Interrogating the Call for More Male Primary School Teachers as Role Models for Boys: 'I don't care if it is male or female, I just want to learn!'

Amy Mc Donald

B.A., H.D.i.P.E, P.D.P.E.S., M.Ed.

Supervisor: Dr. Kevin Davison

School of Education

National University of Ireland, Galway

Dissertation submitted in February 2020 to the School of Education, National University of Ireland, Galway, in fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Abstract

The education of girls and boys in Irish primary schools is one of the most imperative aspects of our children's lives, yet it seems to be an area in which important focus shifts towards essentialist, simplistic debates centred around campaigns for more male role models for boys. The purpose of this research was to gain valuable insight into the opinions of practicing educational professionals as to the need for more male role models in Irish primary schools, while understanding their perceptions of role modelling. The research also sought to gain children's experiences and thoughts on their own role model and experiences of teacher gender in the classroom. In doing this, the research focuses on the experience, perception and opinions of primary school principals, teachers, coaches and students.

Throughout this interpretative research, the use of semi-structured interviews and pupil questionnaires produced a rich and informative insight into the daily pedagogical practices of professional teachers and principals, demonstrating the importance of individual role modelling and teaching pedagogy that targets children's individual, specific needs as opposed to gender modelling. The participation of children in the research provided a more in-depth insight into their own role models and demonstrated their reluctance to see their teacher as a role model, with preference for teaching styles rather than teacher gender. The study also demonstrated how boys' already formed masculinities can impact in their attitude towards schooling, affecting their academic interest and demonstrated how gender essentialism stops diversification in role models for boys, placing male teachers and boys into unified groups.

The study raises critical questions in relation to the call for more male role models in schools for boys and places caution towards the further reinforcement of hegemonic masculinities in school. It highlights the effects of unifying a particular cohort of boys at the marginalisation of other children. The findings and implications of the study allow for particular insight into current discourse surrounding the male role model debate as a means of regaining male power and privilege and therefore the study acts to benefit the overall educational experience of both boys and girls. In line with this, the results of the study may be of particular interest to educational professionals, educational stakeholders and legislators who create and influence educational policy.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to express my gratitude to everyone who volunteered to participate in the study. It was a wonderful experience entering into schools to open dialogue on gender and primary education. Thank you for taking the time to share your experiences with me. You were invaluable to this research.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor Dr. Kevin Davison for his continuous support and assistance throughout this research. I am forever grateful for his expertise, motivation, and immense knowledge. His guidance inspired an abundance of 'food for thought' which was instrumental in defining the path of this research. For this, I am very grateful.

I would also like to acknowledge academic members of my Graduate Research Committee, Dr. Manuela Heinz and Dr. Elaine Keane for their continued support and advice. Likewise, I would like to express my gratitude to Dr. Veronica McCauley and Dr. Mary Fleming for their invaluable expertise in the early stages of this research.

I would like to thank my parents, Michael and Marian who have instilled in me a curiosity and want, to learn more. You have always encouraged me to challenge myself in every aspect of my life and have ensured I had every opportunity to do so. Thank you for your love, support and laughter.

To my family, extended family and mother-in-law Mary. Thank you for all the support you have given me throughout the years. A special thanks to Mary for your encouragement and computing expertise in the final stages of the study.

Lastly, I would like to express my sincere love and gratitude to my husband Michael and our three beautiful girls, Caitlin, Charlotte and Fiadh. To Michael, I am forever indebted to you for postponing your passions in order for me to achieve mine. You have been a source of endless encouragement to me and you were always there when I needed you, to listen, to inspire and to advise. The girls are so lucky to have such a great daddy.

To my girls, thank you for having the patience to allow me to complete this research. Your smiles, hugs and kisses always made everything seem great. Remember throughout your lives to always *go for it*, never think anything is unobtainable...reach for the stars.

Dedication

To my father-in-law Seán: We miss you dearly.

To Granny: You were an inspiration and the most interesting woman I know.

To my girls...Caitlin, Charlotte and Fiadh.

List of Figures

List of Tables

List of Acronyms

DES: Department of Education and Skills

G.A.A: Gaelic Athletic Association

INTO: Irish National Teachers Organisation

Table of Contents

Declaration

I, _____, confirm that the work for the following dissertation was solely undertaken by myself and that no help was provided from other sources as those allowed.

Signature_____

Chapter One: Introduction to the Study

This chapter gives an introduction and general overview of the research study. It outlines the predominant research aims and research questions, and provides the relevance and purpose of the study. The chapter develops with a discussion of the significance of this research and concludes with a short summary of the structure and content of the chapters within this research. This chapter will not include a background context section, as chapter two provides a unique in-depth critique of contemporary arguments about the needs of boys in primary school and presents hypothesis relating to boy's educational needs as unsubstantiated.

1.1 Purpose of the Study

As popular media is calling out for more males in primary teaching to act as role models for boys, there is a general consensus that more men in teaching will increase performance levels and academic achievement of boys. Concern over boys' academic underachievement has been reflected in many countries across Europe, Australia and America, which has lead to boys being categorised as the 'new disadvantaged' (Epstein et al., 1998). While educational based research has recognised the role of popular media and men's rights advocates in driving campaigns for more men in teaching to act as role models for boys (Foster, Kimmel & Skelton, 2001), educational stakeholders are now too, using media outlets to promote gender imbalance in primary teaching. Yet there is very little research conducted in Ireland as to the role of more male teachers in primary schools and how these role models will affect the education of boys and girls at primary school level.

Stemming from deficiencies above, this research aims to address the disparity of practicing principals and teachers' perception of the necessity for male role models in primary schools and the effects of more men entering our primary schools on the education of both boys and girls, in Irish primary schools. I feel it is imperative to gain insight into this area from practicing educational professionals, as teachers, principals and sports coaches work with children on a daily basis and have a wealth of experience being good role models for children. This research also stems from the disparity of educational gender-based research that has been conducted in Ireland,

involving the perceptions of primary school children themselves, in relation to their opinions of gender-based teaching and role modelling.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore the perceptions and experiences of practicing educators as to the *necessity* of more male role models in primary schools and outline their views on gender modelling as oppose to individual role modelling. The study also wishes to convey the perceptions of primary school children and give them a voice in their education.

1.2 Personal Reflection/Statement

As 'reflexivity is a major strategy for quality control in qualitative research, understanding how it may be impacted by the characteristics and experiences of the researcher is of paramount importance' (Berger, 2013, p. 2), it is therefore important for me, as researcher, to be explicit about my individual position in relation to the study.

The original conception of this study was created from of an awareness of the numerical dominance of female teachers in the primary teaching sector. For many years, as a teacher starting out in the educational profession, I was informed that a 'man would get a job much easier' than a female teacher, simply because of the male teacher 'shortage'. Having positioned myself within a large, yet rural school, the continuous references regarding the many benefits for the children having a male teacher was constantly reinforced amongst parents, yet the question of how it would make such a difference to their child's education was never addressed. I felt this was not only degrading to the work that female teachers were conducting, but also placed tension amongst teaching staff, with constant rhetoric surrounding the need for more male teachers.

On moving to a smaller rural school in Galway, concerns regarding the education of children constantly crossed my path. I decided to part-take in Masters level education in an attempt to try to make a difference in children's lives by becoming more experienced in my profession. Having been initially fascinated by educational research, it wasn't long before I became cognisant of gender studies within this programme and my interest in gender and education began to cultivate. It was then, previous experiences of concerns regarding the minority of male teachers began to

occupy my thoughts and I decided to focus on aspects of why more male do not enter into primary teaching (Mc Donald, 2010). On completion of my M.Ed dissertation, I discovered more issues, questions and concerns that needed to be addressed. I began to critique literature surrounding the area of children's education and the role of the male teacher. I encountered large volumes of media campaigns, educational articles and abstracts with the recurring theme surrounding the need for more males in primary teaching. In a time where gender equality and equity are highlighted on a daily basis even throughout the primary teaching sector, I felt the one element missing from these articles was a critique of the *way* in which male teachers could help boys in their education, in Ireland. I was also conscientious of the fact that, in Ireland, the actual perspective of practicing teachers and children themselves were absent from educational debate. Having worked with an array of children for over a decade, I was aware of the great contribution and foresight children, even at primary school level have. I wanted to get a more in-depth view of the teacher's opinions in an Irish context. Furthermore, I was eager to involve the pupil's themselves in research as they can often hold more valuable knowledge and insight into their educational experiences than they are credited for and I wanted to give all of the above a voice that should be acknowledged within educational dialogue. I have always believed the perspectives of practicing professionals are imperative as agents of change, as they are the professionals that are teaching, mentoring and guiding children daily.

Personally, as a primary school teacher, I too am concerned about the welfare and academic achievement of the boys and girls I teach. Having over twelve years teaching experience, I have witnessed discourse surrounding the need for more male teachers from parents and the general public, without a valid explanation as to *why* we need more male teachers (or less female teachers), other than reasons that they are male, therefore it would be good for boys. There were very few adults able to elaborate on this when questioned further, which sparked internal thoughts that perhaps people were placing undue emphasis and belief in the 'poor boys' discourses that are ubiquitous in schools. I began to become ultimately frustrated at clever campaigns for more male teachers that are very seductive, yet facile. I witnessed the belief that people were placing in these discourses without questioning the

foundations of the ‘poor boys’ discourse. As a primary teacher, I was aware of the hard-working professionals within schools and all their efforts to involve and do their utmost for every child under their care. I began to feel an obligation to myself and my pupils to carry out some local research in this area. This doctoral study was born out of the factors above.

1.3 Aim of the Study

The aim of my study is to provide informed, research-based evidence that engages in current and past gender based theory to address the uncritical assumptions surrounding the call for more male teachers in primary schools. The study endeavours to increase opportunities for boys enabling them to develop a healthy sense of masculinity and strengthen the educational experiences of both boys and girls. The study hopes to highlight the need for a more critical evaluation into gender and primary school education, questioning the role of gender modelling within the primary school framework.

In addition to this, the study aims to unpack essentialism in the call for more male role models for boys. This thesis will highlight essentialism as the cornerstone of all arguments in male role model discourse. Essentialism makes sense in the male role model debate based on the belief that men, as an assumed homogenised group, only behave in a certain way. When gender analysis is applied, gender essentialism does not make sense. This study aims to demonstrate how essentialism stops diversification in role models for boys, placing male teachers and boys into unified groups.

1.4 Research Questions

This research involves addressing the uncritical assumption that recruiting more men into Irish primary schools as a means of defeminising the primary school environment will act as a solution to the academic underachievement and disinterest of boys. The research aims to create more informed discussion by educational stakeholders that engages in past and current research based gender theory.

The following points are the research questions and goals: To examine;

- The views, attitudes and perceptions of primary school principals, teachers and children in relation to the need for male role models for boys in primary school
- The characteristics principals, teachers, coaches and children believe a male role model should have
- How principals, teachers and coaches feel they can provide a role model in schools for boys
- The benefits for men in being male role models for boys
- The male influence (attributes and limitations) on the education of boys and girls
- Whether it is possible for both male and female teachers to be role models to all pupils through individual role modelling as opposed to gender modelling

1.5 Central Research Enquiry

The primary query of this research through the perspective and experiences of teaching professionals, coaches and students are:

- 'Is there a *need* for more male teachers to act as role models for boys in primary schools?
- Is it possible for children to learn from both male and female teachers through individual modelling as opposed to gender modelling?
- If gender of the teacher is not the reason for boys' academic disinterest and underachievement, what exactly is stopping the boys from achieving academically?

1.6 Study Rationale

Focus on the experiences of participants, allowing them to express their opinions:

The main focus of this study was to enable the participants themselves to have a voice within the research and facilitate them in expressing their own opinions regarding the educational experiences of children. Although there has been media focus in the call for more male teachers in primary schools, often driven by populist campaigns as a means to counter the feminisation of the primary teacher (Martino & Meyenn, 2001, Skelton & Francis, 2001, Yates, 1997), there has been little research conducted in Ireland allowing experienced educators and pupils to express their own perspective on the male teacher debate. As educational stakeholders develop campaigns and strategies to address the needs of boys' education, there is little thought of the active implications of their actions that directly affect the education of *all* children in primary schools. The rationale behind this study to try to close the gap with research that is somewhat underdeveloped in an Irish context. The study rationale was also conceived with primary focus on giving a voice to children and highlighting their understanding of factors that influence their own learning.

Primary school pupils

Previous literature has often incorporated pupil's experiences through the teacher's perspectives. As there is little research conducted in Ireland enabling primary school children to be heard and have a voice in gender based educational research, this study was conducted to address the limited research carried out with primary school children themselves. Literature has often expressed the value in hearing the voices of pupils and encouraging them to express themselves (Fielding 2001). Rudduck and Flutter (2004) have expressed the benefits in pupil participation and consultation in teaching and learning as they can contribute 'in helping schools to develop new directions for improvement' and help develop 'principles of citizenship and democracy' within schools (p.3). This research was conducted as a means of empowering the pupils, not only to have their voices heard, but also as a valued contribution to their own education. The research acknowledges the unique contribution primary school pupils can have towards their own learning within educational research, while also enabling students the potential to develop and aid school improvement.

Educators

Although educators are the main focus of studies conducted within educational discourse, this study recognised the importance of gaining the perspective of principals, experienced teachers and coaches, as a means of gathering a more rounded perspective of the general conduct within Irish primary schools and classrooms. The study identifies their role as educational facilitators and understands the value in generating insight from experienced, practicing school educators. Allowing these participants a voice within the research, enables them to be possible 'agents of change' within Irish educational research and enables them to vocally address advancements and limitations they foresee in the call for more male teachers as role models for boys.

Unclear definition of the role of the male teacher in primary schools:

One of the most significant insufficiencies in Irish gender-based research is the unclear definition as to what is the exact role of the male teacher in Irish primary schools. There has been extensive research in an Irish context as to why more males are not entering into primary teaching, but the experiences of practicing and experienced male teachers and their perceptions as to their role as a male teacher in the primary education sector has yet to be defined. One rationale of this study manifests through this inadequacy and therefore the study analyses male and female teachers' perceptions of their role, as role models to boys.

1.7 Overview of Chapters to follow:

Chapter Two, provides an in-depth critical review of the theoretical literature encompassing this study. The chapter begins with a general overview of the Irish education system and follows with an in-depth critique of the contemporary arguments about the needs of boys in (primary) school. This chapter addresses the arguments about the diverse approaches that have been put forward to address boys' academic underachievement and presents this hypothesis as unsubstantiated.

Chapter Three, outlines the study within the philosophical orientation of the study and outlines the paradigmatic and ontological assumptions within the research. The chapter presents a detailed discussion of the methodological stance of the study,

origins of participant recruitment and detail interview and survey methods used to conduct this research. The chapter concludes with a clear review of the research design and ethical considerations throughout the study.

Chapter Four, begins with a brief outline of the children's profiles/demographic information. The chapter continues by presenting the two key themes that emerged within data analysis, pertaining to the role models of fifth and sixth class pupils and gains considerable insight into their school encounters with male and female teachers, from the children's experience.

Chapter Five, provides brief profiles of the principals and teachers who participated in this research. The chapter develops with an analysis of the five key themes that emerged from interviews with principals and teachers regarding the necessity of more male teachers to act as role models for boys in primary schools. The chapter guides analysis of the elements teachers feel are most important in the classroom when being a role model and discusses teachers' and principals' perspectives on gender modelling as being more effective than individual role modelling.

Chapter Six, gives the reader a brief introduction to the coaches who participated in interviews for the research. The chapter continues by discussing three central thematic findings that emerged from the interviews.

Chapter Seven, presents significant findings drawn from the analysis of the data within this study. Following this, the chapter presents key recommendations drawn from the findings of this research and continues with a discussion of the distinctive contributions this study has made towards research in the area of gender and education. The chapter concludes by outlining areas of limitation within the research and possibilities for future research stemming from this research. The chapter draws to a close with a final conclusion.

Chapter Two: A Critique of the Contemporary Arguments about the Needs of Boys in (Primary) School

2.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to debunk the arguments about the diverse approaches that have been put forward to address boys' academic underachievement. This chapter completely undercuts the arguments to 'fix' boys in order to present the hypothesis as 'this is not valid'. This chapter demonstrates the false claims that have been perpetuated in order to then test if the critical gender research proves to be true when you look to the classroom, principals, teachers and coaches.

In order to do so, this chapter provides the reader with a brief overview of the literature concerning women's entry into the primary teaching sector in Ireland and changes that occurred in teacher training institutions throughout this period. The chapter develops by exploring the theories that are at the forefront of the male teacher rhetoric and are embedded in the 'boy crisis' debate. The structure of this chapter is divided into two main sections. Section one refers to the history of teaching and the 'boy crisis'. Section two elaborates on elements within the call for more role models in primary schools.

2.2 Women and Teaching:

2.2.1 Women Entering into Teaching in Ireland

As the end of the 19th century saw changes in the labour force in developed economies, it also brought changes in the education systems in Ireland from fee paying primary school education in the late 18th century to funded primary schooling though the 19th century. The Commissioners for National Education (National Education Board) was established in 1831 for the education of the poor in Ireland (Coolahan, 1981). In 1834 the first Model School was established in Dublin by the National Education Board, which involved a teacher training facility linked to a school in which teachers could practice their skills in the form of apprenticeships (Mangione, 2003). This was initially only open to males. Female apprentice teachers

were finally permitted from 1842 onwards (Mangione, 2003), which allowed women to progress further, to teacher training programmes (Mangione, 2003). Model schools were eventually managed by male and female teachers, although pay disparity was large at the time.

> The first Principal of the boys' model school of 300 pupils was Dr Mac Arthur, at the princely salary of £300 per annum. Mrs Campbell, who had experience in the Kildare Place system, was appointed Head Principal of the girls' school of 100 pupils, at a salary of £90 per annum (Coolahan, 1983, p. 45).

The mid-nineteenth century also saw more inclusive pupil education in Ireland, as The Society for the Promotion of the Education of the Poor of Ireland, also known as the Kildare Place Society, began to establish numerous non-denominational and non-profit schools throughout Ireland, partially funded by the government and text book sales (Hislop, 2008).

In 1849, Model Schools changed to District Schools as they now operated across the country (Mangione, 2003), however the structure of the schooling remained much the same. As Model/District Schools were non-denominational, there was growing worry amongst the Catholic Church regarding the religious education of their pupils and teachers. The church remained 'apprehensive about the formative influence which the experience of mixed denominational education might have on future teachers' (Coolahan, 1981, p.23) and in particular the 'reading of Scripture extracts in its schools devoid of any direction as to interpretation proved unacceptable to Roman Catholic authorities' (Doyle, 2003, p. 33). The unwillingness of the Kildare Place Society to empathise with any of the Catholic Churches concerns resulted in Archbishop Cullen stating that the sacrament of confirmation would be withheld from any students receiving their education in the 'so-called Model School' (Doyle, 2003). This would prove devastating to the number of pupils attending the Model Schools. Coincidentally, at the time, there were also queries over the standard and funding of teacher training. This led to the many state enquiries into the Irish education system, one of the main enquiries being the Powis Commission inquiry, which one could credit with strengthening teacher education in Ireland.

The Royal Commission of Inquiry into Primary Education in Ireland, also known as the Powis Commission (1868-70) reported its dissatisfaction of the teacher training

in Ireland, as two thirds of the teachers of Ireland still remained untrained (Ní Mhaoldomhnaigh, 1987). The report recommended a move towards a state supported denominational teacher training whereby the teachers were to carry out pre-service training for 12 months (Report of the Commissioners, 1870). This led to a transferral in teacher training education to more formal training. As a response to the Powis Commission and resistance of the Model Schools, the Catholic Church set up teacher training colleges, which included St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra, in 1875, a male teacher training college and later the Sedes Sapientiae Catholic training college for females in Baggot Street, Dublin in 1877. In 1883, teacher training was extended from one to two years, perhaps as an initiative to create more professionalism within the occupation through standards of the education of the teachers. Teacher training also developed professionally in terms of teaching pedagogy as teacher practice changed from 'someone who merely needs to be trained in the dispersal of knowledge to one who facilitates the holistic development of pupils and thus needs to be similarly educated him/herself' (O' Donovan, 2003, p. 20). In 1898, Mary Immaculate College in Limerick was established and saw the enrolment of seventy-five females in 1901, rising to one hundred students two years later, all of which were female. By 1922, there were five primary teacher training institutions in operation in Ireland: St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra, Dublin (male only); Our Lady of Mercy College, Carysfort, Blackrock, Dublin (female only); Church of Ireland College, Rathmines, Dublin (male and female); Mary Immaculate College, Limerick (female only); De La Salle College, Waterford (male only). Educational institutions were the initial stages of a new Ireland for female teachers as the formation of teacher education institutions had a reverse effect on the popularity of the primary teaching occupation amongst men. This reflected patterns across Europe at the time. The labour force was opening up to women, although, with the exception of wartime, the growth of women in labour was mostly in areas that were seen as more suited for women based on gendered expectations. This is especially true for women when it comes to the growth of teacher education in Ireland. An increase in the intake amounts in female only teacher training colleges like Mary Immaculate College and Our Lady of Mercy College, was a contributing factor in the numerical increase of women teachers. Interestingly, there was also a notable occupational decline of men in teaching in western countries when the profession became institutionalised (Williams, 1995). This enabled the growing influx of women into

teaching to become more apparent (Boyle, 2004), as men began to take up employment in other fields. Correspondingly, in May 1939, De La Salle teacher training college for males closed as the government suggested one college for male teacher training was now sufficient (delasallewaterford, 2018). All male teacher training was subsequently moved to St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra, Dublin.

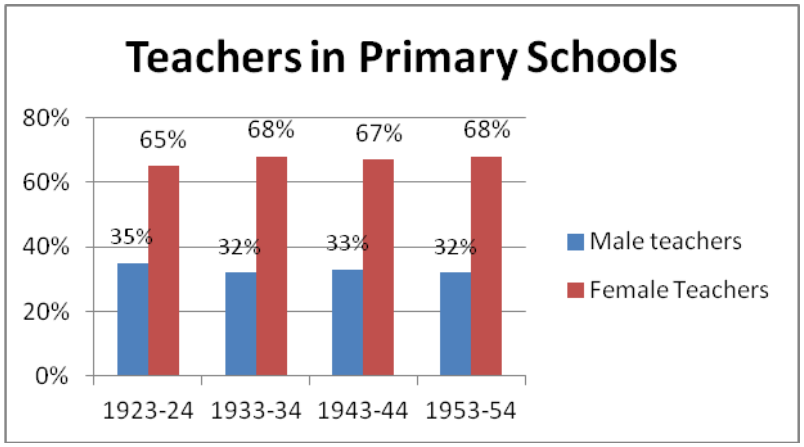
The 1960s witnessed further change in the teacher training colleges in Ireland. The training colleges were now referred to as Colleges of Education (Coolahan, 1981). Social, cultural and economic changes were occurring in Ireland at this time, which again corresponded with a further increase in the number of women gaining entry into primary teaching colleges. As a response to the growing economy, there was a move away from the previous style of teaching in schools where lessons were focused on 'character building' to a more practical style of learning comprising of subjects that would coincide with the economic changes that were evident and provide a skilled workforce for the growing economy (O Sullivan, 2006).

From 1961, open competition was created amongst colleges of education and the entry process was not confined to students who attend preparatory colleges (Coolahan, 2004). This would inevitably open up spaces in the new Colleges of Education to an array of teachers and act as a possible entry point for teachers who would have otherwise not been eligible to train as a primary school teacher. This possibly signified a change in the status of teaching from a vocation to a professional occupation, yet despite the profession becoming more serious, structured, and pedagogically aligned, primary teaching still carried the assumption of 'women's work'. This is perhaps a factor in the declining numbers of male teachers.

2.3 Decline of the Male Teacher

Although Drudy (2001) states there was a professionalism amongst teachers as they held high respect within the community and teaching was seen as a 'vocation' or 'call' amongst society (Coolahan, 2004), possibly due to the lower pay in comparison to other professions and the assumption of primary teaching as 'women's work', a decline in male teachers has been evident for some time. As mentioned in the previous section, evidence of this decline was apparent as far back as the 1920's. If we examine employment figures in primary education from the

early 1920's, 35% of all teachers and principals employed were male and this percentage remained steady right through to the 1960's.



(www.education.ie/en/Publications/Statistics/Statistical-Report)

There was a further decline in male teachers from the 1960's onwards. Despite the increased professional requirements of teachers, the work continued to be categorised as 'women's work' aiding the increased drop off of males in Primary Teaching from this time on. Figures from the Department of Education and Skills (2001), report there was a steady decline in male teachers from this time on to approximately 30% of primary school teachers in the 1970's. This was further reduced in the 1980's to less than 25%, with an approximate total of 15% of male teachers in 2016 (Irish Independent, 2016). The decline in male figures inevitably coincided with an increase in the already well-established female base in the occupation leading to the status of the occupation increasingly became associated with 'women's work' in relation to the 'motherly' role of the teacher. The 'motherly' role of a teacher was not a new concept as it echoes through history right back to the Victorian era[1]. As the 1960 brought about economic growth in Ireland and across Europe, women continued to numerically dominate occupations like nursing, clerical work and primary teaching, while men moved towards occupations in the mechanical, production and driving trades (Hauser, Robert & Featherman, 1977). Although teaching attracted men as a short term occupation, especially in rural areas, where farming continued, the majority of men no longer saw teaching as a desirable

[1] In 1905, Rule 127(b) was enforced on primary schools stating that women were to be employed to teach infant classes as 'women were more likely to have sympathy and patience necessary for teaching younger children' (Ní Bhroiméil, 2006, p.36), in comparison to male teachers who were seen as 'unfit to teach infants' both by 'temperament and training' (Ní Bhroiméil, 2006, p.36) possibly contributing to the attitude of teaching younger children as 'women's work'.

profession in the long term and the numbers of female teachers in the primary education sector continued to rise. The growing status of teaching as 'women's work' paired with the low remuneration for increasingly higher standards of teaching, has resulted in a further reduction of men in the occupation and the development of the feminisation of primary teaching has been further solidified throughout the second half of the twentieth century and on into the twenty first:

> In effect, the longer terms and increased standards for entry turned teaching into a 'para-profession'…A little 'professionalization' of this sort drove men out of teaching, for it increased the opportunity costs without resulting in commensurate increases in pay.
>
> (ibid, p.140, as cited in Drudy et al., 2005, p.20)

Men who did remain in teaching were often fast-tracked to roles of authority or often only taught in higher or more senior classes, while female teachers remained in the lower spectrum of the school (Cushman, 2008, Tyack & Strober, 1981). Men continued to hold more posts of responsibilities in schools than women and 'ideologies of domesticity' continued to form obstacles for women seeking promotion and higher financial rewards (Williams, 1995).[2] The element of male principal or senior teacher is still in existence in primary schools today as more men still hold more positions of authority in schools than their female counterparts, even when 'awareness' of gender equality is high. Although one has to refer back to statistics from 1874, in Ireland and the Forster Education Act 1870 in Britain (Francis & Skelton, 2005) to find an equal ratio of male and female teachers, women have still not progressed to numerically dominate the role of inspectorate and are only marginally numerically dominating the role of principal within schools, even when primary teaching is numerically dominated by females. Statistics from the Central Statistics Office reaffirm in 2015, 41% of all primary school principals were male, although there were only 13% of male teachers at the time. This indicates that although there were 18% more female principals than male principals, it is greater by a small margin in comparison to higher number of female teachers in comparison to male teachers. This demonstrates that a higher proportion of men who enter teaching

[2] Women were required by law to leave their occupations in the civil service in Ireland after they were married (until 1974), further limiting prospects of promotion.

rise to positions of authority. Perhaps aligning with Williams' ideologies of domesticity, women still feel a social pressure to sustain and uphold daily responsibilities around the home, along with expectations that women take on the majority of caring responsibly for elderly members of the family, while maintaining a heavy workload. This is possibly a reason they do not apply for roles of authority that are seen to place more time restraints on the home life, highlighting the social gender divide that is reflected in primary teaching. On average, men have less responsibility for domestic duties in the private sphere but more power. Therefore, women take on more domestic and nurturing responsibilities at home and in school. The evidence of males in positions of authority in schools certainly demonstrates that gendered power relations are very much evident in Irish schools today.

Sadly, as the numbers of men in primary teaching decreased, blame was placed upon the numerical dominance of females in primary teaching towards the 'effeminacy' of schooling and the demise in the academic interest and education of boys and the term 'feminisation of primary teaching' was used as a popular definition to explain changes in the education employment where the sector was considered a mostly female occupation (Drudy et al., 2005). Women were blamed for men leaving the primary teaching sector, yet as statistics clearly demonstrate, female teachers have always been present in the primary education sector and it was the men who chose to enter into other occupations themselves. The argument that stresses boys are suffering because of the 'feminisation' of the profession does not take into account how gendered expectations have shaped the gendered division of labour in teaching. The fact that there are more women in primary teaching because of the gendered assumption that primary teaching is of lower status, through low pay and the association with primary teaching as 'women's work' is ignored. As a result of gendered assumptions, there are fewer men in primary teaching because some men do not want to be associated with a 'female' occupation (Drudy, 2008). This has implications for female teachers as they are blamed for 'emasculating' boys (Martino et al., 2004), and creating a 'feminised' environment that favours girl's learning styles over boys (Hoff Sommer, 2000). The central factor that needs to be highlighted is the fact that some men do not want to enter into an occupation that challenges their masculinity and a fear of effeminate boys in turn results in a 'panic'

that female teachers are ‘emasculating’ boys. Yet, historically, the government has not challenged the stereotype of the primary teaching as ‘women’s work’ because it helps to justify lower pay in the profession. The tension arises as the ‘feminisation’ of primary teaching is blamed for the academic and behavioural underachievement of boys, yet there is little renegotiation of salaries or professionalism involved by stakeholders within educational discourse which has been central to why men have left the profession. Even in 2018, primary teachers, in co-operation with their union, are in negotiations with the government because although they are calling for more men in teaching, they have reduced the starting salary on new primary teacher entrants, ignoring research by Drudy et al., (2005) that blatantly highlights one of the reasons men are not entering into the occupation is because of the low status and pay. It would seem that if one looks critically at the argument made about the deficit for boys resulting from the ‘feminisation’ of schooling, it would be easier to conclude that the number of women teachers in primary schools are not to blame, but rather the threat of femininity to men and boys.

The numerically lower number of males in primary teaching has gained widespread media attention, not only in Ireland but throughout Europe, the United States, Canada and Australia (Szwed, 2010, Skelton, 2009, Drudy, 2008, Martino et al., 2006, Cushman, 2005, Mills et al., 2004). ‘Moral panic’ regarding the academic underachievement of boys has set in amongst popular media and educational stakeholders, which has been linked to the higher number of women teachers. While there was a growth of research in the 1980’s on gender and education dedicated to the experiences and educational achievement of girls, (Francis & Skelton, 2001), there has been a marked shift in gender research in education since the 1990’s, with an increasing emphasis focussing on the academic and behavioural underachievement of boys in comparison to their female counterparts. Newspaper articles and government strategies have being focussing on interventions and changes within the primary educational system to promote a more ‘boy-friendly’ approach to learning for boys, while placing simplistic arguments and blame on the numerical dominance of female teachers and the increasing ‘feminine’ environment in primary schools leading to the current ‘problem’ with boy’s education.

2.4 Female Teachers and Failing Boys

Boy debates are not a new concept in educational research. Since the late nineteenth century, 'boy problems' were reported in the United States in response to panics over female teachers making boys too feminine (Weaver-Hightower, 2008) and the necessity to bring back male teachers and in effect masculinity to schools. While other literature referring to boys and low literacy can be traced back to the seventeenth century (Cohen 1998), the major exception to more recent debates on the educational needs of boys is the awareness and attention it has garnered from educational stakeholders, not only in the United States, but in Australia, Canada, UK and Ireland (Carrington & Mc Phee, 2008, Martino & Kehler, 2006, Skelton, 2003, 2002, 2001, Carrington, 2002, Francis & Skelton, 2001, Martino and Meyenn, 2001, Williams, 1993, recent campaigns in UK and Ireland, 2016). The numerical predominance of female teachers in primary schools is seen to be having a strong effect on the education and behaviour of boys, it is argued, due to feminine pedagogy and philosophies becoming embedded in primary schools, and due to the belief that teachers favour girls and girls learning styles over those of boys (Hoff Sommers, 2000). Arguments connecting girls' educational advantage to that of female teachers, are used to promote the call for more men in primary teaching to overcome the disadvantages and 'effeminacy' that female teachers are imposing on boys. Yet, there is little admittance that the regular presence of women does not make boys effeminate, just as the regular presence of a man will not create more masculine girls or turn every boy macho. Fear of male effeminacy, (which is used to mask traces of homophobia), that is intersected within the arguments about boys' academic underachievement for reasons of different learning styles, feminised curriculum or general 'boys will be boys' discourse, is ultimately rooted in misogyny and homophobia. If it were not, then there would be more blame placed on the curriculum and school design rather than the gender of the teacher.

Francis (2000) reaffirms the term 'feminisation' as the loss of power and security in the workplace amongst men and Francis and Skelton (2005) argue the term 'feminisation' is in effect placing responsibility and blame on women, in this instance, for the 'failings' of boys in the primary education system. Francis and Skelton (2005) question if a feminised school environment 'generates feminised school practices then can only females 'do' femininity and males display

masculinity? (Francis & Skelton, 2005, p.92). If this is the case, this essentialist argument would highlight the simple placement of more men in primary teaching as a one-dimensional solution and the introduction of gender teaching will be the answer to the problem of 'failing boys.' The assumption that male teachers will increase academic and behavioural positivity amongst boys is placing emphasis on 'sex role socialisation theories' (Skelton, 2003) and classifying masculine and feminine roles into biological sex behaviours. Feminists have long argued against simple measures such as increasing more males in schools in order to eliminate problems in behaviour and academia (Smedley, 1998) but this concept has been, and continues to be, suggested by government stakeholders worldwide. Martino (2009) argues there needs to be more 'informed research based knowledge' around the role more male teachers will have on the academic achievement of boys, and girls, in school before certain strategies are implemented (Martino, Kehler & Weaver Hightower, 2009), as yet, there is no concrete evidence that has illustrated that the simple presence of male teachers will increase the academic achievement of boys.

Gender research (Cushman, 2011, Lingard et al., 2009, Carrington et al., 2007, Drudy et al., 2005, Francis et al., 2005, Francis & Skelton, 2005, Ashley, 2003 and Martino & Meyenn, 2001,) has continuously concluded that there is no correlation between the academic performance and motivation of students when gender modelling is practiced, yet the call for more male role models in primary school continues to gain momentum without any critical evaluation of what exactly is needed. This is because boy's education is being reinforced as in 'crisis' compared to girl's academic achievement and therefore government stakeholders feel they need to act upon this 'crisis' immediately without considering gender and education research.

As arguments for male teachers to influence the education of boys and somewhat girls, categorise masculine and feminine roles of teachers into traits that are performed by the biological sex of the teacher, it is important to explore the debates and discourse surrounding the 'failing boys'.

Research by Foster, Kimmel and Skelton (2001) suggest the debate amongst boys' education has being ongoing and has increasingly transformed into a 'moral panic' (Epstein, 1998) or 'crisis' (Farrell & Gray, 2018). Epstein et al., (1998) in a series of essays centring on the boy debate, outlined three dominant discourses in which the

underachievement of boys could be categorised from readings in popular media, educational stakeholders and other literature. These were: 'failing schools, failing boys', 'poor boys' and 'boys will be boys.'

The argument for 'failing school, failing boys' stems from the pedagogical practices in primary schools and in particular, the subject English. Boys have been well documented to perform badly in areas of literacy. Arguments have suggested boys underperform in literacy compared to girls because of their 'preferred learning styles' (Foster, Kimmel and Skelton, 2001). Other researchers have suggested the academic achievement of girls has created a 'gap' or imbalance in the education of boys both in the school structure, academically and organisationally, while more research suggests the limited experience boys have of male teachers in early education results in devaluation of subjects associated with this period, such as, reading and literacy as 'boys find themselves in a world of learning that is not often associated with a masculine figure in their formative years, the activities it involves- principally reading and writing- are devalued' (Bleach, 1998, p.10).

However, not all men (or women) are exceptional role models of literacy and writing. Even if boys did have a male role model in their formative years, it would assume these men would actively model literacy and this would have a positive effect on the academic literacy levels of boys, who would view the subject as less feminine. It is not as simplistic as this theory would suggest. Realistically, even female teachers do not spend an exorbitant amount of time teaching literacy behaviours to girls or boys, as other curricular areas are taught. Therefore, the argument of gender modelling falls down on the level of essentialism, or the belief that men can model literacy to boys and that is the solution to the academic disinterest and underachievement of boys. Girls are not good at reading simply because they are mirroring images of female teachers reading. They are doing what school asks of them. A part of masculinity that is being modelled to boys (even without the presence of 50% male teachers) is an attitude that reading is not a masculine thing to do, therefore, if it is not seen as masculine, boys lack motivation and often they will not engage in the subject (Hay et al., 2001)

Additionally, it is worth noting that although Bleach argues the loss of a male teacher in boy's younger years adds to their disassociation with literacy, one has to be mindful of the boys and girls that *are* achieving. The achievement of girls is being

completely overshadowed by essentialist arguments that place girls at fault for doing well. Instead of praising girls, their achievements are overshadowed by boy's academic underperformance in comparison to that of girls and this is seen as a problem for boys. This is because we are comparing boys to girls, rather than looking at how boys are doing (on their own, without the comparison to girls) over time in areas of literacy. The blame is then further amplified onto the female teachers without research based evidence to illustrate that female teachers are teaching boys poorly. This uncritical gender analysis, and essentialist belief in gender is misogynistic and anti-feminist as it places specific blame on women, who are seen to be at fault for the lower achievements of boys, even though research show men outperform females in occupational status and salaries. There is a complete absence of arguments that say we need men to value the importance of primary teaching and that men need to actively demonstrate or model very high levels of literacy – even when women teach it. Instead uncritical arguments place blame primarily on women and girls for 'creating' a 'feminine' environment in primary schools that does not suit the education of boys, and as a result, more men are needed to counter this perceived imbalance. There are few debates that challenge the lower status and pay in primary teaching and aspects of men not wanting to enter into primary teaching because the low remuneration for hard work is not challenged. Gender inequality in this instance works in favour of men. But when the argument is made that imbalance of male and female teachers is at the centre of the issue of boys not doing better in school, there is little movement to change the way we understand and practice gender. Often the factors of low salary and status in primary teaching do not enter into stakeholders' educational discourse because it would entail seriously reconsidering inequality, and there is an agreed understanding that this is not up for negotiation, mainly because the numerical majority of primary teachers, who are not in a role of authority, are female.

Furthermore, if Bleach is suggesting that more male teachers in the formative years of schooling can create greater value and affection in boys towards reading and writing skills, then surely what boys need in schools are male teachers that explicitly model an exemplary passion of literature and learning, while constantly engaging in diverse literacy practices. If male teachers that show a passion for 'feminine' subjects are what boys need to perform better in areas of English, then the call that is

being placed for more male role models by society is a contradiction, as surely this will only create more 'effeminacy' in boys. Within these contradictions, it creates the argument that society is calling for the exact opposite of what a female teacher is, a male teacher that displays hegemonic masculinities that counter the 'feminine' environment in schools in which girls education is thriving on, not a male role model that advocates a love of reading and literacy. As female teachers model reading and writing skills equally to girls and boys, to suggest boys will simply learn to love literacy when they experience men teaching them is essentialist and suggests girls are excelling in literacy simply because they are being taught by a female teacher. It demonstrates flaws in the argument for more male role models based on biological sex factors and signifies sexism throughout the male role model debate.

Bleach (1998) further suggests the schools and exam systems are failing boys. He argues girls perform better in 'sequential' testing than boys who prefer 'sudden death' style of exams which are timed and can include last minute preparations. Therefore the essay style of literature and English is not suitable to boys learning attainments. Even though 'sudden death' exams are indeed still used in schools, the fact that girls do not perform as well as boys in these style exams is not a factor within educational debates. This explicitly draws on gender differences, which is in favour of the boys. If educational stakeholders were serious about the academic achievement of boys in relation to gendered learning styles then suggestions of different assessment styles for girls and boys should be addressed. If girls perform better in essay-based questions, and boys perform better in a timed multiple choice exams, both of which assess the same content, the logical progression of the gender differences in testing should result in researching different assessments for girls and boys. But this logical argument is not negotiated, which highlights the concern is not about what is most suitable for the education of all, but solely based of the education that would be most advantageous to boys, and girls are left to deal with educational changes that do not necessarily suit their assessment needs. If popular debate is not associated with the development of curriculum to suits only boy's needs, then surely, essay format, which is an important literary skill that even boys need to learn, should be incorporated and not challenged, even if it proves difficult to boys. Research does not suggest that in boys-only schools there should be only 'sudden death' exams, non-fiction books, and only male teachers because this is not pedagogically sound. If

it were, surely all the boys' schools around the world would adopt an andro-centric pedagogy and to my knowledge this has not happened. Therefore, there must be something else at play. Given that Ireland (and the UK) has so many single sex schools, one might think that boys might do better when schools serve the needs of boys exclusively. However, the literacy statistics do not reflect this (Martino & Meyenn, 2001, Rowan et al., 2002, Harker, 2000). This suggests a part of the masculinity that is being modelled to boys is tolerance for excuses that boys cannot learn effectively from a certain style of learning, despite little educational research to suggest this. This leads to a certain gender privilege amongst men and boys, even without the presence of male teachers in schools, that if boys are failing, it is not the fault of the boys. Unspoken lessons are being transferred to boys suggesting that they are the privileged sex that gain more high-powered positions than females with less effort. There are numerous areas where girls struggle academically, but through hard work and discipline they often face the struggle, and some overcome it, other girls do not; there is not the same focus on these girls as there are on the boys who academically underperform. Messages of gendered power relations and male privilege reduce what is expected of boys, instead of encouraging boys to find strategies to work through difficult areas. Challenging academic obstacles and resilience is certainly not specifically targeted at girls by female teachers in primary schools but possibly through holding positions less privileged than boys and men, they have to try harder for greater achievement. Calls for role models to display explicit masculinities, as in research by Cushman (2008), only reinforces the model where boys get more for less effort, as do suggestions that boys need certain 'masculine' styles of learning to achieve more. If populist debate is concerned about boys and academic underachievement, it would surely be better to focus on the *degree* to which boys struggle to achieve, instead of placing blame on the numerical dominance of female teachers and assessment styles that are more suitable to girls.

Interestingly, Arnot et al., (1999) later criticised this view, citing that even after changes to GCSE's in the UK towards what Bleach termed as 'sudden death' assessment were created, there was still a higher level of achievement displayed amongst girls in both types of examinations, which demonstrates even with this change, boy's still did not excel. This again signifies a certain gender privilege amongst males that highlight less effort equals more gain for boys. If they are not

performing well in certain exam styles, a demand is made to change the curriculum to suit the needs of the boys. But because girls still outperformed boys in 'sudden death' style exams (Arnot et al., 1999), blame was subsequently placed on female teachers. Conversely, blame also continued to be placed on the failing school, as failing boys discourse argued that boys are losing out in their educational experiences and the schools are not helping boys attain the scores that they are capable of (Esptein et al., 1998). Failing schools are often associated with lower levels of achievement in areas of literacy and numeracy and as the schools are not attaining the standard level of achievement, they are failing the education of boys. However, this effects the education of both boys and girls and is therefore not a direct reflection of failing boys, but because boy's achievements are being compared to girl's achievements, instead of comparing boys achievements with other boys (which would measure achievement of boys themselves more accurately), girls underachievement's are overshadowed by the 'boy problem' and are not seen to warrant debate. Comparing girls to boys enables a gender panic that is rooted in the belief that boys and men are superior. When they are not achieving as well as their female counterparts, blame for their failings is placed on the (educational) system or theories that girls and women are against them. This is displayed throughout the 'poor boy' discourse (Martino & Meyenn, 2001).

The 'poor boys' discourse seeps into the failing boys discourse as boys are seen as the 'new disadvantaged' who are faced with a feminised primary school experience, a feminised environment and possibly a single parent home with a female parent in a matriarch led family. This overwhelming feminine environment is seen to accelerate the level of progression in girls, whom are believed to thrive in this environment, while supposedly inhibiting the academic progress of boys. Boys are seen to have lost out as a result of perhaps feminist drives in education campaigning for girls. However, research by Martino (1997) suggests it is not comparisons to the girls that cause lower levels of achievement in subjects, but the attitude some boys have to the subject itself, suggesting it is the boy's views of masculinities that disrupt achievement, not the female teachers. Martino (1997) references boys as suggesting 'reading is lame, looking at words is pathetic'. Boys can tend to look at English as a 'feminine' subject and due to the expressive nature of the subject and their predetermined principles of masculinity, they reject the subject and do not achieve

expected standards. This would emphasise it is boy's sense of masculinity that is at fault for boy's underachievement and not essentialist arguments believed and enforced by society. Traditional understanding of gender suggests that boys are disadvantaged when connected in any way with girls or women and arguments that boys are underachieving academically because of the numerical dominance of women in primary teaching is an argument that holds little value when assessed critically. Instead of reinforcing the benefits in the experiences and understandings gained from female teachers and girls, gender essentialism and the belief that boys should be better than women or girls is overpowering critical gendered analysis. Instead, boys are categorised as the new 'disadvantaged' because of all the femininity at home and at school and in essence they are great to endure so many women, but are failing because of it. If arguments that women teachers were bad at teaching had any value, educational stakeholders would commit to evaluations of those teachers, however, this is not the argument. The centre argument is that women teachers are fine for girls' education, but not for boys and the 'poor boys' and 'feminisation' arguments perpetuate this belief. Furthermore, if the sole argument is based on gender modelling then the solution is clear, the female teachers should teach girls and the male teachers should teach boys, however, volumes of research have demonstrated that this does not increase boys academic achievement, therefore the problem must lie elsewhere. As displayed in Martino and Meyenn (2001), suggestions of subject associations as 'feminine' are embedded in predetermined masculinity and it is the boys' own assumptions of a subject as 'feminine' that is stopping them from progressing further in some academic areas, especially English, and not female teachers. Therefore, it is the reinforcement of hegemonic masculinity that is preventing some boys from underachieving academically as they distance themselves from 'feminine' subjects. It is the attitude and willingness to conform to traditionally constructed masculinities that stops them achieving more. If the education of all children is to improve, this needs to be debated critically amongst educational stakeholders, but it is being ignored because clever campaigns that position boys as in 'crisis' in comparison to girls are more convincing. Unfortunately, because society still believes in gender essentialism, these arguments are still being heard and recuperation of masculinities and male privilege is still the underlying focus. This is evident within 'boys will be boys' discourse.

The ‘boys will be boys’ discourse consists of the knowledge that boys, in biological sex are carrying out ‘masculine’ stereotypes and are naturally boisterous in nature and naturally clever but not as academically driven as girls. In ‘boys will be boys’ discourse boys are seen to need more encouragement and motivation to perform academically. However, this again leads back to the essentialist argument that boys are naturally masculine in nature and female teachers are at fault for creating effeminacy in boys and there is a need for more male role models in primary schools to display hegemonic masculinities to boys as a means of driving recuperative masculinity back into schools and this will in effect strengthen the academic achievement of boys, based solely on the presence of a male figure. These arguments are solely focussed on male privilege and constructions of gender power relations embedded in society.

Correspondingly, some authors, such as Biddulph (1997) and Hoff Sommers (2000), have suggested that boys are boys and we should embrace differences. Hoff Sommers warns against labelling boys as in ‘crisis’ and rejects the notion that boys need help. However, as she further outlines that boy’s behaviour does need some addressing as they are currently ‘uneducated and uncivilised’ (Hoff Sommers, 2000), this would suggest to some extent she is acknowledging that masculinity and male privilege is at play. ‘Poor boys’ and ‘Boys will be boys’ discourse has stemmed from much theoretical debate from men’s rights movements but fails to take into account that boys are not one homogenised group and do not all act in the same manner nor do they have the same educational experiences as each other. Actions advocating and encouraging ‘manly’ behaviour could possibly have a negative effect on boys who are not confined to this stereotypical gendered behaviour and this is where the gender essentialism and desire to reinforce masculinities in schools become very clear. Boys are not all the same just as all boys are not academically underachieving in the same way. However, the boys who do well or enjoy reading, may be the boys that are seen as ‘sissys’ or ‘faggots’ as critiqued in Martino (1997), because they are not confirming to social constructs of gendered masculinity, they are therefore not seen as ‘real men’. These are the boys who read many books like girls, the boys who study the most, try the hardest and do not devote all their time to sport. This is central to the ‘boys will be boys’ discourse. There is a desire to change the rules to say that the ordinary way boys are boys (privileged masculinity), is not the problem,

rather schooling should be redefined (staffing, curriculum, scheduling) to meet hegemonic masculinity. The regular way boys are boys, actually disadvantages them academically. But instead of boys or masculinity changing, the blame for academic underachievement, it is argued, should be located externally, preserving male privilege. Therefore, from the 'boys will be boys' perspective, it is the female teachers and femininity in schools that are seen to be responsible.

Francis and Skelton (2005) have suggested that although researchers have debated the problem with boys, in agreement or disagreement of the failing boys 'crisis', all arguments do drive 'conventional conceptions of masculinity and education' and argue the three above discourses fail to account for ethnical and socio-economic differences. Lingard and Douglas (1999) agree that in many cases the solution to counteract academic and behavioural underachievement in boys, compromise mainly of 'recuperative masculinity' approaches. 'Recuperative masculinity' approaches used as a means to entice boys into learning can often be seen in primary schools on a day to day basis whether there is an awareness by the teacher or not. Many teachers have been witness to other teachers promising boys time for soccer or sports (masculine associated activities) if they achieve a certain target in written curricular activities, however, other authors have warned against using competitive sports and such strategies to entice boys as they can further cultivate masculinity and masculine stereotypes amongst boys (Epstein, 1999, Francis, 1999). However, this is the preferred outcome by drives for more men in teaching, as this perpetuates masculine behaviours within schools and strengthens male privilege and gender power. Enticing boys through 'boys will be boys' discourse, could also neglect boys who do not fit into socially stereotypical roles and could lead them open to bullying and homophobic behaviour, an issue becoming prevalent in some primary schools. However, awareness and compassion for those who do not display strong hegemonic masculinities is often marginalised and ignored by gender essentialism in society who engage in 'boys will be boys' discourse. This demonstrates the exclusion of gay or effeminate boys within straight male privilege because they are not conforming to masculine ideals, therefore erode into hegemonic masculinity and male privilege.

Foster, Kimmel and Skelton (2001) discuss the important role feminists had when challenging gender discrimination, allowing girls to focus on women who were assertive, strong and achieved goals that only men achieved before them. However,

they stress that although girls have strong leaders to look up to, there are very few role models that encourage boys to possess gentleness, compassion and express emotion as they climb the occupation ladders. This can further perpetuate social difficulties, as 'these days it is far easier for a girl to be a tomboy than a boy to be a sissy', (Foster, Kimmel & Skelton, 2001, p. 17).

However, the argument for more male teachers is seemingly in direct opposition to boys achieving compassion and gentleness. Instead of trying to counter gender discrimination, as in the case of female role models, the argument for more male teachers encourages recuperation of masculinities within schools through modelling hegemonic masculinity. Indeed, girls have more opportunities than previously to access greater privilege and status, due to the recognition that girls needed to be taught how to negotiate privilege and how to enter into higher status employment. However, boys, generally, do not need to be taught this. Being a boy and being masculine is explicitly about displaying hegemonic masculinities therefore, we need to question if these boys really need more role models to teach them about how to get more privilege. One could argue more effeminate boys, gay boys, or boys who do not fit in to the ideals of masculinity are excluded from this negotiation as they are seen as feminine and have the same gender boundaries to negotiate as females and because they clearly are not defined within straight male privilege, they are ignored. Although gender effeminate men and transgender women are finding more ways to renegotiate power and privilege, they too are disassociated from male power relations because they are seen to weaken heterosexual male power and privilege. The reason more male teachers are being pushed into schools is more about sustaining and perpetuating male privilege. This places emphasis on zero-sum arguments, where there is a belief that if girls are gaining privilege and status through role modelling, then this will be at the expense of boys. So the strategy is to recuperate what was lost by ensuring boys are in a better position to take back male privilege, for example, male teachers bonding with boys through sport, an activity known for bringing strong masculine power and privilege into the playground, which is often enforced by male teachers (Renold, 2004).

Further evidence that calls for more male teachers in schools are more concerned with modelling hegemonic masculinities and male gender privilege than gentleness and compassion is seen throughout 'absent father' discourse, which suggest fathers

enforce boundaries, encourage risk taking and provide 'teachable moments' that hold moralistic value such as 'a little pain for a lot of gain' (Farrell & Gray, 2018, p. 143) and boys from matriarchal families need a strong male role model to reinforce male privilege and masculinity that they are missing. Inferring that fathers will test the limitations of boys more than their mothers (Farrell & Gray, 2018), reflect arguments that place blame on female teachers that have taken masculinity away from boys rather than researching the academic achievements of boys over a period of time, boys achievements are being compared to that of girls, which results in a 'panic' about 'failing boys' because they are not doing as well academically, highlighting straight male privilege. The reinforcement of male role models are more about sustaining and perpetuating male privilege through defensiveness that surround the growth in female academic achievement. Therefore, associations of sport and masculinities (Renold, 2004) act to enforce stereotypes rather than out of concern for the academic disinterest and underachievement of boys, because men and masculinities are seen to get ahead quicker. Examples of masculine incentives can be seen throughout the data analysis within this doctoral study in chapter five**.**

As a result of increased bullying and homophobic behaviours amongst boys, Francis and Skelton (2005) suggested two new discourses had been established. The 'problem boys' and 'at risk boys' have taken the place of 'failing schools, failing boys' and 'boys will be boys' discourse. These two educational discourses are based on the principles that problem boys display 'laddish' behaviour within their peer grouping and 'at risk boys' are at risk of social exclusion and are 'disconnected from society' (Francis & Skelton, 2005, p48). Other authors refer to similar policies as the 'real' or 'other' boy crisis (Foster, Kimmel & Skelton, 2001).

2.5 The 'Problem Boy'

The 'problem boy' debate places much emphasis on these social difficulties that can arise in schools and examines the violence and 'laddish' anti-social behaviours amongst boys. Francis and Skelton (2005) believe that it is men's rights movements, educational consultants and populist literature, rather than academically formed research that are informing government policy. Men's right movements and populist literature believe associations of violence and anti-social behaviours in schools are a

direct result of anger, fear, low self-esteem and experiences of isolation in schools (Neal, 2002, 2000, Pollack, 1998, Bleach, 1998). Although there is very little of the 'boy panic' that arises from actual educational research within schools, the 'boy problem' garners wide attention. They advocate boys are faced with a preference of women teachers over girls and as a result revert to laddish behaviour to cover up low self-esteem and isolation. Therefore, 'problem' boys discourse places boys as the 'victim' in schools and boys are 'positioned as problems or as in danger of becoming problems' (Martino, Kehler & Weaver-Hightower, 2009, p.48). What is very apparent is that whatever categorisation boys are positioned in, they are portrayed as the 'victim'. Boys are the victims that are undermined by their female teachers, boys are the victims that are over shadowed by girls, boys are the victims that face prejudice against women teachers who favour girls, boys are the victims of a feminised school curriculum, a feminised school environment, an exam style that favours girls. What this demonstrates is the concern that these boys might lose out on the male privilege that is assumed to be their right. These arguments still turn the attention and concern to boys and schooling, and girl's educational issues get marginalised once more. Men's rights movements carefully position boys as the victims because they position boys in direct competition with girls. It is this belief that if girls are ahead, boys must be failing, a zero-sum argument, that is at the centre of drives to re-masculinise schools. Through lack of gendered analysis and a belief in gender essentialism, society refuses to recognise that it is not zero-sum, because it serves the argument for hegemonic masculinity and privilege. The rise of transgenderism and diverse ways of defining sexuality illustrates that gender is not a game with fixed rules so zero sum does not apply. But it is in the interests of hegemonic masculinity to perpetuate the zero-sum game by pointing to and accentuating gender difference and essentialism, at the cost of the girls. If this was not the case, arguments would specify what boys are failing instead of categorising boys into a homogenised group that promotes concern of all the 'failing boys.'

This feeds into the boys 'at risk' discourse, where 'at risk' boys are vulnerable and insecure. This has an effect on their academic performance as they are hiding their vulnerability through underachievement and bad behaviours. Boys are presented in this literature as lacking in self-esteem and even as socially excluded as a group.

They are in need of attention and remedy to save them from becoming problem boys (Mills, Francis & Skelton, 2009)

What is missing from these arguments is a critique of hegemonic masculinity. The men's rights argument puts forward an argument that is supposedly concerned about gender but they are unwilling to look critically at gender. Words like 'vulnerable' and 'insecure' are usually associated with girls and women, but when they are implemented in boys educational discourse, there is concern, because it is embedded in society that boys and masculinity, by design, must be powerful and secure and anything else is problematic (effeminate gay men, feminine boys). Men's rights movements construct the argument in this way to portray boys as insecure, garnering more attention. As a response to the 'common-sense' argument for gender balance, policy makers, education ministers, teachers and parents have to re-centre boys in all debates on gender and education, and scholarly critical gender research gets ignored, thus strengthening male privilege once again. These arguments are based on a belief in essentialist gender and zero-sum games, where boys and girls are played against each other. Constant defence of male privilege is disguised as a concern for 'at risk' boys. If there was sincere concern for 'at risk' boys, surely these boys should be specified. But the fact that gay boys, transgender boys, effeminate boys are not being highlighted as an 'at risk' group further signifies that these arguments are disguised as a means of reinforcing masculinities and male privilege back into schools and society, the same way the argument for the 'vulnerable boys' does. Again, educational stakeholders respond to campaigns because they are strategically referring to boys as the 'vulnerable', 'at risk' group. Even the terms, 'self-esteem' and 'socially excluded' are 'feminine' terms. These have power when referring to boys because gender essentialism amongst society does not want their boys and men to be feminine, like girls. For that reason there is not as much emphasis when these terms are used to describe girls. There is little discourse about 'problem girls' due to self-esteem issues and exclusion because girls are not expected to be privileged and powerful the way boys are, which again illustrates the current boy 'crisis' is more concerned with gendered power relations, reinforcement of masculinities and male privilege.

