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GENDERED AUTHORITY IN TEACHING: FEMALE TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES

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**GENDERED AUTHORITY IN TEACHING:
FEMALE TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES**

(Thesis Format: Monograph)

by

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Graduate Program in Education

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of the requirements for the degree of
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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines gendered authority in teaching from the perspective of four female secondary school teachers in South Western Ontario. It draws on feminist researchers and theorists such as Francis & Skelton (2005), Lather (1991) and Butler (1990) to establish a framework for critically examining the effects and impact of institutionalized patriarchy on female teachers' lives in one school. Purposive sampling and interviews with four female teachers are used to provide further insight into how authority is established and understood in a school system that is dominated by a male hierarchy. The thesis raises important questions about the need to create dialogue and awareness about the significance of gendered authority for female teachers in schools and highlights the political significance of including the voices of female teachers in educational research that is committed to a feminist politics.

Keywords: gender, authority, female, secondary school teachers, sexual harassment

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It can be said that a journey begins with a single step. The writing of my thesis began with the decision to enter the Masters program, a step that I had wanted to take for some time. Next began the step of deciding what I wanted to write about and the process of writing and researching. Today I feel that I am still taking small steps and that I will remain on a journey of learning about gendered authority in teaching throughout my teaching career. However, I must acknowledge that I could not have made this journey without my family. First, I must thank my parents who continuously give me the courage and strength to be confident in myself and who encouraged me to go into the Masters program. Your love and support have guided me into the person I am today. Secondly, I must thank my sister for her support and for her strength along the journey. And also, to my friends who continue to support me whenever I need a shoulder to lean on or some advice in the writing process. And finally, I must thank Dr. Martino and Dr. Rezai-Rashti, without their support I could not have completed this task.

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Chapter One:

Introduction

"What we construe as being in authority, and acting authoritatively, has depended upon representations of authoritativeness that privilege masculinity – male bodies and masculinized knowledge and practices. The menstruating body, the body-with-a-womb, the birthing, fecund body, the lactating body, the menopausal body - it is difficult to imagine such bodies being in authority."

- Kathleen B. Jones (1993, p.81)

This thesis discusses the experience of gendered authority in school for female teachers. It is motivated by my own experiences of being a female teacher in a high school in South Western Ontario. Jones (1993) captures this experience, as I understand it, in terms of how she describes the difficulty women face when they are constructed as being powerful. As my own experience attests, one site in which women are required to demonstrate authority is in the teaching profession. In reflecting upon Jones (1993), I begin this thesis with a narrative about my own history with gendered authority.

Introduction: The Journey Begins

As the youngest child in my family, I learned from an early age, to stand up for myself and to use my voice to be heard. I believed as a child that using a loud voice, expressing my opinion, and arguing was a natural part of conversation. My father believed that we were not arguing but rather discussing things loudly, and my family had many 'loud' arguments. My father was born in Italy and my mother is of Irish descent.

Despite my dual heritage my family focused primarily on my Italian descent. Family was very important in our household and my sister and I were taught that family and faith were essential ingredients needed to succeed in life. I was raised in a traditional family by today's standards.

My parents took on the traditional roles, in which my father was the breadwinner and my mother was the nurturer. My father went to work and my mother was a stay at home mom. My mother was the caregiver and she took pleasure in volunteering at the local school and running the Brownie troop. My mother had many roles, which included managing the daily activities at home, knitting, cooking, cleaning, and making sure that her children and husband were well attended to. Conversely, my father's main roles were that of disciplinarian and provider for his family. Although each of my parents took on the traditional 'masculine' and 'feminine' roles, my sister and I were taught to be individuals and to fend for ourselves. We were raised to express different societal expectations.

I was considered the 'principesa', which is Italian for princess, and as a child I had many feminine qualities and characteristics that would be considered princess like. I loved to dress up in my mother's jewellery and heels. However, at the same time I was aggressive in my behaviour and very independent. These aforementioned characteristics were typically not feminine in nature. My parents wanted to ensure that their children could be independent. I remember being the only girl on the street who was responsible for cutting the grass and shovelling the snow. The father and the sons traditionally

completed outdoor chores. Usually, manual labour is considered to be the responsibility of the male. Because I was raised that men and women should not be given labels based on their gender, I would question stereotypical roles. Therefore, when I entered school and I was old enough to reflect on the role of the female, I was often outspoken in the classroom.

My grade eight teacher was male and he would often call the female students “sweetie” or “honey”. I accepted these terms, as did all the girls in class. However, on one particular occasion I became angry when the teacher used gender to define who we were. The teacher needed five volunteers to help with a task and the teacher chose five boys from the class. As usual, I decided to ask why he only needed boys to help when I and many girls had volunteered. My teacher informed the class that desks needed to be moved to the gym for a parent teacher night and this was a task better suited for the boys. This infuriated me, and so I questioned why he would assume that girls could not help carry desks. I remember looking around the classroom at many of the boys who had yet to hit puberty and many of the girls, including myself, who were physically larger than the boys.

I decided to challenge my teacher, to inform him that I could also carry the desks, but I was still told that such tasks were more suited to or appropriate for the male students. This memory stayed with me and I would reflect on it time and again in situations in which my gender was challenged. Forever ingrained in my memory would be my parents’ encouragement to stand up for myself and to question the traditional roles

dictated by society, and I would aspire to constantly change the stereotypes associated with gender.

As I began my teaching career I entered a profession that is dominated by females. Ironically, a male hierarchy dominates administration teams and the decisions within the school. I have encountered several challenges along the way in which gender continues to be a focus in my life. At the beginning of my teaching career a male colleague harassed me. An older male colleague made several sexual comments and inappropriate gestures towards me. When I discussed the incident with other colleagues I was made to feel that it was a normal part of the workplace. In the end, I reported the sexual harassment, but I still carry this experience with me today, as the incident was dismissed and not taken seriously. Secondly, I continue to experience what it is like to be an outsider in a school environment in which the male teachers dominate the school. The women interviewed discussed how they teach in an environment in which male hegemonic behaviour is the dominant discourse. Males police other males in their expressions of masculinity according to what is considered to be acceptably masculine. In listening to the women discuss this male behaviour I have been able to reflect on my own embodied experiences of gender and the way in which the expression of one's gender identity and expectations associated with gender affect relationships and interactions with others, not only in the workplace but in broader social, institutional and political contexts. Moreover, by observing gender and connecting to the topic through graduate research I have realized how important the influence of gender is in terms of my

own understanding and experience as a female teacher. And thus, from here my story begins. I listened to the stories of female colleagues as they expressed their concern about the overwhelming domination of males within their schools. I choose women at one particular school who shared a common experience and I wanted to provide the space for women to share their own experiences as a basis for developing a better understanding of how female teachers make sense of their authority as teachers.

Around the school, by the photocopier, and at lunch women discuss and share similar experiences in which they feel they have a common identification. The experiences of the women are one in which their gender was challenged and they were made to feel as if their authority was minimalized. As I listened to their stories, I clearly understood that they had difficulty understanding and making sense of their experiences as female teachers. They could not understand why female teachers were seen as less authoritative and why male staff members were allowed to get away with situations that they themselves would never be able to avoid or dismiss. I was fortunate to be able to connect with these women and to share their stories, as it provided the opportunity to reflect on my gender and the role that female teachers play as authority figures in education. I recognized that these experiences were not isolated incidents and I wanted to hear the voices of women to help them make sense of their experiences.

Research Problem: Gender and Authority

This study is concerned with examining the question of gendered authority from the point of view of female teachers. It is informed by research conducted by Robinson (2000), which has documented the extent to which authority is gendered in schools and the consequences of this for both female teachers and male teachers who do not conform to traditional masculinity.

Robinson (2000) writes that often, male teachers, due to body size and presence, are generally seen as stronger authority figures within the classroom. In Robinson's (2000) research there is a concern that the female body is viewed as weaker by both students and staff members. When this perception occurs, more authority is attributed to male students and male staff members in the classroom. Therefore, it can become difficult for some female teachers to maintain positions of authority in the classroom and in the school. Robinson (2000) makes reference to female teachers sending students with discipline problems to male teachers for discipline because males are viewed as having more authority. I am concerned that by failing to discipline students, female teachers send a message that they do not hold positions of authority. Therefore, females themselves reinforce the idea that they are incapable of holding authority in the classroom, and they demonstrate a lack of confidence by sending students to male teachers to be disciplined. Robinson (2000) examines how females adapt their teaching styles to display more aggressive characteristics in order to be seen as stronger disciplinarians. As this research highlights, failure to adopt certain masculine styles of classroom management can undermine the authority of the female educator.

Robinson (2000) suggests that in order for female teachers to be more authoritative in teaching, they often feel that they have to act more like males. Those who adopt a style that is more aggressive, for example, are considered to be more like male teachers and, hence, are perceived to be better teachers. Such a gender regime in which hegemonic masculinity is privileged and valued (Connell, 1995) perhaps explains why many female teachers feel the need to conform to masculinist norms for conducting themselves as professionals. This is because failure to do so can lead to an unfair assessment of or judgment about their capabilities to manage student behaviour and, hence, teach effectively. Why is it that behaviours such as aggression and domination are defined as male characteristics? It is important to consider why aggression and domination are considered to be the property of male bodies. Robinson (2000) cites Jones (1993) when she “points out that women have to ‘defeminize’ and ‘desexualize’ themselves and represent themselves as ‘exceptional women’ in order to be considered as authoritarian figures” (p. 81). I would argue that women should not have to work to present themselves as more aggressive in order to be seen as authoritative.

Given the issues about gendered authority that have been identified by Robinson, I am concerned enough to investigate the experiences of female educators within schools in South Western Ontario. To what extent do female teachers feel that female teachers are perceived differently from their male counterparts in terms of their capacity to discipline students and to manage classroom behaviour? In other words, to what extent is authority gendered for these teachers? Thus, Robinson’s (2000) research provides a basis for investigating other female educators’ concerns vis-à-vis their experiences of gendered

authority in schools. Focusing on the experiences of these women helped me reflect on issues of gendered authority in my own life and was used as a starting point to examine Robinson's (2000) findings. In using Robinson's research, I chose to examine the issues she raises about gendered authority as they relate to women teachers in the context of a school in South Western Ontario.

I invited women from one particular school to reflect on their own experiences by asking a series of questions. My focus for my thesis was to understand how female teachers experience their role as authority figures in schools and classrooms and, hence, the following questions motivated my investigation: 1. How do female staff members define authority? 2. Do female teachers believe that students/parents/principal/male teachers respond to or treat female teachers differently? 3. How do female teachers approach discipline? How would they explain their approach to classroom management? 4. Do gender differences in authority exist within schools? 5. Do differences in gender authority exist within their own school? 6. How do female teachers establish authority within their own classrooms? These questions guided my research and enabled me to create a space for female teachers to reflect on and make sense of their own experiences of gendered authority in schools.

A Need For Feminist Research

The research I conducted needs to be understood and framed explicitly as feminist research. As Riddell (1989) stipulates, the idea of feminist research is for and by women, as it serves their interests. Lather (1991) stresses the need for feminist research as

“feminist researchers see gender as a basic organizing principle which profoundly shapes and/or mediates the concrete conditions of our lives” (p.17). Lather (1991) argues that gender is at the centre of shaping who we are and the positions of power that we hold. In conducting feminist research, Lather (1991) outlines, “a feminist standpoint, achieved through struggle both against male oppression and towards seeing the world through women’s eyes, provides the possibility of more complete and less distorted understandings” (p.25). Simply put, Lather (1991) suggests that feminist research is to “put the social construction of gender at the centre of one’s inquiry” (p.71). Thus, gender is an essential principle that underlines every element of our lives including “the distribution of power and privilege” (Lather, 1991, p.71). Therefore, if feminist research is to understand gender then it is necessary to grasp women’s perspective on the role of teaching as it relates to establishing authority in schools.

The emphasis on providing access to women’s perspectives is justified by Weedon (1987). She recognizes that feminism is used to create the possibility of change in the power struggle that exists between men and women. Weedon (1987) expresses a concern for understanding the differences between such power struggles:

...yet if women’s experience is different from the experience of men, it is important to understand why. Either we can see women as essentially different from men or as socially constituted as different and subject to social relations and processes in different ways to me (p.8).

Subsequently, feminist research becomes essential in recognizing and investigating the power relations that inform the inscribed differences which are attributed to males and females. This means avoiding the familiar tendency to essentialize these differences or to explain them in terms of biology.

Feminist writer Judith Butler (1990) stipulates that categories such as gender and sex are socially constructed or enacted by individuals over time. She suggests that one performs one's gender according to cultural and societal norms. In this sense, gender is performed rather than being an expression of sex differences. Thus the sexed body is produced through engaging in certain behaviours and embracing particular understandings about masculinity and femininity that are influenced by certain social norms:

The forming, crafting, bearing, circulation, signification of that sexed body will not be a set of actions performed in compliance with the law; on the contrary, they will be a set of actions mobilized by the law, the citational accumulation and dissimulation of the law that produces material effects, the lived necessity of those effects as well as the lived contestation of that necessity ... Performativity is thus not a singular "act," for it is always a reiteration of a norm or set of norms, and to the extent that it acquires an act-like status in the present, it conceals or dissimulates the conventions of which it is a repetition (Butler, 1993, p.12).

Thus gender is repeatedly enacted by individuals within the context of certain norms, which determine one's understanding of what it means to be a man or a woman. In this

sense, gender is an embodied experience because the body is used to express gender identity or functions as a means by which to present oneself as a gendered subject. In this sense there are different ways of expressing gender identity for men and women, despite the fact that gender often functions in a regulatory way. While being a man or being a woman is often presented as a natural fact, Butler (1990) highlights the extent to which it is enacted or performed according to certain social norms. In other words, what it means to be a man or a woman becomes so normalized that it appears to be a natural effect of biological sex differences. In this sense, Butler (1990) explains that while women share certain biological characteristics, they do not all enact or perform their femininities in the same manner. Butler states:

if one 'is' a women, that is surely not all one is; the term fails to be exhaustive, not because a pregendered 'person' transcends the specific paraphernalia of its gender, but because gender is not always constituted coherently or consistently in different historical contexts, and because gender intersects with racial, class, ethnic, sexual, and regional modalities of discursively constituted identities. As a result, it becomes impossible to separate out 'gender' from the political and cultural intersections in which it is invariably produced and maintained (p.3).

Butler attempts to understand that although there is a commonality that exists between women, there is also a difference between sexed bodies and expressions of gender identity. Her understanding of sex and gender is that "whatever biological intractability sex appears to have, gender is culturally constructed: hence, gender is neither the causal

result of sex nor as seemingly fixed as sex” (Butler, p.9-10). Therefore, Butler (1990) explains the notion that one learns to perform one’s gender because of society’s norms and expectations. Further examining the cultural significance of gender, Butler (1990) focuses on the work of Simone de Beauvoir. De Beauvoir’s theory is that gender is constructed and that there are social expectations underlining what is considered to be gender appropriate behaviour for men and women. In her book *The Second Sex*, de Beauvoir states “one is not born a woman, but rather, becomes one” (de Beauvoir, 1952, p.51). The role of the female is to become what society expects her to be. Women are often left feeling that they must conform to the typical characteristics associated with femininity or willingly embrace certain ideals or norms associated with what it means to be a woman because certain embodied expressions of femininity are considered to be more desirable than others. Therefore, when a woman acts outside of certain normative expectations, she risks being punished or denigrated. Addressing such issues about the policing and regulation of femininities and women’s bodies are central to the political objectives of conducting feminist research.

Feminist research is also important for women to understand so they can recognize the value of their experiences and, moreover, to understand the political dimensions of their personal experiences. It aims to empower women to make sense of their own lives and to act on this knowledge about gender policing and regulation of their own bodies. Riddell (1989) expresses the need for women to recognize their experiences and the socio-political context of their own identity formation. She states, “the woman who is interviewed may enjoy talking about her life, but unless the research is used in

some way to change the position of women in society, then she is not going to be any better off" (Riddell, 1989, p.85). Hence, Riddell believes that the ethics of feminist research must be committed to providing women with a critical framework for examining patriarchal power relations in their own lives. Thus, by recording the voices of female teachers and by posing critical questions about the socio-political significance of gender relations in schools, a space is created for the voices of these women to be heard and for their insights into gendered authority to be documented. One way for women to understand gender relations in schools is to create an opportunity for reflection on the impact of the patriarchal system of gender relations on their own lives.

The female teacher's role in the school system of gender relations must be understood. Feminist research is needed to focus on the experience of the individual. Weedon (1987) places an emphasis on subjectivity and its role for the female educator: "[F]or a theoretical perspective to be politically useful to feminists, it should be able to recognize the importance of the subjective in constituting meaning of women's lived reality" (p.8). Weedon (1987) suggests that it is important to recognize whose interest feminist theory will benefit. She states, "as a project which seeks to address feminist interests... it must necessarily confront the question of whose interests feminism represents. The simple answer is that it represents the interest of women" (p.10). The goal of my research is to give a voice to female educators and to represent their gendered experience in teaching. I have taken a feminist approach by placing the female teacher's voice and narrative at the centre of the research in an attempt to interrogate the gendered discourses informing their own reflections on the question of their authority as teachers.

I employ a feminist theoretical framework as informed by Butler (1990; 1993), Riddell (1989), Weedon (1987), and Lather (1991). Patti Lather (1991) argues that feminist research is an essential part of who we are, as gender shapes our lives. Furthermore, "through the questions that feminism poses and the absences it locates, feminism argues that gender is a central factor in the shaping of our consciousness, skills and institutions as well as in the distribution of power and privilege" (Lather, 1991, p.71). In keeping with feminist theory, I intend to argue that the school system in North American society is dominated by a hegemonic masculinity, which often silences and marginalizes the voices of women.

Given that this is a research project committed to addressing feminist concerns, there is practical, social, and intellectual importance in understanding the role of female educators as they struggle to deal with inequities wrought by an oppressive gender regime through which differences in authority in both the classroom and in the school are reinforced and institutionalized. My aim is to give a voice to the female educator and in doing so to build a better understanding of the extent to which the teacher's authority is experienced and perceived in gendered terms.

