



“If You Hit, You Sit”: Implications of a Pilot Case Study of the Retired Male Primary Teacher

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During the early 2000s, the cries for male primary teachers grew louder in the Province of Ontario. The issue has many dimensions. This pilot study will examine some of these issues through the analysis of an oral history interview of a successful and retired male primary teacher. It intends to lay the groundwork and examine some of the issues that would arise in a bigger cross-generational analysis comparing retired male teachers life experiences with those of male pre-service teachers in their Fac-

ulty of Education programs. It also builds on the authors' previous research into pre-service teachers. In particular the issues of isolation, role expectations and retention will be looked at. The paper will conclude by examining with some benefits of a future cross-generational research project.

Keywords: male teachers, success, oral history, teacher education, elementary school, male studies

Introduction

In the past decade in the Province of Ontario, Canada there has been on-going concern surrounding the number of men entering into the teaching profession, particularly as primary teachers. The situation in the eyes of many remains quite grim (Bernard et al., 2004b). In 2004 the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT) responded to these concerns with their report entitled, *Narrowing the Gender Gap: Attracting Men to Teaching*. Some of the reasons they cited as to why men did not become teachers included low salaries, overwork, and societal views on the appropriateness of men in the classroom and a female dominated profession (Bernard et al., 2004a). In 2013, this issue continues to fester, but in the eyes of the some, this question has taken a back-seat to the number of unemployed teachers in the province (Ontario College of Teachers, 2012, 2013). Still, the issue of men in the classroom remains compelling - there are fewer and fewer men teaching today (National Post Editorial Board, 2013; Petty, 2013). This pilot study will examine the themes of males in teaching through the analysis of an interview with a retired teacher. It intends to lay the groundwork and examine some of the issues that would arise in a bigger cross-generational analysis comparing retired male teachers life experiences with those of male pre-service teachers in their Faculty of Education program. It also builds on the authors' previous research (Parr et al., 2007; Gosse et al., 2008; Gosse et al., 2008). What explanations are possible in terms of male teachers' life histories and particularly why they join, stay, or leave the teaching profession? A broad spectrum of masculinities plays a key role in assessing the male teachers' life histories. There is simply no one way to be a male teacher. The article thus will examine the roles that 1) societal acceptability, 2) gender expectations, and 3) career durability play in male teachers' life histories.

Literature Review

This review will focus on some principal areas: notably, the history of male teachers in Canada, secondarily, the oral histories of educators and finally, cross-generational analysis. It is by no means comprehensive. In each case, the question asked are why is this literature relevant to the study?; Where are the gaps in the literature?; What is the impetus for research?; will be asked. In the past, historians of education have addressed male teachers sparingly and rarely if ever in a cross-generational fashion. In previous historical scholarship, the connection between militarism and the teaching of boys was one of the things that characterized Victorian and Edwardian schooling in Canada and Britain as Moss notes in his work (Moss, 2001). He argues very coherently that athleticism and the creation of armies was tightly drawn together through education (Moss, 2001). Male teachers were part of this and Moss notes the concern by members of the elite over the fact that few men were becoming teachers (Moss, 2001). Secondary male teachers were required to know how to do

drill in order to obtain a First-Class Ontario teaching certificate (Moss, 2001). While Moss' work draws us as readers to the earlier period, his book deals primarily with nineteenth century Canada. He has outlined some of the themes of males as teachers in this earlier historical period, notably the curricular expectations. He also points to the concern and fear of the patriarchy if teaching were to become a female dominated field. In his work, Moss does not speak to cross-generational comparisons. What are the differences between students, for example of the cohort of 1905 to that of 1912? These comparisons would help to verify if there are similarities of experience or is context the key determinant of male teacher success?

While teaching was still seen by some as a "male task," with the turn to the twentieth century, eighty percent of the elementary teaching force was female as Delhi notes (Abbot, 1991; Dehli, 1994; Sager, 2007). Males did teach in the senior grades, but the vast majority of teachers in this era were women. Changing status and remuneration was an important development for both men and women during this time (Sager, 2007). Still, by the 1920s, in the view of MacDonald, the question of pay levels for male high school teachers was front and center. Male teachers should get more remuneration for their efforts; otherwise they would be discouraged from entering into teaching as a profession (J.F. MacDonald, 1918). As Gelman notes however, MacDonald's concern also centers on what he perceived as a decline in status of the profession as more women entered the classroom (Gelman, 1990). Clearly, these articles point to the question of remuneration, albeit from two different perspectives, one rising and the other more exclusionary. In the early twentieth century, differentials existed between men and women in Canadian schools. Pay levels and how they figure into career durability remains a pertinent question for men in this study. How do the different levels of pay between starting male teachers and their more experienced counterparts have an impact on career longevity? The answer seems obvious, but perhaps it is more nuanced and bears further investigation.

