

ENGLISH ELEMENTARY EDUCATION AND THE PERFORMANCE OF  
MASCULINITIES, 1860-1900

By  
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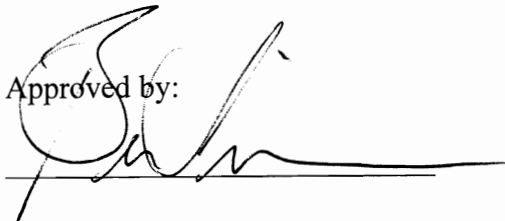
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Approved by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Benjamin Irvin", written over a horizontal line. The signature is stylized and cursive.

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## ABSTRACT

This honors thesis argues that mid- and late-Victorian elementary education was one of the primary sites for the cross-class interaction of manly values. Middle-class reformers, employers, clergymen, and politicians – all of whom wielded power to affect working-class men's lives for better or worse – held working-class fathers accountable for the education of their children. The majority of working-class fathers only partially internalized the respectable ideal of masculinity that this section of the middle-class tried to foist upon them. Thus working-class fathers used elementary education as a means of performing respectable masculinity while simultaneously retaining, in the eyes of the rest of the working-class, a subscription to the binary opposite, 'rough' ideal of masculinity. However, respectability was only one component of masculinity, as the case of male teachers demonstrates. Male teachers were respectable, well-paid, and well-educated, yet they were not accepted into the ranks of the lower middle class because of their dependency. In many ways, the men of the labor aristocracy were regarded by both their social peers and superiors as more masculine than male teachers who, this thesis argues, existed outside the conventional class structure.

# **English Elementary Education and the Performance of Masculinities, 1860-1900<sup>1</sup>**

**by Christopher R. Bischof**

## **Introduction**

The historiography of nineteenth-century English education focuses primarily on the public school system to the neglect of the state school system.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, the historiography of nineteenth-century English masculinity focuses on the middle and upper classes whose children attended those public schools, ignoring the working class whose children went to state, charity, or voluntary schools.<sup>3</sup> This thesis seeks to address both these gaps in historical knowledge by examining working-class respectable masculinity in relation to elementary education during the period from 1860-1900. Respectability is an elusive concept to define, but one that was at the center of Victorian society. Victorians invoked the language of respectability when referring to someone who exhibited some or all of the following qualities: temperance; complacency with the social order and class system; deference to social superiors; stability, usually in the form of familial ties, established residence, and regular work; piety; intelligence, or at least a respect for and deference to it; and finally independence, in both the financial and social sense. This list is necessarily incomplete since scholars, most notably Ellen Ross, recognize that respectability is

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<sup>1</sup> I would like to acknowledge Dr. Benjamin Irvin, who supervised this Honors Thesis and provided invaluable advice on everything from theoretical, historical, and historiographical to stylistic and grammatical issues. I would also like to thank Dr. Richard Cosgrove, Dr. Laura Tabili, and Dr. Stephen Stillwell who all reviewed a manuscript at various points and provided insightful commentary. Of course any mistakes that remain are mine alone.

<sup>2</sup> British “public” schools were not public in the sense of an American public school. British public schools were expensive and exclusive schools with a highly selective admission process. What in America is called a “public school” is in Britain called a “state school.”

<sup>3</sup> State schools existed from 1870 on and were completely funded and regulated by the government. Charity schools, also known as ragged schools, were schools of poor quality, but due to charitable patronage were free of cost. Voluntary schools charged a weekly fee and received additional funding from a combination of government grants and patronage.

an inherently vague concept.<sup>4</sup> Schooling decisions, however, provided a site where the issue of rough versus respectable became explicit, particularly for working-class fathers.

Several conclusions emerge from this study of working-class respectable masculinity in relation to elementary education. First, evidence from parliamentary inquiries into education, teachers' diaries, and working-class autobiographies suggest that working-class fathers used their children's education to construct, both publicly and privately, an image of respectable masculinity that stood in opposition to rough masculinity. Second, although male elementary school teachers seemingly had middle-class levels of income, respectability, and education, middle-class reformers, clergymen, politicians, and employers all refused to acknowledge male teachers as part of the middle class.

Middle-class reformers treated respectability as a universally obtainable ideal. The Charity Organization Society, founded in 1869, granted aid requests only if caseworkers thought a family was respectable.<sup>5</sup> John Tosh warns that "we should be cautious about assuming much permeation by the dominant manly values beyond the ranks of the lower middle class."<sup>6</sup> However, we must also be wary of assuming that no cross-class discourse on "dominant manly values," such as respectable masculinity, took place. Friendly societies, public lectures, temperance societies, sermons, penny readings, and working-class clubs – all of which had middle-class sponsors – as well as newspapers, literature, and music-halls portrayed, and oftentimes advocated, the respectable ideal of masculinity. The labor aristocracy encountered these "cultural productions," as Sonya Rose has termed them, on a daily basis.<sup>7</sup> Men of the labor

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<sup>4</sup> Ellen Ross, "'Not the Sort that Would Sit on the Doorstep': Respectability in Pre-World War I London Neighborhoods," *Working Class History* No. 27 (Spring, 1985) p. 39-40.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 40.

<sup>6</sup> John Tosh, *Manliness and Masculinities in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Edinburgh: Pearson, 2005), p. 32.

<sup>7</sup> Sonya Rose, *Limited Livelihoods: Gender and Class in Nineteenth-Century England*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), p. 8.

aristocracy were constantly exposed to the ideal of respectable masculinity through cultural productions, resulting in an acute awareness and in some cases an at least partial internalization of this ideal. But even if working-class men did not fully believe that educating their children was a manly duty and an important component of respectable masculinity, for numerous reasons which this thesis will explore, it benefited them to act as if they had such an attitude in order to demonstrate publicly their belief in the importance of respectability. This did not, however, entail the complete abandonment of the rough ideal of masculinity. The labor aristocracy could give the appearance of fulfilling both the rough and the respectable ideals of masculinity. The labor aristocracy used elementary education as a tool to demonstrate their respectability. Where many groups of men within the working and middle classes struggled to appear masculine in the eyes of the rest of their class, the labor aristocracy could simultaneously appear masculine in the eyes of both classes.

Many works on masculinity neglect the importance of class in the formation of a masculine ideal. Marianne Gullestad points out that:

Students of gender tend only to see gender; class analysts tend only to see social classes. The research questions are often crudely put as being questions of gender or class instead of asking how gender and class interact in the lives of historically situated social groups.<sup>8</sup>

Keith McClelland is one of the few scholars to move beyond the middle class and to look at the working class as a gendered entity. McClelland argues: “One of the most persistent absences in the historiography has been the realization that this was a *gendered* working class and that an adequate history won’t be written until this is taken on.”<sup>9</sup> Historians of class and masculinity have paid significant attention to clerks as a group within the lower middle class whose

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<sup>8</sup> Marianne Gullestad, *The Art of Social Relations: Essays on Culture, Social Action and Everyday Life in Modern Norway*. (Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 1992), p. 62.

<sup>9</sup> Keith McClelland, “Masculinity and the ‘Representative Artisan’ in Britain, 1850-80,” in Michael Roper and John Tosh eds., *Manful Assertions: Masculinities in Britain since 1800* (Routledge: London, 1991), p. 75.

manliness the rest of the middle class questioned. In particular, G.L. Anderson's works on clerks in late-Victorian Britain demonstrates how clerks were viewed as unmanly by the rest of the middle class for their servile occupation and their inability to provide their family with a middle-class lifestyle.<sup>10</sup> However, although in nineteenth-century America the rest of the middle class looked down upon clerks for their servility and dependence, they accepted them into the lower middle class because they were "emblems of economic hope" in their aspirations to become merchants and achieve the ideal of self-made and independent manhood.<sup>11</sup> The stress laid on a career ladder that offered the opportunity for advancement was a trans-Atlantic phenomenon. By contrast, male teachers, who almost all came from the working class, faced legal restrictions on their advancement within the field of education. Male teachers' careers were characterized by permanent dependence and servility. Although female teachers ranked as part of the lower middle class, male teachers did not. The case of male teachers highlights the limit of respectability without independence in measuring manliness, as well as the power a lack of masculine standing had to limit class status.

