Three Male Primary Student Teachers' Intersections of Languaging and Teaching

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ABSTRACT

Background: This paper reports on an investigation of male primary student teachers about their planning and teaching over the course of the 2021 year. Three male student teachers' experiences are presented.

Purpose: This study highlights how they negotiated the intersections of self with school, identity, and gender as male student teachers.

Method: In weekly semi-structured peer group discussions student teachers were asked to describe the decisions that they made in planning, to reflect on the nature of the decision-making process that they went through, and about the consequences of this process. As necessary, questions were posed to the groups to further stimulate discussions. Written notes were taken from these discussions and used in combination with visiting lecturer notes about their teaching practice.

Results: It was through the combination of these classroom activities and teaching practice observations that ethnomethodology and symbolic interactionism intersected with these student teachers' self with school, identity, and gender. Ethnomethodology concerns how social order is established through social interactions while symbolic interactionism includes both verbal and non-verbal communication. It has been known that past experiences are the foundations of future experiences. The three male primary student teachers presented in this study support this assertion through their inward-looking and/or outward looking narratives.

Conclusion: This study adds to our understanding of the importance of what messages schools, colleagues, and the wider community are sending to male primary teachers about their work and worth as primary teachers.

KEYWORDS

ethnomethodology, languaging, male student teachers, primary education, symbolic interactionism

INTRODUCTION

In 2019, McDowell and Klattenberg in an investigation into whether gender matters for classroom discipline in primary schools reported on the gender segregation of the labour market. In particular to this present study, they looked into the primary teaching sector in Germany and the United Kingdom (UK). McDowell and Klattenberg (2019) reported that 85% of German and UK primary teachers were female. They then went on to discuss issues around the perceived feminisation of teaching before focusing on their research around classroom discipline. McDowell and Klattenberg (2019) conclude their study noting that "gender is not an overriding variable here in being a teacher" (p. 961). More importantly to the present study, they went on to highlight "we must re-interpret language use as reflecting professional identity rather than gender identity" (McDowell & Klattenberg, 2019, p. 961).

In 2015, I reported on the feminisation of teacher education (Sexton, 2015). At that time, it was noted that New Zealand like many western countries reported a declining male primary teacher popu-

lation. I then went on to note that New Zealand like many western countries has seen concerns raised over the 'feminisation' of primary education. In 2015, I agreed (and still do) with Morwenna Griffiths (2006) that the feminisation of teaching should not be about the numeric majority of women in teaching but should be seen as, "a response to perceived injustice. Power relations and power structures constrain who may belong in any social sphere" (Griffiths, 2006, p. 395). Specifically, the power structures and social sphere for this study both take place in New Zealand primary schools. Similarly, I align with Chris Beasley's (2012) social constructivist critique of essentialism. Beasley (2012) noted that social constructivists acknowledge specific social variation and complexity. Beasley (2012) goes on to note that social constructivists argue against any set identity as well as simple accounts of identity. As such, this study necessitated narratives to explore their intersections of languaging and teaching.

Stephanie Taylor (2010), in her book *Narratives of identity and place,* reports how narratives linked to place provide rich and flexible resources of people's work. For her, the personal and social identity is inseparable. She highlights that this focus does not seek a total account of experiences but explores how what a person says and how this contributes to one's own understanding. Specifically, how the temporal aspects of narratives link back to the past and suggest potential links to the future. These narratives then act as a cultural or discursive resource that enables one not only to make sense of one's experiences but also to shape one's expectations of the future. In terms of this paper, the experiences shaping the identity of student teachers take place in New Zealand primary classrooms. As such, narratives have been used by Hobbs and Davis (2013) as a means for students to make connections both within and beyond the subject. Hobbs and Davis (2013) highlight how narratives draw out personal responses in which personal meaning is attached. Most importantly for this paper, Hobbs and Davis (2013) report how students are able to, "build narratives about, and through, their learning, and as they construct narratives from their lived experiences" (p. 1290). For them it is through narratives that one is able to undergo identity formation while positioning themselves within the setting. This notion of positioning is also important in how Norris et al. (2005) support the use of narrative explanation. For Norris et al. (2005), narrative explanations not only use unique events form one's past as explanatory of other unique events but also some events are causes of others.