The Gendered Body

Social norms determine that biology should play a role in shaping and determining our gender identity. As Butler (1990) highlights, society's norms govern what is considered to be proper or acceptable expressions of legitimate masculinity and femininity. Such a position is consistent with what Francis and Skelton (2005) term a social constructionist view of gender. They state: "social constructionist theory

generally sees meaning, including identities as socially situated and constructed through interaction” (p.28). For the most part, these feminist researchers reject theories of sex-role socialization in that they tend to present gender identity formation as a stable and coherent practice. Role theory, they explain, is too simplistic and fails to take into account the contradictory process involved in how gender identity is negotiated and fashioned in specific social and cultural contexts. Francis and Skelton, in this sense, are concerned to illustrate how gender is socially constructed.

Francis and Skelton (2005), for example, indicate that gender is a result of societal expectations and interactions. Thus, “gendered behaviour is produced from social factors rather than biological programming” (Francis & Skelton, 2005, p.28). In fact, they argue that gender is constructed by social expectations of what society accepts as appropriate behaviour for one’s gender as, “it is maintained that boys and girls endeavour to construct their gender identities in ways that are deemed most appropriate or desirable (and hence invested with status and power) to their peers and in the values of society at large” (Francis & Skelton, 2005, p.29). Francis and Skelton (2005) discuss the social construction of gender as displayed in the school environment claiming that “many feminist researchers have observed how particular constructions of gender and gender relations are produced in individual classroom environments, and the differences which aspects such as school culture, teacher approach and expectations, peer group dynamics and so on can make to these productions” (p.28). My research shows that within the school environment gender is socially constructed with legitimate or desired teacher authority viewed as a male attribute. Therefore, to claim that gender is socially

constructed results in understanding that gender is not biologically determined but rather an effect of social norms, as Butler (1990) highlights.

Francis and Skelton also highlight that there is no fixed truth and, hence, that it is problematic to define gender based on one universal perspective: “rather, ‘truth’ and ‘reality’ depend on perspective, and no perspective can claim to be more valid or ‘true’ than another” (p.30). However, while there may not be a fixed or absolute truth, it is still important to consider the social and political consequences of defining a sense of ourselves as gendered subjects. Weedon (1987), for example, ascribes gender to part of our everyday experience:

... feminism is a politics. It is a politics directed at changing existing power relations between men and women in society. These power relations structure all areas of life, the family, education and welfare, the worlds of work and politics, culture and leisure (p.8).

The power struggle between men and women is felt within the teaching profession as the women interviewed felt a need to fit into the school’s gender regime, which is dominated by a patriarchal political agenda. To what extent does one feel constrained by a binary system of gender? Furthermore, how does one define gender?

Francis (2000), for example, states: “ ‘gender’ (masculinity and femininity) refers to the social construction of differences in behaviour according to sex” (p.15). She argues that characteristics associated with gender are determined by society. In fact,

“masculinity and femininity may be constructed slightly differently by different individuals, but in Western society are constructed as bearing some or all of the dichotomous attributes:

Masculine

Rationality
Strength
Aggression
Competition
Mind
Science
Activity
Independence

Feminine

Emotion
Frailty
Care
Co-operation
Body
Nature/Arts
Passivity
Dependence

(Francis, 2000, p. 15)

Francis (2000) clarifies that no one exhibits all of these characteristics, but these are traditionally the binary ways in which masculine and feminine behaviour is categorized and defined for each gender. Davies (1989; 1993) states “gender is seen and felt to be integral to a successful social identity” (p.15). Therefore, according to Francis (2000), gendered identity becomes important for children and adults in order to fit into a pre-existing mould that is determined by society. But what happens when one does not act in accordance with the typical characteristics that are associated with his or her gender?

There are men and women who do not display characteristics that are associated with or expected for their assigned gender. As a result, they may face the challenge of being marginalized by other groups. Francis (2000) asks, “Can women be ‘masculine’ and men be ‘feminine’? If these are purely social constructions, then logically the answer must be a ‘yes’ (p.17). MacInnes (1998) discusses how it can make people feel

uncomfortable by labelling women with masculine characteristics or men with feminine characteristics. He implies "this is partly because of the stigma attached to these terms when applied to the opposite sex (the labels are often deemed offensive when applied to the opposite sex, I would argue precisely because the application suggests that the individual has 'failed' at gender, and might therefore be marginalized)" (MacInnes, 1998, p.17). Therefore, Francis (2000) explains that aggression in a female may lead her to being perceived as manipulative or labelled as "a bitch". Thus Francis (2000) recognizes that the socially constructed differences between men and women "[hold] important consequences in terms of power, because in the dichotomous construction of gender, power is located in the male, and the female is subjugated" (p.19). She believes that socially constructed gendered differences enable women to share a common identity and can be an important basis for feeling empowered to make changes.

Social constructionist and feminist theories inform our understanding about what it means to be a woman or what it means to be a man. As Lather (1990) points out, feminist theory provides one with analytic tools for making sense of the politics of gender identity practices. Weedon (1987), for instance, writes, "[T]he very question of what it means to be a woman, and how our femininity and our sexuality are defined for us and how we might begin to redefine them for ourselves," (p.1) is necessary to help make sense of our experience of being a female and how we experience the world.

In trying to make sense of the world it is difficult to escape gender. From the moment one learns someone is expecting a child one is curious to learn about the gender of the unknown child. Furthermore, the child is often given pink or blue garments on the

basis of the ascribed gender. The gender identity one performs is based on how boys and girls are taught to act, what toys they should play with, and how they should dress. It seems impossible to escape one's gender:

the social institutions, which we enter as individuals – for example, the family, schools and colleges, teenage fashion and pop culture, the church and the worlds of work and leisure – pre-exist us. We learn their modes of operation and the values which they seek to maintain as true, natural or good. As children we learn what girls and boys should be and, later, women and men.

(Weedon, 1987, p.3)

Understanding Authority

Understanding one's gender is difficult as women try to find their place as authority figures in the classroom. To understand the role women play as authority figures one must first come to understand what authority is and how someone is viewed as authoritative. Robinson (2000) cites Friedman (1973) when defining authority as “a mutually recognizable normative relationship giving one the right to command or speak and the other to obey (p.134).” Friedman (1985) further states: “cultural and stereotypical notion that intelligence, expertise, and authority are ‘masculine’ traits that both men and women tend to find ‘incompatible with the feminine’” (p.206). According to Jones (1993)

the modern normalization of authority as a disciplinary gaze represents, in classical psychoanalytic terms, the masculinization of this aspect of being in

authority. Although it comes to be associated with systems of rule that are themselves genderless, this form of ordering social behaviour is at least arguably 'masculine' (p.144).

The role of an authority figure is traditionally a role held by males. Jones (1993) in her understanding of authority and gender "points out that masculinity – male bodies and masculinized knowledge and practices – has been the privileged representation of Western authority" (p.81). Therefore, one still needs to understand what, exactly, authority means.

Jones (1993) connects authority with power and obedience. She states "authority is marked by its ability to get people to obey" (Jones, 1993, p.156). The traditional roles in a patriarchal society encourage people to view the male as an authority figure. This concept is traced back to the traditional role of the father in which the male was the head of the household. "The idea of authority as absolute sovereignty, coupled with the natural, biologically determined right of fathers to rule, established political authority as a naturally hierarchical and naturally paternal relationship" (Jones, 1993, p.142). One can argue that the patriarchal world in which the male is seen as the authority figure still exists within the teaching profession.

Robinson (2000) recognizes that authority should be defined in relation to school "authority in the secondary school context, as in the broader community, must be considered in relation to the ways in which representations of 'authoritativeness' have privileged certain groups within society" (p.77). In examining the historical research of

females in education “the discourse of gendered authority has contributed to women within the teaching profession being viewed as poor disciplinarians, lacking the ‘commitment’ to the job or the necessary ‘masculine attributes’ to control older children, especially boys” (Robinson, 2000, p.77). Furthermore, Connell (1995) highlights that positions of power are still dominated by hegemonic masculinity which are “reflected and reinforced by sexual division of labour and the presence of a ‘gender regime’ within school executives, where decision making, school discipline practices and policies and access to resources compounded the power and privilege of men” (Robinson, 2000, p.78). Robinson’s (2000) research outlines “students’ attitudes and perceptions of authority predominantly reflected stereotypical beliefs about the gendered nature of power and authority” (p.79). Perceptions by students according to Robinson (2000) are “that males were stronger, louder, and more in control, more intimidating and thus had greater authority than females” (p.79). Therefore, Robinson (2000) highlights the “hegemonic masculine body was generally viewed by both teachers and students as the body of ‘legitimate authority’” (p.80). Based on my own research and also on an engagement with the literature in the field, I provide evidence in this thesis to support the view that a patriarchal system and hence, masculinist culture, still reigns within many school systems. Thus, there is a need to understand why the patriarchal system is allowed to continue and why many women are not viewed as authoritative.

Conclusion and Thesis Overview

In this chapter I have focused on my understanding of gender and authority within my own life and how the issue of gendered authority evolved into a research topic. This

enabled me to provide a conceptual framework and rationale for undertaking research with female teachers in one particular school.

In chapter two I provide a review of the literature that is relevant to my topic. The literature helps to situate the importance of my study in relation to related work in the field and, hence, establishes the need for further exploration of the topic. Documenting existing perspectives on and knowledge about the gendered body, the sexual harassment of teachers, hegemonic masculinity, and gender and schooling support the need for further research on gendered authority and teaching.

Chapter Three discusses the rationale behind my methodology and provides reasons for reflection on the chosen methodology. Chapter Four presents an analysis of the narratives of the four female teachers who chose to participate in the research.

The final chapter provides a summary of the main themes related to gendered authority in teaching that emerged from the research and highlights the implications of the study.

Chapter Two:

Literature Review

*The test of literature is, I suppose,
whether we ourselves live more intensely for the reading of it.*

- Elizabeth Drew (Andrews, 1993, p. 529)

Introduction: Discovering the Research

In this chapter I provide a review of the significant literature in the field, which relates to my topic on female teachers and gendered authority in school. The issue of gender and power in schools, as it relates to the experiences of female teachers, has been well documented in feminist literature. As the research undertaken by Robinson (2000) and other feminists, such as Coffey and Delamont (2000), illustrate, there is still a need to focus on issues of gendered authority and the female embodied experience in schools from the narrative perspective of female teachers.

This literature review begins with the history of teacher education and the role that the female teacher has played within society and, more specifically, within teacher education. Such a focus is important because it highlights the historical legacy of the institutionalization of patriarchy in schools in terms of its impact on female teachers and functions as an important backdrop politically for reflecting on more recent research which addresses issues of gendered authority in schools. This is then followed by a review of the literature, which documents sexual harassment experienced by female teachers and which illuminates another dimension of gendered authority in terms of how women are objectified by both male teachers and male students. A review of literature,

which specifically deals with the role of the female teacher as an authority figure, is also included.

The Role of Female Teachers in History

In order to understand the role of institutionalized patriarchy and its impact on female teachers' lives in schools, it is necessary to examine the feminist literature which provides a historical account of the role of women in the teaching profession. This provides a political backdrop for examining current literature on the role and status of women in the profession.

Griffin (1997) reflects on the history of teaching and the role females have played in that history. She discusses the gendered experiences of teachers through female empowerment and raises some questions politically about the status historically of females in the teaching profession. This particular history is insightful and relevant, particularly in light of examining the experiences of female teachers in today's education system.

Griffin, outlines how teaching was a profession dominated by men until the time of the Industrial Era during the late 1700s to 1860s. In the 18th and 19th century, women were given the opportunity to enter the teaching profession. Female teachers were expected to work for less pay and to be compliant. They were also required to remain single. Further explanation by Measor (1992) discusses the history of teaching in the 1920s and the 1930s in England, whereby men were considered the breadwinners and women teachers were not allowed to be married. These rules would remain status quo

until the Education Act of 1944. Society felt that “men had dependents to support and so needed a higher salary, whereas women were financially supported by their husbands and consequently only worked for ‘pin money’” (Measor, 1992, p.111). Weiner (2004), for example, believed that perceptions of gender began to shift after 1945, “to accommodate greater flexibility in male and female roles in society” (p.1). However, women would continue to receive less pay until the 1960s when equal pay opportunities were established (Measor, 1992). Despite regulations for equal pay, however, Measor (1992) discusses that equality is not always realistic “as we have seen however, even though the basic salary is the same for men and women, male teachers on average continue to earn more than their female counterparts because a higher proportion of them occupy the senior positions which carry more money” (p.111). The role of the female teacher continued to face challenges during the 1950s and 1960s. Acker (1994) discusses the sociological concern that there were not enough males in the teaching profession, “most educational psychologists, Liberman reported in 1956, believe that young boys who lack suitable masculine role models among their teachers will not only become reading failures or behaviour problems, but might end up in the nearest pool hall in search of a gang leader to emulate” (p. 77). Acker (1994) further discusses the stereotype of women in the 1960s. She references Simpson and Simpson (1969) whose work entitled *Women and Bureaucracy in the Semi-professions* outlines a problem in the workforce with authority, which is attributed to the presence of women in the workforce:

A woman's primary attachment is to the family role; women are therefore less intrinsically committed to work than men and less likely to maintain a high level of specialized knowledge. Because their work motives are more utilitarian and less intrinsically task-oriented than those of men, they may require more control. Women's stronger competing attachments to their family roles and ... to their clients make them less likely than men to develop colleague reference group orientations. For these reasons, and because they often share the general cultural norm that women should defer to men, women are more willing than men to accept the bureaucratic controls imposed upon them in semi-professional organizations, and less likely to seek a genuinely professional status (Simpson & Simpson 1969, p.199-200).

The traditional role of women began to shift in the 1970s, as women were no longer solely viewed as nurturers and family caretakers. Acker (1994) believed there was little attention given to equal rights for women until the 1970s, "virtually no attention was paid to the topic before the late 1970s" (p. 46). Despite the slow shift in thinking, feminists in the late 1970s and 1980s raised questions about equality and rights of female teachers in the education system (Weiner, 2004). These feminists began to question why women did not go into senior positions and were in less authoritative positions within schools.

Measor (1992) reflects on the stereotypical role of women and how they were still viewed as caretakers, even in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Women in the career world take time out to have children and raise a family. Therefore, women are viewed as less

committed to their careers and have less experience in the working world which leads Measor (1992) to state that "suspicion about the degree of commitment which could be expected of married women in general and mothers in particular has led to reluctance to appoint young and unmarried women" (p.112) to positions of authority. Thus, this domestic ideology explained why men continued to dominate the teaching profession in terms of the administrative hierarchy and why female teachers tended to remain in the classroom.

The role of the female teacher continued to fall under the gaze of male dominance even into the twentieth century. Griffin (1997) cites Grumet (1998):

... during the 20th century, two world wars drew women, married and single, into schools. Schools continued as patriarchal institutions with male curriculum (p. 8).

Griffin, (1997), for example, cites statistics from the United States in 1992 in which 72% of elementary and secondary teachers were women, and 72% of principals and 95% of superintendents were male. The statistics show that males dominated in positions of authority and, subsequently, women were given less of a voice in teaching. Men are the decision makers and provide the basic structure of the school system. This is most evident in schools in which males dominate the administrative team and the secretarial and teaching roles are predominantly female. An analogy for the unequal ratio of females in authority is made by Hall (1966): "in some ways, the school principal resembles, not so much the administrator in the world of business and industry, as the

patriarch presiding over a harem (cited in Griffin, 1997, p.8).” Therefore, according to Griffin (1997) the voices and perspectives of the female teachers often go unnoticed. However, despite the lack of the female voice within authority positions there is a slow movement of change towards female teachers being appointed as administrators in schools.

The roles of female teachers are changing as some women assume administrative roles. However, Griffin (1997) establishes that women are still taught to be more submissive. She claims that even as gender patterns are starting to change:

... authority and deterrence are not changing. Female teachers have been taught, as have female students, to be good girls. Being good means keeping quiet and staying under the control of others (Griffin, 1997, p.9).

Although we would like to think that there has been a switch in the role women play in education, many of the historical perspectives on females in education highlight the extent to which institutionalized patriarchy has impacted female teachers’ experiences in schools. Griffin (1997) cites examples of female educators who experience sexual harassment and inappropriate behaviour by both male students and male staff members. Most of the behaviour by male teachers goes unpunished and unnoticed by the administrative team, which sends a message that such behaviour is acceptable. Griffin, (1997) draws attention to the political significance of examining the history of education vis-à-vis the role of women in schools. In examining the history of female teachers

Griffin (1997) points to the persistence of patriarchy in terms of how it continues to impact on female teachers' lives in schools. Female teachers still work in a predominantly hegemonic society where males dominate the profession in terms of power and control. Therefore, "it is clearly time for elementary and secondary teachers to realize that teaching is a gendered experience, and as such, is oppressive to female teachers" (Griffin, 1997, p.17). The education system should be a place where the idea of change can be fermented in the minds of students. However, Weiner (2004) cites Connell (1987) who argues, "schooling has not fulfilled its potential as an agent for change in respect of challenging 'traditional' gender orders" (p. 2). While female teachers have made important gains in terms of being promoted and in terms of ensuring wage equity, teaching is still seen as a female occupation.

Further research by Anastasaki and Koutra (2005) also highlights how teaching is predominantly seen as a female profession. The role of the female teacher is generally believed to have feminine characteristics that include nurturing and being a motherly figure. Anastasaki and Koutra (2005) examine why females are usually teachers and males are administrators and why females do not go into administrative positions. They examine assumptions about teachers and administrators in connection to gender in education. Assumptions about teachers are that "it is generally taken for granted that women make better teachers and men better managers, in other words, 'women teach and men manage'" (Anastasaki and Koutra, 2005, p.44). Therefore, the dominant discourse of women as less authoritative and managed by males continues to be embedded in society. Anastasaki and Koutra (2005) state "these assumptions or commonly held

beliefs, are so embedded and nested, they generally remain unquestioned and unchallenged, resulting in taken-for granted and unconscious behaviour patterns that become verified as 'universal truths'" (p.44). Therefore, they argue that we must encourage students to question why fewer female teachers are in administrative roles and why women are considered to be nurturers and not authority figures.

Statistics show that, proportionately, there are still fewer women in administrative roles, which could explain in part why women are considered teachers and not managers. Research by Mahony et al (2004) indicate, for example, "the fact that women teachers outnumber men by 2:1 overall, yet men continue to be over represented at head teacher level[s]" (p. 134). Further work by Moreau et al (2007) in the United Kingdom also examines the higher proportionate number of female teachers in education and the lower number of female staff members as head teachers. Their research indicates "that men are still 3.1 times more likely to become head teachers than women in nursery and primary schools, 2.6 times in secondary schools, something which highlights the fact that the 'feminization of teaching (taken in statistical assumption) does not necessarily entail more career opportunities for women" (Moreau et al, 2007, p.238). Skelton (2002) also discusses the imbalance of male head teachers based in the United Kingdom, "although women primary teachers outnumbered men by roughly 5:1, it continues to be the case that males are disproportionately represented at head teacher level. For example, approximately one male primary teacher in four is likely to become a head teacher, whilst the chance for a women teacher is one in thirteen" (Skelton, 2002, p. 85).

