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Youth Perceptions

Of

Authority Figures

In

A South African Secondary School

And

**The Role Of Gender
Within Those Perceptions**

**A Minor Dissertation
presented to**

**The Faculty of Humanities
University of Cape Town**

**in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the
Master of Philosophy Degree
in Educational Administration, Planning
and Social Policy**

By

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2005

Declaration

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

Signed by candidate

18/02/2005

SIGNATURE

DATE

**This Dissertation is dedicated to my dear, much missed friend,
John Nicolaas Berens (18/02/1966 – 16/02/1997).**

University of Cape Town

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank my supervisor, Professor Crain Soudien, for his support in bringing this work to a close. Had I taken fuller advantage of his expertise, I am sure that the journey would not have been as long and as arduous. Special thanks must also go to my brothers, Andre, Dione and Neil who have assisted me with the technical aspects of this dissertation. I also need to thank the Principal and Governing Body of the school at which I was employed at the time of the research, for showing an interest in my work and granting me leave when requested. I am also indebted to the research participants, without whose co-operation this research would not have been possible. Finally, a big thank you to my parents for their encouragement and belief in me.

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ABSTRACT

The focus of this study is on young people's attitudes towards their male and female teachers in their role as classroom managers. The central concern of the study is to gain an understanding of how young people mobilise gender to define authority.

This is done using Connell's (1987) theory of practice and his notions of the 'gender order' and 'gender regimes'. The theoretical framework provided by Connell acknowledges the active part that people play in making a gendered world, whilst at the same time recognising that this always takes place within socially given structures of power and social relations and always draws on the local cultural possibilities. The value of this approach lies in its argument that the structures of gender do not determine human action. Rather, they are actively constituted and reconstituted in a very active social practice. This may result in gender norms, arrangements and relationships being sustained, contested or transformed.

The methodology used in the research is qualitative. The study is located in a Combined School in Cape Town, in a largely Muslim area. The subjects are Grade 11 students, comprising 29 girls and 17 boys. All participants completed a questionnaire consisting mostly of open-ended questions. Two in-depth group interviews were also conducted. Each comprised 8 participants with an equal distribution of boys and girls. Data analysis took the form of developing code categories which matched the research purposes, the theoretical perspectives which informed them as well as taking into account the logic that emerged from the data itself. Data from the interviews was used for the purposes of triangulation. Interpretation of the data was informed by frequency counts, noting of patterns and themes, clustering similar responses and/or subjects and combining categories as well as the theoretical perspectives which informed the study.

The findings suggest that students' understandings of gender divisions and relations are heavily informed by institutional arrangements, cultural expectations and belief systems but also from their own observations and interpretations of the world. The family, religious ideology, sexual

relationships and the workplace are shown to be key influences in redefining and reinforcing gender difference and reproducing gender inequality, while school is seen as reducing this, especially in regard to the empowerment of girls. However, young people do not passively accept the messages contained within these gender regimes. They are increasingly questioning taken-for-granted definitions of masculinity and femininity, accept the possibility that both sexes have equal capabilities, and are supportive of the principle of gender equality. These progressive ideas and opinions are apparent in their views of authority. Authority is seen as a blend of both masculine and feminine elements. In the school context this view is corroborated in students' expressed preference for teachers who use a disciplinary style that draws on both masculine and feminine values and attributes.

The conclusion to which this research comes is that while gender imposes constraints on how it is made and remade, the modern context is increasingly modifying received understandings of traditional and very patriarchal communities amongst youth.

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CHAPTER 1 : INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

Male hegemony has for millenia characterized the order of human social life. Whether we examine the classical model of woman as an inverted man or the Renaissance view of the existence of two distinct sexes, supposedly supported by modern biological knowledge, *women are devalued* (my emphasis) (Laquer, 1990). Contemporary South Africa is a shining example of this.

During the days of the anti-apartheid struggle the fight for gender equality was overshadowed by the fight for racial equality. Indeed, it was not until the late 1980s and early 1990s that gender issues became acknowledged by the African National Congress (ANC), as an important area for discussion at an organizational level.

In 1990 the ANC National Committee issued a statement recognising that there had been centuries of “women’s subjugation”, in the process negating the notion that it was only colonization and industrialization that introduced inequality into African society. The document established the need to take appropriate measures to ensure the principle of gender equality, and called for a “systematic program of formal and informal education to promote an understanding of the origin and effects of gender oppression on our people” (ANC: 1990: 22).

Today the demand for gender equity is present in South Africa’s constitution. Linked to this is a bill of rights which guarantees women protection under the law. The Domestic Violence Act, the Maintenance Act and the Customary Marriages Act are now in operation. In addition, national machinery like the Commission on Gender Equality has been put in place to ensure that gender equality is promoted and protected. In spite of this, South African society remains overwhelmingly patriarchal and inherently hierarchical (Morrel & Jackman, 1997). According to the Gender Equity Task Team Report (GETTR) (1997:25), in South Africa, “women’s subordinate position is embedded in virtually all social systems: sport, the media, religious

institutions and so on, where men's roles are considered more important, interesting and authoritative".

South Africa also has one of the highest rates of violence against women in the world. Police statistics indicate that a woman is raped every 35 seconds in this country, while it is estimated that one in four women are likely to experience domestic violence in their relationships (Sadu News, Motara, 1999). Gender violence affects *all* women irrespective of race, class, location, religion, ethnicity and so on. It takes on many forms. Apart from sexual and domestic violence and femicide, these include violence related to custom and culture (e.g. female genital mutilation, virginity testing, witchcraft violence). More recently HIV/Aids has added a frightening new dimension to this scourge as coercive sex is becoming a major means by which the disease is spread. Such practices undermine the dignity of women. They underline the latter's low status in society and consequent bargaining power in relationships.

A progressive constitution and laws which protect women against abuse be it verbal, physical, psychological or emotional are clearly not enough. More and more, it is being realised, that the move from planning and statements of intent to implementation needs to be accelerated. This is not likely in the near term given the current lack of human resources, training and commitment, all of which must accompany the implementation of legislation. What is needed is a transformation of attitudes and practice in which both men *and* women play a key role.

The structures and processes of the education system have been identified as key in effecting such change. However, within the education system itself gender differences are widespread. According to the *Education and Training White Paper* (No 16312 of March 15th, 1995), and of particular relevance to this research, is the statement that a patriarchal culture dominates educational and authority relationships. As it notes: "Women are overwhelmingly represented in the teaching service but are poorly represented in the ranks of school principals and are barely visible in middle and senior management."

The maldistribution of men and women staff seems bound to convey undesirable messages. Students notice that it is the almost invariable order of things that large institutions are run by

men. Hierarchalism also conveys strong messages about who is to be granted respect in an institution as well as ideas about superiority and inferiority in relation to gender, race and class. However, inequality between male and female teachers cannot be resolved merely by providing women with the same opportunities as men. As Ramphele (1995:6) argues: “One may not simply want an equal slice of the mad race in which men are currently involved. One may want to transform values underlying the notion of work, leadership and human relationships.” This highlights another level of gender relations which the White Paper acknowledges: “In many schools... social relations among students and between staff and students, exhibit sexism and male chauvinism. Sexual harassment of girl and women students and women teachers, as well as acts of violence against women are common in many parts of the education system”(1995: 46). Schools are thus an important site for the reproduction of gender inequality.

Schools are also active players in the formation of gender identities. Their overall gender regimes typically reinforce gender differences though some practices reduce them. Understandings of gender in schools are imparted through school organizational structures, the curriculum, classroom interaction between instructors and learners and between peer groups in the playground and in all forms of social contact. Of specific interest to this work, are those understandings relating to how teaching roles are gendered and how male and female teachers are positioned by processes in schools.

1.2 RESEARCH PROBLEM AND MOTIVATION

There are various important ways that men and women teachers occupy different social positions within the classroom. Central to this study is the hypothesis that female teachers often face particularly acute problems of power and authority. This is most apparent within the context of maintaining classroom order and handling disruptive students who challenge and test them. The belief that women teachers are ‘soft’ and cannot control classes is a deep-seated one, and one, I may add, which I have personally experienced as a young woman teacher. This is problematic, since, in many schools measures of success are inextricably bound up with good discipline – a successful teacher is seen as one who can control the class. While institutional elements play an

important role in creating this situation, an often ignored fact is that students *also* play a large part in creating the classroom climate. Furthermore, it is often the case that students respond differently to female and male teachers and expect different things from them. In this sense young people are active agents in the perpetuation of gender divisions. Many have sexist attitudes and beliefs and hold traditional gender role stereotypes. This is especially disturbing in light of the fact that youth is often seen as a critical time in the formation of identities. Gender, is an extremely important aspect of identity development, since as part of this process one develops a sense of who one is as a man or woman and what implications this holds.

The teenage period is also a crucial time in relation to educational and life choices. Concomitant with this, is the development of critical awareness about gender ideologies. Of particular significance to this work, is the point, that during this time people are in the process of forming attitudes and beliefs about others that could be lifelong. Another point which bears considering here, is that teenagers may construct their identities partly in relation to the way they see their male and female teachers, and, although it is not within the scope of this study to confirm this link, it provides another reason for undertaking a study of this nature.

If women teachers are seen to be unable to assert authority, or if their authority is not respected, it has implications for how boys and girls see themselves. Boys who give female teachers a hard time collude in society's dictum that power and prestige are the preserve of men, while girls are in a sense being told that this is what it means to be a woman – passive and subordinate.

Young people need positive role models in which both men and women are seen as equals. They also need to be made aware of, and take responsibility for the role that they play in perpetuating gender divisions. In this regard, schools have a central role to play as a site for intervention and change. Having said that, in South Africa there is a growing recognition of the wide gap that remains between rhetorical commitments and actual gender practices in South African society and education. A telling example of this is the South African Schools Act (1996) which is silent on issues of gender balance and the introduction of gender equity programs in schools.

Notwithstanding this, as Epstein (1998:50) argues,

periods of great change open up the possibility for those discourses which are usually marginalised to gain leverage. On the one hand, there is the possibility of reinscribing hardness and racism, macho values and misogyny within South Africa. On the other, this period of change means that interventions for alternative versions of masculinity which normalise opposition to violence, racism and misogyny may be possible.

According to Giroux (1996:10):

As a metaphor for historical memory and a marker that makes visible the ethical and political responsibility of adults to the next generation, youth is both an enabling and disabling category. Youth haunts adult society because it references our need to be attentive to a future that others will inherit. It simultaneously serves as a symbol of how society thinks about itself and as indicator of changing cultural values, sexuality, the state of the economy and the spiritual life of a nation.

This provides a powerful rationale for intervention in youth development and for undertaking a study which seeks to explore how gender differentiation in the classroom unfolds, through the eyes of students, albeit at the most elementary level.

We need to develop a systematic understanding of how young people interpret classroom encounters and how their experience of classroom life influences their views about the worth and capabilities of the sexes. Understanding gender differentiation (which in large part is also about inequality and about power relations between men and women) will avoid the introduction of cosmetic changes that, in the long run will achieve little.

While the international literature on gender and education, particularly in developed countries, is extensive, work in this field has only just begun in South Africa. According to the Gender Equity Task Team (GETT) which was set up in 1996 to investigate and advise the Department of Education on the establishment of a permanent Gender Equity Unit in the Department of Education, “very little research of a contextual nature has been conducted in South Africa. Not enough is known of what does go on in schools although there is a certain amount of hearsay evidence” (GETT,1997:78). Furthermore, their report notes that detailed policy measures

relating to gender differences are new to South Africa and there is a debilitating lack of information on gender and education (GETT, 1997:22).

These are the issues that define the context, problematique and stimulus for this study and it is against this background that I have formulated the following research question:

What is the role of gender in students' perceptions of authority?

The study is located in a secondary school in Cape Town in the Western Cape in a largely Muslim area, which previously fell under the jurisdiction of the House of Delegates, that department which had responsibility for people who were classified "Indian" in apartheid South Africa.

1.3 AIM

The central concern of this study is to examine young people's perceptions of their male and female teachers particularly as they are experienced at the site of classroom control. The research is aimed at gaining no more than a preliminary understanding of how young people mobilize gender to define authority.

Perhaps now is an opportune time to define gender as it is used in this work. For the moment, the following working definition provided by *The Oxfam Gender Training Manual* (1994:4) will suffice:

People are born female or male but learn to be girls and boys who grow into women and men. They are taught what the appropriate behaviour and attitudes, roles and activities are for them. This learned behaviour is what makes up gender identity and determines gender roles.

1.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Key limitations of this study include the following. Race and class have been omitted as foci of attention in this study. This provides an incomplete picture, a scenario, which is further reduced

by the fact that it is restricted to a small sample of students from one particular school. The latter's perceptions could by no means be said to represent the views of all South African youth. Nevertheless, in highlighting micro instances of how young people view their teachers as authority figures from a gender perspective, it is hoped that a more in-depth, albeit non generalisable understanding will be achieved.

1.5 THE STRUCTURE OF THIS WORK

This research report is divided into five chapters. The first chapter has sought to outline the issues which call for an inquiry of this kind. Chapter two provides the theoretical standpoint of this work. It also surveys literature which relate to (i) approaches to the study of gender and schooling, (ii) similar research on gender relations in secondary schooling and (iii) the position of South African women teachers. Chapter three describes the methodology used for this study. Chapter four discusses the findings of the research while chapter five summarizes the main conclusions of the report, points to policy implications and makes suggestions about further research in the area of gender and schooling in South Africa.

CHAPTER 2 : LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Gender issues in the South African education system have only recently come under the spotlight. Indeed, in conducting a literature search I could find no previous work which focused on my specific area of interest. Even in the international literature on gender and education, which is extensive, the differential perceptions that young people have of their male and female teachers, particularly in the context of discipline and authority – and its implications, have not emerged as an important theme. Instead, as Angus (1993) notes, “the major strand” in much of the research on gender and education “has been the investigation of differential treatment of girls and boys in schools and the identification of practices that discriminate against girls” (1993: 59). Gender work in schools, certainly in the seventies and early eighties, was thus seen mainly in terms of empowering girls.

Today the continuing struggle for greater gender equality in schools is entering a new phase – one which notes the importance of addressing gender issues in a way which sees both male and female as significant players in the equation. As Oyegun (1998:13) notes, “. . . gender equality is not about women becoming ‘surrogate men’ (Kanter, 1977). It is about looking critically at the way men as well as women are restricted by their socialization and gendering.” To this end, much of the more recent literature on gender and schooling has focussed on the school as an active agent in the *making* of gender identities. This has involved the identification of hegemonic school processes and practices, for example, pupil-grouping, timetabling and the sexual division of labour among teachers which convey particular conceptions of boundaries between masculinity and femininity. At the same time increasing attention has been given to the fact that students are actively involved in inferring the underlying rules, learning to “recognise and make sense of a wide range of variety of contradictory and miscellaneous inputs” (Arnot, 1982:84).

2.2 DEFINITIONS AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

What does ‘gender’ mean?.

The term 'gender' is often confused with the term 'sex'. However, as the Gender Equity Task Team Report (GETTR) (1997) notes, there is "a fundamental difference" between these two terms. The term 'sex' refers to biological or anatomical differences between men and women, which they are born with. These include "distinct male or female genitalia" which "determine sexual reproduction and other biologically given differences, such as hormonal balances, muscular development and so on. Such differences are, clearly of importance but in themselves do not determine how people behave as men or women" (GETTR:1997:40).

Following the Gender Equity Task Team (GETT) a key argument in this work is that, "(t)he way in which girls and boys, men and women live their lives is determined, in the last analysis by social processes" (GETTR, 1997:40). Thus the term 'gender' is used here to refer to:

... social differences (in contrast to biological differences) between men and women; also definitions and practices that distinguish men's behaviour and identities as masculine, and women's behaviour and identities as feminine. Patriarchal culture, made up of customs, beliefs and traditions at a particular place and time, shape the unequal power between women and men. A patriarchy is a society dominated by men. It also provides the basis for the prescription of roles and activities associated with women and men in a specific context (Sardien, *Tatler*, March 21, 2002:21).

This definition is a useful one firstly because it suggests, as Sardien (2002) argues, "that the relations between women and men are made in the society and can be changed in society. Also that relations between women and men are sustained by specific practices that are performed daily to keep 'the order' in place. Part of keeping the order is to monitor, regulate and enforce the expression of masculine and feminine identities ... Lastly, all these customs and traditions assume the superiority of men" (Sardien, 2002:21).

The following definition of gender, provided by Measor and Sikes (1992:115), encapsulates these ideas:

Gender refers to all differences between men and women other than the basic physiological ones. It refers to specific social and cultural patterns of behaviour and to the social characteristics of being a man or woman in particular historical and social circumstances. Gender is made by society.

In seeking a framework within which to understand young people's perceptions of their male and female teachers as they emerge at the site of classroom discipline and authority, I have drawn on Connell's (1987) theory of practice.

A theory of practice focuses on what people *do* by way of constituting the social relations they live in. Such an approach acknowledges the active part that young people play in making a gendered world, a world in which men and women are opposites and in which people are expected to be one or the other. To suggest, however, that this is a matter of free choice is misleading. As Connell (1994:12) notes, "(h)uman societies are not chaotic assemblages of individuals. They are organised in broad patterns and fine details." According to him, "(g)ender is, at the most fundamental level, a structure of social relations: a historically produced arrangement of social practices through which lives are ordered and people differentiated" (Connell,1987). This implies, in regard to relationships between men and women and what is perceived to be their appropriate roles, that society, despite its diversity, is characterised by a 'gender order' (Matthews,1984; Connell, 1987) – "a historically constructed pattern of power relations between men and women and definitions of masculinity and femininity" (1987:99). In describing the nature of sexual politics Connell uses this term for the "structural inventory of an entire society". The concept of the 'gender regime', on the other hand, "involves the same kind of logic on a smaller stage" and is used to refer more specifically to the "structural inventory of a particular institution" (1987: 99).

According to Connell (1987:183):

There is an ordering of versions of femininity and masculinity at the level of the whole society in some ways analogous to the patterns of face-to-face relationships within institutions ... Their interrelationship

is centred on a single structural fact, the global dominance of men over women.

Schools, for example, reflect at least in part structural features of society at large. Schools will thus also have their own gender order or 'gender code' (Macdonald, 1980). In his educational research Connell (1987:120), for example,

found an active though not always articulate politics of gender in every school. Among both students and staff there are practices that construct various kinds of femininity and masculinity: sport, dancing, choice of subject, class-room discipline, administration and others.

Connell's distinction in terminology between 'gender order' and 'gender regime' is a useful one because it points to a linkage but not a reductionist or determinist relationship, between broad structural issues and issues of participants' social action in everyday life. It recognises that the constitution of gender relations "must occur within an existing social structure that both constrains and enables their interaction at the micro level" (Angus,1993:60). Furthermore, in its implicit assumption that gender relations are not uniform, that they are variable and actively constructed according to different times and conjunctures, this distinction offers an understanding of gender which sees it as not merely a property of individual people that is biologically determined or socially produced but also as being a property of collectivities, institutions and historical processes (Connell,1987:139).

According to Connell (1987) the division of labour, power relations between men and women and sexuality are empirically the major elements of any gender order or gender regime (1987:99). Important to emphasise here, however, as Connell does, is that the gender order is "always imperfect and under construction". Furthermore, "it happens on particular terms in particular circumstances" (1987:116). As Angus (1993: 59) elaborates, the 'gender order'

is socially and historically constituted. Its ongoing constitution is always problematic and provisional, however, and occurs largely as a result of differential power relationships, cultural expectations and access to resources between the sexes.

This means that the three main structures of the field of gender relations, which Connell talks of and referred to above, exert a conditioning influence on our behaviour. Such constraints operate through a complex interplay of powers and institutions. In other words, from a young age children are invited to participate in social practice on given terms. As Connell (1987:195) writes:

The invitation may be, and often is coercive – accompanied by heavy pressure to accept and no mention of an alternative. . . . Yet children do decline, or more exactly start making their own moves on the terrain of gender. They may refuse heterosexuality They may set about blending masculine and feminine elements, for example girls insisting on competitive sport at school. They may start a split in their own lives, for example, boys dressing in drag when by themselves. They may construct a fantasy life at odds with their actual practice, which is perhaps the commonest move of all.

This shows that young people are creative makers of gender identities. However, it must be remembered that this always takes place within socially given structures of power and social relations and always draws on the local cultural possibilities (Epstein, 1998). As Connell (1987) writes, “(h)uman practice never occurs in a vacuum.” It “always presupposes social structure in the sense that practice necessarily calls into play social rules or resources. Structure is always emergent from practice and is constituted by it. Neither is conceivable without the other” (1987:94). This line of thinking is based on Giddens’s (1984) structuration theory. Structuration theory is designed to avoid the dualism which has traditionally separated analyses of structure and agency in sociological thought. For Giddens ‘structures’ are not external forces which constrain social relationships, but sets of ‘rules’ and ‘resources’ which actors continually draw on in the process of social interaction. Where gender is concerned this means that gender norms and gender arrangements in society are both drawn on by actors and reproduced through their use in human action. Thus it may be argued, as Shilling (1991:24-25) does, that ‘structures’ are both the medium and outcome of social intercourse. However, these structures or rules and resources do not determine human action. As Connell (1987) argues, “the context of an event should not be seen as the alternatives allowed by given structural principles.” Rather “its context should be seen as its history” (1987:94-95).

In other words, “practice is of the moment. What persists is the organization or structure of practice, its effects on subsequent practice” (Connell,1987:141). Furthermore, while presupposing structure, practice is always responding to a *situation*. Practice is the transformation of that situation in a particular direction (Connell,1987:95). This can depart from, or reproduce the initial situation; that is to say, practice can be divergent or cyclical. It is thus “not a logical requirement that social reproduction occurs; that is merely an empirical outcome” (Connell,1987:141).

A practice-based theory is useful for several reasons. Firstly, it lets one see that the level of systematicity in gender relations varies. As Connell (1994:15) argues, “in acting we convert initial situations into new situations. Practice constitutes and reconstitutes structures.” This allows for choice, resistance and difference and thus avoids problems of essentialism. Secondly, in noting that gender relations are historical – that the pattern they assume in any society is produced by its particular history but that this is always in a process of transformation it is able to account for changes in gender norms. Today this is reflected in “changing family networks, restructured local labour markets, changing sexual patterns of consumption, peer and leisure group practices and media representations” (Mac an Ghail,1994:13). Finally, this approach recognises that gender arrangements and gender norms in society can be challenged. While it is true, as Connell (1987:109) writes, that “(t)he authority of men is not spread in an even blanket across every department of social life. In some circumstances women have authority; in some others the power of men is diffuse, confused or contested.” He notes, nonetheless, that “we can identify a complex of institutions and milieux where the power of men and the authority of masculinity are relatively concentrated. There is a ‘core’ in the power structure of gender, contrasted with the more diffuse or contested patterns of power in the periphery” (1987:109). Thus, while young people are creative makers of gender identities, this confronts them as a social fact which they have to come to terms with somehow.

