

Bhana, Deevia (2018). **Male teachers as sexual predators:**

The perils of non-dominant masculinity in teaching young children.

Paper presented on the 28th EECERA Annual Conference, 30.8.2018, Budapest, Hungary.

Abstract

This paper aims to investigate how primary school teachers construct male teachers in the early years of schooling in South Africa. Globally, there is an increasing concern about the lack of male teachers in the early years of schooling. A gender balance special interest group (SIG) in EECERA is part of this drive. Such research calls for gender balance in the early years of schooling by addressing the question of masculinity. The paper draws from Raewynn Connell's (Connell, 1995) critical masculinity studies to demonstrate the ways in which hegemonic masculinity and non-dominant masculinity are socially produced. Hegemonic masculinity is based on patriarchy, male power and the quest to fulfil an idealised version of masculinity. The paper draws from a qualitative study based on 41 primary school teachers. The data is derived from in-depth interviews with both male and female teachers. Pseudonyms are used. Ethical clearance was obtained from the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Permission was obtained from the Department of Education. Informed consent was received from each participant. Teachers disparage non-hegemonic masculinities which they argue destabilises parental expectations. Essentialised versions of gender are used against non-dominant masculinity based on care and respect (Parr & Gosse, 2011; Peeters, Rohrmann & Emilsen, 2015) as they emphasise male intentions around sexual abuse and potentially using the early years as a space to enact sexually predatory conduct. The development of 'liberating masculinities' which are caring, show empathy, and respect is vital. Addressing the construction of masculinity in schools and with parents is vital.

Keywords

gender, male teachers, masculinity, non-hegemonic masculinity, South Africa

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Male teachers as sexual predators: The perils of non-dominant masculinity in teaching young children

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Introduction

- How might an understanding masculinities shape gendered ideologies about who teaches young children?
- Drawing from a theoretical framing that situates masculinity, sexuality and caring within its cultural setting, this paper explores how primary school teachers located in the KwaZulu-Natal province of South Africa, construct men as teachers of young children in the FP of schooling (children aged between five and nine).

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Theorizing masculinities: Gender, sexuality, care and the case of non-dominance

- Connell (2005) and hierarchies in masculinities; Hearn and Pringle (2006) and notions of care; Skelton (2012) and schooling
- “Gender matters in child welfare partly by virtue of the relationship of men, masculinities and men’s practices to children, young people and childcare” (Hearn & Pringle, 2006, p.365).

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- “it is not simply about whether or not men go into primary schooling; it is about cultural expectations of masculinities, the intersectionality of gender with social class (and ethnicity, sexuality and so forth); and the implications of theories of gender for understanding the tensions around masculinity (Skelton, 2012, p.6).

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Masculinities in South Africa: caring, context and contradictions

- Caring masculinities: The new man? (Morrell, 2012; Ratele, 2016)
- Caring masculinities in FP: The sexual predator and the scandal of manhood in South Africa
- Are liberating masculinities non-dominant masculinities?
- Caring masculinities, FP and contradictions

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The Study

Semi-structured individual interviews

Men as FP teachers

- Questions were used to stimulate a discussion on why there are so few male FP teachers in primary schooling.
- Teachers were asked to respond on the need for male FP teachers.

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Masculinities and sexualities: Dominant and non-dominant

I think it will be good to bring a male influence into the classroom to expose our children to them so long as they concentrate on educating our children and have no other thoughts in their mind... [such as] abuse and touching our children and making them feel uncomfortable—as long as they don't have any ulterior motives.

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Most certainly we need males in the FP but then they need to have this desire, this love and a genuine and a sincere interest in the wellbeing of the child. They must view the child as someone that needs to be moulded and shaped so that the child can be prepared for a fulfilling future. They should not have any other objectives in mind... like wanting to take advantage of these children—you know, child molestation and things is a serious issue.

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Gender of Care: Policing the limits of caring masculinities

See, with society being the way it is, men sometimes are very guarded about being too caring about a child because of all these abuses that are being slung at them, especially in the media. So even if a woman takes her arm and puts [it] around a child and comforts a child everyone will look at it [as] motherly, but if a man does that people look at it twice and they become suspicious. That is why men tend to... distance themselves from it... Sometimes it's not even true [but] children [a] little bigger tend to use things like this against the teacher.

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Being a father figure at home, hugging your daughter or holding your daughter's hand and coming and doing that in the class is two different [things], so he's going to get into trouble for that, as much as [it] may be a simple caring act between an educator and a child, it can blow out of proportion.

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Conclusion

1. Theorising male involvement in FP requires attention to masculinities and its contradictions within local settings
2. Being a man invokes sexuality, power and the concept of care is both liberating and constricting requiring attention to the local dimensions of race, gender and class.
3. Non-dominant and dominant masculinities are interlinked

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4. Men as potentially and uniformly as child molesters hinder care work and the new expressions of masculinity.
5. Implications for working with teachers both in service and pre-service is essential
6. Changing gendered ideologies beyond schooling must be ongoing however, the new man concept is contradictory and can invoke both change, caring and power.

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7. Suspicion of male teachers- connected to the high levels of sexual violence against children by men in South Africa.

8. A need to generate new expectations of men and develop greater confidence in men's ability to care for and teach young children in South Africa.

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