Corporeal Controls

Violence, Bodies, and Young Gay Men's Identities

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This article explores the experiences of gay and bisexual young men in Ireland. It draws on focus groups and individual interviews with a group of gay and bisexual men aged 16 to 25 in Dublin. The article explores how their identities are "discredited" and "othered" through symbolic and material violence, and their bodies become an index in both maintaining and transgressing normative masculine identities. Gay and bisexual young men are stigmatized (by others and self), particularly in school and through sport, by an ascribed femininity in their body practices, and they resist this by employing survival strategies and by recreating their identities through diverse and deliberate presentations of their bodies. The young men compared experiences at school and on the gay scene, the latter often providing them with positive and affirming experiences, although there was evidence that the gay body is subject to (negative) scrutiny on the scene as well.

Keywords: body; gay identity; young men

Ireland has undergone enormous social change over the past 15 years. Economic prosperity, immigration, and active involvement in the European Union have led to greater diversity in Irish society, including sexual identity. Equality legislation (the Equal Status Act, 2000, and the Equality Employment Act, 1998) outlaws discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people, while in parliament there is all-party agreement on the introduction of legal partnership rights for gay and lesbian couples.

However, such progressive changes should be seen in a wider context where male homosexuality was decriminalized as recently as 1993. Although positive change has occurred in attitudes toward LGBT people and the protections afforded them, perspectives have been slow to change within the education system, where the Catholic Church maintains just over half of

postprimary schools (students aged 12 to 18 years). Schools have demonstrated a clear reluctance to include LGBT issues in their teaching, and although LGBT sexuality is mentioned in the Irish Social, Personal and Health Education syllabus, schools can chose to exclude it from the curriculum. The invisibility of LGBT young people in school curricula is compounded by extensive homophobia and violence in Ireland (Barron, 2004; GLEN/Nexus, 1995; MacManus, 2004). An increasing volume of research highlighting a worrying level of homophobia in Irish schools, as well as the particular vulnerability of Irish LGBT young people to drug use and suicidal ideation, has been used to support a nationwide campaign by the Equality Authority and BeLonG To Youth Project to combat homophobic bullying (Barron, 2006; BeLonG To, 2005; Minton, Dahl, O' Moore, & Tuck, 2006; Norman, 2006, Sarma, 2007). Such campaigning work has engaged the Department of Education in discussions about creating more inclusive educational environments for LGBT learners. However, the independent nature of Irish schools means that affecting classroom change is likely to be a long and difficult process.

It is important to situate the circumstances of LGBT young people in the wider policy debate about social inclusion and exclusion. Current inclusion policy in Ireland (Office for Social Inclusion, 2004) has much potential but, importantly, fails to acknowledge the existence of LGBT young people or adults. This is an example of the inadequacy of models of inclusion that rely on labor market participation, and Ireland appears to have adopted aspects of UK-style third-way policy (Levitas, 2005, p. 112). We take the view that justice (and, indeed, inclusion) entails commitments to political representation, fair distribution of material resources, and recognition and respect, the absence of which impedes full social participation (Fraser, 2005, p. 73). This requires a much more forceful social policy response in Ireland that develops a more inclusive vision of social justice.

This article draws on a study carried out with young men aged 16 to 25 who participate in an LGBT youth project in Dublin (the BeLonG To Youth Project[1]). Of the young men who participated in this research, four were studying at University, two were in employment, and three were at school, whereas two had left school early because of homophobic bullying. Eight of the participants indicated that they were from Dublin City; two said that they were from a part of Ireland other than Dublin, and one had recently moved to Ireland from an Eastern European country. They had given many accounts to the project youth worker (the principal researcher in this study) of being subjected to violence, particularly at school, which suggested that this was

based on the sexualization (specifically the feminization) of these young men. Central to these processes of exclusion and violence were deeply held negative representations of gay bodies and appearances.

In the article, young men's experiences in school and on the "gay scene" are juxtaposed and we suggest that the gay body is invariably seen to be lacking. If not the target of symbolic and material violence in school for being "sissy" or "feminine," this body can be simultaneously denigrated for being the wrong shape, inappropriately dressed, or insufficiently attractive in the domains of leisure and pleasure that constitute the gay scene. It seems that gay bodies can never be "right." We draw attention to the ways in which some gay young men are able to resist prevailing and dominant discourses of hypermasculinity, sometimes being able to reinscribe their own body practices in more positive ways. Finally, the article briefly highlights the obligations of policy makers, educators, and others to protect LGBT young people, while recognizing the often mundane and everyday fabric of discrimination and violence that cannot always be easily penetrated by policy (Youdell, 2004, p. 490).

Bodies, Young People, and Sexuality

Since the early 20th century, embodiment has been central to philosophical analysis, the body being "the best picture of the human soul" (Wittgenstein, 1974, p. 178). However, sociology's preoccupation with social facts (values, beliefs, and ideologies, for example) meant that bodies and embodiment were ignored until relatively recently. Access to and engagement with the world is achieved by the body which offers an "indexicality" (gestures or facial expressions, for example) that provides the basis of routine social communication (Merleau-Ponty, 1962; Giddens, 1991, p. 56). In social practice, bodies, faces, and gestures are read and become forms of social accountability. Turner suggests that the body is "the channel or carrier of . . . new emotional intensities" (Turner, 1993, p. 3) in a society ever more preoccupied with sentiment, intimacy, and nonutilitarian trust (Giddens, 1992). The body is accorded particular significance in late or high modernity as it is increasingly subject to regimes of self-control and self-surveillance (rather than being disciplined externally). It is thus positioned—and formed—at the heart of contemporary power practices. As Foucault has it, power relations play on the body to "invest it, train it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs" (Foucault, 1979, p. 26). Gay bodies, we argue, are invested in very specific ways and emit meanings of particular kinds in a

sexual culture in which the iterative representation and interpretation of sexuality is itself thoroughly embodied.

The gendered body has recently been subjected to much analysis. Dominant sociological discourse emphasizes the body's "social constructedness" and cultural plasticity, a position exemplified by Butler (1993), for whom gender, sex, and the body are ideal constructs immersed in and mediated by the social. We find this analysis helpful in emphasizing the ways in which social relations are themselves embodied, although we depart from the idea—a strong social constructivism—that the body can be understood as other than a (gendered) material and physical entity. Bodies cannot be reduced to socially constructed forms of meaning alone. Indeed, the material, embodied, tactile, and visible nature of the gendered self is crucial, entailing "a certain feel to the skin, certain muscular shapes and tensions, certain postures and ways of moving, certain possibilities in sex" (Connell, 1995, p. 54).

For gay young people, as for others, the body has a continuous, though variable, material presence in their lives. As such, the gay body is central to the accomplishment of gay identity, which we see as "a 'production' which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation" (Hall, 1990, p. 222). Thus, identity is formed in the ways by which the subject acquires a sense of who they are, a Heideggerian sense of "being in the world" (dasein) with others and in which embodiment is central. This means that identity should be understood in terms of, and as an outcome of, the repertoire of cultural practices and meanings (effeminacy and camp, for example), in which its production is ongoing.

