

2008

# "Girls play with dolls and boys play with soldiers": Examining teachers and parents' gender beliefs and the gender identity of 8-10 year old Jamaican boys

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“Girls Play with Dolls and Boys Play with Soldiers”:  
Examining Teachers and Parents' Gender Beliefs and the Gender  
Identity of 8-10 Year Old Jamaican Boys

by

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
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Date of Approval:  
June 18, 2007

Keywords: masculinity, Caribbean, homophobia, underachievement, hegemony,  
socialization, teaching philosophy

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Dedication

To the boys whose stories are told herein; their parents and teachers who work tirelessly  
to make them productive, worthwhile, responsible men of tomorrow.

## Acknowledgements

A work of this magnitude is obviously not a solo effort. It is in fact the product of unqualified support given me by a host of professionals, friends, family members, and even just well-wishers. I firstly acknowledge the inspiration and energy provided by God especially at those moments when I felt like giving up; thanks too to my wife Noreen who endured spousal deprivation during my times away studying and even when I returned and was completing the study. She taught me true love; thanks also to my major professor and committee members who guided me through choppy seas, for the most part uncharted for me. They encouraged me throughout my residency, held me to high standards and are deserving of any praise which may come as a result of this study. I am indebted to the over 30 boys, the parents/guardians and teachers who provided the data that helped me answer the questions I had. Over the period in the field I made friends with these boys, men and women and professionals. I remember the laughter, the tears, the pain of some as they talked about their sons, the sincerity with which they shared, the expressions for help and the expectations that something positive will come for the boys of Jamaica; thanks also to my research assistants who helped me to see beyond the page at times, to the many colleagues who listened and provided valuable feedback as I wrote and tried to separate soup from noodles; to Beverly Whyte and George Dawkins, the APA specialist and critical friend respectively. Quite frankly but for their invaluable input I would still be struggling with the work. Finally to my principal and boss, Elaine Foster-Allen who not only found time to read parts of the study but was willing to give

me time off to dedicate to the completion of the writing. I am a better person because all these individuals touched my life and left their mark. I shall forever thank them.

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Examining Teachers and Parents' Gender Beliefs and the Construction of Gender  
Identity of Jamaican 8-10 yr. old Boys

Christopher C. Clarke

ABSTRACT

This multi-case ethnographic study examined the gender beliefs of two teachers and 12 parents and the gender identity of thirty 8-10 year old boys in two primary schools in Jamaica. The study was conducted against the background of gross underachievement among Jamaican boys and the research literature pointing to gender socialization as a factor in the declining results and interest in academic studies. Through 10 weeks of observations, interviews and focus group discussions answers were sought for the following questions:

1. What beliefs do teachers hold about gender?
2. What beliefs do parents hold about gender?
3. What are boys' perceptions of their gender identity?

From the data collected it was revealed that teachers' expressed beliefs was not always consistent with their classroom practices; teachers traditional methods even though recognising that girls and boys have different learning styles; boys arrived at school far less prepared to work than girls; they were more likely to be off task than were girls; they identified strongly and early with traditional masculinity in the process devaluing anything feminine; parents, particularly mothers felt powerless to change the

attitudes of boys towards school work; they allow their boys far more latitude to play at home and in many instances failed to help them develop a sense of responsibility. Parents held traditional gender beliefs guided mostly by religious teachings. In the matter of careers however, they were prepared to allow their sons to work in traditional female careers.

The findings suggest the need for a radical redefinition of what it means to be masculinity, one which will allow boys to embrace feminine values and attitudes. The central education authorities in Jamaica need a clear gender policy for schools; schools need to work closer with parents for a greater level of consistency in the socialization of boys.

Finally, teacher preparation programmes need to pay more than lip service to gender in the education process. Teachers in training need to understand that their socialization practices are driven by their beliefs and impact the development of boys and girls' identities.

## Chapter One: Introduction and Background to Study

### *Introduction*

In the last several years there has been a growing concern in Jamaica over the breakdown in morals and values, and the parlous state of education. A rising crime rate has exacerbated the situation. The academic and social behaviours of schoolboys have come in for special attention. The following citations from educators and commentators indicate the extent of the concerns, problems, and issues boys are facing :

“[Jamaican] boys are on a path to illiteracy, crime and prison” (Jamaica Observer, 2002, p. 7).

“Young males are opting out: Serious decline in ambition and achievement”. (McDonald, 2002).

“(T)eenage boys in Jamaica are alienated, depressed and often suicidal; they nurture bizarre theories about sexuality and are sitting ducks for HIV, hard drugs, and criminal behaviour...” (Maxwell, 2002).

“Gender Gap in Education”...The Government of Jamaica has built its education policy around quality, equity, and access. The factors producing the inequity of presence and performance by males in the education system need to be urgently examined and addressed.” Sunday Gleaner 2002.

“Our young men are especially at risk and will require special attention”, (Morrison, 2003, in a commentary on the recently-announced education consensus between the Government and the Opposition).

Supporting the claims of these Jamaican writers are the following local statistics:

1. In 2002 the average scores for girls in the Jamaican Grade Six Achievement Test (GSAT) were eight percentage points higher than those for boys in all five subjects; PIOJ (2003).

2. At the secondary level (Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate and Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination) male achievement was generally lower than that of females in 2001 (PIOJ 2002).
3. Of the 220 boys in their final year at St. George's College, one of the island's leading boys' schools, only 76 met the eligibility requirements for the 2003 graduation; (Daily Observer, July 15, p.9).
4. At Mona, the largest of the three campuses of the University of the West Indies (UWI) women outnumber men in enrolment almost three to one. (PIOJ 2001).
5. Boys in elementary through high schools score significantly lower than girls on standardized measures of reading achievement;
6. Jamaican boys have a higher school attrition rate than girls do. At the primary school level where nine percent of all children repeat a grade, 63% of repeaters were boys.

One response from school administrators to these unfavourable statistics on boys has been to dedicate a special day in each school year known as "Boys' Day." During this time speakers are brought in to provide motivation to boys with the hope that they will change their ways. The effectiveness of that initiative has not been determined to date. It must be pointed out that there is no claim in this study that all boys are underperforming or are in trouble. Indeed, there are boys who are doing very well in school and are models of appropriate social behaviours. The situation outlined above is neither confined to opinion journalism nor unique to Jamaica or the Caribbean. In the United Kingdom, Gillborn (1997), Head (1999), Arnold (1997) and Cassidy (1999) report on a similar trend and so did Coley (2001), The Frederick D. Patterson Research Institute (1997) in the United States and West (1999), Alloway and Gilbert (1998), and Connell (1989, 1995) in Australia.



Recent research studies conducted in Jamaica by educators Chevannes (2000), Miller (1991), Evans (1999), Samms-Vaughn (2001), and Parry (2000) and Niles (2004) in Trinidad and Tobago have attempted to unearth some of the contributing factors for the decline in Caribbean male achievement. Both Miller and Parry describe the situation in Jamaica where there is widespread concern about the marginalization of young males. Miller, who initiated the marginalization theory, cites statistics to show females overtaking males at all levels of the education system. For example, the figures reveal that from as far back as 1938 girls overtook boys in high school enrolment and the decline of men at the tertiary level began as far back as 1908. Miller goes on to assert that “while other Caribbean countries may show differing times when girls and women surpassed boys and men at different levels of the education system, the pattern is the same throughout the region” (p. 79).

The Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (often referred to as CXC) is the major “passport” to tertiary education and work in the Caribbean. An analysis of the subject-choice of students by Evans showed that only one subject (English Language) was pursued by more than 50% of the boys in the sample. Ironically, it is the subject in which they generally perform the worst. Interest in subjects that traditionally were dominated by boys (Physics, woodwork, technical drawing, and chemistry) was also low. Girls’ interest in the subjects ranged from 1.8 % (Technical Drawing) to 87% (English Language). In 13 of the 16 most commonly taken subjects, girls’ participation was well over 50%. The gender differences in choice were statistically significant in all but two of the 16 subjects. In 2002, boys performed slightly better than girls in mathematics while

60% of the girls who took English Language gained an acceptable pass compared to only 30% of the boys. At the University of the West Indies, the premier tertiary institution in the Caribbean, the ratio of females to males was seven to one. At the primary level, figures from Jamaica (PIOJ, 2001) reveal that girls are also doing better than boys in the Grade Six Achievement Test (GSAT) – the examination used to select students to some of the most prestigious secondary high schools in the country. At the University of the West Indies (UWI) in 2005, a mere 30% of the students enrolled were males and over 75% of those who graduated were females. Females outnumbered males in every faculty except in Engineering and Agriculture. At the University of Technology male enrolment was also in decline (Planning Institute of Jamaica, PIOJ 2005).

In a cognition study conducted in 2000 (Samms-Vaughn, 2001), standardized tests were administered to a sample of 11 year-olds nearing the end of their primary schooling. On these tests, children showed disparities in performance depending on the type of school being attended. Children underachieving in the academic areas were also typically underachieving in other areas. The study reports that girls significantly outperformed boys on academic tests, but both genders performed similarly on cognitive tests. Approximately two-thirds of the significant underachievers were boys. Conversely there were more girls underachieving on cognitive tests. The suggestion drawn from this was that both boys and girls have similar cognitive abilities. However, it was felt that in the current school environment boys are less able to translate this into scholastic achievement. It was also felt that the current approaches to teaching facilitated girls' achievement more.

In her study among secondary school boys in Jamaica, Barbados, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Parry (2000) found that not only were boys underachieving in comparison to girls at the secondary level but also the boys seem to have a very rigid, macho sense of masculinity that expresses itself in contempt for teachers, who are largely female. The situation in Jamaica was characterized as particularly grave. Evans (1999) in a study in secondary schools in Jamaica found boys to hold more negative attitudes towards school work than did girls. Boys' behaviour was "in stark contrast to that of girls" (p.28). Teachers on the other hand, described girls as conforming, participating, doing their work, and sitting quietly. Parry too found an anti-academic male sex/gender identity existing among boys that was not compatible with either diligent study or good grades.

Admittedly, there might be several reasons for boys' lack of academic achievement. The earliest explanation given was that the absence of male role models and preponderance of female teachers led to the feminization of boys—boys come to see academic achievement as a feminine pursuit especially if they do not have a father figure who values education (Biller, 1974; Sexton, 1966; Sommers, 2000). While there may be some merit to the call for a greater male presence in the lives of boys there is no research support for the argument that female teachers put boys at a disadvantage. The contrary is sometimes the case: Many female teachers prefer to teach boys. (Parry, 2000; Sadker & Sadker, 1994;). Furthermore, Foster, Kimmel, and Skelton (2001), argue that it is not the school experience that feminizes boys and prevent them from achieving, "but rather the ideology of traditional masculinity that keeps (them) from wanting to succeed" (p.14).

Traditional masculinity is what is referred to in the literature as hegemonic masculinity. It is explained further in the following paragraphs.

### *Hegemonic Masculinity and Gender Identity*

Most of the literature on the underachievement and anti-social behaviours of boys has been written from a feminist/social constructionist perspective. This literature overwhelmingly points to hegemonic masculinity or the confusion that results from the multiplicity of masculinities that play themselves out at school and in the wider society as the major factor in boys' underachievement and anti-social behaviour (Chevannes, 2000; Connell, 1996; Epstein, Elwood, Hey, and Maw, 1998; Foster, Kimmell, and Skelton, 2001; Mac an Ghail, 1994; Parry, 2000; Miller, 1991; Shepherd 2002; Young and Brozo, 2001). Masculinity is not monolithic. Masculinities are constructed in relation to one's class, social, and ethnic contexts. They do not have a one-dimensional identity. For example, there are white, gay masculinities; black, middle class, bisexual masculinities; and black, lower class, heterosexual masculinities. There are also African, Chinese and Indian masculinities.

Hegemonic masculinity is only one form of expression of what it means to be a man. Over time, according to Connell (1996), it has come to be the dominant form in Western societies. In the hierarchy of masculinities it is at the apex. Hegemony as it is in Gramsci's analysis of social class relations is about power, privilege, and status. First used by Connell (1995), hegemonic masculinity has come to be seen as that singular definition of what it means to be a man. According to Donaldson, in practice hegemony appears normal and natural and therefore the State and the greater part of the population,

through popular culture, the media and other social institutions, punish for non-conformity. It is also about sexuality, heterosexuality to be specific. Donaldson (1993) says “heterosexuality and homophobia are the bedrock of hegemonic masculinity... [it is] violent, pseudo-natural, tough, contradictory, and crisis-prone” (p. 645). According to Sedgwick (1991), “homophobia is used to police the boundaries of acceptable heterosexual male behaviour and identity” (p.33). Jamaica is arguably, the most homophobic society in the Western Hemisphere. Consider the headline in one of the local newspapers “Boys Shun No. 2 Shirt over Gay Stigma.” According to the news item, the boys on a local soccer team refused to wear the No. 2 jersey because a “local deejay released a single about playing Number 2 that had homosexual connotations” (Jamaica Observer, 2003). Not only does this story demonstrate how homophobic the society is, it points out the powerful influence popular culture has on teenagers. Of further interest in that same story was the fact that a girl was being allowed to play on that same soccer team.

Being a man, according to this brand of masculinity, is defined in opposition to what it is to be feminine. Boys seem to internalize this idea before they even start school and therefore regard anything remotely different as feminine, and consequently, to be resisted. This resistance is sometimes typified by a refusal to do well in such subjects as Reading, English and Foreign Languages which are seen as girls' domains. As one boy puts it, "*Most boys who like English are faggots*" (Martino 1995, p. 354) or, as another boy in the study by Parry (2000) sarcastically says, "Real men do not like reading."

Sadowski (2003) considers identity to be critical to school success. According to him, much of a student's success or failure in school—academically, socially, and personally—centres not on external factors such as test scores but around questions of identity. To the extent, therefore, that boys embrace hegemonic masculinity, it affects their performance. Hegemonic masculinity as it relates to underachievement plays itself out in four ways, each of which speaks to the socialization of boys. Firstly, the gendered curriculum allows certain subjects/disciplines to be considered feminine and therefore not consonant with real manliness. The attitude of many boys to English, Reading, and Foreign Languages already mentioned illustrates the point. In Jamaica many boys also eschew participation in secondary school subjects such as Typing and Shorthand, Home Economics, and Office Practice. Reading is integral to an optimum participation in other disciplines and to avoid it is to reduce one's chance of success in school and in life.

Secondly, academic success requires commitment and conformity to school practices such as good behaviour, obeying school rules, obedience to authority, spending time on task and an acceptable level of preparedness for school work. Some boys see these as running contrary to being masculine and display anti-social behaviours instead. Their anti-social behaviours often exclude them from participating in the educational process (Chevannes, 1999). They are often (sometimes unjustifiably) dismissed from a class, suspended and even expelled from school (Townsend, 2000). Scholars have pointed to the social construction of masculinity as playing an important role in violence, low literacy, harassment, and bullying in schools (Mac an Ghail, 1994; Alloway and Gilbert, 1997)

Thirdly, boys deliberately under-perform in order to remain popular and masculine. Kerr and Kohn (2001) and Kerr and Colangelo (2001) in their research among gifted minority boys found that many of the boys hide and deny their giftedness “in order to maintain a masculine façade” ( p. 320. See also Pollack, 1998). They also found that many of the boys they interviewed “avoid activities, organizations or even classroom discussions in which girls play major roles in order to protect their male image” (p.320). To work hard in school is not sufficiently macho for many Jamaican boys. The evidence is that most of these boys have a desire to do well but are afraid lest they upset the status quo of their peer group (Ogbu, 2003). Peer culture can be as harmful as it can be helpful.

Finally, conformity to the tenets of hegemonic masculinity including the practice of homophobia, not only increases the level of anxiety about being socially ostracized, but also dictates boys’ range of social, emotional, and academic experiences in school. The inability to explore and embrace other possibilities of manhood reduces the options and opportunities boys can have and need at school. Instead of doing some of the things regarded as girlish, many boys spend their time interrogating their own behaviours or policing other boys’ behaviours in order to ‘toe the line’ of traditional masculinity. In my experience in teaching boys, many of them long to do some of the so-called girls’ things (e.g. playing ‘girl’ games, cooking, doing classical dancing, working hard) but fear the reprimand and ridicule of other boys. At a time when globalization is further eroding traditional low-skilled jobs and requiring greater levels of literacy for the simplest of paid work, boys are reducing their options to become employable.

Chevannes (1999), a Jamaican sociologist, in explaining the state of affairs with boys in Jamaica says “What we sow we reap.” Chevannes is pointing to the way boys in Jamaica are socialized and form their gender identity. Much of the research on gender has been on discrimination against girls and women and very little on how boys learn to be men and what this means for gender relations as they grow up. There are serious implications for social and economic development in Jamaica if the characterization of hegemonic masculinity described above is consistent with the gender practices of young Jamaican boys. There is a cultural and age group gap in the research cited. Young boys in developing countries have been omitted. Growing up in Jamaica may be similar to growing up in any other country, but there are also many peculiarities to being brought up in Jamaica. For example, young children in Jamaica are forced to grow up much faster than their counterparts in industrialized countries and Jamaican parents are more authoritarian than their counterparts in developed countries. Furthermore, the research on boys cited above has been conducted not just among populations in developed countries but has been largely among teenagers. Very little has been written about young boys- those in early elementary grades who are in their formative years. Ideas about how boys are “supposed to be” are planted early. The messages Jamaican boys receive about what it means to be male are connected to their early socio-emotional and academic development. If we focus on boys’ school experience early on, we will improve education for all children. In addition, research indigenous to the Caribbean is needed to inform education policies and provide a better understanding of young boys. This is what this study can achieve.



### *Social and Economic Conditions in Jamaica*

Jamaica by most standards is a poor country despite the United Nations Development Program's designation of it as a middle-income developing country. It is a generally accepted truism that 20% of the population owns 80% of the wealth. The reported per capita income of \$2,650 (US) belies the harsh realities most of the 2.62 million population faces. Although education is highly valued, there are disparities in the quality of the education offered the top 20% of the population and the rest. Although early childhood education has been singled out for special attention, there is still much to be done to achieve international quality in the offerings and facilities.

A historic development in 2003 (Jamaica Observer, 2003) has given hope that education may have bright days ahead. For the first time in its history three of the major stakeholders (government, political opposition, and teachers) agreed on the direction education should be taking. This came in the form of a resolution debated and passed in the parliament and calls for inter alia:

- increasing allocation to the Ministry of Education up to 15% of the total national budget over the next five years, in increments of one percent per annum;
- renovating, rebuilding, and equipping basic (preschools) schools;
- upgrading of teachers;
- building new basic schools;
- training new teachers; and
- guaranteeing all infants from three to five years old access to early childhood education at internationally acceptable levels.

Early childhood education and care have been seen as a priority by successive governments. It is further highlighted below.

### *Early Childhood Education and Care*

Government and a variety of private entities including churches, non-governmental organizations, and individuals provide education in Jamaica. Of these the government is the largest provider at all levels except the early childhood level where private groups and individuals continue to be the providers since earliest times. The majority of students attending school are enrolled in the public (government) sector. Centrally managed by a Ministry of Education, Youth, and Culture (MOEYC), the system is organized into four levels: pre-primary (3-5 year olds), primary (6-11 year olds), secondary (11-15 year olds, first cycle: grades 7-9; 15-17 yrs. second cycle, grades 10-11), and tertiary (17 yrs. and older). According to the PIOJ (2001), 10.8% of the national budget was allocated to education in 2000. Approximately 95 % of that money is designated as recurrent expenditure.

Jamaica boasts a cadre of nearly 100% college trained and certified teachers despite constant recruiting and enticement with higher salaries by countries such as Britain, United States, and Bahamas. At the early childhood level however, although there has been improvement, the majority of teachers are not college certified. The teachers at this level are regarded as para-professionals. Predominantly female (nearly 100% at early childhood level, 90% at primary level) and in their thirties, teachers spend three years of preparation time in the islands' nine teachers colleges, three universities, and the teacher preparation program of one specialist college.

Improved early childhood care and education for children birth to eight years in Jamaica have been promoted and supported by government and the non-governmental community. This is due largely to the increasing recognition of the vital role it plays in providing the foundation for social and academic development of the child. Enrolment at this level has shown a steady increase over the years and now stands at 91% of the age cohort. A child's likelihood of being enrolled in an early childhood institution increases with her/his socio-economic status. One hundred percent of children in the highest consumption group were enrolled compared with 87% in the lowest consumption group. There is almost universal enrolment at the primary (elementary) level (99%) with average daily attendance of 83% (female attendance being marginally higher). This level of enrolment was common to all areas of residence, family structure, and socio-economic classes. Like at the other levels, attendance for girls is higher than that for boys. Major changes in curriculum and assessment have been undertaken in the last five years in an effort to improve the quality of primary education. This is the level at which students are selected to attend a variety of secondary schools through performance in the Grade Six Achievement Test. This can be taken in the last two years of primary schooling. Girls have repeatedly done better than boys in this test.

Approximately 95% of children 11-18 years are enrolled in secondary education. Almost 21% of the population was enrolled at the tertiary level in 2001, women again were in higher numbers generally. Among the sectors, early childhood education had the largest increase (25 %) over the previous year. Despite the level of increase, that sector

remains grossly under-financed, triggering calls in the press for a greater level of expenditure to be made there.

A 1995 Evaluation of the Provisions for Early Childhood Education in Jamaica (McDonald, 1995) was used as a stimulus to develop a revitalization program for the sector. This program focused on improving the quality of the provisions as well as the management of the sector by the Governmental department designated for that purpose. Reform in the early childhood sector has been ongoing over the last five years and includes a merger of the education (schools) component and the care (day care) section; a new management structure (the Early Childhood Commission); revised curriculum for schools; greater financial input into basic schools by government, and accompanying legislation to regulate the sector while providing quality care and education. These reforms are in direct response to the Caribbean Early Childhood Plan of Action 1997 to which Jamaica is a signatory. Other developments in the sector have complemented those undertaken by the government.

This is the landscape on which Jamaicans live. This is the context in which boys and girls grow up. It is within this context that the socialization and gender identity of boys have to be examined. Given the emphasis that successive governments have placed on early education, research is needed to inform the policies of government and the practices of teachers. The early childhood stage of development is also seen as the time to encourage the development of positive values and attitudes but in Jamaica there has been very little research done on identifying the prevailing values and attitudes among boys under 12 years. Research done outside the region may have relevance but the cultural

appropriateness of such research may be questioned. The need for local research is therefore obvious.

### *Socialization, Gender Identity and Beliefs*

Socialization occurs in various settings and interaction with many people as individuals move through their lives. According to Leo-Rhynie (1997) children develop the knowledge, attitudes, values, and patterns of behaviour from which they construct their gender identities through interaction with significant persons and agents of socialization such as parents, caregivers, and teachers. This interaction functions in such a way that the infant is initiated into the “accepted” methods of behaviour in the cultural environment within which they will grow. The major agents of socialization in Western societies including Jamaica are the home, school, church, public media, and peers. According to Tantekin (2002) parents are the first and most important agents. Children make the first interactions with parents. The beliefs that guide parents’ child-rearing practices are therefore important to understanding children’s gender identity. Although research on parents’ beliefs is not as voluminous as that on teachers’ beliefs, it has been clearly established that the beliefs that parents hold can influence children’s holistic development (Goodnow & Collins, 1990; Kohn, 1969; McGillicuddy-De Lisi & Sigel, 1995; Sigel, 1992).

Once children begin school however, teachers become the most influential adults other than the parents or family members in the child’s life. Teachers, then, share the responsibility for socialization with the parents. Parry (1996) shows that the classroom functions as an arena for the construction and maintenance of gender identities and

notions of masculinity/femininity. What teachers do with children, especially young children, is therefore noteworthy. A vast body of research (for example, Anderson, 1980; Brophy & Good, 1970; Carew & Lightfoot, 1979; Chambers, 1987; Grayson & Martin, 1984; Harris & Rosenthal, 1985; Hendrick & Stange, 1991; Ma, 2001; Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968) has consistently shown that teacher expectations, for example, influence students' academic performance and social behaviour. More specifically, expectations have been formed on the basis on students' gender (Braun, 1976; Lee, 2000).

More recently attention has been turned to teachers' beliefs as the source of teachers expectations as well as their guide to classroom practices (Bledsoe, 1983; Brody, 1998; Cahill & Adams, 1997; Fagot, 1984; Hyun, 2001; Nespor, 1987; Sadker & Sadker, 1994; Streitmatter, 1994; Tiedmann, 2000). According to Pajares (1992), "Attention to the beliefs of teachers and teacher candidates can inform education practice in ways that prevailing research agendas have not and cannot. The study of beliefs is critical to education" (p. 329). In fact, the newly revised curricula of colleges preparing teachers in Jamaica "seek to provide opportunities for student teachers to examine their *beliefs*, assumptions, and expectations about teaching and how these influence the practice of teachers" (Joint Board of Teacher Educators, 2003, p. 1).

While the research cited has addressed several issues relevant to the Caribbean, most of the studies done on teachers and parents' behaviours have been conducted outside of the region. No published research could be found on the study of Caribbean parents or teachers' beliefs although Leo-Rhynie (1997) speculates that Caribbean parents' expectations and goals for their children are related to parents' beliefs. Research

is therefore needed to validate or refute that claim. It is hoped that this study, the purpose of which is explained below, can fill that gap in Caribbean research.

### *Purpose of Study*

The purpose of this study is to examine how teachers and parents' gender beliefs intersect with the gender identity of 8-10 year old boys in Jamaica. More specifically it seeks answers to the following questions:

1. What beliefs do teachers hold about gender?
2. What beliefs do parents hold about gender?
3. What are boys' perceptions of their gender identity?

### *Rationale for Research*

Parents and teachers are two of the most significant socializing agents in children's lives. There is also sufficient research to conclude that parents and teachers' beliefs may intersect with students' academic performance and social development including their gender identity. How this happens has not been made clear in the research literature reviewed. There is also a growing recognition by development agencies of the need to address the ways boys are brought up and to change the messages they receive from parents, schools, and the media about what it means to be a man (Thomson, 2002). This study could facilitate an understanding of the construction of boys' gender identity. Secondly, if in fact it is hegemonic masculinity that is failing Jamaican boys and parents and teachers contribute to this through their maintaining the status quo, then there needs to be ways to influence the change that is necessary. It is hoped that the findings of this study could contribute to the discussion to bring about the change. Thirdly, the study is

significant because to date no research in the Caribbean has dealt with the issues of teachers and parents' beliefs and how these beliefs intersect with boys' gender identity.

The Government of Jamaica has built its education policy around quality, equity, and access. To this end, the colleges preparing teachers in Jamaica recently revised their curricula to reflect, inter alia, the international trend in gender practices. Among the issues in those curricula are gender equity and the underachievement of boys (Joint Board of Teacher Education, 2003). There is, however, a dearth of research studies that have looked at those issues. Furthermore the two studies that have been done both used adolescent boys as samples. This study is the first of its kind to examine the gender identity of boys in their early formative years. The findings of this study therefore could inform the discussions at the colleges about factors that may be influencing the academic and social behaviours of young boys and producing the inequity of presence and performance by males in the Jamaican education system later on. By examining the beliefs of parents and teachers greater insights can be gained into the kind of experiences on which teacher education programs should be built to promote gender equity. While the focus in teacher preparation programs may be on preservice teachers, I contend that it would be useful to examine the behaviors of the teachers beyond the college campuses.

Finally, this study is a response to the call for indigenous research to inform Caribbean policies. There is a need in the Caribbean to promote, support and get involved in research so that we can generate our own bodies of knowledge. As Professor Morrison of the University of the West Indies said : "It is incumbent upon us to generate our own body of knowledge and we need to research what we teach and then teach what we



research. We need to use research programmes (sic) to inform our teaching, policy and decision-making" (Jamaica Observer, 2003, p. 15)

### *Definition of Terms*

Teacher Gender Beliefs: Those gender perspectives a teacher holds or promotes and displays through classroom behaviour. Such perspectives may include but are not limited to issues of masculinity and femininity, and gender equity.

Gender Identity: The individual's identification of being boy/man or girl/woman.

Gender Role: Prescribed social roles for the members of society depending on their sex (Renzetti & Curran, 1999)

### *Summary*

In the preceding sections I described the background and underlying assumptions of the study. I also outlined the rationale and purpose of the study including the specific questions which will guide all aspects of it. In the next chapter, Chapter Two, theoretical and research literature related to the major issues in the study will be reviewed. Chapter Three provides details of the design and methodologies of the research.

## Chapter Two: Review of Relevant Literature

In this chapter, I will review theoretical and research literature related to four central aspects of the research questions. These are: hegemonic masculinity, gender identity, gender socialization, parents and teachers' beliefs. The review is not intended to be exhaustive but highlight the “conversations” in the various fields of research (Locke, Spirduso, & Silverman, 2000), in the process showing how the proposed study could add to that conversation.

### *Hegemonic Masculinity*

The debate about boys' poor school performance and anti-social behaviour is largely among three perspectives on gender and sexuality: the essentialist's, sex-role theorist's and the social constructionist's. Advocates of the essentialist's (also called the socio-biologist's), see gender as prescribed, that is, they believe that one's gender behaviour is largely predetermined. Gender is in the brain. These are the proponents of “boys will be boys” (Dobson, 2001; Gurian, Henley, with Trueman, 2001; Kimura, 1992; Moir & Gessel, 1990; Sommers, 2001, 2003).

The sex-role theorists explain gender and masculinity in terms of the “male sex-role”. Boys internalize these cultural expectations for men. Sex-role theory was the intellectual framework of liberal feminism that launched affirmative action programs for girls in the 1970s (Delamont, 1990). Role theory attributes more importance to education

than socio-biology does, but treats schools essentially as conduits for society-wide norms, and children as passive recipients of socialization.

The social constructionists see gender as ascribed, that is, it is socially constructed through various gender discourses (Chevannes, 2001; Connell, 1996; Francis, 2000; Mac An Ghail, 1994; Miller 1991; Yates, 1997; Young & Brozo, 2001). While the essentialists see most of boys' behaviour as driven by hormones, social constructionists consider them as learned. Boys are not born masculine or feminine. Social constructionists also refute the claims of role-theory and essentialism. Connell (1996) while acknowledging that bodily differences are important to gender disagrees that there is a biological basis to gender. According to him, historical and ethnographic research demonstrates that there is no standard pattern of masculinity that biology could have produced. Careful examination of the arguments about testosterone, he says, shows that there is no one way determination of behaviour by hormones; “indeed, there is evidence that social structures influence the production of hormones” (p.211). In addition, according to Kemper (1990), masculinity is not a biological entity that exists prior to society, rather masculinities are ways that societies interpret and employ male bodies. Anyon (1983) and Connell (1987) argue also that sex-role theory gives little understanding of the detail of school life, such as girls using conventions of femininity to resist control, or boys producing multiple masculinities. “Role theory is notoriously unable to grasp issues of power, or to grasp the diversity of race and class. Although sex-role language remains the most common way of talking about gender in schools, it is fundamentally inadequate as a conceptual framework” (Connell, 1996, p.212). Further, it

fails to acknowledge the complexities of the social construction of masculinity and is therefore unable to account for such things as the interconnections between boys' performances of masculinities and the cultural capital of anti-academic performances (Martino, 1995).

### *New Research*

During the last 15 years a new thrust in gender research has resulted in a new understanding of masculinity. Connell, one of the leading researchers in the field of masculinity research and the one credited with originating the concept of "hegemonic masculinity" (Demetriou, 2001), has identified six themes that are supported by the new body of research.

1. **Multiple Masculinities:** Masculinity is not monolithic (Weaver-Hightower, 2003).

Historians and anthropologists have shown that there are several patterns of masculinity. Different cultures and different periods of history, construct masculinity differently. Some cultures regard homosexual sex as incompatible with true masculinity, others think no one can be a real man unless he has had homosexual relationships (Herdt, 1981). There are, for instance, differences in the expression of masculinity between and among Hispanic, African American, and European American males. Masculinity is also displayed differently according to social class designations (Frank, Kehler, Lovell, & Davison, 2003; Brod & Kaufman, 1994; Donaldson, 1991; Gutman, 2003; Walker, 1988).

2. **Collective Masculinities:** The gender structures of a society define particular patterns of conduct as 'masculine' and others as 'feminine'. At one level these patterns characterize individuals. A man or woman is masculine, or behaves in a masculine way (Chevannes,

2002). These patterns also exist at the collective level. Masculinities are defined and sustained in institutions such as the armed forces, governments, corporations and schools. They are defined collectively in the workplace (Cockburn, 1991) and in informal groups such as street gangs (Messerschmidt, 1993).

3. **Active Construction:** Masculinity is not prescribed but constructed. It does not exist prior to social behaviour either as a bodily state or a fixed personality. Masculinities are constructed through everyday interaction as configurations of social practice. As such they are far from settled (Mac An Ghail, 1994; Messerschmidt, 1993; Thorne, 1993).

4. **Layering:** One of the key reasons why masculinities are not settled is that they are not simple homogenous patterns. Research in both psychoanalysis (Connell, 1994) and ethnography (Klein, 1993) often reveals contradictory desires and logics. For example, a man's active heterosexuality may exist as a thin emotional layer concealing a deeper homosexual desire; a boy's identification with men may coexist or struggle with his identification with women.

5. **Dynamics:** The fact that different masculinities exist in different cultures and historical epochs suggests that masculinities are amenable to change (Gutman, 2003; Kimmel, 1996; Nye, 1993).

6. **Hierarchy and Hegemony:** Not only are there different forms of masculinity, some are more honoured than others, thus creating a hierarchy. For example, in Western societies, heterosexuality is seen as the only true form of masculinity and therefore honoured above all others. Some are socially marginalized, such as the masculinities of disempowered ethnic minorities; others, such as the masculinities of sporting heroes, are seen as exemplary, taken

as symbolizing admired traits (Connell, 1994; Kimmel, 1994; Plummer, 1992; Shepherd, 2002).

Closely akin to hierarchy is hegemony. Hegemonic masculinity refers to the culturally dominant form of masculinity in a given setting. Antonio Gramsci used the term “hegemony” in his analysis of class relations to refer to the cultural dynamic by which a group claims and sustains a leading position in social life. At any given time, one form of masculinity rather than others is culturally exalted (Connell, 1995). Hegemonic masculinity may then be defined as “the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women” (Connell, 1995, p. 77). The notion of “currently accepted” suggests that what is dominant now may change. Connell argues that when conditions for the defence of patriarchy change, the bases for the dominance of a particular masculinity are eroded. New groups may challenge old solutions and construct a new hegemony.

Perhaps no other characterization of hegemonic masculinity is more apt than William Pollack’s Boy Code. The code requires boys who want to be considered as real men to demonstrate four caricatures of masculinity:

1. “The Sturdy Oak”. Men should be strong (physically and emotionally), silent and self-reliant. Showing emotions and being too kind are seen as breaking the rule;
2. Give ‘Em Hell”. The world of competitive sports and the on-screen conduct of such hyper-masculine models such as Arnold Schwarzenegger, Bruce Lee, and Sylvester Stallone (in Jamaica, soccer players and dance-hall deejays are the equivalent of these

movie stars) promote an enormity of daring violent and over-the-top attitudes and behaviours in boys.

3. “The Big Wheel”. This ideal motivates boys and men to achieve status, power, and dominion over others, including an assumption of sovereignty over girls and all things feminine.

4. “No Sissy Stuff”. This is regarded as the most traumatizing aspect of the Code because it inhibits the expression of any feelings and desires that may be construed as feminine, such as dependence, warmth, and empathy (Pollack, pp. 23-24). This is the set of unwritten rules of hegemonic, heterosexual masculinity.

Connell’s hegemonic masculinity concept has recently been questioned by researchers. Edley and Wetherell (1995), for example, argue that the concept is ambiguous; Speer (2001) claims the term is not defined in a way that can be applied to data while Miller (1998) considers it a “hybrid term” (p. 194-5). Demetriou (2001) in a critique of the concept as introduced by Connell, while agreeing with the inability of sex-role theory to explain patriarchal power and social change, finds the concept limiting. Arising out of his analysis of gay culture’s visibility in popular culture he argues that hegemonic masculinity is not constructed in *total opposition* to gay masculinities (emphasis added). Instead, over time many elements of gay culture “have become constitutive parts of a hybrid hegemonic bloc whose heterogeneity is able to render the patriarchal dividend invisible and legitimate patriarchal domination” (p. 354). The idea of hegemonic masculine bloc implies that hegemonic masculinity is capable of transforming itself in order to adapt to new historical realities.

