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Introduction: Young, White, Male and Working Class

There is a virtual invisibility of the voices and concerns of adolescents and young adults in academic debates. (*Signs* editorial 1998: 575)

This book is a study of gender as a social, cultural and economic force but also of individual young men and their lives in particular places. It is about 'the way particular men created their manhood within the limits of their time and place' (Rotundo 1993: x) and about meaning, power and the construction of identity at a particularly significant moment in the lives of young men: as they finish compulsory schooling and start to think about their future working lives. As Connell (1994: 14) has argued, 'masculinities and femininities are actively constructed, not simply received'. Similarly, people are not just at the mercy of the social and economic transformations that have restructured the labour markets of British towns and cities in the last two decades or so. While these transformations may have affected the life chances of individuals, often for the worse, and changed the set of opportunities that are open to young people at the beginning their working lives, individuals and social groups are also agents in their own construction and in their responses to altered circumstances. My aim is to challenge the too-common assumptions in the media and also in social policy that working class young men, adversely affected by economic change, are idlers, layabouts or 'yobs'. I want to show instead the often admirable efforts made by many young men on the verge of adulthood, and with few educational or social advantages, to

acquire and hold down a job and to construct lives imbued with the values of domestic respectability, while negotiating the complex and often contradictory expectations associated with working class masculinity.

In the chapters that follow, the interrelationships between different forms of social inequalities and the ways in which they are lived out in local areas in different towns are investigated through the lens of a year in the lives of 24 young men who finished their compulsory schooling in the summer of 1999. For young people leaving school this is the beginning of a period of transition in their lives as they decide on their next steps. It is also a key moment when inequalities between young people begin to become particularly significant. Despite the huge class inequalities that are evident in the British school system (Adonis and Pollard 1998; Mortimore and Whitty 1997; Rutter 1979; Sparkes and Glennester 2002), until the age of 16, all children, theoretically at least, must attend full-time education and all of them sit the same set of school-leaving examinations. At 16, however, while most young people remain in the educational sector, a minority of young people, predominantly from working class families, leave school and begin to search for work. Twenty-five years ago, when Paul Willis (1977) investigated the lives of a group of young men living in a Midlands town, a majority of 16 year olds left school as soon as they could. In 1977, less than 25 per cent of the age group continued their full-time education, whereas at the end of the century, almost two-thirds of all 16 year olds stayed in full-time education, and many others were involved in some form of training. What was once the start of a transition into the labour market for most young people has now become exceptional, as the majority stay in full-time education and strive to attain the credentials that are increasingly important in gaining access to well-paid and permanent employment.

At the same time as the educational participation patterns of 16-year-olds changed, the labour market had also been transformed by the shift from manufacturing employment to the dominance of service-sector occupations. The types of work that most of Willis's lads had walked into in 1977 – unskilled manufacturing work with relatively good rates of pay and some prospect of security – had virtually disappeared by 1999. For most 16-year-olds now, casual and insecure jobs in the service sector – in fast-food outlets, in shops and restaurants, as waiters, in bars, as cleaners – are what is widely advertised. This type of service-sector employment that increasingly dominates the labour market of most British towns and cities, provides fewer opportunities for steady and reasonably well-paid work for men than the manufacturing sector used to. Indeed, in a paper less often quoted than the 1977 book, Willis

(1984) himself had noted that the prolonged period of unemployment in the early 1980s in Britain was affecting the traditional transition from school to the labour market, particularly for working class young men. He argued that in the early 1980s young men without a steady job were becoming less attractive to increasingly independent young women, and so not only was the transition into work disrupted but so too was the usual path into heterosexual relationships, marriage and family life: the correlates of the dominant version of masculine adulthood. His prescient arguments were, however, not to become common currency for a further two decades when the anxieties about young men's successful attainment of heterosexual masculinity had become widespread. As I shall demonstrate later, in the UK, in contrast to the USA where race and ethnicity is a key part of the *fin de siècle* crisis of masculinity, these anxieties focused in particular on young white working class men who were portrayed as a social problem in school, at work and in urban public spaces.

The increasing dominance of service employment in contemporary Britain and, indeed, in the advanced industrial nations of the world in general, has been recognized as significant for more than poorly educated young men looking for work. A set of new debates about the changing expectations of employment and the impact of new working patterns on personal identity now dominate the academic and policy literature. These debates emphasize the growth of risk, uncertainty and insecurity in the labour market (Allen and Henry 1997; Bauman 1998; Beck 1992; Elliott and Atkinson 1999; Giddens 1991), even the potential corrosion of character in contemporary workplace relations (Sennett 1998), rather than the achievement of the status and respect that was traditionally associated with waged employment, especially for men. Waged employment, identified as a core element in the social construction of a masculine identity (Connell 1995), has altered in its nature and form and, in particular, in its associations with masculinity. Service-sector work, especially at the bottom end, demands care, deference and docility as key attributes of a desirable workplace identity – characteristics that are more commonly identified as feminine than masculine traits and it seems that women rather than men are now preferred employees (Bradley, Erickson, Stephenson and Williams 2000; Duster 1995; Leidner 1991, 1993). Indeed, for many men, and especially young men at the beginning of the twenty-first century, there seems to be growing evidence of a reversal of long-standing relationships between gender and achievement, as girls' rates of achievement at school and at university improve, and between gender and employment chances that previously positioned girls and young women as the underachieving and disadvantaged group (Arnot,

David and Weiner 1999). Men, it is claimed, are the new disadvantaged, trapped in relationships of dominance and aggression that penalize them in the public and the private spheres. Disadvantaged in the service sector, rejected as marriage partners as rates of divorce rise and women remain single longer, even biologically redundant as new technologies alter the social relations of reproduction, it is small wonder that growing numbers of men feel out of place in the new millennium. For young men in particular it is a difficult time to negotiate the transitions to adulthood and pathways to employment when traditional ways of becoming a man are increasingly less available.