As a response to campaigns to reform the education of boys, changes in educational policies in 2003 in the UK were placed on the underlying factors that create

disinterest and lack of motivation in boys in school resulting from vulnerability, low self-esteem and eventually result in social exclusion. Mentoring programmes and schemes to gain more entrants into colleges to cater for diversity in social and ethnic groups were created to help 'at risk' boys, however Ecclestone (2004) placed caution on government and educational strategies to promote self-esteem in educational settings. Although it is considered a positive move, she warns there is not enough sufficient academic clarity on this concept or on its effects in further life events. For these reasons, government strategies and interventions are not overall successful in rising the academic and behavioural achievement of boys and in some literature they have been referred to as 'counterproductive' (Francis & Skelton, 2005, Younger, Warrington & Mc Lellan, 2005).

Although some consider strategies by the government in the UK to be failing desperately and ignoring reasons for boy's academic and behavioural underachievement, such as tendencies to conform to masculine behaviours and escape heavy workloads or categorising them as not wanting to learn, in reality, the problem of boys academic and behavioural underachievement, whether through poor boys, at risk boys, or problem boys discourse, is still very current and at the forefront of media and educational stakeholders attention (see for example Farrell & Gray's 2018 book, *The Boy Crisis*).

The next section of this chapter will focus on the arguments that try to evaluate why the educational 'gender gap' came about and examine the call for more male role models for boys and, to a lesser extent, girls in primary school.

2.6 The Educational Gender Divide

As mentioned earlier, Francis and Skelton (2005) suggested that despite agreement or disagreement on discourses surrounding the 'poor boys' debate, much of the arguments drive conventional conceptions of masculinity and education. This has also been argued by Martino (2009) who criticised references to the feminisation of schooling and the placing of boys and male teachers as victims 'driven by Neo-Liberal agenda that supports recuperative masculinity policies' (Martino, 2009, p. 263). In literature on men as role models for boys, there are a number of suggestions as to the need for more male teachers in schools, which are very much situated in

essentialist commonalities referring to the similarities between men and boys because they have the same biological make up. These are underpinned by the categories 'poor boys, failing boys and at-risk boys.'

The first assumptions for more men in primary schools stems from the argument that men are different to females therefore teach in different ways (Martino, 2009). This argument places blame on the numerical dominance of females in primary teaching (Martino & Kehler, 2006, Weaver-Hightower, 2003 and Skelton, 2002). Male teachers are seen to generate motivation in boys as they have better connections with boys and hold more authority over boys than their female counterparts (Smedley, 1998). However, this theory is questioned by research carried out by Carrington et al., (2006), who concluded from analysis of 413 separate classes of 11 year olds in the UK, that there was no indication of any improvement or relationship between gender pairing and achievement or behaviour. This correlates with previous research by Lingard et al., (2002) who found no evidence to suggest there was any difference in social or educational outcomes for boys or girls when more male teachers were introduced in schools. Similarly, large scale qualitative research carried out by Francis et al., (2008) presented at the British Educational Research Association Annual Conference, examining pupil's and teachers views of same gender teaching, demonstrated that the 'substantial majority of pupils and teachers rejected the salience of gender in pupil-teacher relations and learning outcomes, prioritising instead the abilities of the individual teacher' (p. 1). Furthermore, research by Thornton and Bricheno (2002) suggest there can actually be a relation between more male teachers and less discipline in boys. These significant findings would caution the addition of more male teachers in schools to act as role models for boys just because they are male. However, the other arguments further perpetuate the gendered nature of media campaigns for more male teachers without proper theoretical research.

Despite multiple studies similar to that of Lingard et al., (2002), Thornton and Bricheno (2002) and Francis et al., (2008) discrediting the value of the male role model and indeed, gender modelling on academic achievement, the call for more male role models in Irish primary schools is still prevalent. Regardless of evidence to the contrary, the arguments for more male role models are seductive, and are understood by society because they cater to the fact that there is not a common

understanding of gender analysis in the general public, and society still believes in essentialism, that male teachers are more suitable to teach boys and that boys, especially those in matriarchal families, are in desperate need of a male role model that can show them 'real men' attributes. Stemming from these gendered assumptions, popular media also suggests there is a necessity for more male teachers in primary schools as boys and girls have different learning styles, therefore, men are 'more attuned to boy's learning needs' and can therefore increase the academic interest and achievement in boys, taking a simplistic approach that if boys and girls are different in biological sex, they must have different approaches to learning (Gurian, 2002).

Arguments for this can also relate to curriculum preferences by girls and boys, where Science, Maths and P.E are seen as 'masculine' subjects and English is well documented as a favourable subject amongst girls. Although in recent years there has been a decline in the attitude towards gendered subjects, perhaps illustrating strides in girls entering gendered subjects rather than boys, as the number of girls sitting higher level physics increased 11% from last year, (State Examinations Commission, 2017), where only 2.5% of males took higher Level Home Economic in 2016, (Central Statistics Office, 2016) there is still gendered predispositions in the perceptions of subjects as 'masculine' or 'feminine' (Arnot et al., 2005). As previously highlighted, Arnot (1999) criticised a belief that boys would achieve more success over girls if examinations were in a 'sudden death' formation, he does however acknowledge there is a strong preference of Science and Maths subjects for boys because of the factual memorisation of rules and abstract facts these subjects involve (Arnot et al., 1998). Boys tend to prefer subjects that entail more speed answers, while girls prefer open-ended questions. As a result of apparent subject preferences, drives to 're-masculinise' schools with the addition of more male teachers in primary schools are seen to establish a more 'boy friendly curriculum that caters for boys learning needs' (Martino, 2009, p.264). Mahony et al., (2004) argue that changes in the teaching system already in the UK along with changing teaching styles and recruitment drives for more men in teaching have already enabled schools to become more masculinised in order to address boys learning styles. Which, if the essentialist arguments have any merit, would unproblematically, inevitably advantage boys and disadvantage girls. However, in spite of other social factors that

could affect the learning styles of children, there is general agreement amongst authors that although certain learning styles can be gendered, they can differ as much between same genders as between boys and girls (Gurian, 2002)[3]. Furthermore, arguments for more male teachers to implement a boy friendly curriculum might be premature and unjustified as research suggest targeting boy's learning needs with competition and less group based challenges to keep them stimulated (Gurian, 2002) is often needless and ineffective, not to mention disadvantageous to girls. Coffield et al., (2004) claims that structuring lessons to suit the learning needs of boys in general, is not effective and there is little significant evidence to suggest the success of same sex teaching.

> Despite strong convictions with which these ideas are promoted, we failed to find any substantial body of empirical evidence that such strategies have been tried and found successful (p.43).

While there are continued arguments suggesting the implementation of a more 'boy friendly curriculum' and the addition of more males to 're-masculinise' schools are both ineffective and gendered in nature, other reasons for more men in teaching suggest an increase of more male teachers in schools will provide boys with a male role model who is 'more equipped to address their alienation and disaffection with schooling' (for a critique see Martino et al., 2009, p.265) and enable boys to be more productive. Yet, how increased productivity would be accomplished by the male teacher is never articulated beyond the assumption that the mere presence of a male body will do the job. There is an absence of the application of recognised educational theories of learning in the various 'solutions' to the boy problem in favour of popular psychology and outdated gender role theories.

Calls for more men in teaching as they are more equipped to deal with problems facing boys also aligns itself with ideologies that same gender identity can enable boys to achieve more academically and behaviourally and become more interested and motivated in school (for a critique see Martino & Kehler, 2006). Of course, the assumption here is that female teachers are completely unable to do this. These

[3] It is important for the reader to remember evidence based research by Younger and Warrington (2005), found 'no significant correlation between gender and preferred learning styles' (p. 77), therefore arguments based on 'limited evidence' (p.75) have proven to be simplistic, problematic and categorise all boys into the same homogenous group, which lead to assumptions that all boys are failing.

arguments have been quickly rejected by researchers who have suggested there is no correlation between boys performing better with male teachers whatsoever and proposals for such are determined by the presumption that men are better equipped to cater for boys because of their commonalities linked with biological sex. This is an essentialist argument suggesting that only males can teach, discipline, and form positive attitudes towards learning in boys, and female teachers are not able to do these things because they are female. Analysis of a study by Carrington et al., (2006) in the UK, solidified arguments against gendered pairing when results for matching teacher with same sex pupils had little difference on their behaviour or academic achievement. Unfortunately, Carrington's arguments fall unheard, especially by those who are conditioned to only recognise essentialist arguments and those who fail to apply a gender analysis, as she outlines the positive roles female teachers can have to both boys and girls:

> We found no empirical evidence to support the claim that there is a tendency for male teachers to enhance the educational performance of boys and, conversely, for female teachers to enhance the educational performance of girls. Of particular note is the finding that children taught by women, as far as attitudes to school are concerned, our study indicates that women teachers seem to bring out the best in both sexes (Carrington et al., 2006, p.7).

Carrington's study also referred to attitudes amongst boys in school, highlighting there was no noticeable difference in attitudes to boys when paired with a teacher of the same gender, although the study did indicate women teachers 'seem to bring out the best in both sexes' (Carrington, 2006, p.7). This finding suggests that boys are not disadvantaged by having a female teacher, it also suggests that girls may be *disadvantaged* by a having a male teacher. Therefore, the argument to address the gender balance of teachers in primary schools may work against female students. Other research has further questioned same gender teaching, placing extra caution on boys as it can cultivate or reinforce 'hegemonic heterosexual masculinities' and even distract from boy's learning in school (Martino et al., 2009, Martino & Frank, 2006, Martino & Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2003, Skelton, 2002 and Francis & Skelton, 2001). Cruddas and Haddock (2003), point to distractions in the classroom that effect the education of girls and their academic achievements as 'the teacher spends all the time trying to manage' the behaviour of boys or engage in boys thus taking from the

curricular lesson. While they particularly target boys as needing more guidance, it is important to note that disruptiveness within the classroom could happen regardless of the gender of the teacher and gender modelling will not change this, as research by Martin and Marsh revealed that 'motivation and engagement did not vary substantially for boys and girls as a function of the teacher's gender' (Martin & Marsh, 2005, p.332). Teaching strategies that interact and motivate with both girls and boys would surely be more beneficial to the schooling of everyone, rather than just focus on the motivating the boys. However, in order to see change from essentialist gender notions of disadvantaged boys, gender analysis needs to be applied to the education of all primary school children.

2.7 Summary

Whether blame is placed on the feminine environment of the schools, the favouritism of female teachers towards the girls or the lack of male role models to engage, motivate and discipline boys, all simplistic answers relate in some aspect to the remasculinisation of primary schools. They are misogynistic and homophobic in nature and the fact they fail to imply any gender based critique demonstrates the problematic notion of educational institutions changing curriculum and calling for more men in teaching to counter the damage female teachers have been doing to boys, without consulting evidence-based research. If we are truly concerned about the academic achievement of boys, does it matter if some boys are more effeminate than others once they are happy and learning? But because the boy 'crisis' is rooted in misogyny and homophobia, it fails to take into account that some boys are not performing in education because it is not seen as 'cool' to do so, which is a direct contradiction of the 'effeminacy' and 'feminisation' argument.

Blaming female teachers and women for the academic and behavioural underachievement's of boys allows society to ignore how men are implicated by their absence, as does it allow us to ignore their fear of effeminacy, which is seen to be at the heart of manhood (Kimmel, 2000, O' Neil, 1981). Women teachers in general are great at educating both boys *and* girls and modelling social behaviours, as is evident from the educational progress throughout Ireland. What the 'boy crisis' fails to take into account is the achievements of the girls and the achievements of the

boys on an individual basis, without constant gender comparisons based on zero-sum arguments. The call for more male role models in primary schools continue to grow because there are still some boys underachieving and there are still some boys who happen to be gay or more effeminate than others – and there always will be! Therefore, remasculinisation of our primary schools will not help dissolve these problems just by the presence of a male as a role model. Research completely negates the facile arguments put forth. Despite educational research based evidence, the arguments regarding the feminisation of schooling and the need for more male role models are incredibly persuasive and enduring, precisely because of an underdeveloped understanding of gender and education. In turn this has serious consequences for schools when they run with popular culture panics about the 'poor boys' that do not really help the boys and are likely to be a disadvantage to the girls. Yet the call for more male teachers to act as role models for boys, in order to strengthen male privilege in boys through the formal channel of schooling, are being heard because it is the simple solution to place blame on the numerical dominance of female teachers in the profession that is seen to help the girls get ahead at the expense of the boys. The 'quick-fix' solution of gender balance is seen as necessary because it looks convincing without the application of gender analysis. There is little thought about the effects of re-masculinisation of our primary schools on others.

2.8 Section Two

2.9 Re-masculinisation of Schools: The Perceived Implications of More Men as Role Models in Primary Teaching

For reasons above, it was proposed by those supporting the recuperation of masculinity strategies to encourage more male teachers into primary schools (Foster, Kimmel & Skelton, 2001, p.6). Educational stakeholders and policy makers are in general agreement about the entrance of more males to act as role models for boys in schools, however, there has been little research-based evidence to define their actual role in the schools and how the sole presence of a male teacher will resolve negative attitudes amongst boys. Francis and Skelton (2005) define this as 'speculative deduction' and suggest critical appraisal about the role of the men in schools is never expressed amongst government stakeholders, 'as the form of masculinity which male teachers are envisaged to represent, and the reasons that boys should apparently identify with this, are never articulated in the policy material' (p.4). This is because drives by men's movement, to promote male privilege, are very consistent and tactical in the call for more male role models for boys. Male privilege campaigners do not want boys to become girl-like or effeminate, yet there is little recognition that boys will not become more feminine just by the presence or a female teacher, just as not all girls display strong feminine qualities by being exposed to more female teachers. However, educational and pedagogical approaches are ignored because male role modelling is clearly about modelling masculinity and strengthening male privilege and gendered power, and not biological sex (maleness). If it were not, then there would be more focus on *which* boys are failing instead of generalising the problem to all boys. Yet, the view of the need for more male role models are being pushed on schools through strategic promotion by those in favour of recuperation of masculinity in schools, drawing on out-dated sex-role theories and (pop) psychology that ignores research about gender and education. Their argument fails to consider the boys that are succeeding, but this is not emphasised as it would weaken the argument and highlight the boys who are academic, do not like sport, display feminine qualities or are gay. Instead of celebrating difference, courage, and academic achievement, these boys are shunned because they do not fit into straight male privilege. They are not seen as strong masculine boys who will reinforce gendered power relations amongst men. Gender essentialism in society calls for

more male role models in schools to promote masculinity, so gay, effeminate or sissy boys are neglected and ignored, because, despite evidence based research that concludes there are no significant increase in academic achievement with gender modelling (Francis & Skelton, 2005), calls for more male role models is more about sustaining and perpetuating male privilege than the academic achievement of boys.

Furthermore, Skelton places caution on the effects of limited critical evaluation within current recruitment drives for more men in primary teaching and suggests the simplistic ideas of men as role models is naïve and lacks clear direction (Skelton, 2003). Emulating this, Smith (1992) argues that calls from the Australian government for more males in primary teaching 'silences and excludes' some major issues that have been left unanswered as government stakeholders fail to critically examine the fundamental basic needs of the boys themselves and make little attempt to critically examine if boys themselves will even benefit from more male teachers in schools. This is because arguments for more male role models promote boys as failing and 'insecure' and this garners more attention from government stakeholders because boys (as one homogenised group) are positioned as failing in comparison to girls. If educational stakeholders were serious about trying to improve the academic achievement of boys, recruitment of more role models (without a critical analysis of what boys specifically need) is certainly not the solution. It is a quick fix, simplistic solution that is without critical evaluation of *which* boys are failing. It fails to take into account the boys that are performing well in their own right. This is because drives for more male role models in schools constantly ignore educational rhetoric that suggest there is no indication of any improvement or relationship between gender pairing and achievement or behaviour (Carrington et al., 2009), and instead follow uncritical arguments that call for more male teachers, simply to replace female teachers who are able to teach girls effectively but not boys. These arguments are sexist and misogynous and build on fear of effeminacy in boys, as boys who are gay, effeminate or transgender are finding ways to renegotiate power and privilege amongst society. This is weakening gender privilege amongst males and call for more male role models are a direct attempt to reinforce maleness back into our schools. If this was not the case, then surely educational stakeholders would have called on the experiences of primary teachers and the boys themselves instead of

following uncritical rhetoric against evidence-based research. Smith (1999) summarises faults of these campaigns:

> Issues which have been silenced or excluded in the 'we need more males in primary teaching' discourse include the experience of the males who have chosen to become primary teachers, the opinions of female teachers who will work with the males and the needs of female students who will be taught by the males. […] the call for more male primary school teachers does not even critically examine the experiences of boys in schools, and makes no attempt to document whether boys in schools will actually benefit from the presence of more male teachers (p.2).

The lack of gender-based critical analysis is clear in demonstrating the concern is not about addressing the education of the boys who are failing, it is stemming from the theory that boys are failing because of the numerical dominance of female teachers and the feminised curriculum that is enabling girls to succeed at the expense of boys. Those in favour of reinvigorating hegemonic masculinity in schools, sometimes through men's rights campaigns, rarely have practical primary school experience or teacher training (Biddulph, Hoff Sommer) and do not want the opinions and experiences of teachers, especially female teachers and female pupils because the argument places blame on the female teachers for the academic underachievement of boys and the girls are in direct competition to the boys. Likewise, they are not interested in gaining the opinions of the boys themselves as to what leads to their disassociation with subjects and schooling for fear they will not correspond with uncritical rhetoric and not place blame on the gender of the teacher.[4] It is implementing a zero-sum argument that suggests these boys might lose out on the male privilege that is assumed to be their right, because when girls succeed the female teachers are seen to be enabling them. These arguments, which, historically speaking, are not new, still turn the attention and panic to boys and schooling, which overshadow the educational achievements and vulnerabilities of girls. Instead of celebrating the success of girls, boys are put in direct competition to girls and as they are not achieving grades as high as girls, direct attention is placed back to boys and the simplistic solution is to bring more hegemonic masculinity into schools because male privilege enables boys to get ahead quicker and easier than girls. It is this belief

[4] It is important to remember research by Francis et al., (2005) that strongly indicates a large majority of pupils and teachers questioned within their research, rejected the salience of gender in pupil-teacher relations and learning outcomes, citing the ability of the teacher was far more important.

in the zero-sum argument that is suffocating our education system and ignoring the actual boys and girls that are not academically achieving and actually need our help. Yet, society refuses to recognise that it is not zero-sum, because it serves the argument for hegemonic masculinity and privilege. The rise of transgenderism and gay privilege demonstrate it is not as simplistic as categorising male and female into sex role theories, therefore there are not a set of rules to follow and zero-sum breaks down. However, it is in the interests of hegemonic masculinity to perpetuate these arguments by pointing and accentuating to gender difference and essentialism and ignore any informed based research that suggests otherwise. However, concern is still placed on the vague definition of what the male role model looks like.

2.10 Hegemonic Masculinity and the Male Role Model

The uncritical evaluation into what the role of the male teacher as role model is in schools and the vague definition of what these role models represent, leads to an uncertainty within male teachers about their role outside of the teaching element and this has caused problems for male teachers in this capacity. Lingard et al., (2009), reiterate this point through various experiences of male teachers within their research when male teachers were employed to highlight expressiveness and recognition of emotional capacities, however, through conflicts over gender issues or otherwise, the research found in some cases, the men's experiences were further 'normalising hegemonized constructions of masculinity' (Lingard et al., 2009, p. 142) and in essence defined these men within the 'expected' sex roles of masculine qualities. Within their study, there was an evident assumption that male teachers are normally straight, strong disciplinarians and display some dominance of heterosexual hegemonic masculinities. Lingard et al., (2009) therefore suggests that through the undercurrent assumptions about the hegemonic masculine qualities these men were assumed to have through 'normalised constructions of masculinity,' there is rarely any discussion about the qualities male teachers need to possess. This is because when we use the term 'male role models' we operate from the understanding that boys and masculinity must be powerful, therefore the only way to be a male role model is to display qualities of hegemonic masculinity and anyone who doesn't conform is problematic. Therefore, policy makers, education ministers and other stakeholders do not feel the need to converse in qualities of the male role model

because of the gender assumption in society that a male role model is there to show boys how to be macho and how to display hegemonic masculine qualities (in order to re-masculinise schools). This is why one-parent family debates (primarily matriarchal) garner so much attention. The boys who have limited access to male relatives are seen to have no male to *look up to*, therefore they are going to lose their masculinity and the very essence of being a man, so the simplistic solution is to bring more males into schools to show them how to be men in a role that mirrors a 'father- figure'. The uncritical assumption here is that all boys take on hegemonic gender roles by simply copying the behaviours of men. The father figure is seen to encourage boys to explore their 'natural' masculinity and bring more toughness to boys that mothers would not necessarily encourage, as fathers 'walk a fine line between safety and risk-taking' (Farrell & Gray, 2018, p.134). Again, calling for more males as role models for boys, especially in matriarchal families, is suggesting mothers are not equipped to deal with their sons because they are not male. As such, it is implied that mothers inevitably fail their sons. Yet, there has been contradicting research that suggests boys raised without the presence of a father can present with hyper masculine traits, such as increased facial masculinity and aggression (Boothroyd, 2017). Stevenson (1991) also found close father-son relationships had no increasing masculine effect on their sons. Therefore, if the problem is the father's absence, then surely educational stakeholders should evaluate families where the mother and father is present to find examples of boys that are high achievers in literacy, however, these examples do not satisfy the current male teacher debate. Similarly, there is little suggestion by men's rights movements to research and evaluate Islamic education models where boys are mostly taught by male teachers, because these arguments hold little weight. Curiously, rarely is the essentialist argument made which proposes that absent fathers fail their sons, when this is the case, the solution is that another male can provide a substitute gender model. This echoes arguments for more male teachers in schools because male teachers will 'provide boys with role models' who are better equipped to address their alienation and disaffection with schooling' (Martino, 2009, p.265). This again demonstrates the simplistic assumption that the solution to the academic and behavioural underachievement of boys is to simply place a man in the classroom as they can identify positively with boys and increase motivation and learning because they are the same in biological sex. These actions can result in more male bonding and

reinforcement of hegemonic masculinities (Carrington et al., 2007, Martino & Frank, 2006, Skelton, 2001), rather than an increase in academic achievement of boys. It illustrates those in favour of more male teachers in schools, without critical examination, are only concerned with the recuperation of masculinities, for men to show boys what it is to be a man. It is this silent reinforcement of maleness in schools, further reinforced by notions of gender roles in society that places pressure on male teachers. As illustrated in research carried out by Lingard et al., (2009), even when male teachers were employed to show expressiveness and emotional awareness, they reverted back to displaying hegemonic masculinities because that is what gender essentialism amongst society expects in a man, therefore in a male teacher. Definition of a male role model is not necessary because the definition is already solidified amongst gender essentialism embedded in constructs of masculinity. Arguments and drives for more male role models in schools are anti-female and homophobic in nature and only serve to promote gender power relations amongst males.

Correspondingly, Skelton (2003) notes an absence of defined roles can quintessentially reinforce 'laddish' behaviour rather than provide an 'alternative' model. Interestingly, Skelton, (2001), Sargent, (2000), King, (2000), Drudy et al., (1999) have all emphasised an 'obligation' amongst some male teachers to reinforce masculine behaviours especially those teaching at a primary level, where male teachers have felt uncomfortable due to assumptions regarding their sexuality or even fear of assumed paedophilic behaviour around young children. These teachers feel a need to display more masculine tendencies in an effort to counter such accusations. Unfortunately, such behaviour can only create further gendered discourses within the classroom and school environment, leading men to revert back to conventional masculinities within the school and partly display homophobic behaviours with some school communities as Francis and Skelton explain, 'one way of handling various contradictions involved in their constructions of gender and occupational role is for men to emphasize those aspects of teaching that are more compatible with conventional masculinities' (Francis & Skelton, 2001, p.12).

Male teachers revert to displaying hegemonic masculinities because it is the easiest thing to do. Rather than confronting sexist and homophobic notions that men cannot move outside the realm of what is considered masculine, some male teachers

conform to what is expected of them within socially constructed gender roles. Although this reinforces homophobic behaviour against those who are more effeminate or gay and reinforces notions that men should not teach younger classes, it is not all the fault of the male teacher, who can feel pressure to protect themselves against accusation of homophobia or paedophilia. Within gender essentialism embedded in society where males and females are defined into sex role categories, accusations of paedophilia and assumptions of homosexuality experienced by some male teachers in the younger classes clearly demonstrate that drives for more male teachers are more concerned with male privilege and enforcing strong masculine behaviours amongst boys and men. If some male teachers who do overcome gendered expectations enter into primary teaching revert to traditional displays of hegemonic masculinity because of assumptions of their sexuality or fears of paedophilia, this clearly demonstrates that it is a certain type of (masculine) behaviour society is looking for in a male role model. It further demonstrates fears of effeminacy and strengthening male privilege is the backbone of the calls for more male teachers in primary schools. The assumed role of the male role model, though unspoken, is clearly to reinforce masculinities in schools, in order to rectify weakening male privilege, due to girls and women, transgenderism, gay men and effeminate men gaining more recognition in reconstructing gender privilege. Whether this will enable boys to achieve more academically and behaviourally is not a cause for concern amongst campaigners. If it were, there would be more attention paid to evidence-based research that counter the idea of gender modelling as a solution to academic underachieving of boys.

Furthermore, the contradiction in the debate for more male teachers is very apparent. Although society is calling for more male teachers to enter into primary teaching, when the male teachers break down gendered occupational assumptions, they are then forced to defend their sexuality and masculinity. This demonstrates two important contradictions. Firstly in the call for more male teachers, society is suggesting any male teacher will be of benefit to boys for gendered similarities and reasons examined earlier in ‘boys will be boys’, ‘poor boys’ and ‘failing boys’ discourse, however, the tension experienced by some male teachers to promote their masculinity, especially in younger classes, illustrates the homophobic nature of the calls. Those whose believe in gender essentialism call for male teachers, as long as

they are ‘real men’, because only ‘real men’ will perpetuate gender privilege. Secondly, some men who do enter into the primary teaching sector fear accusations of paedophilia when teaching younger children, again because beliefs of gender essentialism in society assumes a ‘real man’ cannot teach young children because this is more associated with a caring role, which is aligned within feminine characteristics. This suggests that the calls for more men in teaching are only for one certain type of man, a man who displays strong hegemonic masculinity. This, in turn, weakens arguments for more male role models for underachieving boys because it assumes there is a direct connection between modelling hegemonic masculinity and an increase of boys’ academic achievement.

As a result of pressures to conform within the parameters of masculinity, men often revert to teaching the older classes in schools, training sports teams or applying for roles of authority within the school (Lingard et al., 2009), in an effort to further invigorate heterosexual masculinities. Although it is unfair to categorise male teachers into one homogeneous group, caution has been placed on displaying qualities of a hegemonic masculine nature as it can have a negative effect on the behaviour of boys. There are numerous proposals within educational research that highlight ‘bonding’ between male teachers and boys as having a negative influence on their academic achievements (Skelton, 2001, 2002, Francis & Skelton, 2001, Francis, 2000, Epstein, 1998). Quantitative analysis carried out by Thornton and Bricheno (2002) highlighted ‘a correlation between greater concentrations of male teachers and poorer discipline in schools. They found no positive link between higher numbers of male teachers and increased primary schoolboy attainment’ (as cited in Francis et al., 2008, p.5).

Francis and Skelton (2001), reiterate the common uncritical assumption that men are going to increase academic achievement based on gender difference and warn teaching pedagogy often differ between men and women, therefore highlighting weaknesses in the male role model debate on the basis of similar learning styles and same biological sex, suggesting the differences between men in terms of their personal attributes and pedagogical approaches can be as great as the differences between those of women and men teachers. Yet again, this research is overshadowed by men’s rights campaigns for more male teachers that have little educational research behind them, based on beliefs from outdated ‘identity politics which developed in the 1980’s and have continued to the present’ coupled with ‘the

simultaneous impact of poststructuralist and postmodernist theory in social science' (Francis & Skelton, 2001, p.4). Men's rights perspective who are at the centre of the 'boy panic' are drawing on *outdated* role theories, and ultimately ignoring the wealth of research about gender and education. That is, gender is not a simple essentialist equation. Men's rights perspectives draw on a very different body of research to support their arguments, and the fact that they do not cite critical gender and education research is highly problematic within an educational setting. Their arguments have garnered widespread attention and seem to be resistant to critique, precisely because feminist/gender theory is not always taken seriously and can be a source of backlash, garnering negative attention from men's rights movements who often feel feminists are campaigning to oppress men (Roy Den Hollander, as cited in Coston & Kimmel, 2012). Similarly, in most media accounts, research is outlined in an almost anti-feminism manner in which the primary focus for arguments for more male teachers tend to be based on the inherent difference in learning and behavioural styles of men and women or boys and girls, thus further distancing boy discourse from gender research in this area:

> Research/statistics are employed within a context of anti-feminism and moral panic to constitute knowledge/power relations that in turn constitute boys and male teachers as essentially different from girls/women in their behavioural and learning orientations' (Martino & Kehler, 2006, p.119).

The absence of a critical gender perspective has serious consequences if we want to take academic underachievement of boys seriously. Possibly through an inherent gender bias in society encouraged by men's rights movements and a resistance to look at education critically using gender theory, or a belief in outdated identity politics that buy into the 'gender balance' discourse and continue to develop through campaigns for more male teachers, essentialist arguments within educational discourse remain. However, gender theory is imperative to schools when considering children's' education in order to develop *which* boys and girls are in most need of help and if those in most need have access to extra educational resources. An evaluation of such could indicate a misguided understanding of the 'boy crisis' as findings of a study conducted in Canada examining female advantage in school marks noted that across numerous years in the data retrieved (from 1914 to 2011 in Canada) female school grades have remained steady. This 'deserves emphasis as it

contradicts claims of a recent boy crisis in school achievement' (Voyer & Voyer, 2014, p. 1194).

Yet, policy makers are still engaging in the active employment of males in schools for reasons of gender equity and as a means of increasing boy's academic achievement, and interest in school and ignore research studies that contradict any correlation between gender and increased academic performance and willingness to learn (Carrington et al., 2009, Marsh, Martin & Cheng, 2008). Reflecting this, schools are still actively employing male teachers to train sports teams and bond with boys with behavioural issues, based on simplistic arguments that boys and men are similar in biological make up therefore will bond more than boys and female teachers. Studies in New Zealand have suggested some principals actively seek a male teacher who can portray strong 'manly' qualities when teaching their male students. In a study of 250 principals in New Zealand, Cushman (2008) observed a preference in principals for male teachers who 'exhibit hegemonic masculinity couched in heterosexual, rugby-playing, 'real men'; role models' (Cushman, 2008, p.1). Masculinity in this sense relies on the sturdy, strong stereotypical view of the 'real man'. Drawing on various studies, Cushman (2008) outlines that 'real men' entail physically strong, sporty, goal-oriented, males who love 'masculine' pursuits and have a strong sense of 'naturalised' masculine behaviours. This suggests role models in schools are generalised into stereotypical gendered roles and are to conform to the masculine qualities only 'real' men can possess, that is in essence, the opposite of women behaviours, because women are seen to be an easy blame for the underachievement of boys. The representation of the masculine figure (even without the presence of men in schools and at home) sends a clear message often received by boys that they are privileged and they can get ahead with less effort and still succeed. The presence of more male teachers might reinforce this privilege by introducing more sport and more explicit modelling of men getting more for less effort. The recruitment of male teachers in Cushman's study for specific reasons to display 'toughness' and manliness' is not only admitting that some principals are looking to lessen the feminine environment in schools but also it displays that cleverly worded campaigns based on gender essentialism are growing in belief. Although a minority of principals interviewed in Cushman's study did demonstrate a preference for men that display caring qualities in schools, Martino (2008) also noted the general

stereotypical view associated with being a role model entails being a 'real man' and involves the role model 'ensuring that the masculinity of boys remains intact or is appropriately cultivated' (Martino, 2008, p 4), which further solidifies arguments above.

Furthermore, in a paper presented to the British Annual Conference on Education, Cushman (2006) highlights possible gender discrimination when employing teachers in New Zealand. Cushman advocates, through her own research, that while most principals specified an equal opportunities approach when employing staff members, the process of employing the 'best person' is not without challenges as pressure from outside sources can sway some principals to employ men. Referring to qualitative research carried out in 2005, Cushman quantified that eighty percent of all principals surveyed agreed in the importance of staff gender balance, although there was no apparent reason for this other than to bring more men into teaching, which demonstrates the absence of critical evaluation on campaigns for more males in primary schools, and tendencies for educational stakeholders to positively reinforce campaigns without critically examining the cause for the academic underachievement of boys.

In addition, there was evidence in Cushman's research (35% of primary school principals) that when both male and females have been shortlisted for the same position, gender might influence their decision as there was possibly more likelihood the male teacher would be offered the position, while several other principals participating in the study felt they would employ the male first due to pressure from the outside community for more male teachers. Despite this, principals openly admitted, in their experience, there was no real academic difference between either male or female operated classrooms. This illustrates the influence and pressure from media reinforcing the drive for male role models, consciously or subconsciously have an impact on the decision to employ male teachers. It is because principals have a fear of going against popular choice and parents and other school bodies have influence over decisions made in schools. It is through careful promotion of the 'boy crisis' and the placement of boys in a homogenous group, that parents almost feel a sense of guilt, that they are not doing enough to educate their boys and through campaigns from popular media and other media sources that parents and society trust, no one is questioning these sources and questioning what is actually failing the

boys. It is taken for granted that media sources are accurate and little thought is given to the fact that women as teachers could not possibly have that large an impact on the education of boys just by being female. Therefore, because the profession has a gender imbalance, this is the simplistic solution and parents and other educational stakeholders enforce such campaigns in order to support the 'failing boys'. There is little evaluation of which boys are underachieving and what it is more male teachers can do to help change their attitude towards learning because campaigns for more hegemonic masculinity in school provoke 'panic' within society.

Reiterating Cushman's theory, earlier research by Lichtenberg and Luban (1998) argues that, while factors for job entitlement include getting the job on 'merit', they argue merit 'is a socially constructed phenomena complicated by the complex and problematic notion of ability' and question how merit is determined upon creating a fair and equal application process (Cushman, 2006, p.2). They caution that in many cases the person with most 'merit' is not the best applicant for the job. For men to gain easier employment over women displays privilege throughout the primary teaching sector, a sector that has been carried effectively by women for decades. Although gender equality is strengthening throughout the workplace, principals in New Zealand were very clear that if a male applicant arrived, they would look upon them more 'favourably', because men hold male privilege and this male privilege must be exerted onto boys or the gender power within males will weaken. It demonstrates the strength of populist campaigns for more male teachers based on the 'feminisation' of primary teaching that is thought to result in the academic underachievement of boys in comparison to girls. Even to analyse aspects of female recruiters, within the study by Graves and Powell (1995) who were in lower status managerial positions is important as they often favoured males in order to bring more status to the position. The study, although outside the teaching sector, notes similar incidences of females who had risen to higher powered managerial positions often felt they identified personally with men and masculine traits and therefore distanced themselves from female or 'feminine' characteristics (Gordon, 1991, as cited in Graves & Powell, 1995). This is because gender privilege and power relations are associated with being a man and getting ahead and gender essentialism views men as successful and masculine, therefore women who are recruited into high powered position feel they need to associate with these traits in order to be seen as

doing the job effectively, because it is classified as ‘man’s work’ and women (and girls) understand the value of male privilege. This demonstrates the complex interplay of gender and privilege. The calls for more men in primary teaching are driven from a masculine aspect, that in order to get boys ahead, we need men to teach boys how to be masculine, because strength of male privilege is acknowledged within society.

This highlights the strength of sexism throughout society, which is evidentially being passed into the ‘boy crisis’. The very fact that male and female principals, within Cushman’s research, view male applicants more favourable than female candidates highlight that men with the bond of male privilege still get ahead. It solidifies the notion that there is a kind of masculine modelling rhetoric that even without a large presence of men in schools, boys understand they are privileged, and they can get by with less and still succeed. These male teachers are seen as more favourable because they portray similar traits to female principals, possibly traits of authority, strength, leadership, all traits that are associated with maleness. Male teachers because of their minority in the teaching profession are favoured upon by showing opposite traits to what is seen as feminine. They are favoured over female teachers, just for being male. This clearly demonstrates that the caring, affectionate nature associated with the female teachers is not what is sought. It is the masculine characteristics of the hegemonic male, driven by those in favour of recuperative masculinities in schools. It displays the zero sum argument that while female teachers are doing a great job teaching boys and girls, boys and men must get ahead, because if they are seen not to, it weakens male privilege and power. It highlights the misogyny within the call for more men as role models in schools, as does it display, in a game of zero sum, it is much easier for men to get head. It demonstrates that essentialist media attention surrounding ‘role model recruitment drives’ (Carrington et al., 2005) is having an effect on the employment of the ‘best person for the job’ as male teachers could be employed over female counterparts just for being male. Furthermore, narratives that principals appointed the best person for the job or claim gender was not a factor in the decision ‘signals an awareness of official gender discourse’ as there is still ‘considerable evidence of sexism and homophobia’ (Brooking, 2004, p. 28). Arguments for strong hegemonic males are also portrayed within the role model debate through ‘absent father’ rhetoric, where boys from matriarchal families, it is

assumed, are in need ‘father figure’. This can often result in more favourable outcomes for male teachers. Cushman explains:

> [There is]...a public perception that more male role models are needed to make up for the lack of a male presence in some families and the associated need to redress the gender imbalance in schools might signify a possibility that male job applicants are regarded favourably (p.2).

Biddulph (1995) draws on theories surrounding absent male role models in the home suggesting that it is the absent father as a male role model in a child’s life that can have a serious implication on the future academic and social behaviour of the child, therefore some male role model in the child’s life is imperative. Biddulph argues that:

> The "absent father" is at the heart of the problems that boys are experiencing socially and educationally: Boys with no fathers, or with fathers who are not around much, are much more likely to be violent, to get into trouble, to do poorly in schools, and be a member of a teenage gang in adolescence (p. 2).

Although Biddulph acknowledges the role of the absent father in boys, he fails to address the impact of the absent father on girls. Similarly, Hoff Sommers (2000) reiterates the coercions due to the absence of a male role model in boy’s lives both at home and in school as, in effect, denying boys the opportunity to become real men and to experience behaviours that is natural for boys. Through unsupported claims, she suggests boys need a male figure to show them how to be men, advocating:

> It is obvious that a boy wants his father to help him become a man, and belonging to the culture of manhood is important to almost every boy. To impinge his desire to become ‘one of the boys’ is to deny that a boy’s biology determines much of what he prefers and is attracted to (Hoff Sommer as cited in Martino & Berrill, 2003, p.99).

As statistics from the Census in Ireland in 2016 indicates one in four families in Ireland are one parent families, teachers often spend as long as six hours with students on a daily basis. Martino and Kehler (2006) highlight this is possibly students only access to a positive role model in their lives. Reiterating this point when Dykeman (2003), an American psychologist, was reporting on the effects of family conflict resolution on children's classroom behaviour he reaffirmed that in

cases where there is a family dissolution, it is usually the mother who is left caring for the children and school is possibly the only area where the child can be influenced by a male role model. Although within his report Dykeman outlined numerous negative effects of parental divorce upon children, including the age and sex of the child at the time of the marital dissolution, the amount of conflict within the family unit, and the degree of cooperation between the divorced or separated parents, he does suggest difficulties in social and academic expectations can ease once a concrete family is established, explaining:

> In general, children who have recently experienced a family dissolution have a more difficult time with academic and social expectations at school than children from intact families or established single-parent or blended families (Dykeman, 2003, p.1).

Therefore, implicating that it is not the absence of a father that affects the child's academic learning, but disputes and disarray within a family. Furthermore, research carried out by Ashley and Lee (2003), have also found little evidence to suggest that boys from single parent families are in need of a male role model. Interestingly, they suggest poor male role models in any environment can prove more damaging than no role model at all (Cushman 2008). Similarly, a study carried out in Germany by Helbig (2012), analysed if there was a difference in boys' and girls' transition to academic track secondary school based on whether they grew up in a nuclear, matriarchal or a patriarchal family. The study concluded that there was no evidence that the absence of fathers in the family had a negative impact on boy's performance at school, further weakening arguments for the call for more male teachers to act as role models for boys from one parent families.

In a recently published book titled 'The Boy Crisis', authors Farrell and Grey (2018) participate in gender discourse regarding the important role of the father figure in boy's lives. While the book mainly refers to the male role model in boy's lives and give countless scenarios where boy's behaviour deteriorates in situations where the male role model is neither present physically or emotionally, it does not give an account as to what the father figure needs to be modelling to his son. Although their book does define the changing roles in men's lives, where there is no longer a need for men to become 'heroes in war or at work- and risking their health and lives to do so' (Farrell & Grey, 2018, p. 57), they do acknowledge there is more need to think

'outside the box' in terms of viable careers and goals men can achieve but warn about the difficulties boys face trying to overcome hegemonic masculine stereotypes drawn by society where 'maleness' is often associated with success and power. This highlights the contradiction within the 'boy crisis' debate, where those in society claim they want what is best for the boys, but apparently only if they conform within the constrictions of hegemonic masculinity. Absent father rhetoric garners widespread media attention because society feels boys are not getting their masculine role model at home, therefore they are struggling elsewhere, in school and in society, because masculinity equals male power and privilege and with power and privilege boys get ahead. Yet this causes tension for boys who do not wish to follow conventional forms of masculinity because they go against the male role model rhetoric, where boys are placed in a homogenised group that respond to sports and masculinity. It is born out of the assumption that boys 'naturally' want a male role model, which is based on outdated social psychological gender theories.

Evidence of the homogenisation of boys was demonstrated in a National Reading Campaign established in Britain in 2003 as an attempt to increase the literacy skills of boys (and to a lesser extent girls) in order to encourage them to read more. Role models in the form of professional footballers were brought into schools to discuss and promote reading amongst boys through the realm of sport. Boys were seen to have a natural interest in sport and therefore would respond better to these role models. Although the attempts to get boys to read more must be acknowledged, one needs to question if this really the kind of role models we want boys to have? Men whose display of hegemonic masculine qualities is portrayed for a living, men who possibly didn't continue to third level education due to their football commitments, men whose careers are carefully articulated and formulated for the media. Connell (1982) suggests that sport is heavily embedded in masculine activity and can further invigorate masculine stereotypes in schools, while Skelton (2001) was also critical of such schemes for similar reasons. Correspondingly, Ashley (2003) supports arguments against categorising boys into same sex mentoring groups by researching the effects on boys who had relationships with their teachers and the impact this had on their academic performance. On completion, although Ashley found that students who did not have a positive relationship with their teacher performed badly academically, there was little correlation to suggest a difference in behaviour or

achievement between male and female teachers (Ashley, 2003). Additionally, findings by Ashley & Lee (2003) have indicated that peers are more important to boys than teachers, while research by Bricheno and Thornton (2007) support this research citing only 2.4% of pupils in their study referred to teachers as role models, concluding that peers were more influential to boys than teachers.

Although research by Crow (2009), Lee (2007), Miller (2000), Birch and Ladd (1998) and Pianta (1994) all reiterate that students behaviour, motivation, attitudes towards learning and in some instances, willingness to stay in school increased when teacher student relationship was positive and respectful, there was no mention in any of the above studies that gender modelling or male teachers were more effective in establishing these relationships, in fact, the gender of the teacher was not heavily involved in any of the studies, suggesting the simplistic and uncritical argument for more males as role models for boys in primary schools is essentialist and flawed and does not factor in previous studies based on increasing academic behaviour and performance through pupil teachers relationships regardless of gender. Studies above alternatively suggest, through positive reinforcement, respect and trust between teachers and pupils, attitudes towards learning can change.

Role modelling does not have to involve modelling for one sex over another but individual relationships between student and teachers. Arguments for more men in primary teaching, is in essence devaluing the work women have carried out for decades in schools. As boys are not one homogenous group, one has to realistically question how men entering into teaching can increase the learning and behavioural performance of all boys in primary school. It is an essentialist argument that lacks evaluation and educational support and is framed within sexist, gendered constraints. It is quite clear within the research that girls and boys do not have a strong preference in male or female teachers (Francis and Skelton, 2005, Ashley, 2001, Lahelma, 2000). Whilst a clearer, more articulated definition of male role models in schools would be beneficial, it is important to highlight the significance men as teachers can have in the lives of both boys and girls. Despite a number of educational research studies clearly indicating that pupils in general, tend to view teachers in terms of teaching ability rather than gender (Drudy et al., 2005, Ashley, 2003, Trent & Slade, 2001 and Smedley, 1999) and there is little evidence to suggest the teaching pedagogy and behaviour of male teachers as a cohort even differ to that of their

female counterparts (Carrington & Tymm, 2005, Hutchings, 2002, Skelton, 2002, Lahelma, 2000 and Smedley, 1999) the male role model debate continues to gain momentum, for reasons explained earlier. In order to further advance the learning and development of boys' and girls' education, critical evaluations into the boy 'crisis' debate is essential. However, rather than acknowledge this, educational stakeholders are promoting bonding with boys through sport. This is further reviewed below.

2.11 Role Models for Boys, Through Sport

"Every Good Boy Deserves Football," (advertisement in 1999 by the Teacher Training Agency, UK) is just one example of teacher recruitment drives for more male teachers in the UK. The campaign refers to an entity missing in the primary school education system, almost as if boys are being punished because there is not enough sport in primary schools and men are needed to bring much deserved football into schools. Calls for more men in teaching have been continuous in the media spotlight for the past decade, as men are seen to bring certain elements to teaching that will enhance the academic and behavioural achievement of boys, as discussed earlier (Skelton, 2001, Bricheno & Thornton, 2007). Clever campaigns seek men to stand as role models for boys, without a definition of what a role model entails. The absence of definition of what a male role model should be, is possibly absent based on an assumption that hiring more gay male or even more male teachers than have a passion for reading and literacy is not articulated within this discourse, despite boys falling behind in literacy in comparison to girls (Disenhaus, 2015). Although Skelton (2002) articulates that more male teachers were originally sought after to provide alternative and more compliant ways of being 'masculine' to boys who were performing 'macho' conventional masculine stereotypes, this is not being reflected within educational discourse. The assumption that a male role model means a hegemonic masculine male is embedded in the traditional hegemonic zero-sum gender order that is assumed and upheld. It is about homophobia, hegemonic masculinity and male privilege based on zero sum arguments, 'outdated identity politics' (Francis & Skelton, 2001, p.4) and 'conventional stereotyping' (Skelton, 2002, p.77). If we are interested in boys' academic underachievement, discourse surrounding the gender of the teacher needs to be critically addressed and there needs to be a focus on the boys that are underperforming individually and not in

comparison to girls or regarding teacher gender, as numerous authors have discredited such arguments (see section one of this chapter). Outdated identity politics and 'poststructuralist and postmodernist theory in social science [...] and the extent of its potential to contribute to emancipator projects' need to be closed debated (Francis & Skelton, 2001, p.4). Gender should not be a determining factor in boys' academic education. It is about biological sex. Males are underperforming, however, the absence of critical gender perspectives has significant consequences if we want to take academic underachievement of boys seriously, but men's rights movements have taken over realistic forms of supporting boys by using boys' academic underachievement as a response to feminism arguing that gender is at fault for boys' poor academic performances. The male role model discourse is effective precisely because it relies on (unfounded) assumptions, placing boys as vulnerable, failing and disadvantaged in comparison to girls and suggest teachers are not supporting them at school. This vulnerability almost frightens those in society who carry a belief in outdated sex role politics and gender essentialism where males should be privileged and get ahead. The only solution is to create a zero sum argument based on the assumption that if girls are succeeding and boys are failing, it must be because girls have so many female teachers therefore we need to re-masculinise schools in order to re-masculinise the boys. Thus completely ignoring the large body of research that suggest teacher gender is not an issue and some boys are doing fine because this does not fit into the boy crisis debate.

In the context of Britain alone, this can be seen in campaigns to entice boys to read and create more affection amongst boys and academic achievement that have been heavily embedded in sports. Campaigns have targeted boys, and to a lesser extent girls, by asking volunteers from local sports teams to read with children and volunteer in after school schemes, all with the intention of reducing the disaffection of boys and schooling, through the promotion of professional sports stars as role models for these boys.

> Playing for success', the government's after-school scheme, promotes professional footballers as role models, and the National Reading Campaign (2003) uses football heroes to encourage boys (and apparently girls also) to read (Bricheno & Thornton, 2007, p. 384).

Although it has been articulated throughout this chapter, in general, children do not look up to their teacher as a role model and often sports heroes are indeed amongst their role models, one has to question if this is the correct route. According to Bandura, in Bricheno and Thornton (2007), role modelling is a socialisation process in which we learn about others, through imitation of the behaviour of others with similar characteristics as the imitator:

> Role models are considered key players in this socialization process although it must be noted that they can portray a variety of stereotypical and counter stereotypical behaviours. Where the model in question shares with the potential modeller, some characteristics such as gender, age, race and/or social location. Bandura argues that the modeller is more likely to seek to emulate the model because their shared characteristics (model–observer similarity) (Bricheno & Thornton, 2007, p. 385).

We therefore learn from the role model behaviours we want to emulate as behavioural patterns are learned from imitation of others (Bandura, 1976). Role models have a significant role in childhood because 'they provide children with ways of finding their way in their environment and in society' (Biskup & Pfister, 1999, p. 201). Role models can also act as a means for children to see the general acceptable behaviours of men and women. Although roles of men and female heroes are changing in children's literature, where Elsa, Moana and Princess Fiona are the villains and heroines of popular Disney tales, boys literature has and continually features the domination of the strong, masculine male character. However, others argue the female heroine is not transcended into stories for adolescent girls, (Kehlenbeck, 1996) and in some cases the strong female character in the story reverts back to stereotypical feminine traits by the end of the fairytale, it is however, the man who generally saves the day in the end, again pertaining to the strong masculine hero. Although heroines are somewhat limited for girls, studies have suggested there are similarities in the attributes of a role model chosen by boys and girls such as caring roles, however, the reoccurring difference that is present amongst most studies is the popularity of the male sports hero as role models for boys. Biskup and Pfister (1999) suggest mass marketing has a role to play:

> The popularity of sporting heroes goes hand in hand not only with intense competition in the mass media, the aggressive marketing strategies of the advertising industry and the commercialization of sport

> as well as of sportsmen and sportswomen, but also with young people's longing for someone to identify with (p.203).

It is fair to suggest sports have always been associated with mostly males. By marketing sports personalities as strong, masculine sports stars that have large commercial appeal, sports personalities (mainly male) can be seen everywhere, from drinks adverts to video games. Most advertisement is fast paced and heavily reliant on the display of sporting prowess within their adverts. Even latest campaigns by Usain Bolt, a Jamaican athlete who holds the record for the World's Fastest 100 metres, have images of Bolt in superhero outfits, as he decides which costume displays his power and strength most, with clever slogans such as 'Switch to Super Today' (Virgin Media advertisement, 2018), relating 'super' to strength and speed. A large subsection of sports advertisements, regardless of product, are targeted at children and adolescents, in particular boys, because mass marketing is aware of the influence of sporting heroes on this particular audience. In terms of literature, it is the autobiographies of mainly male sports stars that are on the bestsellers lists. Eason's, a large Irish based bookshop, compiled of a list of bestselling sports books which consisted of male GAA, Rugby and soccer sports personalities. Out of thirty-four top bestsellers in the sports category, there was no female sports personality present. This also transcends into popular sports magazines, where male and female sports personalities are depicted in a gender specific way. A study by Cuneen and Sidwell (1998), examined gender portrayals in 'Sports illustrated for Kids' advertisements and concluded that the gender portrayal in such advertisements reinforced 'institutionalized sexism and culturally defined sex-role behaviors' (p39), while also sending gender defining messages to children, as children learn from images quicker than texts. Cuneen and Sidwell (1998) concluded that:

> Girls and women were drastically underrepresented as models in *SIK* advertising and that distinct gender roles were sustained by depicting males in nearly all types of activities and products. Conventional stereotypical relationships between sport and gender were represented in the majority of *SIK* advertisements (p. 50).

Reinforcement of stereotypical gendered roles through sport further perpetuate sex role categorisations amongst boys and girls, as sex role and socialisation theories concur that 'boys and girls learn their gendered identities through interactions with

others' (Francis et al., 2001, p.168). Clark and Paechter (2007) articulate pressures amongst female sports stars to look feminine, often covering or airbrushing muscle in order to look more feminine in sports photographs. Gender is not simply a natural assumption because of the sex of the person. Female sports stars have to perform to their gender identity continually, in order to fulfil the feminine images advertisement and mass media associates with females' athletics, which are within the traditional gendered identities of women. This often results in a paradox where, in some cases, women have to reject their femininity at some point (Scraton et al., 1999), in order to build muscle and strength necessary for the sport (Serena Williams- tennis player, Katie Taylor-boxer), only to be confronted with pressure to almost 'hide' their physique in order to please magazine publishers who give them photo opportunities. Achievements in building their physique and strength is often downplayed in order to make them more appealing to the mass market, which also means despite breaking traditional sporting barriers by excelling in their sporting field, women are pulled back to conform with traditional feminine ideologies. For example, Caroline Wozniacki, a successful women's tennis player posing in body paint for Sports Illustrated or the women's US Hockey team, while campaigning for better treatment embraced a campaign where they posed nude, perhaps in order to get attention. However, these are behaviours that are being infiltrated to young girls and boys. Often in sports magazines girls are seen in a feminine, attractive pose while men are showing their position of strength. This all feeds into what boys and girls are depicting as traditional feminine and masculine behaviours that are reinforcing sexism and cultural sex role behaviours. All of this is inherently a part of the production and re-production of sport.

Attitudes associated with conventional gender stereotyping can still be seen throughout boys and girls attitudes towards their role models. Biskup and Pfister (1999) conducted a study that consisted of interviewing 44 girls and 53 boys from five primary schools in Berlin. Each pupil was asked about their role model. There was a heavy gendered orientation within the research findings as a large percentage of boys chose sports heroes as their role models, while more girls admired movie and music stars rather than anyone from a sporting culture. Teachers or parents were not featured in the study. When the study further analysed gender differences amongst answers, there was a large difference in the attributes that girls and boys admired in

their role models. Boys tended to look up to personalities, mainly in sport, that possessed stereotypical heterosexual masculinity and traditional gender ideals, such as strength, superiority and bravery, while girls admired their role models for positive social behaviours and caring attributes. While the children in the study did choose role models that conform somewhat to traditional masculine and feminine characteristics, the researchers noted that none of the children chose extremely feminine or masculine role models such as 'Rambo or Barbie', suggesting that while children do admire and want to emulate some traits attributed to traditional masculine and feminine roles, within this study they rejected extreme forms of this.

In a similar study carried out eight years later, Bricheno and Thornton (2007) correspondingly cited within their findings of primary and secondary school pupils, that boys were less likely than girls to have a role model and if they did 'they were more likely than girls to relate to physical prowess' (p.387). Paralleling research by Biskup and Pfister (1999), the research findings suggested that the main gender differences between the role models and their attributes were traditionally gendered, as boys tended to view success and money as more valuable than girls, however , in contrast to the previous study, Bricheno and Thornton findings suggested that while there were differences in the traits boys and girls looked up to in their role models, both ranked someone who is 'caring' and kind' as the main attribute of their role model. Interestingly, while girls did tend to look up to figures from the music scene more than boys and boys chose sports personalities more than girls, (this ranked second after relatives), the main role model selected by both boys and girls were relatives. This did not feature in the study of Biskup and Pfister. Again, teachers did not feature heavily within this research either, as only 2.4% of all participants chose teachers as their role models.

Overall, within their research, Bricheno and Thornton found that most students, irrelevant of age, chose parents or relatives as their main role model due to the caring, trusting aspects of the relationship, which can also reflect Bandura's theory above that children's role models are formed mainly by those they have similar characteristics to. However, the higher number of boys who also chose football heroes within the study, (as it ranked second behind relatives as their role models), cannot be ignored. Whether heavy marketing behind sports, in particular soccer, which include video games, figurines and football merchandise have a role in

establishing football heroes as role models for children, as well as their carefully constructed media images, where some footballers are seen as charitable, often helping poorer communities, one also cannot forget the negative attention footballers are getting both on and off the pitch. Even, Ronaldo, one of soccer's best-known players, has been in the news recently, painted in a negative light for allegedly disrespectful behaviour to women. With campaigns in England to promote reading and academic subjects through sports personalities, like the National Reading Campaign (2003), (discussed earlier), there is warrant to question if this is the best solution to the academic and behavioural achievement of boys and girls. If boys are already looking up to these players because of their male prowess and masculinities, then surely distractions with more hegemonic displays of masculinity through sport would inhibit the learning of boys and they would inevitably be modelling masculinities more than literacy. This is because the reinforcement of masculine cultures and attitudes back into primary schools is the main target of essentialism amongst those in society who call for more male teachers. What these sports role models are essentially demonstrating is men conforming to traditional heterosexual masculinity which can inevitably reinforce gender power and privilege amongst men. Gender modelling within schools, attitudes towards males and sport and conforming to sex role categorisations will not change unless we provide a wider range of examples for children and not classify them into a homogenous group.

