

**Has learning become taboo and is risk-taking compulsory  
for Caribbean boys?**  
**Researching the relationship between masculinities, education and HIV**

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***Abstract***

In recent years, gender dynamics in education in the English-speaking Caribbean have undergone significant shifts. On the one hand, educational access, retention and attainment by girls have improved significantly and should be celebrated. On the other hand, retention, completion and attainment by boys appear to be slipping. The question at the centre of these changes is whether the decline for boys is relative (boys only appear to be declining because girls are doing so much better) or real (fewer boys are reaching their potential than was the case in the past). To explore this question preliminary data from a larger qualitative project on Caribbean masculinities were examined. As a result of this work new perspectives have emerged that may help to explain boys' changing educational achievements. In the past, academic excellence was largely, if not entirely a male domain. However, with education increasingly becoming 'common ground', boys are left with fewer opportunities to establish their gendered identity through education; and academic achievement furnishes those needs less readily. In contrast, fundamental biological differences means that physicality has been preserved as a way of asserting masculine difference, and the 'outdoors' remains boys' territory. In the Caribbean and elsewhere, outdoors physicality seems to have gained pre-eminent importance for developing a boys' identity. While this 'retreat to physicality' may well benefit sporting achievements, there are also important negative consequences. Opportunities to prove one's gender identity through physical dominance are increasingly driven towards hard, physical, risk-taking, hyper-masculine, sometimes antisocial acts including bullying, harassment, crime and violence. Meanwhile, boys who do achieve in academic pursuits are at risk of being considered 'suspect' by their peers and of becoming the subject of gender taboos. This includes boys who show a preference for reading, who regularly reported receiving homophobic criticism, perhaps the deepest of all masculine taboos. The research also sheds light on HIV risk. Through the twin mechanisms of obligation and taboo, a wide range of risks, including sexual risks have become resiliently embedded in the social fabric and are, as a result, highly resistant to change. I call this phenomenon 'social embedding'. Social embedding has its impact by way of gender roles, peer group dynamics, stigma and taboo and socioeconomic factors. To address social embedding and to achieve sustained, widespread results, strategies for producing grassroots social change with embedded behavioural outcomes will be required.

### ***Introduction***

Recent decades have witnessed important shifts in educational outcomes in the Commonwealth Caribbean for both boys and girls. These shifts are cause for both celebration and for concern.

On the one hand, educational outcomes for girls have improved significantly: girls now constitute the majority of secondary school enrolments in the region (Reddock 2004: xv) and girls' school attendance and retention rates exceed those for boys for all age cohorts (Chevannes 1999:11).

These trends are in evidence at the tertiary level too. The number of women graduating each year from the University of the West Indies\* now exceeds the number of men (Figueroa 2004: 141; Reddock 2004: xv). Not surprisingly, this has not always been the case. Between 1948 and 1972, males occupied a sizeable majority (over 60%) of places at the University (Figueroa 2004: 142-143). However, this situation has been changing for some years now so that by 1974 female enrolments at the Jamaican campus passed 50% for the first time and by 1982 they exceeded 50% for all campuses. This trend has continued even further: by late 1992, 70% of graduates from the Jamaican campus were female (Reddock 2004: xv).

Of course, these changes might simply reflect a shift in the types of course offered by the university. Indeed, Mark Figueroa notes that the gender balance in registrations is not uniform over all disciplines: for example, in Jamaica 54% of law enrolments are female; for agriculture this figure drops to 33%; and for engineering 10%. (Figueroa 2004: 142-143). Never-the-less, it remains the case that subjects that were once dominated by men are no longer so.

While we should rightly celebrate the achievements of Caribbean women, we should also examine what is happening with the men. In this regard, there is mounting evidence that the educational status of boys and of young men is not faring nearly as well: boys' enrolment, retention and completion rates are lower throughout the system. There is little doubt that boy's performance has declined relative to the growing successes of girls, but what remains unclear is whether the data reflects a real decline or a relative decline? That is to say: boys only seem to be slipping relative to girls because girls are now doing much better or are boys less likely to reach their potential in real terms when compared with the performance of boys in the past?