This paper sought to address the following research question: How do male students teachers reconcile the messages they receive from schools, colleagues, and the wider community about their worth and work as primary teachers?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Languaging

Bloome & Beach (2019) like McDowell & Klattenberg (2019) noted the intersection of language and teaching. Bloome & Beach (2019) examined how preservice teachers reflected on their literacy teaching interactions in writing. They drew on a languaging theoretical framework as it has grown out of linguistic anthropology, ethnography, applied linguistics, and sociolinguistics. Bloome and Beach build on Becker's (1991) distinction between language and languaging, "there is no such thing as Language, only continual languaging, an activity of human beings in the world" (Becker, 1991, p. 34). For Bloome & Beach, languaging shifts the focus from language structure and form to how language functions in interaction to achieve social action. In a broader sense, languaging is the process through which people make sense of, change, and shape their world (Jørgensen, 2004). This process, therefore, includes all the different ways people interact and react to each other; such as facial expressions (smiles, frowns, raised eyebrows, etc.), eye-gaze, body positioning, etc. (Beauchemin, 2019). In fact, Beauchemin (2019) noted in regard to investigations in teaching how a languaging perspective highlights the ongoing verbal and non-verbal interactions of both the teacher and students as they respond to each other.

Ethnomethodology and Symbolic Interactionism

To explore this intersection of languaging and student-teacher interactions, this study employed ethnomethodology and symbolic interactionism. Both are based on two assumptions: first, social life only has meaning though interpretation by those who are participating in it; and second, social life develops as its participants interact with each other (Goffman, 1977). Brickell (2006) builds on Goffman's (1977) early work noting, "ethnomethodology is concerned primarily with how social life and the individual identities and interpersonal relationships that characterise it are achieved or accomplished through interaction and language" (Brickell, 2006, p. 93). While Brickell was concerned about the construction of gender and sexuality from a sociological perspective, he provides a methodological foundation for this paper's study. Most significantly, Brickell highlights how ethnomethodological approaches allow for the study of gender based on action and interaction not essentialism. Furthermore, symbolic interactionism focusses on, "how meaning is created, modified and put into action by individuals in the process of social interaction" (Brickell, 2006, p. 94). Brickell notes that symbolic interactionism allows for a more

meaningful, relevant, and useful account as the participant's agency is acknowledged as part of their engagement with their surroundings. As a result, ethnomethodogy and symbolic interactionism allows for the exploration of the ways people interact and interpret particular social contexts. In the case of this study, primary education in New Zealand.

Primary Education in New Zealand

In New Zealand, you are required to have at a minimum a bachelor's level degree in initial teacher education (ITE) to register as a teacher[1]. Those individuals who are seeking an ITE qualification have two options: a bachelor's level or a postgraduate level degree. A bachelor's degree normally takes three years to complete and comprises a mixture of education theory, curriculum content, and professional practice. Postgraduate study is normally a one-year programme as either a postgraduate diploma or master's degree. As students enter their postgraduate programme with at least a bachelor's degree, these programmes are more intensive and have a greater expectation of both self-study and self-management by the student teachers. Postgraduate programmes do cover education theory, curriculum content, and include professional practice but compress this into a one-year programme.

This study was conducted in a New Zealand university that offers both a Bachelor of Teaching (BTchg) (Primary Education) and a Master of Teaching and Learning (MTchgLn) (Primary Education). Education Counts[2] reported that in the 2020 school year 85.2% of primary teachers in New Zealand were female. In the Primary Education programmes in the College of Education in which this present study was undertaken in 2020 there were 77.2% female student teachers across both undergraduate and postgraduate ITE programmes indicating a slightly higher percentage of male student teachers. This paper reports on a part of a study that had ethical consent to investigate how and why primary student teachers made decisions in their planning and teaching. Three male primary student teachers, two BTchg and one MTchgLn student teachers, are being reported on here due to their experiences in negotiating their intersections of languaging and teacher-student interactions of self with school, identity, and gender.

METHOD

Background

The New Zealand Curriculum[3] promotes seven effective pedagogies. The curriculum document highlights these seven as "there is extensive, well-documented evidence about the kinds of teaching approaches that consistently have a positive impact on student learning"[4]. Six of these focus on how students learn while the seventh 'teaching as inquiry' focuses on how the teacher is learning to be more effective as the teacher through reflections on practice, reflection in practice, and reflections for future practice (Sexton, 2020). Student teachers, therefore, need scaffolding by more experienced practitioners in learning how to implement teaching as inquiry.

Participants

The participants reported on in this study were two male student teachers in the BTchg (Primary Education) programme in their final-year and one male student teacher in the MTchgLn (Primary Education) programme.

