

REVERED AND ELEVATED OR INVISIBLE AND CONDEMNED,  
A MALE CONCERN:  
PERSPECTIVES OF MALE PRIMARY TEACHERS IN ENGLISH PRIMARY SCHOOLS

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by  
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## **Abstract**

### **Revered and Elevated or Invisible and Condemned, a male concern: Perspectives of Male Primary Teachers in English Primary Schools**

This research critiques and explores how male primary school teachers construct their professional identities. The research also focuses on masculinity and femininity in public discourse and outlines how particular professions attract significantly higher or fewer males or females. In parallel, the study critiques the concepts of teacher professionalism and gendered behaviour linked to gendered assumptions underlying dominant conceptions of the professional male primary teacher.

This research investigates the construction of male primary school teacher's identities and its gendered dimensions. The significance of positioning strategies adopted by male practitioners in primary schools is explored. Contributory factors to professional identities, which are partly formulated by colleagues, parents, children and policy-makers is researched. Responses to policy assumptions and rhetoric are also shared. This research is also widened to examine the 'moral panic' (Cohen, 1972) apparent when discussing a lack of male primary school teachers in English schools and how many assumptions are articulated regarding the advocacy of a more balanced gendered profession in primary education.

Findings reveal that the professional identities of male primary school teachers in this study are shaped by many influences, including policy. Following an analysis of the findings the significance of male teachers as role models; stereotypical behaviour and masculinity in primary schools; safeguarding; child protection and social spaces and the juxtaposition of power were revealed.

Keywords: gender, identity, male primary school teacher, performativity

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## **List of Abbreviations**

B.A.	Bachelor of Arts
B.B.C.	British Broadcasting Corporation
B.Ed.	Bachelor of Education
BERA	British Education Research Association
DfE	Department for Education
D.H.	Deputy Head
E.Y.	Early Years
G.T.P.	Graduate Teaching Programme
H.T.	Head Teacher
I.T.E.	Initial Teacher Education
I.T.T.	Initial Teacher Training
K.S.	Key Stage
M.A.	Master of Art
M.Ed.	Master of Education
MoD	Ministry of Defence
MORI	Market and Opinion Research International
N.C.	National Curriculum
N.P.Q.H.	National Professional Qualification in Headship
N.Q.T.	Newly Qualified Teacher
N.U.T.	National Union of Teachers
Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education
P.E.	Physical Education
P.G.C.E.	Post Graduate Certificate in Education
P.P.A.	Planning, Preparation and Assessment
Q.T.S.	Qualified Teacher Status
R.Q.T.	Recently Qualified Teacher
SATS	Standard Attainment Tests
S.M.	Senior Management

T.A.	Teaching Agency
T.D.A.	Training and Development Agency
T.T.A.	Teacher Training Agency
T.V.	Television
U.K.	United Kingdom

## Chapter 1 – Locating the Study

### Introduction

The focus of this study is on primary education in England. It is primarily concerned with exploring the professional experiences of male teachers within this sector. The underachieving boy in primary schooling has been a growing concern for successive governments in the United Kingdom (Carrington and McPhee, 2008; Marino, 2009; Skelton, 2011). As a consequence, government policy has attempted to solve the 'problem' (Ashley and Lee, 2003:5) by taking steps to increase the number of male primary school teachers. Over the past 20 years, policy initiatives have been introduced to reform the primary teaching workforce, driven by the argument that 'the lack of male primary school teachers is having a detrimental effect on boys' (Ashley and Lee, 2003:1). In order to entice a greater number of males into primary schools, government policies have included advertising campaigns, offering bursaries, taster courses as well as mentoring systems (Szwed, 2010). Despite recent government initiatives, the recruitment of male teachers still remains low (Mistry and Sood, 2013). The Teaching Training Agency (TTA, 2004) has admitted that its two-year plan for recruitment of male primary school teachers had been too ambitious in attempting to increase the number of men in training to one in five. A decade later this figure is yet to be achieved. The most recent policy initiative in place for workforce reform in primary education is 'The Troops into Teaching' programme, funded by the Department for Education (DfE). From September 2013, non-graduate ex-service men and women have been afforded the opportunity to train to teach in primary schools by accessing newly-created initial teacher training (ITT) routes. Although not directly targeting males, statistics demonstrate that currently 91% of the armed forces are male (Berman and Rutherford, 2014). Advertising campaigns state that candidates will 'know how to behave in unexpected situations and be a good role model' (DfE, 2013). The teaching profession is offered as a suitable career for 'troops' as it is claimed:

'Research suggested that teachers find their jobs unusually exciting, enjoyable and satisfying, and that when it comes to giving you a natural high, it beats many other professions.'

(DfE, 2013: online).

The main discourse is that male primary school teachers are expected to perform to gendered expectations of masculinity (Butler, 1990; Drudy, *et al*, 2005; Eaude, 2010; Noddings, 2003; Skelton, 2007). Hegemonic masculinity in schools is similar to that in society; males are expected to perform to gendered expectations (Drudy *et al* 2005, Skelton 2007, Eaude 2010, Butler 1990). This is a gender which is socially and culturally constructed but influenced by peers as well as society's expectations. Indeed Connell uses the term 'gender regime' (Connell, 2002:53) when considering gender norms for male teachers in primary schools. What has been neglected in this debate is the establishment and exploration of the link between the policy rhetoric and the experiences of male teachers currently within the profession. This research study seeks to open such a dialogue.

## **Aims**

The importance of 'male teachers as role models' (Training and Development Agency, 2007), is pertinent for policy agenda contributions to the drive for more male teachers in primary schools. Focusing on male primary school teachers as role models is a dominant discourse that is continuous in the literature and is offered as one reason why more male teachers are required in primary schools (Lyons, 2010). Mills *et al* (2007:360) ascertain that boys benefit from 'the presence of male teachers and authority figures as role models of academic scholarship'. As a result, perceptions of males as role models, who can solve the underachievement of boys, have both positive and negative connotations. One of these connotations may be 'that a teacher may be considered to be a 'role model' when presenting an ethical template for the exercise of adult responsibilities' (Carrington and Skelton, 2003:256). The notion of a role model is 'uncritically embedded,' according to Jones (2007:185) in the discourse of primary school teachers identity. My interest in this field is largely borne out of experience as a Primary and Early Years (EY) teacher and more recently working with student teachers. As a primary teacher, my experience chimes with the findings of Jones (2007), by which the professional self I presented was dependent on the expectations of colleagues. I feel it is pertinent to facilitate a dialogue which attempts to understand the lived experiences of current in-service male teachers. The research conducted draws on the theories, gaps, and conflicts from the empirical research outlined. Specifically this has led to the development of the main research question:

1. How does policy rhetoric relating to the promotion of male teachers in English primary education correspond with the lived experiences and professional identities of male teachers in primary schools?

Pivotal to the research is the perceived consideration of consequences of the lack of male primary school teachers in English primary schools (Ashley and Lee, 2003; Drudy *et al*, 2005; Jones, 2007) and the impact that this has on the experiences of existing, in-service male teachers. The policy agenda favoured by government is linked to standards, results and outputs (Ball, 2006; Alexander, 2010) influencing and informing educational policy, thinking and professional identity (Tucker, 2004). In addition to this policy, directed at a specific gender plays a prevalent part. Hegemonic masculinity of male teachers favoured by current policy thinking will lead a 'gendered performance', (Butler, 1990:25) in line with the influence and expectations of others. Whilst the above is salient to the research interests I will also enter into a related discussion about the typologies of 'maleness' deemed appropriate by commentators and policy-makers in English primary schools and the perspectives of male school teachers in relation to their own experiences. There is a paucity of literature of accounts of male primary school teachers' perceptions and experiences in relation to how policy influences and shapes their professional identity (Mistry and Sood, 2013). This thesis will enable different male perspectives to be heard: namely primary school teachers concerning the affects and realities of policy assumptions.

As a consequence this has led to the construction of three sub-questions:

- a) How does policy attempt to define and shape the role of male primary school teachers?
- b) How do male primary school teachers position themselves in discourses around primary education?
- c) What contributes to the construction of professional identities amongst male primary school teachers?

## **Rationale**

While focusing on educational policy in relation to professional identity, this thesis seeks to examine and extend upon preoccupations that often surround the identity formation of male primary school teachers by colleagues, children, parents and other influences. The main focus of this thesis is to capture conversations occurring amongst male teachers on policy assumptions in relation to male teachers in primary education.

The notion of teachers as role models is contested and even inconsistent (Ashley and Lee, 2003; Arthur and Cremin, 2010; Drudy *et al*, 2005; Thornton, 2001) and research indicates (Troman, 2000) that there is little correlation amongst children perceiving their teachers as role models, explicitly when affiliated to gender. Research (Francis, 2008; Francis *et al*, 2008; Carrington *et al*, 2007; Ashley and Lee, 2003) substantiates that there is little authentication of male teachers being viewed as role models for or by boys. However, the Teaching Agency (TA) state that more male teachers need to be recruited in order 'that young people come into contact with diverse role models, including male teachers' (TA, 2007:online). This is contrary to some research evidence which highlights that:

'...there is no indication that boys and girls identify with their teachers, male or female. They do not see their teachers as role models. As a policy prescription to remedy boys' so called underachievement and laddish behaviour it simply isn't working'

(Thornton and Bricheno, 2006:12).

Notably lacking in this debate are perspectives from male teachers themselves and it appears that 'as an academic community we appear to have little insight into how men experience primary teaching' (Lyons, 2010:13). The discourse of male primary teachers as role models is a contested area and consequently another goal of this thesis is to extend knowledge and understanding in this field from the stance of male teachers' voices.

According to Cooper and Olson (1996), Foster and Newman (2005), and Tucker (2004) identity is not a fixed entity or existence. The self is viewed as constantly changing, flexible, 'multiple' and subject to interpretation (McCarthy, 2001). Nowhere is this more clearly evident than in professional settings. The construction of self and how one views oneself is part of an active process – creating selves or identities that are multifaceted and constantly evolving (Goodson, 1997; Coffey, 2001; Tucker, 2004). Dependant on context and perceptions, professionals are in a constant state of 'positioning'.

The role and indeed identities of school teachers is a 'conflictual' one (Woods, 1990). Discourses as to what is meant by 'professional identities' can elicit original insights of the complexity of what it means to be a primary school teacher. The research is timely

due to the rapid and increasing changes to primary education by the previous coalition government and recent proposals by the recently elected Conservative government.

Reform enables possibilities for new identities to be formulated, and therefore the opportunity to investigate how and what these may be as well as exploring readiness or opposition to change. Intrinsic and extrinsic influences shape professional identities, so while the government has imposed extensive reform of primary education, the daily working lives of primary school teachers should not be ignored. Tucker asserts political change results in 'a need to understand not only the nature of that change, but also how it impacts on the professional work and identities adopted by particular individuals and groups' (Tucker, 2004: 82). The notion of a 'perplexed' sense of identity amongst primary school teachers, in particular male primary school teachers is a central feature in this thesis.

McGillivray (2011:98) indicates that 'how we see ourselves in the workplace and the influence of others in creating a self-image are both significant.' The majority of research in the literature takes the stance of how female teachers contribute to the construction of male primary school teachers by the process of 'othering' (Paechter, 1998). Moreover there is a dearth of research relating to the notion of 'otherness' by those who have been 'othered' and how these 'others' position themselves by this process (Mistry and Sood, 2013). Therefore, research indicates that 'the voices of these professionals [males] are muted' (King, 1994:11). This study will enable the 'silenced' an opportunity to 'interrogate unspoken accusations' (King, 1994:11) in relation to masculinity, men and their roles in English primary schools. Male primary teachers are often viewed as 'a rare commodity' in primary schools by parents, other teachers, and often Head Teachers (HT) who acknowledge their presence with excitement, awe or fear (Thornton and Bricheno, 2000).

### **Carrying Out the Study**

In order to address the research questions, case studies were carried out. Geertz (1973, in Cohen *et al*, 2007) argues that case studies 'catch the close up reality and thick description' (in Cohen *et al*, 2007:254) of participants. This methodological approach supports the research aims and questions in order to generate a rich, detailed overview of male teachers' perspectives. An exploration of the features of a

case study reveals many facets pertinent to the research questions. Robson (2002) reports that a case study is an established research design where the focus is on a case in its own right, taking contextual details into consideration. The nature of a case can be understood extensively to include a study of an individual, a group, a setting or a region. Semi-structured interviews were utilised in order to generate the formation of rich qualitative data from all participants (Denscombe, 2003). Open questions were formulated in order to explore the professional narratives of male primary school teachers. While most interviews have a structure, Flick (2002:5) suggests that 'openness' is pivotal for successful interactions and that the semi-structured interview is one of the methodological bases of qualitative research. In order to gain the perspectives of male teachers' opinions of their professional lives and practice, semi-structured interviews were held with 30 male teachers in 17 primary schools.

This introduction forms the first chapter of the study, outlining the aims, rationale, the researcher's place in the study and the way in which the study was carried out. In chapter two I consider the literature connected to educational policy, identity formation and professional identity. To form a foundation for the research questions, chapter two also considers the historical perspectives of both professional and gendered identity.

In chapter three, entitled Research Design and Methodology, the wider picture of educational research is explored, followed by a discussion of epistemological and methodological issues. The choice of case study is then discussed followed by a section on site access and selection. The conduct and analysis of the research are then outlined, and the chapter concludes with consideration of ethical issues.

Rather than presenting the findings case study by case study, the following chapter on data presentation and data analysis uses a framework of the research questions and generated themes, and focus on the explanations and meanings expressed by individuals to generate shared understanding of each research question. Although the research resonates with the complexity and diversity of the settings, the aim is to provide a range of professional's perspectives. The data gathered is full of dynamic accounts of practice and beliefs and it needed to present the findings in a manner allowing these explanations to be fully portrayed and explored. Chapter four presents the findings and analysis of each research question.

In the final chapter I draw conclusions which critically reflect on the research questions and evidence contained in this thesis. In addition, there is a discussion of the contribution that this study makes to the knowledge in the field. The final section of this concluding chapter represents a reflection on the process of executing the study, both in terms of the methodological issues, the methods chosen and the conceptual framework which was employed. It also indicates how further research work which could be conducted in this important area.

## **Chapter 2 – Literature Review**

### **Introduction**

This chapter outlines the major theories and concepts in the field of analysis, alongside reviewing key studies carried out. The chapter also justifies the selection of theories, concepts and empirical studies that I build on. The latter informs the development of my research questions, the selection of my mixed method approach and analysis of my data. In short, in this Literature Review I set out how existing academic work in the field helped frame my research questions and interpretation of male primary teachers' narratives that tend to be under reported in the literature as well as absent from government policy over the last few decades, in addressing the under representation and experiences of male teachers in primary education.

The perceived need for greater numbers of male primary school teachers has been the subject of debate within both policy documents and research for over the last twenty years (Dermott, 2012; Martino, 2009; Skelton, 2010). Research also indicates that as well as declining numbers in England there has been a decrease in the number of male primary school teachers in Australia, Ireland, New Zealand, Finland, Canada and the USA (see for example Martino and Kehler, 2006; McGrath and Sinclair, 2013; Mistry and Sood, 2013). The acceptance of the notion of the need for a more gender balanced workforce in primary education in England is an unexplored assumption in much of the research and policy documentation (Dermott, 2012). Furthermore McGrath and Sinclair (2013) capture the essential flavour of the assumption when they assert that successive governments' claim that the mere presence of more males in primary schools is a positive and will solve 'educational and societal problems' (McGrath and Sinclair, 2013:531).

### **Historical Context**

Traditionally, the first stages of schooling have always been dominated by female teachers (Eaude, 2010; Robb, 2001; Tucker, 2004). Statistical evidence for England shows that there has never been anything even close to congruity in the ratio of males and females in primary teaching. The highest increase in recruitment of male primary school teachers (often referred to as 'elementary teachers') was after both world wars

(Board of Education, 1900-1944) as returning soldiers were faced with professional roles taken up by women. It is worthy to note that by 1952 28% of primary teachers were male, the highest proportion ever recorded before and since. Despite being a minority, the 28% dominated senior positions in primary schools (Ashley and Lee, 2003). Thornton and Bricheno (2006) and Lyons (2010) suggest that since 1952 there has been a decline in the number of male teachers in England's primary schools, with the last twenty years demonstrating the most significant decline.

Dermott (2012) observes that the 1950's represented the closest that primary teaching ever came to achieving a gender balance in England. Indeed Thornton and Bricheno assert that there there was never a '*golden age*' (2006: 34) when the gender balance in our primary schools was representative of society more widely. However, one of the main current policy discourses and arguments for having more male primary school teachers is hinged around the discourse of teachers as role models. As such, constantly focusing on males as role models, who can solve boys' underachievement, has both positive and negative connotations. The importance of 'male teachers as role models' (TA, 2013), is prevalent in policy agendas as is the push for more males in primary schools. Maylor (2009) and others (NUT, 2002; Robb, 2001; Skelton, 2011) observe that men hold differing and contradictory opinions when being referred to as role models. For example, whilst being seen as a role model is, for some this an advantage, others see it as a label indicative of differentiation between genders (Drudy, *et al*, 2005). This differentiation can result in negative comments, irritancies and annoyance against male primary school teachers (Skelton, 2011). Whilst some males embrace the notion of being viewed as role models as they either believe they can compensate for a lack of male influence in children's lives and 'inject humour in the classroom' (Skelton, 2011:14), others are keen to offer versions of a non-traditional male role model as being less dominantly masculine and not meeting societal expectations of gender (Robb, 2001; Sumsion, 2000; NUT, 2002). In this instance gender is related to two significantly different categories, male and female, and as such each gender is expected, by the majority of society, to behave in line with hegemonic perspectives concerned with gender (Ridgeway and Correll, 2004).

The literature portraying dominant representations of teachers needing to set an example to society and be role models has a long and enduring history. This is reflected in the work of Hoyle (1969), particularly in relation to expectations of male

and female primary school teachers. Hoyle's book, aimed at teachers and student teachers in England, refers to social norms as well as gendered expectations. The Junior teacher is referred to as a 'middle class' male who will behave in line with the 'norms which he will embody and seek to transmit to his pupils' (Hoyle, 1969:25). The role of 'instructor' ascribed to male teacher is in clear contrast to the function of his female counterpart whom Hoyle states that 'one of her main tasks is to wean the child away from its psychological dependence upon the home' (Hoyle, 1969:49). Although over forty years old, Hoyle's recommendations and observations still chime with current policy initiatives in relation to the role of male primary schools teachers (see also Dermott, 2012 as well as McGrath and Sinclair, 2013).

### **Male Teachers as Role Models**

The continued policy drive for male role models in primary schools neglects to outline what exactly it is that should be modelled (Martino, 2008). Smith (2005) observes that the drive for male role models in primary schools assumes that males and females teach differently. Yet evidence from research signifies that all teachers, regardless of gender, vary in their choice of presentation of self, professional pedagogy and furthermore there is no basis for claims that male teachers are different to female teachers (Drudy *et al*, 2005). Martino (2008) and McGrath and Sinclair (2013) offer an interpretation of policy proposals of being a role model as being attributable to dominant representations of what it means to be a 'real man.' They state that according to policy, male role models should demonstrate the qualities of real men and reflect dominant masculinities, which were earlier endorsed by Arnot and Mac an Ghail (2003) which include attributes such as 'zero tolerance of failure' and 'tough love' (Arnot and Mac an Ghail, 2003:4). However, the notion of what constitutes a 'real man' is contested by Sargent (2001), who highlights that male teachers are different from one another and their identities are shaped by class, ethnicity, previous experience, religion and a range of other influences. Male teachers, he states, hold a range of perspectives, rather than one on their role in schools. Therefore, when Sargent (2001) uses the term 'real men,' he is referring to the variations of masculine positions that men, who are incidentally teachers, construct and not the macho associations frequently espoused.

Stereotypical expectations of male behaviour or real men is endorsed by unexamined phrases such as male role model and McGrath and Sinclair (2013) suggest that the literature discussion and policy rhetoric on this topic assumes that the role of male primary school teachers is to turn boys 'into fine young men' (McGrath and Sinclair, 2013:534). Research literature further suggests that the notion of referring to male primary school teachers as role models places unrealistic and contradictory expectations on men as they are involved in negotiation of modelling masculinity while pursuing a career that is widely regarded as women's work (McGrath and Sinclair, 2013; Smith, 2005; Thornton and Bricheno, 2006). The current and previous governments' concern relating to the lack of male primary school teachers is hinged around the discourse of the 'failing boy' (Burn, 2001:13; Dermott, 2012; Epstein *et al*, 2000) and the concept that male teachers would be 'good role models' (Skelton, 2010). The failing boy narrative surrounds the academic underachievement of boys in education and has been a central tenet in recent debates concerned with raising standards at primary school level (Epstein *et al*, 2000; Dermott, 2012).

A naive assumption offered by government policy is that simply being male is the basis for positive identification with boys and that an increase in male primary school teachers will increase motivation and a willingness to learn amongst boys (Carrington, Tymms and Merrill, 2003; Martino, 2009). Despite this assumption, in government policy, the recruitment of male teachers still remains low (Dermott, 2012; Foster, 2009) and indeed Sargent (2000) illustrates that the idea of adult transmission of desired ways of being in relation to gender role models is not necessarily effective and as such are unsupported by evidence from empirical research (Connolly, 1995; Mahony *et al.*, 2004; Fuller, 2013; Warrington and Younger, 2005). Moreover, the change in educational policy is insufficiently informed by consultation with current in-service male primary school teachers and their perspectives on the expectations and demands placed upon them from government thinking and policy. The critical, analytical voice of primary male teachers is currently absent from research and policy formation (Lyons, 2010).

The decline in male primary teachers is reported in empirical research and media representation as having a detrimental effect on pupil attainment, particularly boys (Rowan *et al.*, 2006; Tinklin, 2003). The concern is surrounded by the academic underachievement of boys compared to girls (Thornton and Bricheno, 2006) yet it was

not until the second half of the twentieth century that the government intervened to make education more equitable for boys and girls (Phillips, 2005). Indeed, Martin observes that in the 1990s the rise in girls' academic performance attracted the attention of the media yet 'the underachievement of boys was what made hearts race, *not* the extraordinary success of schools and teachers in improving girls academic performance' (Martin, 2012:40). However, one of the predominant issues over the past two decades in debates around gender and education in England has been the academic underachievement of boys (Alexander, 2010). As well as the decline of male teachers and their influence, the perceived 'panic' surrounding boys' underachievement has been variously attributed to 'laddish behaviour' in schools, single parenting and female prominent or dominant households (Fuller, 2013; Tinklin, 2003; Thornton and Bricheno, 2006). Pivotal to this theme is that of 'missing men', not only in the lives of boys at home due to changes of family life but most noticeably in education. Yet this is not a new phenomenon, and the fact that boys' underachievement is the focus for government policy highlights anxiety concerning the 'natural order' (Fuller, 2013). Millis observes that, the majority of mythopoetic literature, which escalated in the late 1980s as a response to the second-wave feminist movement 'usually draw[s] on assumptions about a natural order or essential masculinity, which needs to be spiritually nurtured from boyhood to manhood by a father figure' (Millis *et al*, 2004: 362).

An influential report that has had an impact on recent government thinking was one commissioned by the Training Development Agency (TDA) by Dr Tanya Byron (author and broadcaster for, Little Angels, House of Tiny Tearaways, BBC TV) who offers the view that:

'Almost half the men surveyed in this research (48 per cent) said that adult male primary teachers are important role models where adult male figures are absent in the home lives of children'

(Byron, TDA, 2008: press release)

What is of concern about the findings of Byron (2008) is the confidence with which the author states that male teachers are good role models for children. Yet, place the assertion of male teachers being role models alongside the fact that the voice of the child (Alexander, 2010) is totally missing when it came to assembling 'evidence' and it is difficult to substantiate such a claim. It is difficult to see how such claims, relating to role models, can be made without reference to the perceptions of children themselves.

Interestingly, research on perceptions of pupils' attitudes to a more gender balanced profession, suggests that pupils are more flexible in their gender categorisation in teaching (Drudy *et al.*, 2005). Indeed pupils in schools with mixed gendered teaching did not assign traditional gender stereotypes, seeing males and females equally as 'nurturing' and 'authoritative' (Drudy *et al.*, 2005:9). However, a recent report by the DfE claims after a study in a London school that 'male teachers are more likely to boost pupils' self-esteem and are judged by pupils to be fair' (Collins, 2010:online). This small case study is an example of deeming gender differences at a simplistic level and the notion that much of the research cited by government agencies has limitations and is contradictory but is not widely attributed. Selective utilisation of research is evident here by the chosen studies cited by government agencies. Other studies, such as that by Ashley and Lee (2003) suggest male and female teachers are seen by pupils as 'equally capable or equally incompetent'. The report chosen to be published by Byron (2008) for the TDA is typical of documents and press releases being published regarding male role models by agencies such as the Teaching Agency (TA) or DfE. Byron's (2008) assertion is not substantiated by any reference to research findings and yet it is communicated as fact amongst such policy-makers. The notion of a role model is 'uncritically embedded' (Sargent, 2001; Jones, 2007) in the discourse of primary school teacher's identity. Martino (2009) contributes to this debate by observing that:

'Advocates typically assert potential role-modelling benefits for boys from having more male teachers, but little empirical evidence exists for these claims.'

(Martino *et al.*, 2009:267)

However, some studies suggest that a child's moral characteristics and who they view as role models develop with age and that these characteristics can be altered or influenced by their interactions with others outside the family, such as peers and teachers (Borba, 2002; Berkowitz, 1997). Furthermore, Carrington and Skelton state that a role model is an outdated concept that 'has its roots in role theory, which was at its most prominent in the mid-1950s' (Carrington and Skelton, 2003:255) and that 'there is no mention that teachers might, or should be seen as 'role models' to young people' (Carrington and Skelton, 2003:255). Commentators such as Drudy *et al.* (2005), Eade (2010), Lingard and Douglas (1999) have observed that dominant masculinities are the preferred version of masculinity or role models promoted by government

policies. Further interpretations of a role model are offered by Vescio *et al*/who suggest that it is someone 'to imitate, to be like' (Vescio *et al*, 2004:2), which is further illustrated by relating role models to mentors and heroes. The notion of teachers as role models is significantly challenged within the literature (see for example Carrington and Skelton, 2003; Dermott; 2012; Jones, 2007; Martino and Kehler, 2006; Mistry and Sood, 2013) yet at a policy level only evidence is cited that supports a specific ideologically driven perspective (see Byron, 2008). The perspective is underpinned by the assumption that more male primary school teachers will secure higher attainment and even improved behaviour amongst under-performing boys.

### **Masculinity and Femininity in Primary Schools**

Endeavours to recruit and retain additional male teachers as a means of providing male role models for boys have not achieved the desired outcomes (Alexander, 2010). An assumption that a gender match between male pupils and male teachers will benefit boys' academic achievement is dependent on social learning and sex role theories (Francis *et al.*, 2006). Children learn how to behave in line with gendered stereotypes and gendered expectations from a very early age. Such gendered stereotypes and expectations in this context are the same. This will become clearer as this study progresses. When considering the identity construction of children Brofenbrenner's (1979) ecological theory model is a useful starting point. He outlines how different systems, micro-, meso-, exo-, macro- and chrono- systems, which are described later on in this chapter, are interrelated to inform and influence the emerging and shifting identities of youngsters. Moreover, gender and other aspects of social identity are multiple and fluid (Foster and Newman, 2005; Tucker, 2004) so to suggest that a boy would automatically identify with a male teacher has been observed as 'ridiculously simplistic' (Francis *et al*, 2006). Considerations of boys and men as homogenous groups neglects the effects race, social class, sexuality and disability, as well as many other factors have on identity. Carrington's research outlines the negative effect of matching teachers with pupils to one aspect of their identity as 'matching teachers and children by ethnicity is not sufficient condition for winning their respect or gaining recognition as a 'role model'' (2002:47). In fact the consistent poorer attainment of boys when compared to girls in primary schools is more reasonably attributed to social and environmental influences or factors rather than ability or the lack of male teachers (Alexander, 2010; Warrington and Younger, 2005). Such commentators have also

outlined that the constant reporting of boys' underachievement in primary school contributes to a deficit model of gendered primary experiences. The deficit model of boys experience in primary school can be reinforced by the constant reporting of boy's underachievement.