   In this book I investigate the ways in which the coincidence of these changing material circumstances and theoretical debates about new relationships between employment and gendered identities are affecting the attitudes and aspirations of young men in two British cities as they contemplate their transition from school to labour market participation. The particular group of men that I focus on is white English 15- to 16-year-olds with low educational achievement. There are several reasons for this focus. This group has perhaps been particularly adversely affected by economic change, but they are also currently neglected – indeed discriminated against – by social policy-makers. Young people's eligibility for welfare benefits such as income support and housing benefit has been eliminated and they are also excluded from the new workfare programme introduced in the United Kingdom in 1998 – the so-called New Deal – which requires 18- to 24-year-olds to participate in workfare schemes in return for income support. A further reason for the focus on young men is the spread of debates about masculinity from arcane theoretical papers into the popular imagination. Since 1997 or so, there has been a consistent argument in the media that young men are facing a crisis of confidence. The popular and broadsheet press concur in their view that young men are a 'lost generation', caught, according to a comment in a Sunday broadsheet, 'between the Nineties New Man and New Lad' (Ardlidge 1999: 13). The comments are repeated elsewhere in the media (Hill 1997; McInnes 1997) and are the topic of popular books about masculinity in the USA, from Robert Bly's *Iron John* (1990) to Susan Faludi's *Stiffed* (2000); in Stephen Biddulph's *Manhood* (1994) in Australia; and in the UK, where the radio psychiatrist Anthony Clare (2000) weighed in with his book *On Men: Masculinity in Crisis*. The arguments about crisis are variously supported by statistics about the rising rate of suicide among young men and, especially, by figures that demonstrate the relative successes of young women both in school-leaving examinations and in access to higher education. Boys and young men also truant more, offend more and are both

more violent themselves and more at risk of violence than young women. While these latter differences are not new, the opening gender gap in educational performance at the age of 16 certainly is. Combined with the rapid rise in feminized service-sector employment opportunities in the majority of British towns and cities, masculinity is coming to be seen as a disadvantage rather than an advantage in labour market entry.

At the centre of the book are the voices of two groups of young men, whom I interviewed three times in the 12 months after they left school. One group lived in the northern deindustrializing town of Sheffield, the second in the expanding science-based and service-sector market town of Cambridge in East Anglia. As the comment at the chapter head suggests, there has been a perhaps surprising absence of the voices and opinions of young people themselves in these debates about gender and crisis, whether in press stories or in the work of social scientists. This absence persists despite the recent expansion of studies of childhood, school life and the transition to adult status (see e.g. Ashton, Maguire and Spilsbury 1990; Furlong 1992; Irwin 1995; Krahn and Lowe 1991; Lowe and Krahn 2000; Raffe 1988). It has been partially countered, however, by two recent British school-based studies of young men in secondary schooling (Frosh, Phoenix and Pattman 2002; O'Donnell and Sharpe 2000), and a third study by Stephen Ball, Meg Maguire and Sheila Macrae (2000) following school leavers born in 1979 and 1980 into the labour market. In all three cases the research was undertaken in London. This latter book is similar in its aims to my work, although the so-called crisis of masculinity was not an explicit focus and the participants, of both sexes, came from a range of class backgrounds. In the other two studies, both of which focused explicitly on the social construction of masculinity during the transitional years of adolescence, the boys who were interviewed had not then left school. The boys interviewed by Stephen Frosh and his colleagues were aged between 11 and 13. The 44 boys whom Mike O'Donnell and Sue Sharpe interviewed were in year 11, and so aged 15 and 16, the same age as the boys in this book were when I first talked to them. O'Donnell and Sharpe asked their participants about work prospects, although in neither of these studies were the young men followed into the labour market, nor did they address geographical differences between local labour markets. All three of these excellent empirical studies provide a useful comparative basis for the work reported here.

It is now a common theme in recent 'transition' studies that childhood is a social construction that is historically and geographically specific (Aitken 1994; Aries 1962; Coffield, Borrill and Marshall 1986; Jones 1995; Jones and Wallace 1992; Katz 1991, 1993; Matthews and Limb

1999; Ruddick 1996; Valentine 1996, 2000; Winchester and Costello 1995). Further, it is recognized that in complex post-industrial societies the notion of transition itself is increasingly inappropriate as individuals pursue multiple and complex paths, sometimes concurrently (Coles 2000; Furlong and Cartmel 1997; Irwin 1995; James, Jenks and Prout 1998; MacDonald 1997, 1998), in times when the risks of failure are great, but chances of individual success are also correspondingly greater, less tramelled by conventional social markers such as class position or ethnicity (Beck 1992, 2000). In comparing the lives of young men in two cities I want to explore how these ideas of complexity and risk take different forms in particular places as individual choices are made in the context of geographically specific and differentiated sets of opportunities in the labour and the housing market. For young working class men, however, the risk society is not one in which more optimistic debates about individualization (Giddens 1991) or about new forms of aestheticized workplace performances (Bauman 1998) have much relevance. Rather, the structural constraints of economic transformation seem ever more likely to limit their options to poor work and membership of the expanding numbers of the working poor.

These young men were born in 1982 and 1983 when the Thatcherite 'revolution' that had such an impact on the lives of the working class in Britain was at its height. During the 1980s and early 1990s, as these boys moved through primary school into their secondary education, the impact of authoritarian populism and the New Right (Hall 1988; Hall and Martin 1983), of neo-liberal social and economic policies (Gamble 1994) and the deregulation of capital, restructured the social, economic and political landscapes of Britain (Hutton 1996). Welfare spending was cut, directly affecting many of the families in which these boys grew up, growing school choice adversely affected schools in poorer localities, and devolved budgets from the local education authority directly to schools made it harder for many schools to balance their budgets (Gamble and Kelly 1996). In the labour market the decline of employment in the manufacturing sector was marked and its impact felt most severely by men in northern towns such as Sheffield (Turok and Edge 1999). But in all cities, the gap between the poorest inhabitants and those with the greatest income and wealth and opportunities grew, affecting the boys growing up in Cambridge as well as those in Sheffield (Gregg and Wadsworth 1999; Hills, Le Grand and Paichaud 2002). One consequence of this growing polarization was an increase in the number of children living in poverty. In 1992–3, when these boys were 10, a third of all children in the UK were poor (Oppenheim 1998), including

among them some of the boys whom I interviewed. This combination of economic transformation, labour market changes, welfare state restructuring and growing inequalities means that 'young people now grow up in social, economic and political conditions radically different to those encountered by their parents' generation in the post-war years of relative prosperity and social cohesion' (MacDonald 1997: 20).

