

# Gender, grievance and bad behaviour at a NSW state high school, 1913-22

HELEN PROCTOR, UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY

*The bureaucratic methods of rational and uniform regulation developed in western democracies in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were anchored by the collection and preservation of large amounts of paperwork, within which it is possible to locate traces of interactions between state education authorities and the children and adults under their jurisdiction. In particular, documentary records were kept of instances where parents, teachers or students questioned or disrupted school authority. This article is a reading of the correspondence among families, teachers and bureaucrats collected on the NSW Department of Public Instruction files for one school, Parramatta High School, for the first decade of its existence. The article sets out to explore the exercise of bureaucratic power and the shaping of gender relations at an early coeducational state high school. The files reveal ways in which the school's disciplinary and pastoral duties towards boys and girls were viewed quite differently.*

In recent years the work of a number of historians of education has suggested ways in which studies of schooling from local, regional or community perspectives might inform our understanding of the purposes and practices of schooling, or challenge and alter what we see as important in education history. In a review of the United States literature in the early 1990s, Barbara Finkelstein (1992) argued that the study of small social contexts could provide a more human view of the experience of schooling than was to be found in larger analyses of systems and structure. She conceptualised community as a rich and important analytic category, foregrounding non-material dimensions of human behaviour and experience, notably the psychological and the cultural:

As a result of explorations of the role of community in educational history, schools acquire new dimensions and emerge as powerful structures of persuasion mediating between the increasingly differentiated worlds of men and women, young and old, parent and child, and household and work site. They appear as protracted group-learning settings within which teacher culture, youth culture, work culture, and the culture of the book form important new forms of human association, ways of feeling, believing and knowing. (Finkelstein 1992, pp.284-5)

While this emphasis on meaning and emotional life has scarcely been taken up in the Australian literature (Trimingham Jack 1997), at least one historian has argued persua-

sively that our understanding of Australian state education is top heavy with analyses of policy-makers and system-builders (Campbell 1999). There are few regional or local studies, and almost no histories of individual schools outside the commissioned or celebratory traditions. Craig Campbell and his co-authors have called for small regional and single school studies for the purpose of looking more closely at the making of various kinds of power relations: to explore in a grounded way the role of (secondary) schools 'as social institutions engaged in class formation, the making of youth cultures, the structuring of daily life, and gender order and identity making' (Campbell, Hooper and Fearnley-Sander 1999, p.117).

That it might be strategic to focus on particular sites and experience is also suggested by a body of Canadian research which explains the making of state schooling systems, and state schools, in terms of the working out of power relations between centralising bureaucratic authorities and local communities of parents, pupils and teachers (Curtis 1988, 1992; Gidney and Millar 1990). The state that emerges from Gidney and Millar's work on the 'invention' of the modern Canadian high school is complex, inconsistent, even self-contradictory. There is no seamless connection between policy and practice, and in fact it is possible for the intentions of policy-makers to be frustrated or derailed in the obdurate face of local practice. Resistance is less likely to be successful in Bruce Curtis's study, also of nineteenth-century Canada. For Curtis, the key operation of expanding systems of (compulsory, elementary) schooling is the imposition of bourgeois disciplinary regimes. Central to his analysis are interpretations of the educative nature of bureaucratic practices, the routines of report writing and the work of early school inspectors. Disciplinary practices are directed not only towards the establishment of order in new settings which organised and mixed adults and minors in different ways, but also the more fundamental purpose of making good and well-behaved citizens – in the case of high schools, incorporating a project of middle-class formation.

More recently, in an international collection of essays, Kate Rousmaniere and her co-authors have theorised the state school as a principal site for the making of good citizens in the following terms:

Moral regulatory processes are integral to historical processes of state formation, especially to those hierarchical relations through which people are invited to see themselves as members of political communities, as simultaneously free individuals in, and as subordinate subjects to, regimes of government and rule. State schooling in capitalist societies forms an important set of sites where such invitations are differently offered, and where 'freedoms' are made available in ways that claim generality and equality, while producing and reproducing relations of power and difference. (Rousmaniere, Dehli and de Coninck-Smith 1997, p.6)