Methods and Procedure

This study was conducted over the 2021 academic year. The two BTchg student teachers were each assigned to a classroom for the entire academic year. These student teachers begin the school year in their classrooms working with their associate teacher as they take on more and more of the teaching role. They begin with a two-week initial block to establish relationships and then continue in the classroom for one-day a week leading up to a three-week block in which they are responsible for half the classroom planning. They then continue in this class for several more weeks of one-day per week leading into a five-week block in which they are responsible for the entire teaching programme for three of these five weeks. The MTchgLn student teachers start the school year in a classroom for one week and continue in this classroom also for one-day a week leading into a four-week block in which they are responsible for half the classroom planning. Then in the second semester of the university,

1   Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand. (2022). *Becoming a teacher*. Retrieved from https://teachingcouncil.nz/getting-certificated/getting-started/becoming-a-teacher/
2   Education Counts. (2022). *Teacher numbers*. Retrieved from https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/statistics/teacher-numbers
3   Ministry of Education. (2007). *The New Zealand Curriculum*. Learning Media.
4   Ibid, p. 34.

these student teachers move to a second school settings in a different year level for a seven-week block in which they are responsible for three weeks of full control teaching.

The participants were invited to participate in this study as part of their normally scheduled classes within their ITE programmes. For the two BTchg student teachers this was a total of 26 one-hour semi-structured peer group (Loughran, 2007) discussions over the course of the year (thirteen in Semester 1 and thirteen in Semester 2). For the MTchgLn student teacher this was 15 one-hour discussions over the course of the year (ten in Semester 1 and five in Semester 2). These student teachers in peer groups of 3-5 were asked to describe their decisions that they made in planning for their teaching: what they planned, why this was planned, and where to next based on what happened. Student teachers were given time each week to reflect on the nature of their decision making process as well as the consequences of their decisions (Lyons & Freidus, 2007). I would listen to their conversations, record elements of the discussion, and as necessary pose questions to further stimulate their peer group discussions. It should be noted that all the student teachers in both programmes voluntarily chose to participate as part of their normal classroom activities. As part of these classroom activities, all student teachers agreed to have the information recorded. This study reports on only three: Chris, Scott, and Henry (all names are pseudonyms) as I was also their supervising lecturer and observed them in their classroom practice. For Chris and Henry this was five times over the course of their year and for Scott, eight (I was his visiting lecturer for his repeat teaching practice). Each observation included a written running record of what was seen and heard by me in the observation. Each observation lasted approximately 60 minutes with a 30-45 minute debrief following. As a result, only their amended discussions are used in this study and all student teacher comments are used with their permission.

Data Analysis

As part of their university classroom activities, the student teachers were asked to describe the decisions that they made in planning for their teaching, to reflect on the nature of the decision-making process that they went through, and about the consequences of this process. As stated, these reflections were a part of the programme and the participating student teachers were free to include as much or as little information as they felt comfortable. The student teachers were ensured that while I would take written notes during the discussions no names of student teachers, schools, associate teachers, or any of their school students would be mentioned in this research.

It was through the combination of these classroom activities and teaching practice observations that ethnomethodology (how the student teacher established social order in the classroom through social interactions) and symbolic interactionism (how the student teacher used not only language but also non-verbal communication in the classroom) intersected with these student teachers' self with school, identity, and gender.

RESULTS

The Three Male Student Teachers

Chris described himself as your typical small-town boy, "I was born __ (a small Central Otago New Zealand town)". Central Otago is a geographical region on the lower half of the South Island of New Zealand. Chris described his family as average for the area, "we were not financially well off, but we didn't starve". He went to one primary school (years 1-6), one intermediate (years 7-8), and one secondary school (years 9-13) all of which were within walking distance of his house. In 2019, he was an 18-year student. In this BTchg programme, some first-year student teachers are offered the opportunity to return home for their end-of-year teaching experience. Chris took this opportunity and was placed into the same intermediate school he attended six years previously. He was known to more than half the teaching staff as a former student. Chris found himself to be the only male in the school. He was not sure that this was the best choice as he noted:

> I know I was a first-year student teacher, but I really don't think they expected
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> too much from me as a teacher, I really think they just saw me as the bloke who
>
> would play basketball at lunch with the boys.

He found forming relationships with the male students easy but had trouble keeping a professional distance, "one boy, that I knew had problems at home, would hang around me in class if things were not going so well." On more than one occasion he was reminded by his associate teacher and even the school principal that he would have difficulty as a teacher if the students only saw him as one of their mates (a New Zealand term used to describe friendships). His second-year teaching experiences were in unfamiliar settings which much younger students in a much bigger urban environment.