The middle class used elementary education as a focal point in the campaign to get the labor aristocracy to adopt the ideal of respectable masculinity. Parliament, a body that had evolved a largely middle-class *ethos* following the Reform Acts of 1832, 1867, and finally 1884, used commissions and investigations to monitor working people's attitudes towards education. Parliament also used legislation in an attempt to foist an appreciation for education onto them. As a result of Parliament's concern with education, public attention focused on the subject, and consequently other middle-class institutions and individuals also attempted to instill in the

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<sup>10</sup> G.L. Anderson, "The Social Economy of Late-Victorian Clerks," in Geoffrey Crossick ed., *The Lower Middle Class in Britain 1870-1914* (Croom Helm: London, 1977), p. 113-134.

<sup>11</sup> Brian P. Luskey, "Jumping Counters in White Collars: Manliness, Respectability, and Work in the Antebellum City," *Journal of the Early Republic*, 26 (Summer 2006), p. 175, 179, 181.

working class a reverence for education. Middle-class reformers, religious leaders, and businessmen all sought to get children into the classroom where the curriculum would indoctrinate the next generation of workers in the respectable ideal of masculinity, part of which included knowing their place in society and not trying to break out of it, and in so doing perpetuate the middle class' own dominance.<sup>12</sup>

Education was also critical to working-class men's construction of their masculinity within the household. As England industrialized, the power of the *paterfamilias* within the working-class household declined. By the middle of the nineteenth century, the site of laboring had moved from the house into the factory. This shift resulted in a loss of power and authority within the household for the *paterfamilias* as he no longer delegated and supervised labor. Unlike middle-class men whose authority over others at work made their masculinity relatively secure, working-class men, whose work usually did not put them in a position of authority over others, could not afford to ignore this loss of power and abandon the domestic sphere to women. As John Tosh points out, "home might be the 'woman's sphere', but the husband who abdicated his rights in the cause of a quiet life was in common opinion less than a man, and he was a common butt of music-hall humour".<sup>13</sup> Therefore working-class men were forced to look for new ways of asserting their authority within the domestic sphere. This thesis will argue that the working-class *paterfamilias* used self-education and the supervision of his children's education to help regain the authority within the domestic sphere lost from industrialization.

The first government grant for education came in 1832 in the form of £20,000, which was awarded annually until 1839. From 1839 to 1861 the annual grant was increased most years

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<sup>12</sup> Stephen Heathorn, *For Home, Country, and Race: Constructing Gender, Class, and Englishness in the Elementary School, 1880-1914* (Toronto: University Press, 2000), p. 143.

<sup>13</sup> John Tosh, "What Should Historians Do With Masculinity? Reflections on Nineteenth-Century Britain," *History Workshop Journal* (38, 1, 1994) p. 68.



until it reached the sum of £798,167.<sup>14</sup> While on the surface an impressive sum in an era when a man earning a salary of £150 could reasonably claim to be middle class, it pales in comparison to other social spending such as the £7,000,000 spent annually for poor relief and the £20,000,000 voted for the liberation of slaves.<sup>15</sup> The annual grant for education seems to have been approved and surprisingly even increased each year largely as a matter of course. Parliament demanded relatively little accounting for how the grant was spent throughout most of that period.

Parliament made few attempts to influence educational policy and received few reports on the subject. This changed in 1858 when Parliament charged a commission “to inquire into the state of popular education in England, and to consider and report what measures, if any, are required for the extension of sound and cheap elementary instruction to all classes of the people.”<sup>16</sup> Three years later in 1861, the so-called “Newcastle Commission” on education delivered its exhaustive report on the state of elementary education and thereby thrust education as an issue into the limelight. Education featured as the subject of a plethora of debates in Parliament, leaders, and letters to the editor. The attention that both Parliament and the public paid to education from 1860-1900 both justifies and makes possible this thesis.

The Newcastle Commission’s report eventually led to the landmark Education Act of 1870, which created a state elementary school system. The National Union of Elementary Teachers was formed in that same year to provide a framework in order to professionalize the teaching occupation. Before 1870 there was very little regulation of the teaching occupation, a fact which was often abused by inept and uneducated persons who, desperate for money, turned to teaching. The cruel, often ignorant schoolmasters who are recurring figures in Charles

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<sup>14</sup> *Report of the Commissioners on the State of Popular Education in England*. PP1861 [2794-VI] XXI, p. 20.

<sup>15</sup> Frank Smith, *A History of English Elementary Education 1760-1902* (London: University of London Press, 1970), p. 138.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid* p. 7.

Dickens's novels were relatively common in reality prior to 1870. The new state system closely regulated the teaching occupation and the National Union of Elementary Teachers gave them the bureaucratic framework necessary to attempt to professionalize. After 1870 teachers received better, more regular pay. Teachers also became more respected figures in the community.

However, despite a social status and salary that would seem enough to count them among the ranks of the lower middle class, middle-class educational reformers constantly rebuked male teachers for being “too apt to forget that they owe the culture they have to the public provision made for them.”<sup>17</sup> Middle-class reformers encouraged teachers to remember that they came from “a very humble social position” and told them “look upon Popular Education in a missionary spirit, and be trained to a life of humility and self-denial.”<sup>18</sup> This chastisement was mostly targeted at “men ... from a class which has been very little in contact with refinement or self-control, or delicate appreciation of what is elevated and honourable.”<sup>19</sup> As Dina Copelman has shown, female teachers were usually counted among the lower middle class.<sup>20</sup> Male teachers, however, were denied their claim to the middle class because they failed to meet one of the primary characteristics of respectable masculinity: independence. This was not a problem for female teachers since dependence was actually more characteristic of middle-class femininity than it was working-class femininity.

The elementary school was a nexus for the interaction of class-based ideologies. Middle-class reformers and activists paid close attention to elementary education during the latter part of the nineteenth century. Working-class fathers, aware of this attention, used elementary education to convey the appearance of adopting the ideal of respectable masculinity, something

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<sup>17</sup> PP1861 XXI, p. 162.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid..

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 139.

<sup>20</sup> Dina Copelman, *London's Women Teachers: Gender, class and feminism 1870-1930* (London: Routledge, 1996).

which middle-class reformers and employers both encouraged and economically rewarded. This appearance of adopting the respectable ideal of masculinity afforded working-class fathers additional economic security and opportunities for advancement while simultaneously allowing them to fulfill the working-class ideal of masculinity. This performance was not necessarily conscious, nor was it entirely disingenuous: working-class fathers' intense exposure to the respectable ideal of masculinity probably led to a partial internalization of it. Working-class fathers also asserted their role as supervisors of their children's education at home and some men even participated in continuing or self-education schemes. In doing so, they asserted their authority and dominance in the household. While elementary education allowed working-class fathers to fulfill both the working- and middle-class ideals of masculinity, the structure of the education system denied male teachers the ability to fulfill either ideal of masculinity. Late Victorian male teachers were at once both above the working class and below the middle class because they had powerfully achieved the ideal of respectable masculinity, but were characterized as dependent. Male teachers' ambiguous class status resulted from their ambiguous masculinity.