Bodily pleasure and pain assume particular significance for young people and adolescence itself is constituted by bodily transformation from child to adult. Specifically, adolescence signals expectations on the subject to become a competent agent marked, in part, by the (deeply gendered) capacity to sustain continuous bodily control and discipline (Aapola, Gonick, & Harris, 2005, p. 132). Youth—often expressed bodily—is nothing if not spectacular and in a culture characterized by the "epistemological regime of the eye" (Connor, 1997, p. 203) the gendered body is key to the construction of a visualized and recognized self (Frost, 2003, p. 54). This self is not only known visually to others but, reflexively, to self as well, offering a terrain (both material and imagined) to be worked on in the context of incessant exhortations to "become (a successful) somebody" (Wexler, 1992). Under late modern consumer capitalism, the body—as important bearer of identity—has become central to the acquisition of symbolic capital based on image, style and fashion. Commentators have pointed to the potential for "identity damage" (Frost, 2003, p. 59) in circumstances where social difference—principally class, but

gender, race and disability as well—prevents young people from participating in consumers identity construction.

Part of the argument in this article is that insufficient attention has, as yet, been given to the discursive construction of the body of gay young men in the context of their own productions of identity—their "identity work." There is a considerable literature on young women, identity, and embodiment (Aapola et al, 2005; Frost, 2003) and on masculine identities conferred by particular body practices and representations (Haywood & Mac an Ghaill, 2003). Most research has focused on young men who identify as heterosexual and on their construction, maintenance, and policing of corporeal masculinity (Richards & Grogan, 2002; Frosh, Pheonix, & Pattman, 2002). This work suggests that the bodily transgression of gender boundaries is associated with certain behaviors coded as gay. Young men who do not conduct themselves in a masculine way (characterized by "hardness," "being tough," and the cultivation of violence) constitute a gay identity framed in a highly deterministic form that constrains all young men's experiences and aspirations. Frankham (1996) found that gay and bisexual young men altered their body practices (how they walk or sit, for example) to avoid being seen as gay and "campness" (read as the bodily manifestation of being gay) was denoted an undesirable attribute by gay young people themselves. This suggests a negatively imagined gay body as well as negatively construed gay body practices, potentially securing both internal and external practices of bodily regulation.

We find Goffman's work on stigma helpful in understanding some of the processes and practices involved in shaping the experiences of young gay and bisexual men as well as cultural representations of them. Stigmatized identity is lodged in the discrepancy between normative social expectations and actual identity, where these expectations cannot be met and the individual is "reduced in our minds from a whole and usual person to a tainted and discredited one" (Goffman, 1963, p. 3). We argue in this article that young gay men are often stigmatized in this way. As Goffman suggests, stigma has three principal dimensions: first, "bodily abomination" (disfigurement or physical impairment, for example); second, "character blemishes" (identity or lifestyle, for example); and third, "tribal stigma" (negative characteristics associated with a particular group). These multiple practices of stigmatization often define young gay and bisexual men (for example, "campness," "weakness" and alleged promiscuity are embodied in dominant cultural definitions of male homosexuality). Gay identity has become defined in essentialized terms; it is simply not possible to be gay and other than camp, "effeminate," or in some way negatively compared

with hegemonic versions of hard hypermasculinity. Masculinity (and as we suggest later, femininity), therefore, exists on a constrained and constraining register and although not "fixed" in any absolute sense, for many young people it is often played out in terms of a familiar hardness expressed in physicality. More complex, nuanced, or pluralized masculinities seem to be rarely available as resources. Emphasizing the importance of "the visual," Goffman indicates the vital role played by the body, as both biological and social index, in stigmatizing practices (by self and others) in the context of identity work. Indeed, practices of visualization inevitably hold the potential of panopticism and of positioning subjects in particular relations of power and meaning. For young gay men, we suggest, there is immanent potential and recurrent possibility of being stigmatized because of the visual (and transgressive) codes of camp and effeminacy that are identified in the complexity of everyday social interaction. Doing identity becomes a recurring process of hide and seek in these young men's lives, as they negotiate, elaborate, and protect their often endangered and discredited identities. However, it is important that these young men should not be seen as passively occupying subject positions that heterosexual discourse marks out for them. Indeed, there is a lacuna between discourse and the lived experience of everyday (heterosexual or homosexual) life. As Foucault points out, although discourse operates as an instrument of power, it can also undermine power, render it fragile to become a "point of resistance . . . a starting point for an opposing strategy" (Foucault, 1979, p. 101). Individual responses to discourses of sexuality vary—resistance, denial, positive or ironic adoption, and so on. Perhaps one of the key roles of education and educationalists is to support young people of different sexualities in acquiring a more critical and reflexive understanding of the multiplicity of discursive elements that shape their own, and others', identity work and practices.

Sexuality is historically, culturally, and socially constructed. We understand it as being invariably subject to contestation and, literally, embodying power relations. Sexuality entails identities and the practices by which they are constituted as intermittently dominant or subordinate. Sexuality always refers to knowledge and what counts as "truth" at any given historical or cultural point, often a truth constructed in the binary between heterosexuality and homosexuality. As such, sexuality is socially pervasive and a component in the construction and performance of identity. It constitutes a principal dimension of power relations (and is a focus of governance) in contemporary societies, operating at a societal level (e.g., in the form of social policy aimed at health and well-being), at an institutional level (e.g., in the organization of school or workplace relations) and in the domain of interpersonal relationships (e.g., in

defining the nature and boundaries of intimacy). These levels or domains intersect to construct opportunities and structure constraints in undertaking identity work. Masculinity is an iterative performance, a perpetual demonstration and achievement of normative compliance in which "compulsory heterosexuality" positions—and, indeed, silences—other masculinities as marginal and less valued. Researchers have largely failed to consider the implications of this for young men whose identifications are not heterosexual. This article seeks to redress that.

The Research

This study is modest but important. It offers indicative analysis and interpretation from data that foreground a range of salient issues and it can be read as a pilot study suggesting a basis for further work. The principal researcher (also a youth worker on the BeLonG To Youth Project) had developed positive and trusting relationships with the young men involved and was well placed to record the richness and complexity of their experiences. However, the research raised some complex ethical issues.

Approach and Ethics

The research strategy used qualitative methods, including two focus groups and five follow-up individual in-depth interviews. Ten young men participated in Focus Group 1 and five participated in Focus Group 2. We recognize the problematic nature of generalization from small qualitative studies (Payne & Williams, 2005, p. 310), but this research aimed to contribute to "theorizing" the experiences of the young people involved through the development of "deep" understanding of them and their perspectives (Silverman, 1993, p. 95).