A general culture of individualism and an economic policy based on the supposed superiority of individual effort was a marked feature of the Thatcher years, perhaps best summed up in her claim that 'there is no such thing as society'. Throughout the 1980s and into the 1990s, then, at a time of growing risks and uncertainty, people increasingly were held to be accountable for their own futures (Giddens 1991; Beck 1992). As these working class boys began to approach the end of their school lives, new Labour gained power but, despite the introduction of a number of innovative policies to improve the living standards of the poorest members of society, including the right to a minimum wage, the notion of individual effort continued to dominate economic and social policy, accompanied by a strong belief in the moral superiority of labour market participation for the largest possible number of people (McDowell 2001b; Peck 2001). At the same time, consumerism became an increasingly significant part of the social construction of identity, increasing the disadvantages of poor working class teenagers for whom many of the iconic goods of contemporary style were out of easy financial reach. In circumstances in which access to employment and consumption – key elements of the social construction of masculine identity – became increasingly uncertain for young men such as the ones whose lives are the focus here, questions about the pathways from school into early adulthood and the associations between employment, consumption and gendered identities gain increasing salience.

Theorizing Gender, Ethnicity and Class: Difference and Inequality

In recent years, questions about social identity have been at the forefront of the social sciences in exciting new theoretical work about the construction of difference. The notion of 'difference' and its significance in distinguishing 'self' from various culturally defined 'others' has dominated debates in many disciplines. In this work – loosely grouped under the heading of 'postmodern' or 'post-structuralist' – earlier notions of a stable, immutable sense of identity, typically rooted in social class

position, have been disrupted. The significance of other dimensions of identity, especially gender and ethnicity, and their interconnections, has been recognized, as well as the provisional, tentative nature of identity which is theorized as an ongoing performance, variable in space and time, albeit regulated by social norms and cultural expectations (Butler 1990; Evans 1997; Friedman 1998). This approach to identity is sometimes termed a 'relational perspective' in which identity is theorized as a contingently defined social process, as a discursively constituted social relation, articulated through complex narratives. Thus as Somers (1994: 635) has argued:

> Narrative identities are constituted by a person's temporally and spatially variable place in culturally constructed stories composed of (breakable) rules, (variable) practices, binding (and unbinding) institutions, and the multiple plots of family, nation or economic life. More importantly, however, narratives are not incorporated into the self in any direct way; rather, they are mediated through the enormous spectrum of social and political institutions and practices that constitute our social world.

This quotation nicely captures the connections between material structures and social practices, as well as the complex and variable ways in which identities are plural and dynamic. Somers also insists on the significance of place – a recognition that has been of great significance for geographical understandings of social identity. Identity is constructed through social interactions in specific locations which themselves both reflect and affect the construction and performance of particular identities. For young men on the verge of leaving school, their sense of themselves as masculine, and increasingly as independent, is constructed through the intersection of institutional rules and acceptable (or unacceptable) behaviours in the school, the local streets, their homes and potential workplaces that construct and constrain them in their everyday lives as classed, gendered and raced subjects.

In the following sections I explore in more detail approaches to understanding gender, class and ethnicity as relational processes, endeavouring to spell out the interconnections between masculinity, class position and whiteness that construct the young men in this book as a complex and hybrid group whose ethnicity and gender – as white men – endows privilege in certain spheres, but whose age and class position – as working class adolescents – locates them as subordinate. Although class, gender and ethnicity are mutually constituted, for conceptual clarity and ease of presentation, I first address the burgeoning literature on masculinity.

Theorizing masculinity

For some years now there has been a recognition that masculinity, as well as femininity, deserves theoretical scrutiny. A large, and still rapidly expanding, literature has accepted the challenge, laid down initially in feminist theorizing, of defining and mapping the multiple ways of being a man. This literature has begun to explore from a range of theoretical perspectives the complex dynamics of power and identity and the relationships between class, ethnicity, age and other social characteristics that situate men in relationships of power and inequality with women and with other men in different ways in particular places and in different historical circumstances (Whitehead [2002] provides a useful summary of the different perspectives). In the early work on gender, especially in psychoanalytic approaches, femininity and masculinity were theorized as binary opposites – woman is what man is not, even absence or lack – and so women are defined as emotional compared to the rationality of men, the inferior other to the dominant masculine One. This binary construction, albeit reversed, still distinguishes some of the recent popular texts on masculinity (including Biddulph 1994; Bly 1990; A. Clare 2000) where the problems of men are analysed in terms of their inability to tap into their emotions, compared to women's intuitive sensitivity to their own and others' emotional needs.

In recent scholarly works, however, a more complex notion of masculinity is common. As Martain Mac an Ghaill (1996b) has documented in his survey of work in the area during the 1980s and 1990s, a wide range of literature about masculinity was published, drawing on sex roles, psychoanalysis and power theories, in disciplines including sociology, criminology, social psychology, psychoanalysis, anthropology, history and cultural studies (see e.g. Brittan 1989; Brod and Kaufman 1994; Clatterbaugh 1990; Connell 1987; Craig 1992; Dollimore 1991; Edley and Weatherell 1995; Edwards 1994; Hearn 1992; Jefferson 1994; Middleton 1992; Sedgwick 1994; Segal 1990; Sinfield 1998; Tolson 1977; Weeks 1991, 1989). Within this literature there was a common focus on the relationship between structure and agency, or society and the individual, as well as on the interconnections within and between gender, sexuality, class, 'race', ethnicity, nation, age. The 'starting point [was] that masculinities are problematic, negotiated and contested within frameworks at the individual, organizational, cultural and societal levels' (Mac an Ghaill 1996b: 2). In a forward-looking conclusion Mac an Ghaill suggested that the agenda for future research should include unpacking the complex links

between masculinities, sexualities and power; analysing the cultural pro-
duction of masculinities within local institutional sites; exploring the
contextual contingencies, confusions and contradictions of contemporary
forms of masculinity; and, in particular, making problematic dominant
forms of heterosexuality in a male-dominated society. Building on his
agenda, recent analyses, many of which have adopted an ethnographic
approach, have addressed the complex constitution of masculinities in a
wide range of different sites and locations (see e.g. Barrett 1996; Collinson
and Hearn 1994; Connell 2000; Craig 1992; Edwards 1994; Kerfoot 1999;
Massey 1995; McDowell 2001a; Middleton 1992; Nardi 1999; Poynting,
Noble and Tabar 1998; Segal 2000; Sweetman 1997; Walker 1998; see also
the useful surveys in Whitehead 2002; and Whitehead and Barrett 2001).

