

Jon Bettin

**Mindset Minefield: Identifying the
Mindsets of Male Primary Educators**

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the requirements of the degree of Master of Education.

Abstract

This study is an autoethnographic piece which conducts research through personal reflection to identify the mindsets of male primary educators. These mindsets are broken down into three distinct stages which show the progression based on experience and challenges. The first stage focuses on training and the disposition of male students who are in the process of becoming a teacher. Stage two highlights the challenges and difficulty of being a male provisionally registered teacher and the isolation of working in a feminised career. Finally, stage three investigates the role of male educators as mentors and learning from their experiences. Data has been found by using my own experiences and deeply personal reflection into historical events in my life which build a picture of these different stages and how I progressed through them. This research notes that some of the findings which influence these mindsets include personal belief systems, effect of upbringing, as well as the challenges and pressures from society. All of these are shown to either help or hinder the progress through these stages. Additionally, there is discussion into the potential differences between the genders when teaching and how society has an impact on the male educators based on media perspectives. This research concludes with insights and recommendations to help create a diverse workforce that supports the minority of men who choose to teach young children.

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Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Signed

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Introduction

A common narrative we face in primary education is the perceived need for more male teachers within society. However, this narrative is in stark contrast to the views presented in the media as well as how female educators perceive their male counterparts. This research explores my own perspective on whether we need more male educators. A major theme in this research is how status can be a defining factor for the behaviour of male educators. By highlighting whether male educators possess a distinctive mindset, it may make male educators be aware of the potential stages in their teaching journey.

The reflective nature of this research prompted an autoethnographical approach (Wall, 2008). As reflection and experience are key drivers to discovering the mindsets of a male educator and will hope to both influence and connect others' experiences. These observations enabled me to begin the gestation of the research question:

What is the mindset of a male educator in the primary sector?

This is the key question that I hope to answer with this research.

Chapter 1 Locating the researcher

At the time of writing this, I have lived in New Zealand for 12 years, having taught here for seven. I am originally from Cornwall in England. I came to New Zealand with the intention of teaching in schools where students were more valued than in the traditional English system. Upon arriving here, I worked in insurance and as a labourer to build up the money to pay for my university fees. I noticed how New Zealand schools were a stark contrast to English schools. In the UK it was not unusual to see male educators, many of whom are not straight cis-gendered men like myself.

I realised I wanted to become a teacher at 11 years old; this decision was made due to my many negative years in primary school. For me this decision was made initially because I felt I wanted to make schools a welcoming place where students looked forward to being part of my class. Something which I did not experience as a child. I went to a small Christian school in Cornwall where I experienced routine bullying from several teachers who disliked me due to our family coming from Zimbabwe. Ironically, experiencing a Christian education for the first 11 years of my life made me an Atheist.

My desire to teach became more apparent as I grew older. I became more analytical, often scrutinising my teachers' lessons thinking "Why is this so boring." At this point it became a passion and a life goal to teach. I first noticed the lack of male educators being an issue during my first years of university; when entering a school, I would often get quizzical looks from students. This was due to them not experiencing a male educator before. This was often followed up by comments from parents who would relay how nice it was that their child got to learn from a male. These comments often came from parents and guardians of young boys.

However, as part of this research I would like to stress I am not an advocate for men's rights or adding to the gender divide within society. I am a person who wants to talk about an issue they have noticed with the hope that it will connect with others.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

When reviewing the literature, there is an obvious trend in the mindset development of male educators (Crisp & King, 2017; Lahelma et al., 2014; Mallozzi & Galman, 2014; Martin, 1984). There are many issues which stem from these mindsets, most often discussed is the impact on young boys and a lack of role models to provide structure (Malaby & Ramsey, 2011). However, this is not the only issue, as often the men within this marginal number are impacted negatively. This is due to both isolation as they are working within a "pink collar" profession (Lips-Wiersma et al., 2016). Furthermore, this number is even more concerning when compared to the number of teachers in secondary and tertiary education where the ratio of males to females is almost equal (Braun, 2015; Farquhar, 1997). Further comparison between sectors to show the depth of this issue is apparent when comparing the number of teachers in Early Childhood Education (ECE). Currently, less than 2% of ECE teachers are men (Education Central, 2013). By having such stark difference in the number of teachers at lower year levels it creates a pre-conceived perception. That perception is that male educators who work in these areas are dangerous. This is due to the lack of representation creating doubts as to why a man would want to work in such a feminine profession (Cushman, 2006; Petersen, 2014).

This section of the literature review will review how mindset stages are reported by researchers and how they both develop through a mix of time and pressure. I identify five key themes, which I approach in order:

1. The development of the male mindsets; how experienced male educators mould experience
2. Status and the cognitive dissonance of being a man in a feminine profession
3. Unrealistic expectations and boys' success
4. Teaching as a gendered profession and what do men need that is different from women?
5. Poisoning the well – the Peter Ellis syndrome

2.1 The development of the male mindsets; how experienced male educators mould experience

Across the literature associated with this research there are several key themes which have emerged. The first of which is how the mindsets of male educators develop with experience. A term which frequently occurs in relation to the development of the male educator mindset is “identity bruising”. This refers to the phenomenon that male educators often suffer negative experiences and challenges which then harden them to the realities of teaching. As Foster and Newman (2005) state, “all the men in our research were conscious of identity bruising, and many of those that had experienced some bruising” (2005, p. 352). Although female teachers go through a similar process of discovering their teaching identity, a characteristic difference is that identity bruising is often done to men, by men and occurs without the support system which many female teachers receive from other females in a feminine profession (Foster & Newman, 2005). As part of their research, Foster and Newman conducted a study of male educators and found that all participants had negative experiences and interactions as part of their journey to teaching. Highlighted in this research was how most of these experiences came from more experienced male educators who sought to protect and remove potential negative behaviours of less experienced male educators.

This idea of removing weakness stems from the teacher training. Literature indicates that prospective male teachers who are currently attending university have what could be

perceived as an attitude problem in comparison to their female counterparts (Baker, 2006; De Salis et al., 2019; Kane & Mallon, 2006). This expresses itself as an attitude of arrogance and laziness. "Many students questioned the commitment of males to the profession: men are lazy and not committed to their work" (Petersen, 2014, p. 6). Overall, a higher proportion of male teaching students tend not to take the course as seriously as females, instead these students have a mindset of perceiving the learning as easy and thus teaching as an 'easy' profession (Kane & Mallon, 2006). This can lead to them spending less time focusing on their studies (Foster & Newman, 2005; Martino et al., 2009). This attitude comes from the ease in which man can embark upon the profession and the perceived need for them (Ministry of Education, n.d). "Faculty of Education and Social Work is encouraging more males to consider teaching as a career" (University of Auckland, 2019). Across the literature there are multiple accounts of a need for male teachers, making them more desirable (Mallozzi & Galman, 2014). This leads to a lower bar of entry for male educators in the application process (Baker, 2006; Moors, 2010). By having a system which places an emphasis on gender over competence, it reinforces in the male mind that this job is easy as male educators face fewer challenges professionally on their journey (Kane & Mallon, 2006; Martino et al., 2009; Mills et al., 2004). This has a twofold effect: resentment can build with female students; it can also make male student teachers woefully unprepared for the challenges to come in the early primary school environment (Baker, 2006; De Salis et al., 2019; Petersen, 2014).

Following on from this early mindset of, "this is easy, and they need me here" come the crushing realities of teaching (Edwards, 2008; Sumsion, 2005). Most male students are not equipped with the tools to teach during their Provisionally Registered Teaching years or foundation phase (FP):

Male students were unsuited to the FP as they lacked the communication skills to work with young children. Again, this may be linked to identification with mothers or females as the primary interacting individual in the lives of young children. In particular, there was a belief that men lack the empathy required to teach very young children and the ability to care and love for young children which is associated with working in the FP. Male students were regarded as having no patience and

possessing few nurturing traits and being insensitive and thus unable to teach young boys and girls...as well as a female would. (Petersen, 2014, p. 6).

Across the literature, two scenarios occur for a majority of male educators: either they give up because it is too hard and return to a more 'masculine' profession; or they battle through the challenges and become worthy of being called a teacher by embracing behaviours that are important (Farquhar, 1997; Farquhar et al., 2006; Foster & Newman, 2005; Petersen, 2014). Brownhill terms this, "The most frequently identified characteristic of the 'male role model' in terms of their acknowledged importance at Stage One alongside being 'Reliable' was being 'Able to demonstrate positive attitudes towards learning'" (2014, p. 255). This phase of the male mindset could be called the "identity crisis stage," the male teachers have gone from sitting at the back of the lecture hall ignoring the lectures to actively teaching a class of personalities who depend on them (Flood, 2011; Foster & Newman, 2005; Jones, 2008). "Male apologists in fact considered 'healthy idleness' to be a defining quality of masculinity" (Baker, 2006, p. 7). At this point most men will realise, "I am not ready." The biggest challenge they will face is in drawing a line between nurturing and maintaining the correct distance, both physically and emotionally (Crisp & King, 2017; Farquhar, 1997; Martin, 1984). It is often noted that female teachers have the ability and allowance to give children emotional support through physical contact, by doing this it removes some of the mental weight of the situation (Kliman, 1978; Martin, 1984; Petersen, 2014). Thus grounding the teacher and allowing them to move beyond the experience (Rabelo, 2013; Schacht, 2000). However, Peterson argues that male educators can find this balance far more difficult as physical contact is both discouraged and viewed with suspicion by others (Petersen, 2014). However, it is a perceived lack of mental maturity that causes the biggest difficulty (Baker, 2006; Kane & Mallon, 2006). This can lead to male teachers in the first two years having a cold and distant mindset. Such a clinical approach has both positive and negative effects on the students (Jones, 2008; Malaby & Ramsey, 2011). However, students of male educators often do not feel less emotionally supported. This is because they are encouraged to build resilience and are often educated in a way that focuses on expression through learning that directly relates to their interests. As Sumsion (2014) says:

Infusing conventionally "masculine" interests and skills into a play-based, developmentally appropriate curriculum was one strategy Bill used to blend a

traditional form of masculinity with the non-traditional role of caring for young children. He recalled: I've driven my car into the preschool and put it up on jacks and taken the wheels off and pulled the brakes apart. And then we all washed the car. We were talking about cars and buses, so it just seemed like a good thing to do. (p. 114)

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The biggest issue in the emotional support situation is not its impact on the students, more so the nature of traditionally held views of masculinity (Foster & Newman, 2005; Mallozzi & Galman, 2014; Martin, 1984). Males have a higher incidence of suicide around the world—possibly this comes from an expectation from society that it is a weakness to show emotions. This may lead to men who have been brought up in a traditional manner suppressing how they feel (Farquhar, 1997; Petersen, 2014). This suppression of emotions in teaching can lead to mental health issues. Much of the literature shows that male educators leave due to the emotional pressures of the job and those that succeed are ones who have created a support network to avoid the isolation of ‘being a man in a woman’s job’ (Foster & Newman, 2005; Mallozzi & Galman, 2014; McGrath & Sinclair, 2013; Rabelo, 2013). It is also noticed that pressure from the media is a factor for the lack of male educators “Several high profile sex abuse cases in childcare centres, causing some men to leave the field” (Farquhar, 1997, p. 1).

The final mindset stage identified in the literature is what I call “the cycle of torment.” In this stage it reflects a microcosm of male group-think and societal expectations, revolving round status (Farquhar, 1997; Martin, 1984). Once a male educator has successfully prevailed through the challenges of his first two years, they can operate with autonomy and authority (De Salis et al., 2019; Martin, 1984; Martino et al., 2009). A male educator with some experience will be considered and fast tracked towards leadership roles and given extra responsibilities, so adding to his ‘status’ (Cushman, 2005; De Salis et al., 2019; Skelton, 1991). Furthermore, being possibly one of the only males within the school with both experience, status and recognition, he will begin to gain (further) autonomy. This autonomy

results in a situation where male educators do not follow the rules, and enact changes in the school, streamlining systems and challenging ideas of others (De Salis et al., 2019; Yates, 2004). Baker (2006) found that, whereas female teachers tend to consistently work hard and use cutting edge ideas in their classrooms, male educators find a comfortable groove in which to teach almost by muscle memory, something that he refers to as a “healthy idleness” (De Salis et al., 2019; Flood, 2011; Mills et al., 2008). However, this is not necessarily negative as it allows the male teacher to focus on relationships and building a class culture, something that can be missing in their initial years of teaching (Sumsion, 2005). This building of a class culture often comes through as a paternal instinct; “participants indicated an embracing of the nurturing, supporting aspects of being a role model or father figure in school” (Malaby & Ramsey, 2011, p. 10).

By this point in the mindset, the experienced male educator holds themselves with pride and authority when talking to other males (Martin, 1984; Mills, 2000). This is also how the cycle begins; part of the identity bruising is how experienced male educators tend to interact with their lower status peers (Foster & Newman, 2005). This is targeted at male teachers who are Provisionally Registered Teachers by using stories centred around children and sexual abuse experiences. Male teachers attempt to mould the younger males into what they see as a successful teacher and to hopefully circumvent the challenges they themselves experienced (Jones, 2008). However, this can have the opposite effect and result in an ‘overload’ for the younger teacher, by adding extra stress to the point where they leave the profession (Farquhar et al., 2006; Petersen, 2014).

Another aspect of this mindset is what men would call “banter” or jokes at the expense of those with less power, but others would see as bullying (Martin, 1984; Mills, 2000). With the end goal of building resilience in new teachers, male educators use their status, experience and confidence to build resistance (De Salis et al., 2019; Foster & Newman, 2005). This can be in a range of ways, from commenting on the less-experienced teacher’s physical appearance to the aforementioned stories about the dangers of teaching (Foster & Newman, 2005; Jones, 2008). However, the most dangerous is the usurping of authority. This is where an experienced male teacher will use his experience to rob his “protegee” of voice or agency by not allowing him the opportunity to rise to leadership. For example, resaying what has just been said for longer or cutting them off mid-sentence to add his own

authority to the situation (Mills, 2000). Doing this can grind the younger teacher down and put them into a situation where their status is at an all-time low. The unfortunate situation is related to men's need to create and become a role model as well as develop "male style" camaraderie when isolated in a female profession (Martin, 1984). As such, this is the behaviour handed down to new male teachers leading them to act in the same way in the future (Foster & Newman, 2005).

2.2 Status and the cognitive dissonance of being a man in a feminine profession

Across any literature which mentions male educators in the primary profession, one of the biggest themes to arise is the issue of status (Cushman, 2005). In New Zealand and most other western nations outside of Scandinavia, the teaching profession in both the primary and ECE years is seen as a feminine profession (Farquhar, 1997; Sumsion, 2005). As such, most men enter more labour intensive and what we might call "masculine"¹ jobs (Cushman, 2006).