As a 19-year-old, Chris was struggling as his associate teacher and visiting lecturer noted "Chris is visibly uncomfortable with the physical proximity and touching of these [six- and seven-year-old] students." When establishing his teaching goals for his final year, his experiences from the previous years were discussed as it was reported that Chris needed to work on his teacher presence and how he presents himself as a confident and capable teacher. In this BTchg programme, student teachers are able to request the school setting they would prefer for their final year. Chris' final-year

placement was with Year 7 students (children aged 12) as this was the age group, he felt would suit him and his teaching style the most. In 2021, Chris was a 20-year-old with a couple of years practice, he noted "I do not believe there will be any expectations placed on me, as a male student teacher, that I wouldn't expect to be put onto any student teacher while out."

Scott came into ITE from a previous career working to support individuals with a range of abilities and needs. He began ITE as a 32-year-old male student in 2020. In his MTchgLn programme cohort, the average age was 28 with an age range of 20 to 52. He had spent the previous decade working with individual's one-on-one. His previous employer as a referee described him as very adept at de-escalation with a calming presence and tone. Scott described himself, "I have been a social worker but really want to be in special education, so I need this degree to get into a classroom." His first teaching experience was in a combined Year 1-3 class (children aged 6-8). His mentor teacher noted that Scott tended to focus his attention on those students who he felt needed the most support and as a result neglected the other students. When this was noted, Scott replied, "how are we supposed to be agents of change if we do not focus on those who need us the most?" As this was his first placement, it was agreed that he could progress but would need to work on his teacher presence and a greater awareness of the whole class. His second placement in a Year 5 class (students aged 10) was a what he described as a "disaster, I tried to give them independence and self-management to be the 'best version of themselves they can be', they walked all over me." His mentor teacher had to take over the class repeatedly as the students were not engaged, not listening, and in some cases not even in the room. After he was failed for this placement and removed by mutual agreement by him and the school, he gave an honest assessment, "I was not their teacher, they knew I was not, and treated me accordingly." In 2021, Scott was in his second attempt to complete his teaching practice. He chose a Year 3 class (students aged 8) as, "they are not too young and not too old."

Henry was in the same BTchg cohort as Chris. Like Chris, Henry was from a small Central Otago town. Henry grew up on the mountain slopes of [his hometown]. Henry noted, "I spent as much time as possible on the slopes snowboarding." Henry and his circle of friends knew they had advantages that many others did not have. In 2021, Henry was a 22-year student. He spent a year after graduating secondary school "snowboarding around the globe." He and is two best friends planned a year holiday travelling from country-to-country snowboarding for as long as possible in as many places as they could. Like Chris, Henry also went back to his primary school in a Year 3 class (students aged 8) for his first-year teaching experience in a school setting where he knew almost everyone and they knew him and his family,

"I loved going back to ____school, I could talk to them about the different runs and the best way to drop down (descend the mountain)." Also, like Chris, Henry found it a challenge in his second year with Year 5 students (students aged 10), "we had nothing in common, none of them had been snowboarding." His final-year placement was in an intermediate school with Year 8 students (students aged 13) as "they are like young adults, and I can talk to them." Henry went into this placement with the expectation that his charm, easy manner, and good looks would carry him through, "I am really looking forward to this year, it is going to go well, I can tell."

For all three of these student teachers, their comments and opinions about themselves and their school experiences are not really that notable. These same statements have been repeated by numerous student teachers in many different ITE programmes around the world. What does become notable is how their languaging of self intersected with school, identity, and gender in their narratives as they discussed their teaching practice.

Chris' Intersection of Self and School

> Me: How did this year go?
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> Chris: The teacher that I was placed with was amazing and gave me enormous amounts of time to prepare for, teach, and debrief from my lessons. I feel like I was treated fairly and was seen as an equal among staff and respected by the students.
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> Me: How were you treated as an equal?
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> Chris: My teacher always sat down with me at the end of the day and gave me feedback on my lessons and how I interacted with the children. She was well resourced and offered for me to use anything and everything that she had, and even make copies if I chose.
>
> Me: That was in class but what about the wider school community?
>
> Chris: I was also involved in a number of out of school activities, including helping coach and referee one of the school touch teams. I felt like a valued member of this school.

