

Lack of Adult Male Role Models in Secondary Schools of Armenia and Its Impact on Armenian Male Teenagers' Conceptualizations of Masculinities

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Abstract

This project addresses the probable influence of adult male under-representation in secondary schools of the Republic of Armenia with reference to its possible effects on the development of male teenagers' perceptions on gender roles and associated values, specifically related to the construct of masculinity. It links the emergence of asocial behavior and negative crime statistics among Armenian male juveniles with international research findings regarding the impacts of feminized schools on male juveniles.

Introduction

"The information necessary to create a male is encoded in our DNA, but it takes all the institutions of a culture to produce a man. The male body is the biologically given hardware, the myth that manhood is the software inserted by society through a series of formal and informal rites of passage". Sandor McNab¹

Armenia, formerly a Soviet Republic and currently a developing country, witnessed intensive political, industrial and social reforms for the past 15 years while transforming into a market economy. The newly established independent republic since its inception has needed to break away from the programmed and routine social policies inherited from the Soviet regime and enter into a completely different phase of creating and institutionalizing new public policies and processes. While some upgraded and/or newly adopted policies addressed and refreshed the management and functionality of some public administration areas, many areas falling within the same public administration framework remained unvisited and unquestioned. While the importance of other areas is not underestimated, this project addresses one of the vastly disregarded public administration themes. It explores the lack of gender balance reinforcement among educating staff in Armenian secondary schools and dwells on its consequences tied to the establishment and promotion of masculinity concepts among Armenian male juveniles.

To achieve the objectives set, the project focuses on the following 3 key social phenomena:

1. Excessive under-representation of adult Armenian male educators in Armenian secondary schools
2. Very high rates of long-term emigration among married Armenian males
3. High rates of direct or indirect, full or partial participation in crime by male juveniles.

Through interpreting the possible interrelations and overlapping impact of the phenomena stated above, the project directs the cumulative effect of the first two phenomena onto the adolescent development processes that empower the construction of Armenian male juvenile masculinity. The juvenile crime rate is merely utilized as a proxy instrument to provide evidence that the combined influence of male absence at school and at home results in misconstructions of male gender values and wrong behavior in male adolescents.

Linking Issue-based Armenia Context with International Research

Careful review of research exploring gender themes in Armenia indicates gender issues in the country are currently under-evaluated and translated predominantly into women's issues. Most of the recommendations drawn from different research suggest special policies to support and reinforce their integration into traditionally male-dominated areas. The current project considers it is a critical oversight to ignore those important areas where significant under-representation of men is apparent. In the long-term view, doing so ensures a catastrophic outcome for the Armenian male, the Armenian family unit and Armenian society in general.

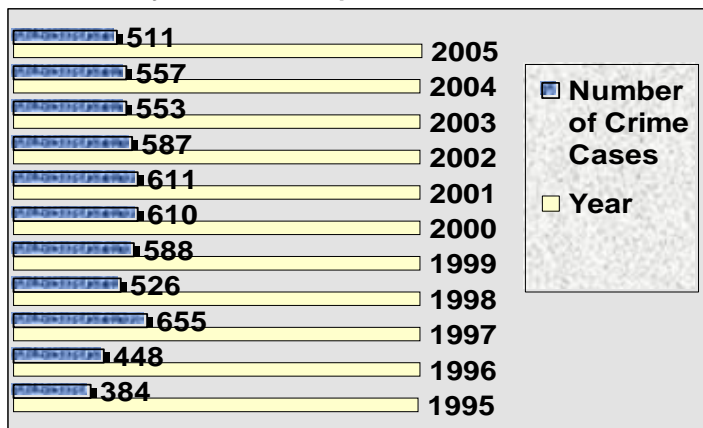
Due to the exchange and mobility of academic thought resulting from recent globalization processes, social research has gained importance of international character: open access to different research has allowed researchers from diverse countries to detect interrelation and common patterns of problem areas in their countries, thus helping the international research community to build on one another's work. The current project was initiated from the implications and findings frequently communicated throughout those research initiatives. It acknowledges the significance of international material on gender roles and the influence of adult role models on the development and maturity of adolescents' identity.

The recent repeated scandalous cases of young male violence, especially in educational institutions of the U.S. and Canada raised in the West an unprecedented fear among citizens and a serious academic debate among researchers exploring education, psychology, gender and restorative justice issues². As Diane Ravitch³ claims in one of her writings on gender biases, in schools of the U.S. girls do not face special self-esteem crisis while “boys, in the meantime, are killing themselves and each other at alarming rates”. She argues that “if either sex is in trouble in our society, it is the males”.

Myra and David Sadkers⁴ come to support Ravitch in that “while boys rise to the top of the class, they also land at the bottom. Labeled as problems in need of special control or assistance, boys are more likely to fail a course, miss promotion, or drop out of school. Prone to take risks, they jeopardize not only their academic future but their lives as they dominate accident, suicide, and homicide statistics”. While different researchers identify various rationales for the asocial and/or destructive behavior among teenage males, many researchers signal a common concern that the lack of adult male role models at schools, versus the casual abundance of these models in the street, in the virtual world of Internet and television, is one of the reasons for uncontrolled and undesirable manifestations of youth masculinity.⁵

In connection with the above-described researches, male juvenile aggression and asocial behavior, even in the light of superficial analyses of countrywide crime official accounts⁶ (see Table 1), can be identified as a challenge in Armenia. The actual rate of youth crime is believed to be higher because the cases do not always get reported to respective officials⁷. It is explicitly clear that the theme picture could be more comprehensive and better represented if statistics for the last two years was also provided; however, the research was unable to get final official statistics for the recent two years, while the figures quoted through several non-official sources had some mismatches, therefore the research withdrew from referencing them.

Table 1: Statistics on Crime Rate Committed by or with Participation of Juveniles 1995-2005



The statistics on crime rate committed by or with the participation of juveniles, when represented per gender share, provides substantial evidence that Armenian male juveniles, in contrast to their female peers, manifest quite high levels of irresponsible and negative behavior patterns (see Table 2).

Table 2: Juvenile Crime throughout 2002-2004 By Types of Crimes and Gender Composition (in %)⁸

| | 2002 | | 2003 | | 2004 | |
|------------------------|---------------------------------------|-------|---------------------------------------|------|---------------------------------------|------|
| | Gender Distribution Per Type of Crime | | Gender Distribution Per Type of Crime | | Gender Distribution Per Type of Crime | |
| | Girls | Boys | Girls | Boys | Girls | Boys |
| Intentional Homicide | - | - | - | 100 | - | 100 |
| Attempted Homicide | - | 100 | - | 100 | - | 100 |
| Grievous Bodily Injury | 4.3 | 95.7 | - | 100 | - | 100 |
| Theft | 1.7 | 98.3 | 2.0 | 98.0 | 1.4 | 98.6 |
| Larceny | - | 100 | 7.7 | 92.3 | - | 100 |
| Robbery | 13.3 | 86.7 | - | 100 | - | 100 |
| Fraud | - | - | - | 100 | - | 100 |
| Hooliganism | 5 | 95.0 | - | 100 | 3.6 | 96.4 |
| Drug Addiction | - | 100.0 | - | - | - | 100 |

| | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|------------|-------------|------------|-------------|------------|-------------|
| Illegal Storage, Carrying of Weapons | 2.9 | 97.1 | - | 100 | - | 100 |
| Other Crimes | 3 | 97.0 | 4.8 | 95.2 | 3.0 | 97.0 |
| Total Crime % Per Gender | 2.9 | 97.1 | 2.5 | 97.5 | 1.4 | 98.6 |

The opinions communicated by field experts supplemented by national statistics confirm that negative behavior tendencies and crime rates of post school adolescent Armenian males have become alarming (*even though a slight decrease of rate has been recorded for the last two years, as it can be seen from Table 1*). Unfortunately this issue is not given appropriate public visibility in Armenia.

Many countries, when observing an advent of new waves of male juvenile delinquent behavior or consistent negative record trends, have summoned for research and introduced different assistance programs into the risk areas. As the current paper will further elaborate, significant research ties the juvenile male social behavior with feminized schools. In general, internationally it is observed that a male educator is becoming very much of an “extinct species” in school life.