Acknowledgement of the ethical implications of this work was crucial to protecting the participants. The blurring of clear boundaries between the role of practitioner and researcher (particularly differences in identity and expectations) and recognition of the sensitivity of the topic for some participants (Bell & Nutt, 2002, p. 75) were important in ensuring that participants had a clear understanding of their involvement and the consent of guardians was obtained where this was necessary. The problematic nature of "informed consent" (Miller & Bell, 2002, p. 65), especially with potentially vulnerable young people, was recognized throughout. The researcher was acutely aware of the importance of respecting the young men's privacy while also encouraging them to generate narrative accounts of their experiences. There is a

continuous tension in research of this kind that demands a "situational ethics" in which one's reflexive understanding of self and the power relations that shape the artifact of the interview are kept in constant view (Maguire, 2005, p. 430). The interviews were understood as "displays of perspectives and moral forms" through which the young men accounted for their "troubles and good fortune" (Silverman, 1993, p. 107–114).

Data Analysis

The interviews and the focus groups were tape recorded and fully transcribed. Transcripts were analyzed for key emergent themes that embodied the young men's accounts of the world, and were subsequently coded. These themes—understood as discourse—were then interrogated sociologically (by drawing on our own theorizations of the experiences of gay young men) to validate the analysis. In this sense, our approach is pragmatic in adopting aspects of both deductive and inductive positions. Researchers always approach research and data from a position (ethical, methodological, and theoretical) yet must also strive to be open to surprises in the data. As well as considering interviewees' interpretive practices, we were interested in how discourse "speaks subjects." We construe the individual (in contrast to neoliberal and some sociological accounts), as a thoroughly social subject inscribed by social dispositions that, literally, embody the force of social and power relations, through which "the collective is deposited in each individual in the form of durable dispositions such as mental structures" (Bourdieu, 1995, p. 18). Bourdieu's "social logic" offers the basis for generating accounts of how dominant discursive noise (of masculinity or femininity, for example) positions subjects in specific ways (Fairclough, 1995, p. 5) and against which they are compelled to understand their own social positions. The accounts from the young men in this study can be read as their attempts at making sense of such positions.

A range of key themes and ideas emerged from the data (inclusion and exclusion, bullying and violence, gay identity, masculine and feminine identity, school, the gay community, and the body) not all of which are reported here. The article draws on material from eight of the young men and focuses on two main aspects of the analysis. First, it offers analysis of the young men's understandings of the "gay body" and the role of this in their own constructions of identity. Second, because identity is always contextualized in particular space, the discussion is drawn together by considering the specialization of the young men's identities and, specifically, of their bodies. School and the "gay scene" are juxtaposed as two key spaces in these young people's lives.

"Included" and "excluded" identities can only be understood in their own spatial contexts and in terms of particular practices that are, themselves, placed (Massey, 1994, p. 168). As we suggest, the sociospatial inclusion or exclusion of the young people interviewed (in the forms of acceptance or violence, for example) profoundly shaped their lived experiences of school and the gay scene and contributed strongly to their sense of who they are: their identity.

The Feminized Gay Body

All the young men had been subjected to particular representations of the "gay body" in school and beyond, and these were central to the ways in which they thought about themselves. They had, to varying degrees, identified with, invested in, or sought to experiment with specific body styles and practices and the identities that these either assigned or made possible. Body style and body practice render identity observable and intelligible both to self and others, and are profoundly significant in the visual and spectacular cultures constructed and enjoyed (as well as policed) by young people. Interviewees knew that cultural representations of the gay body had been important in their own development. Although we accept the poststructuralist argument that bodies are inevitably caught within competing regimes of knowledge and meaning (Weedon, 2005, p. 14) it was striking that, for our interviewees, the "gay body" had a fixity that forced an almost invariable reading of its essential character. Interviewees were asked about the images of gay men's bodies they had received when they were growing up.

> The picture that I got was that they were very feminine, walking around with their wrists bent, they were very thin, they walked around like girls, dressed different to other lads. They were basically like male girls, they were all skinny and scrawny and they were all real camp . . . that was the picture I got growing up. (Joe)

Joe's comments denote representations of gay men as "very feminine." Similarly, Luke imagined gay men as "very weak, feminine looking," Paul thought them "kinda petite, little, thin, like stick insects," and Billy's early image of gay men's appearance was that "they looked like women and talked like women as well." For Carl, the orthodox image of gay men stripped them of masculinity:

> There's a stereotype about gay people being really camp . . . their bodies . . . being weak and skinny . . . that's still prevalent. Like it's funny, being gay is not identified with being masculine at all.

All interviewees indicated that the dominant representations of gay men's appearance were almost exclusively negative, relying on an implicitly pejorative account of femininity without which gay young men could not be seen in this way. Importantly, the quotes above indicate not only a wider cultural vilification of femininity, but an adoption of this position by some of the young men themselves. In turn, such a discourse is dependent on a particular femininity that is positioned as weak ("emotional") in relation to a strong ("rational") masculinity (Henriques, Holloway, Urwin, Venn, & Walkerdine, 1984, p. 225). When embodied within the masculine, this feminized sensibility (represented as effeminacy or campness) is paradigmatic of Goffman's notion of the "blemished character" constitutive of stigma.

The (negative feminine) image of the gay man has a long historical lineage. Weeks, for example, cites an account recorded after the trial of Oscar Wilde in which a gay man was described as "pale, languid, scented, effeminate, oblique in expression" (Weeks, 1989, p. 111), a recurring narrative that is strikingly similar to our research participants' own descriptions. This dominant image of gay men is central to the justification of continued homophobic violence premised on the enforcement of strict gender codes. Under these, being masculine in a specific way is authentic and desirable, whereas an unreflexive masculinist culture derides its putative binary other, an equally specific femininity. Such stigmata—weakness or effeminacy—can be disempowering and for some young men they generated oppressive experiences. For others, however, the implicit acceptance of femininity as an undesirable characteristic was evident. Joe's early visual appearance transgressed "normal" masculine gender codes to the extent that his actual sex was misread by others and he cited this as the reason for trying to change his looks. He recalled changing his appearance to conform to dominant masculine codes ("hard" and "sporty"), although he acknowledged this as personally inauthentic:

> I was always being mistaken for a little girl. I was basically the "gay" that everyone was saying "that's what a gay person is like." That's why I changed and hid for so long. I changed and started wearing tracksuits and tried to look more hard, trying to be someone I wasn't.

Joe's work on his appearance can be seen as both strategy of survival and, potentially, a form of resistance to a stereotyped (and stigmatized) gay identity.

Transgression of gendered body codes regularly led to abuse for these young men. Peer strategies of bullying and harassment included name calling, social isolation, public humiliation, and physical assault, practices that

"othered" the young men from their school cultures' hegemonic heterosexual norms. These shaming rituals were premised on the feminization of these young men's bodies which, they suggested, was the implicit justification for abuse. So the role played by others' "readings" of their bodies in this process seemed clear. As feminized, their bodies were disqualified, deemed noncompliant in how they appeared to frame resistance to codes and symbols of masculinity. As such, they were subject to recurrent vilification. For example, fellow students mimicked and denigrated Tom's comportment ("they used to copy the way I walked and talked"). However, Joe indicated that bullying stopped when he grew taller and stronger, and was able to physically resist those who tried to bully him. Perhaps this happened because his physical capacity demonstrated a legitimate masculinity as well as offering the threat of physical resistance to abuse. We return to this point later in the context of bullying.

