

# **The Role and Impact of Masculinity in Education on the Coast of British Columbia: An Analysis of the Formation of the Education Schooling System, 1875-1925**

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Oliver O'Dell  
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The nineteenth century underwent a significant shift in the ways that childhood and education were perceived, approached, and encountered by society, parents, and the government. When public education was implemented by the government, they also took over the implementation of teachers' course materials such as textbooks and other teaching materials. These contributions and implementations by the government would also dictate what the students learned, how they learned, and from whom they were learning. When studying the history of education in Canada one may find there are a plethora of sources pertaining to the feminization of the public schooling system, female teachers, and the impact of the teaching profession on women throughout history (which is excellent, because these are important and essential subjects to embark upon in research.), however, there is very little information regarding the relationship between masculinity and education. Moreover, there is minimal research done on masculinity, male teachers and their impact or influence on young students within the school setting at the onset of the education experience in British Columbia, Canada. Therefore, in this research paper, I will discuss the role of masculinity within the education system on Vancouver Island during the late nineteenth century. I will argue that men were seen as the paternal and authoritative figure whom were expected to keep students, and their female counterparts, in line. I will also argue that men were seen to be better equipped to mould and shape young minds, in particular male or rowdy students, but I will also argue that masculinity also significantly molded and shaped the minds of all students in British Columbia; and that the male teachers were also the forerunners in the defining of what it was that made a great teacher in Victorian era British Columbia. To illustrate and highlight my arguments, I will utilize articles written and published in Victoria's

local newspaper, *The Daily Colonist* as well as various secondary sources to support my argument. The most useful approach to start with would be to look at an analysis of what masculinity looked like in the nineteenth century.

In the book *Manliness and Morality: Middle-Class Masculinity in Britain and America*, J.A. Mangan and James Walvin highlight the qualities which are central to the nineteenth century ideal of 'manliness' or 'masculinity'. Although the authors state that throughout history masculinity has taken a variety of forms, they agree with Norman Vance's summary of 'manliness' or 'masculinity' as "as embracing qualities of physical courage, chivalric ideals, virtuous fortitude with additional connotations of military and patriotic virtue."<sup>1</sup> At the beginning of the century "[masculinity] represented a concern with a successful transition from Christian immaturity to maturity, demonstrated by earnestness, selfishness and integrity"; but they state that by the later-half of the nineteenth century, the concept of masculinity undergoes a metamorphosis which left masculinity characterized by "stoicism, hardiness and endurance - the pre-eminent qualities of the famous English public school system."<sup>2</sup> In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, masculinity or manliness had evolved once more into the concept of 'muscular Christianity', the title of which captures the "excessive commitment to physical activity which was an unquestionable feature of middle class male society".<sup>3</sup> The new gentleman was proclaimed by genteel British society as a man who was "aristocrat of character but not an

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<sup>1</sup> J.A. Mangan and James Walvin, "Introduction", *Manliness and Morality: Middle-Class Masculinity in Britain and America, 1800-1940*. Manchester University Press (1995), 1.

<sup>2</sup> Mangan, *Manliness and Morality: Middle-Class Masculinity in Britain and America, 1800-1940*, 1.

<sup>3</sup> Mangan, *Manliness and Morality: Middle-Class Masculinity in Britain and America, 1800-1940*, 3.

aristocrat by birth”.<sup>4</sup> These qualities and characteristics which were believed to be masculine were then instilled into the public education system at end of the Victorian era. Both male and female students in the educational setting during this time period were taught to develop these morals, values, and qualities which were favoured as the masculine ideal and therefore the ideal for societal behaviours.

There are various useful sources within the newspaper *The Daily Colonist* which illustrate not only the expectation of boys, but the content which they were subject to learn. In the newspaper, there is an advertisement stating “School for Boys” and declaring that the school had just re-opened under the Superintendence of Reverend WM. Mearnes. The advertisement indicates that the course of instruction will be “Comprising all the English branches: Spelling, Reading, Writing, Geography, History, Book Keeping, Natural Philosophy, [...] Mathematics, Arithmetic, Algebra, Geometry” and that Greek, Latin, or French are offered for an extra cost.<sup>5</sup> The advertisement also states that “It is unnecessary to speak of the care taken, as regards the good morals and general conduct of scholars”.<sup>6</sup> This advertisement, although not for a public school, illustrates the ideal subjects, morals and conduct of the students or potential students whom attended the school. In *The Daily Colonist* the headmaster of The Collegiate School wrote about “His Lordship the Bishop” visiting the school in 1894 and pointing out to the young boys that “the ideal of education was the production of a Christian gentleman”.<sup>7</sup> Ensor Sharp, a school

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<sup>4</sup> Mangan, *Manliness and Morality: Middle-Class Masculinity in Britain and America, 1800-1940*, 7.