The statistics on male educator enrollment in Armenian schools also leaves little room for comfort. Throughout her 7-year field travel related to the Armenia School Connectivity Program⁹, the author visited more than 600 out of 1468 Armenian secondary public schools. Her intense observations, followed by her official inquiries with the Armenian Ministry of Education and Science confirmed that according to Aug. 2007 data, out of approximately 45,200 teaching staff working in general schools, women constitute 84%. One may argue that feminized schools are not an utterly new phenomenon in Armenia and that the imbalanced gender teaching staff has been a feature typical of the Soviet educational system as well. Therefore, the theme should not now generate specific concerns. Unfortunately, there is insufficient statistical evidence to officially support or deny this argument. Yet, as counter-argument to this line of reasoning, the research relies on the opinions gathered throughout Armenia from experts and approximately 50 randomly selected adults of sufficient age to have graduated from the Soviet school system. Agreeing that Soviet secondary schools have also been short of male educators, the interviewed people verified that the current situation is not at all synonymous to that of the Soviet times because of several factors:

- They each were able to recollect the presence of at least 10-15 male educators teaching diverse subjects in their schools, confirming that in the historical context the teaching staff misbalance has never reached the current extreme level of feminization.
- The consequences of adult male under-representation in Soviet schools were not magnified by the dramatic rates of adult male long-term migration (regular absence from homes to acquire employment), which is the sadly observed current pattern.
- Even if we accept that the teacher’s job was not a highly paid occupation during the Soviet period, thus never being a beneficial employment for a breadwinning male, we also have to accept that it has never been one of the low-ranked professions in terms of popularity as it is now. A special time-honored respect and admiration was used towards people in the educational sphere to provide a positive influence on many students to become educators. This is not the case in current Armenia. Today’s menu of professions, as compared with that of Soviet times, has rapidly increased, and the teacher’s profession is not among the impressive and socially rewarding ones on the list.
- The concepts of masculinity and femininity were fixed in the public arena by the Soviet propaganda machine as stereotypical and standard perceptions. Given the limited media information and restricted possibilities for promoting alternative ideologies, unconventional models for either masculinity or femininity were simply absent. Nowadays this is simply not the case.

Prompted by the factors quoted above, the research touches upon the increased rates of under-representation of adult males in Armenian households as well, aiming to explore the further amplification of similar under-representation in Armenian schools. Many sources¹⁰ report that since the 1990s Armenia has witnessed intensive emigration of Armenian males. In a report in March 2007 by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), among migrants, married men formed an overwhelming percentage. Even though some migrant return statistics are also available, it is reaffirmed by IFAD that “one out of three households in Armenia is now headed by a woman, and the trend is on the rise, especially in rural parts of the country”.

Preliminary results of migration statistics in Armenia described the following picture according to a nationwide household survey reported in Nov. 2006 by Mr. Jason P. Schachter¹¹, Senior Statistician, Bureau of Statistics, International Labour Organization, (see Table 3).

Table 3: Facts on Armenian Male Migration

| | |
|---|--|
| 1,985 households sampled, 65% Urban | |
| A-1 Resulted in 5,200 respondents | B-1 512 household members living abroad |
| A-2 1,117 people absent for 3 months or more (73% of which male) | B-2 79% male and 70% between the ages of 25 and 49, 71% married |
| Country of migrant residence: 84% Russia, 2% Ukraine, 2% USA | |

Analyzing the facts obtained on adult Armenian male absence at home and at school, the two can be considered important domains affecting an adolescent's identity development. The research links these with the statistics available on Armenian juvenile male crime rate and delinquent behavior. While there is no official discourse on the theme, on the grassroots level adult male under-representation in Armenian secondary schools is of rising concern¹². In the view of all of the abovementioned facts, the features of a challenge area – feminized Armenian households and schools – become more clearly detectable, suggesting a very careful review into the context.

The feminized school situations in other countries, already internationally recognized by research, are very close to the current situation in Armenia. If the most frequently articulated suggestions of prior international research were for a moment theoretically extended to the Armenian case, then the virtual results would be the following: the recent overwhelming feminization of Armenian schools (lack or absence of adult male teaching staff, as representation of alternative male behavior samples) may be one of the major sources for the abovementioned problematic demonstrations in male youth behavior. The feminized school situations:

- result in misconceptions or loss of genuine masculinity concepts of loving, productive and protective men, historically highly valued by Armenian society,
- generate exaggerated male behavior trends that filter everything through the lenses of strong/weak contrast where aggression and violence are the best mechanisms of self-establishment and proof of masculinity,
- create collective male juvenile vigilantism for the need to be strong since boys don't find the appropriate level of adult male support, leadership and stability in their surroundings.

Understanding that while family is the private realm, challenging if not impossible to control or intervene, public education is subject to public research and administration, and therefore, through different policies and necessary norms, intervention should be instituted here. This study project was initiated based on the acceptance that the secondary school, together with the family, is a principal institution that works out and programs into children's mentality long lasting perceptions of social values and insights. It looked into the apparent and possible effects of male under-representation in schools on the development of male teenagers' perceptions on gender roles and related values.

Brief Synopsis of Gender Intensification Factor in School

Throughout recent decades considerable scholarly debate has evolved around conceptions and development of adolescent identity.¹³ Extensive literature has been devoted to the fact that all cultures have their traditional conceptualizations of masculinity with its diverse sub-elements. Theories diverge on the formation modes, progress stages and the longitudinal stability of masculinity elements throughout the individual's lifespan. Yet, significant information confirms "gender intensification" phenomenon during the child transformation period of school years, when based on adult samples the children strongly associate with their gender ideologies, perceptions and beliefs.¹⁴ According to a précis of much research, the "gender intensification" phenomenon in the contemporary world is increasingly more intense with role conflicts for male rather than female juveniles.

According to Michael Gurian¹⁵, researches studying male reactions to socially prescribed sex roles register colossal male fragility, which in the last few years has been uncovering itself in more clarity along with the increase of conflicts in male role "in the ever-changing masculine landscape". Increasingly, more male juveniles express challenges in reconciling with the elevated and quite contradictory standards that cultures instruct them to indoctrinate. The double character of these standards generates confusion while the male adolescent is on the road of identity development: "on the one hand, super-rationality, high competitiveness, repression of emotions and vulnerability, and high sexual prowess, and on the other hand, high levels of complex emotional expression, withdrawal of competitiveness so that females can excel, expression of feelings to please others, and decrease of sex drive so that females can take more control of sexuality".

Recognizing the fact that “gender intensification” processes fall within the period of adolescents’ school years, a natural question comes up – how can a gender misbalanced school successfully accomplish its task of generating not only a mentally knowledgeable but also morally and physically well integrated young citizen? In this context the theory of “character developing education”, a highly popular philosophy in American Social Studies teaching, serves as a valuable reference. According to Thomas Lickona, one of the founders of this theory, the “character developing education” pursues the aim “to help people understand, assess and place fundamental moral value in their actions”.¹⁶ Many scholars and researchers provide thoughtful approaches towards correlating and/or differentiating character-shaping and value-shaping educational activities and intensively comment on the core components of each one: Kevin Rian and Karen Bohlin stand out with their pragmatic ideology of “character developing education” 6 “E”-s¹⁷. This type of education is comprised of the following 6 principal components beginning in “E”:

1. **Example** (*teacher’s personal example may at times play an undeniable role for encoding positive youth behavior patterns and with its value may exceed many academic teachings*)
2. **Explanation** (*allows a forum between a teacher and a student for exchange of thoughts/clarifying one another’s concepts and opinions*)
3. **Exhortation** (*motivation of such behavior which proves identification of positive values by a youth; the teacher can have better impact results through exhortation on the heart than the brain*)
4. **Environment** (*the atmosphere in which the search for identity develops for a youth is a major factor*)
5. **Experience** (*values are not adopted until they are lived through; teachers and parents should create opportunities for adolescents to enable them applying what they see and learn*)
6. **Enjoy** (*exploration and consumption of values should be an agreeable and useful process for adolescents*)

The greatest value of this educational theory is in its blending academic messages of teaching with routine, daily practices – it does not see effective output to education without seeing and living through experience. So, it can be believed that a few of the above-described categories of “character development” can prove effective irrespective of a school’s staff gender representation proportions, yet the current research claims that regarding the operations of a few of the “E”-s, it is ultimately important to maintain gender equilibrium in the school to achieve desirable effect on youth identity and character shaping processes. Thus, it is a worthwhile task to investigate the weight of character development processes in schools where there is an alarming misbalance of genders among teaching staff. It is the primary task of this small-scale research to examine the borders between Armenian male adolescents’ perceptions/expectations of ideal masculinity qualities and the level of opportunities for those adolescents to observe, personally connect with, and then experience those perceptions/qualities in their daily school life.