2.3 APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF GENDER AND SCHOOLING

In the seventies and early eighties the gender and education literature was most often guided by the concepts of sex roles and social moulding or socialization.

Socialization theory treats gender formation as the acquisition and internalization of social norms. The main argument of this approach is outlined by Connell (1987:191) as follows:

The new born child has a biological sex but no social gender. As it grows older society provides a string of prescriptions, templates or models of behaviour appropriate to one sex or the other. Certain agencies of socialization – notably the family, the media, the peer group, (the community) and the school make these expectations and models concrete and provide the settings in which they are appropriated by the child.

This then shapes their expectations of life and other people's expectations of them.

According to this approach "women's disadvantages are attributed to stereotyped customary expectations both held by men and internalised by women" (Connell, 1987:33). In this literature, schools, operating in their traditional fashion, are seen as active agents in reproducing gender stereotypes e.g. through textbooks, career counselling, teacher expectations and selection processes. As Connell (1989:91) writes:

This was theorised as the transmission of an oppressive or restrictive 'sex role' to girls. It followed that girls and women would be advantaged by modifying the sex role or even breaking out of it. This led easily to an educational strategy: a program of redress and compensation to expand girls' occupational and intellectual horizons, affirm women's worth, write women into the curriculum and so on.

Such work has been important especially in terms of empowering girls and women teachers. For this reason it is vitally important to extend and continue (Salisbury and Jackson, 1996:6). Sex-role socialization was also helpful in showing that gender is learned rather than biologically

determined. Yet there are problems. According to Arnot (1991:453), one of the major weaknesses of theoretical work in this area has been inadequate conceptions of sex/gender identity formation. As Salisbury and Jackson (1996:6) explain, “(f)rom this perspective boys (and I would add, girls) are seen as fixed, passive victims of gender socialization. Schools are also seen as places where boys and girls learn to fit into a pre-existing gender role or script that trains boys up in aggressiveness and competitiveness” and girls in meekness and restricted ambition. “Boys (and girls) don’t seem to have any ideas of their own but unquestioningly conform to certain masculine (and feminine) norms.”

Recent research on gender relations and schooling has drawn attention to the limitations of using this framework. According to Connell (1987), socialization theory presents a “homogeneous or consensual model of gender identity”. It therefore “loses the ability to account for resistance and change” (1987:194). As Salisbury and Jackson write, “(a)ll this talk of ‘internalising dominant stereotypes’ doesn’t give any critical purchase on questions of boys’ (and girls’) resistance, the variety of masculine and feminine forms, historical changes and the contradictions in the lives of most boys and men” (and girls and women). Furthermore, in viewing boys and girls as trapped in stereotypes, it “doesn’t analyse boys and masculinities (and girls and femininities) in such a way that allows them to take active responsibility for their own changes” (Salisbury and Jackson, 1996:6). This includes holding sexist attitudes towards women. Also, in treating gender as a universal, consistent and stable group membership, the inevitable consequence of naturally occurring and ahistorical sex differences, this approach “ignores the historical and cultural dimensions of the social construction of masculinity and femininity. It fails to adequately account for social change” (Lemon, 1995:68). In other words, it cannot explain why gender has developed the way it has or why gender codes change over time. More importantly, sex-role theory does not have a relational understanding of gender. It therefore masks questions of power and material inequality between males and females.

As Kessler *et al.*, (1985:35) write, “(t)alking about gender relations in terms of roles, internalised expectations, attitudes, and traits directs attention away from larger structures and focuses explanations of inequality on what is going on inside the heads of the subordinated group. It is a classic case of blaming the victim.” The idea of sex roles exaggerates the importance of

individual attitudes and minimises the importance of the economic and social forces to which those attitudes are a response (Franzway and Lowe,1978). Where gender and schooling are concerned, these criticisms have been important in showing that schools do not simply adapt to a natural masculinity among boys or femininity among girls. As Connell (1989:91) notes, “(t)hey are agents in the matter, constructing particular forms of gender and negotiating relations between them.”

In the seventies this recognition led to an increased focus on structures of power and large-scale social dynamics which contributed to the reproduction of unequal gender relations – and locating the school within this process.

In this literature, schools were seen as functioning to prepare students for the sexual division of labour in the home and the workplace. Furthermore, schools do not merely reflect the dominant gender ideology of the wider society but actively produce gender divisions. For the purposes of this study an important theme to emerge from this work is that the sexual division of labour among teachers contributes to the reproduction of patriarchal social order especially by providing models to students of male-female power relations and sex-differentiated subject specialities and responsibilities that reinforce the connection of femininity with caring, serving, conforming and mothering (Acker,1989:134). Yet there are problems with this theoretical framework as well.

As Kessler *et al.*, (1985:35) explain:

There is a strong tendency towards functionalism in reproduction theory. It is difficult to incorporate the dynamics of historical change into social reproduction analysis. There is a tendency to treat ‘male’ and ‘female’ as simple categories and to ignore their complexities and internal structuring. Homosexuality, once again tends to get to get written out of the discussion.

Furthermore, as Diamond (1991:141) states, “(t)he assumption of the individual as a passive recipient of society’s messages through institutions such as the school failed to account for the lived experience of practitioners and students and precluded the possibility of transformative work” (1991:141). As (Connell,1987:44) writes,

. . . the concept of 'social reproduction' only makes sense if an invariant structure is postulated at the start. History enters the theory as something *added on* to the basic cycle of structural reproduction. For history to become organic to theory, social structure must be seen as constantly constituted rather than constantly reproduced.

This line of thinking has led to "the postmodernist practice of unpacking totalising unitary concepts such as patriarchy, power and ideology in the interests of revealing their fragmented and contingent nature" (Campbell, 1993:48). Deconstructionist theory, as this is referred to, has also been particularly important in moving beyond common sense views of the individual as a unitary, rational being. While recognising that gender is a nearly universal feature of all human societies, the usefulness of this approach lies in its observation that, "the actual contents of gender identities (and by implication gender relations) have a wide-ranging and cross-situational variability" (Campbell, 1993: 49).

In the school context this work has been useful in pointing to the *complexity* of sex/gender power relations and the operation of gender ideology. As Campbell (1993:59) states, "(w)omen are not always simply passive victims of patriarchal social relations. While patriarchy determines/shapes subjectivity, it by no means does so in a consistent or non-contradictory way." It also means that *all* men are not in an equally dominant position. Although men in general benefit from prevailing gender relationships, many men, particularly gay men, find the dominant male form oppressive.

This does not mean that one should abandon concepts such as gender and patriarchy. As Campbell (1993:49) argues, "(a)ll it need imply is the importance of constantly contextualising such concepts within specific social and historical conditions and within particular configurations of, for example, race and class." A key limitation in this study is an omission of race and class as foci of attention.

2.4 PREVIOUS RESEARCH ON GENDER RELATIONS AND SCHOOLING

In the past most of the empirical work on gender and education which concentrates on teacher-pupil interaction has drawn attention to the important role that *teachers* play in redefining and reinforcing gender divisions. According to Acker (1988:307), one of the ways in which this happens is through “direct action, such as treating the sexes differently or holding differential expectations of them”. The general conclusion of such research has been that teachers unwittingly give more time and attention to boys (Sadker *et al.*, 1991). However, as Coulter (1995) points out, “this conclusion may need rethinking”. For example, in her study of the ways in which a group of feminist first year female teachers experienced sexism in Canadian classrooms, Coulter reports that one of them “made a conscious decision to acquiesce in allowing different standards of behaviour for boys and girls in order to *survive* (my emphasis) in the classroom and as a teacher. While she tried to ask as many questions of and give as much attention to each sex, she recognised that, ‘... simply to maintain control I have to ask a majority of questions to boys’” (Coulter, 1995:45). This points to an often overlooked aspect of research on teacher-student relations, that is, until fairly recently. As Coulter (1995:42) explains:

Most recommendations and proposals for eliminating sexism in education simply ignore or fail to take account of the fact that *students* (my emphasis) play a large part in creating the classroom climate. Of course, teachers of both sexes can and do exercise considerable power in the classroom but students are also active agents who can enhance or undermine anything teachers do (Weiler, 1988; Rakow, 1991). As we have increasingly come to realise, too, students respond differently to female and male teachers and expect different things from them.

One of the earliest studies which draws attention to this issue and which will be discussed now is Michelle Stanworth’s (1981) study of gender divisions in the British classroom.

Apart from failing to address the issue of the *quality* of the student-teacher interaction, Stanworth notes that quantitative approaches failed to understand (my emphasis) that *there was no straightforward relationship between prejudiced teachers and differential expectations of male*

and female students. The same argument, I believe, holds for *students'* differential expectations of their male and female teachers.

Of relevance to this study is Stanworth's finding that young people are actively engaged in constructing gender identities and gender roles – testing out behaviour and making sense of many competing agendas. However, to the extent that “the central concern” of her study is “with the way in which, in pupils' experience, girls are placed on the margins of classroom encounters” (1981:49) – she does not pay adequate attention to the active role that boys and girls play in regenerating a gender hierarchy – particularly in regard to their perceptions of their male and female teachers.

Before I discuss these findings at any length, perhaps a brief word on Stanworth's theoretical framework for understanding the relationship between gender and schooling is necessary. Although she acknowledges that “no fully satisfactory framework has yet been devised” (1981:14), Stanworth is strongly influenced by the insights of those writers whose work suggests that education, far from promoting equality – “tends to act as a vehicle for the reproduction of patterns of subordination and domination which characterise our society” (1981:14).

In this regard, the work of Bowles and Gintis (1976) is acknowledged. Bowles and Gintis, she writes, saw “a structural similarity, or correspondence between the organisation of production in capitalist societies and the nature of schooling”.

Although Bowles and Gintis recognised inequalities in terms of gender, this did not comprise an important part of their work. Indeed, as Stanworth (1981:15) writes, it was their contention, “that the sexual division of labour is reproduced chiefly by means of the *family* ” (my emphasis). In following this path, Stanworth (1981:15) argues that,

they seriously underestimate the significance of schooling. If education prepares working class pupils for subordinate positions in the class structure, so too schooling helps to shape the consciousness of pupils in such a way that girls are habituated, at every level of the educational hierarchy, to ceding priority to boys.

The account of schooling offered by Bowles and Gintis has since been recognised as severely limited – mainly because it does not conform at all to the reality of people’s lives and experiences. This was not lost on Stanworth. As she states, “schooling does not merely reflect the demands of dominant groups or changes in the economy; on the contrary, education is ‘partially autonomous’, the site of diverse pressures and struggles” (1981:15). Thus, while the theoretical emphasis in her work is on institutions and dominant relations which condition the reproduction of inequality, her recognition of the partial autonomy of education also implies that some degree of social change is possible through educational intervention. Noting that the struggle for a more just society “must always be multifaceted” and that education is just part of this process, Stanworth’s main concern here is with identifying the most effective form/s of educational intervention. According to her this “depends upon an understanding of the internal workings of schools, upon knowing how curriculum, educational organisation and encounters in the classroom can be altered so as to facilitate change” (Stanworth,1981:15). It is this point which provides the impetus for her study. What follows is an attempt to shed some light on the practices of students and especially of teachers which actively reproduce a hierarchical system of gender divisions in and through the classroom.

Stanworth’s research draws upon detailed interviews with teachers, and with a sample of their male and female pupils, in seven ‘A’ (advanced) level classes. The research was set in the humanities department of a college of further education and was chosen mainly because of the absence of more obvious forms of gender differentiation.

Of particular interest to this work is her identification of authority and discipline as a key site in which this was most evident. As she writes, “although pupils were not questioned about discipline in the classroom, many ventured criticisms of teachers for being, in their view, insufficiently authoritarian” (Stanworth,1981:33). Furthermore, while they were equally critical of male and female teachers whom they saw as not strict enough, Stanworth notes that they “still seemed to hold the general preconception that men are the more effective disciplinarians. Many,” she writes, “expressed a conviction that male teachers in general tolerate ‘less mucking around’,

and that pupils respond more readily to a rebuke or command when it comes from a man” (1981:33).

Stanworth does not discuss these issues in any detail. Instead, she points to them as an area in which more research needs to be undertaken. She concludes that, “(p)upils expectations concerning teachers, and their evaluation of teachers, are linked in complex ways to the teacher’s sex. Girls and boys believe male teachers to be more effective disciplinarians, even though this does not seem to be borne out by their current experience of classroom life” (1981:50).

Thus, while young people may emerge from school with the implicit understanding that the world is a man’s world, in which women take second place, the part *they* play in perpetuating this needs to be further understood in order that values and attitudes may be changed.

Another ethnographic study which focuses on gender inequality in schooling but pays *more* attention to the position of women teachers is Lawrence Angus’s (1993) *Women in a Male Domain: Gender and Organizational Culture in a Christian Brothers College*. He conducted this inquiry over several years as a participant observer in Newburyport, Australia – in the early to mid 1980s. In it, he writes, “the women teachers are shown to be in an inequitable position in relation to their male colleagues in a variety of ways” (1993:57).

In order to understand how school processes redefine and reinforce gender inequality, Angus uses an approach which, like mine, draws on Connell’s (1987) notions of the ‘gender order’ and the ‘gender regime’. The ‘gender regime’ of a school has been defined by Kessler *et al.*, (1985:42) as:

The pattern of practices that constructs various kinds of masculinity and femininity among staff and students, orders them in terms of prestige and power, and constructs a sexual division of labour within the institution. The gender regime is a state of play rather than a permanent condition. It can be changed, deliberately or otherwise, but is no less powerful in its

effects on the pupils for that. It confronts them as a social fact, which they have to come to terms with somehow.

According to Angus, sex is, “a category which clearly structures the identity and perceptions of people and how they are regarded or valued within organisations and by society” (1993:60).

In beginning, Angus notes that the gender regime of CBC (a school for Catholic boys) had a number of identifiable features that contributed to its organisational culture. According to him, “(t)his culture was characterised, perhaps more than anything else, by the emphasis on forms of discipline” (1993:74). As he writes, “(d)iscipline and physical punishment were associated with manliness and ‘character’, and miscreants could regain esteem and respect in the eyes of the Brothers by accepting punishment in the right spirit – ‘by taking it like a man’” (1993:70). Even though the nature of discipline and punishment in schools has since changed considerably, this again points to its importance as a site for the construction of masculinity. Furthermore, it was firmly believed by many teachers that the strict discipline associated with CBC had “enhanced the reputation of the school” and that teachers who had “not got discipline” were unsuitable (1993:71-72).

This deterred many teachers from adopting more liberal teacher-student relations even though there was a recognition as one woman teacher put it, “that today, especially, you have to be able to communicate with the kids, and I think children’s expectations are different – they expect their teachers to be human and they want to be able to talk to them” (Angus,1993:72). At CBC, however, it was the male principal who,

set the tone of discipline and watchful control each school morning as he patrolled the school grounds before classes began. In the evenings he was almost always again on duty at the school gate seeing that pupils left the school grounds in an orderly manner. His attention to checking that correct school uniform was worn earned him the nickname of ‘mother’, a term which was not intended to flatter (Angus,1993: 72-73).

This did not, however, elevate the status of women teachers in the eyes of the students, even though, it was mostly the former who “favoured more ‘positive’ authority relationships” (Angus,1993:73). According to Angus, this was in part due to the fact that “for much of its

history CBC had been an all male institution” (1993:73). Firstly, the few women who had initially been appointed, occupied positions in the primary and junior secondary phases. As Angus notes, this made the recent influx of women teachers at the secondary school level difficult for students to accept.

This situation was compounded by some male teachers who, he says, “were critical of the increased presence of women because, they claimed, classes too often had to be ‘settled down’ after lessons with women teachers who had inadequate classroom control. Only a few saw the treatment of women at CBC as fitting into broader social patterns of gender subjectivity” (1993:73). Angus found that patriarchal attitudes were deeply held by students as well. He concludes that, even though “to some extent boys and men at CBC blame women for what could be seen as the result of their *own* (my emphasis) sexist practices – especially in the area of classroom discipline ... Many of the problems encountered by women teachers seemed to have emerged directly from the norms of the general authority structure” (Angus,1993:83). While this implies that sexist practices may be “rooted in tradition and common sense rather than malice” (Acker,1988:310), Angus emphasizes that it should “not be used to absolve men and hegemonic masculinity from responsibility for oppression” (1993:83). He recommends, therefore, that male teachers, in particular, “should take responsibility for helping boys *and* girls by offering them an alternative to the hegemonic model of masculinity” (1993:83).

More recently a number of studies on the construction of masculinity in schools have emerged. This has been inspired, in part, by a recognition that boys’ and men’s emotional and social problems can be seen as connected to the issue of masculinity. As Kenway (1996:510) explains, “(d)ominant versions of masculinity are seen to lock boys into narrow and restricting ways of being human which have negative effects on their health, their relationships and their perceptions of the value of different forms of knowledge and work and therefore their achievements.” In addition, she writes, “certain masculine ways of being in the world are said to limit boys’ and men’s emotional horizons and to tilt them towards aggression, repression, conflict and violence and towards damaging forms of competition and control”. This line of argument is an important one and has led to a closer examination of “the relationship between masculinity, subject and career choice, achievement, discipline, and school violence and harassment” (Kenway,

1996:510). However, according to her, in its focus “on the personal, interpersonal and small-scale” this perspective tends not to “have a relational understanding of gender and therefore it fails to attend to the undeniable broad structural inequalities between male and females”. In doing so, it ignores “the ways in which boys and men are a problem for women and girls” or, indeed, “to the ways some males are a problem for other males” (Kenway, 1996:510).

One work which recognises this is Mac an Ghail’s (1994) *The Making of Men – Masculinities, Sexualities and Schooling*. This book provides important insights into sexual and gendered hierarchies in schools and the ways in which homophobic and misogynistic practices are a natural taken-for granted aspect of school relationships. In it Mac an Ghail presents the findings of a three year ethnographic study of Parnell school, an English urban co-educational comprehensive between 1990 and 1992. Most of the material comes from a cohort who were year 11 students during the 1990 -1991 school year.

In this work, as Kenway (1996:511) writes, Mac an Ghail “clarifies the ways in which schools implicitly teach boys about masculinity, about who to be and what to value and also how boys negotiate the differential and differentiating codes of the school in order to establish their masculine identities – for better or for worse. He makes it very clear that schools are one of the places where boys learn how to be male”. According to him, she continues, “(t)hey are taught this by the gendered and sexualised, classed and racialised discourses associated with such things as management, discipline, sport, play, knowledge, assessment and teacher-pupil and pupil relations.”

The value of Mac an Ghail’s approach lies in his offering of a non-reductionist, non-essentialist reading of schooling and masculinity. According to him, “schools are sites of historically varying contradictions, ambiguities and tensions” (1994:8). This, he continues,

is most evident in relation to sex/gender social relations. Schools function to prepare students for the sexual division of labour in the home and workplace. Furthermore, schools do not merely reflect the dominant sexual ideology of the wider society, but actively produce gender and heterosexual divisions. At the same time,

schooling may be a potential significant public site that enables young people to achieve a degree of social mobility in the labour market and the development of non-traditional gender identities. Schools are thus active makers of a range of femininities and masculinities (Mac an Ghaill, 1994:8).

A further important argument in Mac an Ghaill's work is that students are also active makers of sex/gender identities. According to him, "(a) major flaw in much equal opportunities work, exemplified in the 'positive images' approach has been a failure to conceptualise the complexity of student identity formation"(1994:179). Most importantly, as he notes, the students in his study illustrate that:

Misogyny, homophobia, heterosexism and racism are not passively inherited in a unitary or total way. Located within local gender and sexual peer group cultures, they actively select from a range of socially oppressive constructs and in this process make their own individual and collective meanings (Mac an Ghaill, 1994:179).

The central focus in his work, however, is on male sexuality, issues of institutionalised heterosexism and homophobia and young gay males' experiences of schooling as opposed to how masculinity continues to operate materially as well as discursively as a mechanism of female oppression. Furthermore, in attending to the latter issue, he concentrates on female *students'* experiences of teacher and student masculinities. The practices and processes of masculinity in the classroom which serve to marginalise or exclude women teachers is thus not given adequate attention. Nevertheless, at Parnell school Mac an Ghaill found that "male teachers and male students colluded in the construction of processes of social closure in relation to female teachers"(1994:36). He notes that they were particularly disparaging in their representation of women in senior administrative positions. The latter were seen as finding discipline "difficult" and often reliant on male colleagues to back up their authority.

Of relevance to this study is Mac an Ghaill's finding that the practice of marginalising women teachers is not just confined to male teachers. It extends to male students as well. One such boy is unequivocal in his preference for a male to be "in charge". His statement that students don't take women teachers, who assume a masculine style of authority seriously anyway, is a telling one. It shows that women teachers *are* perceived differently even when they use the same

disciplinary style or strategies as male teachers. Institutional values and rituals play an important role in influencing this. The student's subsequent remarks suggest that the school and the family are powerful role players in redefining and reinforcing women as carers and nurturers and men as breadwinners and leaders i.e. in producing and reproducing gendered identities. Mac an Ghail notes for example, that primary school teachers, who are mostly made up of women, are perceived as holding less authority than secondary school teachers. The secondary school's reputation is seen to be at risk if women teachers are in charge. Again, the views expressed are not based on sound evidence but rather on preconceived ideas about the sexual division of labour and male power.

Mac an Ghail does not examine the responses made above in any detail. However, in referring to the "subordinated occupational status" of female teachers in relation to males, he talks of "the occupational gender ambiguity of contemporary secondary school teaching" and notes that this "has differential implications for the positioning of female and male teachers" (1994:36). In doing so he calls attention to Connell's (1985) observation "of the apparent incompatibility between the conventional positioning of femininity and the disciplinary role of the teacher". According to Connell (1985:153):

It is a tension about gender itself. Authority, in our society, is felt to be masculine, to assert it is to undermine one's femininity, in other people's eyes and one's own ... The contradiction it creates in teaching is registered in the creation of the derogatory comic stereotypes of women teachers: the rigid spinster school-marm, the tweedy hockey mistress and so on.

Connell adds that "teaching, which is often seen as a soft job, is not however unambiguously masculine, because it involves emotional engagement and caring for children which are traditionally defined as women's work". As he states, "(c)lassroom life is *not* (my emphasis) predisposed to accommodate such emotional ambiguity, which challenges the gender-ascribed 'masculine' function of discipline and 'feminine' function of caring/nurturing with their attendant juxtaposed connotations of physical strength and emotional vulnerability" (Connell, 1985:155). The male teachers and male students in Mac an Ghail's study illustrate this.

Having considered the international literature which relates to this study, it is perhaps now appropriate to examine the South African context.