Moreau et al (2007) *Making Sense of the Glass Ceiling in Schools: An Exploration of Women Teachers' Discourses* discuss "the lack of awareness of gender issues among many teachers" (p. 250). Their research is relevant because, according to Hutchinson (2002) "[gender imbalance] issues are a particular concern in education because it is an institution through which gendered divisions are reproduced" (p. 125). Examining the imbalance of gender in the teaching profession is important and thus the starting point of the research by Moreau et al. (2007). Their research involved interviewing female teachers in England between the years 2002-2005. The purpose of the study "was to identify the factors influencing women teachers' career development and access to management positions in schools" (Moreau et al., 2007, p. 239). They used case studies and interviews with women and head teachers at six different schools. Research by Moreau et al. (2007) is relevant as "schools have widely been described as 'feminised' environments," (p.237) with statistics showing that 69% of teachers in England are females. Moreau et al. examine the concern in the media that schools are feminised, given that "the term 'feminization' has also been used to describe schools as environments which carry and favour 'feminine' values" (p. 237).

Moreau et al. highlight the extent to which the feminization of schools is considered a threat to the male identity and to male achievement. They discuss how "[the] UK Government policies continue to focus on attracting men into teaching, in particular in the primary sector, while ignoring the under representation across all education phases of women in schools' managerial jobs" (p. 238). Therefore, Moreau et

al. (2007) continue to focus on “the under representation of women in promoted positions in comparison with their proportion in the overall teaching workforce” (p. 238). During the interview process the women were asked why there is a gender imbalance in teaching and why there is a lower proportion of females in authority positions.

A major argument for the imbalance of female teachers in positions of authority “suggests that the different positioning of men and women in the workplace is a result of their different positioning in the home, and the teachers who hold this view may or may not perceive schools as meritocratic workplaces” (Moreau, et al., 2007, p.241-2). The women interviewed believed that it is difficult to balance both work and domestic responsibilities and that management jobs were not compatible with family responsibilities. Other reasons such as geographical mobility were issues identified by the women who relocated to different schools because of their husbands careers. Moreau et al. (2007) indicate that “it appeared that women teachers’ professional and geographical mobility depended on their partners [...] such decisions for women to ‘follow’ their partner rather than the opposite seemed overall to be due to representations of men as [the] main bread winner rather than their objective situation” (p. 242). They also reveal in their research that some women teachers:

... described schools as workplaces where women faced disadvantage on the basis of their sex. Often, these were women who told stories of having been discriminated against or had seen other women teachers experiencing such situations (Moreau et al., p. 244).

An experienced secondary school teacher, who had taught in the same school for fifteen years, noticed she had not been given the same responsibility or opportunities as her male colleagues. In the interview she revealed:

I think it's a very very chauvinistic school. And that's, it's not always overt. It's not that they say that women are being put down openly or that women are not considered for jobs. There is just a very strongly masculine ethos where certain values are valued, certain attitudes are valued and others are not. So for a woman to progress in this school she actually has to have a lot of balls
(Moreau et al., 2007, p. 245).

The research by Moreau et al. (2007) is important because it provides an understanding of how women experience and make sense of their experience of gender in schools. In order for the perception of female teachers to change and for female teachers to feel empowered, there needs to be a societal change in how gender equity is understood and conceptualized. Although teaching is considered to be feminized work, it is still a career where females are not in dominant positions of authority.

It is important for teachers to recognize the influence they can have on students in the classroom. Teachers must actively challenge limiting gender stereotypes. Measor (1992) states, "while the beliefs and attitudes held by individuals can be influential, the general ethos and the institutional and organizational practices and customs of schools also have considerable impact on how teachers as well as pupils experience being female

or male at school” (p.116). Thus, we need to acknowledge the impact of gender regimes and, hence, institutionalized patriarchy, on the lives of both students and teachers in schools.

To embrace feminist research is important as it creates awareness of the inequalities based on gender. Weiner (2004) stresses, “the ‘good news’ of feminist research is that it has inspired many women (and a few men) to break out of cultural orders, heritages and disciplinary frameworks that have sought to diminish them” (p.4). Furthermore, Weiner (2004) values feminism as it challenges the idea of traditional gender stereotypes and promotes the possibility of changing the traditional view of women (Weiner, 2004). Therefore, “feminism is particularly important for education and schools, not least because half of its (potential) pupils, and many of its practitioners, are female” (Weiner, 2004, p.4). A shift in thinking about feminist research is needed in order to hear the voices of women who struggle with equality and gender within the school system. Weiler’s (1991) research is important in this respect as she:

argues that feminist pedagogy is aimed mainly at changing the classroom methods to acknowledge three areas of concern: the role and authority of the teacher, the epistemological challenge of experience i.e. ‘the source of the claims for knowledge and truth in personal experience and feeling’ (p.456).

Acker (1994) also discusses the importance of feminist work in education. She states, “girls and boys are thought to be socialized (by the family, the school, and the media) into traditional attitudes and orientations that limit their futures unnecessarily to sex-

stereotyped occupational and family roles” (Acker, 1994, p. 46). Acker (1994) believes “that one task for feminists is to consider how to convince their colleagues that gender is not a topic of interest only to women, but a fundamental principle of social life” (p. 157). Gender is a part of our experience and it is necessary to give meaning to our experience because “teach[ing] careers, collegiality and cultures need to be examined for the ways in which women and men have had different typical experiences and questions asked about why this happens” (Acker, p. 158). Therefore, the research conducted by Acker, Weiner, Coffey and Delamont and other feminist writers provides important historical insights into the nature and status of women’s work and serves as a basis for reflecting on women’s experience of teaching in today’s schools.

Sexual Harassment

Rebecca Coulter’s (1995) *Struggling With Sexism: Experiences of Feminist First-Year Teachers*’ researches the role first-year teachers experience with gendered authority while teaching in Ontario schools. Five first-year feminist teachers were interviewed over a one-year period. The teachers identify being undermined and devalued as sexual objects and talk about their experiences of gender inequality as female teachers. Coulter (1995) begins with the expectations that the five new teachers wanted to address in their classroom. These women “expected to present students with a non-sexist curriculum and to teach both girls and boys that women and men are equal and should be treated that way” (Coulter, 1995, p.35). However, many of the new teachers became disheartened that male teachers and students challenged their authority. Female teachers were given

less authority because of their gender. Many of the narratives by the teachers are disheartening and express a concern that females are viewed as sexual beings and not teachers. One of the feminist teachers said "...your authority is being challenged more because you are female than because you are their first-year teacher or you are young or any of the other reasons why authority might be challenged" (Coulter, 1995, p.35).

All the interviewed women felt that the students, the male teachers, and the male administrators challenged their authority. The women said "male students, some as young as 6 or 7, and male teachers have a gender agenda that categorises female teachers as more 'woman' than 'teacher'" (Coulter, 1995, p.35). The women felt that their authority was challenged by their interactions with male teachers enforcing their dominance in the form of harassment. Many of the women believed that they were dominated by male teachers and administrators and felt disempowered. One of the women explained that the male teachers in her school used comments and body language deemed as inappropriate behaviour. Moreover such inappropriate behaviour by the male teachers was often displayed in front of the students. Susan, one of the first year teachers, described an incident in which she was dressed as a cat for a Halloween party at school. In front of the students one of her male colleagues made the following comment, "Isn't she a great pussy?" (Coulter, 1995, p.37). Susan was mortified by the sexualized comment and later received an apology from the teacher. Other comments were made to the female teachers, which positioned or rather framed them as objects of sexual desire, both for the male teachers and for the male students. These teachers were devalued by

their colleagues and by the students who would witness the inappropriate behaviour by their male teachers. Such examples send a message to the students that women are merely sexual objects and contribute significantly to diminishing their authority.

The teachers gave other examples of inequality in their statements when referring to the treatment of female staff by male administrators in their schools. In one example, male staff members received preferential treatment when it came to covering classes for sport games or professional activities. The female teachers were never given the same consideration or support and were often turned down for the same requests that their male counterparts were granted. Such research draws attention to the need to conduct further research, which gives voice to the perspectives of female teachers in schools.

Robinson (2000) also addresses the issue of sexual harassment in the school environment, particularly as it impacts on female teachers' lives. She examines the role that hegemonic masculinity plays in schools and how this impacts on female teachers to undermine their authority and status. In Robinson's (2005) research, young males are interviewed for their understanding of sexual harassment and whether sexual harassment is a problem in their schools. Her research shows that sexual harassment is indeed a part of school life and that it is often trivialized or normalized as typical harmless male behaviour. In fact, Robinson highlights how harassment of female teachers is tied inevitably to a diminution of their authority and status as teachers in schools.

Robinson (2005) found that male students openly admitted to sexually harassing girls. They offered the following: "Yes we do that [sexual harassment] sometimes, but

it's all a joke though, the boys are just having a bit of fun" (Robinson, 2005, p.26). The males in this research explained sexual harassment in the following ways: as a joke, as *normal* behaviour, as asked for by girls, and as reestablishing male sexual behaviour (Robinson, 2005). Therefore, when males partake in sexual harassing behaviour, it is accepted as normal behaviour because it re-establishes their hegemonic masculinity. Robinson states: "doing hegemonic masculinity, and how successfully this is performed, is often measured by the dominance, aggression and intimidation shown towards the gendered 'other,' that is girls and women" (p. 20). In fact, sexual harassment is a means by which males assert their domination over females and male students see this behaviour as acceptable. In legitimating hegemonic masculinity in this way, a message is sent that sexual harassment is an acceptable part of simply being a boy or a man. When this behaviour is accepted, students' resort to this learned behaviour in how they interact with others. The boys in this study also targeted female teachers. Robinson (2000) highlights that "daily interactions between female teachers and boys often resulted in boys utilizing sexual harassment to gain and shift the power relationship within the classroom and within the school more broadly" (p.81). She documents the fearless attitude of male students as they exhibit sexual harassment in the school:

I was walking across the school quadrangle last week and this boy I don't teach, I didn't even know his name, put his head out the window of the classroom and called out 'Great tits, miss!' I was really embarrassed and furious to say the least. I wasn't going to let him get away with it, especially in front of the whole class, so I stormed up the classroom and dragged him out of the class. The kid just kept

saying it was a joke. I was even more pissed off that the teacher in the classroom at the time didn't say a thing to him. He told me later that he thought I was a bit over the top reacting how I did (Robinson, 2000, p.82).

Robinson's (2000) examples of sexual harassment of female teachers are viewed as the fault of the female teacher who fails to reinforce her authority in the classroom. Sexual harassment is therefore not believed to be the root of the problem, but rather a discipline issue that female teachers cannot control. Thus, the female teacher is viewed as less authoritative and unable to successfully manage classroom behaviour.

The Female Authority Figure

Other research by Ingalls (2006) also draws attention to the question of gendered authority as an embodied experience. She narrates her personal story from her experience as a female teacher who finds her gendered body is an obstacle in the teaching profession. In her article, *Unmasking the Brilliant Disguise: Smallness, Authority and the Irony of a Teacher's Body*, she shares her own stories of a petite woman who struggles with her body, self-conscious and aware of students who do not take her seriously. Ingalls (2006) maintains that being a female teacher and being petite has its benefits in youth, but with age and when seeking to establish authority, body size for female teachers can indeed become an issue. She explains that being short and being female are two handicaps that women face in order to be seen as successful authority figures in the workplace.

Ingalls (2000) cites Gladwell (2005), a cultural critic and author of the book *Blink* whose research shows that physical size and its connection to authority is an issue for women and some men. The concern is mostly related to women who generally are physically smaller than men. Ingalls (2000) suggests that women educators need to make each other more aware of the stories and experiences that other women encounter and the role of their gender in education. As Ingalls (2000) recognizes:

knowing that there are aspects of our physical selves that indeed will never change, and that will continue to influence our and others' evaluations of us and of our academic merit, I am encouraged to believe that prejudices against teacher bodies - whether they are directed toward the race, gender, sexuality, ability, or sizes of those bodies – must become part of the ether of discussion around subjectivity in the workplace (p.244).

Therefore, dialogue about gender can hopefully change attitudes that portray hegemonic masculinity as the accepted authority in the workplace.

Smith (2000) also advocates a need for breaking the silence by including the perspectives of women in conducting research that attends to issues of gender and power. Such feminist perspectives and narratives clearly inform my research, which is committed to documenting females teachers' accounts of their experiences of gendered authority in one particular high school.

Such perspectives on gendered authority are also echoed by Cooks (2007) who examines the female body and the role it plays within the teaching profession. She writes about her position of authority as a professor and how her body was viewed as

incompetent. She received student feedback at the end of the semester in which students commented on her body as signifying a lack of competence. In reviewing the student evaluations, Cooks (2007) began to research the gendered body, as she wanted to determine whether her body portrayed an image of incompetence because of her gender. According to Cooks (2007) "as teachers, we might assume our competence to be rooted in how we teach and how we help others to learn and yet our bodies also reflect the power and desire of the dominant culture" (p. 301). Cooks (2007) reflects on her entrance into the teaching profession and how she hoped to be evaluated in terms of her intellectual and pedagogical capabilities and not in terms of what her female body potentially signifies about her capabilities. However, she realized that it is impossible to escape the gendered body and its potential signification according to cultural norms, which govern the reading of the female body as somehow lacking in competency. Cooks (2007) reflects on feminist research by Bordo (1993) who questions the body when she asks, can "we ever know the body or encounter the body – not only the bodies of others, but our own bodies – directly and simply ... Rather, it seems, the body that we experience and conceptualize is always mediated by constructs, associations, images of a cultural nature" (Bordo, 1993, p.35). The image of the female body is further examined by Cooks (2007) who states, "feminists have long understood that the matter of bodies, or matters of bodies, are the core site of power" (p. 303). Therefore, she views the role of the female teacher as "fetishized in popular culture as both the highly sexed object of adolescent male desire and the asexual mother figure totally divorced from sexual appetites or bodily desires" (Cooks, 2007, p. 301). Women who deviate from such

cultural norms governing acceptable femininity are often questioned for their positions in society.

Women, for instance, who are seen as authoritative run the risk of being pathologized. Ingalls (2006), in fact, asserts that “female empowerment and authority are seen as inherently corrupt” (p. 243). The typical role of women is that of caregiver, who is not as firm and argumentative when needed as a man. Hence, women are viewed as nurturers and caregivers and these characteristics are at the forefront of students’ perspectives, which allow students to view male teachers as more authoritative. Overall, Ingalls (2006) provides a useful discussion as she encourages educators to be more aware of their bodies and, more importantly, their gendered bodies because they are carriers of messages to the students. When teachers create dialogue with students, they can help break down stereotypes associated with gender and authority.

Coffey and Delamont’s (2000) research examines an understanding of the gendered experience of teaching and uses narratives to provide feminist insights into the everyday lives of female teachers in schools. They begin by exploring the role of the teacher, which is often associated with developing strong classroom management skills. One expectation of a good classroom teacher, they highlight, is control in the classroom, whereby the teacher maintains strong classroom management skills. Thus, “colleagues judge teachers for their ability to exercise discipline in their classrooms” (Coffey & Delamont, 2000, p.21). Therefore, one must question what happens when the teacher’s authority is undermined in the classroom. Coffey and Delamont (2000), for example,

indicate that women are often undermined in the classroom by students and by male colleagues within the school “through ridicule, sexual comment (harassment), gender joking and so forth” (p.23). Furthermore, they argue that comments that undermine the female gender are generally part of the daily life of the female teacher. These experiences of diminished authority have been documented in other literature already reviewed. Coffey and Delamont (2000), however, further highlight how male teachers are perceived or positioned as taking care of female teachers when they agree to help discipline students who are unruly. Although this may appear to be helpful, they argue that it undermines the authority of the female teacher. Male teachers and students further undermine the female teacher when gender joking becomes a common experience in the school staff room. Coffey and Delamont (2000) claim that these jokes generally ‘focus on women’s femininity, or women’s bodies, domesticity, sex or just poke fun of women in general” (p.25). They argue therefore that when male colleagues harass female teachers, the females’ positions of authority are lessened or diminished as they are made to feel insecure in their occupation and social standing.

Coffey and Delamont (2000) cite Davies (1992, p.128) who claims that aggression in teaching is a characteristic that males demonstrate to display hegemonic masculinity and thus:

... the version of male masculinity that has come to dominate school management is ‘competitive, point scoring, over confident, sporting, career and status

conscious' – with pupils clearly identifying discipline with physical intimidation and aggression (p.23).

In a study conducted in Greece by Hopf & Hatzichristou (1999), female teachers were found to be more sensitive and gave warnings to students about their misbehaviour than did male teachers. Duffy et al. (2001) in the United States also found that “male teachers tend to be more authoritative and instrumental whereas female teachers tend to be more supportive and expressive” (p. 580). These researchers draw attention to the role that the teacher plays when disciplining students and raise questions about how students perceive authority on the basis of the teacher's gender. The female teacher, for example, is seen or viewed as more sensitive or less assertive because she is the one who gives warnings for behaviour. Thus, the students perceive they can get away with more because the female teacher is perceived to be more permissive and, hence, less authoritative. The result, Duffy et al. (2001) conclude, is that behavioural problems in the classroom are more likely for female teachers. This finding is also supported by Hopf and Hatzichristou (1999) who state that in Greek secondary schools, female math teachers had more behavioural problems in class than did male teachers.

Maher (1999) also focuses on feminist pedagogies and issues of gender, power, and authority in the classroom. She discusses what is considered good teaching and the treatment of girls and female teachers in the dominant male education system. She uses personal testimonies by both students and teachers to provide a space for women in authority to reflect on the role gender plays in the classroom. Maher (1999) begins with

a story that is written by two girls. The story is viewed by the students and the female teacher as an atypical gender story that girls should not write. The story contains violence, superpowers, and an action character created by the girls. When the two girls read the story to the class, the boys are surprised that girls could have written the story. In fact, the boys are condescending to the girls and question their story: "you can't write such stories if you don't know what 'teleporting' is, and girls shouldn't try to write such stories anyway" (Maher, 1999, p.37). The boys in the class dominate by suggesting that girls should not portray typical male characteristics. However, it is disappointing when the female teacher does not interject or say anything to the students.