#### **A Man's Duty: Fatherhood and the Provision of Education**

Sending children to school was a public act. Any other family who had children in that school would be aware of it, as well as anybody whom the children might encounter while walking to or from school. As Ellen Ross has demonstrated, families were highly conscious of the public nature of streets in urban areas and streets' reputation as unrespectable areas.<sup>21</sup> There are records of clergymen conducting moral patrols in which they were on the lookout for

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<sup>21</sup> Ellen Ross, "'Not the Sort that Would Sit on the Doorstep': Respectability in Pre-World War I London Neighborhoods," *Working Class History* No. 27 (Spring, 1985) p. 49

unrespectable behavior.<sup>22</sup> Such behavior could directly impact working-class families' ability to get aid from groups such as the Charity Organization Society, which granted charity only to respectable families.<sup>23</sup> Sending children to school kept them off the streets, thus avoiding the disrepute associated with street play. Sermons and interviews with Parliamentary commissions indicate that clergymen were keenly aware not just of behavior on the streets in general, but of which families were sending their children to school. Patrick Cumin even made it a point as a member of the Newcastle Commission on Education to seek out clergymen in the communities he investigated to ask them about the school attendance of working class children.<sup>24</sup> The actions of a family member on a street affected the reputation of the entire family. By sending their children to school, families gained a reputation within the community as a respectable. The ideology of respectability was pronounced, and almost always cast in a favorable light, in everything from political platforms and magistrates' pronouncements to autobiographies and periodicals during the period from 1840-1900.<sup>25</sup> Respectable masculinity was a tool for economic and social advancement that positively influenced men's ability to get and retain jobs. Playing into the ideal of respectable masculinity was an economic survival strategy, as this section will explore in greater detail later.

Merely sending children to school was not enough to earn a reputation for respectability, however. The school to which children were sent had almost as much of an impact on a family's reputation as whether or not they were sent at all. In particular, it reflected on the father's independence, an important component of masculinity that encompassed a man's ability to

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<sup>22</sup> Judith Walkowitz, "Going Public: Shopping, Street Harassment, and Streetwalking in Late Victorian London", *Representations* 62 (Spring, 1998), p. 1-7.

<sup>23</sup> Ellen Ross, "Not the Sort that Would Sit on the Doorstep," p. 40.

<sup>24</sup> PP1861 XXI, p. 85.

<sup>25</sup> Mike Huggins, "More Sinful Pleasures? Leisure, Respectability and the Male Middle Classes in Victorian England," *Journal of Social History*, Vol. 33, No. 3. (Spring, 2000), p. 586-587.

provide for his family. Working-class women often made significant financial contributions to the family, however it was the male head of the household who was ultimately credited or blamed for the adequacy of a family's provision. As Sonya Rose notes, both the Poor Law Amendment Acts and common-law principle of *cou-verture* reinforced "the false notion of women as non-wage-earning dependents and men as sole family providers."<sup>26</sup> William Leask in his 1854 pamphlet *True Manhood: A Lecture*, asserted that it was part of men's duty as providers to insure the best education possible for their children.<sup>27</sup>

The Elementary Education Acts of 1870 and 1876 have traditionally been hailed as turning points after which there was free elementary education in Britain. The reality, however, was that decades passed before free education was readily and adequately available, even in many urban areas in England. For example, York did not have a school board, a local institution created by the Elementary Education Acts that was responsible for providing for free elementary education, until 1889 and it was not until the 1890s that that free elementary education was widely available in the city.<sup>28</sup> The Parliamentary Commission reported in 1886 that ragged schools, free charity schools not sponsored by the state, no longer existed and had been completely replaced by state elementary schools.<sup>29</sup> They were, however, sorely out of touch with the reality of the situations in much of England. Until about 1890, then, parents throughout much of England generally had three options: to send their children to a fee-charging voluntary school, not send them to school at all, or send them to a ragged school. Since it freed parents from the obligation of looking after their children during the day, most parents who either could

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<sup>26</sup> Sonya Rose, *Limited Livelihoods*, p.51-4.

<sup>27</sup> William Leask, *True Manhood: A Lecture* (London: John Snow, 1854), p. 25.

<sup>28</sup> Seebohm Rowntree, *Poverty: A Study of Town Life* (London: MacMillan, 1910), p. 333.

<sup>29</sup> *Royal Com. to inquire into Working of Elementary Education Acts*. PP1886 [C.4863] XXV.1, p. 4.

not afford to or chose not to send their children to a voluntary school sent their children to ragged schools.

Ragged schools got their name from the rags that many children who attended them wore. Ragged schoolchildren typically had visibly poor hygiene and were underfed. In short, they showed all the signs of poverty and neglect at home. Consequently, ragged schools carried the connotation of extreme poverty for any family who sent their children to one. Trev Lynn Broughton and Helen Rogers argue that Poor Law legislation throughout the nineteenth-century bespoke the belief that “a man who could not or would not provide for his family had failed the first test of manhood: independence”.<sup>30</sup> A voluntary school education was considered part of the basic provision a father was supposed to make for his children. An anonymously authored pamphlet, “Household Truths for Working Men,” said of working-class children in 1857 that “their success in life cannot be better promoted than by placing within reach every educational advantage which our limited resources will allow.”<sup>31</sup> The Newcastle Commission went even further in 1861, stating that: “the child has a moral right to as good an education as the parent can afford to give it at the expense of reasonable sacrifices.”<sup>32</sup> Seebohm Rowntree’s study of poverty demonstrates that a significant group within the working class could not afford enough bread, let alone luxuries like beer or tobacco that they could ‘reasonably sacrifice’.<sup>33</sup> As Ivy Pinchbeck concludes, “The only ‘indulgence’ in many families was an ounce of tea a week.”<sup>34</sup> Nevertheless, fathers who did not give their children at least a voluntary school education were perceived as failures as providers and independent men.

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<sup>30</sup> Trev Lynn Broughton and Helen Rogers, *Gender and Fatherhood in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007), p. 10-11.

<sup>31</sup> “Household Truths for Working Men,” (London: Jarrold and Sons, 1857), p. 12.

<sup>32</sup> PP1861 XXI, p. 189

<sup>33</sup> Rowntree, *Poverty*, p. 87-118.

<sup>34</sup> Ivy Pinchbeck, *Women Workers and the Industrial Revolution 1750-1850* (London: Virago Press Limited, 1981) p. 98.

A man who did not provide for his family could be legally stripped of his status as a father and husband. Legal records show that women were acquitted in bigamy cases where the first husband stopped providing and where the second, bigamous husband had assumed the role of the provider. The second husband, despite the bigamy, became in the eyes of the law both husband to the woman and father to her children.<sup>35</sup> Although men who relied on the charity of ragged schools did not lose their legal status as husband and father, this publicly visible sign of dependence would make it difficult to claim the masculine role of the provider or the independent man. Children who attended ragged schools or who attended voluntary schools on a charitable basis often received distinctive clothing that marked them within the community as objects of charity. The charter of the National School at Penkridge in Staffordshire, for example, required the Master “to instruct eight poor boys in reading, writing, and accounts, and to buy them each a blue bonnet.”<sup>36</sup> The color of the bonnet may have been a symbolic reference to the temperance movement’s “Blue Ribbon” campaign in which working-class men wore blue ribbons to proclaim their temperance.<sup>37</sup> There was a strong link between middle-class temperance and education advocates, as will be explored later in this section.

