

Race, Sexual Orientation, Culture and Male Teacher Role Models: Will Any Teacher Do As Long As They Are *Good*?

Douglas Gosse

Northern Canadian Centre for Research in Education & the Arts at Nipissing University
douglasg@nipissingu.ca

ABSTRACT: There is a perceived shortage of males in education provincially and nationally in Canada, particularly at the primary and junior levels. Some barriers to males becoming teachers include the impression that teachers are overworked and underpaid, that men are less nurturing than women, and that it is inappropriate for men to be working with young children due to perception of their dangerous sexualities. Also, boys progressively score less well than girls on provincial, national, and international achievement tests in several areas, and some link this to the shortage of male role models in our schools. Ultimately, increasing numbers of researchers, teachers, administrators, and members of the public identify the need for more men to serve as role models, which has resulted in significant controversy. My theoretical framework derives from queer theory, questioning the fluidity of discourse and identities, and troubling accepted, commonplace beliefs, knowledge, and practices. To this end, I interpret data from an online survey of 223 male primary/junior school teachers in Ontario, Canada. The results are startling, and call into question some commonly accepted truths about male teachers as role models. In particular in this paper, I will critically address male primary-junior teachers as role models along the lines of race, sexual orientation, and culture, regarding two popular ideologies: firstly, that of *good* teachers who can supposedly teach all pupils regardless of their own identity markers, and sense of agency, or those of their pupils and larger communities, and secondly, notions of *diversity* to offset hegemonic male gender expectations, and to better reflect diversity in the broader school and social populations while counterbalancing the overwhelming numbers of female role models in school and at home for children.

Keywords: primary- elementary education, role model, intersectional identity, androgenophobia, Pygmalion effect

INTRODUCTION

The cry for more male teachers is nothing new. At various times over the past century there have been peaks in professional and public discourse around the waning or disparity of male teachers in the classroom, that appear to have intensified in academic literature post-World War II (Coulter & Greig, 2008), and more recently since the 1990s. This is no doubt largely due to a perceived plight in the educational experiences of boys and men. There is alarm over the dwindling numbers of males in undergraduate degrees (Finley, 2007) where men in Canada account for only about 40% of the student population. In addition, the media frequently reports on dwindling numbers of male in professional schools such as education (Mitchell, 2004), law and medicine (Wente, 2003a) in North America and beyond; Furthermore, boys high school drop out rates (Bouchard, St-Amant, & Gagnon, 2000; Hirschman, Pharris-Ciurej, & Willhoft, 2006) and literacy problems are largely held to be greater than that of most girls (Blom, 2007; Brown, 2003; Honey, 2001), even when factors such as middle-class status are considered (Hoff Summers, 2000, 2007). This has resulted in increased debate around encouraging more men to become teachers to ostensibly counteract this phenomenon.

In Ontario, and similarly in most areas of Canada and the United States, men represent only one in ten primary/junior teachers, and fewer than one in three secondary teachers (Bernard, Hill, Falter, & Wilson, 2004). In Canada, according to Statistics Canada (Staff, 2008a), the total of full time and part time teachers stands at 108,267 male and 267,788 female; There is also a majority of female administrators in education nationwide with 29,015 total of whom 13,680 are male and 15,335 female. Likewise, reports from teacher organizations in British Columbia (Staff, 2007/08), Prince Edward Island (MacRae, 2008), and New Brunswick (Robichaud, 2008) confirm both a preponderance of female teachers and administrators. This is contrary to persistent yet erroneous popular beliefs and publications regarding male dominance in educational administration. Consult, for instance, Coulter & McNay (1995) who base their

assertions about male patriarchal administrative dominance in education on research from the 1980s, including *Women and men in education: A national survey of gender distribution in school systems* (Rees, 1990), as does Martino (2008b) citing *Teachers: The culture and politics of work* (Lawn & Grace, 1987), and an English context, thereby selectively ignoring current data that decries the implications of the lack of male teachers in England as role models for boys.¹ Furthermore, research on men's experiences in teaching is often framed in a discourse of "backlash" against women's progress and equity (Martino, 2008b), and encapsulated in a supposed "myth" of the boy crisis (von Drehle, July 26, 2007). Such rhetoric is an attempt to silence research on boys and men, and maintain problematic yet widespread theories of patriarchal hegemony that permeate every aspect of society from media and popular culture to our educational, medical, and legal systems. Ultimately, there is passionate disagreement over the issue of engaging more male teachers.