These sorts of perspectives and interpretations clearly present challenges in terms of sources. Historical records not only privilege the voices of metropolitan officials and elites, but also may appear silent about deeply embedded practices and beliefs (Rousmaniere et al 1997, p.10; Depaepe 1998, p.24). Nevertheless, the bureaucratic methods of rational and uniform regulation developed in western democracies in the nineteenth and

early twentieth centuries were anchored by the collection and preservation of large amounts of paperwork, within which it is possible to locate traces of interactions between state authorities and the children and adults under their jurisdiction. In this article I am reading the processes of moral regulation in one regional state high school, through sets of correspondence kept in the NSW Department of Public Instruction files between 1913 and 1922. The memoranda, reports and letters in the files mostly do not purport to address the careers of boys or girls as academic learners. Rather they are concerned with the development and maintenance of the school's material structures, the buildings and so on, with staffing, and with questions of order and discipline considered serious enough to need discussion beyond the hierarchical system of the school itself. They document cases in which small numbers of unruly parents, students and teachers question or resist the school's or the department's authority in some way, thus occasionally forcing the headmaster or senior inspectors to explain practices, rituals or structures which might at other times be taken for granted. The incidents become visible in the exchange of formal communication among parents, students, teachers, the headmaster and senior bureaucrats, as they negotiate notions of correct behaviour, complicated by power relations of class, age and gender.

I am interested in the drama of the shape as well as of the content of these exchanges: the methods of persuasion tried out by supplicants to the department, and the formal patterns of bureaucratic information gathering and reporting which contain the voices of central office. While some of the petitioners' grievances are passionately expressed, and clearly quite deeply felt, the language of the reports assembled by departmental officers is characteristically magisterial, and the letters and memos sent out from central office almost uniformly brief and bloodless.

Parramatta High School was established in 1913 as part of the ambitious expansion of state secondary education in NSW associated with the *Universities Amendment Act* of 1912. Editorialised in the local paper both as 'the Oxford of Australia' and 'the people's school' ('The park encroachment' 1913; 'The new high school' 1914), Parramatta High School was an elite, meritocratic institution; a step on the department's educational ladder between compulsory elementary schooling and the Sydney University. It was also one of the earliest coeducational or 'mixed' high schools in NSW, and for some decades the only one in Sydney despite plans to remove the girls to a separate site, which came close to fruition in the late 1920s (Parramatta High School files, 3 August 1928 to 29 January 1931). Fundamental to my project is the opportunity to examine an institution which had to accommodate in some way the circumstances and aspirations of both boys and girls as students, and both men and women as professional teachers. Unlike early public statements by the headmaster and other officials, which rarely allude to or describe separate educational experiences or vocational destinations for boys and girls at Parramatta High School, the confidential departmental files reveal ways in which the school's disciplinary and pastoral duties towards boys and girls were viewed quite differently. The policing of gender order emerges as a central preoccupation of the disciplining of the Parramatta High School population.

## SAFEGUARDING GIRLS

'Coeducation' is a term with different meanings in different settings and historical periods. One of the main lines of investigation of the doctoral research from which this article is drawn is to find out what was intended and feared about the mixing of the sexes for the period when coeducation was still a minority experience for secondary school students and their teachers. While coeducation is nowhere theorised or justified in the department files on Parramatta High School, it is often represented as a special set of circumstances. Among the earliest papers on file is a report by William Elliott, Inspector of Secondary Schools, concerning a male teacher, Mr Schrader, reprimanded in 1913 for interfering with the supervision and organisation of girls' tennis (Elliott's report, 20 September 1913). The exact nature of his misdemeanour is unclear. Elliott has been called out to the school by the headmaster, after 'complaints by the women teachers', in what seems to contain elements of a demarcation dispute. Nevertheless, Elliott recommends that the teacher be transferred as soon as possible to a boys' school, finding that 'in a mixed school such interference cannot be too strongly deprecated'.