   The focus on multiple masculinities and their specificity owes a great
deal to the pioneering work of the sociologist Bob Connell who has been a
key theorist here, as well as producing a whole range of stimulating
empirical work about a range of masculinities. In a recent book (Connell
2000), pulling together not only his own work over a decade and a half but
also summarizing the field more generally, Connell suggests that the new
social research on masculinity is defined by a set of key propositions or
arguments that emphasize both the variations, across time and space, in
the construction of masculinities as well as evidence of hierarchical social
relations, not only between men and women, but within and between
groups of men. The first of his propositions is that masculinities take
multiple forms, constructed differently across cultures and in different
time periods as well as across a range of spatial scales. Thus there are both
large- and small-scale, relatively enduring as well as more flexible, differ-
ences in what it means to be a man. As Connell (2000: 10) notes, there are
'different ways of enacting manhood, different ways of learning to be a
man, different conceptions of the self and different ways of using a male
body'. For young men, this emphasis on learning how to be a man is a key
part of the transition from childhood to adult manhood. Differences
between social constructions of masculinity not only vary between nations
– as Gilmore (1993) has illustrated in a cross-cultural review of manhood,
in some non-western societies generosity, selflessness and nurturing are
masculine attributes – but also between and within particular spaces and
social settings. Research on schools (Ball, Maguire and Macrae 2000;
Connell 1989, 1994; Dixon 1997; Frosh, Phoenix and Pattman 2002;
O'Donnell and Sharpe 2000; Segal 2000), for example, has shown not
only how young men from different ethnic backgrounds or social classes
enact masculinity in different ways, but also how boys at school act differ-
ently there from their behaviour in public arenas or in their own homes.

The second of the set of propositions is that masculinities may be ordered in relations based on hierarchy and dominance. This is perhaps where Connell's own work has been of greatest significance. As he has documented, there are distinctive social relations of power that position men in a hierarchy, opening up a theoretical space for the analysis of power relations between men, as well as men's domination of women. Thus, he has suggested, particular versions of dominant or hegemonic masculinity characterize gender regimes at different historical periods. And further, these hegemonic definitions of masculinity are 'constructed in relation to various subordinated masculinities as well as in relation to women' (Connell 1987: 183). While the construction of masculinity as differentiated from and superior to femininity – the masculine, disembodied rational One to women's embodied inferior Other – has long been accepted (see e.g. De Beauvoir 1972) as the most significant feature of gender relations, it is now clear that masculinities too are not only multiply constructed but may also be ranked in a hierarchy of dominance. The idealized embodied masculinity of working class men, for example, both differentiates them from the rational cerebral masculinity of middle class men, but also constructs them as inferior. And so:

> To recognize diversity in masculinity is not enough. We must also recognize the *relations* between the different kinds of masculinity: relations of alliance, dominance and subordination. These relationships are constructed through practices that exclude and include, that intimidate and exploit, and so on. There is a gender politics within masculinity. (Connell 1995: 37; original emphasis)

This gender politics is based on relations between men based on hegemony, subordination and complicity. Hegemonic masculinity (that which is most respected, desired or dominant within a society) captures power relations between men. In contemporary western societies – as the research on media representations (Chapman and Rutherford 1988; Dyer 1997; Simpson 1994) or workplace cultures (Collinson and Hearn 1994; Kanter 1977; Lewis 1989; McDowell 1997a, 2001a; Wright 1994) has made clear – this encompasses men who are economically successful, racially superior and visibly heterosexual. Dominant versions of masculinity are constructed by 'othering' masculinities that are differentiated, and regarded as inferior on the basis of, for example, ethnicity or sexuality, and on the basis of class position. Thus young white men, the subjects of this book, may be ascribed masculine privileges as white men, but as working class men they are a subordinated

masculinity, subject to constant surveillance in public arenas, as well as to condescension at school (Charlesworth 2000). As Connell (1987, 1989) found in his own empirical study of young Australian men, the impoverished urban environments in which working class youths grew up, combined with their taste for risk, produced what he termed a 'protest masculinity'. This form of masculinity contrasts with the hegemonic masculinity that is inculcated in the middle class pupils of elite Australian schools where boys are trained to be rational and expert – traits that are then played out and reinforced in professional and managerial careers in hierarchically organized workplaces, where these men have authority over other men (and women).

Thus class and ethnicity, as I shall illustrate, are widely acknowledged as major factors in the social construction of masculinities, interacting with gender and generation to produce varied and unequally valued positionalities, which in themselves are both complex and fluid. Class position for the middle class not only brings with it the privileges based on social and cultural capital accumulated through, for example, elite schooling and familial resources, but is marked on the body (Bourdieu 1984; Young 1990) and is evident in accent, weight and height and in the very ways in which the body occupies space. Thus the subordinate 'protest' masculinity described by Connell is often portrayed through an aggressive 'macho' stance in which the positioning of the working class male body in space is used to threaten and challenge perceived 'others'. Further, as I argue later, the particular construction of a 'threatening' working class masculine embodiment is one way in which young men from working class backgrounds may disqualify themselves from many of the service-sector jobs that increasingly are the only options for early school leavers in British towns and cities.

The third proposition insists that masculinities are more than individual characteristics but that, as the examples above have suggested, they are constructed, defined and maintained in discourse and culture and sustained through institutional practices. Masculinities are, in other words, collective social practices. In capitalist societies the construction of masculinities occurs in a range of institutions from the family to the school and the workplace. The significance of particular institutions varies in different historical circumstances. Connell (2000: 11) suggests, for example, that 'the institutions of competitive sport seem peculiarly important for contemporary western masculinities'. The current emphasis on sporting prowess makes abundantly clear the claim that the body is a key element in social construction of masculinities. Men's (and women's) bodies are surfaces that are inscribed with, defined by and

disciplined through social norms and conventions about gendered appearances, in size, weight and deportment as well as through decoration and clothing (Bordo 1993; Foucault 1977; Grosz 1994). Thus, through bodily performances as well as in all social interactions, masculinities are constantly being actively constructed, maintained or challenged. For working class men in particular, embodiment is a crucial part of their masculinity, both in the workplace and in leisure arenas, as the disembodied rationality of idealized hegemonic masculinity is contrasted to the strength, agility or sporting prowess that are the advantages of subordinate masculinities, forms of embodied social capital that, of course, depreciate with age, whether in the workplace or in sporting arenas.

Finally, this emphasis on active construction and performance, on 'doing gender' (West and Zimmerman 1987) as an everyday act (Butler 1990; Kondo 1990), combined with the recognition of multiple ways of being a man, makes it clear that masculinities are complex and often contradictory, riven with conflicting desires and ambivalences. As Mac an Ghaill (1994, 1996a, 1996b) has noted, hegemonic masculinity itself is 'constituted by cultural elements which consist of contradictory forms of compulsory heterosexuality, misogyny and homophobia. These are marked by ambivalence and contingency' (1996b: 133). In his work with young men, Mac an Ghaill has suggested that 'what emerges as of particular salience is the way in which heterosexual young men are involved in a double relationship: of disparaging the "other", including women and gays (external relations), and at the same time expelling femininity and homosexuality from within themselves (internal relations)' (1996a: 133).