2.5 THE POSITION OF SOUTH AFRICAN WOMEN TEACHERS

In considering the structural position of South African women teachers within the education system as a whole, I have drawn heavily on Kotecha's (1994) work in which she examines both historical and current discriminatory practices against them. These practices, I believe, have had important consequences for the position that women teachers find themselves in at the micro level of the classroom. Part of this centres around how students respond to them and also what they expect of them.

Although Kotecha's work does not have anything specific or indeed substantial to say about students' part in marginalising women teachers, it is nevertheless important because it shows how the conditions for the production and reproduction of unequal gender relations in schools have been created.

In a speech given by the Teacher's Federal Council (TFC) Second Annual Women's Conference in 1991, Graves described women teachers as "the most exploited, most ignored, most intimidated and the most discriminated against" (Graves, 1991). Such a description, as Kotecha reports, is not exaggerated. In spite of rendering exactly the same service, South African women teachers have not been treated equally to their male colleagues.

The lower professional status of women teachers has been underpinned by the following historical facts:

- a) Unequal salaries
- b) Losing their permanent position after marriage
- c) Unpaid maternity leave
- d) Unequal provision for housing subsidies, retirement funds and medical aid for married women teachers

These legislated discriminatory practices have affected women teachers of all races and although they have now been formally removed, their role in influencing how women have come to be valued and perceived in schools should not be underestimated.

As Kotecha (1994) explains, these conditions of service were based on, “the outdated notion that women teach because it is a ‘fill-in’ job rather than a lifelong career” (1994:25). In other words, women were seen first and foremost as housewives and mothers – not as full-time professionals. Men, on the other hand, were seen as principal bread winners and because of this were given more opportunities for promotion. As Van den Heever (1975:109) writes, a married woman was:

... not considered for a permanent position as a principal, deputy principal or vice principal; and in competition for any posts, regardless of experience or ability, preference is given to males and single women and what is defined as ‘a married woman who may compete’: one whose husband is for health or other reasons unable to support her, who ‘may be allowed by the Department to compete for a teaching post on an equal footing with unmarried teachers, subject to such conditions which may be laid down by the Department’.

Kotecha argues that the legacy of this form of discrimination “has undoubtedly shaped power relations in education” (1994:24) – a view with which I concur.

Thus, even though school teaching in South Africa has traditionally been and remains female dominated, this is not if we take domination to mean the exercise of authority. According to the Gender Equity Task Team Report (1997), hereinafter referred to as GETTR, “the large numbers of women teachers in the education profession have a history of domination and exploitation based on essentialist notions of womanhood rather than of encouraging the career development of women” (1997:197). As we shall see, when women and men have been skilled or trained differentially, discriminatory employment becomes rational from the employer’s point of view. A striking example is Hendrik Verwoerd’s introduction to the Bantu Education Act in 1954 which “demonstrates the sexist and racist ideology behind the historical positioning of South African women in the teaching profession” (GETTR,1997:197). This has been quoted by Truscott (1994:22) as follows:

As a woman is by nature so much better fitted for handling young children, and as the great majority of Bantu children are to be found in lower classes of primary school, it follows that there should be far more female than male teachers. The Department will therefore . . . declare the assistant posts in . . . primary schools to be female teachers' posts . . . Quota will be laid down at training schools as regards numbers of male and female candidates respectively which may be allowed to enter for the courses . . . this measure will in the course of time, bring about a considerable saving of funds which can be devoted to . . . more children at school.

Thus, as the Gender Equity Task Team (1997) notes, women teachers were made to carry the burden of so-called Bantu Education as well as pay the price for the expansion of black schooling at the expense of their salaries. Furthermore, men were actively discouraged from teaching, particular at primary school level. According to Budlender (1991:12) they were,

. . . fired or phased out and primary school teacher training facilities were closed. The few men who continued to teach were allowed to do so on condition that they accept the lower rate of pay. Nearly 40 years later most teachers are women.

Not surprisingly the predominance of women teachers features essentially in primary schools whereas a more even distribution of the sexes is found at secondary school level. "By 1994, 64% of all practicing teachers were female. Seventy six percent of African teachers at the primary level were female, while at the secondary level only 44% were female" (Arnott and Chabane, 1995). The unequal distribution of women teachers in primary and secondary schools is an important and problematic one. This becomes especially clear when one examines the Early Childhood Development (ECD) sector. Gender issues that have been identified here centre around the low status, poor working conditions, underpaid and undervalued work of educators in this sector.

In 1995 the *White Paper On Education and Training* stated that ECD “must be the foundation of social relations”. This was an important recognition. As the GETTR (1997:60) notes, it is during this stage of development in which:

. . . the most rapid acquisition of knowledge of the existing unjust world with all of its prejudices takes place. These early years are a crucial phase in the formation of the value systems of South Africa’s future citizenry. It is at this early stage that patterns of racist and sexist attitudes need to be deconstructed and children need to be prepared to inhabit a just and democratic, non-racist and non-sexist society.

According to Alloway, (1995:57):

When it comes to social justice issues, what children piece together for themselves will be limited by available knowledge of the world and by what they perceive to be appropriate ways of being and relating. Even if we only scratch the surface of this model, we can immediately see that children’s efforts to construct meaningful knowledge are most likely to eventuate in an uncritical piecing together of an accommodation of the status quo. Of primary concern is the way in which the omnipotent child constructs its own understandings.

In the racist and sexist society which South Africa is, “(c)hildren must be guided in critically examining their contexts and must be offered alternative visions of how social relations could operate” (GETTR,1997:62). According to Alloway, “(t)he time to make children aware of the ways they are limited, and the ways they limit themselves is in the early childhood years Eight’s simply too late to begin working on gender reform” (1995:26).

However, this will not happen if the teaching of younger pupils remains firmly associated with women. According to the GETTR (1997) , “(t)he ECD sector is almost exclusively staffed by women . Edusource (1997) indicated in informal correspondence that, according to latest figures only 8,6% of pre-school teachers are male.” Furthermore, “(t)he few men who are involved in the sector dominate senior decision making positions” (GETTR, 1997:64). Arnott and Chabane’s (1995) figures (highlighted earlier) on practicing teachers – show that in primary

schools as well, most of the teachers are female: The continuation of a mothering role is unmistakable. As Caroline Benn (1989 p x1x) writes:

Historically, there have always been two distinct teaching functions: the first an extension of mothering and reserved for women; the second an extension of power and authority reserved for men, who have guarded it well. This division while no longer explicit – is still important throughout the education system.

The ECD development sector in South Africa (perhaps more than any other sector) reflects in many ways gender relations in the broader society. Certainly, the possibility that, “the unequal distribution of mainly women in Early Childhood Development and primary schools has definitively constructed the idea that women are better suited to nurturing roles and care associated with younger learners, and males are better suited to the intellectual and disciplinary needs of older learners” (GETTR, 1997:83) is a valid one. It is no coincidence that primary teaching is seen by many as an occupation with lower status than secondary teaching.

This has implications for how the worth and ability of female teachers in secondary schools may be assessed by pupils. As the GETTR (1997:84) argues,

the absence of males in ECD and pre-primary schools continues to perpetuate the lack of positive nurturing images of masculinity, while the domination of males in management and higher level posts in both primary and secondary schools perpetuates the notion that women are unable to lead. These distributions, and the accompanying ideologies, are arguably extremely influential on future gender relations for learners.

Nonetheless, “(e)ducation administration in South Africa remains ... male-dominated” (GETTR, 1997:195). As Kotecha writes, “(m)en are concentrated at the highest levels whereas in the lower levels they are in the minority” (1994:24). In 1990, Narsi (1990) reported that women occupied only 20% of all promotion posts. She argues correctly that, “(t)he under-representation of females in positions of power and authority is problematic as it transmits an implicit message regarding male and female divisions of labour to both sexes” (Narsi, 1990:17). Shindler (1996)

has summarized the disproportionate share of management positions held by men as follows: “While men make up 36% of all teachers in South Africa, they hold 58% of principal posts, 69% of deputy principal posts, and 50% of head of department posts” (Edusource Data News 1995b:18).

It must be pointed out however – as international research on gender issues have – that equal opportunity may be a very limited vehicle for achieving gender equity in schools. It is not sufficient to have women participate in equal numbers to men. Such provision will not by itself deal with those deep-seated beliefs that obstruct girls’ and women’s development as well as that of boys and men or with the structures and processes involved in the course of educational provision. Of equal importance is the need to transform values underlying the notion of work, leadership and human relationships (Ramphela,1997). This is an important point since discrimination against South African women teachers has not only been official. According to Kotecha (1994:29):

Sexist attitudes towards women teachers are deeply entrenched within the status quo of the education system and from men teachers. A strong culture of male dominance pervades and persists within schools: this find expression within the hierarchy, the roles that women and men teachers are expected to perform and in their attitudes towards each other.

In her investigation on the status of South African women teachers in schools, Narsi (1990:17) reports that, “(t)he divisions of labour at schools are often based on stereotypic gender roles. Tasks that are regarded as being intellectual and creative, viz. management, organisation and planning are not easily available to women.” Furthermore, if any woman did manage to get herself appointed to a higher position her duties would more than likely be to take charge of providing refreshments for visitors to the school (Sayedwa,1975). Men, on the other hand, would have responsibility for the timetable, ‘discipline,’ curriculum and staff development. According to Sayedwa (1975:101), under these circumstances, “men come to see themselves as a superior class of teachers”. So, I would argue do students.

These experiences affect women's leadership roles and their chances of promotion. As Kotecha (1994) writes, "(l)ittle or no confidence is shown in women and their abilities by male teachers and pupils. Erroneous beliefs such as, 'Women cannot endure punishments or organise rugby, therefore they cannot be heads of schools' are very common and deep-seated" (1994:30). She concludes: "As a result, men have greater credibility as authority figures, whereas women tend to be recognised for stereotypical qualities such as sympathy, creativity, openness, patience and are viewed as less suited for leadership positions" (1994:30).

A further consequence is that women teachers tend to be taken less seriously by students when it comes to discipline. In their investigation of women's attitudes towards their occupational status Simon and Beard (1986), noted that many felt that, "(d)iscipline problems with senior boys could be solved if women teachers had equal status" (1986:20). Not much research in South Africa has been conducted to establish whether this is in fact true and it is hoped that the research undertaken here will contribute, albeit in small measure, to understanding this issue better.

CHAPTER 3 : METHODOLOGY

3.1 PHILOSOPHICAL BACKGROUND AND PARADIGMATIC CONSIDERATIONS

It is essential when conducting research to locate it within its relevant and appropriate philosophical and paradigmatic context (Druker,1996:47). A paradigm can be defined as “the basic belief system or world view that guides the investigator, not only in choices of method but in ontologically and epistemologically fundamental ways” (Guba and Lincoln in Denzin and Lincoln,1994:105). In this respect the following questions need to be addressed:

- The ontological question – What is the form and nature of reality and therefore what is there that can be known about it?
- The epistemological question – What is the nature of the relationship between the knower or would-be-knower and what can be known?
- The methodological question – How can the inquirer (would-be-knower) go about finding whatever he or she believes can be known?

Within methodological discussion two major research paradigms are apparent and acknowledged – these are the positivistic and the phenomenological paradigms. The key idea of positivism is that the social world exists externally, and that its properties should be measured through objective methods, rather than being inferred subjectively through sensation, reflection or intuition (Easterby-Smith,1993:22). Proponents of this view maintain that there can be no real knowledge but that which is based on observed facts. This statement contains two assumptions: first, that reality is external and objective; second that knowledge is only of significance if it is based on observations of this external reality (Easterby-Smith,1993:22). The general focus is thus on empirical and quantifiable study and aims for generalizations of findings. The phenomenological paradigm, in contrast, stems from the view that the world and ‘reality’ are not objective and exterior but that they are socially constructed and given meaning by people (Husserl,1946). Hence the task of the social scientist should not be to gather facts and measure how often certain patterns occur, but to appreciate the different constructions and meanings that people place upon their experience. One should therefore try to understand and explain why

people have different experiences, rather than search for external causes and fundamental laws to explain their behaviour. The emphasis here is thus on a more holistic, naturalistic, interpretative and qualitative approach which is more context-specific (Guba and Lincoln, 1988, Patton, 1990).

The choice of paradigm for a study is determined by which seems to be more methodologically appropriate in the light of the aims and context of the particular piece of research (Druker, 1996:47). While this choice is often clear-cut at the basic beliefs or philosophical level, it is however, by no means so distinct when one comes down to the actual research methods and techniques used by researchers. Having located oneself paradigmatically,

the issue (for the researcher) then becomes not whether one has uniformly adhered to prescribed canons of either logical positivism or phenomenology but whether one has made sensible methods decisions given the purpose of the inquiry, the questions being investigated and the resources available (Patton, 1990:39).

With this in mind, I have chosen to locate this study within the phenomenological inquiry approach for the following reasons. First, my aim was to obtain an in-depth understanding of how a group of young people made sense of a particular social reality. I intended for this understanding to acknowledge and investigate the complexities involved. This seemed more appropriately achieved through the use of *qualitative* methods. Second, this research was not aimed at seeking explanations and predictions that would generalize to other persons and places. Third, my role as teacher at the research site provided an ideal opportunity for a more thorough analysis and also enabled me to gain the trust of the participants. Fourth, a qualitative and phenomenological research framework allowed for an acknowledgement of the fact that who one is as an individual impacts upon the research process in a highly complex fashion. Last, the phenomenological paradigm most closely approximated my own understanding of the world and of issues such as the possibility of objective truth.

The label most commonly used to incorporate research strategies within the non-positivistic approach is “qualitative research”. Denzin and Lincoln (1994:2) offer the following generic definition of qualitative research:

Qualitative research is multimethod in focus, involving an interpretive/naturalistic approach to its subject matter.

This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them.

They continue that there is “an emphasis on processes and meanings that are not rigorously examined, or measured (if measured at all), in terms of quantity, amount, intensity or frequency” (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994:4). This does not mean, however, that qualitative is antiquantitative. As Langenbach et al.,(1994:31), quoted in Leedy, (1996:108) note, “(u)sed separately qualitative and quantitative data, provide different kinds of information. When focused on the same issue, qualitative and quantitative data can triangulate – that is, use different methods to assess the stability of the findings.”

Certain research problems lend themselves more readily to qualitative methods, namely research that attempts to understand people’s perspectives and views of social realities, as this research does. As Druker (1996:49) writes, “(t)he data such methods produce is rich, personal, close to the real world and contain a depth of meaning that more abstract forms of evidence lack. The subtleties and complexities inherent in human relations are more able to be expressed through the use of a qualitative approach.”

3.2 CONTEXT AND SITE OF STUDY

The study took place at a Combined School (hereinafter referred to as Rajah Combined) that is, it had classes from Grade One to Grade Twelve. Rajah Combined is situated in a historically ‘Indian area’ and during the apartheid dispensation it served *that* particular racial group. At the time of the research South Africa had made the transition to a democratic society. In spite of this, the school had, by and large, retained its racial identity both in terms of student-enrolment and staff-employment. Perhaps an important point to include here is that the majority of students who attend Rajah Combined, are Muslim, from working and middle class backgrounds.

The school was chosen for pragmatic reasons – these related to issues of time, availability of resources and so on. A more important reason, however, was that my research interest had developed as a direct consequence of my own experiences there as a high school woman teacher.

These related to not being taken as seriously as male teachers in the context of discipline and authority. The question for me was less to prove that this was indeed the case rather than a desire to understand why it happened. I felt that the best way to answer this question was to hear the voices of the young people themselves on this issue. Having said that, my role as a teacher at the research site was problematic in the following ways. Firstly, young people become accustomed to certain types of questioning in school. Often questioning is used by teachers to test children's understanding of knowledge. The relationship between the child and teacher is such that the child might make every effort to say what they think the teacher wants them to say. Secondly, I was aware that my status as a staff-member at the school could influence how students responded to some questions. In attempting to alleviate the above, it was necessary to brief all participants at the outset on what was expected of them. In doing so, I talked to them about my research area and the reasons for undertaking it. My intention here was to provide them with a clear picture of what questions or issues I was interested in. I emphasised that there were no right and wrong answers to any of the questions, to answer as honestly as possible and to draw on their actual experiences. I also assured them of anonymity and confidentiality. I found, later, that while some students were guarded in their responses, many were enthusiastic about having the opportunity to speak freely about themselves, express opinions and describe their experiences and relations with their teachers. Finally, in deciding to use a site at which my personal and others' experiences supported the hypothesis that women teachers were less respected than men teachers, I had to ensure that my own prejudices did not influence analysis and interpretation of the data. It was with this in mind that I chose my subjects and methods of data collection.

3.3 SUBJECTS

The subjects of this research were made up of Grade Eleven students i.e. sixteen to seventeen year olds. They were a group whom I had never taught. This minimised preconceptions that we may have had of each other in our respective roles as teacher and students. A total of 46 students – 29 girls and 17 boys completed the questionnaire. Each of the two focus-groups were made up of eight participants with an equal distribution of girls and boys. Since these individuals needed to be acute observers who were well informed/knowledgeable and informative about the

consultation with colleagues. It is important to note that pseudonyms have been used for the names of the students, teachers they wrote or spoke of, and the school itself, throughout this work.

3.4 DATA COLLECTION

One way of enhancing the trustworthiness of qualitative data is to make use of *triangulation*. Triangulation refers to the process of using multiple data collection methods, data sources, analysts or theories to check the validity of the findings. If similar themes are noted in data collected from a variety of sources, the credibility of the interpretation is enhanced (Marshall and Rossman, 1999:194). Triangulation is important because, as Denzin (1988:512-513) explains:

The social world is socially constructed and its meanings to the observer and those observed is constantly changing. As a consequence, no single research method will ever capture all of the changing features of the social world under study... By combining multiple observers, theories, methods and data sources, social scientists can begin to overcome the intrinsic bias that is bound to come from single-method, single-observer, single-theory investigations.

In this study data triangulation i.e. the use of different methods of data collection was utilised, as were previously conducted studies and contemporary theories of gender. The data was collected by means of a questionnaire where respondents were allowed to write their views on a number of mostly open questions and by means of two focus-group interviews. I used these methods because I felt that I knew fairly well what I was after but saw that a greater insight might be gained from permitting the participant to choose her or his own path. The broad parameters though, were very clearly set by me.

3.4.1 Questionnaires

In view of the limited time and resources available to me at the time of the actual research, I had to devise a strategy that would maximise student participation and at the same time ensure that

While questionnaires, as Brown and Dowling (1997) argue, “are not always good for exploring *how people think* or *how people construct meanings* they are particularly useful for gathering simple information on *what people do or have done* and *what people know*” (1997:50). Furthermore, it is possible to use a questionnaire to explore what people think or feel. This, however, requires great skill in the design of items. Having said that, the questionnaire for this study was not a conventional one in the sense that it substituted for face-to-face interviews with individuals. Accordingly it consisted of 25 mostly open-ended questions. This means that the respondent was asked to provide his or her own answer to the question as opposed to selecting answers from a pre-determined list of possibilities (See Appendix I). The questions were formulated with my research problem in mind and focused on specific topics. As can be seen in Appendix I many of the questions contained supplementary questions. This allowed me to explore the form of reasoning employed by these young people. In addition, having a number of questions relating to the same topic allowed questions to be asked about different aspects of the topic, thereby providing richer data.

Once the questionnaires were ready for distribution, I sought permission from the school principal to administer it to the Grade Eleven students during school time. Permission was granted and a period of one and a half hours was allocated for completion of the questionnaire. My personal involvement in the distribution and completion of the questionnaire meant that I was on hand to clear up any confusions or misunderstandings experienced by respondents in interpreting questions. This facilitated full completion of the questionnaire. The questionnaire also eliminated interviewer bias in the sense that I could not impose my own reference frame on the interviewees, both when the questions were asked and as the answers were interpreted. It also allowed respondents to express themselves freely and without fear.

3.4.2. Group Interviews

The group interviews were conducted approximately three weeks after the administration of the questionnaire. This interval was used by me to read through the responses of each respondent, make preliminary notes, and ultimately guided my design of the interview schedule for the two focus groups.

Frey and Fontana quoted in Denzin and Lincoln (1998:53-54) describe the group interview as “the systematic questioning of several individuals simultaneously in formal or informal settings”. They continue, “it is essentially a qualitative data gathering technique that finds the interviewer/moderator directing the interaction in a very structured or very unstructured manner depending on the interview’s purpose” (1998:54).

In this study, the group interviews were used to provide another level of data gathering on the research problem but also for the purposes of triangulation. The interview schedule thus consisted of a prepared list of questions. These were organized by using a topic guide i.e. a resume of the main ideas of interest which needed to be further explored. At the same time many of these questions were formulated in a way which allowed me to compare information gained from the questionnaire. This allowed for a richness of data gathering as well as a means of checking for consistency across data sources. The interview schedule comprised 30 open questions (See Appendix II). Both the interviews were conducted on the school premises in a semi-structured format. The duration of each interview was approximately one and a half hours. They were tape recorded and later transcribed. This provided an unbiased record of interviewees’ responses.

The group interview, as Fontana & Frey in Denzin & Lincoln (1994:365) write, “has the advantages of being inexpensive, data rich, flexible, stimulating to respondents, recall aiding, and cumulative and elaborative over and above individual responses”. However, while it is also true that in group interviews, “the emerging group culture may interfere with individual expression; the group may be dominated by one person; the group format makes it difficult to research sensitive topics; ‘group-think’ is a possible outcome; social pressures can condition the responses gained and it may well be that people are not willing to air their views publicly” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994:365), I believe these were countered in my design and administration of the questionnaire.

3.5 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Data analysis in qualitative research is often particularly difficult since one is confronted with large quantities of data which need to be processed. This is no small feat. The qualitative data analysis process is defined by Jorgensen (1989:107) quoted in Seidler (1998:E – 4) as follows:

Analysis is a breaking up, separating, or disassembling of research materials into pieces, parts, elements or units. With facts broken down into manageable pieces, the researcher sorts and sifts them, searching for types, classes, sequences, processes, patterns or wholes. The aim of this process is to assemble or reconstruct the data in a meaningful or comprehensible fashion.

Although computers have recently established themselves as key aids in qualitative data handling analysis, there are many who argue that there is no package that can substitute for the interpretive skills of the researcher (Easterby-Smith, 1993:113). Furthermore, as Rudestam and Newton (2001:56) note:

There is considerable latitude in analysing qualitative data and each qualitative analysis still requires the researcher to devise his or her own method for presenting the findings.

In this study all data collected were in the form of words and ideas. Data analysis proceeded as follows. To facilitate the reading and rereading in its entirety of all the information generated from the questionnaires, I began by sorting them according to the gender of each respondent. Having done that, I then devised a system for naming each respondent. This was done by using the letters of the alphabet e.g. A1; B1; C1... Z1; A2; B2; C2 and so on. As there were 46 respondents in total (29 girls and 17 boys), the names of girls were identified from A1 to C2 and boys, D2 to T2. Each respondent's response to each question was then typed out on a computer and printed out (See Appendix iii for an example). This allowed me to begin the process of coding the data i.e. classifying or categorizing individual pieces of data coupled with some kind of retrieval system (Babbie, 2001:359).