The debate around male teachers tends to take two major camps: the first follows this line of reasoning, as related by a male teacher survey respondent,² "Some boys could benefit from having male role models.. but I'm also a firm believer that any child can succeed in a classroom regardless of the teachers gender, ethnicity, etc... it's about getting your students interested and teaching to those interests." In this case, the belief is that *good* teachers should be equipped to teach all students, despite mitigating factors such as race, class, gender, etc., whether their own or that of their students. Similarly, Coulter (2008) quotes Wells from the 19th century (1891), to support her thesis that a *good* teacher should be able to teacher all students regardless of gender:

Wells argued that the "the whole question" of teaching was "one of character and ability, not of sex." The solution to the debate about the man and woman question in teaching was this: "Let the most competent teachers be appointed to all positions, whether men or women" (Wells, 1891, p. 508). In the nineteenth-century Wells recognized that a good education was the result of meaningful content, carefully selected and supported by the thoughtful pedagogy of a socially responsible and ethical teacher who might be male, could be female.

I content that this belief downplays the considerable effects and limitations that intersectional identities and exposure to and embracing of *diversity* play in education and in a pluralistic and diverse Ontarian and Canadian society. Correspondingly, the second camp is exemplified by the following survey respondent quotes, "All children benefit from a balance of male and female role models as leaders and professionals" and "There are many students lacking a significant positive role model outside of school so having a good mixture of genders as well as other forms of diverse representation in the teaching staff is beneficial." In this case, male teacher role models emerge as important to create a gender balance, along with other identity markers, in order to better represent and reflect *diversity* in education and broader Ontarian and Canadian society.

In this paper, I explain my theoretical and methodological approaches, and then delve into findings on male teacher role models according to (1) race, (2) sexual orientation, and (3) culture, in order to problematize the dualistic popular stances that generic *good* teachers should be able to teach everyone effectively, and what I view as a more counter-hegemonic, pluralistic, and academically sound view that recruiting and retaining more male teachers would foster *diversity*, thereby reflecting broader social populations in Ontario and Canada, and permitting alternate possibilities that challenge hegemonic gender and teacher stereotypes, in addition to fostering a more equitable and secure workplace for many male teachers.

THEORY

¹ In England, the number of male school teachers is running at a historic low of 13 per cent in primary schools and 41 per cent in secondary schools, with more than a quarter of primary schools not having a single male teacher, and nearly 5000 staffrooms populated solely by women (Clark, July 13, 2009).

² All quotes from respondents are unedited to respect their words.

Queer theory can be a novel approach for scholars, researchers, educators, and activists to critically think about how bodies negotiate themselves using their identities in cultural spaces (Ruffolo, 2008). Queer as a verb is at the core of my poststructuralist theoretical approach, and entails a way of reading and interpreting with two major tenets: (1) examining what knowledge is being accepted and endorsed as “natural,” normal,” or “good” and; (2) reflexive inquiry through the lens of sexuality into social phenomena, interactions, and institutions (Gosse, 2006). That a generic *good* teacher of any gender, or race, class, sexual orientation, class, ability, geographical location, and language and culture, may be sufficiently equipped to effectively teach all students serves to reinstate the status quo, that is, the prevalence of white, able-bodied, white women in education, both as teachers and administrators. In particular, the questioning and deconstructing of commonplace, widely accepted beliefs around male teacher role models are central to this paper.

A theoretical paradox I encounter is in my optimism for a society in which gender would play less, if any significant role in the future, but for the time being, I must acknowledge the stringently gendered field of education, even as I attempt to show its cracks and shortcomings. According to Sondergaard (2002), poststructuralism offers the possibility for researchers to examine the constitution of social practices, cultural patterns, and subjectivation, which may lead to ruptures. Ruptures in my research are moments where interlocutors may feel disarmed, shocked, alienated, or even outraged at times but ultimately this may lead them/us to rethink common practices, customs, and/or beliefs. I explore how widespread, accepted misandric knowledge and beliefs are constructed and upheld, and I ultimately solicit questionings so that the status quo may be destabilized. Therefore, I examine how subordinate male primary/junior teachers navigate though a female dominated field as role models and, in particular, the interconnectedness of race, sexual orientation, culture, and gender will emerge in this paper within the two camps of (1) a *good* teacher who is supposedly able to teach all equitably, regardless of identity markers and the preponderance of white, middle-class, female teachers and administrators in education in Ontario and Canada, and (2) an approach embracing *diversity* among teacher role models, that would call for more males in the profession, and other minorities.

