

1-1-2009

The social construction of masculinity and boys' struggles in school: a content analysis of children's TV shows

Caitlin Grzeslo
Ryerson University

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.ryerson.ca/dissertations>

 Part of the [Film and Media Studies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Grzeslo, Caitlin, "The social construction of masculinity and boys' struggles in school: a content analysis of children's TV shows" (2009). *Theses and dissertations*. Paper 595.

THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF MASCULINITY AND BOYS' STRUGGLES IN
SCHOOL: A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF CHILDREN'S TV SHOWS

by

Caitlin Grzeslo

B.A., Dalhousie University, 2007

A Major Research Paper

Presented by Ryerson University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

Master of Arts

in the program of

Early Childhood Studies

Toronto, Ontario, Canada, 2009

© Caitlin Grzeslo 2009

Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this major research paper.

I authorize Ryerson University to lend this thesis or dissertation to other institutions or individuals for the purpose of scholarly research.

I further authorize Ryerson University to reproduce this thesis or dissertation by photocopying or by other means, in total or in part, at the request of other institutions or individuals for the purpose of scholarly research.

THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF MASCULINITY AND BOYS' STRUGGLES IN
SCHOOL: A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF CHILDREN'S TV SHOWS

© Caitlin Grzeslo 2009

Master of Arts

Early Childhood Studies

Ryerson University

ABSTRACT

The gender gap in education has been widening over the years as girls push ahead, and boys lag behind. Various factors are considered when attempting to explain this trend as well as how it can be addressed. This study focuses on the role of media, specifically children's TV shows, how they portray masculinity and how those portrayals may shape boys' identities and behaviour in school. A content analysis of six boys' television shows has been conducted to document some of these messages. With the exception of one show, overall findings illustrate that the television shows included in this study do not represent a range of masculinities, providing limited messages to young viewers. This study does not assess the direct relationship between these messages and behaviour in the classroom but considers one possible explanation for the gender gap, and makes suggestions aimed at transforming practices in the classroom. Even with research suggesting the need for exposure to different types of masculinities, such issues cannot be addressed until society believes that young boys need encouragement and support in forming their own individual gender identities.

Keywords: boys; education; gender; gender gap; masculinity; television

Acknowledgements

I would first like to thank my supervisor, Dr. Patrizia Albanese, for the guidance and support that she has provided me throughout the writing of this Major Research Paper. I am so thankful for her constant encouragement and the “gentle nudges” that helped me get through in completing this process. I would also like to express my appreciation to my professors and fellow classmates who have supported me on this journey and inspired me to write on this topic. A special thank you to my mom for her tireless editing and to my entire family and my friends for their endless love and support.

Table of Contents

Author's Declaration.....	ii
Abstract.....	iii
Acknowledgements.....	iv
Table of Contents.....	v
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	1
Chapter 2: Review of the Literature.....	2
Gender and Education.....	2
Race, Class, and Gender.....	3
Explanations and Approaches to Understanding Boys' Educational Struggles.....	5
Social Construction of Gender.....	7
Role of the Media in Promoting (anti-intellectual) Masculinity.....	10
Theories Explaining How Media Impacts Children.....	13
Research Questions.....	16
Chapter 3: Methodology.....	17
Chapter 4: Findings.....	22
Limited Displays of Masculinity.....	22
Conflict, Anti-Intellectual Resolution, and Indirect References to School.....	23
Female Characters as Saviours.....	25
Limited Racial and Class Diversity.....	25
<i>Spongebob Squarepants</i> : In a league of its own.....	26
Chapter 5: Discussion.....	28

Chapter 6: Conclusion and Recommendation for Further Research and Practice.....	33
Appendices.....	36
Appendix A: Findings Chart – Anime Shows.....	36
Appendix B: Findings Chart – Traditional Shows.....	38
References.....	40

CHAPTER 1: Introduction

For years, debates have been raging about the causes and consequences of gender roles and differentiation: who should play what role in the family? Who is a better athlete? Who is more rational? More emotional? Smarter? Statistics and media reports highlight educational differences between boys and girls and their suitability in the academic learning environment. Evidence, although at times anecdotal, has shown that the gender gap in education has widened over the past decade, with boys becoming increasingly disadvantaged. Tests show that boys' math scores have dropped/worsened, behavioural and disciplinary issues have risen, and reading levels and social skills have all taken a turn for the worse (Galley, 2002).

If a boy seems not to be reaching academic, behavioural, and social expectations, there is an inclination to diagnose that child with a learning disability, behavioural disorder, or to find a label that places him in a category that supposedly provides both a reason for these apparent "delays," and answers as to how to address them. At the same time, these boys often get punished for their behaviour, both at home and at school, making their struggle that much more challenging. There are many explanations as to why the gender gap has widened and how it can be addressed; and it is important to gain a holistic and balanced understanding in order to properly determine the most effective practices and programs for implementation. Special attention will be placed on one of the factors, assessing the possible role of the media, and especially popular "boys'" television shows, in shaping boys attitudes about themselves and their identity, education and learning, and their future aspirations.

CHAPTER 2: Review of the Literature

Gender and Education:

Whether anecdotal or scientific, evidence suggests a recent increase in the gender gap in education that disadvantages boys. The US Department of Education has declared the under-achievement of boys a national concern (Tyre, 2008). As Kafer (2007) states:

Girls surpass boys in reading, writing, civics and the arts. Girls get better grades and more honors; they have higher aspirations, are more engaged in school and are more likely to graduate from high school and college. Boys, on the other hand, are more likely to be suspended or expelled, need special education, smoke, drink and do drugs, repeat a grade, commit suicide, become incarcerated, leave school without attaining literacy, drop out of school or be unemployed. Marginal advantages in math and science for boys pale compared to the sheer advantage girls enjoy throughout school. (p.1)

There is strong evidence that when it comes to special education, boys are more likely to be enrolled in such programs, as well as diagnosed with behavioural and attention deficit disorders (Tyre, 2008). With these labels, boys fall further behind and it is difficult for them to ever reach or surpass average standards; for boys, more time in school results in increased academic gender gaps (Tyre, 2008).

Both Canadian and US statistics document this ever increasing gender gap. The National (US) Centre for Educational Statistics show that girls outperform boys in grades and homework at all levels of schooling; boys are thirty percent more likely to drop out of school than girls (PBS Parents, 2009). In addition, Macnamara (2006) cited Sommer (2000) noting that girls outperform boys in arts and music, and are more inclined to read books. In some opinions, reading is the most valuable indicator of academic success (Statistics Canada, 2008; Tyre, 2008).

Looking at US statistics from 1974-2004, it is evident that boys trail behind in reading, therefore rank low in academic success (Tyre, 2008). This was found to be true in Canada, Germany, and France, where the gender differences in reading scales are much larger than in math and science. A study done to assess school performance in OECD countries (which include Canada) also showed that boys fail to perform at the same standards as girls in literacy tests, specifically in reading comprehension and writing (Martino, 2008). Surveys conducted by Statistics Canada (2008) also touched on attitudes and behaviour towards school and found that overall, males, particularly drop outs, had more negative school experiences, felt less engaged, were uninterested, unmotivated, and had weak relationships with their teachers.¹

This being said, there is a risk in generalizing boys as an undifferentiated group, as other variables do come into play when assessing academic achievement, including aboriginality, geographical location, poverty, and most importantly, socio-economic background (Martino, 2008). Froese-Germain (2004) wondered about girls in low-income families, noting the possible impact that race and class have on the gender gap. The possibility of other influences prompts the question: *Which* boys face the greatest struggle?

