

Masculine Boys – Feminine Boys

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Part 1: Practical Guidance and Didactical Approach

Background and Keywords:

Vague role definitions and wishy-washy systems of values and norms at different levels of socialisation are making it increasingly difficult for boys to develop an identity. Issues related to sexuality and issues related to the onset of puberty for elementary school age boys play an essential part in helping them to find and develop their identity (girls as well). The activity that is presented here offers the teacher a didactical and methodical three-tier approach to working with the self-image and self esteem of boys.

This activity could be used in particular when the teacher establishes that a boy is being called “feminine”, “sissy”, “queer”, by children of the same age as a result of his behaviour patterns.

Similar Topics:

Identity, self-image, self esteem, sexuality (see Theoretical Background and Further Information)

Materials:

- Material on Lewis Hamilton
- Material on Bill Kaulitz and Tokyo Hotel
- Music video ‘Monsoon’ by the Group Tokyo Hotel
- A3 sheet of paper and pens
- Film “Clash of the Titans”
- Illustrations of gods from Greek mythology
- Worksheets 1 to 6

Duration:

2 lessons each lasting 45 minutes

Number of participants:

12 boys (the boys should know each other well; attend the same class for example)

Age:

The boys should be aged between 9 and 10. The activity must be adapted to the level of knowledge of younger boys.

Aims:

- The boys learn about typical masculine and/or feminine traits.
- At the end of the activity the boys will be capable of judging themselves (self-image) and will be able to assign to themselves the (character) traits that they have studied beforehand.

- The boys develop a greater awareness of the existence of masculine and feminine traits. They understand that existing feminine traits should not be deprecated.
- The boys learn to communicate openly about themselves
- The boys will have greater self esteem.
- The boys have an idea of how to establish a link between human traits and sexuality.
- The boys become more tolerant towards different sexual interests.

(Short) Explanation:

The teacher should prepare for the activity by familiarising the boys with numerous adjectives (comparative as well as superlative), to enable them to describe individuals. This knowledge has been conveyed by showing them photos and pictures of celebrities from the areas of music and sport and by encouraging them to tell stories about family members and friends. This storytelling focused on the questions: Why is he/she your friend? And what do you like about him/her?

1st step:

The teacher begins with a recap of the previous studies to increase the boys' awareness of the subject matter again. The teacher explains to the boys that traits that they have studied are to be used in this lesson to analyse two celebrities. Background information on the racing driver Lewis Hamilton is supplied. The teacher must ensure that he gives an impartial account of Lewis Hamilton. He shows photos, pictures and videos (depending on the material available).

The boys are subsequently divided into four groups. They are given Worksheet 1 and are asked to describe and characterise Lewis Hamilton and to answer the two questions on the worksheet. Depending on his relevance to the present, the person chosen – Lewis Hamilton in this case – should be replaced by someone else.



The boys write their answers on a large A3 sheet of paper to enable them to present their opinions to the other boys. In the round-table discussion the teacher summarises the traits that the groups have come up with and explains the differences at the same time. It is important here for the teacher to interpret the traits that have been highlighted as feminine in a manner that conveys to the boys that the traits are not to be regarded as negative and should not be ridiculed. The boys become aware that it is wrong to deprecate someone who is different and has different traits.

The exercise is repeated. This time the teacher shows the boys the video clip 'Monsoon' by the group Tokyo Hotel. The teacher gives the boys background information about the group initially (the focus is on the singer Bill Kaulitz).



The boys are given homework. They should each compile pictures and / or other material about one person with whom they identify or do not identify. They are again required to answer the question, what they like or do not like about the person chosen. The boys present their examples at the beginning of the second lesson.



Step 2:

After the boys have presented their examples and the teacher has summarised them, the teacher draws the boys' attention to different traits and behaviour patterns again.

In the second lesson the subject matter is broached using Greek mythology. As the boys have limited understanding and knowledge of this subject the teacher has the important task of giving them a detailed, albeit simple, introduction to Greek mythology. An excerpt of the film "Clash of the Titans" might be useful here.

Greek gods are often used to depict personal human traits. The boys basically have all the tendencies in themselves, but environmental influences mean that some are activated and others are not. The teacher chooses two male and two female gods from the broad spectrum, and describes them with illustrations. The gods Zeus, Poseidon, Aphrodite and Athena are recommended (background information on these gods may be found on the websites cited below).

When the boys have been given the necessary background information, the lesson continues with the boys working in pairs. Each pair takes worksheets 3 and 4 or alternatively 5 and 6, so that they are evenly distributed throughout the group. The boys work in pairs and answer the questions on the worksheets for the other boys in each case.

The answers are assessed in the group discussion. The assessment is described under the heading 'Reflection' below.