> We have the possibility of forestalling the extremes of gender stereotyping behaviour by providing a much wider range of examples of adult masculinity and femininity. By presenting them with secure adult masculine or feminine performances that do not involve stereotypical stances, bodily uses or behavioural restrictions (Paechter as cited in Francis et al., 2001, p.51).

If we continue to use sport as a means to gain academic interest and improved behaviour amongst boys in schools, there are many issues that arise in forms of gender powers relations and gender identity and they act to marginalise the needs of girls and boys who do not adhere to traditional masculine ideals. The addition of linking sports personalities to school needs to be done so with caution as not to further reinforce masculinities and power privilege amongst males and boys. If some boys and girls benefit from these projects, this is wonderful, however, the numerous educational research based studies that have highlighted the common connection

between sport and the attitudes of masculinities (Skelton et al., 2006, Martino & Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2003, Francis, 2003, Martino & Mayenn, 2001, Mac an Ghaill, 1994) cannot be ignored, all of which impact on gender identities within primary school playgrounds.

2.12 Gender Identity in the Primary School Playground

> The sporting hero then is seen to embody valued masculine characteristics, such as strong, brave, tough, and powerful, all of which are evident in the sporting discourse (Lines, 2001, p.285).

While analysing contrasting identities of tomboy and feminine girls, or 'girly-girls', Paechter (2010), conducted a study that examined how children (9-11yerars old) construct identities using their body, dress, talk and play and how their behaviour manifested into other children categorising them into groups or 'tomboys' or 'girly-girls'. Observations from the research give clear indication that gender identities and grouping are very much based on the appearance and behaviour of the children and are then identified by other children as belonging to certain groups. In relation to the constructions of 'tomboy' girls, Paechter observed that one could not be both a tomboy or a 'girly girl' as both identities were constructed in direct comparison of each other, for example, 'tomboy identities can be constructed not so much in relation to masculinity, but through a rejection of femininity' (Paechter, 2010, p.3). Paechter found that although it was taken for granted that boys dislike certain feminine associated traits like the colour pink, tomboy girls had to also reject the same attributes as the boys, therefore tomboys girls could not transfer to being a 'girly-girl' and a tomboy identity, as one was in opposition to the other. Most interestingly, through focus groups consisting of 'friendship groups', Paechter articulated how tomboys were seen to be more like boys by their male peers. Male peers suggested their entry into the tomboy category was because of their 'masculine' behaviours as they were verbally aggressive during football or talked like a boy. There were even instances where girls were categorised into the tomboy group because of their negative behaviour in school as one particular girl, the biggest tomboy, was a girl in the class who had 'reached the most serious level of behavioural sanctions' and talks 'gangster talk' (Paechter, 2010, p.4). However, girls

tended to veer back towards the 'girly-girl' attributes as they were entering puberty, which was an important finding within the study. As puberty is seen to make an enormous impact on girls' decisions to remain within the tomboy category or not, it places importance on how children view masculinities and femininities as they move towards puberty. In the case of this research, it was taken for granted that the girls would have to move towards more feminine identities as they progressed into adulthood. These feminine identities encapsulated society's view of traditional femininity, even for children who were seen as tomboys originally. The alarming finding was that there was no flexibility to move from tomboy to girly girls as each group was in opposition to the other, therefore, although the children accepted boys or girls had certain personality traits, this was only when they adhered to the codes of dress or behaviour within that certain group. However, when observations on gender divisions in the playground were made in other studies, findings concluded that the largest gender divide in the playground stemmed from the strong masculine authority held amongst boys who played football.

2.13 The Role of Football in the Gender Divide

> Despite women's growing participation and the mass appeal of the sport, football continues to be an overwhelmingly masculine pursuit at both national and local levels in England and across Europe (Scraton et al., 1999).

The playground is a very important space for study in primary schools as it is often a key area of interaction and gender negotiation, especially within the confinements of certain playground sports (Renold, 2004). Many studies have highlighted the constructions of masculinity through sport, especially football within primary school playgrounds, which have in turn acted to exclude and marginalise girls and boys who do not have a strong interest in the game (Skelton, 2001, Renold, 1997). Swain (2000) and Nespor (1997), (as cited in Clark and Paechter, 2007) both conducted research observing the use of football as an empowerment tool for boys to exercise their dominant constructs of masculinity much to the exclusion and marginalisation of other boys and in particular girls. An ethnographic study by Clark and Paechter (2007), also observed the dynamic between boys who play football in the primary school playground and other boys and girls who do not participate. The researchers

were interested to observe how visual gender constructions of children impacted on their involvement of playing football during playtime. Children participating were 9-11 years old. One of the main finding of the study highlighted children's sense of masculinity played a key factor in the inclusion or exclusion of children:

> The performance of masculinity through football translated into heavy investments for many boys who took any opportunity to prove both their knowledge and expertise in the sport. This investment rested on derision and the exclusion both of non-footballing boys and of girls. Associations between humility, restraint, niceness and femininity also had a negative impact on girls' involvement in the sport (Clark & Paechter, 2007, p.261).

Girls in particular, were excluded from the game, as they tried to dominate or even heavily participate in games and attempts to be included in the game was 'compounded by boys' co-optation of football as "inherently masculine"' (Clark & Paechter, 2007, p.261). Throughout the study the segregation of girls became clear as there were inherent territories established that were dominant areas for boy's football while girls were only allowed marginal space. Within this study, Clark and Paechter observed boys' consolidation of dominance within the game of football while girls were actively discouraged from playing by their male peers, based on their constructs of gender identities. There was also strong gender discrimination observed amongst staff at the school, where boys were the main target of sports questions and girls were often seen as weaker footballers than boys, or if not, they 'played like a boy'.

Similarly, this gender stereotype was carried by the boys at the schools as the researchers observed girls were often called 'rubbish' by their male peers or non-hegemonic males were becoming aggressive to the girls playing in order to fit in with their male peers, displaying a willingness to behave more masculine in order to fit into the dominant group. Similarly, they witnessed the playground surrounding football had become so male dominated that the girls had to wait to ask permission to play football with the boys, only to leave the game early because they were shouted at or told they couldn't play by another male peer. What was clear from the research, was despite gender power relations in the playground, girls continuously resisted the authority of boys and continued to attempt to play the game or even disrupt the game. Gendered expectations and power struggles were continuously

witnessed amongst girls in both schools participating in the study and male power always prevailed. Girls playing football was seen as a stand against the dominance of masculinity on the playground and weakening male power, therefore was not fully accepted by the boys. There was a strong element of zero-sum within the study where boys were seen to lose out once girls were introduced into the play. It was quite clear that strong gender expectation and power privilege amongst boys was developing through the game of football in which ownership of territory and rules of the game were all felt by the boys, which marginalised the girls and non-football playing boys. This demonstrates that boys' sense of masculinity is very much intact and weakens arguments that suggest the feminisation of primary schooling is creating 'effeminate boys' (Martino, 2003).

Furthermore, similar findings can be found in ethnographic research carried out by Skelton (2001), in which football was seen not only as a method of male domination and gender power but also a bonding tool with male teachers:

> Football did not serve solely as a means of generating male camaraderie but defined relationships between males and females in the classroom and took a central place in the classroom management strategies of the male teachers (p.5).

Issues of reinforcing macho stereotypes are a cause for concern especially with the constant promotion of boys' academic interest and achievement through sport. Currently, the way in which P.E or schools sports 'are practiced or currently practised tend to favour certain forms of masculinity (interest in sport, aggressive, heterosexual)' and this has implications for all students involved (Gard, 2001, p. 233). Studies above have confirmed that not all boys play football and quite often, those who don't are marginalised, while mass media continues to categorise failing boys into a homogenised group. In Skelton's research, similar patterns of girls and some boys being left out of the football game occurred, while, this was also evident during physical activity lessons where the teacher, who trained the football team would often allow the girls to opt out of playing while he continued with the dominant boys, allowing them to give each other nicknames, where boys who were not avid playground footballers were again excluded, possibly because they were seen as weaker therefore they were categorised amongst the girls. Girls' exclusion was also strongly observed and witnessed from the girls themselves as they were not

only excluded by the boys from playtime football but there was also little effort on the teacher's part to include them in the games. This again led to the reinforcement of male power within the playground. Skelton's research further articulates the marginalisation of boys who do not play football or display associated attributes of power or physical strength as popularity within the school was determined by each boys ability of football. Most popular boys were often the best football players. However, Skelton observed that most boys within the class were given some role within the football camaraderie regardless of their ability, often in opposition to the girls and while the football 'stars' were given extra privilege this did 'not mean to say they immersed themselves totally in the hegemonic masculinity of the school' (Skelton, 2001, p15), demonstrating that although dominant boys within the study had a strong sense of masculinity, this did not always need to be displayed, a pattern that could change if more men enter into teaching and conform to traditional sex role categories.

Regarding male teacher debates surrounding male teachers and sport, Skelton's study clearly highlights the implications of hegemonic masculinity in relationships between staff and pupils, staff management and amongst peers. In order for schools to strengthen academic interest in boys, whether schools feel the need to follow the reinforcement of masculinities in schools through encouraging the power relations in the playground is a prerogative of each school, however, in order to apply gender based theory to the male teacher debate, one cannot ignore the research above that clearly highlight gender identities and traditional hegemonic masculine stereotypes that are being constructed and perpetuated within the primary school playgrounds. Strengthening boy's academic interest and achievement through male teacher bonding and sport certainly does not seem to be the solution, however, it is up to individual schools to determine how they want to proceed with the culture of football in order to confront gender behaviour expectations.

2.14 Conclusion

Unfounded assumptions made by men right's movements have gained widespread momentum within educational discourse through seductive arguments (absent of gender or school-based research) that place boys as disadvantaged. These arguments

are accepted despite any research foundation possibly because of inherent gender bias in society and a resistance to look at the education of boys critically, using gender theory. Men's rights activists use boys' academic underachievement as a clever mechanism to get more masculinity back into schools through the reduction of femininity, thus placing a disproportionate amount of blame on female teachers and schools. This reinforces the underlying aim of the activists, gaining more male power and privilege. In the past, mythopoetic men's movements originally 'sought to enable men to search for some "deep" or "essential" masculinity' (Coston & Kimmel, 2013, p.371). However, changes within the men's rights campaign to a critique of the 'oppressive male sex role and the desire to free men from it' (Coston & Kimmel, 2013, p. 373) drastically changed the aim of these movements into an almost vengeance against women and specifically feminism, as the desire to free men from oppression. Subsequently their objective:

> morphed into a celebration of all things masculine, and a near-infatuation with the traditional masculine role itself. Men didn't need liberating from traditional masculinity anymore; now they needed liberating from those who would liberate them! Traditional masculinity was no longer the problem; now it's restoration was championed as the solution. The problem was, in a word, women—or, more accurately, women's equality, women's empowerment, and specifically, feminism (Coston & Kimmel, 2013, p.373).

Although Coston and Kimmel, (2013) highlight the confusion amongst some whether men's rights movements seek to be either traditional 'patriarchs or liberated men', the one clear aspect amongst the men's rights movement that needs to be cautioned is their aspiration to 'become a movement of re-appropriating power at all costs, no matter who gets in the way' (Coston & Kimmel, 2013, p.373). It is this sense of determination to get ahead regardless of cost that is transcending into our primary schools. Unfounded and unrealistic arguments that suggest schools are to blame for the academic disinterest and underachievement of boys are based on gender power relations and strengthening and rehabilitating masculinities, not the academic wellbeing of boys and girls.

Throughout this chapter weaknesses in the male role model debate have been continuously highlighted. This chapter has addressed the uncritical gendered and essentialist assumptions that more male teachers in primary schools will actively challenge conventional stereotypes. Male privilege, fear of male effeminacy and a

belief in outdated identity politics and sex-role theories drive campaigns for more male teachers solely based on gender essentialism and to some extent a misunderstanding of gender theory in society. These arguments act seductively because of the belief in zero sum, if boys are failing in a feminised environment in which girls are thriving, it must be because of the numerical dominance of females – and as a result masculinity must be defended. The weakening male privilege is at the focal point of these campaigns, therefore gender theory is not applied. The threat to the education of our pupils become apparent as men's rights perspectives draw on a very different body of research to support their arguments, and the fact that they do not cite critical gender and education research is highly problematic within an educational setting. Ultimately the wealth of research about gender and education is being ignored. Arguments for more male role models have gained attention and are believed because they place boys as 'vulnerable, disadvantaged' and in need of urgent help. These campaigns have become almost resistant to widespread critique in part because of backlash against feminist theories that are suggested by some, to be acting as a means of oppressing men (Roy Den Hollander, as cited in Coston and Kimmel, 2013) and therefore oppressing boys in school. This, coupled with the belief in outdated sex role theories and traditional forms of masculinity, men's rights activists convincingly argue that the numerical dominance of female teachers is enhancing the education of girls at the expense of boys. These arguments garner attention because it is a quick fix solution that more male teachers will solve the academic decline of boys, yet as demonstrated, it is men who did not want to be positioned in occupations that have little status or remuneration for often increasing standards. Activists for more male teachers based on sex role categorisation where the feminisation of teaching is addressing girl's educational needs and neglecting boys' needs is simplistic and well documented amongst gender educational research not to be an underlying factor in academic education of boys and girls. Yet government agencies are so invested in these outdated sex-role theories and gender essentialist arguments, they are failing to engage with educational gender based research. Framing the increase of more male teachers in school around arguments that it will lessen conventional masculine behaviours of 'macho' boys and reduce 'macho' behaviours contradicts the previous campaigns for more male teachers based on promotion of football, as seen in the UK. Integrating league tables and various forms of assessment and more male teachers into schools is not addressing

the educational underachievement of boys. It is simply working as a 'postmodern remasculinisation of primary education' (Skelton, 2002, p.90).

Furthermore, to omit a critical gender perspective amongst educational discourse has serious consequences if we want to take academic underachievement of boys seriously. Despite men's rights movement conducting very limited research within the schools themselves, there is a resistance to look critically at arguments within the boy crisis rhetoric using gender theory because in a zero sum argument boys are at a disadvantage in comparison to girls. Yet, zero-sum cannot apply in this case, as boys' achievements cannot be homogenised and *some* boys are achieving academically, just as *some* girls are failing academically. Furthermore, without a gender based critique, 'at risk' boys, gay boys, transgender boys and effeminate boys are not being highlighted as an 'at risk' group, again, signifying that these arguments are disguised as a means of reinforcing masculinities and male privilege back into schools and society, the same way the argument for the 'vulnerable boys' does. Construction of boys and male teachers as the "new disadvantaged" is possibly a defensive reaction to broader cultural and social problems that pose a threat to traditional, hegemonic masculinities. This can be seen within the absent father rhetoric:

> The production of truths about "the absent father," and its effect on boys' developing masculinity and learning in schools, seems to have fuelled the call for more male teachers at a time when increased visibility of single parenthood, alternative family arrangements, and alternative or queer masculinities proliferate within popular culture (Martino & Kehler, 2006, p.115).

As highlighted on numerous occasions throughout this chapter, there is little or no connection between gender modelling and academic achievement. Therefore, we need to look elsewhere, possibly towards 'dominating and oppressive societal representations of masculinity' (Watson, et al., 2010, p.359) if we are to address the academic underachievement and disinterest of boys.

Chapter Three: Method and Methodology

3.1 Introduction

'All research needs a foundation for its inquiry.' (Creswell, 2007, p. 21)

In this chapter, I will briefly discuss the philosophical orientation in which the research is positioned. I will succinctly outline the paradigmatic and ontological assumptions within the study. I will examine the methodological approach used, paying particular attention to origins of participant recruitment and detail interview and survey methods. The research design will also be discussed in detail. Finally, I will examine ethical issues that arose throughout the research and provide details of how the thematic process of data analysis was established.

3.2 Aims of Study

The aims of the study are to examine:

- The views, attitudes and perceptions of primary school principals, teachers and children in relation to the need for male role models for boys in primary school
- The characteristics principals, teachers, coaches and children believe a male role model should have
- How principals, teachers and coaches feel they can provide a role model in schools for boys
- The benefits for men in being male role models for boys
- The male influence (attributes and limitations) on the education of boys and girls
- Whether it is possible for both male and female teachers to be role models to all pupils through individual role modelling as opposed to gender modelling

3.3 Philosophical Principles

When devising research strategies and approaches, Creswell (2003), distinguishes primary 'worldviews' in which research can be undertaken as; post-positivism, constructivism, advocacy, participatory and pragmatism. Clearly defining the implications for practice, Creswell demonstrates contrasting viewpoints and factors to each paradigm (Creswell, 2003, p.46)

Similarly, Burrell and Morgan (1979) identify a scheme for analysing assumptions about the nature of social science, categorising the ontological, epistemological and human nature of the study into 'subjectivist and objectivist' dimensions in social science. The assumptions identified, have direct implications for the direction of the study as all have contrasting ontological and epistemological approaches, therefore demand different research methods. A positivist, objectivist view would favour knowledge being tangible and is used by social scientists to create a single reality that derives from a particular hypothesis. It is an acceptance of natural science and distance remains between the researcher and those being observed. Methodology is deductive in nature and axiology remains objective and unbiased. Procedures are referred to as 'Nomothetic'. The human nature of the research entails a view in which the social world responds almost mechanically to external factors rather than take ownership of their own actions and are 'conditioned' by external factors. In comparison, a 'subjective' approach views the world from a softer, more personal nature, where emphasis is placed on explanation and understanding in individual behaviour rather than a general or universal opinion. Approaches may be termed as 'Ideographic' (Burrell and Morgan (1979). The philosophical basis of ideographic research is more aligned to social reality and idealism. Interpretation of the subjective means is the fundamental basis of the research and methodologies tend to be inductive in nature (Crotty, 1998). The assumption of human nature is more creative, and less controlled. The human being creates a perspective derived from their own experiences (Burrell and Morgan, 1979).

Arising from the philosophical paradigms above, this study draws on elements from an interpretivist school of thought.

3.4 Interpretivism and the Study of Male Role Models in Primary Teaching

Interpretivism, associated with qualitative research, searches for meaning within the social world, where participant's interactions within society and personal histories shape the research (Creswell, 2007). This research involves an empathic, inquiry-based study in which one describes an experience, through observations, in order to understand and interpret the experiences of those around us (O' Leary, 2004).

3.4.1 Ontological Assumption

The ontology of the study reflects a multiple-realist approach in which elements of constructivist realism are underpinned within an interpretivist paradigm. Constructivist realism reflects 'a position which acknowledges that social phenomena exist in communities' (Cupchik, 2001, p1). These real phenomena will be 'observed and named by members of the natural community' (Cupchik, 2001, p1). Researchers approach this 'real world' each in their own way, therefore the social inquiry element of the study is imperative. An empirical approach was used throughout this study, in which, an attempt was made to understand these phenomena holistically and from the perspective of the participants. This aligned with the interpretivist nature of the study through an understanding that 'the best way to acquire reliable knowledge is the way of evidence obtained by direct experience' (Barratt, 1971, as cited in Cohen et al., 2005, p.27).

3.4.2 Epistemological Assumptions

The epistemological focus of this research, once again, aligns within an interpretivist theory. The theoretical approach of the research is interpretivist in nature. The significant requirement for this study was to interpret and understand the views of the social world exploring the perspectives of the respondents within society. A holistic approach was taken between the researcher and the respondents and elements of transparency and trust were the primary focus. As the child participants were between the ages of 9-12 years old, the holistic and interpretative nature of the study was important to highlight to the children participating as it emphasized the questionnaire administered to them was not a test, and the study was interested in their opinions and perceptions only, therefore there were no right or wrong answers.

This allowed for trust and honesty within children's answers, rather than the children being afraid to express themselves.

3.4.3 Axiological Assumptions

In terms of axiological elements of the study, as a researcher, I am aware of the reality of the influence outside factors can have on respondents. As a primary school teacher, I am aware of the strain and difficulties within the occupation in this current climate, such as time restraints and continued additions on an already overloaded curriculum. I am also very aware of factors influencing my own views within the research, therefore, I have addressed these concerns in the 'personal reflection' in the Introduction chapter of this dissertation. Careful consideration was given when selecting respondents due to the variations necessary to suit the research aims, and as interviewer, I was conscious not to express my own opinions or influence the respondents in any way. Throughout the research I was aware, as a primary school teacher that there might be a greater sense of trust, or possibly respect as an 'insider' researcher (Mercer, 2007) because participants were aware, as a practicing teacher, I had an understanding of the issues associated with the academic and behavioural underachievement of boys. However, a lot of thought was given to ensure the best approach was used when collecting data for the research. I felt honesty about my position as a practicing teacher was best as it allowed the participants to understand that although I was a practicing teacher, it was their experiences I was interested in. It also ensured the participants could discuss elements of the curriculum freely, without further explanation of curricular and assessment development or acronyms used in primary teaching, therefore adding to the honesty and progression of the conversation.

3.4.4 Methodological Assumptions

The methodological stance of the study was inductive in nature. As the study was concerned with the experiences and opinions of primary school educators and children, an interpretative paradigm was the fundamental basis of the research. Qualitative methods were implemented to gain an insight into the opinion's and views of the participants. The research questions enabled the researcher to garner

data regarding educators and children's perceptions of male role models in primary schools, if they perceive there is a difference in having a male and female teacher and their view on individual role modelling as opposed to gender modelling. A qualitative approach complimented the epistemological and ontological position of the study within an interpretivist framework and aligned the study within a social interpretative inquiry. In interpretivist approaches, the inquirer uses the participants' views 'to build broader themes', which was intended throughout this study (Creswell, 2007, p. 23). Throughout the research, importance was placed on the experiences of the participants and their interpretations of male teachers as role models for boys in Irish primary schools, and themes were built upon their experiences, aligning the study further within the interpretivist framework. Complementing the research aims and the interpretivist epistemological stance of the research, qualitative research is a form of social inquiry that focuses on the way people interpret and make sense of their experiences and the world in which they live (Atkinson, et al., 2001). Qualitative research is predominantly concerned in the 'interpretative approach to social reality and in the description of the lived experience of human beings' (Flick, 2009, p. 1). It is embedded in an inquiry-based method in which the researcher's main focus is the opinions and interpretations and experiences of the social world, rather than numerical statistical facts.

As this research is embedded in social inquiry, encompassing reflection and evaluation of informational data through interpretations of the social world, the research fits well into the qualitative data framework. For this reason, the research design of this study was embedded in an interpretative orientation encompassing a subjectivist view. Human behaviour is valued as an intentional, creative process rather than controlled by environmental or external factors. The research aligns within an interpretivist paradigm in which the intention of the research is to rely upon the 'participant's view of the situation being studied' and incorporate their experiences and opinions (Creswell, 2003. p.8). Using inquiry-based methods, the researcher approached respondents, in order to 'explore their world within their whole life context' and gain admittance to their experiences by observing them, talking to them and listening to their opinions, rather than focus on prediction and control of a theoretical perspective, as in quantitative research methods.

However, interpretative paradigms and qualitative research have had numerous criticisms when it comes to social science, especially amongst researchers in the natural science. It is argued that qualitative methods of research have too many environmental factors that can influence participants and that an individual social reality is not that far removed from these external factors. Giddens (1979) disputes that environmental structures have a cause and effect on the opinions of the social world and vice-versa, claiming the particular sector in which the participant is involved, is explicit to that area. Other critics believe interpretative paradigms are a step too far from the analysis of scientific measures. Argyle (1978) argues that if ethological controlled studies are put into question for their numerous flaws, how can newer perspectives such as interpretative paradigms hold value?

> If the carefully controlled interviews used in social surveys are inaccurate, how about the uncontrolled interviews favoured by the (newer perspectives)? If sophisticated ethological studies of behaviour are not good enough, are participant observation studies any better?' (Argyle, 1978, p.242)

Lincoln and Guba (2000) also acknowledge that the ontological foundations of positivist and interpretivist paradigms that underlie qualitative and quantitative methods have little common standard of measurement, however, they welcomed an alternative, constructivist approach to evaluation, suggesting quantitative methods have an inability to adequately address factors that include voice, practice and empowerment within the research. Similarly, Cupchik (2001) suggests that despite arguments for quantitative research methods over qualitative, 'physical phenomena can exist without human apprehension but they only become meaningful events, in the sense of influencing action, when noticed or observed by a group of people, however small' (2001, p.4). Correspondingly, more recent research from numerous well known researchers, such as Creswell (2009), Denscombe (2008) and Greene (2008) have explored the advantages of using qualitative research and even articulated the advantages of using mixed methods approaches to data, where it can possibly 'increase the accuracy of the data', while advocating the use of qualitative research methods (Denscombe, 2008, p. 272). However, in this research, the primary endeavour was to understand the subjective world of human experience through an interpretative paradigm. Shared experience and actions of the social world is developed through everyday interactions, therefore in order to engage with the

research orientation of this study, everyday interactions with the external environment are necessary and the interpretivist paradigm, which aligns with a qualitative, social inquiry approach is best suited to the research aims. Survey research was chosen as the most appropriate instrument within the qualitative framework as it allows for interpreting 'the subjective feeling of the public' (Floyd, 2013, p. 2) and compliments the empirical nature of the study.

3.5 Mixed Methodology

This study employed a mixed methodological approach. This specific approach was utilised to allow questionnaires (open and closed questions), in order to reduce discomfort and apprehension for any child participating in the research, as the children involved were only 9-12 years old. This will be outlined later in this chapter. A permutation of methods enabled the research to gain a better understanding of children's and educational professionals experiences and perceptions of role modelling in Irish primary schools as data collection methods are conveyed 'simultaneously but independently' (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011, p. 25), therefore one method did not over shadow another but rather complimented the research. As a result, questionnaires were conducted with children participating in this research and semi-structured interviews were utilised for teachers, principals and coaches data collection.

3.6 Respondents and Sample Size

Due to the empirical nature of the study, careful consideration was given to the variables necessary when choosing the participants, incorporating factors of accessibility, limited time during the academic period and expense. Probability sampling was used to compliment the 'stratified' method of sampling necessary for the research. This allowed for the division of potential research sites into contained groupings with similar characteristics (Cohen & Manion, 1984). Although non-probability sampling was considered, the disadvantage of non-representativeness within the study would act as a limitation for research, whereas, stratified sampling enabled the study to give a sample representation of the population within the framework intended. Although the sample represented would not allow for

generalisation, it would give a good insight into the experiences of educators and children in the research area.

Teachers were the first cohort of participants to be approached, as I was interested in their opinion of the learning experience of boys and girls with respect to the gender of the teacher. Teachers are embedded in the school environment on a daily basis and their opinion of the teaching methods of male and female teachers would be of great benefit. Experience of teachers was also a determining factor within the participant selection to reduce influences of external factors as much as possible. Teachers in the field for a longer period than newly qualified teachers could have an established viewpoint based on experience rather than departmental or institutional influences. Experienced teachers would also have more diverse knowledge in curriculum delivery, academic achievement and behavioural difficulties, therefore I concluded newly qualified teachers and student teachers would be excluded from the research.

Both male and female teachers were invited to participate to enable the exploration of gender viewpoints across the data. A key research aim was to ascertain opinions on the characteristics of a role model for boys and if teachers feel gender modelling could create more influential learning than individual role modelling. The research also strived to examine the limitations and attributes educators felt men have in being role models to boys, therefore, it was necessary to include male and female teachers to see if opinions between gender differed.

Principals were an important focus within the research as they hold a strong role of authority and responsibility within schools and their general aptitude to have an overview of different teaching methodologies used within the teaching of male and female teachers was imperative to the research. They would also provide considerable contribution regarding their opinions of the effectiveness of gender modelling within schools and possibly allow me to distinguish if a mentoring programme would be beneficial in schools to strengthen boys' academic performances within certain subjects. As principals also have to communicate with individual students on a regular basis, they would have a good indication of the behaviours and educational difficulties of boys and girls in their school. Principals are heavily involved in the recruitment and selection of teachers for employment and would provide a valuable insight into characteristics they feel are necessary in

teachers as educational role models, while also enabling the research to determine if they feel pressure from media to hire more male teachers. Again, male and female principals were necessary for cross-gender analysis.

Children were the next focus of my research through the medium of questionnaires. When formulating research questions for this study and researching background literature in the area of teachers and role modelling in primary schools, I found it very difficult to find many studies that actually explore the opinions of the pupils themselves on their perceptions of their teacher as their role model. As a practitioner in the primary education field, I was very aware of the maturity that can be encountered in children from the ages of 10-12 years. In my experience, there are very self-aware and capable of defining positive and negative influences in their educational learning and I felt the expressions on their own educational experiences have potentially greater value than perspectives from policy holders and educational stakeholders who are out of the classroom context for a number of years. Children generally have a very innate sense of responsibility towards their education as they become more mature in the senior cycle of school. This is why I felt the addition of children's questionnaires would give them a voice in the research and add an extra element to the study, as international research tend to consist of interviews, questionnaires or focus groups with primary teaching students or secondary school pupils only.

I also felt children's experiences were of great value to the research as they could indicate themselves if they learn more easily with a teacher of the same gender or if academic and social learning is more of an individual matter. There is little previous research in this area in Ireland that involves the children questioning and exploring their own learning. Children in fifth and sixth classes, (aged between 10-12years) were deemed the most appropriate age grouping for the study as they have some understanding of the term 'role model' and would not feel intimidated by the research. Children participating in the research would also have to have previously been taught by both a male and female teacher in order to fulfil the research variables.

The final group that were recruited were school coaches. This cohort of participants originated from other theoretical perspectives when researching literature. Sport and boys was commonly linked within 'boys and role modelling' literature (Connell,

2008, Martino & Frank, 2008, Renold, 2001, 1997). Many boys at primary school level often associate members of a sporting community as their 'hero' and numerous educational research shows an intricate link between boys and sport (Renold, 2003). As most school coaches are men, this would also add another element to the research. I was interested in getting a perspective from someone who wasn't in a teaching role as such, but had an influential position of role modelling to children. Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) coaches come to most primary schools once or twice a week for a period of 6-8 weeks.

The sample size was selected based on the aims of the research and the nature of the study. Care was taken to require a minimum number of participants to allow for representation of a subgroup of the population and limit the possibility of 'sampling error' (Cohen & Manion, 1994). The sample size consisted of 14 interviews with principals, teachers and coaches, along with 60 questionnaires from 5th and 6th class pupils. There was a 100% return rate in the questionnaires as I was present on the day the questionnaires were administered and collected them on completion[5]. Even if students did not write or fill in each section of the questionnaire, I asked for them to be returned as all information regardless of size would help the research. Interviews were carried out with 4 principal teachers, 7 mainstream class teachers and 3 Gaelic Athletics Association (GAA) coaches assisting schools. Originally four coaches we invited for interview, however only three of the four coaches were willing to be interviewed as one coach declined the invite for interview. Although the sample size would not be sufficient enough to make a broad generalisation about gender modelling in Irish primary schools, the representation of 60 children's questionnaires and 14 interviews would reflect a cohort of people on a local level within the Connaught region and provided a valuable insight into the understanding, experiences and attitudes of principals, teachers, coaches and students regarding male teachers as role models in Irish primary schools. It was also a large enough sample to allow validity within the research.

[5] See Appendix 2 & 3 for the assent and consent forms ensuring children were aware of the voluntary nature of the questionnaire.

3.7 Research Site

As the research criteria for the school selection was meticulous, this led to limited selections in the location for the study. The variables needed for the research, in order to provide cross comparisons, indicated a need for a rural and urban school. This would allow for comparisons in social background. Although I was careful not to allow the research to become embedded in socio-economic factors as the research focus is primarily gender based, it was important to generate knowledge based on the location setting of the schools in order to question if urban and rural schools were in agreement regarding the characteristics, attributes and necessity of more male role models in relation to pupil's (boys, in particular) academic and behavioural achievement in Irish primary schools. Factors including size of the school, male or female principal and number of boys and girls within the school were also important for reasons discussed earlier. Interviews and questionnaires were conducted in the same research site, on the same day, over a three-week period.

The teaching faculty within the school was the second variable to consider. As primary teaching is still numerically dominated by females, I had to locate a school with a male teacher currently teaching in a mainstream setting. In order to compare the teaching styles of male and female teachers, it was obligatory for a male teacher to have taught the children being questioned. This again, eliminated a large selection of schools in a rural setting. In order to create meaningful cross-gender analysis, one school with a male principal and one school with a female principal was selected in each location. The research included one school that caters for boys only, (as I was interested to see if experiences and opinions regarding gender modelling were stronger within a single educational setting), and three co-educational schools, thus further aiding cross-gender analysis. Due to reasons indicted above, stratified sampling was my only realistic option. Coaches selected for interview were current working in the schools, allowing for continuity between the research participants and the school setting. The table below summarises the criteria selection. All data collection between principal, teacher, student and coach were in the same school and carried out the same day.

Variables			
Urban Single sex school	Urban Mixed sex school	Rural Mixed sex school	Rural Mixed sex school
Male Principal	Female Principal	Female principal	Male Principal
Female teacher has taught the current cohort of $5^{th}/6^{th}$ class. They currently have a male teacher who declined to be interviewed.	Male and female teacher having **both** taught the current cohort of $5^{th}/6^{th}$ class	Male and female teacher having **both** taught the current cohort of $5^{th}/6^{th}$ class	Male and female teacher having **both** taught the current cohort of $5^{th}/6^{th}$ class
Pupils	Pupils	Pupils	Pupils
Coach (No female coach was available in any of the selected schools)		Coach	Coach
Total: **Interviews:**14 4 principals 7 teachers 3 coaches 68 children's questionnaires			

Table 1: List of Respondents in each School

3.8 Obtaining Access to Research Site

Using the Department of Education and Skills website, a list of suitable schools that fulfilled the research criteria was drafted. The list indicated the number of teachers on staff, the principal, the address of the school and the number of boys and girls in the school (Appendix 9). From this list, four schools in the Connaught region were contacted by telephone and invited to participate in the research. The Connaught region was selected on proximity to the college, the number of schools in the location and access to interviewees.

A detailed letter of invitation was drafted, outlining the research objectives, theoretical perspectives on the research area, my request for permission to interview and distribute questionnaires, the research method I aimed to use and an explanation regarding the students in which the survey was aimed. Another follow up telephone conversation was initiated between all the schools contacted, explaining briefly what the research and participation entailed. The recruitment of two teachers for interview, a male and a female, were also outlined during the conversation and this was relayed onto the staff. When interest and oral agreement to participate was gained, an email was sent to each school attaching an information pack for the principal and teachers involved (Appendix 1). The information pack included a letter of invitation clearly outlining the aims of the research and the interview process, information assent/consent forms for pupils and parents and a consent form for the interview participant (Appendices 2-4). The consent forms again, gave clear indication of the research aims, what participation involved, information about possibly publishing the findings and information on confidentiality and ethical issues. Each school was asked to distribute consent forms and information packs to voluntary teachers and parents of the selected class. Within a week, a further telephone call was made to discuss feedback. If enough consent and assent forms were returned from parents, I entered the research site.

3.9 Arranging Participant Interviews

Initial contact with participants was carried out through the principal of each school and then through the respondents via e-mail, which proved both efficient and logical as personal details were not exchanged, such as mobile phone numbers or addresses.

Location and time was chosen by the participant and principal of the school, as in most cases the principal allowed the teachers to be interviewed during school hours. On one occasion, I interviewed two teachers after school, and this was mainly due to lack of supervision or cover for their classes.

3.10 Research Method

3.10.1 Survey Research

As the intention of a survey in qualitative research is typically used to acquire information regarding the nature of existing conditions, identify standards against associated conditions or 'determining relationships that exist between specific events' (Cohen & Manion, 1994, p. 97), a survey would align with the research questions effectively. A survey approach is a commonly used strategy for data collection within educational settings and occupies 'a major place in small-scale social science research projects' (Blaxter et al., 1996, p.72), therefore questionnaires and semi-structured interviews were used as a means of data collection within this study, as both research methods have valuable roles within this research. Questionnaires and interviews compliment the 'social inquiry' element of the study, gaining access to a variety of different opinions and perceptions regarding male teachers as role models in primary schools. They also enabled the data to align with the empirical elements of the research questions and interpretative nature within this doctoral study, without being restricted to one or two research sites only. Survey research would therefore, enable the study to get a 'snap-shot' into the opinions and attitudes of society on a certain topic, at a certain point in time (Robson, 1993). Although there are a range of survey styles, descriptive surveys and interviews effectively align with the aims of this study as they are designed to portray accurately the characteristics of particular individuals, situations or groups, (Bulmer,1984 as cited in Blaxter, 1996, p.72), which aligned well with the social inquiry element of the study.

3.10.2 Advantages of Questionnaires

I felt the use of a questionnaire would support the aims of the research questions by allowing the experiences and perceptions of children in particular, to be heard

through a medium that was neither frightening nor pressurising to them, as one to one interviews or even focus groups could potentially be. As questionnaires can combine qualitative and quantitative research methods, I felt they would more beneficial to use with children as they could include two closed-ended questions that would only involve 'yes' or 'no' answers therefore they were both factual and opinion based (Denscombe, 1998) and time friendly for younger children. Questionnaires could also be concise for children with reading or attention difficulties, potentially reducing any failure to answer the questions as 'the quality of the data is jeopardised when respondents fail to fill-in specific items' (Denscombe, 2009, p. 281). This was also a benefit in the addition of two closed questions in the questionnaire as it allowed for students who did not want to elaborate in the open-ended questions to still have a voice in the research. Questionnaires were also time efficient (Wright, 2006) in both administration and data analysis as although there were mostly open-ended questions, there was only three-four lines provided for explanation and I could reach a larger number of pupils than interviews or even focus groups while also reducing disruption for teachers and pupils. Online questionnaires were briefly considered due to their potential to reach a large number of participants in a cost effective manner (Wright, 2006), however, online questionnaires can produce a lower response rate than paper questionnaires (Denscombe, 2006, 2009, Boyer, et al., 2002) therefore face to face interaction was considered a better option. As questionnaires are mainly associated with descriptive studies where social attitudes or explanations are explored, there were possibilities the interpretative approach to the study would be restricted within an observatory method. In comparison to participant observation through ethnographic research, questionnaires ensure information is obtained directly from respondents in a way that was not overwhelming for children.

With this in mind, I felt questionnaires were the most appropriate instrument for data collection with children as the children participating in the questionnaire were only primary school age (9-12years old) and focus groups might intimidate them when carried out with someone whom they were not familiar. Similarly, interview could potentially cause discomfort for young children and they may inhibit them offering their honest opinion, therefore they were not considered appropriate.

Questionnaires importantly, were a means of data collection that ensured the children felt comfortable, while allowing them to express their opinions freely and support the interpretative nature of the study. As questionnaires can be adapted to suit any sample, they allowed me to give great consideration into the questionnaire layout and design, ensuring the language and format of the questionnaire was child friendly and reached an array of learning abilities. They also enabled easy answering methods for children with learning or speaking difficulties, that interviews or focus groups might constrain.

3.10.3 Disadvantages of Questionnaires

Robson (2002), and Blaxter (1996) suggest the questions are generally designed to be un-biased and can often be used for future reproduction. However, Robson argues, confidence in the questionnaires are usually dependent on the independent responses. Respondents may not reflect their attitudes and opinions accurately, which often leads to accusations as to whether the questionnaire responses can carry valuable meaning. Although it is hard to distinguish data from 'dishonest or joke' data, or in the instance of this research, the children misunderstanding the question, in order to manage the validity of the data, the questionnaire was carefully formulated with the respondents age taken into account and the piloting process further ensured questions were age appropriate. The questions were not misleading or 'overloaded' in any way and the different abilities of the children were deeply considered (see Appendix 5, where there is a copy of the questionnaire). Questions were kept to a minimum and any difficult words were eliminated during the drafting and piloting process. Due to the respondent's age, I felt once they understood the questions, issues of 'joke' data could be reduced. During data analysis, I compared all questionnaire responses and made a conscious effort to categorise data that stood out as 'joke data' into a category of 'other', for instance, one particular child wrote 'I don't care' in most of the answers, which I felt could not be interpreted that he did not care if the teacher was male or female, as his answer did not change regardless of the question, however, it did give a good insight into the attitude of the child towards his school experiences. With this in mind, I also carefully compared responses to theoretical perspectives outlined in the literature review. Careful measures, as above, were taken to keep data as honest, valid and reliable as possible.

Another limitation of questionnaires is the unsuitability 'for subjects with poor literacy, visual impairment and non-English speakers' (Marshall, 2005, p.132). This was a concern within this study as I was researching children in primary school, therefore there could be a range of emotional and intellectual difficulties within each class and the possibility of children with limited English language. This posed a risk of respondents submitting short inaccurate answers or failing to answer the question. To address this difficulty, the questions were formulated in a manner that entailed very clear and uncomplicated language. Instead of asking children to explain, in their experiences, if there is a difference in having a male and a female teacher from the point of view of a student or pupil, questions were short and concise for example, 'Do you think there is a difference in having a male or a female teacher?', 'why or why not?' As attention span of children varies greatly from one child to another, inaccurate answers could be very likely at primary school level if questions are hard to interpret, therefore a considerable amount of time was spent on question formulation, as discussed later. Again, piloting the questionnaire also greatly aided in the elimination of any difficulty in reading and interpreting the text, as difficulties, like the term 'role model', were highlighted prior to the questionnaire being administered. On alteration, I felt this further reduced the difficulty for children with learning difficulties, visually impaired children and students where English is a second language.

While open-ended questions are often seen as the typical formation of questionnaires with qualitative research, they can often gather large volumes of information and as respondents can write large amount of feedback, they can be time-consuming to code (Bryman 2013), and more difficult to analyse than qualitative methods (McGuirk, P. M. & O'Neill, 2016). Large volumes of data proved difficult to eliminate within this research as 60 questionnaires did provide a large quantity of feedback. Although the questionnaire provided lines and sufficient space for answering between each question and there was not an abundance of room for extended answers, I found a number of the responses were 'heavy' in detail and sometimes repetitive in nature. Although this was more time consuming during data analysis, it did ensure the children's opinions and experiences were expressed well, supporting the interpretative nature of the study. It ensured the children would express their 'voice' in the research without feeling pushed or intimidated by face to face interviews.

Although I was mindful of the negative elements associated with questionnaires, I felt they aligned with the needs of the research entirely. Being physically present on the day the questionnaires were distributed allowed me to collect feedback instantly on the research site,

reducing the risk of data becoming lost and contributing to high response rates. Interviews were the next step in the data collection.

3.10.4 Advantages of Semi-Structured Interviews

Interviews also greatly aided the research, adding a comparative element to the study. Stemming from the purposes of an interview, outlined by Cohen et al., (2007), I also aimed to conduct interviews as a second research methodology to question adults involved in the study on a more personal level. Semi-structured interviews aligned with the methodological orientation of the study as they allowed for interpretation, understanding, and an insight into the minds and experiences of the primary school principal, teachers and coaches, complementing the interpretative approach chosen (Mason, 1996). As semi-structured interviews are 'conversations with a purpose' (Burgess, 1984, p.102) they allow guided insight and opportunity to expand on key topics that cannot always be accomplished with questionnaires. The requirement to talk to teachers, principals and coaches was central to my research as I needed to gain insight into how they understand and make sense of the issues of role models for boys. Inviting these key stakeholders to talk to me about how they understand this complex issue necessitated that I offer them a forum for detailed discussion in the form of an interview.

Semi-structured interviews were chosen over structured interviews as they allowed the research to expand on information gathered in the data and maximise the variety of information collected, allowing the research to 'take different types of questions, perhaps put in different order, to get the same information from different people', thus strengthening the possibility of generating richer data (Kane, 1990, p.63). Semi-structured interviews also allowed for some flexibility in their structure (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003), therefore, they would not constrain the data as much as formal structured interviews would, allowing flow and consistency within the data, aligning to the holistic and interpretive approach of the research. They also provided a

situation where participants could discuss their views on a particular area using 'multi sensorial channels- verbal, non-verbal, spoken, heard' (Cohen, 2007, p.349), as very often expressive or negative body language can suggest more than verbal communication. The body language was important within this study as it enabled me to take note of visual clues about areas of discomfort for participants, for example, in one particular instance, it was clear discussions relating to difficulties in dealing with some of the behaviour of some male students towards female teachers was an area of discomfort for one particular principal, however, the relaxed, informal nature of the interviews enabled a more in-depth discussion, where the principal could express herself freely and confidentially. As the semi-structured interview setting was determined to create an informal interview setting to 'give the appearance of a conversation or discussion' (Mason, 1996, p.38), through a shared understanding approach, I felt my interview technique lay between an interview guide approach and semi-structured open-ended questions (Cohen et al., 2007). All questions were carefully structured in an open-ended manner and framed around the aims of the research, ensuring the research questions would be addressed effectively. Careful consideration was given to the wording of the questions to ensure there were no leading or overloaded questions (Wellington, 2000), and the interview guide ensured the interviewed stayed within the parameters of the research questions.

Semi-structured interviews (as opposed to formal interview techniques) also allowed the researcher probe further into areas of discomfort or interest, enabling flexibility within the questions, which resulted in rich, in-depth data. Difficulties experienced by female teachers when dealing with some male students from patriarchal families was an important finding in the study, that I feel focus groups or questionnaires would have altered. The private environment surrounding interviews allowed for difficult discussions, that I feel would not have appeared in more social research methods like focus groups and participant observations.

3.10.5 Disadvantages to Semi-Structured Interviews

There are inherent disadvantages to semi-structured interviews mostly which lie in the interviewers experience (or inexperience). Drawbacks for an inexperienced interviewer include difficulty asking prompt questions reducing the possibility of

gaining more informed data (Kajornboon, 2005). The difficulty in listening to the interview responses and understanding these, while also ensuring that you are covering the interview aims within the allocated time and within the depth in which you expect, can be difficult to manage (Wengraf, 2001) . Another disadvantage of semi-structured interviews arises in the face to face interaction between interviewee and the participant. The face to face element of the interview can create difficulty ensuring the interviewer does not lead or possibly influence the participant answers in any way (Gall, Gall and Borg, 1996). Due to the less formal style of the interview, face to face interaction between participant and interviewer can also have an impact on the quality of answers relayed to the interviewer (Opdenakker, 2006). However, Opdenakker notes, difficulties with face to face interaction can be diminished by having interview protocol and the interviewer having an awareness of such actions.

As much of the challenges when conducting semi-structured interviews are due to interview interaction or inexperience interviewing, I engaged in two interviews during the piloting stage of this research which I feel addressed the issue of absence of probing. Also, as suggested by Opdenakker (2006), I was aware of my presence within the interview and was careful not to phrase any questions in a misleading or influential manner.

3.11 Development of Data Collection Instruments

3.11.1 Formulating and Piloting the Questionnaire

The questionnaire and interviews were formulated using a similar method. Research aims and goals were consulted as well as consultation from other literature in gender and education. Possible questions, focus points, or areas of interest were formulated. Through constant revision of areas of interest, sub-groups were created, which consisted of the following:

- Gender of the pupil
- Role Model
- Difference in having a male/female teacher
- Behaviour towards male/female teacher
- Who influences their education/learning

Sub-questions and as a result, questions were then formed organically. Due consideration was implied in the phrasing of the questions due to the respondent's

age and different level of abilities. Questions needed to be clear, concise and to the point, keeping language simple. Any loaded (Wellington, 2000) or heavy questions were reduced into single lined questions in order to make it easier for the reader. Questions comprised of open and closed-ended questions. Initial sub-questions in the form of descriptions, asking the children from their experience to describe someone they look up to, were shortened to describe someone you look up to. This ensured the question was clearer to read and easier to understand. Questionnaires were designed using colourful, child friendly images and each question was followed by a lined space to make it easier for each child to answer and to reduced problems associated with closed-questions noted earlier (Appendix 5). Throughout the entire process, questions were discussed on numerous occasions and amendments were made continuously, following guidance from my supervisor and Graduate Research Committee.

3.11.2 Formulating the Interview

When devising the questions for interview, I took my research questions, aims and goals into careful consideration. In a manner suggested by Mason (1996) and Wellington (2000), I used a brainstorming technique to formulate a set of key research areas, listing areas of interest and information I wanted to research. After assembling a list of general topics, I categorised these into sub-sections or mini-research questions. These sub-sections were divided into possible topics for interviewing, leading to individual question areas. The table below gives a clear indicate of the general interview question process. Sub-questions changed for each group of participants as coaches, teachers and principals had different roles within the school.

Key research area-
area of interest

Sub sections/ mini questions

Possible interview topics and questions relating to research questions

Consideration of interview style/type.

(Based on table by Mason, 1996, p.52)

Adapted to my own research, possible topics and questions included:

Interview Guide/Topics: (For all three groups)

Traits of being a role model

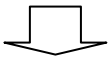
Gender modelling and individual role modelling

Influencers in a boy's life, both in and outside of school hours

Learning from a teacher (or coach) of the same gender

Subjects boys perform better in

Limitations of a male role model in primary schools



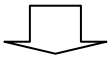
Extra Areas of Interest or Questions for Principals:

Pressures to employ more males?

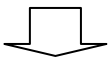
What do they look for when hiring a teacher/ male teacher?

What traits would they expect for a male teacher being a role model to boys?

Possibility of implementing a module on gender in schools



Review data from questionnaires to allow for linkage or integration of any interesting themes that may arise and need further probing (e.g. male teachers and sport).



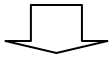
Questions for Interview: Principals

1. Who do you think are the largest influencers in a boy's academic achievement?

2. Do you think their peers have a big influence on their styles of learning and how much they contribute to class?
3. Do you think there are categories of subjects that boys perform better in?
4. Do you think same gender role modelling is more or less effective than other (individual) role modelling?
5. Do you think there is pressure from the media to employ more males? Does it have an influence on your decision when taking on or doing interviews for jobs?
6. What traits would you expect in a male role model for boys?
7. Are there differences between male and female role models?
8. Do you think there are any limitations in terms of more males entering into primary teaching schools?
9. Do you think that a teacher should teach on an individual merit rather than be a role model to boys and girls in the classroom?
10. Do you think a mentoring programme would be beneficial if adopted in schools?

Ten questions- questions remained a work in progress until the piloting process and were redefined numerous times throughout the formulation process.

Teachers' and coaches' questions can be seen in Appendix 6 and 8.



Semi-structured, interviewer guided approach, relaxed, conversational style.

As the interview topics and possible questions were beginning to take form, an interview schedule was devised to turn 'areas of inquiry into meaningful questions for the target interviewers' (Wellington, 2000, p.76). During this stage, importance was placed on maintaining continuity through the research methods and strategies, to ensure a guided interview and semi-structured open-ended approach could be taken.

Informed questions in the interview design were participant-orientated (Barriball & While, 1994), with the aim that the interview would reflect the participants personal feelings (Whiting, 2008), experiences and opinions.

Paying particular attention to question format, great attention was given as not to include questions that would be too leading or informative. Guidance was taken from Wellington (2000), who suggested avoidance of the following question genres:

- Doubled-barrelled questions
- Two-in-one questions
- Restrictive questions
- Leading questions
- Loaded questions

(Wellington, 2000, p.82)

Taking these considerations into account, along with factors, including, the depth I wished to achieve and sequencing and style of questions (Mason, 1996), a list of questions were devised. The questions were open-ended in nature as to reflect the interpretive nature of the study and the interview structure and environment required, allowing the 'interviewee to express views and attitudes' (Wellington, 2000, p.78). Careful attention was given as not to phrase open-ended questions in a leading manner, which would result in interview bias. Questions were primarily to answer research objectives. Any data collected through questionnaires was also examined in order to differ the questions in the interview and to expand on any interesting areas and responses in the questionnaires, such as male teachers participating in more sports activities than their female counterparts. Therefore, if similar themes arose in the interviews, I could relate to the children's questionnaire and ask the teacher's perception on this area. This provided good integration and linkage between the two forms of data collection. (Full interview questions can be seen in Appendix 6 and 8).

The interview was formulated to give continuity between questions and allow for a natural flow from exploring areas of general role modelling in schools for boys and

boy's academic interests to limitations for men as role models in schools and individual role modelling as opposed to only gender modelling. All questions had clear focus and although there were ten questions, I felt they all served a purpose and when answered, they allowed for thicker, in-depth analysis of the research focus. They also allowed participants to express themselves freely and there were no alternative meanings or tricks in any questions. I was aware that my research might be seen as suspicious, as I am a practicing teacher, who was analysing gendered perceptions in an area I am very knowledgeable about, and this could create discomfort for participants, therefore I made sure the questions did not make the participants feel there was a particular agenda to my research and I assured participants that although I was a practicing teacher, I was only interested in their perceptions and experiences. I hoped this would generate honesty within the data.

The interview questions for teachers and principals finished on a very important aspect of the research, individual role modelling verses gender modelling. I felt this was a good conclusion question to the interview as I would have a good indication of the interviewee's level of awareness and understanding of being a role model to boys and girls. I felt this question was in essence, the backbone of the research and would be the key to answering the research purpose, if participants felt we do or indeed do not need more men to act as role models for boys in Irish primary schools, and of course, what impact, if any, was the male teacher debate having on the teachers themselves working in the schools. I was interested to note if the 'boy crisis' debate changed their teaching pedagogy or made them more aware of gender neutrality within the classroom or did it create a stereotype amongst schools that men are employed to help boys only- or that individual role modelling works better? I felt the last question would be a good indication of this, without formulating a leading question, as it was their experiences and perceptions in which I was interested. All sets of questions were discussed, revised and reviewed at length following consultation from my supervisor and Graduate Research Committee.

3.12 Piloting Data Collection Instruments

3.12.1 Piloting the Questionnaire

The questionnaire was piloted in a rural school amongst a small number of 6th class pupils. On checking consent forms, I discussed the survey layout, what the survey entailed and the anonymity of the questionnaire briefly. The children were very enthusiastic about completing the survey and were positive regarding the questionnaire design, however, a number of difficulties arose. I noticed two of the questionnaire responses were difficult to read, so I was aware during the actual administration to ask pupils to write clearly. Piloting the questionnaire also proved very beneficial as it highlighted some questions that needed revision. One particular student found the words 'role model' in the first question difficult to understand. I decided the best solution was to give a brief explanation of the term 'role model' instead. For the final draft of the questionnaire, I rephrased the question, asking the children to describe 'someone they look up to or hero'. I decided to allow the children to use diagrammatic answering for this question if they wished. I also noted during the pilot, one or two children failed to elaborate on their answers, therefore I revised the layout of the questions ensuring they could not be interpreted as a closed question in any form. The revision of questions and the piloting experience proved advantageous as I was pleased with the responses gained. Information generated allowed for good comparisons within the data and no issues arose during administration.

3.12.2 Piloting the Interview

Piloting the interviews acted as a method of establishing 'flaws, limitations, or other weaknesses within the interview design' (Turner, 2010, p.757) and would allow necessary revisions prior to the implementation of the study (Kvale, 2007). The interview was piloted in the early stages of the methodology research. I piloted the interviews in a rural school with two teachers who I knew from my previous studies. This proved incredibly advantageous as I had not interviewed in a long time and I was nervous initially.

During the first interview, I felt the absence of time since I previously interviewed anyone was clear and, as a result, I forgot to ask some probe questions (which I felt

afterward were necessary). The interview was more formal rather than the relaxed semi-structured interview I was hoping for. The second interview piloted was a little better as I managed to use additional probes and I could actually listen to the participant as I was more relaxed. I felt the preparation of the questions using an interview guide really helped the fluency of the interview and did not allow for questions being answered prematurely (Mason 1996). Nevertheless, I decided to be conscious of the benefits of probing during the actual research interviews. I felt natural probing was a key element in this interpretative study, and trust in the piloting experience would give me confidence when interviewing participants. A semi-structured open-ended interview gave me confidence in that fact that I had an outline of questions to act as a guide to help me. I felt the experience from the piloting process was welcoming.

The pilot interview lasted forty minutes, which was far more time than I had allocated, therefore this was a discrepancy I would have to change in the introduction letter. There were no further changes to interview questions. Overall, the experience and knowledge gained from piloting the interview was invaluable. The following interview protocol was established.

3.13 Interview Protocol

Before the interview, I checked minor details that can have a large impact on the interview success, such as batteries for the dictaphone and two copies of the consent form to be signed. Using a holistic approach for the choice of venue and interview setting, a small resource room within the school was chosen as a venue for the pilot interview, as it was both an educational setting and a quiet atmosphere. I felt this was an area that would provide the relaxed, yet professional atmosphere associated with the qualitative orientation of the study. During previous research, I interviewed in a café and found the background noise was very severe and I had difficulty inserting probes. Having learned from this, the resource setting was quiet, relaxed and informal. I engaged in conversation with the interviewee before the interview, asking about the school in general and general curricular questions, encouraging this conversational style to exist throughout the interview. This reserved the naturalness of the interview, while also obtaining the research goals. I felt the relaxed

atmosphere initiated more honesty during the interview process. It also added to the research validity. Participants were asked to read the consent form and information sheets and sign it if they agreed to be interviewed. They were invited to question any elements of the research or interview. Creating a comfortable environment within the semi-structured interview model also helped me build on some of the initial findings from the questionnaire data from the children.

3.14 Questionnaires Protocol

As the proposed respondents were at primary school level, I had to ensure my presence would not intimidate any of the pupils. Primary school children can become very reluctant and cautious when placed in an unfamiliar setting. I felt as I had been previously introduced to children when handing out the initial consent and assent forms the previous week before administering the questionnaire, there would be more familiarity between myself, the child and the research and therefore would not cause much anxiety for the child.

On return of the signed assent and consent forms from children and parents (See Appendix 2 and 3), questionnaires were administered only to students who had their assent and consent forms present in class. This eliminated any child who did not have consent instantly and made it very easy to ensure all children participating had parental approval. After checking consent and assent forms, I briefly discussed what the questionnaire entailed (Appendix 5). The questionnaire was purposely formulated to help children with reading and writing difficulties. I read through the information sheet quickly, placing emphasis on the voluntary nature of the questionnaire, highlighting my interest in their opinion and experience so there was no right or wrong answer. The anonymous questionnaires were administered to each individual and consisted of five open-ended questions. Questions were concerned with outlining differences, if any, in having a male and female teacher, experience of learning from a male or a female teacher and influences on the child's learning. Questionnaires were administered and collected with ease.