<sup>5</sup> “School for Boys.” *The Daily Colonist*, August 13, 1862.

<sup>6</sup> “School for Boys.” *The Daily Colonist*, August 13, 1862.

<sup>7</sup> “The Collegiate School: Report of Progress for the Term Just Brought to a Close.” *The Daily Colonist*, July 31, 1925.

teacher at The Collegiate School wrote in the report as well, stating, “I am glad to report that as a whole the boys have shown increased steadiness in their work, and the conduct has been satisfactory. Four boys were prepared by myself for confirmation, and I hope that we shall be able to present some to you annually.”<sup>8</sup>

In another *The Daily Colonist* article written in 1925, a past student of The Collegiate School recounts that “the school was originally one big classroom, with “the principal who [...] occupied a seat at the head of the room” and “the vice-principal sat at the opposite end, at the door, a probably precaution against truancy”.<sup>9</sup> According to the article, The Collegiate School helped prepare students for examinations to get into college (hence the name ‘collegiate’), though only some students appeared to proceed with the examinations at the end of the school year. Another significant point of these articles is to showcase that the boys were specifically under the care of male teachers in this school. The positioning of the vice-principal and superintendent in the one-room school house gives the paternalistic image of male authority and a dominating figure being ‘at the head of the house’, like a father would be in order to keep to the rules of the house at all times. This paternal role of the male teacher at the beginning of the twentieth century was significantly influenced by the expectations of the male teacher at the close of the nineteenth century.

During the nineteenth century, according to Terry Wotherspoon, the education system in British Columbia underwent two significant transformations. The first transformation was “driven by bourgeois reformers' desire for a strong teaching force of university-educated men

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<sup>8</sup> “The Collegiate School: Report of Progress for the Term Just Brought to a Close.” *The Daily Colonist*, July 31, 1925.

<sup>9</sup> “Collegiate Established When Douglas Governor.” *The Daily Colonist*, May 26, 1925.

who had the skill and moral authority to mould out of a heterogeneous population of indigenous peoples, immigrants, and colonial subjects a new and unified political order.”<sup>10</sup> This illuminates that there was a preference for the teachers of young minds to be previously education and male. In the 1830s, fathers were encouraged to provide their children with fundamental education in their leisure hours and many fathers extended principles of morality and habits of industry as well.<sup>11</sup> At the beginning of the nineteenth century, before schools had been implemented in Canada, it was evidently the man’s role to instil in their children good morals, values, and habits. In 1851, nevertheless, the governor of Vancouver island, James Douglas, “urged the provision of elementary schooling to promote social stability and economic development” and argued that schools” and also contended that schools for children of poor or labouring classes could instil ““a proper moral and religious training' and prevent children from 'growing up in ignorance and the utter neglect of all their duties to God and to Society.’”<sup>12</sup> It is clear that there was a deep concern for the moral and religious well-being of children as well as what the opportunities of their future may hold. In order to align the moral and religious conscience of all children in society, it would be most efficient to filter them into schools wherein they can be taught the desired information by the desirable people.

The 1970s marked a pivotal time for the education system in Canada. John Jessop, originally a teacher from Victoria who helped lead the Victoria teachers’ strike, was named the

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<sup>10</sup> Terry Wotherspoon, "From Subordinate Partners to Dependent Employees: State Regulation of Public School Teachers in Nineteenth Century British Columbia." (Spring 1993): 75-76.

<sup>11</sup> Wotherspoon, "From Subordinate Partners to Dependent Employees," 79.

<sup>12</sup> Wotherspoon, "From Subordinate Partners to Dependent Employees," 79.