### ***Methods***

In an attempt to understand the situation better, and to add meaning to the accumulating quantitative evidence, interview data from a larger project on Caribbean masculinities

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\* The University of the West Indies is a keystone university which covers almost all of the English-speaking Caribbean. It has three main campuses in Jamaica, Barbados and Trinidad. It also has facilities in 12 other Caribbean countries and territories.

were examined. This project involved interviewing young men in their late teens and early twenties about their experiences of gender while they were growing up, particularly in peer groups and at school.

To date interviews have been conducted in 3 Caribbean countries: Guyana, Trinidad and St Kitts. It should be noted that the findings being reported here are preliminary and further interviews are planned for the coming year along with more detailed analyses. Nevertheless, these findings along with cumulative evidence from other researchers is building a compelling case that academic achievement is indeed becoming taboo at least for some Caribbean boys.

### ***Policing masculinity***

The interview data confirms that achieving a gendered identity – being able to convincingly project yourself as masculine – takes centre stage for most boys as they mature. There is a sense that boys both aspire to masculine status and that their behaviour is policed to ensure that it conforms to prevailing masculine standards. Central to this policing process is the peer group, which the data reveals to be a formidable force in boys lives, particularly during adolescence.

*As the boy approaches pre-pubescent years... the peer group begins to exercise its magnetic pull.* (Chevannes 1999: 29)

Indeed, the present research reveals that for many teenaged boys the authority of the peer group at least competes and frequently exceeds the authority of any of the adults who feature in the boys lives. In that respect the data corroborates the words of Barry Chevannes who says:

*The peer group virtually replaces mother and father as the controlling agents or, if not entirely a substitute, a countervailing force.* (Chevannes 1999: 30)

So while it is popular to blame parents, teachers and the media for boys' adverse outcomes, more often than not it is the peer group that exercises the most profound influence (and it is here that researchers should turn, to seek a better understanding of the dynamics that underpin the relationship between gender and education). As we will see shortly, this peer-group influence has wide-ranging social ramifications from educational achievement through to crime and HIV.

Of course peer group influences are not necessarily bad – but they can be, in fact they can be very bad. Here are the words of Bailey and colleagues in Jamaica;

*The worst and most individualistic and predatory aspects of the street became the norm for youngsters who found validation for their behaviour in their peers and in the larger environment.* (Bailey, Branche, McGarrity & Stuart 1998: 82)

Moreover, the present research found strong linkages between peer groups and gang-related activity – to such an extent that a core research question emerged: at what point does a peer group become a gang?

*In time, some of these groups become fundamental identity –bearing groups that not only impose themselves on the behaviour of the young men but separate them competitively and conflictually from other similar groups of young men (Bailey, Branche, McGarrity & Stuart 1998: 59)*

It seems as if in the absence of sufficient restraint, for example where there is lack of supervision or a ‘power vacuum’, the male peer group readily assumes authority in that space. Often this occurs on the streets, where the peer group really comes into its own.

But surely these dynamics don’t arise spontaneously? These peer groups have to source their behaviours from somewhere? Someone must be responsible? Paradoxically, the answer is both yes and no. Yes, it is the case that the rules of masculinity are comprehensively coded into our cultures. Moreover, parents, teachers and adult ‘role models’, including women, contribute significantly to setting the standards that boys emulate. For example Wesley Crichlow reports that his mother instilled in him a “very rigid hyper-male gender prison” (Crichlow 2004: 193). And when he then ‘acted out’ the hard masculinities that were instilled, he notes:

*... these activities demonstrated “power” to parents, women, teachers and friends, who were proud to see that a young man was not a buller, a sissy or a coward. (Crichlow 2004: 201)*

As you may be aware, the term ‘buller’ is used in Trinidad and Barbados to denote a homosexual. We will return to the significance of this term shortly.

As for the ‘no’ case concerning the responsibility of some external influence, the research found that young men are not simply cultural sponges; the peer groups themselves are able to actively fashion dominant masculinity. Here is Barry Chevannes again:

*An adolescent boy’s friends exact an affinity and a loyalty as sacred as the bond of kinship as strong as the sentiment of religion. They socialise one another, the older members of the group acting as the transmitters of what passes as knowledge, invent new values and meanings. (Chevannes 1999: 30)*

This phenomenon (of transmitting peer group codes down the generations) I have referred to elsewhere as ‘rolling peer pressure’ (Plummer 2005: 226). Rolling peer pressure identifies a mechanism that explains how the cultures of boys and young men can be semi-autonomous and can effectively take on a ‘life of their own’. Codes and standards are continually passed down the chain from older to younger boys often at arms length from adults. As a result, peer groups have a culture generating role that is, on reflection, highly evident in most modern societies. It also means that neither parents, nor teachers nor the media can be held primarily responsible for social movements that emanate from youth culture, including the problems that accompany them.