In more recent times in Canada, there has been a more extended analysis and focus on the changing role of women in the classroom as noted by several prominent historians of women and women teachers (Prentice, 1996; Prentice & Theobald, 1991; Sangster, 1995). More recent literature also includes a scrutiny of gender role models in schools through government policy documents. These works are relevant in that they set the stage for this study, but they also show the gaps in the literature because there is no examination of the question from a cross-generational perspective. What kind of world existed for graduates of the 1960s versus the world of the 2000s? The Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada, 1970, did much to publicize the gap between the genders (Canada, 1970). It called for the advancement of women teachers to leadership positions and also an end to stereotypical examples of "women's work" and women's life choices (Canada, 1970). Similarly, the Hall-Dennis Report, 1970, argued for the opening of promotion opportunities for women teachers (Gidney, 1999). In the decade of the 1980s, more women were employed as principals, and supervisory officers in Canadian school boards (Gidney, 1999; Tabin & Coleman, 1993).

In more recent times as well, historians have shown growing interest in men school systems in Canada. During the late 1990s under the provincial Conservative government of Premier Mike Harris, the employment statistics for male teachers, *grosso modo*, pointed in one direction, downward. In 1999, there were 52,798 male teachers in Ontario. They made up only 31 per cent of the more than 170,000 teachers in the Ontario College of Teachers (Giguère, 1999). Recently, the situation

has grown substantially worse. For historians of education, the question of male teachers is now emerging as a topical issue. In the 1990s, historians Rebecca Coulter and Margaret McNay argued that the nature of the call for new male teachers is a political one and cannot be reduced to a series of simplified causes (Coulter & McNay, 1993). They suggest that the purpose of having more males in the elementary schools needs to be clarified (Coulter & McNay, 1993). In Britain as well, attention has been drawn to the issue of the disappearing male primary teacher and some of the causes of this phenomenon (Skelton, 1991, 2003). The issue of male teachers then is in front of historians, but much more work needs to be done to understand their decline in the school system.

Oral histories of teachers have become more prevalent in recent times. It is important to look at this key tool as it is used to understand the challenges of male teachers. Kathleen Weiler points to the issues of identity in her analysis of female retired teachers (Weiler, 1995). While Weiler discusses issues of narrative and subjectivity extensively, she also speaks to the construction of gender and profession, as well as the limitations of women's roles (Weiler, 1995). This is relevant to the current paper, in that broader notions of definition (i.e. beyond "the patriarchy" in the sense that not all males are at the apex of the decision making pyramid or in what Kimmel *et al* describe as the *structure of power*) and the definition of professionalism also provide the background wallpaper to men's and women's lives as teachers (Kimmel et al., 2005). Some of these themes will emerge in this paper. Likewise, Altenbaugh in his broad-ranging discussion of teachers and oral history's accomplishments to date points to the agenda for historians of education in the twenty-first century (Altenbaugh, 1997). He states two things; "gender resonates throughout all of their recollections," referring to women teachers of the twentieth century (Altenbaugh, 1997). Further, "we must make a greater effort to weave *all* teachers' voices into the traditional narrative of educational history, enriching it as well as giving substance to those voices" (Altenbaugh, 1997). These two points speak to this study as well; gender does resonate and all voices need to be heard and weighed. Elsewhere, Gardner examines the distinction between "oral history" and "life histories" in his discussion of teachers' lives (Gardner, 2003). His work is quite relevant to this work in the sense that the distinction between life histories and oral histories needs to be drawn (Gardner, 2003). Life histories speak to the narrative of single lives, while oral histories speak to a broader collection of interviews and resources from other sources designed to create a broader picture. Equally essential and linked to Gardner's critical analysis is the problem of memories (Gardner, 2003). The significant and intractable issue that Gardner raises, in this regard, is that of "narrative identity." Life histories can be recounted along as well constructed narrative paths where the thickets to the side of the path are less well investigated. As Gardner states; "we may wish to take this narrative as the starting point from which to probe individual memory for more precise, detailed or verifiable information about the past. Just such data reside in memory but have often been pushed to one side in the refinement of a coherent narrative identity (Gardner, 2003)." The digging along the side of the path brings us to oral histories. Gardner also speaks about, "narrative disruption," the ability to introduce elements into the conversation (i.e. a curriculum guide from the interviewee's early career) that triggers memories "off path" or outside the main narrative (Gardner, 2003). The oral history interview in this sense brings the historian closer to the documentary record, but also to the "real and explicable past" – the main object of the exercise in any event (Gardner, 2003).

Lastly, with an eye to a bigger and broader future research project of looking at both retired

teachers and pre-service candidates, the question of cross-generational analysis remains important and to it the discussion now turns. Wertsch and Lau argue that different generations remember things in different ways – hence it critical to have the voices of all (Lau, 2003; Wertsch, 2002). The challenge of this area of research is to look at the connections between generations. In this study, there are no direct familial connections (i.e. grand-father, son, grand-son, grandmother, mother, daughter). Daniel Bar-On’s analysis of Holocaust survivors looks at the impact of the Holocaust on the second and then third generations of families following the event. For many, the echos still resonate loudly (Bar-On, 2004). There is much that pre-service teachers can learn from their retired elders and the evolution and transformation that occurs through a professional career (i.e. teaching) (Bar-On, 2004). There are very few examples of this type of study. Consequently, the topic is significant, relevant and provides an impetus for the research.

Methodology

Who?