Currently, male primary school teachers have been considered by many to be "unmanly" (Lips-Wiersma et al., 2016). As such their status in society is questioned as why would a man want to work with young children when he 'should' be doing manual work? (Petersen, 2014). This creates a situation among male educators where there is embarrassment as they are perceived as rejecting social norms. This mostly comes through from father figures who are in a more typically 'masculine' job. Potentially, male educators can face ridicule from their friends and 'jokingly' be labelled a paedophile (Cushman, 2006; Cushman, 2005; Farquhar et al., 2006; Petersen, 2014). All of these have a negative impact on the mindset and self-worth of a male entering the primary profession as they have been made to feel low in status (Crisp & King, 2017; Petersen, 2014; Sumsion, 2005). If male students took their studies too seriously it could feel a betrayal or perhaps further damage their ego if they 'failed' (Baker, 2006; Kane & Mallon, 2006). Another possibility found in literature is that a tendency towards arrogance and laziness could be a result of being given some form of status. After all, being told "we need you" or "you are the solution to boys' success" may go a long way to propping up a fragile ego damaged by societal pressures (Brownhill, 2014; Martino et al., 2009; Mills et al., 2004, 2008; Rogers & Brooms, 2020).

¹ Jobs which emphasise either wealth or physicality

In stark contrast, this issue of status does not appear to extend to male secondary school teachers (Hall & Langton, 2006). In this role they are seen more as professors with expertise, rather than someone who looks after young children (Farquhar et al., 2006; Sumsion, 2005). As such, there is a degree of institutionalised bullying within the male teaching community. In my experience, there exists an attitude from secondary school teachers which views primary school and ECE teachers as less skilled and qualified (Cushman, 2005). There is an even split between genders in secondary education whereas fewer than 20% of teachers in primary schools are male (Skelton, 2009).

The issue of status is a concern for the training period and the first two years of a male educator's career. Like all PRT teachers who become fully registered, most experienced educators in the primary field take pride in their positions regardless of gender (Brownhill, 2014; De Salis et al., 2019; Kane & Mallon, 2006). Furthermore, with the government introducing pay parity between secondary and primary institutions it has helped towards a levelling of teacher statuses in society, as lower paid jobs tend to be seen as more "feminine" (Hall & Langton, 2006; Palmer et al., 2020).

As discussed, there is still an issue of status in male primary teachers, due to so many men having negative starts to their careers leaving a trail of doubt and lingering sense of what they once felt (Farquhar, 1997; Foster & Newman, 2005; Jones, 2008; Mills et al., 2008). To reinforce their status and achievements, male educators have several key behaviours. The first of which is when they begin to enact the cycle of torment as previously mentioned. Another is seeking and being fast tracked for leadership opportunities (Mills et al., 2004). Across many schools it is not unusual to see male educators in many high status roles such as principal, as noticed by De Salis et al. (2019) "Male teachers occupy a disproportionate number of management roles in primary education," (p. 484). Many male educators create status by running an autonomous programme that challenges the rules of the school, thus asserting their status (Edwards, 2008; Mallozzi & Galman, 2014; Mills et al., 2008).

2.3 Unrealistic expectations and boys' success

Within education there is much discussion on why boys' achievement is lower than girls', particularly in literacy (McGrath & Sinclair, 2013). Male teachers are touted as the answer to improving boys' success, however studies reveal that male teachers have little impact on boys' achievement and instead good teaching is the cause for academic success (Brownhill,

2014; Martino et al., 2009; McGrath & Sinclair, 2013; Mills, 2000; Mills et al., 2004; Rogers & Brooms, 2020). “There is, however, little evidence showing any correlation between boys’ educational outcomes and the number of male primary teachers in schools” (De Salis et al., 2019, p. 475). This myth has a negative effect on male educators for two reasons. Firstly, it supports the importance of males over females, increasing potential resentment and conflict in the workforce (Allison, 1995). Much of the research shows that the assumption that men can teach boys better has a negative impact on both male and female teachers (Brownhill, 2014; Kliman, 1978; Mills et al., 2004; Petersen, 2014). It reduces the agency of female teachers and can also lead to situations in which males are seen to have more ‘value’ and become a commodity with unrealistic expectations, as the burden relies on them to show progress in boys’ learning (Jones, 2008). The pressure on new teachers regarding this expectation is the most detrimental aspect of this perspective. By causing stress and anxiety, especially when the students do not improve, it adds to the feeling of inadequacy among male educators (Cushman, 2005; Jones, 2008; Mills et al., 2008; Petersen, 2014). This is due to many feeling they have ‘failed’ and not achieved what is expected of them (De Salis et al., 2019; Martino et al., 2009).

However, there is a range of research which indicates that there is some truth to the perspective that men educate boys in a way that supports their needs to a greater extent. This is due to more active teaching styles or values impressed on boys at home which lead them to respect men more than women (Crisp & King, 2017; Malaby & Ramsey, 2011; Mills et al., 2004; Sumsion, 2005). This leads to a situation where boys listen to male educators more due to identifying with their gender (Mills, 2000). Additionally, when learning from an experienced male teacher who shows authority and is seen as a role model, boys are more likely to succeed. This is attributed to the male role model having the confidence to elevate the student and show success is possible (Brownhill, 2014; Malaby & Ramsey, 2011; Mills et al., 2004). Due to male educators being more willing to challenge authority and teach in different ways from females, boys will be more willing to learn as the behaviour is considered aspirational (De Salis et al., 2019; Sevier & Ashcraft, 2009). Continuing the theme of teaching styles, children respond to more engaging teaching styles that are high energy and offer a range of learning opportunities (Palmer et al., 2020; Schacht, 2000). This way the learning is contextualised, especially for boys, as there is relatable life experience. However,

it is important that we do realise that neither all boys nor all men are the same and that female teachers have this teaching style also.

It is also noted that male teachers have been attributed with the ability to promote pro-social behaviour while assisting both boys and girls to develop their ideas of masculinity (Flood, 2011; Martino et al., 2009; McGrath & Sinclair, 2013). This idea is important as this image of masculinity will work to establish male educators as being part of the norm (Jones, 2008). Doing this will reduce the impact of the initial mindset of male educators being sought after, as future generations of boys may be more encouraged to teach as they see it as 'normal' (Mills et al., 2008). Furthermore, more male educators interacting with boys would also positively impact the second mindset. This could be due to both reducing pressure and isolation on male educators as potentially more boys would see teaching as a gender-neutral profession thus reducing stigma (Farquhar, 1997).

The belief that education and masculinity are in a "crisis" is one of the key reasons more male teachers are sought after (Martino et al., 2009). "Backlash implies that there has been a feminist conspiracy against boys, and male teachers, in schools" (Mills et al., 2004, p. 358). However, this crisis is a symptom of the current system's high level of advocacy for male educators. The literature notes that most of this comes from conservative, neoliberal, and religious activists and writers regarding boys' education and resistance to a change in societal values (De Salis et al., 2019). Several sources of literature notice that the improvement of boys' educational success has a lot more factors than needing male teachers (Kane & Mallon, 2006; Martino et al., 2009; Skelton, 2009). The current proposed solution of incentivising and encouraging male educators is both reductive and not proven to be effective, whilst also furthering the mindsets that develop in male educators (Ingram, 2018).

The literature also notices that a backlash is becoming apparent from the value bestowed on male educators (Baker, 2006; Kane & Mallon, 2006; Martino et al., 2009). Overall, the literature makes the case that we should not be tailoring education to boys and assuming success is due to their gender. Instead, it is connected to conditions like intellectual quality, connectedness, supportive classroom environment, and working with and valuing difference, something that is not unique to male educators but to good teachers as a whole (De Salis et al., 2019).

2.4 Teaching as a gendered profession: Do men need something that is different from women?

A theme discussed by the literature is that there are key differences between men and women, these are down to key areas engrained in our society such as the traditional gender roles (Brownhill, 2014; Dillabough, 1999; Foster & Newman, 2005; Malaby & Ramsey, 2011). However, since our classroom could be viewed as a miniaturised version of society there needs to be action put into place which benefits all genders alike (Farquhar et al., 2006; Ingram, 2018). The gender debate has grown since the recognition that there are more than two genders. Such conversations into the differences has always been provocative, with lingering tensions as we focus on both women's rights and also the rights of those who are non-binary (De Salis et al., 2019; Jones, 2008). It could be seen from outside the male perspective that within education we have a narrative that continually overvalues male educators while not representing non-binary teachers and devaluing female teachers (Edwards, 2008; Martino et al., 2009; Mills et al., 2004; Sevier & Ashcraft, 2009). Across many interviews women are reported as saying they feel undervalued and must work harder for respect compared to male counterparts (Baker, 2006; De Salis et al., 2019; Kane & Mallon, 2006; Martin, 1984; Petersen, 2014). One solution to help the mindset of male educators is raising the expectations for teaching. Rather than employing men and valuing them based on their gender as well as the supposition they are the solution to boys' success, there should be a focus on good teaching and promoting competence regardless of gender (Baker, 2006; Kane & Mallon, 2006; Kliman, 1978; Mills et al., 2004; Petersen, 2014). This may impact the equality of outcome and encourage less men into teaching, however those who do turn to teaching will be more committed from the initial stages and more equipped for the challenges that follow (Foster & Newman, 2005; Mills et al., 2004; Palmer et al., 2020).

Another theme which appears, allied to the lack of male educators in primary schools, is that of isolation (Cushman, 2006; Cushman, 2005; Farquhar, 1997; Mills et al., 2008; Sumsion, 2005; Yang, 2014). Adding to the difficulty faced in the initial male mindset, many men feel isolated and struggle to ask for help (Crisp & King, 2017). This stems from being perceived as an outsider (male in a female profession) and the belief that sharing such difficulties could further isolate them or encourage feelings of weakness (Foster & Newman, 2005). Therefore, another key difference males need is the active development of a

community. It has been shown in Finland and other Scandinavian countries that by offering men opportunities to network and interact with other primary male educators, it increases both the quality of male teachers and the number of male teachers (Lahelma, 2000, 2011; Lahelma et al., 2014). In Finland, 30% of primary teachers are male (Lahelma, 2011). This isolation impacts the mental health of male teachers. Male teachers tend to have higher levels of anxiety and depression as well as professional burn out (Lahelma, 2000; Petersen, 2014). Cushman links this to them being shunned or not understood by the male peers who do not teach, and a lack of support or understanding in a female-dominated job (Cushman, 2006).

The way male educators interact with their students is a key difference between how the genders view teaching (Mills et al., 2008). More male educators tend to teach in a very active style which promotes building, play and movement (Brownhill, 2014; Mills, 2000; Mills et al., 2008; Sumsion, 2005). In an industry that views men with suspicion, it is hard to teach in a way that promotes a physical style without physical connection (Crisp & King, 2017). Although in the current climate no teacher should touch a child, it is more socially acceptable for a female teacher to do so (Crisp & King, 2017; S. Farquhar et al., 2006; Petersen, 2014). This is supported by my experience. I would routinely see female teachers hug children when they were distressed or had accomplished a challenge. However, I have been warned about contact after lifting a child down when stuck on the top of the monkey bars. This dichotomy highlights the degree in which teaching is a feminine career and how the rules between the genders when teaching are often blurred based on society's overarching views.

This leads to situations where male educators are overly aware of their proximity with children. This adaption is done through pushing the rules and challenging the status quo (De Salis et al., 2019; Jones, 2008; Lahelma, 2011). By doing this, a male teacher learns that there are ways to support, nurture and teach within the confines of suspicion and fear (Foster & Newman, 2005; Mallozzi & Galman, 2014; Palmer et al., 2020). Indeed, only at the end of term and when students leave his year group, will a male allow any degree of physical contact. As, at that point, with parents and peers present he is free from accusations when engaged in physical contact, such as a hug, prompted by either child or parental pressure as a thank you (Cushman, 2005).

The male identity within New Zealand is a complex issue that has developed over the course of our history. Contemporary masculine identity and its development would serve as a pertinent topic to include as part of this research. Due to the dominance of men in positions of power, it is widely regarded that societies across the world are governed by patriarchal systems (Johnson, 2005). This tendency of men occupying positions of power in labour, corporate and governmental sectors of society. This identity is often taught at a systemic level in schools and family units based on values associated and upheld within society (Setts & Burke, 2005).

Johnson (2005) states,

Cultural depictions of mass-society as a whole and the ideal man in terms that closely resemble the core values of society as a whole. These include, control, strength, competitiveness, toughness, coolness under pressure, logic, forcefulness, decisiveness, rationality, autonomy, self-sufficiency, and control over emotions. (p. 7)

These qualities have developed an identity based on power and struggle, resulting in a system where men vie for status over each other. Men who work in more masculine roles are often accorded greater value within western cultures. This value may not be a conscious favouritism instead it will be more subconscious within society, often reflected through wages and pay. An example of this is manual labour being considered a masculine profession, as such labourers and traditional male professions earn more than female-dominated professions such as teaching. To further support this gendering of professions, masculine jobs are referred to as “blue or white collar” professions whereas feminine professions are considered “pink collar.” This denotes a sexist view which serves to undermine those who go against gender norms as they are instantly labelled as being in the ‘wrong’ category (Lips-Wiersma et al., 2016).

It is well known that the current identity men hold with New Zealand is described as “toxic.” This idea of toxic masculinity has been the result of value of status. By having men seeing themselves as needing status there are severe repercussions to mental health among males. Mike King has been one of those trying to shift the identity of men to being less tied to status and more focused on welfare. "When you have one of the most quintessential blokes

in the country saying, 'I can do better', that just fills me with hope" (King, 2018). In relation to teaching, this identity creates a scenario where male teachers are accorded low status as they are going against the gender norms and working in a lower-status female role. By doing this, a natural mindset begins to develop. This is one that wants status and recognition but is seen as of lower status by society. As such, this relates to the first mindset as they are given status within universities due to the feeling of being needed thus feeding the male ego and breeding arrogance among trainees.

The notion of gendering and gendered professions has usually had a historical negative impact on our society. This is due to the development of inequality between groups and reinforcing gender stereotypes (Davidson, 2016). As part of this there needs to be a discussion around trans-, a-gendered teachers and students as well as what gender means in contemporary society. Historically, gendering professions has served to marginalise these non-binary groups to the fringes of society as they do not have a place in a binary system (Davidson, 2016). As part of this there is little or no information about the number of New Zealand teachers who identify as either non-binary or transgendered. Furthermore, by having a society that still genders profession, the impact on students is negative as the dialogue around and recognition of non-binary identity improves. In a report by OECD (2020), it was found that, "New Zealand is one of three OECD countries that provide significant legal protections to sexual and gender minorities" (p. 2). Although New Zealand encourages more expression around gender from students, there is a lack of support for these individuals at a societal level. This is due to our workforce being divided along binary lines, thus ostracising these individuals from the workforce (Davidson, 2016). The topic of gender diversity in the teaching profession merits a study of its own; it is beyond the scope of this project.