All responses for each question were closely examined firstly by underlining interesting things and writing reflective notes alongside. The next step was to review the entire text that each question produced in order to search more systematically for constructs and themes. This was

done by highlighting commonly used words, phrases and ideas. These information units were then isolated from the text. This was accomplished by making a copy of the printout mentioned earlier, cutting out individual responses or segments thereof, and then, sorting and pasting them in clusters on the basis of similarity in meaning. In doing so every response was catered for. I realise that I could have used a text analysis programme to achieve the same outcome.

The above procedure facilitated revision, modification and refinement of the data as well as numerical descriptions of the data. Themes emerging from each question were typed up as headings on the top of a spreadsheet. Names of respondents i.e. A1; B1 etc. were typed in the margin one below the other. Responses were recorded by using the numerical 1 against the name of the respondent and the relevant theme/construct. This enabled me to do frequency counts and to summarize and to synthesize the information produced by each question (See Appendix iv). It also served as a starting point for creating a set of file folders labeled with various topics. These file folders were then organized into categories on the basis of similarity in meaning. Apart from matching my research purposes, and the theoretical perspectives which informed them, these code categories were developed in a way which reflected the logic that emerged from the data itself. Thus the approach was not entirely one of grounded theory (Strauss and Corbin, 1990) but did have some of its elements, particularly an inductive focus.

This set the stage for turning my attention to the interview data. As I said earlier, the interview schedule was designed for the purposes of triangulation. Again, I began by reading and rereading, in this case, the interview transcripts. During this time, I recorded related thoughts and ideas by attaching memos to lines of data. This was accompanied by marking interesting things in the text and jotting down more comprehensive notes and observations. In doing this, I was guided by my research focus as expressed in the title of the research, the code categories developed in the questionnaire as well as previous research. This assisted me in reducing the information produced by the interview data. My preliminary notes and the highlighted passages served to isolate the initially most striking, if not ultimately most important aspects of the data.

I then turned my attention to naming these segments of data by using code words. These coded segments were then disassembled. This was done by making copies of the interview transcripts.

While one copy of each interview was left intact to be read in its entirety the other was cut up. Slips of paper that contained text that seem to relate to the same content were grouped and put in folders representing code categories. I tried to ensure that these categories were exhaustive and mutually exclusive. Arranging the questionnaire and interview data into file folders or topic codes made it easier for me to compare and contrast in order to identify similarities and distinctions among categories to discover patterns i.e. relationships among categories that pointed to theoretical understanding. This involved re-examining all code categories – modifying, refining, revising, combining and regrouping them conceptually in relation to my research focus i.e. gender, authority and student-teacher relations. This provided me with a framework for interpreting the data in a holistic way. Interpreting the data were underpinned by the following methods:

- Counting of responses or instances
- Noting of patterns and themes
- Clustering similar responses and/or subjects
- Combining categories

Interpretation was also informed by the theoretical perspectives which informed the study.

3.6 CRITERIA FOR VALIDATING QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

As Marshall and Rossman (1999:191) note, “(a)ll research must respond to canons of quality-criteria against which the trustworthiness of the project can be evaluated.” Trustworthiness is a general term representing what conventional researchers think of as internal and external validity, reliability and objectivity (Rudestam and Newton, 2001:98).

Qualitative research, however, cannot be judged by the same criteria as quantitative research – for the obvious reason that its methods are so different. One of the central differences is that the validity of qualitative research hinges largely on the researcher and her or his skill, knowledge, competence and rigour. As Patton, (1990:14) claims, “the researcher is the instrument”. Qualitative researchers have thus developed their own language to describe these terms. The corresponding terms for objectivity, reliability, internal validity and external validity in

traditional empirical research are confirmability, dependability, credibility and transferability in naturalistic inquiry (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

One means of achieving this is through the use of a confirmability, audit or audit trail. An audit trail as Rudestam and Newton (2001:99) write,

refers to keeping a meticulous record of the process of the study so that others can recapture steps and reach the same conclusions. An audit trail includes not only the raw data but also evidence of how the data were reduced, analysed and synthesized, as well as process notes that reflect the ongoing inner thoughts, hunches and reactions of the researcher.

This was something that was aimed at in this study and all documentation has been kept in a coherent form for consultation by those who wish to confirm it.

Dependability in this study was ensured through triangulation of methods. This relates to the confirmability audit discussed above and involves ensuring that one's raw data is available for scrutiny.

Credibility is "seen as a check on the isomorphism between the enquirer's data and interpretations and the multiple realities in the minds of informants" (Guba and Lincoln, 1988:84). It can be achieved through a variety of techniques such as extended engagement at a site, persistent observation, triangulation (all of which were utilised in this research) and peer debriefing.

Transferability is the qualitative equivalent of generalisability and relates to the question – how transferable and applicable are these findings to another setting or group of people? It can be achieved through theoretical or purposive sampling, and/or

Thick description, furnishing enough information about a context to provide a vicarious experience of it, and to facilitate judgements about the extent to which working

hypotheses from that context might be transferable to a second, similar context (Guba and Lincoln, 1988:85).

In conclusion it is hoped that this methodological outline proves sufficient to offer the reader a clear account of what was done methodologically.

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CHAPTER 4 : FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The data from both the questionnaires and the focus-group interviews produced a vast array of information, much of which provided valuable insights into the research area. The task before me was to condense this material into a form which was both manageable and comprehensible, and then to integrate it with the theoretical perspectives which inform this study. For this reason, the emphasis in presenting the findings will be on those aspects most pertinent to the research topic.

The areas of focus will be:

- Young people's understandings of gender and their experiences of gender-related issues;
- the influence of gender on their understandings of authority; and
- implications for the social positioning of male and female teachers.

In seeking to examine the role of *gender* in these young people's perceptions of authority, I felt that it was first important to find out how they understood this concept. Based on the approach that gender refers to social differences (as opposed to biological differences) between men and women; that these differences are learnt through a process of socialisation and through the culture of the particular society concerned, and that young people are active participants in this process, I begin by exploring the influence of gender in structuring their perceptions of themselves. The reasoning employed here was that young people's sense of themselves as masculine or feminine would strongly influence how they perceived and valued others as gendered beings. This related to: a) how they defined masculinity and femininity; b) what they considered to be appropriate behaviour, attitudes, roles and activities for boys/men and girls/women and c) how the latter should relate to one another. As anticipated, this line of questioning provided useful insights into these young people's *lived experiences* of gender. First, social rules or resources drawn on in gender construction were illuminated. Second, they pointed to how gender differentiation i.e. inequality and power relations between boys/men and

girls/women were created. Finally, it drew attention to what young people did with these messages in building a sense of themselves and others as gendered people.

The findings generated from students' definitions of masculinity and femininity, their observations and personal experiences of gender roles and gender relationships, and their responses to these, provided a background for the next important section of this chapter, in which I turn my attention more directly to their constructions of authority. Here, I try to establish whether there is a link between gender and authority. I do so by examining students' definitions of authority, identifying those whom they consider to hold authority and noting their explanations for this. This enables me to see whether understandings of authority are gendered and also to describe the connections made. Developing an understanding of students' perceptions of gender, authority and the relationship between them provided me with a framework for understanding how this was played out within the school context. School processes, as we saw in the literature review, are active agents in redefining and reinforcing traditional gender identities and gender relations. Accordingly, the final section of this chapter focuses specifically on those patterns of practices by which students construct particular kinds of masculinity and femininity among teachers and orders them in terms of power and prestige. This is explored with particular reference to the classroom-control context and teachers' accompanying roles as authority figures. In this section, I also show how disciplinary processes in schools are active agents in the construction of particular types of masculinity and femininity and how they may serve to perpetuate gender inequality. This is discussed in relation to male students' treatment of certain women teachers, the differential types of punishment meted out to boys and girls and the implications thereof, in particular for the former.

This chapter is thus divided into three main sections, all of which have been outlined above. The findings are noted in terms of patterns across participants and illustrated accordingly. Subjects' voices are acknowledged through the use of an indented structure. Focus-group participants are identified by gender, as are respondents. In the case of the latter, I have included the alphabetical coding system developed during my data analysis to distinguish between speakers.

4.2 EMPIRICAL SELF-PERCEPTIONS AND GENDER IMPLICATIONS

In describing themselves, the participants in this study emphasized religion, personality traits, gender – specifically the fact of being male or female, family background, leisure pursuits and geographical location.

Analysis of the survey showed that most students (61%) considered family to be especially important in defining their identity. This was followed by religion (48%), interpersonal attitudes and behaviour (41%) and school (28%). I noted that in all these aspects of life, gender is a key organising influence.

Respondents who identified *family* as central to understanding who they were, often explained this in terms of the family's role as a stabilising element in society e.g. by providing nurturance and guidance to the young, influencing moral values, setting boundaries, developing social skills and so on. Such views were in accord with what Connell has described as “conservative ideology” which, he writes, “speaks of the family as the ‘foundation of society’” and “traditional sociology” which, he continues, “has often seen it (the family) as the simplest of institutions, the building block of more elaborate structures” (Connell, 1987:121). For the purposes of this study, these views were particularly significant since gender relations are arguably the most important structure in the family. Moreover, gender relations characteristic of the dominant family form remain, as will be shown in this study, a key to understanding women's place in the social world.

The survey showed that the next most important aspect which defined these young people's sense of who they were was religion. Islam, Hinduism and Christianity were respectively the religions most commonly followed. Again, this was significant in view of the concerns of this study, since women also face discrimination in relation to religion. As *The Oxfam Gender Training Manual* (1994:6) states: “(w)hile religions may teach equality between people, in practice, women usually have a subordinate role and may be excluded altogether from the religious hierarchy. Furthermore, as many feminist writers claim, religions also show a marked tendency to represent women in terms of their sexuality and are characterised by a dualistic

mode of thinking (Armstrong, 1986). These points become especially significant when one considers that religious texts like the Bible and Quran are often understood as the central authority in people's lives. Certainly this was the case for many of the young people in this study, in particular, those who were Muslim:

- Male (G2): I am Muslim and in Islam male is considered as head of family and community.
- Male (K2): We live in an Islamic community. Our holy book tells us that males are in charge of looking after females but they are never in charge – both are equal.

The above views pointed to religion's role as a powerful form of male control over the lives of women. At the same time, there were clear indications that using religious texts to justify discrimination against women was unacceptable. This suggested that some young Muslims may be forging a new way of practising Islam – one which reconciles the basic tenets of their faith with the principles of democracy, the rule of law and the freedoms of expression and association. As we will see later, this was particularly evident in attitudes expressed towards homosexuality.

Different interpretations of religious texts and different religious traditions thus have different implications for women and men. Young people appear to be actively engaged in this process, making sense of many competing agendas.

The school was also seen as important in influencing identity. More girls than boys emphasized the importance of school in defining their identity. Schools were viewed as significant sites for preparing young people for their future careers, and education was seen as a vehicle for both personal and economic empowerment. School was also experienced by girls as a more egalitarian environment than the home. This was an important finding especially as schools have often been seen as active players in the reproduction of gender inequality. Notwithstanding this, many students' accounts of their experiences at school also pointed to it as a key site for reproducing traditional gender identities and perpetuating gender divisions. Masculinising and feminising practices at Rajah Combined were most commonly expressed in terms of disciplinary measures and the division of labour. Several boys said that harsher punishment was meted out to them and harder labour was allocated to them. Some girls acknowledged that they were treated

“more carefully” when it came to discipline and given tasks which did not require physical strength. Such practices reinforced definitions of boys as strong and girls as weak.

Finally, interpersonal attitudes and behaviour were also viewed as very important in defining identity:

Male (M2): Your attitude and your behaviour is part of your personality and therefore defines your identity.

Female (K1): What I do and the way I carry myself surely reflects a lot about me. This shows others what character/type of person you are. People judge you by your attitude.

The comments above highlighted those aspects of one’s self that feel the most personal or unique. At the same time they also show that personal life is constructed through the play of social relations. As Connell (1987:222) writes, “(l)ives are not monads closed off from others”... “the person is person only as I-and-you; the personal world *is* relational” (Connell, 1987:220). In short, identities are not self-contained – they develop and operate in relation to other identities. Where gender is concerned, this often means – as will be shown later – that masculinity and femininity are constructed in relation to and opposition to each other.

In this section, I have provided a brief outline of those aspects considered most important by these young people in defining themselves. While gender was ranked closely behind school in the survey and it was commonly mentioned in the focus-group participants’ self-descriptions, its importance in defining identity was elaborated simply as a biological fact. This called for more specific and in-depth questioning on *social* and *cultural* perceptions of masculine and feminine traits and roles. It is this aspect of the research findings which I now wish to give attention to.

4.3 HOW ‘GENDER’ WAS DEFINED

The term ‘gender’ was most often explained in biological terms, the most common response being, “whether you are male or female”. ‘Sex’ was defined similarly i.e. as a male/female duality. However, many respondents noted that ‘sex’ also referred to the actual ‘act’ of sex or

“intercourse” between two people. Where specified, sexual practice was most commonly defined in heterosexual terms. Emotional attachment, reciprocity, eroticism, marriage and procreation were the main themes of these definitions.

The conflation of the terms ‘gender’ and ‘sex’ suggested that most of these young people understood ‘gender’ as dichotomous and assigned on biological criteria. ‘Gender’ was thus a poorly understood concept. Indeed, only a handful of students’ definitions of gender suggested an awareness that ‘gender’ was connected with social processes. In doing so, they alluded to social rules concerning gender-appropriate behaviour and the obligation to follow these, unequal social relations between men and women and sexual orientation. As the following responses showed:

Female (F1): Behaving in a certain manner and abiding to certain rules and regulations.

Female (E1): Having the same rights – male and female having the same freedom of expression.

4.4 VIEWS ON, EXPERIENCES OF AND RESPONSES TO GENDER DIFFERENTIATION

Biological and physical differences aside, the young people in this study, in differentiating between men and women, most commonly spoke of attitudes, in particular, emotional characteristics. As a male focus-group participant explained:

I think males...The difference between a male and a female besides biologically... A female has more feelings. She shows more emotion and she ... you will see that it is easier to see if a female is hurt or feeling some pain than... a male. Because a male generally looks strong. He doesn't worry himself with other problems ... It takes long for him to realise that something is affecting him. Whereas a female ... she looks ... she's more responsible I would say.

The ability to contain emotions was considered a key distinguishing feature of maleness. An important consequence of this was that men were viewed as more suited to playing leadership roles. Females, in contrast, were generally defined as emotional, soft, vulnerable and so on:

- Female (A1): It is a fact that males are stronger than females, females need emotional stability. They are sensitive beings.
- Female (Z1): Male is much stronger in keeping their emotions inside whereas females release them easily because they are soft-hearted.

Although girls/women were frequently described as “more responsible”, it was boys/men who were generally perceived as the more capable sex in situations which called for someone to “take charge” or make decisions. Perceptions of women as “responsible” seemed to be closely tied to their domestic roles and activities e.g. child-care, cooking, cleaning etc., as well as having moral rather than social authority. Such definitions of masculinity (strength, dominance, leadership, autonomy, power) and femininity (weakness, dependence) were strongly influenced by gender arrangements within the family.

Many female respondents reported that the domestic division of labour in their homes took traditional gender forms. They said that they were treated differently and unfairly to their brothers:

- Female (P1): Males are treated differently especially in my family. Boys get more privileges to go out late, do all the work what women cannot supposedly do.
- Female (A2): At home... I only have one brother and he gets spoiled like a brat – he gets the most attention at home and he gets everything he wants.
- Female (N1): ... at home when I ask my brother to pack the dishes away after I've washed them my father or mother would say, “No! Leave him, he's a boy. Boys jobs are outside.”
- Female (T1): They are not treated the same. Not even in my own house. My brother who is 8 years old has more freedom than me. They treat boys more responsibly. They can take care of themselves which is not true. Females are better in taking responsibilities.

- Female (B1): In the home – parents treat daughters and sons differently which is very unfair. Girls can never go out whereas boys can do anything.
- Female (D1): Boys are given more scope and in most families the older brother gets everything and goes anywhere. Also in arguments the boy has a say as girls should keep quiet or will get scolded. Also if you ask why the answer is because he's a boy.
- Female (R1): A girl can basically do nothing. She can't do things her way, nor can she go out alone. While the boy gets to. And men always want to be on the top and always discourage females. It's like if the men say jump, the women must say, "How high?".

Apart from reproducing stereotypical gender identities and gender roles, the home thus also served to privilege boys and oppress girls.

In spite of a general consensus that gender arrangements in the home which discriminated against them were "unfair", most girls seemed to put up with sexism in this context. Furthermore, some who were against specific sexist practices such as work roles at home or dating practices, were accepting of ideologies of masculine authority. Not all girls, however, took on the roles and expectations prescribed for them by society. While some embraced domesticity, others appeared more resistant:

- Female (X1): I feel that a woman should be able to do what she wants e.g. men say the wives should stay in the kitchen. But the problem can only be worked out individually at home.

Many of their responses also suggested that they did not support gender stereotypes. However, while they questioned traditional roles and expectations there was no clear indication of an active rebellion against them. This was significant, especially as gender arrangements stemming from the family/home exerted a powerful influence on these young people's sense of who they were, their capabilities and worth. As the following extract from one of the focus-group discussions illustrated:

- Interviewer: How are you different from him?

- Female: Maybe from experience, maybe he's got more experience than certain girls, that makes who he is. I'm speaking mostly for everyone. They have more freedom and us girls are treated like more... restricted.
- Interviewer: And it's happening?
- Female: Yes.
- Male: I think it is right.
- Interviewer: You think it's right. Why?
- Male: Well, girls that get a slight bit of freedom, they tend to abuse it.
- Male: If you a female, you must now control yourself.
- Female: No, but if you had freedom from the beginning you wouldn't go wild.

The reference to girls' "abuse" of their freedom was not made explicit. However, there was strong evidence in the data to suggest that this was closely tied to dominant cultural expectations of male and female behaviour, especially sexual behaviour. While it was fine, for example, for boys to be promiscuous, loud, drink, smoke, swear and so on, such behaviour was not seen as appropriate for girls. As Connell (1987:113) argues,

(t)he 'double standard', permitting promiscuous sexuality to men and forbidding it to women has nothing to do with greater desire on the part of men, it has everything to do with greater power. The process of sexualising women as objects of heterosexual desire involves standardising feminine appeal.

Boys recognised that females were treated differently to them by society. As one of them stated:

Like females, they have to watch every step they make or they do. Like the way they sit, the way they speak to people, the way they like communicate. The way they carry on. It tells other people what kind of people they like are. But in males it's generally, like oh he's so immature.

Furthermore, boys took up the offer of gender privilege in diverse ways. Some were actively involved in bolstering their power and reinforcing their status as dominators of society. This often found expression in their relationships with girls. As the following comments from female respondents in response to differences between men and women showed:

- Female (R1): Males are also over protective than females. Males also want to impress females.
- Female (B1): Males could be jealous and overprotective at times.
- Female (X1): Most of the time males lust for females and not vice-versa.

For many boys, having a girlfriend and being able to protect her is proof of their masculinity. Some girls seemed to support the idea that they needed male protection. As one of them said: “If you a female things can happen to you.” Under these circumstances, boys may come under enormous pressure to adopt a masculinity that is aggressive, dominant, competitive and so on. As the following response from a male respondent implied: “Generally speaking girls look up to boys because they feel safe with boys.” At the same time, and perhaps more disturbingly, it also provided opportunities for boys to dominate girls/women in interpersonal relationships:

Interviewer: Why can't they protect themselves?

Male student: They need some big grown up with them. Not necessarily a grown up but someone who could help you when you're in danger.

Girls were thus infantilised. Definitions of femininity (fragile, vulnerable, helpless, sex object) and masculinity (strong, brave, heroic) thus had the effect of reinforcing unequal social relations between boys/men and girls/women and, significantly, also legitimating power relations between them. Those male respondents, for instance, who felt “fine” about the differential treatment of the sexes often based their arguments on exactly such definitions: “Perfectly fine. Women are treated more carefully than men because they're more fragile or petite.” Again, the danger of this type of thinking and these social practices is that it provided a rationale for policing the movement of girls. However, as often is the case, the ideology of the ‘natural’ weakness of women and their unsuitability for work is both a suppression of history, and, as I just indicated, a rationalisation of present practice (Connell, 1987). An important point to add here is that males’ desire to protect is not always driven so much by a need to honour and protect women’s bodily dignity as much as to control it through sexual violence. As a lone female student noted:

Female (W1): Boys get more privileges than girls e.g. boys can go out at night but a girl can't. Girls get to sit at home and do housecleaning. *Most girls get raped*

at night, right – but who are the ones that rape them – men (my emphasis).

This was a crucial point, especially as there was little acknowledgment or even awareness by these young people, of boys'/men's abuse of physical strength and need for sexual conquest and their role in posing a threat to girls'/women's safety. To the question of whether boys needed protection, responses from the latter were hesitant and ambiguous, and if there was agreement, no elaboration. As the following response from a male focus-group participant shows:

Because of the physical differences between males and females. Or even the upbringing. If you're brought up in a very rough environment then you able to protect yourself, when you go out. But if you're being pampered all your life, then you wouldn't be able to defend yourself when you go out.

Such a response highlighted Epstein's (1999) point that there are many different versions of masculinity, which are affected by: (a) the social positions of particular men or groups of men differentiated by race, ethnicity and class, (a key limitation of this study has been its neglect of such factors), and (b) the life histories of individual boys/men. While it is true that "there are cultures and historical situations where rape is absent, or extremely rare; and where men are not normally aggressive" (Connell, 1994: 9), it is also fair to say that this is more the exception than the rule. We still live in a male-dominated world, and, as Arnot (1984:45) notes, in such a world, "femininity is ascribed, masculinity and manhood have to be achieved in a permanent process of struggle and confirmation". The comments above hinted at this – while boys needed to be exposed to tests which proved that they didn't cry and were tough enough to handle life's challenges, the same rules did not apply to girls. Such practices served to sustain gender hierarchies and gender divisions. Some male pupils, for example, were highly critical of strong displays of emotion from females. To them this was evidence of weakness rather than strength. As the following responses suggested:

Male (K2): ... people can become hyperactive in many circumstances. Males usually cope, females go crazy and do not know what to do.

Male (L2): Males can cope under pressure and some females can't. Females are generally more mature than males (yeah right). Females get more hysterical than men.

Such comments hinted at Arnot's (1984:145) point that boys may also "try to achieve manhood through a process of distancing women and femininity from themselves and maintaining the hierarchy and social superiority of masculinity by devaluing the female world". A further consequence of defining women as emotional and helpless was that the capabilities and worth of women tended to be underestimated by girls themselves. The damaging effects of gender oppression on girls could be seen in the following responses:

Female (G1): I feel as if I am confused, I don't know how to react with others. I'm lost!