A father whose children attended a voluntary school avoided the failing of a perceived dependence while simultaneously asserting his independence. The Newcastle Commission noted in 1861 that among the working class “the sentiment of independence is strong, and it is wounded by the offer of an absolutely gratuitous education.”<sup>38</sup> Independence was one of the primary ways by which both the working and middle classes measured the masculinity of

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<sup>35</sup> Ellen Ross, “‘Fierce Questions and Taunts’: Married Life in Working-Class London, 1870-1914.” *Feminist Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 3. (Autumn, 1982), p. 58.

<sup>36</sup> Nancy Ball, *Educating the People: A Documentary History of Elementary Schooling in England, 1840-1870* (London: Maurice Temple Smith Ltd., 1983), p. 31.

<sup>37</sup> Brian Harrison, *Drink and the Temperance Question in England 1815-1872* (Keele, England: Keele University Press, 1994), p. 27.

<sup>38</sup> PP1861 XXI, p. 73.

working men. As Keith McClelland notes, “aspirations to masculine independence, and the attainment of respectability, were not new to this period. But what I think *was* new was the prominence and visibility of them in the culture.”<sup>39</sup> Financial independence proved that a man could succeed in the realm of work, largely perceived as a masculine sphere, and fulfill the role of the provider.<sup>40</sup> The counterpoint to financial independence was dependence, which created a “psychic depression” that “led to a sense of ‘incompleteness’ and shame.”<sup>41</sup>

The independence/dependence divide was not necessarily an either/or classification. Dependence did not have to take the form of complete reliance on charity, but it was possible to be partially dependent by accepting the charity of a ragged school education. One of the ways in which working men publicly proved their independence was by sending their children to a voluntary school on a fee-paying basis rather than on a charitable basis or by sending them to a ragged school. Penkrige had, for a time, been a charity school, but in 1854 they began to charge a weekly fee. A letter to the parents at Penkrige explained that it was not just increased operational expenses that led to the charging of a fee, but that:

another circumstance which has led Lord Hatherton, the Patron of the National School, to require this payment, is the universal testimony borne throughout England to the great advantages resulting from the system of small payments for Education; the Parents of Children having been almost invariably found to value instruction, to the expense of which they have contributed, more highly than that which has been entirely gratuitous.<sup>42</sup>

This line of reasoning was not simply an excuse to start charging fees, but rather an idea that was repeatedly asserted by both middle-class educational reformers and patrons and working-class parents themselves.

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<sup>39</sup> McClelland, “Masculinity and the Representative Artisan,” p. 84.

<sup>40</sup> Andrew Miles and Mike Savage, *The Remaking of the British Working Class 1840-1940* (Routledge: London, 1994), p. 46.

<sup>41</sup> McClelland, “Masculinity and the Representative Artisan,” p. 78-79.

<sup>42</sup> Ball, *Educating the People*, p. 31.



Working-class fathers performed the part of the respectable man by sending their children to voluntary schools. Literature, sermons, pamphlets, penny-readings, newspapers, music-halls, and plays exposed the working class to, and often encouraged them to adopt, the middle-class influenced ideal of respectable masculinity. Indeed, the only real difference between the respectable ideal of masculinity with regards to education as acted out by middle-class men and as acted out by working-class men was what each man could afford. For example, the working man sent his children to a voluntary school whereas the middle-class man sent his sons to a public school. Many middle-class reformers and employers treated respectability as a universally obtainable ideal of masculinity. Speaking of the middle class's expectations of her and her husband, a working-class woman wrote in 1866: "We are told that we ought to live in good houses, cloth and educate our children properly; and yet at every opportunity the masters have, they come down upon us for a reduction".<sup>43</sup> This woman wrote in the midst of a strike against a proposed lowering of wages in which her husband was participating. She felt that her husband was expected to adhere to the ideal of respectable masculinity and used that expectation as a rhetorical strategy to justify her husband earning enough money to pay for the education of their children. This wife and her husband conceived of education, at least in part, as a performance with a specific, middle class audience – the "masters" who employed her husband – in mind. Working-class men who gave the appearance of accepting the ideal of respectable masculinity could use that to justify things like the family wage. Working men who had a reputation for respectability even received leniency from local magistrates. Thomas Wright reported that a dozen of his fellow working men who vandalized numerous storefronts during a

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<sup>43</sup> Trygve Tholfsen, *Working Class Radicalism in Mid-Victorian England* (London: Croom Helm, 1976), p. 247.

demonstration one night got off with just a warning from the magistrate where they otherwise would have been jailed for seven days because they had a reputation for respectability.<sup>44</sup>

The working-class man who appeared respectable seemed unthreatening to the middle class. The 1870s and 1880s were a time of economic depression in England and throughout much of Europe. The newly homeless and poor that the depression created agitated against the social and political establishments, often violently. Even the upper middle class encountered the homeless, jobless laborers who camped out in urban centers. An attempt to remove the poor and homeless from central London resulted in a violent clash known as “Bloody Sunday” in 1887.<sup>45</sup> The middle class encouraged the working class to aspire to a respectable masculinity that was opposed to this threatening rough masculinity. As beneficiaries of it, the middle class was keen to preserve and stabilize the current social order. Nan Hackett notes of working-class autobiographies in this period, “The simplicity of the presentation can be deceiving; the author usually wants to be taken as a plain, steady, reliable workman rather than as an angry, obstreperous or threatening figure.”<sup>46</sup> Working-class autobiographers played into the ideal of respectable masculinity in order to sell books to the middle class in much the same way other working class men did to help get or keep employment.

The working-class man demonstrated his adherence to the respectable paradigm of masculinity by sending his children to a good voluntary school, maintaining a residence, and clothing his children well. Middle-class social workers specifically looked for these three things when assessing a working class family.<sup>47</sup> By educating his children, a father demonstrated that

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<sup>44</sup> Thomas Wright, *Some Habits and Customs of the Working Classes* (New York: August M. Kelley Publishers, 1967), p. 81.

<sup>45</sup> Elaine Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siècle* (New York: Viking, 1990), p. 5-6.

<sup>46</sup> Nan Hackett, *XIX Century British Working-Class Autobiographies: An Annotated Bibliography* (New York: AMS Press, 1985), p. 5.

<sup>47</sup> Rowntree, *Poverty*, p. 16-25, 333-343.

he cared about the stability of the social order. Education was a long-term return on the investment of fees and lost income that came from the opportunity for social advancement. Since the long-term benefit of education was the opportunity for social advancement, fathers who educated their children were, the middle class might well presume, implicitly agreeing to perpetuate the current system of social order. Since the middle-class man shared this vested interest in the stability of the social order, he was far more comfortable employing, extending the vote to, and paying a higher salary to the respectable working-class man than his coarser counterpart, the 'rough' working-class man. The 'rough' working-class man asserted his masculinity through the consumption of large quantities of alcohol and in other ways which, one middle-class man wrote in a letter to *The Times*, made them not respectable and productive members of the working class, but rather "persons of an extremely offensive ... description," who were members of "the predatory classes".<sup>48</sup>

Sending his children to a voluntary school rather than a ragged school helped to demonstrate a man's temperance and therefore his respectability. In the eyes of middle-class reformers and the labour aristocracy, any father who sent his children to a ragged school was lazy, of morally lax, and a drunkard. Patrick Cumin's inspection of ragged schools found that:

Both at Bristol and at Plymouth it was an admitted fact that the parents of more than half the children were drunkards; and, indeed, one of the leading members of the ragged school society stated as much, both to myself and at a public meeting. The reason why a dissipated parent prefers the ragged school to the other schools is obvious. Like many other parents, he acknowledges the necessity of education, but he would rather spend his penny on a glass of gin than on a week's schooling.<sup>49</sup>

Many middle-class reformers and members of the labor aristocracy classified intemperance as immoral, unrespectable, and therefore unmanly. Lectures and pamphlets advocating temperance aimed at working-class audiences appealed to their audiences' masculinity. In an 1867

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<sup>48</sup> Harrison, *Drink and the Victorians*, p. 25-26.