Primary school teaching has not always been considered a female profession, pre-World War 1, it held comparatively high numbers of male teachers. This was due to the role being seen as a symbol of status and power (Strachan, 2000). Teachers were influencing the values and ideals of young children, helping to reinforce gender roles. Often, men would be tasked with teaching and enforcing the ideals of what young boys should strive to be while female teachers would encourage young females to adhere to their traditional roles. It was during the conscription of men to join the war effort that there became a necessary reliance

on female teachers (New Zealand History, 2014). Thus, boys and girls were educated together due to the shortage of teachers. It was when the men returned from war that many of them worked manual labour as their jobs were now either female dominated, or they were unable to adjust to their old way of life. In contemporary New Zealand, the effects of this are still discernible. Primary teaching is considered a pink-collar profession; as such men who enter this profession have an innate stigma attached to them as they are defying the core values of being a male for an easy and safe job that does not challenge them physically (S.-E. Farquhar, 1997; Lips-Wiersma et al., 2016).

2.5 Poisoning the well – the Peter Ellis syndrome

A recurring theme that needs to be addressed in regards to the mindset of male educators is an issue has been dubbed the “Peter Ellis syndrome” (Baker, 2006, p. 23). Peter Ellis was a male New Zealand childcare worker who was convicted of sex offense crimes against minors in 1993. This case and the publicity around it served as the catalyst for one of the biggest aspects of the male mindset—fear (Crisp & King, 2017; Edwards, 2008; Farquhar, 1997; Foster & Newman, 2005; Jones, 2008). Much of the literature points to this being a self-fulfilling prophecy amongst male educators. Men teach in a way that is so actively aware of accusations, they seek to avoid the labels created. This is done by becoming distant from their students and trying their best to guide less-experienced male teachers to become resilient to the reality that men can be targeted by false accusations of impropriety (Brazauskaitė, 2021; Cushman, 2005; Foster & Newman, 2005; Jones, 2008; Malaby & Ramsey, 2011).

This syndrome could be the very foundation that underpins the male mindset in teaching. As discussed in the literature, men in the first two years of teaching tend to be cold and distant from their students (Jones, 2008; Mallozzi & Galman, 2014). This may be seen as a form of self-protection as, if they get too close or comfortable around their students, it could lead to accusations of inappropriate behaviour (Petersen, 2014). This is a perception held solely by men, as the wider community within schools sees male educators as vital to the education of children (McGrath & Sinclair, 2013; Mills et al., 2004; Skelton, 2009). However, peer relations between men serve to highlight the damage these accusations can cause. It is typical that within society and peer groups, often male educators experience

bullying about being 'paedophiles' from other males (Cushman, 2006; Cushman, 2005; Farquhar, 1997; Farquhar et al., 2006; Jones, 2008).

Coupled with the pressure from males outside of teaching is the impact of experienced male teachers; this is the poisoning the well aspect. Experienced male educators are the key perpetrators of the "Peter Ellis syndrome" (Baker, 2006; Jones, 2008). Although an accidental side effect of wanting to protect their colleagues, a range of stories and cautionary advice is given to inexperienced teachers to not only to warn them of danger and so prolong their careers whilst protecting themselves from being targeted by association (Foster & Newman, 2005; Jones, 2008; Petersen, 2014). In the mindset of an experienced male teacher, if one of their male colleagues is accused of abuse, they are likely to be linked to it or even accused of negligence themselves as they did not protect those involved or identify the potential predator (Hall & Langton, 2006).

As part of this theme, we must also address the juxtaposition of the messages being given to prospective male teachers (Jones, 2008). An example of this is the push from governmental and education bodies who are seeking more male educators (Lahelma, 2011; McGrath & Sinclair, 2013; Mills et al., 2004; Skelton, 2009; University of Auckland, 2019). This extends into universities not educating and preparing men for the difficulties of the roles they are about to embark upon, once again making it the elephant in the room (Foster & Newman, 2005). We also have the media and the impact on society's perspectives of male educators. We are given the rhetoric that male educators are dangerous and predatory; these statements are inflammatory with no follow-up reports clearing the man of the supposed wrongdoing (Baker, 2006; Moosa & Bhana, 2020; Petersen, 2014). This perception can increase the mistrust and suspicion towards male educators, thus enforcing the scarcity of educators who are male (Lahelma, 2000; Mills et al., 2008). This is whilst making those who do teach more hyperaware of their situation (Baker, 2006; Foster & Newman, 2005; Jones, 2008).

Other researchers note that within the past few years there has been a significant change in the perceptions of male educators, especially in primary schools. Currently we are in a society that advocates the change in gender roles and supports choice (Brownhill, 2014; Lahelma, 2011; McGrath & Sinclair, 2013; Skelton, 2009). Issues such as the Peter Ellis syndrome are fast becoming a thing of the past (Lahelma, 2000; Lahelma et al., 2014). As

such, perceptions around male educators have developed from “potential paedophile” to “necessary assets” within schools (Sevier & Ashcraft, 2009). This is most prevalent in the attitudes of the community, where many prefer their children to have good teachers over those of a specific gender (Mills et al., 2008).

Chapter 3 Methodology

The methodology of this research is broken into three main parts. The first part focuses on the nature of autoethnography as a method and what it offers. This includes a discussion on the history of autoethnography. The second part will look at how I am conducting my research; this will include models of reflection and a justification as to why an autoethnographical approach was chosen for this specific research project. Finally, I will examine the ethical considerations which affect an autoethnographical approach and how I have addressed these issues.

3.1 The nature of autoethnography

When conducting research there is the assumption that, within qualitative research, reality and truth are based on the lived experiences of the individual. This style of research seeks to use the individual's experiences to make sense of the world around them thus validating their ideas and existence (Silverman, 2000; Yates, 2004). According to Denzin and Lincoln (2000) "...qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meaning people bring to them" (p. 3). Qualitative research uses a range of methods that use a humanistic stance when investigating information that is seen through the eyes and experiences of individual participants (Chu and Chang, 2017; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

Goldschmidt (1977) proposed that an autoethnography is focused on the self and reveals personal investments, interpretations, and analyses. However, David Hayano (1979) was the researcher who popularised autoethnographical research. As an anthropologist, Hayano was interested in the role that an individual's own identity had in their research. He believed there was value in a researcher conducting and writing ethnographies of their own people. As the years progressed, there became an interest in the importance of culture and storytelling (Richards, 2008; Tolich, 2012). This was due to research being more human centred and gradually becoming more engaged through the personal aspects in

ethnographic practices. This led to the eventual application of the term "autoethnography." Autoethnography was to encompass a research style that worked to explore the interplay of introspective, personally engaged selves and cultural beliefs, practices, systems, and experiences. Currently the emphasis of an autoethnography is heavily placed on personal reflection (Lake, 2015; Sparkes, 1996, 2002).

An autoethnography is an example of a humanistic research method as it establishes its data by employing a personal narrative (Plummer, 2012; Richards, 2008). This narrative exists to validate the experiences and opinions of the researcher (Yates, 2004). By using experience and the individual's life experiences as valuable data, it places the personal element at the centre of the research. It could be argued it does this to a higher degree than most other types of qualitative data (Wall, 2008). By having an individual reflect and dive deeply into their experiences, it allows a connection to be provided to those who read the research, going beyond the typical use of questionnaire and interviews (Carolyn Ellis, 2007; Lake, 2015; Schulz, 2013). Although these data collection methods do indeed have a humanistic element, there is always the potential for deception and experimenter bias where the participant gives information based on what they think the researcher wants to hear rather than the truth (Denzin, 2007; Mockler, 2014; Wall, 2008). However, the intent of an autoethnography is to provide the information and research data with the assumption that lived experience is data, thus allowing higher degrees of truth and accepting personal bias as part of fact as it relates to the experiences of an individual (Marshall & Rossman, 1999).

An autoethnography takes the approach of using the researcher as the main source of data for the research (Sparkes, 1996; Wall, 2008). Instead of surveying and interviewing participants, I instead use reflection to conduct research. There are many benefits of using this approach, most noticeably the biggest benefit is the richness of the data and insight (Tolich & Fitzgerald, 2006). Importantly it is the researcher's responsibility to not only protect the identity of those written about but also themselves (Ronai, 1996; Sandstrom et al., 1999; Wall, 2008; Wyatt, 2006). Mental harm is a potential impact of a reflective narrative, as the individual is revealing personal events to be used as data (Sparkes, 1996; Wall, 2008); I avoid this issue by reflecting carefully on what I wish to disclose in a publicly available document.

Another attraction of using an autoethnography as the methodology is that it gives access into the researcher's private worlds to provide a rich source of data (Bochner & Ellis, 2016; Sparkes, 2000). By doing this, it also creates a realistic and honest interpretation of the data as the researcher has personal investment into the research (Sparkes, 1996; Wall, 2008). By having a deeply personal narrative in which to research, often results in the data being more genuine due to how personal it is to the researcher in the search of truth (Bochner & Ellis, 2000). It is an extremely uncommon occurrence for a researcher who uses an autoethnography to be fraudulent (Ellis, 2007). This supports the instinct for people to make a connection to the data and researcher (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The ability to reflect and critique one's own life also serves as a valuable tool as it allows individuals to develop their own practice as they research (Jones, 2008). Having data that is reflective and based on lived experiences has the added benefit of being more likely to connect to the audience. This is due to the personal journey, instead of the data being a consolidation of others' experiences out of context or raw data (Lake, 2015; Sparkes, 2000).

The significant feature of the purpose of an autoethnography is what insights others can glean from their own experiences by reading about that of others (Tolich, 2012). As an aside to this, people and professionals will try to find parallels between the experiences of themselves and others to enact necessary changes to society (Sparkes, 1996). There is a possible issue of confirmation bias, where the reader will use the research to justify and explain their own personal biases whilst ignoring the other potential truths (Mockler, 2014). However, there is an advantage that is unique to an autoethnography. By crafting a reflective piece of data, it will draw in those professionals who are also seeking to reflect and develop. Often researchers who embark on this style of research do so to improve their practice (Korthagen & Vasalos, 2005; Sparkes, 2000). Within education, reflective practice is a highly sought-after skill, as it develops professionals who are aware of their surroundings and impact on others (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Autoethnographies serve as an avenue that allows researchers in the field to be aware both of their actions and how to improve in the future (Sparkes, 2002). This honesty results in the recognition that we are part of both the problem and solution (Chang, 2008). Therefore, although a small minority of the readers may wish to use research to confirm their own biases, my research aims to reflect on the issue of male mindsets to improve them (Foster & Newman, 2005). As such, I posit that

most who partake in autoethnographies have already become aware of their shortcomings or issues in society and are actively seeking ways to reflect and develop understanding. This is also whilst seeing if such issues are unique to them or are representative of wider problems within society, leading towards social change. By using personal reflection to find the cause of issues within the self, it shows a vulnerability and willingness to become better and influence society to change.

The ease of access to data is an area where autoethnographies show a valued strength over other types of methodology, since the researcher calls on his or her own experiences as the source from which to investigate a particular phenomenon (Sparkes, 2002). Since there is no need to manage the schedule or travel to the source of information, such as interviewees, it allows a logistical advantage (Chang, 2008). However, it is important to recognise that this advantage also entails a potential limitation, by subscribing analysis to a personal narrative, the research could also be limited in its conclusions (Wall, 2008). This idea comes from the perception that more voices can enrich data. However, Bochner and Ellis, consider that this limitation on the self is not valid, since, "If culture circulates through all of us, how can autoethnography be free of connection to a world beyond the self?" (Ronai, 1996, p. 24). In other words, the experiences of individuals are often so varied and rich that many conclusions can be drawn. Often in the case of an autoethnography the researcher does not start off with their conclusions. They may have a hypothesis to work from, but this is not always proven true. As such the perceived limitation is no longer valid.

The idea of access to data needs to be discussed further in terms of a methodology. This is due to the question: how does one access such data? On the surface, it may seem both simple and lazy to use a reflection and personal narrative as a source of data. Many critics who have a lack of understanding into the depths of reflection needed may even conclude that the research can say anything to fulfil a conclusion. This is not the case, in all regards an autoethnographical reflection goes far beyond a surface level reflection (Wall, 2008; Wyatt, 2006). This deep dive into the self is often done in tandem with stimuli which serve to enable the necessary depth of reflection (Lake, 2015; Sparkes, 1996). This could be a researcher using photos or other stimuli associated to the data they are trying to reflect upon. In addition to this, most researchers who use an autoethnography tend to have both studied and/or developed a model of reflection (Korthagen & Vasalos, 2005). By doing this it

allows not only a depth of reflection into the subject but also provokes a cycle which allows data to feed into one another giving a cause and effect. These clear links between events are the key to a deep dive reflection where the layers of the self are traversed and peeled away to expose the root of the data.

Reading a highly personal narrative that captures the voice and experience of another fosters empathy and allows readers to become aware of realities that have not been thought of before. This idea is called emancipatory discourse, and is an advantage which is acknowledged by Richards (2008), "...those being emancipated are representing themselves, instead of being colonised by others and subjected to their agendas or relegated to the role of second-class citizens" (p. 1724). Readers are not digesting the numbers and cherry-picked accounts of participants who have been interviewed. Instead, highly personal and reflective experiences of a single human being are presented making autoethnography a valuable form of inquiry both on a professional and personal level. Personally, I feel any research that allows a connection between social groups or individuals will create dialogue. This can then be a catalyst to enacting change for the better within society, as opinions and beliefs can be changed and challenged through lived experiences.

Another advantage of autoethnographies is variety. No two autoethnographies are the same; they may have similar conclusions but there is an innate uniqueness to each autoethnography due to personal voice. However, this uniqueness does not get in the way of an autoethnography's desire to inform and educate others. Plummer (2012), makes light of this, saying, "What matters is the way in which the story enables the reader to enter the subjective world of the teller—to see the world from her or his point of view, even if this world does not 'match reality'" (p. 401).

There are limitations to autoethnography, however. The narrative may evoke feelings of unpleasantness for both the readers and researcher (Bochner and Ellis, 2002; Sparkes, 2002). Wall (2008) states that it is not unusual for the reflective process to have both a lasting and negative impact on the researcher (Wall, 2008). This could be at the cost of not reaching a conclusion that allows both closure and the desired impact on social change. This begs the question: was it worth the suffering? These risks will be looked at in the ethics section below.

3.2 How this research will be conducted

This research will create a picture of how to break the negative mindsets mentioned in the literature review and the cycle which is ever-present in the male teaching community. There were several important steps I took to get the level of reflection necessary. The first of which was the writing style and perspective. My research is from a first-person perspective as I feel it allows a deeper, more truthful representation of my journey compared to third person which may allow for a more fictional story-like narrative.

The first part of the autoethnography process was deciding on a model of reflection. This process was multifaceted. Initially I decided to use Brookfield's model of reflection (2017). This model looks at teaching through four lenses using a process of critical reflection to gain a new understanding and awareness of the situation. These areas are the autobiographical, the students' eyes, our colleagues' experiences, and theoretical literature (Brookfield, 2017). Due to my experiences as a teacher using the Brookfield model for teacher inquiry, I chose to adapt it for an autoethnographical reflection. This change was due to the original use of the Brookfield model being created with teaching as inquiry as its focus (Brookfield, 2017). I have adapted the categories for self-reflection rather than a reflection into improving teaching practice. The model I have created is as follows.