METHODOLOGY

In the ongoing provincial study of which I am principal investigator, *Tracing the Professional Journey of Male Primary Teachers in Ontario*,³ I seek to explore the experiences of male primary teachers to add to understanding and awareness of some of the social, political, institutional, and structural variables that influence male teachers' decision to enter, remain in, and/or leave teaching. A position as a primary or junior educator is strongly associated with women, and maintained as a field privileging women in numerous explicit and implicit ways, one of the strongest being prevalent fears surrounding male sexualities (Gosse, under review). The initial phase of inquiry for this provincial study involved the collection of data from an online survey sent to several hundred male Elementary Federation of Ontario (ETFO) members, all of whom are certified Primary/Junior teachers.⁴ In a primary/junior context, respondents were asked to comment on their main reasons for becoming teachers, whether they felt that

³ *Tracing the Professional Journey of Male Primary Teachers in Ontario* is supported by Nipissing University and the Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario (ETFO) with Dr. Douglas Gosse—principal investigator, co-investigator—Michael Parr, and research assistants Brendan Dillon and Johanna Kristolaitis.

⁴ We also have conducted single in-depth interviews with multiple teachers, and a series of interviews and in-class observations with nine core participants at different stages in their careers—beginning, mid-career, and senior, as well as in-class observations, and related document analysis from teacher organizations and school boards.

male and female teachers had any unique qualities, if there were any groups they felt benefited from have a male teacher, hiring practices, their understanding of public and media views of male teachers, and advantages and disadvantages of being male teachers; Participants were able to add comments in text boxes, and this is what I thematically analyze (Atkinson, Coffey, & Delamont, 2003; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000), looking for patterns that emerge in discourse. For this paper, I chose to analyze the several hundred quotes, filling thirty-five pages that directly list the term “role model”. While there are many others that implicitly make links to the concept of being a “role model”, they are not the focus of this analysis, given the profusion of responses that do explicitly refer to the keyword “role model”, thereby already providing rich commentary and description.

In the forthcoming comments from survey participants, I signal that these are careful selections that embody major themes. In other words, I could have used many more quotations to illustrate dominant themes but have chosen these as representative. As a primarily qualitative researcher, I attempt to capture glimpses into our participants’ realities, and to respectfully capture their voices by presenting their unedited words. My readings of their words and the conditional statements that follow are not generalizable but do form a set of hypotheses and concepts that I, and other researchers, may analyze and interpret (Charmaz, 2000). I recognize the subjectivity in my approach, and indeed in all research. My intent is to tell a critical narrative about male primary teachers as role models, and their interplay with race, class, and culture⁵ to generate further discussion.

FINDINGS

1. Race

The majority of English-speaking first-wave feminists were not only ethnocentric but racist; This lingered into the 1980s, and led to an exclusion of women of color, Native women, and immigrant women from a movement claimed to be based on gender (Valverde, 1992). Similarly, much academic literature in the field of male elementary teachers focuses on gender but unduly highlights [negative] possible experiences and effects on women as opposed to men; As well, although race and class issues do sometimes emerge,⁶ men are misandrously treated as though they were a largely homogeneous and hegemonic group (see, for example, Ashcraft & Sevier (2006), Coulter & Grieg (2008), and Martino (2008a). This fits with an enduring *ideological feminist*⁷ propensity for attacking the [mythological] malevolent, privileged, able-bodied, white, middle-class, protestant male, symbolic of the root of all evil. Similarly, Segal (1990) refers to “the masculine myth” –the intrinsic virtue of women and the apparent ‘vice’ of men in social and academic trends. Since so many contemporary researchers in gender and equity

⁵ There was a mountain of comments regarding *gender* and *teaching styles* that explicitly use the keyword “role model” but will be fodder for a much longer paper. For this shorter conference paper, and in keeping with my queer theoretical perspective, I choose to explore the three areas of (1) race, (2) sexual orientation, and (3) culture that were less present in the data but nonetheless significant.