Agreeing with the abovementioned “E”-s and considering them as an excellently condensed representation of many educational processes, the research challenges the possible existence of enough practical examples, enough adequate environment, and sufficient experiment or activity exchange for a male student when adult males are simply not around in the school. The current challenge is void of even slightest remote agenda of underestimating the importance, roles and amazing capacities of female teachers. A female and a former teacher herself, the author has many times over time been involved in this conversation with her female colleagues who observe the challenges and burden of single gender service and instruction at school. Many teachers informally engaged in this study have strengthened this viewpoint and wished for reinforcement of financially and socially improved policies and conditions around teaching that would fascinate male graduates and make the school a more realistic mirroring of a dual gender society.

Project Study Description

A. Main Activity and Structure Overview

The overall project was comprised of extensive literature review on relevant themes, fieldwork and analyses of generated data. The 4-month (Aug.-Nov. 2007) fieldwork embraced all 11 regions of Armenia. The target population, which the project studied, was Armenian male teenagers, attending middle and high school grades, mostly 7-11 grades, and aged 13-17. As a sampling framework, the list of all 1468 public and private schools in Armenia per their teaching staff gender enrollment was obtained from the Ministry of Education and Science.

After a careful review of the list, all schools were grouped into two categories, based on their staff gender proportions:

- 1) Control group schools that had a comparatively acceptable number (more than 3) of male educators
- 2) Main group schools which, from the perspective of this study, had an unsatisfactory number (less than four) of male educators.

With a total of 192 participants, the study engaged 95 students from the 1st group and 97 students from the 2nd group.

The lack or absence of Armenian adult males in Armenian secondary state schools was defined as the independent variable of the study and the conceptualizations and manifestations of masculinity/ies among Armenian teenage males were defined as the dependent variable.

As briefly explained above, the study was accomplished by applying both qualitative and quantitative methods:

- a) Individual interviews with experts in the field were used to provide their diverse opinions regarding primary questions of the study. The result was a well-defined problem hypothesis.
- b) Ten Focus Group Discussions (FGD) were conducted and the students participated cross-regionally. The accumulated information helped to formulate Armenian male teenagers' perceptions on masculinities and explained the perception formation processes as described by them. It also helped to realize the gap between the ideological masculinity framework that they are instructed to achieve, who they want to become and what kind of male models they see. The first few FDGs also helped to refine the questionnaire material, and be more reflective towards certain areas already highlighted during the FDGs.
- c) Questionnaire-based survey among Armenian secondary school male students, both within the control group and the unexposed group.

Special care was applied in choosing both urban as well as rural schools in each category. From each of the 11 regions 4-5 schools participated, with selected students from each being invited to the following activities: 45 students from the Control group completed questionnaires and 50 participated in 5 Focus Group Discussions, while 42 students from the Main group completed questionnaires and 55 participated in 5 Focus Group Discussions.

The student recruitment for completing the questionnaire was based on random sampling.

The questionnaire completion portion was accomplished in two formats: offline and online. Those students that felt comfortable about their computer skills had a chance to complete the form electronically and submit it to an online area specifically designated for the purposes of this research. The electronic questionnaires had detailed instructions for overall comprehensiveness of each question.

It must be underscored that the methodology limitations, mentioned below, were realized at the very onset of the study, therefore, all efforts were made to minimize their influence:

- There is scant secondary scholarly data on the issue. Armenia has not specifically invested on exploring the hidden agents for juvenile male challenges.
- There was initial fear that femininity and masculinity could still prove topics of substantial sensitivity among teenagers, so it was assumed that the respondents might not express their thoughts and emotions on the given questions very openly, which would result in some lost data.
- There is no genuine control or comparison group for the project. The presence of a more or less acceptable number of male educators does not realistically make a school an impacted school.
- It was not a precondition of this research that the respondents should necessarily be directly taught by the few men present in their school. The research aimed to explore the indirect rather than immediate and direct presence of a male teacher; otherwise, given the male scarcity in the demographic picture of Armenian schools, the research would become extremely challenging to conduct, especially within the timeframe restrictions set by the Caucasus Research Resource Centers.

In general, it was realized from the beginning that the research could be sure of accurate adult male impact results on male teenagers only through a structured experiment investigated through longitudinal research. However, the general project, including, the study piece, was limited to a maximum of 9 months, so it was neither possible, nor allowed from the view point of social research to hold a series of attitudinal impact analyses throughout the short period of fellowship.

Nonetheless, even with the abovementioned limitations, it is believed that the project generated very interesting results, which may serve as a pioneer source for further research considerations in Armenia.

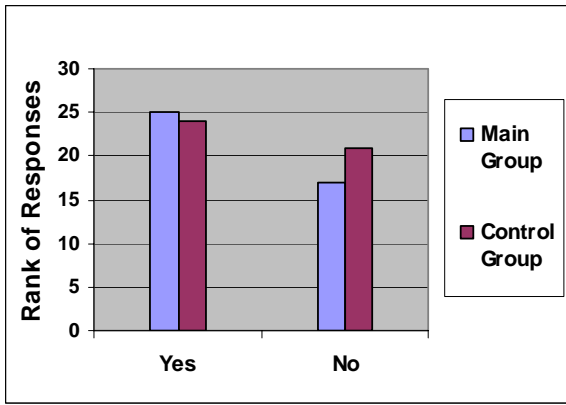
B. Representation of Data Collected through Project Study

The information resulting from the analyses of the questionnaire responses very nearly coincided with the messages delivered through the FDG. The FDG questions did not include all of the questionnaire questions: rather questions of further clarifying character were posed to respondents. The selected questions invited students for more reflection and requested an active dialogue providing more details on investigated areas. Thus, the FDGs allowed attaching more precise qualitative thought to the quantitative data obtained through the questionnaires.

The main comparisons between the responses of two groups drawn from the questionnaires are presented below.

It was expected that an important majority of students in both groups would have male role models. However, the results were surprising: in both groups about half of the respondents stated not having an adult male role model. Actually, the Control group students registered a higher level of disinterest with resembling a male role model (see Survey Table 1).

Survey Table 1: Students Have Adult Male Role Model or No

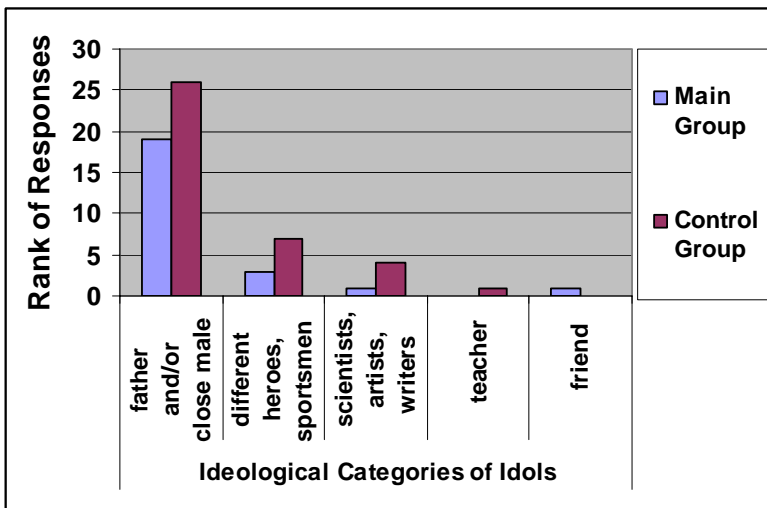


During the FDGs, many students in both groups explained that they feel caught in the phase of frequent mentality change and it is difficult for them to strongly associate with one individual as the ultimate role model. While they appreciate certain traits in a certain character, there are other traits that they admire in some other character. Most of them were unable to identify one source which would utterly tempt them as a figure of undeniable replication.

The results of the thematic summary of model identity brought some surprises. The research assumed that, as consistently mentored in the Armenian society, in both groups the teacher personality would be one of the most well rated responses. However, the category

of teacher was one of the least popular responses (see Survey Table 2).