That there are special responsibilities in a mixed school is also seen in the case of a 15-year-old pupil, Frank Drayton, who in 1918 is suspended from school for passing a note in class containing an off-colour joke. The boy is in extra trouble because he passed the note to a girl. In the ensuing investigation the girl testifies that she did not read the note, being 'busy with my arithmetic', and Drayton apologises, writing in his own defence that the joke 'was not meant for the girl but the boy behind her' (Record of investigation, c.15 July 1918; Drayton to Atkins, 8 July 1918). In recommending Drayton's expulsion, the local school inspector investigating the case (deputing for Elliott who is away) summarises his reasoning as follows: 'The painful part of the affair is that, whilst one does not wish to be too hard upon a boy, one also has to consider the welfare of the other pupils, and especially the girls who attend a school of both sexes' (Blumer to Dawson, 15 July 1918). He is, however, overruled by J. Dawson, the Chief Inspector of schools, who 'consider[s] that at the opening of his career the young chap should not be so heavily handicapped in order to point a moral' (Dawson to P. Board, Director of Education, 18 July 1918). Drayton is given a second chance.

The headmaster for this period, William Atkins, whose voice carries very strongly through the files, appears ambivalent about having charge of a mixed school. In 1917, for example, he writes to the Chief Inspector asking for a reclassification of the school from second-class to first-class high school (which would have the effect of increasing his salary and staffing levels), on the grounds that the presence of girls in his school makes extra work:

The duties incidental to the government and organisation of this large staff and body of pupils are the more severe and taxing on account of the coeducation of the sexes, and demand tact and forethought which, perhaps, even a larger school consisting of boys would not require. (Atkins to Dawson, 29 November 1917)

On another occasion, finding himself in a dispute over timetables with the itinerant teacher of girls' physical culture, Atkins complains to Dawson for more than three pages

of the trouble he has taken to try to provide 'for both boys and girls to get equal treatment in the matter of lessons' (Atkins to Dawson, 8 July 1918). His 'difficulties' which 'do not, of course, arise in a purely girls' school' include issues such as 'the question of change of costume'. 'Girls [in a girls' school] can come to ordinary classes in their training costume, a proceeding which is, of course, out of place where there are boys.' By 1919, Atkins was writing to Dawson urging the purchase of a nearby local property as 'a possible site for a future separate girls' high school' (Atkins to Dawson, 14 October 1919).

While individual boys appear on the files episodically, creating problems which call for punishment or reprimand of some kind, it is the collective bodies of girls that are represented as requiring more constant vigilance. The extra consideration apparently demanded by girls arises from anxieties about health and respectability, issues which are raised in slightly different ways by teachers and parents. The disputes about sports supervision already discussed are initiated by women teachers and complicated by struggles for authority with their male colleagues and superiors. While the documentation of the Schrader case, over tennis supervision, is very thin, it does seem that the women teachers who complain about him are protecting their own territory, in having charge of girls' sports, along with the girls' respectability. Similarly, Ella Gormley, the visiting physical culture teacher referred to above, is refusing to alter her weekly travel arrangements to coordinate with the boys' cadet drill.

The mixed high school poses a particular set of problems for female teachers. Promotion positions such as subject mistress and principal were effectively only available to women teaching in an all-female environment, and the 'School Notes' in the *Parramatta High School Magazine* regularly record farewells to female teachers leaving for promotions to girls' schools. When a reclassification of Parramatta High School in 1919 leads to the creation of several more promotion positions – all taken by men – the altered balance of sexes on the staff is described with some bite in the magazine:

We now have eight gentlemen instead of five. The school has become quite masculine in tone. Much more frequently now, interspersed with the silvery cadences of the voice feminine, one hears the booming bass and resonant roll of man ... At lunch time the sound of seven male voices, discussing with much vigor the faults of Single Tax, the burden of superannuation or some other such political topic, gives one quite a feeling of protection. (*Parramatta High School Magazine*, June 1919, p.187)

With other paths to leadership or authority partly closed off, one area of expertise in which women might remain unchallenged was the special care of girls' morals and bodies. One lady teacher who attempts to carve out a career for herself in this way at Parramatta High School is Miss Meta Latreille. Miss Latreille, 39 when she enters the state teaching service in 1917, first applies for a promotion to Mistress of Modern Languages in January 1918, writing, 'I am anxious to get a position which will give me fuller scope for my experience' (Latreille to Dawson, 4 January 1918). When this is unsuccessful – 'there is no mistress-ship vacant' (Dawson to Latreille, 25 January 1918) – she writes to the Chief Inspector suggesting the creation of a position of Mistress in Charge of Girls in Mixed Schools:

## PROCTOR

There are many questions, especially those relating to health, sport, behaviour and dress, which can best be handled by a woman, who could interview mothers anxious about their daughters' welfare. An arrangement such as this would greatly relieve the headmaster.