Chris ended his final placement having met all the requirements to complete his ITE qualification. As he stated, he felt as if he was seen as a teacher by both his associate teacher and students. His positive verbal language was reflected in his confident body language, he saw himself as a teacher and felt as if he contributed. An advantage of his ITE programme is the final year ends all content by early November so that student teachers are able to seek relief teaching to get straight into the teaching profession as New Zealand primary schools do not end the year until mid-December.

Many are often hired by schools to get this practice at the end of the year prior to them starting full-time teaching positions the following year. Chris chose to complete his year

before looking for any teaching opportunities. In November, his positive image of himself changed.

> Me: You do not look happy; how did your interview go?
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> Chris: I went to [school named] for a job interview and was offered the job rather than being interviewed for the job.
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> Me: Don't you want this job?
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> Chris: The school really wanted me only because I have a penis! There were no male teachers in the school, and it wasn't me they wanted, it was any male teacher they wanted.

It has been reported in many countries about primary teaching and male teachers (McDowell & Klattenberg 2019; McGrath & Sinclair 2013). Specifically for this article Cushman (2008, 2010) addressed this in New Zealand. Cushman (2008) reported on what some principals wanted in male teachers or what they wanted these male teachers to role model. Cushman highlighted that about half of her participating principals were looking for characteristics that would be found in any teacher. She went on to highlight that only 29% stated a male role model needed to be a good teacher. It would appear that after a decade and a half since Cushman surveyed principals in New Zealand, some are still looking for males not primary teachers as evidenced by Chris's comment above.

In New Zealand, beginning teachers register with the Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand[5] for a teaching certificate that is required to be a teacher. As a provisionally certificated teacher (PCT), you are entitled to induction and mentoring for the first two years of full-time teaching. Chris stated he knew he was not the best teacher that has ever been in a classroom, but he has experienced being a welcomed and valued member of a school where he was able to learn and grow as a teacher. He went into this job interview prepared to discuss what he needed to work on to be an even better teacher. While this teaching position was in a school near his home, in a year group he would prefer, and would have allowed him to return home to start his career he was offended that this school only seemed to want him as he was the only male to apply for this position.

> [Chris sitting in my office shoulders slumped, head down, and hands clasped in front of him] What should I do?
>
> Me: This may be the school you want, but is it the job you want?
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> Chris: I know I am not the best teacher out there, but I want to be in a school that wants me not just someone who can use the male staff toilet.

Scott's Intersection of Self and Identify

Scott saw his ITE programme as the next step in his career in helping students with special needs to, "be the best you can be". This was a statement Scott used at least a dozen times a day. What Scott was having trouble understanding is that his ITE programme was also about his learning and how he was progressing to be the teacher to the whole class not just one or two students in the class. For over a decade Scott had been working as a social worker and dealing with individuals. He came to his ITE programme with strong recommendations noting his empathy, ability to de-escalate tense situations, and work with individuals with a range of needs. Scott had difficulty in taking the strengths of his experience as a social worker and applying them to the whole class.

As noted, Scott was unsuccessful in achieving a passing standard of teaching in his second teaching experience. In one lesson, he had the students sitting on the mat (an area in the classroom without desks that students are called to which gets them away from their seats and any potential distractions) going over directions for 28 minutes, and even stated, "I know we are getting a bit restless. I understand this has gone for a while, but you need to show me you can be the best you can be." Then proceeded to continue with instructions for another five minutes ignoring that most of the class had given up trying to pay attention as Scott was focussed on Archie, Cooper, and Santiago (all names are pseudonyms). These boys have a history of not engaging well and going off-task quickly. As Scott focused on these three boys, the behaviour management of the rest of the class began to slip until this situation became untenable for the classroom teacher and the school. When discussing what happened, Scott noted:

> My social worker instincts took over, all I saw were three young men who needed help and support and I no longer even paid attention to the rest of the class. How do I be the teacher when all I see is what I could do to help them as a social worker?