***Aspiring to be bad: peer group obligations and the rise of hard masculinity***

For many boys the constant social ‘policing’ of masculinity literally becomes a straight-jacket. These young men find themselves caught in a vice, occupying a narrow space of authorised masculinity while simultaneously being cut off from vast fields of social life which are rendered taboo by the very same masculine standards they are under pressure to conform to. The rhetoric of the young men who were interviewed and their descriptions of the powerful influence of peer groups provided revealing insights into the standards against which boys are judged and the penalties exacted for failing to conform. At the forefront of these standards is hard, physical, narrow, polarised masculinity. As Bailey *et al* note:

*... younger teenaged boys had embraced, in the most uncompromising way, the [prevailing] male gender ideology. (Bailey, Branche, McGarrity & Stuart 1998: 82)*

The relentless policing of ‘manliness’ relies on boys being closely scrutinised. The data reveals that surveillance is particularly intense from peers. As a result, boys learn to choose their styles carefully and to craft an image for projection to the outside world, which partly reflects their personality but also carefully attests to their allegiance to the prevailing standards of masculinity as endorsed by their peers. Elaborate codes arise which govern acceptable clothing, the designer labels to be worn, the deployment of ‘bling’ (jewellery acceptable to men), authorised styles of speech, striking a ‘cool’ pose and so on. For many boys image is everything – it sustains their masculine reputation.

Of course, image is more than merely appearance, it also stems from what you do – image is very much about performance. In contemporary male culture, masculine status is enhanced greatly by displays of sexual prowess, physical toughness and social dominance. Moreover, the consequences of valorising hard and risky masculinities are far reaching – this valorisation constitutes the very foundations of many of our most profound social problems. There is strong pressure to resist adult authority, to earn status by taking risks and to display your masculine credentials in hard, physical and sometimes anti-social ways.

*In an attempt to temporarily secure my masculinity or hyper-masculinity and hegemonic heterosexuality, I participated in events such as stealing... breaking bottles with slingshots or stones on the street, engaging in physical fights, and “hanging on the block” with boys until late at night. (Crichlow 2004: 200)*

It is here that the links between the prevailing standards of masculinity and crime start to emerge. In effect, crime becomes the ultimate symbol of the forms of masculinity that a society promotes - it stems from boys emulating the ways ‘real men’ are supposed to act according to the culture they grew up in:

*The so-called inner-city don is a role model not only because of his ability to command and dispense largesse, but also because he is a living source of power the power over life and death, the ultimate man. Among the youth, a common word for penis was rifle (Chevannes 1999: 29)*

Notice the close linkage between gender, sexuality, risk and power in this latter statement.

### ***Sexual prowess and risk***

Gender roles are the engine that drives the HIV epidemic. Men are subject to comprehensive social pressures to conform to gender roles, and the roles that relate to sexual risk-taking are directly implicated in the epidemiology of HIV.

Boys learn very early about complex codes of gender-based obligations and taboos that they are subjected to. In the words of Bailey and colleagues:

*By the age of 10... boys began to realise that toughness, physical strength and sexual dominance, all features of traditional masculinity, were expected of them*

(Bailey, Branche, McGarrity & Stuart 1998: 53)

Moreover, while it is commonly claimed that there are taboos against speaking about sexuality, this silence does not extend to young people themselves. On the contrary their environment is saturated with sexual references.

*Sex then was very much in the environment of the young boys and girls... they did pick up a great deal of information from observing their environment and from listening to "people", particularly the age group just older than themselves.*

(Bailey, Branche, McGarrity & Stuart 1998: 29)

By way of contrast, parents and teachers are notable for their silence on these issues and as a result:

*Boys are expected to obtain virtually all their sexual preparation on the street and secondarily from school.*

(Brown & Chevannes 1998: 23)

Clearly young people are teaching themselves about sexual practice and the gender roles that should accompany that practice, largely with inputs from older peers and popular culture.