Numerous studies of schools (Griffin and Lees 1997; Haywood and Mac an Ghaill 1995; Holland, Ramazanoglu, Sharpe and Thomson 1998; Kehily and Nayak 1997; Thorne 1993; Valentine 2000; Woods and Hammersley 1993) have reinforced these conclusions, showing how boys disparage their female peers as well as women teachers, but also assert their own superiority through labelling less powerful boys as 'cissies', 'big girls', 'poofters' and other sexualized insults. Dominant versions of masculinity in schools value aggression, repression, conflict and control in the school environment. Fears of being soft, of feminine characteristics, and so their derogation, are part of the development of a hegemonic masculinity. Through ethnographic research, there is also now greater knowledge of the complex ways in which gendered identities in schools are constructed in multiple settings. Discourses in school, but also in the home, in workplaces, streets and other places of leisure and pleasure offer a range of ways of being male and female, despite privileging some as superior or 'normal'. For young men and women on the

cusp of leaving school, their identities typically tend to be marked by anxiety about their sense of self and uncertainties about their future place in the world as they begin to negotiate the transition to adulthood.

Ethnicity and whiteness: the abject white working class

The connections between masculinity and ethnicity are a key element in the recognition and definition of multiple masculinities. As I noted above, the concept of hegemonic masculinity, with its emphasis in most western nations on middle class, majority group, heterosexual men, constructs men from minority groups as the Other, in ways that have parallels with women's Otherness and subordination. A range of studies, often drawing on the insights of postcolonial theory, have demonstrated the ways in which men of colour are positioned as subordinate or complicit by the hegemonic discourse. In both the USA and the UK, men of African or African Caribbean origins, for example, are constructed both as a threat and as enviable, or as objects of desire, confined to their bodies by a rhetoric of rampant sexuality, of naturalized athleticism or of degradation and dirt (Dyer 1997; hooks 1992; McClintock 1995; Segal 1990). For men of Asian origins, on the other hand, more commonly a stereotypical feminized identity is conferred upon them by the majority discourses and practices (Alexander 2000; Frosh, Phoenix and Pattman 2002). What has been missing, however, in this work, at least until relatively recently, is the theorization of 'whiteness'.

   Whiteness has tended to remain invisible and unexamined: 'unqualified, essential, homogeneous, seemingly self-fashioned and apparently unmarked by history' (Frankenberg 1997: 1), locating white men (and, in some circumstances, women [Ware 1992]) in a sphere of unexamined privilege. But like skin 'colour', whiteness is a socially constructed marker, the meaning of which is also socially variable across time and space. Whiteness too should be understood 'as ensembles of local phenomena complexly embedded in socioeconomic, sociocultural and psychic interrelations' (Frankenberg 1997: 1). Thus whiteness is a historically specific and variable social formation, a process rather than a categorical attribute, shaped within a racialized problematic (Bonnett 1997, 2000; Jackson 1998; Kobayashi and Peake 1994). Critical attention to whiteness offers a way of examining not only its multiple construction and the position of groups who might be categorized as white 'others' (working class men might be so categorized in certain circumstances as well as white immigrant groups such as the Irish in mainland

Great Britain [Walter 2001]), but also provides a different way into the examination of the foundation of all cultural constructions of 'race' and ethnicity. This claim should dispel the fears of critics of intellectual work on whiteness who argue that it might recentre rather than displace whiteness from its current central position in social theory. Examining views of the 'Other' among, for example, young white men leaving school in British cities, adds to an understanding of their own and other groups' developing sense of themselves as masculine and white/ 'raced' and the ways in which it is co-constructed.

While the initial analyses and theorizations of whiteness tended to be within the humanities, in film and cultural studies, for example, as well as in literary theory (Dyer 1997; Morrison 1992; Young 1996) there are a growing number of studies that address the social and economic advantages that accrue to white groups because of their whiteness. In the USA, for example, the economist Roediger (1994), in a magnificent analysis of the relationships between emerging nationhood and the labour process in the nineteenth century, has shown how some ethnic groups, European immigrants, for example, accepted what he terms the 'wages of whiteness' to distinguish themselves from and as superior to African Americans. Roediger also documented the interconnections between 'race', class and masculinity, showing how constructions of whiteness were interwoven with particular ideas about masculinity and femininity. From the 1950s onwards in Britain, Cohen (1992) examined what he has termed the 'habitus of race' – its embodiment in variable forms as black and white labour and the associated social constructions of the male body – to explain the cultures of racism often found among white male manual workers. He illustrates his arguments through ethnographic work in the East End at the time when the London Docklands were being re-developed, as well as through work with young white men, both at school and at play, as football supporters, for example (Cohen 1992, 1997a, 1997b). Cohen deftly reveals the ways in which a white racist discourse among these different groups of men was connected to the simultaneous class and ethnic restructuring of the East End in the 1970s and 1980s.

In the UK, today still a predominantly white country, male manual workers are, of course, the group currently most threatened by deindustrialization, economic change and the growing dominance of the service sector. Rates of unemployment are consistently higher for men in old manufacturing districts and during periods of economic retrenchment, and, as I explore in more detail in the next chapter, the least skilled members of the labour force are disproportionately disadvantaged. In a provocative analysis of the intersection of economic restructuring with

the growing emphasis of welfare policies on labour market participation, also to be discussed in more detail in chapter 2, Haylett (2001) recently has argued that the discursive construction of the white working class poor in Britain as 'socially excluded' is achieved through their racialization as a backward, unprogressive group in a modern, multicultural society. As well as, or even instead of, earlier emphases in poverty programmes on the inner city, where the majority of Britain's non-white population lives, recent Government policies to address inequality and area-based deprivations have focused on working class areas of mass housing, often local authority estates on the peripheries of towns and cities. In these places, the white working class occupants are represented as impoverished not only by their economic circumstances but also because of their cultural attitudes. They are portrayed both in the quality press and in policy discourses as abject, white and racist, 'symbols of backwardness and specifically of a culturally burdensome whiteness' (Haylett 2001: 351). Consequently, they are constructed as out of place in the new dominant discourse of 'multicultural modernization'. To support his contention, Haylett quotes Peter Mandelson's astonishing statement when launching the Government's new Social Exclusion Unit in 1997 that the problem of social exclusion was about 'more than poverty and unemployment. It is about being cut off from what the rest of us regard as normal life' (quoted in Haylett: 352).