The concept of defined male and female gender roles is rejected by much social theoretical argument (Millard, 2010). An alternative, and more accepted version is a foundation combining theory of masculinised and feminised discourse (Ashley and Lee, 2003) who argue that gender identity is grounded in the cultural variations allocated to masculinities and femininities in society. Similarly Millard (2010) claims 'gender regimes' are compliant versions of masculinity or femininity, as in operation in certain settings or establishments: family, peer groups or occupational settings. The prevalent expectation from such established groups or settings regarding groups of gendered behaviour varies for example in primary schools males are expected to behave in a very masculine manner (Lingard and Douglas, 1999). Behaviour is heavily influenced by positions of conduct, deliberation and societal standing which is informed by prior history in the framing of social status, family, schooling and social groups - social groups such as work colleagues who in the case of male primary school teachers will be mainly female. Returning to Brofenbrenner's (1979) ecological theory the micro-, meso-, exo-, macro- and chrono systems are useful when considering how identities are shaped and change over time. The micro-system is concerned with immediate influences that impact on identity such as family and peers. The macro-system considers how structures and policy influence changing identities and the meso-system outlines how wider networks and socialisation at the workplace impact on identities. Changes over time and cultural features are the main aspect of the exo-system. The chrono-system is mainly concerned with biological features and is therefore not relevant for the purpose of this study. This study aims to draw from some of Brofenbrenner's (1979) ecological theories (micro-, meso-, exo-, macro-systems) to establish the influences on the professional identities of male primary school teachers.

Bourdieu (1990) uses the concept 'habitus' to describe gender-affected behaviour, elaborating that such behaviour is dependent on history and human behaviour, which is underpinned by societal expectations. This can simply be referred to as 'doing gender'. Claire (2005), for instance, observes:

'when a woman sits with her knees together and a man sprawls; when a woman stops talking because someone else has butted in, or jumps up to clear a table; when a man becomes the spokesperson for a mixed group, or takes over in managing a joint project – they are 'doing gender'

(Claire, 2005:19).

As Claire (2005) illustrates individuals behave as males or females as part of social learning and identity which is not fixed by our biological sex but learnt. When discussing identity it is important to note that individuals are not just female or male and that dominant gender expectations are opposed and subverted within particular social groups and by individuals.

Our understanding of 'masculinity' is dependent on a coherent explanation of 'femininity' and vice versa. Often such definitions focus on extreme versions of masculinity and femininity. For example one version of masculinity is offered by Mac an Ghail (1994:108-109) and outlines the three 'f's – fighting, fucking and football.' Connell (1995) offers a complementary version of this where femininity is linked to fragility and passivity but mainly compliance to male desire. This contributes to one definition emphasising 'subordinated relationships to hegemonic masculinity in ways that reinforce masculine power' (Millard, 2010:313). These two extremes are by no means being offered as clear definitions of masculinity or femininity or can be attributed to each sex, that being males only exerting masculine qualities and *vice versa*, but are nonetheless relevant discourses in the contributors to the construction of professional identities amongst male primary school teachers and despite being partial perspectives, that being gender is only one aspect of identity, they provide a context within which societal opinion is formed.

Societal expectations will obviously heavily influence the identity of male primary school teachers (McGrath and Sinclair, 2013). Examining this aspect of societal opinion further, the expectations generated from society could be said to influence the identity of male primary teachers; therefore the construction of professional identity is an interaction between policy and personal (McGrath and Sinclair, 2013). When conceptualizing identity, or indeed professional identity, there are no general actualities to be unearthed and all accounts are inevitably fragmented and are subject to socio-cultural and historic forces. This affects the way in which one constructs relationships

between society and self (Foster and Newman, 2005). To explain the concepts of identities, many researchers have referred to the definition of identity used in social sciences and philosophy. Sociological research regarding education and teachers' images of self is complex and evolving. It is widely documented that identity is not a fixed entity or existence (Cooper and Olson, 1996; Foster and Newman, 2005; Tucker, 2004), the self is viewed as constantly changing, flexible, varied and subject to interpretation (McCarthy, 2001). The established notion of teacher identity and construction of professional identity of teachers in primary schools has various connotations in empirical research. What these assorted definitions all subscribe to is the idea that identity is not a fixed trait of a person but a relational occurrence – which is dependent on various contextual factors. This contradicts the hegemonic and dominant discourse of masculinity currently promoted and favoured by education policy (Eaude, 2010; Fuller, 2013; Lingard and Douglas, 1999). Jenkins (1996) for example notes that all human identities are concerned with meaning, and that as such meaning is not considered an essential property of words. Jenkins (1996) further states that meanings are always the outcome of agreement and disagreement, always a matter of convention and innovation, always to some extent shared and always to some extent negotiable.

### **Professional Identities**

The reviewed literature in the above paragraph suggests that in all aspects of our existence, particularly in professional settings, defined by ourselves, is in relation to others. Therefore, one must begin by looking at social relations and social organisations when discussing identity (Eriksen, 1993). According to Said (1994), identity can only be understood as process, as 'being' or 'becoming.': one's social identity, or identities, is always a singular and plural, never a final or settled matter. Said (1994) argues that labels such as white, male, teacher or English are no more than starting points. Hall (2003) notes, that because identities are constructed within, not outside discourse, we need to understand them as produced in specific historical and institutional sites within specific discursive formations and practices. Moreover, Hall (2003) adds, professional identities emerge within the play of specific modalities of power and thus are more the product of the marking of difference and exclusion, than they are the sign of an identical, naturally constituted unity, an identity in its traditional

meaning. The construction and negotiation of professional identities is one of the issues explored in this thesis.

The suggestion that 'self-formation' is segregated from standardised and socialized procedures of schooling (Foucault, 1980) is significant to this research, most notably the issues of masculine identities in mainly female domains (i.e. primary schools). Some researchers (Martin, 2012; Paechter, 2007; Skelton, 2002) outline that primary schools have become, or has always been, too feminine in terms of curriculum content, assessment procedures and performance related targets. Skelton (2007) asserts that male primary school teachers' identity is further complicated by the fact that their gender is constantly under scrutiny. The identities of male primary teachers are frequently assigned deficit representations, by elements of the media for example, through an increased focus 'on the plight of male teachers in primary schools, have [accelerated] the view of teaching as a "no-man's" world and low-status, women's occupation' (Cushman, 2005:231). King's (1998) earlier clarification of 'caring' regarding primary school teachers is useful, as he states there is a difference regarding caring 'about' and caring 'for' children. According to King 'caring about' is a male high status trait while in contrast 'caring for' is a female low status trait (Ashley and Lee, 2003).

In addition, Jones (2007) later states there is an assumption that male practitioners exhibit less of the caring ethos integral for working with young children and are more formal in approach. This has ramifications for how males are viewed in the public sector, particularly in care professions or those working with children. In relation to primary teaching, Noddings (2003) suggests that teachers in EYs who are perceived as uncaring or care for children, rather than about children, are marked or disadvantaged. This description results in such practitioners being deemed as ineffective as an EYs practitioner. Such dichotomies are not very useful as they reinforce gendered behaviour and stereotypes. When outlining identities of primary school teachers in England there are undoubtedly close correlations with gender as the majority of teachers in primary schools are female. Gendered teacher professionalism and discourses of responsibility all contribute to the identity of primary school teachers as well as educational policy and reform (Noddings, 2003; Szwed, 2010).

The notions of professionalism, professionalisation and what it means to be a professional have been the main theme arising out of an extensive literature, including Fredson (2001); Fuller (2013); Goodson and Hargreaves (1996); Hargreaves and Shirley (2009); Sachs (2001); Whitty (2000). These commentators allude to an ambiguity surrounding the notion of professionalism and what defines professionalism in terms of hierarchies, power and ideological positions. The term professionalism is essentially a contested concept (Hoyle and John, 1995). Goodson and Hargreaves further state that 'what it means to be professional, to show professionalism or to purpose professionalization is not universally agreed or understood' (Goodson and Hargreaves, 1996:4).

Different professionals shift and adapt through the adoption of a 'collective vision'. Casey (1995) describes this process as colonising by which employees sign up to a shared vision or the ethos of organisations. In order to comply with and demonstrate agreement of an organisation's ethos, effective performance is further required and in the case of teachers this is complicated by them having to perform to constantly fluctuating expectations in order to satisfy 'professional hierarchies' (Leonard, 2003). Hierarchies could be managers or indeed the dominant gender meaning that performance could be concerned with gender identity as it is 'performatively constituted' (Butler, 1990:25) by entrenched and expected gendered behaviours, such as males behaving in a masculine manner and females in a feminine manner. This perspective on teacher identities is what Butler (1990) and later Ball (2003) describe as performativity. This illustrates the conditions, constraints and contradictions many primary school teachers currently have to work within and adhere to. Coffey states that teachers as social actors 'are engaged in a continuous and dynamic process of identity or biographical work in their everyday social and cultural lives' (2001:53). This can be further attributed to competing discourses with the dominant discourse, that being male teachers behaving in a gendered expected manner, providing elements in defining the role and perceptions of male primary teachers. The uncertainty that may arise from these complicated orientations as well as expectations, combined with the ways in which male teachers negotiate themselves between them, demonstrates that the shifts that professionals are required to construct result in or from the different identities that they play (Ball, 2003; Tucker, 2004).

The concept of primary school teachers becoming more professional was at the forefront of educational reform experienced by the workforce in England in the 1990s (Goodson and Hargreaves, 1996; Fuller, 2013) by the introduction of Qualified Teaching Standards (QTS), performance management procedures and a contemporary culture of surveillance and 'performativity' (Ball, 2003). Omitted from the modernisation process in England was the voice of teachers in education policy (Ball, 2001). One explanation of this is 'New' Public Managerialism enforced on the public sector in the 1990s which focuses on accountability and audit as key performance measures, such as performance management indicators and the standardisation (QTS) of teaching (Clarke *et al*, 2009). Draper and O'Brien (2006) further argue that teachers' needs as employees are relatively invisible and their views, perceptions and understandings are often neglected in the planning and implementation of education policy. As a consequence in the teaching profession it is now imperative to demonstrate high quality teaching, as determined and judged by external agencies, as well as ensuring constant improvement of learning outcomes and attainment of pupils, leaving little room for teachers' perspectives. This has led to what Sachs refers to as a workforce of 'designer teachers' (Sachs, 2005:10) who are compliant employees to policy imperatives as well as having a blind acceptance of standard regimes. Troman (2000) highlights that many primary school teachers have adapted to 'security-seeking' tactics with increased 'anxiety and dread' concerning such procedures and reforms relating to professionalism in primary education.

In their consideration of the discourses of teacher professionalism, Goodson and Hargreaves (1996:20) believe that 'professionalism and professionalisation can empower teachers or exploit them' for example through performance-related pay. There has been an increase in the discourse regarding a perceived ineffectiveness and loss of autonomy within the teaching profession as well as 'performativity', which is offered as 'regimes of truth' (Ball, 2001). Performance management procedures, standards agendas and targets are a few examples of discursive frames in place to ensure teachers conform. Reducing teaching to lists of benchmark competences is likely to lead to unproductive and superficial construction of what it is to be a primary school teacher. Amongst others, Day and Sachs (2004), Apple (2006) and Forde *et al* (2006) note the increasing dominance of the teacher as an effective technician, solely responsible for improving children's attainment is of growing concern. Against this backdrop, Clayton (2009) asserts that primary teachers are also expected to

demonstrate a reflective approach to new strategies. He believes that time spent reflecting on why pedagogically approaches may not be effective could result in teachers demonstrated a more creative approach. Pollard (2008) also expressed views that teachers need the skills to reflect effectively in such a quickly changing environment. Henderson (2001) and Hirsch (1998) concluded that reflective practices are pivotal to the professional growth of teachers which was later endorsed by regularity bodies such as Ofsted (2008) who claim that schools must allow time for teachers to reflect. Indeed Rhodes and Fletcher (2013) outlined that a lack of self-belief can encourage reflection and therefore learning as well as professional identities. Thus the lived experiences and professional identities of male teachers in primary schools may be influenced by the interrelated procedures outlined. It will be imperative to this research to ascertain to what extent influences and factors outlined above have an impact on defining and shaping the role of male primary school teachers.

Moreover according to Tucker the 'dual problematisation' of professional identities is concerned with the 'requirements of the state to regulate, control and change both the actions and activities of young people and those developing services for them' (Tucker, 1999:293). Tucker (2004) further acknowledges four major factors and influences that are involved in the construction of professional identities. These include the utilisation of ideological effects of official discourse and policy to determine the treatment of pupils; the tensions between 'macro' and 'micro' levels related to roles, expectations and relationships; the third factor relates to the influence of training, a changing curriculum, objectives and methods of assessment; finally the link is made between prevailing discourses, contemporary priorities and practices (Tucker, 2004:88). This perspective is important when attempting to define construction of professional identities because of the nature of the variables involved and the impact of local and national rhetoric, policy and practice. The increasing reliance on self-regulation and self-monitoring in primary schools, which were initially packaged as 'devolving authority' or 'providing flexibility' (OCED, 1995:29) have an impact on teachers' professional identities (Alexander, 2010; Ball, 2006). In this same era Whitty (1997) suggests that in the introductory period of Ofsted, the surveillance culture in English primary schools which encouraged peer observations, targets to be set and reviewed for individual teachers by colleagues, impacted on teacher identities. The discourse of accountability in primary education is the responsibility of colleagues as well as outside agencies. Yet observers and critiques of such structures and procedures note that

these contribute to a form of 'ventriloquism' (Ball, 2003) or game playing tactics (Tucker, 2004) amongst teachers. This is where teachers' true identities, values and rationales for entering and staying in the profession are as Ball (2006) would suggest a masking in order to comply and 'live an existence of calculation' (Ball, 2006:145). Rhodes and Fletcher (2013) assert that the shaping of professional identity is closely connected to the process of professional socialisation and this heavily is influenced by policy reform.

## **Policy Reform**

The complexity of reform is relevant to this research, in particular in regard to the discourse of teacher identity. Many academics have noted the increased pace of educational reform in England over recent years (Ball, 2003; Hardy, 2008; Levin, 1998; Tucker, 1999). Since 2010, the previous coalition government subjected English primary education to a wide range of policy initiatives, which claim to simplify and enhance practice. The Academy Act 2011 was recorded as the fastest implementation of a Bill through Parliament in recorded history. However, it is argued that pedagogical and professional judgment, expertise and knowledge have been eroded in English primary schools and replaced by an accountability culture established through administrative control (Elliot, 2004). Trust in both teacher and education reform has been constructed in order that primary teaching and its outcomes can be managed and controlled, resulting in what Ball refers to as 'discourse of derision' (2001:17). What it is to be a teacher, and trusted as a professional is complex, and within current rapidly changing education policy there is little evidence of trust (Arthur, 2013; Doherty and McMahon, 2007). The implementation of earlier policies such as the codification of standards, performance management procedures and curriculum constraints (TA, 1998) had already seriously impacted on teachers' daily practices. It is noted that such policies have a genuine effect on teacher identity (Cooper and Olson, 1996; Beijaard *et al*, 2003; Tucker, 1999). As Ball notes, 'this epidemic reform is that it does not simply change what we, as educators, scholars and researchers do, it changes who we are' (Ball, 2003:143). Fundamental and rapid change in primary education will have a significant impact on teacher identity (Fuller, 2013). As previously noted underpinning this period of reform successive governments have introduced a range of policy. Some of these policies, which point to an attempt to transformation and shift in the gendered teaching profession of primary teaching, are briefly outlined below.

In England, the Teacher Training Agency's (TTA) Corporate Plan (2003-2006) aimed to achieve a total of 39,649 male teachers by 2006 (Alexander, 2010; Howson, 2009). This target figure represents an overall increase of male primary school teachers of 20% based on 2002 figures. This figure has never been achieved. Expensive campaigns by the TA (previously known as the Teacher Training Agency and Teacher Development Agency) have attempted to entice more males into teaching using slogans such as 'Every Good Boy Deserves Football' (TTA, 2000). Such slogans serve to enforce hegemonic masculinity: that all males in primary schools should adhere to traditional versions of masculinity (Mills, 2004; Martino, 2009). Gramsci's (1971) term 'cultural hegemony' (adapted from Marxist original theory relating to economic recessions and capitalism) outlines how dominant notions can become generally accepted or naturalised within a specific society.

Such a socially constructed view of gender was clearly evident when female teachers were asked for characteristics that they believed male teachers should possess. Research by Jones (2007:186) identified that female teachers believed their male colleagues should '...not be arrogant [and be] macho'. Despite the TA's previous support of hegemonic masculinity through their choice of football related slogan, 'not all men teachers position themselves within football discourses' (Skelton, 2000:12). The latest policy initiative in place for workforce reform in primary education, announced by the DfE in conjunction with the Ministry of Defence (MoD) in June 2013, was entitled Troops into Teaching. The scheme has been adapted from a similar scheme in the United States (US) in the 1990s and is an example of how the UK government seeks new policy ideas from outside national borders (Dermott, 2012). The initiative enabled non-graduate ex-service men and women the opportunity, from September 2013, to train to become primary and secondary school teachers. As well as claiming that such candidates would make outstanding teachers and role models (despite there being a lack of appropriate research and confirmatory 'evidence'), the report states that ex-service personnel would also 'help raise educational attainment' as well as engaging 'disaffected students' (DfE/MoD, 2013). In relation to the implementation of the policy in US Johnson (2010) argues that American schools are increasingly sites of militarization due to a military ethos. The image of the military has long been associated with 'masculine power dynamics' (Jones, 2013:9) and by targeting such a profession, it could be argued that it will have an impact on the impending professional identities of future teachers.

Males as 'firm disciplinarians' (Mills *et al*, 2004:361) is also apparent in the latest Troops into Teaching policy. Whilst this new policy initiative is not directly targeted at males, Berman and Rutherford (2014) note that currently 91% of the armed forces are male. Justification for such strategies include that they make teaching 'more representative of the communities they teach' (TA, 2007). The government's Troops into Teaching policy supports Francis *et al's* (2006) research regarding policy assumptions; the belief being that a gender match between male pupils and teachers will be beneficial and furthermore increase boys' achievement. Clearly there is a discipline element woven into this strategy as it is claimed that such candidates would instil 'self-discipline... and a sense of pride in our schools' (TA, 2010:online). The significant absence of discipline necessarily leading to successful learning in primary education has been noted (Dermott, 2012). Another implication is that without male teachers there will be a problem for the educational attainment of boys.

Educational attainment has been used to justify educational reform and policy. Policy initiatives directed at alleviating the issue in inequalities in education or 'hard to reach' (Burkard, 2008:7) groups such as boys in primary education are often utilised by successive governments in an attempt to ensure a meritocratic education system (Gillies and Boyle, 2010). Moreover, boys at primary school have long been identified as being 'disaffected' (DfE/MoD, 2013; Epstein *et al*, 2000). Such deep-rooted notions of gender engagement will, it is argued have a detrimental effect on pupil achievement. The consequence of being disengaged impacts on attainment (Alexander, 2010). The link between gender and achievement, particularly amongst boys, has been the subject of significant research in recent years (Jones, 2007; Martin, 2003; Reay, 2002). Paton (2007) contends that 'an anti-education culture' amongst primary boys is the main cause for underachievement in comparison to girls. The notion of underachievement has dominated the English education system and policy reform for many years. Gorard and Smith use the phrase 'elasticity' (2004:26) to encapsulate the flexibility of this definition of underachievement due to its fluctuating definition, for example changes in benchmarks of Key Stage (KS) 2 SATs. This generalisation is perceived to be damaging as, Elliot (2004) and Doherty and McMahon (2007) argue, policy has been driven by an alleged claim that pupil achievement has not been as high as it ought to be or expected and that schools and therefore teachers are to blame. Consequently boys' underachievement is prominent in educational policy

and the 'common sense' solution is to employ more males in the primary sector (Jones, 2007:186).

### **Gendered Professions**

New market ideologies that have recently influenced primary school practices have been aligned to a 'masculine preserve' (Burn, 2001:5). Arnot and Miles (2005) and Mahony *et al* (2004) concur that performance indicators, as well as hierarchical management structures in primary schools, are increasingly becoming more masculine thus contradicting the notion of primary education being feminised. For example, Griffiths (2006:402) asserts that 'the masculinity in question is hegemonic: individualist, competitive, performative, calculative and hierarchical'. As a consequence it is claimed that men are still more likely than women to hold positions of structural power as HTs or senior members (SM) of staff (Fuller, 2013; Mahony *et al*, 2004; Powney *et al*, 2003; Riddell *et al*, 2006) and it has been suggested by Thornton that males prefer 'power and status' (2000; 205). This leads to a tension where primary teaching is constructed as women's work (Thornton and Bricheno, 2006) whereas educational policy and localised management structures, including primary school headships, are increasingly constructed as masculine work (Mahony *et al*, 2004).

The professional status of those working with young children is, as many have argued accorded low social prestige due to the high number of females employed in such settings (Basten, 1997; Cameron *et al*, 1999; Lyons, 2010). In common with other female-dominated professions, Drudy *et al* (2005:15) highlight that as well as primary teaching, social work, nursing and librarianship are classified as 'semi-professions'. When considering teaching as a profession (or indeed semi-profession) The American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE) outlined twelve features that can be attributed to teaching being perceived as a semi-profession. These included a preponderance of women in the profession as well as a lack of autonomy in professional decision making, with accountability to superiors rather than to the profession (AACTE, 1976). Wylie (2000) highlights that there is an assumption in England, in many European countries and the USA, that an increased dominance of females in teaching has a negative effect on the professional status of the occupation and thus female teachers are blamed for the low status of the profession.

Johnson *et al* (1999:61) note that 'primary school teaching is regarded as low level work lacking in intellectual demands'. Reasons for primary teaching being perceived as a low status profession are more complex. For example, primary teachers are seen as substitute parents acting 'in *loco parentis*'. Indeed 'parenting remains the template for teaching at an unconscious level, and the process of teaching still works through a series of unconscious identifications' (Shaw, 2004:56). Thus teachers do not consider the various roles and versions of self they may portray in their daily practices. In educational terms, especially in primary education, when linked to parenting this could be expressed as mothering not fathering. It has also been argued that primary schools are feminised environments dominated by female teachers; these encourage and favour girls by a feminised curriculum and pedagogy at the detriment of boys (Fuller, 2013; Martino and Kehler, 2006; Martino 2009; Mills *et al*, 2004; McGrath and Sinclair, 2013). This is further complicated by Cameron *et al*'s (1999) identification of the discourse of male primary school teachers being viewed as, needing to compensate for absent fathers in single parent households. Gendered norms are therefore evident in the multiple stereotypes that are applied to male and female teachers in England (Burn, 2001). As the discourse of the two models of parenting and teaching merge and become institutionally grounded, teachers may find it difficult for either to dominate as teachers may be confused about societal expectations of them. This will contribute to how male primary school teachers position themselves in discourses around primary education. Another common theme within literature, concerns male teachers compensating for the absent father in single-parent families (Burn, 2001). For example Mills suggests that 'in light of their [fathers] absence it is suggested that male teachers can become influential father like figures' (Mills *et al*, 2004:363).

Primary school teachers are often viewed as social actors where their daily practices are concerned with performing in social and cultural contexts (Coffey, 2001; Rhodes and Greenway, 2010). Primary teachers' day-to-day practices are further complicated by the very nature of their role. For example, one significant factor is primary school teachers' contribution to children's construction of self-identities. Primary schools are the places that children start to become pupils and where they learn how to perform as learners. As well as performing as learners, the socialisation into gender roles also occurs in these settings. Primary school education plays a major function in shaping children's sense of self (Millard, 2010). Bourdieu (2000:165) argues that when 'one becomes a miner, a farmer, a priest, a musician, a teacher or an employer [the

process] is long continuous and imperceptible ... [and] starts in childhood'. Construction of identity is also influenced by peers and society's expectations of gendered behaviour in formative years. Drawing on the work of Davies (1992), Francis (2005:42) argues very young children engage in 'gender category maintenance work'. This involves children policing the expected gender stereotypical behaviour of their peers in classroom interactions. Learning how to become a boy or a girl is influenced by schooling. Against this backdrop, male primary school teachers find that their own identities are intensely scrutinised, 'by pupils, parents, other teachers, governors and head teachers' (Thornton and Bricheno, 2000:204) and as well as their professional practice being critiqued (Foster and Newman, 2005) their gender is 'constantly being attended to by others' (Skelton, 2007:684). The main reason for such attention is because they are still viewed as a 'rare commodity.' This is further corroborated by statistics which outline that currently only 21% of primary school teachers are male (Paton, 2013).

The notion of teachers being compared to social actors is also contested particularly when one is engaged in discourses regarding identity (Dillabough, 1999). According to Beijaard *et al* (2003:114) the construction of teacher identity as a 'rational instrumental actor' negates the theory of 'the authentic and discursive self'. Such a version of self is constantly negotiating the complexities of how one views oneself and how one is perceived by others and in professional settings, this can include aspects such as self-fulfilment, uniqueness or self-actualisation. Furthermore Costas and Fleming (2009:354) observe that often many professionals adopt a 'dis-identification' approach in order to negotiate between 'who they feel *they are*' and who they have to be at work in order to maintain authenticity'. Nevertheless, whilst it is possible to disaggregate performance regarding lesson delivery, the current debate offered by Ball (2006) concerns performance in relation to meeting external targets, performance management procedures, threshold applications and meeting professional standards as well as gendered expectations. Alexander (2010) and Ball (2006) argue that the ambiguity of standards and the reluctance to have transparent and clear modes of accountability are deliberately 'volatile, slippery and opaque' (Shore and Wright, 1999:569) and open to interpretation. This policy contradiction will impact on the construction of teacher identity in relation to professional judgment and autonomy. Indeed:

“.....the TDA framework is mostly unhelpful in the matter of discovering wherein the differences truly lie. This is because they focus on the teacher’s possession of approved but vaguely-expressed information and skill, rather than on how the teachers might think; and whether the teacher conforms rather than demonstrates originality.”

(Alexander, 2010:415).

This is extremely relevant as this research seeks to interpret the versions of truth offered by participants on how they negotiate and position themselves in relation to discourses of power and control in primary schools. How teachers construct their identity and respond to the demands of performativity are embedded very early on in their careers as student teachers through the implementation of QTS (Ball, 2006) and by the strong and continued links to Teaching Standards which begins at the onset of their induction and training.

An important recurring theme in the literature is ‘the control of training [that] is seen as a way of constructing different kinds of professional identities’ (Tucker, 2004:87). A discord between teacher’s personal educational philosophies and codified standards can lead to a juxtaposition or conflict in teacher’s professional identity when the personal and the professional role are too far removed from one another (McCarthy, 2001; Coffey, 2001; Beijaard *et al*, 2003; Goodson and Cole, 1994). Professional identities may contain sub-identities which may contradict or combine with each other. This state of professional identities is further complicated by gendered expectations (Mishler, 1999). Roberts (2000:168) argues that:

“The notion of multiple selves and different ways of talking connect with current research on teacher socialization and professional identity, where induction into teaching is seen as similar to the process of learning to talk.”