⁶ While the majority of teachers provincially and nationally in Canada is white and female, amongst the male minority, I do remark that a majority also appears to be white. It is interesting that there is a social cry for more male teachers, but less so for more visible minorities or disabled teachers, for example, to better reflect the popular ideology of *diversity* or *diversification*.

⁷ Nathan & Young (2001) assert that *ideological feminism* presents all issues from the point of view of women and, in the process, explicitly or implicitly attacks men as a class. They argue that ideological feminism is silently reshaping law, public policy, education, and journalism. While I acknowledge the positive impacts many feminist social activists have had, and continue to have, on social issues, much like many queer and black activists, ideological feminism is reductionist and infused with essentialist dogma towards boys and men, even as paradoxically many ideological feminist challenge essentialist views of girls and women.

are progeny of ideological feminism, it is no surprise that a contemptuous or at best—‘unsympathetic’ approach endures towards men and boys in much educational research. Therefore, I seek to challenge ideological feminism with a more critical, open-minded, and intersectional analysis of identity and power relations regarding male teachers.

Interestingly, although race and sexual orientation⁸ emerged in multiple contexts in our survey and participant interviews, there was but one comment for each that explicitly linked the two with the keyword *role model*, but they are nonetheless poignant. Regarding race, once respondent confided, “The students can relate to a teacher from a visible minority background. I am a good role model for English Language Learners. The most rewarding part of this job is watching young minds develop over the course of the school year and the impact I am going to have on my students. Role model = my grade 5, 6 teacher.” Here, the respondent insinuates that he is a good role model as a visible minority for other visible minorities and/or English Language Learners, in keeping with public discourse around *diversity*, and that he may have been positively influenced by his own former grade 5 and 6 teacher.

Indeed, many visible or ethnic minority children, including Black Canadians, may not identify with dominant history, past, culture, or lifestyle that is Eurocentric, white, and middle-class, thereby contributing to disenfranchisement with school and resulting in higher drop-out rates (Dei, 1993). Similarly, for Portuguese Canadians in Toronto, while not necessarily visible minorities, blue collar social class, and a cultural practice of getting jobs early on rather than preparing for university or college, may contribute to high school attrition rates.⁹ The attrition rate of Black Canadians in Toronto has been such at almost 50% that an alternative Afrocentric school has been recently created (Brown, Popplewell, & Staff, 2008), with teachers specialized in Afrocentric curriculum, many of whom are Black, so that students may ostensibly have more role models and curriculum reflecting their own ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Therefore, the importance of the presence of teachers who culturally or visibly reflect the student population emerges, to alleviate school underachievement and attrition rates of minority groups, in which boys typically are more negatively represented. Therefore, one can conclude that a diverse representation of genders in school to counteract the dwindling numbers of male teachers is analogous, and the representation of more male teachers in schools might similarly alleviate the higher attrition and literacy problems of many boys.

2. Sexual orientation

Fears abound regarding male teachers’ sexuality that transcend being labelled or self-identified as gay, straight, or any other variant, and are centered around men’s supposed universal predatory and pedophilic tendencies. When asked in what circumstances they experience prejudice, one respondent confides:

Just the classic assumptions about male "role-models" and that males need to avoid certain situations with students because of "historically bad decisions being made by males" giving male teachers a bad name, when it is not seen as an issue for a female colleague. A need to protect oneself and to be more prudent than female teachers is another way of saying it.

Additionally, another respondent reflects the widespread notion that male primary teachers, like figure skaters, designers, hair stylists, and flight attendants, are suspected of being gay:

Yes. Male primary teachers are assumed to be lacking in stereotypical male traits. Their sexual orientation may be questioned behind their backs. Teaching in the older grades, these types of

⁸ Likewise, although there were multiple areas in our survey and complimentary research where able-bodiedness, class, geographical location, and language arose as significant themes, they were not explicitly referred to along with the keyword of *role model*.

⁹ There is even a Facebook group devoted to discussion of the 43% drop-out rate of Portuguese students in Toronto: <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=27853691920&ref=share>

assumptions are not made. Men in older elementary are generally considered to be exemplary people and good role models. Secondary teachers remain the most respected as they are considered to have superior knowledge, skills, expertise, and intelligence.