In Scott's ITE programme student teachers are allowed to take a teaching experience twice. Should they fail the same teacher experience twice, they are automatically excluded from the programme. Scott failed once and knew his second attempt was his last opportunity to complete his degree. In 2021, Scott wanted to be and was placed in a Year 3 class:

> Scott: Last year was a bit of a shock. I was not expecting to be a 32-year-old failure, it was a bit hard to take listening to as everyone else talk about what they did, and I was sitting there knowing they all knew I had been asked to leave the school. I thought the teaching part of this master's was going to be the easy part but now I know what I need to work on.
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> Me: What do you need to work on?
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> Scott: Timing is a big issue for me, I need to balance slow or reluctant workers while not letting the others get bored and distracted. As well I have to get being Firm but Fair sorted. I am not a growly teacher, but I do have to be the responsible adult for the entire class.
>
> Me: How are you going to do these two things?
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> Scott: I have been in touch with Mary (his new mentor teacher in this Year 3 class) and was pretty upfront and honest

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5 Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand. (2022). *Becoming a teacher*. Retrieved from https://teachingcouncil.nz/getting-certificated/getting-started/becoming-a-teacher/

about what went wrong last year. So, we are going to team teach from day one so the students see us both as the teacher and then I can work with Mary on how to get better at lesson pacing and timing. Getting the Firm but Fair part is going to take some work, but Mary let me know she is not an angry teacher with students, so I will role model off her to see if how she works will work for me.

Scott went into this teaching experience with a much greater growth mindset. To help keep Scott on track, Mary stood at the opposite wall to Scott when the students were on the mat. If the instructions to the activity were planned to only take five minutes, at the five-minute mark Mary would indicate the time so Scott could keep to the planned pacing. Now instead of repeating the instruction numerous times to each individual student, Scott would send the class to their desks to work and any student who still was confused could stay on the mat. After doing this a few times, Scott realised which students kept staying behind and altered his instructions to asking them what was the first thing they needed to do at their desk, then where could they look to see (instructions were now written up on the teaching board) what was the next thing to do. By the end of this teaching opportunity, Scott's language, demeanour, and presence in the classroom was well on track to meeting the objectives of this teaching experience.

Henry's Intersection of Self and Gender

Henry wanted to be a teacher but also wanted to go back home to be this teacher. This would allow him to continue his passion for snowboarding. Like the rest of his cohort, he began his final-year teaching experience with the start of the school year. In 2021, this was a Year 8 class of 29 thirteen-year-olds composed of 17 girls and twelve boys. His associate teacher set his class up in rows where one row was facing the adjacent row. This facilitated his ability to walk around the room and in-between the rows with him able to make eye-contact with half the class at most times. Henry thought being in Mr Robb's class would be good for him as it would be two male teachers.

Me: What happened this year?

Henry: I had an older mentor teacher, who was not like me at all, we seemed to be on different wavelengths. He had his idea of how a male teacher should be, and that was not me.

Me: In what way?

Henry: I wanted to bring in new things to the class like mindfulness and meditation, you know, I thought it was really cool and I enjoy it in my life. He didn't like me bringing in new things that you know he like didn't know. I mean schools want more males and even here at teachers' college there are only a few males and even less as lecturers. There is no support for young males to be a teacher. No support for what you can and can't do as a male. This can be hard as you see female teachers doing or saying things that we as males can't.

Me: Such as?

Henry: Isn't it obvious, you had to come out to [School name] to negotiate a plan to allow me to complete this year. I told a group of girls who were not really engaging in class that I did like them but that wasn't going to let them not do the work.

Me: Where did this happen?

Henry: It was in class; they were in a group not really doing what they were supposed to be doing and I walked up to them and made the comment.

Me: What were you doing when you talked to them, like standing over them, or bending over them, hands touching them?

Henry: Even I know male teachers do not touch students, I just walked up to the group and lend down to talk to them as the rest of the class was working.

Me: Then what happened?

Henry: Another group of girls went home and told their parents that I said I liked a couple of the girls in class, and they called the school asking if their daughters were safe in the class with me. The school leadership freaked out and I thought I was going to get kicked out if you had not set up a plan with the school so I could stay and finish.

Me: How did this make you feel?

Henry: I feel like there is this whole ethos that we are not trusted in the classroom, female teachers can say 'I really like you, but I don't like your behaviour' and for them that is fine, but not for me! I find that, like it sucks, it sucks.

Me: You were not the only male student teacher there, is this how they felt?

Henry: Angus got on great, but like high school he is a rugby lad. And all the senior male teachers in [School name] all play rugby so he fit right in with the boy's culture, boys are hard, boys play rugby, blah, blah, blah. I went to [high school name] where rugby was everything, their rugby budget was bigger than any other in the school, it was ridiculous. Yeah, so Angus fit right in with their idea of what a man is, but I am not a rugby boy, and I don't want to be, and I am fine with that, and I don't want boys to think they have to be that. I think that might have led to the personality clash with Bryan [Mr Robb] but I don't have to be what they think their idea of what a man should be.