Race, Class and Gender

Part of a study conducted by Griffin (2000) highlighted the concern over the failure of young working class boys of Caucasian background as she examined the crucial yet hidden role that class plays on academic achievement of boys. Griffin (2000)

¹ A few articles have been published in Macleans Magazine regarding this gender gap. Although Canadian publications, they refer to research and writings by American physician Dr. Leonard Sax (2007).

noted that a small number of young men who do enter higher education are not part of the underachieving group, and numbers show this gap to be lower in upper class areas. She made a point in saying that although gender is highlighted as the primary characteristic of the group of underachievers, class, in fact, plays a central role as the hidden factor of this decline. The discourse that Griffin (2000) used to explain this debate about underachieving boys is one of crisis and loss. Griffin identified masculinities that are lost and misrepresented in the degradation of the class. With the 'feminization of society' comes the loss of some virtuous male characteristics such as 'dignity, responsibility, and gravitas' (Griffin, 2000). In the debate about 'underachieving boys,' these lost forms of masculinities result in these boys as "...lost in *themselves*, as losing their *own* potential," and at the same a loss experienced by society as a whole (Griffin, 2000).

In her study, Griffin (2000) also considered race as she looked at West Indian Underachievement in the 1970's and 1980's and how parents of black students were criticized for not doing enough with their boys to help them achieve good academic standing. Griffin was critical of the conclusion that black parents, rather than schools and teachers, were responsible, pointing to a cover up for institutional racism (Griffin, 2000). From this, it can be inferred that teacher attitudes and beliefs regarding race impacted on how well these young black boys did in school. In the end, race too, ends up being a key factor in the gender achievement gap (Griffin, 2000).

While looking at social class, Swain (2005) reminded us that masculinities and femininities are created in relation to one another. A study conducted by Swain (2005) found that boys and girls had little engagement and mostly negative feelings for each other in an "upper-class" private school compared to a working-class school. In the

working-class school, the two genders interacted very frequently and enjoyed doing so, especially the boys who were friends with girls most like themselves (cited by Albanese, 2009). This finding may create a challenge to the proposed solution of single sex classrooms to improve boys' performance in the classroom. While one side is saying that single-sex classrooms will strengthen and expand the various forms of masculinities while breaking down stereotypes (Sax, 2007), another (Connell, 2000) suggests that because masculinities and femininities are produced together, the integration and interaction are necessary (cited by Albanese, 2009). Thorne (1990; 1993) also supported this as she recognizes gender as inter-relational, stating that similarities between boys and girls are often overlooked, differences are inflated, and the importance of staying clear of forming simple dichotomies, especially in the classroom, is too often ignored. Be it class, race, and/or ideas about gender and sexuality, there are many aspects to this debate and a gender gap that cannot be understood if one dismisses these variables, and their intersection are dismissed.

Explanations and Approaches to Understanding Boys' Educational Struggles:

Currently, there are four bodies of literature that examine boys and education: (1) popular-rhetorical literature, (2) practice-oriented literature, (3) theoretically oriented literature, and (4) feminist and pro-feminist literature (Weaver-Hightower, 2003; Froese-Germain, 2006). The first area, popular-rhetoric literature, takes an essentialist perspective, dominating the field as it argues that schools fail boys and are too focused on accommodating the needs of girls. This perspective falls victim to antifeminism and conservative politics but uses accessible language and is widely available (Weaver-Hightower, 2003).

Practice-oriented literature can be seen as the more practical, action-based component of popular-rhetoric theory. It provides mostly academic solutions for the classroom, to counter-act the so-called feminization of schooling. Some examples of these solutions include reading clubs for boys (Bodkin, 2004), the use of “boy-friendly” resources (Martino, Lingard, & Mills, 2004), same-gender classrooms and increasing the number of male teacher (Froese-Germain, 2004).

Theoretically-oriented literature looks at types of masculinity and how schools and society modify them. Although important, the literature focuses on visible types of masculinity as constructed by society, is not readily available, and does not use very accessible language. Feminist and pro-feminist responses view the gender gap through a social justice lense and often lead to heated debates. They question the idea of underachievement and whether or not there is reason to panic over the so-called “boy-turn,” (a recent shift in research, focusing on educational and social experiences of boys rather than girls). While there is validity to this perspective, it tends to overlook the positive side of boys’ reforms (Weaver-Hightower, 2003).

Although the popular rhetoric literature is most commonly available and most commonly referred to, and the programs noted above, such as reading clubs, are responsive to the public and allow for quick and relatively cheap solutions for educators (Weaver-Hightower, 2003), both approaches (the popular rhetoric and the programs) have been highly criticized as they fail to account for other important factors such as race, class, family, and end up being band-aid solutions, not addressing the causes. Martino and Kehler (2007) saw a few problems in this area as well; first of all, it is far too general, secondly it is based on widely accepted social constructions of masculinity and

gender identity, and thirdly, as stated above, they agree that it does not take into account other possible influences.

Froese-Germain (2004) challenged the notion of “broken school not broken individual” and asked important questions that shed light on areas that get lost amidst generalizations. He called for an investigation into gender differences in levels of interest and student engagement and other areas that touch on social/emotional rather than purely academic aspects. This explanation remains at the level of the individual, and does not take into account broader social factors contributing to the gender gap.

Social Construction of Gender

It seems plausible to say that the same individualistic brush that was used by teachers and schools to paint Black students twenty years ago, as stated in the Griffin (2000) example above, is being used with boys today. The result is a homogenous picture of how they should act, what is expected of them, and the mold they are being encouraged to fit. Theories concerning the effect of the social construction of gender and masculinity are gaining more and more attention as they have become strong counter-arguments to the widely accepted popular-rhetoric and practice oriented perspectives. The attitudes and beliefs of teachers and schools are based on and feed into these social constructions; the result is that boys have few options, and are being constrained to a space that gives little room for movement.

Blye, Kehler, Lovell, and Davison (2003) suggested that social construction of gender began as far back as the 1600's. For over 400 years, boys have been told that they must be strong, tough, masculine, funny, and not too smart but smart enough (Blye et al,

2003); it is little wonder that popular-rhetoric and practice oriented theory dominate this field. While there have been changes over time, society has become entrenched in these ideas and imposes them on boys, who are not encouraged to challenge them but rather to abide by them without question. The programs and responses that have been most commonly used to address the gender achievement gap, as highlighted above, contribute to the social construction of gender and masculinity and, therefore, perpetuate the cycle.

A document that was produced by the Ontario Ministry of Education offering guidance to educators as to how to improve boys' literacy skills has been criticized for committing this very act. It fails to explicitly address normative assumptions and ideas about masculinity and the role it plays in the field (Martino & Kehler, 2007). These ideas are in fact recapped throughout the document when outlining claims about boys. These 'claims' include: "Boys take longer to read than girls do, boys read less than girls, and girls are better than boys at reading narrative and most expository texts" (Martino & Kehler, 2007, p. 415). In relation to this, as well as the other standard "solutions," Francis and Skelton (2005) argue, "...simply accommodating traditional masculinity in the classroom is not going to produce better educational or social outcomes for boys" (as cited in Martino & Kehler, 2007, p. 411).

Also speaking to this, Van de gaer, Pustjens, Van Damme, and De Munter (2006) conducted a longitudinal study that followed over 6000 students for over 10 years to assess the relationship between boys' underachievement in language and their negative attitudes toward school. Various forms of testing were used to attain data which verified that boys in lower tracks (non-academic streams) scored lower in language than those in higher tracks. It was concluded that the lower track reflects an anti-school culture which

means those particular boys were exposed to negative attitudes about school.

Surprisingly, post hoc analysis showed that the boys who were the least motivated, the least interested, and the least attentive in class achieved higher than expected in the lower track. This was attributed to social constructions of masculinity and the notion that being smart was not widely accepted as being cool. These boys compensated for their achievement by acting out in class and bullying other students so that they would not be bullied themselves. Fulfilling another characteristic of society's construction of what it means to be a boy, these boys fall victim to being labeled with having behavioural and/or disciplinary issues. Deconstructing these social constructs is extremely important to begin to understand boys' underachievement.