The major research on masculinity has been conducted in Australia (Connell, 1995; Lindgard & Douglas, 1999; Martino, 2000; West, 1996, 1999), Britain (Arnold, 1997; Head, 1999; Gillborn, 1997), and to a lesser extent, North America (Kimmel, 1996). More recently, research from Latin America (Gutman, 2003), Africa, India (Cleaver, 2002), and the Caribbean (Chevannes, 2002; Chevannes & Brown, 1995; Forrest, 2002; Miller, 1991) have added to the growing field of masculinity research. The vast majority of these studies have been among adult men and focused on sexual and reproductive health, violence, and conflict. The notable exceptions are Head (1999), Skelton (2001), and Gillborn, (1997), who studied boys in British primary and secondary schools respectively. Chevannes conducted an ethnography on becoming a man in the Caribbean. Cleaver (2002) also reported on a Save the Children UK study among children. With the exception of Parry's (2000) studies in Caribbean schools no other studies in the Caribbean has examined the gender construction of boys. There is clearly a need to understand how boys in general and Caribbean boys in particular, understand and practice masculinity.

### *Socialization and Gender Identity*

As was established in chapter one, parents and teachers are among the most potent influences in the lives of young children. The next two sections review the research literature originating in Jamaica followed by the international theoretical and research literature.

*Socialization at home.* Children are born into particular racial/ethnic and social class groups. These provide the context for their socialization. The norms and



expectations of the parental group provide the parameters for the process of child rearing (Leo-Rhynie, 1997). The expectations and goals of the parents are based on firmly held beliefs on differences between the sexes. Parents and other household members have very clearly defined roles and guidelines for raising boys and these are often very different from those for girls. While career roles may not be prescribed in the early years, gender roles are. Girls are seen as “easier to raise” and will “provide help in the home”, and care for parents “in old age” (Brown & Chevannes, 1995). These researchers from their analysis of community discussions, which formed part of a larger study in Jamaica and elsewhere in the Caribbean, concluded that at home chores are assigned along gender lines to fit the philosophy of “tie the heifer, loose the bull”. Consistent with this philosophy, girls do household and childcare tasks inside the house while boys are assigned “heavy” work outdoors. Washing dishes, bathing younger siblings, cooking are considered girls’ and women’s work while taking care of the outdoors, washing the family vehicle, tending animals are reserved for boys and men. Boys are raised to become providers while girls are expected to become nurturers (Miller, 1991; Chevannes, 2002).

The fact that many boys are required to perform some ‘female’ tasks, as happens in a family of all or mostly boys, or that many girls are required to undertake ‘male’ tasks, in a family of all girls, is of little consequence as far as the behavioural norms are concerned. What matters is the gender significance of what is done (Chevannes, 2002). Even as they perform such cross-gender tasks, children are made aware of their gender significance. Boys, as soon as they are able to, resist such simple tasks as washing dishes and keeping the house tidy. At home, boys’ leisure activities engage them with older boys

and young adult males in sports, street corner games and chats, bike riding and other such physical activities often outside of the immediate home environment. Girls on the other hand, are restricted to more circumscribed activities--- playing with dolls at home or playing at school and before dark. Girls are more likely to be reprimanded for “playing too much” and told to “go take a book” meaning they should do something academic. Boys are likely to be stigmatized as effeminate if they stay indoors too often. At home also, boys are punished more severely to “toughen” them and enable them to survive in the rough outside world. Physical affection is largely reserved for girls; boys are not to be “petted.” This is part of the “toughening” process as well as to prevent them from becoming homosexuals. Homophobic myths are prevalent in Jamaica and boys who are seen as acting “like a girl” are the butt of jokes, reprimands, and even face ostracism.

Toys too are selected along gender lines by both parents and children. According to Leo-Rhynie (1995), from a study conducted across a sample of toy purchasers and children from all social classes, toys were bought to enhance the gender of the children for whom they were intended. Some purchasers even avoided buying certain toys for boys because “I don’t want him to be a sissy” (p. 258). When the researcher offered “sex-inappropriate” toys to some of the children “they all indicated very emphatically, that this would not be acceptable”. The boys found the idea of a doll for Christmas hilarious asking “Are you for real?” (p. 258). The study also found that retailers use the sex of child consumers as a major factor in the grouping, display and offer of toys for sale.

Internationally, three major reviews of the parental socialization literature have been done in the last 30 years (Fagot, 1995; Lytton & Romney, 1991; Maccoby &

Jacklin, 1974). With the exception of Fagot's review and research they suggest that there is little evidence to suggest that boys and girls are treated differently in the home.

Maccoby and Jacklin found that most studies were biased in or limited in several ways, both in terms of subject population and interpretation of studies. For example there were few studies with direct data on fathers; the studies dealt mostly with children below age five; and the samples were mostly middle class parents. Many of the studies implied causality between parental socialization and child sex differences where only correlational findings existed. Maccoby and Jacklin concluded that beyond shaping obvious sex-typed play and the fact that boys received harsher punishment than did girls there were few consistent differences in the socialization of boys and girls.

Lytton and Romney (1991) completed a meta-analysis of 172 studies examining the socialization differences of boys and girls and also found few consistent differences across studies. Fagot (1995) insists, however, that there is sufficient evidence to conclude that parents do socialize their boys and girls differently. In fact, she shows that from as early as birth the differential process begins and that these early differences in parenting play an important part in children's gender role development and identity (Fagot & Leinbach, 1993). Fagot's review also included how mothers and fathers differ in their socialization of children.

Siegel (1987) examined 39 studies on differential socialization and concluded that some support exists for the uniqueness of the father's role. Fathers were more likely than mothers to show sex-specific differences. For example, fathers were found to talk more to their sons in some studies while in others fathers spoke more to their daughters. Given the

traditional roles that mothers play however, mother variables were found to be stronger predictors of children's social and cognitive behaviors (Fagot, 1995). Fagot and Hagan (1991) examined behavioral differences in mothers' and fathers' reactions toward boys and girls at three different ages (12 months, 18 months, and 5 years) in a study of actual behaviors. Through observational studies differences in mothers' and fathers' styles of interaction emerged. For example, mothers gave more instructions and directions than did fathers and fathers spent more time in positive play interaction. The results of these studies also failed to lend support to the traditionally-held belief that fathers were more involved in sex-typing than mothers. The exception was the finding that fathers gave fewer positive reactions to boys engaged in female-typical toy play at 18 months. Given the paucity of studies which included fathers however, these conclusions remain tentative. Phares and Compas (1992) recommend that more research with fathers be done. The findings here are also restricted to children under five years old.

*Socialization at school.* Next to parents teachers have the most influence on young children's self-image, self-perception, and gender identity. Raywid (1995) in discussing the "teacher's awesome power" says teacher power is awesome with regard to establishing and controlling the social environment of the classroom. It is the teacher who determines the roles of every person in the room and the expectations that will govern every interaction. It is the teacher who decides whether the general tone of the classroom will be relaxed and informal, friendly and supportive, brisk and businesslike, essentially cooperative or competitive. And this decision has profound implications for students and what is expected and required of them (p.79). Teachers have the power, according to

Weglinsky (2002), to dramatically alter the knowledge and attitudes of students. As socialization agents, teachers have to teach their students which behaviors are acceptable in which situations. Hence, through their own actions and interactions teachers transmit to children their expectations for appropriate behaviors in various contexts (Peisner, 1991).

There is a dearth of comprehensive research on what goes on in Jamaican classrooms. Most studies have focused solely on academic behavior and more often than not conducted in secondary schools. Other studies were too dated to be included here. I therefore draw heavily from publications by Evans and Davies (1997); Leo-Rhynie (1997); Parry (2000); and Evans (1999). The research by Evans, although the most comprehensive of its kind to date, is also confined to secondary schools and its primary focus is students' attitudes to academic work. What is known about socialization in schools at the lower levels is left largely to speculation and un-documented anecdotes.

At school, both male and female teachers reinforce many of the gender stereotypes learned earlier. As at home, boys and girls are treated differently at school. Evans and Davies (1997) point to evidence that shows that boys are treated more harshly than girls mainly because girls "are more compliant and follow rules more willingly" (p. 19). Anecdotal and observational reports according to these researchers indicate that girls in general are more likely to adhere to the norms of the school and are consequently given more responsibility in the classroom by teachers who are overwhelmingly female. Evans and Davies opine that the reason for this could be that the skills and the sense of responsibility that the girl develops in the home are recognized and utilized in the

classroom. Presumably, boys do not develop skills at home that can be utilized at school. More recent research by Evans (1999) show that boys, more than girls fooled around in class—joking, chatting to other boys, and even playing. Evidence of the male peer culture was found even in classrooms. One gang member explained that a gang member’s anti-social behavior in class is often imitated by another. If most members were “idling” for example, and others wanted to work, the latter would have to refrain from doing so lest they be seen as “odd ones out”. Not all boys idle however, and the research does find evidence of boys showing high level of interest in schoolwork depending on the topic of discussion or the activity to be done. Boys were more interested in discussing practical life issues or discussions about sports and participating in more hands-on activities. According to Evans (1999), boys sometimes refrained from participating for fear of being humiliated. Some teachers used boys’ poor reading ability to shame them.

On the playgrounds it is boys who control the larger spaces (Thorne, 1993). By virtue of the games they play they dominate the playground. Cricket and soccer are games that require big spaces and girls know they should keep out of the areas where these are being played. Boys also engage in more rough and tumble games, more horsing around and often get into conflict with other boys sometimes leading to fights. These observations are consistent with those made by Thorne (1993) in his study of schools in the United States. Another feature of playground interaction is the separation of the sexes. Boys play among themselves and girls do the same. Occasionally there is mixed-group play or participation in cross-gender activities. Boys seen playing with or among girls are viewed suspiciously. Girls who show interest in traditional boys’ activities are

simply considered tomboys. They suffer no negative consequences. In fact there is now an active girls' soccer competition among secondary high schools in Jamaica. Whether inside or outside the classroom boys and girls are socialized along gender lines and even in the expectations teachers have of the two groups.

At the international level the landmark study by Sadker and Sadker (1994) shows girls and boys at all levels of the school system in the United States receiving differential treatment while other researchers (Anderson, 1980; Brophy and Good, 1970; Carew and Lightfoot, 1979; Chambers, 1987; Grayson and Martin, 1984; Harris and Rosenthal, 1985; Hendrick and Stange, 1991; Ma, 2001; Rosenthal and Jacobson, 1968;) have consistently shown that teacher expectations influence students' academic performance and social behavior. More specifically, expectations have been formed on the basis on students' gender (Braun, 1976). Teachers hold differential expectations for boys and girls. Sadker and Sadker reported that boys consistently were advantaged through the interactions teachers had with them. Evans and Davies (1997) opine that the expectations that teachers hold of students are formed in part based on teachers' beliefs. There is however, no research to support this claim.

In summary, while there is enough evidence to suggest that boys and girls are socialized differently and that teachers hold differential expectations for students based on their gender and other identifying characteristics, there is need for research to show how the school's culture and especially teachers' beliefs influence the way students come to perceive themselves as masculine or feminine.

## *Gender Identity*

One important aspect of the socialization process is the learning of gender roles. Several theories have been advanced to explain how this happens. Psychoanalytic theory (Freud, 1962) and social learning theory (Bandura & Walters, 1963; Mischel, 1966, 1970) both emphasize observation of, identification with, and imitation of same sex models by children as they grow. According to psychoanalytic theory same-sex parents are critical to the process. Social learning theory while admitting that same sex parents are powerful models—particularly in the years before school—it is the differential positive reinforcement that is usually provided when a same-sex model is imitated. Such reinforcement results in further imitation not only of the same sex parent, but also of other same sex models.

Another theory called here the “biological foundations” theory (Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974) suggests that one’s gender identity is arrived at through a process of learning built upon biological foundations (see also Kimura, 1992; Moir & Gessel, 1990). After an extensive review of research on sex differences, Maccoby and Jacklin dismiss the explanations of Freud and Bandura and Walters noting that

Children seem to adopt sex-typed patterns of play and interest for which they have never been reinforced, and avoid sex inappropriate activities for which they have never been punished.... [While] it is tempting to try to classify the different behaviours as being either innate or learned we have seen that this is a distinction that does not bear scrutiny. We have noted that a genetically controlled characteristic may take the form of a greater readiness to learn a particular kind of behaviour and hence it is not distinct from learned



behaviour.... It is reasonable then, to talk about the process of acquisition of sex-typed behaviour- the learning of sex-typed behaviour—as a process built upon biological foundations that are sex differentiated to some degree (p. 362, 363, 364).

According to Leo-Rhynie (1997) these “biological foundations” have not been determined and most theories have not dealt with the emergence of sex-typed behaviours and the developmental sequence that they follow (Roopnarine &Mounts, 1987).

Chodorow (1976) provides yet another explanation for the development of gender identity. Through a reinterpretation of Freud’s psychoanalytic theory, Chodorow argues that boys eventually turn away from their mothers as they develop a distinct other-than-mother identity. Girls on the other hand come to identify with mother which leads to more flexible ego boundaries as self and other are not totally differentiated. This stronger self-identity accounts for men’s greater assertiveness and dominance over women (patriarchy)

Another theory, proposed by Kohlberg (1966) and called “self socialization” by Maccoby and Jacklin (1974), claims that as children grow, they gradually develop the concepts of “masculinity” and “femininity” alongside their development of other concepts. While these concepts are initially imperfect because of the child’s level of cognitive development, they are gradually refined as age and intellectual development improve. Concept development, according to this theory, arises out of constructs derived from information obtained from a variety of sources, including, but not limited to parents. Sex-typed behaviour is not just made up of acts of imitation but based on generalized,

organized concepts that develop as children's experience increase and to which behaviour is matched.

Closely akin to Kohlberg's theory is that of Slaby and Frey (1975) who identified three stages of gender development. When all three stages are completed, the child is said to exhibit gender constancy. The three stages are

1. Gender identity—the child recognizes that he/she is a boy/girl
2. Gender stability—the child understands that he/she will be a boy/girl throughout life
3. Gender consistency—the child recognizes that he/she will remain a boy/girl even if he/she dresses up or changes appearance to look like the opposite sex.

Slaby and Frey found that 3-year-olds did not understand any of these concepts; 4-year-olds understood gender identity only, but the majority of 5-year-olds understood all three. In all children the sequence of concept development was the same.

Cognitive-developmental theories have been expanded upon resulting in, for example, information processing theories. These base their assumptions on Piaget's proposition of schema (Piaget, 1970) which serve as internal information organizers for the search, selection, and receipt of information relative to that particular schema. In *Self Schema theory* (Martin & Halverson, 1981) children evaluate information that is available in their environment and assess its appropriateness or inappropriateness for their gender. Children gradually build up more schema for the behaviours that are typical of their sex than for those that are relevant to the other sex group. *Gender Schema theory*, proposed by Bem (1981) assumes the existence of schema that recognize the bipolar

gender distinctions in society, and these schema guide social functions as well as the extent to which individuals engage in sex stereotyped behaviors.

Finally, Miller (1991) in discussing the history of patriarchy also provides an explanation for how gender identity is developed. Miller argues that demographic, environmental, and technological factors in early human societies are responsible for the division of life-giving and life-taking to women and men respectively. Biology had determined that the life-giving powers rested with females. As children were often sacrificed to appease the gods and ensure group survival, men assumed the role of life-takers by default—women as life-givers found that life-taking conflicted with their life-giving and life-preserving roles. This separation of life-giving and life-taking roles, argues Miller, determined the definition of masculinity and femininity that have been transmitted over the centuries:

The biological determination that life-giving and life-preserving roles would fall to women resulted in females being socialized into behaviours and habits that were consistent with caring and preserving life. [The] assignment of life-taking powers to men resulted in males being socialized into behaviours and habits consistent with these powers (p. 114).

The gender socialization of children therefore began from the earliest age and was inculcated through various schedules of rewards and punishments as well as through the imitation of older siblings and same-sex parents. Different varieties of masculinity and femininity emerged in various cultures according to how life-taking and life-giving were interpreted and implemented.

The common threads running through all of these theories are: gender is ascribed (not prescribed); gender identities are socially constructed; children acquire behaviours in complex and not yet fully understood ways, from the models available to them; these models are usually representative of the societal subgroups (gender, race, class) in which they have membership. Very little systematic research has been designed and carried out to explore the effects of gender in child rearing in the Caribbean. No study could be found that addressed the effects of parental and/or teachers' beliefs on gender identity. It is hoped that the current research could fill that gap.

#### *Teacher and Parents' Beliefs*

According to Pajares (1992), "attention to the beliefs of teachers and teacher candidates can inform education practice in ways that prevailing research agendas have not and cannot. The study of beliefs is critical to education" (p. 329). Supporting this claim of Pajares is Kagan's (1992) assertion that "the more one reads of teacher beliefs, the more strongly one suspects that this piebald of personal knowledge lies at the very heart of teaching" (p. 85). Marshall and Reinhartz (1997) suggest that in order to address the effects of gender bias in schools teachers need to examine and clarify their beliefs. A growing body of literature can be found on teacher beliefs (Bledsoe, 1983; Brody, 1998; Cahill and Adams, 1997; Fagot, 1984; Hyun, 2001; Nespor, 1987; Sadker and Sadker, 1994; Streitmatter, 1994; Tiedmann, 2000;). Brody (1998) asserts that teachers' beliefs may have the greatest impact on what they do in the classroom while Fennema (1990) indicated that "classroom instruction is determined by the decisions that teachers make, which are directly influenced by their beliefs" (p. 171). The consumer of research,

however, faces a major difficulty in reading the teacher belief literature—there is inconsistency in the definition of belief.

### *Definitions of Beliefs and Teacher Beliefs*

Pajares (1992) in a comprehensive review of the literature found over 20 different terms used to mean beliefs. The confusion seems to center on the distinction between beliefs and knowledge, a distinction Clandinin and Connelly (1987) tried to clarify when they examined the origins, uses, and meanings of personal knowledge constructs used in teacher belief studies. While Pajares concedes that defining beliefs is problematic (“it’s at best a game of players’ choice”, p. 309) he also points out that “when specific beliefs are operationalized, appropriate methodology chosen, and design thoughtfully constructed, their study becomes viable and rewarding” (p.308).

Rokeach (1968) may be credited with the seminal work on beliefs and belief systems. He defined beliefs circularly as “any simple proposition, conscious or unconscious, inferred from what a person says or does, capable of being preceded by the phrase “I believe that...” (p.113). According to Rokeach, a belief may be descriptive or existential (I believe that the sun sets in the west), evaluative (I enjoy writing papers), or prescriptive or exhortatory (I believe that children should be raised in love). Rokeach argues that all beliefs have a cognitive component representing knowledge, an affective component capable of arousing emotion and a behavioral component activated when action is required. He cautioned that in order to understand beliefs one has to infer about the believer’s underlying state because individuals are often unable or unwilling to accurately represent their beliefs.

Abelson (1979) defined beliefs in terms of people manipulating knowledge for a particular purpose or under a necessary circumstance; Brown and Cooney (1982) see beliefs as time and content-specific dispositions to action while Sigel (1985) defined beliefs as “mental constructions of experience – often condensed and integrated into schemata or concepts” (p. 351) that are held to be true and that guide behaviour. The definitions of beliefs cited here are all conceptions of general beliefs, not the specific beliefs of teachers only.

Teachers hold many beliefs. The ones of concern to this review however, are the educational beliefs of teachers in general (for example beliefs about their roles and responsibilities, their students, and the various disciplines they teach) and the gender beliefs in particular (beliefs about masculinity and femininity and related issues). Tabachnik and Zeichner (1984) defined teacher beliefs as *teacher perspectives* which include both the beliefs teachers hold about their work and the ways in which they (give) meaning to these beliefs by their behaviour in the classroom—akin to Sharp and Green’s (1975) idea of a teaching ideology. Clark (1988) refers to teacher beliefs as preconceptions and implicit theories. He noted that their use is not at all consistent with what one finds in textbooks or lecture notes for they “tend to be eclectic aggregations of cause-effect propositions from many sources, rules of thumb, generalizations drawn from personal experience, beliefs, values, biases, and prejudices” (p.75). Teachers’ attitudes about education (students, teaching, learning, and schooling) have also been referred to as teachers’ beliefs (Pajares, 1992).

### *The Research Literature*

A growing body of research is pointing to the way in which teachers' beliefs about gender influence their expectations of, and subsequent interactions with students. Lee (2002) for example, found that teachers' conceptions of what it means to have high ability in mathematics and science in early childhood "appeared to be influenced by teachers' beliefs about gender" (p. 383). In the study conducted among 16 Australian early childhood teachers, typically teachers saw boys as being *innately* more competent and interested in mathematics and science and girls in the arts and language. Lee concluded that gender is a significant factor in teachers' conception of giftedness in young children. Other studies (Bryan & Atwater, 2002; Harold, 1992; Tiedemann, 2000; Fennema, Peterson, Carpenter, and Lubinski, 1990; Stipek and Gralinski, 1992; Wigfield and Harold, 1992) have also shown the influence of teacher beliefs on students' performance in specific subjects. Two longitudinal studies (Jussim, 1992; Jussim & Eccles, 1992) involving 1700 elementary students and 100 teachers, showed that teachers believed that boys were slightly more talented at math than were girls even though there was no gender differences in their standardized test scores; teachers believed that girls tried harder than boys.

In summary, according to Pajares (1992) the major findings that have been unearthed through research on beliefs and belief systems are:

1. Beliefs are formed early and tend to self-perpetuate, preserving even against contradictions caused by reason, time, schooling, or experience (Lortie, 1975; Nespor, 1987; Rokeach, 1968; Schommer, 1990; Wilson, 1990)

2. Knowledge and beliefs are inextricably intertwined, but the potent, affective, evaluative, and episodic nature of beliefs makes them a filter through which new phenomena are interpreted (Abelson, 1979; Calderhead & Robson, 1991; Nespor, 1987; Nisbet & Ross, 1980; Schommer, 1990)
3. Belief subcultures, such as educational beliefs must be understood in terms of their connections not only to each other but also to other, perhaps more central, beliefs in the system (Kitchener, 1986; Peterman, 1991; Rokeach, 1968;) Psychologists usually refer to these subcultures as attitudes and values.
4. By their very nature and origin, some beliefs are more incontrovertible than others (Bandura, 1986; Clark, 1988; Lewis, 1990; Lortie, 1975; Nisbett & Ross, 1980; Rokeach, 1968)
5. Individuals' beliefs strongly affect their behavior (Abelson, 1979; Lewis, 1990; Nespor, 1987; Nisbett and Ross, 1980; Rokeach 1968; Tabachnick and Zeichner, 1984).
6. Beliefs must be inferred, and this inference must take into account the congruence among individuals' beliefs statements, the intentionality to behave in a predisposed manner, and the behaviour related to the belief in question (Goodman, 1988; Rokeach, 1968; Tabachnik and Zeichner, 1984).
7. Observed teaching practice sometimes contrast starkly with held beliefs; while teachers professed student-centered beliefs, for example, they behaved in teacher-centred ways ( Simmons et al., 1999).

These findings, as Pajares points out, are not to be seen as categorical truths but “as fundamental assumptions that may reasonably be made when initiating a study of



teachers' educational beliefs" (p. 311). With few exceptions, the teacher belief studies done have all focused on teachers general beliefs about pedagogy or on beliefs relating to specific content areas. No research was found relating teachers' beliefs to students' gender identity although extrapolation could be done from some of the studies cited.

There is no Caribbean research among those cited above.

### *Parent Beliefs*

Ogbu (1981) suggests that a detailed examination of cultural practices be done to identify clues in the development of concepts (such as gender identity) related to socialization practices within particular contexts. These clues, he senses, can be obtained from exploring *parental belief patterns* (emphasis added), perceptions of children and their role in society; folk belief and practices; religious doctrines; parental strategies; fertility rates; and assumption of individual responsibility within given social, organizational, and structural milieu. McGillicuddy-De Lisi and Sigel (1995) argue that beliefs permeate parents' actions, not only with their children, but also with the larger environment. In addition they posit that beliefs provide a means for generating behaviours, that may then affect children's development, in response to parenting demands. Like the use of the term in teacher beliefs research the research on parent beliefs is fraught with inconsistencies for the construct. Such terms as parental perceptions, ideas, attributions, attitudes, values, expectations, and knowledge are often used interchangeably. Despite the variety of terms used however, it is established that the beliefs that parents hold generally or specifically about child development including "appropriate" gender socialization, affect children's development (Goodnow & Collins,

1990, Kohn, 1969; Sigel, 1992). While the research on parental beliefs is growing Miller (1988) suggests that the link between beliefs and behaviour is the least studied in the parental beliefs literature. In addition, although Leo-Rhynie (1997) strongly implies that Caribbean parents' expectations and goals for their children are related to parents' beliefs, there is no Caribbean research to validate this claim. It is hoped that the current research can contribute to that understanding. The research cited below has all been done outside the Caribbean.

McGillicuddy-DeLisi and Sigel (1995) in a review of the literature on parental beliefs make the following observations:

1. The present day conceptualizations of beliefs do not derive from a single definition or perspective, but rather range from everyday and common usage of the "belief" term to quasi-philosophical conceptualizations.
2. Because of these differences in conceptualization, the definitions and the research conducted on parental beliefs vary across studies and investigators. The terms belief, attitude, cognition, attribution, perception, and idea are often used interchangeably;
3. There is variability in the conceptualizations of the origin and function of beliefs relative to the parent who holds them, and about how they relate to other cognitions of the parent or to the parent's affective states.
4. Some authors prefer to be inclusive and specify that a variety of types of cognition are to be included and should not be further specified (Goodnow and Collins, 1990). In such cases the common thread running through these terms is the underlying

premise of adult social cognition, that is, these are notions of reality held by parents about children (Goodnow, 1988; Miller, 1988).

5. There appears to be four major perspectives within which parental beliefs have been researched. These are outlined below.

*Attribution approaches.* Many researchers assume that parents, like any other adult, are active cognitively making sense out of the world through causal attributions. The parents' attributions about causes of the child's behaviour either mediate or moderate the parent's behaviour (Weiner, 1985). In mediational models, the parent observes some event, makes an attribution about the event, and then responds to the event. In such cases, the parent links the stimulus to the response. In research conducted, Dix and his colleagues (Dix & Grusec, 1985; Dix, Ruble, & Zambarano, 1989) investigated mothers' causal attributions of children's misbehaviour. Their results suggest that mothers form theories of discipline that take children's age into consideration. These researchers suggest that when mothers think that the child is old enough and capable and responsible for his or her own behaviour, the choice of discipline strategies is more severe. Other investigators have researched individual differences in parents' causal attributions about children's school performance. For example, Holloway and Hess (1985) asked parents to indicate the degree of effort and ability that are responsible for children's school achievement. Parents' attributions, especially about mathematics achievement, tend to disfavour girls in that success is more likely to be attributed to effort than to ability (Eccles, 1987). The literature on attributions generally suggests a mediational role for adult cognitions. Child behaviour is appraised and child rearing practices depend on

the outcomes of that appraisal (Dix & Grusec, 1985). Mothers of children ranging from preschool to high school have been the major subjects in the attribution studies and questionnaires have been the major instrumentation used. Attributions are presumed to influence children because they influence discipline and affective-motivational behaviours of parents, and may benefit parents through protection of self-esteem and provide some sense of coherence to others' behaviours (Holloway and Machida, 1992).

*Information-processing models (I-P).* According to McGillicuddy-DeLisi and Sigel (1995), within these models, parental cognitions are most likely to be conceptualized as mediating factors that filter experiences with the child into strategies for parental practices. The parent is seen as an active processor of information within this theoretical framework. Particular aspects of the child's behaviour have more salience, for example, and are therefore likely to be attended as the parent processes information and makes evaluations of the child. These evaluations then guide behavioural responses. Rubin and Mills (1992) and Mills and Rubin (1990) are among the major researchers within this approach. They describe an I-P model of parental beliefs in relation to children's social competence. Within this model, parents set socialization goals for their children that guide their socialization strategies. These are known as proactive behaviours. When the child fails to meet these goals, reactive behaviour strategies are employed. The parents' behaviour is influenced by their age and socio-economic status. Rubin and Mills' research involved longitudinal investigations of mothers' beliefs on a sample of 45 parents of children 4-6 years over the period of follow-up. Other studies

have used surveys and interviews. Mothers of preschool children have often been the subjects (Holden, 1988).

*Constructivist perspectives.* These differ from attribution and information processing perspectives in that the parents' cognition are not viewed as mediators between environmental factors and parenting strategies, but as a starting point for all experiences the parent has with the child. Beliefs are seen as guides to action, having been constructed in the course of experiencing interaction with children and adults throughout life (McGillicuddy-DeLisi and Sigel, 1995). Throughout life each individual constructs a perception of what a child is, how that child changes and what causes development. This construction takes place simultaneously with the development of other beliefs about the nature of humanity, the universe, God and religion, and values. These beliefs are not necessarily developed by being taught (Okagaki & Divecha, 1993). Beliefs are created from an internal organization of experience into a coherent system (McGillicuddy-DeLisi, 1992; Sigel, Stinson, & Flaughner, 1991).

Studies within this perspective have focused on mothers with few exceptions (e.g. McGillicuddy-DeLisi, 1992; Sigel, 1992) which include both parents. These latter have found that mothers and fathers hold different constructs of developmental processes to be responsible for children's cognitive development to varying degrees. Parents' beliefs have also been found to differ with the gender of their children. Simons et al. (1992) found that adolescent children come to know about their parents' beliefs about children and about child rearing from the parents' practices over time. These relations between

occurrence and knowledge of parental beliefs were somewhat stronger for girls than for boys.

Researchers driven by the constructivist perspective have studied mostly parents of preschool and school age children. Several studies of adolescents have been conducted as well (Simons et al. 1992; Youniss, DeSantis & Henderson, 1992). Although both surveys and interviews have been used in these studies there seemed to be a preference for interviews (Miller, 1988).

*Transactional perspectives.* There are two general approaches to the study of parental beliefs within this perspective. The first focuses on how interactions with the culture provide representations of children. Lightfoot and Valsiner (1992); Palacios (1990); and Palacios, Gonzalez, and Moreno (1992) are among the researchers associated with this perspective. According to this perspective, beliefs exist within the culture, but are then constructed by the individual through interaction with the culture. The primary target of interest of these researchers is the parent and the nature of his or her thinking.

The second type of transactional approach focuses on the relationship and mutual exchanges between parent and child (Dekovi & Gerris, 1992; Sameroff & Fiese, 1992). The parent and child come to the interaction with some history that affects their relationship and the cognitions that moderate their interactions. The emphasis in many of these studies is on infancy with few exceptions (Simons, et al., 1992). The children included in many of these studies have also been for the most part from at-risk or abused/neglected population (Bugental, 1992; Sameroff & Fiese, 1992).

### *Summary of Parental Beliefs*

McGillicuddy-DeLisi and Sigel (1995) draw several conclusions from the body of research from the various approaches to the study of parental beliefs:

1. The four perspectives have many features in common including a view of cognition at the core of beliefs; parents as mentally active in their consideration of children; beliefs are an important determinant of parental practices.
2. The review of empirical findings within the four perspectives reveal evidence of some convergent validity in reports of similar findings across studies conducted within different perspectives.
3. Differences in the four approaches have led to variability in how beliefs are defined, what domains of beliefs are investigated, what types of samples are studied, the types of functions and effects of beliefs that are examined and the place of parent beliefs in the family context.
4. Despite the advances made in the study of parental beliefs, “it is distressing that the same issues (e.g. role of effect, origins of beliefs, effects of beliefs, structure of beliefs) are examined and re-examined in isolation within each perspective; that consideration of *gender, race, class, ethnic, and cultural differences are not incorporated into the whole range of research programs...*” (emphasis added) (p. 344-345). These reviewers also bemoan the fact that: self-report data predominate almost to the exclusion of other methods; the primary statistical tool is some type of correlational analysis that allows for minimal inferences as to the nature of observed statistical relationships without addressing the source of the commonality.

5. The diversity of perspectives has led to ambiguous and vague definitions of the belief construct that has hindered shared meaning within and across specialties and theoretical orientations.

### *Summary*

In this chapter theoretical and research literature related to the four major aspects of the study were reviewed. The review revealed that there are three current contending perspectives on gender and sexuality: the essentialist's, the sex-role theorist's, and the social constructionist's. The study is framed in the social constructionist perspective, accepting that gender is constructed, not inherited. Masculinity likewise is constructed and is not monolithic. There is no single, universal, ahistorical version of masculinity—an infinite number of masculinities are possible. As the various versions of masculinities struggle for dominance, the type that currently dominates, hegemonic, is characterized by heterosexuality, physical and emotional toughness, absence of behaviour deemed feminine, dominance over women and men who do not conform to its tenets, and homophobia which is used to police other men.

There are significant differences in the way girls and boys are socialized. In Jamaica for example, boys are afforded more freedom away from home while girls are brought up to tend to domestic affairs and be well behaved. This status quo is perpetuated at school to various extents. Home and school were shown to be among the major agents of socialization and the literature shows that teachers and parents' beliefs help to drive their practices in the classroom and at home respectively. It was further shown that the beliefs held by teachers and parents influence the social development of children



although no study was found that directly pointed to the way their gender beliefs influence boys' (or girls') gender identity.

The research cited in this chapter has largely been done in developed countries especially that on teacher and parents' beliefs. In addition, most of the belief studies have used self reports as the major methodology. The research on masculinity, although becoming more international, has for the most part been done among adult males and covers such areas as sexuality and reproductive health, violence, and conflicts. There is a cultural, content, methodological and age group void in the research literature. It is a void that the proposed research can fill. More details of this research is presented in the following chapter.

## Chapter Three: Methodology

### *Research Design*

The purpose of this study is to explore how teachers and parents' gender beliefs intersect with the gender identity of 8-10 year old boys in Jamaica. The study followed the case study tradition (Yin, 1993; Stake, Merriam, 1998; Bassey, 1999). It may correctly be described as a multi-case study with an ethnographic approach (Knobel, 2003). The study is ethnographic because it sought to study the school culture of boys and teachers but is essentially case studies of six boys and two teachers. The study was driven by the following broad research questions:

1. What beliefs do teachers hold about gender?
2. What beliefs do parents hold about gender?
3. What are boys' perceptions of their gender identity?

The first question was informed in part by Pajares' (1992) admonition that, in studying teachers' beliefs, if reasonable inferences about beliefs require assessment of what individuals say, intend, and do, then teachers' verbal expressions, and teaching behaviours must be included in the examination of beliefs. Hence, teachers stated beliefs are not the only aspect to be examined but their classroom practices also. "Not to do so calls into question the validity of the findings and the value of the study" (p. 327).

In Chapter Two, literature related to the study was reviewed. Based on the review the need arose for an understanding of teachers and parents' gender beliefs and the

gender construction of young Jamaican boys. It was not stated then how that understanding would be facilitated. This chapter sets out the design and methodology used in data collection and analyses; describes the context in which the research was conducted; outlines the strategies employed to ensure validity and trustworthiness; and describes some ethical considerations that influenced the research.

Wenglinsky (2002) argues that qualitative research designs are more appropriate in gaining an understanding of the classroom practices of teachers. According to him, the interactions that occur between and among teachers and students are often neglected by quantitative measures, treating them as a black box not worthy of study. These interactions, he says, are best measured by qualitative methods. More specifically, Schunk (1991), and Wilson (1990) assert that qualitative methods are particularly relevant, appropriate, and promising in examining teachers' beliefs. Schunk for example says that although quantitative methods have typically been used to study teacher efficacy beliefs, qualitative methods are needed to provide additional insights.

“Design in the naturalistic sense...means planning for certain broad contingencies without, however, indicating exactly what will be done in relation to each” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.226). Patton (1990) also says a “qualitative design needs to remain sufficiently open and flexible to permit exploration of whatever the phenomenon under study offers for inquiry. Qualitative designs continue to be *emergent* even after data collection begins” (p.196). Before data collection can commence however, one has to gain entry to the site. I describe that process and then provide details of the data collection process.

