My name is Graeme and I am very pleased to be addressing you this morning on some issues which are very close to my heart as a teacher of language and care-giver to high school boys at a traditional full-boarding school in South Africa.

The title of this seminar is: *"Separation and Adaptation: Early Experience in Boarding and Identity Formation."* And here I address how (or whether) boys begin to form authentic, *integrated identities* at boarding school and I consider how this is affected or facilitated by their early experience which begins with separation from family and is then a process of enforced adaptation to very particular, quite uniform circumstances . I consider to what extent this early experience may be considered to be *traumatic* and speculate on the effect such trauma has on the identity formation process. I explore what elements in the new adaptive context are particularly powerful identity shapers. I reveal how a structure of *power hierarchy* within the social relationships of the boys at the school where I work affects their identity formation and how this operates through very strong role modeling. I include basic reference to the identity formation theories put forward by pioneering psychologists Erik Erikson and James Marcia.

Further, I want to place this presentation in the context of a perceived *crisis in masculine identity* in the modern western world and to acknowledge the work of English psychologist Joy Schaeverin on what she refers to as "Boarding School Syndrome".

I will also be threading the theme of *global citizenship* into my content as much as possible and I am hoping that your shared insights will assist me with that and I intend to leave time for questions and discussion at the end.

I am basing my discussion on primary source-based research in the form of a series of six questionnaires administered to new boys in grade eight over the period of the first fifteen weeks of the current South African school year; I interviewed several of the new boys, some boys of an intermediate age and some senior boys (grade twelves who are referred to as "matrics" at my school), some teachers who are primarily academic, others who are involved more directly in pastoral care roles and others in management positions. I spoke to a teacher from a primary boarding school and some parents of current new boys as well as old boys of the school of varying ages, some of whom are employed as teachers at the school. Secondary sources include texts on identity theory, boarding school syndrome, boys' development crises, modern and traditional masculinity and hierarchical structures in societies. I have also used my own observations of boys at school over the years as well as my own understanding and "gut feel". While some of this work could be referred to as "research" it was by in large carried out informally and I have not done statistical data analysis - the purpose of this presentation being to workshop ideas by raising issues and pointing out examples and trends I have observed which have caused me some concern over the years.

The focus of my project is *boarding schools* and here I narrow my focus to the "classic" traditional British-style boarding school found all over the English-speaking world. The school where I work is a typical example, I think – a boys-only, full- boarding institution which houses 550 boys in seven boarding houses of between 75 and 80 boys each. Each house houses boys of all grades 8-12. [1] The grades 8-10 sleep in dormitories of about 15 boys in the typical layout, each with a bedside cupboard unit for clothes and toiletries; there are hip-height walls between every two beds and they are open to view from the central walkway and the beds opposite, there are windows between the beds with colourful curtains. Two matric boys (Dormitory Leaders/Dorm Cops) are assigned supervisory roles in each dormitory and their studies have doors which can be accessed only from within the dormitory. [4] The boys in the dorm have a bathroom accessible from within the dorm with cubicled showers and toilets and shared wash basins. [5] Senior boys have their own studies which are sometimes shared in grade 11 but always single units which are larger for grade 12s. Senior boys sleep and do academic work in their studies while the grades 8-10 use a large common [6] "prep-room" where each boy has his own desk partitioned from his neighbours into a cubicle. Grade 10s have their own room and grades 8 and 9 share a larger space. There is a large common room [7] for house meetings and some indoor games – there is a kitchen area and a large television with comfortable seating; this room is used by grades 8-11 while the grade 12s (matrics) have their own common room which only they may enter. Grade 8-10 boys may not enter the studies of the senior boys or the areas where the studies are without permission. [8] A junior boy must stand and call for permission before entering the corridor – "may I please come down?" Although these Houses are shared, it can be seen that within the house, there is a place for each group and some shared spaces – the access to spaces is controlled and ritualised and as a boy grows and the years pass his access to space in the house changes according to his age. In a few minutes when I explain some identity theory, you may see how this set up meshes with the different stages of the boys' identity forming processes.