Against this vacuum is the reality that all societies attach paramount importance to achieving an appropriately gendered identity. The combination of adults being largely absent from sex education and of ceding sex education to young people has important implications for this achievement. Sexuality and gender are tightly intertwined, and accomplishing a masculine (gendered) reputation is tightly linked to adolescent discourses, peer group dynamics and sexual accomplishments. In Barry Chevannes words:

*Manhood is demonstrated by sexual prowess... it is usually measured... by the number of female sexual partners*

(Brown & Chevannes 1998: 23)

Under these circumstances, where having multiple partners attests to one's masculine status, even being faithful to a single partner can be the source of scorn and loss-of-face.

*For males, multiple partnerships could become also a matter of status... (p 65). The term 'one burner' applied to a faithful male in some Jamaican communities was a phrase of derision.*

(Bailey, Branche, McGarrity & Stuart 1998: 66)

Indeed, the importance attached to having multiple sexual relationships for one's reputation is tied to one of the deepest male social taboos, homophobia, as the following quotation suggests:

*Someone who did not have as many women as they did was "sick", "suspected as a buller"<sup>1</sup> or not "the average young black male".*

(Crichlow 2004: 206)

Furthermore, gendered youth cultures, at least in the English-speaking Caribbean, have consequences that go far beyond sexual practice: a combination of obligation and taboo imposed by gender codes profoundly configures the *quality* of young people's relationships too – often adversely so. The basis for this impact stems from equating successful masculinity with physical and emotional strength and social dominance; a consequence of which is the creation of taboos around weakness, tenderness and commitment. These taboos impact on relationships between men and women and between men themselves.

### ***Masculine taboos – enforcing 'no-go' zones***

Almost as noticeable as the symbols of masculinity that are widely flaunted, are the human qualities that go 'missing in action'. An early casualty is the ability to cry, or to be more accurate the ability to cry is not lost (the tear ducts remain functional), however crying in public is steadfastly suppressed. Most of the rest of the boy's emotional repertoire soon falls under similar heavy restraints, particularly those that denote tenderness. However, not all emotions are expunged, some – for example aggression and anger – are actively cultivated precisely because they symbolise masculine strength.

In the following quote, Brown and Chevannes describe how boys use aggressive acts as a substitute for other emotions:

*Boys greet each other with clenched fists and backslaps, and often use other forms of aggression to express their feelings.* (Brown & Chevannes 1998: 30)

Of course, there are always two sides to binary phenomena: aggression is both an expression of masculinity and a simultaneous public disavowal of tenderness. Here is Morgan's perspective:

*Our fights usually indicated an "overt disdain for anything that might appear soft or wet – more a taboo on tenderness than a celebration of violence"* (Morgan quoted in Crichlow 2004: 200)

It becomes increasingly clear from the present research and from the cumulative findings of other Caribbean researchers that much of the 'macho' acting out of that is seen among

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<sup>1</sup> "Buller" is the term in the South-Eastern Caribbean for homosexual - the equivalent in the United States is "faggot".

boys and young men simultaneously affirms one's allegiance to prevailing standards of masculinity while publicly attesting to what is being rejected: soft, feminising and castrating 'failed' masculinities.

*The culture demanded physical responses from boys and made toughness the hallmark of the real male. Young boys knew that if they performed outside the expected, traditional roles they would be ridiculed and labelled 'sissy' by boys and girls. (Bailey, Branche & Henry-Lee 2002: 8)*

### ***Is boys' education a casualty of the rise in hard masculinity?***

The combination of masculine obligation and taboo narrows boys' potential down and cuts them off from large areas of social life, to their ultimate disadvantage. Embracing hard, risk-taking, often anti-social 'hyper-masculinities' puts the lives of young men in danger: sexually, on the road, in the gang, and potentially in conflict with authority. By disenfranchising boys from activities that have been rendered taboo by their own codes of masculinity, boys are denying themselves access to considerable longer-term social benefits. For example, if being safe is considered "sissy", then driving small low-powered cars at a safe speed potentially comes at a cost to one's reputation – and many opt to place themselves (and others) at risk (on the roads and elsewhere) in order to affirm their masculine status. Likewise, if youth culture has come to equate education with their own emasculation through deep homophobic or misogynistic taboos, then getting an education is no longer something that a 'real man' would want to do. Yet this is exactly what the present research has found and these findings have been corroborated by the accumulated evidence of other Caribbean researchers as the following quotations confirm.