Several narratives are given by Maher (1999) in which female teachers do not interject when male students become the dominant authority in the classroom. As an educator, it is necessary to use student-gendered experiences to reflect and critically examine why girls should be allowed to write stories that contain typical male roles. The teacher could have used the situation to question gender binaries. Moreover, her silence also contributes to the sense that male students have of females as somehow lacking authority and power that is considered to be the domain of males. In fact, Maher (1999) even states that she has been part of the problem by choosing to remain silent about such power issues, "Why have I often felt so powerless in my own teaching career, caught between things that students said or did that I thought were wrong, even harmful" (p.38). Maher (1999) was taught primarily by male teachers and she states that most topics covered in school were taught from a male perspective. The author had difficulty

connecting with the stories in history because they were from a hegemonic male point of view.

One female student in Maher's (1999) study offered the following opinion:

Sometimes, I feel like saying that I disagree, that there are other ways of looking at it but where would that get me? My teacher thinks I'm showing off, and the boys jeer. But if I pretend I don't understand, it is very different (p. 42).

The teacher has been given the opportunity to lead a discussion and to challenge the gender barriers in the classroom but fails to take up this opportunity. However, many of the teachers interviewed by Maher (1999) were self-conscious of their behaviour and did not want to appear aggressive.

Maher (1999) argues that males are generally aggressive and females are often associated with being passive in nature. Therefore, the role of being aggressive and authoritative is downplayed in the classroom by some female teachers. In fact, Maher (1999) states "another [issue] is the need for women to claim authority in a society that denies it to them... the authority and power of the woman feminist teacher is already in question from many of her students precisely because she is a woman" (p. 49). I would support Maher's (1999) point that female teachers are generally perceived to be passive. The narratives of the women in her study all highlighted the extent to which female teachers were perceived in these terms and how such perceptions impacted their own self-perception as teachers. Therefore, in reflecting on the first story with the two girls

Maher (1999) states, "the goal is not to replicate these power relationships but to challenge and change them: to ask more girls to comment on Dolores' and Rosie's story, and to ask Harold what kind of new stories he thinks boys might write" (p.50). The stereotypes associated with gender and authority cannot be broken until we critically discuss and examine why these roles exist.

Conclusion

The literature reviewed in this chapter is relevant in order to understand the role of the female teacher and the relationship between gender and authority. This literature highlights the significance of feminist scholarship in its capacity to provide insights into the history of teaching and the position of women in the teaching profession. It also draws attention to the fact that the feminization of the profession has had a significant impact on the status of teaching and the power or authority that is attributed to women. Through engaging with the field it becomes clear that gendered authority is central to an understanding of the perception of what makes a successful teacher. Most importantly the literature stresses the significance of the voices of the female teachers in terms of producing knowledge about how women have been positioned historically in the teaching profession and how this relates to the experiences of female teachers currently teaching in schools. As Weiler (1988) states,

students, like teachers, are historically situated beings, whose complex subjectivities are socially defined and at the same time are internalized and lived.

Both students and teachers have experienced and participated in relationships of

domination, submission, oppression, and privilege, which have helped to shape who they are and how they interpret the world (p.125).

Therefore, it is necessary to understand the gendered dimensions of teaching from the point of view of female teachers whose voices are often silenced. Reflecting on feminist research and giving voice to the female teacher enables a greater understanding of the role of women in education. Acker (1994) states, "it is through these very dilemmas, through attempts to solve the unsolvable, through exchanges among feminist frameworks that feminist theory moves ahead" (p.54). Thus, this thesis has the potential to provide more opportunities to create discussion and to produce further knowledge about gendered authority in the teaching profession.

Chapter Three:

Methodology

The true method of knowledge is experiment.

- William Blake (Abrams, 1993, p.26)

Introduction

In this chapter I outline the methodology I used and the rationale for conducting my research. I adopted a qualitative research methodology, given my particular interest in the experiences of female teachers in Ontario schools. Qualitative research can be described as “tak[ing] us, as readers, into the time and place of the observation so that we know what it was like to have been there” (Patton, 2002, p. 47). Such research is important as it gives meaning to personal experiences and increases understanding of the perspectives of the marginalized or silenced voices (Fine & Weis, 2003). I use case study design and draw on both Stake (1995) and Patton (2002) to justify my approach to conducting qualitative research. I specifically outline and explain the methods used to select candidates as well as my approach to analyzing the data. I used semi-structured interviews given that I was concerned to provide a space in the thesis for female teachers to talk about their own experiences of gendered authority.

Case Study Design

The research design for my thesis involved using a case study. As Stake (1995) indicates:

a case study is expected to catch the complexity of a single case. The single leaf, even a single toothpick, has unique complexities (p. xi).

Using a case study enabled me to explore the in-depth complexity of individual female teachers' experiences of gendered authority in the classroom and in the school environment. This is because case studies are designed to help one to understand the commonalities and unique experience of a single group of people. My purpose in using a case study was to provide in-depth knowledge about how four women teachers at school X made sense of their experiences of gendered authority, given the literature in the field, which had documented the importance of the topic. As Stake (1995) states:

for the most part, the cases of interest in education and social services are people and programs. Each one is similar to other persons and programs in many ways and unique in many ways. We are interested in them for both their uniqueness and commonality. We seek to understand them. We would like to hear their stories (p.1).

Therefore, the purpose of using a case study is to understand and give meaning to the experience of a group of people (Stake, 1995). The women interviewed all had a story to share and a common experience related to gendered authority. In using a case study as a form of research one must realize that "we do not study a case primarily to understand

other cases. Our first obligation is to understand this one” (Stake, 1995, p. 4).

Therefore my purpose in using a case study approach was to “make the case understandable” (Stake, 1995, p. 85).

Semi-structured interviews were an important part of my research and formed the basis of generating a specific case study approach to examining gendered authority in female teachers’ lives. The interviews were conducted at one school and allowed the women to share their experiences. In other words, “qualitative data tell[s] a story (Patton, 2002, p. 47). The data collected through qualitative research “makes possible description and understanding of both externally observable behaviors and internal states (worldview, opinions, values, attitudes, and symbolic constructs)” (Patton, 2002, p.48).

Denzin and Lincoln (2000) state that qualitative work is essential:

[I]t consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world (p. 3).

The use of qualitative research is also viable, according to Patton (1990) who acknowledges the usefulness of qualitative research to allow for the interviewees to make sense of their experiences. Patton states “qualitative methods are often used in evaluations because they tell the program’s story by capturing and communicating the participants’ stories” (Patton, 1990, p.10). Therefore, using interviews allows the participants to reflect on and to make sense of the world around them, and to validate and give meaning to their own experiences. In this sense the interview data served as a

means by which to draw out the narrative voices of the participants as a basis for examining their experiences of gendered authority. It is through this approach to qualitative research that the women were able to give meaning to their experiences.

In particular, I wanted to understand and give meaning to the experiences of women teachers in secondary schools in Ontario. In this sense it is important to state that my engagement with feminist theorists and researchers such as Butler (1990; 1993), Francis (2000) and Ingalls (2006) provided me with analytic categories and frameworks for making sense of these female teachers' embodied experiences of gendered authority. In addition, feminist research is committed to creating a political space for women to make sense of their experiences of institutionalized patriarchy. The connection between feminist writing and narrative research can be defined "as discourses within a clear sequential order that connects events in a meaningful way for a definite audience and thus offer insights about the world and/or people's experiences of it" (Elliott, 2005, p.3). In a narrative approach, the women are able to reflect upon their own lives, which correlates with feminist methodology. Elliott (2005) recognizes that "narrative can perhaps be understood as a device which facilitates empathy since it provides a form of communication in which an individual can externalize his or her feelings and indicate which elements of those experiences are most significant" (p. 4). By using a narrative approach, the women are able to reflect upon their teaching careers and their own lives. In reflecting on their experiences, the women can understand their role within the classroom and, more specifically, within the school environment. This understanding demonstrates the benefits of narrative research.

Elliott (2005) addresses five different goals that narrative research explores. She outlines:

Some of the common themes that run through research that pays attention to narrative in respondents' accounts are: 1. An interest in people's lived experiences and an appreciation of the temporal nature of that experience. 2. A desire to empower research participants and allow them to contribute to determine what is the most salient themes in an area of research. 3. An interest in process and change over time. 4. An interest in the self and representations of the self. 5. An awareness that the researcher him- or herself is also a narrator (p. 6).

By understanding the reflective nature of narrative research I can conclude that not only the interviewee, but also the interviewer is able to give meaning to the research experience. The combination of narrative and feminist research directly weaves the stories together and informed my approach to making sense of the data.

Feminist theory and using interview data to generate narrative voices of the female teachers were central to my approach to undertaking a qualitative research project committed to serving the interest of women educators in schools. The research design for my thesis also enabled me to "catch the complexity of a single case" (Stake, 1995: xi). This design, along with the particular use of data to generate narrative voices of female teachers, enabled me to construct a particular case study about the experience of gendered authority in one particular school in South Western Ontario and in this sense, as Stake (1995) points out, enabled an examination of "unique complexities" (xi).

The Participants – Selection and Procedure of Candidates

I began my process of qualitative research by using purposeful sampling: “[T]he logic and power of purposeful sampling derive from the emphasis on in-depth understanding” (Patton, 1990, p.46). In order to understand gender and authority I began my research at school X, a fictitious name used throughout this thesis. I chose school X for a number of reasons, which include my own knowledge of the context of the school, the large population of the school, and the experiences and voices of many teachers who felt they had an important experience to share. The school is relatively large in size with approximately 1700 students and 125 staff members. The staff consists of approximately 79 female staff members and 46 male staff members. The school administrative team currently consists of a male principal and two female vice-principals. The structure of the administrative team has always consisted of the same principal, while the vice-principal role has changed consistently over the last nine years. The vice-principals have been both male and female, but usually a female has filled the role. The changing role of the vice-principal has had an impact on the school and is referenced by the female teachers in their interviews. An important element of the administrative team is also the office staff. The office staff has always consisted of all female employees. In addition to the administrative team, there are other elements of the school that must be discussed as part of the thesis topic.

School X is a school that places emphasis on academics and on sports. Sporting events are a large part of the school environment and football has become a defining

element of the school's culture. Because football is a significant part of the school culture there has been a dominance of male sports. In fact, the female teachers within the school have labelled the male coaches as "the boys' club". These particular male teachers hold a dominant position in the school in that they have very powerful personalities and are able to exert their influence. The female staff members are constantly challenged by and question the status that is given to male sports as a defining element of school culture. It is from this perspective that the school was selected as a site for my research. A number of female teachers at the school were aware of a gender imbalance in authority positions in the school and had expressed concern about the differential status and treatment of women relative to their male counterparts. Therefore, the selection of school X is in fact purposeful as it is used "in order to access 'knowledgeable people,' i.e. those who have in-depth knowledge about particular issues, may by virtue of their professional role, power, access to networks, expertise or experience" (Cohen, et al., 2007, p.115). Given that I have taught at a number of schools in South Western Ontario, I had ready access to a network and knowledge of participants who had expressed their concerns about the patriarchal culture at one school and the status of female teachers in the profession.

Purposeful sampling was also used to select the participants for this study. I interviewed four female secondary teachers about their experiences of gendered authority. I was personally familiar with the women in the school and several women had discussed issues concerning gender with me. Several female teachers mentioned

their interest in discussing their experiences. I purposefully chose four teachers from one school who had on occasions expressed particular concerns to me about the treatment and status of women within their school.

Because there is a large staff at school X, I purposefully selected candidates who had shared narrative experiences about issues related to gendered authority. Purposeful sampling is beneficial according to Patton (1990) who recognizes that "regardless of the kind of unit of analysis (e.g., an athlete or a sports team, a teacher or a classroom), the purpose of purposeful sampling is to select information-rich cases whose study will illuminate the questions under study" (p. 46). Therefore, the purposeful selection of women provided rich cases from which I hoped to learn a great deal. The four women purposefully selected offered a particular understanding of their experiences as female teachers at school X.

My initial interviews asked the teachers to discuss their role at school, their experience in the classroom, and their classroom management skills. I asked the women whether they believed they were considered less authoritative because of their gender. For those who explained there was a difference between gender and authority, I asked for examples and stories. Subsequent interviews were held to clarify comments and questions from the interviews. In later interviews I asked the teachers to explicitly explain their understanding of gender and authority.

The first woman interviewed is a relatively new teacher with five years of teaching experience. She participates in a variety of extracurricular activities within the

school, including coaching. Her experience is valuable as she shares her narrative that includes intermingling with the male coaches and trying to be part of the dominant male sporting teams within the school. The second woman interviewed has sixteen years of teaching experience and has taught at several schools. During her teaching career she has experienced a variety of issues involving gender. The third woman interviewed is also an experienced teacher of eighteen years and has taught at several different schools. She was able to relate and share her experience with gender as a petite, blond, female who believes that gender and authority are an important element in her teaching career. And finally, the fourth woman interviewed has been teaching for twelve years. Teaching is her second career and her experience both in the classroom and in the business world, made her a good candidate to be interviewed. I chose these four women because they are well known within their school community both by their colleagues and by the students. Each woman is well respected within the school both academically and professionally as a pillar of the school community and they shared their experiences in the interview process. My research began with a focus on these four women: Tanya, Jennifer, Maria, and Mallory - fictitious names used throughout my research study. Further details about each of these female teachers are provided in the following chapter.

The four women interviewed are used as testimonies to understand the experiences of gendered authority in one Ontario secondary school. Because this is a study about gendered authority in teaching, which stems from Robinson's (2000) research, I am focusing specifically on female teachers. Given the issues that Robinson

(2000) identifies in her research I adopt a feminist approach. Feminist studies identify the need to place females at the centre of the research. Thus, I conducted interviews, which allowed female teachers to give meaning to their experiences which, according to Weedon (1987) is the backbone of feminist research.

My sample size is relatively small, as I wanted to focus on in-depth interviews from each of the four women interviewed. Patton (2002) states, "there are no rules for sample size in qualitative inquiry. Sample size depends on what you want to know, the purpose of the inquiry, what's at stake, what will be useful, what will have credibility, and what can be done with available time and resources" (p. 244). The small number of women interviewed was used to provide information rich cases. Information rich cases are important according to Patton (2002): "in-depth information from a small number of people can be very valuable, especially if the cases are information rich" (p.244).

Data Collection

The proposed design of my thesis project is a case study. The case study was developed using semi-structured interviews. According to Patton (1990), "case studies employ various methods. These can include interviews, participant observation, and field studies. Their goals are to reconstruct and analyze a case from a sociological perspective" (Patton, 1990, p.298). Case studies are beneficial as individuals are able to discuss and make sense of their own experiences. Cohen et al. (2007) discuss the importance of case studies: "it is important in case studies for events and situations to be

allowed to speak for themselves, rather than to be largely interpreted, evaluated or judged by the researcher” (p.254). Therefore, the process of interviewing women from within one particular school allowed the opportunity for the interviewee and interviewer to reflect on and analyze their experiences of gendered authority in teaching. It is important to recognize that a case study is only a snapshot in time of one experience that may be shared by many people. A shared experience is valid and should be acknowledged. Patton (2002) states: “months of fieldwork may result in a single case study that describes a village, community, neighborhood, organization, or program. However, that single case study is likely to be made up of many smaller cases – the stories of specific individuals, families, organizational units, and other groups” (p. 297). Thus, I used a case study approach to present the stories of the women at school X and to recognize their experiences as teachers in Ontario secondary schools.

In order to begin the case study, I needed to gain the consent from the women, to participate in the interview process. Each woman was given a consent form to participate (Appendix B). Once I had gained approval I held an information session to further explain the research and interview process. The teacher information session was designed to establish an understanding of my thesis topic and to set up a time frame for interview sessions with each woman. Locations and times were set up with the teachers to meet for interview sessions. Because of the nature of the topic, the women were assured confidentiality for their participation in the project. The women were asked to reflect on their experiences at a school where they worked and therefore it was important

to establish a rapport with them. Cohen et al. (2007) recognize the importance of confidentiality: "this means that although researchers know who has provided the information or are able to identify participants from the information given, they will in no way make the connection known publicly; the boundaries surrounding the shared secret will be protected" (p. 65). The serious nature of the subject needed confidentiality: "on the whole, the more sensitive, intimate or discrediting the information, the greater is the obligation on the researcher's part to make sure that guarantees of confidentiality are carried out in spirit and letter" (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 65). In order to protect the privacy and confidentiality of the women interviewed all names have been deleted. Cohen et al. (2007) state: "deletion of identifiers (for example deleting the names, addresses or other means of identification from the data released on individuals" (p.65) is crucial to protecting the participants. Once the women were certain about the confidentiality agreement and understood the expectations of the interview, I began a four-week process of interviewing the women.

It was essential to focus on my thesis question while interviewing the women. The interview process focused on the following: How do female teachers understand or experience their role as authority figures in schools and classrooms? In order to inquire about the research of how female teachers understand or experience their role as authority figures in schools, I needed to conduct interviews to elicit responses that would enable me to interpret and understand their experiences. Women needed to feel comfortable sharing their stories with the interviewer to enhance feminist research. The fact that I was a friend contributed to the participants feeling comfortable in talking to me about

their experiences, especially given that we had already, on many occasions previously discussed such topics related to the patriarchal ideology embedded in the organization and structure of schooling at school X. According to Patton (1990), interviews help discover what is “in and on someone else’s mind” (p.278). To seek meaning in an individual’s experience was necessary, particularly given my commitment to feminist research and my desire to create a space for the silenced voices of female teachers to be heard from inside schools. Patton (1990) claims:

We interview people to find out from them those things we cannot directly observe... We cannot observe feelings, thoughts, and intentions. We cannot observe behaviours that took place at some previous point in time. We cannot observe situations that preclude the presence of an observer. We cannot observe how people have organized the world and the meanings they attach to what goes on in the world. We have to ask people questions about those things. The purpose of interviewing, then is to allow us to enter into the other person’s perspective (p.196).

Cohen et al., (2007) also describe the interview process as a means by which to allow the interviewee to make sense of his or her world. They state:

interviews enable participants – be they interviewers or interviewees – to discuss their interpretations of the world in which they live, and to express how they regard situations from their own point of view. In these senses the interview is not simply concerned with collecting data about life: it is part of life itself, its

human embeddedness is inescapable (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 349).

Therefore, in order to give the women the opportunity to make sense of their experiences, I decided to use semi-structured interviews because of their potential to facilitate a dialogic and conversational space for female teachers' voices to be articulated.