As noted, teachers have multiple and shifting positions that may be simultaneously taken by the same individual. As well as policy attempting to define and shape the role of male primary school teachers the influence of others in professional settings is also of relevance. Research by Weber and Mitchell (1995) into public perceptions of teachers requested that adult participants of varying ages and cultural backgrounds draw a primary school teacher. The research identified strong themes in the images

drawn, with the majority of depictions being very similar. Images of teachers being, Caucasian, female, having an authoritative pose, prim and with chalkboards, were overwhelmingly evident. The responses from such research depicted stereotypical images of primary school teachers thus influencing teachers' identity (Alsup, 2006). As such a singular identity will make it difficult for marginalised groups, such as male primary school teachers, to negotiate and position themselves in relational to societal expectations.

As well as policy rhetoric Skelton argues that 'the public discourse around male primary teachers inevitably impacts on them as they construct their professional and personal identities' (2001:1). Often contradictory stereotypes are expected from male teachers who have been described as 'unusual, ambitious, odd and deviant. Unambitious, effeminate... wimps, perverts, heroes, sportsmen, homosexuals, paedophiles, [and] principles in waiting' (Lyons, 2010:14). The juxtapositions of such social pressures, accusations, as well as expectations highlight the difficult negotiating and positioning strategies that male primary school teachers have to adopt as men do not 'want to be round pegs trying to fit into square holes' (Lyons, 2010:12).

A simplistic stance is that male primary teachers rely on a 'properly hyper masculine' (Skelton, 2001:206) version of self or that they portray a 'female-male or not a real male' version (McGrath and Sinclair, 2013:534). This resonates with Butler's (1990) notion of a gendered performance. Jones' (2003) typology of male primary teacher compounds the complexity of the issue of professional identity. To summarise, she categorises men in primary teaching as 'The Superhero', who will save children particularly boys from the effects of feminisation and will behave in a gender stereotypical ways. 'The Wimp' who aligns himself to feminine and passive ways of working and 'The Sexual Predator' whose motives are questioned from the onset; yet fatherhood or marriage avoids suspicion and makes such men 'immediately more acceptable' (Jones, 2003:8). This reinforces the fact that research on gender is complex, particularly gender identity and dominant discourses regarding gender in relation to the many factors which define and shape the professional identities of male primary school teachers.

As male teachers are often viewed as 'a rare commodity' in primary schools, parents, other teachers, and often HTs acknowledge their presence with excitement, awe or

fear (Thornton and Bricheno, 2000). Newly-recruited male teachers identified similar experiences and feelings to that of one participant who stated that they felt under constant scrutiny from parents (Newman and Foster, 2005). According to research by Edmonds *et al* (2002) and Cushman (2005) motivational differences between males and females regarding primary teachers is significant with males maintaining a career in primary schools being both 'privileged and disadvantaged' (Newman and Foster, 2005:344), by accelerated routes to management duties but also being under heightened scrutiny and surveillance through procedures such as Ofsted and Performance Management. One in four men entering the profession is more likely to become a HT compared to one in thirteen women (DfE, 2005); although dated these figures remain the most recent, yet male primary school teachers are more likely to leave the profession within the first five years compared to their female counterparts (MORI:2013). This state is likely to enforce the view that primary teaching is 'woman's work' (Francis and Skelton 2001:12).

Gender stereotyping of male teachers is prevalent in primary schools in England (McGillivray, 2011). Connell (1995) states that male primary teachers entering the profession are often accused of a taking a soft option due to engaging in women's work. Primary school teachers are often referred to as generalists due to the nature of curriculum and pedagogy (Arthur and Cremin, 2010). The introduction of the National Curriculum (NC) in 1988, alongside other government initiatives such as the Numeracy (1999) and Literacy Strategies (1998) has contributed to a hierarchy of subjects. For example, more value is being placed on some subjects whilst devaluing others. Core subjects (English, Mathematics and Science) in primary schools are allocated more time proportionally than foundation subjects (Art, P.E., History etc...). Successive education ministers have endorsed the need for more specialist teaching in primary schools, the most recent being in the subject of Mathematics (DfE, 2012).

The devaluation and differentiated status of primary school teachers, when compared to their specialised contemporaries in secondary and higher education is evident. The clearly defined hierarchy of subjects in primary schools across the age ranges coincides with the gender of teachers (Thornton and Bricheno, 2006; Alexander, 2010). Williams (1989:33) suggests that many male teachers in primary deliberately 'carve out specialisations' in order to demonstrate that they are 'separating and differentiating themselves from their female colleagues, and aligning themselves with safe traditional

signifiers of masculinity'. This is revealed by males mainly teaching in upper KS2 and having overall responsibility for high value subjects (Dermott, 2012), as well as 'control of the oldest pupils' (Francis and Skelton, 2001:13). Female teachers are more likely to take responsibility for Humanities, Special Education Needs (SEN) and overall responsibility for age-phases (Connell, 1995; Lyons 2010; Thornton and Bricheno, 2000) than their male colleagues. Interestingly, research does not support the notion that boys' achievement in higher status subjects is increasing despite the fact that proportionately more males are responsible for the implementation of the pedagogy and delivery of such subjects. This directly contradicts the notion, dominant in policy, of positive male role models linked to improving attainment.

Literature further suggests that seeking ways to secure work that would be viewed as high status amongst parents is a strategy some male teachers utilise to assert superiority and even the securing of economic advantages over females (Williams, 1993; Fuller, 2013). In the primary school these roles may include taking responsibility for sport, Science or Mathematics as well as the aforementioned teaching upper KS2 classes. These are all linked to the professional status of working in primary education. Parents often view these roles as being the most prestigious in primary education. Male primary teachers are aware of many parents' preconceptions that as male teachers they will be 'firm disciplinarians' (Mills *et al.*, 2004:361). This is corroborated by female primary teachers who observe that their male counterparts receive a great deal of kudos and gratitude from parents for being role models, particularly for sons (Smith, 2005). The different means by which males in female-dominant settings position themselves are 'continuously fluctuating' between a range of competing discourses within which they are positioned, indicating that they:

'...are not unitary subjects uniquely positioned, but produced as a nexus of subjectivities, in relations of power which are constantly shifting, rendering them at one moment powerful and at another powerless'

(Leonard, 2003:219).

In essence male teachers, in female-dominant school settings are never statically observed: labels applied are contemporaneously formed dependent upon the situation and the observer. An appropriate example of this relates to the previously mentioned football discourse as often males in primary school are aligned to organise out of

school sporting activities regardless of their personal preferences or interests (Skelton, 2000). Yet research indicates that many male primary school teachers expect to 'capitalise on their scarcity value' (Foster and Newman, 2005:342) by fulfilling societal and parental expectations. Positioning strategies that male teachers adopt in relation to parental expectations are another example of competing discourses. All of these examples reflect competing discourses experienced by current in service male primary school teachers (Lyons, 2010). Indeed research (Paechter, 1998; Francis, 2005 and Martino, 2007) supports the concept that males are more concerned to establish themselves as masculine without feminine traits because of peer and society's expectations rather than *vice versa*. Hegemonic masculinity from the perspective of society as a whole discourages males from a career in primary teaching (Arno and Mac an Ghail, 1994; Kenway and Willis, 1998). Men are likely to be more 'gender sensitive' (Johnston *et al.*, 1998) when considering professions.

### **Moral Panics and Child Protection**

Male teachers who do not demonstrate societal expectations of masculinity are an example of 'othering' (Paechter, 1998) as they could risk being ostracised by their colleagues and school community. The notion of otherness within the literature relating to male teachers is scarce (Sumsion, 2000). One's relations with others are shaped by the fact that we are 'strangers' (Lumby, 2007:31). Thus interactions and dynamics between people in professional settings are complex and multifaceted. King claims that often males who 'break the social taboo' by embarking on a career in primary education are viewed negatively as being 'feminine, homosexual, and [a] paedophile' (King, 1994:11). This is mainly because 'society is naturally wary of 'difference' particularly when associating it with young children' (Lyons, 2010:12). Much of the research (Skelton, 2007; Sumsion, 2000) regarding how male teachers construct their identity references the expectations of female colleagues in relation to how males position themselves, but lacks evidence of how males 'police' other males' gendered behaviour. The notion of othering by male KS2 student teachers towards their KS1/EY colleagues was however identified by Skelton's research on perceptions of masculinity (2003). In a climate where there is media as well as public preoccupation with paedophilia Skelton's participants (trainee male KS2 teachers) were keen to distance themselves from KS1/EYs pedagogy in order to limit the possibility of wrongful accusations. Males referred to this sector of teaching as 'mothering' and they were

concerned with being viewed as 'glorified babysitters' (Skelton, 2003:205) not involved with real academic work. The research on current in-service male primary school teachers is limited in this particular area and it would appear from these limited sources that there is an emerging 'backlash' towards the perceived feminisation of primary education (Ashley and Lee, 2003). Recently in support of King (1994) Guasp (2010) suggests that the problem of male identity in primary schools is a product of the mainly female work force which seeks ways of 'othering' male colleagues. He further illustrates his argument by using the expression of one male teacher regarding a male 'feminine' colleague who does not display conditioned behaviour is one of concern:

'Homosexuality is a deviant behaviour.....If you want to be a sexual deviant, fine, in the privacy of your own home and if it's between consenting adults. Just don't do things in public that offend and don't involve children'

(Guasp, 2010:12).

Extreme views such as this are rare, yet highlight at an institutional level the expected male masculine behaviour desired in many primary schools. Many researchers such as Berrill and Martino (2002), Carrington and Skelton (2003), Mills (2004) and Skelton (2011) observe that often homosexuality is conflated with paedophilia. Skelton observes that consequently 'the significance of a heterosexual identity is of particular significance for male primary school teachers' (2001:148). King's research (2000) with male primary school teachers in the USA illustrates that the participants were so concerned with being perceived as gay, that they reverted to strategies such as placing photographs of their wives and children on their desks. Sumsion (1999) also notes that in order for some gay male primary school teachers to disprove suggestions of being homosexual they actually invented wives and wore wedding rings. 'Heteronormativity' (DePalma and Atkinson, 2009) in primary schools has been identified as a strategy to ensure all behave in gendered expected ways.

Much earlier Cohen (1972) captures the extreme views regarding males in the primary sector by offering the theory that it is a 'moral panic'. According to Cohen, a moral panic occurs when a 'condition, episode, person or group of persons emerges to become defined as a threat to social values' (Cohen, 1972:9). Moral panics over recent years have essentially tapped into the public's fears for their safety of children. This

moral panic (Cohen, 1972) of males working with young children is cited as one of the reasons males offer for not considering a career in primary education as 'many men have a fear of false paedophilia accusations' (Mills *et al*, 2004; 359).

Over the past two decades and most recently there has been an increasing public awareness of the sexual abuse of children in a wide array of social, educational and professional settings (Landor and Eisenchlas, 2012). The increased awareness of sexual offences against children is not considered to be the result of an increase in the number of cases rather an increase in the number of cases reported (Coxell and King, 2002). The mass media shapes public opinion related to the sexual abuse of minors by the way in which individual cases are reported, including the choice of vocabulary incorporated and the types of images displayed in order to present a certain bias as the press desire society to perceive these occurrences in a certain way. Landor and Eisenchlas' (2012) research relating to the utilisation of language by the press when reporting sexual crimes by both male and female teachers signifies major differences. The use of language used to describe men in such cases contains 'pejorative gender-labels, such as paedophile or pervert' (Landor and Eisenchlas, 2012:499) yet women committing similar crimes are labelled as lonely or 'young lover or pupil lover' (Landor and Eisenchlas, 2012:499) and their breach of trust is actually negated resulting in 'an unbalanced representation of genders in relation to similar crimes' (Landor and Eisenchlas, 2012:499).

When something as disturbing as child abuse cases involving males in the Catholic Church or the unearthing of Jimmy Saville's predatory offending are brought to our attention, it allows, however unfortunate, the powerful to enforce their ideas and rules about government thinking and indeed policy. Kitzinger (2002) acknowledges that how the mass media report individual cases not only influences public opinion but can often be misleading, representing a distorted view of events which can be potentially damaging to all. Recent child abuse cases involving Teaching Assistants and male primary school teachers in Birmingham and Plymouth in EYs settings have resulted in media attention encouraging societal moral panics regarding whether men should be working in EYs. For example the case in Plymouth involved 3 female members of staff; yet their crimes were so distressing, that as female perpetrators much of the media could not comprehend females being capable of this so the case was reported as 'a paedophile ring' with the ring leader a male who did not actually work in the nursery

(Morris, 2010). The perception being that reports of the involvement of females in such actions would incite a moral panic; whereas reporting as a paedophile ring, led by a male would cause less of a moral panic. The mass media fashions such episodes, elaborating the essence of the information, thus transforming them into a national issue, when the matter could have been dealt with at a local level. Anxieties relating to potential accusations of child abuse regularly feature as a significant concern amongst male primary school teachers (Berrill and Martino, 2002; Cushman, 2005; DeCorse *et al*, 1997; King, 2009; NUT, 2002; Smedley and Pepperell, 2000; Skelton, 1991; 2003; 2011; Thornton and Bricheno, 2006; Weaver-Hightower, 2011) as males teachers are subject to a higher level of scrutiny than their female counterparts, yet such concerns are omitted from education policy (Martino, 2009; Skelton, 2007; Szwed, 2010) because of the selection of research which is cited in such policies. The construction of male primary school teachers' professional identities is formed in part, in response to the risk discourse, with its emphasis on the potentiality of men being abusers.

Any group that challenges the norm can be marginalised and viewed with suspicion and their motives questioned. A negative discourse surrounding the public's perceptions of homosexuality, when linked to paedophilia, needs further clarification. To go against the norm of gendered performativity or behaviour or to be different appears to be discouraged at best, and deeply disturbing at worst. The interrelated 'abnormality' (Mills *et al*, 2004:358) of being gay and thus possessing paedophilic tendencies is absent amongst policy documentation which has been noted by Szwed (2010). It is recommended that 'government strategies on male recruitment and retention need to pay attention to the issue of child abuse' (Szwed, 2010:304). Martino observes there is 'a failure to address moral panic about paedophilia' (2009:269) by policy-makers. The hegemonic masculinity and acceptable versions of masculinity that should be adhered to by male primary school teachers needs to be challenged (Cushman, 2008; Martino, 2009) and policy needs to demonstrate a comprehension of how 'homophobia, femiphobia and misogyny' (Mills *et al*, 2004:359) impact on how current male primary school teachers position themselves in discourses around primary education.

## Summary

The available literature provides an informative discourse and backdrop in relation to males as role models in primary school settings. The theme of professional identities has also been explored and acknowledged and this research will use Butler's (1990:25) notion of 'gendered performance', as well as Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological theory as frameworks in order to inform this study in order to help explain the findings. Notably absent however, are the voices of in-service male primary school teachers: this research will address this under-researched area. Already established is the widespread assumption from policy makers that there is a need for more male primary school teachers. The justifications for targeting males to apply for positions in primary education are convoluted and contradictory, thus illustrating the differing positions held by researchers, government and teachers and the creation of a gendered profession in which males are 'subject to far greater public scrutiny now than ever before.' (Thornton and Bricheno, 2006:3).

Having reflected on the construction of primary school teachers' professional, or indeed semi-professional, identity, this chapter has indicated main themes related to male primary school teachers in England, these have tended to hinge around three key areas, these being: Reform and Policy, Male Teachers as Role Models and Moral Panic. In addition the versions of masculinity promoted by government strategies and policy have been critiqued as it appears that 'the hegemony of traditional forms of masculine performance' are the versions endorsed by expensive advertising campaigns (Mills *et al*, 2004:365) and policies such as 'Troops into Teaching' (Burn, 2001; Dermott, 2012). How male teachers contend with, and in some cases, confront traditional constructs of masculinity and feel about the three areas above in their daily routines is lacking in policy construction, with a clear paucity in the literature on this axiomatic stance. Socio-cultural practices have an influence in the shaping of professional identity and societal as well as colleagues, children and parents' expectations have been established and omitted from education policy. This literature review has attempted to clarify some of the reasons why policy makers feel more men are required in English primary schools and interrogate such reasons by utilising empirical research. This research therefore focuses on these areas by analysing the views and experiences of current

male primary school teachers as they consider how policy rhetoric corresponds with their lived experiences and professional identities. After all:

'In short, what policy makers and stakeholders fail to address within the context of the male teacher debate is the troubled connection between dominant constructions of masculinity and gendered construction of teaching'

(Martino *et al*, 2009:269)

Strategies to overcome gendered stereotyped career choices have been adapted by agencies and policy makers such as the TA, although these have been largely unsuccessful. This is apparently due to a lack of comprehension of the ambiguous relationships between minority genders and certain professions (Ashley and Lee, 2003) and the perspectives of in service male primary school teachers (Lyons, 2010). Finally this chapter has explored key literature that investigates the lived experiences of male teachers in order to facilitate insight into what and how male teachers are currently experiencing within the profession.

## Chapter 3 – Research Design

### Introduction

This chapter outlines and justifies the research design used in endeavouring to address the research questions set. Initially it restates the four research questions and purposes of these, prior to considering this research within the wider field of educational studies. It then focuses on the relevance of a quantitative and a qualitative methodological paradigm and elucidates my philosophical approach by probing the ontological process and the epistemological perspective. It has been suggested by Flick (2002) that methods have to be appropriate to the topics being studied; therefore a consideration about the essentials of research design is offered. Furthermore, reliability and validity are examined together with any possible ethical issues associated with this research. Finally the chapter outlines how the data will be analysed.

This study examines the correlation between policy rhetoric and professional, gendered identities. The aim of this research is to explore male primary school teachers' notions of professional identities and consider how and indeed if policy rhetoric informs such identifies as well as daily practices. Thus, this study also aims to provide a range of professional's perspectives. In specific terms, it posits one overarching research question with three sub-research questions addressed through thirty case studies. When considering appropriate methods I was careful to ensure that 'questions should shape methods and not the other way round' (Plummer, 2001:22). The posited questions are consequence of a attentive interrogation of relevant literature, empirical data, analysis from a pilot study and theory and are worth restating:

The overarching research question is:

1. How does policy rhetoric relating to the promotion of male teachers in English primary education correspond with the lived experiences and professional identities of male teachers in primary schools?

The associated three sub-research questions are:

- a. How does policy attempt to define and shape the role of male primary school teachers?

- b. How do male primary school teachers position themselves in discourses around primary education?
- c. What contributes to the construction of professional identities amongst male primary school teachers?

## **Philosophical Approach**

Philosophical concerns are fundamental to the research procedure as they incorporate a researcher's inner narrative: this chapter aims to define my ontological and epistemological stance in a very clear way. Method and theory are inevitably related; therefore the manner in which an investigative proposal is planned is influenced on the researcher's judgements and their perspective of the features of knowledge. A quantitative researcher may assert that social science examination should be objective; a qualitative positioned practitioner may not prefer an indifferent, removed approach. All research is formed by the understanding of differing epistemological viewpoints therefore both paradigms should be studied and known by the researcher. Nonetheless, as I aim to develop as an effective researcher, instead of detailing each strategy, I commenced with Walford's (2001) ascertain that:

'It is always necessary for researchers to examine their own 'grand theories' about how the world operates, and to recognise that this will have influenced the way the data were constructed and the interpretation that the researcher may give to them'

(Walford, 2001:148)

The interpretations of my own experiences will inform my understanding of my perceptions of the nature of truth. The qualitative paradigm recognises that we do not simply remain in any situation, but that we actually collaborate to establish our own environments. Cohen *et al* (2007) affirm that:

'The social and educational world is a messy place; full of contradictions, richness, complexity, connectedness and disjunctions...It has to be studied in total rather than in fragments'

(Cohen *et al*, 2007:167)

How people construct and view their world is pivotal to this study and this resonates with the notion of people constructing their social reality so a qualitative approach is pertinent (Gall *et al*, 2003). It is imperative that I consider my role as researcher and any contribution made towards the construction of realities. The classification of constructivism is suggested by Robson (2002) as a contemporary view of qualitative research. A method examining complex and productive communication encapsulating an interpretative humanistic process is vital for interpreting meaning from communal environments.

In the field of social and educational research there are two sets of suppositions within which research can be framed: the positivist paradigm and the interpretivist paradigm (Arthur *et al*, 2012), each describe an extreme of approach to knowledge and thinking. Positivism describes a position where social reality exists independently of the researcher and which there is to be discovered; a scientific approach. In contrast, interpretivism holds that reality is, in fact, socially constructed and that:

‘Reality would not exist independently of the individuals’ personal creations against which they might assess or evaluate their perceptions’

(Pring, 2000:60)

Given that ontology refers to what something ‘is’, the ontological basis of any research must be governed by the view taken of the nature of what is real and whether it is possible to discover truth. An interpretive standpoint would hold that the evaluation or research leads to ‘a new construction that is not necessarily better or truer than that which held previously’ (Pring, 2000:71). This research has its source in the views and experiences of individual participants (male primary school teachers) so it is clear that the notion of objective truth is not relevant here and that the ontological standpoint to be adopted is interpretive.

In addressing the term ‘epistemology’ it is appropriate to turn to the purpose of research, which has been described as the production of new knowledge (Arthur, *et al*, 2012). The term concerns the theory of knowledge; that is, how we know what we know. As with ontology the two paradigms mentioned previously govern the view of knowledge that is taken. The positivist stance has a number of central tenets including

the view that only scientific knowledge is reliable and true, that the evidence gathered is devoid of subjectivity and that universal truths can be generated.

A contrasting, interpretive view of epistemology argues that the model based on the universal logic of scientific research is inappropriate and that:

'.....knowledge is concerned not with generalisation, prediction and control but with interpretation, meaning and illumination'

(Usher, 1996:18)

This research focuses on professional and social practices as well as making the assumption that all human action is meaningful and as such needs to be understood within that context. Given the two extremes of definition outlined above it is clear that the epistemological position also lies within the interpretivist paradigm and so this is the philosophical standpoint that will dominate throughout this research.

Having defined the philosophical foundations of the study to be initiated in terms of both ontological and epistemological positions, the approach adopted will be clarified in addition to the in which this impacts on the research established. It is clear, given the focus on non-empirical data, i.e. the views and experiences of participants, that there is a need for an interpretive view which accepts that reality is a human construct. The position taken is that knowledge is subjective and influenced by personal experience, with the data collected being very individualistic and providing subjective views, insights and perceptions of the reality of life as experienced by the participants.

### **Wider Frameworks**

As a way of demonstrating a secure comprehension of the reasons for this study, it is vital to consult the wider aspects of educational research. Furlong and Oancea, (2005) propose that the literature concerned with research methodology is extensive in the requirements and practices of educational research, yet there is evidence of a shared core of concern. Furthermore, Pring (2000:26) claims that a common original aspect of educational research is that it should establish a clear comprehension of people's perceptions and interpretations of their 'social world'. The theoretical foundation of this study needs to endorse this. As this research is concerned with capturing male

teachers' perspectives, I have drawn on the suggestion of the humanistic knowledge domain recommended by Ribbins and Gunter (2002:378), as a relevant underpinning framework. Parallels with professional identities and educational policy have been identified by Ribbins and Gunter (2002) who state that:

'... it can be understood as the effecting of policy, values and philosophy through collective action. It is the moving of men towards goals through organisation and it can be done well, badly, or indifferently'

(Ribbins and Gunter, 2002:362)

How educational policy and professionals are associated is an important feature of this study. The collation of people's perspectives and experiences have been theorised within the humanistic domain by Ribbins and Gunter (2002). 'Professional experiences' are one of the main features of this study which will be outlined by participants in a 'context' (Ribbins and Gunter, 2002:378). This supports Furlong and Oancea's (2005) notion of a shared core of concern. This study will also focus on the perceptions of the participant's 'everyday practice' (Ribbins and Gunter, 2002:378). The emphasis upon professional and personal narratives of male teachers' experience relating to policies informs not only the objectives of this research, but the selection of research methods and the validity of data obtained.

## **Research Strategy**

The strategy used flows directly from the philosophical approach outlined, with the focus on the views of individuals and their perceptions related to gendered professional identity and practice. These will naturally be set in their own unique context and will provide rich detail and interpretations of events from which it is likely that a range of 'multiple realities' will emerge. This approach reflects the fact that:

'...things can be seen in different ways by different people at different times...each alternative version needs to be recognised as being valid...'

(Denscombe, 2003:100)

While the aim is to ensure that each individual's story is recognised and valued, the possibility of identifying a widely shared reality cannot be discounted. Trochim (2002) argues for a shared reality that most people will subscribe to, whilst valuing the views of others who do not subscribe to this view. Whether or not this proves to be the case, a positivist strategy dominated by quantitative data collection arising from objective questionnaires and experimentation, is not applicable to this research.

It would be as a result of the process of identifying possible shared realities that the potential for identifying strategies for improvement could be investigated. The data collected is analysed in a thematic way, with responses gathered in order to establish common or contrasting views that will facilitate the interpretation of the outcomes. The post-positivist approach, which rejects the existence of a single 'truth' and focuses on subjective data and its interpretation, lies at the heart of the research strategy to be adopted although, within this overriding description, there are varying stances which have already been alluded to.

A mixed method approach has been adapted for this research which will include elements of some of the paradigms outlined above. It would be useful here to distinguish between method and methodology. Broadly speaking, the former is a component of research, for example in this research a qualitative method such as semi-structured interviews will be used. Deciding on which method to utilise is often 'based on values and assumptions which influence the study, and as such therefore need to be fully interrogated' (Clough and Nutbrown, 2007:22). The latter, on the other hand is the justification for using a particular method and refers to the theoretical analysis of methods appropriate to the study. In this particular case a phenomenological methodology within an interpretivist paradigm. The interpretive paradigm, seeks to discover how individuals interpret the world and importantly, to 'understand' (Carr and Kemmis, 1986).

'The principal concern is with an understanding of the way in which the individual creates, modifies and interprets the world in which he or she finds himself or herself'

(Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000:7)

Research, therefore, focuses upon the meanings individuals place upon their actions, and recognises that situations are fluid and that meanings evolve and are affected by

context. This study embraces the central concerns of the interpretive paradigm and its suitability. This is an attractive approach as the research questions focus on the perceptions and experiences of male primary school teachers when considering their own professional identity and practice.

## **Research Methodology**

Given the nature of the research questions (the voice of male primary school teachers), it is imperative that the research design reflects this and aligns itself to the nature of the research. According to Yin (2013), case studies are a preferred strategy when 'how' and 'why' questions are being posed. Moreover case studies are viewed as the most appropriate mode of research for informing as well as reporting about educational practice, (Bassey, 2009; Newby, 2010; Stenhouse, 1983) as it has been suggested that they provide unique situations enabling the researcher to generalise and apply theoretical frameworks or such situations or interpretations to a mass (Bassey, 2009). In this context the study would be defined as explanatory in nature as it arises from the desire to understand complex social phenomena. Case studies are not meant to be generalised to wider populations given their focus on particular instance(s), instead their aim is to '...illuminate the general by looking at the particular' (Denscombe, 2003:30). Thirty male primary school teachers were involved in this research, each as individual cases. These numbers were regarded sufficient to enable the collection of data that would allow the creation of plausible interpretations to the findings (Bush, 2002). In each case all were interviewed, exploring a range of matters relevant to policy rhetoric. Case study research has significant strengths including flexibility in design, the generation of in-depth knowledge of particular cases and the potential for informing practice and policy.

This study contains more than one case, and so a multi-case design was used. Yin (2003) suggests that each case must be selected so that it either:

'(a) predicts similar results (a *literal replication*) or (b) predicts contrasting results but for predictable reasons (a *theoretical replication*)'

(Yin, 2003:47)

He then indicates that where two or three cases are used this will fall into the literal replication category as the data collected would be insufficient to generate more than one pattern of theoretical replications.