Survey Table 2: Role Models for Armenian Male Juveniles

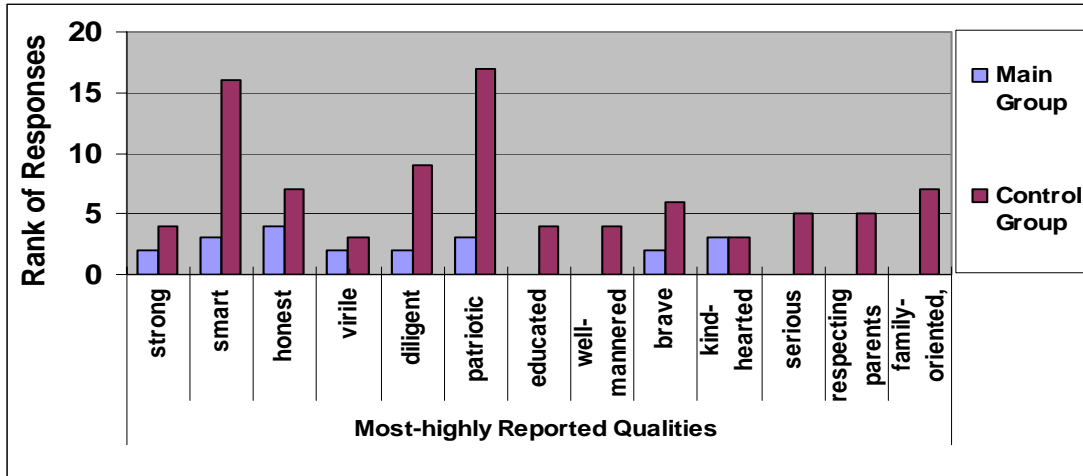


It is surprising to realize that the teacher was absolutely not mentioned among the response scale of the Main group. As commented by the FDGs, the teachers, with their current personal as well as professional characteristics, are unable to contest for a high level of influence. In both groups it was the personalities of father and/or close male relatives that inspired the students, and surprisingly, not a very high level was allocated to the physically powerful and heroic personalities, which was stereotypically expected to be so common for boys of such age. The other unanticipated element in the

responses was that elder friends do not measure up to become role models for their younger friends. However, as very clearly expressed during the FDGs, they do serve as agents of quite explicit influence for the younger juveniles. The subculture of male maturation on the street, among the clan of friends, was very well elaborated during the discussions. Both group students stated that while interaction with strong elder friend-authorities is a critical need for their own smooth integration into the authenticities of life, they are just temporary pillars for socialization and not role models.

As to the next question with regards to the most appreciated traits of a male role model, the spectrum of qualities significantly differed in two groups. The Control group responses were thematically wider, mentioning a total of 13 qualities versus only 8 qualities suggested by the Main group (See Survey Table 3).

Survey Table 3: Most Important Qualities of Male role Model as Defined by Students of Each Group

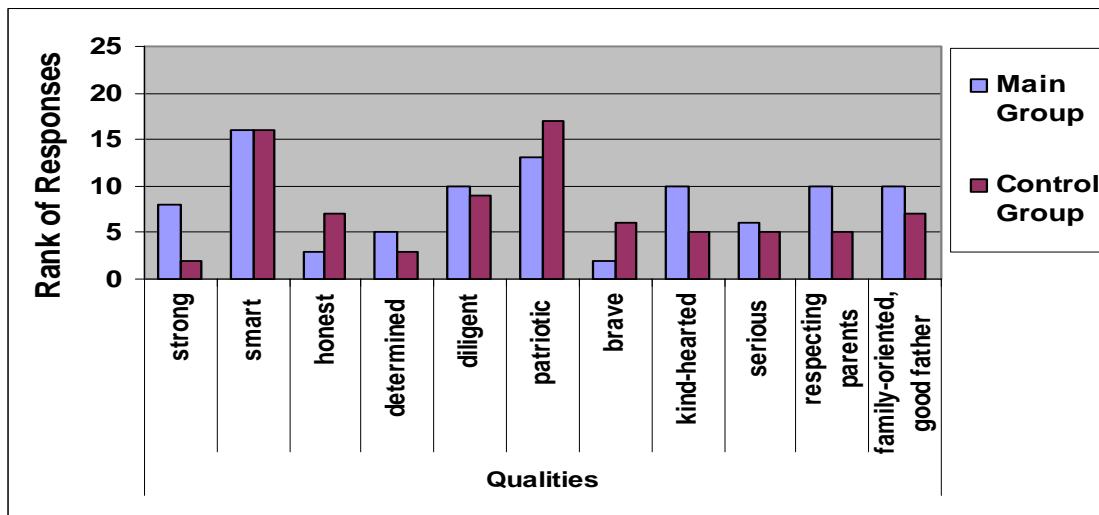


The Main group response range missed such important qualities as *being educated, well mannered, and serious, respecting parents and being a family-oriented, good father*. For them *smartness and honesty (not strength or power) in a male* were the most sought qualities (even though not very intensively expressed), while for the Control group *patriotism, smartness, diligence, honesty, and devotion to family* were the qualities most urgently sought after. In addition, the Control group students registered higher levels of intensity in basically all qualities. This table to a certain degree supports the thought that students in Control group have access to more ideological alternatives of masculinity than their peers in the Main group.

It is very interesting to note that there is almost an identical match between the personal choices of Control group students and the instructions of adults, while there is a strong imbalance between the instructions of adults and the student personal choices of qualities of an ideal male in the Main Group.

As progressing, the research aimed to scale possible differences between the paradigms of the ideal male qualities instructed by adults against the qualities selected by the students themselves (See Survey Table 4).

Survey Table 4: Ideal Armenian Male Qualities Instructed by Adults



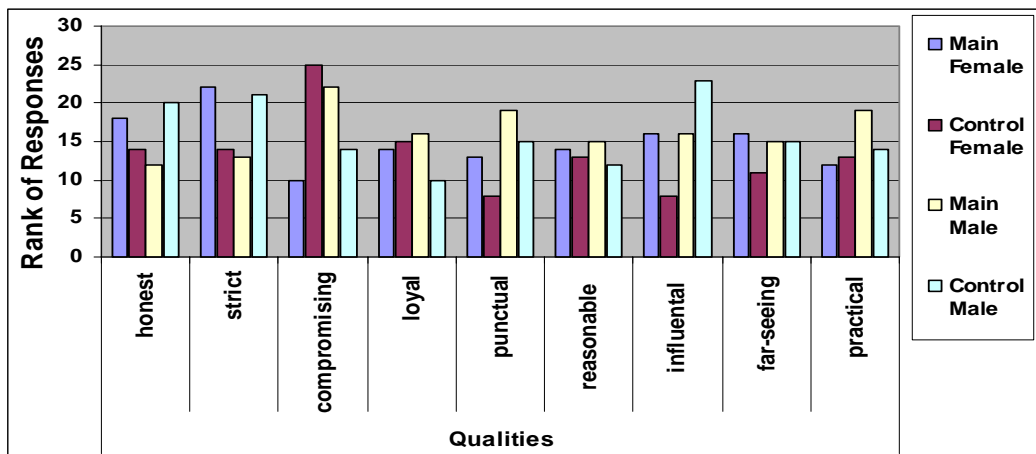
The Main group students reported realizing a higher degree of adults' instruction on each quality than they actually feel comfortable to achieve. If we regard the role models as the condensed combination of key male qualities which the students want to possess in the future, then those qualities in their case highly contrast what their adults expect of them. The students in this group less frequently choose to be as strong, smart,

patriotic, diligent, and kind-hearted as they are summoned to be (according to the students own perceptions of adults' instruction level). The students fully discounted the qualities tying them to the parent-family-relationship section, and focused on a survival package of minimal key traits, which, are all expressed in their mentality in almost equal importance.