Reflection:

Step 3:

When the boys have completed the work in pairs (with assistance), the boys take it in turns to present their assessment of their partners. The other boys then have the opportunity to agree with the assessment or to reject it. The boy concerned should then say whether he sees himself in the same way as the Group does.

The teacher should ask each boy the following questions, depending on the assessment:

- Which traits that the male and female gods possess apply to you?
- Are more male or more feminine traits applicable to you?
- Which male and which feminine traits are you particularly proud of?
- Have the other boys judged you correctly?
- Does it make any difference to you what other boys think about you, or do you wish to reflect on what the other boys have said about you?

The teacher should discuss the following questions together with all the boys:

- Are you surprised that you all have feminine traits as well?
- Do you think it's okay for each boy to have feminine traits as well?
- Do you think it's bad if a boy has more feminine than masculine traits? How might you help such a boy?

The reflection should focus on increasing the boys' awareness of feminine traits. The reflection should (provided the age group allows it) also inform the boys about different sexualities and teach them to be tolerant of different forms of sexual conduct.

Variations (Continuation):

The activity may be varied and extended at random.

The first section (description of boys) may be extended to include more celebrities, family members, other children and teachers from everyday life.

The section on Greek mythology can also be extended. Role plays (dressing up for example) or theatrical performances could be used as didactical methods.

Part 2: Theoretical Background and Further Information

The field of personality development makes a distinction between concepts such as identity, self-image and self esteem. These terms are often applied synonymously in everyday usage, despite having different meanings. The concept of sexuality plays a central role in personality development.

Sexuality:

Sexuality is not simply a byword for sexual intercourse and does not solely deal with male and female genitals; there is much more to it and it is closely associated with other areas of life.

Sexuality is a universal vital energy that plays an active physical, intellectual and social role in all phases of human life. Sexuality is about pleasure. Pleasure may be experienced with one's own body and with other bodies as a sensual and emotional medium and as an essential prerequisite for enjoying life. It is frequently hampered by embarrassment and indifference, boredom and violence, however.

Sexuality is associated with self-esteem and identity, with the possibility of experiencing one's own significance as a man, woman, boy or girl, with the possibility of developing self-esteem and also with the possibility of learning to love one's own body.

Self-image:

Self-image is regarded as a series of elements that constitute the self-knowledge acquired by young person through interaction with other people. What are the answers to questions such as: What can I do well? What do I like?, What don't I like?, What do people admire about me?, What annoys me about other people?. A self-image does not first start to develop in adolescence; it is already developing in elementary school age boys. In elementary school age children this process is confined to competing against and with other children ("I'm good at drawing" or "I can sing better than Kevin."). These comparisons play a significant role in the relationship to other children and adolescents in the later adolescent phase. For a boy 'speed' for example means that he is regarded as an asset in a football team. Self-image is consequently largely determined by how others see it.

Self-esteem:

The attainment and maintenance of a positive self-perception by others, mostly friends and peers or by adults as well) creates positive a self-esteem. These external reactions give boys the encouragement they need to work on their own development.

Identity:

Kohnstamm (2004) defines identity as a self-perception – a perception of being one and the same person in all situations and atmospheres. In other words, identity is the answer to the questions: 'Who am I?' and 'Who do I want to be?' The last question explains why boys constantly (allow themselves to) compete with other boys/children, with certain values and views and with knowledge and learning environments.

At school adolescents have to learn to position themselves in comparison to and with other children and young people. Kohnstamm also explains that identity implies an aspect of conduct as well, namely what someone does out of a sense of his own identity. The extent to which a boy has developed a sense of identity determines the extent to which a boy can and will work with a sense of purpose.

For the teacher this means that some boys will begin and complete their identity development earlier and others later. The following distinctions may be made between boys in this respect:

- boys who opt for a certain course after a minimal search for their identity
- boys who are still searching for their identity, but have opted for a specific course for the time being
- boys who opt for a certain course after a long search for their identity
- boys who do not consciously search for an identity which would determine their actions

Problems with identity may emerge during adolescence. They manifest in experimentation and trying things out for example. The activity described above may help to shorten the duration of this phase.

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<http://www.bzga.de/?uid=97630f2a8d44df30a7231a5b1d55a583&id=medien&sid=71&idx=42>

Further Information:

<http://griechische-sagen.de/>

http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liste_griechischer_Gottheiten

<http://www.rhodos-welten.de/gott/goetter.htm>

<http://www.geschiedenisvoorkinderen.nl/Griekengoden.htm>

http://www.jugendinfo.be/sexualitaet/beziehung_sexualitaet.html

<http://www.nasowas.org/download/hhbn.pdf>

Worksheet 1:

Describe Lewis Hamilton!