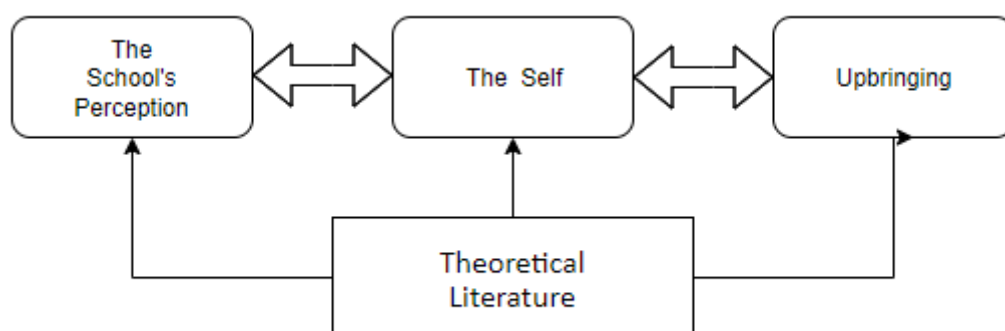


Figure 1: My reflection model

I have sought to combine the categories “the students’ eyes” and “our colleagues’ eyes” into “the school’s perception.” By making this change, it allows a surface-level entry point for me to analyse my research. In this area I talk about my experiences at a surface level and how I felt about certain events. Beyond this, the reflection will then allow me to deep dive into “the self” and my perception of how (I believe) my actions have been perceived by

those around me and the impact my behaviour had on them. Next, I have changed “literature” to “upbringing.” The intention of this is to discuss how my upbringing and values may have preloaded many of these responses and my sense of identity. I also feel that “theoretical literature” was a redundant category as this is a master’s-level dissertation which will have a consistent use of literature to support any observations (Yates, 2004). It is also important to stress that, throughout this research as part of the methodology, a use of questioning will need to be apparent. It isn’t simply enough to ask, “how do I feel?”, but as part of this research I questioned these questions to delve down further in my reflections. An example of this was asking “why did this challenge me?” This was then followed up with “where did these values come from?” and further asking “what were the origins of these values?” Overall, having a model in which to scaffold and follow lines of questioning served as a gateway for deep reflection and a transition into a meditation-like state.

Eliciting memories is a key aspect to my methodology. As part of the process, I decided to limit my sensory input by being in a dark room with noise-cancelling headphones. I visited my old school cricket pitch and used a staff photo of my first-year teaching as tool to elicit memories. Each of these methods were chosen for a specific reason. By using sensory reduction and being alone, I was able to channel the feelings of isolation that are commonly associated with being a male in a female profession (Mallozzi & Galman, 2014; Skelton, 2009). Beyond this was the first-year staff photo, as representation of my second stage mindset—fear and anxiety. Furthermore, by looking at the faces on the photo I was able to accurately recall conversations and the emotions of being around these people. This allowed me to expand on my data and create links both to now and to my childhood. It is often how photos of old acquaintances evoke feelings of childhood. In addition to this, walking the school grounds at the weekend just so happened to result in me meeting old colleagues and students. Conversations with them were then able to flow naturally, eliciting the feelings of old and reminding me of the third mindset—survival—and how I was able to transition to the experienced teacher I am now. Furthermore, this experience served as a reminder that not all memories are bad and that it is important to focus on the positives as well as the negatives when engaging in reflective practice. Finally, my own class was possibly the most important aspect of the elicitation of experience. It was a powerful reminder that I am now an experienced teacher and of why I was doing this research. As an aside to this,

the use of noise-cancelling headphones and a darkened room allowed me to achieve a meditative state and block out many of the distractions that were present in day-to-day life. This was vital to allowing me to reflect and become one with my thoughts. Often these reflections were done at home and the stimuli mentioned above were used to overcome mental blocks or allow a pathway for me to engage into a deeper level of reflection. I then dictated my thoughts into a recording device which was later transcribed (Wall, 2008).

3.3 Ethical considerations

An autoethnography needs to keep its emphasis on the self. This focus becomes an issue as the narrative is developed (Ellis, 2007). The reason for this is the potential where details begin to be unveiled that may threaten the safety and identity of others (Bochner and Ellis, 2000). Within my research I have striven hard to ensure anonymity and keep both people and places unidentifiable. This is done using pseudonyms. It will not be possible to identify individuals through exact phrases used; their exact words will not be reported as this could also be an identifier.

In autoethnographies, the problem of consent is often not considered due to the reflective nature of the self. However, evocative autoethnography may include descriptions that involve sensitive issues with regard to the researcher and the people around them (Wall, 2008). Due to this, consent and ethics is a key consideration when anyone can be identified within a narrative. Ellis discusses several dimensions to ethics in autoethnography: relational ethics (2007). This text contains a helpful, in-depth discussion of personal narratives and writings about experiences where intimate others are included. Therefore, the question needs to be asked, when should we ask consent from the people involved in autoethnographic narratives? On the surface it could be stated only if they are identifiable, however, it is often hard to gauge what that means. In some instances, a reader may notice themselves within a composite character. This is a serious issue that seems to have no straightforward responses, but often a researcher should always strive their best to make unidentifiability a must: "The bad news is that there are no definitive rules or universal principles that can tell you precisely what to do in every situation or relationship you may encounter, other than the vague and generic do no harm" (Ellis, 2007, p. 6).

Autoethnographies can often have a large impact on the researcher due to their proximity to the data. The fear of triggering could become an ethical consideration and as such the

researcher needs to not only be aware of the impact that reflection can have but also curate their reflection to ensure that it is fit for purpose and relevant to the conclusion.

As such there are several ways to mitigate this ethical issue. Autoethnographies may be written in the first or third person—using the third person can give a degree of distance from the events. Doing this allows the researcher to create a barrier around traumatic experiences, as explained by Ellis et al., "I was just going to disguise myself because I still didn't have the freedom to—I hadn't given myself the freedom to—write that narrative in the first person" (2007, p. 317). The implication of this harkens back to the idea of the purpose of an autoethnography. By writing in the third person, the distance may allow for truths to become distorted and for it to become a fictional narrative rather than a reflective piece based on lived experience.

To counteract the ethical implications that writing in the third person can present, first-person narrative can be adopted. Doing this is a double-edged sword however, as it does allow for the researcher to be completely explicit about the events being analysed by allowing a deeper connection. However, it does have the potential effect of opening the researcher to a higher degree of trauma or damage to the psyche. An example of this conflict between writing styles is highlighted by Wyatt (2006) who admits to changing some parts of his narrative from first to third person. However, he says, the most important ethical principle should be, "...how close we choose to position our readers" (p. 814). As such, when writing an autoethnography we should be aware of readers. Doing this will ensure both integrity and rich data regardless of writing perspective.

Two ideas within research are that of anonymity and identifiability. Both work to protect the participants from recognition within the research. Anonymity is where a researcher will make a participant's identity confidential to third parties who engage with the research. There are several ways this can be done, including through pseudonyms and working to disguise the individual (Yates, 2004). Identifiability is where a participant can recognise themselves in research (Mockler, 2014). In the case of this research, I have used compound characters made up of several experiences and events across multiple schools and years. By doing this, as using pseudonyms, I will be both making those I talk about anonymous and further deducing chances of identifiability.

Another ethical consideration is how across autoethnographies there could be feelings of guilt which occur when writing and publishing autoethnographic accounts. This feeling comes through due to the researcher being aware of who they are talking about and the potential of leaking damaging information. The feeling can remain even though anonymity has been kept or consent has been granted. An example of this is from Wall (2008), who gained consent from her family through an ethics board. However, when writing about her experience as an adoptive mother, was not free from feelings of guilt: "I had a persistent and significant sense of anxiety about the tension between proceeding with an academic project and telling a story about my life that was inextricably intertwined with my son's" (p. 49). Medford (2006) shows agreement with Wall on this ethical issue, as guilt can come through the loss of voice and information within the research. During her autoethnography, Medford felt hurt when writing in a way that required her to erase valuable and important information that applied to her life and that would allow her to show the whole truth of her situation: "When writing autoethnographically, we are forced to hold a critical mirror to our lives, and sometimes looking in that mirror by candlelight is more flattering than looking into the mirror in broad daylight" (p. 859). Overall it could be said that this feeling of guilt or worry could be partly due to repercussions from those around us and the potential impact this may have on our futures and careers (Ellis, 2007; Wall, 2008). However, it is just as likely to stem from needing to alter the truth in some way to make the research more palatable to the reader (Medford, 2006). Overall, an autoethnography is a way of conducting research to the degree that most of the impact will be on the researcher's sense of self, as described by Ellis (2007) "...autoethnography itself is an ethical practice" (p. 26). Most importantly this practice of ethics should be focused on retaining anonymity and being ethical and honest about events and people.

Chapter 4 Narrative Journey: My Experiences as a Teacher

The following section of this dissertation will be a focus on what I have discovered during my reflections. This area is broken into three key areas that have helped define the mindset of a male educator in the primary sector. The first part focuses on how I, as a trainee student teacher, approached my study and how my attitudes were shaped at this early stage. This is followed by a reflection on my own experiences in the provisionally registered teacher stage of the teaching journey and how those experiences helped develop and shape

my mindset, highlighting the challenges faced by young male educators due to their attitudes when training. Finally, I reflect on my current status as an experienced educator who has developed in their skills and attitudes to become a confident educator.

The most influential aspect of this research came upon reflection into my own experiences and mindset as a male. This reflection helped me conclude that there is an identifiable mindset within the male teaching community that impacts our behaviour and is unique to male teachers (Cushman, 2005; Jones, 2008; Malaby & Ramsey, 2011; Mallozzi & Galman, 2014). The key goal of this research is to shine a light on this mindset and hope to move the dialogue away from needing male teachers to actively encouraging a higher degree of male teachers in the community of teachers.

However, this question goes beyond the often-asked question, “why is there such a lack of male teachers?” This simplified question often serves to employ a higher level of necessity and attribute a need for more men in the classroom whilst backing up a commonly held view within society (Mills et al., 2004). This view often is at the detriment of female educators as it leads to a devaluing of their skills as educators and places men as a priority within school (Mallozzi & Galman, 2014; Skelton, 1991). Instead, for this research I want to take the approach of “what are the characteristics of male teachers which female teachers do not share?” By taking this perspective it allows a focus on how men think comparatively to women and will allow a social shift which will improve the quality of teachers regardless of their gender. This is due to hopefully a removal of the opinion that we need more male educators and a replacement of it with we need more high-quality educators, with the hope that there is a more evident gender balance amongst teachers.

However, it is also important to address why I feel there is a difference in the way male and female educators think. This hunch stems from my own experiences and that of other men who I have interacted with throughout my time as an educator. It is important for me to recognise this may not apply to all men, but due to the autoethnographical nature of this research, to my experiences that act as data. I feel the first and most obvious difference between how men and women think is the journey the genders will take to achieve a task. When teaching, I have noticed that often male teachers want to get the job done as fast as possible with little fuss, sometimes with minimal planning. However, many of my female colleagues tend to enjoy meetings and pre-planning events to the finest detail. This

difference shows that the male mindset is one that is focused on the here and now, whereas the female mindset could be seen as one that sees the journey and possibly the wider perspective. This is not limited to the genders, but across my experiences male educators often dislike meetings and the long conversations they inspire. Often just wanting to get it done and move on. Other nuisances between the genders' mindsets are how each teacher will engage in discussions. Many male educators often default into more authoritative roles with the students but will usually be both blunt and humorous to gain students' favour. In contrast, female teachers will tend to be less authoritarian to their students and focus on nurture and emotions to make connections with their learners. This is a vital difference between the genders' mindsets, and it shows an awareness of how each gender sees themselves. Men are often sarcastic, blunt, and humorous as it allows them to keep a distance from their students, thus avoiding accusations but whilst still displaying themselves as a role model and a kind authority figure.

I have begun to understand from my own experiences that male teachers often develop a recognisable mindset which evolves based on experience and pressure (Foster & Newman, 2005). However, it has only been in the last few years that this question has become a burning issue for me. This development came as part of working and interacting with new male teachers and noticing similar traits and behaviours I once had. This naturally linked to the question—what else do we share? Across my time I noticed many of these similarities with very few differences even across age groups.

Across the narrative there is a recurring theme of the impact that experienced male educators have on their protégées and how this potentially presents the biggest challenge to male educators. This highlights political and social pressures that feed and influence these mindsets as these aspects offer a rich discussion and are key to creating good teachers rather than valuing teachers based on their gender. All the reflections in the findings are anonymous and I mention the specific objects of interest that helped to elicit the memories needed to achieve a deeper level of reflection. The model used is an adapted version of the Brookfield model as mentioned in the methodology section.

Before beginning the narrative journey, it is important for me to outline the mindsets I refer to and the reflection that applies to each one:

Stage 1 – Arrogance (Boys at the back of the lecture hall): The time when a prospective educator begins his training, often he does not understand or in some cases even want to be teaching. For some male educators this is not a passion but a means to an easy career that has control and status within society. During this time there is an attitude of arrogance and laziness. Many male teaching students will have an easier time becoming a trainee teacher over women at university as society has taken the perspective of “needing” more men in classrooms. This enables male teaching students to underestimate the challenges of teaching as they feel they are needed and do not need to earn their place to succeed.

Stage 2 – Inexperience and unpreparedness (The realities of a beginning teacher): After the initial training period, male educators are thrust into the role of a teacher. Those who have not taken the training seriously are now expected to not only be part of a community but also responsible for the wellbeing and education of their students. During this time many will seek a more masculine job or a career with less pressure and a focus on physical ability rather than emotional support of others. Within New Zealand men who perform more traditionally masculine roles have a higher status within society due to wages and stereotyping. The others who choose to progress in this role will go through an “identity bruising” and will be moulded by experiences and the expectations based on challenges. After successfully navigating these challenges, they will have earned the right to progress to stage 3.

Stage 3 – Confidence and dominance (Male teachers: It’s all about status): During this stage male educators have become impassioned teachers who can not only effectively teach but also feel responsible for the wellbeing of their male peers in stage 2. This is the main source of the “identity bruising” and is where stage-3 male educators begin to craft and influence the actions of stage-2 teachers. This behaviour often comes from a place of being overprotective but also has a sinister element. Due to society and media’s perceived outlook of sexual threat towards male educators, teachers in this stage use both stories and exaggerated personal experiences to ward off potential predators or situations where it could be perceived as damaging to the reputation of the school and the men who exist within. This could be seen as dominance as they are asserting their higher statuses which they lack in society to challenged stage-2 teachers.

A further part of this stage is confidence. This is when male educators begin to assert themselves within the school. This is done by challenging policies and procedures to create a reputation and improve their own status with the aim of solidifying the need for more male educators. Once again, this highlights how a male within a female profession lacks status and will continue to work to improve his own. This behaviour also explains why most principals and leadership roles go to men even if they lack certain requirements.