<sup>49</sup> PP1861 XXI, p. 50.

pamphlet, “Christian Manliness. A Book of Examples and Principles for Young Men,” the Religious Tract Society declared that temperance was once of the greatest demonstrations of self-control, a quality associated with masculinity in late Victorian England.<sup>50</sup> Rowntree, a social observer of the working class, was very sympathetic to the difficulties that the working class faced, but even he looked upon intemperance in the working class with extreme disapproval, writing of the labor aristocracy, which he calls “Class D,”:

There is no doubt that the average weekly expenditure upon alcohol drink by the families in Class “D” is considerable. They have more money available for this purpose than those in the other classes. Such a fact reminds us that while adequate wages are one principal factor in social progress, other influences are required to produce strong and rightly developed character.<sup>51</sup>

Since intemperance was assumed in fathers who sent their children to ragged schools, fathers who sent their children to ragged schools demonstrated a masculine: a lack of self-discipline.

Thomas Wright, a journeyman engineer who wrote *Some Habits and Customs of the Working Classes* in 1867, also made a clear distinction between the rough and respectable working-class man based on the over-consumption of alcohol. Wright wrote of the rough working-class man:

He is often drunken, and not always ashamed thereof; and sometimes his love of drink leads to his being guilty of conduct which – to put it mildly – is not all that may become a man; moreover, he frequently, in too literal a sense, takes no heed for tomorrow.<sup>52</sup>

Wright believed that drunkenness led to unrespectable behavior, which was distinctly unmanly.

Character in Victorian England was closely linked to masculinity. Lectures, sermons, and pamphlets aimed at the working class usually featured a discourse on the etymology of “virtue.”

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<sup>50</sup> “Christian Manliness. A Book of Examples and Principles for Young Men.” (London: The Religious Tract Society, 1867), p. 135. Leonore Davidoff, “Class and Gender in Victorian England: The Diaries of Arthur J. Munby and Hannah Cullwick,” *Feminist Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 1, “Women and Power: Dimensions of Women’s Historical Experience,” p. 90.

<sup>51</sup> Rowntree, *Poverty*, p. 73-74.

<sup>52</sup> Wright, *Some Habits and Customs of the Working Classes*, vii.

These discourses pointed out that the root of virtue was “vir,” the Latin word for man. Therefore, the Reverend Hugh Stowell Brown concluded in his 1858 “Manliness: a Lecture,” “virtue and manliness are the same.”<sup>53</sup> Since fathers who sent their children to ragged schools were regarded as drunken, middle-class reformers perceived them as lacking virtue and thus lacking manliness.

The masculine paradigms of the ‘rough’ and ‘respectable’ working class man were not necessarily mutually exclusive. In order to reap the benefits that came from being ‘respectable’, a man only had to give the appearance of respectability through performance. Fathers achieved this performance in part by sending their children to a fee-school. It was entirely possible for a working-class man to give the appearance of respectability while actually believing that manliness was measured by the amount of alcohol he could drink. There is evidence to suggest that members of the working class feigned an interest in education for the benefit of middle-class observers. When Dr. J.S. Hodgson, a parliamentary commissioner, approached a former schoolteacher he found that the schoolteacher had stopped teaching because the parents in the area were unwilling to pay. Hodgson went door to door among the woman’s neighbors and he reported that one of the neighbors “assented to my view of the comparative cheapness of schooling to idling” and that other neighbors, and there are hints that these neighbors were mostly men, also readily agreed that education was a valuable, worthwhile pursuit for their children.<sup>54</sup> In this instance there was no reward for acting interested in education beyond earning the favorable opinion of Hodgson, but the neighbors did not know that. His clothing and manner of speech would have clearly marked him as middle class. The neighbors may have suspected him of being a middle-class activist who was assessing whether or not to hold a free public

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<sup>53</sup> Hugh Stowell Brown, “Manliness: a Lecture,” 1858.

<sup>54</sup> *Report of the Commissioners on the State of Popular Education in England*. PP1861 [2794-VI] XXI, p. 95.

lecture in the neighborhood, an event that was usually accompanied by free food and drink – another benefit of performing the part of the respectable man. It is very likely that the neighbors were simply performing the part of respectable masculinity for the clearly out of place middle class man.

John Tosh argues that “dominant masculinity is constructed in opposition to a number of subordinate masculinities”.<sup>55</sup> By paying for their children’s schooling working-class men asserted their dominance over another man: the male school teacher. The relationship between the working-class father and the schoolteacher was similar to that of a boss and an employee in which the father was clearly dominant and the schoolteacher clearly subordinate. For the father to subordinate such a man through the acts of effectively paying his salary, interviewing him for a job, and demanding progress reports reflected positively on the father’s masculinity. Until the state school system began to replace voluntary schools, fathers, particularly in towns or urban areas, had a choice of two or more schools to send their children to. Schoolteachers were forced to endure social domination in their interactions with fathers in order to retain their children as pupils for the fees and grant money they brought. A teacher recorded the following incident in the Log book of Harlton School in 1878: “April 2<sup>nd</sup>. This morning I sent home Albert Fuller for his money. His father opened the school door – pushed the child in and threw the money at my feet – and said I might pick it up.”<sup>56</sup> The father’s assertion of dominance over the schoolteacher was a performance of masculinity witnessed by his son. The schoolteacher was the only socially superior man over which a working-class man could assert his dominance with near impunity. The father also performed his masculinity for his son, who held domination to be a manly value rather than for a middle-class audience that valued respectability.

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<sup>55</sup> Tosh, *Manliness and Masculinities*, p. 43.

<sup>56</sup> Anne Digby and Peter Searby, *Children, School and Society in Nineteenth-Century England* (London: Macmillan, 1981), p. 123.

### **Domestic Authority: Masculinity and Education in the Home**

John Tosh asserts that: “the public demonstration of masculinity occurs in three linked arenas: home, work and all-male associations.”<sup>57</sup> The previous section dealt largely with the working-class father’s demonstration of their success as providers by giving their children a voluntary school education. This section explores working men’s demonstration of masculinity in their homes using education. It begins by looking at father’s use of supervising their children’s education at home to regain some of the authority within the household that they lost during industrialization when they ceased to directly control their family’s labor. It goes on to examine the continuing education movement, which took place in two of Tosh’s three “linked arenas”: home and all-male associations. The working men’s self-education movement emerged just as England began industrializing and it too provided a means for men to reclaim some of their lost domestic authority.

Industrialization had moved work out of the house and into the factory for most working-class English families. With fathers absent the majority of the day, the household lost the largely patriarchal chain of authority that had existed in pre-industrial times. It had been largely the case that the father had ultimate authority with the mother or perhaps, depending on the boy’s age, the eldest son exercising the next most authority and so on. Under the putting-out system, men were directly responsible to capitalists for the production of their entire household. Wives and children were subject to their husbands and fathers authority in matters of production and pay. Since the father primarily worked in the house under the putting-out system, he also exercised his authority as disciplinarian. With industrialization and the absence of fathers for much of the

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<sup>57</sup> Tosh, *Manliness and Masculinities*, p. 35.

day, mothers took on many of the roles that had previously belonged to the father, such as disciplinarian, and assumed the authority that came with those roles.