Overall, we were struck by the apparent absence of access to positive representations of gay identity that could provide affirmative identifications for these young men. Ironically, the specific (and negative) feminine forms that were associated with gay identity themselves constituted a highly specific (and arguably hegemonic) version of femininity, privileging certain body practices while simultaneously precluding others. In her discussion of working class children in so-called "failing schools," Reay points out that as well as being externalized, the "pathologised other" comes to be located as part of the self (Reay, 2004, p. 1012). This is mirrored in the reflexive stigmatization of these young men—in which shame and disidentification are aroused—and has real implications for their well-being, their mental health, and their futures. Many schools in Ireland appear unwilling to acknowledge the presence and particular circumstances faced by LGBT young people and this is a serious challenge to the Irish social justice agenda.

School as Engendered Space

School occupies a powerful place, literally and metaphorically, in most young people's lives. For some, it is conducive of opportunity and mobility, yet for other young people it situates risk, exposure, and danger as the varying territories and microspaces of inclusion and exclusion (the corridors, the playground, the classroom, and the sports field) are incessantly produced and contested.

For the young men interviewed, school emerged as a critical space in which representations and practices of gayness and the gay body were constantly made, unmade and remade. School experiences provided the most extensive discussion focus in all of the groups and interviews. This reflects

its significance as an institutional setting for the production of young people's sexualities and, potentially, in any policy response to the issues themselves. Mac an Ghaill (1994) suggests that a hegemonic heterosexual masculinity among young men in school actively others peers who do not conform to a masculine norm and are invariably labeled as effeminate and gay. Nayak and Kehily (1996) similarly suggest that homophobia among young men in school is a heterosexual performance. It is constructed in the shadow of a normative masculinity and policed by recurrent assertions that transgression signifies the less than masculine other that is feminine or gay. Homophobia is much more than fearing or despising homosexuals and homosexuality. It is constituted in the practices that demonize those considered to transgress normative heterosexuality; in this instance, those who fail in some way to author a legitimate masculinity.

The data analysis here is divided into three subsections.

1.   Material and symbolic violence and sexuality

British sociology of education has characteristically construed education (its institutions and practices) as a primary means by which social inequalities are established, reproduced, and played out through the relations of class, gender, and race. However, sexuality as an important form of social difference occupies a difficult relationship with schooling (Youdell, 2004, p. 479). Schools and those in them (students and teachers, for example) are formally understood (because of professional codes of practice and cultural representations of childhood and young people) as nonsexual or sexually neutral (Epstein & Johnson, 1996). Yet, ironically, the attempt to ignore or conceal an underlying "sexual economy of schooling" (for example, by seeing sex as individualized and "biological," a "latent by product of emerging adult status" Mac an Ghaill, 2000, p. 90) only makes the power of sexualities more potent. This is, perhaps, nowhere more so than in Ireland, where the Catholic Church has, historically, been so influential in matters of both schooling and sexuality. Far from ignoring sexuality, the Catholic Church has continuously sought to intervene in the domain of sexuality. However, there are powerful contradictions in the Church's treatment of the body. It celebrates its capacity as the "word made flesh," yet attempts to mortify its desires through celibacy and chastity (Grace, 2002, p. 71). Despite this, little research has been done to explore the ways issues of sexuality play out in Irish schools.

Schools in Ireland (as elsewhere) have always been a setting in which violence—both material and symbolic—is the means by which masculinity

is constructed and policed (Haywood & Mac an Ghaill, 2003, p. 72) and by which it has retained its dominance. It is not only economic capital that secures the position of dominant elites. Cultural capital (located in sexuality, for example) articulated with economic capital and inhering in symbolic systems, defines knowledge as legitimate or not. It is in the symbolic domain, in language and discourse, that meaning is formed and imposed and in which violence is deployed to secure relations of dominance and subordination (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 192). Foucault makes the point that discourse is "a violence which we do to things" (McNay, 1994, p. 96); indeed such violence is centrally implicated in the practices that make and remake sexualities in particular ways. For young men, heterosexuality is the dominant form of cultural capital, defining the bounds to social inclusion and simultaneously constructing and excluding its other: homosexuality. Symbolic violence—as a form of domination[2]—has acquired a normality and naturalness, an essential "taken-for-grantedness" that emerges in the fabric of everyday school cultures. Its effects—power effects—constitute forms of corporeal capital that designate boundaries between legitimate and illegitimate sexualities, signaling the body's value and status. Like other capitals, the salience of corporeal capital lies in its capacity for transformation to other commodity forms (recognition, status, authority, security, and so on). Our interviews indicated that it played an important role in the school cultures that these young men had experienced.

Four of the young men who participated in individual interviews and four in the focus groups revealed that they had experienced homophobic bullying at school. This ranged from physical assault and name calling to ritual humiliation: material and symbolic violence. Billy left school in a rural part of Ireland without completing his Leaving Certificate and moved to Dublin at the age of 17 (4 months before he was interviewed). His experience of school was traumatic.

> There was stuff written about me in school, I was slagged going down the street, there was stuff thrown at me. I had to go to hospital in 4th year because someone pushed me off the stage. I had to move from that school to another one. . . . I had to stand on my own, no one would talk to me unless they wanted a cigarette, or they wanted money.

Tom also left school without completing his education because of homophobic bullying. He recounted being repeatedly humiliated:

I was called ya faggot, ya bender, ya queer, ya puff . . . you know the ones. They [other students] used to copy the way I walked and talked. They

used to rob me schoolbooks and it used to cost me £20 at the time to get new ones. . . . Once they robbed me school bag and wouldn't give it back so I had to buy the whole lot again. Once too they threw incense on me. It was really, really strong and I had to go home it was so strong.

Our interviewees gave an impression of casual, ritualized, and frighteningly normalized levels of symbolic and material violence in schools and directed toward young gay men's bodies. Some interviewees had considerable insight into the fragility of young male identities, one suggesting that bullies are "insecure, like people who are self conscious, like fat people who take it out on other people." Other interviewees thought that violence was a strategy adopted by heterosexual young men to conceal anxiety and insecurity about their own sexuality; as one interviewee put it, these practices are attempts to "prove that they're not gay." Such violent practices reflect discourses of a dominant heterosexuality that, in effect, translate to practices of identity policing. They also suggest the perpetual performance of male heterosexuality and the extent to which some young men go in order not to be found wanting in terms of an authentic sexuality.