Henry agreed to the terms and conditions that were set in place so he could complete his teaching experience. At the time of the incident, Henry had been in this class for a total of twelve weeks and was in his second week of his three weeks of full-control teaching. He had one final week of full-control teaching and then a final week to hand the class back over to Mr Robb. We agreed that Henry would stay in the classroom to complete his week of teaching placement but at no point would he be in the classroom alone with the students. The parents agreed with a final condition that at the end of his third week, Henry would leave the school. Henry finished his placement.

DISCUSSION

In New Zealand, it is against the law to discriminate based on person's gender among several other categories[6]. As stated, McDowell & Klattenberg (2019) concluded "gender is not an overriding variable here in being a teacher" (p. 961) in regard to classroom discipline. However, some of what happens in classrooms seems to challenge this notion. This study supports Beauchemin (2019) work on the ongoing verbal and non-verbal interactions between and among teachers and students. Similarly, like Brickell's (2006) study this study focused on the gendered actions and interactions of three male student teachers as they negotiated becoming primary teachers through languaging rather than essentialism.

Henry stated he knew male teachers do not touch students but also recognized that female teachers were able to express themselves in ways that male teachers were not able. He also noted that some senior male teachers re-enforced some stereotypical gendered notions of what it means to be male in New Zealand. For those male student teachers who conformed or reflected these notions, they were seen by Henry to have an easier progression through their teaching experience. Chris' experiences in his first year were similar in coming up against stereotypical gendered notions. He was reminded by both his associate teacher and the school's principal that he needed to be the teacher not their mate. While he acknowledged he had issues with boundaries he also noted he felt as if there were no expectations place on him as a teacher. This seemed to be re-enforced after completing his ITE degree when he was offered a job only due to his male anatomy not his ability to be a teacher. Chris was able to acknowledge that in this case the discrimination was in his favour but was visibly unhappy with this situation. He commented that in this programme he has heard us state numerous times 'Education is founded on relationships'. So, when I asked him, what relationship is being established by [school name] offering you this job and is this how you want to start your career, he went from head down and shoulder slumped to head up, eyes wide open, and fists clenched. I then commented, you asked what you should do, your reaction just gave you the answer.

Scott offered a counterpoint to both Chris and Henry. While Chris and Henry encountered gendered notions of how they were experiencing their ITE programme, Scott's experiences were an exploration of the ways he interacted and interpreted particular social contexts. It should be noted that like McDowell & Klattenberg's (2019) study, gender was not the overriding variable for Scott. Like McDowell & Klattenberg's study, one of the main variables was how Scott learned to be in control of the whole class in terms of being Firm but Fair,

i.e., classroom discipline. For Scott his main variable was how he had to negotiate a new identity that allowed him to use his previous skills as a social worker as he worked to become a primary teacher. He and his mentor teacher in 2021 worked as a pair in the classroom to support each other. The students saw the class as having two teachers from day one working together.

Intersections of Languaging and School

Dewey (1938) long ago noted that current experiences are the foundations of future experiences. Lortie (1975) took this a step further noting that student teachers will have experienced several thousands of hours of teaching before they begin their ITE programmes shaping their images of teaching and being the teacher. More recently, Taylor (2010) in her work around narratives of place reported the impact that one's experiences in shaping the future. So, while McDowell and Klattenberg (2019) may have reported that gender was not a variable in being a teacher when it concerned classroom discipline, it does appear to be an issue when it concerns gender, identity, and bodies of some male student teachers. Much has been written about the feminization of primary teaching both here in New Zealand (Cushman, 2008, 2010) and internationally (Griffiths, 2006; McGrath & Sinclair, 2013). The three participants' narratives in this study appear to raise issues around their *intersections* of power structures and social spheres, i.e., hegemony. Hegemony as defined by Encyclopaedia Britannica[7] is the dominance of one group over another. This domination is both often supported by legitimating norms and ideas and inhibits the dissemination or articulation of alternative ideas. The participating student teachers in this study offer their perspectives. Specifically, they evidence what Hobbs and Davis (2013) report as both outward and inward-looking narratives. Their outward-looking narratives allow them to go beyond the classroom's context while inward-looking created meaning from their experiences within the classroom.