first Superintendent.<sup>13</sup> He proceeded to “develop a far-reaching and unified school system in accordance with the principles of a nonsectarian public morality”.<sup>14</sup> Jessop played a significant role in forming the education system of British Columbia, and that of Victoria in particular. He strengthened the ideals of masculinity within the education system of British Columbia by reinforcing the education system’s responsibility to produce “a politically-unified but socioeconomically-heterogeneous society with an emphasis on compulsion and duty.”<sup>15</sup> Jessop had a hand in The Public Schools Act of 1871 as well as the amendments made to the act in 1873 and 1876 which made schooling compulsory for six months a year for children aged seven to twelve years.<sup>16</sup> In order to serve as a Superintendent of Education, the candidate must have served as a chairman of the Board of Education, must hold a first-class teaching certificate, and was required to have had five years of successful teaching experience.<sup>17</sup> Superintendents held the power to appoint, pay, inspect, and license teachers. They also determined the school curriculum, textbooks, and holidays. Superintendents sought out teachers who possessed not only certain teaching skills, but also the “educational credentials, and strong moral character [that] were incorporated into a distinct educational hierarchy under the paternalistic guidance of a state official with a background as a competent male teacher”.<sup>18</sup> The aim was “to produce [...] a stable and reliable staff of ‘superior’ and ‘efficient male teachers’”.<sup>19</sup> According to Helen Brown, there

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<sup>13</sup> Wotherspoon, "From Subordinate Partners to Dependent Employees," 92.

<sup>14</sup> Wotherspoon, "From Subordinate Partners to Dependent Employees," 92.

<sup>15</sup> Wotherspoon, "From Subordinate Partners to Dependent Employees," 92.

<sup>16</sup> Wotherspoon, "From Subordinate Partners to Dependent Employees," 92.

<sup>17</sup> Wotherspoon, "From Subordinate Partners to Dependent Employees," 92.

<sup>18</sup> Wotherspoon, "From Subordinate Partners to Dependent Employees," 92.

<sup>19</sup> Wotherspoon, "From Subordinate Partners to Dependent Employees," 92.

were no men in lower- and middle-level teaching positions in the teaching hierarchy between the years 1891 and 1914. She argues that this was not the result of a disinterest on the part of men, but that “trustees were not comfortable with women in the senior positions in the teaching hierarchy”.<sup>20</sup> Women were not seen as trustworthy, capable, or savvy enough to make critical, difficult, or intellectual educational decisions. As we have explored various people during the nineteenth century held a preference for male teachers educating their children, however, it appears that women teaching was easier for many people to swallow than women in a position of higher authority or control.

Educational textbooks and teachings in the nineteenth century had a heavy focus on the relationship between religion and morality. This taught children that they were always to speak “the truth, were never [to be] wild or rude, and [to listen] to the conscience which God had implanted in them” and that because “God made children breathe the breath of life, they must always do His will.”<sup>21</sup> Bible stories were often told to children because of the moralistic values in which they were likely instilled, such as the “Golden Rule” or knowing how to tell right from wrong.<sup>22</sup> Children were encouraged to work hard, use their time well, and to be humble, prudent and courageous; while passions such as “indolence, disobedience, miserliness and envy would have had immediate catastrophic results.”<sup>23</sup> Lack of cleanliness went hand-in-hand with evil and sin whereas cleanliness was next to godliness in importance. Students were taught to assume that

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<sup>20</sup> Helen Brown. "Gender and Space: Constructing the public school teaching staff in Nanaimo, 1891-1914," *BC Studies*, No. 105/106 (Spring/Summer 1995): 63.

<sup>21</sup> Harry Van Brummelen, "Shifting Perspectives: Early British Columbia Textbooks from 1872-1925," in Nancy M. Sheehan, J. Donald Wilson, and David C. Jones (eds.), *Schools in the West: Essays in Canadian Educational History*, (Calgary: Detselig, 1986), 8.

<sup>22</sup> Brummelen, "Shifting Perspectives", 9.

<sup>23</sup> Brummelen, "Shifting Perspectives", 9.



parents or any other authority figure always knew best and to always “give blind obedience to their elders”.<sup>24</sup> According to Brummelen, students were instructed that “true greatness” was “a greatness based on love and virtue and truth, on devotion to duty, freedom and religion, and on defiance of peril” and all students were encouraged to do their part in inciting such moral greatness in themselves and in others. With regard to history, students were told that it “teaches us to admire and esteem the brave, the honest and the self-denying; and to despise and condemn the cowardly, the base, and the selfish. We are led to see that virtue preserves and strengthens a nation, while vice inevitably causes decay and weakness.”<sup>25</sup> This demonstrates that the curriculum in which students of the nineteenth century were taught was formed to be in the image of masculinity which would lead to a paternalistic society. Both young boys and girls were being taught these same values which translated back to Norman Vance’s definition of manliness and masculinity. These teachings became more and more apparent in the opening of new schools and institutions as the years progressed.