2. Responding to violence in school

The concept of resistance is vexed and its use in the sociology of youth is somewhat procrustean. Griffin (1993) identifies how so-called "radical sociology" of the 1970s and 1980s superficially "read" resistance from young people's actions without properly analyzing relations of culture, agency, and structure (p. 210). Raby (2005, p. 152) distinguishes between modernist and postmodern conceptualizations of resistance. In the former, resistance is signaled by actors' attempts to disrupt or achieve dominance in extant power relations. Resistance in the latter is construed in more fluid, transitory, and fragmented ways, identifying the importance of local and context-bound attempts by subjects (young people, for example) to position themselves in complex fields and flows of power relations and constricted identities. The young men interviewed here demonstrated resistance insofar as they acknowledged their own attempts to disrupt or contest the consequences of normalizing discourses of heterosexual masculinity. They gave many examples of modest and specific ways in which their own practices attempted to secure protection from the harm of violence. These should not be romanticized, nor seen as heroic (although sometimes indisputably brave). However, they should be understood as attempts, however short-lived or abortive, to achieve agency.

It is possible to consider the dominant heterosexualities (and, as we have suggested, homophobia) discussed above as the outcomes of discursive practices. These circulate and shape the social field—in this case, the social relations of school—reinforcing the legitimacy of "normal" masculinity and heterosexuality. However, these practices are contested. Sexuality (like other identities) is a site of struggle in which discourse is potentially fragile and unstable rendering practices of power are dispersed, fragmented, and sometimes contradictory. Youdell's work, for example, suggests that particular sexualities have no a priori repressive or emancipatory status; they are contested and can be deployed in varying configurations and in diverse ways with sometimes unpredictable outcomes (Youdell, 2004, p. 487). Although, as we have seen, the practices of heterosexual masculinity invariably comprise symbolic or material violence we should expect their outcomes to remain contested and challenged. As (the later) Foucault points out, "There are no relations of power without resistances; the latter are all the more real and effective because they are formed right at the point where relations of power are exercised" (Foucault, 1980, p. 142). Consistent with Foucault's rejection of the central "subject of power" (the state, for example), resistance is fragmented, localized, and inevitably comprises shifting, temporary, and sometimes contradictory positions.

Resistance seems to work here in two distinct and different ways. First, their peers apparently read these young men's feminized bodies as implicit statements of resistance to dominant definitions of how to do "young man," even when this may have entailed an unconscious, or even unintended, identification with gay identity on the part of these gay young men. Arguably, the definition of the young men's gay body practices as resistance constitutes a mistake on the part of the young men's peers who incorrectly assume agency on the part of the gay young men. What is defined by peers as resistance may be the inculcated dispositions of habitus that have unconsciously molded these young men's bodies and practices in specific and habitual ways. Second, there is the strategic and reflexive resistance (exemplified in Joe's account and clearly not available to all) undertaken to survive the dangers of violence and abuse. We suggest that bodily comportment read as resistance by others and conscious and explicit practices deployed as resistance (physical or verbal violence, for example) are both present in shaping the lived experiences of young gay men.

Some young men interviewed had devised careful defensive strategies of self-representation as a means of fitting in and, in so doing, resisting hostile school cultures. Their responses to violence emphasized the importance

of the visual codes constituting sexuality, and entailed complex reflexive work on the body and on their own "talk repertoires." The idea was to pass as "straight."

> You definitely acted straight. I don't know how well I did it, acted straight, but I got through (laughs). But ya, the way you held yourself and in class, everyone in class would sit completely slouched. Like completely! (Carl)

Interviewees indicated that in their experience there was a "straight ontology"—a straight way of being—in school and to which they felt intense pressure (external and internal) to adhere in the presentation of self. As Tom said, in school, "you're supposed to act macho, pretend you like girls, pretend you like football," and Joe suggested, "you're supposed to hang around with the fellas and talk about girls." These practices were key markers in mapping an authentic heterosexual masculinity and successfully avoiding harassment and violence. As Carl put it, "I kept to myself a lot. . . I wouldn't put myself out there at all, so . . . I definitely felt different and behaved to a norm. Maybe if I had behaved as I actually am then I would have been targeted."

We reflect on two contrasting examples of "survival attempts" and potential resistance to violence. Paul was verbally bullied at school from an early age. He tried unsuccessfully to modify his behavior ("by keeping 'myself' hidden inside") but this did not divert attention from him. "I was totally quiet in school . . . you see I was just so scared that I just kept quiet and didn't let myself out. . . . In school I got it all the time. . . . 'Oh you're gay' even when I was quiet, they still just figured I was gay." In contrast, Joe knew that his appearance could alert people to the fact that he was gay. Consequently, he often changed and moderated his image, choosing to look more gay at times and less at others, playing with the ambiguity and uncertainty that he could generate through using his body. In contrast to Paul, who seemed "stuck" in his identity, it appeared that Joe presented a "moving target," part of the "hide and seek" of doing identity in difficult and dangerous circumstances. This can be seen as an example of the local and context-bound resistances to dominant definitions of Joe's identity. Joe's physical size offered him some protection and gave him license to experiment with body practices that Paul and others did not have.

> I was real camp when I was young. I had blonde hair and then I started associating that with being feminine so I started dying it brown. . . . I had so many looks. . . . I didn't want to be gay so I'd dye my hair brown one day and then I'd want to be gay another day so I'd dye it blonde.

It is almost as if Joe wanted to "keep them guessing" through a constant process of maximizing ambiguity around the fabricated representations that he made of himself for others (and for self). This entailed complex reflexive work, making, unmaking and remaking the embodied self in the inevitably unfinished process of identity construction. This is the "production" within representation to which Hall refers. Interestingly, there is evidence in these data of imputed "bodily abominations" that Goffman defines as constituting stigma. In Joe's example, however, there is also a kind of ironic "self-stigmatization," almost a playfulness that Joe felt able to manage, perhaps supported by his physical strength and size. As he put it:

> I was in a fight nearly every week. Then after a while, after first and second year nobody ever said anything to me 'cos they were thinking "Joe isn't going to take it like." I got so tall—I grew from 5 foot to 6 foot real fast.

The differentiated material presence and capacity of Joe's and Paul's bodies were, in both instances, as significant as the meanings and investments their social construction set up. Ultimately, in this instance at least, it seems that it was the sheer materiality of Joe's body, rather than its socially constructed meaning, that enabled him to survive, a resource on which Paul was unable to draw.

Normative gender construction is "performed" through the continuous reiteration of what are understood as fundamental qualities of sex (man/woman) and gender (Butler, 1993). Playing sport and deploying heterosexual body practices (such as sitting "completely slouched" at school) seem, in the experiences of these young men, to have signaled an authentic (and normative) gender identity. Interviewees indicated that they attempted this performance of "proper" identity by "acting straight," itself a way of resisting the damaging definitions of gayness. Carl and Paul said that they consciously "acted normal" (normal being proper normality) in school, whereas Joe changed his appearance to be more masculine and pretended to be interested in football. These acting strategies were necessary because a lack of involvement in authentic heterosexual practices was an indicator of gender transgression that would result in young men being labeled as "girlie" or effeminate, being ostracized, and attracting violence. Paul explained his experiences of bullying this way: "If you're different, if you're girlie, it's like, 'why aren't you playing sport? You're meant to be a man, why are you girlie . . . be a man!'" Although Paul had positively embraced a "girlie" identity through his body practices and comportment, other students responded to this by labeling him as gay. He

acknowledged his efforts to "act straight" were unsuccessful ("even when I was quiet they still figured I was gay").