Mills et al. (2008) highlighted that there are powerful discourses that construct primary teaching, and that these discourses question why any man would want to work with children. Mills et al. (2008) went on to highlight how and why male teachers often encounter contradictory messages about their work. While Mills et al. (2008) were focused on "attempt to remasculinise the teaching profession can impact upon male teachers who do not readily take up the socially prescribed imaginary male teacher" (p. 74); the implications from this study indicate that the three male student teachers in this study encountered similar contradictory messages. Chris felt he was being offered a job solely because of his male gender and not his teaching ability (i.e., being prized as a male not as a teacher). Scott felt he was

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[6] Parliamentary Counsel Office. (2001). *Human Rights Act 1993*. https://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/1993/0082/latest/DLM304475.html

[7] Hegemony. https://www.britannica.com/topic/hegemony

being offered a job because of his social work expertise not as a teacher (i.e., valorised for his social work ability and experience not his teaching ability). Henry experienced both accusations of sexual predatory behaviour on young women as well as not fitting in with school's male culture.

Where they were in 2022

Chris turned down the job offer that he was uncomfortable with. Covid-19 has actually been an advantage for him as New Zealand's borders were very restrictive. So, in December 2021, there were schools across the country still actively seeking teachers for the 2022 school year. Chris got interviewed for a Year 6 teaching position that he accepted. He began the 2022 school year as a PCT in a school with an induction and mentoring programme for beginning teachers.

Scott completed his ITE programme in June of 2021 which allowed him to teach for second half of the 2021 school year. He was offered a maternity leave position in a special needs programme as they wanted him to start immediately to finish the school year. Two months into this position, he applied for a full-time teaching position in a Year 2 class. He asked me to be a referee. When questioned why he did not want to stay in the special needs area, he replied:

> I worked hard to become a primary teacher who has special needs skills I can bring to the class; I want to be a primary teacher. I may go back into special needs, but I want to be a primary teacher first.

Scott began 2022 as a Year 2 teacher.

Henry completed his degree in November 2021 and immediately moved overseas to take a snowboarding instructor position in Japan with every intention of moving back to New Zealand for our 2022 winter to continue being an instructor. He knows he has a few years to gain full teacher registration so wanted a year or two away from the classroom and then come back to a teaching position in [his hometown] for the 2023 school year.

One final intersection of Self with Identity, School, and Gender

I approached each interaction with these student teachers with the idea that for them each interaction was their truth at that time (Denzin, 1989; Dhunpath, 2000). These multiple collection points, which occurred over the length of the year allowed me to highlight, explore, and investigate their stories. However, this was a collaborative process with these student teachers and as such, I had an obligation to respect their ownership of the raw data. I continuously informed these student teachers about the collected data. Each participant reviewed their data to allow for its authentication and I respected and accepted any editing before using any material.

CONCLUSION

Narratives offer the opportunity to tell a story. For male primary teachers their narratives on how they experienced the social order in the classroom through it's set of social interactions (ethnomethodology) and how they used not only language but also non-verbal communication in the classroom (symbolic interactionism) highlighted the intersections of these student teachers' self with school, identity, and gender. These student teachers reported on the messages they received from schools, colleagues, and the wider community on what it means to be a male teacher in a primary classroom. Their outward-looking narratives allowed them to go beyond the classroom's context while their inward-looking created meaning from their experiences within the classroom.

Furthermore, this study allowed multiple opportunities for these male student teachers to describe the decisions that they made in planning, to reflect on the nature of this decision-making process, and about the consequences. These reflective opportunities helped these student teachers develop the skills necessary to understand their own intersections of school, identity, and gender, which they would not learn in their ITE programme. This type of reflection helped these students to advance their own reflective praxis as they reflected not only on what happened, but also what this meant for future action in the classroom. It would be beneficial to all student teachers to include more of this reflective praxis in their ITE programmes. For this to happen, it is recommended that student teachers are matched in a sustained collaborative mentor/mentee partnership that allows for the time and place to support student teachers in articulating their ethnomethodology and symbolic interactionism.

These stories are narratives and as such are powerful tools for expressing identities that are widely shared. It must be noted that this study was conducted at one university and reports on only three of the male participants. This limits the variety in narratives that are able to be presented. It would be interesting to compare these male student teacher narratives with their female colleagues in their ITE programmes, especially female student teachers in more male dominated fields such as maths and sciences. While these narratives were taken as truth for these participants, their narratives cannot be taken as representative of all male student teachers.

It would appear that 15 years on, similar contradictory messages were still be experienced by some male primary teachers. One remaining question in this area that would be beneficial to determine is how, if in any way, what these three teachers encountered is indicative of other males in primary teaching.

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