When attempting to determine who is responsible for such notions, Froese-Germain (2004) suggested that the load should be taken off schools and placed on broader influences such as society and the media. To gain insight about the impact of teacher knowledge and beliefs about boys and education, Martino, Lingard, and Mills (2004) looked at one example of an all-boys program in a coeducational school in Australia. The school program was based on the following: Principal driven reforms, a boy-friendly philosophy, an activities-based curriculum, the idea that boys are disadvantaged, and an overall essentialist perspective. Teachers in the program did not carry out any reflective practice nor did they even acknowledge normative ideas about masculinity and in turn, the programs encouraged this type of thinking to continue. In this case, the principal guided how the program was run, and teachers had no say in the matter. The lack of teacher reflection and unwillingness to deconstruct dominant views was clearly a shortcoming.

Role of the Media in Promoting (anti-intellectual) Masculinity:

As noted above, when attempting to determine who is responsible for promoting limited and anti-intellectual notions of masculinity, Froese-Germain (2004) suggested that the attention should shift from schools to broader influences, such as society and the media. Not surprisingly, the bulk of literature on gender and the media focus on the gender stereotyping and under-representation of women and girls. That being said, there are some studies that address male and female representation in children's television programming. As cited in Calvert, Kotlet, Zender, and Shockely (2003), many content analyses of children's shows report a stronger presence and advantage of males over females (Berner, 1999; Calvert et al., 1997). Calvert et al. (2003) took these results even further, working directly with children and assessing their reports about their favourite TV shows for the presence of gender stereotyping. Overall, they found that this gender stereotyping carries over into children's own reports about television shows, therefore supporting the idea that these messages are certainly being consumed, processed and accepted by children. The children reported remembering gender stereotypical representations of males and females, supporting the gender schema theory, as well as nontraditional representations of female characters only, also supporting the drip and drench hypothesis.²

Another study conducted by Zarini (2005) compared gender and racial representation in children's television programming between PBS and Toon Disney. After a thorough content analysis of shows airing on these two stations, Zarini (2005)

² The drip and drench hypothesis is used to explain the influence of media on ideas and behaviour. The "drip" refers to the consistent and frequent portrayal of stereotypical images and the "drench" refers to an alternative image that appears every so often. In some cases the drench can be more influential overall than all of the drips combined (Greenberg, 1988).

found that females and non-whites were underrepresented on Toon Disney but shown quite equally on PBS. In addition, results revealed that shows airing on Toon Disney displayed gender stereotypical portrayals of both male and female characters more so than on PBS. From this, it was concluded that girls and children of colour watching Toon Disney may interpret themselves as being less important and having few role models to identify with from television.

The most disconcerting result related to this, as other studies also show, is the consistent negative stereotyping of females, with intentional masking of any relationship between being female and being empowered. Although the overrepresentation of male characters and the more positive portrayals of males in these shows warrants concern and attention (it is possible that *how* males are being portrayed is not only harmful and limiting to girls, but boys, as well), many unwilling boys may feel pressured to be dominating and controlling and those who do not fit the roles may not have the strength to share their opinion.

Kundanis (2003) included examples from studies on gender representation in the media, finding that both young males and females are strongly affected by these representations, despite the overbearing underrepresentation of females and the focus on physical appearance. She (Kundanis, 2003) also cited Pollack (1998) who talks about a “boy code” that is followed in the media. This boy code consists of four stereotypical male models of behaviour: The “Sturdy oak,” the “Give ‘em hell”, the “Big Wheel,” and the “No sissy stuff.” The “Sturdy oak” means that no boys should show weakness or soft emotion. “Give ‘em hell” portrays a brave and daring ideal where the character steps outside the expectations of his society. “Big Wheel” refers to boys staying calm and

rational during high stress situations, avoiding shame at all times; and “No sissy stuff” capturing the stereotypical put down: “You throw like a girl.” Although four different ideals, this boy code provides no room for any other forms of masculinity to be represented in the media or television programming.

Along with representations of masculinity, there is body of literature on boys and TV violence. Citing news stories such as the Columbine shootings and scientific evidence proving the link between TV and behaviour, Miedzian (1992) suggested that “the connection is obvious” (p. 212). Both boys and girls engage in “copycat” behaviour as a result of something they view on TV or film. The negative impact of being exposed to violence has been reported on for years, as Miedzian (1992) included a report from 1982 done by the National Institute of Mental Health stating just that: violence on television leads to aggressive behaviour. With the statistics included above on the number of children who watch TV, being exposed to such violence, usually without adult supervision, it is easy to agree with Miedzian (1992). Briefly touching on this connection can shed some light on the impact that television messages have on children and youth, from individual behaviour to forming one’s own identity.

It is important to note how girls and women are depicted in the media because boys and men are often constructed as polar opposites to girls and women. Just as women are inaccurately and stereotypically depicted as weak, passive and domestic, men are equally incorrectly/inaccurately and stereotypically constructed as macho and anti-intellectual. The lack of critical literature on the social construction of masculinity, and especially boyhood, in the media also suggests the need for more studies to be conducted

on how media directly impacts males and boys, including the messages they receive and the expectations they are required to meet.

Children of almost all ages have access to television and other forms of visual media (Albanese, 2009). A study done by the Canadian Teacher's Foundation (2003), called "Kids Take on Media," found that young children are most likely to choose a media activity, compared to other activities such as reading, to fill their free time - boys being more likely to do so than girls. Overall, the study determined that 75 percent of children, male and female, from grades three to 10 watch television daily. This accessibility combined with daily consumption increases children's exposure to social constructions and stereotypes of gender as depicted in television shows.

The media seeks to deliver various messages when it comes to gender and what is expected from boys. One study highlights the top ten leading messages about men in the media, most of which are highly unfavourable. Some examples include men as criminals, violent, aggressive, sexual abusers, oppressors, stupid, and insensitive (Macnamara, 2006). This is problematic for various reasons but as Swain (2005), and Gilbert and Gilbert (1998) indicated, boys, especially in school settings, are not often encouraged to resist traditional stereotypes (as cited in Albanese, 2009).

Theories Explaining How Media Impacts Children

These limited and negative portrayals of masculinity result in an assault on boys' identities providing them with little choice in who to be other than the "flawed male" (Macnamara, 2006, p. 191). Theories have been developed to explain this impact that media has on children; these include social learning theory (Kundanis, 2003; Macnamar,

2006), schema theory, (Kundanis, 2003; Albanese, 2009) and the drip and drench hypothesis (Calvert, Kotler, Zehnder & Schokey, 2003).

Social learning theory, as developed by Bandura (1977), consists of four steps: attention, retention, motor reproduction processes, and motivational processes (cited by Kundanis, 2003). According to Bandura (1977), children learn through observation. Once attention is attained, children begin to retain the simplified messages and images that are repeatedly displayed which then brings about the third step where symbols are converted in action. In certain television shows, there is either an interactive component or what is shown can be easily re-enacted. The last stage relies on motivation and encouragement from others (Kundanis, 2003). Looking at the example of boys learning how to be boys, socially accepted male behaviours are encouraged and reinforced everyday at school, at home, and in the media. Overall, social learning theory suggests that positive images result in positive effects, while negative images result in negative effects (Kundanis, 2003).

Schema theory refers to how a child develops his/her identity (Kundanis, 2003). According to this theory, children build knowledge of schemas that relate to gender, forming their gender identities based on these schema and socially constructed roles and behaviours (Albanese, 2009). The media is a key player in the development of the schema when it comes understanding gender, as the images portray various messages and send lessons to viewers beginning at a very young age. Often, these messages are culturally dominant, offering few positive and very limited role models for both males and females to identify with (Kundanis, 2003). Schema theory is relevant when it comes to assessing and understanding the impact of the media.