3.15 Validity and Reliability

> 'By validity, I mean truth: interpreted as the extent to which an account accurately represents the social phenomena to which it refers.'
>
> (Hammersley, 1990, p.57)

Validity is concerned with the reality of the findings and the truthful nature of the relationship established (Robson, 1993). In order to strengthen the validity and trustworthiness of the research, strict measures were taken following guidelines by Creswell and Miller, (2000):

- Internal validity and Member Checking
- Transparency and Rich Description
- Triangulation
- Audit Trail
- Researcher Reflexivity
- Generalisation

3.15.1 Internal Validity and Member Checks

Internal validity was ensured throughout the data collection process as transcripts and questionnaires were kept strictly confidential and only seen by the researcher. Language and 'voices' of the participants were used as the key focus of data representation (Lather, 1986), when analysing, concluding and outlining recommendations of the study. Data instruments did not change once they had been fully decided upon (Robson, 1993), therefore the same measures applied to all interviews and questionnaires administered. The selected sample were chosen carefully in line with the research objectives and remained so throughout the research. Through piloting the questionnaire and interview, problems were addressed in early stages of the study and once administered, questionnaires remained standardised for all respondents and interviews remained close to the interview guide. This also reduced bias within the data. Reliability of the research was ensured by interpretation of interview transcripts as accurately as possible, as recommended by Silverman (2000). In order to keep the research authentic, interviews were transcribed verbatim, which included pauses and other emotional aspects, such as laughing. When transcribing, recordings were repeated a number of times as not to

misinterpret the interviewee and member checks (Lincoln, 1985, p.314) in the form of 'face validity' (Lather, 1986, p.70) were carried out where respondents were invited to verify their transcripts, and reflections or suggestions were encouraged, however, only three of the respondents opted to do so and no modifications were necessary. Although some respondents declined the invitation to view their transcripts, the option was very welcome. The fact that three of the respondents felt there were no necessary corrections to their transcripts gives comfort to know that this verification process acknowledged that they were still involved in the research and happy with their contribution to the research. The process of contacting the respondents after the interview allowed me additional contact with them and it enabled me to build more trust. Questionnaire responses remained as they were collected. The piloting of the questionnaires and interviews ensured participants had the same questions (questionnaires) and with the exception of probing, the same interview guide for all interviews. Construct validity was acknowledged by the convergence and creation of 'categories arising from the language of respondents' (Lather, 1986, p.69). The responses and experiences of participants were the main focus of the research at all times.

3.15.2 Transparency and Rich Description

According to Elman and Kapiszewski (2014), displaying a clear and accurate account of how the research was conducted and how data was generated and interpreted allows for great transparency within the research. In an effort for greater transparency, this research has provided the reader with clear and open accounts of the data collection process of this study. The study gives a detailed account of the formation and thought process involved in the creation of interview questions, questionnaires, consent and assent forms. The piloting process is described in great detail and the process of data analysis has been thoroughly detailed with the aid of visual tables. Likewise, the findings within this study have been clearly constructed using the voices of participants through the use of participant quotes and visual diagrams were used to illustrate the findings of closed questions in the children's questionnaire.

3.15.3 Triangulation

Triangulation includes ‘multiple data sources, methods and theoretical schemes (Lather, 1986, p. 67). It is the ‘combination of multiple methodological practices’ (Denzin, 2012, p.82) that can act to improve validity. Within this study, both questionnaires and interviews act as a means of methodological triangulation. Triangulation is further reinforced by the addition of gender-based literacy sources and other gender-based theoretical perspectives which are evident throughout the study and include; Biddolph, 2018, Farrell & Grey, 2018, Lingard et al., 2009, Cushman, 2008, Martino & Kehler, 2006, Smith, 2005, Francis & Skelton, 2005, Carrington, 2001, Martino & Meyenn, 2001, King, 2000, Drudy, 1999) Triangulation was aimed to further strengthen the validity of the research.

3.15.4 Audit Trail

The ‘audit trail’ (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), is used by researchers in the hope that the evidence in the research would be visible to the reader, leading to greater credibility, thus strengthening the dependability and reliability of the research. The researcher aims to link a sequence of evidence creating an ‘audit trail’ throughout the methodological elements of the research. Given that the goal of qualitative research is ‘to reconstruct the specific categories that participants used to conceptualize their own world view’ (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984, p. 6), the researcher is responsible for documenting the procedures used to generate categories and make clear the progression and development of the research.

In an effort to do so, this research has given specific details of methodological elements of the research, including piloting the interviews and questionnaires, written correspondence with schools, information sheets, consent and assent forms. I, as researcher, have carefully complied questionnaire responses, transcripts of interviews, signed consent and assent forms and completed a brief reflective log which was used as a method of concept mapping, process development and idea formation.

3.15.5 Researcher Reflexivity

Research reflexivity is a process of self-reflection that enables the researcher to 'self-disclose their assumptions, beliefs, and biases' (Creswell and Miller, 2010, p127) that could potentially have an influence on their research. It allows readers to understand the position of the researcher and to 'bracket or suspend those researcher biases as the study proceeds' (Creswell and Miller, 2010, p. 127). More explicitly, it refers to 'specific ways in which our own agenda affect the research at all points in the research process' (Hesse-Biber, 2007, p. 17). Ackerly and True (2010) describe research reflexivity as having self-awareness and actively acknowledging that we are part of the social world that we study, therefore I felt as a practicing primary school teacher, researching a field in which I was very familiar, it was important to consider how my own interpretation and bias could influence the research. It was important that I was actively aware of this throughout the research process and I felt I was obligated to inform the participants and the reader of my position as researcher. Researcher reflexivity was used throughout the research as a means of guidance in order to ensure the study remained as unbiased as possible. (My personal statement can be seen in the introduction chapter of this study).

3.15.6 Generalisation

With reference to external validity, Robson (1993) suggests internal and external validity are related as internal validity helps to counteract external validity or generalisation. External validity is concerned with the representatives that were used to generalise. Threats to external validity include the findings being only specific to the sample selected and the events occurring within a historical period in which the research carried out is affecting by this historical event. While outlining the aims for this research, the sample was carefully selected in order to provide naturalistic generalisation within the study. I felt the selected sample would give a good representation of primary educators' experiences and attitudes towards gender and individual role modelling in a small cohort of primary schools in Connaught. The sample was strategically selected in order to authenticate and validate the research.

3.16 Consideration of Ethical Issues

From the beginning of this doctoral research through to completion, I endeavoured to hold transparency, honesty and clarity regarding all ethical considerations and implications involved in this research. On consideration of ethical issues at the initial stages of the research, principles of ethics were consulted (Hammersley, 2012), ensuring there was a priority within the research to protect privacy, respect autonomy, treat participants equitably and minimise harm to anyone during the course of the study (Hammersley et al., 2010). Ethical protocols in the form of ethical approval, assent, consent, confidentiality and anonymity were followed rigidly (Felzmann et al., 2010).

3.17 Ethical Approval

Ethical approval was sought at the final stages of drafting consent forms, letter of information and survey questions. This was granted by the Research Ethics Committee in NUI Galway on 23rd June 2013. Correspondence stated the application was considered high-quality.

3.18 Informed Consent

Gaining informed consent from people involved in research is generally regarded as central to ethical research practice in the social sciences. The Social Research Association defines informed consent as a process of ensuring research participants understand what the research entails for them, limitations of their participation and awareness of potential risk factors (Social Research Association, 2003). Furthermore, informed consent 'gives the subject a sense of control over their personal information or alleviates the fear that the data, samples or information will be retained or used in any other unintended manner' (European Commission, 2013, p.8).

With this in mind, consent forms and information sheets were specifically designed for each group of participants. During the drafting process, advice on best practices was sought from online and literature sources (Govil, 2013, Felzmann et al., 2010, Hammersley et al., 2010, Denscombe, 2002, Creswell, 1998). As previously

discussed, children's assent forms were drafted in an manner which was appropriate to the age of participants and questions were primarily focussed on the pupil's experiences in school. Assent forms (Appendix 3) were administered to children completing the questionnaire, along with parental consent forms (Appendix 2) and students were not allowed to participate in the research without having both forms present. The option to withdraw from the survey at any time, ensured consent remained 'informed' (Denscombe, 2002, p.183).

Due to the personal nature of interviewing, there was careful consultation with ethical advice during the drafting of the consent form, as the interviewee also needs to be fully aware of all practices during the interview and needs to have given full permission prior to the interview (Wellington 2000). Taking advise from Mason who advocates that researchers need to 'be sure the consent you gained is actually informed' (Mason, 1996, p.58), a checklist on ethics was consulted during the preparation of the interview questions, consent forms and the introduction letter (Cohen et al., 2007). The consent form was based on a sample by Creswell (1998), containing lengthily details of the following:

- Research area
- Research objectives
- Risk and potential benefits of the research
- Topics cover during the interview
- Audio recording of interview
- Confidentiality and anonymity
- Possibility of publishing the research
- Signatures of both participant and interviewee (Creswell, 1998, p.116).

Ethical practice within the research adhered to the guidelines and objectives of the application at all times and all documentation was consulted regularly. In order to maintain a good relationship between participants and myself as researcher, honestly and openness was a priority at all times, as was the importance of protecting the identity of all participants and ensuring they understood the terms of the interview. Any issues or queries arising in relation to data review, was discussed at length during Graduate Review Committee meetings, held annually in the School of Education.

3.19 Risks of Participation

Although this research was strict to adhere fully to ethical practices that maintain participants safety and welfare, every research carried out has potential risks, therefore I was mindful of the potential consequences to the following groups:

Teachers: Participating teachers could possibly feel at risk reflecting upon school practices, experiences of parental issues or negative aspects on teaching pedagogy, curriculum delivery or other aspects of the educational sector

Children: Children could feel at risk reflecting on their school and academic experiences causing emotional concern completing the questionnaire as they were questioned on their experiences with their teachers

Due diligence was given to respect potential feelings of risk to each of the above participants.

3.20 Benefits of Participation

Benefits of participation included:

- A possibility to have a voice in gender-based academic research involving children's education
- A possibility for children to have a voice in their own academic experiences and engage in educational research
- To contribute to research that could potentially increase opportunities for boys (and girls) and strengthen their educational experiences
- To have the opportunity to reflect upon their own experiences, perception and opinions regarding primary school practices

3.21 Minimising Harm for Participants

> Harm means an injury to the rights, safety or welfare of a research participant...[*sic*]... It is the responsibility of the researcher to avoid, prevent or minimise harm to others (UCD, Human Research Ethics Committee, 2008, p.1)

Ensuring the welfare of participants was an important factor within this research, therefore anonymisation procedures were outlined at the initial stages of the research. Communication between myself and the participants was maintained throughout the study, as interview participants were invited to review their transcripts if desired. Arrangements of interviews (times and locations) were decided upon by the participants and participants were encouraged to express any concerns they had in relation to their participation in the study. Continual attention was given to methodological, practical and ethical principles throughout the course of this research (Hammersley et al., 2010). In so far as the researcher was aware, there were no known risks associated with this research that could cause potential harm to participants and due vigilance was given to ensure their comfort throughout the process.

3.22 Consideration of Vulnerability

> Some research populations are vulnerable and need special protection. Special attention is also required for those who cannot give or refuse consent for themselves, for those who may be subject to giving consent under duress, for those who will not benefit personally from the research and for those whom research is combined with care (Declaration of Helsinki, 1964, p. 1)

In relation to this study, children could be considered 'potentially vulnerable' (Felzmann et al., 2010, p. 2), therefore due diligence was given to their participation in the research. According to the European Commission (2013) 'Means to safeguard children from risks include developing an informed consent process for their guardians, ensuring that the research methodology is not invasive and establishing means to protect their identities with the utmost confidentiality' (p.11). With this in mind the study ensured:

- Formulating and administering research methodologies were child appropriate
- Assent and consent forms had to be present and signed on the day
- The identity of the child was only by school and gender
- The nature of the research was discussed with the children prior to the questionnaire

- Children were encouraged to ask questions regarding their their involvement in the research
- Assurance was repeated regarding the voluntary nature of the questionnaire
- Discussion about the research was encouraged at home with their parents

Although this could in fact take from the autonomy of the child, it was for the child's own protection, as all participants were unknown to me and I had no previous knowledge about their emotional wellbeing, therefore parental trust was supported and necessary.

3.23 Insider Research

All participants were informed immediately upon arrival of my position as a primary school teacher. Pupils were also informed on my arrival into the classroom as I felt in some way it settled the children to know I was a teacher, but I also was careful to inform them that I was conducting research not as a teacher, but as a research student who was eager to hear their experiences and views, therefore they were not to worry about what they wrote on the questionnaire. It was their honesty that was important. Again, I felt this eased any anxieties for the pupils, hopefully creating a sense of their importance to the study. Interview participants were also informed of my position as a teacher during the initial introductory conversation. As a teacher, I was aware there could possibly be tension between a teacher researcher seeking information on a 'peers' own teaching pedagogy, classroom practices and perceptions of students in their classroom, therefore, similar to the pupils, I reiterated the importance of *their* experiences and perceptions of male role models for boys to the study and I was aware that they had volunteered for interview therefore they were eager for their voices to be heard.

3.24 Power Dynamics in Interviews

Although I was interviewing peers and principals, who are in a role of authority within the schools, by the time I had the interview piloted and the questionnaires administered, I was confident entering into research sites, as communication had already been established with principals during the questionnaire process and various

emails and phone calls had been exchanged. I was also confident in my own knowledge of the research area. I entered each interview in a professional and friendly manner and explained the nature of my research openly, as discussed previously. I was aware that participants could be weary of a possible bias within the research on my part, as a practicing teacher, therefore, I explained openly about my position as an 'insider' researcher' and conversation prior to interviews was very general in terms of the research. Careful consideration was given to interview questions as not to be misleading or biased in any form (Wellington, 2000) and interview protocol was strictly followed.

Throughout the interviews respect was upheld between the interviewee and me and it was evident early in the interviews that most teachers and principals had an interest in the research area and were very willing to discuss role modelling in the primary school sector openly and honestly. I did experience one teacher, whom I felt was not fully engaged in the process, acting somewhat disinterested, continually rushing through interview questions, however, I remained professional at all times and used probes during this interview to try to engage the participant further. In hindsight the information provided in this interview gave a good insight into her attitude towards gender modelling and highlighted her disagreement that more male teachers are better role models for boys. It also taught me not to get disheartened if I feel the interview lacks motivation, as this does not necessarily reflect the data.

Regarding the feedback from the questionnaires, I felt there was very much a collegial relationship between myself, the teachers of the children involved and the principals. The children were informed that questionnaires would give me information about their experiences in school and help me understand how we can better our teaching of primary school children, therefore their answers were very important. I also informed them that I would be collecting the questionnaire and no one else would read their answers, therefore they could trust that whatever they wrote down in the questionnaire would not be identifiable to anyone else. I felt this was important as the children might feel pressure to write down facts complimenting their teacher, whereas if they knew they could not be identified in the questionnaire it would ensure more honesty in their responses. Similarly, there was also trust amongst the teachers, principals and the research, that if any responses painted them in a negative light, the teacher or school would not be identifiable from the data. I

felt once all parties involved were aware of the ethical considerations and objectives of the research, suspicions were reduced and relationships between participants and I remained positive. I found the children from each school were very engaging, well behaved and serious about participating in the research. Perhaps they valued being asked their opinion on matters of primary school education, something that is very rare.

3.25 Storage of Participant Information

As outlined in the letter of information (Appendix one) and consent forms, all participant names were changed in order to maintain confidentiality of the interviewee and recordings and transcripts were filed and secured in a cabinet in my home, for reasons of safety and confidentiality, for five years, as required by policy within the National University of Galway (2006). Schools were not identifiable from any information provided or dispersed within the study. Electronic forms of information were password protected and stored on the same memory stick throughout the entire process.

3.26 Communication of Results and Findings

The findings, conclusion and recommendations of this research will be offered to all adult participants who were involved in this study. Adult participants will be informed of the study completion through their schools and invited to discuss the findings. They will also be accommodated with a copy of the completed thesis, if requested.

On a wider level, this findings, conclusion and recommendations of this study will also be disseminated through educational conferences, educational and gender-based journals and research seminars. The research will be used as a means of creating awareness of gender essentialism within the male role models debate and the continual aim of the research is to strengthen the academic welfare and experiences of both boys and girls in primary school.

3.27 Data Organisation

The following section of the study gives a detailed account of the data analysis and coding methods used in the research. Thematic analysis was used in both questionnaire and interview analysis in order to create patterns across the datasets (Braun and Clarke, 2019). This will be discussed in detail below.

3.27.1 Organisation of Participant Information

As all schools were contacted to participate in the study via email, once confirmation was guaranteed, following advice from Kirby, S. and Mc Kenna, K. (1989), I created four initial files in order to organise school information and records into manageable sizes and to assist in the smooth transition of information. These included:

- File One: School details
- File Two: Pseudonyms
- File Three: Questionnaire participant number (R:01)
- File Four: Excel data input program for questionnaire responses

All schools were given a colour code to enable me to identify school details with ease without having to use the school name. Following this, I then set up 'file two' containing the pseudonyms of all teachers, coaches and principals involved within the study. The separate file guaranteed extreme confidentiality between school locations and participant details. The third file (file three) included a list of questionnaire respondents. Questionnaires were given a colour code in accordance with the school file, example, red or green, to identify the school location. Each questionnaire was then coded with a respondent number and a letter. R01: A02, would identify as respondent one answer two. This enabled fluency within the questionnaires and the analysis and allowed one to go back and forth between both with ease. Following this, I read each questionnaire numerous times in order to familiarise myself with the data. File four was set up in an excel program in order to process responses from the children's questionnaires in which answers could be easily tracked.

3.28 Data Categorisation: Initial Coding and Analysis

3.28.1 Questionnaires

Once the questionnaires were given a respondent code, coding techniques based on Ryan and Bernard (2000, p.2) began. These included:

- Analysis of participant quotes (word repetitions)
- Careful reading of larger blocks of texts (compare and contrasts)
- Analysis of linguistic features (transitions, connectors).

Line by line analysis (Charmaz, 1990) enabled me to clearly highlight any reoccurring answers that could create possible codes. This process was time consuming but was very effective in the qualitative element of the questionnaires as it kept me focussed on the data at hand (Charmaz, 2000). After outlining exact responses in such a manner as this, I was able to compare and contrast codes. Using a 'constant comparative method' (Strauss and Corbin, 1990) datasets were reviewed for 'patterns, commonalities and similarities' (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011, p.542). Repetitive codes began to formulate into categories. I then numbered the categories (for example: Who do you look up to? 0 mother, 1 father, 2 teacher, 3 sports person). This was coded in excel as seen below:

Question Number	Respondent Code	Category	Boy/Girl	Urban/Rural
1	R01	1	B	U

Every question in the questionnaire was coded and entered into excel in a similar manner. (I later used Excel to specify the percentage of answers in each category). This gave a very clear visual indication of what was produced within the data and enabled me to create visual charts of answers in excel, to be used later in thematic development.

When this process was complete, categories were then regrouped or refined, linking all similar categories together (Ryan and Bernard, 2010). I then revised categories further by reducing large categories into smaller quantities to allow the data to speak more freely, for example, brother, sister, grandmother and grandfather were brought

together as one category ‘general family member’, likewise, band member and singer were categorised together as ‘musician’. This continued until the data was ‘saturated’ (Kirby, S. and McKenna, K. 1989) and there was very little data left to work with. Category names were both priori and posteriori, in order to link to existing data and create new data. In the event of ‘satellite’ data (Kirby, S. and McKenna, K. 1989), I created an ‘other’ category, in some instances, for example, two children suggested the President of Ireland and the local priest were people they looked up to, therefore they did not warrant their own category and I was happy to confirm them as ‘other’. I wanted to ensure all the data was given the opportunity to be used.

On occasions, extra data was compiled where a respondent’s answers linked into more than one category, for example, one particular child chose two people as his/her role model. I felt if the child has two role models then both needed to be valued of equal importance and, therefore, they were both entered into their existing category, allowing for the extra data to be present. I also used many Post-it notes to visualise the data that divided children into rural, urban, boy and girls to cross-compare answers according to gender and location. These were colour coded to represent each section. Post-its eventually turned into graphs (compiled on Excel) that are presented in the children’s chapter in this research. The same process was allowed for all questions in the questionnaire.

3.29 Initial Thematic Development

When categories were finalised into groups and I felt all the data had reached its potential category, which was strongly support by the data, tables were created (for example, see the table 2 below)**.** The tables were then printed to give a clear visual indication of what the data was presenting. It also made the further refining into themes easier. This systematic form of thematic analysis also ensured the themes were data driven (Braun & Clarke, 2019). The thematic process was very organic in formation, as the data nearly separated itself into two areas from the questionnaire formation, role models and gender of the teacher in the classroom. However, this was not a linear process.

3.30 Thematic Thoughts Process

Question One: Who is your role model?

Initial codes	**Sample Categories from codes**	**Possible themes**
Soccer players		
Hurling/Football player	Sports Role Model	
Show-jumpers		
Boxer		
Singer	Musician as Role Model	Outside Influence
Band member		Not a present role model
		Artificial Role Model
Gamer		Superficial Role Model
'You Tuber'	Computer Role Model	
Grandfather		
Grandmother		
Mother	Family member as role model	Role models from grandfather down need to be
Father		Discussed but they are not as sufficient in number to create a theme.
Brother/sister		

Teacher	Teacher	
Friend	Peer	
President	Other- as only four entries	
Philanthropist		

Table 2: Codes, categories and possible themes from questionnaires

Categories were grouped into sub-themes and eventually formed themes, in a written process of 'thinking it out'.

Categories	**Sub-themes**	**Theme**
Sports Role Model	Absent role models	Are they in essence artificial role models?
Music Role Model		
Gamers	No influence in their daily lives	Superficial Role models-[6]
'You Tubers'		

Table 3: General themes from questionnaires

I reviewed themes and read questionnaires several times in order to become very familiar with the responses. The next step involved pulling apart quotes from the questionnaires and placing them under each specific theme. Although it was a

[6] *Superficial Role Models* was due to the large number of children who had a role model that could hold very little influence in their daily lives because they were 'celebrity' role models and the second theme was *Gender in the Classroom* which was created as a result of the data collected, regarding the children's opinions of teacher gender and influences on their learning. This can also be seen in the table provided.

lengthily process, it saved time when writing the data analysis chapter. I also felt this was more practical for questionnaires as the structure of the data became clearer when placed on the floor under their specific theme. Graphs were then created from the information inputted into the excel sheet explained earlier and these were used to help me structure the analysis chapter as I could clearly visualise the data on the graph. The second theme was processed using the same method. Interviews used were coded in a similar manner as questionnaires.

3.31 Coding and Categorising Data in Interviews

After all interviews were complete, I personally transcribed them verbatim and printed each transcript. Taking advice from St. Pierre and Jackson (2014) when coding began, words were then 'sorted into categories and then organized into "themes" that somehow naturally and miraculously "emerge" (p. 716). I followed this process of coding, categorising and thematic development, which were all intertwined using data from the respondents.

Initially, Interview transcripts were read continuously in order to find patterns within the data. All data was treated with equal respect and 'worthy of analysis' (St. Pierre & Jackson, 2014, p. 715). Again, line by line coding was initiated (Charmaz, 2014), which was a system that worked for my research (Mitchell, 2011). On consultation of the research questions, I read the full interviews and highlighted areas of interest on each transcript, again searching for 'patterns, commonalities and similarities' (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011, p.542) within the data. I made a note of possible codes the participant data could develop. I then jotted down patterns onto a 'notes' page that were grouped, refined and revised to create categories of information (this thought process can be seen in the table 4 below).

Categories were redefined numerous times due to the volume of data. Following a similar process to the questionnaires, I reprinted the interviews and placed important quotes into the category they corresponded with, for example, quotes about the XBox fell into a category of 'ICT'. I was careful to put the respondent's name on the back of each quote, to ensure I could identify each participant (Mitchell, 2011). I read the quotes continuously in their newly formed categories, which began the process of creating sub-themes.

3.32 Thematic Development of Interviews

Initial thematic development of categories began by grouping similar sub-themes together with the participant quotes (see table below for examples). Sub-themes were reviewed and refined if necessary, in a non-linear process. This allowed for the formation of the actual themes. Again themes were revised in connection with the data from the interviews. Finally, there was fluency throughout the data and analysis could begin. This lengthily process aided greatly in writing the analysis as I had all quotes already placed in each theme.

3.33 Interview Thematic Process

Sub themes/ potential theme	**Sample quote that aided in the creation of the theme**
Gender of the teacher doesn't matter its getting their attention: Gender balance: A question of gender?	I went to an all boy's school and most teachers were male and I don't think boys in that school would have done any better for it, just as I don't think the girls would have done any better just because [there are] female role models (David). It's good to use the man as a novelty yes, but I don't know if just because boys are men or teachers are male that they are automatically going to be a role model because of their sex (Linda).
Boys are harder to motivate, it is not the gender of the teacher. It's about getting the interest of the	Regardless of teacher, male or female, both have to work with the individual child. Understand them,

individual child, Teacher and curriculum verses pupil's interests: children's interest more important than teacher: curriculum verses teaching pedagogy: academic interest.	regardless of gender.(Anna) We're always looking for special books for them, we're constantly trying to motivate them (Liam)
Individual teacher as a person is key: being exposed to both sexes: Is there tension amongst teachers and call for more men? Exposure to both sexes: tensions and contradictions in the call for more male role models	Different teacher, different personalities, it exposes them to the real world!...It's just a variation and being exposed and comfortable with both men and women, not because they respond better to one another (Áine). Some male teachers do present a certain calmness but really different teachers, different personalities. It exposes them to the reality of working with different people in the real world! (Mary)
Male teachers in the infant classes:	If there was a vacancy for an infant teacher, and I'm being really honest here, but I don't think I would employ a male to the position because you know an infant teacher is seen as a motherly figure (Tom).

Friends peers influence, video gaming as a distraction Other influences on children's education? Outside influences?	Video games (Elaine) Playstation (Anna) Xbox, Playstation (Áine) There's really not much peer pressure in my class really (Anna)

Table 4: Interview Thematic Process

Coaches' interviews were categorised in a similar manner. Final themes emerged from the thematic development process, which are listed below and writing up of findings could begin.

3.34 Final Themes

Children's Questionnaire:

- Superficial Role Model
- Gender in the Classroom

Teacher and principal interviews:

- A Question of Gender Balance?
- Curriculum verses Teaching Pedagogy: Academic Interest
- Exposure to Both Sexes: Tensions and Contradictions in the Call for More Male Teachers
- Male Teachers in the Infant Class
- Outside Influences

Coaches Interviews:

- Sporting interest or hegemonic pressures?
- Sport and Hegemonic Masculinity
- Gender and the G.A.A

3.35 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the positioning of the research and discussed the methodological practices used in the process of analysis development. The chapter has demonstrated the consideration and approaches that have been taken in order to ensure the development of ethically sound and valid research. The chapter has detailed the thought process of thematic development that is evident in the chapters to follow.

Chapter Four: Children's Questionnaires

Within the children's questionnaires, this chapter explores whom fifth and sixth class pupils define as their role model and the characteristics of these role models, in their experiences. This chapter further analyses their sagacity of gender modelling and if they learn or behave differently with a teacher of the same sex, while gaining insight into their school encounters with male and female teachers.

The initial stages of the chapter will involve a brief outline of the children's demographic information. This will be brief as all questionnaires were completely anonymous and no further knowledge was acquired in order to protect their identities. The chapter will develop by discussing the key themes that arose within the data and again, children's responses will be used to reiterate reoccurring themes.

4.1 Pupil Questionnaires Demographic Information:

As discussed in Chapter Three, children in the senior cycle (10-12years old) were the predominant respondents of the questionnaire, due to the difficult terminologies in the questionnaire. They also had previous understanding of terms 'influence' and 'role models', phrases that were necessary to answer the questions. However, in order not to discriminate against those with learning or reading difficulties, the term for 'role model' was written in the questionnaire as 'hero or someone you look up to', allowing all students to understand and participate in the study. When the survey was administered, there was a brief oral explanation (in order to ensure children understood the first question) that hero or someone they look up to also meant who is their role model. There was no further discussion or explanation permitted. The researcher was very confident the term 'hero or someone you look up to' was interpreted correctly by all students as the results/variables of this particular question correlated with findings from other studies who questioned primary school children about their role model, using the direct term 'role model' (Bricheno & Thornton, 2007 and Biskup & Pfister, 1999). Additionally, there were no references to superheroes or cartoon figurines as children's heroes, therefore, the researcher was confident from the data gathered, that all children understood the terms involved to

mean role model in similar terms to research by Bricheno and Thornton, where 'heroes were defined as someone admired, inspirational […] imitated and aspired to (2007, p.5). However, for clarity for the reader, the term role model will be used throughout this chapter, where appropriate.

All pupils had to have had experience of a male teacher in order to reflect on their learning and behavioural experiences with a male teacher and compare teaching methodologies and experiences with teachers of both genders. Pupils were chosen for the study once they had fully completed the parental and assent forms. On entering the classroom, the consent forms were checked and as all consent forms distributed were returned, the questionnaire could be administered freely. There were a total of 35 boys and 33 girls participating in the study from both rural and urban school settings. Pupils came from an array of cultural backgrounds. There were children from Poland, Lithuania, Moldova and England in the rural schools, while the large urban school consisted of children from various countries including Poland, England, Nigeria, Egypt and Pakistan.[7] As far as the researcher was informed, all students were in Ireland over a year and had a good command of the English language. The table below indicates the rural and urban divide of the pupils involved in the questionnaire.

Rural	**Urban**	**Total**
17 boys	18 boys	35 boys
23 girls	10 girls	33 girls

Figure One: Urban and Rural Divide of Children Participating in the Questionnaire

Although there were fewer girls from urban school than rural locations, responses from girls in the survey were similar in nature therefore the researcher did not feel there was a need to generate more data from the urban areas. The number of male students in urban areas was higher, as boys from the single sex school were included in the total number of urban boys. As the total number of questionnaires collected

[7] Information on the students' ethnic background was provided by the school(s), rather than from the demographic section of the survey.

was 68, the information generated two key themes that were emerging throughout the responses, as explained in the Methodology Chapter.

4.2 Key Themes That Emerged in Questionnaires

4.2.1 Theme One: Superficial Role Models

One of the prevalent themes to emerge in the data originated from the first two questions in the survey: "Describe your role model and why?" As table 2 below suggests, nearly half of all respondents opted for a 'sports' person as their hero.

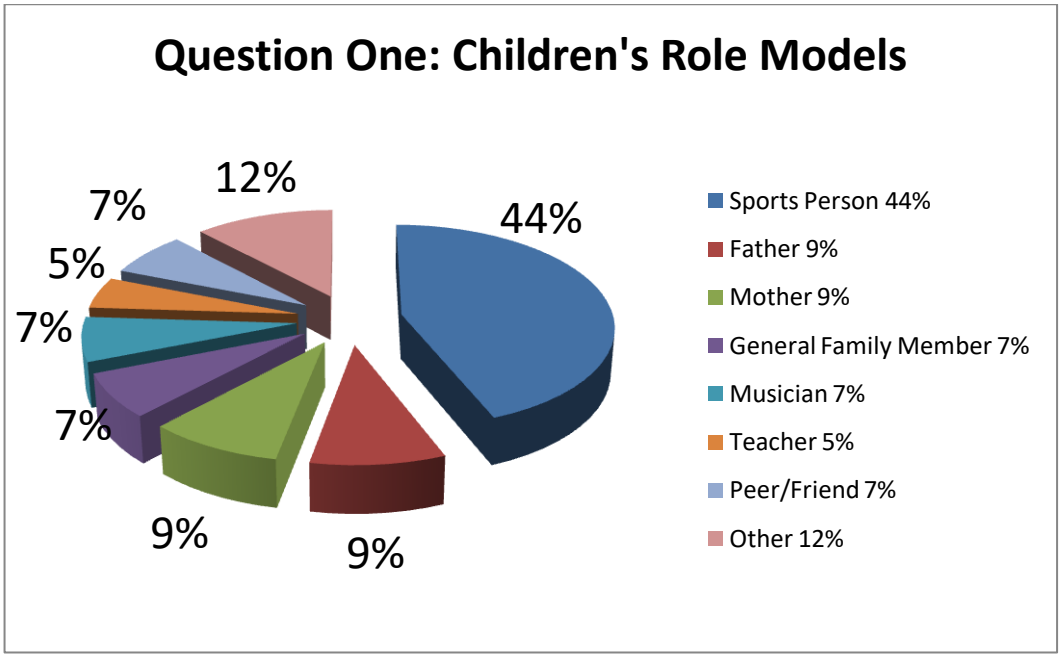


Figure 2: Describe your Role Model and Why

Although there was no significant difference in the variation of responses between urban and rural locations, when the total number of children who chose a sports person were categorised into boys and girls groupings, it was clear more boys chose a sports role model than girls. Interestingly the girl's role models were more evenly spread out amongst parents, friends and family relatives, aligning with studies by Biskup and Pfister, (1999) and Bricheno and Thornton, (2007), however, boys tended to mainly view a sports person, followed by their parents (only15%) as their role model.

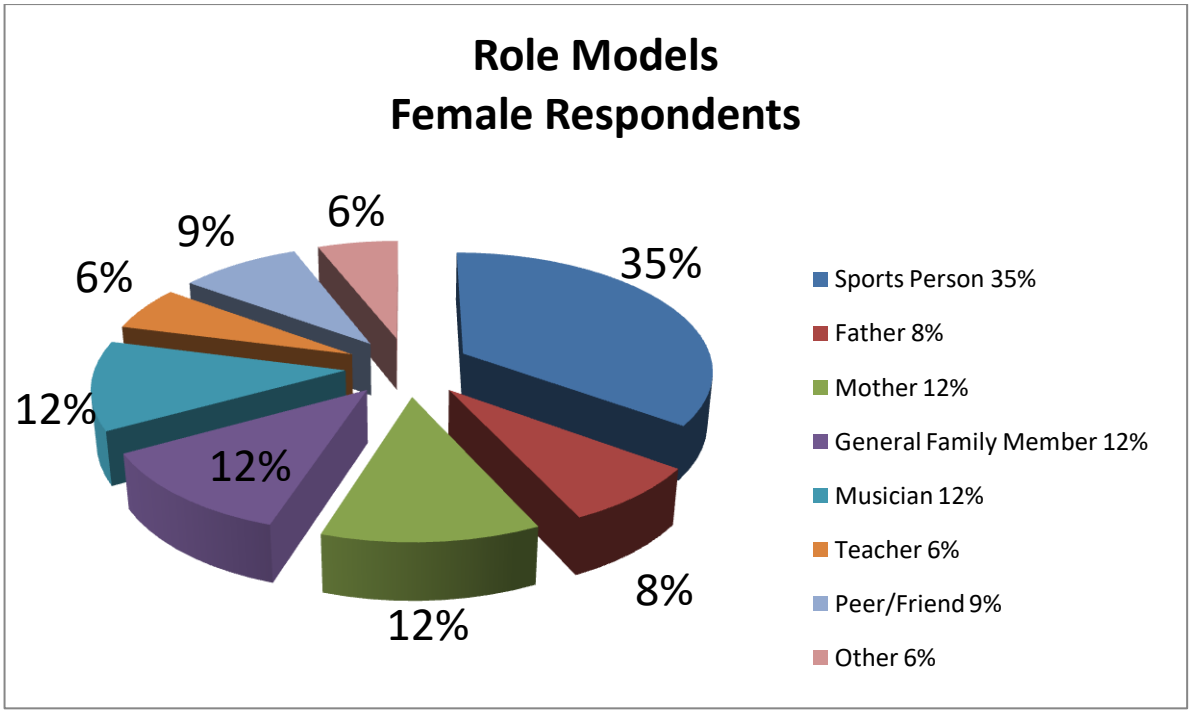


Figure 3: Describe your Role Model and Why: Female Respondents

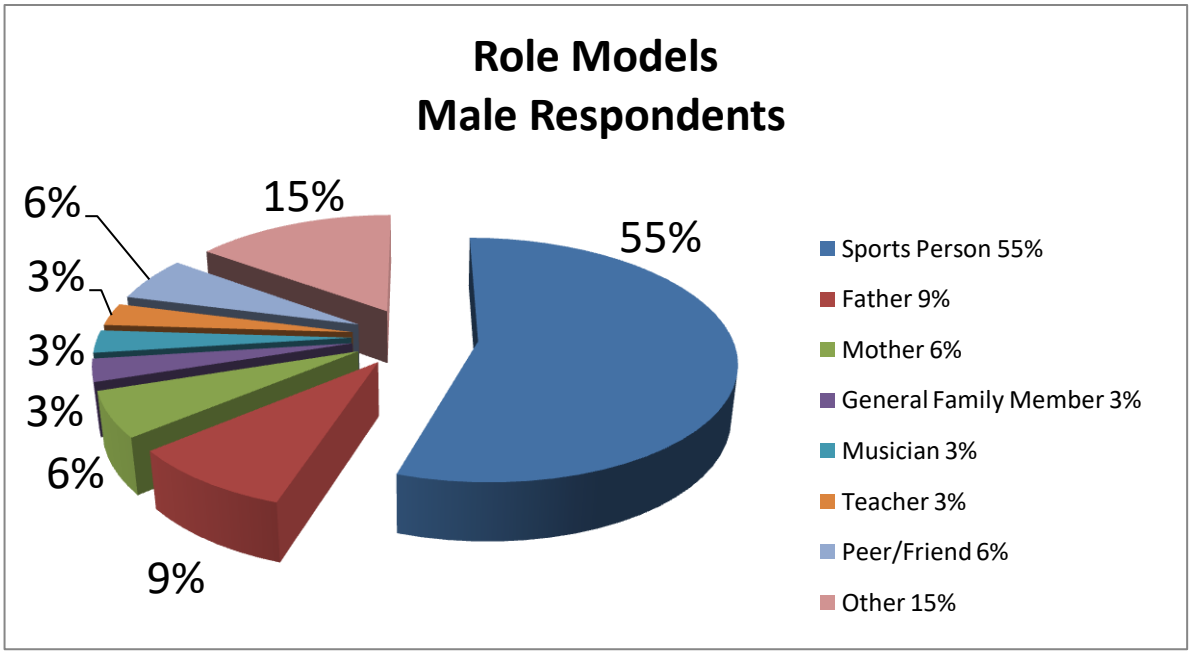


Figure 4: Describe your Role Model and Why: Male Respondents

What was apparent was the vast majority of these sports role models chosen by boys and girls, were male.

While a small percentage of the children emphasised female show-jumpers or female boxer Katie Taylor as their sports role model, 93% of their role models were male

sports personalities from a Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) or soccer background. Although at first glance, it would be fair to assume the role of a male role model is more valued and prevalent in children's lives. If one was to look at any popular sports teams around Ireland, professional Rugby and Soccer or amateur GAA sports, both are largely promoted and numerically and culturally associated with men. Men's sport is more publicly available on television and radio broadcasts, in comparison to women's sport, while mass marketing of sports brands and merchandise is also heavily associated with men's sports. As men populate the majority of high earning sports events from Soccer, Golf and Rugby, it is not surprising children view men as more successful in sports, as children often value success in terms of professional achievement (Martino & Rezai-Rashti, 2012) or on monetary values. Furthermore, in circumstances where there is prevalence in media cultures of these personalities, it is unsurprising children from similar backgrounds want to emulate these behaviours (Crichlow, 1999).

Throughout the children's questionnaires, responses illustrated that there was no apparent gender divide between the girls and boys who chose a male sports person as their role model. Within the 44% of respondents who chose a sports person as their role model, both girls and boys selected the majority of male sports personalities. This demonstrates that within the children's sports role models there is not a clear gender modelling divide amongst boys and girls and gender essentialism is not being reflected. Most 'celebrity' sports personalities have an overwhelming media presence, take for example, soccer Match Attax™ cards. All soccer teams that are participating in soccer tournaments, for example, the World Cup, or Premier League in England are promoted on a team set of Match Attax™ cards, where each of their players are on a separate card, with their profile and a rating of their performance. These cards are collected by children (even children who are not particularly interested in playing sport) and catalogued into books or folders and sometimes brought into schools or events and swapped in a bartering type system. There is a 'game' built into the cards, where children build up teams and 'compete' against others (both in person and on-line). They are engaging in sport without the element of physically playing sport. These cards act as an important social outlet for some children and therefore may possess high cultural capital (Bourdieu, 2011) for children. Likewise, the commercialisation of sports personalities, whom frequently

feature on television advertisements from sports drinks to sports merchandise, are created as a strong media spectacle in order to increase sales. As boys and girls within this research did not specifically chose their role model based on sex role categorisations, this demonstrates boys and girls are looking up to these sports stars not necessarily because of their masculinity or personal traits, but because of their strong media presence and influence amongst young children. Children, both boys and girls alike, likely use Match Attax™ cards and emulate soccer or GAA players because they are popular amongst their cohort due to the heavy promotion of sport across all media outlets and not specifically because they are looking at these players for their masculine traits.

> The popularity of sporting heroes goes hand in hand not only with intense competition in the mass media, the aggressive marketing strategies of the advertising industry and the commercialization of sport as well as of sportsmen and sportswomen, but also with young people's longing for someone to identify with (Biskup & Pfister, 1999, p. 202).

Sport is seen as a trait of masculinity but not all of sport needs to be associated with masculinity, as Match Attax™ cards demonstrate. Children within this study did not select the sports person as their role model grounded on gender similarities based on sex role categorisations, suggesting that it is not a simplistic essentialist matter here where boys are looking up to masculine sports role models, and girls are identifying with female role models. Sporting success and ambition were prioritised as criteria for their selection. This would particularly highlight the essentialism of the arguments by popular media for more male role models in schools for boys on the basis of same biological sex. If this was the case, then girls who chose a sports person as their role model would have chosen female personalities only and vice versa. They are sexist and problematic in their assumption that boys will respond better to men based on biological sex. The large number of boys (and girls) that chose male role models suggest that if boys need more male role models they are out there, and boys are capable of finding them (as are girls). Although these role models are quite superficial and disconnected to the lives of boys (and girls), the number of girls identifying with sports role models or Match Attax™ cards suggest that girls recognise the value and status of sport in society, and may not be content to value traditional stereotypical toys, such as, ponies and unicorns, when sport is being sold as the more powerful, dominant commodity in popular culture.

Furthermore, it was interesting to view the gendered aspect of children who chose a sports person as their role model. When the 44% of those who chose a sports person as their role model were categorised further, 55% of boys in comparison to 35% of girls chose a sport person. There was an interesting disparity of role models amongst the girls, as they were more evenly distributed than boys. Girls tended to view family members and relatives (Figure 1 above) as someone they look up to nearly as much as a sports persons (32%), whereas boys tended to view mainly sports persons as their role models (55%), distantly followed by family or gamers, which contrasts to other studies that suggest family was more of a role model to both boys and girls than sports (Bricheno & Thornton, 2007, Biskup & Pfister, 1999). However, within this research, family only accounted for 18% of boys' role models in comparison to 32% of girls. This would suggest that although boys did not necessarily chose a sports person as their role model based on sex role categorisations, it does demonstrate the commercialisation of sport has more of an influence on boy's lives than girls and places caution on promoting the education of boys through bonding with male teachers (masculinities) and sports. This could resonate with research by Martino where there was evidence of boys 'enacting desirable masculinity' in order to fit into the dominant groups (Martino, 1997, p. 34), which led to a 'normalisation' of displaying hegemonic masculinity in order to fit in with the footballers or surfers. Although this research was based on older children attending secondary school, it was very apparent throughout the interviews within Martino's research, that homosexual accusations and exclusion can follow one not conforming within the normalised masculinities in school. As the main focus of this research is to see the opinions of teachers and children as to the need for more male role models, it is important to view sport within this research in relation to the boy 'crisis'. If educators use sports to bond with boys and in return, boys use sport as a means to negotiate around the playground and 'fit in' to popular grouping of boys through displaying hegemonic masculinities in discussions about sport and playing sport, this could perpetuate an awareness of male power defined by masculinity within schools, even at a young age. Renold's research on the constructions of gender identity in the playground reiterated research by Martino when she confirmed 'boys' need to define their masculinity through the game of football, thus further reinforcing the correlation between hegemonic (heterosexual) masculinity and sport' (Renold, 1997, p.17). Therefore sports role models although distanced from the lives of boys are

ever-present. While they are perhaps superficial role models, they play a very important role in establishing the foundations of hegemonic masculinity in the lives of boys (and girls). Some of these players are not intending to be role models, but they are role models to boys and some girls in this study. If boys are aware at a young age, even without the presence of males on the teaching staff, that the way 'fit in' or to get ahead is by displaying traditional forms of hegemonic masculinities, then more males entering into schools to act as role models for boys through biological sex similarities could further reinforce masculinities within schools and lead to further disassociation within boys and schooling and exclusion of those who do not 'fit in' to traditional masculine ideals. It also demonstrates boys awareness of the privilege associated with being a man or a boy. Boys in this study already are aware of advantages of portraying their masculinity and they are doing this through sport. They do not need more males in schools to reinforce this for them. Hegemonic masculinity is being infused into their lives everyday. While sports role models are superficial and not physically present, the function of the public sports figures, and their related marketing is never explicitly to provide a role model, it is to bring children into consuming hegemonic masculinity, both internalising it and reproduce it, which is being witnessed in schools (Renold, 1997, Connell, 1995, Mac an Ghaill, 1994).

As many researchers have discussed how particular types of masculinities are constructed (and reconstructed) through sport (Connell, 1995), the argument for more male teachers in schools is enforcing masculinities on boys because blame is being place on female teachers and the 'feminisation' of primary teaching for the academic disinterest and underachievement of boys, yet there has been no critical evaluation by educational stakeholders into the role of peers and associations of masculinities (through sport), in the academic disinterest and underachievement of boys. Such factors are being ignored by government stakeholders. The easiest solution is the simplistic view that there is a numerical dominance of female teachers in primary schools creating disinterest in boys therefore more men is the solution. Factors for boys disinterest in certain subjects in school is often blamed on the 'feminine' aspect of the subject (Martino, 1997), however, studies have suggested 'boys' disaffection for schooling, which is increasingly recognised as a result of a construction of masculinity that is in opposition to schooling' including the

placement of 'sporting prowess above academic studies' (Francis & Skelton, 2005, p.9). This again, clearly demonstrates that masculinity is already present amongst boys and attitudes to sporting prowess over educational achievement could have more effect on the academic achievements of boys than the minority of male teachers in primary schools. It was especially interesting to note, outside the realm of sport, the different cultures of celebrity that also formed role models for the children.

As the research aims were to see from teachers and pupils experiences, the need for more male role models for boys and, to a lesser extent girls, in primary schools and indeed to help define the characteristics pupils see in a role model, it was interesting to get further insight into the element of 'celebrity' culture that surrounded the children's role models. Although the children surveyed looked up to their role model for motivational qualities discussed later, of the 68 children questioned, 44% of respondents had a role model who was in the public eye rather than in the children's lives and the definition of role model was more related to the pupil's future ambitions (see studies by Martino et al., 2012), and the players major achievements, as is illustrated below:

> My hero is Steven Gerrard. He plays for his English team and Liverpool FC. He has spent over 15 years at the club and scored over 100 goals (R:30:A:01, Boy).

> My hero is Ronaldo. He plays for Real Madrid. He is number 7. He has more than 80,000 fans (R:38:A:01,Girl).

> My hero is Joe Canning because when the going gets tough, the tough get going, because he influences me to play for my county when I grow up. (R:62:A:01, Girl).

> I look up to Conor Cooney because I want to be a good hurler as he is in the future (R:57:A:01, Boy).

This was also reflective in the 7% who chose a famous musician as their role model, leading to a total of 51% of children chose a celebrity as their role model. Whether an amateur or professional sports persons or, to a lesser extent, musician, all the role models chosen by half of the respondents were high profile figures in the Irish or

International media, [8] and were someone the children admired and wanted to emulate. As most of the children's role models were from careers of a 'celebrity' sports profile, they are unlikely to emulate the career of their favourite hurler or football player, nor are they likely to become a global soccer player, therefore there is an argument that the role models children currently value are superficial in nature and of little benefit to their daily lives. There is little ability for these role models to portray these qualities actively and have a significant influence in the lives of the children. They are absent role models whose careers and public values have been carefully constructed by media through mass marketing consumer driven enterprises and they are in essence artificial role models for children. One also has to be mindful of the disadvantages of these players or musicians as role models for children when the terms of their success, does not heavily rely on education, especially in the case of soccer, where a lot of the players are scouted from a young age. This could possibly formulate a negative 'I don't need it' attitude towards education amongst the pupils who look up to these players.

Although the total number of children who chose other 'celebrity' role models, like musicians, would not appear significant on the total chart, when the scores were categorised by gender, it signified that 14% of boys chose gamers as their role models. Even to cross compare the number of boys who chose gamers and sports stars as their role model, gives an interesting insight into potential power relations within schools. While over half of the boys chose 'sports role model' only 14% chose gamers, this could signify certain power dynamic and privilege within the 'sports' group. It also could verify that sport is invested in the children associations of hegemonic masculinity and what it is to be a 'real man', as 'boy's masculinities are also constructed through fighting and aggressive play, both of which are related to violence and aggression in sport' (Paechter, 2007, p.102). Even the total number of boys that chose gamers and sports role models, signifies that 70% of boys role models account for a role model who possibly display masculinities through sport or violent and aggressive video games, such as watching video gamers playing online

[8] In an Irish context, Joe Canning has won young player of the year, player of the year and five All Star awards, while Conor Cooney won an All Star in 2017, so both players are high profile in their field.

‘Slender’, a horror based video game that was referred to by three separate boys. Conrad, (2010) advocates it is the stimulation through visual content and multi-sensory approaches that attract boys to video gaming, as boys gain as sense of control and mastery within the game where they can create a virtual living space for themselves. Both types of role models display traditional hegemonic masculinity upon which male power and privilege is based on. This could signify that when some boys are already very aware of developing masculinities in schools and possibly look up to role models that display hegemonic maleness, more male role models in schools is only going to further reinvigorate hegemonic masculinity and lead to further disassociation with boys and schooling. The type of role models boys are looking up to are certainly not the images of many teachers, therefore they will unlikely create a big impact on their learning in comparison to what teachers are currently doing. Although there were more male role models chosen from both boys and girls, results below would further indicate the ambition and success of the player in the sport itself was chosen rather than the actual male. (Of course, one needs to remember the predominance of sport tends to be male related, therefore more male sports role models are likely than their female counterparts).

Although only a quarter of respondents regarded a family member as their role model, it was interesting to dissect the responses into gender categories. Although there was an 11% difference in the number of girls than boys whom chose a family member as someone they look up to, there was very little evidence to suggest their preference for a role model of the same gender as the number of boys and girls that looked up to their father were very close in percentage (9% boys: 8% girls), while 6% of boys and 12% of girls highlighted their mother as their role model. The similar percentage of children that chose their father as their role model signifies that although both girls and boys do not necessary count their parents as their role model, when they do look up to a parent, their preference for one parent over another was not significantly gender orientated. Although a smaller percentage of boys chose their mother as their role model over their father, there was very little difference between the percentages to suggest boys related to their father more, (as there was only 3% in the difference between seeing their father and mother as their role model). Although more girls chose their mother as their role model than their father, again there was not enough difference between looking up to their mother more than

their father, therefore there was not significant evidence to suggest girls prefer role models of the same gender either. In general, the lack of substantial evidence of gender modelling with the children surveyed signifies within this research, when children are in the environment of their own home, there was no significant preference in gender modelling within male responses and very little preference for a female role model amongst girls. The only variation between responses was that girls tend to look up to other relatives more than boys, for example, a sibling or grandparent, again gender was not a significant factor in their decision. If boys and girls themselves do not specifically choose or relate to their role models based on same sex categories or gendered similarities, then it is unlikely that they will become more academic and interested in school just because they have a teacher of the same sex.

Furthermore, despite the current worldwide call for more men as role models in primary teaching, (Lingard et al., 2009, Martino et al., 2009, Carrington &Mc Phee, 2008 & Francis & Skelton, 2001), only five percent of all respondents in this research actually saw the teacher as a role model in their lives (3% of all boys and 6% of all girls). This suggests that children participating in the research do not look to the teacher for any category of role modelling, gender or otherwise. It would also place caution on the value of investing in essentialist arguments that assume the successful operation of traditional (outdated) sex role theories, where 'arguments about gender are plagued by the assumption that what is biological or 'natural' is somehow more real than what is social' (Connell, 1998, p.2). If the children themselves do not view either the male or female teachers as a role model, it would be fair to articulate the addition of more males to act as role models for boys could be unwarranted. Furthermore, within this research, accusations that female teachers can relate better to girls and girls are achieving better academically because of the feminisation of primary teaching are unwarranted, as only 6% of all girls surveyed viewed their teacher as a role model, therefore arguments that suggest girls are achieving more and are at an advantage over their male counterparts is one dimensional and has no evidential bases, aligning with studies (Cushman, 2011, Lingard et al., 2009, Martino & Meyenn, 2001, Francis & Skelton, 2005, Drudy et al., 2005) that suggest there is no correlation between gender modelling and the academic and behavioural achievement in boys or girls.

Additionally, of the respondents who did suggest their teacher was a role model in his/her life, gender preference was not evident in their responses. Experiences of students displayed an admiration for the teaching pedagogy of the teacher and the teacher's personality rather than the gender of the teacher.

> My teacher, because he is nice and helps me when I am stuck. He boosts my confidence in things like sport and classwork (R:01:A01 Girl).

> They give me confidence and help me a lot (R:01p:A01, Boy).

Similarly, when the children were questioned on the reasons why they chose their role model (characteristics), gender identity did not factor in responses, demonstrating that it is not particularly men that boys look up to, it is traits of success and high achievement that they admire most in their role model and want to emulate. The number of their role models that are male could be because boys are looking up to the majority of successful sports persons in popular media, which are mainly male.

Figure 5: Word Art Cloud on Children's Responses as to Why They Look up to Their Role Model

Over half of respondents suggested they look up to their role models for reasons of ambition and achievement, while the other 43% highlighted the inspirational elements their role model places on them. This demonstrates contradictions between what children view as a role model and the call by popular media for more men in teaching. As populist debates for more male teachers in primary schools suggest the absence of a male role model in school is said to create 'problems for boys in terms of motivation, discipline and social interaction' (Francis & Skelton, 2005, p.90) and argue as men are similar in biological sex, therefore they can motivate and relate to boys better than their female counterparts, however, if boys look up to their role models for their ambition and high achievements, these are not traits that are displayed in primary school teachers, an occupation that is seen to have low pay and low status through its association as woman's work and they certainly are not traits that can only be portrayed by a male. Similarly, if another 43% of students expressed characteristics of inspirational elements, it is very difficult for a teacher of any gender to display excess inspiration in comparison to those who are on popular media frequently. Teachers have less reach to provide significant inspiration against highly constructed and marketed public sports figures, where their goals and achievements can be rewound and viewed by numerous audiences at various times of the day. Although teachers' inspirational moments may not have the same abilities to reach students, they are providing smaller degrees of inspiration to students daily. Furthermore, all characteristics above are non-gendered and can be displayed by both male and female teachers, therefore, to suggest a man can only teach boys demonstrates the misogyny in the argument for more male teachers. It signifies more men are wanted in teaching to promote masculinity in schools that are seen to be 'feminised' environments. By implicating the message that 'male teachers are needed to provide more positive masculine images to boys and, to a lesser extent, girls' (Francis & Skelton, 2009, p.94), it is implicating that a female teacher cannot be a role model to boys and a male teacher cannot be a role model to girls. As children's experiences throughout this doctoral research suggest, boys and girls do not significantly see their teacher as a role model in their lives, but those who do, are very gender neutral in their explanations. If the children throughout this study view the traits of a role models as motivational and inspirational, these are traits that are not gender orientated and therefore be can produced by both male and female teachers, but because the male role model debate is based on gender essentialism

throughout society, these arguments are not challenged. Furthermore, if male teachers are employed as role models for boys and a majority of schools are mixed sex, it is blatantly ignoring the education of girls. Respondents in this study clearly feel inspirational traits are more important than gendered traits. Respondent R17:A01b, (Girl) defined:

> I look up to them because they have achieved so many great things I would feel so interested in, I would try to do the same thing….. they will have a good influence on me and help me accomplish that.

Aspects of determination and achievement through hard work was evident and reiterated in a large number of respondents:

> I look up to them because they donated over a million pounds to a poverty-stricken place and they work so hard. Martin Luther [King Jr.] fought to get rid of racism and accomplished that (R10:A01b Girl).

> 'I look up to him because he started in the league of Ireland and after years of practicing he finally made it. I suppose that is the meaning of practice makes perfect' (R21: A01b. Boy).

> I look up to him because he never gives up in what he does (R14:A01b Boy).

Although boys are willing to put in the hard work to achieve their goals, their disassociation with school is in contradiction with their classroom work ethic, because working hard in class is not seen as a 'masculine' thing to do and boys are very aware of male privilege, as seen earlier. Foster, Kimmel and Skelton (2001) suggest it is their own sense of masculinity that stops them from achieving more in school as it is 'the ideology of traditional masculinity that keeps boys from wanting to succeed' (Martino & Meyenn, 2001, p.14). If this is the case then surely boys need role models that can confront their sense of masculinity in school, not reinforce it by further displays of hegemonic heterosexual masculinity. It is also worth noting that the accomplishments that the boys above admire most are not usually associated with teachers.