4.4 The boys at the back of the lecture hall

As I dictate this experience to myself, I am lying in a pitch-black room. This method has helped to bring the vivid memory of four young men at the back of the university lecture theatre to my mind. I remember the sound of both our laughs and the music of a video game disrupting our class. Sitting in front of us at the far front of the theatre were over 100 studious females. Every single one of them focused on the lecturer trying her best to give a presentation into the human development side of teaching. Although the other students were trying their best to ignore the disruption. Frequently we got shot of a look of annoyance. However, we were too embroiled in achieving the next high score.

At this point it is hard to tell if I truly wanted to be there or was only there to achieve the grades to begin teaching. But upon reflection, I can confirm that at this stage in my journey to becoming a teacher I was focused on having fun, taking the course and future responsibilities for granted. This takes me to my interview to apply for university, there were fewer than 10 males who applied to the course. In the waiting room most men seemed relaxed and casual, chatting, and making jokes as we waited for the call to begin group interviews. I knew at this time that male teachers were in a shortage, and I felt I needed to do little to impress because I was needed. One young woman stood out to me; as we were all conversing, she sat in silence. She was in her 20s, wearing a nicely pressed suit, and I could tell that this opportunity was important for her. She was nervously engaged in deep breathing techniques. I expected to see her again she had the look of someone who was both studious and wanted to be there. But perhaps this nervousness is what stood against her? To this day I still feel that we had been accepted partly due to our gender as well as confidence.

At the back of lecture hall, us younger male teachers, pre 30 years old, sat laughing and teasing each other. At the front amongst the female members of our cohort were one or

two older men. After getting to know them, I remember that these were men who had past careers, families and children. To these men the opportunity to teach was to follow a passion and move into a career where they could make a difference and escape the corporate ladder. Unlike me, they seemed to have more of a purpose and had to genuinely fight to be on the course. One of them told me they had to justify and prove that they belonged on the course due to a stigma that they were older and could not keep up, especially as some were closing in on retirement.

This sentiment is further justified based on my interactions with a mentee teacher. I will give him the pseudonym “Mr G.” This provisionally registered teacher (PRT) is an imposing gentleman, who has had several careers of high status before becoming a teacher. To many it would be humbling to having someone less than half their age be their mentor, he carries himself with pride and a relationship of experience is established. He respects my years as a teacher, and I understand his experiences have given him a level of confidence as a PRT. When discussing this dissertation, I ask how he was at university. His response was, “straight A’s mate, I worked my butt off.” In our discussion he made it clear that he hated his old jobs and being a teacher gave him a job that is passion-based, rather than financial-based. A chord of agreement was reached when discussing the young male teachers. He also noticed the behaviour that I was part of, and he stated how they struggled on practicum, with many not returning. This struck a chord with me and became a stimulus to allow me to reflect on my first practicum.

Throughout my first semester at university almost every single class had been taken for granted, with attention often only paid when it was necessary to pass. Therefore, upon reflection it was no surprise that I was unprepared for my first time on practicum. Compared to the more attentive individuals, I was a semester behind in experience and maturity. I know that my time as a training teacher would have been easier if I paid more attention and sat closer to the front before my confidence was knocked in the classroom. However, the feeling of being valued and having such an easy entry into the course and high assignment grades reinforced a mindset that I did not have to work hard to succeed.

Reflecting on my first practicum, I was nervous. I had sweat on my hands and every time I tried to talk to a student, I got tongue tied and was unable to relate. The most embarrassing aspect of these first interactions is when I introduce myself as my name (Jon) rather than

“Mr Bettin.” I did not even see myself as a teacher. This led me to gravitating to the corner of the room and trying to look busy on my laptop and making excuses to my associate teacher (AT) that I was, “checking my course requirements and doing a reflection.” Her puzzled looks betrayed her kind words of reassurance that I was, “onto it.”

During this practicum, I began to gain confidence. Watching my AT teach and discussing her techniques, I began to interact and teach. Over my four weeks of practicum, I found it exhausting, especially when I struggled to control behaviour. Luckily, I had an AT who regularly pushed and advised me. She was instrumental to helping me catch up on what I had missed at university. I do now recognise that it would not have been so exhausting if I had taken my study seriously. One of the key moments in me developing past this mindset was my low practicum results. Although I had completed my practicum, the “Beginning” marks I received highlighted a need to change. The comments also showed me how the school bent over backwards to pass me as the need for more males, no matter the quality, was the narrative being promoted. This was part of the discussion with my AT, she very candidly told me, “You need to learn from this and develop your confidence in the class. You may not be this lucky on your next practicum. We passed you because you really did try.” My change in attitude was swift and I began to both focus and develop my confidence when back at university. No longer was I a boy at the back of the lecture hall, but invested and focused. The sting of my first practicum still hurts today as it was self-inflicted. Upon returning to university, I was now one of the individuals giving the annoyed glares to the three boys at the back of the lecture hall. They never changed, and all got teaching jobs.

In my cohort there was one man, roughly my age, who had truly no reason to be on the course. For this reflection I shall call him “Steve.” Steve was a late admission into university and was only there for two reasons. His parents could afford for him to come to university, and he needed something to do. Steve had no interview and was eventually removed from the course in the third year. When remembering Steve, I wonder how he was accepted over the many eligible female teachers who vied for his position and would have made better teachers? Steve’s focus during his time at university was spent being more interested in going out drinking rather than doing the required reading and studying hard. He became ostracised in our second year when our Design and Technology assessment required us to build a lunchbox for a student and provide food. This assignment involved decile 1 school

students who often could not afford lunch. Steve's student was the only child not to have lunch that day. I remember the look on the boy's face as all his friends opened their custom lunchboxes filled with food. He was crushed.

Although my first semester of university was spent being unfocused, until the realities of practicum hit, there was one part of my training that I took seriously. I was completely aware I was a man entering a woman's profession and working with young children. On my first practicum, I was not alone. The other student teacher I was partnered with will be referred to as "Amy." Upon reflection, I see myself to be more standoffish compared to her, partly due to lack of focus, but also due to a fear of being around young children. I was afraid and did not know how to act as children hugged and asked questions such as, "who are you?" or "why are you here?" This is a symptom of the Peter Ellis syndrome; I, like most male teachers, are aware that it would be very easy to be seen as a potential predator. This behaviour is in stark contrast to "Amy", she was immediately hugging the children and did not need to keep a safe physical distance like myself. However, this behaviour certainly had other prior influences. During our final lecture before this practicum, the course leader was discussing the formalities of what we need to achieve and the requirements. It is when she makes the very bold announcement of, "... and gentlemen. Do not be caught alone with the kids, if anything like that happens, we will not look after you." After this statement was given all the men in the room had the same look. We all felt like we had been accused of a terrible crime none of us had committed.

4.2 The realities of a beginning teacher

To elicit the memories of being a beginning teacher [BT] (now provisionally registered teacher), I took a trip to my old primary school where I completed the starting two years of my training. As I explore the path past the playground I am instantly reminded of the younger students and how they run to me in tears after being hurt. The dichotomy of feelings one experiences in this situation is often unique to male educators. On one hand I was drawn to teaching as I am a naturally paternal individual who wants to support and nurture children. Therefore, the initial response to seeing a child in pain is to offer comfort. Usually, this comfort comes in the form of a hug as that often gives people of all ages immediate physical and emotional reassurance. However, whilst being in the second mindset I was dominated by a fear of accusations and the possible repercussions. I feel this

still stems from what that course leader said. During this mindset it was vital to build up emotional walls and develop strategies to comfort students without the use of touch.

Often, I would have a resentment towards my female colleagues. I distinctly remember when on duty a child coming to me in tears, unable to vocalise their emotions and thus not able to respond to talking strategies. The resentment became clear to me when as I was trying to discuss and calm the student down a female staff member picked the child up and gave a prolonged hug to calm them down as a mother would. This was not the only time a situation like this happened. One particular incident involved a student being concussed on the playground. My first aid training meant we could move the child, as there was no neck or back injury, to an area more comfortable whilst waiting for an ambulance to arrive. However, whilst I waited for the nurse and comforted him using my words, out of nowhere one of my female colleagues scooped the child up and carried them to the sick bay in the same way a mother would hold a baby. I should have been able to do this as the support of the child should have been paramount. However, the possibility of an accusation or report dominated my actions.

Being outside my old class has helped to kindle the memory of the first time this feeling became exacerbated from an awareness to fear. After a busy sports day halfway through my first term, I was given some. I remember standing on guard outside the boys' toilets because we had been told two students were playing in there. One of my male colleagues, a teacher of over 40 years, asked me to help by standing guard. After the incident, I asked why he needed me. He told me, "never go anywhere with children alone," and recounted to me an experience. I was told a story by him about when he first started teaching and what happened to one of his friends who was also a young male BT. This BT was working in an intermediate school and one of his female students developed a crush on him. Ignoring the signs, he continued to teach and spurned her affections. However, when he was on duty, he got an urgent message from one of her friends, saying she was seriously injured in the toilets and needed his assistance. The girl knew he was on duty that day. On the way to the toilets, he ran into a female colleague. Luckily he asked for assistance as his first aid training made him feel this situation needed more than one individual. When at the girls' toilet, the female colleague entered to check instead, and found the girl naked anticipating the arrival of the teacher she had a crush on. This set a realisation in me, the age group I teach are

aware enough to place male educators in situations where there could be serious repercussions.

This, however, is not the only story I was told by this teacher. He often made it his goal to offer me advice via cautionary tales. Upon reflection I know this was to build an inner resilience and create a male educator who is aware of the dangers of working with young children. Another story he told me was when he got summoned in front of the board of trustees. He did not know why at the time, but a false accusation was made against him because the student mentioned to her parents how they went into the resource room together. Luckily in this case other members of staff were able to vouch for his innocence. They were simply getting books and he needed a pair of hands to help carry them. This instilled in me a fear that both our communities and the media are predisposed to suspect the worst of male educators and see us as predators and in all cases, we need to have our actions observed and a solid alibi in place to defend our character.

Whilst in this stage of mindsets I do also recognise another challenge I had to face as a male educator. There was often the added pressure of being given the responsibility of unlocking the success of my male students. It was during the school holidays when I was called into my first school to discuss my class and their history. My mentor teacher wanted to let me know about each of the students' backgrounds to help me prepare to teach them. As we went down my class list each student was colour coded; green was above standard, yellow was at standard, while red was below standard. I still remember seeing almost every boy on my list being red. When I asked my mentor why this was, she responded, "We think these boys will respond well to a young male teacher." This added expectation has been a recurring theme throughout my career from both staff and parents. At the start of each year, I always get parents shaking my hand saying, "He has never had a male teacher before. We think it is what he needs to help him learn." This sentiment was also a recurring theme during my practicums. During my six practicums I had one male associate teacher. This was also the only practicum where the groups I taught were not male dominated. However, his groups were.

4.3 Male teachers: It is all about status

During my time as a BT, there was bullying I had to endure. Still standing on the cricket pitch at my old school, I can remember the institutionalised bullying male BTs endure at school.

This bullying emphasised to me the low status we have in society but also how hard we need to work for recognition in our schools. My low status was highlighted daily by more experienced male colleagues. During sporting activities, they would seek to undermine my authority and mock me in front of the students. An example of this happened on this very cricket pitch where every Friday we would gather all the students for sport. The female teachers would take the “unsporty” students into a class to do art and the male teachers would run outside games.

The most burning of all the barbs sent my way was when one of my male colleagues had a hard day. Rather than allowing me to run the games I was told, “this is my way of doing it, you are not ready.” Although unfair I stepped back, happy to have an easy Friday afternoon and play cricket. His ire was not satiated, whilst explaining the games he made several comments on my looks such as, “Kids, Mr Bettin has spent Christmas eating all the pies so he would struggle to do this, but you all need to run between the cones...” My status never felt lower as over 60 students laughed at my body weight. This had a further impact where the students outside my class began to make fat comments and would often refuse to respond to my requests. As part of this ritual, I would always be given clean up duty or the teams of students who were the hardest to control. I believe this tactic was all part of his identity bruising to shape me into a resilient educator and prove my dedication to the school. I also feel it was to build my confidence and develop a confident voice that would eventually bite back and take control rather than allow him to dominate. I thank him for this as it helped me to develop the third stage of the mindset, but I also recognise there are other ways to go about enabling this development of mindsets.

One of the most vivid memories of my first transition to this mindset was during a sporting afternoon with the male teacher who used identity bruising to move me into this mindset. As mentioned I felt bullied, he was consistently asserting dominance and his status over a new teacher who had not “proved” himself. However, on this occasion, we both stood proudly in front of 200 senior students. As he was addressing the group, I moved to the sport shed to gather the equipment for my game. I heard him say to the group, “Matai, you will be with Mr Bettin, meet him by the shed... you can’t miss him,” Although innocent sounding, he gave a sly look to signal it was a comment against my weight. On this occasion, I shot back louder and stronger, “Just remember, I can lose my weight, but you will always

be old.” This comment dwarfed his and the students gave an almighty moan to signal it had landed.

The look on his face was one of respect; the nod and smirk he gave me highlighted this, coupled with the quiet pat on the back and whispered, “on ya.” After this moment, we developed a relationship that used banter rather than bruising. Daily we would trade equal insults and laugh. However, a fundamental change also happened – we were now on an equal footing. No longer did he tell me cautionary tales or compete in front of the students, he would also consult me and work with me to plan events as well as letting me lead the sporting events such as our yearly athletics competition. I had achieved a status amongst my peers and the students responded to this. This gaining of authority also transitioned into the classroom; the students saw me as a confident authority figure. When entering other people’s classes as well as my own, the students would greet me and hush when I gave an announcement.

The establishment of this mindset became most apparent to me when studying the photo of my fourth-year class. This class was both difficult and rewarding. During this year, I was able to both create the strongest professional relationships with my students, and become a fatherly figure to them. During my second mindset stage I would have been terrified to deal with one of my students, his behaviour was violent and explosive. However, I had achieved a status where he was handpicked to be in my class due to the reputation I had built over the years. I was trusted to teach and guide this student. Within the first few weeks of teaching this class I was physically assaulted by this student; it was not his fault as another student had made it his goal during lunchtime to upset him and push him to explode. After being struck, I was able to use my confident and assertive teaching style to talk him down and move him beyond his anger. Before this I struggled to comfort students crying in the playground, but I had been through my identity bruising. The previous years where I struggled to achieve status and recognition allowed me to have the mindset of “I am good enough to do this.” After these events I was in a position of status where the other students in the class trusted me to protect them and knew I could handle him. With this mindset also came the ability for me to trust my students to self-manage as I had gained the confidence and authority to emphasise a class culture where they could be trusted for me to leave the class and deal with this student and his serious issues. After half an hour of mindfulness,

calming techniques, and a strong father figure trying to understand him, the boy re-entered the class and the day continued as planned. I knew I did the right thing when reporting the incident, the deputy principal trusted my decision to keep him in the class and continue learning in that environment. I know that in prior years my confidence would have resulted in him being moved to another more experienced teacher's class.