Another interesting hypothesis to explain television influence on individual beliefs is called the 'drip and drench' hypothesis developed by Greenberg (1988) and cited by Calvert et al (2003). The drip component supports the idea that throughout their childhood, children are exposed to a constant "drip" of socially constructed gender stereotyped images, which encourages and strengthens stereotyped beliefs. The 'drench' component serves to counterbalance the "drips," proposing that beliefs about gender can be changed by infusing a number of not usually socially accepted images on gender (Calvert et al, 2003). This hypothesis also serves to suggest methods of how to challenge traditional images, therefore providing alternate identities for children to learn about and choose from.

An abundance of studies exist on how the media affects females, almost so much so that boys and the struggle they face as they attempt to fulfill certain roles and act in certain ways are forgotten. As one of many explanations for the increasing gender gap in education, the media serves to create a disconnect between what is acceptable boy behaviour in society and what is acceptable behaviour in the classroom. As Professor of Early Childhood Education at Arizona State, Dr. Tobin recognized, it is important to ask, "In what ways are we disapproving of boys' interests in our classrooms" (PBS Parents, 2009)? To assess the relevance and applicability of some of the theories above, the following content analysis will explore socially constructed messages and images of masculinities in boys' television shows, to see if the images and identities they offer may contribute to some of the challenges that boys face in school.

Research Questions:

There is relatively little Canadian research on the educational challenges faced by boys today. There is also little Canadian research on the role and impact of the media on boys' attitudes and perceptions of masculinity, which might then affect how they approach and perceive school. To begin to add to this sparse literature, I decided to conduct a content analysis of children's shows that are popular among Canadian boys today. I hope to better understand what kinds of messages, and the range of messages, boys receive from the programs they watch. Are boys exposed to a range of messages that allow them to explore a range of attitudinal and educational possibilities, or are the messages narrow, fixed and anti-intellectual? Are the main messages boys receive through these shows indeed narrowly "macho" and anti-intellectual—limiting their educational horizons and sending them the message that being interested in school, or being smart is not 'cool'? I believe that answering such questions is an important first step towards helping us better understand why boys may be doing less well in school.

CHAPTER 3: Methodology

I conducted a content analysis to measure the various messages delivered to children, and especially boys, through “boys” television shows. Content analysis is a quantitative method (with some qualitative elements) of research that measures specific aspects of a body of text (Gill, 2007). The form of text can vary, and accounts for anything that acts as communication from spoken to written to visual. Examples of texts commonly assessed using content analysis include books, magazines, newspapers, advertisements, photographs, films, and television shows (Neuman, 2006). Content analysis may, for example, involve comparing the relative numbers of heterosexual couples to homosexual couples as displayed in television commercials. Beyond this, and more qualitatively, a researcher can measure or assess *how* various couples are depicted, and possibly depicted differently.

There are a number of subjects that act as the focus of a content analysis - trends in media coverage, themes in popular songs, religious messages in films, gender stereotyping in magazines, and dominant messages in television shows (Neuman, 2006). Content analysis also allows the researcher to find alternate ways of seeing or reading a text (Neuman, 2006).

As can be seen from the some of the examples above, content analysis is commonly used for this type of research. It has been used extensively in feminist research to determine how women are portrayed on TV and in the media, from the roles they play to the behaviour and character traits they possess. The three Global Media Mentoring projects are the largest and most well known examples of the use of content

analysis to analyze gender. These projects were developed by the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing and took place in 1995, 2000, and 2005. They provided variables for which to measure gender portrayal in the media and gave women all over the world the opportunity to critically analyze the media. In the end, it allowed groups of people to come together to support their overall struggle against stereotyping in the media. Content analysis allowed them to document the gender stereotypes and mis- and under-representation in a systematic way, in hope of strengthening their case (Gill, 2007).

Another example includes the content analysis of the fifty most popular US films in 1996 as done by Eschholz and associates in 2001 (Neuman, 2006). This study examined whether main actors in these films reproduced traditional gender and racial-ethnic stereotypes by comparing percentages in the US population with gender and racial-ethnic representation in the films. After coding the data that was collected, it was concluded that the fifty most popular US films in 1996 reinforced and reproduced traditional cultural stereotypes while misrepresenting important aspects of social life (Neuman, 2006).

In this study, I analyzed boys' popular television shows that air on YTV and Teletoon. In particular, I looked at six shows in total - three 'traditional', North American shows: *Fairly Odd Parents*, *Spongebob Squarepants*, and *Johnny Test*, and three equally popular, Japanese-style anime shows: *Pokémon*, *Bakugon*, and *Digimon*. When looking into which shows to select, I looked at the show schedules on the websites of each television network. I specifically focused on the after school time slot starting at 3:30pm and Saturday morning as well—both being time slots most commonly targeting

school-aged children. From this, I generated a list of television shows found on the two networks. I grouped together the Japanese Anime shows and thought it would be interesting to compare them to the more ‘traditional’ boys’ television shows. Based on that, I looked at timing of the Japanese Anime shows and found that they played more consistently every day after school as opposed to Saturday mornings, which led me to focus on the more traditional shows that also played most consistently every day after school—for comparison purposes. I analyzed two episodes of each television show, for a total of 12 episodes, again, in order to compare the Japanese Anime to the more traditional North American shows.

The chart below outlines the variables measured in this content analysis. Each of the variables was chosen based on their relationship to what is socially accepted as “masculine.” Many of these variables were also selected because a number of other researchers included them in their research (Zarini, 2005). For comparison purposes, I decided to include them in my analysis as well.

I focused in particular on whether or not these shows send “anti-intellectual/school” type messages to the viewers as I am interested in assessing the possible impact these messages have on boys’ behaviour and attitude toward school. By comparing the Anime shows with the traditional North American shows, I would like to see which ones are more likely or less likely to send such messages. To do so, I have included variables that cover actions, words, and resolutions in the hope of addressing the intellectual and physical aspects of each show.

Table 1. Sample Findings Chart

Variable	Traditional/Anime Show: <i>Name of Show</i>	
	Episode 1	Episode 2
Name of episode		
Number of males		
Number of females		
Human or animal/creature		
Personality of Protagonist		
Personality of Antagonist		
Dress of Protagonist		
Dress of Antagonist		
Main "dilemma" to be resolved		
Who resolves the "dilemma"		
How solved(physical or intellectual resolution)		
Language used (physical/intellectual)		
Violence?		
Number of punches		
Number of kicks		
Number of use of weapons		
Is there blood/bruises shown?		
Are there consequences when violence is used?		
Role of other (adult) women		
Role of other (adult) men		
Any reference to school, training, education		
Anti-intellectual/anti-school language or actions		

Although content analysis is an effective method of collecting data to capture the messages that are sent to children, in this case boys through television shows, it cannot

account for or assess how the messages are actually received by children. My study will not ask children what they think or feel, nor will it note how they actually behave after watching the shows—future research can do this. My research can and will however, lay the ground work for future studies of this type. Once the messages that are sent out are established, future research can determine how children behave after watching certain shows and what the messages mean to them. A longitudinal study tracking boys' behaviours and development of identity as they get older can be conducted.

Another shortcoming of content analysis is that the generalizations formed from such a method of research are confined to cultural communication. Although the content of the text is exposed (forming the generalizations), its significance cannot be properly interpreted. In reflecting back to the first drawback mentioned above, it becomes problematic when determining the truthfulness of the findings and how they directly impact those receiving the information. As well, the researcher must keep in mind that content analysis is nonreactive, meaning that the consumer may read/watch a text while the creator develops the text, both without having any knowledge or intention of its content ever being analyzed (Neuman, 2006). Having said this, I believe that content analysis of these popular children's/boys' programs may shed some light on why boys may be performing less well in schools compared to girls. Of course, other factors, in future research, need to be considered as well.

CHAPTER 4: Findings

After watching two episodes of each television show, the results reveal there are various similarities and differences within and between the categories of “traditional” North American shows and “anime” shows. Although only a small sample, as a whole, the “traditional” shows do a slightly better job of displaying various types of masculinities than the “anime” ones. One significant difference that gives some positive weight to the “anime” shows is the value placed on knowledge and training. For example in *Bakugon* the most highly regarded character is “Noble Lion.” This being said, the knowledge and training commonly refers to which powers to use to battle an enemy, for example, in *Pokémon* there are training sessions to learn about powers. Unfortunately, skills such as communication and listening, although paid lip service, are not used when facing a dilemma.