### *Gaining Entry*

The research was conducted at two schools, one rural and one urban (described on pp.73-76). Both schools have been given pseudonyms in order to protect their identity. I selected the two schools because I knew they were likely to respond positively to my request. I worked at Lewiston Primary, the rural school during my early years in teaching and have been invited back to functions several times. The current administration is made up of former colleagues with whom I had close friendships. Other teachers with whom I served were also still there. I was warmly welcomed and introduced to the school upon my arrival on the first day. One of the vice-principals was acting at that time as principal. When the principal returned from leave she again welcomed me, putting me on a “pedestal.” The students were not told what my purpose was but they were polite and generally very kind to me.

I was also very familiar with Kingston Primary. Not only had the principal and I pursued our undergraduate studies together I also worked closely with many of the teachers while on staff at a nearby teachers’ college. Unlike her rural counterpart though, there was no announcement of my presence in the school. The teachers had been alerted of my coming and I simply entered, introduced them to the research and asked if they would have been willing to participate if I chose their class. Only once did I run into the principal during my time there and only briefly too. Only the teachers, parents, three boys and those in the focus group knew of my purpose in the school. With a no-hassle entry I felt free in both schools.

### *Data Collection*

It is difficult for any single method to fully capture the richness of human experience (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). As related to teacher educational beliefs specifically, Pajares (1992) argues that self-reports and belief inventories cannot encompass the myriad of contexts under which specific beliefs give fruition to intention and behavior. Therefore a combination of methods was contemplated. Observation, individual interviews and focus group interviews were utilized to answer the research questions. Together it was hoped that those methods would facilitate a level of method triangulation (Borg & Gall, 1989; Guba & Lincoln; 1989). Ely (1991) contends that triangulation is one way of achieving trustworthiness; while Anderson (1990) argues that with proper triangulation of methods and data sources, it will be difficult to refute conclusions that follow logically (See Table 3.1 for a summary of data collection activities).

Prior to any data being collected the Internal Review Board of the University of South Florida conducted a thorough review of the research proposal including instruments and letters soliciting participants. After recommended amendments were made the research was approved. This approval was contingent upon the proposal being approved also by a committee of five university professors.

Protocols were developed to guide the interviews (Appendices A-C). The protocols benefited from feedback from educational professionals (researchers, graduate students, university lecturers). The protocols for boys and parents were further revised after each use. Some items were reworded while some were not used. For example, item 15 on the individual boys' interview protocol (Appendix C) included the word "admire".

After using the protocol with the first boy I realized it was not a word in third graders' vocabulary and therefore dropped it from subsequent interviews. Each data collection method is further described below.

### *Interviews*

Interviews were conducted with teachers, parents and students. Interviewing is arguably the most commonly used means of data collection in qualitative research and the most powerful means we use to try and understand others (Fontana & Frey, 1994). Kvale (1996) describes qualitative (unstructured) interviews as a kind of guided conversation in which the researcher listens carefully so as to hear the meaning. Patton (1990) says interviews are used to find out from participants what cannot be directly observed. A total of 23 interviews were conducted involving 32 boys, two teachers, and 12 parents/guardians (Table 1).

### *Measuring Children's Perspectives.*

Lloyd-Smith and Tarr (2000), and Marshall (2003) opine that children's views have been neglected in education research. Dockrell, Lewis, and Lindsay (2000) suggest further that it is an "underdeveloped task" although it is important to get their perspectives. Brooker (2001) says it is both ethical and logical to ask children for their perspectives because they have the right to be heard and are competent in giving their perspectives. Scholars such as Thorne (1993) and Corsaro (1997) have called for the voices of children and youth, "particularly when trying to understand their social worlds and the meanings they make of social constructs, such as gender" (Marshall, 2003, p. 1289). Dockrell, Lewis, and Lindsay (2000) suggest that there are various ways in which

it can be done. Direct or indirect measures may be used. Interviews are among the prominent direct measures used. Eder and Fingerson (2002) assert that interviewing can be used successfully with children from preschool age (e.g. Brooker, 2001; Gallas, 1998) to high school age (Gilligan, 1982). It allows them to give voice to their own interpretations and thoughts rather than rely solely on adults' interpretations of their lives. Focus group interviews are particularly recommended because it is said that children are more relaxed in the company of their peers and are more comfortable knowing they outnumber the adults in the setting. Several researchers (Bradley and Bryant, 1985; Holmes, 1998; Gallas, 1998; Gilligan, 1982) have however, conducted individual interviews with children. Individual interviews are particularly common in studying sexuality and body issues. Both individual and group interviews were utilized in this study. The purpose of interviewing the boys was to get their perceptions of what it means to be masculine. Based on the literature, boys construct their gender identity from information received from various sources (Leo-Rhynie, 1997). I was interested in their perceptions of masculinity and how they came to perceive it the way they do. Six individual interviews were conducted. Once I got permission from the parents and the boys agreed to participate in the study I started establishing rapport with them and asked them if they would have been willing to talk with me at some point. They all agreed to do so. All the interviews with boys were done at their respective school. Before the interview started I explained to each of them their right to refusal in answering a question as well as my commitment to confidentiality. The following, taken from the transcription

of one of the recorded interviews was typical of what was said prior to asking interview questions:

C: [Boy's name] thanks for agreeing to talk with me, I'd like to remind you that the information which you're gonna share with me, will be kept privately and will only be used for the purpose of this study. Neither your name nor the school's name will appear in any report arising from this study, if you don't feel like answering a question you don't have to and if you don't understand a question let me know so I can explain. I'd like to tape record the interview and take notes, cause I don't want to miss any of your answers and I want to be correct in my report. Awrite, I might not get to ask you all the questions I have now and would like to meet with you again, is that ok?

K: Yes sir

Because the interviews were done on the school compound during school hours, there was much outside interference and I had to stop the recording sometimes. This however did not seriously affect the interviews although in one instance the interviewee lost his train of thought. I also had to constantly remind two of the boys to either speak louder and/or to use words instead of gestures in responding to my questions. When that happened I would often say something like "I see you're nodding your head, does that mean yes?" to which he would respond using words. The interviews covered such topics as what it means to be a man; the sources of influence on their gender identity, their role models, career aspirations, and attitude towards schoolwork (see Appendix C for Boys Interview Protocol). At the end of each interview I replayed a portion of it to the delight of the boys.

*Focus Group Interviews*



In addition to the individual interviews a focus group interview was conducted with twelve boys at each site (Patton, 1990; Pugsley, 1996) exclusive of those specially chosen for observation. Focus group interviews facilitate discussion on issues in an efficient manner. In addition, according to Patton (1990) they “provide some quality controls on data collection in that participants tend to provide checks and balances on each other that weed out false or extreme views” (p. 336). The discussions I conducted confirmed Patton’s claim. For example, while many of the boys expressed the view that William (see below) by wanting a doll was a sissy or worse, others countered that nothing was wrong with a boy wanting a doll. Some of the same issues discussed in the individual interviews with boys were discussed in the focus group interviews. To stimulate discussion I read Charlotte Zolotow’s *William’s Doll* to the group. This is a story of an eight year-old boy who wanted a doll. When his grandmother buys him the doll, his father is upset. Teachers who have used it with their classes have often reported that it stirred controversy among the students. I decided to use it as an introduction to discussing gender identity issues among these young boys.

There were significant differences between the rural focus group interview and that in the urban area. The boys at the urban school were far more outspoken, more articulate but not as well behaved as their rural counterparts. For example, after approximately 15 minutes into the discussion at the urban school, I had to ask two of the boys to leave because of their constant interference with other boys. They were reluctant to go and stood near the door of the room we were in. After a while I invited them back upon condition that they apologized. This they did but was again ejected for repeating the

behaviours. On the other hand, boys at the rural school sat throughout, were polite but seemed less excited about the discussion. The rural-urban context is discussed below under “Context.” The selection of the boys for the focus groups is also discussed below.

Once the boys were gathered at the venue for the discussion, I introduced myself again (they had all seen me before at least once in their classroom) and explained the purpose of the meeting. Each was asked to introduce himself stating name, age, community in which he lived and persons with whom he lived. Of the 12 boys in the “Kingston Primary” group three were eight years old while the others were nine; they came from diverse communities some as far as 20 miles away from the school and therefore less urban than others; the homes from which the boys came reflected the various family structures in Jamaica: seven boys lived with both parents and siblings, four lived with a female single parent and siblings or relatives (grandmother, cousin, auntie) and two lived in households where grandmother was in charge. Of note was the absence of grandfather in those structures and where it was a single parent as head of household it was never a father. One boy lived with his grandmother alone. The pattern in the rural school, “Lewiston Primary” was similar. The boys’ addresses and speech also revealed their social class backgrounds. Most were from working class families and a few from lower middle class homes. The quality of their experiences varied but they had more similarities than differences. With the exception of one instance when a boy told another that he behaves like a girl, there was much respect for one another. They did not try to put down one another and generally waited their turn to talk.

On the day of the interview at Kingston Primary my battery-operated audio-recorder malfunctioned and no sooner was an electrical one procured than there was a power cut in the area. I decided to proceed with the interview anyway, recording by hand the proceedings of the discussion. When an opinion was expressed for example, I asked for a show of hands for agreement and disagreement. This would be followed up with reasons to support their respective position. For example seven boys said William should have been given the doll, five opposed that view. Those who agreed with him being given the doll said “He well wants it (1); the way his father treats him he could treat the doll that way (1); doll will teach him to take care of children (6); he wants it to hug (1).” I did a similar breakdown with the opposing view: “He’s not a girl (4); he’ll be laughed at (5); doll is girls’ toy (3); should not play with girls’ toys (5). The numbers will not add to 12 because some boys had more than one reason to support their position.

There were moments when I asked the boys to repeat a statement which they did and immediately upon the completion of the interview I completed gaps in the notes as best I could from memory and jottings. I am satisfied that I did the best I could in documenting what transpired in the forty minutes that it lasted. At Lewiston Primary where the discussion was audio-recorded I made notes as well and when it was useful to count hands I did and had it recorded

*Teacher interviews.* I conducted interviews with the teachers after each teacher was selected (explained below). Originally I wanted to conduct two interviews with each

teacher: one in the early stage of the study intended to get an initial understanding of her gender beliefs and the other at the end to clarify issues arising from the first interview and ask additional questions. This worked as planned with the first teacher, “Arlene Williams” but not with the second, “Patricia Henry” largely because she expressed a desire to have the interview at a later time. I wanted to respect her wishes. Eventually the time elapsed and only one interview was conducted with her. The timing, time, and place of each interview were negotiated with the teachers. The interviews covered the biographical background, professional experience of each teacher; her views on boys and girls as individuals and as learners; beliefs about male and female roles; and male-female equality (see Appendix 1 for Teacher Interview Protocol). According to Carew and Lightfoot (1979) to understand a teacher’s behaviours in more than a superficial sense, one needs to know about her upbringing, values, and ideology; her perceptions of the needs of individual children and how she sees herself as meeting those needs; her beliefs, views of the racial, cultural, social class, and gender groups to which children belong and the reason she might like or dislike, be interested in or indifferent to particular children in her classroom (p.169).

All three interviews were conducted at the teachers’ respective school. At the outset of each interview the teacher was reminded of my commitment to confidentiality, that she was free to refuse answering any question without penalty, and that no report emanating from the study would in any way identify her. In fact, each teacher was asked to give herself a pseudonym. The interviews were conducted in an atmosphere of cordiality and mutual laughter can be heard punctuating especially the first interview with

Arlene Williams. As mentioned above a protocol was used to guide the teachers' interviews. The protocol sought to get background information on the teachers, the factors which led them to become teachers, their philosophy of teaching and their gender beliefs. Each interview lasted approximately 45 minutes. The interviews were audio-taped with the consent of each teacher and notes were also taken during each. The notes recorded mostly facial expressions in responding to questions. These were recorded next to the questions and included in the transcription of the interviews.

*Parent interviews.* Twelve interviews were conducted with parents or guardians of the boys in the study. Four fathers, one "uncle," one aunt, a grandmother and five mothers were interviewed. Three of the interviews were conducted at one of the schools; two were conducted at the parents' place of business while all the others were done at the homes of the parents or guardians. The parents, like the teacher participants were asked to share their background and gender beliefs; their expectations for their children and especially the son in the research; and the sources of their beliefs (see Appendix 2 for Parent Interview Protocol). Interviewing these parents required time. It was not enough to arrive for the interview, do it and leave. Parents and guardians wanted to know what was in the research for their sons. Many asked what I could do to help the boys in the short term. Consequently, time was taken to explain how the research could help in future planning in education and I also shared with some of the parents a project I intended to start soon to help boys in school. They were also happy to hear that I was helping their sons in class as I promised in the Informed Consent agreement. Once rapport was established the semi-structured interviews flowed. At no time during any of the

interviews did any participant refuse to answer a question. I found however, that I had to rephrase the question about the ideal man for some participants. Some parent participants seemed not to understand “ideal” so that was changed to “perfect” or “the type of man you would want your son/husband/male companion to be.” The parent interviews too were guided by a protocol (Appendix 2). This sought to ascertain, in addition to biographical information parents’ relationship with the respective boy, their gender beliefs as well how their respective sons behave at home. Each interview lasted approximately 40 minutes on average.

### *Observation*

Observation allows the researcher to identify naturally occurring events. The three boys and one teacher at each school were observed repeatedly over a period of ten weeks (Table 1). Twelve observational visits were made to each school during the period March 9, 2004 to May 27, 2004. Each visit lasted approximately three hours. I tried to vary the time of observation to be able to capture different three hour periods. This was partly to avoid establishing a pattern and equally to be able to observe what happens at different times of the school day. Consequently, some days I started the observation at the beginning of the school day, some I went just after or during the morning break and at other times I went after or during the lunch break.

Observation is particularly useful when researching children (Eder & Fingerson 2002). Because children’s experiences are grounded in their own peer culture and life experiences, observation complements interviews in providing more valid responses and strengthening the interview data. Observation also allows the researcher to identify

naturally occurring events during which interviews with students could take place as well as typical language routines in the setting (Eder & Fingerson, 2002). I observed the boys, therefore, during recess and lunch breaks as well as during in-class activities. Field notes were taken of all observations and later transcribed.

*Teacher observation.* Teachers were observed primarily during classroom interactions. I was particularly interested in how the teachers interacted with the class generally and the six boys in particular. I wanted to see how they related to the boys, their classroom gender practices, how they handled disciplinary matters and their teaching styles. Both teachers expressed reservations about being observed despite the fact that it was explicitly stated in the Informed Consent document that they would be observed and interviewed. It was not that they would not allow me in their classrooms but they did not like the idea of being scrutinized. Patricia Henry, my rural participant was particularly nervous about it. She told me she feared the principal of her school might be given a report of my findings. Later I learned why Patricia had this fear. When I had told the third grade coordinator which class I had chosen she said I had chosen a good class. At the time I had no idea what she meant but not wanting her assessment to colour my research I refused to ask why. The principal had wanted to dismiss Patricia on the grounds of incompetence. The other teachers were aware of it and based on how the principal publicly welcomed me Patricia knew I was the principal's friend. I repeated my commitment to confidentiality, informed them that I would only be in the classroom for a maximum of three hours each day and for only three days per week. In addition, I resisted the temptation to talk with the administration for any lengthy periods and at both sites I

spent most of the time including breaks with the children and teacher and left promptly at the end of observation period each day. At Lewiston I took special care to avoid too many contacts with the principal even to the extent of refusing a lunch date with her. In fact on the days I stayed there during lunch hour I had lunch with the teacher in her classroom.

I knew it was important to earn the teachers' trust and friendship. At the end of the second week at Kingston Primary in response to my query Arlene told me that my presence in her classroom was not impacting on her negatively. We both shared light moments with each other, talked about the students from time to time and her mother who was ill. She also began to use a strap to beat the children, something that was not evident in the previous weeks. When a teacher administers corporal punishment to her students (which by law is reserved for the principal only) in the presence of an outsider it is a sign that she is either comfortable with the outsider or she does not care. At Lewiston a similar pattern was seen. Two weeks after I began observing I noticed the use of the strap (in this case she used a men's belt without the buckle). Patricia and I also shared pleasantries, we talked about her college days and she often inquired of me about particular lecturers she had had. She also had an interest in growing vegetables and that often became the topic of discussion. She shared vegetables from her farm with me and I brought her fruits from my backyard. We became friends but she was curious about what I was finding via my observation. I would always tell her it was too early to tell. At the end of the second week she asked me to teach the class. I discuss this in the next section.



*Participant observation.* Participant observation, where the researcher becomes involved in the phenomenon being observed is a distinctive of ethnographic research. I had deliberately designed my research as quasi-ethnography, that is, ethnography without researcher involvement in the activities being observed. At the outset of the research I had grand plans to maintain a non-participant observer stance. This I argued would “free me up” to focus on recording details of what I was observing. After the first day of observation it became clear I could not maintain that position.

At Kingston Primary, after I settled on the class I would study and started my note-taking, I would often move around the room to see what the students were doing. They began asking me to spell for them or to check if they were doing the work correctly. I obliged with the consent of the teacher. As I began to pay particular interest in the work attitudes of the three boys, sometimes asking them to take their work to show me they too started seeking my assistance. On two occasions when the teacher was absent I decided to take the class upon the urging of the students. I also intervened twice to break up fights. At other times however, I refrained from participating, wanting to see how the children behaved when no adult took charge.

- At Lewiston, fewer students came individually for assistance but my role as teacher was acted on more often. During the second week of observation the teacher requested me to teach a lesson on Jamaican Heritage and later that week I fulfilled a promise to the class by showing a movie (a novelty to them at school). I taught the class on two other occasions including assigning work twice in the absence of the teacher. At

one point I felt as if the teacher took it for granted that she could leave the class at anytime and I would take over. There were times also when I wished I had the class as she gave the students incorrect information, and made spelling and grammatical errors. On a few of those occasions I felt could not help but correct the errors for the benefit of the children. At other times I ignored it not wanting to be seen as an evaluator of her teaching.

*Observation routine.* Once I established a seating position which made me somewhat inconspicuous but gave me a vantage point to see all the students, I maintained it. At the start of each session I noted physical changes to the classroom (if any), the number of students present and then proceeded to log what was happening. As I recorded, I also made comments (Observer Comments [OC]). For example while observing a math lesson I noticed very few students were paying attention so I made the following comment [OC: Most of the students seemed tuned out at this point—yawning, 2 suck their thumb, some play with each other]. Given that I could not record everything that transpired I dedicated periods when I would focus on individual boys. In doing this as recommended by Carspecken (1996) I decided on whom I would focus at the beginning of a lesson or period. This does not mean I ignored the other boys or what was happening in the context of the larger class. It simply allowed me to be more focused in my observation.

During recess and lunch breaks I would shadow the boys outside and then record what I observed as best as I could remember immediately after. Following is the routine I followed in data collection.

*Data Collection Schedule*

Week 1 Introduction, familiarization, selection of participants at Kingston Primary.

Week 2 First interview with teacher; observation of teacher and boys.

Week 3-5 Observation of teacher and boys, interviews with parents and boys; final interview with teacher.

Week 6-10 Process repeated at Lewiston Primary with the exception that the interview with the teacher was conducted later than the second week.

Following is a summary of the data collected.

Table 1 Summary of Data Collected

Participants	Interview	Observation
6 individual boys	1 x 30 mins each	15 days x 4 hrs (60 hrs.)
12 parents/guardians	1x 60 mins. each	N/A
2 teachers	3 x 45 mins. each	15days x 3 hrs. each
24 boys (2 focus groups)	1 x 45 mins. each	N/A

### *Participants*

Purposeful sampling (Patton, 1990) also called criterion-based sampling (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984) was used to select the participants. Purposeful sampling allows for the selection of information-rich cases—participants “from whom one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research” (Patton, 1990, p. 169). A total of 44 persons participated in this research including 30 boys, 12 parents/guardians, and two teachers. The process of selecting each group of participants follows.

### *Teachers*

It was intended to do in-depth studies of two teachers- one in an urban school and the other in a school in a rural town. Following Merriam’s (1998) suggestion, some time was spent establishing rapport with the third grade teachers, observing their teaching practices, learning about their backgrounds and especially their gender practices to determine which teachers would be included. I wanted to select a third grade teacher at each school who demonstrated a measure of gender equity—typical cases (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984; Patton, 1990). Streitmatter (1994) explains that there are two approaches to gender equity: *equal treatment* and *equitable treatment*. *Gender-equitable treatment* refers to teaching practices that seek to “enhance opportunities for an at-risk group, sometimes to the point of extending an unequal and greater amount of resources toward that group rather than equalizing the resources.” For example, I chose Arlene Williams at Kingston Primary because she told me explicitly that she “looks out especially for the boys”. In her opinion boys often got “a raw deal” (which puts them at

risk) and therefore she saw her role as correcting that situation. (p.9). *Equal treatment* “would involve assuring that students receive the same opportunities for access and participation” (p.8). Patricia Henry at Lewiston Primary was chosen based on her expression of equal treatment for all the students in her class: “I think I give them the same treatment” she told me during my initial observations.

In the fall of 2003, I wrote letters to the respective principals of the two schools informing them of my research interest and seeking their permission to conduct the research at their schools. Both responded in the affirmative. In February 2004 I wrote to them again reminding them of my plans and asking them for background information on the schools. I also asked them to inform the teaching staff of my coming to avoid any surprises. Initially I had intended to do the study among teachers and students in the second grade. Upon arriving at Kingston Primary, however I learnt that the second grade was unavailable and so I decided to use third grade instead. I met with the coordinator of the third grade and explained to her what I planned on doing and how I would go about selecting the one teacher I wanted. All third grade teachers at this school are women. I visited each of the three classes spending either a morning session or an afternoon session in each. I observed students at work, teachers interacting with students and then spoke with each teacher about how she related to boys and girls in her class. The teacher of the top stream (academic group) was quite proud of how most boys in her class were doing academically. She also held the view that she treated all students equally. She was a potential candidate. I followed a similar procedure in all classes. In the lowest stream there was an over-representation of boys (25 boys, 10 girls) and the teacher was quick to

point it out to me. She expressed a “boys will be boys” acceptance of some of their behaviours she said but felt that she was fair in her treatment of boys and girls. It was Arlene’s explicit statement to me that made me decide on her. I had met all three teachers before. Arlene had been a student at the same college at which I taught prior to embarking on the research. After I selected Arlene as the teacher for study, I informed the other third grade teachers and thanked them for their willingness to participate. I also alerted them of my intention to select boys from their classes for the focus group interview.

Having selected Arlene, I told her of the procedure I intended to follow in the remainder of the research, asked her to read and sign the Informed Consent agreement, and entertained questions from her about the research. The same procedure to select the teacher was followed at Lewiston Primary. There too, all six third grade teachers were female. Two teachers, including Patricia Henry were secondary certified, one in business and Patricia in Home Economics. It was harder deciding on her because all the other teachers said they subscribed to the equal treatment approach. The deciding factor was the way Patricia arranged the seating in her classroom. No two students of the same sex sat beside each other. Some of the students resented it. I wanted to know what motivated the practice and how it might impact interaction among students so I chose her. When I announced my decision to the other teachers, who were all willing to participate, the grade coordinator who had been my colleague when I taught at that school felt I had made a good choice. As said earlier, I did not want that comment to colour my research so I did not ask why.

*The teachers.* Arlene Williams is a single 31 year-old native of Hanover, one of the western-most parishes, but had lived all over the country because of the nature of her father's vocation. Her father was a minister of religion. She graduated from college and went back home to teach. Her first job was teaching a class of 58 boys and two girls. It was a group no other teacher wanted and she being fresh from college was given the challenge. That was what influenced her bias towards boys she said. At the time of the research she had only been in that post two months, having worked for six years in a private school after she left that first position.

Patricia Henry is 35 years old, has lived all her life in rural St. Catherine, is married and lives with her husband and three children five minutes from the school. Prior to going to college she had taught at Lewiston Primary as a pre-trained teacher (not certified by the national certifying body). Not having found a job in her area of specialization she sought and got another job at Lewiston under a previous principal. She had been there for nine years at the time of the research. She knew me while she was in College but I had no recollection of her. More will be said about both teacher participants in chapter four.

*Students.* The selection of the teachers led to the selection of the six boys who were observed and interviewed individually. That is, the teachers were selected first and then from their class the boys were chosen. Three boys from each of these two classes were selected for observation and interviews. Here, as in the selection of the teachers, criterion-based sampling was used. I wanted and chose boys that represented a range of academic abilities and social behaviours. Once the two teachers had been selected, the

first day of observation in each classroom was spent observing and selecting the three boys at each school. In addition to my observation I asked the teacher for background information on the boys in the class. I learnt about their academic abilities and home backgrounds from the teacher. Selecting the top and bottom abilities was fairly easy. The middle range ability boys were harder to settle on. However, based on how quiet one boy was and how hyperactive another seemed I chose them. The academic profile of each of the six boys is set out in Table 2. Each boy was asked if he was willing to participate in the study. If he was willing a letter was sent to his parents/guardians explaining the research and asking for their permission to include their son. (Boys will be referred to by first names throughout the study). The letter also asked for the parents' participation. Where the parents gave permission the son was required to sign an assent form saying that I had explained the study to them and agreeing to participate.

Table 2 Academic Profile of Boys

<b>Kingston Primary</b>	Integrated Studies	Math	Lang. Arts	Reading
Oscar	A	A	A	B+
Chester	A	A	B	B-
Kenroy	C	D	C	D
<b>Lewiston Primary</b>				
Corey	A	A	A	A
Delroy	B	B	C	C
Jermaine	C	C	C	D

*Note.* Grades supplied by respective class teacher and representing performance for January to March 2004. Although Reading is a part of the language arts, for assessment purposes it is treated as a separate discipline.



A separate group of 12 boys at each school was selected for a focus group interview. These boys were selected entirely by the teachers and equal numbers chosen from each class in the grade. Teachers were told to select boys who were articulate and not afraid of sharing their views in a group.

*Parents.* The parents or guardians included in the study are those of the three boys from each school selected for observation and interviews. Having selected the boys their parents were informed of the study and asked to participate. One Lewiston Primary parent declined the invitation to participate and her son was therefore replaced by another boy. Among the parents/guardians interviewed there were four fathers, one male guardian, five mothers, one grandmother, and one female guardian (aunt).

#### *Context*

The study was conducted in Jamaica. Jamaica is the largest of the English-speaking countries in the Caribbean, occupying an area of 10 990 km<sup>2</sup>. A former colony of Britain, Jamaica gained its political independence in 1962 after almost 300 years of British colonialism. It is still tied to the monarchy however by its system of government although legislation is in place to repatriate its final court of appeal from “the motherland”. Of its 2.66 million predominantly black population (2005 estimates) those under the age of 18 years constitute 38.7 %. Females (50.4 %) and males (49.6%) are almost equally distributed in this portion of the population. Life expectancy at birth in Jamaica is 73 years (71 for males and 75 for females) while the crude birth rate is 17.1 per 1000 for the population (PIOJ, 2005). The total fertility rate has been declining since

1998 (PIOJ, 2001). As a measure of the health status of the population, these rates compare favourably with those of developed countries.

In 2005 the average size of a Jamaican household was 3.3 persons with adult males, adult females, and children equally distributed. In the poorest 80% of the population, however, the figure was 5.23 while the wealthiest 20% had the lowest household size with 2.26 members. Mean household size was slightly larger in the rural areas than in the Kingston Metropolitan Area (KMA). Female-headed households (44.9% of all households) were more likely than the male counterparts to be without an adult partner and also had more children. Most children (52%) lived in female-headed households. Only 5.4% of household heads belonged to the professional categories. Based on its life expectancy rate, its literacy rate of 80% and Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita of \$2,650 (US) Jamaica has been placed among those countries with medium levels of human development by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). Unemployment figures give cause for concern. There is an overall unemployment rate of 11.3 %. Although it is the lowest rate ever when disaggregated it is twice as high (15.8 %) among females, (PIOJ 2005). At the same time almost 45% of all households were headed by females, in most instances without an adult partner and with the likelihood of more children than their male counterpart.

The Jamaican economy is heavily dependent on foreign trade, particularly in manufactured goods, food and fuel. As a large service-based economy in which service accounts for over 60% of GDP, the distributive trade, transportation, financial services, and the tourism industry are the major service sectors. In addition remittances from North

America and the United Kingdom have played a significant role in the economy. According to 2001 figures growth in real GDP was 1.7%, an improvement despite how miniscule the figure appears. The economy has been anaemic for several years and like many others is only now recovering from the slump in international economic activity particularly in the United States. While its foreign debt has shown a decline, Jamaica's domestic debt continues to increase at a worrisome rate. Approximately 60 cents of every Jamaican dollar are now needed to service its debt. Poverty estimates show that one-third of the population live in poverty. A half of those living in poverty are children under 18 years of age according to figures released by the Planning Institute of Jamaica (PIOJ 2003). The report noted that "poverty among children and some of its side effects—low school attendance, inadequate nutrition, and crime 'have the potential to erode the gains made in child development and survival over recent years'" This same report also revealed that 71% of poor children live in rural areas, 14% live in Kingston metropolitan area while the remaining 15% live in other towns. The implications for development are obvious. There are numerous social problems: poverty, crime and violence, unemployment, migration of professionals and a decline in moral values and attitudes are like rain clouds constantly hanging over an already saturated ground. Many look to the education system to provide a way out. Early education is particularly seen as the place to start.

### *The Research Sites*

The study was conducted at two elementary schools. Each is further described below:

*Kingston Primary.* This is an urban school comprising students in three levels of schooling: early childhood, elementary, and middle school (junior high). The school is over a hundred years old and is located in an upscale neighbourhood. Accessing the premises during school time requires getting past the locked gate operated by a guard. It both keeps students in on particular days at lunch break as well as it keeps those who do not belong out. Despite its location, its student population of 617 boys and 547 girls is made of approximately 70% of students from the nearby inner-city communities surrounding the school as well as from communities as far as 15-20 miles away. According to the principal, about two-thirds of its students are from single-parent households (mostly women). Headed by a female principal and two female vice principals, the academic staff is made up of 30 women and 4 men. All but one of the male teachers are deployed in the junior high department of the school. None teaches below fourth grade.

The school describes itself as a laboratory for the adjacent teachers college. Although autonomous, it was originally built to support the work of the college—providing a site for student teachers to practice as well as a place for them to visit to observe good practices. There is a vibrant parent-teachers association (PTA), a strong sports and extra-curricula program as part of its scheduled activities.

According to the principal literacy is the major emphasis at School A. It is taught by specialist teachers in the upper grades of the elementary department. Class teachers supplement the work of the specialists. Students with severe learning disabilities are

taught through a special unit of the school. The school has had outstanding achievements in sports and environmental activities.

Kingston Primary starts at 7:40 a.m. each day with whole school general assembly. A religious exercise (devotion) is conducted by a member of the academic staff or the principal. Latecomers are required to join their respective gender queue and are sent to their classes after the other students have left the quadrangular area. Students stand in gender groups throughout the 20 minute exercise which may also be used to announce achievements by students and present information considered for the entire school family. At the end of the assembly, students walk to their respective classrooms in gender queues, sometimes with their fingers on their lips to prevent them talking.

The culture here is “no problem”—nearly everyone seems laidback, there is no sense of urgency. Students in the upper school, especially boys, wander around outside even during class time. Teachers appear tired and simply go through the daily routine. My observations reveal that some are absent for a whole day with very little attention given to their class. Fights among boys especially but girls too, are not uncommon. Students who are late although required to join the “late line” are not spoken to about it and there are those who are repeatedly late. There are teachers however who do care and are concerned about the level of motivation among students. One teacher was so concerned she invited me to give an impromptu motivational talk to her grade seven class. The principal is on the verge of retirement after 15 years in that post.

*The observation classroom.* The grade three classes are streamed as are all other classes. They are named after their teacher in an effort to conceal the fact that classes are

in ability groupings (streams). For example, the class I observed is the middle range ability group but named 3W (W as in Williams). Three W occupies about 225 sq. ft. of floor space barely enough to accommodate the 18 combination desks and the teacher's table which occupies a small corner at the back and provides no privacy for the teacher's conversations with students. The 23 boys and 21 girls sit in ability groups (streams) here too, an arrangement implemented by the current teacher. Because of this sometimes three students are forced to sit together at one desk in one section of the room while in another section two, or sometimes one student occupy a seat. This sometimes causes discomfort and skirmishes among students. It is not unusual either for students sitting at one end to crawl under other desks when getting out in order not to disturb their bench companions. More than a few students have been forced to fight to sit on a bench if the teacher is absent. Despite this there is much warmth and togetherness among students. Boys were noticeably over-represented in the lower ability groups. The teacher is new to the students. Their previous teacher retired at the end of the last calendar year. The students showed no signs that they miss her but the parents to whom I spoke all regret that she had to leave. The students are still getting used to their new teacher.

A few teacher-made charts have been hung on the wall, some added days after I started observing. Two had to be taken down because of errors I pointed out on them. No student work has been put up but one chart near the teacher's table was done by the students. The noise level in the room is quite high when the teacher is absent; activities from nearby classes distract these students easily. Each class including 3W has two students as leaders (prefects) but they have no real power and are expected only to model

good behaviour: “how you a prefect and a curse.” Attendance in 3W is outstanding. During the period of observation it was not unusual to find over 90% of the students each day. The only exceptions were days on which tests were given: as the teacher said “Once I announce a test for the next day, many of them not coming.”

*Lewiston Primary.* This is a rural primary (elementary) school located in the parish of St. Catherine which is situated west of the capital city of Kingston. The school has a tradition of excellence in academics and culture. The students sitting GSAT have consistently scored above the national average in all five subjects and the students have won several academic and performing arts awards for the school. According to the principal, however, numeracy is an area of weakness to which attention is being given. The school is sought after by parents in the immediate vicinity as well as many within a 15 mile radius of the school. The school’s PTA provides a bus service to transport students from far as well as students going to represent the school whether in sports or the fine arts. The majority of its 1580 students are girls. Most of the students are from lower class homes and many take advantage of the school’s breakfast and lunch programs for needy students. Headed by a female principal and two vice-principals, it has an academic staff of 37 teachers, five of whom are men. The men all teach in grades above grade four with one exception—the computer teacher who teaches everybody. There is a vibrant parent teachers association and a program of extra-curricular activities which was not evident during the period of the study.

Lewiston Primary is about academics, law and order, and its public image. It is more than implied in its motto “Not for School but for Life we Learn.” It is important that visitors and guests of the school leave with a positive impression of the school. When this is not done teachers remonstrate with the students. The strap and the public address system are critical to the running of the school. They are the major means of control. Like its urban counterpart and as is common to all primary schools and most other schools in Jamaica, the day starts with a religious exercise. At Lewiston it is special and is part of the control mechanism of the school. Students are told Bible stories which teach good behaviour and morals. It is not unusual for a teacher during the course of the day to remind her class “what devotion was about.” Most of the teachers are practicing Christians and the leaders of the school are particularly conservative in their religious practices. Students stand throughout this exercise and are expected to be silent unless asked to participate. On several occasions during my observation the principal insisted that there should be no talking and stopped the exercise until there was full compliance. This happened even when students could obviously not relate to what was going on and had been standing for over an hour.

Students are not encouraged to play during recess or lunch breaks and those who do, particularly the boys are punished if they return to their classrooms sweaty. The playfield is not big enough for any game and has been reduced over the years to accommodate more buildings as the school population grew. Boys practicing for a cricket competition had to do it on a paved area and only batting skills could be practiced.



The social graces, cleanliness, and being proper are stressed here. Students are irritatingly polite. You say good morning and they recite a response lasting a minute. While I was there the School had Girls' Day. Boys got the day off from school and girls were taught hygiene and appropriate behaviour by female parents and other invited women. A concert was put on also by the girls to climax the day. Boys' Day was scheduled for June—after I had left. The program was going to be similar to the girls.'

Grade three at Lewiston is made up of six classes, about equal in size and although I was told the classes were not streamed my observation proved otherwise. There was one class in particular with an overrepresentation of boys that the teacher said was a remedial class. There was one other class which I was told "had more of the brighter children than the other classes." Here like at Kingston Primary classes took the names of their teachers. All the classes in this grade except the remedial class were on the same block in the two-storey building.