Oral history methodology often asks the question “who should be interviewed?” It also asks “why” and “by whom?” The “why” here is answered with - to understand better the challenges that different generations of teachers face. The “by whom” – clearly interviewers can have an impact on memory of the interviewee. This and Yow’s questioning of objectivity are significant (Thomson, 2007; Yow, 1997). The issue of the bias and the interviewer will be discussed again in a moment. The question of “who?” is answered with a retired male teacher. Why was he chosen? As a long serving practitioner he was well placed to reflect on the totality of the experience of teaching in primary through the past thirty years. As repeated by noted oral historians and very cogent, “when an old man that dies, a library burns” (Perks & Thomson, 2006). Why are the tales of retired and seniors so significant? Portelli speaks to the question of oral history interviewees’ relationship with time. If the interviewer meets the interviewee at the “right time,” (not too young to be in the thick of action, and not too old to remember nothing)” then they may get a balance of experience and analysis in the tale that is being told (Perks & Thomson, 2006). Retirees, as opposed to youth and the younger generations, have the richness of time and the depth of experience, whereas younger generations may be much quicker to make the snap judgments of youth. Rushing through time, arguably, does not give them the freedom of analysis that their elders may have in their senior years. Lack of experience may also inhibit them. Yow speaks to the question of memory and age. To put it bluntly, narrative and stories are better told by older adults. They were not only able to understand stories better, but also can summon considerable vocabularies and are able to cross-reference details in a much more sophisticated fashion (Yow, 2005). Yow also notes the work of German scholars, who consider that some of the most traumatic memories that older people have do not a greater salience than do banal daily events (Yow, 2005). Yow also notes that for men in particular, there is a “developmental need” to be more forthright with events – to set the record straight, as it were. There is also a greater openness to display emotion, which in many cases with men may not be present earlier on in their lives (Yow, 2005).

How?

The question of “how?” can be answered with oral history methods. How was the in-depth interview conducted? How is the interview analyzed? Where do the themes come from? The exploration of the retired teacher’s view on being “a male in primary” was approached from a slightly different perspective than the younger teachers in earlier research as this clearly was to be a reflection on more distant events, rather than an analysis of life choices in an early career stage. Senior (in experience and years of service) teachers may have much to offer in this type of interview, however are still constrained by the fact that they continue to be working in the field, and are still an employee, possibly of a district school board. Retired teachers have broader latitude to delve into their memories of the classroom, the administrative structure and the subsequent politics of education. This type of interview has also been termed the *in-depth interview*. All the questions for this interview went through university ethics and were approved prior to the interview. The questions were variations on the questions posed to the pre-service candidates (or teacher candidates) in the earlier research; these spoke more clearly to an older demographic. The interview for the retired teacher was two hours in length. This type of interview used the oral narrative that is central to a historical research strategy and is the precursor to a bigger project with many interviews (Lummis, 1987; Yow, 2005).

So What?

The analysis of the retired teacher’s interview also took cues from the earlier studies (Parr et al., 2007; Gosse et al., 2008; Gosse et al., 2008). Were the challenges of the retired *successful* teacher the same or different? The themes that emerged from the earlier study of pre-service candidates were ones of *isolation* (pre-service males, along a spectrum of sexual orientations and in different family situations (i.e. single to married with children), in all female pre-service classes), *gender role* (caring male vs. authoritative father figure, etc.) and *retention* (staying in the Faculty of Education vs. dropping out)(Parr et al., 2007). These themes were retained for this study.

The analysis also took into account the secondary literature; government publications and scholarly literature on this subject (Bernard et al., 2004b). A key question is whether there was a triangulation of results (Dougherty, 1999; Roper, 1996; Walker, 1996)? Additionally, the analysis followed the analytical directions of Yow and Yans-McLaughlin and Gutman and Brian Roberts. Yow states that the historian must “look for the plot of this life-story, the beginning, the middle, the end” (Yow, 2005). Yans-McLaughlin and Gutman argue that oral historians should critically examine the ways their subjects organize time (i.e. chronologically versus thematically), how is the past characterized, and what is the level of description of the past (Yans-McLaughlin, 1990). This work is very relevant to this case study; in the case of the retired interviewee, there was a plot to the life-story, and time was organized chronologically from the beginning of his teaching career to his retirement. As per the earlier discussion of Gardner, attempts were undertaken to “disrupt” the narrative (Gardner, 2003). Moreover, Brian Roberts also points to the role of contradictions in the analysis (Roberts, 2002). Are there spaces between what the interviewer asked, and the interviewee’s response? Lastly, as discussed earlier, what is the interaction between the biases of the interviewer (the historian) and the interviewee (Yans-McLaughlin, 1990)? Again this is very relevant to this case study as both the interviewer and the interviewee were primary teachers at different points in their careers, the interviewer subsequently became a university-based historian and is much younger than the interviewee. This presents the issue of bias, but also provides for some commonality of meaning and understanding in terms of the language of teachers – or as Ravitch has termed it “edspeak” (Ravitch, 2007).

King has addressed this issue (King, 1991). Also, Yow's questions are significant here (Yow, 1997).¹

Analysis

The central themes that the analysis addresses then are *isolation, role models, and retention*. It is to that analysis the paper now turns.