3.   Sport and football in school

Sport is a major global cultural institution. Characteristically, it is seen as leisure, as the counter to work and central to the sphere of recreation, a principal domain in which identity is negotiated and renegotiated. Sport has the capacity to both humanize and dehumanize (Shilling, 2005, p. 125) and there was certainly evidence of the latter in our interviews. Globalized sport (perhaps particularly football because of its huge popular appeal and cultural significance) is also a milieu from which young people derive compelling representations of the sporting body, symbolizing important capital and providing powerful sources of social identity. Because of the differential distribution of such capital, sport has limitless power to establish and maintain social inequality. Wrong—nonsporty—bodies can easily be marginalized and excluded. For most young people, the school sports curriculum is the space in which they acquire intimate experiences of engagement in the social and technical practices of sport. Sport curricula and pedagogies are important mechanisms in which the power of sport is realized through its capacity "for inscribing and proscribing student subjectivities" (Martino & Beckett, 2004, p. 240) and physical education and school sport are primary sites for the circulation of discourses of sexuality and for the organization of embodied status and identity.

Sport emerged as an important theme in our interviews. Interviewees spoke at length, sometimes ambivalently, about sport and football. They talked about footballers being attractive ("nice asses [that] always stand up nice") but some indicated that playing sport was something to be avoided. Sporting spaces (the gym, the football pitch, or the rugby ground) were potentially perilous places for these young men. They symbolized a domain where the visual significance of the gay body was particularly important—creating a bas relief where the gay body could attract material and symbolic violence from other young people and, occasionally, from teachers. Tom's P.E. teacher had made him run laps of the football pitch (Tom thought that his teacher knew he was gay) as Tom didn't actively involve himself in football. Billy said he "wouldn't feel comfortable on a [football] pitch" and he studied alone during sports lessons. This shaped his school experience and cast him as "other."

> In our school you had to play football. All the girls would play basketball and you couldn't go in with them, you'd have to play football or rugby. What I used to do was go into a room and study for two hours.

Tom confirms the binary between the masculinity of sport and the implied femininity of academe (although basketball was, perhaps, equally feminized), whose institutionalized form constrains sexual identification.

Typically, interviewees described school cultures where football (and, in one case, rugby) was valued cultural capital, symbolizing hard masculinity and reflecting a long history of the "cult of manliness" that has pervaded middle-class British and, latterly, Irish culture from the 19th century (Shilling, 2005, p. 118). A lack of interest or ability in sport rendered these young men's identities as "spoiled" and left them vulnerable to harassment (despite attempts by some to conceal their dislike or disinterest), particularly in schools where the "cult of the sportsman" prevailed.

> They [other students] used to talk about matches and all in school and I used to pretend that I watched them and all, but I never did, and then I'd always get caught out (laughs). . . . I think it's just that the people who play sport, they're the macho lads . . . and if you don't fit into that group you're different, you get slagged for it 'cause you don't play sport, it's stupid. (Joe)

Football is indexical of heteromasculinity; symbolic of what it is to be "one of the lads," a "real boy." The implication from Joe here is that sport (especially football) was a key site for the manufacture and expression of a normalized and dominant masculinity and of the potential marginalization of gay and bisexual young men. To conform to the dominant vision of masculinity, young men believed they had "to be macho . . . one of the lads . . . you play sport." Playing football is a key to this, and the alternatives (such as spending lunch times with groups of girls) signified otherness.

Some schools' own policies and practices marginalized some of the young men interviewed. Billy's experience, for example, of his school's sports policy (he felt he could not play football with the boys and was not allowed to play basketball with the girls) left him isolated. In the context of the harassment he experienced from fellow students, his school plainly contributed to this by promoting specific, and traditionally dominant, representations of masculinity and femininity: "real boys play football, girls play basketball." Billy's studying (a feminized activity) during sports lessons was inscribed as a further marker of his effeminacy that transgressed normal masculinity. Although the classroom was safer than the football pitch for Billy and others, it was not necessarily safe space, denoting, as it did, Billy's difference.

Sport contrasted strongly with academic life in these young men's schools. Both were coded in gender terms and marked off the legitimate boundaries to male or female sexuality. Carl recalled that part of "acting straight" in school meant that "in class you didn't participate too much or

be too enthusiastic at all," as this would define deviance (although, ironically, enthusiasm and passion were valued in sport). Among many adolescent young men, studying—signifying "geek" or "boffin" culture—is coded as essentially feminine (Frosh et al., 2002), although, as Haywood and Mac an Ghaill (2003) point out, in some settings masculinity is aligned with aspirational academic cultures (p. 69). Elsewhere, young men's academic achievement is assiduously cultivated and valorized through specific inter-sections of class, ethnicity, and gender (Bradford & Hey, in press). However, for Billy, academic achievement was not considered a realistic option and he was isolated by school policy that provided no safe curricular spaces, either sporting or academic.

As we have seen, school represented a particular space for these young men in which they were often subjected to ridicule and violence, yet it was central in structuring important aspects of their identities. We think it immensely sig-nificant that our interviewees' experiences of school were almost exclusively negative. This indicates that there are important policy matters that require attention and we briefly consider this in our concluding section. We go on to discuss our interviewees' experiences of another (in some ways, a very differ-ent) space: the "gay scene."

The Gay Scene: Appearance, Ambiguity and Stigma

Our interviews identified school as a powerful material and symbolic space in which identity was shaped. Interviewees referred to other spaces (the home and the street, for example) and, of these, Dublin's "gay scene" was important. As a city of just over 1 million residents, Dublin has a well-established scene, although it developed later here than in cities of comparable size. Reflecting Irish cultural representations of sexuality, it wasn't until the late 1980s that an openly advertised gay bar emerged in the city. Soon after that, alternative nightclubs began to provide a social space for young gay people and Dublin's gay and lesbian community centre—The Hirschfield Centre—also became a place to meet with an occasional disco night. The small, "underground" nature of the scene was largely a consequence of homosexual sex being criminalized until 1993. Decriminalization brought with it a boom, in which gay bars, clubs, and cafes opened in the city.

Today, the scene comprises six permanent venues, two "super-pubs" with capacities of more than 1,000 people, and a number of club nights, cafes, and saunas. Although less segregated on the basis of age, gender, and class than gay scenes in other cities, the two super-pubs attract a young "trendy" gay

male crowd. These venues have large dance floors and appear to be dominated by young men aged from their late teens to their mid-20s, and recreational drug use (particularly cocaine and ecstasy) is evident. The two scene magazines—*Free! Magazine* and *SceneCity Magazine*—contain sections (up to one quarter of each issue) of photographs of "nights out," in which images of young men in these venues dominate. For our interviewees, these photo sections act as a "who's who" of the scene, so that appearing there (while looking "good") represents potentially valuable social capital.