*The observation classroom.* My grade 3H was upstairs between two others. Mrs. Henry's 45 students were a daily challenge for her. Her means of classroom management were the strap and her constant changing of children's seating arrangements. To prevent them chatting she arranged the seating so that generally no two boys or two girls sat beside each other. Special "talkers" were kept close to her so she could monitor them and at least two boys were forbidden from ever sitting together. On occasions when they (including one in the study) sat together other students (girls in all instances) would report it: "Miss, Corey and Shawn sitting together and talking". Some girls were repulsed by the idea of boys sitting beside them and would try to subtly push them from the bench.

The lone style of teaching here was whole class teaching. Not once were students put into groups or even asked to discuss something with their neighbours. Students took inordinate amounts of time to get their work done. Boys in particular were extremely slow. Minutes were wasted sharpening pencils and copying work from the chalkboard. The teacher seemed oblivious to these things. The relationship among the students was cordial. There were groups of friends in the class but girls and boys could hardly be described as friendly towards one another. Some parents to whom I spoke were not particularly happy with the progress their children were making and one wrote to the teacher asking her to be firmer on her son who seemed not to be completing any piece of work given. At least three children in the class were constantly sucking their thumb. The teacher was aware but had no explanation for the phenomenon.

The class was warm towards me. Some shared their candy with me while several boys would always volunteer to get my lunch or the drink to go with it. They constantly clamoured for me to teach them “Sir, teach us noh” “Miss not here so is your time to teach us.” They never asked what I was writing about but often commented on how much I had written. On my last day, I brought candy for the entire class and they surprised me with a gift. Such is the hospitality and keenness on public image of Lewiston Primary.

#### *Data Analysis*

“The goal of data analysis is to come up with reasonable conclusions and generalizations based on a preponderance of the data” (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984, p.139). At the same time Goetz and LeCompte (1984) claim that those who “fail to transcend what has been merely descriptive (analyses) fail to do justice to their data” (p. 196).

Analysis of the data was conducted simultaneously with data collection (Merriam, 1998; Creswell, 1994) and guided by the research questions. I kept reading through my field notes and the transcribed interviews constantly asking questions of the data. The research questions were uppermost in my mind. They had guided the data collection and as Merriam (1998) suggests, they would also guide the data analysis. As I did this I would make jottings of questions I could ask the next parent, the next boy. For example, I would read through a transcript and make numbered points such as the following:

1. Influence of aunt and uncle
2. Strong traditional masculinity
3. Likes school

This preliminary analysis soon gave way to more detailed analysis described in a subsequent section.

Once data saturation set in, that is, once I kept seeing the same pattern in the classroom I stopped making fieldnotes and turned my attention to organizing the data and to another level of data analysis. Firstly I organized the raw data.

*Data management.* According to Denscombe (1998) all analysis involves the efficient management of data. Among the steps I took to organize the raw data were:

1. Make a back-up copy of each set of fieldnotes, each interview and summary as they were written. Not only did I make back-up copies I also made copies of the interviews and fieldnotes in which the real names of the participants were changed. Those I considered the working documents.

2. The original handwritten fieldnotes and tape-recorded interviews were locked away for safe-keeping.
3. Copies of the working documents were organized in a binder with dividers appropriately labelled to identify the two sites as well as the data sources from each site.
4. In addition each piece of data source was identified with a unique code which helped me to remember what it was, who provided the information and on what date. For example, Int. OG4-30 means the data source is an interview (Int.) with Oscar Graham (OG) conducted April 30.

*Detailed analyses.* Through repeated readings of the data (fieldnotes and interview transcripts) I identified and coded patterns and regularities from which themes emerged. Coding was done manually. As I read each transcript I noted in the left margin what each sentence (the sentence was used as the data item) seemed to be about. The data items were grouped to form themes. Among themes which emerged from the boys' interviews were:

1. Masculinity
2. Education
3. School work
4. Free time
5. Career aspiration
6. At home
7. People admired
8. Relationships

9. Girls
10. Boys at school.
11. Influences

The number of themes seemed unwieldy. I read through the transcripts again and noticed that there were overlaps among some of the themes. For example in examining 'Education', 'Boys at School' and 'School Work' separately much of the same content would be repeated. According to Merriam (1998) the categories or themes should reflect the purpose of the research and should be mutually exclusive—no single unit should be placed in more than one category. Having read through the data and the categories I took the decision to reduce the eleven themes above to seven as follows:

- a. Masculinity
- b. Education
- c. Free Time
- d. At Home
- e. People Admired
- f. Relationships
- g. Influences

These themes were then used to construct case studies for the six boys (Chapter 4). These were instrumental case studies (Stake, 1995) or what Bassey (1999) calls theory-testing/theory-seeking cases. This type of case study goes beyond the case to examine an issue, in this case the issue of gender identity. Similar themes were identified from parents' and teachers' interviews.

In reporting the results (Chapter 4), I utilize a descriptive, narrative form. Thick description was the vehicle for communicating a holistic picture of the experiences of the participants. Where appropriate, the participants are given voice through the use of verbatim texts. A case has been developed for each of the six boys to enable cross-case analyses to be done (Merriam, 1998; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Yin, 1994; Stake, 1995). The final report will be a construction of the participants' experiences and the meanings they attach to them. This will allow readers to have an understanding of how teachers and parents' beliefs intersect with boys' construction of masculinity.

*Editing interview transcripts.* In reporting verbatim text I followed the style of Wolcott (1996), a giant in the field of qualitative research:

The underlying issue of editing original text goes back to the purpose of the study. Nevertheless my working guideline is to strive for readability. I edit spoken words as necessary to help readers read and to put participants in the best light possible. I have no qualms about editing out extraneous material that may technically be a part of the record but is of no consequence to the purpose at hand (p. 66).

In so doing I omitted such words as 'uh', and 'ahm' where they did not add to the meaning of the text. In addition many of my participants spoke in Jamaican Creole and in grammatically incorrect forms which are not yet understood by the intended audience of this report. I am confident that the meaning of their statements has remained intact. The original unedited transcripts are preserved for anyone who might want to see them.

### *The Researcher's Role*

In qualitative research, the researcher is the primary data collection instrument (Patton, 1990, Merriam, 1998). As such it is important to declare personal values, assumptions, and biases as these can influence the research.

My interest in and my perceptions of the issues of boys' gender identity, masculinity, and teacher and parent beliefs have been shaped by my personal experiences. I am a black Jamaican male educator. As a boy growing up in Jamaica, I experienced social injustice. I was never the stereotypical male and received a lot of flak and suffered much humiliation from that. I have been mentoring teenage and adult males for over twenty years. I have taught both boys and girls, have been seen as a role model by many, and for ten years I taught pre-service and in-service teachers (mostly females). I have often heard these teachers express concern about the performance and behaviour of the boys they teach. I am also a former teacher at one of the research sites where many of the teachers who served with me can still be found. At the other site I am also well known, having supervised student teachers there for several years leading up to this study. My familiarity with the sites and some of the teachers will make access to the sites easier. I have taken several courses in qualitative research.

For two years I served as a research associate at a Research 1 university where my work involved all stages of qualitative research—from conceptualization to dissemination of results. I also have an unpublished thesis, two publications in peer-reviewed academic journals in which I used qualitative methodologies, and am co-author of a book chapter on cross-case analysis.

### *Verification*

In ensuring internal validity the following strategies were employed:

- 1) Triangulation of methods: Data were collected through multiple sources including individual interviews, conversations, focus group interviews, and observations.
- 2) Triangulation of Data Sources: Data were collected from teachers, parents, individual boys, and groups of boys.

3) Member checking (Merriam, 1998): The teachers served as checks throughout the data collection and analysis. The transcript of the first interview was shown to Arlene Williams and Patricia Henry also verified the accuracy of her interview. I told them the idea was not to fill in blanks or sanitize the transcripts but rather to check the accuracy of what was transcribed. I have not shared with them my interpretations of their stories.

Given the difficulty with access and the fact that the interviews were not transcribed within the prescribed time period I was not able to ask parents to verify the accuracy of their interview transcripts. While I did not ask the parents and boys to check the accuracy of their interview transcripts I made it a point of procedure during the interviews to seek clarification for statements they made and which appeared unclear to me. There are instances when I was corrected on factual issues as well as in my interpretation of what was said. The following excerpt from an interview with Chester illustrates the point (C represents me while *CG* is Chester Gutzmore, the student):

C: What do you think I should know about how boys are treated in your, in this school ?

CG: Repeat



C: What, how are boys treated at this school?

CG: Rough and the girls are treated ... (unclear)

C: The girls are treated how?

CG: Nice

C: The boys are treated rough and the girls are treated nice?

CG: Yes sir

C: Uh, uh. Is that how they are treated in your class too?

CG: No

C: How are the boys treated in your class?

CG: Good

C: They are treated good? By the teacher or by everybody?

CG: By the teacher

C: By the teacher. Ok. And how are girls treated in this school?

CG: Nice

C: They're treated nice. By who? Who treat them nice?

CG: Principal, teachers,

C: Ok. So you think the principal and the teachers prefer girls to boys?

CG: No sir

C: No? Ok. Why do you think they treat girls nicer?

CG: A never said they treat them nicer

C: I'm sorry, you gotta talk up so we can hear. Say that again Chester

CG: I never said they treat them nicer

C: Oh, but they treat them nicely?

CG: Yes

C: So they not treated better than boys?

CG: No

C: Alright, I 'm sorry, I got that wrong, I got that wrong. Alright.

In the excerpt one can see Chester correcting my impression/interpretation of what he said. I was of the impression that he was portraying girls as getting better treatment than boys when he was merely saying girls were treated *nicely* not *nicer*. There were not many instances of correction but I tried to clarify what was said and understood as a form of member-checking with the boys.

4) Long term and repeated observations at the sites: Observation was done over a three-month period for three half days each week.

5) Local transcription of interviews: Given the cultural nuances of Jamaican English and Creole spoken by students and adults (including parents) a native Jamaican assisted me to transcribe the taped interviews. She knew no one from any of the two schools. This helped to maintain confidentiality.

6) Independent Coder: An independent coder was used to complement my own coding. A graduate student was employed for this purpose.

7) Clarification of researcher bias: At the outset of the study I articulated my bias under the heading "The Researcher's Role."

8) Peer Review: The study was presented to a group of 20 lecturers and the principal of the college where I work. One lecturer had only recently completed his doctorate and

five others had been pursuing theirs. In addition to this whole group presentation, three colleagues read and edited versions of the report. The feedback from these was incorporated into the final draft.

In aiming to achieve external validity I have provided thick, rich, detailed descriptions so that anyone interested in transferability will have a framework for comparison (Merriam, 1998). Three techniques were employed to achieve dependability (Goetz and LeCompte, 1984). One, I have provided a detailed account of the focus of the study, my role as researcher, the methodologies that were used in data collection, the sites from which the data was collected and justification for each. Two, triangulation through multiple data sources and data collection methods have been used. Finally, data collection and analysis strategies have been reported in detail in order to provide a clear and accurate picture of the methods used in the study. A committee of five faculty members of the University of South Florida audited all phases of the study, all of whom have either used qualitative methodology in their work or are familiar with the paradigm. They have extensive experience in research supervision and in conducting their own research.

### *Ethical Considerations*

Because of the nature of naturalistic inquiry it is difficult to avoid ethical dilemmas. For example, how much does one disclose to participants about the scope of the research without being dishonest? How much confidentiality can a researcher guarantee to the participants when there is an obligation to publish? These are some of the issues with which I have grappled in my experience as an emerging qualitative researcher. To tell teachers that I am examining how their gender beliefs might intersect boys' identity

might reduce that naturalness of the setting during observation periods. In response to the second question: naturalistic research depends on thick, rich description. The aim is to give the reader a vicarious experience of the participants' lives including the context. Therefore, details are required. Corbin and Morse (2003) argue there can be no absolute guarantee of confidentiality. In the process of providing details it is likely that readers may be able to identify the sites and even the participants. In addition there is the power imbalance between the participants and myself. Such are the dilemmas the researcher faces.

Notwithstanding the inherent dilemmas, I adopted the following as guidelines in remaining professional.

1. Adhered to the agreement and conditions set out by the Internal Review Board of the University of South Florida as it relates to confidentiality, anonymity, and protection of participants. This includes gaining the informed consent of the teachers, parents, and students through their parents.
2. Maintained a professional distance at the sites to avoid being seen as a spy for the administration; interventions were those requested by the teachers or demanded by the circumstances. For example when I stepped in to break up a fight or the times when, instead of allowing the class to deteriorate into chaos in the absence of the teacher I assigned work. I do not believe these activities compromised my professional stance (Cassell cited in Merriam, 1998).
3. Practiced member-checking throughout the research period to ensure I was accurately representing the participants. This was largely through asking during

interviews for clarification. It was not always practical to get the interview transcripts to parents.

4. Gave participants the option of refusing to answer any questions if in their opinion doing so would have embarrassed them or make them feel uncomfortable in any way. This also gave them more control over the interviews.

5. Shared with participants, as was relevant and necessary my personal experiences. This could reduce the power differential between the participants and myself (Thompson, 1995; Wong, 1998). For example, in the course of talking to a parent she said her father was deceased, I told her mine too was deceased. Similarly, in the interview with Arlene Williams I discovered she was from a family with eight children which she considered to be very large. She was consoled when I told her I was from a family with nine children.

6. Preserved all documents, recordings, or artefacts relating to the study in order to make them available for inspection for at least three years after the conclusion of the study in accordance with the Internal Review Board (IRB) requirement.

### *Limitations of the Study*

This study will confine itself to interviewing and observing teachers and boys about their gender beliefs and gender identity respectively. I will also interview the boys' parents. Its limitations include the fact that by design, replication is not possible. The phenomena studied were captured at a moment in time. Although it is possible to generalize from a small sample, the purposive sampling procedure decreases the generalizability of the findings. Cassell (1999) however, argues for “fuzzy generalization”—a tentative generalization, one that “carries an element of uncertainty. It

reports that something has happened in one place and that it may also happen elsewhere. There is a possibility but no certainty” (p. 53). It is also conceivable that the findings could be subject to other interpretations than those given (Kunes, cited in Creswell, 1994). Despite these limitations, however, given the descriptions of the participants and the settings, as well as the details and strategies used in data analysis, it is hoped that the study will enhance the readers’ and my own understanding of the phenomena under study and provide a framework for further study of young children’s social development.

### *Summary*

In this chapter the purpose of the study was stated, the guiding questions raised, and the design, participants, methodology and data collection were described. The method of analyses, interpretation, and reporting as well as the strategies to ensure trustworthiness and validity were also explained. The ethical dilemmas the qualitative researcher faces were discussed and the limitations were mentioned. In the next section of the report (Chapter 4) I present the results of the analyses which will be followed in Chapter 5 by a discussion of what I learned from the study and any implications this may have for education in Jamaica.

## Chapter Four: Presentation of Themes

The purpose of this study was to examine how the gender beliefs of teachers and parents intersect with the gender identity of 8-10 year old boys. Three broad questions guided the collection of data:

1. What beliefs do teachers hold about gender?
2. What beliefs do parents hold about gender?
3. What are boys' perceptions of their gender identity?

In previous chapters, I reviewed the literature on gender identity, masculinity, and teachers and parents' gender beliefs; in chapter three I detailed the design of the study as well as the data collection and data analysis plans. In this chapter I will present what I learnt from the 44 participants through interviews and 10 weeks of observation. The chapter is organized into four sections: firstly, I present the six cases of the boys and a summary of the focus groups data, secondly, I present the common themes from the boys' data; thirdly, the teachers' data is presented and fourthly, a summary of the parents' data using themes which emerged from the interviews is presented.

### *Cases of Boys at Work and Play*

*Oscar.* At eight years of age, Oscar is among the youngest in his class. Physically, he's about 4 feet tall—the average height of third grade boys. He is the first of two sons born to Carol and Ivan Graham. Oscar's father operates his own taxicab and his mother works two days a week at a supermarket. The family of four lives in one of the better

neighbourhoods in the city of Kingston. When it was announced at birth that the baby was a boy his mother, 34 years old at the time, breathed a sigh of relief and happiness because “it was a boy the father wanted long time ago to carry on the family name” (Int. CG5-13). She was overjoyed it was a boy although her personal preference was for a girl. His father expressed his own joy:

It is always the thinking of most fathers to get a son right at the first instance... so when Oscar came into being it was a bundle of joy for me, very wonderful, excited, I was like then a man. I was very excited about being a father at the age of 32 (Int. IG5-3)

There is a common view in Jamaica that until a man has a son he is not a man. It is even better if the first child is that son. Interestingly, while Mr. Graham was happy for a boy, if he had a boy and a girl and could only afford to send one to college he would send the girl because:

Girls tend to be more attentive when it comes to giving attention to parents. On many occasion you find the boy might become a sports man and he’s not there for his mother, some times he’s travelling all over the place. He would be out there playing dominos with his friends while his mummy needs some water. The girl will ensure that she is combing mummy’s hair you see. I see that a girl will make a vast difference if I had that choice (Int. IG5-3).

The family are devout Christians. Father is a lay leader and preacher in the church they attend, mother is very involved in several areas of ministry and even Oscar talks about “doing the Lord’s will” (Int. OG4-30). From time to time when either of his parents is not feeling well he would “put his hands on (them) and pray nice, solid, good prayers



for (them)” (Int. CG5-13). On one particular occasion after his father’s car was totalled and he felt depressed, Oscar prayed so well on his behalf it brought tears to his father’s eyes. His father even wants him to witness to his friends about God while he’s at school.

Oscar has no daily duties to do at home after he has made his bed and cleaned his shoes. He is required to clean the yard, however, whenever it needs cleaning. He also washes the car sometimes. He is often eager to help his mother especially to cook but she refuses to “let him come to the stove (until) him get a little bigger.” His father is proud to say he has no problem whatsoever with doing housework traditionally done by women. He is willing to launder his wife’s and children’s clothes, cook, clean the house, and bathe his boys. After school Oscar enjoys sweeping his classroom. Sometimes he does it all by himself much to the displeasure of some of his classmates who are still around at that time: “they take the broom from mi an’ that upset mi” (Int. OG4-30). Sweeping the classroom is very common among the boys in his class. In fact, the teacher had to insist one day that the girls should sweep (fieldnotes). Boys who have sisters at home very rarely are required to sweep the house. Oscar does it voluntarily at school.

His main activity at home is play. Oscar “loves to play, he plays a lot and (watches) television. He loves television without mercy” (Int. CG5-13). He is not however, allowed to watch adult shows and violent cartoons but encouraged instead to watch the channels and programs “that make sense”. He plays mostly with boys and sometimes two girls from his neighbourhood. Together they play with his toy race cars, cards, cricket, and sometimes race among themselves. He also draws and paints—an activity which his parents encourage. He wants to become an architect. Doing school work at home is not a

part of Oscar's things-to-do-at-home list. "To tell him to take a book and study is like you telling him a bad word. Only if him get homework and even then you have to down on him". Outside of doing homework, mother does not force him to "take up the book" because she wants him to do it voluntarily not only when forced. He has a lot of freedom at home but has set times for going to and getting out of bed. His parents teach him safety rules for the house: "Don't play with matches or hot things, don't run with sharp objects." Above all the rules however, they try to instil in him the good value of God and education—that "he should put his head to his book and try to grasp as much as possible while he have the opportunity because a lot of children don't have the opportunity (Int.CG5-13).

When Oscar misbehaves at home it is "Mummy who mostly does the punishing" which can be time out from watching television, a slap or a talking to from his father.

This youngster with his disarming smile and who has taken on the habit of playfully sucking his thumb, who likes to "fool people that I am nine," loves his parents and they love him too. In addition to praying for his parents "sometimes he will say some things and you have to smile and hug him." He chooses his friends very carefully. He prefers friends who are smart and sees no boy in his class who measures up. His best friend is a boy at another school whom he regards as "VERY, VERY, VERY smart, sometimes even smarter than his mother" [IC: emphasizing 'very']. He chose a girl as his partner in class.

Oscar loves school. He has a perfect attendance record and has never been late for school since he transferred from a private preparatory school a year ago. His favourite

subject is Mathematics (“I like maths the most”) and Language Arts last (“because mostly you get a lot of hard words”) (Int. OG4-30). When the work is difficult he asks his female partner for help. In class Oscar sits in a front row between two girls on a combination desk built for three. He gets along with all his classmates, even someone like Chester Gutzmore who “when he first came to this school used to beat (him) up” (Int. OG4-30). In those early days he could not fight but after being beaten up repeatedly by Gutzmore he “turned mad. When I get mad I turned red, red, red, red,” had another fight with Gutzmore and gained his respect. Now they get along much better although Gutzmore teases him from time to time. His father encourages him to defend himself when other attempts to resolve the conflict fails:

I taught him self-defence. I said not because we are Christian you must not allow people to batter you, you must stand up for your right as a man, [if] you can solve the problem in a simple way [good] but if you see it going out of hand, stand up and defend yourself.

At recess break at school Oscar has a routine. He goes to the bathroom and nearly always quickly returns to the classroom to eat the snack which he takes from home each day. He does not play like most of the other boys do. At lunch time he follows a similar routine. In fact it is fair to say he does not play at school. During a PE lesson which culminated in a wild game of soccer (Boys Versus Girls) he refused to play, joining some of the girls as onlookers.

When work is assigned by his teacher he tackles it immediately and never gives it up till it is complete or told to do so by his teacher (fieldnotes). His work is neat. In five weeks of observation never once was he reprimanded by his teacher for incomplete work.

His grades for the grading period January to March 2004 (Table 3.2) reveal that he works hard. Having done Spanish at his former school he wished it were done at his current school because “Spanish is the coolest.”

Ask him if he is glad that he’s a boy [and not a girl] and he will quickly say yes and then just as quickly say “it does not matter [because] it is not [his] but the Lord’s decision...” If he were a girl he fears he might have too many friends who [eventually] would “turn against you”. Oscar’s opinion here runs counter to that of the majority of the boys in the study. They despise girls. Without exception they would not like to be girls because they see girls as nuisance or as smelly. Both parents have advised him to avoid too many friends because “even though people might say they are his friends they don’t really necessarily be his friends and they will hurt him” (Int. CG5-13). His best friend teaches him much of what he is learning about becoming a man. For example, his friend has taught him to treat women with respect and always say kind words to them. This is unlike what he sees his father doing sometimes. His father “curses his mother”. Oscar eschews that kind of behaviour. His father relates an incident when Mrs. Graham should have met him and the boys at a particular time and place. Mr. Graham became visibly upset when the time had passed and she did not show until some time after. As she approached, Oscar knowing his father’s tendency to curse begged “Noh badda quarrel wid har now you know Daddy” [Do not fuss with her about it]. Mr. Graham said he had no choice but to yield to the request. Oscar says he “hopes he lives to marry” but he would not curse his wife lest he “scares her away.” Neither would he do like some other

men who “kill their own wife.” The girls in his class, even though “sometimes they cuss off the boys” treat him nicely because he “is the nicest (boy in class).”

Despite the flaw in his father, he admires “everything [his] father does”. He wants to be able to drive his father’s car on his own, but his father won’t let him. He also admires his class teacher who is teaching the boys in class to respect everybody but especially women: “Ladies before gentlemen” she tells them. Unknown to me I have also impacted him by “everything that (I) do and everything that (I) speak” in addition to showing him to “wear your seatbelt.” Ivan, his father loves his son to the point of reorganizing his work schedule to spend more time with him. He admits the relationship with his sons needs improvement. Operating a taxi can be a 24-hour job but Dad does not go back to work after he picks up his sons at about 3:30 p.m. on school days. He stays with them at home.

Although Oscar has had male and female teachers he prefers female teachers because “they beat less.” According to him his current teacher, Arlene Williams, treats the girls in his class “perfectly: sometimes the teacher make mostly the girls answer more than the boys.” On the other hand the boys are “treated badly by the girls.” A majority of the boys in the focus group shares this perception. Their teachers have told them not to fight girls and some girls seem to have taken advantage of it. Arlene Williams, Oscar’s teacher also tells the boys in her class to treat the girls nicely. She wants to stem the tendency of boys “to treat females harshly.”

Both of Oscar’s parents believe in the equality of men and women despite the Bible saying “men are the head of the house.” Mrs. Graham believes that men and women

should work hand in hand. Her husband goes further. He believes that “all people are born equal in the sight of the Creator. Whether male or female, there is no gender with God... I do not believe in man over woman... I do not believe I should dominate over my wife.” For this couple, the ideal man must be “Christian-minded, kind, loving, compassionate, caring, have a sense of responsibility firstly to God, not an abusive person, not vulgar, should command respect, committed to family life, [should] stick to his partner, peaceful and honest, speaking positive things of others.”

What of the future for Oscar? He wants to be an architect. His parents are willing to support him in his choice even if he should choose to become a male nurse [only a handful of nurses in Jamaica are males and they are viewed suspiciously]. His father’s wish however, is for Oscar to become an electrical engineer. He does not think Oscar is an academician like the younger son who at age five appears scholarly. Mr. Graham also thinks being an electrical engineer is a skill one can learn on one’s own and it also allows you to work independently almost immediately whereas becoming an architect requires longer studies and upon graduation you dare not practice on your own.

*Chester.* It is break time at Kingston Primary School. Mostly girls are inside the classroom playing. Chester sits on the step leading to his classroom. A boy from another class wants to enter the classroom but Chester kicks at him and he retreats in a hurry.

Another day class is in session. Students have been assigned to their reading groups. The class teacher is at the chalkboard. Chester leaves his group, walks past Miss Williams and sits on the window sill right next to her. She sees him but ignores him. He

sits there for five minutes before the teacher takes him by his shirt and returns him to his seat. He seems unhappy about something. He starts to sulk.

Yet another day. It is a language arts lesson. Miss Williams asks Kerron a question but he answers incorrectly. She then asks Chester. His answer is correct, much to his delight. “Am I a genius or what!” he blurts out with a grin of satisfaction on his face. There is nothing to him like gaining the approval of peers.

Other incidents could have been recounted but the above are typical of Chester Gutzmore. When he was born his father received a lot of kudos: “everybody in my family said yes, boy you strong.” It is felt by many Jamaicans that having a boy child is the proof of manhood. It is even more so if your first child is a boy. The argument is that it takes a strong man to produce the chromosomes for a boy. The high-fives soon turned to hand-wringing. At age four, he was afraid of his father. At nine years old, Chester (also called Chevy at home) is both loved and feared by students at Kingston Primary. His grandmother and aunt cry when they talk about him. They give the impression that he is at risk. Born to a man and woman who now have nothing to do with each other, he has been shifted from his mother to his aunt then back to his mother before now settling with his mother and aunt :

*SG: Lang, lang, fram Chevy bawn, Chevy jus box roun. Chevy deh dung yah, him deh up deh; im madda naw show im nutten, she lefan she gone, “gwaan a yuh gran people dem fi dis, gwaan dat*

*GG: She not even say gwaan a yuh gran people dem, bring im come and put im a de doorway, an say a’right*

*SG: She lef him up deh soh [pointing to the top of the lane about 70 meters from their house], she carry im an lef im meck im walk come dung.*

Relations between the two families are marked by animosity. Chester's father wishes someone else were the mother of his son. He and his relatives blame Chester's mother for his current state of underachievement. The mother is cast as irresponsible, carefree, and as someone who should not be blessed with children. There may be some truth to that. On the day I went to interview Sandra and her grandmother, I mistakenly stopped at the wrong address. Upon alighting from the car, I was confronted by a woman sitting by the roadside. She wanted "a lunch money"—the Jamaican way of begging money. I lied so as to avoid giving her the money. Later in conversation with Sandra and her grandmother, I learned that the begging woman was Chester's mother.

In class and outside playing, you can hear him in the distance. At school he is like the big bad wolf. Meet him one on one however and this kid is like a lamb. You strain your ears so as to hear him. When he was about three months old Sandra, his aunt and primary guardian discovered she had a nephew—the child of her 22 year old brother—born to a woman for whom she had no regard. Two years later, Sandra was still in high school but she insisted that her brother take Chester from his mother: I told his father "if you don't want the responsibility, he's your son and my nephew and if I take him and you do not want to help me, that is your business". With that Chester started what would be a shifting game between the two homes. He would spend time with his aunt, something would happen and he would be sent back to his mom. Later his aunt would take him back and allow only brief visits "because when he's up there he gets out of hand and comes



back rough.” Furthermore, his aunt says, his education is neglected when he goes there. He now lives with his aunt, her live-in boyfriend, his father, and his grandmother whenever she returns home for extended stays from abroad.

At school his friends are boys in his class including Kerron (Chester is not on Kerron’s list of friends). His favourite friend is Damien because Damien is popular. He is quick to point out that he is popular too. Popular here means one has a reputation—you are known. He fights for his friends to “keep them safe” and that makes them like him. To be able to fight for one’s friends makes a boy popular in school. It commands the respect of other students. He likes school. He looks forward to going to school to the extent that one morning he got up way ahead of time to go. He likes the children, his teacher and the work at school. His grades reflect and observations confirm that he is capable academically and has the potential for much better work. His favourite subject like it is for so many of the students is Math. He likes Language Arts too although in doing it “sometimes [he] gets mixed up.” When he encounters difficult work he goes to his teacher for help. He has also asked me for help although on at least one occasion having looked at his work I concluded he came only because others were coming. On every occasion he was asked to do something during a lesson he did it correctly. Even on one occasion when he was telling the teacher out loud that he did not understand a particular problem I checked his book and noticed he had all the problems correctly done. He knows the value of education especially the value of being able to read and write: “when I grow up someone might think of sending me a postcard but might change their mind [when they discover] that I cannot read and I cannot write.” Becoming a man also

requires education: “[To become a man] I need to study my work, listen to my parents, do my homework and so on” This is exactly what his guardians want him to do and a part of what other boys say about becoming a man: “learn their lessons; get a good education so you can own a bank; learn your lesson to avoid begging on the street”

His social behaviour however is a challenge for his teacher. She gives him special attention, sitting beside him, playing with him, hugging him even after he has just disobeyed the rule not to shout answers and sometimes ignoring his anti-social behaviours. Once when he was caught misbehaving the teacher put him to stand at the door. He went outside to walk about. Upon his return the teacher sent him from the class. I later learned he was sent to another class as a time out procedure.

At home he is quite another child. There he is under a strict regime. For example, he is not allowed outside his house after 8 p.m. Playing football with other boys in the community has been suspended partly because the older boys with whom he plays beat up on him while others complain that he is meddling in their activities. Instead of being the aggressor he becomes the victim of others’ aggression: “Everybody just takes him like a toy, everybody shouts at him, sometimes he sits down like no one likes him, everybody just ‘shut up and go sit down boy’ ... only we show him love.” Chester spends his time at home playing mostly. He plays with his four year old female cousin and his aunt sometimes or on his own when he plays video games. The few times he is allowed to play outdoors, he plays cricket, football [his favourite game] or basketball. He is a member of a soccer youth team that his father coaches.

His duties at home include keeping the flower garden and the yard clean as well as taking care of his personal items. Rohan his father has no objections to him cooking and washing. Rohan himself started washing his own clothes from as early as age 12 years. He will not allow Chev however, to clean the house because “that’s a lady’s thing.” He spends very little time at home doing school work and in fact, he often cries when he is called upon to do any sometimes prompting his father to beat him.

He is very glad he is a boy because he notices a girl in his community who wants to be a boy. In addition “I hate girls. They are annoying. When I’m eating or playing they annoy me.” When he’s annoyed he beats up on whoever upsets him. He is particularly harsh on girls and smaller boys [fieldnotes]. Most of the girls in his class avoid him. Oscar was once his punching bag until Oscar learned to fight and stood up to him. Oscar has since gained his respect. His aggression is consistent with boys’ perception of manliness. Boys at his school think that to be a man a boy should “act like a tough rough nigga, act like a bad man, defend yourself, don’t call your mama (and) don’t behave like a girl.” Acting tough is helpful in school and in competitive tough neighbourhoods. It keeps other males from picking on you.

As tough as Chester is at school he prefers female teachers “because they’re not rough.” He describes his teacher as “gentle, kind and loving.” Chester is not all about toughness. When he does not get to have his way, or is overwhelmed by a situation another side of him comes to the fore. For example in class one day he apparently did something stupid. The class in a chorus and spontaneously shouted “Silly Gilly, thunder clap, silly Gilly, thunder clap.” This went on for about a minute until the teacher stopped

it. Chester in the meantime put his head on the desk and cried. At home he also “cries a lot.” There is a concern that he may be suffering from emotional abuse: “everybody just take him like a toy, everybody shouts at him ‘boy, shut up and go sit down’ ... sometimes he sits down as if no one loves him, he feels rejected by his mother, only we show him love (Int. SG/GG5-16).

He admires people who are kind. In addition to his teacher, he respects his father: “If I ask him for money he gives it to me...” the Prime Minister who he says “is always looking out for the people and sometimes he gives them food” and his paternal grandparents who “live abroad and if I ask them for something they give it to me and if I want US dollars they give it to me.”

Unlike other boys he thinks there is equity in the treatment of girls and boys. He says both are treated nicely. This perception is contrary to that of other boys who claim girls get special protection because boys are forbidden from fighting girls even when the girls are the aggressors. Boys also risk being laughed at if they are beaten up by girls.

Chester wants to be both an engineer “because I like cars” and a footballer. He admires Onandi Lowe and David Beckham both outstanding players for Jamaica and England respectively. Onandi Lowe is Jamaica’s leading goal scorer but has a reputation for also being ill-tempered and always getting into fights with football opponents. When he becomes a man Chester says he does not want to smoke, drink, shoot or break the law. Gun crimes are a staple of the news media in Jamaica. It is not unusual for children living in an inner city community to actually see gunmen. Many boys actually imitate the actions of gunmen when they use their fingers to make the shape of a gun and point it at

others as sign of threat. In addition in idle talk it is often heard. The following is a brief conversation heard at lunch time in the classroom

Chester [to Abigail]: When a grow up I'm going to be a gunman and shoot you down.

Abigail (addressing me): Sir, he says he's going to be a gunman and shoot me down

Kenroy: Yeah, and I will be a police and shoot you down

Chester: yeah right [exits the classroom].

Chester may be joking but his statement echoes what is sometimes heard among some boys. If he were serious he might have been criticized by other boys in his grade who say among the things they see men do that they would avoid are “

His guardians also try to keep him away from “gun-talk”: being a thief or a gunman, don't beat up women, don't break people's houses, don't keep going to jail, harass people, be a criminal, don't rape.”

SG: An, maybe, a de environment that we live in. We dont really make Chesta come out wid dem lickle pickney yah cause is jus gun, gun they talk 'bout an we live in a ghetto but me noh gwaan like me come from ghetto.

His father stresses the importance of education to counter the ghetto culture: there are not many parents in the ghetto who emphasize education on a consistent basis to their children. The family does not want him to go the way of some of the other children in his community. Consequently, they are dissatisfied with Chester's attitude to school work. At the same time they will not dictate to him what career to pursue. They are prepared to support him in his choice. They only wish he would focus more on his school work and give less trouble. He has not always had the support of either parent. He has been kept

away from his mom and his father admits he could do more for his only son: “To be honest, me could do more—talk to him more and be around him more.” Sandra and her mother too, believe that if Rohan and Chester’s mother had given more emotional support to their son, Chester would do better:

SG: A’right between his motha and fatha. Him have tings from school, an him rather come to me, him ratha ask me. I say, Chester, mi not sayin you not to ask me you know, but your motha, yuh have a motha and yuh have a fatha.

Maybe dem (father and son) want get closer... you see if Rohan was close to him like how I am close? Maybe him woulda have a betta relationship

C: Uh, uh

SG: Him wi carry him go school, see to it dat him go school, see to it dat him come home, sometime him wi help him wid him homework

C: Ok

SG: But him need to put down some of the things dem what outta road an’ focus on Chevy

GG: If is even a hour

SG: Even two hour, focus on Chevy, forget everyting an jus focus pon Chevy (excerpt from interview with Chester’s grandmother (GG) and his aunt and primary guardian, SG).

These women even accused Rohan of reneging on his duty as father (even though he lives in the same house with Chester), leaving it to Sandra’s live-in boyfriend:

yuh si my boyfriend? Him is a fatha to Chevy. Peter scold him. In a de firs' half when him a go basic school is Peter teach him to spell him name. There is somethings that he would say to Peter dat him would never say to his father, if him come fi choose between him fada an' Peter, cause Peter would a spen more time, homework an soh, it would a balance, him would a say some things a him fada an some is Peter.