Societal Acceptability and Isolation

Teacher isolation can take place inside schools and within grade divisions.² It has been noted elsewhere that male teachers in the lower grades or primary division are often very much alone in their vocation. Many of their colleagues are female teachers and increasingly their administrators are female (National Education Association, 2004a, 2004b). In earlier research, the pre-service candidates, both those who completed their studies and those who dropped out noted some isolation in the faculty of education in the pre-service classroom. Isolation is not uncommon in post-secondary settings, this acknowledges others can be alone as well. In one case this was due to other commitments – the candidate simply did not have the time to maintain his business in another city, and go to school (Parr et al., 2007). In a second case, isolation was in part due to exclusion based on sexual orientation and anti-gay bullying as well as a series of other factors (Parr et al., 2007).

When asked about isolation, the retired interviewee did not see any issues of being alone in his position as a Junior-Kindergarten teacher (Retired Teacher, 2007). Setting the context of the retired interviewee's life is also crucial. He was a long time member of a northern rural community (Retired Teacher, 2007). Clearly in the case of the retired interviewee there were a variety of factors at work. The idea of being an accepted member of a school staff, particularly in a primary classroom, in part relies on a shared set of values. When a teacher grows up in the community of his or her employment and has this shared set of values, whatever these maybe, then this facilitates the transition to employment and subsequently assignment to a primary classroom. The retired interviewee was very much a product of his northern environment. Factors that lead to male isolation were reduced by the common experience of his developing years and his own school experiences. Isolation can also be connected to race and ethnicity. Integrating staffs who do not share cultural backgrounds has been played out in particular around this issue in the United States (Frankenberg, 2006). Another discussion centers on the question of accumulating cultural and network capital. This is a struggle that is ongoing for the pre-service students of both genders. In the case of the retiree, this life skill was mastered and he had accumulated the necessary capital. The Northern Ontario community where the retired interviewee taught was relatively homogenous in terms of origin, qualifications and experiences; consequently this question did not arise. In short, the retired interviewee "fit in."

The retired interviewee addressed some of the issues surrounding isolation early in his career. He was in many ways a forerunner for the current generation of teachers with his international experience. He left his northern community for a sojourn abroad to teach and then returned. He started teaching in the Fall of 1963 and started as an elementary teacher (Retired Teacher, 2007). He

taught in a small town in 1965 and attempted to teach internationally in Holland. He taught in Jackson's Point in Simcoe County after that for several years (Retired Teacher, 2007). From 1974 onward for several years he taught at an Anglican boarding school in Jamaica. He returned to the north in 1977 and started teaching again in his Northern Ontario community of origin. He also caught up with some of his friends from his earlier teaching experience.

I phoned some principal friends in (home city) from the previous fifteen years that I taught there.....the boards were very small and very personal (Retired Teacher, 2007).

Another component that mitigated against the retired interviewee's isolation and facilitated his re-entry into the primary classroom was his familiarity with principals in junior schools. Many of these principals were women. He worked for this series of principals on a part-time basis to provide supply coverage upon his return to the (home city) Board of Education.

When I came home even when my Mom was still alive, before I was married I was home for like a couple of years and I lived in the village here and worked in (home city) and I started working for friends.... and I opted into a job working for teaching for the principal in the principal's classroom because they had to work half time depending on the size of their school" (Retired Teacher, 2007).

Isolation also cannot describe the retired interviewee's view of the classroom in terms of gender. He found his interaction with female primary teachers and administrators to be highly beneficial. He often went outside with his Junior Kindergarten class and this provided for an opportunity to work collaboratively with the Senior Kindergarten teacher. Often in Ontario schools, JK and SK classes will take their recess breaks or outdoor physical education breaks at different times than the upper grades.

....every day we were outside; everyday unless there was fear of frost. As soon as the bell rang and we took attendance in the school, the SK and the JK both of us, both classes went outside and we had a full play ground, all the climbing equipment, we could bring out tricycles, bikes, balls, the whole school was in, we had the whole yard to ourselves. We could, we didn't play with them as much as watch them. It took about twenty-eight minutes and at the twenty-eighth minute you could look down at your watch, and I don't know how many times it was twenty-eight minutes and out of my fifteen or sixteen kids and Alicia's [pseud.] twenty, there would be thirty-six kids out there. In twenty-eight minutes, over half of them would be sitting down somewhere. So then it was time to go in" (Retired Teacher, 2007).

By mid-career, well-honed time management and organization skills also served the retired interviewee well in terms of buttressing him against isolation in an environment dominated by female teachers. Being competent in these areas brought confidence and being accepted in the staff-room environment. Seeking and finding elusive "moments of tranquility" where he could interact with his colleague and peer, while at the same time supervise outdoor activities was a key strategy. He spoke of breaking down the walls between the Senior Kindergarten and Junior Kindergarten classrooms so there could be a better flow between the two rooms. When questioned about being one of

a few men on staff in a primary school, the retired interviewee underlined the fact that the Kindergarten was a unit separate from the rest of the school. The two kindergarten teachers worked as a team all throughout the day as can be seen (Retired Teacher, 2007). Clearly, communications strategies and interpersonal skills helped establish his close relationship with his colleague.