Limited Displays of Masculinities

First, looking at the “traditional” shows, two (*Fairly Odd Parents* and *Johnny Test*) out of the three involved similar yet limited types of masculinities. Both protagonists in these shows were either engaged in or interested in some sort of violent activity, for example, wrestling. In one episode of *Fairly Odd Parents*, the boy even bonded with his grandfather over violent cartoons while learning about the past. In *Johnny Test* there is reference to the notion that the main character is naturally “drawn to danger.”

The protagonists in each of the “anime” shows have similar builds as well as personalities. They are young, have lightly toned muscles, medium length dark hair, and dress in slacks, a t-shirt, and a vest. They all take leadership positions, and are great problem solvers. They are intelligent, rational, and always in control. Other adult males that appear in the show act as teachers or trainers, and possess much wisdom, providing the young males with sound advice. For example in *Pokémon* there was power training sessions that were run by adult males.

Conflict, Anti-Intellectual Resolution, and Indirect References to School

The “anime” shows are all very similar, with a goal of battling using super human powers to achieve success and resolve dilemmas. There is, however, quite a bit of reference to training, and knowledge seems to be highly valued. This knowledge and training is always practical and useful for battle. Although all the “anime” shows referred to training, *Pokémon* stresses it the most as the characters took lessons on how to train their “Pokémons”, practiced various moves, and also learned the importance of self care.

On top of this, wisdom and nobility are admired in the “anime” shows. In *Bakugon* wisdom was referred to many times and a character called “Noble Lion” was a very important figure in the community. This being said, when faced with conflict, due to lack of time and other restraints, the characters resort to physical rather than intellectual means to solve any problems. In a *Digimon* episode, one character says, “We could talk, but there isn’t any time,” when trying to figure out how to protect a young and vulnerable character. Another example of this from *Bakugon* occurs when the characters

were searching for solutions as to how to balance restoration of their world and one says, “We should use wisdom,” but never does. No blood or bruises are shown in any of the “anime” shows, although weapons are used in *Pokémon* (guns and missiles) and *Digimon* (javelins).

As for the “traditional” shows, the protagonists in two out of the three solve conflict either by directly engaging in physical contact or by talking about violent situations (as mentioned above in *Fairly Odd Parents*). The bonding over violent TV shows that took place between the grandfather and the protagonist did slightly speak to an interest in knowledge about the past but this knowledge was focused solely on a history of violence. Also in *Fairly Odd Parents*, punching is used, as are weapons, including everything from household objects to a sawmill. Despite the use of violence, there are no consequences depicted when it is used. In one episode of *Johnny Test*, however, the main character gets a light punishment of being grounded from watching TV for having experimented with various anti-intellectual techniques to resolve his dilemma of needing “HD TV” to be able to watch a wrestling program.

Unlike in *Johnny Test*, *Fairly Odd Parents* contained many anti-school/anti-intellectual messages. These included reference to how the main character never reads a book, and wants to go to as little school as possible as he is always sleeping through the lessons. He also labels himself as the “dumb kid of today” saying there is too much hard work involved in order to get what you want.

Female Characters as Saviours

A pattern that emerged in all the “anime” shows and two out of the three “traditional” shows had to do with the presence of female characters and the roles they played. Female characters seemed only to serve the purpose of assisting or saving males. In a *Digimon* episode, one female character was a mother who took in all of the characters when they needed protection, providing them with comfort, saying she would cook them anything they wanted. *Pokémon* included female characters who were servers and nurses. They all had a strong attraction to the stereotypical handsome male character, who in turn, had a very hard time staying away from these female characters. These women were portrayed as needy and irrational.

In *Johnny Test* his twin sisters solved all of his problems using their scientific and mathematical skills as he struggled with thinking logically or reasonably about how to achieve what he wanted. Similarly in the “anime” shows when the males were on their last legs, they had a female character come to them, providing strength through food, love or support. In both “anime” and two of the three traditional shows, the males made the decisions about whether they needed the females around or not, as they were always in control. Surprisingly, in *Spongebob Squarepants*, there were no female characters in either episode, nor were there any references to females.

Limited Racial and Class Diversity

All of the characters in *Fairly Odd Parents* and *Johnny Test* were white and either middle or working class. In contrast, there was much diversity in the animals and creatures in *Spongebob Squarepants*, suggesting that no one “race” was dominant among

the characters. In *Spongebob Squarepants* when it came to class, most characters seemed to be middle or working class with the exception of a wealthy CEO as well as another boss-like figure. In the “anime” shows, the majority of human characters were Japanese with various skin tones. These individuals looked as though they were of middle and working class as well. Interestingly, other human characters, acting as enemies or antagonists, were predominantly white and of a higher social class. For example, in *Digimon* the antagonist was an older white male who carried a sense of entitlement.

Spongebob Squarepants: In a league of its own

Spongebob Squarepants appears to be in a category of its own. In only two episodes, diverse examples of masculinity were shown, and the messages given were more intellectual than in the other shows. The main character is a made up cartoon sponge wearing a shirt and tie with a goofy, playful and adventurous personality; yet at the same time, the character has the ability to think critically and have a conversation to resolve a dilemma rather than resort to physical violence. As mentioned, other male characters present in this show represented various examples of masculinity. There were characters that were competitive and athletic, one macho muscle man with a sensitive side, a controlling and angry boss, a wealthy CEO, supportive fans, and caring and kind friends.

When it came to messages and solving dilemmas, the one episode was focused around the depletion of natural resources (jellyfish, in this case). Greed was the reason for the depletion, and once this was realized, the main character was able to have a conversation with the last jellyfish, listening to his feelings, understanding why he was

upset, and then going on to have another conversation with his boss, the character who was responsible for the depletion. The boss, although usually angry, was able to listen and also understand the negative impact his greed was having on the jellyfish. This episode contained messages on an intellectual level, valuing respect, kindness, and understanding.

The other episode was based on a sports competition and touched on more stereotypical male behaviours and feelings, but in the end, after some physical interactions, the two opposing characters decided to stop wrestling, and let go of their desire to win, focusing on their similarities and what they have in common in order to be friends. Neither episode contained anti-school references and both quite clearly promoted intellect and critical thinking.

CHAPTER 5: Discussion

The goal of this study was to document the nature and range of masculinities presented to boys between the ages of 7 and eleven when watching a selection of television programs. One of the aims was to draw attention to some of the limited and anti-intellectual messages they are exposed to; another was to alert those involved in creating and producing these programs to re-examine show content and assess the potential impact these shows may have on the classroom experiences of young boys. Finally, the study hoped to alert parents and teachers to the roles they may be able to play in opening dialogue with boys, which both affirms their experiences as boys, and assists them in critically deconstructing the messages they receive.

With the exception of *Spongebob Squarepants*, the other two “traditional” shows all contain similar patterns and trends when it comes to examining types of masculinities, conflict and resolution, reference for or against schooling of any kind, and female characters. The “anime” shows also display similar patterns and trends as two of the three “traditional” shows (*Fairly Odd Parents* and *Johnny Test*) in all of the themes except for reference for or against schooling of any kind. The main finding that stood out was the value placed on knowledge and training in the “anime” shows; something that was not apparent at all in the “traditional” shows. In accordance with Pollack (1998) and Zarini (2005), this study found that boys are exposed to a limited range of masculinities and most of these are anti-intellectual and macho.

Specifically when looking at the range of masculinities, Pollack’s (1998) boy code can be referred to, as the four main stereotypical male ideals are included in these

shows. The main characters possess qualities of bravery, strength, reason and control, farthest away from any feminine characteristic or variation of masculine ones – a perfect of example of what Pollack (1998) described (cited by Kundanis, 2003).