While Rohan accepts some blame he also shifts some to Chevy's mother. He accuses her of not just brainwashing Chester against liking him but also of ignoring his education. Yes, he was sent to school by his mom but that was about all she did, the Gutzmores claim. If Chester asked her for anything even if she could afford to she would not give him. When he lived with her she was also not able to account for Chester's whereabouts if he was not in her yard.

Chester's father went to a reputable secondary school after he graduated from Kingston Primary. He operates his own taxi service (just one car in the fleet) and his sister and mother describe as a "nice person" who is well respected in the community. He may not spend a lot of time with his son but he has strong views on how he would like him to grow up. H does not want to see his son play with a doll but wants him to respect others, display good manners, take care of his body and try to stay on the right side of life, that is, he should not get involved in illegal activities. He wants his son to avoid others "controlling his buttons" that is he should not let anyone control him the way we control computers and radios. Rohan has no problem with women lading sometimes but based on his Bible teaching from childhood, the king can only be a man and his role is to provide and lead. In the absence of the man however, a woman can lead and in fact she

should not wait on the man's return to make decisions. Men he says can also take orders from women sometimes. The ideal man for him is one who is well disciplined, well behaved, has manners, and knows how to deal with people including his girl or wife. He goes on to explain that while such a man does not have to go to church to have good morals the church does put a seal of approval (and respectability apparently) on his relationship with a woman. He himself grew up in a conservative church and has a woman who among other things, washes his clothes while living elsewhere.

Chester has two men as fathers, two women as mothers as well as a grandmother who cries for him frequently.

*Kenroy.* Kenroy is the shortest of the boys in his class at just over four feet. In fact he is taller than only one other boy. He is eight years old. Soft-spoken and quiet in class, he is the second of two children of Marie and Anthony French. He lives with his parents and an extended family—aunt, uncle, cousin, and grandmother. His dad, although a certified pastry chef has been working as a painter and carpenter for the last two months—a job which takes him from home for periods of up to three weeks sometimes. His mother is trained cosmetologist with her own practice. She also has training in interior decorating and catering. The family lives five minutes from Kingston Primary in a neighbourhood sandwiched between an inner city community and a posh residential neighbourhood.

Mother and older brother, Kemar, are devoted born again Christians. Kemar was baptized at age ten years before his mother was, while his mother serves the church “doing just about anything”: “ them can just call upon you and I always make time for that” (Int.MF5-19). Kenroy likes church too but Father does not go to church.



While his parent did not mind the idea of another boy, having had so much fun with the first, Kemar did not relish the idea of a brother at first. He wanted a sister and did everything to show his displeasure. He criticized his brother for “crying like (his) pet” and even removed the newborn from his mother’s bed, put him on the floor and then occupied the spot on the bed where he was. He also refused to help his mom in the early days after Kenroy’s birth. When Kenroy was about six months old he was already very active. That was what convinced his older brother that “he was here and here to stay” and to see him as a play partner. Even now he is still not fully accepting often considering him as a nuisance and accusing his mom of favouring Kenroy over him.

Having a brother has not been easy for Kenroy. He is constantly being compared to his older brother, his mother seeing him as “so different from my first boy”. His brother who is three years his senior is the standard by which he is judged: “When Kemar was his age he was firin’ in his work... some things that Kenroy does, Kemar wouldn’t do it... he will climb a tree, go on the housetop, Kemar not doing that.” In fact Kenroy has had to tell his mother not to compare them because “seven children, seven different minds.” His mother describes him as hyperactive (even sought medical attention for him), curious, stubborn, aggressive, daring and fearless. All these qualities have worked against him being allowed on “outings” and field trips because “him don’t know his danger as yet and that’s why I don’t send him. Because Kenroy is not a child who might stay here and teacher might see him here, he’s just quick, he cant stay still.” Well, not unless he’s at school where for the majority of class time he sits still no doubt because he knows that “sitting in class is a must and it is important”. At church on the other hand, he finds every

reason for going outside even telling his mom that he is about to pee on himself. He loves the outdoors.

At home Kenroy's duties are few. He takes care of his pet birds and on weekends may be asked to do dishes. He spends most of his time at home playing marbles and football (soccer) with his cousin and brother. Sports are his passion. Both his parents are former track and field athletes and his brother also plays sports. Kenroy wants more sports at school especially for his age group. He is currently in his church's soccer program and his career ambition is to be a professional sportsman (athlete or soccer player). His parents also want to enrol him in karate "to help him curb his aggression." His mother thinks he plays too much to the neglect of his education. He enjoys playing "but if you give him the book you jus' kill him". He spends very little time at home doing school work telling his mom instead that too much study and no play "make Jack a fool." Only his father and mother are able to get him to do any school work at home. In their absence his grandmother is unable to manage him: "he has a way of soothing [tricking] har no matter what. Him jus' soothe har and disappear." If his brother is left in charge of him it often creates a fuss because he does not accept his brother's authority forcing his mother to remind him that "when I ask him to do something towards you, he's in control." He has only one best friend and even regards me as his best friend. He is however caring and loving. His mother emphasizes these values in her boys and bought them the birds so that they would learn not only to take care of them but later "how to care for his wife and children." He has a girlfriend at his church and "at school him jus' feel like all the girls like him because of him face."

Although he has a near perfect attendance at school he admits that he does not like school. Neither does he like his current teacher. In class he's generally quiet, sometimes he appears untidy and very rarely puts out effort to complete his work. He shares one of the combination desks at the back of the class with one other boy and they both use much of their time playing. If work is assigned and he has no book or pencil, he does not do the work. "Miss have mi book" is one of his excuses for not working. He says he would be glad if he did not have to go to school and would not be sorry about the work that he would obviously miss. His favourite subject is Math "cause a know how to do it." He hates Language Arts and Integrated Studies "cause a cannot do it (them)." He says he finds "dem hard" because his reading is not so good. His first response to difficult class work is to pray. When he prays and "start doing it" God "come and help." Sometimes he seeks help from his friends (including me) who understand but never from the teacher. He complains to his mother about the teacher's indifference to him. Not even his mother's telling him that the teacher cant always pay him attention is enough to assuage him and change his attitude towards her: "she noh pay mi no attention at all mommy, none at all." He thinks the teacher only puts on a show for his parents when they visit her at school. This is unlike his perception of his first grade teacher whom he regards as a mother and a teacher. Furthermore he thinks the teacher prefers girls and says boys are not given any chance "its just about the girls, she don't give us any chance. Miss treat the girls dem good, Miss noh lick dem nuff time, she always lick de bwoy dem." Kenroy rarely participates in whole class activities. He neither ever raises his hand to answer a question, nor does not participate in chorus answering. He takes an inordinately long time

to complete work. On one occasion, 26 minutes after the Math work was assigned Kenroy had still not completed one. Math is his favourite subject. On another occasion it took him 18 minutes to complete a problem (15 divided by 3). He brought it to show me with a smile (fieldnotes). He realizes though that without a good education he is not likely to get a good job and might even end up on the streets begging which he wouldn't like.

The only time Kenroy seemed excited about a school activity was during a one-off physical education lesson held in five weeks. His teacher had tried unsuccessfully to teach the class a no-contact skill. When that failed she tried another activity but that too did not go well. The boys started saying they wanted to play football (soccer). The teacher surrendered and announced "Football, Boys vs. Girls." At the start of the "Boys versus Girls" soccer match Kenroy and Chester led the other boys in a wild chase to get the ball. It seemed the students were not used to being taken out like that. The game descended into disorder forcing the teacher to call a halt.

At other times in the classroom he seeks my help with reading and modelling how particular math problems are to be done. During recess and lunch breaks, he is among the first to go outside to play. He plays with other third grade boys in a confined area less than half the size of his classroom. They usually kick makeshift "balls" at each other, an activity which once in a while leads to fights. At lunch breaks he and some of the other boys often have their lunch outside before returning to the classroom to play or interfere with the girls' play. On one occasion while the girls performed a dance in the classroom,

Kenroy stood nearby almost like he wanted to join. He resisted “the temptation” however perhaps because he saw another boy, Garfield, tried and was chased away by the girls.

Kenroy believes that to be a man he needs to be strong and be able to protect his family. He does not have a close relationship with his dad, preferring his mom. He prefers his mom because she is warmer and less strict. Daddy beats him if he fails to obey his orders. Mommy will sometimes allow him to explain his way out of it. He does not spend any quality time with his father and could only remember going with him once to his mother’s place of business. When he grows up he wants to play sports and be able to fix cars like he sees older men do. He will try to avoid using swear words like he hears men do although he admits that even now whenever he gets mad from being teased he does “curse bad words”. As far as his relationship with bigger brother goes, he cares and looks out for Kemar more than the reverse: “Not that Kemar don’t love him, but (Kemar) always consider him as fatiguing....”

*Jermaine.* If Jermaine does not get a letter from his mom was as clear as it was severe do sufficient work he is not to be given a recess or a lunch break. That morning I watched him even closer. He was unmoved by the letter. He went through the day as he did most other days: going to buy a notebook just when the work is assigned, borrowing a pencil when he returns to the classroom, taking his time in sharpening it, and taking forever to copy the work from the chalkboard. Add to that intermittent thumb-sucking or stopping to add some feature to the car or airplane he’s been drawing and you get a sense of how this eight year old spends a morning in Patricia’s class at Lewiston Primary. On this particular day it took him 30 minutes to get a textbook from which to work. On that day

the recess break came and he was still not finished. Patricia tells him that in accordance with the request from his mother he was to remain inside and complete his work. There is no argument, no frown, only meek compliance.

Jermaine lives with his mother, step-father, and two year-old baby sister. His mother has two older children—a boy and a girl. They have a different father. He gets very little financial support from his father. His mother is distressed by the lack of help from the father:

Things are really hard with me. I have NOBODY [emphasized] helping me wid him. Believe mi. Mi cant call him fada and say ‘boy, Jermaine sick, mi want a money fi carry him go doctor, him a go tell mi say him don’t have it. Some a di time fi months him noh si Jermaine, and when him si Jermaine, \$300. No more dan dat him naw g’him.

It is hard for an unemployed single parent to raise a child with US\$5.00 periodically. His father is big on promises but small on delivery which also upsets Jermaine’s mom. She however, makes sacrifices for him “because me really want suppen good come outta him.” Above all she hopes he will make the most of his schooling. With the exception of his school work which needs improvement, he is dear to his mother:

He has a great sense of humor, him lovin, an’ sometimes him very undastandin’, an’ him like fi express his feelins when it come to certain things him say “Mummy, yuh kno’ mi love yuh tho’, yuh know and dat an’ dat an’ dat, yuh kno’. Him not, him mannable an’ him can talk. Only thing him have him time when him try to be stubborn. Him noh really hard fi manage. Is jus’ that him wont focus on him school work, a jus dat a him problem yah now.

Ask his friends to describe him and they are likely to say that “*sometimes he’s a little idiot.*” They probably mean he does and says things they do not quite understand. He also likes to make jokes.

At home as the eldest child he sometimes cleans the yard and do the dishes but this is only since recently. Before, his mother did everything for him: “*clean his shoes, wash his socks, everything.*” Getting him to do these things properly can be stressful according to Christene, his mother, so often to avoid the stress she simply does them herself. Jermaine would rather spend his time playing video games, cricket, or football with his friends. When he is not outside playing he likes to watch television: *Him neva have the TV off.* He has his own TV in his room which he watches sometimes into the wee hours of the morning, even on weekdays. On Saturdays his playing reaches a peak as his mother describes:

As him wake yuh haffi tell him, Jermaine wash yuh face and goh brush yuh teet, if suppen is there to eat, ‘come eat your breakfast.’ In front o’ di TV him glue til 12 o’ clock or after 12 yuh hear him fren dem come call him “Jermaine” an’ dem play game, dem mostly ova the missionary house deh soh [pointing towards a house across the street]. But some a di time him wi stray. If him fin’ himself wid a money him stray. Him gone a games room. An if him en’ up a games room, mi naw si him back till all 3, 4 a’clack.

On one particular Saturday he spent the “whole day” playing cricket. His mom does not always approve of his going to the games room. In fact she has gone after him but has not been able to catch him there. She has also beaten him for going there but that has not

deterred him from going—even using the paltry \$300 his father gives him for his upkeep or money he takes from home to support the habit.

He spends very little time at home doing school work and only if his mother insists and “stands up over him. If I’m not over him to take up his book, book work can stay.”

The few times his mother insists on his doing school work

Him goh teck up di book an him wi have di TV on, most likely, him neva have the TV off. Only him one watch it. For if yuh go roun’ deh now and tell him teck up him book him start look pon di TV an you a say Jermaine, like yuh say two and two a how much, two plus two a how much. Whe’ yuh seh mummy? Mi haffi jus lock off de tv an’ say listen, yuh teck di ting fi too much joke ting, yuh need fi teck up yuh book more often. Him have a tendency when yuh a talk to him an’ him don’ wan’ hear him gwaan like him, yuh noh, him play deaf.

She finds his lack of interest frustrating because she believes “he has the potential to learn” and she has tried in her own way to help him. She has even tried to motivate him by telling him that given that he wants a Ferrari to drive when he grows up he “will need a good education” to be able to afford it. Not seeing sufficient progress is the number one concern of his mother. It is what prompted the letter to his teacher. In it she asked the teacher to help her get Jermaine to get more work done and gave the teacher the power to apply sanctions such as denying him of play time.

In class he sometimes sits with Jevlon, one of his best friends. This is in breach of seating rules in his class. Same sex seating is forbidden by Mrs. Henry. If three students share a bench only two can belong to the same sex and they are required to sit at opposite



ends of the bench. Mrs. Henry admits that the students, particularly the girls, do not like it. This arrangement is intended to keep conversation to a minimum. Students do not like the arrangement and often openly show their displeasure by reluctantly allowing others of the opposite sex to sit beside them. In the case of Jermaine, because he has a propensity to chat excessively, there is a special arrangement: he sits by himself and near to the teacher's desk. When he sits elsewhere he is likely to hear: Jermaine find your seat, you're to be in a seat by yourself." One day she beat him for chatting to another boy before sending him to his "right seat" with the comment "two devils cant sit together" to which Jermaine replied as he moves to his seat, "I am not a devil."

He says he loves school. In fact he insists that it is "love" not "like." He would continue going to school even if he were given the option not to attend. His favourite subject is Math. He is not sure if he loves Language Arts and Integrated Studies. He insists that he loves Reading but not story writing. Whenever he encounters difficult work "I use my brain or follow the example teacher gave." Jermaine recognizes the importance of working hard in school explaining that only through hard work will one "get like 100% on your test and be what you want to be." His classroom behaviour however is not supportive of his belief in hard work. Except for that one time when his mother requested and his teacher insisted that he should work through recess, Jermaine showed no inclination for hard work. While some students, especially girls will put in extra time to get their work done, Jermaine and most of the other boys do not. Although the students generally do not play at recess those with incomplete work do not use that time to get it done. Jermaine however, says he is "trying my best in class. Sometimes I work hard

enough like when I was in grade 2 and got 56% on a test and this year I get it back.” Most of his time in class is spent chatting, wandering around, drawing even during work time and sucking his thumb which he says he does when he is happy or when his tummy hurts. Drawing cars and airplanes is his favourite class activity. The Ferrari is his favourite car. He wants to be a mechanic like his father.

His contact with his father is sporadic and on weekends only. At that time he visits Clive at home when they sometimes play basketball (which he admits he can't do well) or watch television together. His father taught him to fix his bicycle. Back at home his relationship with his step-father is rocky. Jermaine is mostly afraid of him. He handles Jermaine roughly and constantly wants his mother to punish him harshly because “a bwoy pickney.” Christene, Jermaine's mom says Robert, her partner Doesn't know how to deal with children. He's from a Kingston inner city and you know how they behave, they have some words that they use. I told him I don't like it [the way he speaks to Jermaine]. Nobody (else) talks to him that way. So I realize Jermaine doesn't like it and because of that when he's (Robert) around Jermaine no really come hug me up. He stays far from me.

There was one day however, when Robert and Jermaine were alone at home and upon Christene's return, Jermaine reported that they “had a really good time.” Christene was happy about that. The mother is planning to break up the relationship because of Robert's attitude. According to her “...it's not working out. [This is the] first I'm going to live with a man, I don't usually have a man around me. It not working out, believe me.”

Jermaine loves his mother, often expressing his feelings “Mummy you know me love you though.” He compliments her when the meal is tasty and shows sensitivity towards her. He attributes what he knows about growing up to his mother and his teacher. While he cannot pinpoint what his teacher has taught him he says his mom teaches him about manners, being polite, and helping others.

Try tricking Jermaine into believing he will be a woman when he grows up and you’ll be corrected immediately: “big man, not big woman because I’m not a girl.” He lights up when he says how glad he is to be a boy and not a girl: “because if I was a girl and ask them [boys] if I can play cricket they will say no.” Furthermore, “if a boy is playing, like he’s making a building she comes and breaks it down. That’s why I don’t like girls.” In addition “girls follow-up things” which in Jamaica means girls nag, they do not put a matter to rest. Other boys had similar perceptions of girls as meddlesome and fragile. Boys do not want girls to play with them: “I don’t want the ball to hit them”; “they like to cry and scream.” At best some play tag games or “little baby cricket.” Not only does Jermaine not play with girls, he has no use for “girls stuff.” He gave me raised eyebrows when he said he would like a doll. He hastens to clarify “not one like Barbie” but an action figure because “I’m not a girl and I don’t use those stuff [Those stuff] are not for boys cause girls play with dolls and boys play with, like soldiers and those things.” Other boys reported having dolls but are also quick to make a distinction between theirs and girls’ dolls “I have a boy doll;” “I have a girl doll but I trim her head.” Others have male action figures—wrestlers, spinners, batman, soldiers, and teddy bears.

Although his teacher admits to treating boys more harshly than girls, Jermaine like the other boys prefer female teachers because

They are much nicer; they don't beat hot like the male; they will send you to the bathroom easy; they are soft-spoken and will not make you come from your home with your presents and tell you they don't want them for that would be wasting your mother's money.

Male teachers were perceived as direct opposite: "too rough;" "When it's Teachers' Day the man (teacher) normally say they don't want anything and if you want to go to the bathroom and you do something wrong they are going to say no." Boys even recount incidents when they were beaten on their backs by male teachers with belts.

Jermaine admires the pastor of his church because of his kindness. He was supported by several other boys who also admired their pastors for their kindness: "When I was buying my books the pastor gave me some money on my money to buy the books." Jackie Chan, the karate actor was also admired especially for his role in Mortal Kombat. Jermaine thinks that boys need to avoid fighting and work hard in school to become men. Other boys also think that they need to "take their education serious;" "show strength, courage and bravery" and "do not from an early age give your mother any trouble." In addition, to be a man boys should "not behave the girl way" that is, "don't be a sissy and don't walk and shake your bottom;" "make sure you know how to handle a son if you're gonna have one;" "you must not play with people's girl child, do not trouble people's girl child" (Boys Focus Group).

Jermaine's mother wants him to do well; she wants him to be more responsible, to refrain from lying and to obey her: "I need you to know that I am the parent and when I talk you are supposed to respect and hear what I say." Continuing in a softer tone she says "I am not really hard on him you know, I don't really ask much of him. Those are the simple things I ask." She does not want to control his career choice. She however would not want him to be a gunman, thief, or drug pusher. She also does not want him to "come chop yard or nothing like that...the career he takes up must make me proud."

She admits to differential upbringing for boys and girls. She believes in harsher punishment for boys "and I would keep the girl more in my eyesight." She explains: I want her to stay around me where I can see her." She would not even do certain jobs like bartending because "I don't feel I could leave her that amount of time to go to work." Bartenders work long hours in Jamaica and are away from home especially at nights. Although she is protective of girls if she had a choice to send only one of a boy or girl to school even if both were doing well in school, she would send the boy: "I could help the girl." [Besides], "she has a better chance than a man. If she even doesn't go to school she might be able to find a man who really likes her [and obviously take care of her]."

Christene's ideal man must have a good sense of humour, somebody genuine, loving and caring, respect people, somebody understanding, somebody you can talk to like a friend, someone who loves kids, who is honest, whatever he feels he can talk about it, we can talk and reason and we can do almost anything together, somebody who can appreciate even the little things I do.

Jermaine already has some of these qualities. She hopes he can develop others and that her sacrifices will pay dividends. If he adopts a more serious attitude to his school work he may yet make her proud.

*Corey.* At just over eight years old Corey is among the youngest boys in his grade. The only child of an accounting technician and a teacher, Corey tops his class in reading and also has straight A's in the other areas. He is one of only two boys from his class selected to join the Reading Club at his school and to attend the recently held storyfest in the capital city of Kingston. His parents wanted a healthy child more than they wanted a boy or a girl. They did agree however, that if the baby were a boy his father would name him and if a girl mother would provide the name. As it turned out they were both glad it was a boy they had although for different reasons. Mrs. Edmonds was happy for a boy because she had to go back to school and wondered how she would have managed if it were a girl:

Because I had to go back to college [and leave Corey with his father]. It is easier for a man to manage a boy because if it was a girl he would have hair to plait and maybe like at Lewiston those uniforms take a lot of time to be done (Int. DCE-5-29).

Mrs. Edmonds is implying that girls require much more care and men are not necessarily capable of providing that. For Mr. Edmonds however, the reason for his happiness was quite different:

I am sort of the outdoor person... a lot of the time I am out there planting things around the place. If you go around the back there now there are two machetes one for me and one for him—an old one that he has taken over. A lot of times he and I are out there.

Even though sometimes he is threatening to destroy good crops [mistakenly] but the fact is that a female wouldn't be out there with me so much. For that aspect of it I'm glad it is a boy. Probably that's a little selfish on my part but that's really it.

In fact, he went on to say plaiting of hair was not a major problem for him because he "grew up with a number of girls around and he would still plait his mother's hair and while he cannot say it was neat "at least the effort was there." He is also very proud of his laundry and culinary skills:

I don't think my wife can iron as neat as I can and she can tell you that I can wash [and while] I'm not an expert in the kitchen I can whip up something that is palatable and would not poison anybody.

These are skills Mr. Edmonds learnt from his mother and from having to do his part when his mother was away. The Edmonds are of humble beginnings. Both are from unstable homes: David grew up without a father and Carol experienced much shifting around before finally settling with her stepmother. She is now a new schoolteacher and he is an accounting technician. They both credit Jehovah (their word for God) with their success in life—having a tertiary education, a successful marriage, having their own home and a healthy, intelligent son.

The Edmonds are proud of their son. They describe him as helpful to the point where "you sometimes have to slow him down because he wants to do things and sometimes doesn't recognize the dangers that face him." His dad also considers him quite intelligent which he attributes to the "sort of environment in which he was brought up including the religious environment." Both parents agree that Corey is talkative—a quality his mother

says he got from her and one his father wishes were otherwise given that he “is on the quiet side.” They both agree however, that being talkative can help Corey to learn. At the same time several school reports have commented that although Corey is doing well he would do better if he learned to control his talking in class.

At home Corey has complete control over how he spends his time. His father jokingly says a significant part of Corey’s free time at home is spent eating and asking what is there to be eaten. What time is left is shared among playing (sometimes alone, sometimes with his father), doing homework, gardening with his father, and watching television (cartoons). Not having a brother or a sister and no immediate neighbourhood children to play with, he says he finds being at home boring sometimes. On a Saturday he has one compulsory activity—he must spend time with his parents studying the Watchtower Magazine in preparation for participation in the following day’s meeting at the Kingdom Hall the family attends. Both parents are devout Jehovah’s Witnesses and Corey is exposed very early to the teachings. Occasionally his father takes him to the neighbouring sports club. This gives him an opportunity to meet and play with other children while his father plays soccer with older men.

As far as duties at home go, Corey is required to make his bed in the mornings, empty the chamber pot he uses and make sure his shoes are ready for school. His shoes are often very shine.

At school Corey is the one the children go to for help especially with their spelling. He is the one that is likely to be outside doing chores while class is in session. On one occasion he returned to class wet, 20 minutes after the class had started. A boy reported



he was playing with water outside. The teacher said nothing to him. The reports about his chatting in class are confirmed. When asked what he talks about in class he said he and his neighbours sometimes talk about what their teacher is wearing or how she looks. This youngster is friendly with everyone in his class. He says he has no preferences for who sits beside him and has no special friends either although he is often seen with Jhaleel, another boy in his class. He has no favourite subject and his grades show he does well in all the major disciplines. Whenever he gets work which he finds challenging he “try to work it out... or take it home and make mummy and daddy help me.” He knows it is important to work hard in school so that “(he) can achieve (his) education.” Corey says if he does not achieve his education he is likely to “end up on the street”

His work ethic is not particularly exemplary; there have been times in class when he was found idling instead of working. On at least one occasion his teacher flogged him for not producing enough work. Corey loves school. He wouldn't want to miss a day and he wished he got home work everyday. His career aspiration is to become a fireman although he hastily adds that “I might change my mind a little” by which he means that he may change his mind later. He wants to become a fireman because “fireman rescue people.” Corey says he has no role models; he just wants to become a fireman.

Ask him if he is glad that he is a boy and not a girl and he is likely to look at you as if to ask “why do you even ask?” He is glad he is not born a girl because they “are too immature “play with dolly (dolls) and things like that. ” He is very definitive about what boys need to do to become men: “don't act like a female, don't dress like a girl, don't laugh like a girl.” He has a strong preference for male teachers although he has never

been taught by one (except the times I took the class partly at his urging “teacher not here so you must teach us”). And who is teaching him about growing up? According to him no one in particular although his father has told him he is growing up and therefore needs to wear more than just underwear and T-shirt in the house. When he grows up he will not “smoke, drink alcohol and [get] drunk and speed” like he sees other men doing now. He wants to be law-abiding when he grows up: “get a licence, speed carefully, stop when the police stop you” (sic).

This eight year-old who seems very sheltered has a word of advice for the boys at his school whom he describes as disciplined: “stay in your seat, stop the talking, pay attention when teacher is talking.”

*Delroy.* His broken incisor jumps out at you when he smiles. His neatly pressed khaki uniform stands out as well. Today however, as we sit down to talk it is his subdued manner which is obvious. This is rivalled only by his non-verbal responses to my questions. He nods and shakes his head to every ‘yes/no’ question. Repeatedly I have to remind him he is talking into a tape recorder not a video camera. Delroy, like the other rural counterparts his age is a model of traditional manners: “yes sir, no sir.” He says he is seven but that is contradicted by the fact that his brother who is 13 years old is four years his senior. Nine years old and in third grade seems more consistent than seven year old and in grade 3.

His parents wanted a girl. In fact, his father, contrary to popular sentiments among Jamaican men, wanted a girl as his first child : “*from the first one I was planning for a girl [laughter] I wanted a girl. I don’t know why but you know, through maybe some of*

*the time you see girl baby with the little earring and so forth*". His common-law wife made all the preparations for a girl:

To tell you the honest truth, I love my boys them, but I really wanted a girl. I go all the way and I prepare pink, pink [laughter from C] pink, pink bath, everything, chemise pink. I wanted a girl so badly but God knows best.

Pink is considered inappropriate for males. Andrea gave away all the pink stuff she had bought.

They both rationalise their disappointment and have embraced their son whom they call Buddy. Nesta, his father is particularly philosophical about it:

... I glad I got two boys, two boys. I was wishing for a girl but the two boys is ok for me because I glad. Bwoy pickney noh hold you back. Boy pickney noh hold you back, boy pickney will loosen you up. I was fretting for him for even when Charlie leaving him at primary school but him manoeuvre. I think he got a bigger body than the bigger one.

What a glad about the two of them is they are four years apart, them no pressure me you know. What the big one has it come down to the small one.

The couple talks with much pride about Buddy. They are particularly proud of his grasp of video games technology. The couple owns a video games arcade and from an early age Delroy was able to figure out how to operate the machines. At home he is also very helpful. He often sweeps the house (not unusual where there are only boys at home as children) and the yard. At school he occasionally sweeps the classroom. He also volunteers to do the dishes at home sometimes and although his mother lets him she often goes back over them (to ensure they are clean.).

Ask him how his friends are likely to describe him and he simply says “as friendly.” He is indeed a friendly youngster. Yet he has had run ins with other boys. On one such occasion he was beaten up but said nothing to his parents about it. They only heard when other children told them. In class he relates well with others, mostly boys. He has several close friends with whom he plays only at lunch time. He wishes to sit next to two of his friends but that is not allowed in Patricia’s class where two boys are not allowed to sit next to each other if it is at all possible. Delroy however, takes practices like those in strides. His seat on the left wing of the classroom puts him and the others who sit there at a disadvantage. He cannot see the chalkboard from there and uses up work time moving to other available seats. If he or any other boy sits in a seat belonging to a girl he is chased out. In one instance he was forcibly pushed out by a girl. He never complained. Based on his grades he is not considered as “bright” but he spends class time doing his work. Unlike other boys he neither gets flogged for his work nor his behaviour. The teacher likes him and he likes her because, he says, she is kind and loving. His parents too have high regards for his teacher. Andrea, his mother sees Mrs. Henry as a God-send. Both parents have seen a great improvement in Delroy’s performance since his entry to her class. Nesta, his father says Buddy did not get a good start and failed to accomplish much in previous grades.

His favourite subject is mathematics and he wished he did not have to do spelling. He wished they did more reading in his class [In 15 days of observation I observed one formal reading lesson]. Yet Delroy, even if given the option, would not want to miss one day at school. Having to stay home he says, “would be boring”. What is it he likes about

school? Maths, language arts, phonics are his favourite. He particularly likes mathematics “because it is hard.” He insists that he relishes difficult work. When he is challenged in Math he sometimes seek help from the information printed on his math notebook (multiplication tables, conversion tables, etc). If that does not help he “thinks harder” but never gives up.

At home Delroy only does school work at the insistence of his parents. Most of his time is spent playing with his cousin or watching television especially if his mother is not there. His mother reduces their television time. On Saturdays he is often at the family business helping his father. Sundays are generally for going to church (his parents insists the boys go) and spending time with the family. Upon returning from church father invites the boys to join him in reading the newspaper. Older brother does not mind but it is not Delroy’s idea of spending his free time. He would rather go play with his cousin – who is in his age group. His father tries to show him the importance of reading:

Because I know for myself that reading, reading it help me. And me know why me emphasize on reading because I remember when I became a basic school teacher I lucky my mother use to whop me to read because when some of the time you go out, the Asst. EO, them a look on you as teacher you know and call upon you to read something, and me see where that play a good role in my life because say I cant do those big maths, if you tell me to read something, not to say I cant do the big math because if the example say divide three by 6 minus this on it, is read me can read so mi must know how to work out the sum...Mi tell him you know say is it meck Charlie (his brother) go through (primary school) and never repeat, reading cause from the teacher say you can read then

maths an.. {unclear] cant hold you back in school. Because maths is reading, English a reading, anything a reading.

In short, father is telling him that reading is the key to unlock all other disciplines. So while the males of the family are reading the newspaper, mother is preparing dinner for the family. After dinner although Delroy would still want to go and play, his father maintains that they stay inside. In fact oftentimes his mother will use this time to go over school work with him inasmuch as he does not fancy that.

Delroy has no assigned duties at home before or after school. In fact, after school he goes the business place to do his homework and stays until his parents are ready to go home. When they get home there is only time to have dinner and get ready for bed. Occasionally he sweeps the yard.

The relationship with his parents is positive. Father admits his son does not share with him freely. He constantly harps back to the time Buddy was beaten up by another boy and said nothing to him. When I suggested to him that boys are not to report fights lest they be seen as sissies he agrees remembering that he did the same as a student. He also reveals stories of his son championing the cause of other students in fights. Notwithstanding all this he wishes his son would feel freer to share with him everything. Mr. Haynes also admits he does not spend as much time with his son – something which bothers him:

... only thing me can tell you mi sorry, some of the time mi tell all some of mi friends or even a guy work at the bank Mr. Wilson and him a say Mr. Haynes you have to make the

time for them you know. And me a say a true you know but is just the time me want spend more with them.

They love their two sons. Andrea is more expressive with her affection for them: I love to sweet them up, kiss them up and cuddle them up. But I really lay down rules and regulations and let them know that I will make rules that they don't like but I'll always be their mother and I love them. I tell them you know, I love them and I will kiss them up, you know.

Father too shows his affection openly but mixes it with warnings:

Me love him man, love him. No morning don't pass I don't warn him and tell him to stay out of trouble, trouble walk in your way, walk out of it, come give me a hug, give me a ding.

Both parents admonish them from time to time; Nesta wants them to keep out of trouble, Andrea stresses discipline: "I really need them to be disciplined, discipline is what I really stand for, you know." And what important lessons do these parents impart to their younger son as he grows to become a man?

Nesta:

Me tell him don't beg money, behave yourself, all those little things every morning me will charge them, you know...some of the time when they go to the bathroom and come back and I'm inside, for me love to see to it that they well groomed going out: hair groomed, them shoes and so forth and me will say to them 'when you going on the road you know, me don't hide nutten, I say listen to me man, any man try give you coke on the road you know, coke head man will come friend you up and 'bout you want sweetie boy?

Don't take nothing from them. Man will want give you drive, dem deh man a batty man. You see me? I will walk from round my yard come road and when man offer me ride, is not say me funny or what but mi naw take it.

Andrea:

I stress mostly that, that they must love one another, especially in the home. This is where it starts, that's why there is so much violence in the country and that's why I always tell Delroy 'love your brother, love your brother, love your brother' that is a very important thing in all the world, love. You know if you don't even have money if you not even have food in the cupboard as long as you have love in the home.

Religion is arguably at the top of their values list. Nesta and Andrea insist that their sons go to church because, according to Andrea "... (religion) has a lot of influence in my business, in my relationship, with my children, in my whole growing up. Nesta, by far the more articulate and experienced of the couple, expressed similar but more philosophical views:

I grew up there (in church). When I'm sending out my boys Sunday mornings I say listen to me man, the blessings that I have now I gain them from I was a little boy in church. There was no Anniversary that ever miss me at church. Miss Anderson, Rev. Brown in those days. Have to go church man, and stay back evening time learn your golden text and your recitations so church is a lot. If you have a child and he's not going to church mi sorry for that child... you have to be religious because religion curb you. When you're a religious person, actually I am not a person you say born before [again], baptize but if you are thinking that there is no God, you wrong for there must be a God because God



direct your living. Him can no meck yu wake you up this morning and him make you wake so you must give thanks to him cause many no wake this morning, you know. He would later brag about the public speaking skills he developed in church which now enable him to speak to any group unlike many of his peers.

They also stress honesty and the value of education. In fact that seems to be the one aspect of Delroy's life which gives them the least satisfaction. They want him to do well enough to go to a better high school than his brother is now attending. So far that does not seem to be happening. At the same time they express a willingness to support whatever career path Delroy may choose. Delroy says he wants to be a teacher but says his father wants him to be a policeman.

Their emphasis on education is understood given their individual backgrounds. Andrea is the eldest of seven all of whom look to her for leadership. She is proud to say that it was education which "brought her out of the pits." Nesta's story is far more complicated: he discontinued high school because there was no money for him to continue, his father never really stood by him and he was forced to "hustle" for many years before settling down as an uncertified basic school (kindergarten) teacher for 20 years. He gave that up only when his first child went into third grade and he realised he needed more income to be able to afford him a better education. He does not want the same thing for his sons. Listening to both parents was inspiring. There is a strong bond between them for their boys to follow.

Delroy, like his peers in the City of Kingston and those in his class at Lewiston, is very happy that he's a boy. With a big, broad smile this nine year old has already the

gender advantage of being a boy. He says he is happy he is a boy and not a girl because people are “always troubling girls.” This youngster prefers female teachers because they are kinder, echoing in part the views of the other third grade boys. In the focus groups most of the boys expressed a preference for female teachers on grounds that they were kinder, gentler, more sensitive to students’ toilet needs and less likely to refuse gifts from parents.

He admires a Miss Bailey at his church more than anyone else he sees on television or in the community because she is “always praising the Lord” and his advice to other boys as they grow to become men is to be kind and learn to share. When he grows up he does not want to smoke like he sees other men doing now, neither does he want to be a taxi operator. Smoking, he says may cause his wife to leave him if she finds out. Taxi operators it seems, are not highly regarded in his community.