Merriam (1998) recognizes the importance of semi-structured interviews because they are generally an informal interview that is less structured. A less structured interview provides open-ended questions that allow the interviewee to expand and make connections with her own life. Semi-structured interviews also provide the opportunity for open-ended questions. Open-ended questions are beneficial for both the interviewee and the interviewer. The main goal is to create an atmosphere in which the interviewee feels comfortable expanding on their responses. Patton (1990) believes there are a number of benefits to open-ended interviews:

[T]hey are flexible; they allow the interviewer to probe so that she may go into more depth if she chooses, or to clear up any misunderstandings, they enable the interviewer to test the limits of the respondent's knowledge; they encourage cooperation and help establish rapport; and they allow the interviewer to make a truer assessment of what the respondent really believes" (p. 357).

The women that I interviewed felt comfortable with being interviewed and with the open-ended nature of the questions. This sense of comfort was clearly enhanced by the advantage of already being familiar with the interviewer.

The interview process occurred after school. Initially the women were asked basic background information to gain a better understanding of the teacher and her experience in the teaching profession. Then they were asked several questions regarding gender and authority in teaching; specifically I asked the participants to talk about their experiences at school X that directly related to their gender. I later asked the women to reflect on their understanding of gender and authority. The initial interview included the following questions:

1. How many years have you been teaching?
2. Have you taught in more than one school?
3. What subject(s) do you teach?
4. How many male/females are within your teaching department?
5. Are you aware of any stereotypes associated with your particular subject area in terms of how it is perceived?

Further questions relate to gender discrimination, sexual harassment, and understanding one's own gender. See (Appendix C) for further interview questions.

The participants were asked the above questions as a guideline to help understand their experience with gender and authority in teaching. A sample of the interview questions is included (See Appendix C). The interview process was recorded and transcripts were made from each interview. Observational notes were also made during the interview process to help formulate further questions. Patton (2002) recognizes the importance of notetaking to help the interviewer formulate new questions during the interview process. According to Patton (2002), notetaking during an interview "helps

pace the interview by providing verbal cues about what's important, providing feedback to the interviewee about what kinds of things are especially 'noteworthy' – literally" (p.383). After each interview I also completed field notes to help recall important information that occurred during the interview. These notes were used for further analysis of the interview sessions as well as to prepare for other interviews. In using field notes I wanted to ensure that I remembered my own understanding and feelings during the interview process. My understanding of the interview process was important in the writing, recording, and analysis of the interviews. According to Patton (2002) "field notes, also contain the observer's own feelings, reactions to the experience, and reflections about the personal meaning and significance of what has been observed. [...]Feelings and reactions should be recorded at the time they are experienced, while you are in the field" (p. 303).

Upon completion of the interview process, the interviews were transcribed and the interviewees were asked to review their transcripts. All interviews were transcribed verbatim. My field notes were also recorded to include important information regarding the interview session. The transcription process was insightful and an important part of the research process. In transcribing the notes, I was able to immerse myself in the stories of the women. Patton (2002) believes it is beneficial for the interviewer to transcribe his or her own interviews: "doing all or some of your own interview transcriptions (instead of having them done by a transcriber), for example, provides an opportunity to get immersed in the data, an experience that usually generates emergent

insights” (p. 441). The women were allowed to edit the transcripts and to make any necessary changes they deemed appropriate. Reviewing the transcripts is an important process to ensure accuracy and trust between the interviewer and the interviewee. Following the data collection of individual interviews, I analyzed the transcripts to look for themes and commonalities.

Data Analysis

Upon completion of the individual interviews, I began the process of analysing the data. One aspect of data analysis is to recognize patterns that emerge from the interviews. Therefore, “data analysis involves organizing, accounting for, and explaining the data; in short, making sense of data in terms of participants’ definitions of the situation, noting patterns, themes, categories and regularities” (Cohen et al., 2007, p.184). However, the challenge of analysing the data is not an easy task as there are many parts of the data collection that need to be understood, analyzed, and grouped together. Patton (2002) describes data analysis in the form of an analogy: “findings emerge like an artistic mural created from collage-like pieces that make sense in new ways when seen and understood as part of a greater whole” (p. 432). Thus, the individual interviews were part of the painting that when viewed together or analyzed helped me make sense of the participants’ recorded experiences of gendered authority.

Denzin and Lincoln (1994) also discuss the significance of data analysis in terms of providing a means to address “the primitive questions of what is going on and how things are proceeding call for a reasonable accounting of the phenomena observed”

(p.432). However, my understanding of the phenomenon of gendered authority was informed by my engagement with feminist theory and research. Theorists such as Francis (2000) and Butler (1990) informed my approach to analyzing the data in that they provided me with a lens through which to make sense of the social, cultural and political dimensions of female teachers' experiences of gendered authority.

Feminist research is important to comprehend and give meaning to women and their understanding of the world around them. Weedon (1987) believes that feminist research serves the needs of women and helps give meaning to their understanding of the world. In examining feminist research, "we need to understand why women tolerate social relations which subordinate their interests to those of men and the mechanisms whereby women and men adopt particular discursive positions as representative of their interests" (Weedon, 1987, p. 12). The analysis of the data is to answer the very nature of Weedon's (1987) description of feminist research, as women are asked to explain their understanding of their gendered authority within the school system. In this sense, the data was analyzed from a feminist standpoint that paid attention to how female teachers constructed their gendered authority and, hence, made particular sense of their experiences in the face of institutionalized patriarchy at the school where they were currently teaching. Thus feminist theorists and researchers informed my understanding of the data and, hence, of gender as a socially constructed phenomenon as well as an embodied experience that is governed by particular norms. In this sense, I entertain the need for feminist research to give voice to these female educators and draw on the theories of Butler (1990), Lather (1991), Riddell (1989) and Weedon (1987). Lather

(1991) for example, claims that feminist research is important as it “put[s] the social construction of gender at the centre of one’s inquiry” (p.71). She further adds that the goal of feminist work is “to correct both the invisibility and distortion of female experience in ways relevant to ending women’s unequal social position” (Lather, 1991, p.71).

According to Weedon (1987) feminist research is necessary “to understand why women tolerate social relations which subordinate their interests to those of men and the mechanisms whereby women and men adopt particular discursive positions as representative of their interests” (p.12). The use of feminist research is critical in analyzing the interviews and stories of the women as means by which to raise critical questions about male power and its impact on female teachers’ lives. Feminist research is necessary as Riddell (1989) believes that it provides women with a critical framework for examining and understanding the patriarchal power relations that exist in their own lives. In analyzing and recording the voices of the female teachers at school X, a space is created for the voices of these women to be heard and understood as they reflect on gendered authority in their own lives both as teachers inside school and as women in the world outside of school.

After transcribing the testimonies of the women I amalgamated key issues and identified patterns that emerged from the interviews (Cohen et al., 2007). When analyzing the data, it was important to recognize the extent to which my own personal opinions and biases were implicated in the research and analysis of the data. As Lather (1991) highlights, there is no objective or unmediated research text. The researcher’s own

position, values etc. inevitably influences the research. It was important to also acknowledge that given the purposive nature of the sampling, the focus was not on establishing some sort of generalizability across a population of female teachers in South Western Ontario. Rather, as Creswell (2007) points out, the purpose of such case study research was to achieve some insight into the particularity of particular female teachers' experiences of gendered authority.

Thus, it is difficult to be objective when recording, interviewing, and doing research. Moreover, already existing feminist research and the theoretical frameworks informed by the work of Butler (1990), Weedon (1987) and others already informed the sense I made of the data. According to Cohen et al. (2007), it is extremely important to be prepared for the interview process and to be fully aware of the broad picture, taking into account all facts, information, and sensitivity to the research topic. The research topic was relevant and important to me and, therefore, I needed to ensure that the questions I was asking were not being answered by me, and that I provided an opportunity for the participants to express themselves freely.

Patterns emerged through data collection and observation and it is important to keep track of these in the data analysis. Patton (1990) states "recording and tracking analytical insights that occur during data collection are part of fieldwork and the beginning of qualitative analysis" (p.436). Once the interviews were transcribed I spent time reading through the data, a process which needs to be understood as a "sense-making effort" committed to identifying "core consistencies and meanings" (Patton, 1990, p.454). The interviews were analyzed primarily through the use of analytic

induction. Analytic induction “offers a specific form of inductive analysis that begins deductively, by formulating propositions or hypotheses, and then examines a particular case in depth to determine if the facts of the case support the hypothesis”(Patton, 1990, p.94). The approach of looking for patterns and themes made sense given my proposition about the impact of patriarchal definitions and effects of gendered authority (Patton, 1990; Robinson, 2000). I intend to follow the inductive approach in my research. After each case was written up, patterns began to emerge for analysis. As Patton (2002) points out:

the initial focus is on full understanding of individual cases before those unique cases are combined or aggregated thematically. This helps ensure that emergent categories and discovered patterns are grounded in specific cases and their contexts (p.57).

Recognizing and comprehending patterns that emerged through my analysis became the basis of my approach to making sense of the data in conjunction with the insight afforded from my engagement with feminist informed theory and research in the field.

Conclusion

Throughout this chapter I have outlined the methodology used to execute this research project. I chose to use qualitative research because it was best suited to my

concern to listen to the silenced voices of female teachers in the field. Patton (2002), for example, claims that qualitative researchers:

...take us, as readers, into the time and place of the observation so that we know what it was like to have been there. They capture and communicate someone else's experience of the world in his or her own words. Qualitative data tell a story" (p. 47).

Thus, my methodology was used strategically to enable the stories of four individual women who work in a secondary school in Ontario to be told. In short, as I have highlighted in this chapter, the interviews with the four female teachers at one school were used to generate a series of narratives which "can be understood as a device which facilitates empathy since it provides a form of communication in which an individual can externalize his or her feelings and indicate which elements of those experiences are most significant" (Elliot, 2005, p.4). Overall, I have attempted to explicate the significance of conducting feminist informed research that is committed to documenting the perspectives of female teachers on the effects and impact of institutionalized patriarchy that is embedded in school systems.

Chapter Four: Analysis

The voice of female teachers: The question of gendered authority

But after observation and analysis, when you find that anything agrees with reason and is conducive to the good and benefit of one and all, then accept it and live up to it.

- *Prince Siddharta Gautama (Nyanaponika, 2000, p.188)*

Introduction

This chapter focuses on an analysis of four women teachers who were interviewed about their experiences of gender and authority in teaching. I draw on each of these women's experiences in an attempt to document their understanding of gender and how it directly affects their lives as teachers in secondary schools. As indicated in the previous chapter, this analysis is informed by the analytic insights of feminist theorists and researchers such as Lather (1991), Francis (2000) and Butler (1990). The focus is on examining the topic of gender and power, particularly in terms of how female teachers are perceived as less authoritative than their male counterparts at their school. The interview process provided an opportunity for the women to give meaning to their experiences as female teachers in an environment in which institutionalized patriarchy was deeply embedded (Connell, 1987). According to Griffin (1997) the voices of the female teachers often go unnoticed. Thus giving voice to the silenced voices of female teachers constitutes an important political commitment on my part as a teacher researcher who is concerned to represent the interests and concerns of women in education (Riddell,

1989). This focus on women is particularly important, given the structural inequalities that continue to exist in terms of gendered authority and the positioning of women within the institutional bureaucracy of schooling. Riddell (1989) argues that there needs to be further understanding and research into why gender inequality still exists. Griffin (1997), Skelton (2002), Moreau et al. (2007) and Mahoney et al. (2004) all express a concern that while there is a high proportion of female teachers in the classroom, males tend to dominate in administrative positions. The dominant position of males in managerial positions continues to imply that “women teach and men manage” (Anastasaki and Koutra, 2005, p.44). Gender imbalances in education are important to understand “because it is an institution through which gendered divisions are reproduced” (Hutchinson, 2002, p. 125).

In recognizing that the experiences of women teachers must be heard, the interviews were analyzed for commonalities that exist between the women in light of existing feminist theory and literature. The interviews emphasize the need to critically examine the role of gender in education, given the issues related to gendered authority in schools. Robinson’s (2000) research highlights the sexual harassment of females in secondary schools and how sexual harassment is “not about sex but about power, focusing virtually exclusively on male power over females” (p.20). Sexual harassment is a part of school life and is documented in the work of Coffey and Delamont (2005) who show that teachers are often undermined in the school environment through ridicule and comments that are inappropriate. As this research reveals and further confirms, women

who do not subscribe to traditional or normative notions of femininity risk being derided or labelled as aggressive.

An analysis of the interviews is essential to understand the relation between the women interviewed and the existing literature on gendered authority in teaching. In this chapter, each woman's story is used to highlight her own understanding and experience of gender within the teaching profession in light of this literature. Their stories are described and woven together in this chapter together to create an understanding of gender for female teachers at school X. The four women interviewed come from different backgrounds and have a variety of teaching experience. Each woman is well respected within the school community and participates in a number of different school activities and, thus, was purposefully sampled for the interview process. What follows is an introduction to each of the women where I provide more details about their background and context for making sense of their stories.

Participant Profiles

Tanya

The first woman interviewed is relatively new to the teaching profession, with five years of teaching experience. Tanya's five years of teaching have all been at school X where she has only recently secured a permanent position. Her first four years of teaching were Long Term Occasional (LTO) positions. Tanya explains that she had a difficult time securing a permanent position within the school board. She felt

disheartened as she felt she was constantly looked over for a permanent job. In fact, Tanya joked that if she only had a male anatomy she would be considered for a permanent position. Research by Moreau et al. (2007) documents similar experiences in which women felt there was a double standard for women to be considered for jobs, “so for a woman to progress in this school she actually has to have a lot of balls” (p. 245). Tanya witnessed several male teachers with similar teaching qualifications who had obtained permanent positions. In order to help secure permanent status, she participated in coaching a number of sporting teams. Tanya believed that coaching sporting teams would help secure her a permanent position at the school since sporting teams are an important part of the school community. Today, Tanya still coaches and participates in a variety of extracurricular activities at the school. Her experience is valuable as she shares her narrative that includes some discussion about the impact of intermingling with the male coaches and being directly involved in a dominant male culture in which certain sporting teams and practices are valorized.

Although Tanya is a relatively new teacher she also has a unique background that includes involvement in the Canadian military. Her military experience is an important part of her background. She reflects on and shares her experiences, which relate to the difficulties she has faced as a female teacher and a female officer in the Canadian military. She believes that her experience in the military has helped her become more aggressive and authoritative both in the school and in the classroom.

Jennifer

The second woman interviewed is a teacher with sixteen years of experience. Jennifer has taught at several schools and has experienced a variety of issues related to gender and male power. Sixteen years of teaching experience and working at three different schools makes Jennifer an excellent candidate to interview. Jennifer has also taught in a number of different areas including adult education and various subjects at the secondary level. Jennifer teaches in the Social Science department and has a majority of male colleagues in her department. In the school community she is well known as a hard working teacher by the staff, administration, and the student community. Her involvement in school events and her role in the classroom are noted by both staff and students who are aware of her no-nonsense approach. Although a relatively petite woman in size, students respect her dedication and commitment to the school, making her an excellent candidate to interview.

Maria

The third woman interviewed is also an experienced teacher of eighteen years who has taught at several different schools. Maria actively participates in the school community and is well known and respected by staff, administration, and students. Maria believes that gender and authority in teaching are an important element in her teaching career. Her family background is very traditional and her understanding of gender relates back to her family life and childhood. Maria is able to relate and share her experience of gender as a petite, blond, female who has had to struggle with body size as a signifier of diminished authority.

Maria also reflects on the subject she teaches and acknowledges that Mathematics is not traditionally considered a subject suited to female teachers. Although this has traditionally been a subject that male students would gravitate towards, Maria believes this perspective is changing. She has noticed a shift in the number of females who are enrolled in Mathematics and the increase of female teachers who are teaching Mathematics.

Mallory

The last woman profiled has been teaching for twelve years. Teaching is her second career and she offers insight into both the classroom and the business world. Mallory has participated in a number of school events and has been at school X for six years. School X is the second school Mallory has taught at. The two different schools she has worked at provide interesting point of comparison, as Mallory is able to reflect on her experience with gender both at the different schools and in the business world. Her six years at school X Theresa have allowed her to establish herself as a teacher both in and outside of the classroom. Mallory's experience as a female teacher is discussed in terms of body size and how she can be viewed as less authoritative because of her size.

Another issue involving gender that Mallory feels is important is age. She believes that her age as an older female teacher portrays her as more of a motherly figure. Mallory is a popular teacher amongst the students who is considered to be approachable and friendly. She believes her role as a motherly figure makes her easy to relate to. She is a respected member in the community, particularly with students.

Overview

The female teachers are outlined in the remainder of this chapter. They highlight the extent to which the teaching environment is tightly linked with their gender identity.

Teachers' Perceptions of Pedagogy and the Curriculum

For some of the participants, the subject area, as well as ratio of male/female staff in a particular department, are important and help to situate the teacher within a specific pedagogical and gendered context. Tanya, for example, who has been teaching for five years in a number of different departments and currently teaches Science and Physical Education, spoke about the gender ratio in the science department, which includes six male and seven female science teachers. In the department of Physical Education there are four male teachers and three female teachers. Tanya identifies that traditionally there are more male staff members in the Physical Education department. She states:

In phys-ed there tends to be more male teachers because more males take phys-ed. I think part of that plays into stereotypes about females and physical fitness. There are obviously some body image problems with girls. And at that age, [...] they don't take phys-ed.

Given that male teachers are traditionally associated with teaching science, Tanya believes that this has an impact on how both the subject and female teachers are perceived:

there are definitely stereotypes within teaching science. I think that in a lot of cases science is something that women aren't perceived as being sort of a typical role. So, often parents are really surprised to have their children have female science teachers. I actually had parents get super excited that their daughter has female science teachers as a role model. Even though the numbers seem to be even, I think the perceived numbers by parents and outside people is that there are more male staff as science teachers than there are females.

Anastasaki and Koutra (2005, p.44) believe that there are commonly held assumptions about teachers that remain within society. Science has been typically considered a male dominated field and thus becomes the accepted norm in that females are not expected to be teaching science. According to Tanya there are also stereotypes associated with being female:

There's definitely stereotypes. I think that male teachers are perceived to be more authoritative when female teachers exhibit authoritative behaviour they are perceived to be bitchy. As opposed to having an authority or just being someone who plays by the rules.