The case study methodology was appropriate for this study because it enabled the researcher to investigate contextual instances in which primary teaching is practised. As outlined by Robson:

'Case study is a strategy for doing research which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context using multiple sources of evidence'

(2002:178)

In this study, policy rhetoric and participants' responses were the phenomena studied and the majority of interviews were carried out at primary schools, which meant primary teachers were investigated within real life-context. The case study approach was also chosen because it allowed the researcher to study primary education in detail. For example the use of thirty teachers means the researcher was able to get a potentially wider variety of data from informants. Complex situations relating to perspectives and subtleness can be researched in greater detail when only a few are focused upon as identified by Denscombe (2003). By utilising a case study enquiry I can ensure that the utilisation of different methods of data collection, for example the use of semi-structured interviews and reference to relevant policy documentation will be adopted in order to guarantee methods of triangulation (Merriam, 2009; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003).

Triangulation has been defined as 'more than one method of data collection within a single study' (Hitchcock and Hughes, 1995:180). Using contrasting methods offers the possibility of different perspectives on a topic, which in turn can enhance that validity of the data (Denscombe, 2003:113). Triangulation is a tool that could be employed in an attempt to address concerns with regard to qualitative and quantitative research and may increase the level of validity of the researchers' investigation. Employing multiple methods such as, interviews and referring to policy may lead to more valid realities. Patton observes:

‘... triangulation strengthens a study by combining methods. This can mean using several kinds of methods or data, including using both quantitative and qualitative approaches’

(Patton, 2001:247)

This methodology was appealing for this study as it was a strategy to note the recurring themes of perceptions of male teachers in different primary schools. For the main study, the selection of a sample of senior leaders, middle leaders, KS2, KS1 and EY teachers were asked to participate. As is the current landscape in primary education in England, the majority of males teaching in primary schools mainly teach in upper KS2 and have overall responsibility for ‘high value subjects’ (Francis and Skelton, 2001:13). The majority of males interviewed teach in upper KS2 thus reflecting the national picture of the disruption of male teachers in primary education. A small percentage interviewed work in KS1 and just one of the participants interviewed is an EYs teacher. This reflects the statistics in English state schools by which three per cent of teachers in EYS are male (Paton, 2013).

The candidates were approached by the researcher to ascertain their willingness to participate; this was followed by correspondence from the researcher which provided an outline of the interview schedule to be followed (see Appendix 1). Arrangements for the time and place of the interviews were made on a personal basis via email or telephone call with the participants.

The selection of representative sample is described by Denscombe (2003) as non-probability purposive sampling and requires the researcher to select the sample:

‘...with a specific purpose in mind, and that purpose reflects the particular qualities of the people or events chosen and their relevance to the topic of the investigation’

(Denscombe, 2003:15)

The choice of sample might have been affected by issues of convenience and willingness to participate but all participants recommended or selected were willing to participate.

Before addressing the research methods used brief details of the seventeen institutions chosen for the multiple case study are provided below:

**Table 1: Names, Positions and Duration Male Participants Have Been Working as Class Teachers in Primary Schools**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Position in School</b>	<b>Qualifications</b>	<b>Length of Time Teaching</b>
Will	Year 6 class teacher	B.A., P.G.C.E, Q.T.S, N.P.Q.H	7 years
Rob	Year 2 class teacher	B.A., P.G.C.E, Q.T.S,	3 years
Edward	Numeracy co-ordinator Year 3 class teacher	B.A., P.G.C.E, Q.T.S,	10 years
Richard	Literacy co-ordinator Year 6 class teacher	B.A., P.G.C.E, Q.T.S,	5 years
Tony	Year 5 class teacher	B.A., G.T.P, Q.T.S,	3 years
Mark	Year 3 class teacher	B.A., P.G.C.E, Q.T.S,	6 years
Ricky	Year 5 class teacher	B.A., P.G.C.E, Q.T.S, N.P.Q.H, M.A.	11 years
Chris	Year 1 class teacher	B.A., P.G.C.E, Q.T.S,	4 years
Tim	Numeracy co-ordinator Year 5 class teacher	B.Ed., Q.T.S,	13 years
Joel	Literacy co-ordinator Year 5 class teacher	B.A., P.G.C.E, Q.T.S,	5 years
Toby	Year 6 class teacher	B.A., G.T.P, Q.T.S,	2 years
Liam	Reception class teacher	B.A., P.G.C.E, Q.T.S,	3 years
Peter	Assistant HT Reception teacher	B.A., P.G.C.E, Q.T.S, N.P.Q.H, M.A.	11 years
Andrew	Phase Leader Year 4 class teacher	B.A., P.G.C.E, Q.T.S	8 years
Simon	Numeracy co-ordinator Year 3 class teacher	B.A., P.G.C.E, Q.T.S	4 years
Ben	Year 1 class teacher	B.A., Q.T.S,	5 years
Rohit	Year 5 class teacher	B.A., G.T.P, Q.T.S	7 years
Davie	Year 3 class teacher	B.A., P.G.C.E, Q.T.S	4 years
Devon	Year 1 class teacher	B.A., P.G.C.E, Q.T.S	3 years
Ray	Assistant HT Year 6 class teacher	B.Ed., Q.T.S	14 years
Brett	Deputy HT Year 6 class teacher	B.Ed., Q.T.S, NPQH, M.ed	22 years
Martin	Deputy HT Year 5 class teacher	B.Ed., Q.T.S	17 years
Fred	Year 5 class teacher	B.A., G.T.P, Q.T.S,	13 years
Mike	Assistant HT Year 5/6 class teacher	B.A., P.G.C.E, Q.T.S, NPQH	3 years
Gavin	Deputy HT Year 3	B.A., P.G.C.E, Q.T.S, N.P.Q.H, M.A.	11 years
Gary	Assistant Head Teacher Year 6 class teacher	B.A., P.G.C.E, Q.T.S, NPQH	20 years
Josh	Numeracy co-ordinator Year 6 class teacher	B.A., P.G.C.E, Q.T.S	3 years
Bobby	Phase Leader Year 6 class teacher	B.A., P.G.C.E, Q.T.S,	6 years

<b>Name</b>	<b>Position in School</b>	<b>Qualifications</b>	<b>Length of Time Teaching</b>
Adeel	Deputy HT Year 5/6 class teacher	B.Ed., Q.T.S, N.P.Q.H, M.A.	28 years
Ryan	Year 3 class teacher	B.A., P.G.C.E, Q.T.S	5 years

The schools selected were all primary schools in the West Midlands and included KS1 and KS2 classes. Fourteen of the schools selected had nursery provision attached to the schools and EY provision for each school varied. Three of the schools selected were faith schools. The schools are appreciably different in a variety of ways including size, ethnic mix, gender, selection criteria and religious adherence thus providing a significant diverse range of units of analysis for the multiple case study. In my current role as Partnership Co-ordinator I ensured that the schools selected were not in my portfolio of schools I visit to assess trainee teachers. This guaranteed that the participants had no prior professional relationship with me as the researcher. The size of each school meant that there would be sufficient male staff in each with an appropriately diverse range of experience ensuring that there is a wide enough range of individuals to choose from when identifying interview subjects.

## **Research Methods**

The main aim of this study is to gain detail and richness from personal narratives and unique truths, all in different contexts. The phenomenological strategy is most suitable for this small-scale study as it is dependent on in-depth interviews (Denscombe, 2003). The utilisation of the phenomenology strategy is the preferred one for casting light on the lived in experiences (humanistic approach) of participants, coupled with qualitative methodologies (Denscombe, 2003). Valid phenomenological research involves thorough descriptions of the experience that is being investigated. This study aims to address questions such as: how does policy attempt to define and shape the role of male primary school teachers?

The semi-structured interview method was selected for this study for many reasons. Primarily, this method was selected because it is a versatile approach for seeking information. As opposed to questionnaires, face-to-face semi-structured interviews enable flexibility for the interviewer when considering the direction of this process, resulting in adaptation in connection with responses (Robson, 2002). Similarly, Bryman

(2008:438) asserts that, 'questions that are not included in the guide may be asked as the interviewer picks up on things said by interviewees.' For example non-verbal cues could enable the researcher communication which assisted in understanding responses.

Additionally, the methods chosen resonate with my own ontological position, which implies that participant's 'knowledge, views, understandings, interpretations, experiences and interactions are meaningful properties of social reality' (Mason, 2002:63). This correlates with the design of my research questions. Consequently, a mixed method approach of semi-structured interviews as well as referring to policy documents seemed the most suitable method in order to address the questions throughout this study.

This enquiry used thirty semi-structured interviews as the method of data collection, with each being transcribed to facilitate analysis. Thirty staff were selected across the seventeen schools, all with full teaching commitment, including some who were deputy head (DH) teachers, whilst others ranged from middle leadership to classroom teachers. Before the main phase of the research, six pilot interviews were conducted with male primary school teachers in one school. The main purpose of these interviews was to identify whether the questions used would provide data relevant to the research questions posed and to identify possible opportunities to extend and develop the number and range of questions where omissions were evident. In addition the pilot interviews provided a valuable opportunity to test the mechanics of the recording process.

The pilot interviews were conducted in the school in the HT's office. The recording device for both the pilot and main study was a hand-held Olypmus DS-40 digital voice recorder. Prior to beginning the interviews I had considered using a video camera as a means of recording, as Kvale (1996) suggests it is a more effective method for capturing non-verbal language alongside talk. I was concerned, however that I could be introducing an imposing level of technology. I was already aware that introducing any recording device would result, no matter how temporarily, in a rather unnatural flow to talk. If a video camera were to be used the participants may have become more concerned to offer the 'correct' response in educational terminology rather than one more genuinely held and inscribed in everyday practises. I decided therefore to

use the aforementioned less intrusive hand-held digital-recorder. Some field notes were taken during the course of the interview and these were used, together with the transcriptions of the interviews. Schostak (2002:25) suggests that fieldwork notes are more than a 'stream of consciousness' connected to the project. I used notes to record contextual features relating to particular interviews. I included details that could not be captured by the tape, such as the body language of the interviewee. Hitchcock and Hughes (1995) suggest that dated field notes form another supplementary layer to the triangulation.

After completing the pilot study and from the initial analysis of the responses I felt confident that the responses obtained from the participants ensured that my questions, referred to as prompts (Appendix 2), were appropriate to my overall research focus. I did however fail to consider strategies to follow up or ask participants to extend further or contribute more to their initial interview after the process had ceased. I was thus aware of the need to ensure that contact details were shared and an agreed mode of communication, email, telephone, face-to-face, was discussed at the end of interviews, for the final study, in order to assist the analysis process and extend upon themes and trends. I am mindful though that such forums could change the meaning of the 'natural occurring conversation' (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005:670) which I was keen to capture. Therefore any follow-up sessions, questions or further clarity seeking was carried out to ensure authenticity and authority in the parameters of my research. This was only necessary for two of the thirty interviews I conducted. In addition, it was decided that only full time staff would be included to maintain the uniformity of experience of the effect gender may have on professional identity and eliminate the potential influence of working part time on the views and experiences of participants.

The most popular method used in qualitative methodology are that of interviews. With the increasing utilisation of technology these can take on many forms. When one considers face-to-face interviews these too may vary, ranging from structured, semi-structured or unstructured interviews (Robson, 2002). Interviews that have pre-set questions yet permit more capacity for a flexible approach and more open-ended responses are commonly referred to as semi-structured interviews (Hannan, 2007). This method affords the interviewee the opportunity to extend their thoughts and speak more broadly relating to issues addressed by any questions. One of the aims of

this study is to provide rich data which can be analysed based on experiences. The semi-structured interview is described by Robson (2002) as:

'Has pre-determined questions, but the order can be modified based on the interviewer's perception of what seems most appropriate. Question wording can be changed and explanations given; particular questions which seem inappropriate with a particular interviewee can be omitted, or additional ones included'

(Robson, 2002:270)

The final questions posed were based on issues identified from the literature review and the pilot interviews (Appendix 2). The role of the researcher during the interview was to try to stimulate narrative through dialogue, rather than elicit specific responses (Gubrium and Holestein, 2001). I was aware not to interrupt narratives or limit interviewee's responses to short statements as the research is concerned with the experiences of male teachers and how this contributes to professional identity. Sensitivity is advised by Charmaz (2001) as participants may share stories they would not normally reveal. The interviews began slowly with a few introductory questions following the guidance of Johnson (2001). Participants were asked to outline their teaching experience and consider the differing age phases they had worked in as well as any other roles in school. During the interviews, the questions were framed carefully and asked gradually 'to foster participant's reflections' (Charmaz, 2001:679). The interviews were semi-structured so therefore the participants had a large degree of autonomy when answering. The main structure of each interview was often not linear. Instead, the outline of the interviews were guided by the questions in a way that aimed to respond to the participants as 'the questions must both explore the interview's topic and fit the participant's experiences' (Charmaz, 2001:679). As a consequence, as the research advanced, themes that were not examined by earlier participants were introduced as their significance to the constructed theory became more explicit. Therefore questions were loosely framed around prompts (see Appendix 2).

Denscombe (2003) believes that interviews are a particularly insightful tool for gaining insights from participants. These participants are responsible for monitoring quality internally and externally and semi-structured interviews were selected to enable them to express themselves at length. The data generated is central to the constructs of this

study. The interview enables participants to discuss their interpretations of their working world; this method develops the construction of knowledge through interaction which will then inform the involved parties in a way that cannot easily be encapsulated by the utilisation of other methods such as questionnaires.

## **Documents**

'Documents' utilised in this enquiry refers primarily to written documents and policies. Written documents take on many variations such as policies, field notes, biographies, autobiographies, annals and chronicles or photographs (Robson, 2002) but for the purpose of this study only government policies and documents were considered for reference. These documents were treated as important in providing supplementary data for triangulation purposes with the main research question concerning policy rhetoric as well as sub question 1a (how does policy attempt to define and shape the role of male primary school teachers?). In this research documentary evidence is being used to triangulate the data generated in the semi-structured interviews, along with the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 – here I draw upon secondary sources. Yin (2003:87) substantiates this stance and states that, for case studies, documents are utilised to 'corroborate and augment evidence from other sources' and this is further substantiated by Cohen *et al* (2001:201), who state that this helps for a more 'visible the phenomena under study'.

Hitchcock and Hughes (1995) urge caution when consulting documentary evidence: specifically whether the documentary source be regarded as credible. Recently, this has become a more pertinent question as sources on the internet, in particular, may have been written for a particular audience, and may be generalised not empirically researched documents. Therefore, it is important to ensure reliability and validity when consulting documentary research; and in this study these sources are a supplementary source supporting other data.

Thomas (2009:170) advises, when consulting documents, that 'the knack is to find the right documents, read them and think about them.' Thus this method resonates with my ontological stance that written words and policy documents are significant elements of the social world and represent to a degree some form of illustration of the appropriate basics of the social world. Mason (2002:106) observes that aspects of the

social world can be traced and 'read' by effective utilisation of documents. For the purpose of this study my epistemological position is that texts, such as policy documents will be used to contribute as evidence of the above ontological attributed.

The method of analysing documents as a secondary method was also appropriate for this study because it enables data to be revisited. According to Robson (2002), as documents are constant forms of data they can therefore be repeatedly analysed. Consequently this leads to an inconspicuous approach (2002). Therefore it is useful to consider that these documents have not been constructed for the purpose of analysis but for other reasons. Therefore such documents enable the researcher to 'observe' instead of being 'observed' Robson (2002:358). Moreover policy documents have been developed by 'highly skilled professionals' (Cohen, *et al.*, 2007:201), so will contain more meaningful data pertinent to the researcher rather than documents that may not be appropriate or valid which may have been created by less proficient contributors.

It has been recognised that written documents are a pertinent form of data for researchers within social science but they do have limitations and disadvantages. As with all methods documentation analysis need to be studied within a context as a means to comprehend their importance at any given time (Cohen, *et al.*, 2007). It is pivotal that there be an understanding of the socio-political situation of when such documents were constructed. The ramifications of not considering such factors would be a misinterpretation of such documents. The notion of bias also needs to be considered when analysing any documents as they may have been written for many occasions and readers. With this in mind:

'...the case study investigator is a vicarious observer, and the documentary evidence reflects a communication among other parties attempting to achieve some other objectives.'

(Yin, 2003:87)

Therefore, there is a need for 'triangulation' with other data sources to address this issue (Robson, 2002). This is the justification as to why this method is being utilised as a secondary method as well as semi-structured interviews.

## **Researcher Reflexivity**

The interpretive approach does not ignore the effects the researcher may have but anticipates them. Thus, it is vital I recognised that the potential influence myself as the researcher may have on those participating in the research. This was identified clearly and incorporated into the analysis of outcomes. The positive relationship the researcher enjoys with some of the participants may result in the expression of the overly optimistic expressions of views relating to their professional identity. The participants least likely to be influenced by the 'interview effect' (Denscombe, 2003:169) are teaching staff with whom the researcher has had little or no contact. It is impossible, given the nature of this project, to eliminate the effect of the interviewer completely, although the behaviour of participants when being interviewed will give some indication as to whether they are answering the questions as fully as possible. Therefore, field notes were taken during the interviews in order to identify any actions or tones of voice that might add to interpretation of the response given.

In order to offset the potential 'interview effect' (Denscombe, 2003:169) the objective stance of the researcher was emphasised with interview questions being posed in a non-leading manner from a neutral position. Denscombe (2003) suggests that while an effort can be made to be polite, responsive, receptive and neutral in order to create a comfortable atmosphere it is not possible to change our personal attributes or indeed professional role. The venue chosen for interviews may also have an impact on the degree of comfort that participants feel in speaking openly so it is important that privacy is ensured. All but three of the interviews were conducted either in the classrooms or offices at the schools the participants were employed at. Three interviews were conducted in my office due to convenience of the participants.

Critical to the research and the pilot study executed is that there remains a paucity of literature on the research of male primary school teachers from the perspective of a male researcher. The majority of the research in this field has been conducted from the stance of female researchers engaged in feminist ethnography (Lyons, 2010; Troman, 2000). Such research accounts have concluded 'methodological strengths' when female researchers research females (Troman, 2000:213). As male primary school teachers were being interviewed I was conscious of the need to consider the

impact my gender may have on the field relations and in-depth interviewing. Previous to my appointment as a Lecturer in Professional Education I was a primary school teacher, working across the full age range from Reception to Year 6. During that time ethnographic research was conducted in primary schools. This experience could enable 'mutual trust' and there was a need to 'build [this] up through dialogue not interrogation' (Oakley, 1991:4). My previous experience in primary education assisted me as the researcher in the 'act of interpretation' as:

'How researchers do this depends on the kind of self they bring to the interpretation - experiences undergone, interests and values, personal preferences, affected dispositions towards those studied, commitment to causes involved in research'

(Woods, 1996:54)

As the researcher, I have been disciplined in my methodological considerations yet as interviewer I was aware of the dimensions of 'self' I was representing. Methodologically the approach taken during the interview process, was to demonstrate that during the execution of my loosely-framed questions, there was a variation of techniques dependent on responses as well as situations thus known as applying 'tactics' (Douglas, 1985). Although a friendly tone was maintained throughout the interviewing process there was an avoidance of just having a 'real' conversation with the participants, as there needed to be a balance between being empathetic (as an former primary school teacher) and influencing responses (Fontana and Frey, 2005). The research is concerned with the participants' role as male primary school teachers, so it was important to encourage them to recount anecdotes regarding their professional lives. Caution was taken not to take to the process for granted although there is recognition that semi-structured interviews are the most feasible mechanism for obtaining information about individuals, groups or organisations (Fontana and Frey, 2005). There also needed to be an awareness of when participants were 'actively' (Holstein and Gubrium, 1995) constructing knowledge around questions and responses.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Access to the case study schools was obtained via an initial letter to the head teachers (see Appendix 1) which included a brief outline of the focus of the research and an

indication of the planned data gathering process. From the earliest stages of this study there has been compliance with the BERA Ethical Guidelines (2011). I ensured that any methodological approaches were within the University guidelines and that before commencing any research I obtained ethical approval from the Research Ethics Committee. The inclusion of ethical considerations must take a prominent role in the research design and pilot study; in particular there is a requirement to ensure that participation is voluntary and informed:

'Researchers must take the steps necessary to ensure that all participants in the research understand the process in which they are engaged, including why their participation is necessary, how it will be used and how and to whom it will be reported.'

(British Educational Research Association, 2011:7)

This requirement was achieved via written information issued to each participant in which the right to withdraw was emphasised together with an assurance of confidentiality and anonymity at all stages. Securing voluntary informed consent should also take place before the research commences (BERA, 2011). All participants were therefore provided with a letter (see Appendix 1) prior to interviewing which outlined the purpose of the study, explained what would happen to the data and again confirmed the right to withdraw at any time. In addition each informant was asked to consent to their interview being recorded and then transcribed. The challenge was to ensure that participants were secure in the confidentiality of their responses and in genuine desire of the researcher to establish their personal views and perceptions. This was to ensure that they felt part of the process and thus more willing to cooperate. As Cameron (1994) suggests:

'If empowering research is to be done 'with' subjects, as well as 'on' them it must seek their active cooperation which requires the disclosure of the researcher's goals, assumptions and procedures.'

(Cameron, 1994:23)

Ethical dilemmas involved in 'research subject disclosure' have been widely outlined in methodological approaches (Oakley, 1991; Skeggs, 1992; Mac an Ghall, 1994). I could be asking teachers sensitive questions regarding positioning strategies they may adopt and their sense of self as well as their professional, and possibly personal, identity.

Pring (2000:115) maintains that 'those being researched into must be brought to the centre of the picture. The moral ground for this is that any other discourse would show disrespect to them as a person'. Therefore, consideration was required to ensure that the research process did not negatively impact on participants.

### **Validity, Reliability and Trustworthiness**

The validity of research concerns the need ensure credibility alongside maintenance of the integrity of the results obtained. In relation to the interview procedure, validity can be assessed by considering whether the instrument measures or describes what it purports to do (Merriam, 2009). The outcomes and conclusions obtained in both the pilot and main studies determined that this was indeed the case. Furthermore, Wragg (2002) asserts that the constructs selected were purposeful ones in that experienced researchers regarded them as important, thus ensuring validity. In addition, it was possible to ensure external validity by comparing the conclusions with existing knowledge as alluded to in the review of literature.

This study has been firmly situated within the interpretivist paradigm; therefore the issue of reliability must be contemplated. Bassey (2002) promotes the word 'trustworthiness' instead of 'reliability' as:

'Reliability is an impractical concept for case study since by its nature case study is a one-off event and therefore not open to exact replication.'

(Bassey, 2002:111)

Bassey also proposes the concept of 'fuzzy generalisations' within social research. As well as ascertaining the validity of ensuring trustworthiness Bassey expresses that 'if x happens in y circumstances then z will occur in all cases' however he observes that if this is not proven than he avers that 'if x happens in y circumstances, z *may* occur' (Bassey, 2011:6). As this research will contribute to current educational debate consideration of the above is important. The use of the term 'reliability' in the context of qualitative research has been contested by Lincoln and Guba (1985) who prefer to replace 'reliability' with terms such as 'credibility' and 'dependability'. In fact, as Cohen *et al* (2007:153) suggest, a solution to the problems associated with validity and

reliability may be a 'judicious compromise', given that an increase in reliability which might be achieved by the use of a more structured interview, would result in a reduction in the validity of the research. The issue of 'trustworthiness' must be recognised in qualitative research and so practical mechanisms such as the use of standardised methods to collect data, prepare transcripts and recording of field notes. In particular the use of audio recordings provides a complete record of the data and eliminates the errors associated with incomplete recollection.

According to Bassey (2002) there are eight tests that can be adopted in order to ascertain whether trustworthiness has been accomplished, these include:

- 'Has there been prolonged engagement with the data sources?
- Has there been persistent observation of emerging issues?
- Has there been sufficient triangulation of data leading to analytical statements?
- Has a critical friend tried to challenge your findings thoroughly?
- Is the account of the research sufficiently detailed to give the reader confidence?'

(Bassey,2002:120)

In relation to this study the response to each of these points is positive. The researcher engaged with and analysed the research data over a lengthy period and, given the context of the position of the researcher, he was able to observe firsthand the issues that emerged, as he was often visiting the majority of schools in the role of supervisor to student teachers. The triangulation of data was facilitated by the use of seventeen institutions which facilitated a comparison of responses between staff in each in that the same interview questions or prompts were used for all participants (see Appendix 2). This process of triangulation was used to combine the perspectives of the range of participants in the project. These varying applications of triangulation to the data collected demonstrate some commonality and give a strong implication of the 'truth' of an interpretation. Mathison (1998) views triangulation as an approach in establishing validity. Through triangulation, common themes which emerge can provide a greater insight into an area under investigation rather than statistical data alone. By utilising such an approach it has been suggested that 'the security that triangulation provides is through giving a fuller picture of phenomena, not necessarily a more certain one' (Richie and Lewis, 2003:44).

Bassey's (2002) last two recommendations specify the role of critical friend the importance of detail in the report. The part of the researcher's supervisor in assisting as critical friend has been vital in ensuring the trustworthiness of the findings and the detailed account of the research provided also gives confidence in this context. Thus, the research data can be trustworthy in the way that Bassey (2002) outlines it.

## **Analysis**

When collating data from narratives or other assortment of words, focusing on a qualitative approach of such data is often outlined as 'rich', 'full' and 'real' yet lacking a numerical quantitative form (Miles and Huberman, 1994). The complication of a qualitative approach has concisely been explained by Robson as an 'attractive nuisance' (2002:455), mainly due to the complexities of collating and analysing it. Moreover Tesch (1990:304-305) writes that 'there is no correct way of doing qualitative analysis'. She further states that:

'In qualitative research, no two scholars produce the same results, even if they are faced with exactly the same task. Their differences in philosophical stances and individual styles will lead them to perceive and present the phenomenon each in his/her own way'

(Tesch, 1990:304)

I understand that in order for data from the interviews and documentary evidence to answer the research questions and to generate new knowledge, analysis and evaluation is inevitably necessary (Bell, 2014). To this end a table is presented below highlighting the advantages and disadvantages of qualitative analysis:

***Table 2: A synthesis of personal understanding of the advantages and disadvantages of qualitative analysis***

<b>Advantages of qualitative analysis</b>	<b>Disadvantages of qualitative analysis</b>
Richness of data generated by participants – a 'lived experience' (Miles and Huberman, 1994:10)	Qualitative analysis takes time and the analysis tends to be interpretative resulting in more reflexive findings, rather. 'than a discovery of fact' (Denscombe, 2007:313).
The opportunity to 'move' between the data when analysing it – the analysis does not simply happen at the end but takes place throughout the project, it is	There is no one way of analysing the data. The researcher is analysing in a way which is fit for purpose but also making the decisions and judgements.

<b>Advantages of qualitative analysis</b>	<b>Disadvantages of qualitative analysis</b>
iterative.	
By appreciating and understanding that the researcher is able to 'read' the situation and make sense of the interviewee's words.	As qualitative analysis tends to be interpretive, the researcher needs to consider whether his/her understanding of the words used by the interviewee are the same as the interviewee's understanding of the words he/she used and what the interviewee was intending to portray.
The possibility to form judgements as the analysis develops providing the opportunity to consider further causes, theories and hypotheses.	The potential to lose the 'synergy' (Cohen <i>et al</i> , 2011) by fragmenting the data.
Making thoughtful and considered decisions, and using the data systematically and critically, to construct an argument and being creative to understand a particular phenomena.	The interpretive nature of analysis means that there would be alternative views if someone other than the researcher analyses the data. There is also the potential issue of 'oversimplifying the explanation' (Denscombe, 2007:313)
Being able to develop theories as the research analysis progresses and considering alternative viewpoints to support critical analysis.	Generalisability is an issue as the richness of data generated can be more limited compared with quantitative data

Denscombe's (2007) five stages of qualitative data analysis was used in order to ensure that the process of analysis was rigorous. The first stage 'preparation of the data' involved making copies of the sound files from the interviews and transcribing the interviews in a compatible format with space to make additional field-note comments, to aid with analysis, along with a simple reference system to be able to locate comments about recurrent themes easily making comparisons of aspects of the data possible. The second stage, 'familiarity of the data' allowed the researcher to 'understand the data in context' (Denscombe, 2007:291) and to 'read between the lines' for any 'implied meanings' (Denscombe, 2007:291). The consideration of silence and any pauses during the interviews were important here. The third stage involved 'interpreting the data (developing codes, categories and concepts)'. This stage was essential in identifying the components and impact of policy rhetoric on professional lives and establishing these various components allowed the identification of the emerging themes to be recognised. The fourth stage of 'verifying the data' is presented in Chapter Four. Within this, the creditability, reliability, generalreliability, or transferability, and objectivity of the data have been considered. The fifth and final

stage of Denscombe's (2007) qualitative analysis process is 'representing the data' which involved editing the data to represent the participants perceptions. In this study, analysing the interview data involved giving meaning to the words and what implications the words have in relation to the topic under investigation. Looking for emerging themes from the thirty interviews was a straightforward and methodological approach adopted to analyse the data. The main advantage of using this approach was that semi-structured interview data was systematically analysed, question by question, and allowed all responses to be considered in a similar way and to be fairly treated. Recurring patterns emerged from the interview data and a constant comparative method was used enabling the themes to be identified (see Appendix 3).