Female (J1): It irritates me a lot. It makes me want to cry sometimes. Which makes me want to change my sex so badly. Like why me being a female.

Female (T1): I feel... I think most women do feel inferior because we're made to believe all we can do is look after babies, cook and clean the house, which is very unfair.

Although most boys in the survey (71%) felt that gender discrimination was unacceptable, and did not appear to be threatened by the idea of equality for women, they showed little awareness or understanding of how this related to them in practice and how to take active responsibility for changing it. This supported Arnot's (2002) contention that many boys can now speak the language of equal opportunities and women's rights. However, as she says, when they are confronted with real life they expose how they actually feel (*Sunday Times*, Insight, November 24, 2002). There was no indication, for example, that any of these young men took responsibility for housework or had any involvement in looking after younger siblings. Some boys, however, acknowledged that domesticity/childcare was oppressive to women. This, however, did not mean they were disapproving:

Male: I'll just elaborate on what he said. It's like a female, for example, ... like they do things, males also do things, but I would say females are restricted to a certain extent, where like we males... I wouldn't say in most cases but...

- Interviewer: What makes you say restricted?
- Male: Well... okay apart from talking of like a male you know like biologically... But they the ones that give birth to children and they have to like... you know, look after things. See that things are in order, where like males they basically take life as it comes. Work, earn money and there's more responsibility on the female because she spends most of the time with the children.
- Female: He just makes them and leaves them... a female has a lot of responsibility where normal daily life is concerned.

A woman's reproductive capacity thus constructed her as mother, nurturer, homemaker and wife. The perception that men and women had different emotional characteristics was often based on their different functions in biological reproduction. Furthermore, mothering, as we know, consists not only in nurturing but also in the mother's regulation and disciplining of the child. As we shall see later, it was in this context that a woman's authority was defined.

At the same time there was some recognition that differential perceptions of men and women were often based on stereotypes and made in society. As a male participant in one of the focus-groups said:

But most of the time it's stereotypes that like call male and female. It's not really your personality changes. It's like what people make you think. It's all in the mind. Psychological. It's like a stereotype kind of thing. You are brought up to think this way.

In explaining this response he referred to other gender identities:

Like you get moffies. Yes like whatever. Transvestites. Bisexual. Homosexual. Don't know whether they have a problem or anything. Some people that are males but want to be females. They dress up in short dresses and mini skirts and wear lipstick and jewellery and grow their nails and talk like ladies.

Another male participant's immediate response to this statement was: "And we were brought up to think that this is wrong." Some of these young people thus saw that there were different ways of culturally interpreting the sexed body. Nevertheless, they still perceived this as "a problem" and simply a case of males wanting to be females rather than the creation of a new gender identity altogether. In other words, they worked within a common sense binary logic to understand gender identities. This was also evident in the survey which showed that the five most common qualities associated with masculinity were physical strength, sex appeal, respectfulness, respectability and aggression. The five most common qualities associated with femininity were softness, sex appeal, respectfulness, respectability and emotionality. For both masculinity and femininity sex appeal was defined in oppositional and complementary terms. For most boys and some girls sex appeal in masculinity was closely linked to having an impressive physique and being attractive to girls e.g. "well-built, big kahuna¹ [penis], hairy back, no beard, short hair; girls, muscles, cars; female friends" (male students) and "good butt; anything that shows good looking muscles; rugby player built and handsome" (female students). Sex appeal in femininity was also defined in physical and heterosexual terms e.g. beauty, being well-groomed, petite, slim and attractive to boys.

At the same time, there were also indications of similarities in qualities associated with masculinity and femininity. This was most noticeable when it came to respect i.e. showing it and being worthy of it. This was an important point as it showed that, "(g)ender is not a consistent, unitary category" (Campbell,1993:62). Closer analysis of the data, however, revealed that respectability, in particular, in men and women, was not always defined in the same way.

Respectability in masculinity was most commonly defined by both girls and boys as honesty, refinement and maturity. Such qualities, it may be argued, are prerequisites for good leadership, and, while they are not unambiguously masculine, respectability in femininity was not viewed in exactly the same terms. Respectability in femininity was most commonly defined by both girls and boys as being "reserved", "responsible", and having "a good personality". Apart from being well-behaved, respect for women also appeared to derive in large measure from their style of

¹ This is a colloquial term for 'penis'.

and as cheapening to women. Again, boys' collusion in regulating girls' personal behaviour was evident. As the following response from one of them to qualities associated with femininity illustrated:

Behave like a real woman. Must not be a prima-donna.
She must not smoke. She must act mature. Carry herself
in a respectful manner.

Furthermore, although qualities such as self-confidence and assertiveness were also mentioned as those which instilled respect for women, this was much less emphasized than the qualities mentioned above. Thus there were strong boundaries surrounding the distinction between acceptable feminine and masculine behaviours. Respectability in masculinity, it seemed, was more closely associated with qualities relating to social power and authority while respectability in femininity was more closely linked to being quiet, virtuous and proper.

In spite of these binary views of gender, most of the students in the survey (87%) said that they believed that it *was* possible for males to have feminine qualities and females to have masculine qualities. The most common explanation for this view was androgyny i.e. the co-existence of masculinity and femininity in the same person. Boys/men, for example, were seen as capable of displaying traditionally feminine qualities e.g. showing vulnerability, being caring, fearful and so on. Similarly, girls/women were perceived as able to display traditionally masculine traits i.e. coldness, aggression and strength. This implied that femininity and masculinity were not always seen as polar opposites or as single, static entities. Such a finding thus refuted the notion that there is, just one set of traits that characterizes men in general and thus defines masculinity, and another that characterizes women, which defines femininity.

The muscle gap was also not seen to be carved in stone. There was a common reference, for example, by some students to female "body-builders". For them, this was an indication that women had the same physical potential as men. The possibility of men and women being similar to each other was more commonly expressed in psychological and physical terms rather than those relating to the social or economic aspects of their lives. Other reasons given for why it was possible for males to have feminine qualities and females to have masculine qualities included

genetic factors (15%), environmental influences (7%), dress (7%), homosexuality (4%), transsexuality (4%) and transvestism (2%). Only three students felt that it was not possible for males to have feminine qualities and females to have masculine qualities. In all cases such views were guided by religious doctrine.

In spite of their liberated views concerning androgyny, however, most of these young people, in particular boys, chose to locate themselves in the category that corresponded to their biological sex. Fifteen girls (52%) located themselves within the feminine category. Thirteen boys (76%) located themselves in the masculine category. Thirteen girls (45%) and three boys (18%) chose the androgynous category. No girls located themselves in the masculine category and no boys located themselves in the feminine category. Girls and boys who located themselves under androgynous did so because they felt that they possessed both masculine and feminine qualities. Other reasons given by girls for locating themselves in the androgynous category included participation in activities usually associated with males, in particular, sports. Others expressed a preference for wearing masculine clothing as opposed to dresses or skirts.

Such views showed that individual girls and boys varied greatly in their behaviour and characteristics. This highlighted the diversity within masculinity and femininity and confirmed that they are not essences but rather multiple and contradictory. As Salisbury and Jackson (1996:7) write, “(t)here is no such thing as masculinity” (or, I would add, femininity) – “only masculinities” and femininities... “Masculinity” and femininity are “never unified or homogeneous.” In pointing to how young people borrowed and mixed and matched elements from a range of gender identities, the above responses supported this argument. Such a finding suggested that the opposition between masculinity and femininity is unstable and that perhaps gender is continuous between men and women rather than oppositional. It suggested that gender identities are not “fixed, natural and eternal” (Salisbury and Jackson, 1996:2) but rather shifting, fluid/changeable and in process. Who a person was or the way s/he felt varied according to his/her immediate context. The feasibility of making choices between identities shows the real potential for change. However, while complete acceptance of sex-role appropriate behaviour and attitudes was uncommon, this did not mean that these young people’s gender identities were

free-floating without any investments in particular identities. Indeed, complete rejection of gender-appropriate behaviour and attitudes was rare.

More than half the females in the survey located themselves in the feminine category. They did so because of their behaviour and physical appearance:

- Female (G1): I think I'm very soft for others. I cry very quickly. I am too sensitive about things.
- Female (C2): I'm not a very rough person and don't consider myself as masculine.
- Female (M1): I'm quite the emotional and understanding person.
- Female (S2): I behave like a woman should and dress like a woman.
- Female (L1): I am feminine in appearance and I have feminine qualities in that I am very sensitive and that's just how I feel.
- Female (N1): I find myself very petite and have all the qualities listed under femininity.
- Female (B2): Because I am a lady and I'm built like one and I act like one.

Femininity was thus largely constructed around the image and experience of a female body and cultural oppositions of masculinity and femininity. The girls above adopted the social expectations for their sex. This did not, however, mean that they had no choice in the matter. Several said that they were proud of their feminine identity and embraced it:

- Female (O1): I enjoy being a female and I am definitely proud to be a woman.
- Female (X1): Femininity is attractive in a woman. It enhances her inner and outer appearance.

Others said that although they could behave in a masculine way they didn't see the need to locate themselves under the androgynous label:

- Female (C1): Well, I think that I am totally feminine, I mean my mannerisms etc. Sometimes I do behave like a tomboy, but basically I am all girl.

Female (K1): Although I'm female and have some masculine qualities, I do not feel that I have to fall under androgynous.

Such views hinted at Anyon's (1989:25) contention that:

Most women who accept femininity as their natural role do not passively adopt the stereotypical set of expectations. Rather the doctrine of femininity is often used by women to try to ensure their own protection by men, as a way of enforcing a reciprocity of duties and obligations. Femininity may become a way of gaining security against a harsher world.

The positioning of oneself as female (or male) thus did not occur in a vacuum and femininity often operated in relation to hegemonic masculinity. As the following remarks showed:

Female (A2): Sometimes I can be feminine, especially when I am with my boyfriend, and sometimes I can act like a boy by playing rugby, soccer and fighting with the boys.

Female (W1): I can be feminine when I'm around guys or my boyfriend but on the other hand I can be masculine when I'm playing around with them.

Female (Z1): I may like certain games that boys play and things that they do but when I go out for e.g. to a wedding, I dress in a feminine way.

Dominant social relations e.g. heterosexuality, institutions such as marriage, cultural expectations and norms – most noticeably in sport and clothing – were thus important influences in reproducing traditional gender identities, gender roles and gender relations. At the same time, they also served as a medium for resisting/contesting and transforming them. Gender identities, for example, may also develop in relation to historical power imbalances between men and women. As a female respondent suggested:

Female (Y1): As I stated above, I do have what a man's got to have except a 'penis' but I can do things better than a regular guy and that's because I have girl power.

In other cases the effect of this seemed to elevate masculinity and devalue femininity:

Female (R1): I would like to be strong. I like being in the company of guys. They're more fun and wild unlike most females who want to be nosy.

Female (J1): I would love to be a male and have their qualities. I would have been better off. I would have looked at life in a different way and dealt with it differently.

These findings highlighted Connell's (1987:183) identification of various forms of subordinated femininity, which he has summarized as follows:

One form is defined around compliance to the subordination and is oriented to accommodating the interests and desires of men. I will call this 'emphasized femininity'. Others are defined centrally by strategies of resistance or forms of non-compliance, Others again are defined by complex strategic combinations of compliance, resistance and co-operation.

As we saw earlier, boys were aware that they benefited from prevailing gender relationships. It was thus perhaps not surprising that most located themselves in the masculine category. Reasons given included behaviour and personality traits, sexual prowess, heterosexuality, biological factors, the power and prestige associated with conforming to expectations of hegemonic masculinity and religious ideology:

Male (D2): I have good control over my emotions and I am bold and calm.

Male (E2): Because I am one who explores and lives on the wild side.

Male (J2): I am a very cold-hearted person. Don't care.

Male (L2): I'm sexy, very well-built, so I have to be male.

Male (P2): Because I want to have the one woman in my life and this is the way I will be personally comfortable with.

Male (S2): Because I was born to be masculine.

Male (I2): Because people respect and obey masculine men.

Male (G2): God created me as a male (physically, mentally and any other way) and therefore I'll stay as much masculine as masculine can be.

The decision by most of these young people to locate themselves in the category that corresponded to their biological sex suggested that ultimately, society and culture – conditioning, perceptions of obligations and appropriateness, expectations, responsibilities – all conspired to constrain choice in both genders (Horowitz,1997;White,1997). The gendered nature of behavioural options (and which these young people actively chose from) showed how the identities of these boys and girls tended to develop in such a way as to allow men far greater independence as well as greater freedom of movement and association. Not only did this serve to promote male involvement in community and political issues (but exclude women), it also promoted control of women by men in family and sexual relationships. As noted earlier, policing went on to produce and enforce ‘appropriate gender’ especially in the family. Eventually young people themselves come to regulate the elaboration of gender, thereby reinforcing definitions of what is normal and acceptable. Having said that, it is important to emphasise that young people’s sense of themselves as male or female and the implications thereof was not just a question of imposed regulation, but also based on lived experience in which they were active agents.

Apart from the division of labour and power relations between men and women, the structure of sexuality showed itself to be a key medium for redefining and reinforcing conventional gender identities and gender relations.

My intention in asking these young people for their views on homosexuality and lesbianism was to draw attention to the latter as a gender issue. Sexuality and gender identities are not totally separate. Indeed, some would argue that concepts around masculinity and femininity are inextricably linked to forms of sexuality. As Connell (1987:112) explains, in our culture, “objects of desire are generally defined by the dichotomy and opposition of feminine and masculine; and sexual practice is mainly organised in couple relationships”. Heterosexuality is thus viewed as the acceptable, normal pattern for human relationships, while all other sexual relationships are viewed as either subordinate to or perversions of heterosexual relationships (GETTR, 1997). Certainly, this was the case for almost all the young people in this study. Forty-three percent of respondents rejected homosexuality outright. Twenty-four percent expressed tolerance and it is important to emphasize that this did not mean acceptance. Only 30% of

students accepted homosexuality. Homosexuality was regarded by many as an indicator of insufficient or inadequate masculinity. This highlighted Connell's (1987:248) argument that "the fact of homosexuality threatens the credibility of a naturalised ideology of gender and a dichotomised sexual world". For this reason, homosexuality is often seen – as many of the participants in this study did – as a "symbol of disorder, dirtiness and danger". Of particular importance to the concerns of this study is the point that there are many parallels between processes of marginalisation of women and gay men. As Lees (1993:89-90) has observed, "it is an insult for a boy to be called a 'woman' because to be similar to girls is also to be associated with a lower status group". Furthermore, many of the characteristics ascribed to gay men are applied to women (Nayak and Kehily, 1996).

Homosexuality was most often rejected because it was seen as a practice that went against religious laws:

Female (L1): I feel that it is wrong. I feel God made women for men and men for women.

Male (G2): I find it disgusting, and totally against laws of naturalness and laws of God – appalling, irrational, utterly indescribably stupid.

However, although religious ideology imposed limits on how these young people understood the act of sex, it did not always generate a total rejection of homosexuality:

Female (A1): Though not allowed in my religion, I think you can be what you want to be and no one can ridicule you for wanting to do something you're comfortable with.

Female (K1): I don't have a high regard for the above as I feel God created us as either male or female and therefore we should live by it. I do however respect them as individuals.

Female (T1): I don't like judging what God has created regardless of whether you're gay or lesbian because we're all human. I believe there is a reason for everything.

Some young people, however, were tolerant within limits that they set themselves:

- Female (C1): As long as they do not try to enforce their views and lifestyles on me, I am okay with it. I do not condone their behaviour but neither am I totally against it.
- Male (E2): I don't have a problem. They made a choice and if it doesn't cause a problem in my life, I don't have a problem with it.
- Male (N2): I think that it is very gross. But it is a free country. They can do what they want so long as it has nothing to do with me.

Most of these young people, especially boys, thus distanced themselves from homosexuality. The views expressed above also showed, that when it came to expressing sexuality, they were faced with real constraints. At the same time they were actively involved in making their own meanings around sexual mores.

Some saw the human sexual impulse as being tightly coupled to reproduction. In addition, sexuality, like mothering, was perceived to be an area which belonged to 'nature' rather than social arrangements:

- Male (M2): I don't see why nature has made homosexuality – because it has nothing to do with reproduction. However, I have nothing against homosexuals.
- Female (I1): I feel that although it's not things of nature, it's things that are happening nowadays which we have to live with.

The following responses which highlighted the same theme were less accommodating:

- Female (J1): I think it's sick. There are two sexes which are meant to be together and not one sex being with each other. It is unnecessary.
- Male (N1): I think that it is just scandalous. A disgrace to the human society. Females belong with males and vice-versa.
- Female (Q1): I am totally disgusted because I cannot see two people of the same gender and have a great problem.

These views on homosexuality and lesbianism showed these young people to be actively involved in maintaining sexual boundaries – in policing and legitimizing heterosexual identities.

Significantly, the few young people who had personal contact with homosexuals were more accepting of their lifestyles and felt less threatened by them:

Female (R1): I am not against them that's just the way they are. I respect them for who they are because they present no harm to me. They're also the best of friends one can have.

Male (S2): I think nothing of it because I have friends who are and they are very nice people.

Female (X1): Homos and lessies (for short) I don't have a problem with, they're just human and some even have better personalities than some of us. They're well-mannered.

The scope of identity alternatives which an individual was exposed to was thus a key influence on gender construction.

Having gained a sense of these young people's definitions of masculinity and femininity, their experiences of and responses to gender-related issues, I now wish to look at how this influenced their understandings of authority.

4.5 STUDENTS' UNDERSTANDINGS OF AUTHORITY AND ITS LINK TO GENDER

In the previous section we saw that students' definitions of masculinity and femininity and their perceptions of the social relations between men and women were both hard and ambiguous. This extended to their understandings of authority, who they perceived to hold it, how they characterized authority figures and why.

'Authority' was most commonly defined as social power or control:

- Female (O1): Having power and maintaining order, stability. Setting the rules and regulations which need to be followed.
- Female (U1): An authority governs, guides and controls in social structures. An authority has power to judge and make sure that society functions accordingly.
- Female (N1): Someone in a high position.
- Male (D2) : ... someone in charge who can make educated decisions.
- Male (M2) : A figure of order and leadership.
- Male (S2) : Where you are given the right to do something.

Important to note here is that authority was understood by all students as legitimate power rather than individual acts of force or oppression. A figure of authority was also defined as someone who was widely respected and who *gave* respect:

- Female (K1): Someone who is respected.
- Female (E1): Someone that holds much regard for you. Someone that you can trust in.
- Female (L1): Authority – having an influence on you, a person you respect and regard highly – of great importance in your life, who you follow as an example.

It was *this* definition of authority which prevailed in most respondents' identification of authority figures.

Fathers (65%), mothers (61%), religious leaders (48%), principals (28%), teachers (28%) and political leaders (28%), in that order, were people in the community and wider society considered to hold authority. They were associated with authority mainly because of their role in providing moral guidance, leadership and support:

- Female (I1): In the case of help being needed they are there and they lead the way to a straight path. They authorise the go-ahead or not.
- Male (M2): They tell me what to do and teach me how to lead my life the good way.
- Male (R2): They will put you on the straight path and will always see you take the right steps.

Their authority also derived from their greater knowledge, experience and age:

Female (M1): They are people who ought to be respected. People you can learn from.

Female (O1): They are people who I respect and obey since they're older, wiser and obviously know better than me.

Male (D2): Because they have wisdom and it is a law.

Such individuals were also seen as able to influence young people's ideologies:

Male (I2): These people can change your perception and have an effect on you.

They also served as role models:

Female (U1): It's because we rely on them for our success and prosperity. They lead us in all we do. If they do right, we do right. In other words, they are our image and inspiration.

Authority figures were thus not defined as important or worthy of respect only by virtue of the law, their social position, age and knowledge. For these young people, they also drew status from the quality of their relationships with others. Authority figures, for instance, were commonly characterised as individuals who had good communication skills and who treated others with kindness. Having said that, the gender order and gender regimes were powerful influences on how students made sense of who had more authority in society as well as whose roles and work were to be more valued. Seventy-two percent of respondents (69% girls and 76% boys) felt that males had more authority in society. Only two students – one girl and one boy – felt that females did. Thirteen percent of respondents (17% girls and 6% boys) believed that men and women held equal authority while one male student said that this was context-dependent. The most frequently cited reason for why men were considered to hold more authority was their high representation in positions of power and authority:

Female (B1): Most presidents are male. Most principals are male and even in households fathers have the last say.

Female (C1): Well, if you notice very few women are presidents etc.. Somehow society feels that men can deal with

those positions better. Maybe that's why the world is so corrupt.

- Female (D1): In most cases you will only see males. Maybe for the reason that females are too soft. More policemen than women. Principals mostly male. Priests and Sheiks. Also your father.
- Female (O1): Males hold all the high positions, for example, principal, chairman of certain bodies and institutes.
- Female (Z1): It's a male dominated world.
- Male (J2): Most people in high places that have authority are men.
- Male (S2): Because in our society it is mostly males.
- Male (T2): They hold the highest positions in society.

The over-representation of men in leadership positions served to reinforce patriarchal social relations. Men, for example, were taken more seriously. In some cases their advice was accepted and orders followed without resistance. One male student, for example, who associated males only with authority said he did so, "(b)ecause they are treated with respect. People listen to their advice," while another said: "When they speak, we listen and do things without asking why," and a female noted: "Father – he wants things done his way and you got no say." Furthermore, men were elevated and considered more important. As the following reasoning from those who associated only men with authority suggested:

- Female (B1): Because they are the leaders in families, communities and countries.
- Male (G2): My father is the head of the house. Priest, head of community, Mandela, head of country. Role model to all "below" them.
- Male (Q2): Because they are important, because they serve the community.
- Female (D1): Father – he has the power to control a family because he works for food on the table. Principal – without one there wouldn't be control in the school.

In identifying who their role models were, both boys and girls chose mostly male figures in their lives e.g. fathers, older brothers and uncles. These choices were largely influenced by men's roles as providers and protectors of their families. Interestingly, of the few students who

identified their mothers as role models, one had passed away, another was the breadwinner and others emphasised the maternal role.

As I mentioned earlier, the ability to control and take charge of a situation was a strong indicator of authority for these young people:

Female (W1): Because they can control things.

Female (H2): I associate these people with authority because they are in charge, they control.

Male (J2): Because they are more dominant over everyone.

Male (T2): I associate them with authority because they are in command of anything they do.

Such roles and activities, behaviour and attitudes have traditionally been assigned to, expected from and encouraged in males rather than females. These, in turn, were reinforced by cultural beliefs and traditions:

Female (A1): Because of Indian background, the boys seem to be favoured more: allowed to do more things than females. They are treated more highly.