Although this study did not explore the impact that these findings have on young boys, the theories mentioned earlier can help to explain how the messages are received. As Bandura (1977) suggested with social learning theory, boys watching these television shows retain the images that are displayed, whether positive or negative, and in turn are impacted in one way or another. Being exposed to only the stereotypical examples of masculinity over and over again, as explained by social learning theory, will result in reproduction of these roles in real life. Characteristics of these masculinities build inside of each child and shape his gender identity. The danger of being exposed to the “anime” shows and “traditional” shows that were looked at in this study is that it limits boys and what they see as acceptable behaviour while still feeling masculine. Given the findings, it is evident that boys are not exposed to a range of masculinities, resulting in possible limitations on how their identities are formed.

With its more intellectual messages, along with the array of masculinities and various examples of how to resolve conflict, *Spongebob Squarepants* offers a glimmer of hope, and seems to acts as the ‘drench’ factor in Greenberg’s (1988) ‘drip and drench’ hypothesis. The other five shows provide consistent ‘drips’ of socially constructed gender images to boys but if they get a chance to watch *Spongebob*, they also have the chance of expanding their understanding of what it means to be a boy. This does not mean to say that stereotypical portrayals of masculinity are not acceptable; the need for

alternative portrayals is crucial. Even boys who naturally fit the stereotype, need to be reassured that if they need a break from being “the brave one,” that is okay.

As Griffin (2000), Swain (2005), Connell (2000), and Albanese (2009) all pointed out, it is important to relate issues of gender to race and class. Although these variables were not observed as extensively as others relating to masculinity in general, it did appear that when it came to race and class there could be some connection between these findings and underachievement as most messages, with the exception of *Spongebob Squarepants*, were anti-intellectual. With such a small sample size, this conclusion does not hold enough strength to be supported by the literature reviewed earlier. Based on this, future research should include more shows, specifically ones that include a broad representation of race and class (if they exist). Only then can more solid conclusions be made connecting the two.

Reflection and critical thinking must be practiced at all levels. A suggestion to those involved in creating and producing these television shows would be to include more “drenching” and a broader range of masculinities; this may even attract more viewers, therefore benefiting both the viewers and the shows. In the end, it would be idealistic (and most likely disappointing) to rely solely on the hope that these shows will change anytime soon. The importance of the (social) responsibility that individuals like teachers and educators of all kinds have in preparing young boys with the proper skills to challenge these messages and embrace and nurture the individual within them becomes evident. The focus is on teachers and educators for two reasons. First, they play a significant role in children’s lives and second, because this study is looking at the social construction of masculinity in TV shows in relation to boys’ struggles in schools.

When these gender identities are tested out in the classroom, a whole other range of complications can take place, which then likely means outside support will be needed. As mentioned earlier, the study by Blye et al (2003) examined how and when four young, white, middle-class men challenged notions of masculinity. Results showed they were willing to negotiate and stand up to conventional ideas of masculinity supposedly due to their positions of privilege. These results support the idea that young men can and should have a say in reconstructing beliefs around masculinity. Teachers can learn from this example by having discussions with their students about such ideas and giving them opportunities to voice their beliefs and practice critical reflection.

Beliefs, values, and knowledge lay the groundwork for program development and implementation, therefore continuous self-reflection should be mandatory. If educators believe in the importance of challenging messages and ideas, model the practice themselves, encourage students to ask questions and provide them with a safe environment to explore who they are without even knowing it, they teach this type of critical reflection to their students. With a change in these beliefs, so too will come a change in action and a move away from hegemonic practice. As mentioned earlier, feminist and pro-feminist responses touch on this as they seek to work towards social justice (Weaver-Hightower, 2003).

In addition to deconstruction of societal values and self-reflection, there are other recommendations as suggested in previous research that can apply to the findings in this study. Froese-Germain (2006) puts forward the need for participatory action research to gain more insight in this area of concern which will then hopefully provide a stronger connection between theory and practice. As well, in order to truly attain educational

equity, there is a call to address the needs of both boys *and* girls (Martino et al, 2004).

Froese-Germain (2006) agrees with this arguing that a “girls then boys now” attitude is not effective in striving for equity in education and suggests an attitude that focuses on all children, all the time.

In the end, practices and programs used in the classroom must be for *all* students. The true barriers to this must be recognized and deconstructed. Failure to do so will perpetuate the cycle and there will always be a group of individuals who are seen as disadvantaged, and because of these views, will fulfill their social expectations and end up as just that. Everyone is different – it is as simple and complicated as that; and children’s television shows should do a better job of depicting this. What is needed subsequent to this realization is two fold and lies in the hands of teachers: (1) having the knowledge, beliefs, attitudes and confidence to go against the grain and (2) initiating dialogue with students and providing a safe and respectful environment where their needs are met, their strengths recognized, and they feel valued and appreciated for who they are. No child should come home from school everyday thinking that unless they change who they are, they will not be valued nor will they be successful. After all, it is much easier to be who you are when someone influential believes in who you are and allows you to shine brightly every time you enter the classroom.

CHAPTER 6: Conclusion and Recommendations for Further Research and Practice

This study has sought to answer questions relating to the social construction of masculinity and how it is presented in children's (boys') television shows. Based on the six shows chosen to address these questions, overall, it can be concluded that there is a limited range of masculinities being presented in these television shows and those that are most prominent display stereotypical images providing a limited range for boys to build their schema around gender identity. This overall finding is not absolute as there were some exceptions, specifically the diversity of masculinities and the inclusion of intellectual behaviour and messages in *Spongebob Squarepants*.

One shortcoming that, if addressed in further research may reveal different findings, is the sample size. Future research should include more shows and possibly explore more than two episodes of each. This being said, it was surprising to see that in only two episodes of *Spongebob Squarepants*, there was such diversity. Along with the inability to generalize these findings because of the small sample size, we must also keep in mind the risk of treating boys as an undifferentiated group. As Martino (2008) reminded us, aboriginality, geographical location, poverty, socio-economic background and other variables come into play when assessing academic underachievement.

It is important that future research look into other factors that moderate and counterbalance the negative impact of exposure to stereotypical images of masculinity from family involvement, to critical thinking, to exposure to alternative forms of masculinity by other means. This study in no way implies that television is the only factor contributing to the underachievement of boys in the classroom, nor does it imply

that without television, the boys will improve. As covered throughout the paper, and more in depth in the discussion, other factors must be present to help support and guide our young boys.

The findings of this research lead to some practical recommendations as well. Along with self reflection (as mentioned earlier), teachers may do well to allow boys the space to bring the even limited range of masculinities available to them through popular culture, into the classroom. This would go a long way towards legitimizing who they are as boys, but also creating a space for critical dialogue. Creating a space to have open conversations, discuss images and recognize the strengths in and value of accepting “boy culture” is essential in deconstructing masculinity. Rather than asking boys to leave popular culture and parts of their identities outside the classroom teachers need to encourage and accept boys’ interests, having a dialogue about them, and at the same time providing options and alternatives. Boys should be allowed to share what interests them and the reasons for these interests in a safe and comfortable environment. It is possible that in the end, not only can students learn from their teacher, but their teacher can learn from them in return, expanding their own knowledge and understanding of every child that walks into their class.

As Martino et al (2004) suggested, there must be a focus on boys *and* girls at all times if we are to achieve any progress in the underachievement debate. For now, I hope this study can contribute to the literature focusing on boys, and how we understand what they are being exposed to through television. Although I have hope, I am concerned that young boys in our society are left feeling misunderstood with very few options for creating an identity that truly reflects who they are. Without these options, as they grow

up they will continue to learn from other forms of media, including magazines such as “Esquire”, who’s May 2009 issue featured the article “How to Be a Man” (Chiarella, 2009). The article began:

A man carries cash. A man looks out for those around him — woman, friend, stranger. A man can cook eggs. A man can always find something good to watch on television. A man makes things — a rock wall, a table, the tuition money. Or he rebuilds — engines, watches, fortunes. He passes along expertise, one man to the next. Know-how survives him. This is immortality. A man can speak to dogs. A man fantasizes that kung fu lives deep inside him somewhere. A man knows how to sneak a look at cleavage and doesn't care if he gets busted once in a while. A man is good at his job. Not his work, not his avocation, not his hobby. Not his career. His job. It doesn't matter what his job is, because if a man doesn't like his job, he gets a new one.