Although one could revert back to the previous argument of the absent role model and how these traits, while upstanding, are displayed by absent role models and a

role model cannot truly encourage a child from afar, it does however display some understanding of how children distinguish their role models. In many responses, the words admire, encourage, determined are reiterated. Although many of the children cannot emulate the lives of their role model, they can gain some valuable traits from them, such as, 'never giving up' (R:21) or to be 'honest' (R67) and hard working. It is also important to note although none of the respondents highlighted their role models for factors of physical strength or manliness, the association with sport could warrant caution about an already formed awareness of male privilege within schools as boys recognise that those who are successful or resilient are male, because it is only male sports stars that are at the forefront of popular press and Match Attax™ cards.

Although being 'tough' was mentioned previously and some respondents did refer to 'sticks up for his teammates', it was a term that could be aligned with either male or female sports persons and was suggested by a girl in reference to Joe Canning (hurler) contributing to the majority of scores when his team were trailing behind, rather than his physical attributes. Within this research, there was very little correlation to suggest characteristics of their role model relied on gendered qualities. This could illustrate that although the role models the children look up to are in effect, absent from their lives (mostly boys), children do understand the values and attributes that would determine a good role model and these do not necessarily have to be from the same 'biologically sexed bodies' (Davison, 2007) or gendered stereotypes. Likewise, as only 3% of boys viewed their teacher as a role model, the likelihood of all boys becoming more interested in achieving in areas they are failing because they have a male teacher is small. This has serious implications for those who think more male teachers who serve as role models will have any effect.

Additionally, if one is to consider the curriculum aspect of the children's lives, again, we can find that even in the Religion syllabus, someone who inspires them is very much at the core. In the new 'Grow in Love' curriculum developed in 2016 onwards, Biblical stories in lessons are used to illustrate key themes of love, care and forgiveness. Primary school Religion classes currently account for two and a half hours of the weekly timetable. Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE), which accounts for 30 minutes a week of class-time also incorporates lesson on caring and communication within its programme. Interestingly, when questioned on who

influences their learning, curriculum development was a factor as teachers and parents were the main influencers.

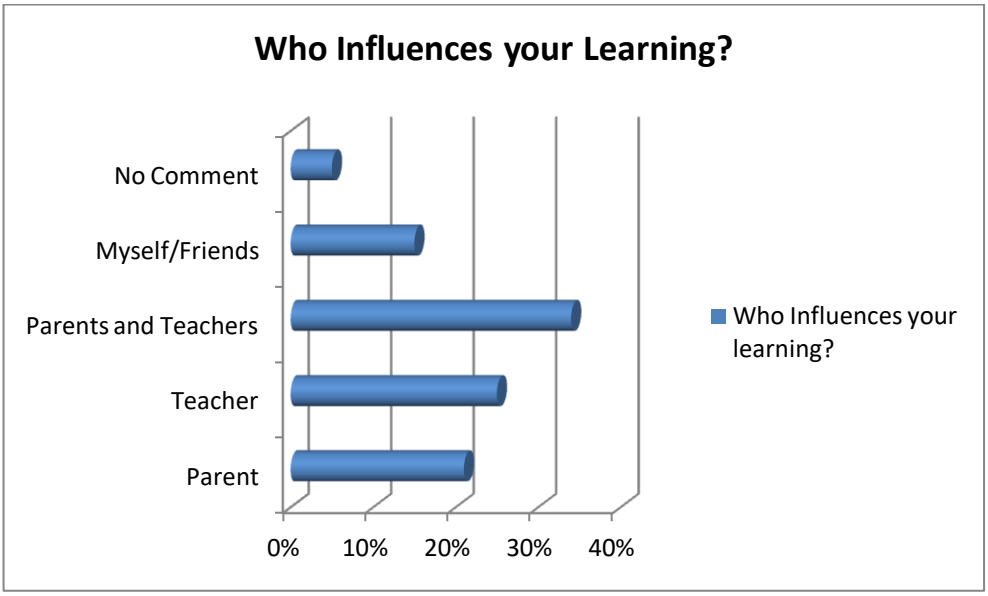


Figure 6: Who Influences your Learning?[9]

Although only 5% of students felt teachers had a significant role as a role model in their lives, they do see teachers as big influences in their learning and education. It would be fair to assume teachers are a big influence in their learning because they relate school and learning with the teacher but do not associate teachers with their social and future development. This is an important finding because it demonstrates that although boys do not see teachers (male or female) as their role models, they have an awareness of the value of teachers in their academic learning. Yet, despite the number of children who viewed their teacher as influential in their learning, the fact that only 5% of all students saw their teachers as role models (which the drive for more male teachers originates from) demonstrates that even when more male teachers enter into schools, boys will only see them as teachers and not role models. Despite research displaying the influence of peer pressure on the impact of boys learning and social development at school, (Gilbert & Gilbert, 2008, Martino, 2000, Mac an Ghaill, 1994), peer pressure and the influence of friends did not feature heavily within the children's responses in this research. Friends only accounted for 15% of the total responses. Perhaps as the children are only in primary school their

[9] Please note parent and teachers are both together and separate. This is to illustrate where a student chose their parent or their teacher separately as an influence on their education, where the combined parent and teachers demonstrates the children that chose their parents and teacher as equal influences on their education. Both columns signify different children.

understanding of peer pressure is limited. Girls were the majority group of respondents who stated friends have an influence on their learning, however, responses were positive in nature and the caring, encouraging nature of their friends was highlighted, as this respondent demonstrates; 'My hero is my best friend because they will help me in school and out of school, whenever I need help' (R:36:A:01, Girl).

4.3 Theme One: Concluding Analysis

Although this research has placed caution on the role models articulated by children involved in the research, the characteristics of the role model they look up to were more mature and insightful in nature, with less gendered qualities than popular media would lead one to believe. The research highlights that teachers' biological sex is not as influential as recruitment campaigns for more male teachers indicate and one could argue the teaching curriculum has more influence on the child than the actual biological sex of the teacher itself. Much of the panic about the need for more role models for boys is embedded with an archaic, essentialist gender view. Gender modelling is not as simplistic as boys shadowing what men do. It is precisely because this form of filial imprinting is ineffective and does not happen with boys and men, there is a panic to get effeminate boys to behave more masculine by providing male role models. But because it is based on outdated sex role theory, the argument collapses. Throughout this chapter, it is demonstrated clearly that boys already have self-elected surrogate role models conveying masculinity, therefore should one not question the additional need for more role models in the form of male teachers? Boys' role models are adequately demonstrating strong masculinities in their lives through football and sport. While it could be argued that sports role models are not 'good' role models, the abilities of male role models are not central to the arguments of those who want more male teachers. It is the simplistic solution that more men bring in more masculinity, therefore more gender privilege. This research demonstrates the message of male privilege is being received by boys (and girls) very clearly through their understanding of culture capital. However, the argument for more males in schools does not come from a critique of current male role models being superficial, it seems society wants more direct male role models – male coaches and PE teachers – just to make sure that the masculinity message cannot be

misunderstood or missed. But as demonstrated by the children participating in this study, boys already understand masculinity, they are aware they should look up to men and girls also understand the value of being associated with men in the public eye, and the privileged role of sport in Irish society. Therefore, is it not unwarranted to suggest there is a need for male role models in schools when the apparatus to masculinise boys already exists and is already being mass distributed to boys? They have already internalised the 'right' roles for boys, and the girls have also demonstrated that they understand this by feeding into the value of culture capital, such as Match Attax™ cards and male sports role models. Furthermore, throughout this research, it is clearly demonstrated that boys (and girls) do not see their teacher as a role model in the first place.

If drives to recruit male teachers are based on sex role theories because male teachers 'are more attuned to boys' learning needs' and are 'better equipped to address their alienation and disaffection with schooling' simply because they are male (Martino, et al., 2009, p.265), and children, especially boys, do not see their teacher as a role model, nor can teachers compete with mass media to demonstrate the traits boys do see in a role model, it is difficult to see how the addition of more men will simply create affection amongst boys and schooling, when boys do not to relate to them as role models. Debates for more male teachers are based on strengthening gender privilege amongst men and boys and therefore associate the progress of boys with more men only, regardless of research-based evidence suggest gender modelling does not work for boys or girls (Lingard, Martino, Mills & Bahr, 2002). Arguments for more male role models in schools to increase academic performance and behaviour in boys are based on uncritical evaluations centring around campaigns by popular media that place blame on female teachers for the academic and behavioural underachievement of boys, which does not take into account the opinions and experiences of boys themselves. Furthermore, if boys are already engaging in sporting culture, emulating their sports role model and associated masculinities, which is already proven to disassociate them from schooling, then surely the increase of male teachers would perpetuate this problem and result in further disengagement of boys. It enforces the segregation of effeminate boys or girls as 'many researchers have noted the active exclusion of girls from the majority of "boys" sports' (Renold, 1997, p.12).

Lastly, aligning with research confirming that boys and girls do not have a strong preference for gender modelling (Francis & Skelton, 2005, Ashley, 2001, Lahelma, 2000), if neither boys nor girls engaged in this study show a major preference for a male or female relation, family member or teacher, surely this demonstrates the arguments that more male teachers in schools to act as role models for boys, based on gender similarities and same biological sex are essentialist and flawed.

4.4 Theme Two

4.4.1 Gender in the Classroom: 'They are all the Same, They Teach the Same'

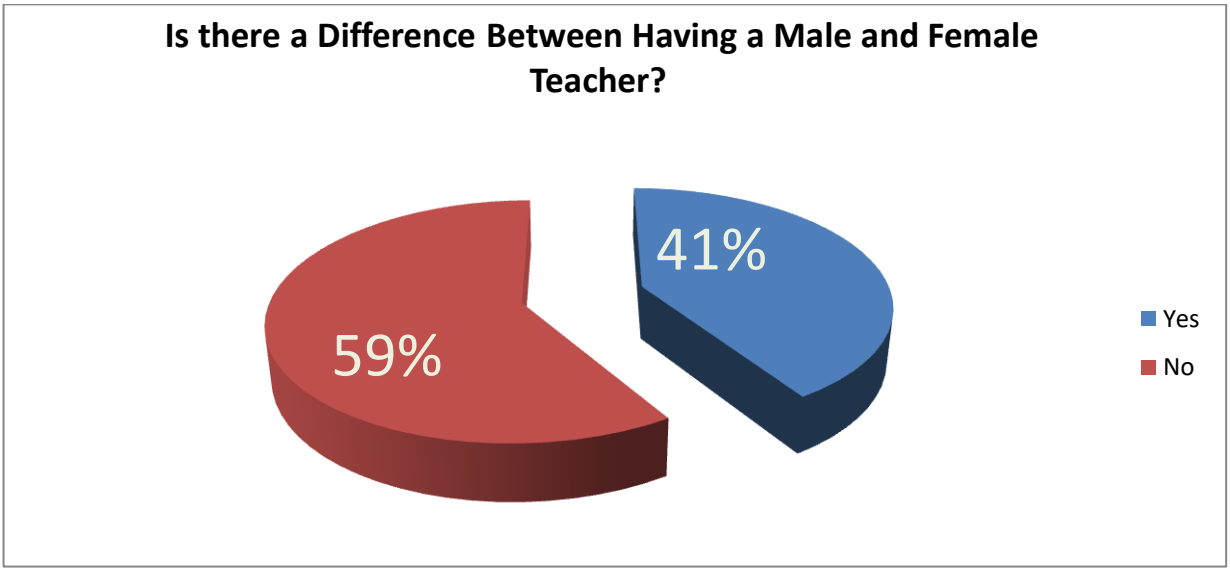


Figure 7: Difference Between Having a Male and Female Teacher

As table seven indicates, the majority of the children who participated in the questionnaire stated, in their experience, there was no difference in having a male or a female teacher. This aligns with research carried out by Martino and Rezai-Rashti (2012), Francis et al., (2008) Carrington et al., (2007), Francis et al., (2006), Ashley and Lee (2003), Lingard et al. (2002) and Trent and Slade (2001), who also reported little substantial evidence to suggest otherwise. Relating to the calls for more male role models based on notions that male teachers can increase motivation and willingness to learn in boys, significant research in Australia further correlated with findings in this research, revealing 'motivation and engagement did not vary substantially for boys and girls as a function of the teacher's gender' (Martin & Marsh, 2005, p. 332).

As the table above displays, nearly 60% of the overall children participating felt the gender of the teacher was irrelevant. Although students gave a variety of reasons for this, many responses suggested that teachers have a curriculum to follow and regardless of gender this must be implemented.

> No, because we are all treated with respect for who we are. Both genders try to increase our education the same amount (R:29:A02, Boy).

> No, because they teach you the same thing (R:67:A02 Boy).

Although this was mirrored in a large number of responses, other students' reiterated findings by Francis et al., (2006), referring to the teacher's classroom environment and work within the parameters of the curriculum, finding lesson content similar regardless of the gender of the teacher. Respondents advocated that although teaching pedagogies differ between teachers, the results are similar:

> I don't think gender affects your teaching, every teacher has their own teaching styles. It's up to the teacher really (R03:A:03 Boy).

> I see no difference between a boy or a girl teacher. I think this because during my time in school…All of them treat us the same. Same teachings, same acting, same kindness etc. (R:61:A 03 Girl).

Similar to research by Lingard (2002), other students identified certain qualities, capacities and teacher behaviours which were more aligned with the individual personality of the teacher rather than sex role classification and reiterated in their experience, regardless of teacher gender, curriculum guidelines determined the work covered, not the individual teacher, therefore both male and female teachers 'get the job done' equally.

> They just do individual stuff…like they're not robots that do the same work as each other but male or female, they still do a good job (R01:A03, Boy).

> There isn't much difference it's just girls have long hair, maybe males talk about sport. Some can be boring, some can be fun. It isn't much of a difference. It depends on what type of a person they are. They all cover the same (R63:A02, Girl).

> Kind of, a male teacher is likely to talk about sport, a female teacher is likely to try to get your handwriting neat and encourage you to read a lot, but they both get the job done! (R70:A02, Girl).

Interestingly, masculine qualities of the teacher and the probability of playing sport or discussion of sport in the classroom environment emerged in a small number of male responses that was seen as a negative factor in some of the female responses. This was reiterated by students from both rural and urban background. Similarity, the easy going nature of some male teachers was also reiterated in responses from the boys' questionnaires which aligns with research by Martino and Rezai-Rashti (2012) and Button (2007), who suggest the male teachers are more willing to 'put aside curriculum and do something considered more fun' (Martino & Rezai-Rashti, 2012, p. 97). However, this gave more of an insight into the interests of the student rather than preference of a male teacher for displaying 'hegemonic masculine' qualities. Although, it did highlight some of the gendered male associations children have with men and sport, perhaps an element being perpetuated by the 'panic' by popular media for more males in schools to 'remasculinise' the boys, stemming from adult's gendered anxieties for more male role models for boys in primary schools.

> Well, because I'm a boy, I prefer to have a male teacher talking about sport, some female teachers wouldn't understand. Males like sport (R60:A02, Boy).

> I don't find any difference in teachers apart from the boys talk about sport (R66:A02, Boy).

> Male teachers are more relaxed and tend to do more P.E. (R:16:A:02, Girl).

In contrast, other students who suggested there was a difference in having a male and female teacher identified issues of authority and teacher personality as a *disadvantage* rather than male or female traits. Responses tended to veer towards the teacher's style and discipline rather than the aspects associated to the gender of the teacher. While female teachers were highlighted for their organisational skills or discipline, aligning to the research of Thornton and Brichenco (2002), men were reported at times to be 'less strict' than female teachers, which contradicts those calling for more male teachers as they have 'better control and can motivate boys in school' (Martino et al., 2009, p. 294). However, there was little indication to suggest one teaching method was better over another. But it was interesting to note some

children were aware of perceived gender attributes that can become evident within the classroom:

> Yes male teachers tell more jokes! (R43:A02, Boy).

> You learn the same with both, but some female teachers are more stricter (R48:A02, Boy).

> Male teachers are calmer and don't worry about things, but I don't care as long as they are nice (R71: A02, Girl).

> Women usually get the job done quicker and can multitask while men are more laid back….but it depends on what the teacher is like (R62:A02, Girl).

Although sport and a more relaxed teaching style was alluded to by some of the respondents towards male teachers, there were no measures within the study to indicate if this had an impact on the learning of the student and the students did not refer to 'talk about sport' as a distraction or advantage to their academic achievement. It was rather seen as a trait of male teachers, which does demonstrate an awareness of student's associations with male teachers and sports, a result of gender essentialism amongst society that promote ideologies that male teachers will bond with boys better than female teachers 'because they are more attuned to boys learning needs' (Martino et al., 2009, p. 264), again through activities that are seen to portray strong heterosexual hegemonic masculinities, like sport.

However, as a research aim of the study was also to question if more male teachers entering Irish primary school would affect the education of girls, it was interesting to note, 16% of students who felt there was a difference in having a male or female teacher felt they would be more comfortable with a teacher of their own gender. While a small number of boys suggested they would be more confident with a male teacher, nearly a quarter of girls (within the 16%) who suggested they found a difference between having a male and female teacher (23%), advocated gender similarities and preference for a female teacher. Reoccurring factors referred to the 'motherly' role associated with teachers, as some girls find female teachers more caring and would feel more confident confiding in a teacher of the same gender. While respondents did not expand upon reasons for wanting one gender over

another, other than ‘confidence and easier to confide in’, one has to be aware of the age group of participants and perhaps issues and difficulties with puberty could be a source of embarrassment with male teachers. Although this research is too small in number to generalise, it does give a good insight into the experiences of primary school children regarding the gender of their teacher. This warrants concern about the effect more male teachers will have on the education and confidence of female students, not in terms of role models, but in terms of emotional wellbeing. As one of the research aims of the study is to explore the impact more male teachers will have on the education of boys and girls, it is a worrying indication that more male teachers entering schools will potentially have a negative impact on some girls. However, it is not surprising given that the aim to bring more male teachers into primary schools is targeted specifically at boys. The welfare and education of girls is not considered in these recruitment drives. Those associated with ‘boy crisis’ discourse are in search of a solution to help the boys only, which has implications in a mixed-sex school setting. The education of girls is not up for consideration because girls, like boys, are being placed into a homogenised group and are seen to be achieving more in comparison to boys–due to them being advantaged by the ‘feminised’ environment where, through essentialist beliefs, it is assumed that they are better served by female teachers. Individual student’s needs are not considered.

Interestingly, there was an anomaly in children’s responses from the urban mixed sex school, where boys in particular saw a difference in having a male and a female teacher.

Within the single sex boy’s schools, there was a majority of 66% who suggested they did not experience any difference between having a male or female teacher.

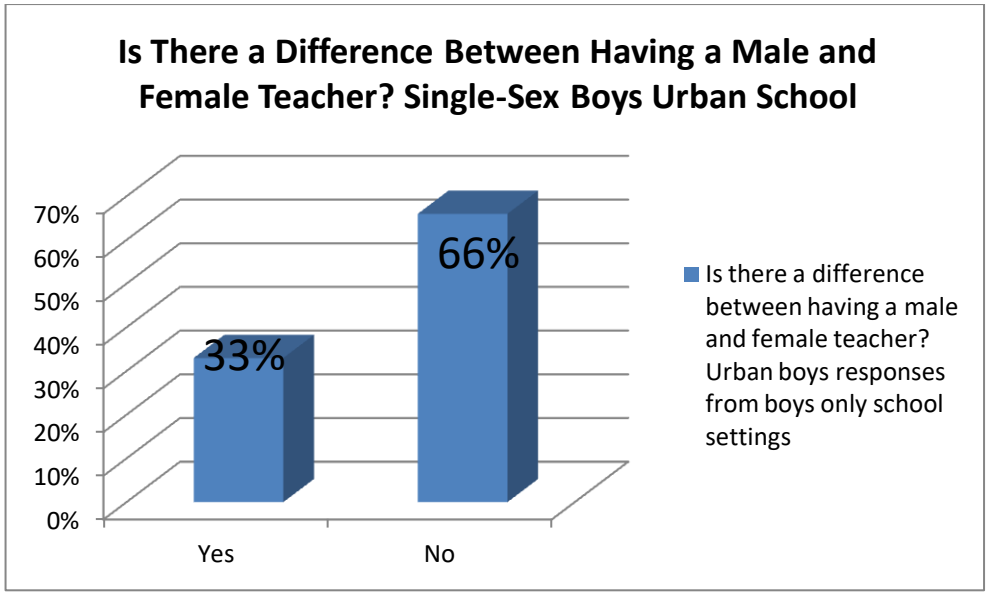


Figure 8: Single-Sex Boys' School: Difference in Having a Male or Female Teacher

Similar figures were seen for girls from a rural school, where 54% and 80% of boys felt there was no difference between a male and a female teacher.

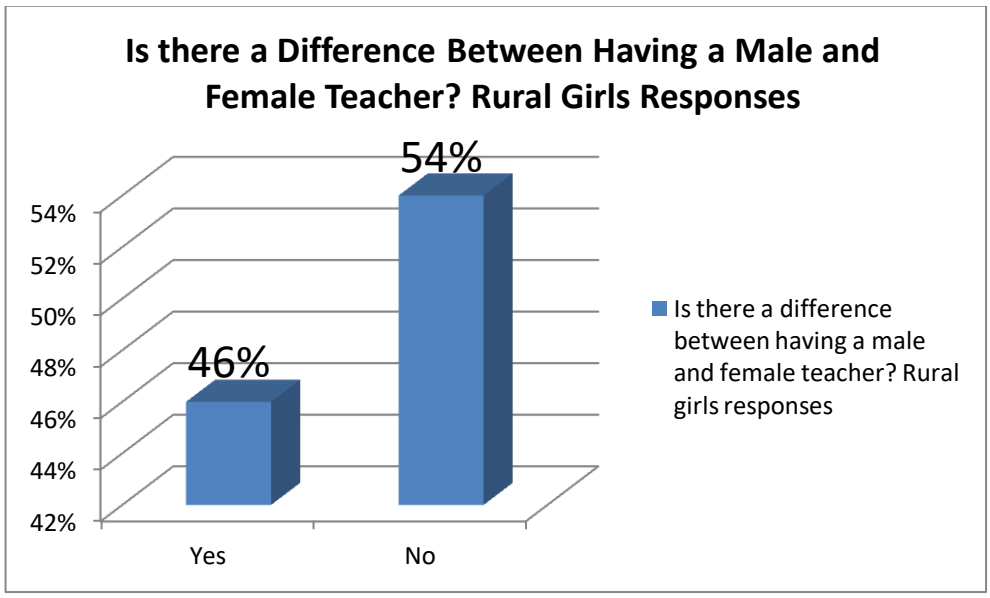


Figure 9: Girls Responses: Difference Between Having a Male and Female Teacher

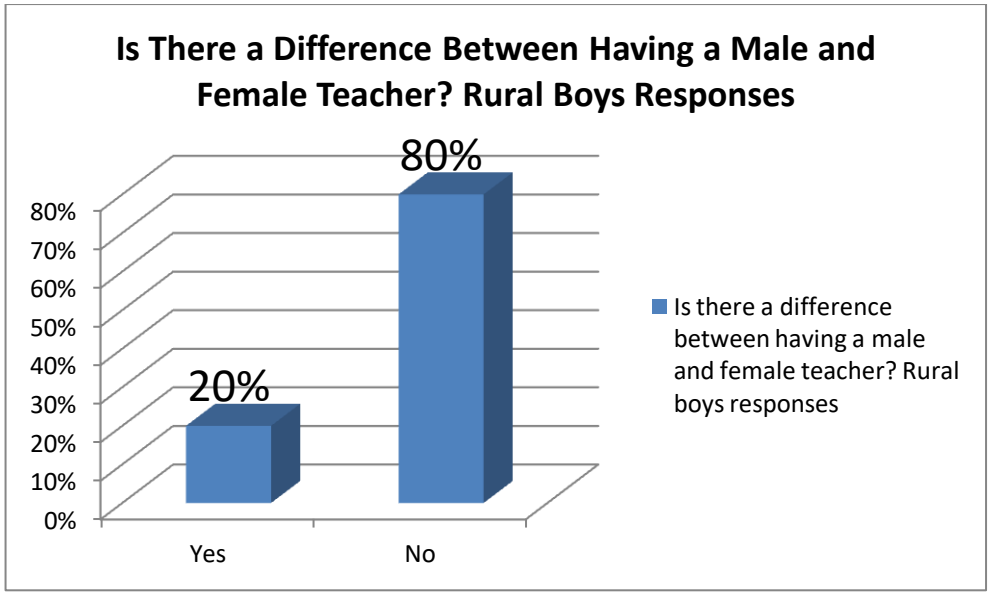


Figure 10: Rural School: Boys' Responses: Difference Between Having a Male and Female Teacher

At first glance, this would signify that a majority of boys do not feel there is a difference between having a male and female teacher, however, when the results were graphed from the urban mixed school, differences in gendered attitudes became apparent and results were reversed, as 66% of boys and 50% of girls suggested in their experience there was a difference in having a male and a female teacher.

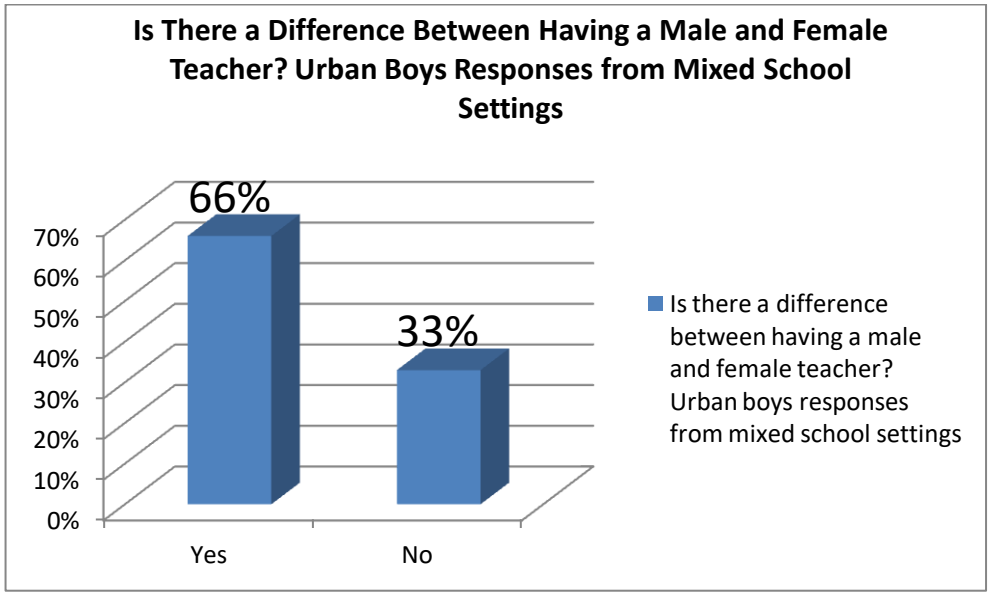


Figure 11: Urban Boys from a Mixed School Setting: Difference in Having a Male and Female Teacher

This was very interesting as it completely contrasted the views of both single-sex (urban) and rural children's opinions, especially as 66% and 80% boys in single sex and rural schools experience no difference in having a male or a female teacher. The researcher found it difficult at first to understand why there was such a variation between three schools compared to the urban mixed school, until the teacher's interviews from this school were analysed, which gave great insight into the dynamics at play within the school. Throughout the interviews of both the principal and teachers, each expressed concern for female teachers where there was aggression, defiance and lack of respect given to female teachers by some boys of different cultural backgrounds, where the men hold more authority within a family (which is discussed at length in the next chapter). This was a unique theme that occurred only within the urban mixed-sex school interviews and the cultural diversity within the school was the only difference in the background data collected from each school and this was also strongly highlighted within the school interviews, which could lead one to conclude that the multicultural diversity within this school could outline the anomaly of attitudes from boys, in particular, in this school. When children's answers within this group were further refined, they indicated that the larger number of boys in this school see a difference between a male and a female teacher because they feel male teachers do more sport or talk about sport, whereas the girls indicated they would be more comfortable confiding in female teachers and they get the 'job done' quicker. One can only speculate, as there is no proof to otherwise suggest, but perhaps it is the already defined gender roles that are in place within the urban school that could explain variations between their opinions and the experiences of the other three schools. It may be possible, on the evidence from teachers and the principal in that school, that some of the boys already have a sense of gender privilege from their cultural background or manifested from attitudes in society. If this is the case, these boys prefer male teachers who can reinforce this masculinity through sports and feel they relate to male teachers better because of their displays of hegemonic masculinities, as male teachers' associations with sport was reiterated at times. Therefore, through the displaying of hegemonic heterosexual masculinities and bonding within the male teachers and boys, the girls feel they are being left excluded and for this reason they prefer and feel they relate to female teachers more.

Behaviourally, although a small percentage of children participating did view positive qualities of their teacher in gendered capacities (sport, caring), there was an overwhelming agreement that they would not behave differently with a male or female teacher. Although this somewhat contradicts the previous responses in the urban school, it could indicate that although the boys feel there is a difference between having a male and a female teacher, they do not actually feel they behave differently possible because they are not aware they are being more aggressive to female teachers, because male dominance is normalised within these cultures. Again, this is only speculation that the researcher has correlated based on evidence within the interviews and the school setting. Overall, while some responses reiterated differences in authority depending on the teacher, this was a component of their personal experiences of a particular teacher and not evident on a gender basis, but it did indicate that children are more concerned with learning and how the teacher treats them, than the gender of the teacher.

> They are all the same, they teach the same really. Sometimes the female teachers are nicer…. Sometimes (R:56:A2b, Boy).

Similar responses arose when questioned on behavioural differences when they have a male or female teacher:

> I think I would behave well when having a male or female teacher. I always behave well with all teachers I've had so far. For me, it [the gender of the teacher] doesn't really matter at all (R22:A3, Girl).

> No because I wouldn't mind whether it was male or female, I just want to learn (R27:A03, Girl).
>
> No because I think it doesn't matter who's the teacher, male or female' (R34:A03, Boy).

This demonstrates that children are not overly concerned with the gender of the teacher and again, place more concern on the ability of the teacher and teaching pedagogy. Therefore, one could conclude, within the context of this research, it may be adults' gendered anxieties about male role models in schools that stem from strategic recruitment drives based on strengthening male privilege, who place

concern for more male teachers in primary schools, rather than the children themselves.

4.5 Theme Two: Concluding Analysis:

Although the sample size in this research is too small to generalise, it does offer insight into the experiences of primary school children in Connacht, regarding the gender of their teacher and demonstrates that children do not associate teachers as role models and are for the most part, happy to have a male *or* a female teacher. It demonstrates that while teaching pedagogy and personality might differ amongst teachers, overall, children generally feel teaching content is similar and children place more emphasis on the quality of the teaching rather than the gender of the teacher. Although an anomaly occurred within responses from the urban mixed school, when asked if there is a difference in having a male or female teacher (Yes: 66% boys and 50% girls), this could possibly be explained by the multicultural diversity within the school, strongly referred to in the teacher and principal interviews. It certainly could encourage more research in this area. Otherwise, there was no significant difference in opinion amongst urban and rural children and the geographical location of the school did not have a significant impact on children's role models or experiences of having a male or female teacher.

It is therefore the duty of educational stakeholders to take the view of the children themselves into account and carry out gender-based analysis into the children that are failing, the boys and girls that are falling behind academically, and the reasons for this, because simplistic solutions like gender modelling and ignoring evidential research is not going to create a dynamic and diverse educational system that is inclusive of all. That is, if that's what they are hoping to achieve.

Uncritical calls for more men in teaching demonstrate the essentialism in suggesting that more men will be the answer to the academic underachievement of boys and highlights the absence of critically evaluating *which* children are academically failing and how more male teachers effect the girls, because girls are not seen to be failing, in comparison to boys, they are therefore not involved in the academic underachievement rhetoric.

Although there could be room for further research to categorise the children who come from single parent families, presently, the responses throughout this chapter give warrant to question the current 'panic' for more male teachers in primary schools to act as role models for boys. If boys themselves do not specify a gendered preference over the gender of the role model *actively* present in their lives (excluding sports person), then one would have to question if more men in schools to act as role models for boys will have a major impact on their academic behaviour and learning at all and gender modelling may not have as big an impact as popular media and educational stakeholders argue (Francis & Skelton, 2005). Furthermore, if men are employed to model positive behaviour to boys, then this is already being achieved through the Religious curriculum where teachers engage in discussions and modelling of positive moral behaviour and values. If recruitment drives are concerned with employing more male teachers to act as role models for boys, it is quite clear within this research that boys have self-selected roles models that convey a sense of masculinity to them that encourage their understanding and engagement in masculinities and gender privilege, as are girls aware of the value of masculinity and sports culture in Irish society. Therefore, one has to question what essentialist calls for more male teachers in primary schools are for, if not to act as a means of recuperating hegemonic masculinities directly into schools.

Chapter Five: A Teacher's and Principal's Perspective

This chapter explores the experiences and perspectives of practicing teachers and principals as to their perceptions of the need for more male role models in Irish primary schools and the role of the male teacher as a role model for boys. The chapter examines if teachers and principals feel more males in primary schools will be advantageous to the education of boys through factors of biological similarities outlined by Martino, (2009). The chapter guides analysis of the elements teachers feel are most important in the classroom when being a role model and discusses the teacher's and principal's perspective on gender modelling as being more effective than individual role modelling.

The initial stages of the chapter will provide profiles of the interview participants. The information was composed based on details provided during conversations before and after the interview. This information is provided to enable the reader to get a better understanding of the participant's background, teaching experience and current educational setting.

The chapter will evolve into five dominant themes that arose within the analysis of the participant interviews. Participant experiences and quotes from interviews are used to highlight and formulate themes. Although it is small-scale research, rich conversant data provided a good view into the insights and experiences of a small cohort of teachers and principals regarding the necessity of more male role models in Irish primary schools.

5.1 Demographic Information of Schools and Teachers Within the Study

For the purpose of clarity for the reader, information about each individual school is provided, including teachers in the school, interview participants within the school, details of the principal and the broad location of the school. The school profile also gives details of classroom settings and the children involved in the study. I have included school profiles in order to give the reader a better insight into the environment participants are working and help them form a better understanding of the participants' experiences. The table below indicates school information clearly.

Variables			
Urban Single sex school	Urban Mixed sex school	Rural Mixed sex school	Rural Mixed sex school
Male Principal	Female Principal	Female principal	Male Principal
Female teacher has taught the current cohort of $5^{th}/6^{th}$ class.	Male and female teacher having **both** taught the current cohort of $5^{th}/6^{th}$ class	Male and female teacher having **both** taught the current cohort of $5^{th}/6^{th}$ class	Male and female teacher having **both** taught the current cohort of $5^{th}/6^{th}$ class

Table 4: Variables in Schools Selected

5.2 School Profiles

The first school entered was located in a rural setting. The school had one male and two female teachers. The principal teacher was male. All teachers had over ten years of teaching experience. The principal teacher was near retirement. Classes were within a multi-grade setting, however pupils, both boys and girls, from fifth and sixth class were invited to complete the survey. The teacher's pseudonyms were Tom (principal) and Mary.

The second school location was also a rural setting. The school had a female principal, three female teachers and one male teacher on staff. There was also a part-time male resource teacher. All teachers interviewed had over six years teaching experience. The principal was in the role for over 15 years. One of the female teachers interviewed had taken a career break during her time teaching and allowed reflection of this during her interview. Again, boys and girls in fifth and sixth class completed the survey. Pseudo names for interviewees included, Liam, Linda (female teacher) and Elaine (principal teacher)

The third school taking part in the research was a large mixed-sexed urban school. This school had a female principal who was in the school for five years but had previous principal experience in a smaller urban setting. Both male and female teachers had over seven years teaching experience. Some of the pupils from this

school were from a diverse range of multicultural backgrounds and were originally living in Pakistan, Poland, Egypt, Nigeria and Britain, before moving to Ireland. There were over twenty teachers in the school. Pseudonyms included Alice (principal), David (male teacher) Anna (female teacher).

The last school involved in the study was an urban all-boys school. The principal-teacher was male and had over ten years principal experience. There are over fifteen teachers on staff. The teacher interviewed was female with more than seven years teaching experience. Unfortunately, there was no male teacher available willing to interview in this school. Boys from a small sixth class participated in the survey for the research. Pseudonyms included Michael (Principal) and Áine (Female teacher).

5.3 Teacher Profiles

Teachers were chosen on a volunteer basis within the research site.

Mary: Mainstream teacher. She is currently teaching First, Second and Third class in a rural school. She has over ten years teaching experience. Her previous teaching experience would include multi-grade and single classroom teaching in both urban and rural settings.

Liam: Liam teaches Fifth and Sixth class in a rural school. He is teaching six years. Liam has previously worked in a large urban school and has experience of teaching in a boys-only primary school also.

Linda: Mainstream teacher, teaching Third and Fourth class in a rural school. Linda has over twenty years teaching experience. Linda took a career break during her time in this school. Linda is actively involved in sports within the school.

David: David is currently teaching fifth class in a mixed urban school. He loves sports and takes children regularly on sports outings. David has over ten years of experience teaching in a range of schools and attended a boy's only school himself, with 'a higher number of male teachers than normally'.

Anna: Mainstream teacher in a mixed urban setting. Anna currently teaches Sixth class. She has over twenty years teaching experience in various rural and urban settings.

Áine: Mainstream teacher in a boy's only school. Áine is in the school four years but teaching over ten. She currently teaches Fourth class but they change classes yearly.

5.4 Principal-Teacher Profiles

Michael: Is also a 'walking principal' in a boy's only school in an urban setting. Michael is an avid sports fan and enjoys getting the school involved in table quizzes and playing music. Michael is in his role over ten years and has previous experience teaching in rural and urban schools with mixed classes.

Alice: Alice is principal in an urban setting, therefore is a 'walking principal', and does not teach on a daily basis. Her job entails more administrative work due to the large number of teachers and pupils in the school. She was previously a principal in a smaller rural school but changed to her current employment seven years ago.

Elaine: Principal teacher, mixed rural school, currently teaching resource. Elaine has been in this school for over twenty years, but is in the role of principal fifteen years. She previously taught Fifth and Sixth class for over ten years, before changing to Special Education teacher. Elaine tries actively to involve the students in Science fairs, Drama workshops and Arts.

Tom: Principal-teacher, mixed rural school, currently teaching Fourth, Fifth and Sixth class. Tom has nearly forty years teaching experience and twenty years as principal. Tom has taught most of his career in a rural setting, with multi-grade classes.

5.5 A Question of Gender Balance?

Although there is a general consensus in society and popular media that there needs to be more recruitment of male teachers in schools to act as role models for boys, and to reduce the feminisation of the occupation (Skelton, 2002, Martino & Kehler, 2006, Drudy, 2008), throughout this research teachers interviewed appear to reject the essentialism of this argument. Respondents were in general agreement, that although more men in Irish primary schools would have a positive impact on the occupation, the majority of teachers suggested it was not necessary to recruit more male teachers specifically to act as role models for boys as male teachers would be beneficial to all children as a means of social confidence and competence when

communication with both males and females. Mirroring research by Skelton (2003), who interviewed student teachers, the majority of participants appeared to have an optimistic view that primary teaching, although currently viewed as 'women's work' throughout society, should offer 'equal opportunities' and was a career suitable for both sexes (Skelton, 2003). Significant parallels within this doctoral study can also be drawn from research by Drudy et al., (2005), as aspects of 'women's work' were highlighted throughout this study and the numerical dominance of women in the occupation did arise frequently, however, rather than the widespread fear of entry into teaching because of its association as a 'feminised' occupation (Drudy et al., 1999), it was rather suggested that more men should enter into the occupation to promote the occupation as gender neutral and promote teaching for both sexes on suitability to the occupation rather than suitability by gender only. Reflecting on this, Liam suggested more men in teaching could modify perceptions of primary teaching as 'women's work', by entering the occupation not as male role models but as teachers who are male. He believed more men in teaching could possibly work towards less gender tension associated with the occupation, explaining:

> I think it's good for children to see a job that doesn't have to be your occupation, doesn't have to be decided by your gender, but I don't think in relation to the teaching it's a huge factor. But I do think it's good to see that teaching is an open profession regardless if you're a male or female. I suppose anyone would have considered in the nursing profession a nurse was considered a woman and it's good to see now there is a mixture of some male and female nurses. I would like teaching not to be seen as gender orientated (Liam: Rural school, mainstream teacher).

Through acknowledging the benefits of more males entering into primary teaching as a means of changing current discourse and embedded acceptance in children to view primary teaching as 'women's work', Liam is also highlighting issues of gender identities that are constructed in young children through recognition of dominant discourses towards occupations that are considered 'women's work' or 'men's work'. This illustrates the effect gendered assumptions have on children even at primary level. This also demonstrates how attitudes within social constructions of gender roles can easily be passed onto children from uncritical gendered assumptions of those around them.

Although Liam did not comment on his own experiences regarding predeterminations by society of primary teaching as 'women's work' or more so, populist attitude that men as teachers will strengthen the academic and behavioural performance of boys, he did appear to be mindful of his position as an equal peer to his female colleagues and articulated he was not there to undermine his female counterparts or carry out specific requirements female teachers were lacking, as some popular media would portray. Demonstrating his sophisticated understanding of both his relationship to his peers and to the external perceptions of him as a male teacher, Liam explained, 'Once the role models are a positive influence, I don't think gender [of the teacher] is in any way of real importance'.

While the dominant focus of calls by popular media for more men in teaching is to act as role models for boys, only one of the male teachers made direct connections with being placed in a classroom for this reason, which will be discussed in the next section. However, there did appear to be some tension within the interviews not to be associated with being a role model to boys only. There was a consistent resistance from both male and female teachers to recognise gender modelling, as all participants made constant references to modelling for both boys and girls in a similar manner. This possibly demonstrates an underlying tension present amongst female teachers towards the direct calls for more men in teaching. Conforming to Liam's perception that being a role model was gender neutral and more emphasis was placed on actual modelling behaviour to all children than to one specific gender, teachers interviewed acknowledged that although they were mindful of being an influential presence in boy's lives, they did not see themselves as a role model to just boys or just girls but more of a general role model to all students in their class.

> In a way for me it's the same, I suppose, in terms of your behaviour, your example in front of the classroom, communicating…..For me it's almost sexless, that you should be a role model whether your male or female, you're up there and you are the role model and it's not that you're the female role model or you're the male role model (Linda: Rural school, mainstream teacher).

Teachers were in agreement it was the behaviour they were modelling and this was not gender specific. Regardless of a male or female teacher, a key factor emphasised throughout this study was the importance of teaching pedagogy and the significant increases in academic and behavioural performance and motivation by engaging with

the students and modelling the qualities themselves that they wished to instil in the children. Interestingly, when asked what they perceive as a good role model to children, aspects of role modelling were again gender neutral and not targeted at one sex in particular. Tom explained:

> In a small setting like ours here, they all take part in everything and everybody rolls in and plays together…. You have to treat them the same, they really respond to that (Tom: Rural school principal).

This was also reiterated by Anna, who suggested the 'teacher's personality, with boys and girls, being kind and respectful' is more influential than gender. David too expressed similar sentiments, reiterating the importance of keeping role modelling general to all children and again, not gender specific:

> I suppose in the kind of teacher you are. From my own experience I try to treat the children as I would like my own children to be treated or I would like to be treated myself, so I would always try to use manners when I'm asking them to do anything, always try to remain even tempered and try my best to treat them all the very same…. I just try my best to model the behaviour I expect from them and I don't think I'd have the upper hand in doing that for boys, in that particular aspect over females. Role modelling is general behaviour (David: Urban mixed school teacher).

Throughout this doctoral study, respondents appeared to have a general awareness of using non gendered approaches within the classroom and teachers did not intend to be role models for girls or boys on a particular day, but rather sought opportunities to demonstrate respect, manners, good communication to one another and sincerity throughout the day, in hope this behaviour would possibly in effect, guide the children towards displaying these qualities towards one another and become reflective in how they apply themselves to their study. Whether this was a reflection of underlying and unspoken tension within female teachers towards campaigns for more men in primary teaching or resistance from male teachers towards the pressure society is placing for more men in primary teaching as role models for boys, when attempting to define their perception of the teacher as a role model, there did not appear to be any display of deliberate conformity of stereotypical roles within their perceptions of their teaching in the classroom or indeed reinforcements of hegemonic masculinities or gender segregation within the parameters of how they carry out their daily lessons. Both male and female teachers seem to actively resist

the tenant that a role model for boys needs to be male Teachers generally articulated a general neutral stance towards gender modelling. Anna reflects:

> I think maybe the same as we are for the girls, the exact same, just try to demonstrate as best we can support, I suppose, and try to lead by very good example just in general behaviour, manners, calm (Anna: Urban mixed school teacher).

The call for more male teachers in primary school can lead to tension amongst female teachers as it signifies more men are needed because female teachers are not performing the entire obligations of their occupation and men are needed to oversee their flaws. Calls for more male teachers to act as role models for boys as a means to increase the academic performance and interest in boys is a sexist argument that not only insults the work women have carried out for decades but also places undue pressure amongst males to carry out tasks that have no educational or theoretical evidence (that gender modelling works) in the first place. Whether or not the teachers were aware of this research countering the effectiveness of role modelling, they clearly demonstrated that they believed modelling was gender neutral.

Similar styles of non-gendered teaching and 'role modelling' were again reiterated by Áine and David, which lends one to infer that regardless of gender of the teacher and the pupil, teachers within this study have an underlined agreement the qualities they feel teachers display as role models are more aligned with general behavioural traits of respect and etiquette rather than gendered qualities. As there appears to be a general perception within this study, that teachers do not behave or act differently in their capacity as role models for boys and girls regardless of the teacher's gender, this counters essentialist arguments for more male role models for boys in order to reduce effeminacy in schools, and to form better relationships with boys. If experienced teachers themselves, both male and female, perceive role modelling for students as primarily non-gendered and believe the most suitable method of role modelling is not of a gendered nature but instilling general behavioural qualities within the children, there is no correlation whatsoever between the current call for more men in primary teaching and the perceptions of experienced teachers within the primary sector itself. The participating principals and teachers have clear contrasting views of the external perception of what is needed in schools in terms of role modelling for boys and this highlights a clear disconnect between popular theory

based on the call for more male teachers and on-the-ground practices and opinions of teachers in schools. Áine's reflection below further illustrates role modelling, even in a boys single sex school, has the same underlying behaviours regardless of the school structure:

> I think teachers can be good role models for boys by showing them how to respect one another, by displaying good communication qualities, good caring qualities and showing them that you understand them and are there for them…… definitely displaying behaviours and mannerisms to the boys is very important. Instilling good values in the kids (Áine: Boys only school teacher).

Although men's rights groups would possibly suggest this is exactly why we need more men in primary teaching, that all the discourse surrounding manners and caring qualities displays the 'feminine' environment that surrounds boys in primary schooling and this in itself would highlight the need for recuperative masculinities in primary schools, (Skelton & Francis, 2003) it has however to be noted, that there was no gender divide between male or female teachers views of what a good role model for boys should be nor was there any mention from male teachers about displaying hegemonic male qualities to boys, bonding with boys in particular or 'toughening' boys. This would correspond with many studies (Ashley & Lee, 2003, Lingard et al., 2001, Trent and Slade, 2001) that suggest the sex of the teacher is not a determining factor in the academic and behavioural performance of boys and qualities to demonstrate good teaching pedagogy are not determined by or for one sex only. The insistence of teachers and principals in this study that modelling is gender neutral indicates that they place quality teaching above teaching gendered qualities. Mills (2004) stresses the importance of not placing boys and male teachers into one homogeneous group and the importance of acknowledging diversity within the classroom. This was reiterated within the interviews as it was advocated that the entry of more males into teaching would be 'great', but only from the angle of 'individuality' and 'variation' rather than for gendered reasons. Teachers participating appear to be, in general, in agreement that the current panic for more male teachers to act as role models in schools for boys is not 'a determining factor in their [children's] outlook' (Tom) and although they felt the boys did not need a male teacher in order to perform better academically and behaviourally in primary schools, they acknowledged a male presence on staff would be good for both girls and boys in terms of diversity and change for the children, but paralleling research

by Mills (2004), the overall agreement was that gender modelling certainly is not going to automatically change academic and behavioural performances of boys. Linda strongly articulated:

> I don't know as a pure argument if having a male role model the whole way in school is going to suddenly….that the boys will be soaring in their results and so on. I cannot see that suddenly changing. It's good to use the man as a novelty yes, but I don't know if just because boys are men or teachers are male that they are automatically going to be a role model because of their sex (Linda: Rural school teacher).

This was also expressed by a Tom:

> I do think it's nice for children to have both positive male and female influence in their lives as opposed to having a number of positive female influences or a number of positive male influences. But I don't think it's going to be a determining factor in their outlook either way (Tom: Rural school principal).

While Tom suggests the gender of the teacher might not change the overall experiences of the children, David's practises somewhat contradict this, as he details previous experience of gendered attitudes within the classroom. Linda's reference of 'novelty' referring to a male teacher was experienced by David, who also confirmed the pupils do enjoy having a male teacher but he believed rather than needing a male influence in their schooling or a preference over gendered behaviours male teachers portray, it was just the 'novelty' for them having a male teacher for the first time. Interestingly David specifies the excitement of the girls at having a male teacher also:

> It's funny actually this year in particular I have a class and I know I'm the first male teacher that they had and when I met them they found out I was male they all seemed pleased that they had a male teacher, the girls seemed pleased as well. It's kind of a novelty for them (David: Urban mixed school teacher).

The 'novelty' or excitement associated with having a male teacher was also expressed by Elaine, who acknowledged children can be excited when they have a male teacher for the first time, however, she does explain the novelty soon wears off when the children realise that teachers have a curriculum to follow. Coinciding with research by Jackson (as cited in Skelton et al., 2006), who concluded regardless of class structure, single-sex or mixed-sex, teachers revert back to a 'curriculum as usual approach':

> I think boys do respond to the male model very well, I don't know why. I think it could be because they are scarce...but at the end of the year, you have to have so much done and you have to recap on it…I think they have to focus them more and maybe [boys] lose some of the interest. They mightn't be as popular with the boys because they have to put pressure on them to learn (Elaine: Rural mixed school principal).

Although, Elaine suggests each teacher has a curriculum to follow and the novelty of a male teacher can wear off, she does highlight in her experience boys can respond well to male teachers. This is where contradictions became evident surrounding areas of the absent role model in boy's lives, in particular, in one parent families, where the family tends to be matriarchal. Awareness of having a male influence was generally expressed stronger with teachers in urban areas, where they felt the presence of male role models to relate and learn from, was in some instances absent from the child's life due to families moving away from their original home setting or not having a male grandparent or uncle present in their lives. It is also possible that rural schools would not experience as many single parent families as in urban, city areas. Although in his interview David tries to ensure he treats boys and girls equally and stresses the importance of treating all children the same, he is aware that he could be the only male role model present in the child's life. However, David's sophisticated understanding of his influence as a teacher to both boys and girls is apparent, as is his awareness of the perception and public call for more male role models. Throughout his interview David is very reflexive about the public call for more male role models and this is reflected in his approach to teaching as he also undercuts the essentialist binary by noting that male role models are good for girls as well:

> I suppose in that type of family [matriarchal] there can be a lack of male role models and there sometimes is a very involved male present there, but quite often there is not, and I think in my experience it does help boys and girls from that background as well to have a male role model in their life on a regular [basis], that they can relate to and learn from (David, urban mixed school teacher).

The suggestion of male teachers being an influential presence in the lives of boys in one parent families is certainly not new. Research from Lingard, Mills and Martino (2009), Carrington (2003) and Gilbert and Gilbert (1998) have all examined one parent family discourse where there is a call for more men to be present in schools

for boys living in matriarchal households. Even the aspect of the male teacher as a role model for boys in one parent families appearing in ten of the twelve interviews conducted within this doctoral study illustrates the prevalence of the one parent debate amongst society, which places pressures on male teachers to act as role models, particularly for boys from one parent families. However, such debates strengthen ideologies of a nuclear family as being the best for all children and infer same-sex parenting and female-led families as less successful. They also cause possible tension amongst male teachers who feel they should be conforming to stereotypical hegemonic roles for these boys to look up to, while at the same time demonstrating a capacity to show kindness and caring to students (Pepperell & Smedley, 1998, Connell, 1995). Debates for more male teachers to show boys gender 'normalisation' continue to be driven by media and some government stakeholders who devise campaigns to encourage boys, 'and apparently girls also' (Bricheno & Thornton, 2003, p3) to read more, by recruiting volunteer premier league footballers to read to children, while bonding through football (this is ongoing, in association with the National Literacy Trust in the UK). Reinforcement of socially constructed gender roles further perpetuates tension within the role of the male teacher, creating almost confusion for male teachers as to what exactly their role is within the school, teacher or 'father figure'. Furthermore, research by Ryker et al., (2001, p.11) into the educational achievements of children from 'broken homes', concluded, amongst other factors, that 'females from broken homes have lower educational achievement than males from broken homes', possibly because they are given extra household responsibilities than males. This further highlights the uncritical argument for increased male teachers in primary schools to act as role models for boys, when evidence-based research has shown, if the father figure is absent, it is the *girls* who are possibly in greater need of attention (Ryker et al., 2001). This articulates the desire and 'panic' in the call for more male teachers are essentialist and more concerned with reinforcement of hegemonic masculinities and power privilege in boys than behavioural and academic achievement.

However, the role of the male teacher as a 'masculine father figure' was confronted strongly by two teachers within this study, who argued that male teachers could benefit children in matriarchal families by giving them an opportunity to see men display nurturing and caring qualities rather than highlight masculinity for these

boys. David displayed his resistance of 'popular' beliefs about gender and role modelling explaining:

> I don't think it's important to show a boy how to do manly things like fixing a leak or like repairing a tyre, I mean mums are perfectly capable of doing those things, but I definitely think that showing more modelling on how to be balanced, kind and caring. I mean there's a lot more to being masculine than doing manly things (David: Urban mixed school teacher).

The awareness of not needing to display hegemonic masculine qualities in his classes was highlighted in many areas of David's interview. He constantly emphasised his awareness of treating all students equally. Having had an educational background himself that consisted of a majority of male teachers in a single-sex boy's primary school, perhaps David had more insight into the uncritical rhetoric surrounding gender modelling. Drawing significant parallels with research that suggests boys do not perform better with a male teacher (Helbig, 2002), David argued:

> There are certain primary schools, all boys primary schools, [that have] a lot of male teachers and I know in my own case I went to an all boy's school and most teachers were male and I don't think boys in that school would have done any better for it, just as I don't think the girls would have done any better just because [there are] female role models.

Contradicting populist debate for the recuperation of hegemonic masculinities in schools and acceptance of masculine behaviours within 'boys will be boys' discourse (Biddulph, 1997, 2000), David was purposefully positioned in his current class to portray caring qualities, as many children in his class from other ethnical backgrounds had difficulty taking direction from female teachers on staff. Conflicting to research by Cushman (2008) who demonstrated principals wanted males to display hegemonic qualities to the boys, to show them 'manliness', David was in the senior classes to promote equality and authority towards female teachers.

The principal in David's school reiterated the significance of strategically placing teachers in certain rooms in order to diffuse gendered expectation amongst some students. Alice expressed how she structures classes in certain ways to avoid intimidation of female teachers due to aggression or defiance in certain cultures towards women. Contradicting findings by Cushman in New Zealand (2008), male teachers were not used to reinforcing aggressive discipline on these students, in fact the opposite, they were placed within the senior classes to display respect and

equality to female teachers as she witnessed increasing aggression shown towards female teachers by some boys from other cultural backgrounds, where heavy social constructions of gender are engrained:

> Where some children who are coming from different cultural backgrounds because maybe males are more valued in certain cultures, the children are encouraged to follow the instructions of the males over their mothers so if their father is the dominant one in the house, the mother is very sub-ordinate, I would see that it has been beneficial to have a male teacher for those children. I don't want to highlight any particular cultural group but, there definitely would be different groups where, you know, the fathers would be far more dominant and that is picked up by the children, that they should be listening to a man more over a woman and I have seen, I have witnessed, a female teacher correcting a child or trying to discuss something with him and they would be flippant or defiant even or dismissive, yes (Alice: Urban mixed school principal).

In a classroom situation, where there is an attitude of superiority against women due to cultural differences and/or beliefs, if male teachers enter into this classroom setting and reflect dominant constructions of masculinity that reinforce and invigorate gendered stereotypes and further strengthen superiority of men, this could percolate into peer groups, school discipline and power relations between girls and boys and boys and their female teachers. It could perpetuate and strengthen the sexist attitudes already evident within the classroom and acknowledge power privilege amongst these boys, both allowing for negative consequences for girls and other boys who do not display hegemonic masculine qualities.

If principals are actually pairing male teachers to classes where there is a need to display nurturing and respectful qualities towards women teachers, due to cultural attitudes embedded in the children, this demonstrates a conscious effort to dispute the theory that the feminisation of primary teaching is in essence creating more caring boys. It also questions uncritical calls for more male teachers to act as role models for boys, especially when gendered anxieties are being imposed onto children and schools. The mainstream critique about the 'poor boys' and a call for more role models for boys displays the lack of co-operation and engagement with practicing school teachers and educational research, which challenge the call for more male teachers in order to facilitate boys learning and behavioural interest in school (Carrington et al., 2007, Mills et al., 2004, Martino & Berrill, 2003, Francis,

2000, Lahelma, 2000). It is also worth noting Alice's reference to children. She, like Liam, is aware of how children can 'pick up on' gendered influences and carry on these gendered stereotypes.

Although Alice felt the need to strategically place male teachers with boys in the senior classes, she was very aware of the difficulties teachers, even male teachers, would have building relationships with aggressive or defiant pupils but she expressed the male teachers would have more respect from these particular students due to cultural boundaries and therefore be in a better position to model behaviours of sexual equality and nurturing:

> There are some really good teachers who are very aware of the cultural differences so they are keen to promote so they actively model how you should treat the female teacher in school in front of that child, so, as recently as last week …..a male teacher came back into the classroom [after an incident with a female supervising teacher[10]] and reasoned with the situation, he spent quite a few minutes talking to the child about how the authority of whatever adult is as valid as the other and he did it in a supportive way but it probably carried more weight for the child coming from him maybe than from the female (Alice: Urban mixed school principal).