Female (K1): Since we live in an Indian community... live by the Indian customs. Boys/males are treated/given more freedom than females. Females are sort of under lock and key and live under strict rules.

At the same time, some young people were actively involved in reinforcing definitions of males as the stronger sex both emotionally and physically in their own perceptions and practices:

Male (F2): Males are brave and work hard.

Female (H1): Everyone, I think feels more secure and comfortable with a male in charge.

Female (W1): Because the males are supposed to be the head of the home. He must see to it that he can control things.

Male (M2): People tend to listen to people who are stern – sternness is basically, usually a masculine trait.

The responses above thus suggested that authority was masculine. However, just 17% of respondents said that they associated authority with masculine qualities only. Explanations for

this view were heavily informed by common sense or oppositional notions of what men and women should be like. Definitions of men as the stronger, tougher sex were particularly important in influencing perceptions of authority as masculine. Male strength was defined in terms of physical ability, emotional control and sexual prowess:

- Female (Q1): When you think of authority, you think of strength, rough etc. of all masculine qualities.
- Male (T2): Because you have to be tough to have authority and have power which is part of masculinity.
- Female (B1): Males are generally supposed to be figures of authority. Males are more stern sometimes and hard or stronger.
- Female (K1): They are obviously more firm and most of the time demand respect.

At the same time, authority for many students was not unambiguously masculine. Fifty-nine percent of students (62% girls and 53% boys) said that they associated authority with both masculine and feminine qualities. Some drew on gender arrangements in the home to explain this: “In our household both my parents have authority over me and my brother.” Students’ identification of their mothers as authority figures implied that there was power sharing between husbands and wives. Thus, as Connell (1987:110) writes, “(i)t has become clear that household and kinship relations are not a test-tube of pure patriarchy. The family as an institution might best be regarded now as part of the periphery rather than the core complex”. This is true. Today, the fact that divorce doesn’t carry the social stigma it once did; increasing numbers of single mothers – some of whom may marry and others never; a recognition that homosexual relationships are entitled to the same rights as their heterosexual counterparts; and single-parent households with a man at the head, means that there is more diversity and fragility in family structures. However, as we have seen, in many cultures the traditional roles of breadwinning-father and stay-at-home mother still apply. This did not always imply that husbands could impose an openly patriarchal regime in the home. As Connell (1987:125) argues, “(i)n the traditional patriarchal household, a marked sexual division of labour actually places some limits on the patriarch’s ability to exercise power, since women monopolise certain kinds of skill and knowledge.” The authority of a woman may thus be defined by her ability to nurture her children and to ensure that the family’s day-to-day needs are satisfied at household level. A woman’s

control and power thus derived from her traditional role as mother. The findings for this study tended to support this argument.

Other students who associated authority with both masculine and feminine qualities were influenced by changes in the labour market:

Female (D1): Authority could be masculine or feminine because both sexes could do any job if he/she is able to do it. People believe that men are better than women which is wrong. They are to me alike.

Another group of students hinted at shifting gender identities and gender roles and the importance of a mix between masculine and feminine qualities in authority figures:

Female (U1): Nowadays both qualities fit because authority deals with working hand in hand for prosperity.

Their responses also suggested that they did not support the “concept of an inherited master pattern of gender” (Connell, 1994:9): As the following responses indicated:

Female (D1): Whether a male or female, anyone can do the same job. Depends on your inner self, if you have the ability to do the job.

Female (C1): It is a load of nonsense. How much authority you have, depends on you, the person you are, the impressions you give off and the way you handle yourself. It is in no way a masculine or feminine trait.

Male (G2): I don't associate authority with a specific sex, just a coincidence that four out of five of my examples are male.

Such views showed that some of these young people were not passive recipients of messages contained in the gender order and gender regimes. For them gender was not the decisive factor in who held authority. Rather, it depended on one's sense of self and ability.

Another student felt that: “Authority can be associated with anything, like inanimate objects, which are not masculine or feminine.” He didn't specify what these were but his statement underlines Giroux's (1996:13) statement that “electronic popular forms offer a wide range of identifications and new challenges to traditional forms of authority”. As he says:

In a rapidly changing postmodern cultural landscape, the voice of authority no longer resides exclusively in the modernist spheres of the school, family and workplace. Authority has been refashioned in the legitimating discourses and images of an electronic media culture which has dramatically altered the course and content of the social and cultural relations of youth.

For the students above gender identity was not a predictor of authority. Such understandings supported the argument that power relations between men and women and definitions of masculinity and femininity are social constructions forged out of history, culture and ideology and do not merely spring from the biological nature of men and boys and women and girls. Having said that, the gender order was not something these young people could escape from. Only three students (two girls and one boy) said that they associated authority with feminine qualities. As their responses to the statement that authority is masculine showed:

Female (Y1): Bullshit. Because females has higher standards than men.

Female (R1): Females should be (hold more authority) cause they have more understanding and patience.

Male (Q2): The females are responsible.

Definitions of femininity which connected it to moral uprightness, kindness and caring and domestic virtues were used by some students to make their *own* inferences about who had authority and what it meant. At the same time these understandings were strongly influenced by dominant gender practices in society. For the students above, for example, a woman's authority seemed to derive from her traditional roles as carer, nurturer and homemaker. They also drew on cultural expectations for masculine and feminine behaviours – one outcome of which was that women were perceived as being morally superior to men.

Male students who suggested that women had more authority emphasized the latter's sexuality: "If a female has big breasts, is beautiful, has sexy legs, she can have a man do anything for her. At least I would." Some of them later contradicted themselves in saying that males had more authority and that authority was masculine. As the following response illustrated: "We got the kahunas. Without it they (females) can't live." Such views suggested that women were often merely seen as objects for adolescent males' titillation rather than as credible authority figures.

The young people in this study thus showed themselves to be actively involved in making meaning around sites and instances where gender and authority was relevant. However, while men and women were seen by most as having equal authority, their authority was defined differently. These derived from their respective traditional gender roles. Such perceptions had important implications for the disciplinary role of women and men teachers in the school context.

4.6 STUDENT-TEACHER RELATIONS

In responding to questions on their relations with teachers, students tended to be non-gender specific. Most of these young people said that their teachers treated them well and with respect. Furthermore, they showed an awareness that teachers were more likely to be positive towards them if they were respectful, well-behaved in class and hardworking. When it came to *their* treatment of teachers most said that they treated the latter with respect and some, as they did their parents. Others said that they treated their teachers the same way that they were treated. Although students commonly felt that teachers were entitled to respect because they were older, because of their roles as educators and also because they were regarded as substitute parents within the school setting, respect for teachers was not a given. In explaining why they respected teachers, for example, students most often said that this was a direct consequence of how they were treated. Respect was thus a two-way process and needed to be earned.

The qualities most commonly respected in teachers included respectfulness, friendliness, the ability to demonstrate assertive control (this was emphasized more by boys) and understanding. Good teaching skills were also admired and respected but to a lesser degree. The qualities most commonly disrespected in teachers were rudeness, inconsiderateness, arrogance, favouritism/victimisation and poor paedagogic practice. Teachers were thus respected first and foremost for how they treated students i.e. their interpersonal skills and then their teaching ability. As we shall see later, female teachers were more commonly associated with good interpersonal skills, however, this did not necessarily mean that the authority they had was taken more seriously. While it is true that students' likes and dislikes were closely related to the personality of the individual teacher, and as such did not appear to be affected by the gender of

the teacher, gender *was*, nevertheless, a mediating factor in how students treated their teachers. Gender and personality were not, as will be seen below, mutually exclusive.

4.7 EXPECTATIONS OF MALE AND FEMALE TEACHERS

The survey showed that the qualities most commonly expected in a female teacher were that she be “understanding”, “kind”/friendly, “soft”, “caring” and attractive in appearance. She was not expected to be rude, unkind, insensitive or distant. A male teacher, in contrast, was more commonly expected to be strict, to treat students with respect and fairness and to be in control. He was not expected to be soft, sensitive or emotional. Twenty-two percent of respondents said that they expected the same qualities in male and female teachers. However, closer analysis of the data revealed that such responses were often riddled with inconsistencies and ambiguities. Furthermore, while there *were* similarities in students’ expectations of male and female teachers, namely understanding, kindness, professionalism, respectfulness, control, strictness and counselling, these were highly gendered. Responses to expectations and non-expectations of male and female teachers, for example, were often expressed in degrees of comparison:

- Female (J1): *More* understanding, kind, patient, concerned.
- Female (L1): Soft, *less* strict, kind.
- Female (Z1): To be *more* lenient towards pupils.
- Male (Q2): *More* understanding than males.
- Male (J2): Nothing *more* different from that of a male teacher, just a bit *more* soft.
- Female (W1): The same as the female, but also be a little hard on pupils who don’t listen.

In other words, men and women teachers were more frequently expected to display behaviour and ways of being that were culturally dominant for their sex. The quality of understanding, for example, was expected by 33% of respondents in female teachers but only by 9% of them in male teachers. Strictness was expected by only 2% of respondents in female teachers compared to 26% for male teachers. The differential expectations that these young people held of their male and female teachers had important implications for how their authority was defined as well as how they were responded to in their capacity as authority figures. At the same time,

preconceptions of women teachers as caring and supportive and male teachers as strict and dominant seem to be confirmed by students' actual experiences within the classroom.

4.8 PERCEPTIONS OF MALE AND FEMALE TEACHERS AS AUTHORITY FIGURES

Both boys and girls said that their teachers asserted authority by being stern and showing that they were in control (emphasised more for male teachers), raising their voices (emphasised more for female teachers) and taking strong disciplinary action against errant students (emphasized more for male teachers). Such views suggested that while male and female teachers often used the same disciplinary tactics, male teachers tended to be more forceful, less tolerant of bad behaviour and were generally harder on students when meting out discipline. Indeed, while male teachers were commonly associated with intimidatory, loud, aggressive, arrogant disciplinary styles, female teachers were generally perceived to adopt a firm but gentler approach. For example, students said that women teachers often attempted to reason with them when they were misbehaving. This was in contrast to male teachers, who were experienced to be more decisive and authoritarian in dealing with unruly students. These differences in leadership styles suggested that the majority of male and female teachers at Rajah Combined behaved in accordance with stereotypical roles and expectations for their sex. Disciplinary processes in the school thus did serve to redefine and reinforce perceptions of men as strong and women as soft. At the same time, students were active participants in perpetuating these gender divisions but also in transforming them. For example, more students (40%) said that male teachers *did not* have more authority than female teachers than those who said they did (33%). Interestingly, the latter view was shared more by girls than boys and was influenced by an observation that male teachers were generally stricter and more firm in the classroom. As the following responses showed:

Female (H1): Males seem to get order quickly and simply, they don't tolerate nonsense.

Female (R1): With females we get our way and they have less control over the class unlike males, they are more bullying and get control and we don't get our way.

However, while male teachers were often admired for adopting a no-nonsense, hard-line approach to discipline, being in command of the situation and acting decisively, they were also admired for remaining calm and not resorting to violence in potentially volatile situations. Indeed, male teachers who used corporal punishment or drew on physical strength and aggression to assert authority over students were especially disliked *and* disrespected by them. Furthermore, while female teachers were admired for their ability to counsel students and to be understanding when dealing with discipline, they were especially admired for not allowing students to get the better of them, taking strong disciplinary action against rude students and for their ability to control large, unruly groups of students. There were also clear indications that students were disapproving of female teachers who showed that they were weak or vulnerable and unable to handle disrespectful students, in particular boys, on their own. As one of them put it:

When a pupil was rude to the teacher, instead of reprimanding him, she started to cry and ran out, she should have stood her ground and shown her authority not her lack of it.

In asserting authority, male and female teachers were thus admired and disliked for showing characteristics that were generally expected for their sex as well as those that were not. Certainly the findings for this study showed that male teachers who were strict but non-aggressive and female teachers who were caring but firm when asserting authority were most liked and respected by students. Such responses supported the argument that in today's world authority is not unambiguously masculine but rather a blend of both masculine and feminine qualities.

Of those students who said that male teachers did *not* have more authority than female teachers, some argued that it depended on the individual. These views implied that the gender of the teacher was not the decisive factor in determining whether there would be order in the classroom:

Female (C1): I don't think that the gender of the teacher causes them to have more or less authority. It's the impression they give off to pupils.

- Male (M2): Authority has nothing to do with being male or female – some females have more authority than males and vice-versa.
- Male (P2): Some males cannot control pupils whereas some females can.
- Male (Focus-group Participant): I don't think it's like males or females. There are females who handle us but there are some females who don't. And there's some males as well. You can't say male or female.

This showed that men and women were not seen as unproblematic, fixed categories. Others said that the control a teacher exerted depended on the situation:

- Female (G1): It depends what sort of a matter it is. There are some matters that females can handle better than a man and vice-versa.
- Female (L1): ... it depends on how you look at it. Female teachers also have more authority in certain cases.

These views were encapsulated in the following response that, “male and female teachers have authority in different ways and both are successful”. The two distinct ways in which male and female teachers were perceived to show authority was perhaps most clearly expressed in the following response to whether authority was masculine or feminine:

- Female (C2): Masculine: they are strong and can enforce discipline better. Feminine: are gentle and people listen to them because they are caring.

Such views showed that when it came to defining the authority of teachers, students could not escape from working within a binary logic. Males and females were seen as equals but different.

For many boys a woman teacher's authority derived from her sexuality. The physical appearance and the personal grooming of teachers was emphasized more for women than men. Girls seemed to be especially attracted to female teachers who dressed stylishly while boys tended to be more explicit about their preferences. Favourite women teachers, for example, were described by some boys as follows: “(n)ice legs, breasts, nice hair, thin”; “(b)ig breasts, beautiful face, long hair, sexy legs”; and “(t)hin, petite”.

Such responses confirmed that adolescent boys gained erotic enjoyment from a woman teacher's physical attractiveness and sexuality. Furthermore, there were indications that the sex appeal of a woman teacher was an important factor in influencing whether both boys and girls, but in particular boys, would look up to her or not. Indeed, the clearest example of why female teachers had more authority was expressed in the following response from a male student: "The sexier the female, the more authority she has." This finding supported past research on gender and schooling which has shown that women teachers who were good looking, sexy and dressed well had fewer problems with discipline. This was because boys could fantasize about them and girls could identify with them (Wolpe, 1988:126-127). Such perceptions, however, I would argue, reinforce definitions of women as objects for male titillation rather than as professionals or figures of dignity and respect. For this reason they should be strongly discouraged. As Connell (1989:94) writes:

In the mass high school system sexuality is both omnipresent and illicit; to act or talk sexually becomes a breach of order – a form of trouble. But at the same time it is a means of maintaining order, the order of patriarchy via the subordination of women and the exaltation of one's maleness.

Women teachers who invoke their femininity/sexuality to control students are reinforcing behaviours that objectify them. At the same time, some women may find that this is the only way to effect control especially with boys. This was not empirically verified. Furthermore, the authority that women teachers were perceived to have by virtue of their maternal ability i.e. their nurturant, caring qualities, did not always mean that they were given the same respect as male teachers or taken as seriously. In other words, although many students responses suggested that they were more approving of women teachers' disciplinary styles, in particular, their capacity to be kinder and more understanding, this often gave them licence to exploit women teachers. Thus, although these young people appeared to be committed to the principle of gender equality, their practices within the classroom often contradicted this.

More than half of the students in the survey said that they would find it easiest to face a disciplinary committee, which had an equal representation of male and female teachers. This, they said, was because it would facilitate a balanced perspective of the situation at hand. Implicit

in these views was a perception that male and female teachers thought differently and that they had different approaches to dealing with discipline. Significantly, however, not one of these students expressed a desire to face an exclusively male disciplinary committee. Some admitted that they would prefer to be dealt with by females. Girls, in particular, said that they would feel more at ease talking to a woman teacher. This was in part due to a shared identity. The perception that women teachers were “more understanding” was a strong reason for students electing to be disciplined by them:

Female (C2): They are softer and more understanding.

Female (Q1): Women are less strict and more understanding.

At the same time, some students were aware that these qualities would get them off lightly and took advantage of it:

Female (K1): Sorry enough, I feel that females are more softer in nature and should be easier on me.

Male (K2): Usually do not take anything hard and let us off easy.

Although students were insistent that it was not the gender of the teacher that determined whether s/he would be successful in gaining control over them, but rather his or her attitude towards them, this was contradicted by a majority view that the atmosphere in the classroom *was* influenced by the gender of the teacher. Only 17% said that this was not the case. As a female student put it:

Pupils' behaviour towards male teachers is far different to female teachers, maybe because females are softer in general.

While some students said that they felt “more comfortable” or less restricted in female teachers' classes, and, that this contributed positively to their learning experience, a larger number emphasized that the more relaxed environment often led to them taking “advantage” of the former. As the following responses showed:

- Female (F1): They tend to take advantage in female teachers' classes and know their limits in a male teacher's class.
- Female (L1): I feel that we perhaps take advantage of female teachers more often than males, because the females appear to be more lenient and have more sympathy for students.
- Male (D2): More rowdy when there is a female teacher in the classroom.
- Male (I2): Because they tend to obey a male teacher.
- Male (T2): Because they are not afraid of the females but they feel intimidated by the males.

This was corroborated by the focus-group participants who admitted that they did not treat their male and female teachers equally. They said that they were quieter, more productive and that their concentration level was much higher in male teachers' classes:

- Interviewer: Do you treat your male and female teachers equally?
- Female: No, not actually.
- Interviewer: Explain.
- Male: I think that we give more of our male teachers more respect.
- Female: Yes. We are like more quiet, more civilised. Do more work. The concentration level is much higher. But I mean, there are some female teachers that have control over us.

Other examples of how female teachers were taken advantage of included the fact that cheating in tests, bunking and not doing homework were more likely to occur when *they* were involved or in charge. Furthermore, even though students said that their decision not to do homework, depended on the subject, it was interesting to note that the one for which they said *nobody* did their homework, namely Afrikaans, was taken by the deputy principal of the school – a woman. Elsewhere, the same teacher is described as 'dom' [stupid] because she chose to give a student who was suspected of copying, the benefit of the doubt. A woman teacher's hierarchical position within the school thus did not guarantee that she would have more authority over students – especially if she employed a disciplinary style that was more consultative/democratic and non-aggressive.

According to these students, the main reason for taking male teachers *more* seriously was because of their size and stature. However, such responses were often marked by ambivalence and ambiguity:

- Interviewer: Why does this happen?
Male: Because of the physiological...
Male: The male of course is probably the dominant one...
You think twice before challenging their opinion.
Of course with a female teacher you would respect her more because she is always looking out for you.

While respect for a female teacher often derived from her motherliness/protectiveness towards students, this did not, however, guarantee that she would receive their undivided attention when it was sought. Even their most favourite, respected teacher – a woman whose worth was measured as much for her ability to control, as her warmth and friendliness – was taken advantage of:

- Female: I think so. Our class does take advantage of her.
Interviewer: What do they do?
Female: Not because she's a female. Like if she's giving a lesson, we'll make sounds and noise while she gives the lesson

Although the comments above suggested that students' responses to a particular teacher were not determined by gender but rather individual personality, there were clear indications that male teachers were taken more seriously by them. On being asked, for example, whether they would behave similarly if their class was taken by a male teacher in the school, known to be loud and aggressive, but who didn't actually teach them, this was their response:

- Female: Then we wouldn't do anything wrong. Everyone would be quiet.
Interviewer: Now what is it about him that makes you do that?
Female: The way he screams at the pupils and the way he speaks.
Male: He doesn't speak to you nicely. He demands respect.
Interviewer: Do you respect him?

Male: No. No.

These responses suggested that male teachers were able to control students by being loud and aggressive. While it is true that this disciplinary style met with students' disapproval, most ultimately thought twice about openly challenging or resisting it.

Certain qualities of external masculinity such as build, stature and a loud voice thus *did* seem to advantage male teachers when it came to exerting classroom control. In identifying which of all their teachers would be able to bring them to order in the shortest space of time, the focus-group participants were unanimous in their choice of their male mathematics teacher. When I asked them why this was the case, a female responded as follows: "It's like the way he carries himself. The way he carries his bag. The way he talks. That is total authority." However, even if male teachers were not overtly authoritarian, the *expectation* that they would be less tolerant of bad behaviour from students also appeared to advantage them:

Interviewer: So there *are* differences in how male and female teachers try to establish control in the classroom?

Male: Yes.

Interviewer: Explain.

Female: I think males don't have to actually raise their voice. Ja, that's cause we are naturally quiet in the class. You'll be surprised in female teachers' classes. It's very rowdy and they like have to scream most of the time.

Male: Us as pupils, we tend to... Although we don't show that fear for male teachers, for the first time there is fear for the male teacher but then again as we go along for the day, we get use to him and the fear leaves. We get to know him without him knowing it.

This implied that classroom-control would be less problematic for male teachers. Some responses in the survey confirmed this:

Female (A1): Most of the pupils tend to listen to the males.

Female (M1): Pupils tend to obey male teachers more.

Female (X1): Kids seem to be more scared of the males.

Female (F1): Students tend to take males more seriously, considering that females are softer and more sensitive.

Under such circumstances, women teachers may become easy targets for control and manipulation. In this study, this type of behaviour seemed to be more frequently associated with boys. As the following extract from the interview data illustrated:

Male: Sometimes you get like female teachers like... okay, I'll speak from my point of view. Like you tend to test the teacher out.

Interviewer: How do you do that?

Male: Tend to be like rowdy, try to get the teacher's attention and see what the teacher likes of you and what she hates of you. And once you get that, you know the teacher's soft spot and whatever. We try to basically rub her so we know if we need something we know what to tell her and how to tell her. And which buttons to hit.

The perception that boys took liberties in female teachers' classes was emphasized more often by female respondents in the survey:

Female (H1): Boys tend to talk more and become active in class in the presence of a female teacher.

Female (A1): With some boys, the female teachers are popular, the boys will talk with her.

According to male students, female teachers were taken advantage of because they were too lenient or not firm enough:

Male: They're more vulnerable I think. They are actually understanding, but sometimes they can be too understanding to people's problems.

Interviewer: For example?

Male: Like okay. You've done something bad and they'll just overlook it and you like to take advantage of that. And you know that this is a female teacher and she like let you off the last time so why not do it again. And that's like taking advantage of her.

The male will be strict. He'll never be understanding. He will never listen to our side of the story.

Male: Most of the male teachers intimidate you whereas the female they like... listen to both sides of the story. They scale the problem. They are kind of a motherly face to us. Some of them.

This did not, however, mean that such female teachers would have the same power as their male colleagues. As Askew and Ross (1988) note, under these circumstances some female teachers may, in order to establish credibility or some kind of equality in the situation, rely on an aggressive, controlling disciplinary style. Such a strategy, however, may backfire on women teachers. The students in this study, for example, were particularly derogative of a female teacher who employed a masculine disciplinary style. This individual, whom I shall call Mrs. Ahmed, was frequently characterised by both boys and girls as abrupt, bad-tempered, unaccommodating, unfriendly, unsympathetic, uncaring, rude and insulting. She was also identified by most students as their least favourite teacher. As the following descriptions showed:

Female (Y1): There is no particular teacher I do not like except for one teacher who thinks the world shines out of her ass. She thinks a person must kiss up to her ass.