Interviews conducted by Coulter (1995, p.35) tend to support this observation in that the women teachers in her study felt their authority was challenged simply because they were female. This notion of denigrated female authority is highlighted by major theorists such as Connell (1996) who argues that the binary structuring of gendered relations is based on a valorization of the masculine, which is built on a fundamental devaluation of the feminine.

Jennifer also addresses the stereotype associated with being female when she reflects on the male/female ratio in her department. The ratio of female teachers in the Social Science department is lower according to Jennifer. She reveals that there are six full time teachers in the department and only two teachers are female. Jennifer does not believe there are any stereotypes associated with her subject area, but she does identify stereotypes associated with being a female teacher. Jennifer states:

it's okay for guys to be cool and use their physique and voice and it's still okay because in the end they're still cool. But females they're a bitch if they use their voice. I don't know if that's a stereotype but yeah they are considered a bitch.

Here Jennifer draws attention to the denigration of the feminine, which translates, into women being demonized and derided when they exercise their authority in this instance by raising their voice. Duffy et al. (2001, p.580), highlight that female teachers are often considered to be more nurturing while male teachers are seen as more authoritative. In

this sense, Jennifer believes that there are different expectations associated with being a female teacher.

Although there is a higher proportion of male teachers in the Social Science department there are more female teachers in Mallory's department. Unlike the higher rate of male teachers in the Social Science department, the English department consists of six females and one male teacher. According to Mallory the subject of English is:

perceived as something that there are not right or wrong answers, so that it tends to be used more subjective. So if your kid's arguing about something they have written ...I don't have the same opinion as you, which is true but sometimes it's not what you say it how you say it and you have to bring kids along to perceive it that way.

English can be considered a subject that is much more subjective and Mallory believes this can account for the fact that there is a higher ratio of female teachers. English courses are more subjective, as stated by Mallory, and are considered a subject where there are no black or white answers and thus, she believes this reason could attract more females to the department. Mallory believes that male teachers traditionally gravitate towards courses like Science and Math in which there are definite answers. Riddell and Tett (2006) believe that students and educators often choose gender appropriate curriculum subjects:

gender is constructed as relational, and as a foundational aspect of identity.

Pupils may draw on 'gender appropriate' curriculum subjects and occupational choices to bolster their constructions of gender identity (p.77).

When asked about stereotypes that favour male teachers over female teachers, Mallory offered the following response:

Certainly in grade school the males, I think are perceived as more valuable simply because [administration] are always looking for them. I know when I was a supply teacher and when I did my practice teaching the male teachers were generally in the senior grades, so 7 and 8 or the upper grades and in high school it depends. I think it is more divided into cliques as in there is the jock group, there's the science group, which is more the geekie ones you know? It always goes back to high school like our own high school days like that's what it seems to be divided up as.

Mallory raises an interesting point in which she feels that males are perceived as more valuable because there are fewer males in the teaching profession especially in the lower grades. Acker (1994) highlights the sociological concern that there are not enough males in the teaching profession. She examines concerns by psychologists who are worried that young boys are lacking male role models in education and are at risk for a number of

problems including failure and behavioural issues (Acker, 1994, p.77). Therefore, male teachers are viewed as more important and desired in the teaching profession.

Although there are more female teachers in the English department there are fewer females in the Math department, which corresponds to Maria's statement. In the Math department at school X there are four females and eight male teachers. When Maria is asked about stereotypes associated with her subject area she states "I would say that most people think that there are more students that would be male students taking senior maths over the female students." Maria's understanding of this stereotype is:

because I think the type of jobs that [...] people would have to require math, those types of jobs within, lead more males into those types of jobs that require the math. But mind you, since I've been teaching that has changed some. When I used to teach at [...] the number of males in the senior classes was higher.

Where now it's getting closer over the years.

Although Maria discusses a shift in male/female enrolment in math classes, she still believes there is a perception that math is associated with males who require this subject as a prerequisite for certain university courses. Research by Francis et al. (2003) shows that course selections and job occupations tend to be stereotypically based on gender which is consistent with Riddell and Tett (2006) who claim that "girls tend to choose jobs with attributes that can be classified as 'caring' or 'creative', while boys choose jobs with scientific, technical or business oriented features" (p.77). These observations highlight

the extent to which gender is institutionalized in terms of how the curriculum is constructed and perceived. Moreover, it is clear from these teachers' comments that the social construction of gender informs every aspect of schooling from how teachers and particular subjects are perceived to how students behave and relate. Statistics from Hopf and Hatzichristou (1999), for example, show that in Greek secondary schools, female math teachers had more behavioural problems in their classes with male students. These statistics prove interesting as Maria teaches mathematics and describes issues of behavioural attitudes with male students during the interview process. In understanding the participants profiles, and stereotypes associated with their subject areas, it is important to recognize how the participants perceive the role of the female teacher.

Participants' Perceptions of Female Authority

All of the women interviewed identified different expectations for female teachers on the basis of their gender. The different expectations that are required of female teachers relate to Connell's (1987) work on gender and schooling. He highlights the role of school in establishing and maintaining particular gender regimes that are consistent with already existing gender orders in the broader society.

According to Tanya, there is an instant connection between male teachers and their students. In the Phys-ed Department, as a school coach, and more so, as a female teacher, she believes it takes time to build a rapport with students. In short, she believes that female teachers have to work harder at developing a bond with the students:

In Phys-Ed it's kind of interesting because you get the kind of sports contingent. Generally speaking we have a higher male population and different boundaries between the male teachers and students and between female teachers and students. So, you will often hear students call their teachers by their last name only without receiving it as Mr. Smith. Where [...] that sometimes happens with female teachers but on a very rare occasion. It's got to be a relationship that has definitely been built up. Whereas, male students will do it all the time. So, whether it's just chumming around or they do it because they think they can get away with it, it definitely happens. There seems to be an instant connection between male teachers and their students both male and female. Female teachers have to work for that.

Here Tanya highlights important issues about male privilege and how this translates into the sort of relationship building that male teachers are able to establish with their students. She is uncertain as to why the instant connection happens between male teachers and students, but suggests that male teachers are more laid back, which could account for the student perception that the teacher is more easy-going. This viewpoint is reinforced by Jennifer who discusses the relationship that male teachers have with their students and the role of the female teacher, who is viewed as less authoritative by students. Riddell (1989) discusses the relationship that male teachers have with their students in her research and she explains that "some male teachers dealt with the threat of boys' potentially disruptive behaviour by attempting to establish an atmosphere of male

camaraderie based on sexual joking” (p.150). The camaraderie developed by male teachers allows Jennifer to believe that students see the male teachers as cool:

the coolness factor that is associated with males. I tend to lose my voice. Which makes me become a bitch. I’m one that my title as Mrs. [...] I want that.

I’m not a last name. I’m not coach. I’m not so and so. I have authority and I want that associated with that. Other people think its okay to have nicknames and to just use their last names or something.

Jennifer, like Tanya, believes that it is important for teachers to develop a professional relationship with the students, which means addressing the teacher by his or her proper title. However, when female teachers demand respect they are often seen as aggressive and risk being perceived as ‘bitches’. According to Robinson (2000) when women are more like men in their approach to classroom management in terms of being “aggressive and domineering they are generally considered better teachers because they could ‘control’ students more successfully” (p. 81). Jones (1993) believes that women “have to ‘defeminize’ and ‘desexualize’ themselves and represent themselves as ‘exceptional women’ in order to be considered as authoritarian figures” (p. 81). It is important to emphasize here the gender regime that informs the ways in which these teachers are positioned and positioned themselves vis-à-vis establishing their authority and in demanding respect. In demanding that students address them in a more formal and professional manner conjures up the spectre of the repressive female authority figure.

Maria, for example, also believes that as a female teacher she is perceived to be much more aggressive, even if she is exhibiting the same behaviour as her male colleagues.

According to Maria there is a double standard when it comes to establishing one's authority as a female teacher in school:

because I think a lot of times women have to work harder to prove themselves.

And sometimes when we have to do certain things that are a given for males, we are looked upon as if we are not how can I say this? We are very mean...we are too aggressive because of what we have to do to get where we want to go. Where males could be having the same type of attitude where they want to get to a certain spot but they don't look like they're as aggressive. It's just a given that they could do those things and they are accepted that way. Where we do the same thing were looked at as aggressive.

Mara's point about 'having to work harder' to establish their credibility is significant and highlights the extent to which female teachers feel that they have to compensate or rather prove themselves according to male norms and standards. She believes that female teachers are considered to be much more aggressive even when they engage in the same behaviour as their male counterparts. In addition, female teachers who are seen as aggressive are often treated differently by both staff and students. Ingalls (2006) discusses that women who are seen as authoritative are often pathologized and that female authority is often viewed as corrupt.

Mallory also perceives that students treat her differently on the basis of her gender: "As a female teacher, I think you have less respect from students that don't know you." She describes an incident in the school hallway where students who do not know her treat her differently than they would a male colleague:

I have been finding this more and more with grade nine students in the hallways during lunch period. They are very, very loud. They don't seem to understand the concept that this is out of bounds. So, you go out there and tell them that this is out of bounds, please clear out of here and you will get some attitude. I don't think a male teacher, now this is just my opinion ... I haven't seen this in action. But I don't think a male teacher who has a same, who has a larger physical presence, would get the same attitude from grade nines. I think it's that perception of female teachers being weaker.

These perspectives on gendered authority are consistent with those given by the women in Moreau et al.'s (2007, p.244-5) research who talk about the disadvantages and discrimination they face in schools based on their gender. Interviews conducted by Coulter (1995) also show that female teachers felt male staff members received preferential treatment in the school in terms of sporting events and professional activities. Therefore, to understand the role gender plays within the school as described by each participant, I asked the teachers to elaborate on their understanding of gender within their own personal lives, outside of the school environment. Each woman identified their

gender as having had a significant impact at some point in her life both inside and outside of school.

Participants' View of Gender Outside of School

There was a connection or correspondence between how the women in my study talked about gender in school and their experiences outside of school. While the significance of gender for the teachers in the school environment is essential in understanding their perception of gender, it is also important to understand how each participant has experienced and understood gender outside of the school environment. As Weedon (1987) has illustrated, gender is discursively constituted and, hence, is embedded deeply in institutional practices and process. For Butler (2004) it is governed by particular norms and is regulated by the heterosexual matrix for establishing what is to count as acceptable and desirable gender performances. Thus each participant's understanding of gender outside the school will help explain how gender has shaped her life and experiences in schools. Griffin (1997) believes that teaching is a gendered experience and thus the experience of the teacher's gender outside of the classroom is important. Connell (1987) believes there is a responsibility for teachers to challenge the traditional gender beliefs that are part of institutionalized cultural norms in schools in terms of their capacity to regulate and constrain gender relations. Mallory, for example, explains her understanding of gender and how it has directly played a role in the development of her identity. She specifically discusses her age and her experience as a young female when she was allowed to get away with more: "I think when I was younger

and prettier I got away with more and I got things handed to me more. So, I think doors open when you are younger and prettier.” Mallory associates age and beauty with females and how younger females are treated differently in their youth. Mallory even notices the favouring of younger teachers by male administration: “The principal would favour the blond younger teachers.” Mallory raises an important question when she believes that age and beauty directly affected her life in a positive way; more opportunities were created for her because of her youth and gender. According to Mallory it is important to recognize there could be a correlation between gender and youth for females that can give females an advantage in the workforce. Research by Ingalls (2006) suggests that younger females are treated differently and in fact receive preferential treatment. In her research Ingalls (2006) discusses the benefits of being a young female teacher. She believes there are benefits in youth but with age and when trying to establish authority her gender becomes an obstacle, in fact she sees her size and gender as a handicap. Therefore younger more attractive teachers are subject to being sexualized or treated as sex objects while older women are positioned more as mothers. Maria has also experienced gender issues within her own life and she believes there is gender discrimination in her own family – experiences which connect and relate to her own experiences as a female teacher in schools.

Traditional roles of the male and female are embedded within the home environment according to Maria. Work by Simpson and Simpson (1969, p.199-200) connects the primary responsibility of women to the role of the family and the

homemaker. Maria is a single woman who comes from a large family. She claims that the traditional societal expectations of gender are evident within her own family, whereby women are expected to take responsibility for domestic duties such as cooking and taking care of the family:

if you are looking at my personal life say hosting Thanksgiving dinner. I come from a large family. You would never think of a brother hosting that. Where it's assumed more so, that a female would host that. And even if you're not married. A lot of times they think if you're married and you have kids you do it. But even if you are single the expectation is still there because you're female instead of being male.

Maria believes her role as a gendered being is to be a caretaker and nurturer, which is at the forefront of her own understanding of femininity and corresponds with Ingalls (2006). Maria recognizes the unfair expectation that females should only be responsible for certain traditional roles within the family. However, she participates in the stereotypical behaviours and does not feel there is anything she can do to change the perception that females should be homemakers. Moreau et al. (2007, p.241-2) recognize the division of labour in the work place, which corresponds to the differential positioning of the sexes at home. Further research by Acker (1994) also shows that boys and girls are taught traditional roles of masculinity and femininity at home and in school. Tanya

also identifies with Maria, as she believes there is still an imbalance of expectations for males and females.

Tanya, on the other hand, believes that the role of females is changing. Despite the changes in gender roles, however, she still believes that gender inequality exists.

Tanya says:

I think that since I've been younger I've seen the role of women change. I think that we have it much easier than our mothers or our grandmothers. And I think that part of it is that the issues are out in the open and can be talked about.

Tanya is under the age of thirty and is also part of the Canadian military. She notices the changing role of society whereby women have equal rights, but she describes first hand where she experiences inequality because of her gender. Acker (1994) claims that although changes are occurring slowly, there is still an imbalance in equality whereby the authority of women is still challenged. Tanya discusses the challenges she experienced as a female growing up:

I can remember being involved in activities where I lost positions or spots on a team or a group because I was a female. And I think that especially within the military, I really had to fight for positions that I wanted because it's given to males over females.

Moreau et al. (2007) give examples from research interviews where women felt they were not given the same opportunities and were passed up for career advancements because of gender. Such research correlates with my own interviews as examples are provided of women teachers who felt they were passed up for job opportunities because of their gender. In fact, Moreau et al. (2007), provide

... evidence that some policies and practices are made more available to one sex. Such approaches might appear benevolent on the surface, but could be deemed as discriminatory. They draw on stereotypical constructions of men's and women's place and risk reinforcing the status quo" (p. 245).

Jennifer also makes connections to her understanding of gender outside of the school environment:

whether or not it's me being female or the people above or around are male, it's always harder and takes double the effort to get something accomplished. It seems because I'm female I have to double the work to get something.

The female participants' experiences outside of the school environment help shape their understanding of the role that gender has played in their lives. The role of the female and more specifically the role of the female teacher are important to acknowledge, especially within the context of examining the issue of gendered authority in the school setting.

The Role of Classroom Management as Perceived by the Participants

Behaviour management is a part of a teacher's daily classroom routine. The success of a teacher's evaluation is directly linked to classroom management skills and the environment in which the students are successfully learning. Thus, it is important to focus on the role of classroom management and the perception of classroom management as viewed by the participants.

All of the participants discussed the importance of good classroom management skills. The necessity of such skills is viewed as an important aspect of a teacher's professional life. Teachers who are unable to manage classroom discipline are considered less authoritative (Robinson, 2000). Tanya stipulated that classroom management skills are essential in terms of one's perception of a good teacher, "I think that it doesn't matter whether you're male or female you need to have good classroom management techniques." She also discussed the importance of rules and regulations to maintain classroom management, "I think it's really important to set ground rules and to have students be a part of that process. And to be consistent that doesn't matter if you are male or female, elementary or secondary, students need guidance." Jennifer also agreed that classroom management skills are essential in terms of being viewed as a good teacher: "if you don't have classroom management then you are not perceived as a good teacher." Furthermore, Jennifer found that "if someone did have poor classroom management they are considered a bad teacher because I don't think they're effective."

Coffey and Delamont (2000) explain that teachers are judged by their ability to demonstrate good classroom management skills. Maria states that classroom management skills are important in terms of teacher perception: "I think it's very important because if you cannot control the class it's harder for the students to learn. So, I think you have to have some kind of class management there to allow the students, to give the students, the opportunity to have the best surrounding [and] learning environment." The comments are echoed by Mallory who offered the following statement on classroom management: "I think that they are fairly important [...] I think you have to have that as a foundation for your classroom."

The Perception of Female Teachers

The female teacher participants all indicated that there were differences between the ways in which male and female teachers are perceived and treated at school, particularly in terms of their ability to manage student behaviour. The teachers discussed the differences of opinion regarding the perceptions of assertive and authoritative female teachers. Tanya offered the following perception of a female teacher who is considered to be a strong disciplinarian figure in the classroom:

when a male teacher is using behaviour management or trying to get students to do something if they are loud or if they make a correction of a student they are considered to be an authoritator. When it happens the same thing in case of a

female teacher they are perceived to be bitchy or there are excuses like it's their time of the month or that always seem to come up, right? Or what's wrong with her? The blame seems to lie with the teacher when it's a female and not always so with a male.

At the basis of such sexist constructions of female teachers is a particular gender regime that is built on the denigration and demonization of gendered female authority. Ingalls (2006), for instance, believes that women who are seen as authoritative run the risk of being pathologized. This is confirmed by Tanya who believes that male teachers often get away with behaviour that is aggressive because it is considered an acceptable male characteristic:

it's almost like males can get away with being more aggressive. Having the fallback without losing their respect.

A similar response is echoed by Maria who has difficulty trying to make sense of the perceived differences between male and female teachers in terms of their approach to discipline. Maria senses the differences in perceptions and the assumption that male teachers must be stronger disciplinarians simply because of their gender:

because I think sometimes you may look at a male and female [and an administrator may] automatically think okay, you're male so therefore, you have control of your class you know exactly where you're heading with things.

Where you're female well just why do I think they might doubt us more? I don't know. I think because who we are. I don't think... I don't know if we get respected the same. And maybe that comes back to respect. They just automatically assume well you're female you have to prove yourself. Male, it's assumed that it's already there.

Maria further expresses her concern that female teachers have to work harder to be perceived as disciplinarians:

We have to be more aggressive in it. I think, I get the feeling that a lot of male teachers are more laid back and the respect is given to them and we have to earn the respect of the students.

Jennifer also feels that there is an underlying assumption that males are stronger disciplinarians simply because of their gender:

Males kind of have a point or something going for them already, just for them being males. They are almost immediately given the respect. Yeah. But somehow the female I don't know why or how have to earn it somehow.