I hope to gather some information while at the conference about the dynamics between the boys and the way spaces are accessed and used in boarding facilities in schools around the world and get some input (from you) about how this may affect relationships and identity formation with a view to presenting some alternatives upon return.

My investigation of early boarding experience. [9]

Initial Motivations:

I became interested in this area following the unfortunate misbehaviour of some senior boys during their final days at school. The nature of their unacceptable behaviour raised questions in my mind about how values, traditions, roles, power, entitlement, masculinity and rules affected behaviour and how identity was involved. Reading up about these, I discovered Joy Schaeverin's work and I began to wonder whether "Boarding School Syndrome" in some form could be at play in our school in spite of the good care we take of our boys. [10] [11], 12, [13]

"Boarding School Syndrome" – silencing the emotional voice

Joy Schaeverin has worked in the UK with adults who suffer from emotional deprivation – and their condition has been linked to their boarding school experience as children. Sufferers of the syndrome are generally men and they are unable to be emotionally responsive in relationships; typically they have challenges with intimacy and their marriages have suffered, their efforts at parenting have been problematic – in a way they are *unable to love*. They certainly have trouble expressing love but they also are unable to *feel* it, they are unable access any of the emotionally derived traits related to love – important ones like *compassion* and *empathy*. Because of socialization these men knew the behaviours and roles of being compassionate and knew when to behave appropriately (they had attended top schools – the public part of their socialization was excellent), they were competent in saying the right thing to grieving widows, they did satisfactorily at courting and proposing to their partners etc but something was missing – something revealed sometimes only in an intimate relationship – they were not *authentic* – they are acting, playing a role, only. This problem resonated with my own experience as a young man and so I wondered whether my boys at school were beginning along the same road…

14 *Identity Formation Theories:*

(Show slide)

Marcia:

Identity Diffusion – vague, no clarity of who I am (childhood)

Identity Foreclosure- I have decided but I do not really understand why but I do not want to talk/think about it! (loyalty, religion, politics, school…)

Identity Moratorium- I have some ideas but I am not settled, I may change, I will wait and see

Identity Achievement – I am happy with who I am, I know what makes me who I am, I am clear and stable (maturity)

15 *Erikson: (Growth in the context of conflict)*

Age 13-21 Identity vs Role Confusion I feel that I know who I am but I am not free to do as I please and so I cannot fully be myself yet – I have to wait until I am an adult

Also explained as, (depending on circumstances)

Age 13 -21 Group Identity vs Alienation - I know who I am but I prefer to be part of a group right now because I do not want to be on my own. (If I was myself I may have to leave the group)

I wanted to explain those theories as a context in which to understand the relationships and dynamics which I will be explaining as I see them at my school. It might help to understand why boys make choices, accept rules and instructions and resist others or why boys of different ages do these differently.

16 *Original Thesis:*

Beginning my observation of the new boys and their trajectory of adaptation, I expected that the trauma of separation and the accelerated adaptation which followed had an impact which led to the formation of a false or unintegrated identity and an inability to express emotions – I set out to discover the origins of the typical emotionally-stunted male who cannot express, recognise or value emotions. I thought that I would uncover a pattern of fairly obvious trauma and fairly clear psychological consequences…

In my examination of the new boys at my school this year, I have not uncovered instances of disturbing abuse – bullying is quite rare, difficult to pin down and I would say, certainly does not set the tone. But boys are homesick and they do miss their parents and siblings deeply. There are two or so in each house who feel it more than the others. I have found that there *is* a *silencing of the emotional voice* which takes place in my school and the questionnaires elicited by and large predictable answers which would be expected of a thirteen year old – excited, a bit nervous, curious but careful – certainly they were not confessing anything really intense or heart-felt. They did, however, express that they were afraid of the matrics. Am I able to conclude that there is a shaping or skewing of the identity taking place? Boys are growing up, they are becoming who they will be, they are experiencing life, of course what they experience will influence who they become, whatever we do. But there is no flash of light when things change, when a boy changes track from a road leading to whom he would have been, to whom he will be now that he is at boarding school.