First, in a quote from a Jamaican boy to Barry Chevannes:

*"School is girl stuff!" This declaration by an eight-year old inner-city boy... reveals the association built up in the minds of many boys. (Chevannes 1999: 26)*

Second, the following quote illustrates both homophobic and misogynistic taboos undermining the educational aspirations of boys:

*Many young men in Trinidad argue that academic subjects such as mathematics, physics and English are for bullers and women, while trades are for men" (Crichlow 2004: 206)*

Third, from Mark Figueroa, we see misogynistic prejudice underwriting contempt for education by boys:

*There is evidence that boys actually actively assert their maleness by resisting school. This is particularly true with respect to certain subjects that are seen as "feminine". Male-child subculture therefore exerts considerable peer pressure on boys to be disruptive in school and to underrate certain subjects. (Figueroa 2004: 152)*

Fourth, we see these same taboos reinforcing an anti-academic ethos of contemporary Caribbean masculinity in the work of Odette Parry:

*The homophobic fears expressed by staff and the resulting censure of attitudes and behaviours which were felt to be “effeminate”, “girlish”, “sissy like” and “nerdish” reinforce a masculine gender identity which rejects many aspects of schooling as all of the above. (Parry 2004: 179)*

### **Discussion**

The educational achievements of Caribbean women over the last couple of decades constitute an important success story that deserves both recognition and praise. Unfortunately, these successes are at risk of being overshadowed by changes in boys' education, which by-and-large show that male educational achievement is declining. Some commentators assume that these two changes are linked – that the progress made by Caribbean girls is at the expense of Caribbean boys. The implications of such a proposition are profound and demand careful analysis.

In 1986 Errol Miller published his work “The marginalisation of the black male: insights from the development of the teaching profession”. Miller's thesis - that Caribbean men were being marginalised by social forces largely beyond their control - struck a chord which continues to reverberate 20 year later, especially in popular culture. Likewise his thesis stimulated vigorous debate in academic circles and has been the subject of many academic critiques over the years. In addressing the issue of ‘male marginalisation’ Barry Chevannes is unconvinced, saying:

*Are males being marginalised? Certainly not if the main factor being considered is power. (Chevannes 1999: 33)*

Mark Figueroa took the argument further by arguing that changes in male educational outcomes are a paradoxical effect of traditional male privilege rather than of marginalisation. According to this theory, males traditionally enjoyed privileged access to public space which they dominated, whereas women were largely restricted to private domestic space. In the context of education, this male privileging of public space worked against their academic endeavours whereas women being largely confined to the domestic sphere were inherently better placed to undertake study.

While Figueroa's thesis reconfigures the debate from marginalisation to male privilege, it seems to perpetuate the cross linking of girls' achievements and boys' shortcomings as the following quote suggests:

*Increasingly, as women “take over” so-called male academic subjects, the options for boys will be more and more limited. Ultimately, there will be little that boys can safely do without threatening their masculinity. (Figueroa 2004: 159)*

But in this regard, it should be noted that boys' education and men's academic pursuits in the past were privileged male domains too and an explanation is still needed why boys might be vacating these particular areas of traditional privilege with apparent alacrity.

Data from the present research adds a further dimension to the analysis of Caribbean boys' educational achievements. The research supports previous findings that boys' affinity with public space and physicality is linked to the development of masculine identity. Moreover, in contemporary Caribbean settings, this identity seems to preferentially elevate hard, aggressive, dominant masculinity as the epitome of manhood – perhaps increasingly so in recent years. Certainly, gang culture and music laced with violent allusions have become more prominent in the Caribbean in the last couple of decades. But the present research also adds data concerning the role of masculine taboos in creating social 'no-go zones' for young men – one of which increasingly seems to be education.

A surprising but important finding that has emerged is the role of homophobia in stigmatising boys who are academically inclined. This stands out as a consistent and deep seated phenomenon, not a minor diversionary issue. In the first instance, the role of homophobia seems difficult to account for, but it starts to make sense in the light of recent research that has found that homophobic abuse is a mechanism that is primarily used by male peer groups to police manhood (by stigmatising boy's transgressions from authorised masculinity and 'failed' masculinities) and is only secondarily concerned with sexual practice (Plummer 2005). In this sense, as a repository for 'failed manhood' and as a mechanism for policing the standards of masculinity, homophobia is rightly seen as being a gender prejudice – one which weighs heavily on the lives of all men. Gender in development programmes therefore need to take a much more active interest in it - this is no peripheral issue!