Once I got into the primary grades, once I got into that JK business, then I was not involved with the rest of the school. If I had been in Grade One or Two or Three, then I would have been involved with the rest of the school. But, the kindergarten classes lived apart. You know, we had our own primary bus in the west end. There were a couple of buses in the west end on LeDrew, MacIntyre and Pinewood West, Jane Street and Main West. They came. Once they arrived, we didn't leave them" (Retired Teacher, 2007).

The coordination with the female kindergarten teacher was also apparent in terms of schoolyard supervision. The issue of the retirement of the retired interviewee's colleague is also important in terms of isolation, but is also a question of retention. As a consequence, it will be examined in the section of retention below.

Isolation was also successfully overcome through the use of communication skills and networks. Male primary teachers who are good communicators and have good communication skills are more than likely the teachers who will have longevity in the primary classroom. Good communication skills and a high level of interaction and friendliness with female colleagues provide another structure or framework for success. This has also been noted in the literature. Eng speaks of "mutual respect, getting along with female colleagues." as key in terms of communication (Eng, 2004). The secondary part of this was the ability to establish good networks within schools and beyond their boundaries. Bainer and Didham point to the collaborative environment that is found in elementary schools. This differs from the more hierarchical and structured career path of other institutions and careers (Bainer & Didham, 1995).

In addressing the issue isolation as mitigated by communication and networks, it is clear that the retired interviewee centers his responses on his cultural belongingness, his longevity with the educational authority, his knowledge of authorities and his confidence. He also speaks of establishing a dynamic with his colleague, a Senior Kindergarten teacher across the hall.

We took our recesses, we should have had recess time like a break time, morning recess and afternoon recess and we blocked them together and we took out from 11:30 to 12 o'clock as our break-time because the program was a two and a half hour program, so we worked five hours the same as the rest of the school worked five hours. We took our two breaks between 11:30 and 12 and we went out to lunch every day...Our only school duty was we did the bus duty for the whole building at the end of the day. None of the other teachers ever had to do bus duty all year long...that was a way of double convenience, of reducing the workload, and we were both two teachers getting ready to retire, so we had worked out all the methods making life as convenient, congenial, convivial as possible between Alicia[pseud.]and me. We had a won-

derful – we did it for twelve years or so until Alicia [pseud.] retired” (Retired Teacher, 2007).

Clearly, the retired interviewee had a highly articulated plan both to address issues of isolation as a teacher, but also to construct his environment in a way that would work best for him as well.

Male Gender Expectations

While this teacher successfully addressed the question of the isolation of male primary teachers, equally challenging for some male primary teachers is the issue of “gender expectations.” The notion of role is one that has changed over time and there is a well developed literature on this (Bem, 1995; Biddle, 1986). One of the main points of discussion centers around the perceptions of the necessity of males in the school system; what are their stereotypical role expectations and what they are supposed to provide in terms of a counterpoint to their female colleagues. Agreement on these issues is hard to find. Some, notably Warrington and Younger, and Martino and Blye, argue that having male role model teachers, particularly in boys’ schools, can also reinforce hegemonic masculinity, negative gender stereotypes, and the paternalism of previous decades (Martino & Frank, 2006; Warrington & Younger, 2003). Other scholars have found that male primary teachers see their role as to be a caregiver and fatherly figure in the classroom (Skelton, 1991).

The gender expectations that the retired interviewee faced in terms of Junior Kindergarten were tied up in several salient issues. Good classroom management skills were at the top of this list. Addressing the issue of physical contact was also a critical question (Retired Teacher, 2007). Touching children in any inappropriate way was grounds for immediate expulsion from the classroom and would have been the end of his teaching career. Finally, he had to come to terms with the bigger picture; just exactly what was expected of male teachers in Junior Kindergarten?

The issue of classroom management is one that all teachers have to address at all points in their careers. This is an area that is again fraught with academic debate. Skelton and Francis argue that classroom management styles are tied to gender construction and discourses of heterosexuality, which are particularly enforced by some male teachers (Francis & Skelton, 2001). Elsewhere, men have sometime been labeled as “enforcers” (Skelton, 2003). Martin Mills, *et al*, are critical of the mythopoetic nature of claims that recuperative masculinity politics whereby male teachers are the best disciplinarians of boys (Mills et al., 2004). For their part, Skelton and Read also argue that male and female teachers differentiate in terms of the style of classroom management that they use (Skelton & Read, 2006). Given the breadth of this discussion, as is apparent in this brief summary; this is but a surface sampling of this question. Despite the fact that significant issues remain, some key questions can be asked; are classroom management styles reaching boys and girls? Are they meaningful? Lastly, would this change if the demographic of teachers in the school was different (more balanced)?

How did the retired interviewee fit in in terms of what Skelton addresses in being an “enforcer” or somewhere else along this spectrum of male teachers? Does this term have the same application for JK as it might have for the intermediate grades? In terms of the classroom manager and

the harsher enforcer role, the retired interviewee spoke to the questions of classroom rules and procedures. His approach was universal in its application.