There *is* trauma felt by boys in the form of homesickness, there is fear of the physicality and large size of senior boys and their deep voices and bulging muscles, fear of punishment which matrics are permitted to hand out. But I believe now that it is *not this trauma nor the degree of this trauma* which is at play as the dominant factor in shaping identity and some/many boys appear to have experienced no trauma at all.

I hypothesised that the trajectory ran like this: 1) youngsters arrived at school, 2)were traumatised by feeling abandoned, 3)their identities were stripped away by the trauma of having a matric shouting at him and telling him that he was nothing, 4) that a boy would be told that he was irrelevant until he proved himself by achieving certain accomplishments and learning to be a certain person at high school, 5) this began a process in which the boy became "that person" as quickly as possible so that he would a) stay out of trouble and b) gain approval which would substitute for the missing mother love. 6) I was suspecting that this accelerated/pressurised adaptive behaviour *lacked authenticity* in the sense that he would begin to make choices that he would otherwise not have and was a survival mechanism. Over the years this becomes a lifestyle at school, an image to uphold, a pleasing exterior which can continue to gain one benefits after leaving school – the image of the public school boy (grown into a man), but which was essentially hollow – a façade hiding the frightened boy as he was on the first night at boarding school…

Six months into my observations, can I say that this is how it happens? – does it happen like this? – Maybe and maybe not…sometimes and sometimes certainly not. There really are too many variables involved and who can know all of what one boy may say to another during this period of adapting and who can know how it plays out? Remember too that the most profound changes occur *subconsciously* and one would have to be a psychanalyst to get to anything like the full picture.

So why be so audacious as to present a workshop on the subject? Simply to raise awareness of what potential psychic damages may occur and to initiate some discussion about what strategies we as educators might use to optimise the development of the boys in our care. We should not be blinded by the attractiveness of a smooth-running programme or a disciplined House; we should also not be constrained by *traditional* procedures or relationships. In this field, as "Boarding School Syndrome" validates, traditional practices from the past can be dangerous in the long term.

In schools like mine, in school assemblies, Life Orientation lessons, English Literature classes, History teaching and at conferences like these we, as teachers, are *progressive* – we are open and active in promoting equality of race and gender; we model the schools' values of respectfulness toward all and we discuss how to build character and resilience and adaptiveness while maintaining integrity, we have debates about what characteristics the modern gentleman should exhibit and so on and this is very, very good [17] *but* we have left in place *traditional* (and I say, archaic) structures in the society within in the boarding houses and within the "boy code" which have a greater effect on identity formation than anything else – in my view these structures are the *hidden stumbling blocks* in otherwise progressive, enlightened institutions.

[18] A hard-hitting series of articles, politically motivated, no doubt, attacking current British politicians who have been recognised as being public school old boys, have suggested that boarding schools in the UK, for all their elitism, have failed to "produce" good leaders – the argument, once again, is that parental abandonment, bullying and the development of a survival mentality created in boys a numbing/stifling of the emotions because of a fear that any emotional expression of vulnerability as a

young school boy would lead to persecution/being bullied – this mentality, enduring into adulthood, means that these adults are of low emotional intelligence; they are incapable of emotional responsiveness and do not have or recognise the emotional range required in some of the trickier aspects of modern leadership. I have observed this in males in my community and I have recognised it in myself and I have had to work hard on this. I know there are emotionally stunted people (who are males, generally) How did they get like this? Does it take *trauma* to stunt the emotions? Is emotional hardening a milder version of post-traumatic stress disorder? Or can it happen in normal life? Is it unique to boarding schools?