Being “gay” is commonly conflated with the erroneous expectation of potential or imminent pedophilia in educational circles and broader society (Gosse, 2009, under review). For centuries, dominant groups have used the ‘they’re after your kids’ myth to marginalize subdominant groups such as Jews and gays (Jennings, 2005), and now male teachers. Therefore, as *good* as a male teacher may be in effectively teaching, communicating, and differentiating learning for his pupils, he is nonetheless privy to a level of scrutiny, homophobia, *androgenophobia*, i.e. the prevalent societal conviction that maleness, the male body, and male sexualities are somehow unclean, perverse, and menacing, and *erastophobia*, i.e. a pervasive expectation and fear of impending pedophilia by males in general, and male teachers in the schools in particular, in ways and to a degree unlike female colleagues (Gosse, 2009).

While another respondent does not mention the keyword role model, he nevertheless does implicate role modeling succinctly in his words, “Students who question their sexual orientation can see that a gay male teacher [as a role model] is strong, happy, successful and hopefully can reassure them that life’s biggest challenges are manageable.” While being a visible minority teacher may be more obvious, being gay requires outing, and is generally less straightforward. Teachers who identify, or are identified, as LGBTTIQQ2S (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, intersex, queer, questioning, or two-spirit) continue to suffer from political and social sanctions (Gosse, 2004; King, 2004); this may include silencing, verbal and physical assault, exclusion, and invisibility in the workplace and in social spheres (Gosse, Parr, & Allison, 2007, 2008). In interviews with participants, I have found that most continue to be closeted with their pupils and pupils’ parents/guardians, while some are out to varying degrees with certain colleagues and administrators. Therefore, while some believe that a *good* teacher should be able to teach all students, assumptions of subjugated sexual orientation emerge as crucial phenomenon regarding the experiences of male teachers as role models. The silencing of sexual orientation minorities, and the absence or ignoring of affirmative action and equity policies and discussion in the workplace that include sexual orientation, contributes towards an oppressive work environment for many male teachers, thus hindering their potential to actively challenge hegemonic stereotypes, and become the male role models they aspire to be. This may be even more pronounced in Canadian Catholic schools (Callaghan, 2009), when overt doctrines further result in a precarious workplace for many LGBTTIQQ2S teachers, and in discriminatory learning environment for LGBTTIQQ2S students.

3. Culture

Many of the comments linking culture to male teacher role models surround the idea of certain religious and/or cultural groups who still practice a perceived hegemonic masculinity and dominance over women and girls. One respondent states, “I am unsure how to answer this as I think that it is not fair to say that a particular group would be better in my class than in a female colleague’s class, but some students, due to cultural backgrounds, interact and behave differently with male.” This reflects the belief again in a *good* teacher being able to accommodate all students in his or her class, but also concedes that some cultural backgrounds do interact and behave differently with a male or female teacher. Several comments also allude to boys from certain cultural background ‘respecting’ male teachers more, as embodied in the following, “Many of these students do not have fathers in the home and male teachers serve as good role models. In addition, some of these students respect male teachers and not female teachers because of their culture!” and also, “Example, a boy who has little respect for a female might have a better chance of working with a male teacher who can then model for this student how to respect females.” Another respondent states, “Some boys relate well to a male teacher in elementary schools. Some cultural/religious groups seem to relate better to male teachers.” Although in popular culture the frequently stereotypical assumption is that boys of Muslim culture and background may see girls and women as inferior, it must be noted that in the latter comment, we can infer that the lack of respect may extend to any misogynous background where lack of respect for women is present.

Approximately 63% of African-American households are headed by a single parent, overwhelmingly a mother (Leverett, 2007); links are often made to single motherhood, poverty, lack of male role models, and aberrant behaviors in boys (Finlay & Keewatin, 2002; Simpson, 2002; Tyre, January

30, 2006). Women in Ontario and across Canada who are single-mothers, and the number has been steadily increasing since about 1972, tend to have higher rates of poverty, alcohol and drug abuse, and mental health problems (Lipman, Offord, & Boyle, 1997). Correspondingly, a respondent writes, "Many of these students do not have fathers in the home and male teachers serve as good role models. In addition, some of these students respect male teachers and not female teachers because of their culture!" This echoes the widespread social belief on *diversity* that male teachers may become positive role models for boys who lack them in single-mothered homes, in addition to what is commonly held to be a more Western, and less chauvinistic, embodiment of manhood. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that male role models are also linked to endeavors to encourage boys' literacy in single-parent homes (Willoughby-Herb & Herb, 1993).