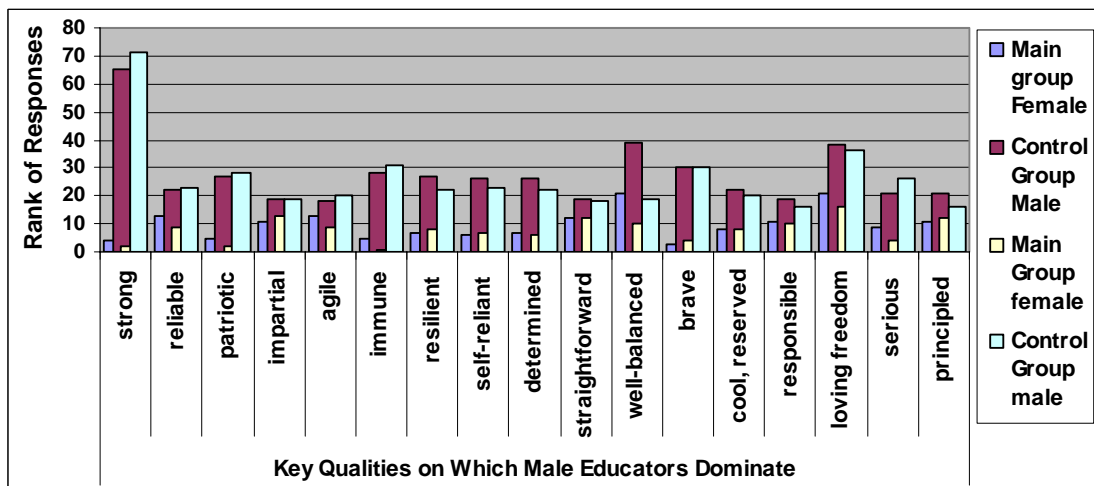
The next question attempted to gather data about the key qualities very obviously projected by general teaching staff and grasped by students during their daily work interaction with teachers. The students were then suggested to attach the quoted quality to the gender in which they most apparently discerned it. The students provided quite interesting information on this. Both groups reported a very wide range of teacher qualities, more than 50 qualities, on the one hand all very diverse, and on the other hand, overlapping one another. However, most of those responses were rare case choices and did not form genuine thematic clusters, so only frequently rated qualities and essentially similar consistencies are presented to the readers' attention. The analyses are provided in 3 different tables:

- **Survey Table 5** presents the series of qualities about which the students in each group have expressed different opinions per quality
- **Survey Table 5.1** presents the series of those qualities on which male educators in both groups rank higher
- **Survey Table 5.2** presents the series of those qualities on which female educators in both groups rank higher

Survey Table 5



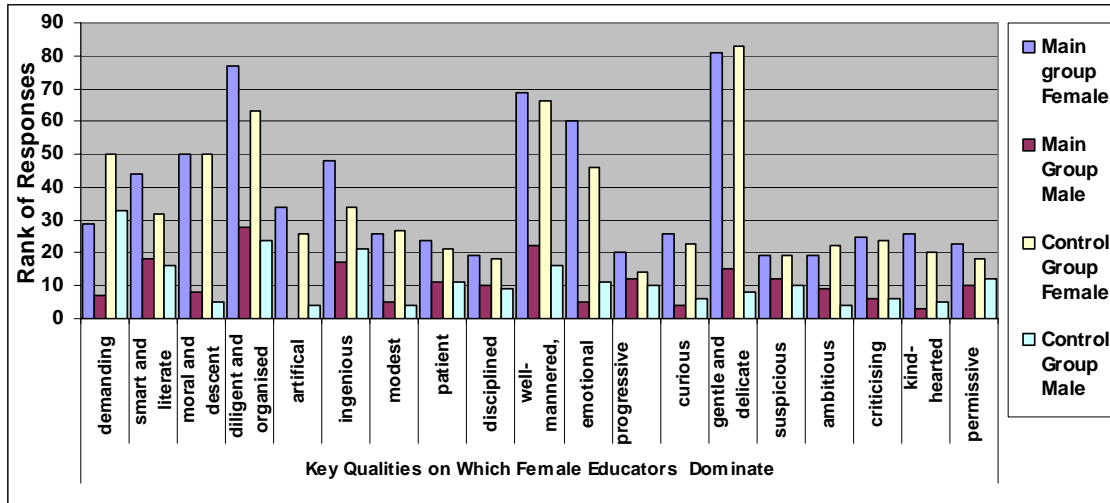
Survey Table 5.1



It was very interesting to see how students in both groups collectively reconciled as men around this question: in students' perceptions male teachers (see Survey Table 5.1) dominated on all qualities associated with vigor, physicality, will, rule, directness, standard and code (**strong, virile, brave, reserved, reliable, impartial, agile, immune, self-reliant, resilient, determined, well-balanced, and straightforward**), while the qualities associated with heart, emotions, flexibility, logistic and administrative thoroughness, openness to change, (**moral, diligent, organized, ingenious, patient, conforming, well-**

mannered, careful, suspicious, polite, kind-hearted, ambitious, delicate, progressive) belonged to female teachers (see Survey Table 5.2).

Survey Table 5.2



Students in both groups described female teachers as more demanding, ingenious, smart and literate than male teachers: this point was further commented by other respondents participating in FDGs.

This estimation is in outstanding contradiction with Armenian social mentality which has for years been reinforcing that men are smarter, more resourceful and more intelligent. Therefore, additional information received through the FDGs proved indispensable in explicating how the students could “deviate” from one of the central pillars of gender difference theories.

In the students’ judgment, in the majority of cases only those men who are otherwise unable to find financially and socially more fulfilling jobs appear in schools as their final professional destination. In this framework, the respondents expressed approval for women’s determined practices of career choice. They consider that the female teachers come to school with original determination, proper academic schooling, and demonstrated affirmative disposition towards teaching as their profession. So, the students believe that the female teachers show good affiliation to the educational structure while among the few men present in the school many are unintended, accidental teachers thus, unable to fully commit themselves to school and students.

The overall suggestion of students’ thoughts was that female teachers appear to be smarter and more literate because they consider teaching as their primary breadwinning activity and are in constant self-perfection, while men never fully devote themselves to teaching as a career and are in constant search for something else, unwilling to exercise their mind in teaching methodologies, innovations, etc. In the students’ mind, women prevail in professional competition for excellence and quality. Furthermore, it is of interest to note the students mentioned in favor of male teachers that they are less permissive, criticizing, suspicious and artificial – these are traits that seem appealing and inviting to communication and interaction. Yet, the contrast of the two tables (5.1 and 5.2) leaves room for contemplation as to the moral image of the Armenian male teacher – male educators extensively lag behind their female associates in morality and modesty.

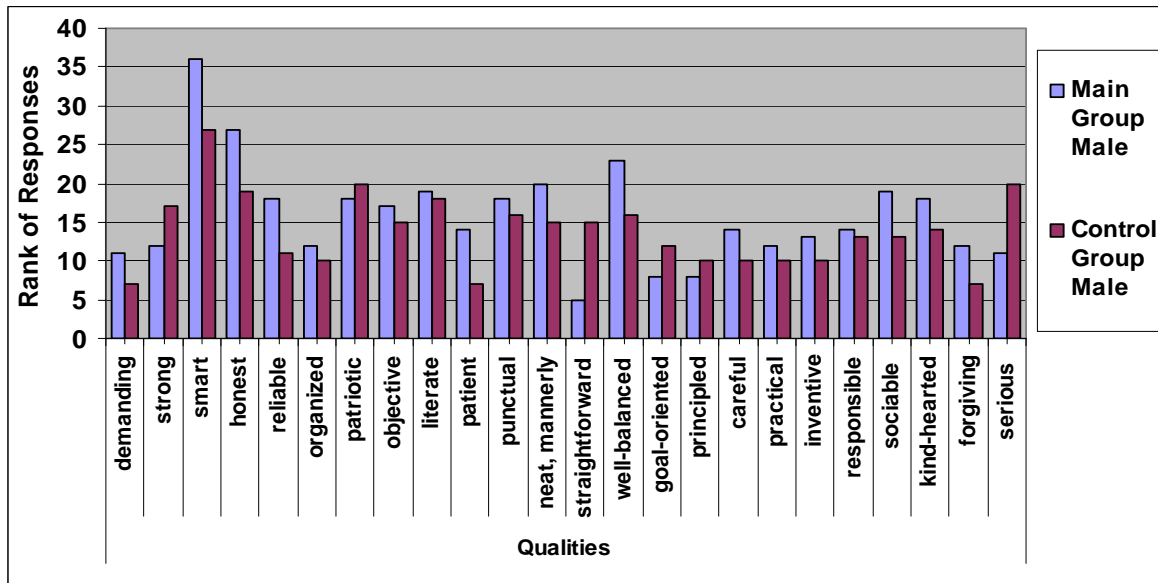
Next, the results suggest that by the intensity of nearly all qualities the female teachers in the Main group excel over their colleagues in the Control Group, except that to a barely discernible degree the former are less practical, loyal and compromising.