Female (D1): No smile, not prepared to listen to your problems, insulting.

Male (S2): She is always sulking and boring and she is never fun.

Male (P2): The teacher that sends you to the office for any small thing that you do in class. A teacher that just gives us work and more work.

Male (T2): She is rude and does not listen to my queries and doesn't care about her students.

As noted earlier, female teachers were expected to be kind, caring, understanding, sensitive, friendly and supportive. They were especially liked if they were charming, smiled, spoke carefully and presented themselves as pleasing people. Furthermore, if they displayed such qualities they were likely to gain both students' affection and co-operation. Mrs. Ahmed clearly did not conform to these expectations. As a consequence, she came under sharp criticism from students and was marginalized by them:

- Female: You don't ever feel to go to that person, her class.
 Male: She wants to be serious all the time. You can't make a joke. If you do, she'll insult you. Only when she feels like making a joke and then she'll laugh alone, that's like one of those stupid jokes. If you greet her then she'll look at you with a foul face. As soon as you go into class, you'll look at her, she has a sour face. You lose all your pluck...
 Male: Is it not like this, like a bee sees this flower. A bright blooming flower. It's going to go to it, now, if we enter her class she must be smiling. I'm not saying that she has to smile but I mean, a smile you know.

While respect and admiration for female teachers often appeared to stem from their ability to demonstrate firm control, it did not have the same impact if it was not also combined with caring and compassionate behaviour. Although most students emphasized that their attitude towards Mrs. Ahmed was influenced by her "sour" personality, and in particular, her treatment of them and not her gender, there were strong indications that gender *was* a mediating factor in how they treated her. First – although many male colleagues employed a similar disciplinary style to Mrs. Ahmed, i.e. were hard, unsmiling and insensitive, her methods were seen as extreme. Second, although equally disliked by students these male teachers were not described or treated as harshly as she was. Students also seemed bolder in challenging Mrs. Ahmed's authority. Some emphasized that they were "not intimidated by her" and that she "didn't have authority". Finally, both male and female students consistently sided with a male peer who adopted a deliberately hostile attitude towards Mrs. Ahmed.

For some boys resistance to and undermining women teachers' authority is a way of confirming their masculinity and dominance over the opposite sex:

- Female: There's some of us in class that she does not like. Like take Bashier... for instance, she can't take Bashier.
 Interviewer: Why would you think that happens?
 Female: Because Bashier always has an answer to whatever she says. Got an answer for everything.

- Interviewer: For example, what would she say and what would you say? (Directing question to student in question).
- Male: Well if she gives me an answer and the answer to my knowledge is wrong, I would question that answer because that's what I'm in class for. Her job is to teach us and my job is to ask the questions.
- Male: She doesn't have authority.

In another incident Bashier and his peers described his confrontation with Mrs. Ahmed as follows:

- Male: She told me... She assumed that I was laughing but I was not because I was sitting in the company of someone who was laughing but his back was facing towards the teacher and I said nothing. I kept my mouth shut. She accused me of being immature. She told me that her daughter in Sub A was more mature than what I am. She refuses to teach our class because of my attitude. I don't have any respect for her. I said nothing. I just looked up. I just like kind of thanked God that I never stood up to tell her something that I felt about her or just to shut her up because that's what I normally do in her class. I'll just stand up and tell her to shut up because I felt...
- Interviewer: You say those words?
- Male: No, not exactly. But I will retaliate. I do retaliate but not in a bad way. I'll just like...cover up and say, "sorry Miss, I didn't mean it" , but because she insulted me, I wanted to stand up then and tell her to shut up and sit down because she doesn't know what happened. Then she accused me as well as causing problems with her the previous period and I was very upset and I just raised my hands and I thanked God that I never stood up there to insult her in front of her whole class because then I know she'd never come back to teach our class for the rest of her life. She'd have left teaching. She'd have left her teaching career. I thanked God she said I must pray for some sanity. That's when I drew the line. You can ask all my friends that were sitting around me. They all prayed that I kept quiet because I was really in a bad mood. And ever since that day I don't pay attention to her. I don't greet

- her. I don't look at her in her face. I don't ask her any questions. If I do ask her a question it will be out of ... against my will, and most of the time...
- Female: Ja, because she thinks I'm a teacher. You have to listen to me. And if I say so you just have to do that. Like how can I say now...
- Male: She have moods.
- Female: If he had to say something, she just thinks I'm not scared man. Who're you? You're a student, I'm a teacher here. You can't do anything to me.
- Male: I'll shut it up.
- Female: One day somebody will stand up against her and I wish it's me.

Other accounts of students' experiences with Mrs. Ahmed revealed that she *did* make attempts to speak to them about her strained relations with them:

- Male: She asked you to tell her what the problem is in class. So once you tell her exactly how you feel, she walks out of the class angry and goes and tell her husband (the deputy principal at the time) exactly what we said. I remember one day when she asked what was wrong and we told her that she doesn't smile, she's got an attitude, she walked out of the class and started crying and I mean, if someone is courageous enough to ask, to tell me what's wrong with me...
- Interviewer: So, how did it make you feel when she cried?
- Male: It didn't bother me because I think that she deserves it. Why you ask a question and we can't retaliate. Because you can't tell somebody hit me and then after he hits you, you say but that was sore or you start crying. You don't do that. I mean she's a teacher.

Such comments highlighted how disciplinary processes in schools are active agents in the construction of hegemonic forms of masculinity. Mrs. Ahmed's response to students' grievances against her suggested that she was not as cold as the image she seemed to project to them. For the boy who was the bane of Mrs. Ahmed's life, showing her her place was a victory. In this way, students showed themselves to be active agents in regenerating a gender hierarchy in which men emerged as the naturally dominant sex.

At the same time it is important to emphasize that even though many students said that they tended to respond more readily to commands or rebukes when these came from male teachers and that male teachers were generally the more effective disciplinarians, those who were loud, overbearing, intimidatory and threatened to use physical punishment were not respected or admired by them. Indeed, the data showed clearly that the authority of male teachers is no longer a given. According to Salisbury and Jackson (1996:22) “(m)any male teachers maintain their authority over pupils by a ‘hard-line’ rule of fear. They control by threats and a loud voice to reduce students to a frightened silence.” At Rajah Combined, many students’ descriptions of their encounters with male teachers, supported this statement. Furthermore, the practice of corporal punishment, or its threatened use was more commonly associated with male teachers. In most of these instances, male students were on the receiving end.

As is well known, corporal punishment has been banned in South African schools since 1995. This legislation was adopted as part of the process of reinforcing a human rights culture. It was also informed by past research which showed that corporal punishment exacerbated disciplinary problems in the long term. Having said that, the findings in this study showed that the abolishment of corporal punishment has been difficult – for male teachers in particular – many of whom “have a desire to work in an atmosphere of certainty and being on top” (Salisbury and Jackson; 1996:18). This may in part be explained by the absence of clear guidelines or training from the National Ministry of Education on alternative means of discipline. Many teachers thus continue to use corporal punishment as a last resort. This, in spite of facing possible criminal offence charges and even dismissal. These arguments are not, however, put forth to excuse corporal punishment. Indeed, the findings for this study showed clearly that corporal punishment *did* tend to develop aggressive hostility and not self-discipline in young people. It also generated feelings of revenge and anti-social aggressiveness. Corporal punishment also did not act as a deterrent and caused distant student-teacher relations.

The students in this study were aware of their right to be given a fair hearing and to be treated humanely. While some took responsibility for their bad behaviour, boys in particular, used such

opportunities to gain kudos in the eyes of their peers by actively kicking against authority. According to Salisbury and Jackson (1996:18):

Such behaviour provokes so many male teachers in so many schools to experience a sense of shame around loss of control. Losing control means not measuring up to the manly ideal of fear and drives men to buy into the security provided by strong leadership and patriarchal values.

Under these circumstances boys may also feel pressurised to demonstrate their manliness or conform to male strategies. The following report of a dispute between a male teacher and a male student, as related by the latter, illuminated these issues. Two male students were seen smoking at the back of the school by a male teacher. They managed to escape before the teacher could apprehend them but were later summoned to the principal's office. On being questioned there, they seemed to capitalise on the fact that the teacher who reported them had got the *day* of the offence mixed up. They also denied his accusation that they had run away on seeing him, saying that they hadn't seen him at all on that particular day. The enraged response that ensued from the senior male teacher seemed to be prompted by a sense that his authority was being doubly undermined: (a) by having his version of events disputed by students and (b) being challenged in the presence of the school principal, his superior. Furthermore, his attempts to show the younger male student his place as well as to prove to the principal that he was in control were unsuccessful. This was because his manhandling of the boy as well as the threat of physical violence failed to intimidate the latter. As the following extract shows:

So I told him, no we weren't there on a Thursday, he's mistaken. Mr Davids (the principal) was sitting there and I was speaking the truth. Because he never saw me there on a Thursday. I'm being honest and he grabbed me and wanted to slap me. He told me he'd slap me so hard that my face would kiss the ground in front of Mr Davids. Mr Davids looked at me and said nothing. I looked at him and I looked at the ground and looked at him again and I just shook my head because if I had to say something, I mean he's a teacher. He can't slap a person. He can't slap anybody. He got no power. He believes that the only way you listen is if you slap somebody which is not true.

Such incidents were not isolated. Other male students reported similar experiences with the male teacher discussed above:

- Male: One day he held me up against the wall and grabbed me here.
- Female: I wonder if he does that to his own children...
- Male: I think he can't abuse his children... There was one situation where I know he tried to hit me. He grabbed my hand. So what I did, I just removed it. Up till today he never touched me and if he hit me, oh God, I don't know....

Schools are thus active agents in the construction of masculinities. As Connell (1989:94) notes, "(a) violent discipline system invites competition in machismo. More generally the authority structure of the school becomes the antagonist against which one's masculinity is cut." Even when physical violence was not actually used, the aggressive disciplinary style employed by some male teachers acted as a medium for the construction of a particular kind of masculinity: it promoted a tough and macho kind of masculinity. As we can see in the above extract, for both male teachers and male students, it celebrated toughness and endurance, relentlessly promoted competitiveness and fear of losing and connected a sense of maleness with a taste for violence and confrontation.

The way in which discipline is administered in schools thus provided a context for the making of masculinities (tough, strong) and femininities (fragile, weak) as well as redefining and reinforcing power relations between men and women. For all their politically correct views on the need for gender equality, male teachers, on the whole, were taken more seriously by students in the context of classroom control. At the same time it is important to emphasize that psychological ill-treatment from teachers, male or female, in the form of humiliation, insults, denigration and intimidation may be equally damaging to students' perceptions of themselves.

CHAPTER 5 : CONCLUSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This research study set out to investigate how young people mobilise gender in defining authority, with a focus on how this impacted on their responses to and expectations of their male and female teachers in their disciplinary role. The research was located within a qualitative methodology, and methods of data-gathering were adopted in line with this methodology, namely focus-group interviews and questionnaires. The aim was to examine in depth how the research participants constructed and understood the relationship between gender and authority, rather than to generate generalisable findings.

The research focus was considered important in light of the fact that sexism is still an integral facet of South African society – in the school room, in the factory, in the boardroom, in the community organisation, in the household, and in the bedroom. And, most tellingly, the continued tragedy of patriarchal oppression is played out on the bodies of women and girls (Rutter, 2003:63). “Policy and legislation,” as Lisa Vetten of the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation emphasizes, are “only the starting point in the process of turning around deep-rooted violence and discrimination against women. It is not enough to trigger enduring behavioural change in a country where a significant amount of gender violence is about men putting women ‘back in their place’” (Dugmore, *The Sunday Independent*, August 8,2004).

Schooling is very influential in reinforcing, maintaining and engaging patterns of gendered social relations. At the same time, as Connell (1989:101) notes, “(i)t may also be the most *strategic*, in the sense that the education system is the setting where an open debate about the democratization of gender relations is most likely to happen, and can gain some purchase on practice.” We also need to deepen our understanding of gender as a creation of society. Examining student perceptions of male and female teachers as authority figures serves to uncover how gender relations are currently being constructed, contested and reconstructed. This will avoid the introduction of cosmetic measures that in the long run will achieve little.

In drawing this research to a close the contributions made by the research study will be highlighted.

5.2 TRENDS AND MAIN CONCLUSIONS

Young people inhabit a world in which there is ever-growing social complexity, cultural diversity and a proliferation of identities. In this age of increasing globalisation and fragmentation, gender identities are equally subject to transformation. Factors disrupting conventional forms of masculinity and femininity include: (i) the increase of women's participation in work outside the home; (ii) the rise of the women's and the gay and lesbian movements and their impact on lifestyles; (iii) the communication revolution and (iv) the increasing significance of consumption in identity construction (Rattansi,1997:124; Lemon,1995:65).

These developments mean that gender regimes are more shifting and contradictory than we supposed in the past and have created a space for the reinvention of masculine and feminine identities, for moving across binary divides and perhaps ultimately to dismantle the binaries so as to allow multiple ways of being. Perhaps more significantly, they create a societal space for changing patriarchal patterns in gender relationships and promoting a culture of non-sexism. Young people are both part of and especially touched by contemporary change. Having said that, it is important to emphasise that gender is not an autumn leaf, wafted about by light breezes (Connell, 1994:14). As an enduring structure of social relations, gender continues to be of profound significance in imposing constraints on how it is made and remade. Meanings of gender are embedded in social relations, belief systems and institutions. These in turn are reinforced by the officially sanctioned production of identities through a variety of regulatory agencies from the family, religion, cultural practices, schooling and so on. Through these, as this study has shown, young people learn their gender and the implications thereof. However, they are not passive victims of gender socialization. Indeed, young people play their own constitutive role in these structurations.

In many instances the young people here accept the logic of their socialization, offering common sense or oppositional notions of what men and women should be like, commonly emphasizing

heterosexual relationships and constructing gender hierarchies. This was not surprising since most of them belonged to a community in which there were strong boundaries surrounding the distinction between acceptable masculine and feminine behaviour, where men have always dominated women and women still live restricted lives. However, in the living processes of constructing and reconstructing gender, they discover that gender identities are not absolute, fixed and immutable but rather shifting, changeable, fragmentary and contradictory. Furthermore, they are actively involved in choosing behavioural options and in re(negotiating), contesting and debating gender, sexuality, identity and power relations. Resistance, alternatives within a multiplicity of masculinities and femininities together with the passage of time and circumstance are presenting opportunities for different expressions and experiences of gender. Having said that, being considered masculine or feminine remains a central component of these young people's subjectivity and social identity. There are tensions, anxieties and crises generated when attempts are made to cross cultural and identificatory boundaries. Moreover, in particular institutions, in particular interactions with others, there is pressure to fit in accordance with particular gender expectations. Notwithstanding this, the modern context is modifying rigid understandings of gender identities and the social relations of gender. In this study, this was reflected in a commonly held view that men and women do not possess clearly identifiable, static qualities, that it *was* possible for females to have masculine qualities and males to have feminine qualities and that gender discrimination was unacceptable.

These progressive attitudes and opinions were reflected in students' perceptions of authority: authority was not seen as unambiguously masculine. Such views were influenced by lived experiences of power-sharing between mothers and fathers in the home; changes in the labour market as well as a recognition that a different kind of leadership is required in today's world, one in which there is a balance between traditional masculine and feminine values and attributes. Credible authority figures were defined as those who combine control and directive leadership with an ability to listen, motivate, empower and provide support to those whom they are charged with. However, while gender was not viewed as the decisive factor in who held authority or indeed as a predictor of authority, historical, cultural and social practices continue to be powerful influences in reinforcing ideologies of masculine authority and in generating dichotomous understandings of authority. Furthermore, the continuing over-representation of men in positions

of power and authority means that they are often taken more seriously and that their roles and ways of being are more valued. This was apparent within the school context.

Although students emphasised that it was the *attitude* of the teacher and not his or her *gender* that influenced responses to the latter in their capacity as authority figures, this did not appear to be borne out in the former's classroom practices. First, women teachers' authority derived from their ability to mother, and, for boys in particular, from their sexuality. Male teachers' authority, in contrast, derived from their physical prowess and their ability to take charge. Second, preconceived expectations that women are soft and men tough often meant that women teachers were taken advantage of and men teachers taken more seriously in the context of classroom control. These understandings and expectations did not occur in a vacuum and could be traced to institutional arrangements, the different roles that men and women play in society and widespread beliefs about women's work and its 'labour of love' nature and men's work. Furthermore, both male and female teachers at this particular school behaved in accordance with stereotypical roles for their sex. This was apparent in students' descriptions of their classroom management styles. Female teachers, on the whole, according to the students, seemed more likely to develop co-operative relationships, used less hierarchical forms of authority, were kinder and more understanding and nurtured students in ways that built their self-esteem. This was in contrast to most male teachers who were generally experienced as being dominant – giving direct orders, enforcing clear rules and using coercion.

While female teachers employed a disciplinary style that was more compatible with the principles of equality, mutual respect and responsibility than males and students approved of this approach, they did not always value it in practice. This may in part be attributed to the lower status that women have in the wider society compared to men, as well as how their ways of being and roles/work are valued both in private and public.

At the same time, the gender of the teacher did not appear to be a consistent, salient characteristic in whether young people would be receptive or non-receptive to the authority s/he held. A teacher's ability to control the classroom was related to a number of factors which included experience, confidence and ability together with the judicious use of the various

instruments of discipline at their disposal. Aspects of masculinity and femininity could be drawn on in the course of maintaining classroom control but gender was not the decisive factor.

It is important to emphasise that teachers, both male and female, were respected first and foremost for attitudes displayed towards students. Teachers, in general, drew status from mutual respect established within the classroom – methods used included attempting to develop genuine relationships with students, providing them with opportunities to be heard and understood, mentoring, motivating and supporting them, assisting them to talk about their behaviour and breaking down the macho approach to discipline. Young people no longer take kindly to being controlled in an aggressive, overpowering way. They do not want to be humiliated in front of others. Neither do they want to be treated in a way that dehumanises them. This means that traditional masculine forms of authority which rely on physical aggression, intimidation and force are increasingly being rejected and challenged. The assumption that men are better able to control classes by virtue of being male, stronger and more in command of the situation can thus no longer be regarded as true. This was corroborated by a common opinion among students that male teachers did not have more authority than female teachers. At the same time, female teachers who were weak and gave in to students who were not respectful of them, were frowned upon. Indeed, the teachers most highly respected and liked were those who displayed a blend of both masculine and feminine qualities. In the case of women, this translated into a caring but firm stance, and in males, a strict but non-aggressive approach.

Authority for these students was thus not dependent exclusively on brute force. Neither was it weak and ineffectual. A mix of both masculine and feminine qualities was necessary, i.e. nurturance combined with firm control. Thus, while young people's understandings of gender and authority are shaped by the structures and power relationships within which they live, these are by no means deterministic.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS, CONSTRAINTS, LIMITATIONS

While these young people showed themselves to be quite modern in their opinions and ideas, it was clear that there may be a gulf between the ideals that they profess in the abstract and the prejudices they enact. In this study, boys recognised that they were the privileged sex.

Significantly, most supported the principle of gender equality – these ideas were expressed in terms of justice, fairness and rights. However, there was little indication that they took active responsibility for, or indeed knew how to put such views into practice. This may partly be explained by the fact that boys in general, as the dominant group, may have no strategic interest in dismantling the patriarchy from which they so obviously benefit (Connell, 1995:241-242). Girls, on the other hand, are increasingly aware of their rights and resistant to gender oppression. However, while many questioned prevailing beliefs on gender roles and gender relations, they were cautious in openly crossing boundaries, and their expectations of themselves and women in general were ultimately limiting. They also showed little awareness of how their behaviour reinforced male power.

Schools are crucial sites for assisting students in rethinking gender. As the Gender Equity Task Team Report (1997:77) puts it: “Education is incompatible with the inculcation of unexamined beliefs and value systems.” At Rajah Combined, there was little to suggest that students were being guided through the maze of questions about gender and sexuality. The findings for this study suggest that it is important for gender awareness programmes in schools to include the following issues on their agendas. First, students need to be assisted to understand that ‘sex’ (as in the social category) and ‘gender’ do not mean the same thing. This requires imparting knowledge of how gender identities are socially constructed as opposed to being biologically determined. Such a measure will facilitate the problematising of common-sense understandings of gender and the breaking down of stereotypes. Within this process critical debate on gender roles and gender relations should be central. Thus, for example, students could be introduced to gay sexuality as well as straight, to the range of gender patterns across the world, to issues of rape and domestic violence as well as happy families. To do this requires prioritising the experiences of those who are usually silenced or marginalised, especially women (Connell, 1994:102).

It is also especially important that gender issues at school be addressed in a way which sees both male and female as significant players in the equation. Boys need to be helped to recognise and work on sexist attitudes towards women/girls. It is not enough to bring about a change of personal style, a change of tactics in dealing with women, but perhaps a changed self-concept.

This involves being provided with opportunities to discuss their own masculinity, how it was formed in growing up, how it constricts the expression of their emotions and the depth of their relationships. Linked to this is an understanding of institutional arrangements that produce male power. Within this context, there is a need to focus on the characteristics of men's social masculinity which lead men towards violence, and on the institutions and ideologies that reinforce aggressive masculinities.

The diversification of school curricula should be encouraged so that boys can grow up with a more open understanding of what masculinity is and be more prepared for choices and opportunities that life offers them (Morrell,1998:12). Male teachers have a particular responsibility and opportunity here because what they say and do influences what kind of masculinity is hegemonic at school.

Schools continue to be an important vehicle for girls to empower themselves. It is recognised, however, that this is still not the case for many schools in South Africa. A program of compensation and redress to expand girls' occupational and intellectual horizons, affirm women's worth and so on are therefore still relevant. Most importantly, as Alloway (1995:103) writes, "girls need to understand that to know only intimacy, connection and conciliatory ways of being is to risk losing self interest and to be positioned as eminently exploitable".

Not only will the above measures enable students to understand in an *informed* way the broader processes and structures that contribute to gender divisions and gender-based inequality, they will also assist them to take responsibility for changes in their own lives.

It is understood that gender equity involves disrupting the status quo and that developing alternative ways of being could generate strong reaction from parents. However, even if schools do not set out to alter cultural practices and values, they need to interrogate social practices that devalue women and men and deny them basic human rights (GETTR,1997:77). Non-traditional options of gender arrangements need to be discussed and a culture of respect needs to be built around these. Only a few schools, I believe, are actively engaged in addressing such issues. This is in part due to inadequate teacher training and unclear guidelines regarding what values and

understandings of gender students should learn through schooling. To this end, there *is* a need for a national policy on gender issues in schooling. Its formulation should involve all relevant stakeholders including parents, learners, religious and community leaders and members of the gay community.