I saw the advantage of this system, which is now pretty generally adopted, when I was visiting schools in England, and especially at the secondary school Hendon, one of London's latest Mixed Schools.

The matter has also been more particularly brought to my notice lately by a trained nurse, who tells me she has been appealed to by a mother, troubled about the health of her daughter at one of the Schools. (Latreille to Dawson, 28 June 1918)

William Elliott is asked to report, finding:

A wise Head Master would naturally consult the most experienced woman assistant on his staff and refer mothers to her in all questions relating to their daughters' health. In other matters such as sport, dress etc the women assistants should use their influence without regulations.

There is, however, much to be said for Miss Latreille's suggestion, provided it could be carried out without inducing friction between the Head Master and the appointee ... It should be made clear that the position is in no sense independent of the Head Master's authority and that the duties are such as he may delegate. (Elliott to Dawson, 26 July 1918)

Both Dawson and Peter Board, Director of Education, agree in principle with the proposal to appoint a girls' mistress, but it does not go ahead due to cost (Dawson to Board, 8 August 1918; Board to Dawson, 18 August 1918). As this possibility falls through for Latreille she applies for the position of Subject Mistress of Modern Languages at Parramatta High School, suggesting that, while she is 'aware that these positions in Mixed Schools have hitherto been granted to men', the department might, 'in view of the Limitation of Funds', consider the appointment 'a Lady who could also undertake the charge of the girls' (Latreille to Dawson, 9 November 1918). Her strategy is not only unsuccessful, but quite hostilely received. Elliott reports:

I do not recommend Miss Latreille's appointment to a Mistress-ship, either in a Girls' or a Mixed School. In my opinion she has not the personal qualifications necessary and, if she were appointed, I should expect difficulties with members of the staff over whom she had control.

Further, if it were proposed to appoint Mistresses of Subjects in Mixed Schools (under whom male assistants would have to work), there are other teachers in the Service with equal or better qualifications and longer service than Miss Latreille. (Elliott's report, 14 November 1918)

The promotion position of Mistress in Charge of Girls was, however, created at Parramatta High School in 1920.

There are a number of letters in the school files from parents concerned for their daughters' moral and physical safety. Train travel is a recurrent problem. In 1918 one

father from Katoomba withdraws his daughter from the school because the daily train travel is 'prejudicial to her health' (Record of conversation Lawrie and Education Minister, 13 August 1918). Another father (it is mostly the fathers who communicate with the department) writes to say that his daughter will not be able to attend secondary school at all if compelled by the department to attend at Parramatta High School as 'she would have to wait two or three quarters of an hour for the train or loiter about on the streets all that time' (Kirwan to Education Department, 12 February 1913). He wants her to attend Fort Street High School as 'in Sydney she has my sister (with whom to) to spend her spare time'. Whether or not this is a 'ruse' as Atkins suspects of another submission by a parent for their daughter to transfer to Sydney Girls' High to study botany (Atkins to Dawson, 21 May 1919), clearly the parent believes that the dangers of 'loitering' might persuade the department to waive its rules about attending the school nearest home. In the event, the request was denied, after Atkins furnished a report about the pains he has taken to safeguard train travellers: the five or more pupils who catch that train are supervised, studying, on school premises, 'the surroundings of the school here are quiet and pupils are safe from any serious temptations', and in any case Parramatta is a safer place than Sydney (Atkins to Dawson, 19 February 1913).