As I said earlier, I expected to be able to *observe* this happening because I have considered many of the boys at my school to be emotionally cold, lacking in originality and flair – I have observed this in their creative writing and I have seen it while watching their sport which strikes me as being over-coached, methodical and unresponsive.

The puzzling thing was that in fifteen weeks of hunting for instances of trauma, I have not been able to observe it – and I have assumed that boarding conditions must have changed since David Cameron's day and that boarding school syndrome applies only to primary school boys. *Trauma* is not part of the tone in the boarding houses, at my school - that I could see. Not as the *dominant* characteristic – so why did my boys seem emotionally under-developed? Was I being unrealistic in looking for more authenticity in our boys? [19]

…I have since come to realise that trauma as such is *not needed* to silence a boy's emotional voice and perhaps retard identity formation – it has become clearer to me how powerful and defining the school boy *hierarchy* is among the boys! The power of the hierarchical system lies in the *extreme role modeling* which it encourages…

Emotional development and Identity Formation

I think I need to clarify the link between emotional development and identity formation. I touched on it when mentioning how boys can go into survival mode and over-ride their feelings so as not to draw negative attention from senior boys and their peers who soon begin to model on the seniors. The survival mode endures, becomes more elaborate and becomes a code of behaviour which presents as "gentlemanly conduct" and which is reinforced daily throughout life – this "pleasing shape" is hollow in spite of the many skills and competencies it carries along with it. It is hollow because it grows from a little boy's fear. And the "little boy" remains under-developed in the psyche because the outer role is the one which grows. Under stress, the little boy who is in the sub-conscious grows afraid and is protected by the outer identity/role which becomes angry. Remember conscious anger is almost always linked to sub-conscious fear.

An unintegrated identity is one which has this *split.* Unintegrated individuals are incapable of having integrity, in the true sense of the word. I find it problematic that so many institutions which claim integrity as one of their core values should allow their members to develop unintegrated identities.

20 This pattern of development is so much part of our culture that it is accepted and even desired, particularly in men – we call it toughness, emotional hardening. We admire and make heroes out of emotionally hard men. The military is full of them. Boys think that to be emotionally tough will enable them to take on physical challenges with ease. That it is required when you want to climb Everest or run an ultra-marathon or, disturbingly, to succeed against competitors in business. No. Emotional hardness is not determination and resilience, it is numbness, confusion, bafflement, arrogance and cruelty. It is part of the military man's image not because of the demanding training he does but because he is a killer. I learned about emotional toughness in the military. Weeks of disciplined drill and standing inspection prepared me for the real stuff – learning how to kill as many people as possible as quickly as possible using an assault rifle, a machine gun and a few other weapons. I returned from my military training and a few people informed that it had made a man of me… What had actually happened was that a few more strokes had been added to a picture begun at home by my bully of a brother, the complex ridicule of my mother and my often absent, yet idealised, father. I was afraid at school (which was a day school) and I covered it up. I compensated/over-compensated for my insecurity by playing extra hard at rugby even though I had no talent. I see the same pattern in some of my boys.

Learning the traditions, learning the code, learning ones place, learning the role, growing into the identity.

Induction and Orientation of New Boys

New boys (grade eights) at my school engage in an induction/orientation programme designed to inform, reassure and enthuse them about their coming five years at Hilton. Staff and senior boys facilitate the programme designed by the director of pastoral care. It is filled with good people saying good things about life in boarding. It lasts for a week before formal, classroom-based lessons begin. It happens during the day, it involves sports in the afternoons, talks in the evenings as well and introductions to cultural activities. It is carefully formulated by well-meaning, intelligent professionals who are well-qualified.