Following the interviews, responses were transcribed by the researcher in the same way as for the pilot study, rather than utilising a third party. This was an attempt to ensure that the researcher was able 'to provide the richest possible data for the study of talk' (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005:875), in order to capture the most immediate 'experienced social reality' (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005:874). Participants were afforded the opportunity to review the transcripts of their interview: all interviewees declined this offer.

In general terms the analysis of qualitative data can be challenging as large volumes of data in a non-standard format are produced. The method of coding and categorising the data facilitated the identification of themes and relationships which were then used to produce generalisations and explanations. The initial coding process required the researcher to identify key ideas to be looked for in the data, these originated from existing theories, professional experience or themes in the literature review. This was followed by the identification of emerging themes provided by some of the participants and then the categorisation of transcripts using these as a framework. This was flexible as additional themes were inevitably identified as the analysis proceeded, thus requiring a regular review of data that had already been examined. In addition the validity of the themes was regularly checked against the reality expressed by participants. At the start of the procedure the categories chosen were not crucial as they underwent continuous refinement and improvement as the research progressed and a constant comparative approach was drawn upon. The most important element was to identify 'patterns and processes, commonalities and differences' (Miles and Huberman, 1994:9) and through this process of reflection and checking a set of

generalisations were refined that explained the themes and relationships identified in the data. The final statements which emerged were compared to existing theories and explanations and existing knowledge was extended by the research findings. This was also compared to the analysis of government policy and 'grey' literature pertaining to male primary school teachers to provide contextual data (Linclon and Cuba, 1985 cited in Cohen *et al*, 2007:182). Documents were referred to in order to identify frequent and infrequent word usage and begin to construct themes around dominant and subordinate discourse in the policy construction of male teachers' professional identities and daily practices.

In this study, as well as identifying recurring themes analytical comparison was an ongoing process. Comparison of construction of professionalism, teachers as men and teachers responses to policy, within interviews, then across policies with other policies, then across interviews with other interviews, then finally across policies and interviews. Through this triangulation, common themes which emerge provide a greater insight into an area under investigation rather than statistical data alone. By utilising such an approach it has been suggested that 'the security that triangulation provides is through giving a fuller picture of phenomena, not necessarily a more certain one' (Richie and Lewis, 2003:44).

## **Summary**

This chapter has provided a clarification of the wider frameworks and the ontological and epistemological assumptions that underpin this research. The research strategy as well as the philosophical reasons behind the methodological approach were explained and justified. Justification was also made of the methods of data collection used and an indication of how findings will be analysed is given. Finally, research management issues such as access, ethics, validity and reliability were also discussed. Having discussed all these and clearly acknowledged the researcher's identity, values and beliefs, this thesis now moves to present the findings of the research in the following chapter.

## Chapter 4 – Findings and Analysis

### Introduction

This chapter re-visits the research questions and presents an analysis of the findings of the data gained from thirty male primary school teachers in seventeen contrasting primary schools. The semi-structured questions posed, in order to gain an understanding about participants' lived experience, have been analysed and grouped under headings. A thematic analysis approach has been adopted (see Appendix 3). The interpretative view of this research was influenced by the humanistic knowledge domain outlined by Ribbins and Gunter (2002). This has allowed the practical reality of the responses from the participants, in a case-by-case basis in the analysis section, to be explored through the generated 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973 in Cohen *et al*, 2007:254). It became clear from the responses given that phase leaders, middle leaders and Assistant HTs aligned themselves as teachers as opposed to senior leaders or managers. Therefore it was not necessary or appropriate to distinguish the roles of participants in school in the analysis section; rather they have been referred to by their pseudonyms. Such a small sample is problematic when attempting to make generalised statements, yet it is possible to say that responses reflect the patterns found in the literature as well as contributing to new knowledge.

The findings have been presented as excerpts, or a series of conversations derived from themes in the data analysis phase with associated analysis (see Chapter 3). The themes, presented in this order, were male role models; stereotypical behaviour and masculinity in primary schools; safeguarding and child protection as well as social spaces and the juxtaposition of power. They were selected for cohesion and clarity in the narrative of this chapter; they also reflect themes in Chapter 2 and are therefore pivotal aspects throughout the study. The approach of utilising excerpts from participants' comments is aligned with an interpretive paradigm (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005; Seal, 1999). By presenting contextualised extracts I was aware that 'one of the strengths of thinking about our data as narrative is that this opens up possibilities for a variety of analytic strategies' (Merriam, 2009:203).

The analytical process as well as coding and categorising have already been acknowledged in Chapter 3, but it is significant to state that the anthology of themes

does not demonstrate exclusivity within each. As the data was analysed it became apparent that there were overlaps between themes. Each theme was sufficient to illuminate the many different and similar perspectives relating to professional practices and professional identities. The voices of the participants were pivotal in addressing the research questions as well as the theoretical models presented in Chapter 2. Social and educational policies have been continually drawn upon in order to inform the analysis. To begin the process of analysis, the dominant theme of male primary school teachers as role models is the first theme for interpretation from the research data. The findings are presented in decreasing order of significance, as identified by the participants.

### **Role Models**

The term 'role model' was introduced and regularly utilised and deemed significant by the participants as it was used by twenty-nine out of the thirty participants (97%). The shared view was male teachers were needed in school as role models. This discourse was outlined for two reasons by the participants: a lack of a male influence in children's home lives, and low achievement of boys in primary schools. Indeed the majority of participants referred to the absence of a male influencing the lives of children and viewed their role as male teachers as significant in responding to the low achievement of boys (see Chapter 2), an understanding succinctly conveyed by Ben:

'I think the pupils liked the novelty of me being a male and I do think the boys reacted in a quite positive way because there are no other male teachers in the school. I was told by other teachers and the HT that I had a good impact on the boys' learning, particularly in writing ... I put lots of passion into my lessons, particularly literacy and it has made an impact and I am a *role model*. Not all the pupils here have a father on the scene so I know I am also a father-figure – sometimes the only male influence in their lives'

Ben's and other participants' perceptions resonate with the discourse of the 'failing boy' in a feminised world (Burn, 2001;13; Dermott, 2012; Epstein *et al*, 2000) in relation to male role models in the primary sector as outlined in Chapter 2. Responses from the majority of participants correlate with mythopoetic literature which often offers versions of men and boys as 'lost' (Biddulph, 1994; Pollack, 1999). The assertion that the participants view themselves 'as being [a] fundamental role model' in relation to boys at 'a crucial time in their development' (Will) was a common response. Will's

conversation and others ‘...usually draw[s] on assumptions about a natural or essential masculinity’, (Mills *et al*, 2004:362).

The obligation, imposed by policy-makers (see Chapter 2) and the school community, to reassert masculinity within the school system is based on the principle that boys are frequently misunderstood by ‘female teachers in a female dominated world’ (Martino, 2008:23) and this resonates with a significant number (53%) of the male teachers interviewed who specifically referred to male teachers as role models for boys. The drive for male role models in primary schools has been identified by Smith (2005) as being based on the assumption that males and females teach differently. Such an assumption was articulated by some of the participants including Ricky who believed that, ‘if you never encounter a male teacher at primary school you’re going to miss out on ... I think you’ll miss out on a different kind of attitude’. The notion of ‘missing out’ by the absence of male teachers as well as having a different approach to teaching was evident in the data, for example:

‘I have brought something new and a bit different and that is a really nice feeling actually, to go into a profession and think I have something to give. So that’s an encouragement to more men to do it in the future, a place where you really feel like you should be and you’re required...’

(Tony)

An opposing and different perspective relating to the qualities and role teachers should adhere to was offered by Josh who articulated that ‘it’s more the relationship you’ve got with the children and whether you’re approachable...rather than it being because you’re a man or woman.’ It has to be stated that such responses were rare and that out of the twenty-nine male teachers who utilised the term role model, only four responses (13%) actually specified that it was individual educational philosophies that informed pedagogy rather than gender. Interestingly, Peter, the one participant who did not use the term role model, stated:

‘I don’t think it should be an issue. I don’t see it as a talking point really ... I don’t think you should get preferential treatment because you are male.’

A more typical response from the participants was offered by Devon who has previously worked in EY and now works in KS1 but shares his opinion on the importance of young children having contact with male teachers early on in their schooling:

'I think it comes down to male role models, and society and you know young boys in those young phases, phases if they don't have a male role model, it's giving them one and an earlier opportunity than if they came across them in Year 5 or Year 6'.

Many of the participants were vague about the qualities or worth they believed that as males they offered to their community (i.e. primary schools). However the vast majority of male teachers asserted their maleness ensured they offered something 'different' (Tony) or unique to primary teaching which could be directly correlated to gender alone. Research by Drudy *et al* (2005) and Martino (2008) contradicts this as they discovered that teachers, regardless of gender, vary in their choice of professional pedagogy and furthermore there is no basis for claims that male teachers are different to female teachers. Moreover, probing questions outlined that a significant number of the participants aligned their value or difference in primary education to masculine activities and stereotypical behaviour which will be outlined later in this chapter.

The value and validity of men in primary school was an element that was perceived to be crucial in fostering positive attitudes amongst boys by all but one of the participants. The need for role models was expressed by Will, who as stated earlier views himself as a 'fundamental role model'. Here he asserts his perception that the benefits of men in primary schools is significant as often such males are the only males consistently present in the lives of some children. The assumption being made here is that children need to be brought up in a traditional family environment. Byron (2008), who has been commissioned by the previous and current government to address longstanding educational issues, has stated that the need to have male teachers as role models is now of paramount importance due to the 'breakdown of the traditional family unit, growing up in single parent families or not having a male figure at home'. Indeed the validation and approval of parents and single mothers was a recurring theme in the data and is highlighted by Martin who believes that he is 'a role model for the children and I think parents appreciate that.' Furthermore within an age when single parent homes are so prevalent (Martino, 2008) some of the participants felt

extra pressure in the position as a male role model 'as often you're gonna be the only male they're gonna come across on a day-to-day basis' (Mike).

Another perspective on this theme is offered by Gavin who stated, 'there are a lot of children from single parent families and I think they crave good strong male figures.' The culture of misogynist blame that is seen to shape much of the male teacher gender debate draws upon various discourses, which are clear throughout conservative politics which position single mothers as culpable for failing to rear their sons in appropriate ways (Blankenhorn, 1995; Edlund, 2001; Arndt, 2003; Slattery, 2003). With statistics revealing that 3 million children live in single parent households within the United Kingdom, with just 8% of these single parents fathers (Gingerbread, 2014), it demonstrates the extent to which male teachers are felt to be needed to deconstruct conventional gendered stereotypes and enable children to encounter males performing counter stereotypical roles within a female dominated profession (Sukhanandan, 2000; Thronton and Bricheno, 2006; Francis, 2008). The notion of being a role model in tandem with being a father-figure clearly did not sit comfortably with all participants and the pressures of being a replacement father or 'influential father like figure' (Mills *et al*, 2004:363) was articulated by some participants (10%). For example Ray said:

'There is this perception that I am going to be a father-figure and I am like no... I have trained to be a teacher, to teach, not fix the ills of society...'

Similarly from Richard:

'...males might have an advantage because, especially with children that haven't got a dad, they might feel that you're the male role model. But I don't really feel like that to be honest... I am not a dad, I am a teacher'

These findings are in accord with and reinforce past research, whereby some male teachers argue, '...their role is to educate and not to be a parent substitute' (McGrath and Sinclair, 2013:533). Despite this though throughout the interviews the failing boy or lost boy was often identified (37%) and specific examples cited:

'There was this one child who was really tricky. Bit of a Jack the lad kind of boy and he was, at home his father wasn't there and because I was able to speak to him, able to get that kind of

authoritative with him. And he seemed to listen to me more and his work improved which I found interesting'

(Chris)

As well as Rob:

'.....straight away you have a bond with the boys... the football side, what team you support, the kind of films you have what books you're into. There is a new wave of Star Wars books and cartoons we used in our school and this mum came up to me and commented on how much her son enjoyed it and having a man teacher and she was glad. She said I was like his new dad...who the boy never saw..... I didn't know what to say to be honest'.

Altogether 37% of the participants interviewed talked about a particular boy in their class who they had come into contact with, and how each individual teacher believed they had a positive impact on his academic achievement and behaviour. These examples represent how influential each teacher believed their gender, performativity and personal habitus (Bourdieu, 1990) were, and how their masculine traits could be utilised to the advantage of the failing boy discourse. Indeed many have argued that gender is a construct performed rather than an essential characteristic (Butler, 1990; Foster and Newman, 2005; Noddings, 2003; Tucker, 2004). The political context discussed in Chapter 2 helps to examine the emergence of the boys' underachievement debate, and leads to the examination of discourses about boys and school which have derived from a variety of theoretical positions about masculinity and schooling: the 'poor boys' discourse; the 'failing schools' discourse; and the 'boys will be boys' discourse (Epstein *et al*, 2000:6).

The 'poor boys' debate, which has been developed by scholars such as Bly (1991), Biddulph (1994), and Lydon (1996), suggests that female teachers have made boys 'soft', through overwhelming them with matriarchal values. Consequently, it has been argued in research and by the participants in this study (37%) that schools are a terrible place for boys, in the sense that they are 'trapped by 'The Matriarchy' and are dominated by women who cannot accept boys for who they are' (Kruse, 1996:439). The 'failing schools' discourse suggests that the structure and education policies of schools is detrimental to the academic achievement of boys. As such, Epstein *et al* (2000:20) claims that boys' underachievement has been attributed to something external – pedagogy, methods, texts, and teachers. The final discourse, 'boys will be

boys', is grounded in the essentialist biological assumption that posits a static and unchangeable 'boyiness', in which aggression, fighting and delayed maturity situates the underachievement of boys as extrinsic to boys themselves (Epstein *et al*, 2000). Thus from the stance of the participants what should be modelled is an accepted version of masculinity. As illustrated by Gavin, this bearing can feel like a huge responsibility:

'... boys have been told explicitly to watch what I do and listen to me because their dads are not there anymore and they need to learn from a strong man which is a lot of pressure.'

Gavin's experiences and that of the majority of the participants chime with Lingard and Douglas' research which concluded that males in primary schools are expected to behave in a very masculine manner as well as a homogeneous force being in place (Lingard and Douglas, 1999). The homogeneous force in place is the school system. Indeed, Gavin's response demonstrates subjective conformity in relation to gender performativity and notably under the rubric of heterosexual normalisation falls under in society and micro-society (i.e. primary school). The identity politics (Butler, 1990) image of being a 'strong man' is a tacit message which forms part of the typology of maleness (see Chapter 2) that it was widely believed, amongst the participants, that should be demonstrated by male primary teachers. Moreover Will avers that there is 'a stigma attached to male primary school teachers as being gay and not heterosexual,' thus reinforcing the notion of the 'strong male,' this is further discussed in the next section Stereotypical Expectations: Masculinity in Primary Schools.

The notion of performativity in relation to gender (Butler, 1990) and professionalism (Ball, 2003), as outlined in Chapter 2, was evident throughout all the responses. The social situated notion of male teachers as role models is a complicated and often under-analysed aspect of teacher identities. This is further compounded when gender is an added dimension to the identities for example focusing on male teachers. Such a 'performatively constituted' (Butler, 1990:25) notion of entrenched and expected gendered behaviours, that being males behaving in a masculine manner, has clearly had an impact on the majority of the participants (97%). The conditions, constraints and contradictions many male primary school teachers currently have to work within and adhere to as well as having to consider being a role model is encapsulated by Chris:

'It's a lot of pressure... You know it's a lot to think about you know, before you've even entered the classroom you are told "you are going to be a father-figure here speaking about...you know, you need to shout at them, authoritative." It's like ... okay, right let me get the teaching done... And it's a lot of pressure to think okay on top of that I've got to do...'

The position of men as primary school teachers as well as role models therefore presents a challenge for such professionals. The claim that boys need male role models has been challenged by many, including Robb (2001: see also, Ashley and Lee, 2003; Arthur and Cremin, 2010; Drudy *et al* 2005; Thornton, 2001). Men working in primary schools were interviewed and Robb (2001) concluded that the contradictory discourses about gender and primary teaching work, in relation to the notion of male role models, resulted in polarised views between men. This was dependent on the typologies of males (see Chapter 2) that individual participants felt it appropriate for children to view in primary schools. Such polarized views were offered by Ryan and Bobby who expressed the importance of offering differing role models in terms of masculinity. Ryan shared his initial thoughts on his role and later added the importance of boys having a range of typologies of masculinity, specifically from men:

'We live in the age where many people were brought up by single mothers in their life and so many really may have no men in their lives at all, especially on boys, they have nobody to look up to for those stereotypical male things in life....They need to see all different sorts of men with different lifestyles and different ways of doing things and look at them as role models....'

(Ryan).

Also:

'I mean I just feel that being a male role model is really good for the kids. I think that it allows them to experience something different from the norm of just being a female role model... I feel that especially living drama and theatre and music and musical, I can associate really well with the girls, I can tell you about Hannah Montana and Bratz – I'm not into sports...'

(Bobby)

Gender as performance in a theoretical sense is not an interior truth as outlined by Butler (see Chapter 2). This is in accordance with the findings thus far. Rather than the assumption that performativity is a socially constructed article 'gender becomes a

mere arbitrary article' (Jagger, 2008:19). Social constructionists consider masculinity and femininity to exist throughout discourses which situate gender identity in specific ways (Haase, 2008; Francis, 2008). The notion of 'not being into sport' as expressed by Bobby infers a performance expected or attributed to one specific gender. This is similar to the disciplines of theory (Butler, 2001; Jagose, 1996) by which the theoretical sense of performativity is most appropriate as this performance can shift or change dependent on the 'audience' (Coffey, 2001). An aspect of queer theory views sexuality as socially constructed rather than something essential which one is born with, which is very similar to the majority of the experiences and perceptions of the participants in terms of their constructs as well as gender and indeed others position themselves as role models (Jagose, 1996). Such identities of the participants are therefore self-defining as well as seeking approval from the primary school community.

The notion of a performed dominant masculinity is evident here – Ryan's identification of 'stereotypical male things' - thus aligning with a gender-expected model of behaviour and a normalised gendered mode of behaviour. Gender is socially and culturally constructed but influenced by peers as well as society's, indeed micro-society's expectations. This is clearly evident when the participants of this study co-constructed their own definitions of what exactly the attributes a male role model should display, which will be outlined later on.

As outlined in Chapter 2, research (Paechter, 1998; Francis, 2005; Martino, 2007; Skelton, 2009) supports the concept that males are more concerned to establish themselves as 'masculine' without feminine traits because of peer and society's or normative expectations. This was clearly evident in this research. Within micro-cultures, such as primary schools and these being institutions there is 'domination and subordination' (Mac an Ghail, 1994:4) when one considers professional identities. Mac an Ghail argues that there is a dichotomy when considering the specific role of male teachers whether they be 'councillors' or 'policemen' (Mac an Ghail, 1994:34) thus resonating with the experiences of the majority of the participants and most notably Bobby and Ryan. According to the responses of the participants of this study males in primary schools are expected to behave as males 'should' in society (see also Drudy *et al*, 2005; Skelton, 2007; Eade, 2010; Butler, 1990; Noddings, 2003). Many of the males interviewed were initially keen to establish themselves as 'masculine', without feminine traits rather than 'feminine' without masculine traits.

As with the majority of the participants, the academic underachievement of boys in education and the failing boy discourse have been a central tenet in recent debates concerned with raising standards at primary school level (Epstein *et al*, 2000; Dermott, 2012). Comments such as 'I am a positive role model for the boys' (Edward) were common responses throughout the data. Yet notions such as the participants' identification of themselves as male role models and the perceived necessity for positive male role models for boys' academic achievements amongst policy-makers (see Chapter 2) are challenged by Lingard's (2002) research. He concluded that the gender of a teacher is not a significant factor and 'does not have a noticeable impact on either achievement or attitudes' (Lingard, 2002:358). Furthermore Warrington and Younger (2000) noted that social and environmental influences or factors are more significant when comparing the academic achievements of boys and girls in primary school than whether or not boys or girls in primary have a contact with male teachers (see also Bricheno and Thornton, 2006; Carrington and McPhee, 2008). After all, 'what primary teaching is about is not providing male role models but exciting teaching' (Ashley and Lee, 2003:13).

Interestingly, only 10% of the participants referred to the positive influence that a male teacher could have on girls: 'I'd say the perception is that boys benefit from having males in school. I would argue that girls benefit just as much' (Josh). Thus from the majority of responses from the participants, who do focus on the underachievement of boys, it is evident that this adds to the body of evidence which highlights 'the interests of girls are being sacrificed in a number of locations in order to accommodate concerns raised by those advocating for interests of boys' (Charlton *et al*, 2007:474). In all the responses where girls were cited it was always an afterthought in relation to role models and boys. It would appear from the majority of responses from this research (57%) that girls have been marginalised and neglected by the debate of boys' underachievement. For example Ricky states '... the boys respected me...the girls, I'm not really sure about'. Indeed some social commentators believe that girls are often marginalised not only throughout society, but also within classrooms in which 'teachers responding more readily to boys who monopolised linguistic and physical space and teacher attention' (Younger and Warrington, 2005:16) and again this was evident in the data (see responses Chris and Ryan earlier on in this section).

The data in this research indicates that the majority of male teachers believe that they develop effective relationships with pupils through masculine activities which they believe contribute to improved behavioural outcomes in pupils, specifically boys. Girls are referred to as an afterthought or viewed as marginal and this debate is examined by one participant who states:

'But I think sometimes the positive impact on girls' education is overlooked, perhaps in the media and other circles and I think that is something, perhaps, that needs to be looked at more, that it is a benefit for girls to benefit from as well as boys.'

(Josh)

From the data in the research the social messages which have been constructed by the participants in relation to a male role model demonstrate the need to construct hegemonic masculine traits. Therefore many of the participants felt they had an obligation to model hegemonic masculine behaviours.

Interestingly 'other circles' (Josh) in this context are related to the majority of participants in this study as only one tenth (10%) of the participants specifically referred to male teachers being role models for girls. The constant focus on boys' underachievement and inappropriate behaviour neglects the existence of equivalent inappropriate behaviour from girls which is rarely reported or widely published (Osler and Vincent, 2003). Conversely there is a growing concern 'about a general deterioration in standards of behaviour in society, it is not only boys, or all boys, who should be blamed' (Thornton and Bricheno, 2006:6). There is however a presumption that the feminisation of the primary teaching profession has negative effects for the education of boys (Mills *et al*, 2004), and with a growing anxiety that the predominance of women teachers have led primary schools to favour girls, and girls' learning styles, over those of boys (Biddulph, 1994; Hoff-Sommers, 2000), calls for more male teachers have been reverberated around the educational systems of most Westernised countries. When educators and sociologists discuss feminisation, they are typically referring to 'labour market changes where the participation of women in various occupations is increasing' (Drudy *et al*, 2006:6). Throughout the responses analysed, the role model status is constructed upon a hegemonic masculinity. Moreover the majority of male teachers in this study assert that their gender is the

dominant aspect of their identity which is maximised upon in order to positively affect the issue of the lost boy.

The continued drive and identification amongst the participants and indeed policy-makers for male role models in primary schools (see Chapter 2) neglects to outline *what exactly* it is that should be modelled. Marquese (1995:9-10) outlines that role models are required to demonstrate that they have 'achieved personal success on the basis of the existing laws and customs of the society'. Interestingly when the participants were requested to expand upon what exactly it is that a role model should be, the responses were aligned to a 'common sense' discourse (Jones 2007:186):

'Err...well no errr.. I've never really thought about that really.... I think as a teacher you're automatically a good role model, you know just because of who you are and yeah you're trying to do well for the kids. It's kind of obvious really.'

(Simon)

As well as:

'I've never thought of it...But you know, I never thought this really until you've asked me the question but I think the same as society and what is expected of men in society.'

(Adeel)

Unsurprisingly, the participants' definitions and evaluations of what exactly has to be modelled by a role model seem somewhat ill-defined. Yet, their hesitation when trying to explain their interpretations and practices of a role model seemed not to lie with the act of evaluating, but with available measures and a clear definition of the term. Indeed the 'call for more male role models are often driven by *common sense* understandings about socialisation' (Martino *et al*, 2010:268) and this is a key message in the findings of this research. This also resonates with the main aims of this study and is particularly pertinent to research questions 1 (How does policy rhetoric relating to the promotion of male teachers in English primary education correspond with the lived experiences and professional identities of male teachers in primary schools?) and 1a (How does policy attempt to define and shape the role of male primary school teachers?).

The tensions around defining exactly *what* should be modelled outline the complexities when considering the many different versions of being a male primary school teacher as a role model or even that it should be reflected upon. Research by Jones (2007) supports this and she observes the main reason for government policies and strategies that endeavour to achieve a balance of genders in primary education, as identified by Martin as 'children need to see men in schools working...otherwise, they're only seeing females at work here,' is based on a requirement for 'more male role models ...[but] few could articulate why that would be beneficial' (Jones, 2007:184).

Furthermore as Bricheno and Thornton (2006) suggest, when considering whom children actually view as their role models, research has demonstrated that 'parents and close relatives were the most frequently chosen role models for boys and girls' (Bricheno and Thornton, 2006:10). Furthermore there was also a differentiation between genders as 'boys are much less likely than girls to have role models at all' (Bricheno and Thornton, 2006:10). Moreover recent research findings outlined that only 13% of primary aged boys identified their teachers, regardless of gender, as role models (Hutchings *et al*, 2008). It is worth noting that none of the participants expressed clearly *what* should be modelled by role models and who indeed pupils, be it boys or girls viewed as their role models.

Considerations of boys and men as homogenous groups neglect the effect of ethnicity, social class and sexuality, as well as many other factors. Although gender was the dominant factor identified when outlining role models by the participants, it was not the only aspect of their identities which some participants believed should be modelled. One tenth of the participants (10%) were male teachers from an ethnic minority and Adeel outlined his experience as an ethnic minority in school:

'...not long after I arrived, somebody who was making me feel welcome shared with me on that the day I got the job she heard a conversation in the staff room there where various senior members of staff and one asked 'who got the job? Was it the long haired Paki?' And that long haired Paki was me. This was in 1985 and I never felt very welcome there but always felt responsible to show children from different backgrounds what they can achieve, a kind of role model'

(Adeel).

As well as Brett:

'I worked in schools being maybe one or two in a minority and being male it's not just about academia but socially in terms of the role modelling, throughout the school ....I understand being a positive role model and understand the role of a teacher, not just a male teacher, or a minority as a black teacher, but a teacher.'