Delroy has a long way to go, he says he is not afraid of hard work, admits he needs to work harder and “*use my brain more*”. If he does these things his parents’ investment in him will pay high dividends.

### *Focus Group Summaries*

There were two focus groups, one in each school. The discussions were guided by some of the same questions which guided the individual interviews with the six boys. The Lewiston Focus Group will be summarised first followed by the Kingston Primary Group

Lewiston Primary Focus Group: All the boys fell within the eight to nine years age group. Of the 12, six had a father living at home while four had another adult male (uncle or grandfather). Only two had no adult males at home.

Their response to Williams' Doll surprised me. Without exception they all embraced Williams' request for a doll saying that through it he "can practise how to be a father" so that in the event his wife dies "he can take care of the baby himself". At this point one boy shared his story of how when his aunt died it was his father who took care of him. When asked how many had a doll there was first denial before one boy said he has a girl doll but cut the hair from her head. Another then admitted that he had a boy doll and others said they had action figures and teddy bears.

These boys use their free time to play or watch television. They all play with girls at school and some at home. Some boys are afraid to play with girls because they are not up to the rough play: "the ball will hit them", "they cant take hit with a ball they always want to cry or scream", "I play little baby cricket with my sister". Some of the boys said they were either forbidden by parents to play with girls or refrained from doing so because girls will hit them or beat them up and they cannot fight back.

A half of the group had regular duties at home: tending animals, sweeping their yard and house (one boy who is the only child at home does that) or disposing of garbage. The other six had no duties at home.

Without exception they all preferred female teachers because they "are much nicer... will not refuse your gifts on teachers Day like the men do... will send you to the

bathroom much more readily and [above all it seems], “do not beat hot like the man teacher.”

For seven of the boys the person they admire the most is their church pastor. Others admired actor Jackie Chan and American firemen. Their career aspirations ranged from fireman to astronaut. They laughed outrageously at the idea of being a nurse: “no, no, no, doctor not nurse.”

They were very firm on what boys needed to do to become men: “take their education seriously... so that when you grow up you can teach your daughter or son a skill and how to behave themselves; have strength, courage, and bravery, know how to behave themselves, that is, from an early age do not give your mother any trouble; do not behave the girl way, stush yourself up like a sissy, don’t be a sissy and shake your bottom; make sure you know how to handle a son before you have one and “do not trouble people’s girl child.”

These are things they say they have learnt from their parents, uncles, teachers, and a policeman. As one participant put it: “My mother always tell my brother to come in the room with us and she discuss [sic] things with us.” When they grow up they would not want to physically abuse women the way they see men do now. Neither would they smoke (especially ganja), drink rum or behave in ways which warrant the intervention of the police. One boy related his experience of witnessing his step-father beat up his mother after he had given her permission to stay out late, another told of the murder of a woman because she walked home after a dance with another man.

On the other hand some boys would like to emulate their father in “running a taxi, driving a bus, working for the Prime Minister, drive fast like his uncle, be muscular and strong and own a house and like one boy “I want to be good to my wife like my father do”.

Asked how girls are treated at their school these rural boys said “nicely by some of the boys” and the male and female teachers. On the other hand, according to them boys are treated badly by the girls. One boy seemed to have captured it for the others: “All if we treat the girls them right them still a teck we like slave.” According to this group girls are allowed to be cruel to them but they are forbidden to touch them. Several incidents were related to support this point. Not all the boys behaved kindly all the time. Some admitted to striking back in the face of provocation.

Asked if they LOVED [emphasis mine] reading, all 11 (one had been asked to leave) boys gave a resounding yes.

#### *Kingston Primary Focus Group*

Of the 12 boys who started out in the discussion eight lived with both parents, two lived with their grandmother as head of the household and two with their mother as head and no adult male living at home. Seven supported William having a doll, five strongly objected. Those in support said he should have it since he really wants it; it will teach him how to care for his children later and the doll is something for him to hug. The five opposers said a doll is a girl’s toy and since William is a boy he should not play with girls’ toys. They further described him as “ a mama’s boy; sissy; maama man; girl; creep; idiot; battyman (gay).

Based on the descriptions of William I hastened to ask what boys should do to become men. The boys were forthright in their response:

Play with boys toys; learn their lessons; get a good education; don't do girls things [i.e. don't behave like a girl]; go to work; act like a tough, rough nigga; act like a tough kid, like a bad man; look muscular; defend yourself, don't call your mama; walk a certain way [at this point two boys demonstrated walking with an exaggerated swagger, hands in pocket] Don't hug man. This last comment was contested. Five of the boys said it was ok to hug your male friend just do not embrace them like you would a girl. These are things the boys said they learn from television, movies, deejays, people on the road, teacher. Pressed to say what specifically their teacher had told them four boys said: "not to "feel up other men", do not slap other boys on their bottom or let them slap you there. Kemar summed up the influences in a very matter-of-fact way: "what we hear in the community is that we do".

The next question was about their parents' teaching on growing up: "Don't deal with pretty ladies, they have more men" [OC: ...And are therefore likely to be unfaithful]; don't argue with your wife in the presence of your children like my neighbour; use a condom; learn education and become what you want to be; don't fight with bad men; "don't curse and shoot like my uncle."

Their teachers have also taught them such values as independence and the value of a good education. Most of the boys have a preference for female teachers while a minority prefer male teachers. Female teachers are seen as brighter, less strict, male teachers can sexually abuse you and are not as strict. Those who preferred male teachers

on the other hand cited reasons such as: male teachers can take you on field trips and do PE because they have the strength.

Whereas most of the Kingston Primary boys prefer female teachers, they, nearly all admire male personalities in sports (Onandi Lowe, Kobe Bryant), entertainment (Michael Jackson, Fifty Cents, Vybz Kartel) or television personalities (Michael Sharpe, newscaster and Oral Tracey, sports commentator). One boy said the person he admired most was his father.

In relation to school work boys from two classes said boys were more serious about their work while in the other third grade (the one I was observing) it was the girls who were more serious about school work. All representatives agreed however that both boys and girls idled when given work to do. The participants shared at this point the school rule governing their behaviour towards girls: no boy should kick or beat up girls. They consider it unfair because girls get away with beating up boys. Not all boys follow the rule, however. Some retaliate because “your friends will laugh after you if a girl beat you up.”

What do they see men do now that they would want to avoid doing when they become men? Most said they would want to avoid criminal activities, physical abuse of women and harassment of women. One boy was a witness to an attempted rape. On the other hand they would emulate the good work habits, making people happy and one boy wants to act like a gangster (which is more an attitude than gang activities).

In terms of career aspiration they ranged from scientist, pilot, basketballer, carpenter, footballer, soldier to rapper, truck driver and singer. One boy said he would

like to be a nurse and was laughed at until I told the group that there are male nurses. The boys mostly prefer mathematics in school. Two had no particular preference and one preferred spelling because “one word and you done.”

The vast majority (10) of the boys had no duties at home. The others raked the yard, did dishes or tended plants. Three boys worked on weekends only.

I will now turn to the themes running through these six cases and the two group interviews.

### *Themes*

As listed in Chapter 3 several themes emerged from the data collected through interviews with the six boys, from the two focus group interviews and the classroom observations. These themes are education, masculinity, free time, boys at home, relationships, people admired, and influences. Each theme is repeated below with text used to illustrate each:

*Education.* Without exception all the boys spoke about the importance of education to their future economic prospects and as part of what is necessary to become a man. At Kingston Primary they expressed the desire of becoming professional sportsmen, artisans, scientists, truck drivers and musicians. They state that it is a good education that will help them to achieve their ambitions.

However, this belief in education was neither supported by classroom behaviours nor by how they spend their time at home. In class with the exception of Oscar at Kingston Primary and Delroy at Lewiston Primary, these boys as well as many others in their classes, completed very little work. At home, the number one complaint of their parents is the difficulty of getting them to do school work. Even Oscar’s parents have that



difficulty. These boys seem not to believe in doing school work at home. Most of the boys used the time at home to play whether outside or inside (playing electronic games). In addition, Kenroy states quite frankly that he does not like school and would miss nothing if he stopped from school.

This same positive view of education was expressed by boys in both focus groups. They too articulated the economic importance of education and the independence it would give them as men. In one focus group the boys made the point that getting a good education will help them to be able to teach their children. These boys therefore are very aware of the need to get an education. The boys in the rural school had very lofty ambitions of being orthodontists, pilots, engineers, and other high level professionals. Observation of their class work however, revealed with few exceptions a general lack of application to tasks assigned. There was a mix of opinions among the boys as to whether boys work as hard as they can. While there was a majority view that boys worked hard when given assignments in class, many of the boys felt girls worked harder. At both schools it was noted that boys spent far more time off task than their female counterparts. Fieldnotes revealed that generally much of the time allotted for seatwork was taken up in sharpening pencils, going to buy books/pencils, or just loafing. Both boys and girls indulge these activities but boys spent far more time on them than did the girls. For example, on one occasion work was assigned at 9:00 a.m. At 9:30 a.m. eight students had completed the work—only two of whom were boys in a class of more girls than boys (fieldnotes, 4.26.04). On another occasion, two boys played with each other for 30 minutes during a lesson, without the knowledge of the teacher (fieldnotes, 3.12. 04). The

interview with Mrs. Henry also strongly supports the observation that boys idle during work time:

The girls seem to be more interested in what's going on during teaching. The boys, they like to have their (toy) trucks with them, they like to be outside and they like to find other things to do.

Could it be that boys believe in education but not schooling? Is it that they hear adults say education is important so they simply repeat it?

*Masculinity (and gender identity).* Boys' views on masculinity were expressed in their perception of what it means to be a man. On this topic they were unequivocal. To be men meant to be anti-women, that is, boys cannot do "girls' things" if they want to be men. For example, in responding to the introductory story, several boys, albeit a minority, ridiculed William for wanting the doll. They used strong pejoratives to describe him. Some declared quite plainly he cannot be a boy if he wants a girl toy. Physically, to be men, boys are required to be tough, muscular, to practice a certain style of walking; they should be brave, courageous, and strong. These boys associate certain bravado with being masculine. Even if so-called "girls' things" are done it must be manifestly different. For example, in the focus group at Lewiston, boys reluctantly admitted that they have dolls but were quick to point out that theirs were either male dolls or action figures. One boy went as far as shaving the hair off the female doll to give it a male image.

These boys expressed their gender identity when they talked about behaviours. Acting anyway effeminate is frowned on and exposes one to ridicule. In the Kingston

Primary focus group one boy ridiculed his own cousin because sometimes “him gwaan like girl.”

Playtime was also used to parade masculinity. Invariably, boys played by themselves, displayed a higher level of physicality than girls, dominated outdoor play space by the very nature of the games they played and were harsh on girls who unwittingly ventured into ‘their’ space. Observed also was the greater willingness to allow girls to play traditional boys’ games than to accept boys doing the same. On one occasion Kenroy looked on as a group of girls danced inside the classroom and later attempted to join but quickly withdrew no doubt for fear of public censure. When I asked him if he liked the dance and wanted to join he said yes but shrugged his shoulder when I asked him why he did not join.

Masculinity was expressed when boys said they played baby-cricket with girls. This meant it was a watered down version of the game under the guise that girls are not tough enough to play full scale cricket or other “boys’ games” (even after my telling them that there are women cricketers and soccer players). As one boy said he does not play with girls because they cry and scream too easily. Another boy sums up the general sentiments on masculinity: to be a man “you mustn’t play with girls’ toys [and maybe by extension, girls].

Boys also expressed their perception of masculinity by their career choices. Most want to enter fields traditionally dominated by men: orthodontistry, medicine, law, engineering, aviation. One boy was laughed at when he said he wanted to be a nurse. Only after I informed them that there are male nurses, did the laughing subside. At

Lewiston when I asked if anyone would like to be a nurse there was an emphatic shout of no.” Doctor not nurse” they said.

Similarly when asked about the personalities they admire the city boys named big name sport personalities (Kobe Bryant, Onandi Lowe, Allan Iverson) male entertainers (Vybz Kartel, Elephant Man, Fifty Cents, Michael Jackson who was criticized for acting like a girl) or other male television personalities (Allan Magnus popular radio disc jockey, and Oral Tracey, sports commentator). Rural boys overwhelmingly chose the church pastor as the person they admire. Not one boy except Delroy Haynes chose a female as someone they admire. This was so despite the boys observing that female teachers are brighter and girls are more serious about school work.

Other instances of gender identity included boys’ happiness at being boys. In asking the question I got the impression that some of the boys might have been saying to themselves ‘why do you even ask?’ Their faces all lit up when I asked and their reason for being happy revealed much: “If I were a girl and asked the boys if I can play cricket they would say no, you’re a girl; girls are taken advantage of; girls are immature; they are annoying; they like to follow up things. Being a boy/male seems to have clear advantages.

*Free Time.* Free time can be a break or lunch time at school or unassigned time at home or school. Weekends for example presents a big chunk of free time. Without exception free time at home or school is spent playing or watching television. Corey, because he has neither neighbourhood children nor siblings with whom to play, occasionally does gardening with his father. He also plays with his father and on Sundays

he sometimes accompanies his father to the neighbouring sports club where he gets a chance to play with children who have been similarly brought there. The other boys play with siblings, relatives, neighbours or by themselves. The boys' parents (except Corey's) all tell of the struggle they have to get them to do school work at home. At least one boy (Jermaine) sometimes plays for a whole day on Saturdays. Delroy does not get that privilege. He is often found at the family business on a Saturday helping however he can. This is also done to keep him under the watchful eyes of his parents. Kenroy uses some of his free time to attend karate classes and soccer training at his church. Typical of other mothers, to introduce school work at home is begging for trouble, Jermaine's mother says. Unless she insists he will not "take up a book." Even Oscar the conscientious shuns doing academic work at home. As his mom says "To tell him to take up a book and study is like you telling him bad word...only if him get homework and even then you have to down on him." These boys seem to believe that school work should be just that—school work. The truth is some do no better at school. Based upon fieldnotes, these boys spend all their free time at school playing. It is not unusual for one or two boys to return to class late after a break because they have been playing. Oscar never plays at school. Not even during a one-off physical education lesson where a game of soccer was played. His routine is to, at break, go to the bathroom, return to the classroom, have his snack. At lunch time a similar practice is observed. Back in the classroom he sits and watches others, mostly girls, play inside. When it is remembered that most of these boys have no duties at home it gives an idea of how much time they probably spend playing or watching television.

*At home.* This theme explores what the boys do at home as reported by them or their parents. Most parents wished their sons would do more school work at home. The notable exception is Corey's parents, the Edmonds. Whether because they both have had long term, tertiary level education or because they are ultra-religious or because Corey has no one to play with it is hard to tell but his parents are satisfied with his work. Their only complaint is his incessant chatting as reported by teachers. His grades are outstanding despite his chatting.

Many of the boys seem to be very helpful at home, some even wanting to indulge in stereotypical girls' things. For example, Oscar is eager to help his mom with the cooking but she won't allow that because he is too young; Oscar has no real duties although he is expected to keep the yard clean and he helps his father to wash the car sometimes. Corey is helpful to the point of destroying plants in the vegetable garden. His father says he has his own machete and sometimes uses it to cut the wrong plants. As far as duties go Corey is only required to make his bed, keep his shoes clean, and empty the chamber pot he uses at nights. Delroy too, is willing to help: he sweeps the house and does the dishes which his mom reluctantly let him do before she goes back over them to ensure they are clean. Jermaine likes to help but spends little time doing the dishes to the point where his mother no longer lets him do them. Kenroy has birds to care for but he spends as little time as possible at home once his parents have left. He talks his grandmother into allowing him to go and play. Not even his older brother, three years his senior can get him to conform because he does not accept his brother's authority. Chester is responsible for watering the flower plants but it is often done for him by his aunt or someone else. He

is forbidden from playing with the neighbourhood children because they are constantly blaming him for things which go wrong. He therefore spends his time at home either sulking or passing the time with his younger cousin.

Most parents report their participation in religious activity on a weekly basis whether it be church-going or attendance at Kingdom Hall as in Corey's case. All the families are religious. In fact preparing for the following day's meeting at the Kingdom Hall is an integral part of Corey's Saturday activities. The Edmonds are devout Jehovah's Witnesses. Oscar, Delroy, and Kenroy too must attend church on a Saturday and Sunday respectively. Jermaine and Chester also attend church but not as frequently as the others.

*Relationships.* Under this theme my young participants talk about their relationships with their parents and teachers and their parents talk about their perspective of the parent-child relationship. All except one of the six boys live with their dad. Jermaine does not but visits from time to time. Chester does not live with his mother but also visits occasionally. Corey spends much time with his father on weekends: they play together, work in their garden together, and study (religious material) together and the entire family goes to meetings on Sundays. He has a strong preference for male teachers although he has never been taught by one (except briefly when I took the class in the teacher's absence. Jermaine does not get along well with his mother's live-in boyfriend. Jermaine is mostly afraid of him. He handles Jermaine roughly and constantly wants his mother to punish him harshly "because a bwoy pickney". Christene, Jermaine's mom says Robert, her partner

Doesn't know how to deal with children. He's from Kingston inner-city and you

know how they behave. They have some words that they use. I told him I don't like it [the way he speaks to Jermaine]. Nobody (else) talks to him that way. So I realize that Jermaine doesn't like it and because of that when he's around, Jermaine no really come hug me. He stays far from me (Int.CB-5-19-04).

She does report however, that one day the two men were left at home and upon her return Jermaine reported that they had "a really good time." Jermaine loves his mother and often expresses it "Mummy you know me love you though." He compliments her when the meal is tasty. He attributes what he knows about growing up to his mother and third grade teacher. He like most of the other boys prefers female teachers. Jermaine's father has not been supporting him financially. This distresses his mom:

Things are really hard with me. I have NOBODY [her emphasis] helping me with him. Believe mi. Mi cant call him fada [father] and say 'Jermaine sick, mi want a money fi carry him go doctor.' Him a go tell mi say him don't have it. Some a di time fi months him no si Jermaine and when him see Jermaine, \$300. no more than that him naw give him.

Whenever Jermaine visits dad who is a mechanic, sometimes play basketball with him, they watch television together and he helps Jermaine to repair his bicycle when necessary. Jermaine also has friends at school. Jevlon is his best friend but they are not allowed to sit together. He does not like girls.

Kenroy lives with his parents, an older brother, aunt, uncle, cousin, and grandmother. He was not initially welcomed warmly by his older brother who considered him "a nuisance". They play together but the relationship is still quite rocky. Kemar, the



older son accuses mom of favouring Kenroy. Mrs. Francis, his mother says Kenroy cares more for Kemar than the reverse. “Not that Kemar don’t love him but Kemar consider him fatiguing.” Kemar is the standard by which Kenroy is judged. Mother makes comments such as:

When Kemar was his age he was firin’ away at his work...some things that Kenroy does, Kemar wouldn’t do it... he (Kenroy) will climb a tree, go on the housetop, Kemar not doin’ that. Kenroy has had to tell his mother not to compare them because “seven children, seven different minds.

Mother and son have a good relationship. The same is not true with father who in recent times has had to be away from home because of job demands. Kenroy can only remember one occasion when they went out together. He prefers his mom because she is warmer and less strict. Daddy beats him if he fails to obey his orders. Mom on the other hand will allow him to argue his way out of situations. Dad was the first to respond to the request for an interview and was expected to attend until circumstances changed his plan.

Kenroy does not like school and does not like his third grade teacher either. He accuses her of bias against the boys. He does not participate in class discussions voluntarily. He has told his parents the teacher only puts on a show when they visit. This is unlike his attitude towards his first grade teacher whom he regards as a teacher and a mother.

Delroy like Kenroy has an older brother attending high school. Like Kenroy too he lives with his parents but shares the yard with an extended family. His parents have put aside their disappointment of not getting a girl the second time around and have poured

their energies into their two boys. They are both proud of Delroy's grasp of video games technology and mother likes the way he is helpful at home. The parents try to keep the family together with mother admonishing the boys to love each other and to be disciplined. Mother does not hesitate to show her love to Delroy and his brother: "I love to sweet them up, kiss them up and cuddle them up...I love them." Nesta too shows his affection: "me love him man, love him. No morning don't pass I don't warn him and tell him to stay out of trouble, trouble walk in your way, walk out of it, come give me a hug, give me a ding." Mr. Haynes regrets he has not been spending time with his son and admits that Delroy does not share with him freely. That was brought home to him forcibly when Delroy was involved in a fight and was beaten up but said nothing to either parent about it. Only after other children told him did he know. He tries to be open with his sons telling them to avoid certain types of persons on the road. The greatest dissatisfaction these parents share is that Buddy (Delroy's nickname) does not spend more time with his book. Other parents share those sentiments.

Chester Gutzmore lives with his aunt (who is his primary caregiver), his aunt's live-in boyfriend, his father and his four year old female cousin. When his grandmother comes for holidays from overseas she stays with them. Although his mother lives a stone's throw from where he lives he does not go there very often. Chester's aunt has very little regard for her nephew's mother and his father thinks the mother has brainwashed Chester against him. It is complicated. It was long after the child was born that the family knew about Chester. Once Sandra (the aunt) learnt about him however she insisted that her brother take him from his mother although she was in high school: "I told his father 'if

you don't want the responsibility, he's your son and my nephew and if I take him and you don't want to help me that is your business." They took him and that began the shifting game between the two homes. He would go back and forth "lang lang from Chevy bawn Chevy jus box round. Chevy deh dung yah, him deh up deh; im madda naw show im nutten, she lef and she gawn..." (Int.SG/GG5-16).

The constant shifting has no doubt impacted his inter-personal relationships. His grandmother says at home he cries a lot. There is even a concern that he may be suffering from emotional abuse. According to his grandmother, "Everybody jus take him like a toy. Everybody shouts at him 'boy shut up and go sit down'...sometimes he sits down as if no one loves him, he feels rejected by his mother, only we show him love."

His grandmother and aunt cry when they talk about him. Chester's father now wishes that someone else were the mother of his son. He and his relatives blame the mother for Chester's current state of underachievement. She is cast as irresponsible, carefree, and as someone who should not be blessed with children.

The two women taking care of him also blame his father for his behaviour.

Following is an excerpt from the interview with the two women. (SG, the aunt; GG, the grandmother; C, Interviewer):

SG: A'right between his motha and fatha. Him have tings from school, an him rather come to me, him ratha ask me. Mi seh Chester, mi naw say yuh noh fi ask mi yuh noh, but yuh modda, yuh have a modda and yuh have a fada

C: Tell me about his relationship with his father though

GG: His father is a very nice, nice, nice, nice person

C: Cool. You not saying it because he's your son?

SG: No

[C laughs]

GG: I do tink

SG [talking over GG]: Maybe dem want get closer but, him try fi put himself, yuh see if him did close like mi?

GG: Like somebody not pushing him

SG: Yuh see if him did closer to Chester like me?

C: Right

SG: Maybe him woulda have a betta relationship

C: Uh, uh

SG: Him wi carry him go school, see to it dat him go school, see to it dat him come home, sometime him wi help him wid him homework.

C: Ok

SG: But him need fi pu' dung, lef' some a di tings dem what outta road an' focus pon Chevy

GG: If is even a hour

SG: Even two hour, focus pon Chevy, fi'get everyting an jus focus pon Chevy. Me alone, cause mi cant gi him two, an' den come back an' give Alya two an mi in a de shop same way.

The relationship between Chester and his aunt's boyfriend (Peter) is better than that between Chester and his father (Rohan):

*Yu si my boyfriend? Him is a father to Chevy. Peter scold him. ...when him a go basic school is Peter teach him to spell his name. There is some things he would say to Peter dat him would never say to his father. If him come fi choose between him fada an Peter, cause Peter would a spen more time wid him, homework an soh, it would be a balance. Him would a say sometings a him fada an some is Peter.*

Rohan admits he could do more: “*To be honest me could do more, talk to him more and be around him more.*” Chester plays on a football team coached by his father.

At school his social behaviour is a challenge to his teacher. He is seen as a bully. She gives him special attention: sitting beside him, hugging him, playing with him even after he has just disobeyed the rule not to shout the answers. She even sometimes ignores his anti-social behaviours. Once when he was caught misbehaving the teacher put him to stand at the door. He went outside to walk about. Upon his return the teacher sent him to another class as a time-out procedure. He likes his teacher describing her as kind, gentle, and loving. He says he admires kind people, his aunt and grandmother among them.

Oscar is the eldest son of the Grahams. His younger brother is four years his junior. He was the pride and joy of his parents when he was born. His mother was relieved when it was announced it was a son because “it was a son the father wanted long time ago...to carry on the family name. For his part Mr. Graham said

It is always the thinking of most fathers to get a son right at the first

Instance...when Oscar came into being it was a bundle of joy for me, very wonderful, excited. I was like then a man. I was very excited about being a father at age 34.

They have liked their son since then. And by all accounts he has mad them happy. He has proven to be helpful at home and according to his mom as a “very loving child sometimes he will say some things and you have to smile and hug him.” Father has his own reason to be impressed: From time to time when either of his parents is not doing well he would “put his hands on (them) and pray nice, solid, good prayers for them.” On another occasion after his father’s car had been totalled and he felt depressed, Oscar prayed so well on his behalf it brought tears to his father’s eyes. He chooses his friends very carefully. He prefers friends who are smart and sees no boy in his third grade class who measures up. His best friend is a boy at another school whom he regards as VERY, VERY, VERY (his emphasis) smart. He chose a girl as his partner in class. He gets along well with his classmates even someone like Chester. When he started attending Kingston Primary coming from another school, Gutzmore used to pick on him. He could not fight in those early days but one day he was so overwhelmed he “became mad, turned red, red, red” had another fight with Chester and gained his respect. Gutzmore still teases him but the relationship is much more harmonious these days.

He does not like the idea of abusing women. Sometimes his “father curses my mother” and that upsets him. He has acted as the conscience of his father on at least one occasion. His father relates the incident when Mrs. Graham should have met him and the boys at a particular time and location. Mr. Graham became visibly upset when the time had passed and Mrs. Graham had not turned up. She came later. As she approached, Oscar knowing of his father’s tendency to curse begged “noh badda quarrel now yuh know Daddy. Mr Graham said he had no choice but to yield to the request. Despite the

flaw in his father, Oscar admires everything his father does. He “hopes he lives to marry” but he would not curse his wife lest he “scares her away.” He prefers female teachers because “they beat less.” He believes in ‘Ladies before gentlemen’ as his teacher has taught him.

Mr. Graham is not satisfied with the relationship between himself and his sons. Operating a taxi can be time-consuming. Mr. Graham, however has reorganized his schedule to stay with his boys once he picks them up at about 3:30 p.m. each school day. He then stays with them at home. On Saturdays the whole family goes to church together.

*Influences.* Who are the influences in these boys’ lives? The answers they gave were elicited by two questions: who is teaching you about growing up? And who are the people on television, radio, at your church, at home, school or in the community that you admire?

The boys gave a wide range of persons and personalities for persons they admire: father, pastor, television personalities (Oral Tracey, sports commentator, Michael Sharpe, newscaster), radio disc jockey (Allan Magnus), sports personalities (Onandi Lowe, soccer player; Allan Iverson and Kobe Bryant, basketballers) movie actors (Jackie Chan), and entertainers (Fifty Cents, Vybze Kartel, Bow Wow, Elephant Man, Beenie Man). Those teaching them about growing up include: parents, friend, teachers and television and popular culture. One boy encapsulated the influences very well when he *said* “what we see and hear in the community a dat we do.”

In the preceding paragraphs boys and (to a lesser extent) parents have expressed and shared their perspectives on a number of issues in this study. These will be revisited later. The teachers will now have their turn to speak.

### *The Teachers' Story*

*Patricia Henry.* Patricia Henry took the long way to get where she is today. She may aptly be described as the girl from the hills. In Jamaica she would also be described as the 'wash-belly' for her parents—the last child. Her older siblings are all boys and they grew up in deep rural Jamaica where she started teaching as a teenager at a preschool. In those days teaching at such a school was done by women who completed secondary school but did not have the qualifications to enter tertiary education. From the preschool she moved to her community elementary school to work as an uncertified teacher. After a stint there she moved with her family to live in Lewiston and got a job at her current elementary school where she spent six years as an uncertified teacher. At the end of those six years government regulations forced her to either get certified or leave the classroom. She had always loved teaching she says so she decided “to go to college.” However, because she did not have the requisite academic qualifications she had to enrol in a developmental program before entering the three year diploma program for teachers. Despite specializing in home economics during her studies, upon completion of her training she returned to Lewiston Primary. The fact that she is secondary certified has not made a difference in her teaching because “I taught in the system before I went to college” she says.



The current administration is not particularly impressed with her performance as a teacher. Patricia is aware of that and it makes her suspicious of visitors to her classroom. She tries her best to make you leave with a favourable impression of her teaching abilities. In addition she wants the visitor to remember her class “as a good set, students who are obedient to teacher and disciplined to a level, (and generally) as a good class. I want you to have good to say about us” (IntPH-18-5). She laughs when she says the last sentence. Discipline is the cornerstone of her teaching philosophy. Although she describes her students as “a lovely bunch” she says in almost the same breath that she has “to be very stern and firm” with them. She wants her students to comply with her instructions and commands. She is most dissatisfied when you speak to them and they don’t hear you and you have to say something over and over again. And especially if somebody’s there it makes you feel as if you can’t manage. And that makes you feel really upset to the point of inflicting punishment (IntPH-18-5).

Several times during the five weeks’ stay with her I witnessed her “inflicting punishment” for students’ failure to comply. In fact, the strap is often brandished as a symbol of control (Fieldnotes). Several times also she was observed changing the seating arrangement in order to better *control* her class. As a rule same gender children are not allowed to sit beside each other even when sharing the same combination desk and bench. The girls hate having to sit between two boys but they are also the first to complain if they see two boys sitting beside each other (Fieldnotes). She gives conflicting reasons for this seating arrangement. When she was first asked she said

Sometimes the girls are afraid to sit next to the boys. The boys maybe don't mind but the girls are shy and I think we live in a modern society and I don't think girls should be shying away from the boys. And to make them to be friends and live together in unity I place the boys between the girls so they can interact (IntPH-18-5).

Later she gives another reason for the arrangement:

Because they talk a lot, when they become friendly with each other I try to put them with somebody they are not friendly with to see if that will keep them from talking....

Despite her anxiety over good behaviour, she describes her students as loving and kind to her, some will even cry if she has to be away from the class for a long time, she says.

Evidence of their kindness could be seen during several recess breaks: students would offer her cakes, candy, and other confectionery items. Even the boys whom she admits are punished harder than the girls "love me. Sometimes they kiss me and bring me presents."

Patricia loves her students too. She says she even takes them as her own and really wants them to improve their behaviour. Jermaine can attest to this. He was the most called-upon student during the five weeks. When his mother wrote crying out for help Mrs. Henry "got on his case" about his social behaviour and his work. At least one parent commented on the work Mrs. Henry has been doing with her son. Andrea Martin speaking about the improvement her son Delroy has shown, has high praise for her :  
Everyday I say God you must send this teacher named Mrs. Henry to me because she really and truly go all out with him (IntAM-28-5).

Being proper is very important to her. Ask her about her expectations of the 21 girls and 23 boys in her class and she will tell you she expects the boys “to be nice to the girls, to treat them good, treat their teachers good too [laughs] and I expect them to be obedient and to work. She wants the girls likewise to be good young ladies and starting from what we instil here (at school), they (should) begin to learn from this place and get good qualities from here then later on in life they will become good mothers and good models at home and in society.

She describes the girls in her class as loving, playful and as having a good work attitude (most of them). On the other hand boys were described as stubborn and difficult, having the energy to give a lot of trouble, although some were seen as being gentle and nice. Boys are more likely than girls to be sent outside as punishment and they are sent on errands more often than the girls (fieldnotes).

Most of her top students, she says, are girls. This she explains:  
The girls seem to be more interested in what’s going on during teaching. The boys, they like to have their trucks with them, they like to be outside and they like to find other things to do. ...For example, when they [should be coming] in [from lunch] in the afternoons you find them wanting to be on the outside. They like to explore, they are very adventurous. They want to climb, jump, run, swim, and do all kinds of fun things. Girls are more interested in what’s going on.

The girls, according to Patricia, like language arts and they like to spell while the boys seem to do better at mathematics than at language arts. Most of the boys in her class have difficulties in their reading, only a handful of girls do (Fieldnotes). She was also

able to pinpoint one boy whom she thinks will be a great scientist one day and another who does very well at math although he does not read well. Generally speaking however, the girls are better academically.

Reflecting on her days as a student, Patricia remembers that boys were punished harshly and she has tried to avoid the brutality in her own treatment of boys. She believes in the equality of the sexes: boys and girls should be given the same treatment and boys and girls should be brought up the same way. She cites as example of equal treatment the way duties are shared in her classroom: “everybody works. Boys sweep, girls sweep, boys bring in water, girls bring in water, girls wash the basin, boys wash the basin” (Int.). From observation, her claim can be supported—both boys and girls do clean up the classroom but in fifteen half days of observation, fetching water and washing the basin seemed reserve for Corey and Foster. They were the only two students that cleaned the basin and brought in water (fieldnotes). Water is brought in each day for the washing of hands especially the teacher’s. This water is brought from downstairs and to get to the classroom students have to negotiate two flights of stairs. On more than one occasion these boys have got wet because they put too much water in the basin. It spills on the way up the stairs. They also spend a long time outside to do this, oftentimes even while lessons are in session.

Although Patricia Henry believes boys and girls should be treated equally and brought up similarly, she would laugh if a boy in her class were to take a doll to school. She would “*consider it a little strange.*” Having laughed however, she would allow him to keep it. On the other hand, she would see nothing strange if a girl were to turn up with

a toy truck. Boys at this school, like Jermaine think that boys should have nothing to do with a doll. In fact, while many admit to having a doll they are quick to point out that it is a male doll, an action figure or in the case of one boy's doll, the head is shorn to make it a male figure.

Although Patricia says firmness and sternness are necessary to keep students in check, boys in this class have been seen returning from lunch and recess break up to ten minutes after the scheduled end but have never been asked to account for their time outside. In the classroom they take an inordinately long time sometimes to get their work done having gone through the ritual of getting a new pencil each day and sharpening it just when the work is assigned. Girls are guilty of this too but far less than the boys are (fieldnotes).

Patricia believes boys and girls should be brought up similarly: for example, both boys and girls should do house work. Boys should be socialized to be strong physically and emotionally. She laughs however when asked if it is okay for a man/boy to cry. She thinks it is fine for men to cry because when they do not they "sometimes hide up these things inside and sometimes you hear men die from heart attacks. They need to express themselves just like anybody else."

Patricia loves the students she has in her class. She is satisfied that she is doing her best and trying her hardest to help them learn. In that same breath she does admit that the boys would rather be outside sometimes doing more physical activities: they like to explore, they are very adventurous. They want to climb, run, jump, swim and do all kinds of fun things." In five weeks of observation only once were the students taken outside

and that was initiated by me. Keen interest was shown in the activity but the period was abbreviated by rain.

*Arlene Williams.* Arlene is a PK—the term used in some circles for preacher’s kid. The nature of her father’s work made the family of eight an itinerant family. They were constantly moving house, each time forcing Arlene to make new friends and turn her back on the ones she left at her last address. Being the daughter of a minister of religion meant she was no ordinary kid:

Well being a pastor’s daughter, sometimes I find you tend to get a lot of pressure because you are expected to do or to be perfect in the eyes of people who are looking on for respect. So you had to be on the street and trying to do the correct thing so that you parents would feel good about you if they should hear something about you.

She has no regrets about being brought up that way. She relished the experience: I found it a good experience; I never ever had a problem. I wasn’t a disobedient child, a bad child and I had a good relationship with my parents, I had a good relationship.

In fact she was her father’s favourite child up until his death 10 years ago. Her family life in the early years was stable despite having to move around the country. She speaks with a sparkle in her eyes about the love and care at home and the opportunity she and her siblings had to express themselves on family matters during the weekly family meetings.