With further development the questionnaire inquired about the qualities the students have observed in their teachers, that they would in the future like to possess in their own character. The Survey Table 6 displays the series of most frequently proposed qualities only.

The outcomes of Survey Table 6, presented below, are very essential for double-checking the interconnection between information received on 3 questions:

- qualities of ideal male role model in students’ perceptions
- major qualities that students observe in teachers and the qualities in which male educators rank higher than female educators
- series of qualities in teachers which in the future the students would like to see in their own character.

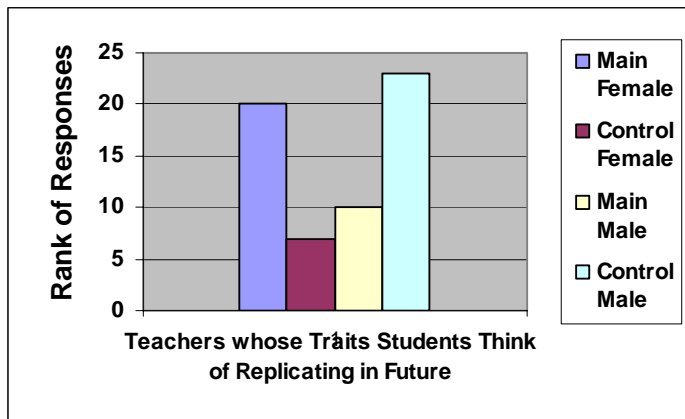
Survey Table 6: What Qualities Students Want to Borrow from Their Teachers



Half of the qualities presented in Survey Table 6 relate to the qualities on which in Survey Tables 5 and 5.1 male educators have ranked higher than female educators. Naturally, the research places great importance on the presence of male educators' for adolescents. The gender role value system develops on the basis of familiar experiences. Therefore, desirable qualities, prescribed to men by students, remains under-experienced by students if they have only a few mediators of those qualities for observation. When many agents bearing the desirable qualities for students are on a daily basis within reach for these students, the socialization and identity development processes become simpler and less complicated for the male juveniles.

The results in the next table (see Survey Table 7) illustrate the extent of adult role influence potential that students see in teachers of both sexes.

Survey Table 7: Level of Adult Role-Model Potential that Teachers Demonstrate



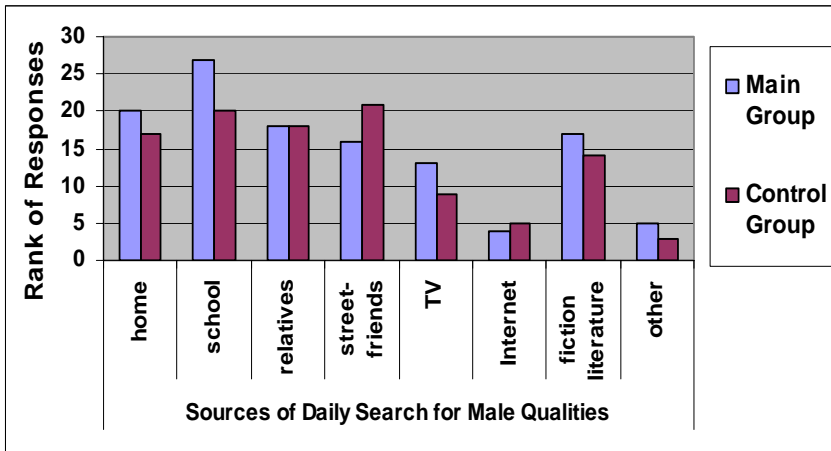
The results very clearly suggest that the male educators in the Control group project the highest level of adult role potential, yet the female educators in the Main group show also an extremely high degree of adult role capacity: they go almost hand in hand with their male colleagues in the Control group. The results of this table are a key support to the initial hypothesis of this study. The opinions of the FDG students enriched the conclusions derived from the questionnaires. While the male in the Control group and female educators in the Main group were mentioned as closely ranked in their adult role potential, the areas

for replication are different, as mentioned by students. Female educators deserve replication in their literacy, ambitiousness, optimism, being disciplined, intellectual diligence and accuracy, while men deserve replication in their objectivity, rationalism, consistency, effortlessness, reliability, and, above all, physically appealing preparation. The male students in the Main group explained that in spite of their high appreciation of the female teachers' many excellent qualities, as young men, they cannot fully identify with them. They consider the Armenian female teachers to be physically and athletically immature and vulnerable. The students felt it was their responsibility to protect their female teachers, instead of regarding them as adults and expecting their protection. It was quite remarkable that the students did not describe their criteria of physicality as sheer strength, force, potency or power, taken for granted per biology. Rather, they formulated this as acquired features, a result of consistent physical training, willingness and aspiration to excel not only in mind but also in structure and muscle. The Control group students further developed this opinion, adding that they consider their female educators as inoperative and unjustified patterns of patriotism, since in their understanding one of the core elements of patriotism is the physical preparation and demonstration of courage. To underpin their point they expressed their strong admiration with Israeli women's military service

and wished that their female teachers were also exposed to the rigorous culture of physical training and athletic competition. In conclusion, there is an apparent split in the search for identity among the Main group students. The young boys tend to intensively echo their female educators' intellectual and moral qualities. However, while obsessed with this task, they also report an extreme void concerning the referral and direction of their physical drive and energy. Their admiration in these areas is bestowed upon the few male educators. They are longing to see in school more genuine men some of whom could provide for them a combined image of a strong, intellectual, educated, well-mannered and prosperous male.

Another question attempted to register the spheres where the students on a daily basis seek desired demonstrations of male behaviors and qualities (see Survey Table 8). Interestingly enough, the most highly rated responses by the Main group students mentioned as primary spheres of influence the school, home, relatives and literature in the same sequence as presented herein.

Survey Table 8: Spheres Where Students Seek Male Qualities

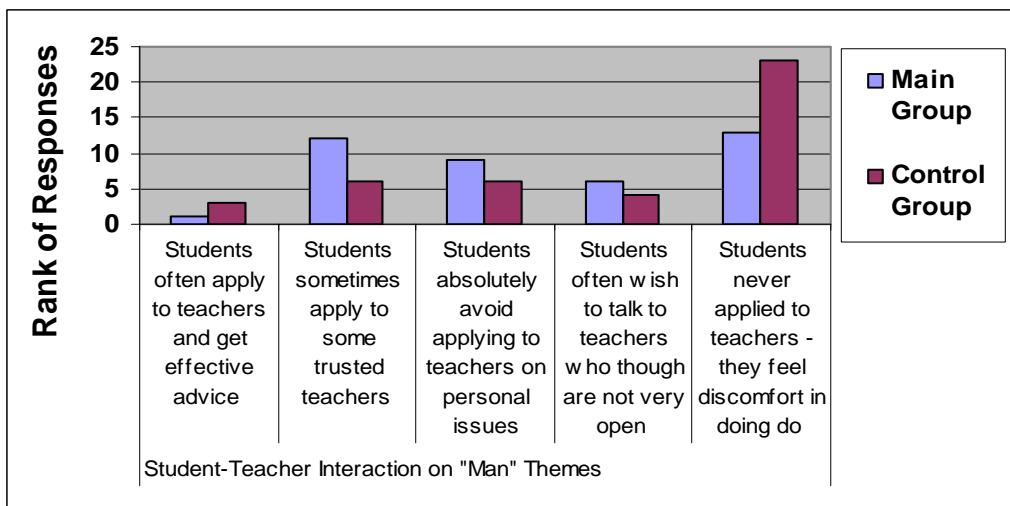


Only after these spheres the friend/street category was mentioned by the Main group which is, by the way, the most highly ranked feedback response among Control group students. The Control Group students then mentioned the school, relatives and home in the same sequential importance as presented herein. Thus, by summarizing Table 8 results, it is very important to realize that for both group adolescents the school and home are evidently key

domains where they undertake their first conscious experiments of personality and gender identification.