All three of the participants from an ethnic minority group focused on the importance, and in some cases the pressure, of being an ambassador for their ethnicity, but only after they had stated the importance of their maleness when considering being a role model. Two of the participants disclosed their sexuality as gay men and one in particular felt this was significant and had made the decision, after a traumatic event in his life to share this with staff, parents and the school community:

'...when I broke up with my ex he posted stuff about me on Facebook, outted me. I was mortified. All the parents, dinner ladies and staff and even some of the children found out I was gay. I had to take time off but when I returned the HT had a meeting with me and said that I was a good role model for the community and that I wasn't a stereotypical gay. She said the children wouldn't know what gay was and laughed and told me to get on with it and just teach...when I think about it, it makes sense ... it was a while ago now'

(Ray).

Again as with issues relating to ethnicity, Ray and Mike felt the pressure to be representative and visible versions of gay men, another minority in society and primary schools. Multiple versions of role models belies the simplistic stance of policy-makers; being that male primary school teachers are a homogenous group thus neglecting the effect ethnicity, social class and sexuality, and other factors will have on professional identities. The data was reasonably silent in relation to attitudes towards offering different versions or even challenging the hegemonic masculinity. In fact, the majority of participants within the study felt comfortable about retaining and upholding the masculine versions of themselves. Interestingly Ray's description of a conversation with his HT is further contextualised as he later informed me that 'I am not your usual stereotypical gay' (Ray). Again as with the majority of the participants Ray, aligned himself with a hegemonic masculinity. There was recognition from the participants that children benefit from various versions of masculinity and femininity. This will be outlined later on in this chapter.

Only 10% of the participants considered their perceived male role model status as having a direct effect on the wider community beyond the primary school. Bronfenbrenner's ecological model (1979), of macro- (state or national level), meso- (local or community) and micro- (the individual) levels of influence is useful to consider when considering role models and identity construction as only two of the participants believed that as male Asian or gay males they may have some impact or influence over meso-levels. As stated by Ray (see above) and Liam who was an EY Asian teacher stated below:

'I think if I can speak for specifically for the Asian community...you can probably get away with it if you're a Year 6 teacher within the Asian community. But I think it is slowly, very slowly, changing with time. I mean we want the right males not any males. It is unusual to have a male Asian in early years so I hope the more we get the more it changes.'

Liam's notion of being 'able to get away with' it was further contextualised when he outlined how primary teaching was often perceived as a profession for females, yet working with older children was much more socially, and indeed culturally, acceptable. This notion is further elaborated under the next theme, 'Stereotypical Expectations/Masculinity in Primary Schools'. It was initially gender and then ethnicity that was viewed as important in relation to aspects of professional identities, role modelling and practice amongst certain ethnic communities as identified by Rohit:

'I think that they thought I was Pakistani but I'm not ... but I look Indian and there aren't any Asian teachers in the school. I think because I am Asian in ethnicity the behaviour was easier. It could be because of their cultural backgrounds. So, like at home, the father... because they were quite traditional ... like Pakistani like... so they see the male Asian as you know... like they show respect immediately just generally; it's just in their nature to do that. For that particular community, not for the public; I mean just for that community, just for that particular community.'

Here it is clear that Rohit is confirming his belief that a certain ethnic community is a hegemonic group with all the same values and principles relating to the role of males and indeed male teachers. Thus confirming the findings from previous research that the concept of a role model is a complex phenomenon which is under-researched in the discourse of primary teaching (Crawford and Unger, 2000; Lyons, 2010). All of the

twenty-nine male teachers who did refer to role model firmly believed that their position as a role model in the primary school community had a positive impact on the pupils in the primary school. Thus the majority of participants (97%) believed that as their influence as role models they influenced the population at a meso-level. In some cases (26%) the micro-level (individual) was concerned with their own identities and the formation of influence on individual boys (see comments from Chris and Rob earlier).

## **Overview of Section 1**

As well as informing all the research aims, the information in this section was relevant in addressing the following research questions:

1. How does policy rhetoric relating to the promotion of male teachers in English primary education correspond with the lived experiences and professional identities of male teachers in primary schools?

And sub-question:

- a. How does policy attempt to define and shape the role of male primary school teachers?

Although policy was not specifically referred to by the participants the notion of role model as evidenced in policy discourse (see chapter 2) was explicitly mentioned by the vast majority (97%) of the participants. The discourse of male primary school teachers being described as male role models is one of the main claims ascribed in educational policy (see Chapter 2). As with previous research and in particular research from Skelton (2011) the participants in this study have differing and contradictory opinions when being referred to as role models. A small minority (7%) expressed negative connotations about being perceived as being special or different (see also NUT, 2002; Maylor, 2009; Skelton, 2011). Whilst the majority of participants in this study accepted the notion of being viewed as role models as they either believe they can compensate for a lack of male influence in children's lives and 'inject humour in the classroom' (Skelton, 2011:14) or 'have a bit of banter and a bit of kind of jokey rivalry... with the lads particularly' (Tim), whilst others were keen to offer versions of a non-traditional male role model (Liam and Adeel). Therefore, in this study the majority of male teachers do indeed feel comfortable with being referred to as role models whilst a

small minority, in line with research from Smith (2005) reject the notion, insisting that their main role is to educate children and not be a substitute parent (see comments from Ray, Richard and Gavin).

From the responses of the male teachers interviewed it is clear that the vast majority frame their identities around the discourse of teachers as role models. This social message has its foundations on a hegemonic masculinity. Observations by James (2000:92) concur the findings from this research that the 'practices of role modelling are part of a hegemonic system'. Male teachers in this study view themselves as playing a pivotal role in a deficit model of modern family life, usually affiliated with the absence of fathers or a lack of male figures in the lives of boys. For example:

'I had a strong father-figure, a strong role model. However, what would happen if a child if they didn't? If that was absent from home in a home environment and also absent in the learning environment where are they getting ...where are they obtaining that role model figure?'

(Will)

From the data it is evident that the majority of participants had not really considered or reflected on what it actually meant to be a role model in their community, that being a primary school. Indeed the need to behave in what Nixon (1996) terms a 'very stereotypical male' way and take on traditional masculine roles was evident in the data. Evidence exists within the study to suggest that the participants' identities were informed by others. Research by Sumsion (2000) notes that identity formation is not only influenced by what circumscribes an individual, but more crucially what colleagues and others anticipate from an individual and what he allows to affect his identity, this is particularly pertinent in the role model discourse (Beijaard *et al*, 2003; Reynolds, 1997). The essentialist assumption (Martino, 2008) that the male teachers interviewed were instinctively role models purely because of their gender and being male was a strong theme throughout the data.

### **Stereotypical Expectations/Masculinity in Primary Schools**

A key message from the findings is a consensus among the participants on how their gender is an influential factor on their role as a primary school teacher. Gendered

expectations as well as gender regimes (as outlined in Chapter 2) were prevalent themes throughout the data. It is recognised that masculinities have to operate, or be competent at operating, some degree of dominance or authority (Brittan, 1989). The expectation of masculine behaviour imposed on male teachers from the primary school community was articulated by 90% of the participants. This was succinctly summed up by Mike:

'There's this underlying assumption that you know the male teachers are the one you know the go-to-guy with discipline problems. You know, any kind of heavy lifting that needs to do anything like that, go to the man, the man will do it.'

As well as from Martin:

'You often get to do jobs that men in society, you know, that something heavy needs lifting or changed or helped, so it's a very common thing and still today that's very common of women, stuff needs lifting up, changed or help whatever. I think that's what comes up most, I think.'

Including:

'The other day there was a dead bird in the tyres in the tyre park, and there is myself and 3 members of staff out there. It was always going to be me that was going to sort that out, and even if one of them were more willing to do it, I'd probably jump to it'

(Devon).

Indeed how some had to navigate and position themselves in this socially constructed environment is best articulated by Davie's experiences:

'I think sometimes people are trying to steer me more towards the sports side of things, but I'm not good at things like that...are gender expectations. I mean things like what they do when they got here, the other day I put up a shed with Joe [site supervisor] and a few of the other male members of staff and it was a man job which is fine.'

The data in this study outlines that the participants felt particular expectations placed upon them from a variety of members in the school community. Behaviour is heavily influenced by positions of conduct, deliberation and stance which is informed by prior history in the framing of social status, family, schooling and significantly by social

groups. This was evident amongst the majority of the participants (90%). The role, and indeed identities, of male primary school teachers is a 'conflictual' one (Woods, 1990). The notion of perplexed senses of identities amongst primary school teachers' - in particular male primary - was evident in the data. This is demonstrated by Devon:

'I think primary schools stereotype, if you say you're a primary school teacher they will expect you to be in Year 5 or Year 6, you'd be expected to run the football team, you'll be very, I think the perception would be, it will be very organised kind of sat at the classroom, you know children at tables, and getting on that way.. I think when people say, when I say to people I teach in the Early Years and Key Stage 1, that it, it certainly challenges that. Those people go 'oh well, it's just playing all day' and those things, but I think that's an accusation of Early Years as opposed to an accusation of males in Early Years'.

Societal expectations or Claire's notion of 'doing gender' (2005:19), as outlined in Chapter 2 was evident from the responses from the participants. Indeed 77% the participants in the study felt pressured at some point in their career to play a major role in discipline, thus agreeing to a hegemonic masculine discourse expected from the primary school community. The implications of such a simplistic stance and the perceived easy consequences of securing the attention of disengaged pupils, specifically attributed to gender was clearly articulated by Gavin:

'And I guess you know just that you know being a male, being strong you don't have to go in a classroom and have kind of behaviour management strategy, if you tell them to be quiet, they'll be quiet and they kind of respect you and they'll listen to you and they'll listen to you and they'll learn from you.'

Furthermore many of the participants (67%) felt extra pressure on how to engage, motivate and actually teach disengaged pupils, due to their gender. The frustration that this causes some of the participants is worthy of noting, particularly in tandem with increasing and rapid education policy (see Chapter 2). There was a clear identification from the data that as male teachers they were often expected to work with pupils with behavioural problems and often groups of children were selected by senior management to be taught by such teachers. Again the assumption being made by the primary school community was that challenging pupils, usually boys (Lyons, 2010; Rowan *et al.*, 2006; Tinklin, 2003) will be saved and in many cases achieve

academic success by being taught by males. Against the backdrop of recent education policy related to accountability and academic progress, Chris outlines his anxiety:

'I found out yesterday that the reception classes are being mixed up. I will have twenty two boys and eight girls in the class, and I think being a male is a massive factor in me having this group. So, I think depending on the class some head teachers are willing to select a man than others. It's fine but what happens when I am asked questions about pupil progress and this whole performance related pay? Does my pay get cut if the class don't make progress when I have been given more issues than others?'

Research findings by Cushman (2008) and Lyons (2010) are very similar to the experiences articulated by Chris. Such research describes that as well as having to ensure that pupils achieve nationally expected progress, male teachers also have the added issue of challenging pupils' behaviour and as a consequence they are severely disadvantaged. Evidence by Sargent (2000) also suggests that males who are expected to work with the pupils who have behavioural issues results in teachers focusing more on behaviour rather than actual teaching. Thus males are 'more likely to come across as disciplinarians, a classic case of the self-fulfilling prophecy' (Sargent, 2000:424). Coupled with the current political shift concerning expectations of all teachers in relation to the standardisation of education and performance-related pay, Chris's response is far from surprising. Indeed there was broad agreement from participants (67%) that the 'paperwork's ridiculous' (Simon) as well as new policies resulting in it being 'very stressful and draining for teachers to have to work in the framework' (Gavin), yet primary teaching was still viewed as 'one of the most rewarding', (Mike) professions. Nevertheless recently institutional and rapid governmental processes of change appear to be having detrimental effect on the working lives of the majority of the participants (as outlined in Chapter 2).

This data is useful; nevertheless the focus of the research is how gender influences perceptions of primary teaching. However, Chris's anxiety regarding performance-related pay, directly due to his gender and this being attributed to the assumption that 'men are going to be shouting at children, going to be fierce. Going to be authoritative as well,' (Chris) directly relates to research questions 1 and 1a. It was evident from the data (90%) that a hegemonic masculinity was expected from many in the primary school community in order to succeed professionally.

Research relating to the character traits normally associated with hegemonic masculinity or stereo-typical behaviour includes, 'competitiveness...aggression, displays of physical strength, concealment of feelings, rationality and independence' (Szabo and Underwood, 2004:185). When outlining masculinities in primary schools, Connell (1995) has identified complicit masculinities which according to Drudy et al (2005:27) 'is a cultural ideal that many men support, but do not necessarily embody'. Some of these traits and cultural ideals were expected to be present amongst the participants from many in the school community (see comments from Mike, Martin and Gavin). Admittedly there is a need to recognise that masculinities are offered in various forms and may be manoeuvred dependant on context. Connell (1995) outlines a 'complicit' masculinity which forms the basis for principles of hegemonic masculinity. A complicit masculinity, or indeed hegemonic masculinity, is the one form that the majority of participants were keen to display (90%). One participant was keen to assert his, and indeed the primary school male teaching workforce's, masculinity:

'The biggest thing is the stereotype as the male primary teacher being conceptualised and labelled. There is a stigma attached to male primary school teachers as being gay and not heterosexual. When in fact I don't think this is the case'

(Will).

However there was a clear differentiation between the responses of recently qualified teachers (RQT) and more experienced male teachers. For example the teachers who have been teaching for 3 years (RQTs) or less, which was 17% in this study, felt more pressure to assert their masculine traits than more experienced teachers, those teaching for 5 years or more. Notably all the participants who accounted a pressure to behave in a gendered manner recalled their experiences of setting first impressions, or meeting colleagues for the first time. First impressions were an important aspect amongst participants and their gender as well as reasons for choosing primary teaching was often questioned by the school community often female:

'I'm walking in on the first day but for novelty...Is that a man, okay. I have had the questions 'why did you enter primary teaching? Why do you want to be a primary school teacher?' And, do you know, in other places they wouldn't ask the female teachers but they ask me...'

(Chris).

As well as from Liam who shared his initial reactions to working as an EYs teacher:

'The other TA [Teaching Assistant] was a bit more... a lot more inquisitive in terms of questioning. She was like, 'oh, okay...so what made you want to work with young kids? Why early years? Why not primary? Why not secondary?' ...which kind of threw me back because I was like, okay, I don't mind answering the question. It's just I didn't really see the need for the question.'

Similar experiences expressed by Liam and Chris were articulated by 67% of the participants. Indeed the majority of participants in the study believed that their identities were intensely scrutinised by, 'other teachers, governors and head teachers' (Thornton and Bricheno 2000:204) in line with other research (see Chapter 2). Furthermore Skelton's (2007) research highlights that as male teachers were viewed as a 'rare commodity,' in their new schools the participant's gender was 'constantly being attended to by others' (Skelton, 2007:684). Some (30%) viewed the constant questioning and need to justify their chosen career with frustration and that the 'novelty in the first instance' can soon become 'tiring' (Tony). From the responses of experienced teachers once they had relaxed and felt accepted by the community they were able to offer alternative versions of masculinity:

'I suppose I cried in all of my schools at one point or another and once people get to know me they have seen it and accepted that...at one time or another I have also felt the need to cry so I suppose we broke down some stereotypes in that way'

(Adeel).

Although once experienced teachers relocated to a new school the process had to begin again:

'It's interesting. By staff in a number of schools given that I've only worked in four, by staff I was often seen as the one who would engage with behaviour issues almost as I've got older I suppose it's very much as a 'Wait till you dad gets home' sort of thing you know 'What would Mr [Adeel] say?' or 'You don't want Mr [Adeel] to know'

(Adeel).

Adeel's and other's responses regarding patriarchal correlations of power reinforce the utilisation of male teachers in primary schools in order to discipline pupils and conventionalise traditional nuclear families (see section in Role Model theme). This is framed around the 'wait until your dad gets home' discourse (King, 2000:13) and is clearly identified by Adeel. Adeel's recognition that as he has matured he has accepted the father-figure role correlates with the findings made by Cushman (2005), who acknowledged that older teachers were more comfortable in the role of authoritative father-figure. Living up to the realities of such deep-rooted expectations can be problematic if this is not played out or performed in reality as expressed by Ben:

'I think when I first came, they had an expectation that I'd be a lot stricter, and maybe a bit harsh, harsher than I am and actually one of the problems I had when I first started here was actually more behavioural management as I was being too soft, and I think that shocked a few of them because they thought, 'Oh a male teacher would come in and sort them out'.

The assumption that males are more authoritative and thus will be firmer with children did not sit comfortably with some of the participants (43%). Reflecting upon his approach to behaviour, management Richard revealed:

'Just being strict I imagine. I think you're shoehorned into that role and I am not that kind of teacher... not really no no...I'm not really a shouter so I don't think I'd be good at that role.'

Also:

'I do though get people sending them down to me and saying 'Could you shout at this child?' which I have had an issue with in the past because it's not my style of things and in some instances it has to be necessary but it is the case of kind of putting on that kind of act in a way and giving, you know, a strong word with the child. I think it does have an impact, you know, a lot of the time but at the same time it's interesting that people will bring children to the male deputy head to be told off rather than the female head'

(Gavin).

From the data a small number (4%) of the participants made reference to the government's 'Troops into Teachers' policy (see Chapter 2). This was endorsed by Michael Gove, the Minister for Education at that time, and he stated that ex-service men and women would 'know all about self-discipline, team work and a sense of pride

into our schools' (Gove, 2010). Josh, Ray and Will had opinions on how this would have an impact on the primary teaching profession:

'I know we're going down the lines of going for soldiers. I just think that's ridiculous. Yes, they'll have their qualities but equally I think anybody can do it. If there are teachers in them, there are teachers in them. It doesn't matter whether if you... I think that's really stigmatizing isn't it? Saying that we'll get soldiers because they are going to be the disciplinarians? It just makes a mockery of those that aren't going in from being a soldier, soldiers aren't teachers and the male teachers that's just wanting to do because they wanted to become a teacher. I think that's quite frustrating'

(Ray).

As well as:

'And that's why I think just recruiting more men into schools or more male troops into schools, just to have an impact on boys learning could be a complete waste of time if they get the wrong people and don't actually look at their qualifications and their background and whether they actually are going to be good teachers, because I think that's the most important thing'

(Josh).

An opposing opinion was offered by Will who stated:

'I'll give you an example people are talking about soldiers becoming teachers and I know in the military that they only have male instructing staff because of the results they want. And that has a direct impact, having only male instructors; has a direct impact on and influence on the training. So if it were...if you were to apply a similar sort of thing into a primary school, I imagine the outcome would be very similar'.

Although opposing views were offered by Will and Ray relating to this new initiative the participants of this study, policy-makers, politicians and commentators all subscribe to the notion that within the 'Troops into Teaching' policy there is a discipline element throughout. Will's opinion is supported by the research of Burkard (2008) who asserts that teachers with military experience would be more competent than regular teachers when dealing with behaviour problems, due to their past experiences in combat. Dermott (2011) supports this argument stating that promoting discipline in underachieving schools through the 'Troops into Teachers' programme, would encourage children to 'learn restraint and respect for authority' (Dermott, 2011:236). The focus of teaching and discipline being at the forefront of the 'Troops into Teachers'

policy was critiqued by Ray and Josh, which also resonates with findings of Chadderton (2014). For example policies such as the Troops into Teachers, focusing on disciplined backgrounds, and the ability to control behaviour as being the most important attribute a teacher can possess, negates the value of academic achievements and skills learnt in teaching. This was also a concern shared by 43% of participants who stated similar testimonies relating to their pedagogy and discipline to Ray, Gavin and Josh.

The 'Troops into Teachers' policy does not claim to target males yet throughout his research Burkard (2008) refers to the candidates as ex-servicemen; implying that he believes the cohort will be made up of males. Burkard (2008:8) also thinks that men with military experience have a 'macho' image which will help them be effective teachers in inner city schools as 'children from more deprived neighbourhoods often respond to raw physical power'. This further demonstrates a simplistic stance from policy-makers and does not align with the experiences and beliefs of current in-service male teachers as expressed by Mark:

'The children we've got in this school have got really strong characters and I think perhaps their background ...I'm generalising obviously. Discipline-wise perhaps expect that they get lot more strict discipline. So they may perhaps expect that kind of discipline from their male teachers and respond better to firmer discipline. But I'm not saying that's my kind discipline.'

As well as:

'The HT did actually just say you know in my observation, she did say that she hasn't seen a male have that kind of authoritativeness but also the theatrical side as well of it. So I'm kind of trying to balance them both, I don't want to be 'the authoritative teacher' ... and I thought that's really strange...'

(Chris).

One of the main reasons cited for schools needing to recruit more male teachers is it is assumed they are better disciplinarians, and have a strict, more masculine approach to teaching which makes them better at dealing with disaffected children (Burn, 2001). This attitude towards the perceived excessive masculinity of male teachers is indeed flawed and has its basis on gender roles. Skelton (2002:91) observes that 'notions of sex roles, appears to have maintained a firm place within government thinking (regardless of political party) since the 1970s'. This often neglects the concept that

males and females can have masculine and feminine traits which are socially constructed (Bourdieu, 2000; Foster and Newman, 2005; Millard, 2010; Skelton, 2007). There is a general assumption that male teachers teach differently in comparison to their female counterparts (Drudy *et al*, 2005; Francis *et al*, 2006; Skelton, 2007), hence why they are needed within primary schools in order improve the behaviour and achievement of boys' (Smedley, 1999; Thronton and Bricheno, 2006; Francis *et al*, 2008). Yet research by Carrington *et al* (2007) discovered that teachers' gender had no influence upon pupils' behaviour, academic motivation and engagement and that pupils appreciated teachers who were dependable, sympathetic and resilient. Moreover further research demonstrates that there is 'no indication that male teachers were particularly effective with boys or female teachers with girls' (McGrath and Sinclair, 2013:535). Thus the potential contribution that male teachers may have in relation to discipline is therefore a flawed argument. Perceptions and experiences for some of the participants indeed support this:

'Female members have been...in some ways I found to be like strong and disciplined. They can be a lot firmer, a lot more proactive than the male teachers that I've seen'

(Rob).

Including:

'I'm just saying perhaps that's what children perhaps expect. And that's perhaps how some of the female...women in the school played their discipline, especially TAs [Teaching Assistants]. I think perhaps of the...because perhaps they're being strong discipline and they're being shouted at by females because they don't respond to other types of disciplines'

(Mark).

The generalisation and assumption that only males from the military or indeed any males are capable of instilling a sense of discipline that can control pupils is challenged by Ray as well as research by Dermott (2011) and Chatterton (2014). All argue that it is based in an out-dated gender stereotype. Dermott (2011) and 67% of the participants recognise that it is naive to assume that male teachers, including those who train through Troops to Teachers, will identify with this masculine image, calling the description of the military male anticipated to join the programme a 'caricature'

(Dermott, 2011:235). This has obviously had an impact on the identities of the participants (43% see also comments from Rob, Ray and Mark).

While the participants in this study believed that they made a significant contribution to teaching and outlined a desire to 'get on with it and just teach, regardless of being a man or woman' (Chris) many (43%) also believed they should not have stereotypes imposed upon them. For example the perception that as males they were better equipped to discipline disruptive classes than their female counterparts was met by some with disapproval and confusion (see comments from Rob and Mark). Indeed Miles *et al* (2007) suggests that often an imaginary male teacher is constructed within societies and this male teacher will be most equipped to 'rescue school sport and act as a disciplinarian with unruly students... the effect of this construction is to limit the kind of male teachers who are attracted to schools' (2007:80).

The need to gain acceptance from the immediate primary school community appeared to be a significant feature from the responses of participants in this study. especially when beginning a position in a new school or as an RQT. This is often achieved by some of the participants by performing tasks that they felt that they were either unskilled to do or uncomfortable with. Examples included behaviour management related to discipline, building maintenance tasks, addressing issues with technology and being solely responsible for sporting activities, most notably football. The majority of participants made reference to anxieties they had related to existing and future career prospects and overall acceptance in the primary school community if they did not 'fit the mould' (Lyons, 2012:52) of what a male teacher should be and should do. This is evident in the summary from Gavin:

'I know it's immediately seen as masculine but I hate the fact that I have been lumbered with the boy's football team. I love doing it but at the same time my workload is already over the top and yet a female member of staff didn't know what she was doing and felt lost in it and couldn't handle it, so they immediately asked me as I was the only male in school so had to be interested in sport.'

It is interesting that Gavin felt pressured by others in the school community, all female, to take charge of the football team and this was a recurring theme throughout the data. It has been identified by Miles *et al* (2007:80) that 'there are powerful normalising discourses at work that police the acceptability of certain masculine

performances enacted by male teachers'. Indeed Josh notes that there 'is a perception that all men enjoy football and can play football'. In fact 63% of the participants referred to 'football discourses' (Skelton, 2000:12) and again as with the term 'role model', the word 'football' was not utilised by the interviewer. This term and information was offered unbidden by the majority of the participants. The data supports Skelton's observations of males in primary schools positioning 'hyper masculine' (Skelton, 2001:206) versions of self or that they portray 'a real male' (McGrath and Sinclair, 2013:534) typology (see Chapter 2). Indeed it is true that 'not all men teachers position themselves within football discourses' (Skelton, 2000:12) but clearly from the data in this study the majority do (63%).

Positioning strategies were outlined by the utilisation of the football discourse in order to bring 'something new and a bit different' (Tony) into primary education. Indeed '...there is something about football, you can sort of have that little chat in the morning just to set up for the day' (Andrew). Interestingly other sports were referred to; rugby by 7% and cricket by 7% by the male teachers. Responsibility for such sports in some cases was reluctantly agreed to by participants as an acceptance of their role in primary schools. For example, 'I have been asked to coach the rugby team. I wanted to say no .. but ... you know...' (Josh) as well as 'I have to do the football club and actually it's not really my strength. I am more of a runner' (Devon). Therefore, as well as being a leveller and enhancing relationships with children, as 'football is a nice link with pupils...a common conversational piece' (Tim) it enables 'banter with the boys about which team they support' (Ben). The football discourse for some is an added extra responsibility (see comments above from Devon and Gavin). From Edward's perspective maleness and football were both interlinked aspects of identify that ensured instant respect:

'They love.. they love... especially the older ones they love having a male here. They know instantly that you're going to like football, what football teams you support, and straight away they've got that bond, you get into discussions on their level, things they like. And you've got a mutual respect.'

Furthermore the football discourse was approached by Gavin as a strategy to urge fathers to become involved in their children's education. In fact Gavin embraced the fact that through football he was enabled to 'be a different person' as well as ensuring that he was able to 'to have my own kind of framework so I can just completely relax

and be me and not think about school.’ In line with research (Williams, 1993; Skelton, 2007) Gavin and the majority of male teachers have sought ways to secure work that would be viewed as having high status amongst parents in order to assert superiority over other mainly female colleagues. In the primary school these roles may include taking responsibility for sport and football teams or clubs. Parents often view these roles as being the most prestigious in primary education and as such many of the males interviewed were keen to maximise from this. For example:

‘I also run the dad’s football team... it is really a good laugh. As you know I run the school football team here as well and you get lots of dads involved and in the playground they come up and talk to you. You don’t often see dads attending parents meetings or talking to the female members of staff, the mums normally do. It’s nice for them to have that kind of participant and that kind of role’

(Gavin).

Mac an Ghail’s version of masculinity (1994:108-109) outlines the three ‘f’s – fighting, fucking and football.’ Football was a main theme throughout the data and other areas of the PE curriculum that are not necessarily associated with the masculine preserve, such as dance, were referenced by only 7% of the male teachers:

‘... you are out your comfort zone a lot. You know singing and dancing and doing things like that that you might not necessarily do within your friends set’

(Toby).