What if you read this in your mid-twenties and you do not know how to “sneak a look at cleavage?” Are you less of a man? What if you read this and think back to when you were young, at school, fantasizing about or acting out kung fu but you got punished for doing so? Did those consequences skew your understanding of what it means to be a man? In the end, the message is clear: boys need to be ‘drenched’ numerous times in order to counterbalance all the ‘drips’ they have been exposed to over so many years. Along with this, they need more support and encouragement in forming their own individual gender identities.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Findings Chart – Anime Shows

Variable	Anime Show 1: <i>Pokémon</i>		Tally	Anime Show 2: <i>Digimon</i>		Tally	Anime Show 3: <i>Bakugou</i>		Tally	Overall Tally
	Episode 1	Episode 2		Episode 1	Episode 2		Episode 1	Episode 2		
Name of episode	"Tanks for the Memories"	"A Lean Mean Team Rocket Machine"		"The Wrath of Saber Leomon"	"The Final Bio Hybrid Battle"		"Soldiers Rest"	"Good Night Baby"		
Number of males	6	3		4	3		2	3		2/3 more males
Number of females	5	3	Fewer females than males	4	2	Fewer females than males	4	3	More females than males	2/3 females under-represented
Human or animal/creature	Main character: human Assistant (Pokémon): creature	Main character: human Assistant (Pokémon): creature	2/2 human and creature	Human and "falcon"	Human and animal	2/2 human and creature	Humans, dragon, lion, Bakugou creatures	Humans, dragon, other creatures	2/2 human and creature	3/3 contains humans and creatures
Personality of Protagonist	rational, always stays calm, smart, insightful, patient, understanding	rational, always stays calm	2/2 rational and calm	- takes leadership, protector	- brave, protector	2/2 braves leaders	- smart, brave, rational, seeks knowledge	- smart, brave, wants to be a hero	2/2 smart and brave	3/3 rational, brave, calm
Personality of Antagonist	controlling, greedy	rude, greedy	2/2 greedy	- angry	- controlling, angry	2/2 angry	- greedy	- angry, manipulative, leader, demanding	2/2 negative	3/3 angry, Greedy, negative
Dress of Protagonist	jeans, t-shirt, cap, vest	jeans, t-shirt, cap, vest	2/2 jeans, t-shirt, vest, cap	- jeans, t-shirt, vest, cap	- jeans, t-shirt, vest, cap	2/2 jeans, t-shirt, vest, cap	- soft brown eyes, wears dark colours, jean, t-shirt, cap	- same as episode 1	2/2 t-shirt, jeans, cap	3/3 basic outfit, jeans, t-shirt, cap
Dress of Antagonist	long hair, "sleazy" looking	slick hair, tight futuristic		- older, glasses, lab coat	- lab coat, glasses, older		- creature	- creature	2/2 creatures	Varied dress of antagonists
Main "dilemma" to be resolved	team rocket was stealing all the Pokémon	needed to retrieve all of the Pokéballs	1/2 intellectual	- save and protect vulnerable character	- keeping the human world and the Digimon world	2/2 intellectual	- balance restoration, bring down antagonist who is causing	- same as episode 1	2/2 intellectual	Majority of dilemma's were intellectual
Who resolves the "dilemma"	Protagonist and Pokémon of protagonist	Protagonist and friends	2/2 protagonists and Pokémon	- protagonist	- protagonist	- protagonist	- protagonist (with the help of a girl)	- protagonist	2/2 protagonist	3/3 protagonist
How solved (physical or intellectual resolution)	Use of Pokémon secret powers – caused physical damage	Pokémon powers	2/2 physical	- Digimon fighting powers - battle	- Digimon fighting powers	2/2 physical	- powers used to battle - "should use wisdom over physical..."	- powers used to battle	2/2 physical	3/3 physical/powers

Variable	Anime Show 1: <i>Pokémon</i>		Tally	Anime Show 2: <i>Digimon</i>		Tally	Anime Show 3: <i>Bakugon</i>		Tally	Overall Tally
	Episode 1	Episode 2		Episode 1	Episode 2		Episode 1	Episode 2		
Language used (physical/intellectual)	Intellectual: "conversationalists"	Physical and intellectual	2/2 physical and intellectual	- intellectual and physical	- intellectual and physical	2/2 physical and intellectual	- physical and intellectual	-physical and intellectual	2/2 physical and intellectual	3/3 physical and intellectual language used
Violence?	yes	yes	2/2 yes	yes	yes	2/2 yes	Yes	Yes	2/2 yes	3/3 violence used
Number of punches	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1/3 contains punches
Number of kicks	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1/3 contains
Number of use of weapons	0 (but Pokémon powers caused damage)	0 (but Pokémon powers caused damage)	No weapons	0	javelins	½ weapons	0	0	0	1/3 weapons used
Is there blood/bruises shown?	no	no	2/2 no	No	No	2/2 no	0	0	2/2 no	3/3 no blood/bruises shown
Are there consequences when violence is used?	no	no	2/2 no	No	No	2/2 no	- lose Noble Lion (the wisest creature)	No	½ consequences	1/3 consequence of losing an elder
Role of other (adult) women	servers	nurse	2/2 traditional roles	Mother	n/a	½ mother	- saviour - encourage positive thoughts	n/a	½ saviour	3/3 traditional, saviour roles
Role of other (adult) men	trainer	teacher, trainer	2/2 trainers	Boss, teacher	Teacher, trainer	2/2 trainer	- wise teachers, boss	- teachers, givers of advice	2/2 trainer	3/3 trainer type roles
Any reference to school, training, education	- lessons on how to train Pokémon	- gaining Pokémon knowledge	2/2 reference to training and knowledge	- reference to the importance of the importance of wisdom	No	½ reference to wisdom	- a lot of reference to wisdom sought from Noble Lion	- wisdom and knowledge of how to solve dilemmas	2/2 reference to knowledge and wisdom	3/3 shows refer to value of knowledge