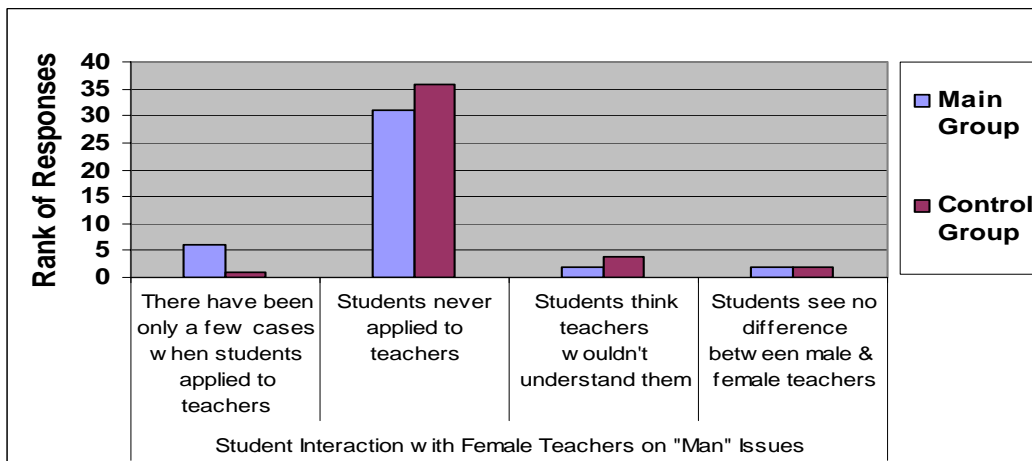
The Survey Tables 9 and 10 provide us with considerable food for thought in regard to how little social interaction takes place between Armenian teachers, specifically female teachers, and male students. In contrast, the students are exceedingly willing to face important dialogs with their teachers, exchange attitudes, voice special issues of concern to their seniors and listen to their advice.

Survey Table 9: Extent of Social Communication between Teachers and Students



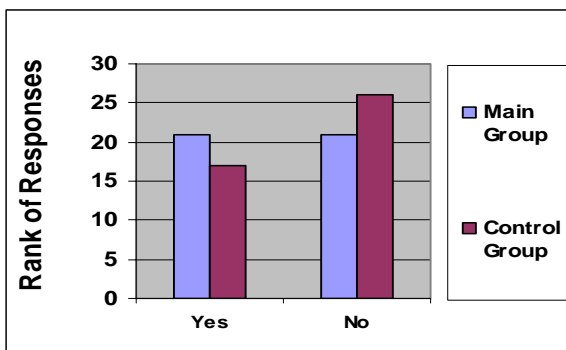
The level of trust and communication is observed to be slightly higher between the Main Group teachers and male students, as one can realize comparing the results of Survey Tables 8 and 9.

Survey Table 10: Extent of Social Communication between Female Teachers and Students



The assumptions derived from the quantitative data of Survey Table 11, which aimed to inquire about the level of students' motivation to have more male educators at school, requested clarifications from the FDG participants. Obviously critical disagreements were delivered within the responses of both groups on their wish to have more male educators at school. The quite high level of negative responses submitted by both group students ran into contradiction with other statements expressed by respondents, thus necessitating clarification efforts through more open and structured in-group discussions.

Survey Table 11: Do Students Want to Have More Male Educators?



The Main group students explained that the male teachers have little behavior diversity due to the lack of variety in their educational fields and classes taught by them. They are used to seeing men mostly teaching in "selected" subjects, specifically, Physical training, Military training, Physics and Mathematics. The students implied that they would prefer having more male educators only if these men were of varying age and experience and from different academic fields. They suggested that the men would be more attainable as role models if they were seen in all aspects of the school – starting from school governance to teaching Literature, Languages, History, Social Sciences, etc.

The feedback from Control Group students in FDGs was remarkably unanimous: without even giving the question an instant of thought, almost all respondents confirmed that they would definitely enjoy seeing more male educators at school. When specific reasons supporting their responses were requested, they provided a pause of silence. One of the respondents explained that it was so very natural for young male students to have more male educators that they had not even thought about why this needs substantiation. The general group reaction was that with arrival of male educators there will be real discipline and order in school, which most female educators are unable to attain in higher grades. They also mentioned that between adults and young males, conversations on a wider spectrum, involving science, technology, sports, politics, and the military could extend during breaks or extra-curricular activities. The brief answers included the following type of declarative announcements: "It could generally be better for us"; "Physically, mentally and morally, we would feel more competitive to deserve their attention and praise"; "Among many male teachers we could select trusted ones"; "The female students and educators as much as we would feel more protected and comfortable".

These types of responses signal that on intuitive level male students collectively admit the need for more male educators but are not very conscious about the benefits that the male presence brings them.

They also had a simpler explanation supporting the negative responses on this question submitted by their Control group peers who completed questionnaires. The students pointed out that in schools with a more or less sufficient number of male educators there is an unwritten principle, regulation and monitoring. They suggested that while mentally they acknowledged the constructive and affirmative side of this male presence, practically they feel more comfortable in the gentle and permissive world of female schools. When adult

males are not available, then the young male students assume the role of protectors. As a result they can become very arrogant and abuse this role-playing function with female students and/or educators.

Their separate thoughts, after thorough analyses chained to one another, indirectly implied the students avoided competition with and final compliance to their male adults. They did not realize that their responses, provided in other sub-contexts, were constantly exploring the opposition/reconciliation challenge with their senior adults and believed the personality development course incomplete without similar challenges with biologically same sex adults.

C. Armenian Experts Feedback: Parallels with FDG Data

Armenian experts (*professionals for many years working in the secondary educational sphere or very closely affiliated within the school context*) involved in interviews for the current study confirmed that according to their observations of post-school youth, dominant female influence of childrearing is a source for misconceptions and misinterpretations of masculinity both for girls and boys, yet if this is not of immediate danger to girls, it is to boys.

In their opinion, social rearrangements and new interaction contexts, when strongly present in the adolescent's life, pressure adolescents to participate through paradigms of different experimental opportunities that intensify their cognitive abilities and help break away from stereotypical gender ideologies. In Armenia's circumstances, the cases of social context rearrangements are extremely limited – communities are small and strongly built on relative-friend networks and most families still continue 3-generations-in-1-household patterns, especially in rural areas. The following common stages of social context transitions are observed for an average Armenian male:

- a) Kindergarten - Is predominantly for families with children living in the capital or in 11-15 relatively large cities; otherwise, in rural areas children stay at home until they start attending school
- b) School - Attending extracurricular sports activities (again, the latter is mostly for city folks); Some street leisure activities with peers sharing his status
- c) Military Service, Employment Period - Unemployment and frustrated period for self-establishment; emigration to the CIS countries or the U.S¹⁸; further studies; marriage at early age, etc.

As we can see, it is only the 3rd stage that offers a person possible diversity of social contexts and certain novelty, understood as a significant social milieu rearrangement. Yet, throughout 1st two stages, the young boy is totally emerged in a physically female governed and prescribed environment, both in terms of private domain as well as academic mind set-up. A boy spends his family hours in a mother-led household and then moves to spend his academic hours in a female-led school. Therefore, essential social context reorganizations occur in the teenage boy's life throughout schooling period engulfed in female atmosphere. From a female dominated context he relocates to the same gender dominated school life, and intensively emerges into female culture, only remotely challenged by a few male educators and his own peers who also face the same limits of practicing their urges of masculinity.

At school and at home the theory of masculinity, heroism and gallantry virtues is advocated and lectured for boys, but no up-to-date practical representatives bearing the virtues of this theory are projected to them. The summary of Focus Groups suggest that the young boys solely receive the ideas of masculinity, have very few practical examples for imitation within their institute of instruction, and what is worse, they have no concrete arena where their understandings of the masculinity promoted in discourse can be practiced and confirmed. Boys are "nostalgic" of adult male pride in them, guidance and interaction of seniors with whom they mirror biologically. Thus, they face the need to find relevant context for their masculinity and prove their identity (see Survey Table 3, quality of patriotism). The interviewed specialists mentioned that this search for gender self expression and linked behavior without the support of an adult with whose gender they identify becomes more troublesome and frustrating with the critical arrival of puberty.

According to the professionals' views, sexual reproduction themes are of genuine curiosity among young people when establishing their gender role concepts, and it is logical that the process develops smoothly when there is proper, precise and accurate dialogue, advice and information shared on the theme. The FDGs confirm that until now there is no adult-to-child literate mentoring on these questions – either in Armenian families or in schools¹⁹. The absence or acute deficit of adequately addressed impulses of sexuality merged with unguided title of masculinity may prove quite dangerous in the long run.