Only one other of the participants outlined his interest in dance, which is another element of the primary PE curriculum but this was only articulated after the principle topic of football was outlined:

‘I suppose as a stereotype, football is a nice link with pupils..... it’s not kind of personal but you know you can have a bit of banter bit of jokey rivalry and it’s easy to talk to them, to the lads particularly, and again that’s not to say that ....I knew plenty of women who are passionate about their football as well, so it’s not just a male thing it’s more... certainly a cliché feature. My girlfriend has made me go to dancing classes... this whole Strictly thing and I am quite fit... no-one here knows that though’

(Davie).

Societal expectations have obviously informed Davie's presentation of self and professional identity. Research (Paechter, 1998; Francis, 2005 and Martino, 2007) supports this and Davie's willingness to share as well as capitalise on the masculine football discourse yet his reluctance to disclose his hobby and interest in the dance, which incidentally he feels forced into, is an example of a male who was more concerned to establish himself as masculine without feminine traits. This is in line with society's expectations and as primary schools have traditionally being viewed as dominated by females (Eaude, 2010, Tucker, 2004). Research by Arno and Mac an Ghail (1994), Kenway and Willis 1998, Mistry and Sood (2013) and Skelton (2010) has concluded that this discourages males from a career in primary teaching. In addition when the participants discussed primary curriculum subjects these were also in line gendered expectations. This is best captured by observations made by Gavin:

'I think there is certain expectations that males will excel at certain subjects. So if you're male, ICT. You know, you're going to be the bloke that fixes the projector when it breaks down because you're male and therefore you know all about gadgets, computers and things, whereas you know, or Science or something like that whereas say something like English for example might not be something that there is an assumption that you would not be good at that or want to do that.'

Including:

'Yeah I think teachers do assume that you're going to be better at PE and probably Maths, actually. Yeah, I think that's the general assumption.'

(Mark).

Although not a core subject in primary schools (these being Mathematics, English and Science) PE, a foundation subject was the one that was referred to most frequently amongst the participants (63%). Other foundation subjects such as Art, History and Geography were not referred to at all. The only other primary subjects referred to by participants were Information Technology (IT), now known as Computing since September 2014 (30%), Dance and Drama (13%) and Music (7%). The focus by current and previous governments' concern related to core subjects (which related to research question 1) has reached the consciousness of the participants and such subjects were referred to throughout the interviews (83%). This resonates with

research by Thornton and Bricheno (2006) as well as Alexander (2010) and is a significant factor on the professional identities of primary school teachers (see Chapter 2). This data is useful and is at some level contextualised with the prevalent themes that emerge later; particularly under the current policy changes in primary education (see Chapter 2). Nevertheless the focus of the research is on how gender influences perceptions of primary teaching. When viewed through the lens of gender the data substantiates the findings of Williams (1989:133) as the participants in his study and this one are 'aligning themselves with safe traditional signifiers of masculinity'. Evidence of this can be located in the data by participants carving out specialisations for subjects such as PE (63%) and Mathematics (40%). Indeed:

'I like the fact that there's not many males and I like the fact that people make a deal of it. It does make you feel a little bit special. I like the fact that it does give you more weight with the children and with behaviour management. I like the fact that I do a lot work with a lot of women and sometimes I am needed to fix computers or take football.'

(Gavin).

Gavin has maximised on his rarity as a male teacher (see previous comment on fathers' football team) and indeed from the extract above it is clear that he adopts positioning strategies in order for a sense of self and well being, all contributing to his professional identities. Foster and Newman (2005) suggest that often male primary school teachers who are marginalised may 'expect to capitalise on their scarcity value' (342), as clearly outlined by Gavin. This also aligns with similar research by Williams (1993) and Skelton (2007). Fundamentally, the stereotypical constructions which situate females in positions of primary teaching are essentially established upon notions of femininity, whereby the profession is framed and described through maternal metaphors and emotional and moral support, rather than intellectual tasks (Skelton *et al*, 2006). Amongst the participants intellectual tasks have been outlined as a strategy to retain and cultivate masculine predispositions. The notion of caring and nurturing was also outlined by many (37%) when considering gendered expected behaviour of male teachers but this shall be outlined in more detail under the subsequent section.

## **Overview of Section 2**

From the findings above it can be inferred that this section is related to addressing research question 1 but more explicitly the following questions:

- b. How do male primary school teachers position themselves in discourses around primary education?

As well as:

- c. What contributes to the construction of professional identities amongst male primary school teachers?

It is evident that the majority of participants in this study were keen to reflect or felt pressured to display the characteristics of a hegemonic masculinity (90%) amongst their primary school community. As outlined in Chapter 2 and in sections throughout this chapter there is connection between dominant constructions of masculinity and the gendered construction of teaching. As such, a consequence of this 'troubled' state of affairs' (Mills *et al*, 2004:364) is that male teachers, and indeed male teachers in this study have to demonstrate their 'manliness' in order to depict particular forms of discipline and behaviour management that are conventionally constructed as 'normal' masculinities.

From that data it is clear that the professional identities of the male primary school teachers as evidenced from their conversations are constructed by both the primary school communities (i.e. teachers, parents and teachers) as well as policy-makers. Such identities are based on traditional practices and stereotypical gendered behaviour. How male teachers in this study perform in line with deep-rooted notions of gendered behaviour at an implicit level is influenced by self as well as members of the primary school community. The need to seek approval from colleagues, pupils and parents is an important factor for the majority of the participants. Indeed the data in this study demonstrates that male teachers feel particular expectations placed upon them from the immediate community of each primary school, staff and pupils, as well as parents. It was also clear from the data that many (77%) of the participants were aware that they were being policed by many in the community to ensure that they behaved in line with gender regimes. The notion of first impressions was also a clear concern amongst the participants regarding masculine behaviour.

Through drawing upon the data as well as work from Connell (1995), male primary school teachers often feel the need to emphasise aspects of teaching that are seen to be more compatible with conventional masculinity, which as Skelton (2003:126) recognises are specific identities, ideologies and pedagogical styles which are intended to demonstrate 'being a real man'. In terms of teaching, this means making explicit forms of discipline and control as outlined by the participants (70%). Thus, it has been suggested by research and from the data that male primary teachers have to identify themselves as being 'properly masculine', which means positioning themselves in relation to established discourses as male teachers as 'effective disciplinarians, and knowledge specialists.' (Skelton, 2003:127).

In this section I have outlined the complex experiences of male primary school teachers who either feel pressured or openly accepted versions of masculinity in their setting. This section demonstrated an emerging identification of some of the prevailing societal discourses regarding males in primary education. This will now be outlined in more detail in the next section.

### **Safeguarding and Child Protection**

The majority of participants (80%) conveyed their concerns relating to the safeguarding of children in their class and their role as male primary school teachers. Within the overall theme of safeguarding, sub-themes emerged which included: the nurturing aspect of primary education, particularly in EYs; physical contact with children; society and school community's perceptions of men in primary schools. From the data analysis it is clear that social pressures, from wider society and the immediate school community, upon the participants to display and uphold acceptable constructions of masculinity, is vital for the majority of male primary school teachers. Indeed gender stereotyping is dominant within some vocational professions such as primary teaching.

As has already been established in the analysis of previous themes in this chapter, the majority of participants in this study (90%) have aligned themselves to a particular accepted version of masculinity and although many of the participants referred to pupils needing 'to see all different sorts of men' (Ryan), this different kind of male was rarely defined. As the majority of participants were keen to demonstrate stereotypical

masculinity a difference could be versions of masculinity that did not subscribe to this. For example Gavin has positioned himself as a strong masculine male and shares his thoughts regarding colleagues whom he has worked with in the past who do not demonstrate this socially accepted trait:

'I have worked with a lot of men who aren't as strong or domineering and kind of you know, I don't wanna say feminine characteristic, a bit of a slight, but I think you know what I mean... And I don't know whether that is because the coverage or move towards the kind of mould which is you know... and people in schools do argue that the curriculum has been feminized and maybe these men want to fit in, I don't know. I do enjoy it though when I hear people say they're kind of scared of me or wary of me'

(Gavin).

The notion of males policing other male's behaviour in primary schools is an under-researched area (see Chapter 2) and Gavin was the only participant who outlined such views. Gavin's assertion has some synergies with Thornton and Bricheno's (2006:61) research who highlight that if 'men do not fit the mould of hegemonic masculinity they are often looked upon with suspicion or even considered dangerous'. Although, as Skelton *et al* (2009) suggest, limited research exists which assesses the problematic nature of masculinity for males who work with primary children. Males working within primary institutions, are considered to be occupying a 'women's job', and are increasingly vulnerable to being 'stigmatised as *sissies* or effeminate men' (Martino, 2008:202). This certainly was inferred by Gavin (see quotation above).

Research has depicted the extent to which men within the primary profession are categorised as 'abnormal men' who are assumed to be homosexual, which is often amalgamated with having paedophilic intentions (Berrill and Martino, 2002). As such, male teachers' gender and conventional masculine characteristics are, as Skelton (2007:684) reports, 'constantly being attended to by others'. Hence it has been suggested that male teachers' normalised constructions of masculinity are modified around children, in order to engage, explicitly, in particular self-fashioning practices for fear of being considered paedophiles or sexual deviants (Berrill and Martino, 2002). Again this is also evident in the responses from the participants and themes already outlined in this chapter thus far. As previous research has found (see Berrill and Martino, 2002; Cushman, 2005; DeCorse *et al*, 1997; King, 2009; NUT, 2002; Smedley

and Pepperell, 2000; Skelton, 1991; 2003; 2011; Thornton and Bricheno, 2006), and is indeed correlated by the data of this research, male primary school teachers share concern in relation to potential accusations of child abuse. As well as this being a regular theme in research (Martino, 2009; Skelton, 2007; Szwed, 2010) it was also evident in the data in this study as 50% of the participants expressed concern as to how a false allegation could ultimately effect professional and personal lives. This is best expressed by Joel who states:

'If you did get accused or something that, like I said, that's your career over or might be your life over. You'll never know what can happen. So there's a small risk of it going in. So you have to be mindful of that'

(Joel).

To be perceived as 'different' or to offer an alternative version of masculinity therefore could risk exclusion and preclusion from the school community. Society and thus micro-societies (such as primary schools) are normally cautious of any type of 'difference' especially related to the welfare of young children. Although gender can be 'enacted and displayed, across a range of masculinities and femininities' (Skelton, 2003:207) this was not the case amongst the majority of participants in this study. A preferred version of masculinity was expected, and indeed displayed from the perspectives of the participants. Thus being viewed as 'different', which indeed males in primary school will be as they are in the minority, has an impact on professional identities and practices. This is clearly articulated by Tony who observes:

'I think that is one of those things, the P word. It's bandied around and used as a sort of joke and insults in pubs and people would want to avoid that and I don't blame them in some instances. It's a terrible word to associate with the...I love working with children and I shouldn't be afraid to say that as a man. And I think lots of social situations I am and I wouldn't say 'I love children' because it would be taken as a joke or worse.'

The data shows that half of the participants were concerned about the impact an incorrect accusation of child abuse could have on their reputation, as well as on their professional and personal lives. This has particular relevance in a climate where there is 'moral panic' (Cohen, 1987:3) and a preoccupation with the media regarding paedophilia. For example from Mark:

'Well it's obviously like what the media does, I think. And also this kind of paedophile type of business. It shouldn't be on the back of everybody's mind. But the way in which it's played in the media, there's that thing in the news at the moment where that guy took his student on holiday and what not.'

The influence of the media in relation to child protection and male teachers was significant for some respondents (30% referred to the media in relation to recent cases reported), particularly the way cases were reported. Indeed, when reporting child protection cases concerning male professionals, 'the news tends to make dreadful conduct seem unique to a particular person' (De Botton, 2015:198). Many of the participants in this study were conscious of how the media has focused on male teachers as 'sexual predators' (Will) and as a consequence, the majority of participants asserted 'their masculinity in acceptable community constructed ways' (Lyons, 2010:69). As outlined below:

'It's more that you're like a Jimmy Saville-type. Sexual things it comes back to like it's a bit inappropriate, really. I mean, I think it's only a joke but I still think that kind of stigma is kind of attached to a male, especially in the primary...'

(Edward).

Also:

'It comes down to this, I suppose, these kinds of images you get from the media. That's kind of the real catalyst really, to be honest, which kind of creates these images in people's heads. Even though you're trying to do like an honest job in a sense. Like you have these cases, don't you, like in child protection where it's been male workers working with the young ones and like mistreated kind of the pupils and stuff, so'

(Rohit).

As well as:

'I don't know. I think there's a stigma, isn't there, with child protection. I think people would assume, "Why a male going into a primary school?" I think they get it from the news because it's only bad news. However, if you look at the facts...I used to work in a prison. A lot of crimes against children of that nature are from females. However, it's mainly reported about the males'

(Simon).

One participant outlined a discrepancy in the media when reporting on recent events amongst the Muslim community and felt that this was such a contentious issue that he asked if it was appropriate to continue:

'I mean it comes from the media, there's definitely elements where its reported differently ... stories, but then there's the other elements of uh other sides of it, it is something, you know, it's something that interested me recently because I know there's recently been issues, news stories in the papers about Catholics or Catholic Teachers or Catholic Priests, and that's been handled very differently to the same stories run about Muslim communities, and the terminology that they ascribe to one as they are ascribing to the other, is very different. I don't, do you want me to continue?'

(Devon).

When asked to continue Devon stated:

'Just something I've noticed when it's Catholic teachers, Catholic Priests, those type of things, it's been discussed as being a paedophile, whereas stories running at the moment about Muslim communities and the issues they're having and they're very much perceived as vile sex attacks and it's, they're perceived more as evil, and I don't know, again I think there's a, a media clamour for giving them a different perception as to what they're trying to ascribe to the Catholics or Christians. And you know, there's issues in both sides of that, but it is interesting in that sense, that if it was, if it was one it would be given, it's described in a different way and again if it's a female, it would be described in an entirely different way again, in those situations'.

How child protection cases are reported by the media has been outlined in Chapter 2, particularly in relation to such crimes being committed by male professionals. Cases of child abuse involving male professionals have maximised society's anxiety regarding the safety of young children and have fuelled moral panic (see Chapter 2). Consequently, this has had an influence on the identities and practices of the participants in this study (80%). Devon as well as others (30%) articulated how there was a significant difference as to how cases by males and females who had committed such crimes were reported in the media. This correlates with the research findings of Landor and Eisenclas (2012). Devon was the only participant who mentioned ethnicity and religion when considering the discourse of child protection. Indeed the majority of participants who mentioned child protection were considering this from a gendered

stance: from the perspective of male teachers and the risk discourse. As well as the influence of the media, the opinions held by the participants' was shared by their male friends who are not in the teaching profession (27%). For example Joel reflects on conversations with his male peers who are not involved in primary education:

'... more comments along the lines of, 'why would you go in to work with children' and because there's a whole stigma about being male and working with young children, paedophilia and things like that? Not just any joke why would you want to work with children in that respect but more of...isn't it a bit risky going in and working with children and you can get falsely accused or something, end of your life something like that. And that's what strikes you.'

A more extreme example was offered by one of the participants below:

'And that's the first thing that they always think of...is you know like the worst thing that could happen. And you know talking about paedophilia or something and you know there's always people joking about it. And so that's the first thing that they can say. Yeah, you know I live with a guy who works in a bank and I'd say he's a bit dismissing of it a little bit. You know, like I'm doing the marking on the table, "oh what you doing there?" He comes in and you know, "can they add 2 plus 3 yet?"...and worse like "you interfered with any kiddies yet?" And he's just a bit... I think he feels like he's above me a little bit'

(Ricky).

As well as Ricky, some of the participants (27%) described how their male friends engaged in conversation in the form of 'banter' on the controversial topic of male teachers and child abuse. An example being that '... the P word. It's banded around and used as a sort of joke and insults in pubs' (Tony). This finding resonates strongly with how males behave in their male peer groups. Kehily (2001) observed that banter and abuse are regularly features of such all male interactions. To be viewed as different, which male primary teachers would be by their male non-teaching male counterparts, results in a codified acceptance of joviality. Again the theme of primary teaching being perceived by many as a feminine activity and a potentially emasculated activity culminates in a jovial and irregular attitude to the serious topic of child abuse. All of this reflects upon Butler's notion of performance when one considers blind acceptance by the participants of such banter resulting in a 'muscular intellectual' (Redman and Mac an Ghail, 1997). However such gender regimes were not accepted

by all of the participants who referred to child abuse and banter (27%). Josh was the only participant who did not accept banter about his capabilities of being a potential child abuser after comments were written about his role as a primary teacher on a social network site by a male friend. As with many of the comments in this section Josh initially outlines the powerful influence of the media in relation to men working with children:

'Well, there's been a lot in the press about male primary school teachers who have been put on the sex offenders register, and obviously that thing creates a negative image of male primary school teachers, and that could obviously put people off, and there can be jokes to me about male primary school teachers. There was one comment from a friend at university. He was asking what I've done, and I said I am going in to teaching...I didn't say where. He said of what age group, and I said primary or key stage 2 or something like that...and he wrote on Facebook LOLP [laugh out loud please] and he wrote that I was a paedo. So I deleted that comment, and obviously that didn't make me feel very nice and that sort of thing. I just deleted him'

(Josh).

Admittedly Josh's example above was the only one which cited derogatory comments in the written form and on public view, whereas other examples cited were directed to males in informal social situations via conversation. This could be the reason for Josh deciding to terminate his friendship with his friend from university.

The ability to ensure that the participants could not be accused of inappropriate behaviour was important. As in this study, other research has cited how male primary school teachers are considerably cognisant 'about the possibility of wrongful accusations in a climate where there is a media/public preoccupation with paedophilia' (Skelton, 2010:205). From the data of this study it is evident that potential accusations of sexual misconduct have an impact on the daily routines and practices of the participants (see comment from Joel) but how male teachers were made to feel about their responsibility, potential and capability of being viewed as child abusers was also shared:

'... I put myself in a huge pile of risk and actually when you're sat doing child protection training and you're listening and statistics have come up from the board that 96% of all paedophiles are male

and you're sat as the only man in the room. It does make you feel pretty green. They made you feel pretty horrendous to be perfectly honest. You're sat there thinking it was great but everyone's thinking he's gonna be the bad guy'

(Gavin).

As well as negative feelings due to social constraints and perceived intense scrutiny by the media which are imposed on male teachers in relation to child protection and statistics, actual day to day practice was also affected as outlined by Ben, Davie and Joel (see comments below). All of their examples refer to the teaching of PE and children getting ready for sporting activities. Below, Ben clearly outlines how his Planning, Preparation and Assessment (PPA) time was problematic due to the designated office being in close proximity to the EYs building:

'And I had to tell them exactly where I was...even though the Foundation Stage Office is in the nursery building, I wasn't allowed to do it...you know work there...I got given some time as part of PPA - not the whole PPA - to sit in the office and do my planning. I wasn't allowed to do that a lot of the time because they wanted to get changed for PE and I had to give them exact, almost the exact timetables of my movements to the office.'

As well as:

'...if a girl wanted help with her tights or whatever, I would always direct her to the female TA [Teaching Assistant] and say, go and ask Mrs so-and-so to do that for you. Because I just think... well, I don't really know how to do tights anyway, but it's just easier for them to... but that shouldn't really probably be the case because dad should do that job too and you are meant to be a male and should be able to do that, but it's just about protecting yourself, isn't it?'

(Davie).

A similar experience was shared by Joel:

'There were things like PE and getting changed. I mean for me I don't have thoughts about it before because you know there are 10 year old girls and boys. It means absolutely nothing to you walking in to the room where they are getting changed, you used to see them changing every time and then in my second week when I walked back in after school was finished. After being at the front office, I walked back into the classroom and I hear 'oh Sir we we're getting changed' and in my mind I was thinking sorry I've got work

to do. I've got marking to do. So I've got to wait outside of the classroom while they get changed and a TA [Teaching Assistant] stays with them. Yet for female teachers obviously that's fine. Fine for them to be in the classroom but because I'm male it's a problem. But I kind of expect it. I kind of, at that time, I was shocked by it. Because I just thought, really is that is such a big issue but when you think about child protection issues it's more protecting yourself, by staying out of the room that is.'

The acceptance from Joel that this has now become part of his weekly routine and that it was 'kind of expect[ed]' was counter-balanced by his initial feelings of shock that his presence whilst children were changing for PE was being perceived as 'a problem'. The three examples offered from Joel, Davie and Ben are preventative strategies utilised but also imposed by the school community in order to minimise false allegations and were indicative of the examples and cases shared by the participants. The notion of 'protecting yourself' (as utilised by Davie and Joel) clearly refers to protecting themselves from any false allegations. Again such strategies were attributed to gender and comparisons with behaviour that female teachers were 'able to get away with' (Liam) were outlined by 30% of the participants. What is evident from the data in this study is that despite policy rhetoric of primary schools embracing equality and claiming to treat male and females teachers comparably, in their reality the lived in experiences of the participants does not substantiate this. The experiences outlined above and from many of the participants in this study demonstrate a significant difference in the daily practices of primary school teachers due to gender. Interestingly none of the participants outlined whether unfounded allegations were made against them but many did allude to the significant stress that any allegation could cause. Preventative strategies were put in place by the participants to ensure that any allegations were minimised and this was due to their gender (see comments from Joel, Mike, Davie, and Ben).

Comparisons were made to female counterparts by some of the participants (30%), and there was a sense of injustice and professional jealousy felt by some of the participants. Indeed, as well as effecting what could and should be done by male teachers (see comments from Mike, Ben and Davie) in order to minimise any allegations of inappropriate behaviour or sexual misconduct, many of the participants described examples of behaviour that they could not engage in which their female counterparts could:

'...like... you see female teachers sort of give a child a hug or something. That's not something I would feel comfortable doing. I don't know if that's just...if that's a male thing or if that's just me. You kind of maybe like gently pat them on the head or something but you sort of go, stay at arm's length away from them. But... yeah to be fair because women just seem to sort of embrace it whereas I'm more like, "okay...stop crying"'

(Andrew).

Similar sentiments were also echoed by Mark:

'... there's this kind of nagging thing in your head of realising that you can't do some of the things that the female teachers do and that you have to be extra vigilant that... you know you are not seen to do certain things or put yourself in positions where you can be accused of certain things...and I think okay, I mean we're all teachers these days and quite right there is this kind of heightened level of awareness, but if you're a male I think you're more aware. And I'm not sure if that is self-imposed or that's coming from external but you know you do feel it.'

Also:

'I know for example, there was a gymnastics assembly where the female teacher was there... there... holding the child and I wouldn't be comfortable doing that. And that's the sad reflection that we are in today but I think that's certainly some part of being the male teacher. When I do child protection training there are good examples that I know directly addressing some male members of the staff'

(Fred).

In another example, Chris outlined the different approaches relating to physical contact with children and how he was advised, when he was a performer before becoming a primary school teacher, to ensure that he could not be accused of inappropriate behaviour:

'It was actually September; it was the very first week the children were coming in. And the children were in tears, because they were leaving their mum and dad for the first time. And the teacher was hugging the children, 'come on in, come on in'. I felt like I couldn't do that. I couldn't you know, anytime they were hugging me coming up and hugging my leg. I had to put my hands in the air. Also goes back to my acting days as well being told to, you know when getting pictures taken make sure my hands are seen. That always comes back to that... because I used to work at Warwick

Castle and I used to be a knight and all the children wanted a picture with a knight but make sure thumbs up or hands were seen'

(Chris).

Concern regarding physical contact with younger children and particularly children in EYs was also expressed by many of the participants. For example, the KS2 male teachers (83%) who were interviewed expressed their anxiety about being stigmatised as potential abusers due to their gender, if they were working in the EYs sector. This, however was not the experiences of the participants who actually worked, or had sustained experience of working in the EYs sector (4%). This will be outlined later but comments similar to the one below were indicative of the responses from KS2 male teachers. Thus it could be argued that KS2 male teachers were 'othering' their male counterparts:

'...yeah, especially in early years. When there is things like children wetting themselves and things like that and what do you do as a man? And I've asked questions to different Reception teachers and different staff and they said, "I don't know. Probably get a woman to do it." "Why?" "Because it's safer for them...?" I don't know. These things are weird...moral issues that 'are men more dangerous around small children?' Well, statistically yes but what does that mean for the rest of us?'

(Tony).

In order to ensure that the participants in this study were representative of the primary teaching profession (see Chapter 3) the majority were male teachers in KS2 (83%) and again the majority of these were situated in upper KS2 (60%). Many of the male teachers in this study were keen to distance themselves from teaching and pedagogy in EYs and KS1 and this was mainly attributed to child protection and the discourse of nurturing and caring for children. This is evidenced by the comments below from some of the participants:

'I mean the thing at the moment about you know males in any kind of caring profession are being a bit suss. You know, why are they doing that? Why does this male want to be near young children? And I think a lot of men are wary of that. I think they are aware that you know that whilst there may be female members of staff that can be more hands-on to younger children'

(Mike).

Including:

'Probably because of the caring and the fact that children need so much more attention. So, even down to putting coats on people and coats off, and general cleanliness and you know the amount of care they need. I think they're probably less inclined to be that caring if the child isn't their own. Perhaps...whereas women seem to have that caring nature across the spectrum, don't they?'

(Toby).

Also:

'I mean like if a child needs changing in early years which we've got numerous or children with medical issues in school, I knew that they're not considered for or now we'll not offer to do it at all because female members of staff can change and change comfortably but I put myself in a huge pile of risk'

(Gavin).

In some cases the participants (23%) reported that the school community, including parents and female teachers, also perceived males in KS1 as potentially problematic as articulated by Chris who shares his initial conversation with his female mentor when commencing his NQT year in KS1:

'And she was saying, you know what's good is to just one male teacher is coming into the school and into Primary, but she can see it's a bit of a problem as well...because a lot of parents especially in the infant area...a lot of parents aren't really too sure about male teachers coming in. That was what the class teachers are saying. And that was the first time I actually thought about there was a bit of a problem'.

As well as:

'It was one of my Mum's friends who happens to be a head teacher in a local school. And she said, "not being funny, but men in primary schools tend to be a bit strange". She says, "I'm not saying you're strange." I was about to go into the profession at that point. But I think that revealed quite a lot about.... she was the head, and I think that revealed a lot about her perceptions of male primary school teachers'

(Josh).

The influence of fellow professionals it seems had formed and changed Chris's and Josh's opinions in relation to males teaching in primary and for Chris, males teaching in KS1. Whilst other participants outlined how influential the media was in this discourse, in Chris's case this was not an influence. What is of particular interest from the above comments is that Mike, Toby and Gavin have gendered the role of EY's practitioners. The notion of primary teaching being compared to mothering, particularly in EYs, is prevalent as outlined in Chapter 2 (see also Sumsion, 2000). Mothering is often perceived as a non transferable skill with little validation in professional training cultures (Ashley and Lee, 2003) and further contributes to the low esteem of primary teaching in public discourse and in the above participant's responses. Mothering of children would obviously involve physical contact with children, an activity that is avoided by the majority of participants:

'I'd like to go to foundation stage. I think it sounds very creative and fun and less pressured, differently pressured, but less pressured ultimately than Year 6 I'd say and I'd love to experience that and be fun and creative. But if lots of parents perhaps or SMT or the children themselves don't like the idea of a man in such a motherly role, if you want to fall into the stereotype then that may hinder that and might not be able to. I don't know'

(Tony).

The notion of primary teaching being perceived as 'women's work' (Harnett and Lee, 2003:81) has long been constructed and fabricated throughout social, political, and gender constrains, which stereotypically perceived women to have the sort of maternal and caring instincts needed to teach and nurture children (Noddings, 2003). Indeed Froebel in the 19<sup>th</sup> century promoted the 'mother made conscious approach' when considering the teaching of young children (Steedman, 1985:149). How such instincts are manifested in primary schools is problematic for male teachers especially against the backdrop of child protection:

'In Reception they can almost can be parental figures and motherly figures, I think, traditionally is what the Reception Teacher's been seen as... so there is that perceived element of almost putting yourself at risk going into those settings, you know from the children's point of view, you know the children... and it's still you know at times require that motherly figure, there's still times, you

know children have, accidents themselves and those types of things, and you know some of the children they don't have those skills to deal with that themselves'

(Devon).