Haylett suggests that the discursive construction of the socially excluded members of the white working class as unmodern or backward is best conceptualized as a form of 'class racism'. Class racism is a term with its origins in Bourdieu's (1984, 1999) assessment of the ways in which accent and comportment mark out working class people as inferior to the middle classes, which as I have already noted, is also a key part of the social construction of masculinity. Drawing on Bourdieu in their recent work with working class women in Britain, both Diane Reay (1997, 1998) and Beverley Skeggs (1997) have argued that British society is imbued with a class contempt for the working class, based on moral judgements of superiority that stigmatize the less privileged as undeserving rather than economically less fortunate. Like gender, class identity is a lived reality constituted in and marked on the intimate locale of the body, the home and the locality, identifying its bearers as subordinate and inferior. Young white working class men, as I shall demonstrate in greater detail in chapter 3, are explicitly positioned within these discourses as morally inferior, excluded from hegemonic versions of masculinity, and portrayed as a threat to the norms and values of middle class England: the 'normal life' taken for granted by British politician Peter Mandelson. However,

whether their positioning also constructs them as actively racist, blaming the 'Other', whether minority groups or women, for their growing relative disadvantage in the labour market, is an empirical question that will be addressed in later chapters. In their work with a slightly older group of young white working class men (in the main between 18 and 24 years old) in deindustrializing towns in the USA, Fine, Weiss, Addelstone and Marusza (1997) found that a rhetoric of blame was developed by these men as a compensatory mechanism for their inadequate understanding that employment change and economic restructuring was responsible for their declining fortunes. Instead, they preferred the explanation that people of colour and women had 'stolen' their jobs.

In his work with young people on urban multiculturalism and racism in Greater London, Les Back (1996) found a more complex situation, neither blaming the other, nor full acceptance nor complete rejection of the contemporary discourses of multiculturalism, identified by Haylett as influencing Government policies and also dominant in the influential work of key cultural studies theorists, including Hall (1991, 1992) Gilroy (1987, 1993), Bhabha (1990) and hooks (1992). Back argued instead that there are 'complex combinations of racist and non-racist sentiment evident in the lives of young whites' (1996: 3) in which the interrelations between class, gender and ethnic differences, as well as local and translocal processes affecting identity formation, position young white people in complex ways, rather than in simple binary constructions. As Back (1996: 7) notes 'forms of social exclusion and inclusion work through notions of belonging and entitlement in particular times and places' and 'urban vernacular cultures possess incommensurable impulses that allow racism and transculturalism to be simultaneously proximate and symptomatic of what it means to grow up in post-imperial cities'. These incommensurable impulses are also evident in contemporary official discourses of belonging. As well as the 'modern' multicultural discourse identified by Haylett, a form of cultural racism that has its origins in growing uncertainties about Britain's role in the world and about the definition of 'Englishness' has also been evident from the late 1980s and early 1990s (Barker 1981; Gilroy 1987; Hall 1978). Thus in 1990 Lord Tebbitt, appearing on the BBC programme *Newsnight*, said that 'many youngsters leave school totally confused about their origins and their culture' (quoted in Back 1996: 9).

A similar sentiment was resurrected in 2001 with debates about the 'mongrel'-ization of Britain: a term used in a speech in April by right-wing Conservative MP John Townend, in defence of a mythical way of British/English life in the face of threats from outside (whether from

Asians, refugees, or asylum seekers). While the new Labour Government attempted to diffuse such claims by defining and supporting a new kind of cultural politics and sense of national identity that is both 'black' and British (see e.g. the report of the Runnymede Commission 2000), its own White Paper on Nationality and Immigration *Secure Borders, Safe Haven*, issued in February 2002, undermined its position. David Blunkett, then Home Secretary, in introducing the proposed legislation, reasserted the significance of a singular notion of Britishness, insisting that new occupants of the British homeland conform to its customs and common practices, as well as requiring an English language competency and the selection of marriage partners from within the UK. Discussions about asylum seekers and economic migrants reinforced these notions. Later in the same year, in a speech noticeable for its incautious use of language, Blunkett suggested that if in-migration were not controlled, then public services, such as schools and doctors surgeries in certain areas of British cities, might become 'swamped' by non-English speakers, thus linking contemporary debates and policies to the racist language of earlier Conservative Governments' policies. For the young men in this book, growing up on peripheral estates in Cambridge and Sheffield in the context of these conflicting national sympathies and sentiments, and in labour markets differentially transformed by restructuring, ideas about their white identity will take different forms in particular encounters and spaces, from the home to the streets and clubs of the urban landscapes, as well as in schools where, as I demonstrate in chapter 3, particular ideas about black style and image play a part in the construction of masculinity.

Material structures and discursive practices

The relational approach to understanding social identities provides a way both of theorizing the multiple constitution of gender, class and ethnicity and also of a way of recognizing that gender is not only a social structure, produced within a matrix of power relations, but is also a lived identity in which the social relations that constitute gender, ethnicity and class are more complex and contradictory, more fragmented, shifting and ambivalent than public definitions of these categories suggest. Thus in investigations of the changing position of different groups of workers in labour markets, structured by the flows of global capital as well as locally specific needs for different categories of workers, an approach that brings together materialist and discursive analyses, combining the insights of political

economy with a cultural studies perspective, has the greatest explanatory reach. As feminist scholars have long argued, and theorists of masculinity now accept, work in a range of different settings and locales, in the home or the factory, waged, unwaged, formal and informal, plays a central role in shaping people's place in the world and in informing their identities. But so too do people's everyday lives – their routines, desires and aspirations as gendered social beings affect their commitment to work and their sense of self as labourers (Bradley 1999; Freeman 2000; Pringle 1998; Wajcman 1998). In this book I try, as in my earlier work with merchant bankers (McDowell 1997a), to bring culture and economy into a productive conversation in an attempt to understand the changing relationships between gender, employment and identity that are evident in contemporary Britain.