21 ***The Boy Code***

However, the official induction programme is by no means the only induction to school which takes place…on the first evening at school which is the day before the grade 9 – 11 boys arrive, the new boys, in their dormitories, have the grade 12 boys (matrics) introduce themselves. At this stage only the matrics and the grade eights are in the school. At first this is done in the presence of the housemaster and then it is followed up when the boys can interact unsupervised. Matrics are as big as me and grade eights are very little by comparison and all the inter-mediate-sized boys have not come back to school yet. The very physical presence of fifteen adult sized eighteen-year olds in the same room as fifteen

grade eight boys who are half their size or less is very, very powerful. The grade 12 boys are given strict instructions by the housemaster and the headmaster that no abuses are to take place. In spite of this, in the house with which I am associated, there were passionately (threateningly?) raised voices. There were unconfirmed reports that some profanities were used. I am sure, however, that on this night no physical contact was made. The general thrust of this traditional address from the matrics (I have established, with great difficulty) is firstly, to establish the power dynamic between the two groups and secondly, to establish the idea that school is a boys' world run by the boys according to rules administered and enforced by the boys. The grade eights get the message that some things are handled by the boys and that the teaching staff do not need to be involved – this idea, developed a step or two further, leads to a code of silence/secrecy at the school which is regarded by the boys as a tradition and therefore something good and desirable… We as staff members are aware of the code of silence but it is a "dirty word" at my school and I suspect that my bosses would take a dim view of my mentioning it in a public forum such as this…We do what we can to address it but it is difficult.

These first-night activities have become a tradition which is cyclical and self-reinforcing and has its origins in the initiation practices of the past – fortunately these have been outlawed but the tradition lives on in this more subtle acquisition and demonstration of senior boy power.

Senior Boy Power

Can you see how the matrics have captured power? First they parade their physicality (in numbers), they take advantage of the absence of any buffers in the form of grade 9, 10 or 11 boys between them and their new boy subjects and then they effectively negate the influence of the staff by promoting the idea that the teachers have academic work and coaching to keep them busy, while discipline and conduct in the house and around the school is boys' (matrics') business. We do not have prefects at my school, all matrics are regarded as leaders and have various portfolios of responsibility which are generally House-based. This gives *all* matrics authority and power in the eyes of the new boys. At my school the leadership philosophy is called "servant-leadership" and the idea is that by leading, the matrics serve the school community and by serving they lead – this idea is very, very good and is understood by the staff and by the matrics and has some very positive outcomes but for my project, I want to point out that this is *irrelevant to the new boys* who are fearful and cannot feel that they could be served in any discernable way by these big, strong boys with deep, loud voices.

 Matrics are permitted to punish other boys and there are restrictions which are clearly laid down by the housemaster but which are generally entrusted to the Head of House (boy) as time passes and he proves himself trustworthy. A record of these punishments is kept in a book administered by the Head of House and checked by the housemaster (with varying regularity). Now, *staff* who punish boys keep a record on our online database which is open to scrutiny by management and technically, by parents at any time – the process is transparent and professional and there is accountability which is legal and above board. The matric punishments are not generally available for scrutiny by staff and are regarded as being between the housemaster and the Head of House and boys in the house. This differentiation reinforces the idea that the school is a boys' world run by boys and, without fail, any boy will tell you that punishment from the matrics is "worse"/stricter and harsher than punishment from staff.

Staff are generally happy with this seemingly imbalanced system – if the boys are well-behaved around the school and in class, teachers are grateful and do not question the system since it all appears good on the surface.

22 *The Love Vacuum*

This first-night experience which shows the power dynamic in the school, happens to the youngsters just when they are starting to realise that they are on their own, away from family and any recognizable source of love; their parents have been gone for six to eight hours, they have not bonded with their peers yet and they are in a "love vacuum" which must be filled sooner or later. *Separation* has occurred and it feels like *adaptation* must begin if a little boy is to survive because his new world is filled with predators – not teachers but senior boys! I believe this experience is *traumatic* but some on our staff object to this term and believe that because there are no abuses commited, there is no trauma. Many on our staff, and most boys, consider it to be *part of growing up* and a necessary *rite of passage* which shows a boy his place and is necessary for a boy to become a "true member of the community", in other words, it begins the process of the *formation of a new identity* which I want to examine. Is this new identity a true, integrated identity *or* does it comprise of strategies, roles and behaviours which serve on one hand, to keep a boy out of trouble and safe from the very scary matrics, and on the other, to fill the "love vacuum" by earning praise for achievement in measurable areas like sports and academics?