Davies (1992, p. 128) believes that aggression and discipline are characteristics that are associated with male teachers and thus the dominant masculinity that is displayed and institutionalized in schools.

The teachers were asked to reflect further on classroom discipline and whether they believe that there are certain expectations or pressures placed on female teachers to adopt a certain classroom management approach. Mallory believes that females traditionally use classroom management strategies, which are more nurturing and are generally considered characteristics of females:

I don't think you can be as strong sometimes, I think you have to lay back a little bit. They see you more as a nurturing figure, which is where the mom thing comes in.

Mallory highlights here that traditional characteristics that tend to be viewed as feminine in nature make it difficult for females to be seen as authoritative. This highlights the regulatory and policing function of gender regimes in which the maternal or mothering function of teaching is inscribed on the female body with all of its consequences for maintaining a patriarchal gender order.

Establishing Authority

The participants discussed at length how they established authority in the classroom. Maria explains that it can be difficult for a female teacher to establish authority in a classroom because of her gender. She elaborates on the gendered body and how she specifically has difficulty with students viewing her as an authoritative figure because of her body size:

I, well part of it I think because of [being] female and my size make a huge difference when I walk into a class. Students look at me and many of the students are bigger than I am, taller than I am.

Cooks (2007) believes it is impossible to escape the gendered body, which is viewed as lacking in competency. Maria relates her size as an issue with some students, and this forces her to take preventative strategies to be prepared for disciplinary issues:

whether that gives them the impression which it shouldn't that they don't have to necessarily listen to what I have to ask. So, because of that, now this isn't all students but some students and I think more so for the male students that you then have to have consequences. You can say well, these are my expectations but you have to have consequences more where they are going to test me more than they would test someone else.

Maria specifically comments on male students' refusal to take female teachers seriously and gives further examples of where she believes her gender and body size are factors that lead students to position her as less of an authority figure than her male colleagues:

and I think because of size and I know that for a fact [...] in one of my first years teaching there was a young man I had major problems with him. We sat down and talked to his father and the three of us were together and his comment to me was I walked into your class, I was bigger than you, and I thought I can get away with whatever I want. That's why I gave you a hard time.

Research by Ingalls (2006) and Cooks (2007) documents the extent to which body size plays a significant role for women teachers who are viewed as less authoritative on the basis of their small stature or body size. Butler (2004) discusses body norms and the body as a signifier of who we are. In her work she notes how our gender is constructed by society and that our body dictates how we are to be perceived. According to Butler (2004) gender is constructed by society "the body has its invariably public dimension; constituted as a social phenomenon in the public sphere, my body is not mine" (p. 21). Therefore, in terms of our body we are perceived to act and perform who we are based on our gender. Jennifer also agrees that body size is a factor in terms of being viewed as less authoritative. She states:

I think size as far as a large man...it doesn't refer to me. But a large man definitely has...they immediately get [attention]. I would hate to think smaller women would be considered weak. Because as we established earlier on that is or isn't the case.

Other female participants like Tanya also describe incidents in which they believe their gender leads students to view them as less authoritative. Tanya describes an incident in her phys-ed class where she has difficulty getting the attention of the students:

But definitely as a female [...] it's especially noticeable when you get into a large group of multiple classes and who can actually gain control of the students. If there's a male in the room nine times out of ten that's who it's going to be. And it happens all the time in phys-ed where we are in a group of students of multiple classes. I can tell you that I have had difficulty getting control of the class [but] the male or maybe they just project their voice more or it's that tone of voice but very often they are able to get control faster than I would.

Tanya's account describes first hand how male teachers are given more authority in a classroom situation. The participants describe events in which students view the female teachers as less authoritative because of their gender. Coffey and Delamont (2000) discuss similar examples in their research where male teachers step in to address discipline issues on behalf of female teachers who they believe are struggling to deal with

management issues in their classrooms. Although assistance from male teachers may seem helpful, in actuality it undermines and devalues the female teacher. Robinson (2000) outlines how positions of authority are lessened for female teachers when male teachers step in to assist female teachers with discipline problems.

Mallory also agreed that it is often more difficult for female teachers to establish authority: "Sometimes it feels that way." Maria has a similar response:

You don't have their respect and you have to work harder to get that. And why do we as a females have to work harder to get it than a male does, just because of who we are?

In the interviews the women try to make sense of their experience but find it difficult to understand why students give male teachers more respect and authority. In Robinson's (2000) research female teachers felt that male teachers had an advantage when it comes to discipline and authority. Mallory adds: "if it was a male teacher he wouldn't have to face some of those issues." Trying to make sense of her experience, Jennifer also agrees that it is more difficult for females to be viewed as authority figures:

I mean the kids for some reason respect the coaches, the male guys, the males that are the coaches. Because maybe they don't have anything to relate to. So, [we] definitely have to work at it harder. Whether or not I recognize it, I don't see that necessarily. [...] But it's a constant battle.

The constant battle to be viewed as an authoritative teacher is expressed by Tanya who feels that her gender labels her as less authoritative. This relates once again to the regulatory function of gender regimes within the context of a broader patriarchal gender order. As Kessler and McKenna (1985) argue:

The school as an institution is characterized at any given time by a particular gender regime. This may be defined as the pattern of practices that constructs various kinds of masculinity and femininity among staff and students, orders them in terms of prestige and power, and constructs a sexual division of labour within the institution. The gender regime is a state of play rather than a permanent condition. It can be changed, deliberately or otherwise, but it is no less powerful in its effects on the pupils [and teachers] for that (p. 42).

Tanya believes that she has to work harder than male staff members to establish authority, "I think you have to work to gain that respect so that you're not labelled as bitchy or in a bad mood or it's that time of the month." Furthermore, Tanya believes females work harder at establishing authority. "You have to work harder to gain their respect in order to have that classroom management, where a lot of men seem to walk right into it and they have it from the start and off they go." Maher (1999) shows that males are usually viewed as aggressive and females are often positioned or perceived to be passive. The overall response from the teacher participants is that female teachers do

have to work harder at establishing authority in the classroom because of their gender. This can be understood in terms of a particular gender regime which results in certain gender arrangements being established and maintained in institutions such as schools (Connell, 2009, p. 72).

The Treatment of Female Teachers

The female teachers did indicate that they felt they were treated or at least responded to differently by the students, the parents, and the principal. Tanya, for example, agreed that students do treat female teachers differently:

I definitely think that students are more likely to back talk or exhibit rude behaviour towards female staff. I don't know [if it's] because they think they can get away with it. Or obviously when you get to grade eleven or twelve some of those students are physically bigger than you as well. So, there's a little bit of intimidation factor that they may feel that they have.

Tanya reflects further on the reason why some students might treat female teachers differently and relates her answer to the student's cultural background:

For some students I think it's the way they are treated at home. It all goes back to cultural or whether the male seems to be dominant within that culture over the

female and the family organization. So, if males are allowed at home to get away with more that turns over to school.

Tanya identifies an interesting link between the gendered perception of men and women in the home and male and female teachers in the school system. Maria also believes that the home life of a student could play a role in determining how students view gender roles. When asked whether students treat female teachers differently she states, "I think [...] some male students do, depending on their upbringing." Research by Moreau et al. (2007) shows that there is a connection between the experience in the home and student perception of gender roles. Jennifer also feels that students treat female teachers differently:

They just want to be the guy's buddy. They want to be the male teacher's buddy.

I don't necessarily see that connection. For the most part you get some people who do that with female teachers.

Jennifer feels that the male teachers want to be friends with the students and are not necessarily concerned to establish a professional teacher – student relationship.

Consequently, they tend to respond to and act differently with the students. Mallory agrees with Jennifer that the relationship between the student and the teacher is very different for a male teacher. She believes that female teachers are treated differently:

when you look at some male teachers, I guess I see it more with the male teachers. Maybe football coaches automatically with students the way they treat those teachers because there coaches, to the way they treat someone else. And I think it's a lot of times. Not all male teachers are coaches but I just see the difference there. Between that, all of a sudden, it's like coach they say sir. It's their address to you is totally different as well. And that's from day one, how they address you.

Griffin (1997) gives examples whereby behaviour of male teachers and male students is often unprofessional. The unprofessional relationship between the male teacher and male students promotes a message that such behaviour is acceptable. Francis and Skelton (2001) discuss the role of the male teacher and how "some men teachers draw on particular behaviours and gender discourses in order to construct themselves as 'properly masculine' in school settings" (p.10). They also document the role of the male teacher bonding with male teachers and male students through sports, sexual innuendos, and behaviours that conform to traditional masculine norms. The relationship that the male teacher is able to develop with his male students translates, according to the female participants in this study, into accruing a certain degree of male privilege in terms of establishing their authority. However, most of the teachers did not feel that parents treat them differently.

Tanya felt that parents can be aggressive but that such behaviour was not directed at the teacher on the basis of her gender:

It really depends on what parent you are talking to. If it's the mother to a female teacher there seems to be more of a connection there. I've had some aggressive mothers but I've also had some aggressive fathers.

Jennifer and Mallory also believe that they are not treated any differently by parents because of their gender. Mallory felt that being older than many of the students parents played a role in the relationship that she developed with them. She feels that she is given more respect:

I gather it's an age thing, as I get older than some parents. I was talking to one parent this afternoon and this kid was driving me crazy in class and a bit of [an] issue there, discipline issue. And he sounded like he was at least ten years younger than me.

Ingalls (2006) believes age is a factor for females being viewed as more authoritative. As Maria ages she feels she is treated differently by parents and is given more respect. However, Maria still believes that her gender has affected some of her experiences with parents:

I've had some parents that have been challenging yes, because I'm female. I've had some parents that feel that they make you feel that you're not worth a lot.

Again, Maria believes this relates to her body size as a petite female. The teachers were then asked the question as to whether the principal treats female teachers differently. A variety of responses were offered by the participants as to the treatment of the female teachers by the principal.

Jennifer describes several incidents in which she believes the male principal has a very different relationship with the male teachers. "Well I've never heard of a principal going or taking the female teachers out for a pedicure." I asked Jennifer to further explain the relationship between the principal and the male staff members at school X:

you know it's one thing if a principal is professional with everyone. But if they are sitting back and going to a party with other male teachers and getting drunk and the next day coming to school and saying they got a lot or have a lot of memories per say or if they say they like to promote how they like to go for pedicures with some of the male teachers and when it comes down to decision time they can't make an accurate decision or a qualified decision or a decision based...I know I'm being vague but a decision sometimes the principal is put into a position where they have to make a decision...whether or not it's hiring or whatever a situation, where they are going to base it on their drinking buddies or their toenail buddies as opposed to merit.

Jennifer believes that there is an inappropriate relationship that her principal has with the male teachers at her school – it is very different than the relationship between female staff members and the principal. Griffin (1997) believes that schools continue to act as patriarchal institutions, which directly affect the treatment and perception of female teachers. Riddell and Tett (2006) document research in which there are still patriarchal ideas embedded in the teaching profession as “school board members and councillors bring ‘very old fashioned, often very patriarchal ideas’ about the appropriate sex of a head teacher both primary and secondary sectors” (p. 53). Tanya also notices the relationship that exists between the male principal and the male teachers:

Our administration seems to be geared towards athletics, which is good because I am part of that. But it’s definitely one sided. It’s definitely geared towards the male side of the house. There’s camaraderie between the males that extends outside of the school.

Tanya further describes the relationship between the principal and the male teachers:

For example, the male administration and the male teachers would get together on a Saturday afternoon and have some sort of sporting event, or they would go out for drinks or they would have dinner together.

She describes how the relationship is noticed by the female staff members: "It's definitely seen and it's kind of one of those unwritten things that everybody knows what's going on but nobody really says anything." Measor and Sikes (1992, p. 116) recognize the importance of challenging the traditional or stereotypical notions of masculinity and femininity in schools as these institutions will impact how students and staff view gender.

Mallory has also experienced a principal from a former school treating staff members differently because of their gender. However, her experience is different from the one described by Jennifer. She witnessed a beautiful female teacher receiving better treatment because of her gender: "If you were shorter, blond female, you got away with a lot more" explains Mallory. Overall, the women did feel they were treated differently by students and in some incidents by parents and administrators because of their gender. This differential treatment was understood in terms of norms governing what is perceived to be legitimate embodied male authority, which amounted to a certain degree of male privilege.

The Perception of Women in Leadership Positions

The participants were asked to reflect on their opinion of women in leadership roles within the school. School X has always had a male principal in the school. There are two vice-principals in the school and the role of the vice-principal has changed several times over the years. However, there has always been a female vice-principal as

part of the administrative team but the female vice-principal has changed over the years. Therefore, I asked the women to reflect on the women in leadership positions within the school, which also included female department heads, or other female staff who are viewed in leadership positions. I began with asking the participants to reflect on the women in leadership positions within the school and how they are perceived.

At school X there are currently two female vice-principals. The women talked about the current administrators and spoke highly of one of the female administrators in particular:

the one vice principal that I'm thinking of has a lot of respect but she has that because she was a teacher at our school before and she's gained that. So, again she's worked very hard to get to where she is and people know her skills and they know that she's a good teacher; they know that she's stood in their shoes. They know she has good classroom management. So, she has that respect and she's earned it.

All of the participants shared a similar response as they admired and considered the female vice-principal to be an excellent administrator. They believed that she was respected and liked amongst staff and students as she was previously a teacher on staff and was promoted from within the school. The staff members already knew her and she had a good reputation amongst students and staff. She was considered to be an effective leader because of her classroom management skills (Coffey and Delamont, 2000). The

participants believe that her previous role in the school helped her establish a good reputation as a successful woman in a leadership position. The second vice-principal is new to the school and the women interviewed felt they could not comment on her leadership position as she has just arrived at the school. The participants believed that she had yet to develop a reputation. However, the participants did offer a number of responses regarding a past administrator who was male but who had left school X for a job at another school.

The participants were asked to consider reflecting on the changes that had occurred in administration. Considering there are currently two female administrators in the school I asked the women if they perceived any differences and changes in terms of perception and how the male vice-principal was perceived: "There's not as much [of] a boys' club from before. So, it's almost like the school administration and the outside school community life have separated. Whereas before, it was one big mess of male crap," stated Tanya. Jennifer also agreed with Tanya that there appeared to be a *boys' club* that existed with administration and male staff members:

guarantee there's a boys' club and it's huge. It's made me not want to go to the staff room for lunch because it just makes me ill. And you know it gets to the crudeness point where some female teachers have been made to feel uncomfortable and whether or not it's just a joke that they think is funny. I can't say that I've been made to feel uncomfortable but I guess enough that I don't eat lunch in the staff room.

Jennifer's reference to the *boys' club* at school X documents the extent to which male staff members perform their masculinity. Robinson (2005) researches the role that male teachers display when performing masculine behaviour as she states, "sexual harassment and sexual violence become part of the performance of hegemonic masculinity that can cement gendered cultural bonds between those boys and men who take up this form of masculinity as their own, creating a sense of identity" (p. 20). The women overwhelmingly felt there was a difference when a male vice-principal was part of the administration team. The women also reflected on other women administrators who had previously been part of the staff. The women were asked to consider past female administrators and whether the women were treated or perceived differently from their male counterparts. Maria recalls a previous female administrator who was viewed differently:

I think they are effective. I had one VP as well, she ran the school. [...] Very effective. Yes, she was perceived as being very aggressive and not the nicest person. If a female is doing their job [...] they are perceived as more aggressive and not as nice as a male doing the exact same thing. But that's okay because you're a male teacher. Or you're male and that's acceptable. [...] when you're female you are perceived as very aggressive. I could have used a word but...

Tanya also agrees that female administrators are viewed differently than male administrators. Women in leadership positions have to work harder to gain the respect that males in leadership positions are already granted because of their gender:

I think that women really do have to earn those leadership positions so they have to prove themselves. With their skills, with their ability to lead, with their ability to manage, with their ability to react to change. Whereas men seem to have that until they screw it up. So, once a male has done something to forfeit that respect he may have to work hard to get it back. But, he seems to get that from the start. Whereas women I think in general have to work and establish themselves for sure they can be good leaders and hold that position and be very well respected but again they seem to have to work harder to earn it.

Maria also believes that women in leadership positions are not perceived in the same light as men in leadership positions, "I think initially they might be [viewed] as a weaker sex, but I think once they have proven themselves I think that maybe that is an important issue is having to prove yourself whereas a male teacher or principal does not." Anastasaki and Koutra (2005) indicate that masculinity is still embedded in society as the dominant structure which results in males being perceived as stronger disciplinarians as "women teach and men manage (Anastasaki and Koutra, (2005, p. 44). When asked to explain why Maria thought women were perceived as the weaker sex she offers the following response:

well, I think women are perceived as the weaker sex. I am not going to be able to handle things, control things, as much as the male can and that goes back to our girly days but you know size matters right? So, that males [are] better off than somebody else. So, I think yeah that's the perception too how are they going to handle it.

Women in leadership positions are required to prove themselves in order to be considered good administrators. The participants felt that females in leadership roles were viewed as weaker and or considered aggressive if they possessed too much authority. Davies (1992) believes that aggressive behaviour is associated with masculinity and not traditionally a characteristic that is displayed by females. Jennifer discusses the perception of one of the past female administrators who was viewed as aggressive but was often ridiculed by students and some male staff members because of the authority she portrayed:

I don't think a male VP would ever be discussed about what he wears or how he walks. But there was this one VP we had a very strong woman. Everybody shook in her boots when they heard her feet coming along. She was [...] very strict and [...] I respected her a lot because she stood for what she believed in. She had a lot of values and she never joined the boys' club. Not that she would have ever been invited. She was ridiculed for her powerful state like [...] her demeanour but I think students feared her and they would always listen for her

boots, her shoes coming down the hallways. I respected her even though she wasn't afraid to question staff over things.

Maher (1999, p. 49) claims that it is important for women to claim authority in a society that does not promote authoritativeness for women. Therefore, the participants believe that woman in leadership positions have to work harder to be seen as good leaders in the school. Women teachers who possess an authoritative demeanour are considered to be aggressive.

Body Language and Comments by Male Staff Members

The participants also commented on their experiences, which involved male teachers in school using comments and body language that they deemed as inappropriate towards female teachers. Jennifer, for example, had witnessed behaviour that she considered inappropriate by both the male administrator and by male staff members:

there have been members who you know [have made] sexually oriented jokes that made them feel uncomfortable. That's just not by the boys' club but also by the principal themselves that have made or alluded to something that was supposed to be a joke but it was sexually oriented and totally inappropriate.