....And they have to share or that's removed from them. So, once I was clear about that, these little people had to learn that if you were going to hit someone, you were going to do time. So that's kind of the only rule I had in the classroom and they all knew it. They knew it as a chorus. When there was a problem, the rule was, if you hit you sit and I had an egg-timer, a four-minute egg timer because they were all four and so, I said what is the rule? and they would, the whole classroom would say '*if you hit, you sit*'. So I would take the malefactor over to a chair somewhere, and say, there was usually a timeout spot. I said, okay, if you hit, you sit. You have to sit here until all this time is gone from this hourglass. When it is finished call me and I will see if you know this rule. So at the end of the four minutes, I would be watching too, and at the end of four minutes I would go over and say, what's the rule? If you hit, you sit. And I would say you can go back and play now (Retired Teacher, 2007).

Having a well developed, easy to understand classroom management strategy was a sure way to lay a solid foundation under one's teaching as a male coming into a primary classroom. The retired interviewee however is clearly takes on the middle of the road role. A question that remains is whether there was a differentiation to be made between the retired interviewee's treatment of the male or female students in his class. This was not established in the interview. If students were not hitting, then they could have free reign to dispute possession of the *prized* item.

"...They could argue over materials until the greatest talker got a hold of the truck or the special paint brush. I let them do that arguing until they, one person, had convinced the other, but once the hand came out or the foot struck, I was right on them. Ninety-nine percent of the time nobody needed a time out, once they knew the rule. The three or four who might have got a time out, they only got one. But, the repeat offender was there every day and they were identifiable within the first ten days of school" (Retired Teacher, 2007).

The retired interviewee was also the one of the first male Junior Kindergarten teachers in the province of Ontario and the gender role expectations regarding physical contact were one important distinction as he embarked on this assignment (Retired Teacher, 2007). Shortly after he started teaching JK he contacted the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO) (which at this point was the Ontario Public School (Male) Teachers' Federation (OPSTF or OPSMTF)) and asked them questions on how to address the issue of being a male teacher in a primary classroom (Retired Teacher, 2007). In particular the issues of touching children and pedophilia were additionally of concern. At this stage they had few answers. To his principal he stated;

....Otherwise, you just have to trust the fact that I am not a pedophile by offering this position, that's quite a gamble on your part" (Retired Teacher, 2007).

The retired interviewee felt very strongly that he was putting himself in the line of fire. The issue of

personal space and touch also became an important question. With the issue of touch,

... They (OPSTF) said we don't know other than to tell you that that's where you are kind of standing on your own. Now I don't know if that has changed since (Retired Teacher, 2007).

The issue of physical contact and teaching has been looked at by a variety of researchers (Cognard-Black, 2004). The retired interviewee also spoke to the difficult issue of touch and children in the role of a primary teacher. He argued that there were certain situations in which helping a child (i.e. toileting, helping with clothing) might necessitate touching that child. Other boards were promoting a "hand-off" approach.

You get a three year old in October that's had a lot of corn on the cob and full basket of plums, you find them in the bathroom, it's pretty hard to deal with that and not touch them...sometimes the other SK teacher, if it's a woman, may not be available to come and handle those situations and sometimes, you know, you have to do that. So that wasthere were some concerns there and because I am not a child-molester I never had any accusations of that" (Retired Teacher, 2007).

The retired interviewee also spoke of the level of acceptance of other staff members in this role and its attendant responsibilities.

Around those issues, there was no...I didn't sense that anywhere, I didn't receive it verbally from anyone....I suppose I was a known quantity in (home city) . It is a small club there... so my reputation had maybe preceded me. I was a senior teacher; I wasn't like a young person wandering" (Retired Teacher, 2007).

The question of the broader role of the Junior Kindergarten teacher also arose.

I said to Tricia R. [principal-pseud] when I first took the job, I said, Tricia, could you tell me what my primary function is in that classroom. She said, retired interviewee, you're a civilizer. Your role is to bring these children from private life into civilized living out in the community where they don't own anything (Retired Teacher, 2007).

The role of teacher as "civilizer" has a long pedigree. One can think in particular of the historian, Fernand Braudel, who as a secondary school history teacher submitted his *History of Civilizations* as a "civilizing" text for senior history students (Lai, 2004). The idea that teachers bring students into the world is also very much part of the ongoing "role" of teachers everywhere. The retired interviewee also spoke to the mechanics of "civilizing."

The wonderful part of the program was spending time with young children of that age and watching them develop those individual skills of self-management of the body, clothing as opposed to the academic stuff...so this was a great change. This was a social activity here and explore and manipulate materials. I wanted as many as they could to print their name by the end of the year, counting and doing those

things” (Retired Teacher, 2007).

Three issues have been examined here; classroom management, the question of physical contact, and lastly the issue of the bigger picture. As a male teacher in kindergarten, the interviewee faced a series of societal expectations in all these areas. Society suggests certain stereotypical male approaches to all three areas. In each case however, the retiree had a nuanced response to this; classroom management which is based on natural consequences, physical contact when necessary (i.e. helping with clothing, toileting) and finally, teaching that worked on civilizing students, bringing them from private life into “the world,” rather than teaching that indoctrinated specific role models for male and female students or teaching with a stylized “firm discipline” approach (Mills et al., 2004).