The dislocation of the site women's work from the house to the factory undermined working-class men's masculine bread-winner status and authority. Under the putting-out system, men received payment for the labor of their entire household and thus could make a nearly undisputed claim to sole bread-winner status. When women's work moved into the factory, it undermined men's status as the sole bread-winner. Sonya Rose argues that the ideal of the sole male bread-winner was part of the masculine ideal of respectability.<sup>58</sup> Women's contribution to the family's income was visible when it came from factory work in a way that the putting-out system obscured. As the factory replaced the home as the site of labor, working men lost much of their claim to masculinity through sole bread-winner status and as the singular figure of authority within the household.

Fathers became involved with their children's education primarily on Sundays. The reason for this was largely practical since Sundays were typically the only day men had off work and thus the only day they had significant free time to spend with their family. But Sunday was also significant as the day devoted to church-going and submission to God's authority. Janet Hamilton, a working woman, wrote in the 1860s: "Working-father – this is not only God's day, but it is also peculiarly yours."<sup>59</sup> Hamilton goes on to recall how her own father tested her and her siblings on their school lessons on Sunday and then read to them from the Bible and offered an edifying analysis of the reading.<sup>60</sup> Hamilton's writing implies that she saw the *paterfamilias*'s authority as deriving from the natural order of things, the same as God's authority. Thus

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<sup>58</sup> Sonya Rose, *Limited Livelihoods*, p. 148-149.

<sup>59</sup> "'First in the House': Daughters on Working-Class Fathers and Fatherhood," Helen Rogers, in eds. Trev Lynn Broughton and Helen Rogers, *Gender and Fatherhood in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007), p. 127-128.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*



authority was an inherently masculine trait that fathers could assert in part through supervising their children's education.

“Father sets me to it sometimes in the evening,” George Ross told the commissioner from the Children's Employment Commission in 1843.<sup>61</sup> The “it” to which 12-year-old George Ross referred was studying. George worked under the supervision of his father as a steel-roller at Firth and Sons in Sheffield. Whether economic necessity forced George out of school and into the steel mill at such a young age or whether George just felt he was done with school and ready to enter the workforce the Parliamentary Papers do not reveal. Though his son was no longer formally enrolled in school, the elder Ross still supervised his son's education. For fathers whose children were no longer enrolled in schools the performance of providing for education was now primarily a private, familial affair rather than a public spectacle – but it was still a performance. By ‘setting’ his son to it, George's father asserted his authority within the household unit in a very visible way. In ordering his son to study George's father once again briefly assumed the role of the pre-industrial *paterfamilias*, assigning labor within the household and meting out discipline. Working-class fathers took charge of the home schooling of their children, particularly boys, in order to regain some of the respectability and authority that they lost in the eyes of their family due to industrialization. Most working-class dwellings were small, four rooms at the most, so the father's act of ordering his son to study would be visible, or at least audible, to the entire household.<sup>62</sup>

As Elaine Showalter notes in reference to *fin-de-siècle* England, “in periods of cultural insecurity ... the longing for strict border controls around the definition of gender ... becomes

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<sup>61</sup> *Royal Commission on Children's Employment in Mines and Manufactories*. PP1843 [307-XIII] XIV, p. 95.

<sup>62</sup> Rowntree, *Poverty*, p 105.

especially intense.”<sup>63</sup> Upper-working-class men increasingly turned to periodicals, friendly societies, books, and public lectures in this period to educate themselves during this period. Frederick Rogers, an artisan who founded a public lecture program for working men in east London, wrote in praise of his friend’s participation in the program: “Cannon had won his education, as he had his bread, by the sweat of his brow, and our movement appealed to him, as it did to me, as the most important movement we knew.”<sup>64</sup> Self-education, such as Rogers’s public lecture program, bolstered men’s masculinity in three important ways. First, since working men saw education as something won by the sweat of the brow, it testified to the masculine work ethic that a man could educate himself while simultaneously winning his bread. Second, it provided a physical space for all-male association. Even local working-class libraries were often restricted male spaces that women could access only by proxy through their fathers or husbands.<sup>65</sup> Third, it bolstered men’s status within the household by means of an ability to claim superior intelligence.

Some men, like John Stuart Mill, thought a man’s wife was “his chief associate, and often his most confidential friend.”<sup>66</sup> Whereas Mill’s writings reflect belief in domestic equality, working-class autobiographies, including those of William Lovett and Frederick Rogers, reflect a belief that it is the man’s duty to preside over the household.<sup>67</sup> As a result of industrialization, men’s status as the chief “occupier” of the household became uncertain. In situations where a man was unemployed or his wife earned more, man and wife had competing claims to “occupier” status. A legal definition of “occupier” evolved through court rulings and census

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<sup>63</sup> Elaine Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy*, p. 4.

<sup>64</sup> Frederick Rogers, *Labour, Life and Literature: Some Memories of Sixty Years*, ed., David Rubinstein (Brighton, Sussex: The Harvester Press Limited, 1913), p. 82.

<sup>65</sup> Helen Rogers, “Daughters on Working-Class Fathers and Fatherhood,” p. 129.

<sup>66</sup> John Tosh, *A Man’s Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), p. 53

<sup>67</sup> Frederick Rogers, *Labour Life, and Literature*. William Lovett, *Life and Struggles of William Lovett*, (London: MacGibbon & Kee Ltd., 1967).

directions. From the mid-century on, the “occupier” of a home was legally defined as a man who could “retain his quality of master, reserving to himself the general control and dominion over the whole house.”<sup>68</sup> Self-education provided men with a pretense for the justification of such “control and dominion.”

### **Class and Classrooms: The Gendered Experience of Male Teachers**

Teachers’ income, education, and respectability surpassed that of even the labor aristocracy so greatly as seemingly to qualify them unquestionably for the middle class. Middle-class educational reformers and MPs recognized female teachers as part of the lower middle class, but not male teachers. Male teachers’ ambiguous class status resulted from their unique masculinity, which was part of neither the working- nor the middle-class paradigm of masculinity.

Male teachers’ salaries financially qualified them for the middle class. In the middle of the century, fresh graduates of teacher’s training colleges made between £65 and £125 a year as assistant teachers, depending on factors such as location and subject specialties, such as music, drawing, or a foreign language.<sup>69</sup> By 1890 the average yearly salary of an assistant teacher was £117 18s 2d. Eventually assistant teachers could become head teachers and earn more than double the salary of an assistant teacher. For example, in 1890 the average salary of both male and female head teachers was £274 12s 1d.<sup>70</sup> In comparison, clerks, who were almost universally regarded as members of the lower middle class, generally started out at £60 a year. In addition to this financial recompense, teachers typically received *gratis* lodging as part of their

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid., p. 61.

<sup>69</sup> Nancy Ball, *Educating the People: A Documentary History of Elementary Schooling in England 1840-1870* (London: Maurice Temple Smith, 1983), p. 156-7.

<sup>70</sup> Dina Copelman, *London’s Women Teachers*, p. 75.

contract. For rural teachers this lodging was generally large enough to accommodate boarders, who paid the teacher directly. The higher cost of housing in cities made it an equal value for urban teachers even though they did not take in boarders.