The more I reflect on this mindset and how I am now, shows me that for male teachers the key defining attribute to developing our mindset is status. This is achieved through both recognition and respect. However, across my current practice, I know that the identity bruising we often use is not needed to create effective and confident male educators. This is a hindrance as it negatively affects these three ideas. After all, how can a male teacher's status be built if they are routinely torn down to preserve that of experienced male educators? This also feeds back into the idea that status is key as our older generation of male teachers is tied to society's idea of manliness, seeing newer male teachers as threats (to their status and the children) and needing to be tested like they were. This brings me to a recent memory in my current school. Over the last few years, I have been working closely with a young male PRT who is undergoing his transition to the second mindset, for this autoethnography I shall refer to him by the pseudonym "Mr Smith." I feel I have helped progress this faster due to setting up a support system between us. He respects my experience, and I am helping build his status to support his confidence in teaching. A fond experience I recall was during term two on the first year of my current school. He came into my room looking tired and defeated, and I recalled at the time when I was in the same situation. The stresses of teaching are many and currently I was also struggling mentally with the pressures of my students' needs. The advice I was given by two other male staff members when I felt this way was, "Toughen up, it is not going to get any easier."

I left feeling despondent and betrayed as my call for help was not answered, instead it was ignored. Learning from this mistake when he told me of a tough child who kept questioning his authority and would not listen. I took the time to hear him out and coach him through techniques that had worked for me. The first technique was placing the student at the front of the class to rob them of an audience and the second was to ignore the negative whilst praising the positive. I also advised him to combine this with giving the student leadership opportunities to establish trust and to give him a break whilst he went on excursion to do

tasks. By offering my experience as a mentor and guiding him through difficult situations I was able to help him build his status. This behaviour also ran into combined class activities, where instead of me running the game, I gave him that opportunity. Since I had already established my status and authority, I had nothing to lose by supporting him to be a leader and authority figure. I vividly remember also using self-deprecation and boosting his status whilst in these group activities such as saying, "Since I am old and grumpy, Mr Smith will explain the game and show you how it is played." By doing this I feel it not only demonstrated his authority but also conveyed the message that he was no threat to mine.

Often professional discussions would be had afterwards away from the children to help develop both his voice and practice, as I did not want to undermine him in the moment. Since this time, I have watched him gain his status, thus resulting in him withdrawing from the need to be mentored. But he still engages with me for advice and guidance when necessary. Currently, he is in the third stage of the mindsets, and I know a big factor of this is by him having another experienced male as a guide. Reflecting and contrasting our experiences, I know a big factor has been Mr Smith having a mentor who has not treated him as a threat or an inexperienced PRT, but as a professional who needed support to gain status within a low status profession.

Chapter 5 Analysis

This section of the dissertation will analyse the narrative research provided in the findings. Part of the analysis will be a reflection using the modified Brookfield model. This will be used to find why and how my experiences were affected by my life. The analysis has been broken into three sections. The first will be an examination into how the schools and institutes viewed me as an individual. This will involve further reflections on how this may have had an impact on my career and progress. Part of this section will also be the school community, which will involve the students and their perception of me.

The second section will be an analysis of my own actions and a reflective deep dive into not only how I felt during this time but why I chose the behaviour. As part of this, there will be an examination of my values that have affected my attitude and a development of my own career investigating how I have changed. Finally, there will be a retrospective of my upbringing and how key moments in my past have influenced my behaviour and mindset

whilst studying to become a teacher. I will also be discussing relevant literature regarding my actions. This will be to show that these actions are common occurrences in the male teaching community. By doing this contrast with academic literature, it will not only fulfil an area of the reflection model I am using, but also highlight that the mindsets of male educators have been addressed and discussed in detail for many years.

5.1 Upbringing: The root cause to behaviour

Across the literature there is a focus on how male role models and pressure from society are the guiding factors from upbringing that affect the journey male teachers have through the mindset stages (Brownhill, 2014; Dillabough, 1999; McGrath & Sinclair, 2013). When analysing my development through the male mindsets, a recurring theme always presents itself. The impact of upbringing on male educators and how this effects their behaviour as a teacher. When making the comparison to my experiences, the expectations of masculinity tend to be a factor for male educators (Farquhar, 1997). Myself and most conscientious male educators are acutely aware of how they see themselves, this stems from pressure within society about masculine ideals (Crisp & King, 2017). In my experiences, my parents did not believe teaching to me a man's job. Instead, they pushed for me to become an engineer or teach engineering as it was seen as more traditional.

This expectation was one that was both upsetting and difficult, often leading to heated debates where at times my entire family was against me. Often my mum would have a look on her face that would speak to her disappointment and my father would leave to the garage and engage in mechanics to distract himself. This sort of behaviour was the peak. I have known since I was 11 that I wanted to teach. This was often dismissed and treated as the ramblings of a young innocent who would eventually change his mind. To this day I do not know where this behaviour stems from as my brother, who is a nurse, did not receive the same backlash when going into nursing. Instead, it was celebrated as a family that he finally found a profession and career he wished to pursue after many years of dead-end jobs.

The way my family reacted to my decision to become a teacher has a strong impact even today. Although they now support my decision and see I made the right choice, I struggle to talk about the challenges of the job. Often, I fear they will turn around and say, "I told you so." Or try and persuade me to quit and find another profession. Therefore, I find myself in a

situation where I can only talk to my parents about the positives of teaching and only when a situation is resolved or too stressful will I let them know the difficulties of teaching. Even then, their advice is well meaning but often comes across as both blunt and overly simplistic for the political landscape of teaching.

When reflecting on my upbringing I also find myself thinking about my own sense of masculinity and how I was both able to not give in to peer pressure and why teaching suited me so well as a person. The simple answer to this is I have never been overly masculine, although 6 foot 4 and an avid weightlifter. I have never seen myself as a masculine male; throughout my life I have enjoyed more feminine pastimes such as art, music and role play. This stems back to my childhood where my family would be too busy with work for me to take part in sports and more masculine pastimes. This led to me gravitate towards feeling comfortable alone using my imagination to build and paint toy soldiers or play make-believe knights and wizards in the backyard. Often this would result in homophobic slurs from my brother, and as such I learnt to embrace my creativity and remove the power of his words. It was only when I became more of an adult, I began to take part in more masculine activities such as weightlifting, but even then, I prefer to paint.

Growing up in England it felt as if there were more male educators than in New Zealand, so it was only from my family that there was pressure not to teach. Potentially this may have also stemmed from their lack of positive role models in school. Especially my father who was taught in apartheid South Africa; his life as a boy born to an English family resulted in a brutal school life. Additionally, my friends were of the same ilk as me. We were all “geeks;” none of us conformed to traditional masculinity. As I became an adult, these friends and other acquaintances were also left-leaning liberals who supported and embraced differences. Compared to when my parents were my age, perspectives and attitudes had changed creating a generation of individuals who celebrate difference rather than view it with scorn or judgement.

As such when becoming a teacher, I was already preloaded with the misconception that I was abnormal for pursuing a feminine career which strayed from parental expectations they had from society (Lips-Wiersma et al., 2016). This often translates through the initial stage of the male mindset as a feeling of acceptance but to the perceived need for male teachers. By doing this I felt like I had been given a higher status, this leading to my initial laziness

which was uncommon in the female trainee teachers (Kane & Mallon, 2006). “Men are lazy and not committed to their work” (Petersen, 2014, p. 6).

Another cause of this stage-1 lack of commitment is the degree of quality of role models boys receive at a young age. Having fewer positive role models or a lack of expectations at home results in men who are unfocused and become teachers because it seems easy (Palmer et al., 2020). The misconception that men in teaching are abnormal is further emphasised when entering stage 2, as not only are most men isolated but also negative experiences via identity bruising often reinforce the idea that they are not meant to be teaching, creating a sense of inadequacy (Foster & Newman, 2005; Jones, 2008). This is a common cause for the high rate of male teachers who leave before completing their two-year PRT. By stage 3, this pressure from both society and family reduces. By succeeding and gaining status within the community, I found that my achievements were recognised. By having this, I was no longer regarded with suspicion by the community and within my household my parents were proud of my achievements (Brownhill, 2014; Foster & Newman, 2005). This is reflected in the literature; when a male educator gain status he is given more agency and recognition in comparison to female teachers who need to work harder to receive the same recognition. This partly results in male educators being more likely to achieve leadership roles sooner within schools, “As male trainees have cited these qualities as ‘male’ qualities, they are perhaps more likely to pursue such roles which may partly explain why male teachers occupy a disproportionate number of management roles in primary education” (De Salis et al., 2019, p. 8).

When analysing these experiences, there is another major influence in my upbringing that caused me to behave in such a way. This experience is the impact a male role model has on the individual (McGrath & Sinclair, 2013). For me this has had a recurring impact on all three stages of my mindset. The two role models in my life that have had an impact on my teaching career are my father, who has been a positive male role model, and my old primary school teacher who had a negative impact.

I recognise that my father was not supportive when it came to my teaching career, but by the point of this conflict I was a fully grown man who had learnt good values from him as a child such as patience, hard work ethic, and commitment to family. Therefore, by the time I decided to teach I had taken and added to these values. His disapproval also served as an

added catalyst to succeed and prove him wrong. As such, I also need to recognise that currently he has pride in my teaching achievements and has apologised whilst learning to trust me and my life decisions. I have forgiven my father for this small moment of negativity in an otherwise positive and loving relationship.

However, when thinking back to my old teacher I can remember no good experiences. I still have a strong urge to return to England, photocopy of degree in hand and tell him kindly, "You made the man I am today." Then when the smug smile crosses this face, and the warm tingly feeling sets in, I can, confidently add, "You were the worst teacher I have ever come across, and I knew I had to be better than you and make children enjoy school." I still imagine and yearn for the crushed look, and it makes me feel excited. Although this could be seen as a petty grudge held over many years it goes far beyond that. One of my key memories with this teacher was on the first day of school where he pointed at each child and made a judgement call whether we would be successful. I was one of the very few who he said, "Would not amount to anything." This man was not a teacher, he was a bully and enjoyed pontificating to the class about who his favourites were. Those students he did not like, he actively bullied and lied to. Another example was when I got a beating from my mum after he told her about how naughty I was and how I always took time off school. As a student I was always shy and quiet, and I was often too afraid to act out at school. It is only recently my mum realised how much he lied, and apologised for not supporting me through these years.

These influences are often the foundation to how male teachers act as their actions are the result of conditioning (Schacht, 2000). The research shows that male teachers seek to become a role model for young children. This can stem from either a lack of role models or a strong role model who inspires them to do the same. This causes them to become a teacher as they are passionate about education and providing a strong disciplinarian figure (De Salis et al., 2019; Petersen, 2014).

In my experience I found this has the most impact in stage 2 when I assumed responsibility for my first class feeling both unprepared and afraid. During the initial part of this stage, I was yet to become an effective role model. I feel this was due to not having developed the confidence and status to successfully cater to their students (Foster & Newman, 2005; Martin, 1984). I feel this attitude stems from both the reinforced messages from university

and how there were very few expectations. However, the most impactful aspect of this behaviour was the recurring negative reinforcement from my past. Perhaps I was not good enough to teach and should have become a mechanic? What happens if my students do not like me and I lose my job, thus proving my parents correct and disappointing them? Eventually these emotions would have become a perceived laziness, where often I would step back from responsibility and focus solely on teaching my students. What is seen as my laziness should instead be recognised and attributed to the pressures of teaching as well as isolation causing a withdrawal from active engagement with the school community (Skelton, 2009).

As a stage-3 teacher it is therefore key for me to understand that students see me as a role model. It is therefore important that the practice of identity bruising is stopped; this practice results in stage-3 teachers becoming negative role models (Crisp & King, 2017). In my experiences the professional bullying I received from Mr Pierce showed my students that they were allowed to do the same too, as they perceived me to have less status (Cushman, 2005; Foster & Newman, 2005). This became apparent after every sporting event where I struggled to regain my class's attention and control their behaviour. Stage-3 teachers are also role models to stage-2 teachers, therefore more experienced teachers need to assume a mentor role to build and develop the skills (Peeters, 2007). Unfortunately, in my experience this never happened, and I lacked a strong mentor during my stage-2 years. In contrast, with my interactions with Mr Smith, I have seen how a mentor can help build the skills and mindset of a less experienced teacher. By doing this it allowed him to progress through stage 2 at a quicker pace but also feel supported when facing the challenges of transitioning from trainee teacher to teacher as he did not feel isolated and bullied by his peer.

In regard to role models and upbringing, male educators tend to mimic the relationships with their positive role models or act against their negative role models (McGrath & Sinclair, 2013). In my experiences, my positive role model taught me to be quiet and caring about the needs of those in my care. Whereas my negative role model taught that students need both a voice and reasonable expectations based on the individual student (Schulz, 2013). Stage 1 is the anomaly to this part of the analysis. In the case of older male teachers who are training, you can stay focused and adapt to teaching quicker. This is due to them having

experience with young children as they themselves are often fathers (Kane & Mallon, 2006). In contrast, I, like some other young male educators in training, became disruptive and lazy. One explanation for this was lack of experience and immaturity causing a loss in focus on why they are teaching (Petersen, 2014). However, in my case, the explanation stems back to the difficult journey I had becoming a teacher. After so much negativity from my parents and people around me, I found myself in a situation where I was able to relax and feel safe. This led to my lack of focus and taking my studies for granted.

5.2 The school's perception

Across the literature there is focus on how schools and institutions see male teachers. Often these views sway between seeing them as valuable assets who are needed to be role models as well as develop the education of boys (Lahelma, 2000; Martino et al., 2009). However, it is noted that from the perspectives of their female colleagues, male teachers at the earlier stages of teaching are lazy. This is due to male teachers having to work less than that of female teachers. There is a definite trend on this behaviour in my own experience. Kane and Mallon (2009) noticed in their research that when studying for teaching, male students have less dedication than their female counterparts due to the ease in which they can enter institutions.

A lot of male teachers are lazy, and relatively incompetent. I've had two male students last year that I recommended to be failed because they were so incompetent, and they are both still at college, but it appears that if you are male it does not matter and they will get jobs and it scares me witless. (p. 78)

During the earlier part of my journey to teaching, I would have fallen into this category. Initially I exhibited traits of laziness and took my position within the course with less seriousness than both the females and older male students. This is due to the feeling of being told how needed I was. This attitude and behaviour are supported by Petersen (2014) who describes this aspect of male educators as the "bad," they discuss how most male educators exhibit what they call professional laziness, "Many students questioned the commitment of males to the profession: men are lazy and not committed to their work" (p. 6). This is one of the damages of telling male teachers they are "needed" and setting lower expectations than female trainees.

In my experience, I have noticed an interesting dichotomy when comparing how male educators are perceived by universities and examining the perspectives of the individuals who are responsible for training male educators. I think this comes from the overarching societal recognition that the number of male educators in primary schools is disproportionately low (Kane & Mallon, 2006). Additionally, there is currently a narrative that men who teach are needed to not only be role models but also improve the academic results of boys (Mills et al., 2004). This then creates the attitude which I and many other male educators have during stage 1. As a male teacher I, like many others, was consistently being told that they are needed and given a level of status males who teach miss from society. By having a system that does this it develops a mindset of being wanted and valued, thus creating an air of arrogance and superiority. This behaviour is recognised by De Salis et al. (2019) in their research that cross examined interviews of both male and female teaching students in England. According to the interviews, male students displayed traits of arrogance and take their learning less seriously due to having less expectations from the universities.