Coulter (1995) examines how sexual comments and jokes can undermine the teacher, which allows the female teacher to be viewed as less authoritative. Jennifer further

explains the experience in which sexual comments were made towards a female colleague: "Well you know there was a person who was late for school just because she was late for school and the principal basically said, 'I know what you were doing?'" Jennifer mentions other examples in which male staff members made female colleagues feel uncomfortable:

there [are] other situations where the boys' club themselves just the colleagues would say things to this other female teacher. Referring to what they were doing in the hot tub one day...trying to joke around but totally made the person feel uncomfortable.

Inappropriate sexual comments and behaviour disempowers women and leaves them feeling like sexual beings and not teachers (Coulter, 1995, p. 35). Tanya has also witnessed female colleagues who experienced comments and behaviour that she considered inappropriate:

I have [a] friend[...] who [...] had some very inappropriate comments said to her in front of a group of students by a male teacher that would have been perceived as rude, ignorant. What's the word I'm looking for derogatory by anyone male or female. I don't know how to better put that.

Coffey and Delamont (2000) show that gender joking becomes a common experience in the workplace. Riddell's (1989) research also documented female teachers who had experienced "some of the male teachers' joking [which] specifically involved the

derogation of women" (p. 151). Female teachers not only experienced inappropriate comments, but some teachers even witnessed inappropriate comments made to female students.

Maria believes male teachers can often be inappropriate with female students and has experienced inappropriate behaviour, "I have seen some male teachers using inappropriate body language to female students [...] I think the teachers are inappropriate and they shouldn't be doing that." Coulter's (1995) research shows that inappropriate behaviour by male staff members is exhibited in the school and is often displayed in front of students. Sexual behaviour and inappropriate comments seem to occur within the school environment. Tanya believes that sexual comments and behaviour are inappropriate for the workplace but that it seems to be part of the daily environment in schools:

there's obviously certain rules that exist within teaching and there are males that have definitely crossed the line, as far as dating students or saying things inappropriate to female students while they are still students. I think that some of the things that go on that offend women sometimes happen without people knowing where it's a group of males talking or discussing something that happened on the weekend or things in general a female will overhear.

The inappropriate behaviour discussed by the female teachers can be considered a form of sexual harassment.

Sexual Harassment

Three of the participants openly discussed that students had not sexually harassed them. However, Mallory felt that she had experienced sexual harassment by some of the male students:

all those grade twelve's last year. They would publicly sexually harass me. [...] would put his arm around me and say 'look I didn't get my homework done because of this.' He would write poems if he didn't get his homework done. He would say no, 'I have to read it to the class.' So, he was the jokester. He was the prankster. He was you know... and it was stuff that you had to laugh at. So, even though I would say 'you're harassing me'...you would still have to laugh. Now you take it from somebody like him, cause he's a goof ball.

Mallory accepted the sexual harassment by a male student and laughed at the behaviour, but clearly felt uncomfortable about the way the students related to her. Robinson (2005) believes that sexual harassment has become a problem within schools and it is viewed as normal behaviour that is considered harmless. When Mallory was asked to explain the reaction of the classmates when the student was sexually harassing her publicly, she commented: "Laughter. It was like it was funny, you know? They expected it right? So, it was kind of an ongoing joke." Robinson (2005, p. 26) claims that sexual harassment by males is frequently treated as a joke, which is accepted as a means by which to

establish hegemonic masculinity. This kind of behaviour was considered to be acceptable by the other classmates and was treated by the teacher as amusing and as part of normal classroom behaviour.

While the majority of the participants had not experienced overt sexual harassment by male colleagues, Jennifer did talk about one such incident involving a male colleague. Upon first reflection, Jennifer stated in her interview that she had not been sexually harassed by any male colleagues but during the interview process she asked if she could go back to the question as she wanted to add to her response. Her explanation provides insight into an experience in which she was sexually harassed.

Jennifer states:

I'd totally forgotten a situation about sexual harassment. It never occurred to me or dawned on me and it was definitely something that made me feel uncomfortable. I was with a colleague doing our graduation stuff and we walked into this classroom and this male teacher in front of his whole class said, 'oh look I was just talking about two hoes from Hades.' I think that's the way it was said. So, basically he called us a bunch of prostitutes in front of his whole classroom. We were just flabbergasted and I think the class was flabbergasted that this man said that. It was ...it just left a bad feeling. I don't think ... I treated the situation properly. I should have reported it....put it on record. But I guess I chose not to.

Jennifer describes the incident in which the students in the classroom were shocked by the response of the teacher and that the teacher did not feel he had said or done anything inappropriate. Coulter (1995) provides similar incidents in which a male colleague sexually harassed a female teacher in front of students. When this occurs the teacher is sexualized as an object of desire for both the male teachers and the male students. Further reflection during the interview process made Jennifer realize that the comment was sexual harassment and that she was embarrassed that she did not report the incident. Maher (1999) indicates that females often remain silent and feel powerless to control sexual harassment issues. Robinson (2000) documents that sexual harassment is often embarrassing and that "for many of the women denial was a major factor and silence was often self-imposed" (p. 87).

The other teacher participants had not personally experienced sexual harassment by other male staff members. However, Tanya offered the following response:

I don't think I have ever felt like I was sexually harassed. I think I've felt undermined by other male teachers. But to actual sexual harassment, I've never personally had to experience that but I have seen that of other teachers by male teachers to female teachers.

Tanya was asked to clarify what she meant by 'undermined' and she explained:

I just feel like I took second chair. Like they had more authority or the rights to a classroom, or time, or management, or resources, whatever it was, because of their gender.

Understanding What it Means to be A Woman

At the end of the interview I asked the women to reflect on their overall experience as a female teacher at school X: To what extent did they believe that certain understandings about what it means to be a woman influences people's perceptions of female teachers? This question proved to be challenging for the women. Several of the women had a difficult time trying to explain what it means to be a woman. Tanya believed that women teachers have a responsibility to be a role model for other students:

I think that as a teacher, as a female teacher we have to be a role model not only to our female students but our male students. To try and break through that line of equity that males and females have the same opportunities and have the same respect and the same abilities to hold leadership positions. But I think ultimately we need to try and get away from the stereotypes of male and females and look at everyone as a person and a teacher, as a teacher no matter whether they are male or female. We need to kind of get rid of those stereotypes.

Tanya's reflection recognizes that inequality between genders still exists and that she has a responsibility to help abolish some of the differences that exist. Weiner (2004, p. 3) believes that there is resistance to feminist research because it challenges traditional

beliefs regarding gender. Maria also indicated that stereotypes and inequality between the sexes still exists as women occupy jobs that are considered traditional roles for females. Maria has difficulty trying to define what it means to be a woman: "What do I think it means to be a woman...I don't know, I don't know." Upon further reflection, Maria offers the following response:

I think [...] a woman's position is what we perceive it to be is that we are more the caring one. The one that's always there if we have concerns because that's how we have been brought up as a mother that you go to mother over dad. And I think we've always been trained to look at ourselves in that way. So, we are different than the males, where the males are there to say [...] supply the food, the income, and everything so we have a different role. So, does that role carry on into work places? Yes, I think [...] that's why sometimes our respect for us we have to earn it more than the males. Just because of where we come from. Things are changing some, mind you with that...because more women are working outside with that. But I think that we have to earn things still.

Maria shares a similar response with Mallory who generally views women more as nurturers who exhibit traditional female characteristics. Mallory states, "Well probably the whole idea of being more of a nurturer. Not being kinder but at least being a little more accommodating to certain behaviours. I think they expect that of me as well that you are going to be more of a softer touch." Anastasaki and Koutra (2005) agree that

female characteristics are associated with the role of the nurturer and being a motherly figure. Mallory believes that there is a shift happening in the perception of gender equality as more females go into administrative roles: "I think that as we are evolving that it's getting better. Especially as more women get into positions of higher authority." Although Mallory believes there is a shift in gender roles, Jennifer still notices a difference between genders.

Jennifer believes that gender is still an issue at school and that what it means to be a woman is to be treated differently from men:

I teach world issues so the issue of equality constantly comes up. So, the idea that respect for women in the 21st century, we are supposed to be equal but it's not. It's not equal because you do have to try that much harder and you talk to students, you tell them about it, you expect them to see equality, to see trying to treat each of us equal but you don't."

Research by Measor and Sikes (1992) asserts that teachers need to encourage students to examine the stereotypes that are associated with gender and influence their understanding of gender roles. Tanya notices that being a female means you still have to work harder than a male:

I think I just always feel we work harder. Not harder at teaching, at preparing, but harder to establish that respect. To get that classroom management and to

maintain it on a daily basis and I think it's really easy to feel undermined to see a male teacher that can do that better than you sometimes. You feel inferior or that you need to work on your skills or there's something wrong with you because you couldn't get that whole class to listen to you as quick as say a male teacher could.

Both women feel that being a woman means being treated differently. Despite the changing roles of gender, all of the women had difficulty defining what it means to be a woman and recognized that gender differences still exist.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided a focus on four individual women and their experience with gender and authority in teaching. The interviews were used to document each woman's experience of gender on a daily basis in the school environment and the classroom. The interviews were analyzed from the standpoint of embracing a feminist politics that is committed to accessing women's perspectives on schooling (Riddell, 1989). The participants were allowed to give meaning to their experience and to better understand their role as female educators. As Acker (1994, p. 158) acknowledges, gender needs to be examined because male and female teachers have different experiences, which are informed by power relations and, hence gender regimes that need to be interrogated. In this chapter, not only have I used the interviews to interrogate the impact of institutionalized patriarchy on four female teachers' lives in one school, I also

provided a space for them to reflect on such experiences and for their perspectives to be validated.

Chapter Five:

Conclusion and Implications for Further Study

*“Be yourself and think for yourself;
and while your conclusions may not be infallible,
they will be nearer right than the conclusions forced upon you.”*

- Elbert Hubbard (1916, p.316)

Understanding the Research Topic

This thesis has examined the experiences of four women educators who teach in the secondary school system in Ontario. I interviewed four female teachers in order to give voice to their experiences of gendered authority in schools. This research was motivated by a feminist commitment to serving women's interests, particularly in its critique of the institutionalization of patriarchy in schools. Therefore, my purpose was to document and give meaning to the experiences of female teachers, particularly given the feminist literature which highlights the persistence of sexism, sexual harassment and the influence of male dominance in the lives of women teaching in schools (Robinson, 2000; Coffey & Delamont, 2005). Moreover, as Griffin (1997) has emphasized, the voices of female teachers often go unnoticed and thus the interview process becomes important in understanding the issue of gendered authority in teaching. During the interview process the women had difficulty understanding why the education profession is still dominated by patriarchy and why female teachers were not viewed as authoritative as their male counterparts. Thus, the research tended to support the need for more knowledge about

the continued and persistent effects of a patriarchal system, which positions women as less authoritative than their male counterparts and, hence, as devalued subjects.

In order to further understand gender and authority in teaching this research was conducted by interviewing four women teachers in a secondary school who were willing to share their experiences about teaching and their experiences of gender. The aim of the thesis, hence, was not to generalize across a population of female teachers in South Western Ontario, but rather to create a space where female teachers could voice their opinion and reflect on their experiences of gendered authority in the school system. The women interviewed found it difficult to try to define gender and to define what it means to be authoritative and indicated that they had not really been provided with the space professionally to reflect on such gender issues in their lives as teachers. According to Butler (1990), society determines that biology should not play a role in shaping and determining our gender identity. However, the women interviewed believed that their gender identity was shaped to a large degree by society and cultural norms about what constitutes legitimate or desirable femininity. In fact, theoretical frameworks elaborated by Butler (1990) and also by Francis and Skelton (2005), which present gender as a result of societal expectations and norms, were helpful in framing my research focus and approach to analyzing the data. The notion that “gendered behaviour is produced from social factors rather than biological programming” (Francis and Skelton, 2005, p.28) was central to making sense of the female teachers’ experiences of gendered authority in my study. In short the idea of gender as a socially constructed category was central to the framing of the entire research project from start to finish.

Overall, the interviews showed that the female teachers, for the most part, struggled to be viewed as authoritative figures. They felt that it was a challenge given the workings of patriarchy and a domestic ideology that continued to construct women in opposition to a privileged masculinity within the teaching profession.

Implications – A Need For Further Research

The thesis process has allowed me to recognize that feminist research is essential and must be validated as important if we are to move to a better and deeper understanding of “why women tolerate social relations which subordinate their interests to those of men and the mechanisms whereby women and men adopt particular discursive positions as representative of their interests” (Weedon, 1987, p. 12). Feminist research remains important, as I was able to validate my own experience as a female teacher and acknowledge that gender issues are still prevalent within our own lives, which includes the environment in which we work. The women interviewed believed strongly that there has been a shift in gender roles whereby women are not as oppressed as they once were. However, they believed that they still faced many issues such as harassment and inequality when it came to establishing their own authority in the school setting and within their own personal lives.

My thesis was based on the concerns about gender and authority as experienced by female teachers in one particular school. Although my sample size was small this research was undertaken to further my own professional development and learning within the context of engaging in a critical reflective practice that was supported by access to

critical feminist literature. It is important to note that not all women feel oppressed in schools. However, it must be noted that there are women teachers who feel their authority is lessened in schools because of their gender. Therefore, my purpose was not to generalize across a population, but to build a basis for critically evaluating and building a feminist community at school X. Community building is an essential part of education and female teachers need a safe environment in which they feel they can support each other as we create alliances with one another and share our political experiences related to the impact of institutionalized patriarchy. The building of such relationships is the basis for building strategic alliances and activism amongst female colleagues. Building professional learning communities that address issues of harassment and gender in schools is important.

Female educators need to feel that they can discuss and document cases of harassment and gender issues within their schools. If gender issues related to teachers go unnoticed and teachers are afraid or embarrassed to discuss or report such issues, then we deliver a message to students that the power imbalances informing gender relations in schools are not important or cannot be addressed. Gender issues must be discussed in the classroom and amongst female teachers so their experiences can be validated as important. Teachers must be willing to share their experiences and to create environments in which gender issues can be recognized as important. Research by Robinson (2000) and Maher (1999) documents that teachers are embarrassed by sexual harassment and do not usually report such incidents. My own research also corroborates

such findings. Therefore, providing spaces for teachers to reflect on their own experiences and making teachers more aware of issues of harassment and gender issues in schools have the potential to create a working environment where they feel they are able to broach important concerns related to gender. My research continues to show that there needs to be more discussion amongst students, staff, and parents regarding gender and authority in schools. Female teachers in particular need to feel empowered to make changes and to build environments in which they feel that their authority is legitimate and legitimated.

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APPENDIX: A

Gendered Authority in Teaching: Female Teachers' Perspectives *Letter of Information*

I am a Masters student at the University of Western Ontario, Faculty of Education. I am beginning my research on my thesis. Within my research, I wish to conduct interviews with female teachers. I am currently conducting research into gendered authority in teaching and would like to invite you to participate in this study. The study will investigate how female teachers perceive, understand and experience their role as authority figures in schools and classrooms. The information gathered in the interview may help individual women reflect and give meaning to their teaching experiences.

If you agree to participate in this study you will be asked to participate in an interview. The duration of the interview will be approximately one hour and it will be audio-recorded. The interview will take place at my home environment. Based on the information gathered you may be asked for a follow up interview. The follow up interviews may be up to an hour in length. You will be given a copy of your own transcripts so that you may review and edit them.

The information collected will be used for research purposes only, and neither your name nor information, which could identify you, will be used in any publication or presentation of the study results. All information collected for the study will be kept confidential. Five years after my thesis is complete, all tapes and notes will be destroyed.

There are no known risks to participating in this study. Participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate, refuse to answer any questions or withdraw from the study at any time.

If you have any questions about the conduct of this study or your rights as a research participant you may contact the Manager, Office of Research Ethics, The University of Western Ontario at 519-661-3036 or ethics@uwo.ca . If you have any questions about this study, please contact my supervisor, Dr Wayne Martino

This letter is yours to keep for future reference. I would be happy to provide the full proposal for my thesis upon your request.

Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,
Kimberly Tornabuono

APPENDIX: B



Gendered Authority in Teaching: Female Secondary Teachers' Perspectives

Researcher: Kimberly Tornabuono & Advisor: Dr. Wayne Martino

CONSENT FORM

I have read the Letter of Information, have had the nature of the study explained to me and I agree to participate. All questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

Name (please print):

Signature:

Date:

Name of Person Obtaining Informed Consent:

Signature of Person Obtaining Informed Consent:

Date:

APPENDIX: C

Introduction Questions:

1. State your full name.
2. How many years have you been teaching?
3. Have you taught in more than one school?
4. What subject(s) do you teach?
5. How many male/females are within your teaching department?
6. Are you aware of any stereotypes associated with your particular subject area in terms of how it is perceived?

Reflection Questions:

7. Are you aware of any stereotypes about male/female teachers?
8. Can you talk about your life as a female teacher at school? Are you aware of your gender impacting in any way on your life as a teacher in school? Can you explain? What role do you think gender plays within your life?
9. Do you think there are differences between the ways in which male and female teachers are perceived, treated etc? What role do you think gender plays within your life overall? Do you see any parallels or similarities between your life inside school and your life outside of school?
10. How do you approach classroom management? Do you feel that there are certain expectations and/or pressures placed on you as a female to adopt a certain approach? Can you explain/give examples? How do you see other female teachers approaching classroom management and discipline? How do female teachers establish authority within their own classrooms?
11. Do female teachers have a different or distinctive approach to classroom management than that adopted by male teachers? Do you think there are different expectations for male teachers in schools in terms of how they approach or address classroom management/discipline? Can you explain/give examples?
12. Do you feel that your body size, voice, etc. or any part of being a female has undermined your position of authority in the school or in the classroom?
13. How important do you feel strong classroom management skills are in terms of your perception as a good teacher?

14. Do you feel that you have to work harder than male staff members to establish authority?
15. Do you think that students/parents/principal/male teachers respond to or treat female teachers differently?
16. Are there women in leadership positions in your school such as Principal/VP? How are they perceived? Do you consider them to be effective? In what respects? Do you think that women in leadership positions are treated or perceived any differently from their male counterparts?
17. Have you ever experienced male teachers in your school using comments and body language that you would deem as inappropriate behaviour towards yourself or other female teachers? In the classroom? In the staff room?
18. Have you ever been sexually harassed by a student? How did you deal with the situation?
19. Have you ever been sexually harassed by a male colleague? How did you deal with the situation?
20. Overall, to what extent do you think that certain understandings about what it means to be a woman influences people's perceptions of female teachers?