

# Editorial



## Introduction

It is with real pleasure that I introduce this issue of *Boyhood Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* (BHS), my first full issue as Editor. The past few months have been a learning curve in terms of the roles and responsibilities expected when editing an international journal, but I am very pleased with what we have to offer here. At a very important and critical time for gender scholars, I want to use this editorial as a general announcement of the editorial change, or addition, in editorship and the future direction, I would like to take the journal in. It is also an opportunity to introduce editorial board members, old and new to the readership and to outline what follows in volume 12, issue 1.

## Past and Future

As one of the founding editors, Diederik Janssen has been involved in the journal since its inception in 2007. In 2015, he oversaw a move for the journal between publishers (Men's Studies Press to Berghahn Books) and a name change (*THYMOS: Journal of Boyhood Studies* to its current title). Diederik has recently embarked on the onerous task of completing a doctorate. With all the hurdles and extra work this brings, it seemed an ideal time to step up from my position as an editorial board member to Editor to share the load and to help the journal grow in readership and submissions. Diederik will continue in a new role as Managing Editor.

For those of you who don't know me, I am a social scientist, and my work over the past decade has centered on young men and masculinities (both in the United Kingdom and Canada) within and beyond educational institutions. I have published on issues surrounding marginalization, place, and social exclusion (see Habib and Ward 2019; Waller, Ingram and Ward 2018; Ward 2015, 2016; Ward et al. 2017). I have editorial experience on



numerous books, as both sole and joint editor, and sit on the editorial board of *Sociological Research Online*, the *British Journal of Education Studies*, and the *Journal of Appalachian Studies*. I currently convene the British Sociological Association (BSA) education study group and chair the education stream at the association's annual conference. I am also a member of the Gender and Education Association.

While putting this editorial together, I took the opportunity to look back at the first issue of the journal. In the opening editorial, the journal's foundations were laid, out and one of the key questions it set out to explore was "whether boyhood is unique to certain cultures or a given historical period, or whether it has fundamental ontological status." (Groth and Janssen 2007: 3). It also made clear that, given the ambiguity surrounding boyhood and how what it means to be a boy and young man has changed over time, the period of investigation should "encompass the years from early and middle childhood to the beginning of the male's third decade of life" (Groth and Janssen 2007: 3, 4).

While I think some of the ideas and discussions are still relevant 12 years on, such as the ambiguity around defining this stage of the life course, a lot has changed since 2007. The global financial crisis, technological and online developments, the continuation of deindustrialization, the expansion and costs of higher education, the emergence of debates centered on "toxic" masculinity, "locker room" talk, and men's rights, incels (involuntary celibates), and the #MeToo era have all impacted the lives of boys and young men. This is coupled with the emergence of the Far Right, Brexit, and debates around gender equality alongside the ongoing global migration/refugee situation and climate change. Going forward, I suggest it is important that the journal explores these issues and critically engages with these contemporary shifts and movements while also identifying historic discourses around gender roles.

## **Vision for the Journal**

For me, (masculine) identities are actively displayed and developed in everyday actions and practices within institutions such as families, sports, schools, and employment and within specific places. Despite the varied perspectives and theoretical frameworks adopted in contemporary studies of boys and young men (e.g., hegemonic, inclusive masculinity studies, post-humanism and affect theory, post-structural, feminist, pro-feminist, post-feminist,

Foucauldian, Bourdieusien, etc.), each perspective still holds social power as significant in the formation of masculine identities. For scholars in critical studies of men and masculinities, gender is both a conscious and unconscious performance, part of a project toward understanding one's identity, individually and in relation to other's identities as "social practice." I and others in the field have argued for the plurality of masculinities, drawing our attention to a range of global power relations—how gender intersects with other forms of power which are constituted out of interaction between structure and agents at a local, national and international level (Bridges and Pascoe 2014; Connell 2000; Elliot 2016; Kulkarni and Jain 2018; McDowell 2003; Roberts 2014; Segal 2007; Schrock and Schwalbe 2009). Of course, boys and young men's lives do not operate in vacuums and their lives intersect with multiple other genders. I envisage future articles will seek to explore further some of these issues and address a range of key questions around these topics. Some interesting discussions could be:

- What are the changing dynamics of young masculinities within a globalized world?
- How are boys and young men coping with a postindustrialized society?
- What is the expanding role of education in boys and young men's lives?
- How do interactions and relationships with girls, young women, sisters, mothers, and grandmothers shape boyhood and boys' lives?
- How do older men reflect back on boyhood?
- How do the intersections of class, gender, "race," and ethnicity combine with other factors in boys and young men's such as sexuality, disability, place?
- Does the term toxic masculinity impact boys and young men? Is it a helpful term, or a term to cause confusion?