Filling the Vacuum

Senior boys can be kind too – they show the new boys what to do to keep out of trouble… a range of rules and expected behaviours is given to new boys. Do not walk on the grass, greet everyone, greet matrics by name, carry out duties like ringing bells and fetching bread and milk for sandwiches and tea from the kitchen. There is a "New Boys Test" two weeks into the term which quizzes them on certain traditions and facts about the school as well as the names and positions of authority of the senior boys. Up until the new boys test, the new boys, who are referred to by seniors as "poeps" (which is a South African/Afrikaans slang euphemism for "little shits") "generously" enjoy a period of grace which allows them to learn all the rules and expected behaviours – the effect of this grace period is to heighten the intimidation value of the matric punishments when they finally arrive because of the anticipation involved.

Matric punishments are *traditional* - they comprise of things like waking up early, changing uniform and running around the large campus from point to point acquiring pencil rubbings or "sketches" from the numerous plaques on memorials and statues around the campus (which literally forces them to kneel gasping at the feet of famous historical "traditional" figures in the school!) The punishments are deemed to be acceptable by housemasters and management and within the scope of expected, boyish behaviour. (Times are not too early – after 6.15 in the morning and the distances run reasonable – any one leg of three, or five point sketches being less than half a kilometer.) These details about boy punishments are not common knowledge among staff and are considered to be "boy" or "house" affairs. They are not in the discipline guidelines for staff. So this power of the matric's over the new boys' fear of punishment goes unquestioned. Matrics wield power over the *problem and* the *solution* for

the new boys – they punish and reward by offering praise (or letting some boys off occasionally) *and* they control the information required to avoid punishments. At our school there is no fagging and at no time is a senior boy permitted to order a junior to carry out any task which is the senior's own responsibility. Juniors do not do favours or serve the seniors in any way – not as punishment nor as the normal course of events.

New boys stand inspection every week night before lights out. Senior boys, officially Dormitory Leaders, known as "Dorm Cops" by the boys, take the inspections. New boys' beds and cupboards must be extremely neat and clothes and blankets must be folded in certain prescribed ways. Their shoes must be shined to a high gloss. Boys who do not measure up are punished and have their beds flipped or cupboards stripped. When I asked the grade eights what they thought inspections were for they responded by saying that it made them *independent* and able to *take care of themselves*. Expressions of approval and praise from the powerful and dangerous matrics for well-prepared inspections help to "fill the love vacuum" and so the activity of preparing for inspections is charged with both fear and the hope that they will be praised and receive some partial satisfaction of their displaced need for love.

23 Now If one visits a *senior* boy's study one will not be impressed by a particularly neat bed, cupboard or shiny shoes – very often the opposite will be the case… So what does a boy learn by standing inspection when he is young? Nothing, except how to wield power when he reaches matric and that neatness and self-sufficiency in taking care of beds, cupboards and uniform is something that only juniors have to do and that they are too old and special to do these things when they are seniors (or ever again) – they become privileged boys who have come to feel *entitled* never to concern themselves with these matters again – that foresee that there will be underlings at their service to make beds, polish shoes etc. The tradition of inspections, carried out by the senior boys on the junior boys, is simply there to teach the exercising of power.