Beyond the classroom and academic ethics, morals, and values, there was also an insistence by esteemed members of society such as doctors, that boys are receiving more than simply mental, intellectual, or brain exercises. It was pertinent to the well-being of young boys to ensure they are physically fit as well. The concept of “muscular Christianity” and the process of masculinizing societal ideals through the education system is illuminated in an article written in 1904 found in *The Daily Colonist* titled “The Necessity of Athletics for Public School Boys”. In this article, Dr. Luther Halsey Gulick argued the significance of physical activity for young boys

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<sup>24</sup> Brummelen, “Shifting Perspectives”, 9.

<sup>25</sup> Brummelen, “Shifting Perspectives”, 9.

and he stated that the necessity for muscular activity and play is “stronger than our power to stop it.”<sup>26</sup> He provided an example, citing the inevitability of boys to “form gangs and get into mischief” and urges that this tendency was dulled by providing boys with the opportunity to play “legitimate manly sports”.<sup>27</sup> Gulick’s argument demanded that physical activity was implemented into the school curriculum for boys because they prevented young boys from resorting to hooliganism and delinquent behaviours. This was another way for the education system to inculcate the preferable and desirable Christian morals into young boys, by channelling any of their aggression or pent up energy into sports instead of illegal recreational activities.

Another way that the masculine teachings and values were exemplified by Canadian school is illuminated in the 1894 article “Public Schools’ Welcome” in *The Daily Colonist*. This article is a commemoration of a speech given by the Governor-General regarding the opening of a new public school in Victoria, British Columbia. The article illustrates the ways education pertained to gender and therefore the skill sets each child would aspire toward depending on their gender. During his speech, the Governor-General insists upon the importance of the technical and manual training because it is “of practical benefit, especially in a comparatively young country like this, and that a boy or a girl equipped with such dignified acquirements, as say carpentry or the ability to knit and sew, has gained accomplishments of practical use and value”.<sup>28</sup> It can be assumed that the boys were not learning how to “knit and sew” and the young girls were not being instructed in trades such as “carpentry” and therefore there was a clear division in the

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<sup>26</sup> Luther Halsey Gulick, “The Necessity of Athletics for Public School Boys.” *The Daily Colonist*, May 1, 1904.

<sup>27</sup> Gulick, “The Necessity of Athletics for Public School Boys.” *The Daily Colonist*, May 1, 1904.

<sup>28</sup> “Public Schools’ Welcome.” *The Daily Colonist*, November 6, 1894.

educational curriculum based on gender. The Governor-General also made certain to assure all students, parents, and teachers in attendance that “in taking advantage of [their] opportunities in this respect [they] can draw in future years” and that “to make a good scholar demands care and pains and patience on the part of the teacher, and attention, thought and also patience in the overcoming of obstacles on the part of the learner.”<sup>29</sup> According to Brummelen, individualism in education was also heavily stressed during the nineteenth century and children were expected to develop their “God-given abilities” by working diligently and showing backbone.<sup>30</sup> These hard-working traits are, yet again, precisely what the ideal of masculinity was in this era. Historical accounts of events often focus on the men of strong personality who, through sheer willpower, overcame adversity and hardship.<sup>31</sup> Students were taught about these strong ‘heroes’ and were encouraged to develop these character traits in themselves by toughing it out through what they were doing and following the moral law instructed through Christianity as well as authority figures.

The significant shift that the Victorian era confronted with regard to education was imperative to the ways that children were, and therefore society was, impacted and influenced in the decades following. There were specific masculine values and expectations which were indoctrinated into the teachings of students in the schools in Victoria, British Columbia during the nineteenth century. There was a preferential treatment towards men with regard to holding positions that allocated the individual with greater amounts of administrative power. Before the public education system began in British Columbia, there was an expectation of the fathers to

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<sup>29</sup> “Public Schools’ Welcome.” *The Daily Colonist*, November 6, 1894.

<sup>30</sup> Brummelen, “Shifting Perspectives”, 10.

<sup>31</sup> Brummelen, “Shifting Perspectives”, 10.

ensure that their children entered adulthood with a good and Christian moral compass, as well as the efficient work ethics necessary to be a thriving and successful member of society. With the implementation of a public education system, there was still an expectation that a male authoritative power took place at the head of the institutions. These men with positions, such as being a superintendent, were able to dictate the school curriculum, morals, and values that young minds were being taught as well as ensuring the female teachers beneath them were engaging in acceptable and moral behaviours which the students were expected to model after. The male teacher and the evolving concept of masculinity and manliness were the forerunners of the development of the public education system in the nineteenth century, and moreover, influenced the patriarchal underpinnings of society today.

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