While these sorts of concerns are not, of course, limited to girls in coeducational schools, there are ways in which mixing creates extra problems. The sorts of dangers that may beset girls are suggested by a 1917 case in which Peter Board is informed by a deputation of residents from Katoomba of 'undesirable conduct of boys and girls travelling to and from school in Western trains' (Board to Atkins, 17 August 1917). One girl has told her mother that "'three of her friends had been kissed by the boys travelling in the same carriage, and that the boys make bets that they will kiss the girls so many times going up and down the train"'. Asked by the department to 'caution the boys of your school ... as to their behaviour', and clearly responding to an implied reprimand, headmaster Atkins offers the following careful, definitive version of the misdemeanours and of his action in response:

Three girls of this school have been subjected to the treatment complained of, quite against their wills as they declare. They name boys attending four schools other than Parramatta High School ... in addition to two boys attending this school.

The undesirable conduct ... stopped in consequence of a rebuke which I gave ... occasioned by my having knowledge of somewhat noisy conduct on the part of some boys and the use of water squirts. I also had heard that some of the girls were a little noisy in calling to one another and strolled up and down the platform more than was necessary. I hinted at other possible misconduct, of which, however, at the time I had no positive knowledge, and forbade boys and girls to travel in the same carriages. This caused the whole of the objectionable conduct to cease at once according to all the witnesses examined so far. (Atkins to Board, 23 August 1917)

As well as implicating boys from other schools, the Parramatta High School girls questioned by Atkins tell him of the bad example set for the boys by 'young women students attending the Metropolitan Business College in Sydney [who] have been kissed in the

same carriage and in their presence by a young man who goes to business in Sydney'. 'The evil', concludes Atkins, 'is a difficult one to overcome' and 'generally occurs with First Year students who have not yet been influenced strongly by the tone of the school'. He suggests that adults, prefects and 'elder pupils' might assist his efforts by reporting wrongdoing.

Central to the high school's project of the production of ordered, orderly subjects is the instilling of habits of self-control over pupils' bodies. The girls and boys on the western trains have declined to keep still, or quiet, or, more alarmingly, to postpone sexual activity. In defence of his students, and of the efficacy of his own authority over them, Atkins finds the girls unwilling accomplices in the kissing game, and the boys, although culpable, subject to bad influences from unregulated women from the world outside the school's control. The solutions he offers are indicative of the high school's disciplinary regime: increased regulation of pupils' movements and surveillance by adults and senior pupils of the young and impressionable.

Concern for the safety of travelling girls extends to consideration of providing state supported or endorsed residential accommodation near the school. In 1918 Atkins endorses 'Mrs and Miss Waugh' of 'Tara' as candidates to run the operation, 'ladies of refinement and education', one of whom 'conducted a private school for several years' (Atkins to Dawson, November 1918). He adds that, should the project go ahead, the 'ladies' would arrange for their current 'gentlemen boarders' to move elsewhere. These arrangements apparently did not work out because in late 1919 he suggested the department set up its own boarding house, speculating that 'some girls, no doubt, do not attend the school at all for want of such a place to stay as the hostel would provide' (Atkins to Dawson, 14 October 1919). In 1921 the issue is raised again – Atkins claims to Elliott that girls have been removed from the school because of problems with travel and accommodation – before it finally lapses (Atkins to Elliott, 29 August 1921).

One father, however, suggests that there should be limits to the school's assumption of parental responsibilities, requesting that his daughter be removed from 'sex hygiene' lectures (Johnstone to Atkins, 3 August 1921). 'She has already received all the instruction necessary', he writes, 'and in what I consider is the only right and proper way – privately and individually'. Moreover, he wishes the department to reconsider providing such instruction to any of the children under its care:

I have the greatest misgiving concerning putting these matters before young people collectively as it opens the door for discussion among themselves afterwards and experience both as a teacher and a clergyman has convinced me of the evils attending such conversation whether among girls or boys.

The writer expresses himself with the confidence of a local dignitary – he is rector of Parramatta's leading Anglican church – in urging the department to educate parents to take private responsibility for this 'question fraught with such grave issues to the welfare of the state'. The letter is addressed to Atkins, who is apparently somewhat caught between the Rev. Johnstone, an 'unofficial' patron of the school (*Parramatta High School Magazine*,



December 1918, p.137), and departmental policy. He passes it on to Elliott with a covering note in which he says he presumes that 'the matter has been carefully considered by the Medical Superintendent' and outlines the precautions he has taken in ensuring the course's suitability:

the doctor herself informed me that it would be confined to matters relating to the female sex ... Miss Collins, Superintendent of the girls, who has attended the lectures given up to the present, is quite satisfied that the matters, so far treated, are free from the possibility of anyone's criticism. (Atkins to Elliott, 3 August 1921)

In accordance with its convention, the department responds only to that part of Johnstone's letter which can be easily answered by existing regulation and accedes to Johnstone's request to withdraw his daughter from any lectures which might contain material about sex hygiene (Elliott to Atkins, 4 August 1921).