This whole ritualized tradition of power-wielding has evolved/been designed to reinforce the existence of the *hierarchical system* and is not particularly effective, in my view, in teaching skills or establishing self-discipline but rather teaches the *rhetoric* of self-discipline and independence as a concealing context for a enforced power gradient which ends with the empowered, super-confident matric boy leaving school attuned to see every relationship in terms of hierarchy with himself at the top of the ladder, "naturally"– *not* because he has earned it by working hard at his inspections in the house or learning crucial competencies, or being a good academic and becoming worthy, although he will use these points as *justifying rhetoric*, but because he has simply *assumed the position at the top* just as he assumed a higher position each year - only by the inexorable passage of time, a year at a time, one step at a time, one grade a year, just by growing larger and older. This way boys learn consciously and unconsciously to assume power; that position equals entitlement; and that identity (I am a matric) and position (I am in matric) and power (I am a matric!) are inextricable. Some view this as healthy confidence and others as arrogance. I concede that obviously other personality traits are involved and I have only traced one (to me, very important) line of a boys' development.

Sports and academics

Sports and academics offer important ways of filling the "love vacuum" which have equally significant but less immediate effects, than the boarding house dynamic, on identity formation. Sport and academics, as *measurable* and highly credited activities are invested with significance in the new boys' psyches because they are means by which positive attention/regard/praise can be earned, which in school life can substitute for parental love and fill the "vacuum". Sports, being more visible and masculine than academics in the mainstream conception of masculinity, are adopted soonest and boys' previously-instilled competitive values (from prep school) are soon aroused and it becomes very important to new boys which teams they are chosen for in their first year and soon an order within the peer group is established. Academics, measured in term of results in tests and examinations also offers positive feedback from the school – teachers more than peers or seniors, in this case. While this may offer an incentive to work harder, poor performance may lead to negative self-concept issues – we as teachers know this but it is worth pointing out that in a boarding school context this achievement/lack of achievement is more loaded and many of our boys are super-competitive.

Role modelling is super-powered in Sport – Rugby!

Rugby matches played by the school first XV are watched by the whole school who sit on the stands in their number one uniforms, watching and cheering their team (heroes) on in orchestrated, ritualized, cheers – war-cries and singing the traditional school rugby song "Oh Boys of Hilton" to the tune of "Oh Flower of Scotland". They carry out a highly stylized ritual of spelling out the school's name in letters formed by arranging boys either with their white shirts or black blazers presented in the shape of consecutive letters. This whole pageant is to present a disciplined, organized yet spirited public image but also to show their worship of their heroes who are on the field being vigorous and muscular and hopefully victorious. Every boy wants to play in the first team and its members are school heroes, win or lose. While, to my taste, this is all a bit extreme it includes very healthy values like loyalty, pride, tenacity etc but what I want to point out here is the super-charged role-modeling taking place. Attendance is compulsory, display of support is compulsory (the senior boys make them shout/sing their lungs out), it is organized and rehearsed under the control of the boys only and discipline at each stage is strictly controlled – *and the boys love it*. Hierarchy and boy power and role modelling on steroids!

Role Modeling

The questionnaires I administered regarding who the boys preferred as role models showed that the most popular sportsmen – Rugby players and then house leaders – closer proximity/visibility and public displays were obviously instrumental in these choices. Personal attributes like kindness or friendliness were acknowledged but were secondary to high public profile and sporting performance. Senior boys were more popular than staff and the most popular choices of staff were sports coaches and then those in high management positions (Headmaster).

Role modelling is clearly the main operative element in identity formation at our school.

I would like to refer, as a slight diversion to, the field of *brain science*. Current theory is that *anatomical* changes occur in the brain when intense levels of emotionality or arousal are linked to certain contexts. The term in use is "neuroplasticity". We use the phrase "hard-wired" when describing a way of perceiving relationships which is psychically embedded. I have a video clip of an explanation by Rick Hanson who puts it rather neatly:

25

 (Play clip)

Neuroplasticity

Rick Hanson says, "what fires together, wires together". Circumstance and perception go together because neurons grow into certain formats which then are favoured and there is a rapid chemical response in the brain and body– this is believed to be linked to addictions and possibly prejudices, but also to less extreme conditions. So when fear or relief or love or pride or celebration or any form of arousal happens in a certain perceived context and this is repeated, then the brain literally grows to accommodate this set of perceptions and simultaneous feelings. So house routines, sports matches, etc become mentally entrenched in terms of how boys feel about them and their understanding of the relationships and power dynamics that go with them. Five years, I would suggest, is more than long enough to set these in place permanently. 26 (Personal experience watching rugby matches)