In keeping with this widespread cultural belief that male teachers may model more respectful, counter-hegemonic traits towards women, thus reflecting the wedded idea of *diversity* and equality, a respondent states the following common, analogous belief, "The male teacher provides a role model for appropriate male behaviour... not just between boys... but also a model for appropriate behaviour around girls. It allows children to see and experience the differences (strengths and limitations) of both genders who are in an authoritarian role with others. It allows boys in particular to realize that males can be nurturing in a different way than female teachers." In this case, the male teacher is supposed to not only show but subsequently reinforce dualistic concepts of gender as polarized entities. This respondent's idea of diversity is partially based on traditional concepts of gender, and hints at a chivalrous type of masculinity towards girls. However, he indicates modeling a type of *nurturing* by male teachers that is somehow different from that of women teachers that needs discussion.

Indeed, there is much anecdotal commentary in academic research that this project, "The Professional Journey of Male Primary/Junior Teachers," has elucidated. Androgenophobia, or irrational fears of male sexualities as something perverse, unclean, and dangerous that must be heavily regulated, and erastophobia, or irrational fears that all males, including male teachers, are potential and imminent pedophiles, and thus to be subjected to high levels of surveillance, abound (Gosse, 2009). Unlike many of their female colleagues who may physically nurture and console their pupils by hugging them, holding hands, or even having young pupils sit on their laps, male teachers find ingenious ways to nurture their pupils: this includes the assignment of special classroom duties, such as collecting books or handing out crayons, heaping on of verbal praise, having pupils sit next to them in closer proximity, and in lieu of physical contact that many women teachers engage in, such as sitting on one's lap, holding hands, or hugging, many male teacher give high fives (Gosse, under review). These sanctions on men's workplace behaviors, originating from administrators and colleagues, all primarily female, as well as children/pupils, parent/guardians, and the public and media (Gosse, under review), cause inequity in the workplace since women are not subject to such prejudice. They also serve to propagate widespread perceptions of male teacher role models as non-nurturing, or less nurturing, than female colleagues, and thus less equipped to work with children, despite male teachers' alternative strategies. Furthermore, these sanctions against physical nurturing also serve to constantly reinstate the privileged status of women in early education by reaffirming the so-called dualistic 'nature' of the 'two' commonly held genders—male and female, which results not only in maintaining women's privileged status in [early childhood] education, but also a heterosexist and rigidly gendered educational system that helps keep them in majority status, for many men report unwillingness to work with younger children, or constant unease and caution for those who do, due to the omnipresent potential for accusations of inappropriate conduct that for many women are simply accepted ways of nurturing their young pupils.

In addition, various respondents bemoan the common cultural practice in schools of placing behaviorally challenged children, particularly boys, with male teachers simply because of social expectations that they must somehow be able to better deal with them better than female colleagues, as reported by this respondent:

Sensitize female staff about gender issues...like...the appropriateness of comments like "that student should be placed with MR_ next year, because he/she needs a male role model or because MR_ will be able to handle him/her" and "-treat males and females equally. Often, males are seen as a silver bullet to solve behaviour problems in students ("he just needs a strong male role model"). As a result, males usually have an overload of behaviour problems in their classes, without support. year-after-year, it wears us down.

Indeed, it appears that male teachers may end up with a larger number of challenging students, and this, while arguably benefiting female teachers who then partake of a more harmonious classroom atmosphere, has implications for male job retention and long term job satisfaction.

Moreover, some male teachers do concede that children from single-mothered homes may benefit from placement with them, and make links to behavioural issues as well as chauvinism:

Children without father figures I've noticed want to know you personally more so than other children. I've had some success with students with behavioural needs (all just so happened to have no father figures in their lives), because I think (unfortunately) that I receive more respect from them than do female teachers. All children need male and female teachers as they grow and learn.