### MAKING MEN

A large amount of the official policy talk around the establishment of high schools like Parramatta was ostensibly 'gender blind', in the style of the following, much-adapted core statement from the Minister of Public Instruction's report of 1912:

It is possible for every boy or girl in this State who possesses the requisite ability and determination to pass from the public schools to any profession, whose doors can be entered only through the University, whatever the social or financial status of the parent. (NSW Department of Public Instruction 1913, p.1)

Less frequently it can be understood from public statements that girls and boys are being addressed in different ways. This tends to occur in discussions about the vocational purposes of high schools, where the theoretical future worker is usually represented as male. In speeches made at various local meetings just before the high school opened, for example, headmaster Atkins finds it necessary to assure prospective high school parents that, while their 'boy' may forgo a weekly wage in the short term to complete their studies, a high school graduate will in the longer term have much increased earning potential ('High schools' 1913; 'High school education' 1913).

Similarly, boys are represented in the Parramatta High School files as having potential or actual autonomy in a way that is not the case with girls. Boys' parents, or boys themselves, apparently unconcerned about health and respectability, consult or question the department about work issues. Reg Mottershead, for example, in 1913, seeking entry to the high school, asks to be exempted from part of the four-year course as he is already nineteen (Mottershead to Under Secretary, 22 May 1913). He is invited to 'present himself to the headmaster and "consult"' (Board to Mottershead, 25 May 1913). In 1921 a father writes to transfer his son to a commercial high school course on the grounds that 'should my health fail me my son will have to leave school at the finish of the first three years, and then strike out for meeting the different contingencies of life' (MacMahon to Board, 21 December 1921).

At other times boys' parents appear in the files responding to various kinds of summonses about their sons' bad behaviour. The punishment of disruptive students was mostly carried out within the school, without recourse to central office, and only brought to the attention of the department when expulsion was being considered. For this period there are no records of individual girls going through this process. For the boys whose misdemeanours are argued through the files, however, investigations are carried out or judgements made based on assessments of character and motivation which presuppose capacities for independent decision-making not accorded to the passive, mostly anonymous girls who appear elsewhere on the files. The tension or struggle in the boys' cases is located in the transition from childhood to adulthood. Unruly boys have problems in achieving the equilibrium between autonomy and compliance which is demanded by the school setting. The decisions made by the authorities turn on evaluations of 'self-control' and corrigibility.

The school files offer insights into the technologies of observation, reporting and investigation developed and employed by the department. One of the ways for disciplinary action to be precipitated is by evidence in pro forma quarterly reports. As well as summarising academic activity according to categories like 'attention to school work' and 'progress', the reports provide for evaluation of 'conduct', 'punctuality', 'diligence in home study'. In the most strongly contested case on file, discussed further below, a senior student, Donald McDonald, risks losing his teachers' scholarship, and his chances of future employment in the state teaching service, after his conduct is found 'not satisfactory' in the mid-year report of his Leaving Certificate year (Quarterly report on Donald J. McDonald, 16 June 1916). The section for 'remarks' at the bottom of the page provides the headmaster with an opportunity to describe the student as 'impertinent' and lacking in 'self-control'.

Another boy's expulsion occurs after failing to respond to pro forma warning letters about his behaviour. Among a number of other infringements, mostly, presumably, observed by teachers, this student also runs foul of the prefects: 'this quarter he has been reported three times in a week by prefects for offensive language and violent and mischievous behaviour' (Board to Kidd, 12 April 1918). After Atkins concludes that the boy is 'incurable' and 'the leader of other boys in all kinds of disorder and larrikin-like conduct', a letter is sent to the student's father from the Director of Education informing him that his son 'has evidently no inclination to take advantage of his educational opportunities' and that 'it would appear better in his own interests that he should be placed in some employment' (Atkins to Elliott, 19 April 1918; Board to Kidd, 2 May 1918).