Based on the findings of this study, education policy-makers need to bear in mind the following:

- Increasing the representation of women in management positions needs to continue since this does go some way in promoting the value and worth of women.
- The process of making students critically aware about gender issues needs to begin in the early childhood years. Associated with this is the need to examine the unequal distribution of mainly women in Early Childhood Development and primary schools.
- Courses offered in colleges of education and in-service training for teachers need to incorporate gender issues *in depth*, since teachers are the main agents of reform at schools. As part of this training, they will need to be provided with opportunities to question their own possibly unexamined beliefs and implicit values (GETTR,1997:77). This is important since teachers' own gendered histories, roles outside school and positions within the school are likely to be a strong influence on their beliefs about what reform is possible or desirable.

Schools, however, cannot solve society's problems on their own. Community support and involvement is vital. Furthermore, the power of the adolescent peer group to sustain its own hierarchies and bigotries should not be underestimated. The role of parents is crucial here. Although teachers were acknowledged as important role models by many of the research participants, it was clear that they did not wield the same influence over the latter's behaviour, values and attitudes as parents, siblings and friends did. This means that it is important for parents to be aware of gender issues and raise their children in a way which cultivates respect for both sexes. Fathers, for example, should participate with mothers in decision-making, rather than make decisions alone or unilaterally (Morrell,1998:12). Children need to be taught from a young age to treat and respond to their parents as equals when it comes to discipline and authority.

Parents need to be educated that bringing up their children in a way which reverses traditional roles e.g. boys cooking, cleaning and looking after younger siblings and girls changing plugs, fixing up cars and so on, is a way of empowering them rather than setting them up for ridicule. This however, may be easier said than done.

The findings for this study suggest that the main obstacles to changing gender relations may be religion and culture. To this end, it is important to help people see that culture is evolutionary, that it can change. Furthermore, practices which discriminate against women in the name of religion need to be interrogated. To sum up, the struggle for gender equality must be multi-faceted, encompassing the structure of the family, the economy and cultural forms as well as the nature of schooling.

Given that this is a single case study involving a single school and a single context, the findings cannot offer generalisable conclusions. Having said that, it does provide suggestions of trends or patterns of what young people do in a modern setting. In terms of suggestions for further research I would encourage similar studies, using schools in different areas and focussing on other categories of difference such as ethnicity, class and race. Such research could serve to see whether similar findings are apparent, in addition to providing a more authoritative understanding of the research area.

5.4 A LAST WORD

The young people here belong to an order in which binary, oppositional and hierarchical understandings of gender are deeply entrenched. At the same time, these boys and girls are increasingly confounding the stereotypes and social relations received by them within that order. The contestation of common-sense representations of men and women in the essentialist terms embodied in the gender vocabulary means that the transformation of gender relations may be a real possibility. At schools young people need to be guided in critically examining their contexts and must be offered alternative visions of how social relations could operate (GETTR, 1997:62). They need to be made aware of the possibility of the dismantling of sexual divisions. The transformation of students' consciousness – enabling them to have confidence in the capacity to

alter the course of their own lives is and must be an important step in the process of social transformation – especially as they are open to it.

University of Cape Town

APPENDICES

APPENDIX i : QUESTIONNAIRE

Name:

Std.

Please complete this questionnaire as honestly as possible.

Questions

1. If you were asked to describe yourself would you do so in terms of the following:
(Tick against the appropriate category)

- Age _____
- Religion _____
- Language _____
- Nationality _____
- Race _____
- Gender _____
- Sexual Orientation _____
- Occupation _____

2. Psychologists and Sociologists suggest that there are different aspects that influence our identity.

Read the following list of aspects which can influence identity and then answer the questions that follow:

- Family
- School
- Religion
- Race

- Language
- Political beliefs
- Gender
- Interpersonal attitudes and behaviour
- Country where you were born

(Please ask me if there are words that you do not understand)

2.1 Which of these aspect/s do you think are the most important in defining *your* identity?

Explain your answer.

2.2 Which aspect/s do you think are least important in defining your identity? Explain your answer.

2.3 Are there any other aspects or areas that define identity that you think should be on this list?

3. What do you understand by the term 'gender'?

4. What do you understand by the term 'sex' ?

5. Apart from the biological / physical differences between males and females what other differences do you think are important between males and females?

6. From your *personal experience* are boys/men and girls/women generally treated the same ? Explain your answer by giving an example.

6.1 How do you feel about this?

7. List at least 5 *qualities* (i.e. *personality, behaviour, habits, mannerisms, dress etc.*) that you associate with the terms ‘**masculinity**’ and ‘**femininity**’.

Femininity	Masculinity
1. _____	1. _____
2. _____	2. _____
3. _____	3. _____
4. _____	4. _____
5. _____	5. _____

7.1 Do you think that it is possible for males to have ‘feminine’ qualities and females to have ‘masculine’ qualities? Elaborate.

7.2 Where would you locate yourself in terms of the following three categories:
(Please tick against your response)

- Feminine _____
- Masculine _____
- Androgynous (Having both masculine and feminine qualities)

Explain your answer.

7.3 What are your thoughts about homosexuality and lesbianism? Explain your answer.

8. What do you understand by the term '**authority**'?

9. Identify at least 5 members from your family, community and the wider society who you consider to hold authority?

10. Why do you associate these people with authority?

11. List at least 5 qualities that you recognise in a person with authority?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

12. Do you associate **authority** with masculine qualities or feminine qualities? Explain your answer.

13. Who would you say holds more authority in society?
(Please tick against the appropriate answer)

- Males
- Females
- Other (Please specify)

Explain your answer.

14. Consider your teachers at school and your interaction with them in the classroom and on the playground.

14.1 How do you relate to your teachers?

14.1.1 What qualities do you respect in your teachers?

14.1.2 Give 3 examples of how you respond to these qualities.

14.1.3 What qualities *don't* you respect in them?

14.1.4 Give 3 examples of how you respond to these qualities.

14.1.5 How do your teachers treat you?

14.1.6 Why do you think you are treated in this particular way?

14.1.7 How do *you* treat your teachers?

14.1.8 Why do you treat them in this particular way?

14.1.9 What qualities do you expect in a female teacher?

14.1.10 What qualities *don't* you expect in a female teacher?

14.1.11 What qualities do you expect in a male teacher?

14.1.12 What qualities *don't* you expect in a male teacher?

14.1.13 How do female teachers show their authority in the classroom and elsewhere in the school environment (e.g. playground, assembly, etc)? Give 3 examples.

14.1.14 How do male teachers show their authority in the classroom and elsewhere in the school environment? Give 3 examples.

14.1.15 Do you think that the atmosphere and students' behaviour in class is influenced by the gender of the teacher? Explain your answer.

14.1.16 What attracts you to a particular teacher? Explain your answer.

14.1.17 Write a short description of your favourite teacher.

14.1.18. What does not attract you to a particular teacher? Explain your answer.

14.1.19 Write a short description of your least favourite teacher.

15. Think of an incident in which a teacher was called upon to exercise his/her authority and *it was challenged*:

- What happened?

- What did the teacher do?

- What did you do?

- Would you have acted differently if you were a male/female. Explain.

- What did the class do?

- Was the teacher successful /unsuccessful in gaining control of the class?

- Why, in your opinion, was the teacher successful or not?

16. You are told to report to the school administration block for questioning about your role in a misdemeanour committed at school. Which of the following groups would you find it easiest to face : (Please tick the appropriate answer)

- A disciplinary committee consisting of predominantly male teachers. _____
- A disciplinary committee consisting of predominantly female teachers. _____
- A disciplinary committee consisting of an equal number of male and female teachers. _____
- Other (Please specify) _____

16.1 Explain your answer.

17. Think of an episode where a **male teacher's** exercise of his authority was recognised and *admired* by you.

17.1 Explain what happened.

18. Think of an episode where a **female teacher's** exercise of her authority was recognised and *admired* by you.

18.1 Explain what happened.

19. Consider an incident where you *disliked* the exercise of a **male teacher's** authority.

19.1 Explain what happened.

20. Consider an incident where you *disliked* the exercise of a **female teacher's** authority.

20.1 Explain what happened.

21. Do you think that male teachers have more authority than female teachers? Elaborate.

22. Who, in the following list has the strongest influence on your conduct at school and who has the least influence?

- Your parents
- The school principal
- The governing body
- Your female friends

- Your male friends
- Male teachers
- Female teachers
- Student leaders/ Prefects/ Martials
- None of the above

Most Influence

Least Influence

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

23. Explain your answer/s.

24. If you were told that **authority** is masculine in nature what would your response be? Explain.

25. Do you have any comments to make on the extent to which your awareness about gender inequality/equality has been highlighted by your experiences at school.

Thank you!

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APPENDIX ii : INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

1. How would you describe yourself?
2. What is it about yourself that makes you define yourself as male/female?
3. Who are your role models? Why?
4. How would you describe your teachers? Do you consider them to be figures of authority?
5. What makes you like a teacher?
6. What makes you dislike a teacher?
7. Are male and female teachers treated equally by you and your friends? Explain.
8. What influences your decision about whether or not you are going to pay attention in class/co-operate with a teacher's request?
9. Why do you think students stand up to greet certain teachers and not others?
10. What is your worst memory of an experience with a teacher at school?
11. What has been your most pleasant experience with a teacher at school?
12. Do you have a sense that teachers have power over you? Explain. How do you feel about this?
13. Consider all your teachers. Who do you feel most threatened by i.e. who would you avoid seeking a confrontation or conflict with? Why?
14. Which teachers' classes do you feel free to express yourself in? Why?
15. Which teachers' classes do you feel restricted in?
16. When you say, as some of you have in the questionnaire, that students take advantage of female teachers, what exactly do you mean?
17. Are there any differences in how male and female teachers try to establish control in classrooms?
18. Is it true that even though some female teachers use similar strategies to establish control or assert their authority they are taken less seriously by students? Why do you think this happens?

19. How would you describe a good, effective teacher?
20. How would you describe a bad, ineffective teacher?
21. Your class is making a big din. Out of all your teachers, who would be able to bring order in the shortest space of time?
22. Whose classes do you feel free to walk around in or leave while the teacher is conducting a lesson?
23. Whose lessons do you talk in while the teacher is talking? How does the teacher react?
24. Whose lessons would you bunk or copy in and feel confident that nothing would come of it?
25. Whose homework/assignments do you do diligently and whose couldn't you be bothered with? Why?
26. How would you respond to a teacher who you felt was being unnecessarily harsh towards you?
27. What kind of teacher succeeds in making you feel small? Explain. What happens?
28. Are male and female students treated equally by teachers?
29. How has your awareness about gender inequality been raised in school/class?
30. What are your hopes for the future?

**APPENDIX iii : IDENTIFICATION OF RESPONDENTS AND
RESPONSES TO A PARTICULAR QUESTION**

Question 8 What do you understand by the term "authority"?		
	Understanding	Notes
A1	A person in charge, have high control. Able to control.	
B1	Authority in my understanding is power. To have authority over people and their attitudes and beliefs.	
C1	Having a certain amount of control or influence over a group of people.	
D1	A person that has authority is someone who has full power. Control.	
E1	Someone that holds much regard for you. Someone that you can trust in.	
F1	Older people taking advantage of youngsters by being domineering and manipulative.	
G1	When someone is in control over something.	
H1	The right to do something, someone in charge.	
I1	Has the power to authorise. Yes or no.	
J1		
K1	Someone who is respected or either in control of a situation.	
L1	Authority – having an influence on you, a person you respect and regard highly - Of great importance in your life, who you	

	Understanding	Notes
	follow as an example.	
M1	The right to be superior over others.	
N1	Someone in a high position.	
O1	Having power and maintaining order, stability. Setting the rules and regulations which need to be followed.	
P1	When someone has control over you. He or she has the power to drive you around and also there is someone who just is high(er) than you. Someone who has the right to say things.	
Q1	The law.	
R1	High place (person in power). Someone who kind-of wants to be in charge.	
S1	If someone has a right over you. They can tell you anything they want.	
T1		
U1	An authority governs, guides and controls in social structures. An authority has power to judge and to make sure that the society functions accordingly.	
V1		
W1	A person that has power over all. A person that has control.	
X1	My parents have authority over me especially my mum. Someone who is in control over you.	
Y1	It is the highest power over someone else.	

	Understanding	Notes
Z1	Someone who has more control over something.	
A2	Where someone wants or has more power than myself.	
B2	Permission to do something or to have power.	
C2	When someone has rights over you, e.g. Boss. Tells you your job.	
D2	Authorisation given to someone in charge who can make educated decisions.	
E2	Power, control.	
F2		
G2	The head, someone in charge	
H2	Control. In charge.	
I2	Authority is power e.g. I had the authority to reprimand Peter.	
J2	One who is more dominant over the other.	
K2	Person in charge.	
L2	I don't. I was an instrument baby.	
M2	A figure of order and leadership.	
N2	To have power.	
O2	Authority means power.	
P2	To get rights or power and everyone must have equal authority.	

	Understanding	Notes
Q2	Has the power.	
R2	Someone or something that has higher power.	
S2	Where you are given the right to do something.	
T2	Having command.	

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APPENDIX iv : THEMES FOUND AND THE FREQUENCY WITH WHICH THEY APPEARED IN THE DATA

Question 8 : What do you understand by the term "authority"			
	Control	Power	Figure of Respect
A1	1	1	
B1		1	
C1	1	1	
D1	1	1	
E1			1
F1	1	1	
G1	1	1	
H1	1	1	
I1		1	
J1			
K1	1		1
L1		1	1
M1		1	
N1		1	
O1	1	1	
P1	1	1	
Q1		1	
R1		1	
S1		1	
T1			
U1	1	1	
V1			
W1	1	1	
X1	1	1	
Y1		1	
Z1		1	
A2		1	
B2		1	
C2		1	
D2	1	1	
E2	1	1	
F2			
G2	1	1	
H2	1		
I2		1	
J2		1	
K2	1		
L2			
M2	1		
N2		1	
O2		1	
P2		1	
Q2		1	
R2		1	
S2		1	
T2	1		
	19	35	3

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

The following terms are defined as follows for the purposes of this report:

(N.B. All definitions deemed to inform this work and taken directly from the Gender Equity Task Team's Report are acknowledged)

Affirmative action

Action which actively tries to promote those who were previously disadvantaged because of their gender, race, class, sexual orientation, geographical location (GENDER EQUITY TASK TEAM (GETT), 1997:266).

Androgyny

Ancient Greek word – from *andro* (male) and *gyn* (female) -...seeks to liberate the individual from the confines of the appropriate...[It] suggests... a full range of experience open to individuals who may, as women, be aggressive, as men, tender; it suggests a spectrum upon which human beings choose their places without regard to propriety or custom (Eisenstein, 1983:60).

Commission for Gender Equality

This is a commission which functions independently of the government as a watchdog body on gender equality in all facets of South African society (GETT, 1997:267).

Construction of gender

The process by which individuals actively build, or “construct” a sense of themselves as gendered people. For education practitioners, it is important to understand the active part that young people play in this process, testing out behaviour and language which enables them to operate comfortably within a range of complex social relations. They interact with adults, with peers, and with media images within a variety of contexts, making sense of many competing agendas. Although young people are actively engaged in this process, it is also important to understand that real choice is limited by the power relationships and structures within which we live: through these, young people can learn to “desire” ways of being masculine or feminine which ultimately restrict them (GETT, 1997:267).

Culture

One's culture consists of the meanings we make of social experience and our social relations, and therefore the sense we have of ourselves.

Cultural formations

This refers to the practices which are formed through the historical interpretations of culture and the ways in which these are perpetuated, continuously added to and reformed (GETT, 1997:267).

Difference

The focus on difference in recent work on gender recognises that there is little value in comparing “boys” and “girls” as if these were simple, single-dimensional variables within homogenous groups. Consciously and unconsciously, young people make choices between many

conflicting ways of being masculine and feminine, and are influenced by factors including place, socio-economic status and ethnicity (GETT,1997:268).

Discourse

A framework of values and ideas and ways of seeing the world which is embedded in the language we all use, and which marks the exchange of ideas within a community, e.g. “scientific discourse”, “economic discourse”, “feminist discourse” (GETT,1997:268).

Discrimination

Discrimination in the education system occurs when a person is treated less favourably than another would be because of a characteristic which is irrelevant to his or her capacity to do a job. Such characteristics include membership of a group, sex, marital status, parenthood, race, ethnicity, disability or sexual orientation (GETT,1997:268).

Essentialism

There is a perception in schools and the wider community that there is an “essential” difference between men and women, that male and female behaviours are biologically determined and thus “fixed.” However, the powerful social influences of family, language and culture begin at birth, and it is impossible to know the extent to which human behaviour is either learned or “natural.” Theories of biological determinism also ignore the fact that men and women are diverse culturally, socially and economically, and that there is no single “masculinity” or “femininity” (GETT,1997:269).

Femininities

Speaking of “femininities” in the plural is a way of drawing attention to the fact that there are many different ways of being feminine, that “femininity” is not a single static entity within a homogenous culture. Girls are presented with many “femininities” within popular culture, in formal school areas of learning and within their own environment, and experiment with a range of feminine ways of being (GETT,1997:269).

Feminist

Women who actively challenge the “naturalness” of their oppression. There are different forms of feminisms (black, liberal, radical, lesbian, third world) which have emerged in different times and in different places (GETT,1997:269).

Gender

“Gender” is understood as the way in which women and men are socially constructed from birth and throughout their lives by the institutions of family, civil society and state to adopt female and male identities. Neither women nor men are homogenous groups. When we talk of gender therefore, we are using a term that needs to be unpacked according to what the term female or male “gender” describes in terms of the lived experience of women and men in specific contexts. Each individual’s gender is influenced by class, ethnicity (“race”), religious beliefs, able-bodied-ness, sexual orientation, age, current family roles (daughter, sister, wife, mother), exposure to alternative ways of being and geographical location among other things. No two cultures would completely agree on what distinguishes one gender from another. Gender not only varies from culture to culture but it also varies over time. Cultures are not static but

continuously evolve maintaining certain traditions and developing new ones (GETT,1997:269/270).

Gender differences

Those differences in behaviours and attitudes which are constructed through social practice, which are dynamic and are capable of challenge and change (GETT,1997:270).

Gender equity

Gender equity is concerned with the promotion of equal opportunity and fair treatment for men and women in the personal, social, cultural, political and economic arenas (GETT,1997:270).

Gender order

A historically constructed pattern of power relations between men and women and definitions of femininity and masculinity.

Gender regime

A state of play in sexual politics in gender relations in a given institution.

Gender regime of a school

The pattern of practices that constructs various kinds of masculinity and femininity among staff and students, orders them in terms of prestige and power, and constructs a sexual division of labour within the institution.

Hegemony

This is when one group dominates the structures and decision-making within the society. (GETT,1997:271).

Hegemonic Masculinity

The culturally dominant form of masculinity at a given time and place - which is not necessarily the most common.

Heterosexuality

This term refers to the sexual attraction between two people of the opposite sex. Many customs, cultures, and institutions in various societies have traditionally been constructed around the assumption of heterosexuality as the norm (GETT,1997:271).

Homogenous

A homogenous group shares more similarities than dissimilarities so when we state that women are not a homogenous group, it is recognising that the dissimilarities between women depending on class, ability and geographical location are often more than the similarities (GETT,1997:271).

Homophobia

Fear or dislike of an individual based on their perceived failure to conform to dominant local norms of masculinity and femininity. This term has come to refer particularly to hatred of homosexuals and homosexuality, and the harassing behaviour which it produces (GETT,1997:271).

Ideology

There are many sets of ideology that relate to all the different aspects of society. As such ideologies represent the way in which people understand society and the way in which they live. Children learn from a very early age the dominant ideas. They employ ideologies of what represent the appropriate and acceptable forms of behaviour (GETT,1997:271).

Masculinities

Speaking of “masculinities” in the plural is a way of drawing attention to the fact that there are many different ways of being masculine; that “masculinity” is not a single static entity within a homogenous culture. Boys are represented with many “masculinities” within popular culture, in formal school areas of learning and within their own environment, and experiment with a range of masculine ways of being (GETT,1997:272).

Misogynist

Men who do not like or respect women (GETT,1997:272).

Norms

Rules of conduct which specify appropriate behaviour in a given range of social contexts.

Organisational culture

This refers to the basic assumptions driving the life of an organisation. These are usually unexpressed, unconscious and unexamined (GETT,1997:273).

Patriarchy

A hierarchy of social relations and institutions through which men are able to dominate women and also men who are younger and have less power.

Prejudice

The judging of people on the basis of stereotypical notions often embedded in cultural formations, generally based on superficial characteristics. This may lead to anti-social and unjust forms of actions (GETT,1997:273).

Role modelling

This is an aspect of socialisation, in which adults or peers provide a “model” of the behaviours young people should learn (GETT,1997:274).

Sex differences

Biological differences between males and females (GETT,1997:274).

Sexual harassment

When a person subjects another person to an unsolicited act of physical intimacy; makes unsolicited demands or requests (whether directly or by implication) for sexual favours from the other person; or makes a remark with sexual connotations relating to the other person; or engages in any other unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature in relation to the other person, and the person

engaging in the conduct does so with the intention of offending, humiliating or intimidating the other person; or in circumstances where a reasonable person would have anticipated a possibility that the other person would be offended, humiliated or intimidated by the conduct. Serious forms of sexual harassment such as assault and rape are also criminal offences (GETT,1997:274).

Sexual orientation

This refers to the sexual preference of individuals which may be heterosexual, homosexual and bisexual (GETT,1997:275).

Sex Role

The patterns of behaviour and the attitudes that society expects from people simply because they are male or female.

Sexuality

Sexuality refers to the complex processes which determine how we see ourselves as sexual beings and our chosen behaviour as a result of those perceptions, feelings, learnings and ideologies. Expression of sexuality is often determined and restricted by the norms and practices of any given society (GETT,1997:275).

Socialisation

The process of learning sets of values and beliefs, through role modelling, through the communication of role expectations by the media, the family and the community, through sanctions applied by adults and by peers, and through direct instruction in how to behave. Recent research and writing has drawn attention to the limitations of the socialisation model. It is important to understand that individuals can make *choices* between alternative courses of action, and that schools can play a part in helping young people to challenge and resist learned behaviour. It is also important to understand that real choice is limited by the power relationships and structures within which we live, including those operating within school culture (GETT,1997:275).

Violence

A means of asserting power and control over an individual or a group, and can be perpetrated by individuals or groups of either sex. A school based definition of violence needs to include a recognition of the impact of violence not only on the safety of the victim, but also on their rights and freedoms and recognise both the overt and hidden forms of violence which routinely take place in the school grounds, on the sports field and in the classrooms and corridors (GETT,1997:276).

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