Evidence suggests that such deep-seated notions do little to enhance the quality of education in primary schools and may also present barriers and challenges for both male and female teachers who are, consequently, subject to career expectations that are gendered in their nature. (p. 10)

This extends to moderation of assessment where extra lenience is given to male students due to the perceived need of more men in primary schools (Kane & Mallon, 2006).

Based on my experience, the truth will often come from the individual lecturers and associate teachers whose responsibility it is to shape men like myself into professionals (Kane & Mallon, 2006; Mallozzi & Galman, 2014). As an experienced teacher, I can now easily reflect and see how difficult my behaviour would have been to those professionals. The same perception would be held by the school where I conducted my practicum as I had not developed an attitude of a professional teacher. The attitude I showed in the first mindset had a wider ricochet across both the school and the community, as they needed to cater to an individual who had not developed the requirements to teach, “we’ve got one beginning teacher, who applied for the beginning teacher position and they had a C for English, a C- for maths...Now to me, that person should not be a teacher because that

person is going to teach” (Kane & Mallon, p. 48). This scenario is not uncommon amongst trainee teachers on their first teaching experience. During my stage 1 I believe if I continued the trend of behaviour I initially displayed, it would have significantly impacted on my future employment prospects. Unfortunately, this is often not the case with male educators receiving more job opportunities regardless of their skill level (Skelton, 2009). The actions of male teachers during stage 1 creates one of the first hurdles in the progression of this mindset. When entering a school for the first time, many young male educators are not ready (De Salis et al., 2019). This often leads to them struggling when expected to teach as they have not learnt the skills required. It is at this point that many men who are in the first stage of the mindset do not continue to study. This is due to their competence and status being challenged and not feeling able to teach (Bhana & Moosa, 2016). However, I did not choose this option, I took the road that would progress my mindset from the first stage to the second. By actively engaging and recognising their behaviour is a problem it allows the development. From becoming a lazy student who avoided learning due to a feeling of status, to accepting the realities of the job and the need to develop their passion (Crisp & King, 2017). This process does not always happen in the first year of study. For some men it may take until becoming a PRT for them to realise they need to change or find a new career (Mallozzi & Galman, 2014; Skelton, 1991).

The school’s perception is an integral part of this reflection process and in the second stage of the mindset it becomes a highly influential aspect of how a male educator behaves. The second stage of the male mindset hinges on both a lack of status and the need to overcome challenges. By doing these two things a male educator will begin to build status and respect (Cushman, 2005; Hall & Langton, 2006). This building of confidence allows the development into stage 3. However, the school’s perception is a key factor into this development. This is often due to the need for schools to recognise potential and foster growth. Although during the second stage of my mindset journey I faced numerous challenges. The school in which I taught was able to see the potential I had and supported my development as a teacher. By having a strong mentoring system, I was able to address any faults in my teaching whilst also gaining support and awareness of how to deal with challenges. However, like most male educators, this was hindered by the identity bruising that took place between Mr Pierce and myself. During identity bruising it creates a scenario where an individual’s status feels so

low, they feel they are unable to speak out against these actions as the more experienced teacher's status is exerted, thus making one feel they will not be believed and they need to become more resilient (Foster & Newman, 2005; Jones, 2008). This scenario is highlighted in my experiences, when reaching out, I was told to "Harden up."

As discussed in the findings, one of the biggest challenges faced by male educators in the second mindset is the perception within the school and community that male teachers are a potential threat to young children (Moosa & Bhana, 2020). I felt I was seen this way due to media portrayals of male teachers and the culture that often exists between men. When analysing how the media had an impact on my behaviour, this aspect had a lot to do with how I felt in the stage-2 mindset. Although, I have never been up to date with the news or current affairs, it is hard to escape the reactions of others when mentioning working with children. The reaction given is often confusion as they try to reconcile a man working a woman's job, then suspicion as the media's perception of male teachers is highlighted (Petersen, 2014). This often places male teachers in the position of needing to be overly cautious when in class. Rather ironically, male teachers often need experience to be trusted around children, although it is often experienced teachers who commit such crimes (Baker, 2006). However, it was during my research that I realised how skewed the media's perception is. When researching male teachers, all articles portray male teachers as either predators or individuals fighting to remove the label of being a predator (Cushman, 2006; Cushman, 2005; Moosa & Bhana, 2020). As such, my behaviour as a beginning teacher (now PRT) was often mired in fear. This fear stems from the internal feelings of consistently acting in a way that tries to prove innocence, in case of accusations. This is where the initial fear of physical contact with a child stems from (Petersen, 2014; Rabelo, 2013). This type of behaviour is common among male teachers and is an easily followable thought process. For myself it was a case of being told by my peers to be careful when around the students. This created a defence mechanism where any action I took was examined internally and assessed before doing. By living in such a way, it breeds both doubt and a lack of confidence in one's own ability. Eventually, through a mutual trust of the self and the community, I was able to become more reflective on what works best for students.

My experiences with other male teachers who were in the stage-3 mindset of being confident is a common shared experience by less experienced male teachers (Foster &

Newman, 2005). My experience aligns with the idea that inexperienced male teachers are seen initially as a threat. This is due to the status of more experienced male educators being threatened and how an unknown male teacher could also be a threat to the students (Crisp & King, 2017; Moosa & Bhana, 2020; Petersen, 2014). In my case I was seen as a threat, as Mr Pierce realised he was not the only male teacher on staff, so had to compete for status with a newer teacher. This idea of the less experienced teacher being a threat is attributed to the new ideas which threaten the status quo of the school (Martino et al., 2009; Mills et al., 2008). In my opinion, the threat also came from the damage to status as there was the potential for myself to become more popular. However, to an experienced male teacher the biggest threat is to reputation (Baker, 2006). Often experienced teachers will regard new, younger, male teachers with suspicion, and this leads to the identity bruising which I experienced. The reason for this behaviour is due to a need to protect the students from someone who is unknown, but also to protect their reputation. The fear the media places in the teaching community causes male teachers to become hyperaware of their surroundings and potential accusations (Petersen, 2014). In the case of Mr Pierce, I feel his actions came from the fear of being labelled by proxy. In his mind, he must have perceived a situation where if I did something to reinforce the stereotype that male teachers are predators he would also be labelled (Crisp & King, 2017). This, therefore, justified in his mind the identity bullying he put me through. By making challenges and pushing me, not only was he asserting dominance to protect his status, he was also doing his best to both help me gain confidence to assert myself while also assessing my suitability around the students. This approach is common in the male teaching community.

The bruising focused on here arise from 'common sense' beliefs that primary teaching is an 'unsuitable' job for a man, either because primary teaching lacks status, (although, paradoxically, male teachers can be seen as positive role models), or because men could be a 'danger' to young children. (Foster & Newman, 2005, p. 346)

The students and parent's perception of me during stage 2 of the male teaching mindset is another area to analyse as part of this research. During my first year of teaching I was nervous, due to the full responsibility of organising and maintaining a full class (Petersen, 2014). No longer was I able to rely on an associate teacher or do enough to pass a few

weeks of practicum. Instead, my mindset was focused on whether I was good enough to teach and keep my job. This mindset is ever present during the first year of teaching, when the shift of responsibilities is so great (Mills et al., 2004). Impacting my thought process was the identity bruising I was receiving from Mr Pierce, through his use of stories and what could be called bullying. It made me cold and distant from my students (De Salis et al., 2019). I found the classroom a truly foreign and isolating place, made more difficult as I was unable to confide in my male peer as he was focused on creating challenges to assess my suitability (Foster & Newman, 2005). This results in male teachers like me beginning to struggle to make close connections with the students (Mills et al., 2008). In that first year, my students saw me as cold and distant, possibly devoid of personality. Contrasting this to my current level-3 mindset, I find it easy to connect to students and often develop professional relationships which last beyond my classroom. This is a reality for many beginning teachers but for male teachers it is far more severe; the fear and isolation felt by male teachers as well as often an unpreparedness from university leaves us in a situation where we struggle to bond with our students. In comparison, a female teacher could be seen as motherly by providing physical contact with their students to reassure them thus making this process less difficult (Crisp & King, 2017). In the students' eyes, this shows a bond and helps develop relationships and trust, especially with younger students (Sumsion, 2005). Male teachers are often too afraid to act in such a way due to societal pressure and fear of accusations (Baker, 2006). It is the status and reputation that needs to be earned first before a male teacher can flourish and develop his mindset to level 3 and begin to make stronger connections with his students (Brownhill, 2014; Foster & Newman, 2005).

5.3 Challenging the sense of self

When recounting my experiences, they evoke strong feelings of how I saw myself. During my stage-1 mindset I saw myself like many other male educators see themselves. I felt I was in a place of privilege; from the earliest moment of study, I was told that we need more male educators (University of Auckland, 2019). However, unlike many other male educators, I was making the choice to teach out of a passion and desire for education, "Despite the myth that males do not pursue careers as elementary teachers because they are not nurturing or patient, research shows that male teachers often do embody these traits and practices" (Crisp & King, 2017, p. 44). This is often not the case for many young male

educators who arrive at teaching because they assume it is easy and choose to be there due to a lack of direction. This attitude leads to the high rate of male teachers who do not complete their teacher education (Crisp & King; Kane & Mallon, 2006).

When in the lecture halls, my attitude was one of arrogance. This stems from my own sense of self. Finding the content of the course relatively easy and being new to New Zealand at the time, like many young male educators I was focused on making friends rather than studying (De Salis et al., 2019; Kane & Mallon, 2006). Across the literature there is a strong theme that male educators develop this behaviour due to their lack of purpose and feeling of status (Foster & Newman, 2005; Jones, 2008). Some treat the training at university with disregard, usually content with passing the course. This behaviour translates to their practicums often as an attitude of “I am not really teaching and as long as I pass.” This attitude leads to three possible avenues for prospective male teachers: dropping out of the course to pursue other more masculine jobs as the realities of their practicums offer such a challenge that they realise they are not well suited to the role. Another avenue is when this mindset of getting a pass continues.

Some student teachers were reported as reluctant to take initiative in the classroom, preferring instead to hang back and stay seated in the back of the class for the day and doing only the bare minimum to pass their teaching practice requirements.

(Kane & Mallon, p. 47)

As such these male teachers will complete their study and face more difficult challenges in stage 2, which often leads them to stop teaching (Mills et al., 2004). For me, my sense of self and recognition was the third avenue in which it was not enough to pass but I wanted to be proud of my achievements and prove the authority figures in my life wrong. The main catalyst for this third avenue was acknowledging the reality that my lack of ability in the classroom was being impacted by my behaviour whilst studying (Kane & Mallon, 2006). By having this acknowledgement, it allowed me to transition into stage 2 with more ease as I was aware of my actions and that I was betraying my motivations by endangering my ability to pursue a job which I had a passion for. Like the older students, my life experiences gave me a sense of self an awareness not afforded to the younger males in my cohort. Men who have had careers and made the active decision to turn to teaching are more likely to take their time studying seriously, “Students who have worked, and then chosen to be teachers

are stunning. Some of the ones straight from school are stunning, but most of them aren't" (Kane & Mallon, p. 47). This is often due to their need for status and recognition being much lower as they can separate their ego and focus on their passions. By having prior careers and experiences to contrast to the teaching profession, they take their study more seriously as they understand what the alternatives are (Kane & Mallon, 2006; Ponte, 2012). For me this was the case, having worked as a labourer, insurance agent and in hospitality I knew these were careers I did not want to have to return to. Furthermore, my sense of self would not allow me to feel the shame of returning to a career I felt was not suited to my skillset.

As such, stage 2 came with the same challenges that every male educator faces. But compared to those who remained unfocused and dispassionate, I was able to adapt and cope to a far greater extent. It was in this stage and during my first two years teaching that my sense of self had the most thorough examination. This was due to many of my assumptions and my sense of self-worth being challenged, which is in line with the idea of male educators needing to build their identity (Jones, 2008; Palmer et al., 2020). One of the main areas challenged during my first two years teaching was my sense of self-worth. This is one of the key factors in identity bruising and for most male educators comes at the hands of a more experienced male educator, "for male trainees and teachers this is likely to be an unusual and uncomfortable experience as there are complex pedagogic and social issues to address, particularly those related to child protection, masculinity and (hetero/homo)sexuality" (Foster & Newman, 2005, p. 355). In my case, Mr Pierce understood that my physical appearance was a key weakness for me. This weakness stems from a history of bullying both in and out of school. Therefore, I know that by targeting this area and using it against me, Mr Pierce was building my resilience for the future. For him the idea of a male teacher who could not handle personal attacks would make him vulnerable to others, especially the students. This is backed up by Henebery (2019) who found that in comparison to female teachers, male teachers are more likely to experience work place harassment from students. The data shows, "Male teachers, on the other hand, were more likely to have students organise others against them (8.3% and 6% respectively), lie about them to get them in trouble (7.6% to 6.4%), be discriminated against by students (5.5% to 2.5%)" (p. 7). I recognise Mr Pierce was building my resilience, however the damage to my sense of self has had lasting repercussions to this day. Often there are moments where my mind recalls these

insults and past traumas leading to nervousness and a lack of control. This shows one of the limitations in the way male educators interact with each other and adds to the idea of isolation (Mallozzi & Galman, 2014). The tactic used by Mr Pierce only helped to create a scenario where I felt unable to rely on my peers (Han et al., 2020). His tactics also would have allowed students to become aware of my anxieties, which are often either not present or well hidden. This is exemplified by the lack of respect and recognition I received from the students I interacted with.

During my stage 2 of the male mindset, I also dealt with a changing of what my perceptions of teaching were. Initially, I assumed teaching was a job of interacting and engaging with students. Due to my lack of attention during training, the biggest gap in my knowledge was the pastoral care that teaching requires (Brownhill, 2014). This is an area men struggle with in comparison to female teachers. Physical contact is an effective strategy to consoling and supporting children (Sumsion, 2005). As a man, I felt unable to do this as my sense of self made me aware of how I could be perceived if physically interacting with a child. As such, a challenge that had to be overcome whilst going through my identity bruising was how to support a child without physical contact (Cushman, 2005). This challenge was overcome through trial and error across many years. It is one of the biggest challenges men face in teaching; how to support children without the use of physical contact? This was achieved through a mix of discussion, observation and finding way of getting to know the child (Persson, 2020). By doing this I was able to recognise their “tells.” These tells are signals students give off that alerted me to a potential issue. This allowed me to pre-empt and conduct pastoral care when my students were either less stressed or at points of the day where they would feel more comfortable. This is one tactic used by teachers to avoid the use of physical contact and build relationships through knowledge of the learner (Mills et al., 2008).