Several of her relatives are teachers so it did not surprise the family when she decided she would enter teaching. She however was driven to enter by more than just the family tradition. Two experiences she had at school convinced her to do so. In first grade she hated school because of her teacher’s harsh punishment:

I cannot ever, ever forget that grade one class that I was in. and I was afraid of that teacher. Everyday I was afraid to go to school because I know that I was going to be spanked, and I thought probably that I was doing something wrong but she drove so much fear in me, everyday I would sit in that class and wet myself up.

At that stage I wasn't thinking about what I wanted to be until when I went to secondary school and I had another experience with another teacher at grade nine and at that time, I didn't do the Common Entrance so I went to a secondary school.

Her teacher then was much like her first grade teacher:

It's as if, if you can't do this thing you are considered to be a dumb person, very dumb.

And I think the negative things that those teachers brought in my life forced me into wanting to become a teacher because I wanted people who did not have the opportunity to have the experience of going to the so-called traditional high school not to think themselves less of any person, anybody, yuh noh? They are humans and they must be given the same opportunity as any other child and that was my sole reason for going into teaching.

After college her first teaching assignment was with a class of 60 students—58 boys and 2 girls. These were children labelled as remedial and whom no other teacher wanted. As Arlene explains it, if she had to be absent from school the students were left on their own. They were considered a handful by the other teachers. She admits it was a rocky start to her career but she persevered, established a good relationship with the boys and their parents and now considers that year her best of the seven years she has had in the classroom.

Miss Williams' teaching philosophy emphasizes social development. She says it is not just about academics because students need to learn how to behave in settings where there are no teachers. Her seating arrangement does not emphasize social interaction however. Students are put in academic groups. She admits that arrangement does not work for some students. Some groups do very little work. She wants to try putting the students in mixed groups so that those with poor work ethics can learn from the more diligent students. Asked what she likes about her current students she mutters something inaudible, sighs, then chuckles before saying she has a better relationship with them outside of class than in class. She says they are also, most of them, willing to work. Her dissatisfaction with the class is about their social behaviour—they spend much of their work time walking around the classroom. The boys are the main offenders. Arlene explains that the previous teacher held the class together with an iron hand and now that she has removed the “shackles” some students interpret it as a freedom without responsibility. Her response to the behaviour is to ignore it “because (she does not) want them to feel imprisoned.” Observation of her classes confirms her interview response. Boys in particular were allowed to walk around the classroom aimlessly. Miss Williams says she has a special place in her heart for them:

I have a better relationship with boys [chuckle]. I don't know why. I tend to sit more with them, I guess because as I said to you earlier on that sometimes they tend to be left behind and the girls are always being pushed to the front and so I try to stick more with my boys than my girls.



As a student she felt the girls were always the ones getting the academic push. By her own admission the girls seem aware of the preferential treatment given to the boys and have asked her if she loves them. She tries to assure them that she does but they often tell her she does not discipline the boys when they transgress. She argues however that she disciplines the boys more often than she does the girls because she “doesn’t have much of a problem with the girls.” She describes the girls in her class as very warm, friendly to each other, although there are times when they hit out at each other. The boys on the other hand are described as the opposite: not so friendly sometimes, boisterous, energetic, and talkative. She also describes them as being very harsh with females and so she encourages them to take care of the girls, that is, they should refrain from hitting them. Interestingly, the boys in the focus group felt the girls were allowed to beat up on them without sanctions: no boy should kick or beat up girls (however) girls beat up boys and that’s not fair. Miss Williams says she instituted the rule to prevent the boys from becoming abusers when they grow up.

Miss Williams confirmed my observation that the boys in her third grade class struggle academically because their reading skills are below par. She believes that “teachers need to find creative ways and means” of getting through to boys. For example they need to find out what they like and teach them other things through their interests. “I find that they are turned off easily if you tend to have lots of discussion, they want to be doing things, generally they are very curious and they query a lot.” she says of boys. I did not observe any attempt by her to teach boys through their interests. For the period I was there not one prolonged hands-on activity was done. The exception to this

observation might have been the following PE lesson which was the only one while I visited. It did not go well:

3. 19. 04

1:00 p.m.

P.E. [Physical Education) [19 girls, 18 boys]

T. (Teacher) announces that it is time for PE. Screaming from the class; boys take the balls and the cones. They start playing with the balls inside the classroom. Upon instructions from T they form separate lines for boys and girls and walk across to the playfield.

Warm-up exercises.

1:20 p.m.

T: Get a partner

[Ss run around chasing others they want as partners. Eventually gender partnerships are formed] T. explains that partnerships could be boy/boy, girl/girl or girl/boy. No changes are made to partnerships.

T; Link arms with your partner. [Ss link arms back to back and start lifting each other. T stops them].

T: I did not tell you to lift. All I asked was for you to link arms with your partner..

She demonstrates the exercise she wants them to do. They do the exercise.

Skill Development

T: Move around without touching anyone. [Ss move but with much contact. They do it again with more success. T explains general space then personal space].

T: We're gonna have a game. Boys against girls. Get in two lines. [Excitement and a rush to get to the head of the lines. T. gives instructions on what to do but there is confusion. She goes to show the boys how it is to be done. In the meantime, girls run around and play with the ball given to their "team"].

1:40 p.m.

T. shows girls what to do. They fail to get it right. In the mean time the boys kick around their ball until the teacher takes it away.

1:43 p.m.

The game begins. Neither team has it right. The boys shout out that they want football (soccer), 8 of them move from the main group and start playing with one of the balls.

The "game" is abandoned.

T introduces a game of throwing and catching. Screaming and wild throwing, running around.

1:50 p.m.

T changes the game again. Football. Boys vs. Girls

There is no organization. Teams are all over the field. Some students do not join. Kenroy and Chester lead the other boys in a wild chase to get the ball. Oscar does not play and many of the girls are obviously afraid of the boys as they charge towards the ball.

As the order deteriorates T brings the game to a halt. She says to me "They're wild"

2:00 p.m.

End.

Boys enjoyed the “wild” outdoors. Girls on the other hand seem comfortable with the indoors. They are able to cope. Many more girls than boys are among her top students. She lets her students know from time to time what her expectations of them are and she emphasizes the importance of education. Knowing of their socio-economic background she encourages them to take advantage of the learning and educational opportunities they get even if they do not see the importance of what they are now learning. She wants them to enjoy learning and not have to be forced to work. During the five week period of observation she introduced “Boy of the Day” and “Girl of the Day”—a motivational scheme for the class. Despite being reminded by the boys sometimes, it was not sustained because Miss Williams often forgot to select winners at the end of each day. It was eventually abandoned exactly a week after but not before one boy told me how proud he was to have been selected as Boy of the Day [fieldnotes].

When asked how she thought girls should be brought up Miss Williams laughs, then after a long reflective pause she talks about how she draws from her experience as a child growing up. From a tender age her mother made her and her sisters do duties that “women normally do.” For example, girls should be required to wash some of their own clothes. She also thinks that like she was, girls should be taught about sex, marriage, how to “value yourself as a woman.” Arlene believes these things should also be part of the schools’ curriculum and that teachers should socialize girls in the same way they would socialize their own daughters. Like girls, boys should be given duties at home which will help them to be more responsible even at school: “I realize that they are not given any sort of responsibility at home... they should start getting, having duties to perform and I

think that will help them even at school where they must be responsible.” She believes boys and girls can and should be assigned the same duties. None is reserved for either boys or girls. In her classroom I noted boys cleaning the room on several occasions while girls went about playing. In fact one day she intervened and announced that the girls should clean the room that day [fieldnotes].

Miss Williams uses Bible characters to teach her students how to behave in class. This is a direct influence of her Christian upbringing. Students are expected to listen to the stories from the Bible and then apply the morals to their lives in school.

She laughs at the mention of a boy taking a doll to school. She struggles to give a response. Later she says although it would be strange to see a male with a doll, she would see it just as another toy. She would ask him however, why he brought it to school and what is it used for. When asked what would be her reaction if a girl takes a truck to school as a toy she says without hesitation that it would be no big thing. It is just another toy.

Arlene Williams proclaims a special love for boys. In her classroom it was not evident. She allowed too many of them to get away with doing very little work. There was no evidence of expectations being set and sanctions applied when they were not met. She laments the fact that some teachers give boys the impression that giving trouble and not paying attention in class are acceptable behaviours. For her this is not the way to go about it. If you are teaching a lesson you have to draw their attention. You have to call on them and allow them to be active participants in their learning experience. You call on

them, you ask them questions. So if a boy has lost focus you try to draw back their attention to whatever is happening in the class setting.

Her class setting shows children sitting in academic and gender groups mostly. That is, because most of the boys are on the same academic level invariably they sit with other boys and girls likewise. Only a handful of mixed seating can be seen. There was very little evidence of students being paired to have the stronger student helping a weaker one—a seating arrangements Miss Williams espouses. Oscar sits with his female partner and one other girl, all of whom showed they are capable of independent work. Chester also sits with two girls while Kenroy sits with his friend neither of whom is able to help the other. Attendance among the 23 boys and 21 girls is very good and only falls off significantly if Miss Williams “should tell them I am *giving a test*.”

Her teaching style is very traditional. She is the sage on the stage. Students have to stop working when she says so and work when she tells them. Because of that approach some students do no work outside of class time. Miss Williams will give individual attention to students every now and then. One day for example, she put the students to work in groups (according to where they were seated). Within a fifteen minute span of time she visited Kenroy’s group four times [fieldnotes]. She did not do it for any other group which prompted me to ask if she was doing this because she knew I was observing the boys. It did not happen again. Only Chester gets her attention consistently. It is also not unusual for boys to misbehave during class time and are either not seen or ignored. Rarely does this teacher shout at the students. She repeats nearly every instruction before the students respond but never shouts. I observed her class being disrupted on several

occasions. The following is an excerpt from my fieldnotes showing how one class dragged on and was interrupted often.

10:05 a.m.

Resumption of class. T writes “Integrated Studies” on c/b. Focus question: Why is it important that we relate to other countries of the world?

10:10 a.m.

Students copy what the teacher has written on c/b

10: 18 a.m.

Some students are still copying. Teacher asks the class “What connections do we have with other countries?” Only a few students are responding. Many are doing their own thing: chatting mostly, looking in books, looking outside, or just resting heads on the desks.

10:23 a.m.

Chester and Denroy have covered their palms with glue which they peel off as it dries. T asks Chester. To return to “his seat” [She obviously had not put him in the current seat] T asks the class to sing “Its love that makes the world go ‘round” The 2<sup>nd</sup> part of this song “God’s love is free so pass it on to everyone” is accompanied by touching, demonstrating “passing it on”. Although boys and girls were standing beside each other only girls “passed it on” and only to other girls. Boys sang only.

10: 30 a.m.

Chester is seen outside hiding behind door.

10:33 a.m.

T tells Chester to return to his seat. He complies but quickly moves to another seat from where he crawls under the seat, stands up, shouts an answer [the rule is ‘no shouting, raise your hand’] after which he crawls again, this time under three benches back to his assigned seat.

10:44 a.m.

T: How many of you would like to be left alone at home?

Students are shouting their responses. Chester has put more glue on his palm, taking it from the teacher’s desk where it was put after being taken from him. More shouting. T stands in silence

T: Denroy I am waiting on you. (shouting) Garnett! [OC: T seems to be losing her patience]

Class quiets down.

T (going back to lesson): Now whether you like it (being left alone) or not that would not be a good experience for you. Now on Friday I asked you to collect some labels. Take them out now without talking.

Ss take out labels and start comparing. Some boys snatch labels from neighbours.

Denroy repeatedly shouts” Miss, I need more labels”. T ignores him.

10:55 a.m.

Ss are asked to read the labels to determine where the product was made.

Chester returns to the seat he was in at the start of the day.

11 a.m.



Girl calls to me to show me she is pushing a boy off the seat [this is a regular offence in the class]. The boy is smiling about it.

Chester stands in the doorway, complains about being teased by a girl.

11:10 a.m.

T: Take out your book for me.

T draws an outline map of Jamaica on c/b. Ss asked to draw map [its not clear what else is to be done]

11:17 a.m.

Students told to paste labels on map outline according to where product is produced.

Miss Williams does not apply sanctions consistently. Students for example constantly shout the answers to questions although there is a rule against the shouting of answers. No sanctions are applied. Denroy and Chester were threatened with losing their break time if they failed to produce work. At break time however, they left the room without so much as being asked to show their work. Students like her.

#### *Emergent Themes from Teachers*

In arriving at themes from these two cases I followed the same procedure as in arriving at themes from the boys' data (see p. 77-78). Consequently the following themes were arrived at:

- a. Boys and Girls in School
- b. Expectations of Boys
- c. Philosophy of Teaching
- d. Entry to Teaching

- e. Influences on Teaching
- f. Relationships with Boys
- g. Teachers' Role(s)
- h. Gender Beliefs
- i. Socialization of Boys and Girls

*Boys and girls at school.* The girls are the top students in both of these classes. They distinguish themselves through a higher level of participation, by being outspoken, they are more aware of what is happening around them and they make an effort to do assigned work. Only a handful of boys are among this set of students. Boys are held back by their inability to read. They prefer Math but even here if the problem is a story problem they struggle because of their poor reading. Fieldnotes reveal that more than half the boys in Miss Williams' class are in the bottom reading group. Only one girl is in that group. Boys prefer the outdoors where they can display their physicality." "Girls are more interested in what is going on (inside).

They are turned off easily if you tend to have lots of discussion. They want to be doing something... they are curious and they query a lot. If we want them to be successful we have to find ways and means of bringing them, pulling them towards this learning. We cant leave it up to them... we have to help them as teachers because if given the opportunity they would do exactly what they want so we have to come up with creative ways and means.

*Expectations of boys.* Patricia emphasises social behaviours: they should be nice to the girls, treat them good, treat their teacher good (sic); to be obedient and to work. Miss

Williams stresses the long-term importance of learning. This she communicates to the boys sometimes on a Thursday instead of sending them to their various clubs. Mrs. Henry on the other hand says she tells the boys her expectations every morning before lessons begin.

*Philosophy of teaching.* Mrs. Henry values obedience and conformity. She wants her student to be obedient to her, to be disciplined. She also wants to know that they learn what she is teaching, “I don’t like to go and then when I teach and ask for responses I get one or two hands, I like to know that my children grasp what I have taught.” To achieve this she says although her students are a good bunch she has to be stern and firm with them. In arranging her classroom she thinks of the students’ physical comfort. From observation her classroom arrangements reflects an attempt to control. Children of the same sex are rarely allowed to sit beside each other even if sharing the same bench built for three. Williams believe in social development. She wants her students to learn to behave themselves even when there is no teacher around. She says it is not all about academics: “There are many things that children ought to learn other than math, language arts, social studies, whatever... simple things such as social graces, just how to sit and behave themselves...” Her classroom seating arrangement is done to facilitate ability groupings. The better able students sit together and the others do likewise. From time to time she also puts hard-working students to partner those not working as hard with the hope that the underperformer will learn the work ethics of the hard worker.

*Entry to teaching.* Patricia found out that she loved helping people and loved children but left secondary school not having the qualifications to enter college. She was

offered a job in a preschool where she worked as an uncertified teacher before moving to her current school. There she worked for six more years until the regulations forced her to leave the classroom or go to college. Even then she had to pursue a developmental program before matriculating. She mostly benefited from the methodology classes in which she learned how to write lesson plans. Although Arlene is from a family of teachers her entry to teaching was mostly fuelled by experiences in her school years. She had a first grade teacher who caused her to wet herself everyday and a ninth grade teacher who considered anyone who could not do the work as dumb:

I think the negative things that those teachers brought into my life forced me to become a teacher because I wanted people who did not have the opportunity to have the experience of going to a so-called traditional high school not to think themselves less of any person. That was my sole reason for going into teaching.

Having made it to college however nothing that was done there helped her in her teaching. She thinks the school classroom and not the college lecture hall is where you really learn to be a teacher.

*Influences on teaching.* The major influence on these women as individuals and as teachers is religion. They both have strong religious background. Mrs. Henry says:  
From I was a little girl I was brought up in the Church... I find that the Seventh Day Adventist Church is really strong on values. And day to day as I go through life and find out that many things that I am seeing has really brought me back to when I was a younger child and the Sabbath School teacher brought out certain morals...

She also remembers and is influenced by the harsh punishment that was usually meted out to boys while she was in school. Now she tries to “avoid some of the brutality, the harshness... I will not flog hard or I try other forms of punishment.”

Miss Williams too belongs to the Christian faith. She is the daughter of a minister of religion. She says that although it put pressure on her to be perfect in the eyes of onlookers, she is quite happy with how she was brought up by Christian parents. It also influences her teaching a lot: where she would normally get angry she (as a Christian) has to “think of different ways and means of approaching things in (my) classroom.” She uses stories of Bible characters as models for students: In addition to the religious influence, the experiences of her early schooling have shaped the way she approaches her work. She recalls how girls were always pushed while boys were neglected. In trying to avoid that she tries in whatever way she can to “...incorporate the boys in whatever it is we are doing.”

*Relationship with boys.* Both teachers spoke of a positive relationship with boys.

Miss Williams was unapologetic about her relationship:

Honestly, I want to believe I have a better relationship with boys. I don't know why. I tend to sit more with them, I guess because as I said to you earlier sometimes they tend to be left behind and the girls are always being pushed to the front so I try to stick more with my boys than my girls...

Her first teaching job was to teach a class of 58 boys and two girls—a remedial group that no other teacher wanted. She took on the challenge and now regards that first year as

her best in seven years of teaching. It was largely due to the relationship she had with them:

But we developed a good relationship. It, was sorta rocky in the first half, the first term it was rocky. I had to find ways and means of developing a good relationship with them and they, up until now those students, they would visit my mother up until this day.

We developed a good relationship and they were boys who you could sit and you could talk with them. If, If they were doing something that was wrong and during a free period you would sit and you would point out things to them that you noh, so and so, think of doing this, this way. And you could talk to them and they would listen to you, not just to talk, they would listen to you. And so ahm it ended being my best year out of all the six, seven years? The best. First you had to be a friend, you couldn't think of yourself as this teacher who would dictate as if to say you do this or you do that. You had to be a friend to them and so I, I thought of games I could play with them and so at lunch time that was what I did. I would go out with them and we would play together. There'd be a session on Fridays, what I also did was that I sorta limit the work so to speak, and let them have the opportunity of talking to me freely about anything that they wanted to talk about. And so ahm, what I found too was that some of them never had the opportunity of speaking to their parents or whoever, whether parents or guardian they never got that chance and so this thing was presented to them and they could talk and they could share and as a teacher I had to, whatever problem they were going through I had to relate this to parents, you noh? Not that I was, not that I was telling all of what they would say to me to their parents (IntAW 3-30).

Mrs. Henry too has a good relationship with her boys:

We have a good relationship. I know they love me. I love them too. Sometimes they kiss me and they bring me presents. Sometimes I wonder why, I think I am so rough on them. Sometimes I am rougher on them than on the girls because they give me, they have the energy to think of a lot of trouble. And they still love me (IntPH5-18).

*Teachers' roles.* Patricia sees herself as a good role model for her students. She says she is also the disciplinarian for them. Arlene in the meantime says she sees herself as parent, friend, a policeman [OC: she chuckles when she says this], teacher and counsellor.

*Gender beliefs.* Both teachers espouse equal treatment for both sexes. Arlene cites a hypothetical case:

If a child does something wrong whether it is a boy or girl if they should be reprimanded for it, they should. There should not be any bias as to whether it's a boy or whether it's a girl. Same thing that goes for the girl same thing goes for the boy. If the thing is wrong, it is wrong.

At the same time if a boy were to take a doll to school both teachers would initially laugh and consider it strange although neither would consider a girl taking a toy truck to school as strange.

I would want to find out why is it that this boy has a doll as a toy... it wouldn't be a problem for a girl to have a truck. I wouldn't see it as a problem but it would be a problem to see a boy with a doll as a toy (IntAW4-30).

Mrs. Henry too would question such a boy about his doll: “what is it about this doll, specifically why are you playing with this doll?” (IntPH5-18). After reflection however both teachers say they would see the doll as just another toy. Mrs. Henry expresses her gender beliefs when she says “Girls seem more interested in what is going on in the teaching. The boys, they like to have their trucks playing with them. They like to be outside and they like to find other things to do...” Girls in these two classes are described by the teachers generally as warm, very expressive, loving and friendly, happy and playful. Boys are described as the opposite: not so friendly, becoming boisterous some times, very energetic and very talkative; some are stubborn, and difficult, some gentle and nice. When Mrs. Henry assigns the fetching of water and the running of errands exclusively to the boys she further expresses a gender belief. When her expectations for the girls is for them to become good young ladies, to learn good qualities in school so that later they can become good mothers and good models in the home and in society, that is another gender belief. When she is rougher on the boys than on the girls that too is another gender belief.

Miss Williams expresses her beliefs when she makes the rule that boys should not hit girls and tell the boys “ladies before gentlemen.”

*Socialization of boys and girls.* Both teachers believe that boys must learn to be responsible. It starts at home where parents should assign work to boys: “It does not matter if it is washing dishes, sweeping the yard, they should start having duties to perform.” They should avoid beating up on girls lest they become abusers of women when they grow up. Boys must be brought up the same way as girls. There should be no



difference. Boys can do what girls can do; girls can do what boys can do; for boys to become men they have to learn to grow up and they have to take it timely, step by step, not force up, just stage by stage; they have to be strong emotionally and physically; it's ok for a man to cry [Patricia says this with a laugh]. They are humans and sometimes they take to hiding these things up inside and sometimes you hear men die from heart attacks, they need to express themselves just like anybody else.

Girls should be taught domestic duties: washing and cooking for example. They should be taught about sex and marriage and how to value themselves as women. "These things should be part of the school's curriculum. It used to be part of family life education and I think it should be brought back because of what is happening in our schools."

#### *The Parents' Perspectives*

In this section, I present the perspectives of the parents (I use the word 'parents' to include guardians) on various issues coming out of my informal interviews with them. The primary purpose of the interviews was to ascertain their gender beliefs and to get their perceptions of life outside of school of their respective son. The parents all took the interviews seriously. They were accommodating, co-operative and comprehensive in their responses. I got the impression that they were happy to get the opportunity to talk about their son. In two instances parents were overcome with emotions as they spoke about their sons. I left these two interviews feeling helpless, wishing there was something I could do to alleviate their pain in the short term. In all instances, I left the interviews

with a greater appreciation of parenting and how involved parenting is. Both in the rural area and in Kingston families shared with me fruits and produce from their property.

I have already included the major points of the parent interviews in the cases of the boys and those of the teachers. Consequently, I became very intimate with the substance of the interviews. It was not intended to build cases for each parent. Instead a summary of their stories will be done. To arrive at the summary the same careful reading done with the data from the boys and the teachers was undertaken. I read through each interview transcript at least three times. The first reading was done to recapture the context and the moment of the interview. I would then do a second reading coding and making notes in the margins. A third reading was done to ensure I had not overlooked any data and that the categories I used for each data point were appropriate. While I was guided by the protocol in deciding on some categories I was not restricted by those categories and included others as they emerged from the data. Below is the summary with the category headings:

*Religion.* Without exception every parent spoke positively about religion, Christianity to be exact. Seven are ardent members of evangelical groups while the others attend church frequently or make sure the children go to church. Some spoke of the tangible benefits of their involvement while others spoke about wanting to do “the Lord’s will.” It was evident that religion played an enormous role in shaping their belief systems and socialization practices.

*Education.* Education was the most talked about issue among the parents. Although many admitted to not getting enough schooling for one reason or another they all want

their sons to “put them head to them book.” That is a Jamaican way of saying “focus on education.” Only one set of parents considered their son as doing enough school work at home. In fact they were nearly all dissatisfied with this aspect of their son:

I would like him very much to get involved in his book. Him jus wan’ somebody, when it come on to the school work, yuh haffi push him fi de school work him noh spen a lot of time doin’ school work because wha’ happen is like you say ‘take up your book and him will tek up the book and do nothing.

When I would like say Delroy come take up your book (he would say) ‘mi hungry’.

Its like him always have something to say why him don’t take up the book and me unhappy over that...

Jermaine no spen no time doin’ school work at home. Yuh see if I don’t say take up a book, Jermaine don’t take up a book... if me noh ova him fi tek up him book and soh, book work can stay.

Oscar hardly tek up him book at home, only if him get home work and you have to ask him ‘Oscar yuh get home work?’ and then yuh have to down on him. Like he’s at home and a say take a book and study is like you telling him a bad word.

Some parents were particularly dissatisfied with the amount of reading the boys did at home. They recognised that if the child is not able to read he might not advance:

Lack of reading is his main problem; reading man, reading is the foundation;

Mi jus wan’ fi know say him can do him school work, read and everything;

Mi tell him you know say is it meck Charlie go through and never repeat, readin,

cause from the teacher say you can read then Maths and everything else cant hold

you back in school because maths is reading, English is reading, anything a reading...

Education was seen as so important to two of the parents that when asked to choose between sending a girl and a boy to school they said they would have to find ways and means to send both:

Trus' me the way education is important, I would have to do without whatever, or even do a domestic work to send them to school. I grew up with seven of us, trus me, education is what got us out of the pits.

*Career choice.* The boys all had ideas of career aspirations. A few parents had different ideas about their son's career. For example, Oscar wants to become an architect while his father wants him to be an n electrical engineer; Kenroy wants to be a professional sportsperson while if his mom were choosing she would want him to be a medical doctor. More importantly however, all the parents were prepared to support the choices the sons made provided that it was legal. Some preferred saying what they would not like instead of what they would like them to be:

Me leave that choice up to him but me only hope is something what me approve of. (I wouldn't want him to be) a gunman or tief or fi go sell drugs, mi noh want him come chop yard. De suppen whe him do mus make me proud.

The following were typical of statements of support:

I not telling you to be a doctor, anything you come to be I will support you;

I'm not really pressuring him about that... as to what he wants to be it's up to him;

I can't decide for him, he'll have to decide, the choice is his;

We'll support him in whatever choice he makes;

*Punishment.* Parents reported various forms of punishment and sanctions: harsh beating, slaps, deprivation of television time and games; time out in their rooms; delayed eating time; shouting; grounding. Punishment was warranted for cases of insubordination mostly. There was no sanction for failure to do school work. Perhaps parents all adopt the Grahams' approach: I don't want to let him believe that I am forcing him, you understand, I want him to do it freely so that him will love it...

*Former teacher.* In talking with the parents invariably they mentioned former teachers their sons had at the same school. This was particularly true of parents in Kingston:

He had this teacher before, Ms. Daye [not her real name], ... and she was very good to him cause well, I heard a lot of parents complain about her, but I never find any fault of her because with her we know sey Oscar have to do his work and him make sure him do it, because she will slap him and him don't want that. And then all with Ms. Daye him always have something to do when him come home...

With Ms. Daye, the teacher before he responds to her because she's the type if she put down her work, she want her work for Ms. Daye will beat them, she will really spank them. I found it with the teacher in grade one too. If Mrs. Charlton come and put her work you better mek she get her work...And those are the two teachers I see Kenroy do well with.

You see the next teacha whe him did have? Everyday him come wid work. She stan' up pon him foot and me si progress...

The only reference to a former teacher made by a parent of Lewiston was uncomplimentary: “We believe he did not get a good start from grade one. If he did get a real start that he really need he would pick up.”

Many more did talk about the current third grade teacher. Both teachers received mixed reviews from the parents. About Arlene some said:

I guess this teacher is not the type that rough that way (like the former teacher)...so with her he's not focusing well. I think she is doing what she can do but I think she needs to do more especially with the ones who are not responding well in class. At the same time she's studying, she's trying to get herself qualified and it hard fo' dem.

The teacher that him have now she say Oscar not listening to her in the classroom and all that. Oscar wont do his work, Oscar talk too much and so on and so on. I don't know if she is doing enough to get him to do the work cause when Oscar come home in the evening and yuh ask him if him get home work (he says) “No.” mi say every evening you don't get home work. Him say “no”. I don't know what to think;

I am satisfied with the teacher with a little hesitation. It is just like my days at Kingston Primary me have a problem with the teacher. Me nuh tell her because me noh want try embarrass her but you cant “everyday mi teacher have mi book a mark.” To how me see she move she like him and him tell her dat... she mark him book wid blue ink, which me noh have a problem still but the teacher mostly do it in red, testament a red... but mi feel the teacher nice and mi try talk wid har...

One parent made comments about Patricia:

Everyday I say God you must send this teacher named Mrs. Henry to me... it must be him, God you must be really hear me crying out to you. She really and truly go all out with him. From he's in Mrs. Henry's class I haven't found any fault. I am satisfied.

*Frustration.* Two parents expressed frustration: one with the lack of interest her sons shows in school work, the other with having to shoulder the responsibility for her nephew when his mother and father were both alive. The first from the rural area, the second from Kingston:

CB: It frustrating cause a don't know what more to do with Jermaine [pause] cause Jermaine have the potential fi learn...

SG: Me noh think me should have to bear so much responsibility... me alone, cause me cant give him two (hours) and then come back and give Anya two, an' in the shop same time... me cant manage, me cant manage. Me wish me did have somebody to shoulder my responsibility

*Socialization.* Under this theme parents talked about how they raise their sons or what specific things they need to do in the process of becoming men:

They must love one another, especially in the home, this is where it starts, that's why there is so much violence in the country. And that's why I always tell Delroy 'love your brother, love your brother. That is the most important thing in the world, love. You know if you don't even have money, if you don't even have food in the cupboard as long as you have love in the home

I don't want him getting mixed up doing bad things. That is what I'm afraid of because he is very friendly and easily led. I try to instil in him the good value of

God. I tell him about getting involved in bad company, what it can do. I try to let him understand that even though people might say they are his friends they don't really necessary be his friends and they will hurt him. Tell him not to fight and not to get into fights because even at school people die...

Incidentally Oscar to whom the above admonition was given by his mom was told something contrary by his father:

I taught him self-defence. I said not because we are Christians you must not allow people to batter you, you must stand up for your rights as a man. If you can solve the problem in a simple way (good) but if you see it going out of hand, stand up and defend yourself.

First he has to learn to love, care for others as he would care for himself... I think that's the most important aspect of life—loving others, caring. That will help motivate the child in stages of life, growing up to care for his wife, his children, and stuff like that. I

wouldn't want him to smoke, drink, and those things but as I said when he reach when I can only say but I cannot do what am I going to do about that? Because sometimes you implant things in them and they become worse and I wouldn't want that for them...

First him have to learn manners, how to respect people, how to take care of his body and try to stay on the right side of life (that means) not getting involved because I could have (got involved in wrong doing). I know the area that me living in, its prone to gunshots and I could. A lot of my friends did but I had some friends, some bigger friends, big man every time him tell me don't mek nuh man press yuh button, don't meck noh man control you for you not computer, yuh noh radio, yuh switch on and switch of when yuh ready...



Jermaine needs to act more responsible. That is one thing. Him need to act more responsible and me tell him don't lie, speak the truth, be obedient to me, you need to know that a me a de parent and when me talk you suppose fi respect and hear what me say. Me noh really hard on him, me noh ask much of him a jus dat a de simple little things what me ask.

Love people who close by you and around you where you live. Love is not something that jus' come off your tongue. I know you can define love in so many ways but the love that is firstly love people. No meck some little thing to you be a bother. If you see a nex' man doing certain things don't make it be a bother to you. At all times think love, understanding say him is him and me is me but me going to counteract him with love and not being negative every minute. If its not necessary to complain about it, don't complain about it. That is one main thing me want them to understand because I guess that is all about man when you come big.

*Ideal Man.* Parents were asked specifically to describe their ideal man. Below are some of the depictions.

Rounded in terms of a lot of discipline, behaviour, manners, how he deals with people, how he get on with people on a whole so that even his girl or wife to be comes under that. So him have to have dem quality deh and you don't have to go church to have a decent mind, but you can work without going to church seal it up more.

A man that will stand up for his house, a person who loves, a person who see Christ as the way maker, a person who is well educated, provide for his family. Basically if a person love, yuh see if a person love? Everything else will come perfectly. Love is the

key to all aspects of life and if you're not love or in love, there's no way it can work, no way, no way.

A man with a good sense of humour, somebody genuine, loving and caring; have respect for me or anybody else, somebody you can talk to like a friend, must love kids too, somebody honest, and whatever you feel and think you can talk about it, we can reason, we can talk, we can do almost anything together; somebody who can appreciate any little thing you do, somebody very appreciative.

Somebody like Nesta. Nothing subtracted, nothing added. A nice person when you get to know him—intelligent, he's a lot of fun.

My ideal man is ... (long pause) Christian minded, very much Christian minded and kind, loving, compassionate ... (long pause)

My ideal man must be a rounded person. I do not see a person in terms of his academic achievement because a man can be an intellect yet he is a fool. Cause he only intellectual on paper. An ideal man for me must understand that he's finite. That he's fallible and he must not be a jellyfish, who you'll be able to spin around and push around and so on. An ideal man must be sensitive in need of others, alright; he must strive for character building; that is first and foremost in any person that I encounter. That's what I'm looking for. It's not even, it's not so much your money, not so much the car that you drive, the house that you live in. I want to see that even that you move in society you see and that man must also be not an abusive person, must be a caring person, alright; that man must, as far as I am concerned, his spiritual life must be first and foremost. He must sense responsibility firstly to God and he must command respect not demand it,

command it. So as a person sees you if a man by mistake (... not audible) say sorry, just out of respect so a man must strive for that, and I do not believe a man who is too vulgar. I don't appreciate a vulgar man. I do not appreciate a man who is very descriptive of women. I can't deal with that man. I also see an ideal man as a person who speaks positive things of others. I believe in that you know.

*Gender beliefs.* Parents expressed their gender beliefs in several ways. Some beliefs are implied others quite explicit. What follows are selected examples of gender beliefs which I consider typical of the parents:

Well, as for me, once I have the time, because my job is very demanding, I run my taxi, I'm out very early. I will wash, I will cook, I will clean, I will press my clothes, and so on. So I will play whatever in the home. I will do whatever in the home No problem, no problem, at all. No problem. I would wash my wife clothes, I will press her clothes, I will press my children clothes, I will bathe them, I will fix their breakfast, take them to school; pick them up back you know and so on.

[Another parent giving her reason why she wanted a boy]: Because I had to go back to college [and leave Corey with his father]. it is easier for a man to manage a boy because if it was a girl he would have hair to plait and maybe like at Lewiston those uniforms take a lot of time to be done;

[Mr. Edwards shares his reason for wanting a son] I am sort of the outdoor person... a lot of time I am out there planting things around the place. If you go around there now there are two machetes one for me and one for him—an old one that he has taken over. A lot of times he and I are out there. Even though sometimes he is threatening to destroy good

crops but the fact is that a female wouldn't be out there with me so much. For that aspect of it I'm glad it is a boy....

[giving his reason for wanting a son]: Well, it is said that you know it is always be the thinking of some father to get a son, right in the first instance. So when Oscar came into being it was a bundle of joy for me, very wonderful, excited I was like then a man, then and what have you.

The mother for that child was also happy to have a son for the father's sake:

When the baby came out now, I ask her what kind of baby it is and she say it is a boy.

Well, it was a boy the father wanted long time ago. (Laughing) So when she say a boy I just breathe down. (Laughing) [Relief].

Another mother:

I really wanted a girl. I go all the way and prepare pink, pink, pink bath, pink everything, chemise... I had to give them away cause I couldn't put the boy in pink, I didn't think it was right.

A father whose first preference was a girl: "I really wanted a girl. I don't know why but you know, maybe because sometimes you see girl baby with the little earring and so forth... cute".

He later rationalises having two boys: "I glad I got two boys. I was wishing for a girl but the two boys is ok for me. I glad. Boy pickney noh hold yuh back, boy pickney will loosen you up."

Another mother:

Well the Bible say men are the head of the house and we are to believe that, but at the same time I think both should work hand in hand. For instance there are things that the man suppose to do but just in case he hasn't done that and the lady can do it she should and vice versa. For instance they can do the cooking, the cleaning, the ironing. Daddy bathes all his children and him dress them. Because even at times I have to run off to church a little earlier, and all I do is put out the clothes and him bathe them, give them breakfast and dress them.

Only thing me don't want him do is clean house, cause me think that's a lady thing, otherwise me tell him to wash him bag. When I was in Grade 6 my mother she don't wash fo' me again. Me wash and iron my school clothes and any clothes that me want to wear. Well not now, me live wid a woman now so she take care of those things.