APPENDIX B: Findings Chart – Traditional Shows

Variable	Traditional Show 1: <i>Fairly Odd Parents</i>		Tally	Traditional Show 2: <i>Spongebob Squarepants</i>		Tally	Traditional Show 3: <i>Johnny Test</i>		Tally	Overall Tally
	Episode 1	Episode 2		Episode 1	Episode 2		Episode 1	Episode 2		
Name of episode	"The Good Ol' Days"	"Stinkin' Johnny"		"Jellyfish Hunter"	"The Fry Cook Games"		"Johnny Dodgeball"	"Future Lost"		
Number of males	3	4		All men	All men		3	8		Boys outnumber girls
Number of females	3	2	Fewer girls than boys	0	0	No girls	2	1	Many fewer girls than boys	Girls under-represented in all but 1
Human or animal/creature	- human	- humans	2/2 human	- animals	- animals	2/2 animal	- humans	- human	2/2 human	2/3 all human 1/3 all animal
Personality of Protagonist	- energetic, goofy	- innovative, "bad boy"	½ goofy	- goofy, playful, messy, adventurous	- same as episode 1	2/2 goofy	- controlling, competitive	- energetic, goofy	½ goofy	high energy and goofy common in all shows
Personality of Antagonist	- greedy girl	- caveman: violent/grunting	½ anti-intellectual	- angry, greedy, controlling	- competitive, angry	2/2 angry	- n/a	- n/a	- n/a	-2/3 negative characteristics
Dress of Protagonist	- green pants, pink shirt, hat, buck teeth	- baggy jeans, t-shirt, cap	2/2	- shirt and tie (sponge) - dress pants, dress shoes	- same as episode 1	2/2 male like clothes	- shorts, t-shirt, baseball cap	- same as episode 1	2/2	
Dress of Antagonist	- kilt, pig tails	- leather loin cloth		- business suit	- sport unitard		- n/a	- n/a		- varied dress of antagonist
Main "dilemma" to be resolved	- have the ability to get along with his grandfather	- need to get HD TV to be able to watch wrestling match	½ intellectual	- restore jellyfish	- win "Fry Cook Games"	½ intellectual	- need to defeat female classmate in dodge ball	- "save the world"	½ intellectual	Each show has at least one intellectual dilemma
Who resolves the "dilemma"	- boy and grandfather together	- sisters help, dad comes to save, and mom ends up sealing the deal with a body slam to the caveman after Johnny got in a fight he couldn't handle	½ main character ½ family support	- main character	- main character	2/2 main character	- sisters of Protagonist	- protagonist and his father	½ main character	All shows main characters solves at least one dilemma, otherwise family steps in to support
How solved (physical or intellectual resolution)	- bond over violent cartoons	- physical, wrestling, smashing TV	2/2 physical	- talking to jellyfish and talking to boss; intellectual	- skills competition - in the end, talking to opponent	2/2 intellectual	- twin sisters create a super dodge ball arm - cheat to win	- physical with some talking	2/2 physical	1/3 intellectual resolution

Variable	Traditional Show 1: <i>Fairly Odd Parents</i>		Tally	Traditional Show 2: <i>Spongebob Squarepants</i>		Tally	Traditional Show 3: <i>Johnny Test</i>		Tally	Overall Tally
	Episode 1	Episode 2		Episode 1	Episode 2		Episode 1	Episode 2		
Language used (physical/intellectual)	- bathroom language	- physical; all about wrestling and beating	2/2 physical	- intellectual	- name calling, bickering	1/2 intellectual	- physical	- "dumb kid of today" - too much hard work	2/2 physical	2/3 physical
Violence?	- yes, exciting and encouraged	Yes	2/2 yes	No	Yes, man on fire, some wrestling	1/2 yes	Yes	- yes, "fighting sidekick"	2/2 yes	All shows refer to some sort of violence
Number of	4	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	1/3 contained
Number of kicks	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	No kicks
Number of use of weapons	1: saw mill	none	1	0	0	0	- Dodge balls used as weapons	3; household objects	4	2/3 contained weapons
Is there	Yes	No	1/2 yes	No	No	2/2 no	no	No	2/2 no	2/3 shows
Are there consequences when violence is	No	- grounded from TV for a month	1/2 consequences	n/a	- no, but learn that feelings are	n/a	no	No	2/2 no consequences	Generally no consequences when violence is
Role of other (adult) women	- n/a	- mother	1/2 mother	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	- teacher, maid, mom	1/2 teacher, maid, mom	2/3 traditional female roles
Role of other (adult) men	- grandfather	- father, wrestler, bouncer	2/2 traditional male roles	- boss, CEO, customers	- athletes, fans, boss	Variety of roles	- father	- father, school custodian	2/2 father	2/3 more traditional roles
Any reference to school, training, education	- learning about the past	No	1/2 references to learning	- no	- training for sports	1/2 reference to training	No	- no	2/2 no reference	2/3 slight reference to training/learning
Anti-intellectual/anti-school language or actions	- "drawn to danger"	No	1/2 anti-intellectual language	No	no	2/2 no	No	- as little school as possible - all about TV and eating - never read a book - fall asleep through lessons	1/2 anti-school language	2/3 anti-intellectual/anti-school language

References

- Albanese, P. (2009). *Children in Canada today*. Toronto: Oxford University Press.
- Blye, F., Kehler, M., Lovell, T., Davison, K. (2003). A tangle of trouble: boys', masculinity and schooling – future decisions. *Educational Review*, 55(20), 99-133.
- Bodkin, B. (2004). Responding to the complexity of boys' learning: promising practices from school districts. *Orbit*, 34(1), 30-32.
- Canadian Teachers' Federation. *Kids' take on media overview*. Retrieved June 17, 2009, from <http://www.ctf-fce.ca/e/resources/MERP/overview.pdf>
- Calvert, S., Kotler, J., Zehnder, S., Shockey, E. (2003). Gender stereotyping in children's reports about educational and informational television programs. *Media Psychology*, 5, 139-162.
- Chiarella, T. (2009) *What is a man?* Retrieved August 14, 2009, from <http://www.esquire.com/features/what-is-a-man-0509>
- Connell, R. W. (2000). *The men and the boys* (Cambridge, Polity).
- Froese-Germain, B. (2004). Are schools really shortchanging boys? Reality check on the new gender gap. *Orbit*, 34(1), 3-5.
- Froese-Germain, B. (2006). Educating boys': Tempering rhetoric with research. *McGill Journal of Education*, 41(2), 145-154.
- Galley, M. (2002). Boys to men: Some researchers question how attuned schools are to boys' learning needs. *Education Week*, 21(19), 26-27 + (4 pp).

- Griffin, C. (2000). Discourses of crisis and loss: Analysing the 'boys' underachievement' debate. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 3(2), 167-188.
- Kafer, K. (2007). Taking the boy crisis in education seriously: How school choice can boost achievement among boys and girl. *Independent Women's Forum*, 1-22.
- Kundanis, R. M. (2003). *Children, teens, families, and mass media*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc., Publishers.
- Macnamara, J. (2006). *Media and male identity: The making and remaking of men*. New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Martino, W. (2008). *Boys' underachievement: Which boys are we talking about?*
Retrieved on June 13, 2009 from, www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/literacynumeracy/inspire/research/whatWorks.html
- Martino, W., Kehler, M. (2007). Gender-based literacy reform: A question of challenging or recuperating gender binaries. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 30(2), 406-431.
- Martino, W., Lingard, B., Mills, M. (2004). Issues in boys' education: a question of teacher threshold knowledge? *Gender and Education*, 16(4), 435-452.
- Miedzian, M. (1992). *Boys will be boys: Breaking the link between masculinity and violence*. New York, NY: Doubleday.
- Neuman, W.L., (2006) *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and quantitative approaches*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon / Pearson.
- PBS Parents (2009). *Understanding and raising boys*. Retrieved on June 15, 2009 from <http://www.pbs.org/parents/raisingboys/school.html>
- Sax, L. (2007). *Boys adrift: The five factors driving the growing epidemic of unmotivated boys and underachieving young men*. New York: Basic Books.

- Statistics Canada (2004). The gap in achievement between boys and girls. *Education Matters*, 4. <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/81-004-x/200410/7423-eng.htm>
- Swain, J. (2005). Sharing the same world: Boys' relations with girls during their last year of primary school." *Gender & Education*, 17(1), 75-91.
- Thorne, B. (1993). *Gender play: Girls and boys in school*. New Brunswick, Rutgers University Press.
- Thorne, B. (1990). Girls and boys together...but mostly apart: Gender arrangements in elementary school in men's lives (3rd ed.). M.S. Kimmel and M.A. Messner. Allyn and Bacon, 61-73.
- Tyre, P. (2008). *The trouble with boys: A surprising report card on our sons, their problems at school, and what parents and educators must do*. New York, USA: Crown Publishers.
- Van de gaer, E., Pustjens, H., Van Damme, J., De Munter, A. (2006). Tracking and the effects of school-related attitudes on the language achievement of boys and girls. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 27(3), 293-309.
- Weaver-Hightower, M. (2003). The "boy turn" in research on gender and education. *Review of Educational Research*, 73(4), 471-498.
- Zarini, S. (2005). *A comparison of gender and racial representation in children's television programming between PBS and Toon Disney*. Retrieved from ProQuest. (UMI 1428292)