Paechter (2007) in part understands difficulties developing teacher pupil relationships when the relationship between teacher and pupil can have boundaries such as social class and the extent in which the teacher feels they can relate to the pupil. Taking studies from Skelton (2001) and Connolly (2004) within violent working-class communities, she highlights the difficulty displaying alternative models of masculinities and femininities in circumstances where violence of pupils is an issue therefore teachers adopted a more masculine, aggressive and disciplinary stance on their role. However, it is worth highlighting the gender awareness of the principal above in placing a 'nurturing' male teacher into this particular classroom and her active role in softening cultural boundaries within commands of authority between males and females from different cultural backgrounds. It is also important to highlight her terminology 'there are some really good teachers who are aware of the cultural differences', this could perhaps indicate that she is acutely aware of repercussions of placing the 'wrong' male teacher into the classroom and the consequences this could have on others within the room. If male teachers were to try

[10] A supervising teacher refers to a teacher who is supervising the class during lunch break or if a teacher has to leave the classroom for various reasons.

to bond with these particular students through dominant masculine discourse and perform 'laddish' masculine behaviour as a means to promote their masculine identities in front of these students, the reinforcement of hegemonic masculinities could further perpetuate misogynistic behaviour. Therefore, male teachers who can challenge social constructs of gender and who are willing to model a variety of masculinities and femininities are needed. This further highlights the dangers of uncritical assumptions of male teacher rhetoric about the need for more male teachers in schools to act as role models for boys without illustrating the importance of their roles within the schools. Both the male teacher in question and the principal had an admirable understanding of their roles within this particular situation but if an egotistic male teacher was to enter into the classroom in order to bond with these boys it could potentially end up in a dangerously sexist environment that would potentially put both female teachers, girls and boys who are do not fit into masculine ideals at risk.

Furthermore, studies by Roulston and Mills (2000) and Francis and Skelton (2002), also highlight homophobic 'bantering' amongst male teachers and boys, perhaps in attempts for the male teachers to solidify their existence as 'normal' men and become accepted by the boys. Roulston and Mills (2000) suggest it is possible that men do not challenge boy's sexist or homophobic behaviour, and this can often result in bonding between the male teacher and some boys. Although homophobia was not mentioned by participants in this doctoral study, it was suggested by both male and female teachers, tendencies amongst some male teachers to overcompensate in order to bond with the pupils or to actively seek a connection with the pupils more than female teachers would. This highlights the importance of not employing males to be role models for boys only, as it could possibly further recuperate masculinities in primary schools and further segregate those who are not conforming to society's stereotypical gendered behaviour. Contradicting assumptions that male teachers allegedly bring more discipline to their teaching (Lewis et al., 1999, Bush, 1997), Mary explained, in her experience, too much bonding can result in a lower standard of discipline within the classroom:

> In my opinion male teachers try to bond with children a bit too much. I feel that they often find a common ground with the children through areas such as sport and that can lead to a little lax behaviour and create a more-friendlier environment (Mary: Rural school teacher).

This was also supported by Elaine, who suggested in her observations 'male [teachers] have more tendency to be relaxed or easy going but get the work done in a more relaxed way'. Perhaps this displays tension within the male teacher debate that some male teachers do feel certain pressures to act as a role model for boys and there is perception that they should create a bond with the students more than their female counterparts. Linda reiterated Anna's experiences explaining, 'a male teacher is more likely to seek the connection [with boys]. Although, it wouldn't be easier for them to find it, but they would go out and seek a connection more than a female teacher'.

Tom also highlighted attempts in forming relationships with boys. In agreement with Linda, he illustrated the ability of girls to remain on task as opposed to some boys who tend to have difficulty reverting back to academic activities:

> I think the girls would still work away. I often find that girls can go back to the task at hand very easily, while the boys just want to keep chatting and are often offended when I have to tell them to go back to work and stop the conversation. I am sometimes cautious about bringing too much distraction into the classroom for this reason (Tom: Rural school principal).

Interestingly, difficulties forming relationships with boys, was also highlighted by Michael, who again, referenced the ability of girls to remain on task:

> I think there is difficulty in balancing the act of being teacher and trying to be, you know, having a relationship with them [boys]. I think it's difficult to do that with boys and it's difficult to vary from the social aspect of things to the academic, whereas with girls, the focus seems to be on the academic. It's easier to have a relationship (Michael, Boys only urban school principal).

On admittance from both male and female teachers that there can be greater difficulty redirecting boys back into their academic work, this could possibly question whether it is the child's interest in the subject and concentration levels that distract from learning and not the gender of the teacher. Corresponding to perceptions of Irish primary teachers throughout this study, research by Martino (2008), Drudy et al., (2005) and Carrington et al., (2004) confirm the gender of the teacher does not have a significant impact on the academic achievement of boys or girls as they discovered that teachers, regardless of gender, vary in their choice of

professional pedagogy. From teachers perceptions above, defining male discipline as more ‘lax’, one could infer that female teachers recognise the difficulty in redirecting boys back into academic activities after more social debates, therefore do not engage in as much general conversation as some male teachers, categorising male teachers pedagogical style as a more ‘relaxed’. It could also suggest underlining tension amongst male and female teachers in their opinions of what type of discipline is needed in schools, as Elaine consistently praises the work of male teachers throughout her interview yet, cautions their ‘easy-going’ nature, acknowledging her awareness of gender dynamics within teaching and her visual awareness of how teachers engage with their students. Various attempts by male teachers above to form a ‘relationship’ with male students, could also indicate tensions and pressures amongst male teachers to try to bond with students because they are in the numerical minority and perhaps feel pressure from society to be a popular male role model amongst their male students. It would certainly correlate with some of the children’s questionnaires in this doctoral study that highlight male teacher’s tendencies to carry out conversations in class more than female teachers and the categorisation of female teachers as being ‘stricter’ by some of the children. However, whether it is subconscious pressure in male teachers to be popular and bond with students or it is simply a teacher’s general pedagogical style, it is evident from the experiences of teachers above that boys find it more difficult to remain on task and revert back to written tasks, regardless of the gender of the teacher.

Additionally, it is also important to note that there is as yet no evidence to suggest that men teachers as a group adopt different pedagogies and behaviours in the classroom to women teachers (Hutchings, 2002, Skelton, 2002, Lahelma, 2000, Smedley 1999). Perhaps it is the interests of the pupils that should hold more focus.

This is further explored in the next section of the data analysis.

5.6 Curriculum Verses Teaching Pedagogy: Academic Interest

Throughout the research interviews, some teachers were determined to note their perceived increase in academic performance and behaviour of all pupils when the teacher, of either gender, actively engages with the student, finds area of interest and promotes this through lessons. It was clear throughout the interviews that teachers

were aware of differences in children's learning and ability and differentiation was an imperative element throughout their teaching pedagogy. Recognition of children's diversity were notably repeated within the interviews, highlighting teachers' perception that pupils cannot be categorised into homogenised groups, as populist debate would portray. Anna explained:

> You have to study what they are interested in. Like, if it's not your interest you have to show them that you know something about it, you mightn't have a huge interest in it, but I do think you have to show them that you can chat about what they come to you with, what's important to them. It depends *fully* on the individual child. Regardless of teacher, male or female, both have to work with the individual child. Understand them, regardless of gender (Anna: Mixed urban school teacher).

Michael too expressed similar sentiments, placing higher emphasis on the motivation of students through outside influences rather than gendered traits:

> Put areas of their interest into reading material, if they are interested in Science, read something scientific and again action in class. When [boys] get into Drama, they really get involved in it and if they learn from Drama they don't hold themselves back, they are willing to participate from a young age and don't hold back. It's what they are used to. They do what they are used to (Michael: Boys only urban school principal)

This element of 'doing what they are used to' is extremely important within educational parameters. After reviewing research by Davies (1989), Skelton undertook her own research with similar variables to Davies. She composed a group of 6-7 year old children and read them a number of feminist fairy-tales. Anticipating the children would recognise the stronger female characters and appreciate the 'softer' male temperaments, Skelton discovered the opposite. Emulating findings by Davies, Skelton also found the children were unable to divert from the 'image' of the princess as the one who is recued and the prince as the hero, even when the prince was actually rescued by the princess in the story! The princess was depicted as a defiant character by the children probably because by the end of the story she was dressed in a paper bag and ran away from the prince instead of marrying him. This did not correspond with the children's current gender discourse and they were unable to deconstruct conventional stereotypes. For this reason, we need to teach children how to deconstruct already formed social constructions of gender. Some of the participants within this research clearly illustrate that it is important for teachers in

early years to understand and acknowledge their role in this by monitoring class-based discussions that reinforce gendered stereotypes and encourage children to openly engage in gender discussions with a view to helping them think critically about their own gendered behaviour and that of others around them. If this is done from an early age, when children's gender categories are still fluid (Davies, 1989), as they develop they continue to 'do what they are used to', it could help deconstruct gendered boundaries, enable children to think critically about gender discourse and influence individual thinking and better learning and individuality within schools.

While the majority of teachers within this study appear to reject the notion of males being more adept in dealing with and teaching boys, discussion on increasing the academic achievement of boys from their perspective did open up interesting dialogue within the interviews. Through their experiences, some teachers placed emphasis on the difference in teaching pedagogy necessary for boys and girls and acknowledged there can be a difference in their learning styles. The struggles to motivate boys, as opposed to girls, was a commonality within the interviews as it was in common agreement that generally girls show a greater interest in learning than boys. Importantly, beyond the realm of the gender of the teacher, the majority of respondents placed more emphasis on enabling the children learn through other motivational tools such as exploring the interests of the children and trying to incorporate this into their academic activities. Áine expressed:

> As an individual it's how you work with them. There's ways to get children on side and if you show an interest in what they want to tell you, if you make a big effort to show you have an interest in their interest, they work with you. And that's not boys, it's boys and girls, if you show an interest in them they feed off that and work with you (Áine: Boys only school teacher).

This was especially emphasised when boys' educational discourse was engaged, as it was again accentuated that, from their experiences, girls have more ability to self-regulate their learning and motivation whereas boys need extra incentives to get work completed, as Liam articulates:

> I think girls would still work away; they are often intrinsically motivated. Boys often need extrinsic motivation, promises to go down to the pitch or, you know what I mean, we're always looking for special books for them, we're constantly trying to motivate them (Liam: Rural school teacher).

Intrinsic motivation amongst girls was also highlighted by Michael, who suggested from his experience girls 'just want to impress naturally, boys are less mature, less focused, boisterous with less concentration'. From Tom and Michael's interviews it was apparent that even male teachers find it a struggle to motivate boys, therefore contradicting popular belief that more men will encourage the participation and interest in boys and schooling. Michael suggested a whole-school approach to learning could help motivate students, in particular boys:

> Maybe it comes down to an individualised school approach, and addition of things like quizzes, children really get into that, and I think that's encouraging academia and you need to do more things like that. Boys naturally gravitate towards teams and competition like sport and I think competition like that with Maths projects or English projects, I think it would incentivise boys to be, I think it would, you know, give them an outcome. Boys like to see an outcome like a team outcome where everyone is striving for the same thing (Michael: Boys only urban school principal).

Although Michael believes active competition and a hands on approach to learning will facilitate boys learning, he is also aware that schools and sports organisations in Ireland are actively trying to reduce competition amongst younger children in an attempt not to segregate those who lack confidence and to promote enjoyment of the sport (GAA, 2011), but he feels strongly that 'it's something boys would engage in if they thought they had something at the end'.

Although attempts to try to incorporate children's individual interests into lessons and awareness of educational discourse were evident, there were still obvious gendered assumptions littered throughout the interviews. While male teachers interviewed appeared to resist the notion that they are only there to be role models for boys, when boy's educational discourse arose, gendered assumptions between subject and interests became evident. Even to take the example of introducing projects and competition because it appeals to boys, is assuming boys are all participants of one homogenised group and as previous research throughout this research cited, it could have damaging consequences for boys who become segregated or excluded. It could also reinforce a demeaning attitude towards girls or non-competitive boys, as was seen in research within single-sex schools (Rennie & Parker, 1997). Even composing teams of girls and boys is likely to perpetuate misogynistic attitudes that highlight any failings of girls within the group. Likewise,

throughout the responses, although good intentions of the teachers were clear, teachers reflected upon Science, Maths and Sports as areas of interest for boys and use these to devise learning methodologies for them by picking books for boys, adding quizzes for boys or incentivising boys through sport. This illustrates the extent to which an essentialist understanding of gender is present and replicated in society. This again, can reinforce boy groupings where boys can bond through discourses of homophobia, misogyny or sexism (Martino & Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2003, Mac an Ghaill, 1994,). In their own research, Martino and Meyenn (2002) also document teaching methodologies implemented by teachers, where teachers use reading material and learning approaches 'typical of boys' in efforts to encourage boy's literacy however, this too has its drawbacks as it can further strengthen social constructions of masculinity and reinforce ideas that they should be conforming to stereotypes by reading certain material and participating in model making or games (Martino & Meyenn, 2002). The unspoken underlying tension between male teachers, that is apparent in Tom and Michael's interview, to promote 'fun or active' learning to boys is possibly as a result of essentialist educational discourse that suggests males are needed in primary schools to bond with boys. From both interviews it was apparent that bonding measures only result in boys becoming less interested and distracted in their learning. Tensions within male teachers to perform 'male duties' that are aligned to educational stakeholders' uncritical and sexist views of being a role model is placing pressure on some male teachers to gain academic interest in boys through socially constructed stereotypical roles associated within gendered power relations, like sport and quizzes. Even the suggestion by teachers interviewed that subjects are gendered, illustrates there are contradictions within male teachers interviewed to adhere to demands by populist media to influence boys' education, while the teachers themselves strongly reject the notion of being primary teachers to be role models only for boys. Although teachers within this study are actively trying to seek an interest within the children in order to create fun and engaging lessons, or even incentivise children to learn by promises of more lively activities after 'mundane' written tasks, it is the attitude of the teacher that will be reflective of the student and teachers must be aware of this and must be more cautious not to comply with gendered assumptions of curriculum and uncritical gendered dialogue within the classroom if we are to move forward. After all, 'perceptions of curriculum and gendered assumption learning can only be

deconstructed by teachers who themselves have the ability to critique their own assumptions about boys and girls and are sensitive to how these affect their chosen pedagogy' (Martino & Meyenn, 2002, p.313)

Although Michael suggested a whole-school approach was needed to incentivise boys through the methods above, perhaps a whole-school approach which is based on socio-cultural needs of the pupils would be more influential, especially when principals in urban schools are forced to place male teachers in senior classrooms because of female misogyny experienced from male pupils. Teachers have great influential power within classrooms to create wonderful environments allowing pupils to deconstruct social constructions of gender but as is evident above, they first have to 'recognise and tackle their own understandings of how gender is constructed in schooling and then help pupils work to deconstruct their stereotypical gendered notions'(Francis & Skelton, 2005, p. 143). However, teachers must be allowed to undertake their role effectively without tensions from society, as seen below.

5.7 Exposure to Both Sexes: Tensions and Contradictions in the Call for More Male Teachers

Significant parallels with this research can be drawn from other literature on gender and education (Cushman, 2011, Lingard et al., 2009, Carrington et al., 2007, Drudy et al., 2005, Francis et al., 2005, Francis & Skelton, 2005, Ashley, 2003, Martino & Mayenn, 2001) who stress there is no correlation between the academic performance and motivation of students when gender modelling is practiced. However, it was of general consensus within this study that teachers felt exposure to both male and female teachers was certainly not a disadvantage for both boys and girls as it could possibly create more confidence and competence within girls, especially when communicating to a variety of males to whom they would not otherwise have been exposed. There was admittance from most teachers that men can bring an extra element into teaching and within eight years of primary schooling it is important that children experience an array of teachers in order to prepare them for society, however, comments generally reverted back to individuality of teachers and not the gender of the teacher that mattered. This could allude to tensions and resistance from female teachers to agree with gendered assumptions and populist attitudes in society

regarding the need for more male teachers to rectify social constructions of gender within schools.:

> Different teacher, different personalities, it exposes them to the real world! ...It's just a variation and being exposed and comfortable with both men and women, not because they respond better to one another (Áine: Boys only school teacher).

> Some male teachers do present a certain calmness but really different teachers, different personalities. It exposes them to the reality of working with different people in the real world! (Mary: Rural school teacher).

Again, the discourse of male teacher necessity from female interviews was strong in Linda's comments as she suggested while males would be a welcoming addition to Irish primary schools, they did not need more males in teaching as populist media portrays. This again, perhaps illustrates an underlining tension amongst female teachers being seen as inadequate to teach boys, therefore more men are necessary. Again, possibly indicating that female teachers are feeling strain from current educational rhetoric:

> I definitely think they can come from things with a different angle so that they get experience but not that they *need* to be male, no, I think females can do the job just as good [*sic*], but if they have eight years of primary school with a female teacher I just think personally from that extra spin on it, to have a male that they might be more comfortable. They should experience a male during those eight years (Linda: Rural school teacher).

An understanding succinctly conveyed by Anna, who also suggests male teachers could add a different element to teaching by bring 'in some ties', in which she refers to the addition of other elements to teaching that can be brought through harmonious or effective relations, but she expressed male teachers were by no means necessary, and again refers back to the individuality of each teacher:

> If there's a school where your eight years in primary school and you don't get exposed to a male teacher, yeah, I do think that's a pity because certainly they could be a little less stressful, maybe they bring in some ties? Or they might do more sport of kind of way. Yeah, I do think it's important to expose them to both and it's personality and it's very important. Personally, I think it's the individual at the end of the day. That's my own opinion (Anna: Mixed urban school teacher).

Interestingly, the responses of the male teachers were similar in nature, also confirming in their experiences that a male teacher is not imperative but can be advantageous from an individual perspective. Some male teachers tended to view it from the side of girls rather than boys as Michael expressed the male teacher might actually suit girls more than boys as it 'exposes them to both personalities and can help them develop socially', communicating with males and females equally, just as a strong female role model can instil equal values to a male role model:

> We live in a world where females are involved in sport and look at Katie Taylor for example, they see strong girls and things like that are good for them, so no I don't think boys necessarily need a male in schools but I do think there are advantages to both teachers. It depends on the individual as well, it really does. I mean it's no harm in my experience, but I don't think it's necessary (Michael: Boys only urban school principal).

There was a large element of 'need' verses 'want' within the interviews. It was clear teachers within this doctoral study had a deep understanding of the debates about role models for boys, and they are critically engaging with these ideas in their professional practice, but they are not taking the current 'panic' without assessment. Throughout the interviews they demonstrated that there is more to the academic disinterest of boys than the addition of more male teachers and although they might suggest a want for more male teachers for reasons of individual merits, it was clear throughout the data that many teachers felt more males were not needed as much as popular media would portray.

The issue of comfort and gender preference arose in Anna's interview, which briefly aligned with the children's questionnaire, most teachers felt children didn't seem to have any difficulty expressing themselves.

> I suppose we are all more comfortable speaking with somebody of the same sex, if it's a girl speaking to a lady or a boy speaking to a man so from that point of view there's a comfort zone so they might be more approachable [male teachers to boys] Anna: Mixed urban school teacher).

But Áine who works in an all-boys primary school, contradicts this as she feels from her experiences that there is no discomfort talking to boys or vice versa and is of the opinion boys have no problem crying on the grass, when they fall.

> I think boys can pretend to be tough but under the exterior is a very considerate, shy and sensitive child. You see this at times when boys hurt

> themselves on the pitch. They will go down on the grass and cry and want to sit out. They want comfort from their teacher, male or female they will confide in us, in my experience anyway. I think teachers need to show boys that this behaviour is ok (Áine: Boys only urban school teacher).

Although Mary is of the same opinion, she does suggest it tends to be younger boys who 'go to the female teacher when they are hurt'. However, it does pose the question: if men are employed in primary school with the expectation that they will bond with boys through their masculinities then could this percolate into younger children and increase social conformity of masculinities at an even earlier age? This could be the case if primary schools were more willing to encourage more male teachers to teach in the infant classes.

5.8 Male Teachers in the Infant Class

Of the thirteen teachers and principals interviewed, only two female teachers were in the lower section of the school, teaching first, second and third class. All male teachers interviewed were in the upper primary school classes. Although, David and Michael both commented on having children of their own, which suggested their experience of young children, they had very little experience in the junior end of the school (ages 4-6 years), which explains their references to quizzes, competition and sport in relation to the promotion of boy's education, which are not activities that are associated with younger children. Although both teachers advocate a male teacher does not create more academic or behavioural achievement in boys, there is a gendered expectation present in their behaviours within the classroom through their display of conventional forms of masculinity and 'male' orientated incentives, such as extra sport, quizzes, and added competition, in order to engage the pupils (boys) further. This led me to wonder if they were given any opportunities to teach in younger classes. Unfortunately, as aspects of teaching infant classes only became apparent during data analysis, I could not further investigate their experiences, if any, and perceptions of teaching younger classes, however, interviews with principals shed significant light on the perceptions of men teaching younger classes in primary school. As primary schools are culturally recognised as places of nurturing and caring, the historical association of the primary school as a place that

'surrounds the construct of female and mother' (King, 1998) became very apparent within participating principals.

Constructs of gender identity categories were clear when the principals were questioned on the limitations for men entering into primary teaching. Three of the four principals interviewed solidified the historical perceptions of the 'motherly' role of the teacher as they expressed preference for a female teacher in the infant room:

> If there was a vacancy for an infant teacher, and I'm being really honest here, but I don't think I would employ a male to the position because you know an infant teacher is seen as a motherly figure (Tom: Rural school principal).

The perceptions of others were also very apparent, as Alice explained that although she wouldn't mind a male teacher in the infant classes, she wouldn't feel the parents would be favourable.

> I would expect though if I was putting a male teacher in, I might have to answer a few more questions from parents but I would be comfortable doing that but I would expect that. I would expect the few raised eyebrows and I would expect if I were to assign an infant class to a male teacher that mightn't have a lot of experience that they might feel oh what would people think and they might have concerns around that if it's a mixed class or whatever.
>
> **Researcher:** Predator? Yeah, and that would be, I would imagine a very real concern for a male teacher (Alice: Mixed urban school principal).

Whether it is discomfort from the principals and an unwillingness to deal with queries outside the classroom, issues of homophobia, paedophilia and 'motherly roles' are a common concern cited in educational literature. Skelton (2003) documented in her study of male primary teaching students both the issues of teaching lower primary school classes as 'not real teaching' and the attitude infant teaching consisted of more nurturing than teaching, while fears of been seen as a predator also impacted on decisions by males not to enter into the lower end of the school. Research by Martino et al., (2009) exposed teachers' awareness of perceptions of doing 'women's work', while Drudy et al., (2005), researching reasons why more men do not enter into primary teaching in Ireland concluded that some males felt primary teaching wasn't seen as a male occupation because of the nurturing association with the role.

The Irish association with suitability of female teachers in the infant room can be seen as far back as 1905, where Rule 127(b) was sanctioned by the Commissioners of National Education, in which the importance of the education of infant children was highlighted. The aim of rule 127(b) was to relieve male teachers from the infant classes and replace them with more suitable female teachers, as infants were 'better looked after by the average mistress rather than the average master' (Ní Bhroiméil, 2006, p.36), due to the sympathetic and patient nature of women. This led to the amalgamation of single-sex boy's and girl's schools in order 'for infant boys to be placed in the charge of mistresses who were their most suitable instructors' (Ní Bhroiméil, 2006, p.36). Women teachers were seen as 'nurturing, patient and able to understand young minds' therefore they would provide a good, moral influence in the education and growth of the youth (*ibid* as cited in Drudy, 2005, p.20) in comparison to men who were 'both by temperament and training […] unfit to teach infants' (Ní Bhroiméil, 2006, p.36). Sadly, this ideology seems to be still embedded in Irish culture today. Fears for male teachers in the infant classes will further perpetuate if principals are not naturally gravitating towards male and female teachers for the role. Although Elaine in particular expressed caution at placing 'a tall '6ft1, 6ft2, man in front of young children' as it may be intimidating for them, gender educational literature would lead one to believe other factors admitted by Alice and Tom are the forefront of the problem. Both research by King (1998) and Ashley and Lee (2003) argue the association with teaching as a 'motherly' role is unjustified and current attitudes put male teachers 'at risk'.

King, in particular, articulates that men who teach are 'at risk' when in care of young children, either they are at risk of being seen as 'unnatural' and feminine, at risk of accusations of sexualising the act of care, or at risk because they disrupt the 'economy that traps female teachers in an early education sweatshop' (King,1998, p.138). Ashley and Lee (2003) concur that there cannot be gendered discrimination within primary teaching and 'do not subscribe to the view that women are inherently more capable of or suited to caring for children in school', and similarly men do not have the advantage of 'rational, focused, cognitive subject delivery' (Ashley & Lee, 2003 p. 21). Suggesting the move from viewing primary teaching as a 'motherly role' or even replacing absent father figures with a male teacher, Ashley and Lee believe school structures need to support 'androgynous' teachers, one in which

displays both masculine and feminine qualities. Instead of a 'motherly, caring' role, the teacher has a 'caring about' the child role that is always interlinked with the curriculum and therefore not equivalent to caring in the home capacity as care incorporates masculine and feminine roles. This was a similar sentiment expressed by teachers throughout this study, who promote the individuality of the teacher rather than adhering to gender specific roles. Teachers can teach children in a gender-neutral learning environment by conducting lessons in which children can explore different ways to look at and critique gender rather than learning through the traditional constructs of gender. Teachers can develop their 'caring' role in teaching by becoming conscious of their behaviours and attitudes within the classroom and not resorting to stereotypical gendered behaviours. School allows for a caring environment where teachers can encourage children to experience different roles and topics that challenge the traditional conforms of gender, as well as displaying this to the children through their own teaching and behaviours. Pupils do not need hyper masculinity or hyper femininity to learn. They need good teachers. It is the sexist and homophobic attitudes in society and accusations of males 'sexualising the act of care' (King, 1999) that place male teachers in a position where they feel they need to constantly assure others of their masculinity.

King (1998) answers the difficulties facing the 'androgynous teacher, and argues care is an embedded element in primary teaching that can be obtained by both male and female teachers, however, he does highlight the difficulty for men in avoiding reference to their gender as 'men who teach in the primary grades are frequently unable to leave gender signification out of the caring equation' (King, 1998, p. 75). Importantly, King notes that the men within his research 'systematically devalued women's teaching and nonteaching behaviours to establish themselves as different, and women as other' (p.105). However, rather than devalue women's teaching as a form of aggression against female teachers, it is possible that some men enter into primary teaching without an understanding of the stigma associated with the occupation. Perhaps, as a result of this sigma, male teachers react defensively against the female teachers or the 'feminised' elements of the teaching profession by accentuating their gender as better than the work of women. This is partly as a result of the tension placed on male teachers to act as undefined role models for boys. It would be fair to argue that men crossing into the realm of 'women's work' have

already shown defiance to traditional 'roles' within occupations, however, pressure to perform as an ill-defined role model for boys further places tension between being the teacher and being the male teacher. Populist media call for more men in teaching, yet, when they enter into the profession, they are closely monitored for fear of being gay or paedophiles due to society's contradiction of their own needs. This constant tension and contradiction enables men to revert to displaying hegemonic masculinities and further reinforces gender constructions which can not only interfere with boys and girls success and development (Foster et al., 2001, Mac an Ghaill, 1994), but also further perpetuate the gendered construction of schools as 'feminised' and boys as underachieving (Skelton, 2002).

5.9 Outside Influences

Video gaming was highlighted by ten of the thirteen participants interviewed. When teachers and principals were questioned on their perceptions of the academic underachievement and disinterest of boys. This demonstrated a clear expression amongst participating teachers that video games and outside influences have a role in the decreased concentration and low levels of academic interest and behaviour amongst some boys, rather than teacher gender. External factors, such as reduced parental involvement and peers also featured, to a lesser extent, as a factor in boy's education. Both Anna and Elaine, who teach in very different school settings, both reiterated a challenge facing teachers nowadays is children's attitudes to learning and poor attention and listening skills rather than gender of the teacher:

> In the last ten years, it's all about their attitude to learning, really do they want to learn? You have to stimulate them more, motivate them more and it's getting harder and harder due to video games, above all it's their attitude. It's the same for men and women (Elaine: Rural mixed school principal).

Anna reiterated Elaine's sentiments, however, Anna expressed anger at the effects of video games on the children's expressive and listening skills due to lack of parental monitoring of video game time:

> I have children who come in and they tell me they spent the whole weekend on the Playstation….They are watching video games for 18 year olds, 20 year olds, that's not appropriate. They are only 11 or 12. They are emulating behaviour, language, being boisterous way too much knowledge for that age. They are up all night, their listening skills are decreasing and the way I see it in

> the last seven years there's a huge difference here and video games and home background have everything to do with it. We can only do so much in school….Children in my class would say when in the car they watch t.v., nobody talks anymore (Anna: Mixed urban school teacher).

Parental influence and monitoring of video games featured in the majority of interview responses, as teachers advocated the increasing benefit to children's education when parental involvement was present. Elaine was clear in her expressions that attitudes towards learning, especially from boys are changing and parents can help 'reinforce positive educational attitudes at home' by reading and talking to the children about their education and their school activities. There was a general consensus amongst teachers, evident from expressions by Elaine and Anna, that, in their experiences, video gaming is contributing to a decrease in literacy, communication, motivation and concentration skills of some boys, with notable changes in the last decade, where children need constant stimulation and motivation, possibly because school and writing are uninteresting in comparison to the energy and visual stimulation in gaming. Furthermore, with video games more readily accessible and portable from home to cars, Anna's experiences of reduced listening skills and emulation of behaviour in video games is worrying, especially when boys in the class are actively playing video games for over 18 year olds. Behaviour and content that is certainly not appropriate for primary school children. Poor concentration for some boy's, is possibly a side effect of playing video games late at night, as experienced by Anna, instead of getting sufficient sleep. Although parental involvement was linked throughout the interviews in terms of lack of parental monitoring and time usage on video gaming as children 'spend the whole weekend on the Playstation' (Anna), studies have shown, video gaming addiction is on the rise and perhaps rather than place blame on parental monitoring, more information should be furnished to parents about the effects of time duration on video gaming and lower academic performance and a heightened level of aggression amongst children that are exposed to violent video gaming content. Children can learn behaviours that are being modelled within video games. Perhaps in the absence of a strong role model at home, children are copying the behaviours they are exposed to on a regular basis, in this instance, video gaming. In an effort to become as successful in 'real-life' as they are in their video gaming, similar patterns of behaviour could manifest.

Studies from Anderson and Carnagey, 2009, Gentile, 2009 and Willoughby, 2008, have all advocated significant links between the time duration of the video game play and the academic performance of students in primary and secondary school Further studies by Schmidt and Vandewater (2008) additionally indicate that children who own video games tend to spend more time on video games and inherently less time on educational after school activities which therefore result in lower achievement levels than comparative children. Although teachers and parents are beginning to understand levels of aggression can increase in children who are continually exposed to video games with high level of violent content (Anderson & Bushman, 2007), research carried out by Weis and Cerankosky (2010) tested the level of reading and written attainment in boys who received video 'systems' immediately in comparison to those who received them four months later. Conveying previous research, they also concluded, children who received the video system first had lower levels of reading and writing scores than comparison children.

> Boys who received the system immediately also had lower reading and writing scores and greater teacher-reported academic problems at follow-up than comparison children. Amount of video-game play mediated the relationship between video-game ownership and academic outcomes. (Weis & Cerankoshy, 2010, p. 464)

Although the above study examined boys only, and possibly would have similar effects on girls, another study of 670 eighth and ninth grade (13-14 year old) students from four participating schools concluded that those who exposed themselves to a great amount of video game violence were also more hostile, had more frequent reports of confrontation with teachers and performed poorly in schools (Gentile et al., 2004). Although the results did not differentiate between cultural or class diversities, there is overwhelming evidence that video gaming has a poor effect on the academic and behavioural performance of children and adolescence, especially if they are exposed to high levels of aggression and violence. Given this evidence, they certainly do not provide a good role model to children.

Expressions of video games affecting the academic study of boys correlate with Áine's experiences, as she suggests most dialogue on Monday morning reverts around their successes on the Playstation. Áine targeted online competitive video

gaming where they can compete against one another as having an impact on academic learning for boys in her single sex class:

> Definitely the X Box, computer games are number one. Disinterest in reading and wanting to go outside is number two. I feel the Playstation and disinterest in reading [from no promotion at home] has a lot to answer for. ….I definitely see a few of my boys coming into class on a Monday morning wrecked and when I ask them what they did at the weekend, I get 'On the Playstation Miss'. They do get exercise too, between matches and rugby but I certainly find concentration levels wouldn't be the best. On a Monday it's exceptionally bad (Áine: Boys only urban school).

Although video games have a negative impact on behavioural and academic performance, there is a parallel evident between the boy's learning and experiences in video gaming, where they are in control of their learning and movements, to the learning in formal education. Boy's gain a sense of accomplishment and success from video gaming that they are not necessarily experiencing at school. If they master the video game and are popular amongst peers in school for this expertise, academic performance matters less. Mastery of the game is highly calculated by the videogame company and designed to keep one playing. Further to this, mastery of a video game can be accomplished within 48-70 hours of play time, in comparison to become a master soccer player, which is far longer. The instant gratification of winning and constant rewarding throughout is very enjoyable and more entertaining than success in areas of Maths equations or other academic subjects, therefore achievement is more exhilarating. This makes it difficult for schoolwork to compete.

Blame could also be placed on the heavy mass marketing of video games from soccer games, car racing video games, like the popular Grand Theft Auto to Lego building video games such as Minecraft, that reach a diverse range of boy's interest. Most commercial marketing of these games are heavily targeted at boys. If video games are being used by boys in competition as a means of masculinity, then more male teachers displaying hegemonic masculinities in schools could invigorate game playing, as Sax, a medical doctor and boy's psychological therapist suggests the competitive nature of boys has changed from competing in sports to video gaming:

> I've been a medical doctor for thirty years. If a boy wanted to gain that feeling of accomplishment thirty years ago, he actually had to accomplish something in the real world. Many boys today boast to me about their achievements

> in *Grand Theft Auto* or *Call of Duty* the way a boy thirty years ago might have boasted about his achievements in track and field (Sax, 2016, p.2).

This further highlights that it is boys' sense of success and mastery in the games that give them a sense of achievement more than accomplishments within school based subjects. It further illustrates changes in the interests of boys from active and physical competition to competitive video gaming. Although ten of the teachers interviewed experienced lower levels of concentration and motivation from students who they felt had more interest in video games than academic activities, video gaming offers much more than a distraction to boys. Video gaming offers boys an escape into a virtual world that, no matter what their interest is, a particular video game caters for their needs. Video games engage children with an array of interests, from soccer, football, golf, Lego (Minecraft), cars and combat, in which they can express greater creativity, with less effort than tasks in normal school practice. Video games are no longer just one player games in which the player memorises character movements and where the player tries to master the game in order to get to the next level. Advancements in video games ensure constant stimulations and creative control, along with online competition with peers:

> Multi-player gaming experiences in which the players themselves became an essential part of highly detailed, constantly evolving, user-created virtual worlds. Gamers designed their own characters, started alliances with other players, created their own game objectives, and built digital universes that some players found more enjoyable than living in the real world (Conrad, 2010, p. 2).

Video gaming is a highly seductive path that provides boys with stimulation and a sense of mastery they might not get with physical sports. Video gamers can adopt a virtual character and live in this virtual world, outside the realm of everyday life. They are an extension of the child's interest, magnified by visual stimulation, where the game strategically 'reinforces continued play though online social connections, obligation to teammates, rewards for continued play, a carefully crafted sense of gradual accomplishment' (Conrad, 2010, p.3).

It is this connection to teammates and friends and expressions of masculinity that possibly ensure boys return to video games and possibly why discussion of video game achievements feature heavily in class conversations amongst peers, as

experienced by Áine and Anna. Children are either in competition or on the same team as their friends. This, therefore, places the achievement in the video gaming world on a far great level of achievement than achievements in school. This could perhaps be one of the links that is affecting the academic disinterest and underachievement of boys in primary schools.

As emphasised by teachers within this study, without placing those who do not perform well in school in specific homogenised groups, consequences of video gaming, such as lack of sleep, negative attitudes towards school, poorer communication skills, could possibly be one consideration as to why boys are not performing as well as female students and why interests in school and levels of motivation are poor. If video gaming has an impact on the concentration and academic performance of boys, more comparative research needs to be carried out in Irish primary schools as to the levels of exposure boys and girls have with video games in general, not just violent video games. If this is the case, then having a male teacher in the classroom for reasons of gender modelling and to increase academic interest and achievement in boys will not have the desired outcome.

5.10 Conclusion

From interviews carried out throughout this research, it was clear that teachers and principals from a range of diverse schools, participated in this research about role models for boys because they all felt strongly about wanting to convey to the researcher that the popular perception about role models for boys is not, in their opinion, the underlying factor for the academic disinterest and underachievement of boys. Through a resistance of the concept that more male teachers will create affection and achievement in boys academic subjects, they have demonstrated a thorough understanding that the role model for boys argument has reached them and they feel it is not the best solution to the problem of some boys academic and behavioural underachievement. Teachers have continually displayed their knowledge and understanding of the profession and rather than homogenising boys into a 'failing' category, they have assessed the needs of the children and carefully thought of the best practices to engage them in learning. Through the assessment of the needs of all their students, teachers have put the relevant pedagogical practices in place in

order to meet the needs of their individual students. They are aware of gender practices in schools and are changing their teaching pedagogy accordingly, not in a simplistic manner, but in a well thought out professional approach. This signifies a slight tension between some teachers and attitudes of populist debates as they weaken claims of populist media and educational stakeholders for more male role models for boys, clearly outlining, it is not as simplistic as this solution would entail. After all, it is both male and female teachers within this research that are experiencing difficulties engaging some boys in class (Elaine, Alice, Michael, Tom).

As emphasised by teachers within this study, there are possibly other factors that allude to the academic disinterest and underachievement of boys that the influx of more male teachers cannot amend. Factors, such as the introduction of more male teachers, while certainly seen as a positive by participating teachers, was argued in terms of increasing children's exposure to a range of different individual personalities rather than simply exposing boys to more males because they are similar in thought. An expression of individual role modelling to all students was a strong focus throughout the chapter. But this leads us back to question the current panic for more male teachers. From the experiences of teachers and principals above, who together, have decades of experience, and do not place blame on the numerical minority of male teachers in primary schools for the current 'boy crisis', we need to evaluate as a society, are we going to ignore their professional perceptions, the perceptions of practicing and experienced teachers and principals? Or as a society, are we still content with following the populist call for more male teachers based on little concluding educational evidential based research that suggests this practice will work? If this is the case, then having a male teacher in the classroom for reasons of gender modelling and to increase academic interest and achievement in boys will not have the desired outcome. Put in very simple terms, it is a case of 'need' verses 'want.'

Chapter Six: From a Coach's Perspective

This chapter explores the perceptions of Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) coaches as to their experiences of being a role model to primary school children. This chapter further analyses their sagacity of gender modelling while in a coaching capacity, in Irish primary schools. The chapter will develop by discussing the key themes that arose within the data, linking the perceptions and experiences of coaches to children's attitudes towards male and female coaches in sport and their gender perceptions within the game of sport itself. The chapter will examine the role of hegemonic masculinities within the children's perceptions of sport, through the experiences of primary school GAA coaches, while also gaining insight into their school encounters with boys and girls in primary school, through the medium of sport.

The initial stages of the chapter will involve a brief outline of the coach's profiles.

6.1 Coach Profiles

Coaches were employed by the Gaelic Athletics Association (GAA), to coach children in hurling and Gaelic football skills once a week for six-eight weeks, twice a year. The three coaches were from the Connacht region and had been in their coaching position for a number of years. Tim had spent at least twenty years coaching groups of all levels. Edward trained teams in his local GAA club for the past five years and has a range of expertise refereeing, training and teaching children in schools and clubs under twelve years of age. John has nine years experience coaching schools and also helps train rugby in his local area. John has been coaching in his present school over six years.

6.2 Sporting Interest or Hegemonic Pressures?

Although the coaches see themselves in a mentoring or coaching capacity for both boys and girls, it was interesting to observe throughout the interviews, the coaches' awareness of their limited ability to be positive role models to all children. Although Edward 'never really thought of myself as their role model', he did display an

awareness of qualities he tries to instil in the children. This involved teaching them important communication and supportive skills to one another, and 'helping them develop a sense of teamwork and a community spirit, you know working together as a team, being a team player, helping one another' (Edward). Although Edward originally did not see himself as a role model, it is fair to suggest his awareness and capacity to be a role model to both boys and girls is evident. This was also reflected in the two other coaches (Tim and John) as they reiterated the importance of 'showing the children a respectful attitude towards the game and the players (John). The sense of non-gendered qualities that can be transferred to all children was a welcoming factor in the coaches' awareness of inclusivity for all children. However, in terms of being a role model to the children, two of the coaches (Tim and John) suggested, although they were there in a capacity to coach both boys and girls, regardless of the children's ability, they felt they were only role models to the children 'who have an interest in sport' (Tim). This is an insightful glimpse into the realism of coaches as role models. From Tim's perspective, his role as coach is limited to those who have an interest in sport, yet this almost contradicts the calls for more male role models in schools, who call for male teachers as role models for *all* boys. Admittedly, Tim does consider changing the perspectives of those who are not into sport beyond his role within the school, therefore he illustrates that he only sees himself as a role model to children who already have an interest in sports. As men's rights movements call for more men in teaching to 'expose' boys to more masculine role models, from Tim's experiences, those who do not share similar interests as Tim, do not see him as a role model. This weakens the role model debate that is based on males modelling masculinity and ruptures the essentialism embedded in the role model movement, because it clearly demonstrates all boys are not being targeted by the masculine (sporty) role model. It further highlights the possibility that more male coaches as role models will only invigorate boys' masculinities, if the boys who are into sports are the children who are gaining the most out of these role models (Renold, 2006). Boys and other children who already feel marginalised are, by Tim's admittance, not gaining from this type of role model, as coaches frequently expressed the difficulty of engaging children who are not involved in sport, which, through their experiences, are mostly girls. This again illustrates the essentialist argument that role models are prospectively only targeted at boys.

It was interesting to note the different perceptions the coaches had between the disinterest of boys and girls in sport, as John articulated how girls 'just opt out and that its, or they complain, whereas boys tend to get on with it a bit more'. John's observation regarding the differences in gender disinterest in sport was interesting as he further suggested it is the boys who will participate in sporting activities regardless of disinterest, whereas the girls often refuse to co-operate. This contrasts the teacher's views of academic interest in more formal subjects, where the girls were more determined than the boys. It could possibly demonstrate gender politics that are at play in primary schools, as seen in other research (Renold, 2006, Clark & Paechter, 2007), where boys want to be part of the dominant group, which is usually the hegemonic sports playing boys and perhaps girls are less invested in how they look to their peers in sports. However, within the coaches' interviews, it was articulated by Edward that when the girls do display an interest in the game, they can be just as dedicated as the boys:

> Girls are so dedicated when they have an interest. They are actually easier to train because they listen and do exactly what they are told. Boys put the head down [when challenged].

However, from the coaches' experiences, it was boys in particular that show a great aptitude for the game, as 'they are into it from an early age. Especially now Galway isn't going too badly the boys enjoy pretending to be the players, where you don't see that as much in girls' (Edward). Although all three coaches reiterated the ability and potential for girls in sports, *once they have the interest*, the essentialist notion that girls and boys can be easily categorised into male and female interests was rejected by all three coaches, again demonstrating an understanding of gender throughout their interviews. While the coaches did acknowledge that it is hard to motivate girls who do not want to participate in sports as they tend to 'sit on the sideline saying their leg is sore because they don't want to play' (Edward), or generally 'the girls who are do not want to participate have no interest at all' (Tim), the three coaches were in agreement that girls' interests outside of hurling and football are definitely dependant on the individual child and cannot necessarily be grouped into sex role categorisations. However, boys' interests outside the realm of sport were more confined than the girls, as Tim explained, in his experience, the boys 'who have no interest, I notice generally prefer Xbox, Minecraft', while

Edmund reiterated, other boy's interests did not warrant stereotyping of boys and girls who do not display an interest in sport into 'singers and Xbox playing' categories as 'it's more individual than that!' (Edward). As sport can often be defined in terms of hegemonic maleness, due to heavy mass marketing involving mostly male sports stars (as discussed in chapter four), the coaches within this research demonstrated an ability to look beyond gender when training primary school children and acknowledged 'girls can be just as determined and skilful at GAA as some boys, I've often seen girls outperform boys on the pitch' (John), and skill-set and ability was determined by the individual rather than the gender of the child. Their deep observations of the boys and girls they train displayed an acknowledgment of individuality of each child that challenges the essentialism of *all* boys and *all* girls.

Additionally, the demonstration of fairness and equal treatment of boys and girls in the interviews demonstrates that when boys are in the arena of GAA coaching, they have less of an authority within the games to undermine players that display less potential than themselves, when a coach is involved. This demonstrates clear comparisons to playground games where boys are often domineering and selective towards those who can participate in the game, (Connell, 2008, Clark & Paechter, 2007), even with the presence of a teacher, as Clark and Paechter (2007) witnessed when observing hegemonic masculine bonding male teacher and student sports training. The structure of the coach as referee, rather than the (usually male) teacher/coach could warrant more respect from the children. Possibly the fact that the coach only has the children for a limited time to develop a certain level of skills, bonding with the children is not as large a priority as it is within teacher-student relationships, therefore the reinforcement of hegemonic masculinity through 'showing off' or jeering reduces. If so, this could warrant caution to those in a teacher-coach capacity to monitor the level of hegemonic masculinities being reinforced throughout sport in school, which could lead to the exclusion of girls and other boys outside the sporting narrative, as was clearly evident in Renold's research (1997, 2004, 2006).

It is also important to refer back to Edward's observations of boys 'putting the head down' when they feel defeated or challenged, as this could indicate a pressure amongst boys to keep up with their peers and achieve more in sports, in order to fit

in with the dominant group, a pressure that is possibly not experienced as heavily by girls at primary school age. Hegemony plays a very important role in boys' lives (Connell, 2008) and often the presence of a dominant pattern or behaviour puts further pressure on boys to match these behaviours (Frosh et al., 2002). Therefore, coaches' experiences of more boys participating in sports despite their apparent disinterest in the game, could suggest, rather than having an interest in playing sport, their participation is based on conformity within the dominant hegemonic group, rather than a love of the game. This coupled with the aggressive competition in sport, even at primary school level, where boys in particular are becoming more physical in an effort to be more competitive. Edward explained the macho stereotypes, more associated 'with rugby' but is slowly creeping into the GAA also:

> The GAA has gone very much into fitness too and I suppose it does tend to display macho stereotypes especially when you see how physical the players are getting. Yes I suppose they [boys] might feel the pressure to be as physically strong and fit as others. It certainly brings on competitiveness.

Research amongst secondary school P.E students in an all-boys school in Australia, have suggested an awareness of the importance of participation in P.E activities amongst students, (which was mainly rugby), for fear of being harassed and called a 'fag' (Gerdin, 2017, p.9). Despite the acknowledgement from some boys that less sporting ability is not equated with masculinity, some boys articulated pressure they experienced not to talk to the coach or teacher because of the homophobic jeering from some of their peers. Although this study was positioned in a secondary school, it gives a good insight into the gender dynamics that are becoming more evident in primary schools, as demonstrated by the coaches' interviews, where boys 'participate more than the girls whether they have a massive interest of not' (John), therefore boys possibly feel the need to participate for fear of losing their status in the dominant group:

> Indeed, the manifestation of heterosexism and homophobia in both the teaching and content of PE has been well reported (e.g. Sykes, 2011Sykes, H., 2011) and how this restricts some boys' and girls' participation due to the fear of being perceived, or exposed, as homosexual (Gerdin, 2017, p.9).

While a conscientious practice of gender neutrality is implied by the coaches within this research, even at primary school level, the gender differences occurring between

all boys' participation in games as opposed to some girls almost defiant behaviour towards playing sport does warrant caution. If sport is used as an empowerment tool for boys to exercise their dominant constructs of masculinity much to the exclusion and marginalisation of other boys and in particular girls (Swain, 2000, Nespor, 1997), and as a result boys are feeling pressure to participate in games, more men entering into primary teaching, displaying and encouraging hegemonic masculinity could only further exacerbate the exclusion or homophobic behaviour towards non-sports playing boys and girls.

Furthermore, references to Xbox and Minecraft cannot be ignored as there was a direct correlation between coaches' interviews and interviews by principals and teachers, suggesting a noticeable interest in boys and video gaming. Although the coaches do not necessarily place gaming in a negative light, there is a parallel present that if boys do not like sport, they like gaming. Correspondingly, gamers were amongst 14% of boy's role models in children's questionnaires within this research. This demonstrates that perhaps the boys who do not get a sense of stimulation and achievement from sport look elsewhere for a different form of hegemonic masculinity. With reference to video gaming, as reviewed in the previous chapter on teacher's perspectives, it is the visual stimulation and sense of mastery that give these boys a greater sense of achievement than sport, as witnessed by Sax (2016). Yet, both video gaming and sport have a common theme of masculinity encapsulated within them (Connell, 2008). Both forms of achievement, from displaying hegemonic masculinity on the pitch through the medium of sport or gaining stimulation and mastery of a computer game, such as Slender Man (an aggressive video game cited in the children's questionnaires), both are possibly boys' method of reproducing and confirming their masculinity with other boys. Video games can aid the reproduction of masculinity online as violent, aggressive and even homophobic behaviours are evident. Boys or men behave more stereotypically rigid than in "real life" (Christensen, 2006). Furthermore, it is a space and experience where the 'digital boy can die tryin', tryin' to win, tryin' to beat the game, and tryin' to prove his manhood' (Burrill, 2008, p.2). This attitude was also demonstrated by the coaches where Tim referred to the competitiveness of sport as 'like rugby. All these young lads are hitting the gym trying to get bigger than the next lad' (Tim). Similar sentiments were expressed by John who articulated 'even at

primary [school] level they are jostling and tackling pretty hard' (John). This clearly demonstrates that although the coaches interviewed had an awareness and sense of inclusion of both boys and girls within the games, perhaps it is boys' own sense of masculinity confined within traditional roles of aggressive hegemonic masculinity that is placed in high priority within primary schools. It demonstrates boys have their own sense of masculinity, whether through gaming or sport, and the position of boys in the playground is dependent on their demonstration of masculinity. Sports, even in primary school, have a strong element of hegemonic masculinity enforced through aggression on the playing field. This was evident from the coaches' interviews as the aggressive and masculine traits associated with sport became apparent, especially when their capacity as a role model is debated.

6.3 Sport and Hegemonic Masculinity

Male gender power and privilege witnessed within GAA sporting activities was evident throughout the coaches' interviews, as there was a clear conformity within the coaches' attitudes of the importance of coaches displaying and encouraging respect to players and peers, when they were questioned on their role as a role model for children. The aggressive nature within the GAA was regularly highlighted by the three coaches, who referred to young boy's willingness to 'lash out at the referee' (Tim), 'actively go out to be aggressive on the pitch' (John) and 'calling the players useless' (Edward). The hegemonic masculine element of sport became very evident within the interviews as the coaches articulated their desire to counter the aggressive forms of sport that is percolating through to younger players, through what they are themselves witnessing from other sporting spectators:

> I see it all the time at senior level matches, aggressive forms of coaching, aggressive methods of play, even down to the spectators shouting abuse at the players. This is what these children see at every single match they attend. It's obviously going to carry on with their generation (John).

This was further reiterated by Tim, who articulated the current 'macho' element within the GAA culture, where players are becoming more aggressive, in their playing and in their attitudes towards referees. Reiterating John's sentiments, Edward referred to the negative elements that are percolating into children's sporting

culture, possibly caused by the aggressive attitudes of adults within sport and observing aggression in sporting matches in the media, and boys are emulating these traits, both on and off the playing field. This in turn is adding to the stereotypical 'macho' nature that is associated with boys and sport, as boys are mirroring the negative behaviours of popular sports players:

> The GAA is gone very much into fitness and strengthening and conditioning. I suppose it does tend to display macho stereotypes, especially when you see how physical these players are getting. Yes, I suppose, they [boys] might feel pressure to be as physically strong, fit and even aggressive as others. It certainly brings on competitiveness.

While Tim also reiterated difficulties with boys emulating the behaviour of not only GAA players, but sports players across the realm of sporting cultures, from rugby to soccer. Again, aggression and disrespect shown towards referees in sport was highlighted as a negative factor:

> I think there has been a lot of aggression displayed on the field in recent years. I definitely think the attitude towards referees needs to change because kids are seeing high profile players mouthing off at the ref and it's not on. I do think GAA need a campaign of respect because there's a rougher element coming into football especially. So, yes, I guess there's a bit of this [aggressive] element in the GAA too.

The aggressive and competitive nature of sport can be seen in a range of educational research and evidence of aggression seeping into playground activities in both primary and secondary schools can is demonstrated in research from Connell (2008), Renold (2006, 2004, 1997), Paechter (2006, 2002), Epstein et al., (2001), and Mac an Ghaill (1994). Recent research by Bhana (2015) in South Africa demonstrates how boys as young as seven years old use physical pain in sports as a measure of 'successful masculinity' (p.7). Martino and Pallotta-Chiarolli (2000) refer to sport as a 'site for policing, regulating and reinforcing certain versions of masculinity by peers and school structures' (p.249), where boys can be seen to use sport to manipulate their dominance through gender power and privilege. In their study conducted in an Australian secondary school, the researchers noted the awareness in boys of the 'impact of the media's centralization of men's sport and idolization of male sporting figures on the place of sport in their own school lives' (2000, p.249), with several boys considering their place in sport to be linked to their national

identity. This was also evident in research by Fitzclarence et al., (2007). Links between national identity and sport can also be symbolised in a number of Irish schools, where GAA is seen as a construct of national identity in areas of sporting success. This was clearly evident within this research, as 55% of boys questioned, suggested their role models consisted of players from a sporting background, which largely consisted of GAA players in rural schools. However, the problem arises when boys use this form of aggression and sporting prowess to dominant and isolate other children in the playground, in order to maintain their heterosexual hegemonic status.

Corresponding to the coaches' experiences of aggression being emulated by boys in particular, Martino and Pallotta-Chiarolli's study also gave evidence of gender power and violence through sports, where sport was often manipulated by dominant boys for the purpose of extending their own power, using forms of harassment and exclusion to target the less skilled players. Furthermore Bowley (2013) in an ethnographic study of 13-14 year old boys found consistent evidence that boys form hierarchies of masculine power, even amongst other boys, through the medium of sport, where often the gender hierarchy is facilitated by the most aggressive form of sport:

> The boys use participation in sport as part of their masculinising process by drawing on their bodies' sexualised and gendered power, and by subordinating femininity that they associate with boys who do not play sport or who lack sporting competencies. Boys' investment in sport is, therefore, highly sexualised and in the heteronormative school environment they confront the inequalities of the gender hierarchy which marks soft boys from tough boys. It is argued that in choosing which sports to play there is already pressure on boys to distance themselves from homosexuality (p. 87).

Boys distancing themselves from any form of femininity, through physical sport and isolation of those that display more feminine traits help to strengthen the power and privilege of the dominant group, with the school community. While gender essentialism amongst some of society consistently creates 'panic' through campaigns by populist media fostering a belief that 'only men can truly understand masculinity' (Connell, 2008, p.132) and can bond better with boys as 'men appreciate the importance of sport, fighting, competition, emotional control, and so forth, in a way women cannot' (Connell, 2008, p. 132), this feeds into the argument that the

education of boy's would truly only benefit from the increase of male teachers, coaches and mentors. It is this gender essentialism that is being reinforced by educational stakeholders in the call for more male teachers as role models for boys. More male teachers, coaches or mentors entering into primary schools, without an awareness of critical gender analysis will, in the long term, may have negative effects on gender segregation and gender equality within schools. Although the coaches within this research appear to have a good insight into gender as they try to promote inclusivity 'especially at underage levels, having a blitz every term and not keeping a record of scores up to Under 10, this is to try to get them to enjoy the game more, give the weaker players more game time' (John). However, if men are employed to bond with boys through coaching as a method of reinforcing heterosexual masculinities back into school, this will in turn, reinforce the role of dominant hegemonic masculinities in the classrooms and the playground. The role of sport in schools can act as method for boys to display their hegemonic masculinities, especially in more aggressive forms of sport, thus, reinforcing boys' position on the masculinity scale, as sport becomes the 'definition of hegemonic masculinities in schools and the subordination of other masculinities' (Connell, 2008, p. 141). Gender inclusiveness is ignored because those in society that refuse to listen to critically evaluated educational research acknowledge that boys who are in a position of gender power get ahead, therefore the increase of masculinity within schools through male teachers, coaches and mentors is seen to be the popular solution to the academic underachievement and disinterest of boys. Boys who do not fit into these perimeters are ignored because they weaken male gender privilege. Even the attempts by the GAA to promote inclusivity and implement strategies, such as, 'cautions for aggressive behaviour or bad language' (Edward), emphasises there is a problem with aggressive behaviour in underage teams.