The theoretical recognition of the hybrid and performative nature of gender identity and the intersectionality of its construction, as well as the extent of variations across space and through time has been extremely productive. However, it is also important not to lose sight of the relative fixity in definitions of masculinity and femininity and the ways in which they are constituted through social relations of power and inequality. Dominant notions of masculinity, for example, continue to be based on their differentiation from an inferior 'Other'. For men, women are the classic Other and to be masculine is to be not feminine, not a woman. Further, idealized, highly valued versions of both femininity and masculinity are also constructed through comparison with a range of other 'Others' – ethnic or sexual minorities, for example. In contemporary western societies, as I noted earlier, hegemonic versions of both masculinity and femininity that stress whiteness, heterosexuality, good complexion, weight and height continue to define men and women with different attributes as less valued (Young 1990). Consequently, despite the growing theoretical recognition of cultural difference, there remain significant and relatively enduring inequalities in the social structures and social relations that constitute, maintain and reinforce such differences. As Tilly (1999) has noted, what he terms 'categorical differences', among which gender is significant, continue to structure unequal social relations in western societies. While fully accepting the arguments outlined above, that gender, as well as ethnicity and class, is a process rather than a category in its construction, it is clear that a set of binary distinctions based on 'distinctly bounded pairs such as male/female, aristocrat/plebeian, citizen/foreigner, and more complex classifications based on religious affiliation, ethnic origin, or race' (1999: 6) remain central to analyses of inequality. These bounded categories, according to Tilly, 'deserve special attention because they provide clear evidence for

the operation of durable inequality, their boundaries do crucial organizational work, and because categorical differences actually account for much of what ordinary observers take to be the results of variation in individual talent or effort' (1999: 6). Like other analysts of contemporary economic change, I insist that both 'cultural diversity' and structural inequalities must be theorized in tandem (Bradley and Fenton 1999; Fraser 1997; Freeman 2000; Phillips 1999; Ray and Sayer 1999).

Despite the durable nature of these divisions, the social attributes associated with categorical differences do change. As Connell (2000) has argued, there are key moments in the collective process of gender construction, when the social dynamics in which masculinities (and femininities) are formed are particularly clear. At such moments, he suggests, the formation of the person and of social institutions is simultaneously at issue. I believe that the current time, just after the turn of the millennium, is such a moment: the dominant version of white working class masculinity, which (relatively) advantaged men both at school and in the labour market (at least in comparison with working class women), is being challenged by girls' growing success in both institutional spheres. Their success is related to, if not the cause of, growing uncertainty among young men about their place in the world and their ability to fulfil traditional notions of masculine responsibilities, based on workplace achievement and the provision of support for dependants. These contemporary uncertainties among young men are more fully explored in chapter 3. Both dominant, or hegemonic, and subordinate versions of masculinity are neither static nor unchanging, but subject to challenge and to periodic change, especially in times of crisis (see Berger, Wallis and Watson 1995; Connell 1991, 1993; Cornwall and Lindisfarne 1994; Hearn 1992; Jackson 1990; Jackson 1991; Nilan 1995).

The long, and partial, transformation from a Fordist to a post-Fordist economy in advanced industrial societies that has been documented by economists and geographers is commonly designated a crisis or sea change (Harvey 1989), and its association with a more general transformation in the dominant gender regime (McDowell 1991) has begun to be explored. A range of theorists whose work will be the subject of the following chapter have noted changes in gender relations associated with economic restructuring, even, optimistically, the decline of patriarchy (Castells 1997). Alternatively, it might be argued that, in these changing times, in a period that seems to be associated with deep anxieties about gender identities and gender relations, deepened by traditional *fin de siècle* anxieties (Showalter 1990), the hegemonic version of a masculinity that is misogynistic as well as deeply ambivalent about race and

sexuality might, in fact, be strengthening its hold, cementing both divisions between men and women and between men. It may be that young men, without fully understanding the nature and consequences of recent economic changes, exacerbate their disadvantaged labour market position by exaggerating the very attributes of working class masculinity that currently disbar them from many of the expanding jobs in the service sector that dominate most British local labour markets. Further, their exaggerated masculinity, and their relative labour market disadvantage, might also construct them as less desirable lifetime partners for young women whose own gendered identities are changing. These are some of the issues to be explored in the rest of this book through the lens of a year in the life of 16-year-old male school leavers.

The Argument, Chapter by Chapter

In the pair of chapters that follow this introduction the connections between labour market transformations and gendered identities are explored. In the first of the two, I lay out the major dimensions of the changing nature of employment in Britain as well as explore the contradictions between the uncertainty faced by growing numbers of working people of securing an adequate income from employment and Government policies that increasingly place waged work at the centre of its programme for reducing inequality, while reducing non-work based benefits. Being outside the labour market has become a less legitimate way of surviving at the start of the twenty-first century, not only in the UK, but also in the USA and, albeit to a lesser extent, in many countries in continental Europe. This growing emphasis on the centrality of work is paradoxical as employment itself becomes increasingly uncertain and insecure for growing numbers of people in Britain. This insecurity has led, according to a number of key theorists of employment change, to a decline in the significance of employment in the social construction of identity, leading variously to new forms of identities, constructed through consumption or in defensive attachments to locality and an exclusive version of community. As employment has long been recognized as a major element in the social construction of masculine identities, new forms of work and transformations in gendered identities are interconnected.

In the second of this pair of chapters, chapter 3, recent debates about the construction of identity and the connection between class-based, gendered and racialized identities are critically assessed and their connection with debates about work are explored, in the specific context of

the changing position of young white men. New debates about the relative failure of young men at school are connected to older, as well as contemporary, debates about working class youth as folk devils and hooligans, showing how working class masculinity has re-emerged as an urgent social problem. Here the key theoretical debates of the book are developed as the arguments briefly outlined above, about connecting material and discursive approaches in theorizing identities as relational, are expanded in the specific empirical context of understanding the position of young white working class men today. The ways in which a white ethnic identity based on ideas of Britishness is constructed in opposition to ideas about a stereotypical black masculinity are explored, showing how boys from African Caribbean backgrounds are both role models and the focus of resentment for white working class boys. Idealized versions of both white and black masculinities are articulated with class and gender in ways that often emphasize the more aggressive aspects of working class young men's sense of themselves and their behaviour at school and in the streets.

In chapter 4 the focus and scale of the argument shifts to an assessment of the extent of geographical variation in labour market inequality and in the options open to 16-year-olds entering the labour market, as well as an analysis of their experiences during their final year of compulsory schooling. Despite the national coverage of schemes for the education and training of young people, there are clear spatial differences in the set of opportunities facing early school leavers: in a very real sense, geography matters. In a second paradox, rates of educational attainment and continuing participation are lowest in areas where rates of youth and general unemployment are highest and where the negative impacts of manufacturing decline are most severe. Labour markets are deeply affected by the histories and cultures of locally specific industrial patterns. The particular mix of industry and employment in a locality is connected to the development over time of the central institutions of daily social life – the family, churches, schools, clubs and sports teams – that take a geographically distinct shape. As Storper and Walker (1989: 12) have noted, 'the result is a fabric of distinctive, lasting local communities and cultures woven into the landscape of labour'. One of the most significant differences in the labour landscapes in Britain is the North–South divide (Allen and Henry 1997; Ball, Gray and McDowell 1989; Hudson and Williams 1995; Martin and Townroe 1992; Mohan 1999; Philo 1995). Reflecting the nineteenth century pattern of industrialization and the late twentieth century pattern of decline, the northern regions of the country have been most

severely affected by the loss of manufacturing employment and the slower growth of service-sector employment, especially in high-paying occupations in south-east England.