Other questions and topics of interest that articles could cover might include diverse subjects such as young fathers; nationalism; bodies; technologies; belonging; methods or methodologies for conducting research with boys and young men; strategies for engaging boys and young men in gender equality; feminist boys; trans-identities; boys and (post)feminisms; folklore; mythology; poetics of "male development"; son-parent and male student-teacher relations; young sexualities; and representations of boyhoods within film, music, the arts and across temporalities, geographies, and cultures.

## Aims and Scope

Since 2007, *BHS* has contributed to key debates and been a forum for the discussion of boyhood, young masculinities, and boys' lives by exploring the full scale of intricacies, challenges, and legacies that inform male and masculine development. Part of this work has been how to discuss the profound changes occurring in transitions to adulthood for boys and young men across the globe. It has published articles and special issues from a variety of research fields, including, but not limited to, the social and psychological sciences, historical and cultural studies, philosophy and social legal, and health studies.

One of the core missions of the journal is to initiate conversation across disciplines, research angles, and intellectual viewpoints. Both theoretical and empirical contributions fit the journal's scope, with critical literature reviews and review essays also welcomed, as well as book reviews. To date, *BHS* has published two issues a year, with one of these tending to be a "special issue" edited by guest editors. These topics have ranged from boys' literacy, educational "failure," boys in film and cinema, and the school-to-prison pipeline.

## Key Changes

Alongside the editorial change, I have pushed forward with three other key changes to *BHS* since coming into post in January. First, in an ever-competing publishing world, the need to make the journal more visible and authors' articles readable and therefore citable seemed crucial. *BHS*, like many other journals, has therefore moved to an online-first (OF) system. Authors' articles will now appear online before being allocated to a print issue. It is hoped this will speed up the process from acceptance to publication.

Second, to aid in the journal's visibility and to grow the citation index, I applied to have *BHS* listed in Elsevier's Scopus, the largest abstract and citation database of peer-reviewed literature. I am pleased to say that in July this application was successful and accepted for inclusion in Scopus. *BHS* was praised for consistently including articles that are scientifically sound and relevant to an international academic or professional audience in this field. *BHS* was also commended for the fact that although the scope of this journal is narrow, it addresses the need of an important niche audience, and this title addresses a subject area not properly covered by an existing journal.

Third, the editorial board has been refreshed in order to broaden the areas of expertise on offer to review article and proposals. The board now contains a mix of scholars from across the globe and at various career stages. The board is made up of the following: Alex McInch (UK), Amanda Keddie (Australia), Anna Tarrant (UK), Carolyn Jackson (UK), Deevia Bhana (South Africa), Ed Morris (US), Edward Fergus (US), Eric Baumgartner (UK), Jay Mechling (US), Jón Ingvar Kjarran (Iceland), Judy Y. Chu (US), Jürgen Budde (Germany), Ken Parille (US), Kenneth B. Kidd (US), Lucas Gottzen (Sweden), Michael D. Kehler (Canada), Michael Flood (Australia), Saul Keyworth (UK), Thomas Viola Rieske (Germany), Victoria Cann (UK), and Tristan Bridges (US). These will play an active part in promoting the journal and its future direction. I thank both those who have agreed to stay on and those who have recently joined.

So far in this piece I have covered the editorial change and the history and future direction I hope to take the journal. I now turn to focus on this issue, and in the final section, outline the diverse international articles and book reviews that make up this collection.

## **This Issue**

The collection of articles and book reviews in this issue continues to do much of the critical work that has underpinned not only the journal's past but also its new direction. In our first article, "Masculinity and Neighborhood Bullying among Adolescents in Ibadan, Nigeria: A Research Note," Mofeyisara Omobowale and colleagues focus on how masculinity, as an identity signifier along gender lines, varies from one society to another. They argue the nature, definition, and expression of masculinity (dominance, oppression, violence, and aggression) through social interactions may breed bullying as found in the Agbowo community of Ibadan, Nigeria. Drawing on mixed methods of data collection, they reveal patriarchal-constructed masculinity allows for hegemonic dominance, aggression, oppression, and violent acts, which foster bullying among adolescent males in Agbowo. Their article suggests that to address bullying-related problems among adolescents, an understanding of the societal context in which it is carried out is required.