Which traits do you think are typically “masculine” and which do you think are more “feminine”?

Would you like to be like Bill Kaulitz? Why?

Worksheet 2:

Describe Bill Kaulitz!



Which traits do you think are typically “masculine” and which do you think are more “feminine”?

Would you like to be like Lewis Hamilton? Why?

Worksheet 3:

Who is Zeus?



- Zeus is the highest of the Olympic gods and hence the most powerful god.
- Zeus is the god of the sky, thunder and rain.
- Zeus was married to Hera.
- Zeus had a brother called Poseidon, the god of the sea.
- Zeus is also called Jupiter.

How is Zeus portrayed?

- He is frequently portrayed as a powerful man with a beard, who sits on a throne.

If Zeus is in you,

... your strengths are:

- you like to be the guide/leader
- you are also prepared to take a risk to achieve something
- you like to show that you have something to say too
- you want your family and friends to respect you
- you have a strong will and like to take the initiative
- you like to be in control

... you occasionally have a hard time because

- you expect everyone to think 'you are right'
- you tend to want power for yourself alone and shut others out
- you tend to conceal your real feelings
- you tend to want to have the last word

... so at a later stage of your career you will look for

- a job with a managerial function
- a job in which you can take the initiative
- a job which plays a very important part in your life

... then be aware

- that it would be better for you to be your own boss and not have to work together with other people
- you set great store by compliments

Does this apply to you too?

Worksheet 4:

Who is Poseidon?



- Poseidon is the god of the sea, storms, earthquakes and unexpected natural disasters.
- He is the brother of Zeus and Hades.
- Poseidon is also called Neptune.

How is Poseidon portrayed?

- He is portrayed as a bearded and majestic figure, holding a trident.
- He drives his chariot pulled by white horses over the waves of the sea.
- He is surrounded by playful sea monsters.

If Poseidon is in you,

... your strengths are:

- you are an emotional boy
- you react very spontaneously
- you are very creative
- you are committed to what you do
- you can sense what others are feeling
- you are independent and believe in your abilities

... you occasionally have a hard time because

- you are occasionally too impulsive
- you want everything immediately
- you are far too preoccupied with yourself
- you can't bear to lose and are vindictive

... so at a later stage of your career you will look for

- a job in which you can use your temperament
- a job in the creative world, e.g. in advertising, the theatre, in art, culture...

... then be aware

- that your emotions sometimes prevent you from thinking and working strategically
- your friends / colleagues sometimes have a hard time with your emotionality

Does this apply to you too?

Worksheet 5:

Who is Aphrodite?



- Aphrodite is the goddess of love and beauty.
- She was the most beautiful of all the goddesses.
- She is the daughter of Zeus.
- She is also called Venus.

How is Aphrodite portrayed?

- She is usually depicted naked or semi-naked.
- She is often associated with doves, swans, roses and golden apples.

If Aphrodite is in you,

... your strengths are:

- you are very interested in art and music
- you enjoy contact with other people
- you are very spontaneous
- you know how to enjoy life
- you feel at ease with people, even if you don't know them well

... you occasionally have a hard time because

- you are easily bored
- you occasionally lack self-control
- you are occasionally untidy

... so at a later stage of your career you will look for

- a job with which you feel an emotional attachment
- a job with lots of variety
- a job which involves working with other people
- a job which allows you to be creative

... then be aware

- a job with repetitive tasks is not for you
- a job that is badly paid is preferable to a well paid, but boring job

Does this apply to you too?

Worksheet 6:

Who is Athena?



- Athena is a beautiful goddess of war.
- She is the guardian and counsellor of the City of Athens.
- She is the goddess of wisdom
- She is the daughter of Zeus.
- Athena is also called Minerva.

How is Athena portrayed?

- She is portrayed wearing body armour and a helmet and holding a shield and a lance and she usually has an owl with her.
- Her shield is adorned with snakes.

If Athena is in you,

... your strengths are:

- you are able to reflect on things and you have an extremely practical streak
- you are adaptable
- you want to achieve something and are prepared to work hard for it
- you are patient
- you have an eye for detail
- you are loyal
- you usually choose the 'golden mean'.

... you occasionally have a hard time because

- you sometimes give the impression of being too calculating
- you are all too often busy with school / work
- you only think about the end result and not whether the means to the end is right

... so at a later stage of your career you will look for

- a job which enables you to achieve something and you will work hard for it
- a job which requires you to think a lot
- a job where you preferably have male colleagues as you feel at ease with them

... then be aware

- that you are a person who will always work hard
- other people occasionally regard you as being too strong

Does this apply to you too?