In the cases of Frank Drayton, the writer of the rough joke described earlier in this article, and Donald McDonald, departmental inspectors are dispatched to the school to conduct formal inquiries. Witnesses are called, and parties to the dispute invited to give evidence in a show of fairness, accountability and due process. The relatively quick resolution of Drayton's case is accomplished through his readiness to apologise, as well as his savvy in admitting only to the lesser part of the offence. Donald McDonald, however, at 17 years of age, is less willing to defer to school authority. The headmaster has remarked

on McDonald's report that he 'has been impertinent to one of staff on two occasions in the past twelve months, the last occasion being quite recently. Makes facile but almost obviously insincere apologies. Seems to have little balance or self-control.' In a fuller, non-public memorandum to Peter Board, Atkins expands on these views, using more of the vocabulary of classroom power relations (Atkins to Board, 4 July 1916). Donald McDonald's character, despite 'much that might develop into good', is 'impulsive and ill-balanced'. He has been previously reprimanded for his 'insubordinate attitude', 'boisterous conduct', 'disrespect', 'insolence' and 'provocation' and:

the accumulation of offences caused me to consider it my duty to report as I have done with the object of impressing him with the need of a more earnest amendment of his faults and with the object also of informing the Department, more particularly in the case of a lad seeking to fill the office of a teacher.

As it transpires, the pivotal incident has been a confrontation between McDonald and a science teacher, Mr Booth, in which the student refused to apologise for his 'impertinence and insubordination' (Elliott's report, c.18 August 1918). Angry letters from McDonald and his father to the department include the counter-accusation that Mr Booth struck the student on the face. Several readings of this event are offered by participants which differ not only in factual detail and but also in interpretation. The stakes are high for McDonald, who stands to lose his studentship. The consequences for the teacher are less clear cut, but corporal punishment, especially administered in the heat of the moment, was officially frowned upon. His promotion prospects might be jeopardised and he certainly risks having a formal censure on his record. In the words of the department's 'Circular No. 61', 'the estimate of a teacher's efficiency will be affected by the extent to which the effective government of the school is secured without resort to the use of corporal punishment' (NSW Department of Public Instruction 1914).

In their letters, both Donald McDonald and his father correctly read the seriousness of the allegation of want of 'self-control'. They insist that, rather than out of want of self-control, his defiance of the teacher was in defence of family honour, as Booth had accused his younger brother of obscene writing on a science room desk (D. McDonald to Bursary Endowment Board, 26 June 1916; J. McDonald to Board, 26 June 1916). According to Mr McDonald, his elder son:

was only defending the honour of his young Brother which you will admit was Perfectly right for him to do but why a teacher should so far forget himself as to assault the boy by striking him in the face with his fist and then call upon him for an apology is beyond all reason.

Mr McDonald's letter offers a particularly interesting interpretation of power relations in the senior classroom: 'This teacher did not forget to give it out in front of the other class and Boasted that He had made one of the big boys climb down is this the spirit of a gentleman I think not'.

Atkins, asked by Peter Board to comment, defends his teacher, up to a point, as a man who lost his 'self command' under provocation and who struck the pupil with only

## PROCTOR

'the tips of his fingers' (Atkins to Board, 4 July 1916). W.J. Elliott is sent into the school to conduct a formal inquiry in which he questions Donald McDonald and Mr Booth 'separately and together in the presence of the Head Master' (Elliott's report, c.18 August 1918). Central to his investigation is the pinning down of the true narrative:

The charge of impertinence and insubordination against McDonald was proved at once by the boy's admission that he used the following words to Mr Booth – 'I don't care whether you like it or not' – in reply to a statement by Mr Booth that he did not like his (McDonald's) attitude.

But Elliott is unable to establish to his satisfaction exactly what was said about the younger brother, nor exactly whether McDonald was struck with a fist or an open hand, although it is agreed that 'the hand just touched his face'.