In our second article, and turning from the developing to the developed world, Brian Wright and Donna Ford, through a detailed case study of one young man called Xavier, explore "Remixing and Reimagining the Early Childhood School Experiences of Brilliant Black Boys." The authors suggest

that as early as preschool, Black boys in the United States face low and negative expectations that contribute to excessive discipline, over-referrals to special education, and under-referrals to gifted education. Through their case study, Wright and Ford present an overview of these issues with most attention devoted to gifted education, which they argue is a neglected topic when it comes to Black boys.

Katrin Olafsdottir and Jon Kjaran in our third article focus on heterosexual young men in Iceland and how they negotiate sex and consent. Drawing on qualitative research and peer group interviews with young men aged 18, in “Boys in Power’: Consent and Gendered Power Dynamics in Sex,” the authors identify how young men are constituted by the dominant discourses at play in shaping their realities. Two different suggestions are outlined that inform consent, the discourse of consent (based on legal, educational, and grassroots discourses), and the discourse of heterosexuality (based on the heterosexual script, porn, and gender roles), resulting in conflicting messages for boys. Olafsdottir and Kjaran argue that while boys feel they are supposed to take responsibility for sex to be consensual, as well as being gentle partners, at the same time the heterosexual discourse itself produces power imbalances in sex and dating.

Set in a very different context to the young men from Iceland, in “We Had To Stick Together’: Black Boys, the Urban Neighborhood Context, and Educational Aspirations,” Derrick Brooms focuses on the ways in which a select group of Black boys make sense of their schooling experiences within the context of an economically distressed urban neighborhood in the United States. Drawing on interview data, the article examines students’ sense-making through three primary lenses. First, the perceptions of the school’s neighborhood; second, the interactions with people in the neighborhood; and third, how navigating the neighborhood impacted their schooling experiences and educational aspirations. The students’ narratives highlight the complexity of belongingness to Black boys’ schooling experiences and how the urban environment impacts their sense of self.

Moving away from the urban to the rural, Susanna Areschoug provides another lens into the lives of young men and the importance of place. In “Rural Failures: Representations of (Im)mobile Young Masculinities and Place in the Swedish Countryside,” Areschoug suggests critical boyhood scholars have consistently problematized the moral panic directed at boys’ educational achievements. The field has not, however, been as attentive to the spatialized dimensions of this discourse. In the Swedish debate, boys in (post)industrial towns in rural regions—affected by decades of deindustri-

alization—are often pointed out as at risk of becoming unemployed societal liabilities. Documenting the lives, aspirations, and future trajectories of young and rural, working-class boys, the television series analyzed in this article reproduces this trope and connects anxieties regarding “redundant” masculinities with rural spaces. Using feminist and post-structural approaches to gender and space, the article shows how this media production, supplied for educational purposes, mediates normative understandings of young rural masculinity. Areschoug argues the documentary, by tending to the specificities of place, challenges universal accounts of youth but simultaneously reproduces a conception of young rural boys as immobile, backward, and left behind

Alongside these five articles, we also have a range of book reviews that focus on recent international additions to the fields of young masculinities, boys’ literacy, the juvenile system, and the “boy crisis.”

## Conclusion

The need for an active boyhood studies field, and vibrant outlets for the work being produced, is becoming even more pressing. Young men’s lives across the globe are being redesigned and overturned at an increasing rate. Young people in general are at the center of political skirmishes, at the heart of new social movements, and living with uncertain futures. Tracing how boys and young men adapt and deal with these changes I believe is a key part of *BHS*. What is also key is to develop a better understanding around the role of women in boys and young men’s lives and how these interactions impact all genders.

In this editorial statement, I have outlined the journal’s history and my plans to take the journal forward. It is hoped the journal will become a key place to publish work in this field. To conclude, I record my thanks to all those who work, and have worked, on *BHS*, and I want to remind readers that *BHS* is very much open to special issue proposals or ideas for themed issues. Please do get in touch! I look forward to seeing where this journey can take us!

*Michael R. M. Ward*

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