However, certain aspects of men teachers' remuneration proved problematic for their masculine identity. The path to becoming a teacher started at about fourteen with a job as a pupil-teacher. Pupil-teachers received modest salaries, which varied according to gender and region. However, a government policy instituted in the 1850s stipulated equal pay for male and female pupil-teachers at any school receiving a grant, which included the vast majority of schools. This strikingly impacted the gender demographics of the occupation. Instead of raising female pupil-teacher salaries, schools slashed male pupil-teacher salaries. Pupil-teacher salaries now derived from the average salary of a fourteen-year-old girl in the open labor market.<sup>71</sup> Many boys decided, or were forced by economic circumstances or family pressure, to take other jobs where they could expect to earn more rather than becoming pupil-teachers. The social stigma that friends and family may have attached to a job where boys and girls earned equal pay may also have contributed to fewer boys becoming pupil-teachers. The working class, from which almost all male pupil-teachers came, referred to jobs that paid men and women equally as "women's work."<sup>72</sup> Numerous witnesses for the 1898 commission into pupil-teachers, including G.W. Boyling, the Organizing Master for the Diocese of Peterborough, testified that the lack of male teachers resulted from the "financial question."<sup>73</sup> The "financial question" witnesses referred to was both the poor salary pupil-teachers earned and the connotations of "women's work" that came from equal pay for both males and females. Male teachers had always outnumbered female teachers, but with fewer male pupil-teachers to feed the teacher's training

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<sup>71</sup> Ball, *Educating the People*, p. 80.

<sup>72</sup> Sonya Rose, *Limited Livelihoods*, p. 103-104.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid*, p. 7-8.

colleges this trend quickly reversed. In 1870, for the first time in the history of English elementary education, the number of female teachers equaled the number of male teachers. By the turn of the century, female teachers outnumbered males nearly three to one.<sup>74</sup> The equality of pupil-teachers' salaries led to a sharp increase in the number of female teachers, which thereby resulted in connotations of teaching as feminine work.

Teachers' *gratis* lodging, while a financial perquisite, also carried feminine connotations. Owning a home was one of the hallmarks of middle-class masculinity in Victorian England. It symbolized the financial success that allowed the *paterfamilias* to provide for his dependents. It also created a divide between home and work that middle-class men used to distinguish themselves from working-class artisans and craftsmen whose workshops were often attached to their homes.<sup>75</sup> The Registrar General wrote in the introduction to the Census of 1851: "The possession of an entire house is strongly desired by every Englishman; for it throws a sharp well-defined circle round his family and hearth – the shrine of his sorrows, joys, and meditations."<sup>76</sup> By contrast, having lodgers meant never escaping "the taint of the market place" in the domestic sphere.<sup>77</sup> A clear distinction between the domestic and business spheres characterized middle-class masculinity. The *gratis* nature of male teachers' housing and their taking on boarders blurred the line and undermined this separation. Finally, it also took away male teachers' ability to conceive of themselves as 'master' of their home. Although, the middle-class Victorian man conceived of his home "as the place where his deepest needs are met," as John Tosh's pioneering

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<sup>74</sup> Barry Bergen, "Only a Schoolmaster: Gender, Class, and the Effort to Professionalize Elementary Teaching in England, 1870-1910," *History of Education Quarterly*, Vol. 22, No. 1 (Spring, 1982), p. 10.

<sup>75</sup> John Tosh, *A Man's Place*, p. 2-3.

<sup>76</sup> Leonore Davidoff, "The Separation of Home and Work? Landladies and Lodgers in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century England," in Sandra Burman, ed., *Fit Work for Women* (New York: St. Martin's Press Inc., 1979), p. 69.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 70.

work on masculine domesticity convincingly argues, he also viewed it as his “fiefdom.”<sup>78</sup> Male teachers’ *gratis* housing ran counter to the middle-class ideal of domestic masculinity.

While providing good pay, a career in teaching gave men few opportunities for raises and advancement. Upon graduating from a teacher’s training college, men became assistant teachers. For the most part, head teaching offered the only opportunity for advancement. In the 1890s in London, assistant teachers possessed, on average, almost nineteen years of experience before they became eligible for promotion. During this period they had few to no opportunities for a raise in salary. Not all assistant teachers made it to the position of head teacher and many spent their entire careers as assistant teachers. A very few became schoolmasters or local inspectors, the absolute highest positions they could achieve in the field of education.<sup>79</sup> Most male teachers occupied the same position earning the same salary at age forty as at age twenty.<sup>80</sup> Female teachers faced an equally limiting career path. However, the presence of a career ladder that provided numerous and significant opportunities for advancement figured more centrally into both working- and middle-class masculinity than it did femininity.<sup>81</sup> The limited career ladder teachers faced therefore posed a far greater problem for men’s gender and class identity than for women’s. Both working-class women’s work in factories and middle-class women’s work as nurses and governesses created no expectations of advancement. The chance for men to become self-made, successful merchants provided the basis for the acceptance of clerking as a lower-middle-class occupation. Even working-class men, who in times of economic boom could become entrepreneurs, had better prospects for advancement than male teachers. Male teachers’ lack of such prospects detracted from their claim to both working- and middle-class manliness.

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<sup>78</sup> John Tosh, *A Man’s Place*, p. 1.

<sup>79</sup> Copelman, *London’s Women Teachers*, p. 78.

<sup>80</sup> Ball, *Educating the People*, p. 146.

<sup>81</sup> Sonya Rose, *Limited Livelihoods*, p. 27.

For a time, school boards provided an exception to this rule by giving teachers an opportunity for advancement. The Education Act of 1870 created a system of local school boards. These boards' responsibilities included the distribution of funds earmarked for education, enforcing attendance, and building new schools. Schools boards were among the most democratic institutions in the whole of Victorian England. They were elected every three years and, quite remarkably, women could vote for and serve on school boards; this was the only government institution in Victorian England for which this was the case.<sup>82</sup> As a government institution that wielded much power within the community, school boards provided members with social cachet and political clout. In 1902, however, Parliament blocked this one clear route for male teachers to reach the middle class by restricting school board positions to direct appointment, and in practice to middle-class men.<sup>83</sup> The debates in Parliament leading up to the Education Act of 1902 are regrettably silent regarding this provision of the bill. However, MPs repeatedly demonstrated contempt for male teachers on account of their rough, working-class masculinity:

Students in training colleges are all young men. They ... have the impulsiveness, the thoughtlessness, the passions of young men. Again, they are mostly selected from a class which has been very little in contact with refinement or self-control, or delicate appreciation of what is elevated and honourable<sup>84</sup>

Parliament's inclusion of the provision restricting school board positions to direct appointment may be understood as a deliberate ploy to keep male teachers out of the middle class. This desire also manifested itself in legal restrictions preventing teachers from becoming national inspectors. Because His/Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) were positions restricted to Oxbridge men,

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<sup>82</sup> Copelman, *London's Women Teachers*, p. 59.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

<sup>84</sup> PP1861 XXI, p. 139.

meritorious male teachers could only rise so high. This ceiling reflected middle-class prejudices against male teachers' working-class backgrounds.

Dina Copelman argues in her ground-breaking study of London's women teachers that to teach was "to perform what was women's traditional role: service to others."<sup>85</sup> As assistant teachers, men answered to: the head teacher, the schoolmaster, the school manager, parents, HMIs, and the school board. Particularly prior to the Education Act of 1870, teachers needed to submit to the will of parents in order to retain their jobs. Teachers needed students in their schools for the fees and grant money they brought. Parents could withdraw their children from school and enroll them in a nearby opposition school at will.<sup>86</sup> This allowed parents to exert control over the teacher's curriculum, discipline style, and religious instruction. In the period before the 1870, William Lovett recalls at one school "being put in the coal-cellar for bad conduct, on the second and last day of my being there."<sup>87</sup> His parents withdrew him from that school and enrolled him in another because they disapproved of the teacher's disciplinary style. Though somewhat more sheltered after 1870, teachers still had to be cautious of parents who lodged formal complains with the school board alleging the improper use of corporal punishment or denominational religious instruction.<sup>88</sup> The necessity of answering to so many masters inhibited them from taking much initiative in the classroom. Both the working-class artisan and even the middle-class clerk had a better claim to workplace independence than male teachers.