Career Longevity and Retention

While issues of isolation and gender role expectations were significant, success for a male primary teacher also speaks to the question of retention. For many students at the faculty of education, obtaining primary certification is simply a means to the longer-term end; becoming a secondary teacher, or an administrator. What are the motivations to stay or to go? Looking at a successful male primary teacher who stays the course to retirement is one way to approach the answer. The other issue that arises is “what is considered a representative teacher and representative career?” Teachers do not as a rule leave faculties of education, teach for thirty years in the same grade and retire. This is unusual and unrepresentative. Careers are as complex and varied as individuals are well, individuals. As Mills, Martino, and Lingard note, there are a wide variety of issues associated with this question of retention and career; establishing what is expected of a male teacher in the primary grades, and what the presence or absence of male colleagues does to female authority in the classroom (Mills et al., 2004). Nikiforuk also has examined this question and points to some of the issues that cause male primary teachers to leave the classroom. Nikiforuk points to figures that 30% of all male primary teachers leave their position within five years because of the following factors, “accusations of sexual misconduct, the double standard of appropriate behavior (i.e. hugs), and perceptions of gender-specific work, especially in younger grades, among others. (Nikiforuk, 2004)”

The issue of retention surfaces for the retired interviewee, not in the Primary Division, but rather his characterization of the Core French program. In his view, Core French was the bottom of the ladder in terms of teaching positions.

...Because that French, that Core French program, that twenty minute program from Grade One to Grade Six is a treadmill that almost kills people. That’s the worst thing that ever happened in education, was that twenty minute French language program to primary children. That was just madness. And so I got tricked into that by the supervisor that asked me if I wanted to work full-time (Retired Teacher, 2007).

Key then was the question for the retired interviewee as to how to get out of this “treadmill” as a Core French teacher. Studies of teacher experiences of FSL reconfirm some of the difficult issues that The retired interviewee faced in the Primary FSL classroom (Lapkin et al., 2006). The issue for the retired interviewee was not retention, reinvention and survival. Instead he was looking for a

“home” when Junior Kindergarten became a possibility. His earlier career, as noted, was made up of many moves around different grades and school boards. The move to Junior Kindergarten in mid-career was strongly supported by his status as a known quantity within the board of education (Retired Teacher, 2007). He also moved out of FSL into something else to maintain his sanity (Retired Teacher, 2007). Initially, the retired interviewee applied for junior grades in 1980 in order to get out of Core French. This strategy did not work. Upon reconsideration he thought of applying for something “strange and unusual.” At this point in the broader history of the board of education, the consultants were just phasing in Junior Kindergarten. Earlier, he had also worked in Grade 6 classes directly across from a Kindergarten, and became friends with this primary colleague. Subsequently this colleague was one of his interviewers for the Junior Kindergarten position. He got the job in the early 1980s and continued at Duke of Albany Public School [pseudonym] until 1992 (Retired Teacher, 2007).

The retired interviewee also felt that the entry of men into the primary grades was in some ways blocked. The movement to bring more men into the lower grades in this era was also one that was curbed in his view.

A lot of boards at the time wanted more men in primary grades, and I thought about that, and you know that’s, they may talk that, but maybe administration has an unwritten code that we are keeping men out of those primary grades because that is where the pedophiles are and I thoroughly accept that because that is difficult to scan....to prevent, to police, once the damage is done you are into something that cannot be...the offender can be removed from the profession and isolated from the community, but the long term damage on the child” (Retired Teacher, 2007).

Once the retired interviewee became a JK teacher what were some of the factors that kept the retired interviewee in the JK classroom? Certainly one of the most important was the collaborative and supportive relationship that the retired interviewee developed with the SK teacher who taught alongside his classroom. The issue of retention comes up here as well, because the change in status, notably retirement, of the other teacher had profound implications for the retired interviewee’s retention in that school and in that classroom.

...we did it for twelve years or so until Alicia [pseud.] retired. The replacement SK teacher came from the staff and I knew by Thanksgiving that I wasn’t going to stand this until I retired. We just....you know in schools where there are two kindergarten teachers working like that, that’s an absolute....one of them has to be on the interview panel to pick that other person (Retired Teacher, 2007).

Once the retired interviewee came to the conclusion that he could not work effectively with this teacher, he then moved quickly to find another location that he could teach at until retirement.

You know and so, I took a stand that nagging and fighting with parents over things that were unimportant, you know. I started right away among I don’t know, fifteen or sixteen other SK teachers in [Northern Ontario City]. I started looking for somebody else I would like to retire with or spend my last three or four years with. So I

found Jacqueline Marshal[pseud.], a really nice lady, at Williams[pseudo] which was a French Immersion school and I thought, ah well, three years, I can do this JK en français. So then I knew the principal there really well, our kids had just finished at that school, it was a senior school then... (Retired Teacher, 2007).

Retention was a question that at the end of the retired interviewee's career was very much under his control and he made choices to maximize teaching as an enjoyable experience.