For many young men the scene is of enormous importance. It is more than just a network of places to go; it involves active participation and involvement. As Skeggs (1999) points out, "Gay spaces can be used as sites for claims to visibility . . . for legitimacy" (p. 220). Young men speak of being "on the scene"—meaning to interact with it, to make it a significant part of their lives, or going "off the scene"—signifying this interaction being ended or on hold. For our interviewees, the scene is an arena where interactions between "what I do" and "who I am" are structured in a complex of opportunity and risk. The elaboration of gendered body practices on the scene is (perhaps inevitably) shot through with ambiguity and ambivalence. In contrast to their frequent attempts to be invisible in school and other settings, interviewees identified their desire to see and be seen, to engage in constructing a public and visible identity—to "do appearance"—in the differently contested, and often problematic, spaces of the gay scene. Visibility "is about an empirical recognition of being in or out of place that invariably invokes regimes of placement" (Skeggs, 1999, p. 220). The scene acted as a site of establishing (and policing) a measure of normative gay identity: how to act, what to be interested in, what to look like and how to "be" an attractive (some) body. The significance of the body on the scene was no less than it had been in school and these young men were very clear of how bodies could be classified there: "You never see anyone fat in The George. . . . I'm just saying."[3]

All interviewees indicated that they had some experience of the scene, some more than others. The scene provoked a high level of discussion and interest in both focus groups and in all of the interviews, particularly in relation to the body and body practices, and for defining and elaborating desire. For several interviewees, the most attractive body form on the scene was defined as "thin" with "sculpted" hair and "good" skin. This representation of desirability set a norm in relation to which some interviewees had ambivalent feelings. Expectations of pleasurable conformity for some interviewees contrasted with others, including Ciaran, who experienced the norm as pressure.

MB: Do you think people are image conscious on it [the gay scene]?
Ciaran: Ya, definitely. I feel conscious of not living up to the norm.
MB: What is that norm?
Ciaran: . . . very skinny . . . good skin for some reason . . . there probably is a pressure to be good looking. I mean straight people seem to be able to get someone no matter what they look like . . . it's not the same for gay people I think. Or at least it's much more difficult.

Ciaran suggests how important practices of the body have become and the extent to which the successful gay identity can be bound up in the investments made in producing the appropriate and acceptable visual self. For Ciaran, the visual(ized) and attractive body (construed as corporeal capital) determines a valued social outcome: "getting somebody." There are clear pressures here to invest in and undertake work on the body, to produce the right kind of visual self, and it is not difficult to see the potential for what Frost (2003) describes as "identity damage" (p. 56) in such a competitive and judgmental culture of the body. Perhaps because of an intuitive understanding of the potential risk in this, there was some ambivalence about the scene. Interviewees generally agreed that there are many attractive young men on the scene, but some felt that they were often difficult to deal with. As Tom put it, emphasizing the recurrent micropolitics of interpersonal relations and appropriating the feminized negative, "There's an awful lot of good looking guys on the scene . . . they're right little bitches though, they think they're too good for everyone."

For other interviewees, the gay scene offered a more positive space in which to construct and consume new body styles. For Joe, socializing in gay venues necessitated increased attention to his own appearance.

When I first went out I wasn't stylish at all . . . and everyone else was so stylish. I was looking at their clothes and going . . . 'oh ya' . . . my image changed then, I started going out and buying new clothes and getting dressed up. It made me feel better about myself. I go to the gym now, where I never used to. It is sort of important—I want to look my best.

The extent to which consumer capitalism—in the form of buying clothes and being a member of a gym, for example—has created "lifestyle spaces" that contribute to and align with the elaboration of a sense of well-being ("feeling better about myself") is evident here. This is a domain of leisure and pleasure (and sometimes pain) in which it is legitimate (and indeed expected) to engage in work on the visual self as part of one's engagement with the scene. Paul and Carl indicated that the importance of the gay community

(constituted in the scene) and, for them, the safety and security of a gay space overshadowed any negative affects the scene might cause.

> When I came out I wanted to be like a gay person. . . . I wanted to connect with something that was gay. . . . I wanted to connect with gayness and be like "them" and get into the group of being gay. I was lost and I was the only person who was gay that I knew so I wanted to have some connection with gay people, I wanted to be with gay people. . . . I wanted to know gay people. (Paul)
>   I think that there are good reasons for young people conforming to a gay way of dressing. I think it can be a comfortable place, if they find a gay community, it's safe and comfortable and they can kinda feel part of that community. It's like the way they dress helps them belong to it. (Carl)

Both Paul and Carl suggest that the function of the gay community lies in its potential for enhancing their capacity to discover self; to provide reference points for their sense of identity and pride in a world where their sexuality (and thus, identity) is, otherwise, viewed as illegitimate. This is elective community, constituted communicatively through an economy of emotions and intimate relationships. It has something in common with Delanty's (2003) "community beyond unity" (p. 136), and is resistant to institutionalized form, yet has a provisional, though fluid and contested, spatial location as the gay scene.

Although emphasizing the normative body expectations associated with membership of the gay community, Carl resisted conformity to a gay stereotype: "I think I feel more pressure from being gay to ironically counteract the gay stereotype, and be more physically robust!" However, this is a community (like other communities) embodying an inherent tension between the autonomy of the self and the (legitimate) constraints imposed by membership ("I wanted to be like a gay person" and "there are good reasons for young people conforming to a gay way of dressing"). The dynamics of embodied "aesthetic community" are evident here in Carl's observation. As Bauman puts it, community "is brought forth and consumed in the 'warm circle' of experience. Its 'objectivity' is woven entirely from the friable threads of subjective judgements" (Bauman, 2001, p. 65).

Interviewees engaged with ideas of gay body image in complex and sometimes contradictory ways. Gay body practices were for some a source of pleasure, particularly on the scene, and offered safety, security, and legitimacy. Yet, other interviewees felt that having been exposed to negative messages about gay men's expected appearance and being bullied (particularly for being effeminate) had a long-term affect on how they saw themselves and their own bodies. These early experiences often mediated current feelings and

experiences and discussion of the scene seemed to encourage exploration of these issues. Like all space, the scene is contested and it is important to acknowledge the "power geometries" through which some young men are able exercise more autonomy than others (Massey, 1994, p. 149). As well as being a site for pleasure or affirmation, the scene also exposes young men to judgment and potential rejection. Billy drew an analogy between hearing negative messages about his body and the impact of being bullied for being camp and effeminate.

> It does have an effect . . . if people drum something into you a lot you're going to believe what they're saying because it's said enough to you. Like if they slag off one of your body features, like you're really fat or really skinny, you're just going to be thinking for the rest of your life "oh my God I am," you're going to be so paranoid about it. That's why people turn anorexic and they're so worried about themselves, it's because of what they've heard about themselves. Having to look one way and you're looking the other.

Paul's involvement in the scene was similarly mediated by his earlier experiences, and he pointed out that, "because everyone says you're 'girlie' you get to feeling that you are. For me it's like people have decided this for me." This is a complex process in which gay identity and body image is potentially stigmatized both by others and by self. In this sense, stigma can be understood as discursive and productive practice: it conveys and circulates particular meanings that have material consequences for those to whom the practices of stigmatization are successfully applied. As such, stigma works as the outcome of particular power relations: in Althusserian terms, as a form of "interpellation."