To capture this large-scale differentiation, I chose a deindustrializing northern city (Sheffield) and an affluent service-dominated southern city (Cambridge) as case studies. But spatial differentiation and geographical inequality is also marked within cities as well as between them. While the inner areas of the largest urban conurbations typically have high rates of deprivation, peripheral estates in both small and large cities are also areas that have above average rates of unemployment and are home to households with below average incomes (Fainstein, Gordon and Harloe 1992; Jarvis, Pratt and Wu 2001; Turok and Edge 1999). As Cambridge has nothing paralleling the inner area deprivation of large cities, I chose to work on a peripheral estate in each city in order to identify young men living in similar circumstances. And as Haylett (2001) noted, it is here that the 'abject' white working class is concentrated. In chapter 4 the similarities and differences between the two cities and the lives of young men therein are identified. Here (and in appendix 1) I also address some of the practical and ethical issues that arise in working with young men in an attempt to explore how they make sense of their lives and their view of themselves as men in a period of rapid economic and social change.

In the second part of chapter 4, and in chapters 5, 6 and 7 the voices of the 24 young men to whom I talked are at the centre of the analysis. The authoritative voice, or commentary, deliberately becomes less audible in these chapters, although it is undeniable that the selection of the material to foreground remains an authorial responsibility. At the end of chapter 4 the attitudes and behaviour of boys then on the edge of leaving school are the focus. As earlier studies of working class boys at school have demonstrated, in a whole variety of ways, a hegemonic version of a working class masculinity that emphasizes fooling around, having a laugh as preferable to academic achievement, and inconsistent attendance, constructs these boys as disruptive, even uneducable, and so labels them as low achievers. Here, I explore the extent to which boys in their final months at school understand the institutional and demographic changes that are reshaping gender relations. As I show, there is the same sort of 'cultural lag' among white boys in both Cambridge and Sheffield as O'Donnell and Sharpe (2000) found among boys in London schools, and Lowe and Krahn (2000) among Canadian school leavers. Young people in all these locations seemed to be relatively unaware of how the opportunities open to men and women from different classes on leaving

school are being reshaped. And as well as demonstrating a limited knowledge of the changing structure of the labour market, the young men to whom I talked also had little awareness of the changing aspirations of many young women. They held conservative views about sex and marriage, and about sharing (or rather not sharing) family and domestic responsibilities. They expected to be able to reproduce the same gendered patterns of responsibility that their parents and grandparents had relied on before them. And, despite their general awareness of the growing significance of credentials in the uncertain and flexible labour market of the twenty-first century, these school leavers were also confident that they would always be able to find work.

The core of gender inequality lies in the gender division of labour in both paid and unpaid work, but, as I argued in the first two chapters, the ideological and material underpinnings of this division are eroding. Young people on the edge of adulthood can no longer rely on the old moral certainties that constructed men as breadwinners, whose identities were constructed in the main in the workplace, and women as primary carers of dependants in the home. The changes in the institutions of the education system and the workplace have transformed women's opportunities and enhanced their prospects of self-sufficiency and independence. Similarly, more diverse and fluid personal relationships have both given women more choice about the circumstances in which they become mothers and less certainty about male support if they do. In the succeeding three chapters (5, 6 and 7) young men's contemporary experiences in the labour market are explored in detail, documenting the consequences of the growth of a service-dominated economy. In the first of this trio of chapters the overall strategies of the boys in the summer during which they left school are examined, documenting the ways in which they searched for work, the jobs that they accepted, as well as the decisions of some of them to combine employment and further study. In the second two chapters the focus is on detailed case studies of different pathways, focusing on differences between the young men in their orientation to employment and to further education and training as they look for and start work in a range of jobs. Chapter 6 focuses on relative success stories, while in chapter 7 less successful transitions are examined.

During the course of three interviews with each of the participants I collected a great deal more information than is included in the pages of these three chapters. All the interviews were transcribed and analysed and reanalysed around a series of emerging themes. For this book, with its key focus on the connections between employment and masculinity, I have presented the material in the form of what Ball, Maguire and Macrae

(2000: 17) termed 'analytic sets' of young people, that blend 'fairly detailed narratives with a degree of conceptual focus'. The sets presented here are organized around young men's attitudes to the labour market and to employment participation. The stories in each case are neither complete nor exhaustive but are presented to allow comparisons between the sets to be easily made and points of similarity and difference identified. While each set or category highlights specific life opportunities and experiences, it is important to emphasize that the groupings are not mutually exclusive nor watertight and that the young men may move between these categories in the coming years. However, while notions of fluidity change and instability are currently a key part of theories of identity, I also want to emphasize the relatively limited options of these men and the key and continuing significance of their class position in structuring their possible options. In each case the narrative may also be compared to the more general stories told about the future of work that were outlined in chapter 2. My aim is to challenge both theoretical models of greater choice and individualization in the world of work, as well as the idea, embedded in current official policies, that human capital models of labour endowment are a sufficient basis for increasing participation rates and enhancing the opportunities of current and potential employees.

In the final substantive chapter (chapter 8) I counterpose this material about workplace-based identities to discussions about other arenas of these boys' lives as they negotiate the transition from adolescent schoolboy to independent youth in order to assess contemporary notions and dimensions of multiple masculine identities. Here I suggest that the typical strategies that are emphasized in the current literatures about the 'making of a man' tend to focus on the macho, energetic, anti-authority attributes of young masculinities, the protest masculinity outlined by Connell, to the neglect of alternative versions, including what I define here as domestic masculinity. In this and the final chapter I examine the ways in which young men adhere to a gendered version of respectability that is often used to distinguish 'rough' from 'respectable' members of the working class. In chapter 9 the connections between class and gender are discussed and the continuing salience of class position in the lives of young white men is emphasized. Finally, the specifics of youth policies are discussed, critically examining the continuing reliance of labour supply measures to the neglect of measures to increase the availability of work for the less skilled and to improve the conditions under which they labour.