Apart from traditionally established mentorship, coaching methodologies and academic content, the not intended practices, causal manners performed and opinions expressed by adults issue behavior stereotypes for the young generation. Some of these practices are worthy of in-depth explorations. A sadly observable fact is the absence of a female dress code in school. Unlike the recent decade, when there was a very formal dress code for the school staff, now the female teachers attend work inappropriately dressed, with heavy make-up and at times even in quite provocative attire. In contrast, the few men have their simple and

specific outfit, as compared to the female’s fancy and liberated dress habits. This condition generates among young people an unrealistically liberalized and untrue picture of the Armenian woman. It introduces double standards of femininity/morality perceptions, disallowing young men to concretely connect with their female teachers, who, on the one hand, being adults, avoid a literate, educating discussion on sex, sexuality and gender issues with their students, yet on the other hand, are sometimes so provocatively dressed at work. This hypocritical senior female morality distracts male teenagers from forming clear-cut attitudes towards their girlfriends as well, which during future socialization creates inter-gender distrust and at times disrespectful and dangerous behavior (see Survey Table 3.2, female quality “artificial” VS male “straightforward, simple”).

All of the above-described issues cannot but imply a cumulative effect on both male as well as female students; however, the primary effect is associated with male juveniles.

The experts from the Ministry of Education and Science report that as an institution it has always identified the lack of adult men in Armenian secondary schools as a challenge for the system. Consequently, it has introduced into the general educational management policy a mechanism to address the need and mitigate the consequences of male absence in secondary Armenian schools. As a formal affirmative act, the option of alternative military service has been launched: young men who hold high education diplomas and who do not want to serve in the army are offered to relocate to remote villages and for 5 years work in the schools. However, the Ministry officials acknowledge that this was based neither on research nor needs assessment. The ministry has only intuitively perceived the problem and introduced this scheme to fill the dearth of male educators. This is a step towards the problem but a far too representative instrument to realistically address the needs of the challenge.

Unlike the Ministry, the project carefully examined the related numbers of educator/student population, thus trying to determine the male educator/male student ration. Below, in Table 12 are the results of this examination which confirm that the ration of female educator/female student is in a situation more than twice beneficial than the male educator/male student ration scenario:

Table 12: Educator/Student Ratios per Gender

| Number of all Educators | | 45,190 | |
|--|--|----------------------------------|-------------|
| Number of Male Students - 104,954 | Number of Male Educators - 7,263 | Ratio of Male Educator/Student | 1:14 |
| Number of Female Students - 228,067 | Number of Female Educators - 37,927 | Ratio of Female Educator/Student | 1:6 |

Conclusions

As determined from the statistics related to all areas of the present project, the school continues the “single-parent” line of upbringing, thus unable to provide the male juvenile with a full spectrum of gender practices. Upon graduating from the school, the juvenile crosses the threshold of life with a deficient practical philosophy on masculinity and applies to situations a type of wisdom inherited from the orientation programmed by female relatives and teachers. This makes child mentality a product of predominantly female instruction and manipulation until it gains experience from the street.

In summary of all the contemplations presented in this article, it can be concluded that:

- the Armenian male juvenile students in both groups lack sufficient diversity of male role models at school and are not satisfied with the current status of their male teachers’ capacity to engage the male students in active and socially instructive activities
- they do not report enough debate and critical thought generation with teachers, particularly with female teachers
- the monotonous environment provides little opportunity for observing, questioning, challenging and reproducing male qualities
- the students ultimately lack thoughtful and wise agendas for demanding and concentrated physical activities with sufficient adult presence, observation and participation
- they face inadequate and non-challenging assessment of their physical progress needs by female educators.

Finally, it is understood that while the young male students in both groups are in a state of prolonged social maturation and gender role, the students in the Main group face a more intense psychological battle between the comforts instituted inside feminized schools and the need for proving traditional virility outside the school.

As an additional finding, the study also revealed that the Armenian male educator has exhausted its popularity as a compelling adult model of supreme masculinity. Additionally, students in both groups do not currently realize the potential for significant change in their gender development patterns resulting from an increased presence of male educators who function currently in Armenian schools.

The most frequently quoted method for attracting and engaging more men into the profession of educator is by increasing the educator's salary. It is believed that this mechanism has the power of generating immediate and tangible impact in the field. In addition to increasing their numbers in the schools, the increased salary would help to attract men who are committed to the field of education. Male teacher quality would rise. However, it is also realized that this is the most expensive mechanism, which the state budget of a developing country is unable to afford for the moment. It is suggested that alternative means of bridging adult and young males be initiated. A good practice is frequent invitations of influential males (community leaders, sportsmen, politicians, scientists, etc.) to schools as guest speakers. Another suggestion is to implement on a selective basis the assignment of male students from higher educational institutions possessing male-rich departments as mentors for school students. These selected men would regularly attend schools, jointly maintain diaries with their mentee and provide advice. It is not the task of the present research to recommend reward systems for these male mentor students but this is yet another area of promoting male activism in developing social capital and corporate social responsibility.

Frequent tours to the military or to different factories dealing with technology, construction, etc. could also be useful, i.e., within these fields the students can observe the realities of male life in a natural setting, with a sense of belonging to those areas.

It should be understood that the present project is just a small-scale pioneer effort exploring the realities of Armenian feminized schools. However, given the findings, it considers that the authorities and agents operating within the educational system of Armenia should contribute genuine effort and time to delve into the challenge area and investigate the impact of male educator under-representation in Armenian schools not only in relation to male but also female juveniles. It would also be very interesting to research the impact of adult male absence not only in relation to juveniles' behavior formation but also in relation to academic performance and motivation.

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For the original source of the table refer to RA Social Situation for 2003, pp 157-158, p. 259, 283.

⁹ This was a high-profile U.S. State Department funded ICT-in-education project, implemented in Armenia by Project Harmony Inc.'s Armenia Filial. More information on this is available at www.projectharmony.am

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¹⁰ a) “The single most important source of non-farm income is the seasonal migration of male workers to other countries in the Commonwealth of Independent States. Male migration leaves women alone to shoulder the burdens of caring for the family and the household. One out of three households in Armenia is now headed by a woman, and the trend is on the rise, especially in rural parts of the country. Households headed by women are likely to be the poorest households”.

“Rural Poverty in Armenia” in Rural Poverty Portal

<http://www.ruralpovertyportal.org/english/regions/asia/arm/index.htm>

URL last visited Jan. 10, 08

b) “In the beginning of the 1990s, there was a spontaneous migration of Armenians. Due to the lack of the official statistics, the numbers are based on the estimates. About 500,000 people (12-13% of the total population) have left Armenia since 1993. The most intensive migration was to the central and southern regions of the Russian Federation, as well as to various CIS [Commonwealth of Independent States] countries. At least 40, 000 people left for the United States and other industrialized countries”.

http://www.hyeetch.nareg.com.au/republic/stats_p2.html

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¹¹ *“The Potential of Using Household Surveys to Improve the Measurement of International Migrant Remittance Data”*

unece.org/stats/documents/ece/ces/ge.10/2006/wp.8.e.ppt

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¹² Author's Text – In the summer of 2006 the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs of Armenia in cooperation with the United Nations World Population Foundation worked out a Policy Paper on demographic challenges of Armenia and their possible solutions. Before its submission to the government, the International Center for Human Development, (www.ichd.org – last visited Jan. 20, 07) offered it to public discussion and extended feedback almost in all regions of Armenia. The author was one of the facilitators of those discussions and registered the participants' opinions on the subject expressed during the events. The critical majority of participants substantiated that in the Armenian culture the main loyal agents of coaching in the family are mothers and grandmothers, while fathers and grandfathers do not closely participate in the process. They serve mostly as model examples representing the general rules of masculine qualities and values as set in the practical life frame. Also, according to the public feedback, in the context of distressing rates of Armenian male emigration, most children are currently devoid of paternal impact and authority example in their families.

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¹⁷ Kevin Ryan & Karen E. Bohlin, *“Building Character in Schools: Practical Ways to Bring Moral Instruction to Life”* (Jossey-Bass: 2003)

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