This latter comment also mirrors the idea of *diversity*, that male teachers can and do provide something of a father figure that may help mitigate some children's emotive and social needs. Indeed, Marshall, English, & Stewart (2001) report lower levels of aggression and depression for children in protective services who had a father figure. More long range, multi-variable research is required regarding male teachers and similar declarations, broadly held to be common knowledge.

CONCLUSIONS

The argument that any teacher will do as long as they are *good* is clearly not the opinion of the vast majority of the male primary/junior teachers in Tracing the Professional Journey of Male Primary Teachers in Ontario. It is clear that the respondents in our online survey who specifically mention the keyword *role model* in their comments, overwhelmingly adhere to the notion of *diversity* rather than the ambivalent idea that a *good* teacher ought to be able to reach all students in his or her class. However, it must be noted that gender arises as the privileged identity marker, with numerous respondents alluding to their [male] gender as somehow germane to being a 'good' or 'positive' role model for children. Amongst those who elaborated in their comments, there are a few chief patterns or themes surrounding this common thought. Most significantly, there are cultural reasons that many male primary/junior teachers feel they can diversify, and perhaps be better equipped in some cases, to respond to certain groups in their teaching. However, the principal reason offered is colonialist, that of transforming (sub)cultures who maintain a non-Western patriarchal structure that 'respects' men more, elevating them to a higher level, while demonstrating a lack of respect and negative attitudes towards women teachers, and this supposedly mostly from boys. This opinion is closely linked to religion, and one can assume from popular culture, media, and also interviews that we have conducted with multiple male teachers, to primarily reference Muslim and Black cultures. Whether this has prejudicial overtones requires further empirical inquiry, as boys (more so than girls), I contend, frequently are unfairly targeted in our school system by both teachers and educational assistants, and seem to be more exposed to negative teacher expectations, which may then have an inverse Pygmalion Effect; Moreover, undeserved and seemingly malicious silencing and ignoring strategies, negative body language and tone, verbal reprimands, time outs, detentions, and punishments abound, especially when of certain ethnic and visible minority backgrounds, targeting many Black, Native, and Muslim boys in particular, according to our research. This substantiates what has been referred to as a type of societal "war" against boys (Hoff Summers, 2000, 2007; Wentz, 2003b), that includes in education. I testify to this troubling phenomenon from numerous in-class observations from all members of our research team who conducted field work during our provincial study in various Ontario school sites, and from other in-school qualitative research I have engaged in from kindergarten upward for several years. This will be the aim of more in-depth future research and publications. Ultimately, all teachers, regardless of their genders or identities, should be more cautious role models in how they convey approval, encouragement, and nurturing towards all children [or withhold these strategies and do the opposite, showing disapproval, discouragement, and neglect], particularly for boys, who seem to bear the brunt of an inverse Pygmalion Effect, particularly when members of a visible minority. Since most teachers are female, white, and middle-class, and the male teachers in the minority also appear to be mostly white and middle class, more affirmative action employment policies to better reflect the student population and broader society should mitigate such prejudice. Additionally, faculties of education, school boards, and teacher

federations should be far more vigilant regarding diversity instruction in their teacher education programs (McFalls & Cobb-Roberts, 2001; Parsons & Brown, 2001).

The notion that male teachers may act as role models for both boys and girls who are lacking them at home and in their larger communities, also arises. There is scant research until now to prove such a claim, which nevertheless has mass common-sense appeal. However, only recently has research on boys and men's experiences begun as it has for girls and women over recent decades, and this is a huge factor in the lack of trustworthy data. Indeed, current findings from the United Kingdom's Teacher Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA) (Eaton, 2009; Staff, 2008b) indicates that male primary school teachers have acted as fundamental role models to one in two men (48 per cent), 35 per cent felt that having a male primary teacher challenged them to work harder at school, and 22 per cent believed that male primary teachers helped build their confidence while they were young; From the 800 men surveyed, many also reported that they were more likely to approach male teachers with issues of bullying (50 per cent), problems at home (29 per cent) and questions about puberty (24 per cent), which is complimentary to my research findings thus far, and the idea that male teacher role models are indeed important, contrary to the notion that any *good* teacher will do, as numbers of male teachers dwindle.