So where do these findings leave the 'male marginalisation' thesis? The conclusion from the present work is that if boys are being marginalised, then it seems likely that they are in fact actively marginalising themselves in order to escape the stigma of masculine taboos. The process of developing male identity involves adopting and displaying shared symbols of masculinity while simultaneously disavowing any hint of failed masculinity. Lately, education seems to have become increasingly associated with feminising and homophobic taboos. This may well have coincided with the progress made by girls in education, but there would seem to be no reason why this has to be the case: greater access by women to education does not explain why males should necessarily have lesser access, unless it becomes taboo. It is the misogynistic and homophobic taboos that alienate boys from large areas of social life that they would be much better off having access to.

The question to consider is whether the data offer any clues as to ways forward. In this regard, there are a number of possibilities (see table 1). First, while associations have been made by some commentators between girls' accomplishments and boys' difficulties, it is important to recognise that these do not have to be linked. The problem clearly lies with the prejudices indoctrinated into men and boys rather than with girls and women being held responsible (girls are just as much a victim of these prejudices as the boys are, but in different ways). But for as long as these biases play a role in the development of young men's identity, then they will impact on educational outcomes. On the other hand, if those taboos can be alleviated, then boys will find it much easier to engage with the

education system and in more constructive ways – because engagement will not come at the expense of masculine reputation. At least this particular social domain (education) will no longer be seen as belonging to one gender or the other, but as a site where both sexes can develop in fulfilling and meaningful ways. Girls' accomplishments in education need to be celebrated and sustained. In addition, we need to take a much more strategic approach to boys' education. The assumption of a link between girls' achievements and boys' difficulties needs to be exposed as unnecessary as it is harmful. Moreover, men need to realise that prevailing contemporary masculinities which valorise both narrow and hard role models are leaving young men in difficult circumstances. It is masculinity that is at the root of many of boys' educational problems: hard, narrow, polarised masculinities, and these must be resisted. Well rounded, diverse male role models need to be visible and accessible. Notions of masculinity need to be reconnected with intellectual achievement. The complex and powerful role of male peer groups need to be carefully studied and sophisticated strategies developed to intervene in their anti-social potential. Taboos have to be confronted if progress is to be possible. Based on the evidence from the present research, the corroboration with the findings of other Caribbean researchers, this necessarily includes addressing misogyny and homophobia.

Finally, I want to make some observations about the relationship between this research and HIV.

Gender roles drive HIV. To better prevent HIV and to manage the consequences of the epidemic we have no choice but to engage with these roles at fundamental levels and in sophisticated ways. This paper finds that gender roles create a trap that disadvantages both men and women. Through the twin mechanisms of obligation and taboo, a wide range of risks, including sexual risks, have become resiliently embedded in the social fabric and are therefore highly resistant to change. I call this phenomenon 'social embedding'. But there is cause for optimism. Research has shown that gender roles are in a constant state of flux and dominant masculinities have changed radically over time and vary across cultures: gender roles are clearly amenable to remodelling. The way forward then, is to realise that individualistic behaviour change interventions will inevitably have limited outcomes due to the way that risk is socially embedded (in gender roles, peer pressures and taboos). Instead, we need to look towards producing grassroots social change with embedded behavioural outcomes. These are much more likely to produce widespread, sustained impacts.

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### **Table 1: The way forward**

- Celebrate girls' educational successes as important Caribbean accomplishments
- Take a more strategic approach to promoting boys' achievements
- De-link girls' successes from boys' difficulties
- Recognise that contemporary dominant masculinities are problematic
- Resist hard, narrow, polarised masculinity
- Counterbalance hard, physical, narrow masculinities with well-rounded male role models
- Embrace diverse masculinities and alternative male role models
- Re-associate masculinity with education and academic prowess
- Engage more fully with peer group dynamics
- Confront the taboos that cause boys to flee from educational pursuits and retreat to hard, physical masculinity
- Reject homophobic and misogynist prejudices
- Support research into masculinities, masculine taboos and peer group dynamics

### **Table 2: Social Embedding**

- Gender roles
- Peer group dynamics
- Taboo and stigma
- Socioeconomics



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