Boys become hard-wired to see all relationships in terms of hierarchy and power

Boys experience *fear* in context of power displays during early years and then *gratification* as seniors when they have power and get to use it, maybe fear of losing it is lingering sub-consciously which can lead to anger and power displays simultaneously *in the age old manner*, when position and power is threatened.

27 *Psychic characteristics of those at different positions on the hierarchy:*

Those at the top see opportunities and strategise – lack empathy are proactive. They can easily assume power and use people to their advantage. This behaviour will come naturally to someone who has been "hard wired" for it.

Those lower on the hierarchy see obstacles, are empathetic and responsive. They bond easily with peers and support one another. (Younger boys at my school show these characteristics but grow out of them – particularly peer bonding although the rhetoric is that this remains forever.)

28 *Characteristics required for effective Global Citizenship*

Adaptability, empathy, non-hierarchical relatability, flexibility…

***29** Why do we have Hierarchies in schools? – they are traditional; they are a military model; they gel with capitalist, mainstream perceptions of success.*

***30** Conclusion*

- *The entrenchment of a hierarchical way of perceiving relationships stunts the emotions and removes the ability to empathise. It is the structure of the institution and some of the systems affecting the way that boys live at my school, rather than the abusive actions of the boys (bullying etc) which have the effect of creating and reinforcing these hierarchies and thus creating what presents in some contexts as emotional stunting viz. circumstances requiring emotional, rather than strategic responsiveness.

- *Hierarchies in institutions *shape consciousness.*

- *In schools with hierarchies, all boys climb the hierarchy and so appear to lose characteristics like empathy which are associated with being lower on the hierarchy and become *more strategic* and *less "relatable"* as they grow.

- *Attributes of those in high positions on the hierarchy do not facilitate creativity or responsiveness very easily. In relationships they tend to expect to have people meet them where they are rather than meet others where they are.

- *When a man who has been "wired" to dominate is unable to because of circumstances or a lack of competence, anger and violence may ensue and this relates to social and familial issues.

- **Assumption* of power relates to business and political leaders who have allowed exploitation of societies and resources. It is time for a new mindset…

***31** Questions for discussion:*

- What alternative models for social structures in schools exist? Are they better, considering global citizenship?
- Changes can be made to the system more easily than eradicating bullies.
  - Is bullying related to hierarchical thinking?
- Separate the grades in the boarding houses?

Appendix (if there is time 2.30)

Hierarchy and Traditions founded in the Colonial Era – effects on current and recent society/history

Since 1872, when my school was founded, there has been the Anglo-Zulu war of 1879; the Anglo-Boer war of 1899 – 1901, WWI of 1914-1918, WWII of 1939-1945, The South African Border War of 1967-1989. For a century South African society directly experienced warfare every twenty years. And then from 1989, no war at all – now for twenty-seven years, and long may it last! The point is that we are not living in a war culture any more. The boys of my school are guaranteed not to have to fight or lead men into battle. The hierarchical boarding house structure is based on a military model… they stand military style inspections, there are milder versions of the military style punishments… these out-dated practices once existed to prepare boys for military service and specifically military leadership. Today, in the context of global citizenship a different kind of leadership is required, obviously. While we acknowledge this, and have the excellent servant leadership philosophy, we still have the old, colonial, military-style hierarchy in place and because it offers power to boys who have been starved of it as juniors, they anticipate it keenly and invest their identities heavily in their positions as matrics. (a position which they assume and do not earn – this is unrealistic and supports attitudes of entitlement which we try to eliminate using words, yet we reinforce the attitude with the automatic hierarchy which operates in the boarding houses.

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