Interviewees' consciousness of others' definitions of self-identity is apparent in Mark's discussion of "internalised homophobia," in which, ironically, he emphasizes the legitimacy of hegemonic heterosexual masculinity.

> I have internal homophobia built into me by my peers over the years. Like I was told by my sisters and all that I was going to turn into a total camp and you bring that with you.

This is an example of how power is implicated in practices of "self-governance." Rather than "internalized homophobia" being exclusively individualized as a psychological "condition," the data suggest that it is a consequence of reflexive work by self on self in the context of social definitions of gender and sexuality. This is work on the self that is constrained by the immediate material and cultural circumstances in which these young

men are situated. Carl, for example, acknowledged the ways in which he feels expected to work on self through the complex relationship between stigmatization and self-stigmatization.

> I think there is huge pressure. . . . It's a daily pressure and I don't know where it comes from. Also, there maybe the whole internalized homophobia thing. I think a lot of people, and I know I do . . . distance them from being camp or from any gay stereotype. I don't know who I want to prove myself to but I know I don't want to be the typical stereotype of being gay—being really camp and weak.

Stigma can be seen here as active and productive practice. As such, it is open to other practices. Potentially, at least, other forms of self-production or self-governance (the kind of educational and development work undertaken by the project referred to above, for example) may have other outcomes for these young men. Such technologies of the self may provide strategies enabling these young people "to effect, by their own means, various operations of their own bodies, souls, thought and conduct, and in such a manner to transform themselves, modify themselves" (Miller, 1987, p. 207).

Conclusions

There are four principal conclusions that we draw from this work.

First, our data analysis has considerable importance for theorizing young gay identities. For the young men interviewed, the body was often negatively imagined; in Goffman's terms, it was stigmatized and self-stigmatized in the face of a dominant monomasculinity. The young men had few examples of positive representations of the gay body as a cultural resource with which they could identify. Nevertheless, the body is central to how these young men see themselves and how they imagine that others see them. The "feminized" gay body, in particular, has become an index by which young gay men define their own bodily identity and how they both judge and define gay identity more broadly as, invariably, other. Importantly, and ironically, the familiar hegemonic and hard masculinity that acts to police the identity practices of young men is mirrored by an equally insistent, negative, and constricting version of femininity. This essentialized femininity apparently renders invisible other femininities (women as competent managers or politicians, for example) and mirrors the ways in which hard hypermasculinity occludes more sympathetic and plural masculine identities (the male

parent or carer in a family setting, for example). Although masculinities and femininities are shaped by class, race, and other forms of social difference (and thus are not "fixed"), the power of ideology, it should be remembered, often lies in its capacity to illuminate a single possibility while simultaneously denying others. Young gay men, it seems, are often caught between the poles of compulsory hard masculinity and an impoverished and highly ideological trope of femininity, which radically limit the scope of gay identity. This has the potential to damage young men who perceive themselves as outside of a distorting masculinity while either embodying or rejecting a repellent caricature of femininity. Young men's agency is important here and we have recognized their individual responses on a register that includes resistance, denial, or the adoption of bodily practices.

Second, this work indicates the extent to which identity, sexuality, and the body are spatialized: bodies and their practices exist somewhere. Young people are sexualized (and desexualized) by school practices and we have seen how the young men interviewed were often vilified and subjected to violence because of the ways in which their bodies were seen. Thus, school is a space of opportunity for some and a place of danger for others. On the gay scene they are similarly subject to scrutiny, on a different (but no less significant) register. Whereas the gay body may not be sufficiently hard in school, the risk on the scene is that it is insufficiently attractive. In both spaces, it seems that the body is always defined in terms of what it lacks, of what is absent.

Third, the article demonstrates how education (and social policy more generally) is crucially embodied in complex ways. Young people in schools are situated ambiguously as their (sexual) bodies are both "absent" and "present": simultaneously ignored yet intensely noticed. For example, schools catch young people in a Cartesian split between "mind work" and "body work," corresponding to the binary between academic work and sport or physical education two which a number of the young men interviewed referred. Superficially, bodies are present in the latter (indeed, the body is the point) yet invisible or irrelevant in the former. Yet, the ways in which schools are organized implicitly privileges bodies as they are minutely regulated through time and space (restrictions on movement, dress, noise, activities, place, etc.). We have shown the extent to which the discursive practices that constitute school cultures (embodied by students and, we believe, teachers) classify, differentiate and harm bodies. It is crucial that education policy and practice (at all levels) are sensitive to the possible (and possibly unwitting) reinforcement of certain gender ideologies. School policy and practices profoundly influenced the school careers of the young men interviewed and the

consequences outlined here have serious implications for the management and organization of Irish schools.

Finally, the work raises crucial questions about democracy, justice and "inclusion." We have shown the limited purchase of inclusion discourses that privilege labor market participation above all else: so-called "third way" configurations of social democratic politics (Levitas, 2005, p. 26). We indicate the extent to which "recognition" (as acceptance and legitimacy), central to the achievement of status equality (Fraser, 2005, p. 73), is so often absent in the lives of these young men. For too long, democratic discourses of citizenship (in Ireland as elsewhere) have failed to acknowledge or recognize how citizens are made through the often humdrum practices of institutions (school or work, for example). These discourses have focused more on the "deficits" of citizenship (Cruikshank, 1999, p. 123). As we see here, these young men (as citizens) are so often defined by what they lack (an authentic sexuality, for example). Thus, there are deep implications here for policy and practice. We have some sympathy with the position outlined by Youdell (2004), who suggests that justice policies so often fail to penetrate the mundane day-to-day fabric of abuse and discrimination that characterize school life (p. 490). However, it is important not to surrender to a nihilism that claims "nothing changes." In Ireland, it is crucial for the state, the Catholic Church, and for schools to accept a responsibility for the well-being of all young people in their care. Policy development is a starting point here as part of Fraser's (2005) "democratic dialogue" (p. 86), which forms a beginning, however fragile, to advancing justice claims. Policy is, of course, to be seen as discourse and thus contested in different spaces by different actors but must "recover a language . . . articulated in terms of ethics, moral obligations and values" (Ball, 2004, p. 25) that can subsequently shape a relevant practice. Arguably, interventions of the type undertaken by the youth project described might begin to support and develop new identifications in the lives of these young men.

Notes

1. BeLonG To Youth Project was established in Dublin in 2002 to work with lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) young people in Ireland. It undertakes confidence building and personal development work and offers peer support. It also affords young people a space where they can experience inclusion, acceptance, social justice, fun, and safety. BelonG To further works with LGBT young people to campaign and lobby for social change to positively impact their lives.

2. As Thompson (1984) puts it, "Symbolic violence is that form of domination which is exercised through the communication in which it is concealed" (p. 58).

3. The George is Dublin's best known gay bar and club.

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