My attitude was another area that had to be challenged in stage 2. Before I started teaching, I worked in a masculine profession as a labourer. This job afforded me both status and recognition as it is typically seen as an appropriate job for a man (Lips-Wiersma et al., 2016). Furthermore, in this profession there is little independence, with each task being set and with a defined end. However, when teaching I became solely accountable for how I worked and educated my students (Mills, 2000). This led to a clash of work experience. I had

to learn to ask for help and not see this as a weakness—an area where male educators struggle (Braun, 2015). Male educators who are stage 2 will see this as a blow to status, due to the need to develop a mindset of being a learner (Bhana & Moosa, 2016). Teaching is a learning profession and I had to learn that I needed to learn from others without taking offense to their suggestions (Mills et al., 2004). For male educators this is a difficult process as not only do we need to balance the learning and needs of our students, but we also need to learn to be wrong and be led by women. Due to reinforced gender stereotypes, male teachers are seen as leaders by both staff and students, “Male trainees identified themselves as being leaders and better at disciplining; qualities that were also identified by female trainees about their male counterparts” (De Salis et al., 2019, p. 7). This perception adds to the loneliness and isolation felt by men as they are often stereotyped into disciplinarian roles and not given as many opportunities to nurture. The disciplinarian role also seeps into the identity bruising of male colleagues, as more experienced male educators seek to discipline the less experienced males and ensure correct behaviours (Petersen, 2014). Coupling these feelings with a low sense of status and self-worth serves as a difficult challenge which often leads men to stop teaching in the early stages of the second mindset.

As part of stage 3 one of the biggest realisations was the sense of self and the transition to becoming a confident and capable teacher (Martin, 1984). Part of this was the development of both status and self-awareness. By gaining the resilience to become respected through my identity bruising, not only had I become a reflective teacher but also one who has the confidence to challenge those of higher authority (De Salis et al., 2019). For me this came through when finding the confidence to challenge Mr Pierce and suggest my ideas for a better educational system when planning (Mills, 2000; Schacht, 2000). Male teachers who enter stage 3 will have such a moment where they are able to meet the challenges of stage 2 and find the confidence to challenge those around them for authority (Martin, 1984). When finally in this stage there are many behaviours which I and other male teachers display. The first is the idea of challenging authority and having the confidence to no longer feel isolated as we accept our position in the teaching community (Martin). This stems from how male teachers gain their status within the school from the students’ perspectives but

also from that of the wider community. As such they are seen as a valuable asset, often promoted or used for extracurricular activities, such as sport (Palmer et al., 2020).

Being part of this stage also warrants a freedom inexperienced teachers do not often have. A confident stage-3 male teacher will be able to feel as if they are able to actively defend themselves against accusations (Crisp & King, 2017). This is due to a difference in physical contact with students to support emotional growth. Whereas a female teacher will use touch to comfort a child, a male teacher does this through sports and activity to promote behaviours such as sportsmanship (Palmer et al., 2020). Additionally, male teachers will use their confidence and awareness to engage with students in physical play such as games and sport (Sumsion, 2005). This was the case with my experiences, I saw myself as a leader and role model. As such I routinely have contact with students to build a connection, however, my awareness results in me using it at times when it is justified, for example engaging in a game at lunchtime. During this time, male teachers will develop the skill of “positive touch.” This example of physical contact could be a pat on the back or a handshake to students. This not only builds trust between the teacher and his students but also displays a confident teacher who knows the limits of what touch is acceptable, “The importance of touch is stressed in particular with regard to the developmental prerequisites for bonding, emotional development and physical wellbeing” (Johansson et al., 2021, p. 288). However, part of this stage is an awareness of proximity with students. An experienced male teacher is still aware of accusations of becoming a predator but has learned the correct way to interact with students physically.

However, as part of this stage 3 there is the “cycle of torment;” in my experience this is something I am both aware of and avoid. Due to their scarcity, experienced male teachers will naturally become mentors to inexperienced male teachers, “Men-only courses and the support of male mentors have proven to be successful” (Peeters, 2007, p. 22). This is done to not only sustain status, but also guide and develop safe teaching practice. In the case of Mr Smith, I was aware of the identity bruising I went through. Therefore, instead of relaying cautionary tales or exerting dominance I worked to support and give leadership opportunities to him. This behaviour has been shown to remove isolation amongst male educators by fostering a community. As evidenced in Finland, it has worked to increase the

number of male teachers, as shared experience and community is needed to remove the isolation that male teachers experience (Lahelma, 2000, 2011).

Chapter 6 Conclusion

This section covers several key areas. Firstly, a discussion of what male educators need to be more supported in primary education and how they can be supported at both a school and societal level. Secondly, I critique the idea of “needing” more male teachers and argue that this idea is more multifaceted than commonly discussed. Finally, I identify limitations of this study and put forward recommendations for future research into this area, as well as outline my personal insights whilst conducting this research.

6.1 How can male teachers be more supported in primary education?

6.1.1 Scholarships and incentives

There are several ways in which male educators can be better supported in primary education. Most noticeably there is always going to be a disconnect when an individual enters a work force that is not associated with their gender (Nieminen, 2020). Currently, there are several scholarships available for women who wish to enter male-dominated sectors in society (The University of Auckland, 2021). By having a similar opportunity for men entering education, male educators would be encouraged, while allowing a degree of control over the standards of male educators supported by a scholarship. Research has shown that male educators tend to either teach to a lower standard or have a dispassion for education (Flood, 2011; Martin, 1984; Petersen, 2014; Skelton, 2009). By having a scholarship that focuses on grades and attendance it would serve to boost more male educators as there is an added incentive. By doing this it would also allow universities to place a responsibility on young male educators. This could result in both more male teachers and a higher calibre of male teachers. An added benefit of this approach would be to remove the current perspective of needing more male educators by focusing on the quality of teachers (Lahelma, 2000; McGrath & Sinclair, 2013).

6.1.2 Creating a community of male educators

This, however, is not the only way in which male educators need support. More is needed at a school level. Being a male educator is often a lonely and isolating experience (Farquhar, 1997; Skelton, 2009). Due to this many male educators can become both withdrawn and highly independent, and this may develop stubbornness in regards to teaching practice

(Mallozzi & Galman, 2014). Male educators of all ages could be supported through this via the use of a system which promotes the building of a male teacher community. In Europe, effort has been taken to encourage more men into the early childhood sector using male-only training courses. “Everywhere in Europe initiatives are being developed to bring the few men in training together, so that they can support each other. In England and Scotland men-only childcare orientation programmes are very successful” (Peeters, 2007, p. 7). Therefore, we should adopt a similar approach in New Zealand. If schools and professional development courses sought to cater for the small population of male educators both in school and out of it, it would reduce the feeling of isolation. The creation of a community of male educators who can network whilst offering support and guidance in a way that is applicable to men would move teaching towards a gender-balanced profession (Nieminen, 2020). This community would become a large part of allowing experience between male educators to be shared. Thus, moving away from the identity bruising as there would be less of a power dynamic compared to my experience as a young male educator being moulded by the older, more experienced and respected peer (Foster & Newman, 2005; Jones, 2008). I feel by having a community of men across areas and deciles with differing experiences, it would create an open and supportive environment in which ideas are examined without the stigma of status, or lack thereof.

6.1.3 Tarring with the same brush: Re-establishing trust

A further way we can support men in primary education is by allowing the reestablishment of trust between male educators and the community (Farquhar et al., 2006; Ingram, 2018; Moosa & Bhana, 2020). This is potentially one of the hardest areas to change regarding supporting male educators. I feel this begins at a school level through a supportive rather than suspicious attitude of male teachers, but overall requires a societal change. Male educators should be supported and encouraged to use their female colleagues as examples on how to interact with children. In Finnish schools, there have been societal reforms to encourage gender neutrality in teaching. Research by Penni Cushman (2009) has found that Finland has developed an educational system that treats “individuals as being different. They also had no concerns about physical contact—it’s normal there for both male and female teachers to hug their students” (p. 1). A man should feel comfortable and reassured when interacting with children, and treated as an individual not held to the crimes of the past (Sumsion, 2005). All male teachers will be involved in a situation where a young child

needs comfort and should feel empowered to support that child in the best way possible (Malaby & Ramsey, 2011). The gender of those who comfort students should not be an issue. It is often society which makes it an issue or adds underlying motives which are not present in the behaviour due to a sexist perspective of male educators (Ingram, 2018). However, as part of this solution, there should also be more of an examination into how women conduct themselves around children. Should we accept hugging and physical contact as the primary form of comfort for school children from female teachers? (Cushman, 2005) Perhaps, we also need to investigate language used by female teachers and contrast it to how we would act if a man used it. It is not uncommon for female teachers to refer to their students using terms of endearment (Esner, 2021). Although innocent, are these terms of endearment acceptable for a professional to use toward a student? Therefore, to support male educators we need to evaluate what is right and wrong for both genders to develop a gender neutrality (Cushman, 2009; Lahelma, 2011). By beginning to set rules for teachers' conduct, it will help to create a balanced environment where men are not forced to be cold and unloving whereas female teachers have no limits on their behaviour and language (Farquhar, 1997).

6.2 Do we need more male teachers?

This discussion is often one that is both frustrating and part of the educational zeitgeist, especially when considering primary and ECE teachers (Lahelma, 2000; McGrath & Sinclair, 2013). Unfortunately, there is no simple answer for this question. However, after my research I would firmly make the assertion that we do not need more male educators. Instead, we need more high-quality educators, more of whom are men (Ponte, 2012). This is where the difficulty lies. In our current educational climate, we have positioned ourselves to place a value on gender (Lahelma, 2000; Mills et al., 2004). There is an understanding that needs to be recognised, and that the want for more male teachers stems from societal issues. Most apparent of these issues is the lack of male role models in children's homes (Martino et al., 2009; McGrath & Sinclair, 2013; Palmer et al., 2020). Unfortunately, many children are growing up with no male role models. Although this is an issue that affects both boys and girls as neither is able to recognise and understand how a good adult male behaves (Sokal et al., 2007), the most damage is on boys' development. It has been shown that, for boys, having a positive male role model allows the development of both social skills

and academic success (Lahelma, 2000; Mills et al., 2008). This is due to the role model demonstrating what success looks like as a man. Therefore, it is no surprise that having more men in schools would help to provide students with this role model who can nurture children's perspectives of how men should act (Brownhill, 2014).

However, contrary to this we need to understand that teachers are not family members and should not be treated as such. Perhaps we should look at teachers as individuals whose purpose is to educate children, and part of that is being a role model to children (Kliman, 1978). Although all teachers give their students care in terms of both emotional and academic needs, we should not be employed for that purpose. By having a system where we employ teachers to be gender role models, it will encourage a system where the skills of teaching are devalued as that is not their primary purpose in the classroom. The main issue of employing men to serve as role models rather than good teachers is when students leave our class. Unlike a family member, our time with the students is limited. At the end of the day or the school year we disconnect from the children to carry on with our lives outside of the classroom. We also need to recognise if we have low-quality male teachers to fulfil this gap in society, we will also be allowing low-quality male role models in our classroom. As such, if by having more men in the classroom it offers a societal benefit, we need to ensure the quality of men is of the highest possible standard (Baker, 2006; Petersen, 2014).

Furthermore, having the expectation that men will solve the role model issue is highly damaging. This is due to an inherent devaluation of the importance of female teachers and the added expectations on men (Martino et al., 2009). By having an approach in which we value teachers as professionals first but recognise their importance on a child's life, it keeps the nurturing of the child as a family responsibility that is supported by the teacher. Rather than teachers being the primary form of care and creating a career that leads to burnout due to overly high expectations from society and schools (Brownhill, 2014).

6.3 Insights gained

During this research, the biggest insight I have gained is how precarious and cautious we are as male educators. Even while writing this dissertation, I refused to be alone in my class with two female students, preferring to leave them with another teacher who had more students. This research has had the profound effect of making me very aware of how society sees male educators. This is both a positive and a negative. The positive aspect is allowing

me to keep an awareness of the danger accusations could have on me, however, the negative has been the damage to the comfort I once had due to my experience as a teacher of eight years. I have also found the experience of writing this research project quite challenging; it is difficult reliving decades-old experiences that had been buried in the past. By looking at these experiences in a new light and considering the perspectives of others, it has helped me to understand, albeit not forgive, their attitude towards my teaching journey.

A sense of pessimism has also begun to creep into my understanding of the world we live in. This is due to my perception that I doubt we will ever be in an educational climate that is “safe” for male educators. Instead, we will always need to tread a careful path and be on our guard in a way female educators will never have to experience. I hope that in the future New Zealand education begins to shift based on the Scandinavian model. However, I remain doubtful of this as I feel New Zealand as a society still holds men to an unrealistic standard of masculinity.

6.4 Limitations and recommendations

As part of this study there are several limitations I need to address as well as possible further recommendations for future research in this field. The first limitation of this research is the lack of transgender awareness and recognition of homosexual teachers’ experiences. As this was an autoethnographical piece, I only considered my experiences as data—that of a straight, cis-gendered man. Therefore, a recommendation for further research could be the impact and experiences of LGBTQ+ teachers and whether their mindset is different due to how society negatively views this group. This could extend into observations whether transgendered men share the same mindset as cis-gendered men.

A further limitation is the focus on the primary education sector. I have deliberately avoided discussions into the ECE sector, secondary, and tertiary. This is mostly due to a lack of experience in these areas. However, a comparison between these three would make compelling research to see whether the male mindset is limited to only the primary sector. The research could be taken to an even more granular level. It could be theorised that at a lower primary level the mindset may be different from that of an upper primary teacher. This idea would allow comparisons and identify different mindsets depending on the levels being taught in a sector or the comparative ages of children.

A further discussion and limitation of this study is the focus on teaching. In New Zealand we have many gendered workforces. Perhaps this study could be extended and used to investigate the mindsets of an individual who is entering a workforce not typically associated with their gender, examples could be female builders or male nurses. The autoethnographical approach was deliberately taken to give a rich and personal voice to this research (Sparkes, 2002). However, this could also be seen as a limitation as only one voice is captured. A future recommendation is to expand the data sources considered through interviews with a wider group (Yates, 2004).

The final limitation of this study could be my own personal biases. Across this study my own experiences have been used to develop the data (Sparkes, 1996). However, it is important to recognise that as part of this confirmation bias is a possible limitation (Wall, 2008). By using my own experiences there is the potential that I have subconsciously chosen experiences that would add to my research and ignored those that do not. However, I have strived to be as honest and ethical as possible to create data that is reflective of my experiences (Carolyn Ellis, 2007). As such, more research into this area will serve as a recommendation to counter this limitation.

I have found this process to be a difficult journey. Recalling and experiencing the negative experiences throughout my life to have weighed quite heavily on my mind, often causing moments of doubt and anxiety. However, I have been rewarded with the understanding and awareness of how I treat those around me. Whilst completing this research, I have begun to gravitate toward the mentor opportunities that exist within my schools. This has allowed a process where I have seen less experienced male teachers feel empowered and develop an identity without the fear and isolation that is so common amongst our community.

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