Conclusion

This paper examined the journey of a successful male primary-junior teacher. It examined some of the issues that may arise in a future project of cross-generational analysis comparing retired male teachers life experiences with those of male pre-service teachers in their Faculty of Education program. It also builds on the authors' previous research with pre-service teachers (Parr et al., 2007; Gosse et al., 2008; Gosse et al., 2008). What are the indices of success as male primary teachers? It is apparent from this research that there is no one way to be a male teacher. A wide range of masculinities plays a key role in assessing the male teachers' life histories. *Narrowing the Gender Gap: Attracting Men to Teaching* highlighted common arguments against males teachers' success in the primary classroom (Bernard et al., 2004b). Other arguments emerged in earlier work undertaken on the reasons why pre-service male primary teachers withdraw from teaching and their preparatory program. Principal among these included the increasing feminization of school teaching staff which often resulted in the relative isolation of male teachers. Moreover, the role expectations of male teachers in the era between the 1960s and the 1990s also changed dramatically. Lastly, the question of retention always loomed large as male teachers left teaching.

For the retired interviewee, a nuanced approach that speaks to an expansive spectrum of masculine abilities and capabilities was key to his success. This success was built on having considerable social and academic capital in the community. It speaks to being an effective communicator and building networks. Accumulated capital was put to good use in removing isolation as a factor working against him. Being "a known quantity" was very different from the younger teachers who were at the beginning of their careers, in some cases freshly minted from the Faculty of Education, in others excluded from the Faculty and a career.

With regard to the question of gender role and classroom management, the retired interviewee successfully addressed the question, but not in such a way to characterize him as the proverbial "kindergarten cop." As an experienced successful teacher he had established a repertoire of effective classroom management skills. This in itself made the path towards a primary teaching position easier. In some senses this included a natural consequences form of discipline. The retired interviewee was not the stereotypical "kindergarten cop" that the now former Governor of California, Arnold Schwarzenegger, once portrayed (Reitman, 1990). Clearly, the second major role challenge focused around the issue of touching and appropriateness for a male primary teacher. In the case of the retired interviewee, experience, social and cultural capital were key elements in securing his position as a JK teacher. In his view, failing these advantages, there remained and remains an unwritten code that eliminates male primary teachers from the competition for JK/SK positions because of the jus-

tifiable concern over pedophilia. The retired interviewee underlined that it is very difficult to scan for this even with criminal records checks and knowledge of a teacher's background.

With regard to successful retention, here too, the situation was reversed as the interviewee arrived at his position as a Junior Kindergarten teacher after a much longer period of time teaching in other grades and divisions. The issue was not so much retention in terms of teaching itself, nor was it an issue of teaching in primary. Rather, the issue arose in the teaching of FSL Core French, and the interviewee's view that this was an awful treadmill for teachers to have to be on. Part of the rationale for going into JK was to get off this treadmill. Some of the choices of this male primary teacher were much more reliant on personal circumstance, instead of the broader question of teaching as a male in the primary grades. An issue also arose when the male primary teacher lost his teaching partner of many years to retirement. Her departure made him look to different schools and other teachers with whom he could be a partner up until retirement. This spoke of being in a position of a senior teacher and being able to pick and choose assignments rather than being moved around from school to school as is often the case with new teachers. The role he undertook then is very different from those of his pre-service successors.

This paper also looked at career longevity. The "local teacher" was examined. Did being from a particular community make a difference? The answer is yes. The cultural and network capital that the retired interviewee built up was as an asset. It was result of his long association with his home region and his well-developed knowledge of the local community. For new teachers searching for positions this is something to take into account. The intrinsic knowledge of a particular education community in Ontario can be an asset. Here, too, however, the perceived disadvantage can be turned in on its head with the correct approach.

Should this pilot study be expanded and should it be cross-generational? There is a good case to be made for the examination of successful male primary teachers' lives and where these teachers fit on the spectrum of masculine abilities. In seeking to understand "why there are not more males in teaching" interviewing new teachers, pre-service candidates, experienced teachers, and those who have recently left the profession and comparing their experiences illuminates the entire picture. In reviewing the methodological questions, it is clear that seniors and retired teachers, both men and women, have much to offer on the development of successful male teachers, and teachers generally. This is information that can be used by policy makers, educational administrators and school leaders, but above all new candidates in faculties of education. It is clear that there is and will be a flow of retirees. The newly retired and elders both have a wealth of experience, but how their wisdom is preserved or forgotten is up to us. The window for this knowledge is time limited and extremely important for gender balanced school staffs in the future.

Footnotes

¹ What am I feeling about this narrator? 2. What similarities and what differences impinge on this interpersonal situation? 3. How does my own ideology affect this process? What group outside of the process am I identifying with? 4. Why am I doing the project in the first place? 5. In selecting topics and questions, what alternatives might I have taken? Why didn't I choose these? 6. What other possible interpretations are there? Why did I reject them? 7. What are the effects on me as I

go about this research? How are my reactions impinging on the research?

² In the Province of Ontario, schooling starts in Junior Kindergarten (Age 4), and proceeds to matriculation in Grade 12. Schooling is divided into four divisions, Primary(P), Junior Kindergarten to Grade Three, Junior(J), Grade Four to Grade Six, Intermediate (I), Grade Seven to Grade 10, and Senior(S), Grade Eleven to Grade Twelve. At Faculties of Education two divisions are normally taught to candidates, hence, P/J, J/I, and I/S.

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