He evaluates McDonald's character as immature but not incorrigible, 'The boy did not appear to me to have an objectionable manner or to be insincere but to be impulsive and wanting at present in self-control' and concludes that 'both master and boy lost their tempers'. Booth is in as much trouble for acting without authorisation as for violence. Elliott remarks:

The master should not have undertaken the inquiry into the writing on the desk. Such an inquiry should have been in the hands of the Head master. Mr Booth did not appear to me to have carried out the inquiry wisely but rather in the manner of an amateur detective.

Elliott's own ostensibly even-handed investigation produces results and he recommends that the boy retain his studentship, dependent on future good conduct, and that Booth be 'admonished for his want of control of hand and speech'. Elliott further suggests that, in view of Booth's good teaching record at Parramatta High School, 'the censure not be formally recorded against him'.

## CONCLUSION

The correspondence files kept by the Department of Public Instruction on Parramatta High School offer a number of insights into the processes of moral regulation and the administration of gender at an early coeducational state high school. While in other settings and other sets of sources the discourses of gender are frequently muted or elusive, notably in early discussions of the meritocratic purposes of high schooling, a reading of the school files reveals gender to have been central to the organisation of discipline and pastoral care. That girl students were passively and collectively in need of protection from physical and moral harm was understood by the headmaster, trying, among other things, to persuade the department to establish a hostel, by female teachers attempting to build careers in the state high school system, and by parents, worried about the hazards of train travel. Boys are represented quite differently in the files, as potential adults and future workers. Problems arise when they are unable to resolve to their teachers' satisfaction the tensions between adult male autonomy, and the docility and compliance

demanding of the school pupil. Constructed around the boys' disciplinary cases in particular are the technologies of investigation and reporting pioneered in the early elementary schools.

## REFERENCES

- Campbell, C. (1999) 'The social origins of Australian state high schools: An historiographical review', in C. Campbell, C. Hooper & M. Fearnley-Sander, *Towards the State High School in Australia*, Sydney: Australian and New Zealand History of Education Society, pp.9-27.
- Campbell, C., Hooper, C. & Fearnley-Sander, M. (1999) 'The state high school in history', in C. Campbell et al, *Towards the State High School in Australia*, Sydney: ANZHES.
- Curtis, B. (1988) *Building the Educational State: Canada West, 1836-1871*, London, Ontario: The Falmer Press.
- Curtis, B. (1992) *True Government by Choice Men? Inspection, Education and State Formation in Canada West*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Depaepe, M. (1998) 'Educationalisation: a key concept in understanding the basic processes in the history of western education', in *History of Education Review*, 27(2), pp.16-28.
- Finkelstein, B. (1992) 'Education historians as mythmakers', *Review of Research in Education*, 18, pp.284-285.
- Gidney, R. & Millar, W. (1990) *Inventing Secondary Education: The Rise of the High School in Nineteenth-century Ontario*, Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press.
- 'The new high school' (1914) *The Cumberland Argus and Fruitgrowers' Advocate*, 19 December.
- 'High school education: address by local headmaster' (1912) *The Cumberland Argus and Fruitgrowers' Advocate*, 11 December.
- 'High schools: address by Mr. W.L. Atkins BA' (1913) *The Cumberland Argus and Fruitgrowers' Advocate*, 26 March.
- NSW Department of Public Instruction (1913) *Annual Report of the Minister for Public Instruction for the Year 1912*, Sydney: Government Printer.
- NSW Department of Public Instruction (1914) Circular No. 61, *Public Instruction Gazette*, 8(4), p.114.
- NSW Department of Public Instruction (1913-1931) Parramatta High School files 1913-1925, 5/17284; 1930-31 5/17285.3 State Records of NSW.
- 'The park encroachment' (1913) Editorial, *The Cumberland Argus and Fruitgrowers' Advocate*, 1 March. *The Parramatta High School Magazine*, December 1918; June 1919.
- Rousmaniere, K., Dehli, K. & de Coninck-Smith, N. (1997) 'Moral regulation and schooling: an introduction', in Rousmaniere et al (eds) *Discipline, Moral Regulation and Schooling: A Social History*, New York: Garland Publishing.
- Trimingham Jack, C. (1997) 'School history: reconstructing the lived experience', *History of Education Review*, 26(1), pp.42-55.