Throughout the coaches' interviews, there is a strong awareness of the strength of children imitating what they see at matches on a weekly basis, both in and out of school, as they acknowledged the need for children to learn that 'we all don't need to use our fists and mouths to win a match. That is why we are sending kids off nowadays for using bad language or acting aggressively' (Tim). Studies from Renold (2006) and Epstein et al., (2001), highlight the depths in which boys are willing to go to display they are 'real boys', in order to appear more masculine and therefore

heterosexual. This is achieved through distancing themselves from feminine associations to avoid being labelled as weak (Epstein et al., 2001). Although coaches were making conscious efforts to reinforce 'respect, good communication and positivity within the game itself' (John), through the promotion of sport as an activity 'to be enjoyed and we are trying to create a positive environment around games' (Tim), the competitive and increasingly aggressive nature of the games was an obvious disadvantage. Coaches stressed the importance of increasing 'community spirit, working together as a team, being a team player and helping one another' (Tim), in order to try to rectify the aggressive forms of sport that is being portrayed at more senior levels of the GAA and more often in primary school games, as 'there is definitely pressure on lads to fit in' (Tim), which possibly adds to the emulation of these behaviours. This gives warrant to question the simplicity of recuperative approaches that hold the assumption that more male teachers entering into schools as role models for boys will eliminate the problems that boys are facing in schools (Foster et al., 2001), as from the coaches experiences, masculinity is very evident in Irish primary schools and boys are increasingly gaining a sense of masculinity from outside influences on the football, hurling and rugby pitches, despite those who argue the female teachers and feminism are partly to blame for the underachievement of boys (Foster, Kimmel & Skelton, 2001, Epstein et al., 1998). Through the coaches perspective, it is demonstrated clearly that boys already have a sense of what it means to be a 'real man' and are very aware of the impact that masculine behaviours can have on the relationship they have with their peers, therefore more male teachers entering into schools to encourage such behaviour could possibly increase macho stereotypes and aggression amongst boys and have long term damaging effects on other children outside of these groupings. Contrary to arguments by Hoff Sommers (2001) who argues it is unwarranted to expect boys to behave quietly and act less impulsive like girls, (as boys are naturally energetic and rough), there is little evidence, as yet, to suggest that 'boys' aggression is biologically based' (Kimmel, 2004, p.169), therefore it is possibly a learned behaviour that can escalate if boys are further encouraged to develop their aggressiveness and competitiveness through sport. This is further evident in attitudes towards female coaches in the GAA.

6.4 Gender and the GAA

Although, more associated with older teams rather than primary school teams, the stereotypical gendered nature within the GAA culture became evident when discourse surrounding gender modelling within the GAA began, as all three coaches speculated on the difficulty for female coaches training boy's teams. Although it was in general agreement that 'it's more about the relationship the trainer has with the team rather than if it's a man or a woman training them' (Edward) and the gender of the trainer did not matter 'if you [the coach] show an interest in what they like, you will be able to encourage and develop them' (John), gendered elements within the coaching of teams was very apparent when training older boys' teams. Suggestions of discomfort for females training boys' teams and difficulties of female trainers relating to older boys was demonstrated within the interviews, possibly implying an acceptability for female trainers to train younger teams rather than older boys' teams where 'there has to be an advantage in being male. You don't care what you see in the dressing rooms, what language is used...I'm not saying a woman can't but I suppose there is a stereotype there, isn't there' (John). John's reference to female coaches appears to be a realistic viewpoint in the GAA, as there are very few female coaches involved in senior men's teams, however, whether it comes from an exclusionary point of view or it is the female coaches that opt not to train male teams' needs to be explored. One instance of breaking against this stereotype is Cliodhna O' Connor, athletic development coach with Dublin Hurling team. O' Connor suggests the role of 'male/female dynamic can work very well' (Boyle, 2019, p.1.), she does highlight additional pressure to perform well in her role because of gender stereotypes where 'you don't want to give any excuse for people to say you are not good at the job' (Boyle, 2019, p.1). Interestingly, when it comes to suggestions of gender discrimination from the players, reiterating the coaches in this research, O' Connor articulated that she has never has bad experiences with the players, once she has them on board, adding that gender stereotyping is ' usually from the people on the periphery who don't know you' (Boyle, 2019, p.1). This demonstrates the essentialist gender view in society where amateur sports are still seen by some in society to be a man's game. As the coaches within this study demonstrate conscious gender neutral practices when coaching and likewise, *some* players and managers on official GAA teams have the ability to undercut gender

essentialism and employ the best coach (male or female) for the position, it demonstrates that essentialist gendered notions can come from outside influences, from others that are *not* directly involved in the actual running of the team, yet they get heard the most. This parallels gender essentialism in the call for more male teachers. Calls for more male role models for boys and employing male managers for male teams appear to be based solely on gender assumptions and stereotyping from people who have yet to apply a gender analysis to the situation and cannot see past the biological sex of the teacher or coach. Interestingly, there has yet to be a female manager of a male county team.

While all coaches did suggest the ability of the trainer was paramount to their selection as coach, as opposed to their gender, acknowledging, 'some retired and existing Galway camogie players are training underage teams and they are way better than the men' (Edward), the preference of a male coach for boys' teams highlights the existence of gender stereotyping, as demonstrated by Tim, ' I suppose it would look a bit strange having a female trainer [over a men's team] but that's not to say it will not happen, it just isn't common'. Female coaches appear to be very welcome within the GAA coaching arena, within younger teams. There were still elements of stereotypical hegemonic masculinity apparent within sporting parameters, once older boys teams were considered, where bonding was favourable between males and boys through sport, as males could have 'banter' and 'craic' with the boys on the team, talk about the matches at the weekend, go down to the pub after the match' (Tim) which makes bonding easier for male coaches than female coaches and men and boys could bond over 'a few pints' (Edward). This was seen to be much more advantageous for men (Tim, Edward and John), due to women's 'other interests and constraints on family time or whatever' (Tim), again, perhaps just a general observation, however, Tim's reference to 'other interests' and family life noticeably demonstrate gender essentialism within sports. Tim's role as coach in schools and his observation of female coaches are clearly contradicting, once the stakes get higher in senior teams. This observation is somewhat misogynistic to women coaches. It is this attitude that could percolate into schools if more males are introduced in schools to bond with boys, it could possibly cultivate a 'macho' and misogynistic attitude. There was also a common occurrence with the interviews of placing men within the homogenised group of *sports enthusiasts* as both Tim and

Edward articulated the advantage of men relating to boys, if the men are into sport, 'which most are' (Tim and Edward), therefore they would bond more readily with boys as they could discuss 'the matches at the weekend' (John). This again signifies men and women being categorised into homogenous gender essentialist roles. It suggests an underlying misogyny within sports where female coaches are great teaching underage but men, as a homogenised group, can bond better with the lads through conversing in match chat. This is characteristic of male and boy bonding throughout the male role model debate. Men are seen to be more attuned to boys learning needs and the same in biological sex therefore understand boys better, (Martino et al., 2009). It is based on a foundation of gender essentialism and out dated sex role categorisations when men can go and have the 'banter' and women can tend to the 'family life'. It is this attitude that will marginalise girls and effeminate boys, gay boys and boys who just do not like sport.

Although segregation between male and female coaches became more pronounced throughout the interviews in relation to training older boys' teams, Edward did acknowledge that if a female camogie or football personality was to take over a male team, once she had the credentials behind her, she would gain the respect of the team. Using the example of Cora Staunton, who achieved eleven All Stars[11] throughout her career, Edward speculated that in order for a female coach to be acceptable, they would need to have earned their way into the coaching arena, stating, 'if Cora Staunton [former Mayo football player] was to come in to train the Galway/Mayo football teams, there would be no doubt as to her acceptance' (Edward). However, one needs to note Cora Staunton has achieved more than most GAA players, having won as many All Stars as Henry Shefflin, who is considered one of the (all time) greatest hurlers in Ireland, therefore, one would wonder if female coaches that gain approval to train older boys' teams have to go beyond the achievements of men in order to be accepted[12], however, this did not feature with the research. It is also worth noting that Staunton herself had to constantly defend her heterosexuality, because of her strong athletic figure and sporting prowess, something she later regretted, realising her fear of homosexual accusations was

[11] All Stars are awarded to the best player of the year, in a particular fielding position.

[12] Of the ten teams that compete in the Liam Mc Carthy Cup, Senior Hurling Championships, only four teams are currently managed by former All Ireland hurling medallists, demonstrating the higher accolades the females appear to 'need' although they are only involved in a coaching capacity.

unfair to gay friends, as the fear of gay associations led to her abandoning social events with gay friends in gay nightclubs or bars (Staunton, 2018). This demonstrates it is not only boys that feel a need to defend their sexuality in sport, however, rather unlike Staunton, shunning certain events, boys' methods of defending their sexuality are possibly through displays of hegemonic masculinity and aggression.

Although the coaches did acknowledge 'a bad male coach would get less respect also' (John), the sense of power and privilege within the GAA was very evident beyond primary schooling. This is worrying, because throughout the coaches' interviews, it was clearly evident male gender privilege and prejudice is actively seeping into primary schools through disrespect and aggression to weaker players and referees. If they feel their predominant role as coach is to encourage the children to emulate respect, for players and referees within the game, the aggressive 'macho' masculinity, as seen by Martino and Pallotta-Chiarolli (2003), Paechter (2006) and Renold (2006), where playground games were dominated by hegemonic masculine behaviours and in turn, used to construct dominant forms of masculinity within the playground, leaving out others who do not conform to these ideologies, more male teachers may reinforce boys' willingness to participate in prejudice and misogynist behaviours.

6.5 Conclusion

Although coaches have an awareness of their role as coach to both boys and girls alike, and the GAA need to be commended in their efforts to reduce aggressions and promote inclusivity amongst their underage players, there is a clear gender divide evident throughout the interviews. Coaches themselves believe in gender neutrality throughout their role as GAA mentor, however, the aggressive nature of boys and the GAA was highlighted on numerous occasions, with the belief that 'the competition between one another and the aggressive play is obvious even at this age [primary school] (Edward). Aggression, as seen in video gaming, is a form of displaying hegemonic masculinity, in order to gain acceptance into the dominant group that holds male power and privilege within the school culture. Within this research, hegemonic power is seen through the medium of hurling and football. Although

coaches claim an awareness of individuality and not conforming to gender specific roles, this is greatly contradicted when dialogue is opened regarding older boys' teams and female coaches. There is an obvious gender stereotype present that women would not 'bond' with older boys, simply because they are women and have 'other interests'. On a primary school level, this is worrying, because principals and teachers, throughout this research, have mostly demonstrated an awareness of critically evaluating gender roles within the classroom and held an awareness that children need to engage in critical gender based activities that challenge older ideologies of sex role categorisations, yet coaches demonstrate particular perceptions that women cannot fulfil certain roles within the GAA. Surely this has potential to counter the work of teachers and principals. Gender essentialism throughout the GAA is clearly demonstrated where aggression and strength get ahead, because they are defined within the roles of masculinity and 'real men'. If this is not addressed, aggression, competition and misogyny will continue in the GAA and aggression will become normality in the role of the hegemonic GAA player. This will in turn, become a cultural identity for some young boys. 'Ice hockey in Canada, rugby in South Africa and New South Wales and soccer in Britain are heavily masculinised contact sports that play a similar cultural role' (Connell, 1996, p.218). Although girls do participate in sport, with less frequency than boys, 'high profile boys' sports are markedly more important in the cultural life of schools' (Connell, 1996, p.218). Perhaps we can now add GAA to the above list.

Chapter Seven: Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

This chapter draws the reader to the conclusion of this research by synthesising the key findings of the study. The chapter outlines recommendations for change as a means of enhancing the education of both boys and girls in Irish primary schools. The chapter continues by outlining the contributions this research has given to existing knowledge within the area of gender and education and will conclude with a review of the limitations of the research. Future areas of research stemming from this study will also be outlined.

7.2 Key Findings

Finding 1: Teaching Pedagogy and Pupil Differentiation is More Effective Than Gender Modelling

Within this research, the data clearly demonstrates that practicing teachers and principals actively resist the central tenant regarding the need for male role models for boys. They clearly articulate a general neutral stance toward gender modelling and appear to contradict the central focus that more male teachers are necessary in school for boys. Throughout data analysis, it became clear that teachers and principals are educational professionals within schools, who are already engaging with the 'poor boys' debates and are actively and consciously examining their practice when it comes to educating boys (and girls). There is a (misguided) critique of the 'poor boys', and a blame on schools that they need to do more in order to enable the academic interest and achievement of boys, however, throughout this research, it is evident that teachers and principals are well aware of these issues and are applying sound pedagogical principles with regard to all children under their care. Teachers are doing what all good teachers should do as trained professionals, they are not homogenising boys and girls, but are actively looking out for all children's welfare, both emotionally and academically, regardless of gender. Teachers as professionals consider role modelling as 'almost sexless, that you should be a role model whether you're male or female' (Linda: Mainstream teacher: Rural

school). Contradicting the critique that schools (or teachers) are to blame for the disinterest and academic underperformance of boys, this research has demonstrated that teachers and principals are actively taking these concerns into consideration, evaluating them, and attending to the needs of all learners.

Furthermore, this research demonstrated teachers' awareness of the blame being placed on them by recruitment campaigns and parents for more male teachers. They are blamed for the academic underachievement of boys and they are alert to this fact. However, as this research clearly indicates, they are educational professionals, who have an understanding of gender and children and see children as individuals. Teachers throughout this research have offered a sophisticated analysis of children in their care. They have not only demonstrated their ability as professionals to apply gender analysis to their classrooms but they have also displayed their capabilities to deal with boys and their learning needs. They have demonstrated an in-depth understanding of child psychology seen throughout the findings of this study and they alter their teaching pedagogy as necessary adhering and teaching to the individual needs of the children in their class. It was clear throughout the interviews that some teachers were aware of differences in children's learning and ability and differentiation was an imperative element throughout their teaching pedagogy, indicating 'It depends *fully* on the individual child. Regardless of teacher, male or female, both have to work with the individual child' (Anna: mainstream teacher, mixed-urban setting). This is something we would expect from most teachers. Arguments for more role models for boys in schools appear to have a lack of understanding of what it is teachers, as professionals, are educated to do in the classroom.

Furthermore, the simplistic critique within the call for more male role models in schools, suggests schools are deficient of males and teachers are not providing good male role models to boys. But this is just another version of teacher blame without recognising that teachers are well-educated in curriculum, pedagogy, policy, child psychology and evidentially, gender. It also advocates uncritically for greater representation of male teachers in primary schools to address a numeric imbalance without any detailed argument as to what this perfect balance will achieve, or what exactly is lacking with a greater number of female teachers, except simply the presence of more males. Disconnect between the misguided theory and the

professional practice in schools is far too evident. The calls for more male role models 'works' for those who suspect that schools are doing a terrible job, but when you look closely at what teachers and principals are doing (as this research does) it gives a richer picture of both what is being done and what is possible in relation to critiquing gender within our primary schools. It was quite clear throughout this research that male and female teachers can have a great influence on the learning of both boys and girls, as individual teachers rather than gender modelling.

Finding 2: Boys' Already Developed Sense of Masculinity is Possibly Obstructing Their Learning

Research has found that after 'one year in school, children tend to discriminate in their choices of playmates, choosing those of their own sex and discriminating those of the opposite sex' (Kimmel, 2004, p. 131). In playgroups children learn the prototypes of what will be expected of their behaviour as an adult man or women. Boys and girls are very aware of the inequality between men and women and both have an awareness of boys and men being the stronger group (Kimmel, 2004). This was evident throughout this research, particularly within the medium of sport and subject areas that are traditionally seen as more 'feminine'.

The data within this study suggests that boys already have a strong sense of masculinity. Boys have self-elected surrogate role models in which they strongly look up to. It is this self-elected role model that demonstrate social behaviours to the children and hold great influence on their lives rather than their teacher. It is also quite clear that boys favoured male role models within the sports domain[13]. Throughout this research, this was reflected strongly, as sport was the dominant method of promoting hegemonic masculinity both in the role models chosen by the students and in observations by coaches, in particular, where the competitive nature amongst boys in sport can increase 'pressure to be as physically strong, fit and even aggressive as others. It certainly brings on competitiveness' (Edward). The research also displayed further awareness *by girls* of the value of masculinity and sports culture in Irish society, as they too understood the value of cultural capital of sport.

[13] One needs to be mindful of the role gender essentialism and the influence mass marketing has on their choice of role model. Throughout children's lives, there is prevalence in media cultures of male sports personalities, who convey a strong sense of masculinity to boys and encourage their understanding and engagement in masculinities and gender privilege.

Sports role models defined strength and courage throughout the children's responses. Although these attributes could be conveyed as gender neutral, further analysis of the coaches' interviews gave more insight into the actual behaviours of primary school pupils.

Through coaches' perspectives, boys are more willing to participate in sporting games, whether they have an interest or not, yet teachers' experiences suggest boys need constant rewarding and incentives to keep their interests in schoolwork. This contradiction arises from boy's increasing awareness of the power of masculinity within primary schools, as it appears it is boys' own affiliation with masculinities that is affecting their academic achievements (not the number of female teachers). This could infer that the so-called 'feminisation of teaching' cannot be blamed for academic disinterest of boys as the contradiction is clear: boys are willing to participate in subjects like sport/ Physical Education where their masculinities are on display, regardless of interest, yet they become distant in areas that is seen as more 'feminine' like literacy. Possibly, because of traditional gendered stereotypes that suggest it is not 'cool' for boys to study. Sport is a mechanism for boys to portray their masculinity in efforts to fit in as 'such practices are linked in complex ways to the imperative to act cool' (Martino, 2000, p.105). This masculine hierarchy that boys have and feel a need to live up to, often obstructs their learning. This will be further reinforced if men enter into teaching with expectations that they need to relate to and bond with boys through masculine discourse, which could possibly further perpetuate boys' negative associations with learning.

Although the GAA coaches articulated a desire to create a more respectful environment towards players and their teammates, which is commendable, and expressed concern regarding aggressiveness within the sport, the particular gendered expectations of women in sport amongst the coaches has to be highlighted. Although there was agreement surrounding the benefit of female coaches, this was firmly placed at underage level, as suggestion of male bonding through 'banter', craic' and having a 'few pints' with the lads were heavily hinted at by one coach (Edward) and men training male teams was seen as more favourable by all three coaches. With this in mind, we need to be aware of the hegemonic masculinity and traditional male attitudes being passed onto the children, in particularly boys. While teachers and principals are enlightened to the needs of their students, perhaps coaches could

promote more awareness of the influence sport has on boys attitudes to masculinity and be conscious of gender in their coaching. This is where gender essentialism in the male teacher debate can be problematic.

Within the male teacher debate, there is almost a kind of masculine modelling simulacrum present within schools - even without the presence of men in schools and possibly at home – the message is received by boys loud and clear that they are privileged, and can get by with less and still succeed (Connell, 1996). As a result, masculinity is an 'enduring patriarchal world that continues to associate successful masculinity with power, domination and non-emotion and to devalue and demean activities connoted as feminine' (Mills & Keddie, 2007 p.337). The presence of more male teachers might reinforce this privilege as boys get more sport and more explicit modelling of men getting more with less effort. If those in the educational community truly wanted more boys to achieve in schools then perhaps the recruitment of more male teachers with keen interests in literacy and reading would be a more appropriate role model, therefore allowing boys to see that it is ok not to feel they have to conform to traditional heterosexual, hyper masculine stereotypes. But that is not being defined in a role model to counter boys' academic underachievement, because, again, the heart of the matter is that men are needed to portray more masculinity for the boys through more coach-teachers, more sports and more male bonding. This is unlikely to help boys academically. It might if these men are also good teachers, but that is not what is being articulated in a role model for boys. In fact, very little at all is being articulated regarding male role models, aside from the presence of more men. Gender essentialism through populist debates surrounding boys' need for more male role models assumes that male role models means 'proper'/hegemonic masculinity, because 'the idea that masculinity itself might change is particularly upsetting to gender conservatives' (Connell, 2008, p. 134). Even if educational stakeholders wanted to recruit positive male role models for boys in school who explicitly model an obsessive love of literature and learning, modelling a life of reading and writing, engaging in diverse literacy practices, this would be difficult, because this is not a central component to the typical mid-1980's hegemonic masculinity, that 'embodied the currently most honoured way of being a man' (Connell, 2005, p. 832). Even for boys that have a male role model present in their lives, men who do model active literacy would be modelling nerdy behaviour

and throughout the critique of literature within this research, it is clear, those who campaign for the recuperation of masculinity in schools do not want boys to learn how to be avid readers like girls because this is not seen as masculine, therefore they will not get ahead. As a result, they call for practices in schools to become more 'boy friendly' (Donnelly, 2004, Hoff Sommers, 2000, Pollack, 1999, Gurian, 1999, Biddulph, 1997).

Correspondingly, to assume female teachers always model strong literacy behaviours to girls or boys is unrealistic and further demonstrates the level of essentialism in the belief that men can model literacy to boys and that will change boy's attitudes towards reading. Girls simply do not enjoy reading because their female teacher models reading. To suggest so is insulting to girl's academic efforts. However, a part of masculinity that is being modelled to boys is an attitude where masculinity equals less effort and more benefits as boys and men still get ahead (Connell, 1996). It is this sense of masculinity that enables boys to label subjects as masculine or feminine.

Finding 3: Male Power and Privilege is at the Forefront of the Male Teacher Debate and not the Academic Welfare of all Boys

We are aware socially to 'what powers we command and what powers will be directed by others for us and against us, and we negotiate the currents both intuitively and deliberately' (Frye, 1992, p. 17), therefore, being in opposition of power 'gives one the feeling of being in control of this situation...[knowing what is going on]...that one can be what it wants to be' (Frye, 1992, p.47) and this would appear to be at the forefront of the male teacher debate.

If men lose the power and privilege that is seen to be their birthright, they are seen to be the weaker sex, therefore more men in teaching will reinforce male power through bonding with boys and reinforcement of hegemonic masculine behaviours, as we have seen throughout the coaches' data. Boys, although they are not performing as well as their female counterparts, can still get ahead. The recruitment of more male teachers as role models for boys based on outdated sex role theories because male teachers are more adjusted to boys' learning needs and are more capable of addressing their disaffection with schooling simply because they are male (Martino

et al., 2009) again highlights the gender essentialism within the male teacher debate and further outlines that maintaining male privilege maybe more important than raising the academic interest and performance of boys. Boys cannot be seen to underperform against girls. Throughout this thesis, male essentialism was evident through sport and aggressive video gaming. Throughout the male teacher debate, it appears that all boys are categorised into one homogenised group, they are all the same and men can help boys because they are male. However, data within this research clearly demonstrates that boys are not in need of more male role models to show them how to be male. Boys are already are aware of their value as males and teachers need to be aware of this. In fact, women teachers are very worthwhile role models to boys as suggested by the majority of teachers in this research.

As girls are continuing to achieve more in their academic performances and transgender and gay men are beginning to gain more privilege amongst society with high profile events such as Gay Pride and campaigners within the LGBT community garnering more public recognition, it may be seen by those who have gender essentialist notions of hegemonic heterosexual masculinity that the only way to strengthen male privilege and power back to men is to bring more male teachers to boys in schools to display what 'real men' look like. By displaying 'real men' qualities these role models are assumed to form positive relationships with these boys and promote hegemonic male masculinities as a way to increase male privilege. They are not concerned about the education of boys, because if they were, they would invest more into those experiencing difficulties in school, boys, girls and children from disadvantaged or difficult backgrounds. But instead, by strategically highlighting the assumed unified group of *boys* as 'vulnerable' and 'failing' (Farrell & Gray, 2018), they mask homophobia and misogyny through the boy 'crisis' debate. Placing blame on female teachers for girls getting ahead of boys is the most straight forward method for gaining attention and gender essentialism amongst educational stakeholders and society allows this to happen because they are unwilling to examine gender critically and accept that it is boys' notions of conforming to masculinity (that is pushed upon them by society) that is affecting boys' academic achievement, not the number of women teachers. Uncritical arguments that more male teachers is the solution are simplistic and possibly insulting to women teachers and could conceivably cause more tension between

male and female teachers than is warranted. Attitudes of male superiority in some cultures where children believe they 'should be listening to a man more, over a woman' (Alice, principal, mixed urban school), as demonstrated through teachers' and principals' interviews, could percolate into other boys. It is for this reason, that educational stakeholders should not create policies based on the statistical and numerical proportions of females in primary teaching and voice concerns about the need for more men in teaching in order to enhance 'the educational performance of boys' (Carrington et al., 2007) and in doing so, assume any male can have a positive impact on a boy's educational experience without even considering whether this male is a good teacher and role model for all students. Engagement in a critical debate in co-operation with evidence-based research on the impacts of more men in primary teaching and gender imbalance discourse is imperative.

Finding 4: Essentialist Gendered Views can Place Pressure on Principal Teachers to Employ Female Teachers for Younger Classes

Currently, the tension between the call for more male teachers and the placement of male teachers in infant rooms can be problematic for principals. It is a concern when principals feel children might be 'intimidated' with a male teacher (Elaine, mixed, rural principal), or they 'might have to answer a few more questions from parents' (Alice, mixed, urban school) if they assigned a male teacher to an infant classroom. The reluctance to 'employ a male to the position [of infant teacher] because you know an infant teacher is seen as a motherly figure' (Tom, rural, mixed school) demonstrates instability in the call for more male teachers. Tensions arising from such instability could be problematic for male teachers being placed in an infant room as fear of being seen as gay or even a predator would be 'a very real concern for a male teacher' in the infant room (Alice, mixed, urban school). This clearly demonstrates gender essentialism and gender stereotypes are still firmly cemented in society and yet, they contradict themselves. The contradiction in the call for more male teachers, where populist media call for more men in teaching, yet, when they enter into the profession, they are closely monitored for fear of being gay or paedophiles, displays society's contradiction of their own needs. The association with infant teaching as being a 'motherly' role, coupled with constant tension and contradiction enables men to revert to displaying hegemonic masculinities, which

further perpetuates a cycle of reinforcing hegemonic masculinity back into schools. This is clear from male teachers throughout this study, who suggest they are gender neutral, yet incentivise boys through masculine activities. These contradictions and tensions are not helpful to any children at primary level, nor are they conducive to any form of learning both socially and academically. There needs to be stronger awareness and solidification of what society is looking for in a male teacher, because current blurred boundaries where it is ok for men to teach older children as long as they do not enter the infant room is based on historical notions that categorise male and females into gendered categories, which is sexist, essentialist and problematic.

Interestingly, Skelton and Francis (2003) suggests that heterosexual assumptions can be challenged within most environments if teachers are committed to influencing what forms of masculinity and femininity practice are constructed in their classroom, however it is only a minority of teachers who do this. Similarly, Skelton's study (2001) confirmed male teachers were very eager to display their own heterosexual masculinities often through 'sexually objectifying banter that included the boys but embarrassed the girls….the only girl who mounted an explicit challenge was perceived by both teachers and other children as unfeminine' (Skelton as cited in Paechter, 2007, p. 85). While this demonstrates the influence teachers can have on invigorating masculinities and femininities within the classroom, especially when teachers themselves display their own identities in a particular way and reinforce traditional gender stereotypes, it equally illustrates the importance of employing the best teacher for the job and not based on gender alone. It is unlikely a male teacher reinforcing masculinities on boys who are already participating in misogynistic behaviour will increase the behavioural and educational experiences of all students in the classroom. On another side, it would be healthy for boys to see more male teachers in a caring capacity in the infant room, as 'role modelling is general behaviour' (David, mixed urban school).

However, if we want male teachers to deconstruct gendered assumptions and every pupil's needs are to be taken into account within the classroom, then surely a male teacher who challenges dominant gender discourses and recognises boys, girls, male and female teachers are not one homogenised group will be able to create a better learning environment for all. Therefore, male teachers should not just be employed for being male, nor should they be employed to teacher senior classes only.

Furthermore, gender equality requires that pupils see men in roles with young children. One male teacher working with the youngest children in a school is likely to be worthwhile in this respect, even if he teaches only one out of several classes. This statement is true, of course, only 'if that male teacher is committed to equality and deconstruction of hegemonic masculinity' (Ashley, 2003, p.12), however, as this research demonstrated, men are very rarely positioned in lower aged classrooms.

Perceptions of society in classifying male and female teachers into sex role categorisations effectively produce and reiterate 'common-sense' understandings of men and perpetuate discourses that place men into hegemonic masculine ideals that are not considered suitable for younger classes. Even in the case of this research, there were no male teachers in an infant class. We need to strongly consider if we want to continue a cycle where it is normal for society to be apprehensive about men teaching young children in the infant room, or equally, where men feel a need to conform to hegemonic masculinities for fear of accusations of homosexuality or paedophilia. Educational professionals, within this research, admit that in order to protect the teacher and out of fear of parental disruption, they avoid placing men in younger classes. This is a reference to the contradiction of society calling for more male role models in primary schools, as long as they don't teach the young children! It illustrates tension amongst the male teacher who is trying to teach, nurture and care for their pupils, yet conscious of displaying hegemonic masculinities and fulfilling the role of what society demands from a male role model.

Finding 5: Gender Essentialism is Shaping the Role of Boys and Girls in Primary School, as Adult's Gender Anxieties Override a Common-Sense Approach

The overwhelming presence of gender in our lives contributes to the way in which we view and act towards men and women. It 'shapes our subordination and dominance' of one category dominating over another (Frye, 1983. p34), and we practice and therefore become embedded into this frame of mind. In particular gender essentialism.

Literature throughout this research has firmly displayed the enormous pressures to act masculine or feminine, not just placed on children and teenagers, but very often placed upon teachers. It is this social pressure to fit in that accentuates essentialism throughout society, enabling penalties for anything outside 'normalisation' (Frye, 1992, p.36). Socialisation has a key role in how we behave, and patterns of behaviour that can be considered genetic or biological, like masculine and feminine traits, can also be explained by social patterns of behaviour. In this regard, learned behaviour from children enables them to act in a certain way displaying more masculine or feminine behaviours. Frye suggests these behaviours are not necessarily biological but formed habitually from emulation of others and are therefore a product of socialisation and this is reinforced in such a manner that 'by the time we are gendered adults, masculinity and femininity are biological' (Frye, 1992, p.37). This is demonstrated throughout this study, especially through increased aggression in sport and male pupil aggression towards some female teachers. This emulation of social (adult) behaviours needs to be accounted for. It is these patterns of behaviours that have become embedded into our children, where gender identity is demonstrated through the enacting of gender roles that are learned (Paechter, 2001). It is gender essentialism, evident throughout this research through video gaming, attitudes towards sport and disinterest towards in academic subjects that is stopping boys from engaging in literacy discourse and choosing video games and sport over books. It is gender essentialism that is encouraging aggressive and sometime violent behaviours on the playing field, because even intelligent boys are acceptable, once they are good at sport. Sport is seen as a foundation for manhood and this is reinforced in the school playground and through boys' sports role models. If we resist or challenge gender essentialism from schooling and the threat posed to

deviations of what is considered 'normal', there would be less pressure on boys and girls to perform according to socialisation patterns enabling them to actually learn and possibly enjoy learning, because it is gender essentialism that gets in the way, not the minority or majority of male and female teachers. In schools we need to break down this essentialism in order to get to the real teaching, but teachers need to be aware of this. If this can be achieved through teachers implementing critical lessons on gender and analysing, evaluating and discussing gender through teaching pedagogy, we possibly could 'break the habits of culture which generate that pressure, [and] people would not act particularly masculine or feminine' (Frye, 1992, p.35).

Furthermore, it is gender essentialism amongst those in society who continue to believe the rhetoric from pop psychologists and men's rights groups that campaign for more male role models in schools to help overcome academic disinterest and underachievement of boys, based on uncritical theories that boys, *as a singular, unified, group,* need more men in schools to help them achieve. Gender essentialism assumes that masculinity is something that can only be transferred from man to boy. If this were the case, the utopian argument put forward by men's rights activists that more role models will aid boys' academic achievement, this would clearly be evidenced in the various international examples of boys' schools with male teachers. To the best of my knowledge, there is no research to suggest that this gender essentialist model offers greater academic success to boys. Debates for more men in teaching, clearly demonstrated throughout this research, are more concerned with the recuperation of hegemonic masculinity and gender privilege than nurturing boys' individual educational needs. Therefore, introducing male role models, through the homogenisation of all boys, will not address the contemporary concerns we have for boys' academic underachievement and possibly add to the potential marginalisation of those who are already outside the realm of what is seen as heterosexual masculinity. As 'problems often begin in the classroom when those 'in the know' commerce only with others 'in the know,' excluding and marginalizing those perceived to be outside the magic circle' (Fuss, 1989, p.115), issues of marginalisation further arise when 'the artificial boundary between insider and outsider necessarily contains rather than disseminates knowledge' (Fuss, 1989, p. 115). This in turn acts to strengthen male power and privilege rather than promote

boys' academic interest and achievement, dispute the latter being heavily promoted by men's rights activists. Boys' who are being marginalised and possibly in need of the most academic help, are potentially subject to further marginalisation. Furthermore, the data from teachers and pupils in this research does not support the belief that the absence of males in primary schools has caused a deficit in boys.

I would argue that the uncritical, simplistic, hegemonic belief in gender essentialism is the lynchpin for the populist arguments for more male teachers in primary school. If the power of gender essentialism is undercut and demystified, the call for more male teachers in primary school would lose its 'common sense' popular appeal. If we were to abandon the belief that supporting all boys' academic achievement is exclusively tied to the presence of other males, we would be in a much stronger position to argue for the advantages male teachers bring to the education of all students, boys and girls. If we question essentialist beliefs that are so embedded in society, we would be in a better place to argue for the importance of male teachers in the lives of girls. We would see the significant role female teachers play in the formation of well-rounded boys. Further to this, we would be able to appreciate the value of what LGBT+ teachers, teachers of colour, and Traveller teachers bring to the classrooms and the lives of children. Identification and gender identity can be used as a mechanism for self-recognition that compliments social communication, not hinders it. Identification is 'the play of difference and similitude in self-other relations, does not, strictly speaking, stand against identity but structurally aids and abets it' (Fuss, 1995, p. 2).

However, the argument to challenge gender essentialist beliefs is not overly idealistic. This research has illustrated that most children do not consider their teacher as a role model, nor do they appear to have a preference for a male or female teacher, once they are learning. Within the context of this research, neither children nor educators are starting from a belief in gender essentialism. As such, they have a greater breadth of understanding about teaching and learning needs.

Therefore, one needs to consider whether the demand for more male teachers as role models for boys, rooted in essentialist beliefs about gender, have any real potential to attend to the academic needs of boys, or is it that these essentialist beliefs merely perpetuate anxiety for adults about assumed 'proper' behaviour of boys, and in turn, only act to strengthen hegemonic male privilege.

7.3 Recommendations

1. Reframing the Argument

> Gender essentialism needs to be further addressed as ‘it is most dangerous and misleading to base identity politics upon rigid theories of exclusion (Said, 1986, p. 50).

Essentialism is the problem. As long as essentialism exists, boys will follow into a role of masculinity because this is seen to be the right thing to do. Assuming all boys are the same and placing boys into a homogenised group only exacerbates the difficulties already facing boys and girls who are already failing. Marginalisation will continue and girls and effeminate or gay boys will inevitably suffer as a result. Men are also the solution to essentialism. Male teachers can help break down essentialism in schools through being aware of their actions and behaviours by bringing critical awareness of gendered expectations into the classroom, as most male teachers are already doing. This was evidence in their explanations of what it means for them to be role models. Breaking down gender essentialism is not overly ambitious. Gay, effeminate boys, LGBT+ communities are already gaining momentum in individual gender identity. Young adults are already very aware of transgenderism and are accepting this. Within this research, it was articulated, a male role model is not about showing a boy ‘ how to do manly things like fixing a leak or like repairing a tyre, [...] mums are perfectly capable of doing those things’ (David, mixed urban school), however, there is importance in modelling behaviour that is ‘balanced, kind and caring. [...] there’s a lot more to being masculine than doing manly things’ (David, mixed, urban school). This also demonstrates the gender analysis teachers are already applying within schools, which needs to be applauded for. It also demonstrates that with more knowledge on applying gender analysis, interrupting gender essentialism is a real possibility.

2. **Increased Production of Gender Literacy**

The Department of Education and Skills need to invest in a proliferation of gender literacy based on research in the primary education sector, which is accessible to those in the school community. This would enable a common understanding of what gender is. From my observations, as seen above, teachers have a good understanding of gender and even more familiarity and unity in this subject area would be an addition to the already gained knowledge of teaching professionals and enable a broader gender education. As teachers in this study articulated a concern of boys following the crowd mentality, teachers should continue to be conscious and have an awareness of gendered power relations and dominant discourses of gender within their classroom. More gender literacy could enable them to continue to disengage in stereotypical gendered roles and encourage students not to conform to gendered thinking and actions. In schools, patterns of behaviour are susceptible to change through time and with constant reinforcement of critical awareness of gender and gender practices, distancing themselves from the homogenisation of behaviours into boys and girls or masculine and feminine behaviours, this can be achieved. Not every pattern of behaviour can be boxed into essentialist categories of masculine or feminine. Through an increased production of gender literacy, enabling new and incoming teachers to understand gender, and apply sound gender analysis, schools can break down this essentialism in order to get to the real teaching and teachers play a large part in this role. Teachers have always been active agents of change and therefore continued engagement in lessons that teach children in a gender-neutral learning environment is encouraged, by conducting lessons in which children can explore different ways to look at and critique gender rather than learning through the traditional constructs of gender. Teachers can continue to demonstrate their 'caring' role (as highlighted by the teachers in this study) in children's lives, by becoming conscious of their behaviours and attitudes within the classroom and examining stereotypical gendered behaviours of others, in the playground and outside the classroom, as children learn by example. Teachers' role and interactions in critically examining gender in education should be incorporated into teacher education programmes and additional professional development and leadership courses, allowing a continued flow of gender analysis within schools.

3. **Interrupting Essentialist Assumptions**

If we want male teachers to deconstruct already formed gender boundaries that have been embedded into dominant discourse in certain cultures of society, we need to discourage the school of thought that suggests men can control and teach boys better because they are male and try to reduce gender essentialism in schools. There needs to be an acceptance that these behaviours could strengthen already dominant constructs of masculinity within boys and create negative macho stereotypes in schools, to the detriment of female teachers, girls and marginalised boys. We need to challenge forms of male bonding and rewarding through masculine attributes as articulated by some of the female teachers and students in this study. Rewarding boys through sport and bonding through sport, as demonstrated by some of the teachers, can lead to those with little interest in sport being excluded. An awareness of this can create more inclusivity for all pupils. Simple changes like introducing homework passes, non-uniform days, even making pancakes as a reward, could be introduced instead, which would appear to a wider variety of children.

As coaches within this study articulated a concern for increased aggression and competitiveness amongst boys when playing sport, consideration must also be given to the ways in which dominant forms of masculinity are carried out within schools, through sport and playground games. Playground teams could be made by teachers mixing girls and boys teams. There could be a no ball play-time whereby other games need to be practiced, like chase. Fun Fridays could be incorporated into schools where hoola-hoop, skipping, bean bag stations are introduced in younger classes and senior students act as leaders and mentors in these games. Paired reading times could be introduced where buddy systems are formed, and older children read to younger children for twenty minutes in the classroom. Conventional and dominant forms of masculinity can be furthered challenged within individual schools and classrooms, where pupils are involved in analysis and discussions of gender. Individuality needs to be promoted more efficiently and confidently, with posters and banners in halls.

4. Negotiating and Rethinking the Debate for More Male Role Models for Boys

This research suggests that if primary schools are going to answer the call for the need for more male teachers, there is need for a critical evaluation of exactly what they are looking for in a male role model in terms of what it is that female teachers cannot or are not already doing. In doing so, perhaps the contradictions that surround such an argument that on one hand call more men into an occupation seen as feminine to 'bring back masculinity, yet on the other hand cause tension for the men who do enter into this role, will be dissolved. Alternatively, by considering a non-essentialist view of men, we might consider what different men might bring to primary teaching. For example, what might gay or transgendered men offer primary school children? In the contemporary debates about role models for boys, this question is *never* asked because of the inherent essentialism and hegemonic heterosexual masculinity that guides the concern for the boys who apparently lack male role models. Asking questions about modelling different masculinities inevitably will expose the argument for more male teachers as one that arises from homophobia and a fear of effeminate boys. If the role model debate is questioned at a systematic level, there is more chance of changing public opinion from those who feed into the arguments of men's rights groups. The DES and Teaching Council could address the disjointed relation between dominant constructions of masculinity and calls for more male role models for boys. Parents, in particular, could place more focus on what is actually happening within the classroom, what teachers as professionals are saying about gender, rather than place value on uncritical assumptions because it garners the most attention. There could be a change in the construction of gender equality and equity policies in primary schools whereby parents and others in the school communities are aware of the promotion of gender identity that pupils engage in. A module where children could openly engage, evaluate and analyse masculinity and femininity would be of great benefit to continue active engagement in gender discourse and social identity.

5. Engaging Research in Those Being Marginalised

Educationalists from government bodies like the DES, INTO and the Teaching Council need to address the lack of educational rhetoric regarding girls who are not performing well in schools. There is an urgent need to reframe the argument and interrupt discourse that creates an essentialist binary that feeds into a zero-sum argument, which places competition between the achievements of boys against girls. This is important in order to ensure we do not get trapped in the essentialist thinking, which in turn will allow girls' educational needs and the good work of female teachers to get side-lined. There is a strong need to conduct research into *which* boys *and* girls are failing and address the actual problem of student's disinterest and disengagement in school.

The DES needs to engage in more critical evidence-based gender research and promote this within schools, continuous professional development courses and teacher training colleges. It needs larger promotion of policies based on inclusivity, for not only LGBT+ teachers, teachers of colour and Traveller teachers but inclusivity for students', positively promoting one's own self-identity. This could be done, through consideration of current gender and education policies both at government and school level, making changes to such policies to ensure more inclusivity for all pupils. This could enable the systematic change of gender policy, which is needed.

6. Engaging Research on Role Model Deficits

Given that there are currently perceived difficulties, in one parent families, where boys are assumed to be in need of a male role model, parents and wider members of the school community, including DES, INTO and the Teaching Council need to engage in educational research that highlights the lower educational achievement of girls from one parent families, in comparison to boys (Ryker et al., 2001). Through critical engagement in gender research, educational stakeholders will be in a better position to address the current rhetoric surrounding the need for male teachers to conform to stereotypical hegemonic roles in order to be a 'father figure' to boys from matriarchal families. However, research by Barclay and Cusumano (1967) and (Boothroyd, 2017), suggests that boys with absent fathers do not lack masculinity,

but rather develop hyper- or exaggerated, sometimes unhealthy masculinity. In these cases, the provision of a male role model would need to temper masculinity, not as one might believe, to provide a model to make up for a deficit. Further to this, we might consider girls who are marginalised and failing in relation to *their* need for a male role model. This needs urgent attention as studies suggest it is girls from single parent families that are more at risk of underachieving academically due to extra household responsibilities. It is also important to acknowledge the need to help the girls who are failing in schools as they have gotten 'lost' in the 'boy crisis' discourse.

7.4 Contributions of this Study

Although this study is largely positioned in an Irish context, it has made significant contributions to current research in gender and education, both in a national and international level.

Inevitably one of the most important aspects of this research was its contribution to the knowledge of gender and education in the primary teaching sector. This research has engaged in diverse critiques of contemporary arguments in male role model discourse and the need for more male role models for boys. Through critically evaluating essentialist arguments that highlight the need for more male role models for boys based on biological sex, this study has demonstrated that arguments for more male role models for boys are simplistic and largely driven by men's rights movements in an effort to increase male power and privilege in primary schools. The study deflates suggestions that gender modelling will increase the academic achievement and interest in boys, in favour of individual role modelling to suit the interests and needs of individual students, all students. This was demonstrated by the opinions and practices of educational professionals and children teaching in and attending Irish primary schools.

It was this process of conducting informed based research, consulting children in particular, on their perceptions and their understanding of role modelling that creates a unique element to this study, within an Irish context. The outcomes of this process enabled the study to give children a voice in the research. The inclusion of children enabled the research to raise an awareness of who children's role models are,

(through their own voices) and how they do not differentiate massively, as there was no significant divide either in geographical location or between boys and girls. This research highlights that both girls and boys certainly do not see their teachers as role models and undercuts the argument that the teacher is the fulcrum of the role model debate. The participation of children also enabled the research to demonstrate and raise awareness to others of boy's own sense of masculinity that is well developed, despite the minority of male teachers. This can help contribute to further discourse of what is best for the education of boys *and* girls.

Another contribution of the study is the element of exposing shortfalls in the arguments for male role models and through this the study helps to diversify our understanding of role models, highlighting that men can be great role models to girls too. In doing so, the study raises much needed awareness in an Irish context about the importance of the education of girls that are also falling behind.

Additionally, the study demonstrates a difference of opinion between rural and urban boys (from a mixed school setting), towards their experiences of having a male and female teacher. The study highlights the need for further analysis into boys from cultural backgrounds where males hold strong positions of authority within the family. The study highlights the need for further research to analyse the effect male privilege is having on the educational achievement of these pupils, while also considering the impact attitudes of male superiority are having on girls.

Furthermore, in critiquing the misplaced arguments for more male role models for boys in primary school, this research has raised awareness of the high level of professionalism within our educational setting. This study has demonstrated teachers and principals' understandings of gender and helps create a case that teachers are already responding to concerns being raised in popular press about boys and in doing so are applying sound pedagogical practices that cater for the needs of all students as individuals.

7.5 Limitations of the Research

Further research into the experiences of male teachers towards teaching infant classes would have complimented the research, as it would have enabled the research to see if it was the male teachers themselves who opted not to teach younger classes

or they were never considered by the principal, possibly on the basis of their gender. Research into both elements, could provide analysis into the impact gender essentialism has in limiting the roles of male teachers within schools and whether males revert back to heterosexual masculine behaviours as a result.

Another limitation would be the sample size of the coaches interviewed. In hindsight, a more in-depth look at the coaches might have strengthened the research given that they are the stereotypical role models that are being called for in schools; sporty, heterosexual and 'manly' male role models for boys.

7.6 Future Research

Based on the findings of this research, there are a number of possible developments that would benefit from further research, which include:

Given the cogitations raised in this study, in relation to the influence teachers and coaches perceived video gaming was having on the academic disinterest and educational abilities of primary school children, more research needs to be carried out into the role of video gaming amongst boys and girls in Irish primary schools and the impact this has on their academic performance, including their perceptive, communication and listening skills. Future research should assess the extent to which boys and girls are spending on video gaming and possibly carry out comparative analysis into the communication and perceptive abilities of boys and girls who participate in extensive video gaming against those who have other interests. Such a study may provide further insight into boys' academic disinterest.

In light of the fact that evidence-based research has shown, if the father figure is absent, it is the *girls* who appear to in greater need of attention (Ryker et al., 2001), there is a great importance to carry out further research in the area of girls' education and their need for a positive male role model in schools. Such a study may provide insightful information on the perceptions of girls in primary school and give them a voice in their education.

Additionally, as this study demonstrated an element of male superiority amongst some cultures that is transcending into schools, there is need for further research in

Ireland into the effect this has on boys and girls present in these classrooms. Further research on the multicultural diversity within classrooms and the effect this has on pupils' learning experiences can possibly shed some light into the emotional and academic wellbeing of primary school students.

Given the considerations and reflections throughout the research regarding the attitude towards male teachers in younger classrooms, coupled with the fact that all of the male teachers interviewed were currently teaching senior classes, this indicates a need for further research as to the opportunities and limitations for males to teach younger classes. There is potential to gain insight into whether male teachers distance themselves from teaching younger classes and the impact calls for more men in primary teaching (yet, fear of been seen as a predator) has on their ability to perform their role as a teacher to all children and if it impacts on their approach to teaching. If we are serious about providing male role models in schools, why wouldn't this happen from the lowest years in school? Further research in this area could highlight possibilities for raising critical questions about hegemonic masculinity in relation to teaching infant classes and raise important questions regarding the re-gendering of primary schools, through the resistance of remasculinisation.

Lastly, there is a need for more research into the role coaches play in the modelling process, given that they are the exact kind of models that are being called for; sporty, heterosexual, 'manly' models for boys. As sport featured heavily within this study, as a means for boys to 'perform' masculinity, and therefore appears to be an environment for the promotion of heterosexual masculinity and marginalisation of other, less masculine behaviours, there needs to be more focus on the impact more gender analysis could have on the role of coaches towards inclusive education.

7.7 Conclusion

> 'The reigning definition of masculinity is a defence effort to prevent being emasculated' (Kimmel, 1996, p.217).

When looked upon critically, the male teacher debate has the potential to open discourse and interrogate gender essentialism that is strongly evident amongst students in our primary schools and in turn create a resistance to gender stereotyping,

changing the way those who believe in the boy 'panic' think about gender. This would entail resisting the clever promotions to re-masculinise schooling, where strategies problematising the 'boy panic' help to reinforce male privilege by enabling greater attention to focus on meeting boys' needs, often at the expense of girls (Epstein et al., 1998). It would also involve a rejection of the role of 'femininity' within the 'poor boys' and boy 'crisis' discourse. The clear disparity between men's rights movements to formally engage in, not only critical educational research, but also practicing and experienced teachers, needs to be addressed. Teachers clearly understand the needs of their students and are actively addressing them, not by gender but as individuals. Teachers, like students, are clearly rejecting the notion that gender modelling is more beneficial to the learning of boys and girls. There is a perceived thought from both educators and students that more male teachers can be beneficial to both boys and girls in primary school, but from a sense of individuality rather than for reasons of gender. Furthermore, the participants within this study are actively present in schools and have a clear understanding of the teaching pedagogy necessary to educate their students. They have considered the gender debate and have chosen to operate their schools effectively to cater for the needs of the boys and girls they are teaching. They are rejecting the simplistic arguments portrayed by populist media and men's rights activists and manage schools with sound educational theory, not popular culture theory that is absent of gender or educational analysis.

Clever campaigning by men's rights groups, 'pop' psychologists (Connell, 2000) and 'gender conservatives' (Connell, 2008), who call for more male teachers for boys, are failing to address the needs of individual boys and girls and are in turn promoting the re-masculinsation of schooling because 'the fear of being a sissy dominates the cultural definitions of manhood' (Kimmel, 1996, p. 214). Anything seen outside the realm of traditional sex role categorisations or traditional hegemonic masculinity is seen as weakening male power and privilege (Connell, 1996). However, R.W. Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinities (1982) has led us on a journey that has not yet come to a conclusion. While a great deal of conceptual confusion has surrounded the concept of masculinities, particularly evident in accounts of masculinity in pop psychology (Gray, 1992) and in the mythopoetic men's movement (Bly, 1990), the underlying disorder has been conceptually useful.

Diverse research on masculinities in various social and cultural settings has emerged precisely because the basic hegemonic masculinities concept is not unified or stable.

This research has helped demystify male role model discourse as an act of gender essentialism that is aimed to increase male privilege in schools. The hypothesis underpinning campaigns for more male teachers for boys is based on 'sex role socialisation theories' (Skelton, 2003, p. 195) that use strategic language placing boys as 'vulnerable' and 'at risk' (Francis, 2006, p. 187). This research has demonstrated that children do not view their teacher as a role model and in fact, boys have already mastered their own sense of masculinity without the presence of a majority of male teachers. The rejection of such hypothesis by teachers themselves has also been clearly demonstrated. The majority of both students and educational professionals feel gender modelling is not necessary. Therefore, men's rights activists need to wake up to the fact that the numerical majority or minority of female and male teachers are not to blame for academic and behavioural disinterest in boys and teaching quality needs to supersede teacher gender. Furthermore, the needs of girls are completely ignored within the male teacher debate because girls as a homogenised group are seen to be successful in comparison to boys. Although, like boys, there are also some girls who are struggling in school.

If we, as a society, are truly concerned about the education of our children, both boys and girls, deconstruct children's already formed social constructs of gender, not promote gender difference and in doing so enable our children to learn that individuality is far better than following the crowd. We need to give children the tools to think critically about gender, through conversing in subjects that allow for a solid insight into how to provide a structure for modelling good values, such as English (debates), Religion[14] and Social, Personal and Health Education (S.P.H.E) lessons. We need to formally compliment teachers, who are already attending to the needs of students who come from single-parent families and providing support for those struggling with reading. As this study has demonstrated, boys are already exposed to an abundance of masculinity from popular culture. The exposure to masculinity is not the issue men's rights groups try to display.

[14] Being a good role model is already being implemented in schools throughout the Religion curriculum which teaches about the importance of practicing good values and moral behaviour towards one another. Discussions and practices regarding the importance of good values are already being 'modelled' in schools.

In further deconstructing social constructs of gender, educationalists need to communicate to society through media campaigns and advertisements that gender modelling is not effective. Throughout this study, it is clear the student's do not look up to their teachers as role models, and teachers reject popular theories calling for more gender modelling, relying on sound pedagogical principals instead. We, as a society, need to highlight this. We need to openly promote statistics from educational-based research that determine the gender of the teacher is not effective in strengthening the academic achievement and interest in boys and counter the gender essentialism that is embedded in some sections of society. This could be possible by changing gender-based recruitment campaigns targeting men and introducing more inclusive campaigns seeking teachers who want to make a difference in children's lives, whether from LGBT+ communities, Traveller communities or otherwise. Campaigns with slogans such as 'Inclusivity is key...Let's teach our kids some diversity' could further enable children to embrace difference.

Additionally, subject discrimination by gender needs attention. Boys' notions of English and Literacy need to be addressed. While reading campaigns were initiated in England, using volunteer football players as role models to try to counter such attitudes, I would argue this had little effect on the overall attitude of literacy as feminine. Perhaps read-a-thons where children are given an array of non-gender books that could be of 'high interest' to them, for example Michael Morpurgo, David Walliams, Louis Sachar , Jeff Kinney and Ross Welford, where the person who reads the most books gets homework passes, to pick the subject for 'golden time', or gets the class extra rewards. Strategies like this are often promoted to encourage children with dyslexia and works very well at encouraging boys and girls to read more. In short, notions of pre-historic gender essentialism need to be addressed. They are based on out-dated sex role classifications and those with a lack of gender analysis are seduced by gender essentialism because of lack of awareness that gender does not fit everyone. As Connell suggests:

> The biggest problem of all in pop- psychology approach to masculinity is its nostalgia, a persistent belief that the solutions to the problems of men can be found by looking backwards. Pop psychology idealizes a pre-industrial past, (a mythical one, in fact) where men knew how to be men and women knew how to be mothers and there was no homosexuality or equal opportunity legislation to muddy the waters. (2000, p. 6)

For future teachers, we need a role modelling module in teacher training courses that erodes views of gender essentialism and draws on theories of anti-essentialism that is becoming part of popular culture, such as, promotion of collective social identities and embracing difference within school culture. The DES is focussed on evidence-based research within school self-evaluation, whole school planning, assessment and the importance of evaluation as the structure for educational reform (Department of Education and Skills, 2018, Action plan for Education), yet they continue to believe essentialist campaigns for more men in teaching that has little evidence-based research itself. If it is gender equality we strive to achieve, we must continue to engage in analysis of 'poor boys' discourse, ensuring gender essentialism advocated by men's rights activists are not at the forefront of educational discourse and policy. We need to closely monitor the gap between the achievement of both boys and girls in primary schools and outline *which* boys and girls are failing, therefore remaining conscious of those who are currently marginalised for underachieving or being 'different'. Only then, the above strategies (role modelling module in training colleges, opening critical discussions based on masculinity and femininity in classrooms, opening policies on embracing self-identity in schools and more continual professional development for teachers on role modelling and gender analysis), we can break down traditionally formed constructions of gender and dominant discourses of masculinity that place enormous pressure on children to conform to what is seen as 'normalised' behaviour. Interrogating hegemonic masculinity and gender essentialism is key, as 'power is never the property of an individual; it belongs to a group and remains in existence only so long as the groups keeps together' (Arendt, 1970, p.44).

Bibliography

Ailwood, J. and Lingard, B. (2001), 'Endgame for National Girls' Schooling Policies', *Australian Journal of Education,* vol. 45, no. 3, pp. 9-22

Allen, A. (1990), 'On being a role model', *Berkeley Women's Law Journal, vol.* 22, pp. 22-42.

Anderson, *C.* and Carnagey, N. (2009), 'Casual Effects of Violent Sport Video Games on Aggression: Is it competitiveness or Violent Content?' *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology,* Vol 45, (4), pp. 731-739

Anderson, C. and Bushman, B. (2007), 'The Effect of Video Game Violence on physiological desensitization to real-life violence', *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology,* Vol 43, (1), pp. 489-496

Archer, J. (1991), 'The Influence of Testosterone on Human Aggression', *British Journal of Psychology*, vol. 82, pp. 1-28

Archer, L. and Francis, B. (2007), *Understanding Minority Ethnic Achievement,* Routledge, London

Arnot, M. (2004), *Male Working-Class Identities and Social Justice: A Reconsideration of Paul Willis's Learning to Labour in Light of Contemporary Research, In Dolby, N. and Dimitriadis, G. (2004) Learning to Labor in New Times*, Routledge-Falmer, London

Arnot, M., David, M. and Weiner, G. (1999), *Closing the Gender Gap,* Polity Press, Cambridge

Arnot, M., Gray, J., James, M., Rudduck, J. and Duveen, G. (1998), '*Recent Research on Gender and Educational Performance'*, The Stationery Office, London

Ashley, M., (2003), 'Primary school boys' identity formation and the male role model: an exploration of sexual identity and gender identity in the UK through attachment theory', *Sex Education,* Vol. 3, No. 3, pp. 257-270.

Ashley, M,. and Lee, J. (2003), *Women Teaching Boys: caring and working in the primary school.* Trentham, Stoke-on-Trent

Askew, S. and Ross, C. (1988), *Boys Don't Cry: Boys and Sexism in Education*, Open University, Milton Keynes

Balchin, T. (2002), 'Male teachers in primary education', *Forum*, vol. 44, no. 1, pp. 27-33.

Bandura, A. (1977), *Social Learning Theory*, General Learning Press, New York

Bandura, A. (1986), *Social Foundations of Thought and Action*, Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey

Bassey, M. (1995), Creating Education through Research, Network, BERA

Bhana, D. (2015), Learning Gender in the Early Years of Schooling in South Africa. *Handbook of Children and Youth Studies.* pp. 279-288

Bickman, L. and Rog, D. (1998), *Handbook of applied social research methods*, Thousand Oaks, Sage Publications.