That there was scant mention of sexual orientation and also race along with the keyword *role model*, and race tied in with English language learning, but none of disability, class, or geographical location, has several interpretations. In our survey, we ascertained the gender, geographical location in Ontario, number of years teaching upfront, and language of respondents at the start of the survey, but were reluctant to explicitly question respondents upfront on more touchy demographics of race, class, disability, and sexual orientation, for fear this might dissuade them from continuing the survey. However, many respondents did indeed divulge rampant prejudice and discrimination in later parts of the survey and subsequent interviews, and in numerous areas of their professional and personal identities (Gosse & Parr, 2009). When asked in the survey whether they had experienced prejudice as male primary/junior teachers, 106 of the 223 respondents indicated they had experienced prejudice with 10.4% indicating race, 6.6% class, 77.4% gender, 17.9% sexual orientation, 1.9% disability, 8.5% language and culture, and 'other' at 20.8%, and most explained how this was lived. Therefore, while they do indeed exist, and were commented upon by many respondents and interviewed participants in our study, it is interesting to note that within the confines of my methodology for this particular paper, responses were more limited. Moreover, just as Cummins and Sayers (1995) report that instruction that denies or ignores students' cultural or sexual identity is unlikely to result in improving academic achievement, I apply the same premise to gender, race, disability, geographical location, and class identification. These are jointly a significant force in literacy learning, curriculum content, and role modeling for male teachers and all teachers, as well as students, for they formulate our understandings of and identification with sundry identities, and are thereby wedded to the notion of *diversity* in education.

Indeed, responses specific to gender, teaching styles, and the keyword *role model* were numerous (in the hundreds) and sophisticated, and will be part of a lengthier, future publication; A significant part of this future analysis will involve our participants' problematic beliefs about diverse teaching styles among male and female teachers. Overall, respondents were more apt to comment on their gender throughout all sections of the survey but this may be in part due to the title and focus of our study, which in implicit and explicit appears to focus on and privilege gender. However, it is equally my contention that while the majority of our teacher population is undeniably white, middle class, and female, it is similarly overwhelmingly white and middle-class in the male minority. Therefore, due to this phenomenon of white, middle-class privilege in education, issues of race, disability, class, geographical location, and other marginalizing factors, may be downplayed by participants. Similarly, sexual orientation was significantly addressed throughout the survey and during in-depth interviews, but less so within the confines of my methodology for this paper. Nevertheless, drawing from the broader study, most queer¹⁰ participants appear to be white and largely closeted in school contexts, although my research does indicate significant personal and professional stresses among queer participants, whether closeted or out to some degree, and whatever their racial or ethnic identification.

In conclusion, I propose a call to explore with increased vigor the lack of minorities in our school system and teaching personnel beyond the confines of "gender". Examination of the interplay and

¹⁰ *Queer* may be used as an umbrella term for LGBTTIQQ2S (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, intersex, queer, questioning, or two-spirit).

intersections of race and ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation, disability, geographical location, language and culture, and amongst both men and women, and those whose gender identities do not correspond to either dualist notion, including transgender, transsexual, and two spirit, would be more fruitful and inclusive. Only by examining those with a critical eye who do not necessarily fall within the norm of mainstream, accepted, categories of teachers, namely white, female, and middle class, can we fully appreciate the diversity, or lack thereof, in our teaching population. Only then may we begin to ascertain the effects on minority teachers, including men, the impediments to their sense of job security and job satisfaction, the constraints resulting from male gender policing, the absence of support services and networks, and the widespread effects and ramifications of androgenophobia, in their personal and professional lives. These factors conspire to collectively inhibit a diverse work force and workplace equity, and to maintain the status quo, a workplace seeming to privilege many girls and women that inversely impedes more inclusionary practices for all.



BIOGRAPHY: Douglas Gosse is Director of the Northern Canadian Centre for Research in Education & the Arts (NORCCREA) at Nipissing University and an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Education. His research interest include men's studies, masculinities, queer theory, arts-based educational research (ABER), diversity, identity, male teachers, and teacher expectations. He is the author of *Jackyta*, a novel (2005) and editor of *Breaking silences & exploring masculinities, A critical supplement to the novel Jackytar* (2008). His website is located at: <http://www.nipissingu.ca/faculty/douglasg/index.htm> and he may be emailed: douglasg@nipissingu.ca

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