By the end of the century, male teachers' gender had become a disadvantage. Mrs. Bannister, an experienced teacher and head of a London pupil-teacher training center, testified to the 1898 inquiry into pupil-teaching: "I am not anxious to stamp out the man teacher. If it were a

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<sup>85</sup> Copelman, *London's Women Teachers*, p. 4.

<sup>86</sup> Ball, *Educating the People*, p. 150.

<sup>87</sup> William Lovett, *Life and Struggles of William Lovett*, p. 3.

<sup>88</sup> Copelman, *London's Women Teachers*, p. 88-95.



question of wanting a new teacher I should rather aim at getting the best teacher than at considering whether it presented itself in the form of a man or woman.”<sup>89</sup> Bannister’s testimony implies that there were those out there who were “anxious to stamp out the man teacher.” In the coal mines, courtroom, architects’ office, and battlefield maleness was an advantage, but in the classroom it was a liability.

Male teachers’ education, respectability, income, the intellectual nature of their work, and their physical weakness – the principal of St. Mark’s Training College testified to the 1898 parliamentary commission that boy pupil-teachers coming to his training college “have not always got the physique or constitution which young men of that age should have”<sup>90</sup> – set them apart from the working class. And yet, male teachers were not accepted into the ranks of the lower middle class either. Middle-class men and women involved with elementary education could not seem to agree on male teachers’ class status. When the 1898 commission of inquiry into pupil-teachers asked this principal if the boys studying to become teachers at his college were “all of the lower middle class” in their familial origin, he affirmed that they were.<sup>91</sup> He went on to list the occupations of many of his students’ fathers as carpenters, farmers, shoemakers, blacksmiths, laborers, and other clearly working-class occupations. Later in his testimony to the commission, the principal of St. Mark’s lamented that “we should like a class of candidates from more intellectual homes.”<sup>92</sup> This ambiguous testimony reflected male teachers’ ambiguous class status. Male teachers occupied a position at once above the labor aristocracy, but below the lower middle class.

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid, 19.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid, 2.

*Report on the Pupil-Teacher System.* PP1898 [C.8761] XIV, p. 1

<sup>92</sup> Ibid, p. 3.

### Conclusion

Respectable masculinity was a cross-class paradigm of masculinity in Victorian England. The middle classes' attitudes towards elementary education reflected their support of respectable masculinity. Middle-class politicians and educational reformers attempted to further solidify and perpetuate the notion of respectable masculinity by advancing that ideal in elementary education policy. Middle-class employers looked disparagingly on fathers who did not send their children to voluntary schools prior to 1870; they saw it as a rejection of respectable masculinity in favor of rough masculinity and punished such behavior through their hiring decisions. Compulsory attendance policies enacted in the 1870s forced parents to send their children to schools where they were indoctrinated in the ideal of respectability not only from teachers and textbooks, but also from social workers who increasingly visited elementary schools.<sup>93</sup>

Respectability was, in the minds of late Victorian society, an ideal of masculinity that any man of any class could achieve. Elementary education can be seen as an important stage for the performance of respectable masculinity by working-class men. Elementary education is also proof of the limitations of respectable masculinity. Respectability was only one component of masculinity, as the case of male teachers demonstrates. Male teachers were respectable, well-paid, and well-educated, yet they were not accepted into the ranks of the lower middle class because of their dependency. In many ways, the men of the labor aristocracy were regarded, by both their social peers and superiors, as more masculine than male teachers, who I argue existed outside the conventional class structure, and men of the lower middle class, such as clerks. Elementary education was critical to working-class men's performance of respectable

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<sup>93</sup> Heathorn, *For Home, Country, and Race*, p. 4-5. Copelman, *London's Women Teachers*, p. 36-37.

masculinity while simultaneously allowing them to engage more privately in ‘unrespectable’ behavior, such as going to the pub, which allowed them to retain their working-class masculinity.

As this thesis has asserted, elementary education in its various forms – fathers sending their children to school, fathers supervising their children’s education at home, and men participating in self-education schemes – was an important stage for the performance of respectable masculinity. Working-class men who performed the ideal of respectable masculinity around the middle class often acted quite differently when out of sight. As Thomas Wright, a working man himself, wrote using the metaphor of performance: “In all phases of life, there is, I fancy, a sort of inner life – a life behind the scenes – that is known only to the initiated. At least, I know that such is the case in respect to the social life of the working classes.”<sup>94</sup> According to Wright, it was common practice in all-male workplaces to post a sentry to “keep nix,” meaning keep a watch for the manager, while they slacked off or drank alcohol that they smuggled in.<sup>95</sup>

Respectability was performed rather than fully internalized by many working-class men.

The perception of the intelligent artisan who had internalized the ideal of respectable masculinity as comprising a significant portion of the working class existed in the period from 1860-1900 because many working-class men performed an ideal of respectable masculinity which they had only partially internalized. Wright wrote in 1867:

Intelligent artisans are much scarcer than many persons seem to suppose them to be. They do exist ... but, considered in relation to that vast aggregation known as the working classes, they must be regarded as exceptional beings. ... They must be regarded as so exceptional as to make the somewhat prevalent idea, that intelligent artisans are a large and well-defined section of the working-class, an utterly erroneous and misleading one.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Wright, *Some Habits and Customs of the Working Classes*, p. 83.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 85-86

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

Working-class men could perform the respectable ideal of masculinity in order to give the appearance of having completely internalized the ideal of respectable masculinity when in fact they still believed in the rough ideal of masculinity.

The over-simplified binary division between the rough and respectable working-class man existed at the heart of mid- and late-Victorian society. Working-class men invoked the language of respectability to justify the family-wage and the vote, charity organizations granted aid on the basis of respectability, and the authors of autobiographies, social reports, letters to the editor, Parliamentary inquiries, and novels classified working men as either rough or respectable. As many feminist historians, most notably Ellen Ross, have cogently argued, working-class wives created most of the appearance of respectability for the family, an appearance for which the husband was credited.<sup>97</sup> Education, however, was unique as one of the few components of respectability that fathers were responsible for. Fathers who provided their children with a voluntary school education prior to 1870 affirmed their bread-winning ability within the community and demonstrated their commitment to the ideal of respectable rather than rough masculinity. Fathers who supervised their children's study at home affirmed their authority as the *paterfamilias*.

John Tosh argues that "Masculinity is more than social construction. It demands to be considered also as a *subjective* identity, usually the most deeply experienced that men have ... It is therefore a mistake to treat masculinity merely as an outer garment or 'style,' adjustable according to social circumstances."<sup>98</sup> This thesis argues that the political, economic, and social circumstances of working-class life created a reality in which masculinity was both a social construction and subjective identity. Working men cloaked themselves in an aura of respectable

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<sup>97</sup> Ellen Ross, "'Not the Sort that Would Sit on the Doorstep,'" p. 39.

<sup>98</sup> John Tosh, *Manliness and Masculinities*, p. 47.

masculinity that they only partially internalized in order to justify enfranchisement and secure and maintain employment. The father who threw money at the teacher's feet resented, but keenly felt, the social pressures that led him to construct an image of respectability by paying for his son's education at a voluntary school.<sup>99</sup> By contrast, Mary Smith's father, who spent Sundays reviewing his children's lessons, had largely internalized the ideal of respectable masculinity.<sup>100</sup> Within the working class as a diverse whole, respectable masculinity can best be seen as a spectrum along which various degrees of internalization and mere performance occurred. Viewing masculinity as often performed rather than internalized is both true to the lived reality of working men in the mid- and late-Victorian period and a necessary acknowledgement in order to continue with the study of working men's subjective masculine identity.

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<sup>99</sup> See p. 19.

<sup>100</sup> See p. 21-2.

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