Mi noh kno, an yuh see sometimes when dem duh dat, 'im cry. When odder bwoy pickney would a jus go troo dat, him cry. ...so mi always keep him inside. And it's not too good for 'im for he is a boy child.

In relation to a toy for his son one father shouted

If him say him want a doll me woulda get mad, me woulda say, you're not a girl. Yuh mad! Crazy! Sick! Yuh don't need a doll to take care of children. If you want to play, play with boys or girls.

Sharing a religious perspective one father asserted

...all people are equal in the sight of the Creator, All, whether male or female, there is no gender with God, right, but from a human perspective I do not believe in what you call man over a woman, I don't believe in that. I believe that we are two grown up adults. We

do not think alike, we share different views right, our bodies function differently male and female, but I do not believe I should dominate over my wife. I do not share that none at all, absolutely none at all. I believe my wife have equal saying and I have equal saying.

With regard to a boy becoming a nurse two parents said:

Well, I wouldn't have any reservation you know, because maybe he could make a difference because in hospital you have the male ward then you have the female ward; Not a thing wrong wid him being a nurse.

Should boys and girls be raised the same way? Most parents said yes. One parent differed:

Harsher punishment for the boys and me more keep the girl in my eye sight. Me want she stay roun' me that me can see har cause even certain jobs, cause me usually work at a bar but because my daughter noh live wit' me. If she did live with me, me noh feel dat me could leave har fi dat amount of time fi go out deh.

What if they had to decide whether to send either a girl or a boy to school, who would they send? Several said education is so important they would have to find ways and means of sending both. Others chose:

I'd send the boy and teach the girl myself. Sometimes whatever you teach the girls they take heed;

Me tink me would send the boy. Might be me coulda help the girl because I guess fi a woman out deh she have a chance more. Me feel like she more have a chance than a man

[boy]. If she even noh go school and soh might be she will find a man that really like har an' soh;

It is said you know I don't know if studies done on it, that girls tend to be more attentive when it comes to attention given to parents and if I had that option I think I would give the girl, to be honest with you. What I've seen among men and women together, many, many occasion the girls usually contribute more to the enhancement of their parents more than the boys. Yes, di girl is so more attentive. Some what attentive you know, especially on the path of the mother di girl would be there. You see because on many occasion you find the boy might become a sports man and he's not there for his mother. Not there for his father and sometimes you travelling all over di place, you see, a boy would be out there playing dominos with his friends while mummy needs some water, you see, and the girl now she will ensure that she is combing mummy's hair you see, so I see, I see that a girl will make a vast difference if I had that choice

A minority view on homophobia was expressed by this one father:

Man will want to give you drive, dem deh man a batty man. I will walk from round my yard come road and when man offer me ride is not that me 'funny' or what but some o' de time yuh have to portray like that let them know (that them not to take ride from men).

### *Summary*

This chapter presented the narratives from all the participants in the study: the boys, their teachers and their parents. A case was developed for each of the six boys who was chosen for special observation. These cases, constructed from observation and interviews of the boys and their parents revealed how the boys perceive being a man;

how they were influenced by a variety of public personalities as well as their attitudes towards school work. Most of the boys had minimal or no duties at home, most had mothers who were active in their lives but only three of the six had fathers who took an active interest in their education. The boys in this study revealed very clear ideas on what they need to do to become men and defined being a man as being opposed to what it is to be a woman.

The two teachers shared their philosophy of teaching, their gender beliefs and socialization practices. While both espouse gender equality their classroom practices and utterances did not support that stance. Arlene tended to allow boys far more latitude in anti-social behaviours while Patricia on the other hand was “rough and strict” with the boys. Both teachers believe that boys and girls should be brought up the same way. Boys in their class are told to be kind and courteous to girls and women. When there is an infringement the perpetrator is sanctioned. In the minds of the boys however, girls are allowed to get away with similar infringements. The teaching methods used by the teachers are not appealing to boys who are described by these teachers as loving the outdoors and having high levels of energy and curiosity. Both teachers also believe that boys and girls have different learning styles.

Parents in interviews divulged their anxiety over their sons’ underperformance and anti-social behaviours. Some point fingers at the teacher while others think it is the boys who are not doing enough. None is completely satisfied with their boys’ attitude to school work at home. At home they try not to pressure the boys to do school work wanting instead for them to develop interest in school work on their own. They all



stressed the importance of education and religion in the lives of their sons. Most parents hold traditional gender beliefs: that certain duties are exclusively for boys and girls; certain toys are for the different genders and that boys should be given more latitude to be outdoors. The fathers and one mother in the study saw having a son as their first child as a defining moment in their manhood.

In the next chapter I draw some conclusions based on the analysis presented in this chapter.

## Chapter Five: Findings, Conclusions, Recommendations

### *Introduction*

This study was conducted to find answers to three broad questions:

1. What beliefs do teachers hold about gender?
2. What beliefs do parents hold about gender?
3. What are boys' perceptions about their gender identity?

It may be necessary to also re-state that the study arose out of a concern about the underachievement of Jamaican boys. While there are contending theories that seek to explain the underachievement phenomenon, the preponderance of local and international literature suggests very clearly that such underachievement is associated with masculinity. That is, boys are socialised to adopt a form of masculinity which, among other things, is anti- hard work and virtually anything that is feminine or perceived as such (Chevannes, 2000; Foster, Kimmell, & Skelton, 2001; Parry, 2000). In Chapter 1, I presented the background and rationale to the research, in Chapter 2 an extensive review of the literature on the major issues (gender identity, teachers' and parents' gender beliefs) was done and in Chapter 3 the design and methodology employed was described and explained. Chapter 4 contains the analysis of the data collected from boys, parents, and teachers. In this chapter, I propose to set out what I have learnt about the issues from the participants. I shall also draw some tentative conclusions and make some recommendations which will also be tentative.

### *Gender Identity and School Work*

The boys in this study have clearly identified themselves as masculine. They seem to understand that there are advantages in being male. Some of these advantages include dominating play spaces and girls. Girls are not allowed to walk across areas being used by boys for playing. In addition, boys do not allow girls to participate in their games. This latter is driven by the fact that many boys perceive girls as ‘lesser beings’: they are fragile, immature, and cry easily and therefore are unable to keep up with the rigours of ‘male’ games.

This domination of play spaces should also be seen as a demonstration of power and control – essential features of hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1987). Boys are socialized to “be in charge.” That is what men do. Boys identify strongly and early with the dominance of men and subordination of women. This identifies them as masculine.

Not only do these boys identify themselves as masculine, they nearly all subscribe to the hard core brand of masculinity. They believe that boys must be courageous, physically and emotionally tough, rough, and shun ‘feminine’ behaviours. In other words, boys’ gender identity is in opposition to being feminine (Chevannes, 2000; Parry, 2000): don’t behave like a girl; don’t hug man; don’t call your mama (when in trouble); don’t play with girls’ toys; don’t laugh like a girl; don’t dress like a girl; choose masculine careers (doctor not nurse). Boys in this study were very adamant that they would not want to be girls. It seems also that their identity is driven more by what they avoid and less by what they do. This is identical to what De Moya (2004) describes in explaining gender socialization in the Dominican Republic. Among the middle class population he

says there is etiquette for gendering both the verbal and non-verbal behaviour of young boys away from femininity. “This spiral of no-no rules... is meant to avert any possible femininity in boys’ body language. It works as a straight jacket that automatically warns them, as a thermostat, against any innocent gesture, movement, word or action that is not the best choice for prospective true males” (p. 73). The exception to this characterisation was Oscar. Initially he said he was very glad to be a boy and not a girl but later recanted saying it did not matter as long as it was “the Lord’s will.” Besides, he refused to participate in “rough and tumble” soccer game, never played during breaks at school, associated mostly with girls in class and wanted to help his mother in the kitchen at home – behaviours normally associated with girls.

It is also evident that boys police the behaviour of their peers so that they “toe the line.” This they do by telling those in breach that they “act like girl”. No boy wants to be told that he does anything like a girl. One of the rules at these two schools is that boys must not beat up on girls. The boys consider that unfair. It poses a challenge to their masculine identity. It is not that they believe in cruelty to girls. They resent however not being able to retaliate when provoked by girls. Some in fact violate this rule because a boy is not supposed to allow a girl who hits him to get away with it. If it is done in a play way it may be excused (such as when a girl drew my attention to her pushing a boy from a seat). Otherwise he stands to be ridiculed by other boys if he does not retaliate. Religion teaches a culture of “turn the other cheek.” This poses a challenge for boys and men when the prevailing reality of “an eye for an eye” is juxtaposed. In other words, boys stand to lose their manliness if they surrender to peers generally but to girls in particular.

Boys, according to the participants must avoid girls' activities and even playing with girls. When an activity which required hugging was done in Ms. Williams' class, the girls hugged one another, the boys hugged no one. There are boys who would want to cross the gender border and do some 'girly' activities but are afraid of being ridiculed by their male peers. For example, some boys have dolls but are quick to point out that theirs are action figures or that they have removed the long hair from the doll's head so that it is no longer a girl doll. The hair, after all, was one of the most obvious signs of the sex of the doll. When Jermaine insisted that "girls play with dolls and boys play with guns" he was expressing the views of many other boys and adults. Leo-Rhynie (1995) had long established the gender considerations in selecting toys. She pointed out in her study that even very young boys knew what toys were for them and those appropriate for girls. Boys learn what is considered appropriate and desirable behaviour for boys and also the consequences of deviating from acceptable norms. They also learn to anticipate how others will respond to them and accordingly modify their self-expressions and styles of relating to others (Froschl, 2005). After all what these boys need is the approval of their peers and the men in their communities.

"Show me your company and I'll tell you who you are" seems to be the mantra of these boys. Of the nearly 30 boys only one considers a female as a role model. All the others identified with professional male media personalities, sportsmen and male entertainers. The exception to this came from the rural boys, many of whom identified their church pastor as their role model. Most of these models are males who display braggadocio, machismo, and in the case of the male entertainers, anti-social behaviours.

Boys do not see these men displaying the behaviours required for school success. Even church pastors give boys mixed messages about being men. Church pastors invariably have women and other men at their beck and call. They do not always practise what they preach. Besides, some churches support male dominance and female subjection. They teach that the divine value of the woman is as child-bearer, child-rearer and helpmate in the service of her male partner.

Boys do not arrive at school with any great sense of responsibility. Although both parents and teachers see a sense of responsibility as one of the attributes of a good man most have no chores at home and the few who have often get let off the hook when they do not do it well or at all. This may be the reason therefore, why they do not take school work seriously. Unlike girls they do not spend much time on tasks assigned. To be idle in class is almost synonymous with boys. Yet boys claim that education is important. Could it be that they do not equate schooling with education? Or is it that they have been told that education is important and so they simply repeat it? Unfortunately teachers allow them to do as they like to a great extent. Parents too allow them to get by with doing very little, not wanting to 'force them to work' lest they grow up not liking it or not having the patience to let them learn by doing over poorly done household chores. Teachers seem to suggest that boys have a different learning style than girls. Despite this perception no provisions were made to accommodate this male learning style. Both teachers articulated that boys like hands-on activities and less discussion. There may be a grain of truth in that. Despite this belief, there was no provision in the classes to cater to this learning style. Instead boys are allowed to miss lessons, take as much time as they like to sharpen

pencils and generally stall instead of working. No sanctions are applied when they fail to produce assigned work.

The ability to read is critical to all areas of learning. Not being able to read significantly reduces one's chances of achieving academically and economically. Parents are cognizant of the importance of being able to read:

...reading is the foundation, from yuh can read then Maths and everything else can't hold yuh back in school because Maths is reading, English is reading, anything a reading.

Evans (1999) found that teachers use boys' inability to read to shame and consequently control them. The teachers in this study made very little effort to teach their boys to read. In 15 weeks of observation only once was reading taught as an independent activity. Yet both teachers report over 50% non-readers in their class, most of whom are boys. Clarke (2005) avers that reading is so integral to an optimum participation in other disciplines that to avoid it is to reduce one's chance of success in school work.

All the participants underscored the value of education. The boys highlight its importance to their becoming men. Their classroom behaviour however, was inconsistent with their utterances about it. Most of them produced very little work and that appeared acceptable to their teachers. Clarke (2005) asserts that academic success requires commitment and conformity to school practices such as obeying school rules, spending time on task, and an acceptable level of preparedness for school work. Some boys see these as running contrary to being masculine and display anti-social behaviours instead. Chevannes (1999) point out that boys' anti-social behaviours often exclude them from

participating in school work. This is so in part because they are often sent from class due to their disruptive behaviours. No one is surprised when boys are sent out of classes.

The top two boys among the six cases (Oscar and Corey) did very good work. Oscar never had to be reprimanded for anti-social behaviour and although his parents wished he spent more time “with his book” his grades reflect above average performance. When work is assigned by his teacher he tackles it immediately and never gives up till it is complete or told to do so by his teacher. He does neat work. In five weeks of observation he never had to be reprimanded once by his teacher for incomplete work. He has a perfect attendance and has never been late for school. Corey is bright by his class’ standards. He is top of his class. His teacher’s and parents’ one complaint about him is that he talks too much. He also enjoys being outside even during class time. His natural ability seems to help him compensate for the time he spends outside. Of all the parents, Corey’s have the highest level of education. Corey’s father has had tertiary education and at the time of the data collection was pursuing further studies while his mother had just graduated from teachers college. The parents of both boys have high expectations for them and support them in their work. Both sets of parents are devout adherents to their respective religious faith. In addition Oscar’s father is a lay preacher and leader in his church; his mother is also very active in church ministry as well. Corey’s dad makes sure Corey is prepared to participate at the Kingdom Hall twice per week. The family studies the Watchtower Magazine together. Both Oscar and Corey are willing to do non-traditional boys’ work: they will sweep their classroom (Oscar was upset once when the girls prevented him from sweeping) and Oscar wants to learn to cook and help his mom



in the kitchen. Neither of these boys has a sister at home. Boys with sisters or another female in their age group at home rarely do household chores. The fathers of both boys are willing to and sometimes even cook at home. Oscar and Corey identify very strongly with their respective father. None of the other four did. Maybe these traits are what make Corey and Oscar different from their underachieving counterparts.

With the exception of Chester and Jermaine all the boys live with both parents. Chester lives in the same house with his dad but there is not much of a relationship between them. His mother lives elsewhere within walking distance from where Chester resides. His situation is somewhat complicated. He knows his father but his aunt's live-in boyfriend is the one whom he sees acting as father. He knows his mom but it is his aunt who is his primary caregiver. Jermaine's father gives very little support and the mother, like Chester's aunt is sometimes frustrated. Jermaine does not have a healthy relationship with his mother's live-in boyfriend. The mother knows it affects Jermaine and is thinking of severing ties with her boyfriend. Delroy and Kenroy both live with their parents. Kenroy's father works long distances away from home. This prevents him from taking an active part in his son's life. Kenroy's mother admits to being the dominant parent; Delroy's father, a former preschool teacher readily admits he has not been spending sufficient time with his son. The boys that have their fathers highly involved in their lives do well in school. They have a better record of social behaviour: less likely to be involved in fights and other anti-social behaviours, more willing to participate in class and to volunteer to help at school. Subsequent to the period of data collection, Oscar has

been made leader of his class—a position reserved for well-behaved and academically bright or promising students.

What was parents' reaction to their sons' underachievement? Most pointed to the boys' failure to spend time doing school work at school and at home. Some blamed the current teacher, comparing her with a previous teacher.

With the exception of two fathers who confessed to not spending enough time with their respective son, no other parent took responsibility for their son's poor performance. Parents appeared powerless to get their eight year old sons to do school work at home. How then do they expect their sons to achieve at a higher level in school?

The teachers too pointed elsewhere for the answer to the underachievement of the boys. Both intimated that boys have a different learning style from that of girls'. Given that they made no attempts to match the learning styles with teaching style it seems they too must accept some of the responsibility for boys' underachievement.

#### *Gender Beliefs, Expectations and Socialization*

Regardless of the philosophical perspective or beliefs, one thing is unequivocal: beliefs held by individuals influence their behaviours (Tabachnik & Zeichner, 1984; Nespor, 1987). More specifically, it has been demonstrated that teachers and parents' gender beliefs influence their socialization practices (Lee, 2002).

For parents these practices start before the child is born. Parents sometimes buy items of clothing in a particular colour scheme in anticipation for a particular sex child. In one instance, when everything was bought in pink in anticipation for a girl, a boy came instead and the mother gave away those things and had to get new blue ones. According

to her, putting a boy in pink “*just didn’t look right.*” Some men regard having a boy as their first child as a great accomplishment and a statement about their masculinity: “it is always the thinking of some fathers to have a son at the first instance so when Oscar came into being it was a bundle of joy for me, very wonderful, *I was like then a man...* (emphasis added). His wife similarly expressed relief when Oscar was born. She was happy it was a boy because “it was a boy the father wanted (and I did not want to disappoint him?).” One other father was happy it was a son because it was more compatible with his outdoor lifestyle. A girl, in his opinion “wouldn’t be out there (in the garden) with him so much,” confirming the practice of allowing boys more time outside the house and keeping the girls in. This was further strengthened by a mother’s declaration that while she allows her son to be out playing for an entire day that would not be the case with a girl. The girl would be kept under close surveillance. In fact she would not take on night jobs which would force her to be away from her daughter. Another parent lamented having to keep her son inside because he cannot get on with the neighbourhood children. This she said is not good for him “for he is a boy child.”

Although most of the beliefs expressed by parents could be considered traditional, when it came to choice of career they did not think along gender lines. They were prepared to accept their sons in nursing, a field traditionally dominated by women. Some of the boys were less comfortable with nursing for men. The idea of giving a boy a doll did not find favour with some parents. They saw no need for it. Some parents also thought that housework should remain the purview of women according to some of the fathers while mothers argue that both boys and girls should be brought up the same way

including being exposed to household chores. One parent would reserve harsher punishment for the boys. Parents were also unanimous on the equality of men and women. Most felt that if women are qualified they should be considered for any job the way men are. The parents believe that men and women can do housework. One parent objected however, to his son cleaning the floor because “a woman work dat.” He also no longer did his own laundry because he now has his woman who did that.

If mothers had their way men would be loving, compassionate, Christian-minded, appreciative and respectful of women, rounded, disciplined and well mannered. They would also be men who would provide for their family, honest and easy to talk with; someone striving for character building, caring and responsible; they would not be like a jellyfish—someone you can push around; they would be sensitive to the needs of others.

They want their sons to grow up loving others, avoiding bad company, being wary of those who say they are their friends, being responsible, being honest. They want their sons when they grow up to keep out of trouble, be self-controlled and not let others “press yuh button, yuh not computer (that is, have a mind of your own, think for yourself).”

Parents have high expectations for their sons. They want them to do well in school so that they can be independent as adults. Their socialization practices however are often not consistent with their expectations.

Teachers have lower expectations of boys. They allow boys far more laxity in their approach to school work. Although admitting that boys have a different learning style from that of girls there was no effort to teach the boys through these ‘different styles’.

They seem to accept that since “girls are more interested in what’s going on” then the boys could be left on their own.

Boys were also described in more negative ways than girls. Girls were described as warm, very expressive, loving and friendly, happy and playful. Boys on the other hand are seen as not so friendly, becoming boisterous sometimes, very energetic and very talkative; some stubborn and difficult, some gentle and nice. When teachers hold these perceptions of girls and boys they are likely to expect them to behave accordingly—the Pygmalion effect. In school boys are expected to protect girls so that “they do not become abusers when they grow up.” At the same time both teachers are rougher on the boys. Although Miss Williams is proud of the relationship she has with boys such relationship was not evident in daily classroom practices. Boys in her class did not benefit from that special relationship. Teachers expressed gender beliefs were not always consistent with their classroom practices. There was very little equity in how boys and girls were treated. Both teachers could be described as traditional in their beliefs. Below is a summary of the major findings for each group of participants.

### *Summary of Findings*

*Boys.* arrive at school less prepared for work than girls;  
only had a few have household chores;  
spend much of their time at school and at home playing;  
are not as closely supervised at home as are girls;  
do not like and often do not do school work at home;  
Boys were highly influenced by:

DJs: Elephant Man, Vybze Kartel, Fifty Cent

Sportsmen: Kobe Bryant, Onandi Lowe

Movie Stars: Jackie Chan (Mortal Kombat)

Entertainers: Michael Jackson\* (He was labeled a “girl” by some boys)

Church pastor

In identifying with traditional masculinity, boys defined being a man as a list of “don’ts:

“Don’t hug man” (homophobia)

Don’t walk, talk, laugh like girl

“Don’t call your mama” (that is, deal with situations that arise, do not leave it for your mother)

Don’t allow a girl to beat you up

Don’t play with girls’ toys and girl games

“Be responsible, learn your lesson”

Be strong, courageous, tough, muscular

“use a condom”

Boys therefore seem to construct their gender identity in opposition to anything feminine or appearing to be feminine.

*Parents.* have very strong religious beliefs which seem to influence their gender beliefs;

hold traditional gender beliefs e.g. “The Bible says man should be head of the house”

“women should wash men’s clothes,”

feel powerless in changing their sons' behaviour and deflected responsibility for their poor performance;

have high expectations for their sons;

In most cases mothers were the dominant parent;.

In the two cases examined where fathers had satisfying relationships with their sons, the boys were the top performers;

Culturally, fathers were ecstatic about having a boy: "made me feel like a man;" "(it means) you strong"

*Teachers.* stated gender beliefs were sometimes inconsistent with their classroom practices;

Often allowed boys to have their own way;

In 10 weeks of observation only one reading lesson was done; boys were the greater majority of non-readers;

have lower expectations for boys;

described boys more negatively than they did girls;

#### *Implications of the Findings*

Since the start of this study the crisis in boys' education has worsened or at best has got no better. At conferences and in the print and electronic media the question of a solution continues to be asked. The literature is very clear and this study confirms that (1) teachers' and parents' beliefs impact their socialization practices and (2) boys construct their gender identity in opposition to anything feminine. It was also discovered that

popular culture was one of the biggest purveyor of the hard-core brand of masculinity with which boys have come to identify.

It seems therefore that if the tide in boys' underachievement and attendant anti-social behaviours is to be stemmed a re-definition of masculinity needs to be done. Such a definition needs to broaden the concept to allow all men and boys to see themselves in it rather than having to define manhood as opposite and anti-womanhood. Hegemonic masculinity as it is now practised has proven deleterious to the emotional and mental development of men and boys. Young boys in Jamaica and elsewhere need to see a new typology of man. At a time when girls are increasing their options in sports and careers it cannot be that boys are holding to traditional beliefs and practices even against their own judgements.

There is also the need to pay greater respect to the practices which make women and girls successful—persistence, spending time on tasks, taking responsibility for their own learning, obeying school rules and arriving at school with a greater sense of preparedness to work.

Simultaneously, teachers and parents need to re-examine their gender beliefs vis a vis their socialization practices. Teacher preparation programmes have a role to play here too. The recent introduction of courses which emphasise reflection needs to be strengthened. Teachers in training need to be helped to adopt relational attitudes that are healthy and can facilitate similar healthy attitudes in both girls and boys. Young teachers need to see how the gendered environment in which they work impact classroom discourses and the construction of identities. Teachers also need to understand that as



leaders in the classrooms they possess awesome power—power to make and power to break.

School practices which regard some activities as the exclusive domain of boys and others of girls can no longer be allowed to continue. Equity of participation must be a pillar of the new paradigm. The gendered curriculum which still prevails especially at the secondary level of the Jamaican education system will have to be eliminated.

The study has shown that even young boys can make their own decision about which type of masculinity to embrace. From among the six boys, two stood out as different. They seem to reject the brand of masculinity their peers have accepted. In doing so, they show that it is possible to “engage in counter-hegemonic practices” (Frank, et al., 2003) without the ridicule and disapproval of their peers. In the words of one parent, they did not allow “anyone to push their buttons”. By going counterculture they also confirm the notion that masculinity is socially constructed. Corey and Oscar both have fathers who were deeply involved in their lives.

Going counter-culture is risky. The social climate in Jamaica is marked by violence. Conflicts are resolved through personal attacks. Homophobia is so rampant in Jamaica that even one’s speech is monitored (policed) for censure and ridicule. Boys like everyone else, want to be accepted, they want that sense of belonging that Maslow speaks about. They want to be identified as “one of us” and not as different. The conservative Jamaican society does not handle differences kindly. Despite these seemingly insurmountable hurdles parents can help their sons (and daughters) to go against the flow.

“Boys will be boys” is fatalistic. Parents can reject that notion and still raise strong, emotional, healthy sons.

The impact of the Christian religion was evident throughout the study. All the participants subscribe to the tenets of one religious group or another. It is the church that seems to have the most significant influence on parents and teachers’ gender beliefs. How then does one change these beliefs when to do so would be contradictory to what some religions teach? What, short of a cultural revolution can effect a change in the mindset of religious Jamaican parents and teachers?

According to Figueroa (2004) gender issues in the Caribbean are “extremely complex and often exhibit a texture that is somewhat different from those identified by gender scholars in other regions” (p. 138). Figueroa goes on to describe the underperformance of boys as a feature of historical “male privileging”. As he posits, certain patterns of gender socialization of boys have developed that tend to leave them deficient with respect to skills that are increasingly required for survival within the Jamaican educational system. This privileging, I further hypothesize lead parents, teachers and the wider society to expect less from boys and men and results in boys adopting anti-social behaviours inimical to learning. Boys also get mixed messages from the adult society: at home they are allowed to roam almost without restrictions while at school they are expected to sit still and conform the way most girls do. They are taught by parents to “stand up and fight back” and by teachers to “talk it out, don’t fight it out.” Male privileging has allowed them to view house work as feminine and therefore to be

avoided and resisted. This results in their lack of a sense of responsibility and preparedness for school work.

### *Recommendations*

In addition to the recommendations implied above I close with others more explicit:

1. The Ministry of Education needs a clearly enunciated gender policy for each level of the school system. There are anti-progressive gender practices which ought to be eliminated. Such policy should be arrived at from broad-based consultation with all stakeholders including the church.
2. Colleges preparing teachers should re-examine their programmes for all options (Early Childhood, Primary, Secondary, Special Education) with a view to addressing gender issues explicitly. Each option should pursue at least one stand-alone course on Gender in the Classroom. In addition, not only should student teachers be required to examine their gender beliefs, my experience has taught me that college lecturers also need to examine theirs.
3. The Ministry of Education, Youth and Culture should examine ways in which popular culture can be engaged in changing the current image of manliness that is proving so detrimental to so many boys and men. The boys all identified with popular male figures (sportsmen, disc jockeys, deejays, church pastors, and media personalities). How can we harness the influence they have on boys to change the anti-academic, anti-feminine view of masculinity?
4. A national discussion needs to be held to interrogate the issues of gender/masculinity, academic achievement and hard work.

5. Early childhood teachers are particularly well placed to effect some of the changes in gender culture. Ideas about how boys and girls are “supposed to be” are planted early. Therefore we need to start addressing issues of gender socialization of boys and girls at the early childhood level. At stake is the full potential of each individual child’s holistic development.

6. Further research is also recommended: mixed methods research with new related variables could further clarify the issues raised in this study. For example, an analysis of popular song lyrics might reveal powerful evidence of specific socialisation messages that boys get about masculinity. I also believe that a longitudinal study of the six boys in this study charting their holistic development could yield meaningful results. Research is also needed to test the widely-held hypothesis that boys and girls have different learning styles.

7. Research is also necessary to discover ways in which home and school can work together in the interest of boys’ education. I also think the Jamaican education system would benefit from a “time-on-task” study. How much time is actually spent teaching? How much is spent doing school work?

Finally, it is hoped that even one small project will result from the knowledge gained from this study. I still remember the plea of some of those parents for help for their sons/grandson. I still remember the tears of that grandmother and her daughter as they spoke about their grandson and nephew. I still remember how close I got to the boys and I still see some asking me when I’m coming back. The purpose of the research was

never simply the means to academic accolades. I studied real people, interrogated real issues and it would be a waste if this study does not propel me to real action.

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APPENDIX A

Teacher Interview Protocol

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the research project-----  
(pseudonym of teacher). I would like to remind you that the information you share will be treated with the strictest of confidence and will only be used for the purpose of this study. Neither your name nor the school's name will appear in any publication or report arising from this study. You are reminded also that you may refuse to answer any question which in your opinion makes you uncomfortable. I would like to tape-record the interview and take notes because I don't want to miss any of your comments and want to ensure accuracy in my report. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Questions with an \* will be asked in the first interview. Others will be asked during a later interview.

1. Share with me a little of your family background \*
2. Which institutions have had the greatest impact on your life? (Church? Home? College? Club?)\*
3. Please tell me about your teaching experience\*
4. What led you to choose teaching as a career? What was the biggest factor that led to your decision to become a teacher?\*
5. What is your philosophy of teaching?\*
6. What activities in your college training do you think best prepared you to be a teacher?\*
7. What factors do you bear in mind when arranging your class as it is?\*
8. What should I know about your class?
9. What is it you like about your current students?\*



10. What about them makes you somewhat or very dissatisfied?\*
11. What is it about your top students that distinguishes them from the others?
12. Are there some specific aspects of the curriculum that seem to challenge boys more than others?
13. Are there some specific areas of the curriculum that seem to challenge girls more than boys?
14. If you had a choice would you have more boys or more girls in your class? Why?\*
15. Do you think boys and girls should be given the same treatment at all times?\*
16. Going back to your own school experiences, what do you recall about how girls and boys were treated? Do you think any of those experiences shaped the way you teach today?
17. What are some words you would use to describe girls generally and those in your class specifically?\*
18. What are some words you would use to describe boys generally and those in your class in particular?\*
19. What do you expect of the boys in your class and how do you let them know what these expectations are?
20. Same question for girls
21. What specific roles do you feel you play in the lives of your students? Are the roles the same for girls and boys?

22. In your opinion, how should boys be brought up?
23. Same question about girls
24. What would be your reaction if a boy in your class takes a doll to school one day?
25. What do you think you would say if a girl brought a toy truck to school?
26. How are girls and boys in your class different as students?

APPENDIX B

Parent/Guardian Interview Protocol

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the research project-----  
(pseudonym of parent/guardian). I would like to remind you that the information you share will be treated with the strictest of confidence and will only be used for the purpose of this study. Neither your name nor the school's name will appear in any publication or report arising from this study. You are reminded also that you may refuse to answer any question which in your opinion makes you uncomfortable. I would like to tape-record the interview and take notes because I don't want to miss any of your comments and want to ensure accuracy in my report. Do you have any questions before we begin?

#### Questions

1. Please tell me a little about your background (where you grew up, schooling, religion, occupation, etc)
2. How many other children do you have except for \_\_\_\_\_ (name of child)?
3. What position does he fall in?
4. Could you share a little about how you felt when you learnt \_\_\_\_ (boy's name) was a boy?
5. What are some of the things about \_\_\_\_\_ (son's name) that please you most?
6. What are some of the things he does that makes you least happy?
7. Tell me a little about how he spends his time at home
8. How would you describe your relationship with him?
9. How much time does he normally spend doing school work?

10. Could you tell me what things you think are important for \_\_\_\_\_ to know and do as a boy? Why do you stress those things?
11. As a boy what are some things you would never allow him to do?
12. What are some things that you do at home to help him in growing up?
13. What would you like him to be when he grows up and leaves school?
14. How much freedom is \_\_\_\_\_ allowed at home?
15. What are your beliefs about the equality of women and men?
16. What roles do you think men should play at home and in the wider society?
17. What would you say or do to \_\_\_\_\_ if he says he wants to become a nurse?
18. What would you think about him if he says he wants a doll for his next birthday?
19. What kind of punishment does \_\_\_\_\_ get when he misbehaves? Would you punish a girl the same way?
20. If you had a son and a daughter and you could only afford to send one to school, who would you send?
21. Would you allow your son to 'hustle' on the streets? Why/why not?
22. Would you allow your daughter to hustle? Why/why not?
23. Describe for me your ideal man.

\*As it is anticipated that I will interview mostly parents the protocol is prepared for parents. Adjustments will be made to accommodate guardians.

APPENDIX C

Boys Focus Group Interview Protocol

## Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the discussion, boys. I would like to remind you that the information you share will be treated with privacy. Neither your teacher nor your parents will hear what we talk about and neither your names nor the school's name will appear in anything I write about this discussion. Remember, there are no right or wrong answers to the questions. I want your honest opinion. You are reminded also that you may refuse to answer any question which in your opinion makes you uncomfortable. I would like to tape-record the interview and take notes because I don't want to miss any of your comments and want to ensure accuracy in my report. To make the discussion orderly you are not allowed to speak unless I ask you to or you have the "mike". Do you have any questions before we begin?

Questions:

1. Could we start by asking each of you to say your name, age, where you live, whether you live with both or one parent, or with someone else?
2. I would like you to listen to a story about a boy your age. When I am done I will ask you some questions. Read the story of William's Doll.
3. How many of you think that William should have been given the doll? Why? Why not?
4. So how would you describe William?
5. What should boys do if they want to become men?
6. From whom did you learn those things?
7. What have your parents told you or shown you about growing up?

8. What has your teacher told you or shown you about how growing up?
9. How many of you prefer male or female teachers? (count hands)Why?
10. Who are the people you admire most?
11. Of the people you admire most which of them would you like to be? Why?
12. Tell me about playtime at school. With whom do you play and what games do you play?
13. What do teachers say about how the children in your class behave?
14. How hard do the students in your class work when they are given something to do?
15. When you grow up, is there anything you see men do now that you would not do?
16. Are you glad that you are a boy and not a girl? Why/why not?
17. Do you think your teacher prefers girls to boys? Why do you think so?
18. Do you think boys work as hard as they can when doing school work?
19. Which work/subject in school do you like best?
20. What would you like to do in school that you don't do now?
21. Tell me one at a time what duties you do before you leave home and when you get home from school each day.
22. What should I know about how boys are treated at this school?
23. What should I know about how girls are treated at this school?
24. What would you like to be when you grow up? Why?



APPENDIX D

Individual Boys' Interview Protocol

\_\_\_\_\_ (Boy's pseudonym), thanks for agreeing to talk with me. I would like to remind you that the information you share will be kept privately and will only be used for the purpose of this study. Neither your name nor the school's name will appear in any publication or report arising from this study. You are reminded also that you may refuse to answer any question which makes you uncomfortable. I would like to tape-record the interview and take notes because I don't want to miss any of your answers and want to be correct in my report. I may not get to ask you all the questions I have now and would like to meet with you again. Is that ok? Do you have any questions before we begin?

1. What would you like me to know about you? (**Prompt:** How do you think your best friend would describe you to me?)
2. If you could choose all by yourself, which student in class would you like best to sit next to? Who would you choose next?
3. Suppose tomorrow someone (your parents/guardians) told you it was up to you as to whether you wanted to go to school anymore, what would you do? (Would you still go?)
4. What do you think you'd miss if you didn't go?
5. Which work/subject in school do you like best? Why
6. Which ones do you not like? Why?
7. What do you do when you find your work difficult?
8. Tell me what duties you do before you leave home and when you get home from school each day
9. How do you spend your time at home? (For e.g. what do you do when you have free time?)

10. If you could be another boy in your class, who would it be?
11. What would you like to do in school that you don't do now?
12. Are you glad that you are a boy and not a girl? Why/why not?
13. Who are you learning from about growing up? Anyone else
14. Do you prefer male or female teachers? Why?
15. Who are the people you admire most?
16. Of the people you admire most which of them would you like to be? Why?
17. What should boys do if they want to become men?
18. From whom did you learn those things?
19. What should I know about how boys are treated in your class?
20. What should I know about how girls are treated at this school?
21. What would you like to be when you grow up? Why?
22. When you grow up, is there anything you see men do now that you would do?
23. Are there some things that you see them do that you would not do?

### About the Author

Christopher Carlyle Clarke is Vice Principal of Jamaica's second largest teachers college. His undergraduate degree was obtained at the University of the West Indies (Mona), his Masters at McGill University in Montreal, Canada and his doctorate at the University of South Florida, USA. He has also done short courses in Israel, Singapore, and England where he also taught for a year. In his graduate and post graduate work he majored in Early Childhood Education and Higher Education. He has published in both regional and international journals. His research interest includes gender in education, teacher development, and early childhood curriculum.