Biddulph, S. (1997), *Raising Boys*, Thorsens, London

Black, B.J., (2007), *Expectations of Boys and Girls, in Vol 2, Gender and Educations*, Praeger, London

Blair, H. and Sanford, K. (2002), 'Engendering Public Education: Single-sex Schooling in Western Canada'. In Datnow, A and Hubbard, L (eds): *Gender in Policy and Practice: Perspectives on Single-sex and Co-educational Schooling* pp. 90-108, Routledge-Falmer, London

Blaxter, L. And Hughes, C. (1996), *How to Research*, Buckingham, Open University Press

Bleach, K. (1998), *Raising Boys' Achievement in Schools*, Trentham Books, Stoke-on-Trent

Blunkett, D. MP, (2000), quoted in 'Single Sex Classes to Help Failing Boys', *The Observer*, 20 August

Boyle, D. (2019) 'If you're doing your job, athletes don't care if your male or female', *Irish Independent 22 May 2019* <https://www.independent.ie/sport/gaelic-

games/hurling/oconnor-if-youre-doing-your-job-athletes-dont-care-if-youre-male-or-female-38135965.html.>

Bowley, B. (2013), 'Soft boys, tough boys and the making of young sporty masculinities at a private boys' school', *Agenda: Empowering Women for Gender Equality,* Vol 27 (3), pp. 87-93

Bricheno, P. and Thornton, M. (2007) 'Role model, hero or champion? Children's views concerning role models', *Educational Research,* Vol. 49, No. 4, pp. 383-396.

Brooking, K. (2004), 'Board of trustees' selection practices of primary school principals in New Zealand'. *New Zealand Journal of Teachers' Work,* Vol. 1, No. 1, pp. 27–31.

Browne, N. (2004), *Gender Equity in the Early Years,* Open University Press, Milton Keynes

Bryman, A. (2001), *Social Research Methods,* Oxford University Press, Oxford

Buckingham, D. (1993), *Children Talking Television,* Falmer, London

Buckroyd, J. and Flitton, B. (2004), 'The measurement of self-concept in children with complex needs', *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties, Vol 9 No. 2,* pp. 131–139

Burman, E. and Parker, I. (1992), *Discourse Analytical Research,* Routledge, London

Burn, E. (2002), 'Do boys need male primary teachers as positive role models?' *Forum,* Vol 44, No. 1, pp. 34–40.

Burrill, D. (2008), *Die Tryin': Videogames, Maculinity, Culture,* Peter Lang Publishing Inc, New York.

Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2013), Successful qualitative research: A practical guide for beginners, Sage, London

Coolahan, J. (1981), *Irish Education: Its History and Structure,* Institute of Public Administration, Dublin

Coolahan, J. (1983), 'The Daring First Decade of the Board of National Education, 1831-1841', *The Irish Journal of Education,* pp. 35-54

Cardy, R. and Dobbins, G. (1986), 'Affect and appraisal accuracy: Liking as an integral dimension in evaluating performance', *Journal of Applied Psychology,* Vol. 71, pp.672–678.

Carrington, B. (2002), 'Ethnicity, "Role Models" and Teaching', *Journal of Research in Education,* Vol. 12, No. 1, pp. 1-10.

Carrington, B. (2002), 'A quintessentially feminine domain? Student teachers' constructions of primary teaching as a career', *Educational Studies,* Vol. 28, No. 3, pp. 287–303.

Carrington, B. and Skelton, C. (2003) 'Re-thinking 'role models': equal opportunities in teacher recruitment in England and Wales', *Journal of Education Policy,* Vol. 18, No. 3, pp. 253-265

Carrington, B., Francis, B., Hutchings, M., Christine, S., Barbara, R. and Hall, I. (2007), 'Gender Matters in the Primary Classroom; Teachers and Pupils Perspectives' *British Educational Research Journal,* Vol. 35, No. 2, pp. 187-204

Carrington, B., Tymms, P. and Merrell, C. (2005), 'Forget gender: whether a teacher is male or female doesn't matter', *Teacher: the national education magazine,* December.

Carrington, B., Tymms, P. and Merrell, C. (2008), 'Role models, school improvement and the 'gender gap' – do men bring out the best in boys and women the best in girls?', *British Educational Research Journal,* Vol. 34, No. 3, pp. 315-327

Charmaz, K. (2014), *Constructing Grounded Theory*. 2nd edns. Los Angeles, Sage Publications

Christensen, N. C. (2006). Geeks at play: Doing masculinity in an online gaming site. Retrieved from http://reconstruction.eserver.org

Clark, S. and Paechter, C. (2007). 'Why can't girls play football?' Gender dynamics and the playground. *Sport Education and Society*. Pp. 261-276

Clough, P. and Nutbrown, C. (2002), *A Student's Guide to Methodology*. Sage, London

Coffield, F., Moseley, D., Hall, E. and Eccleston, K. (2004), *Should We Be Using Learning Styles? What Research Has to Say to Practice*, Learning and Skills Research Centre, London

Cohen, et al. (2007), *Research Methods in Education*, 6th edn, Routledge, London

Cohen, L., Manion, L. And Morrison, K. (2011) *Research methods in Education.* 7th edn, Routledge, London

Colley, H. (2003), 'Engagement Mentoring for 'Disaffected' Youth: a new model of mentoring for social inclusion', *British Educational Research Journal*, Vol. 29, pp. 521-542

Connell, R.W. (1989), 'Cool Guys, Swots and Wimps: The interplay of masculinity and education', *Oxford Review of Education*, Vol. 15, No. 3, pp. 291-303

Connell, R.W. (2002), *Gender*, Polity Press, Cambridge

Connell, R.W., Ashenden, D.J., Kessler, S. and Dowsett, G.W. (1982), *Making the Difference, Schools, Families and Social Division*, Allen and Unwin, London

Connell, R. (1987), *Gender and Power*, Polity, Cambridge

Connell, R.W. (2000), *The Men and the Boys*, Allen and Unwin, St Leonards

Connell, R.W. (1996), 'Teaching the boys: new research on masculinity, and gender strategies for schools', *Teachers College record*, Vol. 98, No. 2, pp. 206-235.

Connell, R. (2008), 'Masculinity construction and sports in boys' education: a framework for thinking about the issue', *Sport, Education and Society*, Vol 13 (2), pp.131-145

Connolly, P. (1995), 'Boys will be boys? Racism, sexuality and the construction of masculine identities among infant boys', in Holland,J. and Blair, M. (eds), *Equality and difference: Debates and Issues in Feminist Research and Pedagogy*, Multilingual Matters, Clevedon

Connolly, P. (1998), *Racism, Gender Identities and Young Children*, Routledge, London

Connolly, P. (2004), *Boys and Schooling in the Early Years,* Routledge, London

Connolly, P. (2006), 'The Masculine Habitus as 'Distributed Cognition': A Case Study of 5 to 6 Year Old Boys in an English Inner City, Multi-Ethnic Primary School', *Children and Society*, Vol. 20, No. 2, pp. 140-152.

Conrad, B. (2010), 'Children Addicted to Computer Games'. Tech Addicion. Accessed 7/Nov/2018.<www.techaddiction.ca/children-addicted-to-computer-games.html>

Coston, B. and Kimmel, M. (2013), 'White Men as the New Victims: Reverse Discrimination Cases and the Men's Rights Movement,' *Nevada Law Journal*: Vol. 13, (2) , Article 5, pp. 368-385

Creswell, J. (1998), *Qualitative Learning and Research Design*, Sage Publications, London

Creswell, J. (1998), *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Traditions*, Thousand Oaks, CA

Creswell, J. (2013),*Qualitative inquiry & research design. Choosing among five approaches,* Los Angeles, Sage Publications

Creswell, J. (2014), *Research design: qualitative, and mixed method approaches. International student edition.*4th edn, Los Angeles, Sage Publication

Cushman, P. (2005), 'Let's hear it from the males: Issues facing male primary school teachers', *Teaching and Teacher Education*, Vol. 21, No. 3, pp.227–240.

Cushman, P. (2008), 'So what exactly do you want? What principals mean when they say 'male role models', *Gender and Education*, Vol. 20, No. 2, pp. 123-136.

Dauber, S.L., Alexander, K.L. and Entwisle, D.R. (1993), 'Characterisitcs of Retainees and Early Precursors of Retention in Grade: Who is held back?', *Merrill-Palmer Quarterly*, Vol. 39, pp. 326-343

Davies, B. (1989), *Frogs and Snails and Feminist Tales*. Allen and Unwin, Sydney

Davies, B. (1993), *Shards of Glass*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney

Declaration of Helsinki, (1964) Available at: http://www.cirp.org/library/ethics/helsinki/ [Accessed August 2019], Section A.8)

Delamont, S. (1999), 'Gender and the Discourse for Derision', *Research Papers in Education*, Vol. 14, pp. 3-21

DENI research briefing, (1997),'A Review of Research Evidence on the Apparent Underachievement of Boys', *Department of Education Northern Ireland*

Denscombe, M. (1998), '*The Good Research Guide: For Small Scale Research Projects',* Open University Press, Buckingham

Denscombe, M. (2008), 'Communities of practice', *Journal of Mixed Method Research*, Vol 2 (3), pp. 270-283

Lichtenberg, J. and Luban, D. (1998), 'The merits of merit'. *Business and Society Review*, Vol. 100 No. 1, pp. 85–91

Dobson, J. (2001), *Bringing up Boys*, Tyndale House Publishers, Wheaton, IL

Dolby, N. and Dimitriadis, G. (2004), *Learning to Labor in New Times*, Routledge-Falmer, London

Drudy, S. (2008), 'Gender balance/gender bias: the teaching profession and the impact of feminisation', *Gender and Education*, Vol. 20, No. 4, pp. 309-323, DOI: 10.1080/09540250802190156

Drudy, S., Martin, M., O'Flynn, J. and Woods, M. (2005), *Men in the Classroom: Male Teachers in Today's Primary Schools*. Routledge, London

Dryler, H. (1998) 'Parental role models, gender and educational choice', *The British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 49, No. 3, pp. 375-398.

Ecclestone, K. (2004) 'Learning or Therapy? The Demoralisation of Education', *British Journal of Educational Studies*, Vol 52(2), pp. 112-137

Ehrenberg, R.G., Goldhaber, D.D. and Brewer, D.J. (1995), 'Do teachers' race, gender, and ethnicity matter? Evidence from the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988', *Industrial and Labor Relations Review,* Vol. 48, pp.547-561

Elwood, J. and Gipps, C. (1999), *Review of Recent Research on the Achievement of Girls in Single-sex Schools*, Institute of Education, University of London for The Association of Maintained Girls' Schools, London

Epstein, D., Elwood, J., Hey, V. and Maw, J. (1998), *Failing Boys? Issues in Gender and Achievement*, Open University Press, Buckingham

Epstein, D., Elwood, J., Hey, V. and Maw, J. (1998), 'Schoolboy frictions: feminism and 'failing boys', in Epstein, D., Elwood, J., Hey, V. and Maw, J. (eds) *Failing Boys? Issues of gender and achievement*, Open University Press, Buckingham

Farrell, W. and Gray, J. (2018), *The Boy Crisis: Why Our Boys are Struggling and What we can do about it*, Benbella Books, Dallas

Fitzclarence, L., Hickey, C. and Nyland, B. (2007), '*The thin line between pleasure and pain: Implications for educating young males involved in sport.' In B. Frank and K. Davison Masculinities and Schooling: International Practices and Perspectives pp. 129-151,* Halifax, Fernwood.

Fitz-Gibbon, C.T., (1996), *Monitoring Educational Indicators Quality and Effectiveness,* Cassell, London

Flouri, E., Buchannan, A. and Bream, V. (2002), 'Adolescents' Perceptions of their Fathers' Involvement – Significance to School Attitudes', *Psychology in the Schools* Vol 39, No. 5

Foster, V., Kimmel, M. and Skelton, C. (2001), 'What About the Boys? An overview of the debates', in Martino W. and Meyenn, B. (Eds): *What about the Boys? Issues of Masculinity in Schools*, Open University Press, Philadelphia

Foster, T. and Newman, E. (2005), 'Just a knock back? Identity bruising on the route to becoming a male primary school teacher'. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice,* Vol. 114, pp. 341–358.

Foucault, M. (1980), *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977,* Pantheon, New York

Francis, B. (1999) 'Lads, Lasses and New Labour: 14-16 year old student' responses to the 'laddish behaviour and boys' underachievement' debate', *British Journal of Sociology of Education,* Vol. 20, pp. 357-373.

Francis, B. and Skelton, C. (2001) 'Men teachers' constructions of masculinity in the classroom', *Sex Education,* Vol. 1, No. 1, pp. 1-17.

Francis, B. and Skelton, C. (2005), *Reassessing Gender and Achievement,* Routledge, London

Francis, B. (1998), *Power Plays: Children's Constructions of Gender, Power and Adult Work,* Trentham Books, Stoke-on-Trent.

Francis, B. (2000), *Boys, Girls and Achievement: Addressing the Classroom Issues,* Routledge-Falmer, London.

Francis, B. (2006) 'Hereos or zeroes? The discursive positioning of 'underachieving boys' in English neo-liberalism education', *Journal of Educational Policy,* Vol. 212, pp. 187–200.

Francis, B. (2009), 'The role of the boffin as abject other in gendered performances of school achievement', *The Sociological Review,* Vol. 574, pp. 645–669

Francis, B. and Skelton, C. (2001), 'Men teachers and the construction of heterosexual masculinity in the classroom', *Sex Education,* Vol. 1, No. 1, pp. 9-21

Francis, B. and Skelton, C. (2005), *Reassessing gender and achievement: Questioning contemporary key debates*. Routledge, London.

Francis, B., Skelton, C. and Archer, L. (2002) ,'*A Systematic review of Classroom Strategies for reducing stereotypical gender constructions among girls and boys in mixed-sex UK Primary Schools',* EPPI-Centre, SSRU, Institute of Education, London

Francis, B., Skelton, C., Carrington, B., Hutchings, M., Read, B. and Hall, I. (2008), 'A perfect match? Pupils' and teachers' views of the impact of matching educators and learners by gender', *Research papers in education,* Vol. 23, No. 1, pp. 21-36.

Frank, B., Kehler, M., Lovell, T. and Davison, K. (2003), 'A tangle of trouble: boys, masculinity and schooling – future directions', *Educational Review,* vol. 55, no. 2, pp. 119-133.

Fraser, N. (1997), *Justice interruptus: critical reflections on the 'postsocialist' condition*, Routledge, New York

Fratt, L. (2004), 'The vanishing male teacher', *District Administration*, Vol. 407, pp. 5–6.

Frawley, D., McCoy, S., Banks, J. et al. (2014), 'Achieving inclusion? Effective resourcing of students with special educational needs', *Child Indicators Research,* , Vol 7, No. 843

Frawley, D. (2014), 'Combating educational disadvantage through early years and primary school investment', Irish Educational Studies, Vol. 33, No. 2, pp. 155-171, DOI: 10.1080/03323315.2014.920608

Frosh, S., Phoenix, A. and Pattman, R. (2002), *Young Masculinities*, Palgrave, Basingstoke

Frye, M. (1983), *The Politics of Reality; Essays in Feminist Theory,* The Crossing Press, CA.

Frye, M. (1992), *Willful Virgin; Essays in Feminism,* The Crossing Press Freedom, C.A.

Furlong, M.J. and Christenson, S.L. (2008), 'Engaging students at school and with learning: a relevant construct for all students' *Psychology in the Schools,* Vol. 455, pp. 365–368

Fuss, D. (1989), *Essentially Speaking, Feminism, Nature and Difference*, Routledge, New York

Fuss, D. (1995), *Identification Papers*, Routledge, New York

Gall,M., Gall. J and Borg, W. (1996), *Educational Research: An introduction*, 6th edn. Longman Publishing, White Plains, New York:

Gallagher, T. (1998), 'Gender and achievement: evidence from Northern Ireland', *International Journal of Inclusive Education,* Vol. 22, pp. 155–167.

Gallois, C., Callan, V. and Palmer, J. (1992), 'The influence of applicant communication style and interviewer characteristics on hiring decisions', *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, Vol, 2213, pp. 1041–1060.

Garner, R. (2010), 'See '1 in 4 Primary Schools has No Male Teachers', *The Independent*, 25 September 2010

Gentile, D. (2009), 'Pathological Video-Game Use Among Youths Ages 8 to 18: A National Study' *Psychological Science,*Vol 20 (5), pp. 594-602

Gentile, D., Lynch, P., Linder, J., and Walsh, D. (2004), 'The effects of violent video game habits on adolescent hostility, aggressive behaviors, and school performance', *Journal of Adolescence,* Vol 27 (1), pp. 5-22

Gerdin, G. (2017), *Boys, Bodies and Physical Education: Problematizing Identity, Schooling, and Power Relations through a Pleasure Lens,* Routledge, New York

Gillborn, D. and Youdell, D. (2000), *Rationing Education: Policy, Practice, Reform and Equity*, Open University Press, Buckingham

Gilligan, C. (1988), *In a Different Voice*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass

Gitlin, A. (eds), (1994), *Power, Activism and Educational Research,* Routledge, New York

Goldman, R. (2005), *Fathers' Involvement in their Children's Education*, National Family and Parenting Institute, London

Goodman, A. and Gregg, P. (2010), *Poorer Children's Educational Attainment: how important are attitudes and behaviour?*, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, York

Gorard, S., Rees, G. and Salisbury, J. (2001),'Investigating the Pattern of Differential Achievement of Boys and Girls at School', *British Educational Research Journal*, Vol. 27, pp. 125-39

Graves, L. and Powell, G. (1995), 'The effect of sex similarity on recruiters' evaluations of actual applicants: A test of the similarity-attraction paradigm'. *Personnel Psychology*, Vol. 48, pp. 85–98.

Grossman, H. and Grossman, S.H. (1994),*Gender issues in education*, Allyn and Bacon, Boston

Guba, E. and Lincoln, S. (1981), *Effective Evaluation*, Jossey-Bass, London

Gurian, M. (1998), *A Fine Young Man*, Tarcher / Putnam, New York

Gurian, M. (2001), *Boys and Girls Learn Differently: A Guide for Teachers and Parents*, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco

Haag, P. (1998), Single-Sex Education in Grades K-12: What does the research tell us? In S. Morse (Ed), Separated by Sex: A critical look at single-sex education for girls, *American Association of University Women Educational Foundation*, Washington DC

Hammersley, M. (2010), 'Reproducing or constructing? Some questions about transcription in social research', *Qualitative Research*, Vol 10, (5), pp. 553-569

Hannon, H. (1997), *The Gender Game and How To Win It*, G Hannan, London

Harnett, P. and Lee, J. (2001), 'Women delivering a boys' curriculum?', *Paper presented at the British Educational Research Association Conference*, Leeds, 13–15 September

Hauser R., and Featherman, D.(1977), *The Process of Stratification: Trends and Analyses*, Academic press, New York

Hayward, R. and Sharp, C. (2005), 'Young People, Crime and Antisocial Behaviour: findings from the 2003 Crime and Justice Survey', *Home Office Findings 245*

Haywood, C. and Mac an Ghaill, M. (2001), 'The Significance of Teaching English Boys: exploring social change, modern schooling and the making of masculinities',

in Martino, W. and Meyenn, B. (eds), *What About the Boys?*, Open University Press, Milton Keynes

Hislop, H. (1992), 'The Management of the Kildare Place Society System 1811-1831', *Irish Educational Studies,* pp. 52-71

Hobcraft, J. (1998), 'Childhood experience and the risk of social exclusion in adulthood', *CASE Briefing*, November 1998

Holland, P. (2003), *We Don't Play with Guns Here: War, Weapon and Superhero Play in the Early Years Debating Play*, Open University Press, Milton Keynes

Home Office (2005), '*Survey of 'young people, crime and antisocial behaviour'*

Hutchings, M. (2002), 'A representative profession? Gender issues', in M and J. Hallgarten (eds) *From Victims of Change to Agents of Change: The Future of the Teaching Profession,* IPPR, London

Hutchings, M., Carrington, B., Francis, B., Skelton, C., Read, B. and Hall, I. (2008), 'Nice and kind, smart and funny: what children like and want to emulate in their teachers', *Oxford Review of Education*, Vol. 34, No. 2, pp. 135-157.

Hyman et al. (1945), *Interviewing in Social Research*, Univeristy of Chicago Press, Chicago

Jackson, C. (2002), 'Laddishness' as a Self-worth Protection Strategy, Gender and Education', Vol. 14, pp. 37-51

Jackson, D. and Salisbury, J. (1996), 'Why Should Secondary Schools Take Working with Boys Seriously?', *Gender and Education,* Vol. 8, pp.103-115

Jackson, C. (2002), 'Can single-sex classes in co-educational schools enhance the learning experiences of girls and/or boys? An exploration of pupils' perceptions', *British Educational Research Journal*, Vol. 28, No. 1, pp. 37-48.

James, M. (1998), *Using Assessment for School Improvement*, Heinemann, London

Jimerson, S., Campos, E. and Grief, J. (2003), 'Towards an understanding of definitions and measures of school engagement and related terms', *California School Psychologist,* Vol. 8, pp. 7–28

Johnson, M.K., Crosnoe, R. and Elder, G.H. (2001), 'Students' attachment and academic engagement: the role of race and ethnicity', *Sociology of Education,* Vol. 74, pp. 318–340

Jones, D. (2007), 'Millennium man: constructing identities of male teachers in early years contexts', *Educational Review,* Vol. 59, No. 2, pp. 179-194.

Jones, S. and Myhill, D.A. (2004), 'Troublesome boys and compliant girls', *British Journal of Sociology of Education,* Vol. 255, pp. 557–571

Kane, J. (2007), 'School Exclusions and Masculine, Working-class Identities', *Seminar paper,* Glasgow University

Kane, E. (1996), *Doing your own Research,* Marian Boyers Publishing, London

Keddie, A. (2005), 'A framework for gender justice: evaluating the transformative capacities of three key Australian schooling initiatives', *Australian Educational Researcher,* Vol. 323, pp. 83–102

Kenway, J. and Fitzclarence, L. (1997), 'Masculinity, violence and schooling: policy challenging 'poisonous' pedagogies'. *Gender and Education,* Vol. 91, pp. 117–133

King, J. (2000), 'The Problem with Men in Early Childhood Education', in Lesko, N. (eds), *Maculinities at School,*Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, pp. 3-26

Lahelma, E. (2000), 'Lack of male teachers: a problem for students or teachers?', *Pedagogy, culture and society,* Vol. 8, No. 2, pp. 172-186.

Lather, P. (1989) 'Issues of validity in openly ideological research: Between a rock and a soft place', *Interchange*, Vol.17 (4), pp. 63-84

Leonard, D. and Murphy, D. (2007), 'Single Sex-Schools' in Myers, K., Taylor, H., Adler, S., and Leonard, D. (eds): *Genderwatch: Still Watching*, Trentham, Stoke-on-Trent

Lewis, A. and Lindsay, G. (2000), *Researching Children's Perspectives*, Open University Press, Buckingham

Lincoln, Y. and Guba, E. (2000), 'Paradigmatic controversies, contradictions and emerging confluences', in Denzin, N. and Lincoln, Y. (eds.) *The Handbook of qualitative research*. 2nd edn. Sage Publications, London

Lingard, R. and Douglas, P. (1999), *Men Engaging Feminisms: Pro-Feminism, Backlashes and Schooling*, Open University Press, Buckingham

Lingard, B. (2003), 'Where to in gender policy after recuperative masculinity politics?' *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, Vol. 71, pp. 33–56.

Lloyd, T. (1999), *Young Men's Attitudes to Gender and Work*, Joseph Rowntree's Foundation, YPS

Lloyd, T. (2009),'What Some Schools say about Boys and Underachievement, Jordonstown', *Centre for Young Men's Studies*

Lyng, S. and Blichfeldt, J. (2003), 'Attracting, developing and retaining effective teachers: Country background report for Norway', *Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development: Work Research Institute*

Lyons, M. (2005), 'Gender—the labour market, the workplace and policy in children's services: Parents, staff and student attitudes', *Australian Journal of Early Childhood*, Vol. 301, pp. 6–13.

Mac An Ghaill, M. (1994), *The Making of Men: Masculinities, Sexualities and Schooling*, Open University Press, Milton Keynes

MacNaughton, G. (2000), *Rethinking Gender in Early Childhood Education*, Allen and Unwin, St Leonards, NSW

Mahony. P, (1998), 'Girls will be Girls and Boys will be First', in Epstein, D., Elwood, J., Hey, V. and Maw, J. (eds), (1998), *Failing Boys? Issues in Gender and Achievement*, Open University Press, Buckingham

Majors, R. (2001), *Educating Our Black Children*, Routledge-Falmer, London

Mangione, T. (2003), 'The Establishment of the Model School System in Ireland, 1834-1854', in *New Hibernia Review*, Vol 7 (4)

Marks, G. (2008) ‘Accounting for the gender gaps in student performance in reading and mathematics: evidence from 31 countries’, *Oxford Review of Education,* Vol. 341, pp. 89–109.

Martin, A. and Marsh, H. (2005), ‘Motivating boys and motivating girls: Does teacher gender really make a difference?’, *Australian Journal of Education*, Vol. 49, No. 3, pp. 320-334.

Martino, W., Lingard, B. and Mills, M. (2004) ‘Issues in Boys’ Education: A Question of Teacher Threshold Knowledges?’ in *Gender and* Education, Vol 16(4), pp. 435-454.

Martino. W, (1997) 'A bunch of arseholes': Exploring the politics of masculinity for adolescent boys in school’. *Social Alternatives,* Vol. 16, (3), pp. 39-43

Martino, W. and Meyenn, B. (2001), *What About the Boys? Issues of Masculinity and Schooling*, Open University Press, Buckingham

Martino, W. (2001b) ‘Boys and Reading: Investigating the Impact of masculinities on Boys’ Reading preference and involvement in Literacy’ *Australian Journal of Language and* Literacy, Vol 24 (1), pp. 61-74.

Martino, W. (1995), ‘Boys and Literacy: Exploring the Construction of Hegemonic Masculinities and the Formation of Literate Capacities for Boys in the English Classroom’, *English in Australia*, Vol. 112, pp. 11-24

Martino, W., Kehler, M. and Weaver-Hightower, M. (2009), *The Problem with Boys’ Education: Beyond the Backlash*, Routledge, London

Martino, W. and Frank, B. (2006), ‘The tyranny of surveillance: Male teachers and the policing of masculinities in single sex schools’, *Gender and Education*, Vol. 18, No. 1, pp. 17-33

Martino, W. (2009), ‘Beyond male role models: Interrogating the role of male teachers in boys’ education’ in Martino, W., Kehler. M., and Weaver-Hightower, M. (eds). *Boys Education: beyond the backlash*, Routledge, London

Martino, W. (2008) 'Male teachers as role models: addressing issues of masculinity, pedagogy and the re-masculinisation of schooling', *Curriculum Inquiry*, Vol. 38,(2), pp. 189-222

Martino, W. and Berrill, D. (2003) 'Boys, schooling and masculinities: interrogating the 'right' way to educate boys', *Educational Review*, Vol. 55, (2), pp. 99-117

Martino, W. and Kehler, M. (2006) 'Male teachers and the 'boy problem': an issue of recuperative masculinity politics', *McGill Journal of Education*, Vol. 41, (2), pp. 113-130

Martino, W. (2009), 'Literacy Issues and GLBTQ Youth. Queer Interventions in English Education,' in Christenbury, L., Bomer, R., and Smagorinsky, P. (eds), *Handbook of Adolescent Literacy Research, pp.386-399,* Guilford Press, New York

Mason, J. (1996), *Qualitative Researching,* Sage Publications, London

McCoy, A.R. and Reynolds, A.J. (1999), 'Grade Retention and School Performance: An Extended Investigation', *Journal of School Psychology*, Vol. 37, pp. 273-298

Middleton, S. (2005), 'Bad boys and good girls', *Education Review*, June 23–29, pp. 16.

Millard, E. (1997), 'Differently literate: gender identity in the construction of the developing reader', *Gender and Education*, Vol. 91, pp. 31–48

Mills, M., Francis, B. and Skelton, C. (2005), *Gender Policies in Australia and the United Kingdom: the construction of 'new' boys and girls,* in Martino, W., Kehler, M., and Weaver-Hightower, M. (eds), *The Problem with Boys Education: beyond the backlash,* Routledge, London

Mills, M. and Keddie, A. (2007), 'Teaching boys and gender justice', *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, Vol. 113, pp. 335–354

Mills, M., Haase, M. and Charlton, E. (2008) 'Being the 'right kind of male teacher: the disciplining of John', *Pedagogy, culture and society*, Vol. 16, No.1, pp. 71-84.

Mills, M., Martino, W. and Lingard, B. (2004) 'Attracting, recruiting and retaining male teachers. Policy issues in the male teacher debate', *British Journal of the Sociology of Education*, Vol. 25, No. 3, pp. 355-369.

Mills, M., Martino, W. and Lingard, B. (2007), 'Getting boys' education 'right': the Australian government's parliamentary inquiry report as an exemplary instance of recuperative masculine politics', *British Journal of Sociology of Education,* Vol. 281, pp. 5–21

Ministry of Education (1996), 'Women in the teaching service'. *Education Trends Report*, Vol. 81, pp. 1–6.

Ministry of Education (2005), 'Statistics on teaching staff, April 2005. Retrieved July 11, 2005 from www.minedu.govt.nz/index

Moore, R. (1996), 'Back to the Future: the problem of change and the possibilities of advance in the sociology of education', *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, Vol. 17, No. 2, pp.145-161

Morris, M., Nelson, J. and Stoney, S.M. (1999), 'Disadvantaged Youth: a critical review of the literature on scope, strategies and solutions', *Department of Education and Employment*, Research Brief 169

Munn, P., Lloyd, G. and Cullen, M.A. (2000), *Alternatives to Exclusion from School*, Paul Chapman, London

Murray, S. (1996), 'We all Love Charles': Men in child care and the construction of gender', *Gender and Society*, Vol. 10, No. 4, pp. 368-385

Murray, A., McCrory, C., Thornton, M., Williams, J., Quail, A., Swords, L. et al. (2011) *Growing up in Ireland: Design, instrumentation and procedures for the child cohort, technical report number 1*. Dublin: Office of the minister for children.

Myers, K. and Taylor, H. (2007), *Genderwatch still Watching*, Trentham Books, Stoke on Trent

Myhill, D. (2002) 'Bad Boys and Good Girls? Patterns of interaction and response in whole class teaching', *British Educational Research Journal*, Vol 28, No 3 pp. 359–372

Myhill, D. and Jones, S. (2006), 'She Doesn't Shout at No Girls' *Cambridge Journal of Education,* Vol. 36, No. 1, pp. 99-113.

National Literacy Trust (2017),'Government strategies on boys and reading', *http://www.nationalliteracytrust.net/Database/boys/boysgovt.html*

Ní Bhroiméil, Ú. (2006) 'Sending gossoons to be made oul' mollies of': Rule 127(b) and the feminisation of teaching in Ireland', *Irish Educational Studies,* Vol (25), pp.35-51

Noble, C. and Bradford, W. (2000), *Getting it Right for Boy and Girls,* Routledge, London

Northern Ireland Assembly (2001), *Selected Current Research in Gender and Educational Attainment, Research and Library Services*, research paper 06/01

O' Sullivan, M. (2006), 'Professional lives in the Irish Physical education Teachers: Stories of resilience, respect and resignation', *Physical Education and Sports Pedagogy,*Vol 11 (3) pp. 265-284

Oyler, C., Jennings, G. and Lozada, P. (2001), 'Silenced gender: the construction of a male primary educator', *Teaching and Teacher Education,* Vol. 17, pp. 367-379.

Parsons, J. and Taylor, L. (2011), '*Student Engagement: What do we know and what should we do?',*University Partners, University Alberta.

Patton, W., Bartrum, D.A., and Creed, P.A. (2004), 'Gender differences for optimism, self- esteem, expectations and goals in predicting career planning and exploration in adolescents', *Journal of Career Development,* Vol. 30, pp. 277–294.

Pepperell, S. and Smedley, S. (1998), 'Calls for More Men in Primary Teaching: Problematising the Issues', *International Journal of Inclusive Education,* Vol 2, No 4, pp. 341-57

Pollack, W. (1999), *Real Boys: Rescuing our Sons From the Myths of Boyhood,* Owl Books, New York

Queensland Government (2002) ‘Male teachers’ strategy: Strategic plan for the attraction, recruitment and retention of male teachers in Queensland state schools 2002–2005’, *Brisbane: Department of Education*

Renold, E. (2006) ‘They won’t let us play … unless you’re going out with one of them’: girls, boys and Butler’s ‘heterosexual matrix’ in the primary years’, *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, Vol 27(4), pp.489-509

Renold, E. (2004) ‘Other’ boys: negotiating non-hegemonic masculinities in the primary school’, *Gender and Education*, Vol:16(2), pp. 247-265

Renold, E. (1997) ‘All They've Got on Their Brains is Football.’ Sport, Masculinity and the Gendered Practices of Playground Relations’, *Sport, Education and Society*, Vol 2(1), pp.5-23

Robins, D. and Cohen, P. (1978), ‘Knuckle-Sandwich: Growing Up in the Working-Class City’, Pelican, Harmondsworth

Robson, C. (2002), *Real World Research*, 2nd ed., Blackwell, London

Robson, E. (1993), *Real World Reseach- A Resource for Social Scientist and Practitioner Researchers*, Blackwell, Oxford

Ross, T. (2003), ‘Principal laments lack of male teachers’. *The Press*, September 20

Roulston, K. and Mills, M. (2000), ‘Male teachers in feminised teaching areas: marching to the beat of the men’s movement drums’, *Oxford Review of Education*, Vol. 26, No. 2, pp. 221-237.

Rowe, K. (1998), ‘Single-sex and Mixed-sex Classes: the effects of class style on student achievements, confidence and participation in mathematics’, *Australian Journal of Education*, Vol. 32, pp. 180-202

Rudenstank, K. and Newton, R. (1992), *Surviving your dissertation: A comprehensive guide to content and process*. Sage, London

Rutter, M. and Rutter, M. (1993), *Development Minds: Challenge and Continuity across the Lifespan*, Penguin, Harmondsworth

Ruxton, S. (1992), *What's He doing at the Family Centre?,* National Children's Homes, London

Ryan, *GW.* and Bernard, *HR. (*2000*).* 'Data management and analysis methods.' in Denzin,N. and Lincoln, Y. (eds), *Handbook of qualitative research, (*2nd edn), Sage Publishing, Thousand Oaks

Said, E. (1986), *Intellectuals in the Post- Colonial World' Salmagundi*: pp. 44-81, Skidmore College, New York

Salisbury, J. and Jackson, D. (1996), *Challenging Macho Values: practical ways for working with adolescent boys,* Falmer Press, London

Sanchez-Martin JR, Fano E, Ahedo L, Cardas J, Brain PF and Azpíroz A 2000, 'Relating Testosterone Levels and Free Play Social Behaviour in Male and Female Preschool Children', *Psychoneuroendocrinology,* Vol 25, Issue 8, pp. 773-83

Sanford, K. and Blair, H. (2002), 'Engendering Public Education: Single-Sex Schooling in Western Canadian Contexts', in Datnow, A. and Hubbard, L. (eds), *Gender in Policy and Practice: Perspectives on Single Sex and Coeducational Schooling,* Routledge-Falmer, London

Sargent, P. (2007), *Real Men or Real Teachers?*, Men's Studies Press, Hardiman

Sax, L. (2016), 'Why do girls tend to have more anxiety than boys', Youth Service Bureau, 21st April, 2018, <http://well.blogs.nytimes.com/2016/04/21/why-do-girls-have-more-anxiety-thanboys>.

Sax, L. (2007), *Boys Adrift: the five factors driving the growing epidemic of unmotivated boys and underachieving young men*, Basic Books, New York

Sax, L. (2007), *Women Graduates of Single-Sex and Coeducational High Schools: Differences in their Characteristics and the Transition to College*, The Sudikoff Family Institute, Los Angeles

Scheurich. J, (1997), *Research Method in Postmodern,* The Palmer Press, London

Schmidt, M. and Vandewater, E. (2008), ' Media and Attention,Cognition, and School Achievement,' *The Future of Children,* Vol 18 (1), pp. 63-85, Project MUSE

Scottish Executive Education Department (2002) *Better Behaviour, Better Learning*, Edinburgh

Sewell, T. (1998), *Black Masculinities and Schooling: How Black Boys Survive Modern Schooling*, Trentham Books, Stoke-on-Trent

Shelton, F. (2008), *Too Cool for School? Why are our boys not achieving?*, University of Derby, United Kingdom

Shipman, K. and Hicks, K. (1998), *'How Can Teachers Motivate Less Able Boys?'* Elliott School, London. A summary of this TTA-funded teacher research is available at: www.tta.gov.uk/assets/itt/providers/research/grant/9798/tta9915.pdf.

Silverman, D. (1993), *Interpreting Qualitative Data,* Sage, London

Silverman, D. (2005), *Doing Qualitative Research*, 2nd edn. Sage Publications, London

Simons-Morton, B. and Chen, R. (2009), 'Peer and Parent Influences on School Engagement among Early Adolescents', *Youth and Society,* Vol. 41, No. 1, pp. 3–25.

Simpson, A. (2009), 'More than a quarter of England's primary schools have no male teachers', *www.telegraph.co.uk,* 22 March 2009

Sinclair, M. F., Christenson, S. L., Lehr, C. A., and Reschly-Anderson, A. (2003), 'Facilitating school engagement: Lessons learned from check and connect longitudinal studies', *The California School Psychologist,* Vol. 8, pp. 29–41

Skelton, C. (2001), *Schooling the Boys: masculinities and primary education*, Open University Press, Milton Keynes

Skelton, C. (2002), 'The 'Feminisation of Schooling' or 'Re-masculinising' Primary Education', *International Studies in Sociology of Education*, Vol 12, No 1, pp. 77-96

Skelton, C. (2001) *Schooling the Boys: Masculinities and Primary Education*, Open University Press, Buckingham

Skelton, C. (2003) 'Male primary teachers and perceptions of masculinity', *Educational Review,* Vol. 55, no, 2, pp. 195-209.

Skelton, C. (2003), 'Male Primary Teachers and Perceptions of Masculinity', *Newcastle: University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne*. Vol 55, No.2, pp. 1-16

Skelton, C., Carrington, B., Francis, B., Hutchings, M., Read, B. and Hall, I. (2009), 'Gender matters in the primary classroom: pupils and teachers perspectives', *British Educational Research Journal,* Vol. 35, No. 2, pp. 187-204

Skelton, C., Francis, B. and Smedley, L. (eds), (2006), The Sage Book of Gender and Education, Sage Publications, London

Smedley, S. (1999), 'Don't Rock the Boat': Men student teachers' understanding of gender and equality', *Paper presented at BERA '99, University of Sussex*,2nd September

Smith, M.W. and Wilhelm, J.D. (2002), *Reading Don't Fix No Chevys: Literacy in the Lives of Young Men*, Heinemann, Portsmouth, NH

Smith, J. (2004), 'Male primary teachers: Disadvantaged or advantaged?', *Paper presented to the Australian Association for Research in Education Conference,* Melbourne, December. Social Research Association 2003, 'Ethical Guidelines', *http://www.the-sra.org.uk/ethics03.pdf*

Sokal, L., Katz, H., Sych-Yereniuk, A., Chochinov-Harder, L., Adkins, M., Grills, T., Stewart, C. and Priddle, G. (2005) 'Male Reading Teachers: Effects on Inner-city Boys', *Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada*

Sommers, C.H. (2000), *The War against Boys: how misguided feminism is harming our young men,* Simon and Schuster, New York

Speizer, J. (1981), 'Role models, mentors, and Sponsors: The Elusive Concept', *Signs,* Vol. 6, No. 4, pp. 692-712.

Sukhnandan, L., Lee, B. and Kelleher, S. (2000), 'An Investigation into Gender Differences in Achievement: Phase 2, School and Classroom Strategies', *National Foundation for Educational Reseach*

Sullivan, A., Joshi, H. and Leonard, D. (2010), 'Single-Sex Schooling and Academic Attainment at School and Through the Lifecourse', *American Educational Research Journal*, Vol 47, No 1, pp. 6-36

Teese, R., Davies, M., Charlton, M. and Polesel, J. (1995), *Who Wins at School? Boys and Girls in Australian Secondary Education,* University of Melbourne, Melbourne

The Scottish Office (2003), *Parental Participation in Schools*, Edinburgh.

Thorne, B. (1993), *Gender Play*, Open University Press, Milton Keynes

Thornton, M. and Brichenco, P. (2002), 'Staff Gender Balance in Primary Schools' *Paper presented at BERA 2002, University of Exeter*, 12-14 Sep.

Thornton, M. and Bricheno, P. (2000), 'Primary school teachers' careers in England and Wales: The relationship between gender, role position and promotional aspiration', *Pedagogy, Culture and Society*, Vol. 82, pp. 187–206.

Training and Development Agency for Schools 2005, 'News release—13 October: Parents call for more primary teachers', Available online at: www.teach.gov.uk accessed July 8, 2019.

Training Development Agency (2007), 'Campaign looking at the absence of males in schools', *See* http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/education/4336092.stm, Accessed on 6th June 2017

Trzesniewski, K.H., Moffitt, T.E., Caspi, A., Taylor, A. and Maughan, B. (2006), 'Revisiting the Association between Reading Achievement and Antisocial Behavior: New evidence of an environmental explanation from a twin study', *Child Development*, Vol. 77, pp. 72-88

UCD Human Research Ethics Committee (2008), 'Further Exploration of Harm Risk, Deception, Privacy and Confidentiality', *HREC Document No. 5*

Vibert, A., Frank, B., Davison, K. and Lovell, T. (2004), *Canadian boys and underachievement: No proof for panic', in* Ali, S., Benjamin, S. and Mauthner, M. (eds). *The politics of Gender and Education: Critical perspectives*, Palgrave/MacMillan, London. pp. 50-64.

Wallis, J. (2009), *Why Girls do Better at Single-sex Schools', The Good Schools Guide*, Galore Park Publishing, London

Warrington, M., Younger, M. and McLellan, R. (2003), 'Underachieving Boys in English Primary Schools?', *Curriculum Journal,* Vol. 14, pp.184-206

Warrington, M. and Younger, M. (2000), 'The other side of the gender gap', *Gender and Education,* Vol. 124, pp. 493–508

Watterston, B. (2001), 'Practices and Policies on Single-sex Classes within Co-educational Schools', *Australian Association in Research in Education,* Vol. 27,(3)

Weis, R. And Cerankosky, B. (2010), 'Effects of Video-Game Ownership on Young Boys' Academic and Behavioral Functioning: A Randomized, Controlled Study' *Psychological Science,* Vol 21 (4), pp. 463-470

West, P. (1996), 'Boys, Sport and Schooling: an Australian perspective', *paper presented at University of Cambridge Faculty of Education,* 7 November 1996, in Younger and Warrington (2005): *Raising Boys Achievement in Secondary Schools,* Opening University Press, Buckingham

Wellington, J. (2000), *Educational Research: Contemporary Issues and Practical Approaches,* Continuum, London

White, S. (2011), 'Dads as Teachers: Exploring the Dual Roles of Being Both a Father and a Teacher', *Journal of Men's Studies*, Vol. 19, No. 2

Williams, C. (1992), 'The glass escalator: Hidden advantages for men in the female professions', *Social Problems,* Vol. 393, pp. 253–267.

Williams, J., Greene, S. and Doyle, E. (2009), 'The lives of 9-year olds: Report 1'. *Department of Children and Youth Affairs,* Dublin

Willis, P. (1977), *Learning to Labour*, Saxon House, Aldershot

Willoughby, T. (2008), 'A short-term longitudinal study of Internet and computer game use by adolescent boys and girls: Prevalence, frequency of use, and psychosocial predictors', *Developmental Psychology,* Vol 44*(1*), pp.195-204

Wilson, G. (2005), 'Boys – Talk to Them!', *www.teachingexpertise.com*, Issue 9 Autumn 2005

Wright, K. (2006), 'Researching internet-based populations: advantages and disadvantages of online survey research, online questionnaire authoring software packages, and web survey services', *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, Vol 10 (3), pp.100

Yates, L. (2000), *The 'Facts of the Case': gender equity for boys as a public policy issue, in Lesko N 2000: Masculinities at School: research on men and masculinities*, Sage, London

Younger, M., Warrington, M., and Mc Lellan, R. (2005), *Raising Boys' Achievement in Secondary Schools*, Open University Press, Buckingham

Younger, M., and Warrington, M. (2005), *Raising Boys Achievement in Secondary Schools*, Opening University Press, Buckingham

Zyngier, D. (2009), 'Doing it to for boys again: do we really need more books telling us there is a problem with boys' underachievement in education?', *Gender and Education*, Vol 21, No 1, pp. 111-118

Appendix One: Letter of Invitation for schools

School of Education,

National University of Ireland,

Galway.

17/11/2013

Dear _____,

As per telephone conversation, please see information below regarding my intended study and what your participation entails.

I wish to invite both **you, one female and male teacher in your school and 5th and 6th class pupils** to participate in the study. Should you agree, you would be enabling me to gain valuable research in the area of male role modelling/mentoring in primary schools, a topic that has garnered much attention in recent years.

As a primary teacher myself, I am aware of the challenges teachers meet on a daily basis as they strive to get every child to fulfil their academic potential. As popular media is calling out for more males in primary teaching to act as role models for boys, there is a general consensus that more men in teaching will increase performance levels and academic achievement of boys. However, there is very little research in Ireland that ascertains teachers' perception of the behaviours necessary for male role models and examines the effects of more men entering our primary schools on the education of both boys and girls. I feel it is imperative to gain your insight into this area, as teachers work with children on a daily basis and have a wealth of experience being good role models for children. For these reasons, I would be very grateful if you would give me the valuable opportunity to carry out further research with you and your school.

The aim of this study, with your participation, is to increase opportunities for boys enabling them to develop a healthy sense of masculinity and strengthen their educational experiences and to give consideration to individual role modelling as opposed to gender modelling.

The research will focus on male role models in these particular areas:

- The need for and characteristics of male role models for boys in primary school
- How can teachers provide a role model in schools for boys?
- The impact more male teachers have on the education of boys and girls?
- To explore if both male and female teachers be role models to both boys and girls?

Getting involved in the study consists of you and another teacher being interviewed on the factors above. Interviews will be carried out in order to get a deeper understanding and more personal view, regarding explorations above and investigate if there are any re-occurring factors or influences that highlight the requirement or limitations of more male role models. Each interview should last no longer than 40 minutes.

All participants are assured all information will be held in strict confidence and all names will be changed and given pseudo-names. The results and information from this research might be available in educational papers, journals, articles and presented at educational seminars or presentations. This will have no effect on the confidentiality and anonymity of all information collected.

Child friendly questionnaires will be administered to 5th and 6th class pupils asking them only for a description of their hero (role model) and if they view male and female teachers differently. The questionnaire is fully confidential and anonymous. Parent/Guardian consent forms will provide full details of the study. There are no known risks/discomforts associated with the research. I will be available to administer the questionnaire, if requested and answer any questions if required. Some children may be invited to talk further in focus groups, if applicable.

I am sincerely grateful to you for taking the time to talk to me on the phone yesterday and to take the time to contribute to my research. Your contribution is greatly appreciated. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you require any further information or have any question about the study on xxx-xxx or email me on a.mcdonald2@nuigalway.ie. Alternatively you can contact my current supervisor, Dr. Mary Fleming (xxxxxxxxxx@nuigalway.ie).

I will call the school on Tuesday to arrange meeting times and dates that suit your schedule. Again, I am very grateful for your contribution.

I look forward to talking to you,

Amy Mc Donald

PhD research student (NUIG)

Appendix Two: Parental Information Sheet and Consent Form

Your child is invited to be in a research study about male teachers as role models for children. Your child was selected as a possible participant because your child is in the upper primary school age range, whom we feel would be able to contribute well to the study. The questionnaire is concerned with gender and role models. We ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to have your child in this study.

The study: The purpose of this study is to explore the effects of more male role models in primary schools. It is also designed to discover whom children themselves feel is a positive role model and if they notice a difference between male and female teachers. If you agree to have your child in this study, your child will be asked to complete a 4 answer questionnaire. Your child will be asked for a written description or drawing of their hero or someone they look up to and if they feel there are differences in the way they behave or learn from male and female teachers. The questionnaire will take approximately 15 minutes to complete.

Risks/benefits: There are no known risks involved in this study. It is a voluntary questionnaire and the child can withdraw from participation at any time or skip a question if they find it difficult. Questions are very child friendly and fully explained before the questionnaire begins. Some children may be invited to discuss the questionnaire further in focus groups, if applicable.

Confidentiality: The records of this study will be kept completely anonymous and confidential. Children will be asked for gender and age only. Consent forms will be kept in a secure location and at no stage will the school or child be identifiable.

Voluntary nature/questions: This is a voluntary questionnaire used for research purposes. The information and research gathered may be used in journals and publication at a later date. All questionnaires will remain anonymous and confidential. Children will be assured it is not a test and they can discontinue participation at any stage.

Please feel free to contact me on xxx-xxxxx or email me on a.mcdonald2@nuigalway.ie if you have any questions.

Amy Mc Donald.

PhD Research student, NUI Galway

Consent form

I have read the information sheet above and fully understand what the study involves.

I consent to my child participating in the questionnaire.

Child's name:_____

Name of Parent/ Guardian (print)_____

Signature of Parent/Guardian _____ Date _____

Appendix Three: Assent form for participating 5th and 6th class pupils:

I am doing a study to try to learn about whom children see as their hero or who children look up to. I am also trying to see if children think there is a difference in having a male or female teacher. We are asking you to help because we don't know very much about who kids your age look up to.

If you agree to be in our study, we are going to ask you three questions. One about your hero and two about if you think there is a difference in having a male or female teacher.

You can ask questions that you might have about this study at any time. Also, if you decide at any time not to finish, you may stop whenever you want. Remember, these questions are only about what you think. There are no right or wrong answers because this is not a test.

Signing this paper means that you have read this or had it read to you and that you want to be in the study. If you don't want to be in the study, don't sign the paper. Remember, being in the study is up to you, and no one will be upset if you don't sign this paper or even if you change your mind later.

Signature of child participating _____ Date _____

Signature of Investigator _____ Date _____

Signature of child participating _____ Date _____

Signature of Investigator _____ Date _____

Appendix Four: Interview Consent Form:

'An explorative study of the attitudes and perceptions of primary school educators and children towards increasing male role models in our schools'

The following information is provided to give you a brief indication of the purposes of the study. Please be aware, you are free to stop the voluntary interview at any time and confidential information will not be used without consent.

The purpose of the research is to gain an insight into the attitudes and perceptions of principals, teachers and mentors regarding the call by popular media for more males in primary teaching. This research project ascertains teachers' perception of the behaviours necessary for male role models and examines the effects of more men entering our primary schools on the education of both boys and girls. The aim of this study is to increase opportunities for boys enabling them to develop a healthy sense of masculinity and strengthen their educational experiences.

Interviews will be carried out in order to get a deeper understanding and more personal view, regarding explorations above, from primary teachers themselves and investigate if there are any re-occurring factors or influences that highlight the requirement or limitations of more male role models. The findings in this interview will be compared with information received from interviews carried out with coaches and principals throughout Ireland.

Please note all information will be recorded using a hand held tape-recorder. Information will be transcribed and sent back for verification, if you should so request, before it is used for research purposes. I will be happy, upon request by email, to share the findings with you after the research is completed. It is important to note, all names and locations will be changed and you will not be associated with the research in any way. Your identity as a participant will only be known to me. All interviews will be conducted in extreme confidence and information obtained in the interview will hold anonymity through pseudo-names at all times.

Please do not hesitate to ask any questions about the study either before, during or after the interview.

There are no known risks and/or discomforts associated with this research. The valuable findings in this interview might be used for publication in journals and articles or presentations of a research nature. All information will remain anonymous.

Please sign your consent form with full knowledge of the nature and purposes of the procedures.

A copy of this consent form will be given to you for your own record.

Name of Participant (print)

--- ---

Signature of Participant Date

--- ---

Signature of interviewer/researcher Date

Appendix Five: Questionnaire for 5th and 6th class pupils:

Children's Questionnaire:

Q1. **Describe your hero/ someone you look up to: (you can draw a picture on the last page if you prefer)**

_____

_____

(b) **Why do you look up to them?**

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Q2: **Do you think there is a difference between having a male or female teacher? Why?**

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Q3. **Do you think you behave/ would behave or learn differently when you have a male teacher? Why?**

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Q4. Who influences your learning? Why?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Thank you so much for all your help!

Please draw a picture of your hero in the space below!

My hero:

Appendix Six: Teachers Interview Questions

Q1: In what way do you think teachers can be good role models for boys?

Q2: So do you think that boys should have more male role models in schools?

Q3: Do you think that role models for boys need to be male?

Q4: From your experience as a teacher, do you think there is an advantage in being male and being a role model for boys?

Q5: What are the difficulties for teachers when acting as role models for boys?

Q6: Do you think more males entering into schools will have an effect on the girl's education?

Appendix Seven: Principal interview questions:

Q1: Who are the largest influencers in a boy's academic achievement?

Q2: do you think that in a boy's academic achievement does the gender of the teacher influence his learning?

Q3:Do you think there are categories of subjects that boys perform better in?

Probe: Do you think is there a reason for this?

Q4: Do you think same gender role modelling is more effective than role modelling for the opposite gender?

O5**:**As a principal do you think there is pressure from the media to employ more males?

Q6: What traits do you expect in a role model for boys?

Q7What is the difference between male and female role models?

Q8: Do you think there are limitations to more men entering into the primary school system?

Probe: So if more males were to enter into schools do you think this will have an effect on the girls?

Q9: Do you think a mentoring programme would be beneficial if adapted into schools?

Q10: When do the best opportunities arise to be a role model and what are they?

Appendix Eight: Coaches Interview Questions

1. Do you see yourself as a role model for **both** boys and girls?
2. In what way do you think coaches can be a role model for boys
3. **Probe Question**: What do you think are traits of a good role model?
4. Do you think role models for boys need to be male?
5. From your experience as a coach, is there an advantage or benefit in being a male coach and being a role model for boys?
6. **Probe question:** Do boys relate better to men because of sport?
7. Do you think boys see female coaches as less effective? Why?
8. Do you think boys have more interest in sports, than girls at primary school level? Why?
9. Does sport create a certain image for boys to portray?
10. Is pressure on boys, from media and peers, to fit into society affecting the way boys behave? why?
11. From your experience coaching primary school children, who would be there main role models

Appendix Nine: List of Schools in Connacht on the DES Database

The list has been shortened considerably as it is used for the appendix display purpose.

Name	Address	Location			Contact	G	B	
SCOIL CROI IOSA	**PRESENTATION ROAD**	GALWAY			091525904	54	46	100
SCOIL AN LINBH IOSA	**ST FRANCIS ST**	GALWAY			091566452	50	130	180
BUSHY PARK N S	**BUSHY PARK**	GALWAY			091524625	232	168	400
SCOIL NAOMH IOSEF	**RATHUN**	BEARNA	CO NA GAILLIMHE		091520933	109	83	192
PAROCHIAL N S	**CEARNOG TI NA CUAIRTE**	GAILLIMH			091569233	42	45	87
S N FHURSA	**NILE LODGE**	GAILLIMH			091521840	127	122	249
NIOCHLAS N S	**AN CLADACH**	AN GAILLIMH			091586173	188	133	321
S N BRIDE NAOFA	**SEAN TALLAMH**	GAILLIMH			091525052	129	100	229
S N PADRAIC NAOFA	**SRAID LOMBARD**	GAILLIMH			091568707	226	0	226
SCOIL MHUIRE	**BRIERHILL SCHOOL**	Brierhill	Galway		091751543	131	108	239
SCOIL IDE	**ARDNAMARA**	Salthill	Galway		091522716	58	235	293
SCOIL NAOMH EINDE	**Dr MANNIX ROAD**	Salthill	Galway		091521272	140	0	140
SCOIL MICHIL NAOFA	**BAILE BAN**	GAILLIMH			091753300	150	0	150
SCOIL NA TRIONOIDE NAOFA	**MERVUE**	Galway			091755920	87	232	319

Scoil Náisiúnta Róis	**ROSARY LANE**	Taylor's Hill	Galway		091520908	69	308	377
S N IOGNAID	**BOTHAR NA SLIOGAN**	GAILLIMH			091584491	336	243	579
S N CAITRIONA SOIS	**RENMORE**	CO GALWAY			091753613	235	200	435
SN CAITRIONA SINSEAR	**SN CAITRIONA SINSEAR**	RENMORE	CO GALWAY		091753613	193	187	380
TIRELLAN HEIGHTS N S	**HEADFORD ROAD**	GALWAY			091763844	232	218	450
GAELSCOIL DARA	**BÓTHAR BHAILE AN LOCHÁIN**	AN RINN MHÓR	GAILLIMH	Co na Gaillimhe	091757145	202	230	432
GAELSCOIL MHIC AMHLAIGH	**AN COIMIN MOR,**	CNOC NA CATHRACH,	GAILLIMH.		091590152	238	264	502
GALWAY EDUCATE TOGETHER N.S.	**THOMAS HYNES RD**	NEWCASTLE	GALWAY		091527887	173	162	335
St. John the Apostle, Knocknacarra NS	**Western Distributor Road**	Galway			091573027	244	200	444
Merlin Woods Primary School	**DOUGHISKA ROAD**	Doughiska	Galway		091761676	161	147	308
Knocknacarra Educate Together NS	**BROOKLAWN HOUSE**	Galway West Business Park	Western Distributor Road		091573023	30	20	50
ESKER N S	**ATHENRY**	CO GALWAY			091848008	67	39	106

Source: https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Statistics/Data-on-Individual-Schools/primary/