Indeed, empirical research suggests that male teachers are concerned with tensions regarding care and child protection (Hansen and Mulholland, 2005). This was also evident in the data as 37% of participants outlined the caring and nurturing aspects of primary education, particularly in the EYs sector. As discussed in Chapter 2 King's (1998) clarification relating to 'caring about' is deemed a male high status trait while in contrast 'caring for' is a female low status trait (Ashley and Lee, 2003). This resonates with the responses from the participants. There was a gendered dimension to the way participants discussed the idea of caring and this was often attributed to the maternal or nurturing aspect of primary education. A large proportion of the participants (63%) felt that females were generally more suited to this aspect of the profession and explicit links were made to EY settings. The rationale for such opinions is due to physical contact with young children as outlined by Mike:

'...you know for example, I think a female teacher would have no problem picking up a child that is crying on the floor or reception child that fell over on the playground. I'd want to make very sure that if I was picking up a reception child, that I have proper adults who are seeing what I was doing you know that it was all completely above board, you know I know that's paranoia but I think you know there is that kind of nagging sort of fear that you have to sort of go over and above to show that you're not doing anything strange'.

There exists a well-documented body of research around discourses of 'care' and primary teaching as 'woman's work' (Cammack and Phillips, 2002; Dermott 2012; Francis and Skelton 2001; Freeman and Schmidt, 2000; George and Maguire, 1998; Griffin, 2006; Mistry and Sood, 2013; Murray, 2006; Zhang, 2008). How such care is manifested can be problematic if it concerns physical contact with children and some of the participants felt there was dichotomy in terms of how to demonstrate professional and personal representations, as articulated by Mark:

'And actually I'd love to be more open. I'd love to give a child a great, big hug if they're feeling really sad and whatever and that kind of stuff. You know but also perhaps it's not appropriate

anyway because you're a male teacher. But then you'd want to do that to anybody in life, wouldn't you?'

(Mark).

Sargent (2000:414) asserts that the qualities of KS1 and EY teachers should include 'nurturing behaviours on the part of the teacher as [this] is considered necessary'. An alternative perspective is offered by Thornton and Bricheno (2006:58), who state that there is 'no evidence that children learn better in classes where they sit on laps or get hugs and cuddles from their teachers'. Such findings contradict the comments made above by Mark and many of the other participants who articulated the need for physical contact with young children in order to be an effective EY practitioner. The participants from this study demonstrated similar responses to student teachers who were interviewed by Skelton (2001). The significant difference being that this research was concerned with capturing the responses of current in-service male primary school teachers. In this research as within Skelton's (2007:685) there was segregation between what she termed 'KS1 man' and 'KS2 man'. Her research noted that KS1 man is inclined to oppose gender stereotypes, whereas KS2 man was keen to distance himself from the stereotypical KS1 teacher in terms of being a caring practitioner. Indeed:

'I think we're very vulnerable these days, aren't we? In the profession, lots of professions really. I mean as public sector workers, I think we're all quite vulnerable to accusation from people and they use accusation as a weapon; you hit my child, you touched my child, you did this you know. When we all know that the majority of these are without foundation but you know they are very damaging to people. So I personally feel more comfortable without the children. You don't seem to see that many that I can think of in Key Stage 1. They tend to go to the older. I am sure not all of those are for that reason. So a lot of them is just because they prefer being with the older kids'.

(Ryan).

Including:

'I like the fact that when they're older, this may be a male thing as well, when they're that little bit older you can sort of have a chat with them. They're not constantly going, I need the toilet'

(Andrew).

As well as:

'I don't feel comfortable particularly working with the younger children, I prefer to work with juniors. Maybe it's more of a fear that you know getting a bad reception and the practitioner is male. There was this one time when I was covering PPA and the first three or four lessons they were just getting dressed and changed and all that and sometimes asking for help... all the time or it didn't feel right them getting into my personal space and sometimes when they like you, you know the way that kids come up all over the younger circle you know who's on. I think that's difficult if you're a man'

(Fred).

Also:

'I think it's only that leadership thing that is there. I supposed there's been more opportunities – that's the reason of staying in Upper Key Stage 2 I think is mainly because you've been seen as being a teacher of the older children and not a mothery type'

(Martin).

Griffiths (2002) asserts that female teachers who are mothers are at an advantage when required to meet national standards. According to Griffiths this is particularly relevant to standards that are related to directly to working with children. Indeed, female student teachers who were participants in her research all felt that as a consequence of dealing with their own children, they believed that they could relate to them, care for them and deal with youngsters' emotional development and as such adapt their pedagogical approaches accordingly. Similar results were also discovered by research by Bassett (2005) relating to female teachers nurturing their pupils due to being mothers. The notion of mothers making effective teachers particularly in EYs was also evident in the data as articulated by Gavin who believes women to be a good influence due to 'nature not nurture' (Will):

'I think women are very easy to work with and with the children it's very good to learn from them because there's a lot in terms of maternal instincts and how women work with children that you can learn from'

(Gavin).

Interestingly, only one of the participants (3%) mentioned being a father and he was hesitant as to how or indeed if this could impact on his pedagogy or knowledge of working with children:

'Talking from a personal point of view, my wife's on maternity leave at the moment, but its, we don't want her particularly to go back to teaching, she's a teacher. I don't want her to go back to teaching, in the short term, because both of us perceive family life is giving her those opportunities to stay at home with our child and hopefully our children, and then moving back into having a job when the children are ready for that, as opposed to childcare as early as possible. Becoming a father may make me a better teacher...erm...I don't know.. not sure...'

(Devon).

When fathering or father-figure was mentioned by the participants in relation to primary education it was often aligned to a traditional disciplinarian role (see the section on role models earlier in this chapter). There was a significant contrast to how the participants translated their understanding and meaning of mothering which was attributed to working with children in EYs and included comments such as 'female teacher[s] as being more motherly and nurturing and male teachers as being more disciplinarian' (Ryan). Indeed Ray who disclosed to not being a father believed that this was a justified reason for not teaching in EYs:

'I believe, personally that they need that transition from leaving their parents to going in, I think. It's easier for a female. I think they have that natural instinct as well and I haven't got children. It might be different if I had children, that might change my opinion but I think at the moment is there's definitely to do with the fact that I believe that women have that natural instinct'

(Ray).

It would appear from the data that the KS2 teachers were distancing themselves from working with younger children and could be accused of 'othering' their male contemporaries who do work in this sector of their primary community. Interestingly the EYs teachers in this research did not demonstrate a gendered performance in terms of their role as EYs practitioners or more relevant for this section, child protection and safeguarding. Indeed:

'Yeah, I think you've got to be wary, haven't you, of putting yourself in a compromising position as such. You know, leaving yourself alone with students and any sensitive areas or sensitive injuries to sensitive areas kind of thing, I mean...but I think it's the same if you're a woman; you do have to protect yourself. So, I think you've got to think of, you know...I better get somebody to come in and help me with this because I'm a man. I need to get somebody to come in and help me or be a witness to this because that's the protocol, isn't it?'

(Peter).

Local policy or protocol has informed Peter's daily practice, but he clearly affirms that he does not amend or change his practice due to being male and that the same protocols should be adhered to by female EYs teachers. This contradicts the perceptions of the KS2 male participants (83%) who have expressed concern about being a male in EYs teacher with little and in some cases no experience of actually working in this sector. It would appear that there is a myth amongst many of the participants that EY's pedagogy is concerned with physical contact. This is further evidenced by comments made by Devon who now works in KS1 but outlined his experiences when working in the EYs sector:

'...but I think being a male I am more cautious, and more vocal this is what's going on and this is, just so people know and it's just making sure you put yourself in the position that, where as if, an allegation happened or those types of things, that other members of staff go "Oh I know he was there, I know what he was doing" as opposed to "I didn't know he'd gone in there to do that today." But at the end of the day it is, you're putting yourself in the same position as a female member of staff, is, and they should take the same precautions...but I think there is a... a notion, I don't know if it's a media notion or a social notion, that being a male you know you're more at risk in those situations.'

From the perspectives of male teachers who have actually worked or disclosed that they had experience, in the EYs sector, all staff, regardless of gender, should take precautions to ensure unfounded allegations did not occur. Again from Devon's comment, it is clear to see that there is a return to the influence of the media when considering males working with young children. It is interesting to note that all the participants who expressed concern about wrong accusations of child abuse were working in KS2 and confirmed that they had not had any EYs or KS1 experience for a sustained time and had often 'only covered the class occasionally for PPA time' (Gary).

Gender was the dominant theme when considering the topic of child protection; however Ricky explains how his gender and lack of experience both combined in him needing extra support when he initially qualified. Experience on how to deal with inappropriate comments and behaviour from pupils was outlined by him and he acknowledged how as an NQT he needed support from his female mentor in order to cope with situations involving young girls in the school:

'When I started here I had trouble with some of the Year 6 girls... something that as quite a young male teacher was difficult. I think other teachers around the school were... you know they were always listening out, you know, girls gossiping about you know the new young teacher or something and that's something I find quite difficult to deal with...and you know, like you walk past a group of Year 6 girls and they'll start giggling and disrupt a lesson and all ... and the deputy and head used to get a bit annoyed. There's nothing you can really do about that, I mean what are you supposed to do? So... yeah I don't really know when that... I guess when you become an established teacher, it would hopefully...you change a bit. But yeah, that's an obstacle to being you know fully respected by the staff I'd say. My mentor noticed this and she had a word with the girls but it was all a bit embarrassing really.'

The extract above was the only example that offered a combination of factors which contributed to his 'trouble' i.e. gender, age and a lack of experience and was indicative of the other narratives. When the theme of child protection was discussed by participants, it was closely correlated to their gender and not other aspects of their identity. Research by Skelton (2007) and Szwed (2010) has recommended that Initial Teacher Education (ITE), should prepare future male teachers for the child protection discourse but this was not a theme articulated by the participants in this study. From the data only one (3%) outlined that he felt unprepared with how to deal with the risk discourse when he was an NQT (see comment above from Ricky). It would appear that the majority of participants in this study had developed a range of security and preventative tactics on how to ensure false child protection allegations were not forthcoming. Nevertheless 'there's this kind of fear element' (Mike) amongst the participants (80%) interviewed in this study on this theme.

### **Overview of Section 3**

As well as other research, the responses from the participants in this study resonate in relation to male teachers and safeguarding enduring this to be 'a controversial topic' (Lyon, 2010:15). As identified in Chapter 2 concern amongst in-service male primary school teachers regarding potential accusations of child abuse is significant (see also Berrill and Martino, 2002; Cushman, 2005; DeCorse *et al*, 1997; King, 2009; NUT, 2002; Smedley and Pepperell, 2000; Skelton 1991; 2003; 2011; Thornton and Bricheno, 2006). However such concerns are omitted from education policy (Martino, 2009; Skelton, 2007; Szwed, 2010) so although it could be argued that the theme extrapolated in this section does resonate with policy rhetoric, I would argue that from the data presented it actually does. Although there is an omission of the child protection discourse from education policy, the data in this study demonstrates that such a discourse does actually inform the daily practices of the participants. Often it is what is omitted or not referenced which is significant. For example, the fact that child protection is omitted from education policy yet is referred to by the majority of participants as a concern (80%) means this is an important theme for the participants of this study.

From the data provided in this study it is clear that the construction of participant's professional identities is partly formed as a consequence of the risk discourse, with an emphasis on the potentiality of males being child abusers. It is also evident from the data that the vast majority of the participants were anxious in relation to tasks they were required to do as primary school teachers that were not perceived by the school community as being traditionally masculine. When considering male teachers and child protection issues the location of professional practice and preferred areas of primary teaching significantly impacted on the participant's professional identities and indeed daily practices.

The findings from the data in this section therefore resonate with the research questions below:

1. How does policy rhetoric relating to the promotion of male teachers in English primary education correspond with the lived experiences and professional identities of male teachers in primary schools?

And sub-questions:

- b. How do male primary school teachers position themselves in discourses around primary education?
- c. What contributes to the construction of professional identities amongst male primary school teachers?

The data in this research demonstrates that discourses around primary teaching impact negatively upon male primary schools teachers as they articulated that often they feel ambivalent about their caring roles and unsure of the expectations imposed on them by many in the school community. As with the responses from the participants widely held societal beliefs, they concur it is a common perception that male primary teachers feel that they are not capable of or able to be as nurturing and caring as female counterparts (Buenaventura *et al*, 2010; Cunningham and Watson, 2002; Sargent, 2000).

The 'othering' of KS1 and EYs male staff by their KS2 colleagues was also significant when considering the risk discourse. Comments similar to that made by Rohit, that '...oh be honest, if you're like in early years and you're a male, for example, I can imagine they might feel slightly uncomfortable in a way' were indicative as to how KS2 teachers spoke about their male colleagues in EYs. Myths surrounding how difficult it could be for males in EYs or KS1, were often cited by KS2 male teachers. Again there was a clear distinction when considering professional practice and actual physical contact with pupils from the experiences of EYs and KS1 male teachers compared to the perceived need for physical contact with young children amongst KS2 teachers. Sargent (2000:414) suggests that 'men who teach small children find themselves doing masculinity that outlines a very narrow field of play' which resonates with the data in this study as the majority of participants (73%) indicated a preference for working in KS2. Furthermore the findings in this study correlates with Cushman's (2001:235) study as 'the assumptions often made of male teachers in relation to child abuse...were evident in all the focus groups'. This has consequences for how males are viewed in the public sector, particularly in care professions or those working with children as well as how this informs their daily practices. Consequences include being excluded from supervising children changing for PE (see comments by Ben and Joel), the questioning of motives for teaching in the primary sector (see comments from Rohit, Gavin and Simon) and avoiding KS1 year groups or the EY sector (see comments made by Toby, Tony, Ryan, Ray, Andrew Martin and Fred). Indeed the 'distrust of male teacher syndrome' (Lyons, 2010:58) was a prevalent issue for the majority of participants

(80%). Evidence from the data exists to show that the risk discourse and child protection issues are prevailing factors in the social construction of the professional identities of male primary teachers in this study.

### **Social Spaces and the Juxtaposition of Power**

The fourth and final theme considered in this research was that of the school community in terms of socialisation and how the participants expressed who had power in primary schools and how this manifested. Power in any workplace is complicated, open to interpretation and not always associated with staff in senior positions. Indeed work colleagues may at 'one moment [be] powerful and at another powerless' (Leonard, 2003:219). The notion of power has been eluded to in previous sections, most notably in relation to stereotypical behaviour and masculinity in primary schools (see also Chapter 2 and theme 2 of this chapter). In this chapter it has already been established that the majority of men in this study position themselves in the discourse surrounding male role models (97%) and perform in line with the gender expectations aligning themselves with stereotypical expectations of men in primary schools (90%). Both of these themes are concerned with discipline and power in relation to pedagogy and positioning strategies adopted by the majority of participants. The fact that many of the participants in this study embraced their role as disciplinarians confirms a hegemonic powerful masculinity and a need to become 'immediately more acceptable' (Jones, 2003:3) within the school community. Unlike the other themes analysed (i.e., role models; stereotypical behaviour and masculinity in primary schools; safeguarding and child protection), the words were used by the participants, yet the word 'power' was not utilised by any of the participants and as with all the themes in this study an interpretivist paradigm will continue to be used .

Although a significant proportion of the participants embraced their role in terms of power and discipline within the school community (90%), which was attributed to their gender, many of the participants (80%) in this study expressed frustration with expectations and comments from the school community regarding the opportunities afforded to them in terms of career progression, again attributed to their gender. Moreover many of the participants (80%) expressed that the perceived ease of promotion and successful recruitment when applying for posts in primary school was attributed to their gender. For example Rob stated 'there's that expectation in terms of

getting a job or a promotion that it would be easier for me because of being male' (Rob). Findings from the interviews (56%) indicate that males felt pressurised to take extra responsibility or progress rapidly in primary schools as Senior Managers (SMs), DHs or HTs and were therefore perceived to be in a more advantageous position than their female counterparts:

'Yeah, that's something I've heard of a couple of times through school, is that males would be fast-tracked. There was one time I heard it with a bit of a kind of edge to it and then other times where I've heard it's perfectly neutral just...but I guess there's the maternity leave issue. Yeah, it was from another class teacher, a female class teacher who she talked...I think...I can't remember. I think she might have been talking about one of her friends who had been going for...I think it was the deputy head but it was a kind of senior management role and she...it lead on to that...she was saying that there was a bias, that if they got a female and a male, they will always go to the male'

(Tim).

As well as:

'I remember I was asking for advice and asking "what do I need to do in an NQT post?" and I remember a teacher at the time saying "you will have no problem, you'll have no problem at all because the schools are screaming out for male teachers and you know what will happen is that you will be deputy head within 5 years". That was a female. That was the class teacher as well'

(Chris).

Similarly again from Will:

'The main, overwhelming thing that people always says is, "Oh, that'll be good being a male in a primary school. You'll find it easy to get a job and they're crying out for males in primary school." That's kind of your token reaction.'

This is echoed by Ray:

'I think you see, definitely, young male teachers you'll hear other members of staff saying, you know, you are already on the road to management. I think that seems instantly that we're here to work our way up quickly. I think there's definitely the opinion that we go further. They were comments from female teachers on my team... it's kind of like – the first question I get asked is, "Are you a class

teacher? Would you prefer management?" And I think that's very much the feeling that young male teachers tend to go further'.

Finally:

'I can't remember who it was, the teacher at my last school what she said, "well you know it's often in a way that males, if you're a good teacher you get taken out of the school and you'll be forced to become a deputy head or a head." I think she is implying that men are picked over women for leadership roles'

(Ricky).

Although research outlines that males are still more likely to hold senior positions in primary schools (see Chapter 2) than females (Mahony *et al.*, 2004; Mistry and Sood, 2013; Powney *et al.*, 2003; Riddellet *al.*, 2006), recent figures reveal that the number of males who are primary HTs is not significantly disproportionate. For example the number of teachers in primary schools who are male is currently 26.7%. In English primary schools 35% of HTs are male (DfE, 2013). This demonstrates that although there are proportionally more male HTs there is little evidence that this is a significant difference in the numbers between male HTs and female HTs. There is a small difference of 8.3% between the number of male primary school teachers and male HTs. Therefore it could be argued that the notion of males becoming HTs at a more rapid pace and as a result of their gender is a professional myth.

Roles such as HT or DH can be perceived as sole possessors of power and status; however the data in this research does not support this theory. Admittedly none of the participants were HTs so could not really outline their structural power but it is clear from the research that power is not located in one source and can be modified (Foucault, 1978) as will be outlined further on in this section. Gavin, who is a DH, shared his feelings relating to comments on his appointments to the school:

'I've heard... quite a lot of female teachers actually here...won't name names...say that... they know women were turned down for my post, that had way more experience than the men who were short listed. And that they were just taking any men for the job. And that massively annoyed me... Because I worked my arse off to get this job. So have loads of other guys. For them to go and say that. I think a lot of them think as well, I don't think you would have to scratch far beneath the surface to get that opinion out of a lot of women in this school'

Interestingly from Gavin's comment above he does not cite the fact that the role he was successful in applying for was that of DH and if one considers the statement above it could apply to any post in the primary sector. Again as already highlighted in the previous section, patriarchal dominance is apparent in primary schools which are influenced by aspects such as social influences and gender (Sumsion, 2000). Here there is a contradiction as policy makers and some teachers feel that there is a need for a gendered balance when considering primary teachers (see also Dermott, 2012 and McGrath and Sinclair, 2013) whilst others (as evidenced in the experiences described above by Gavin, Rob, Will, Tim, Chris and Ray) have experienced resentment regarding the perceived benefits and career ascendancy of male primary school teachers. The influence of power could be offered as a reason for such a dichotomy particularly in the experiences articulated by Gavin. This could comprise Gavin's position of power as DH (Hodkinson *et al.*, 2004). Such findings resonate with Cushman's (2001:232) research who noted that there was 'a perception in the profession that men are given a hiring preference because of the public demand for more male[s]'.

A recurring theme throughout this study is that primary teaching is often constructed as women's work (Thornton and Bricheno, 2006; see also Chapter 2 and previous themes in this chapter). However it has been suggested by Mahony and Menter (2004) that recent education policy is increasingly being constructed as masculine (see also Arnot and Miles, 2005; see also Chapter 2). Furthermore, Griffiths (2006:402) asserts 'the masculinity in question is hegemonic: individualistic, competitive, performative, calculative and hierarchical'. Historically, management structures in primary schools have always been hierarchical with the position of Headship being the final achievement at the end of a career path. When considering this, Moreau *et al* (2007:244) align such hierarchical management structures as 'masculinist'. Indeed Brittan (1989) argues that in order for conventional masculinities to effectively operate within a schooling environment, or to be competent at operating, some degree of power and competitiveness must be demonstrated, particularly in management roles. Moreover the participants in this study recognised the need to perform as a 'conforming' man; a rational promotion man who will conform to and uphold established forms of practices within the 'male-dominated, hegemonic discourse of educational leadership' (Coffey & Delamont, 2000:59). Therefore one would assume

that masculine preserves, which have been identified as important in primary leadership and education policy, coupled with the perceived disproportionate number of males being HTs in primary school (DfE, 2013), would favour males in terms of power in such settings (MacDonald, 2004; Thornton and Bricheno, 2006). This does not appear to be the case with data gathered for this research, especially when one considers how such expected aspirations from others contribute to the professional identities of the participants. Ray describes how males are often scrutinised if they do not occupy a degree of leadership:

'If men have been teaching for many years and haven't taken on some sort of leadership role their work ethic and personality is questioned quite badly, in terms of 'well there must be something wrong with him; he is not working hard enough' or 'he must be a bit of a wimp because he hasn't taken up a leadership role.'

The fact that many of the participants felt pressurised to become HTs due to their gender reinforces the recurring theme in this chapter of a hegemonic masculine persona adopted by the participants. Although Ray describes males who have decided not to take on leadership roles as not being 'hard working enough,' Mills *et al.*, illustrates a much more ominous perception:

'However, for those men who do not aspire to be head teachers and who want to be primary school classroom teachers and in particularly early childhood teachers, misogynist and homophobic discourses work to construct them as suspect'

(Mills *et al.*,2007:74).

A key message from the findings is that there is a general consensus amongst the participants that the preferred version of males in primary is that of a traditional masculine male. Viewing and constructing male teachers as natural leaders with perceived power and authority further confirms this. From Ray's comments and previous themes in this chapter it is clear that particular gender discourses associating males with 'power and status' (Thornton and Bricheno, 2006:205) are enriched and embedded within our historical assumptions as well as evidence of professional myths. As such, many of the participants (97%) have constructed conventional forms of masculine identity in their professional lives whereby gender intersects with institutional and cultural expectations, which subsequently subjects the male as a leader with power. Bradley (1989:219) asserts that males 'are able to exploit their

gender to rise rapidly up the hierarchy to the top posts'. This did not sit comfortably with some:

'I remember one TA [Teaching Assistant] asking me, "Can you see yourself doing this as a career?" I was like, "That is why I've made this huge step of choosing to do this. Otherwise I wouldn't have put myself through such a big thing if I didn't want to do it. But I wanted to do it," and she said, "Oh, okay, but you are only here because you want to be a head." And I thought "no!" I found that really insulting'

(Liam).

Including:

'People are always asking me "when are you going to be a Head?" and you know what I am really not interested. I suppose I see myself more as just a member of staff, just going around interacting with children and the adults just as I would with anyone, really I know that people think that's strange – not wanting to be a Head I mean'

(Edward).

As well as:

'There's this idea that if you're the bloke, you know, why don't you want to be a head teacher, because of course you're going to be in primary school, you're a man, you're going to be a head teacher. This is an unwritten assumption. And you know if you're not, what's wrong?'

(Mike).

Given that the participants were a minority working within a predominantly female environment, it was interesting to note that feelings of isolation, exclusion and segregation, which mirrors past research findings (see Lewis, 2001; Frazer and Yeoman, 1999), and this was apparent amongst the participants. Joel shared his everyday experiences of isolation in staff meetings. He explained how the female DH initiates meetings with 'right then ladies', whilst being consciously aware of his presence. Although Joel suggested that he has become tolerant of the implicit gender prejudices within the female occupied space, he described how at times he feels 'invisible'. Likewise, some of the participants (30%) described how staffrooms were

places where they were made to feel uncomfortable or excluded. Some of the participants in this study (30%) identified feelings of isolation or loneliness as a challenge they encounter in their daily professional lives. When considering social spaces such as the staffroom, Peter felt that, '...working in a female-dominant environment, you've got a sense of, you know, you're in our territory'. Whilst Ricky, for example, had experienced loneliness because he could not contribute or articulate his views on the appointment of a new HT in the informal setting of the staffroom:

'And it's quite... it's a large staff. Quite well off middle aged woman, teachers and TAs [Teaching Assistants], I don't want to stereotype but... and then a couple of them were shouting, "we want a good looking bloke to be the head teacher". And you know everyone else is taking it as a joke. Well I was a bit taken aback by it I think. Because I thought they were taking the whole process a little bit lightly because I've been struggling with getting a job myself. And to just say that out loud in front of you, you know, there weren't that many male staff in there... It's a bit, bit odd. There's... lots of very strong woman in there. And if you did stand up for yourself you felt a bit isolated sometimes I think. I stood up for myself with you know with teaching things. In the staff room I tended to hide away I guess, a little bit... that's where I found it most difficult....some of our males avoid going to the staffroom. One was... there were two that were deputies. And they avoided it like the plague'

(Ricky).

Feelings of isolation and being ignored and choosing not to challenge inappropriate and controversial comments for a 'quiet life' (Ben) was also expressed:

'In the staffroom, I have to listen to all these conversations about this and that... so and so falling out with...soap operas...clothes, dresses. One day there was a big conversation about teaching...been a lot of it...not to me personally but another thing in the staff room has been about male teachers being in the classroom while kids are getting changed and if that should not be allowed and stuff...but while I was actually sitting there, so...normally...the reason I was sat in the staffroom and I just thought there's no...I'll leave it because I'll upset them or I'll be pounced on by about five different people'

(Ben).

Also an example of 'othering' of female staff by Edward:

'I noticed as well, the males we never go into the staff room regularly. We always kind of stayed in our classrooms or...I don't know whether it's because we like getting our work done or we kind of...I think it's because we can't be bothered with the tittle-tattle, little things in conversation that people have. We just want to have our lunch in peace, do a bit of work and get on with our job basically'.

The capacity to manage the increasing demands of primary teaching and the emphasis for the need to work smarter rather than harder Duncan (2006) and 'get on with our job' (Edward) was offered as a reason for avoiding the staffroom by some of the participants (10%). Yet the main reason cited by the participants for avoiding such social spaces was to do with a lack of traditional male discourse occurring in such spaces (30%). As opposed to classrooms by which daily practices have been cited as 'gender neutral spaces' (Bricheno and Thornton, 2006:59) and teachers or those working with children being increasingly expected to behave in a professional manner, staffrooms have traditionally been informal spaces where all staff relax. Against this backdrop, 92% of full-time and part-time THAs currently employed in primary schools in England are female (DfE, 2013), which as outlined by the participants has an influence on informal discourse articulated in the staffroom (see comments from Peter, Ricky, Ben and Edward). Indeed, Sargent (2000:417) explains how 'the ever-present cautionary tales keep the male teachers both invisible and condemned'. Their experiences of isolation are essentially due to males being a minority in terms of gender and primary school staffrooms have been described as a space "'where women's talk' or 'intimate conversations', [occur] from which men are generally excluded' (Cameron *et al.* 1999:70). Indeed such exclusion from conversations in staffrooms is a powerful mechanism used in order to maintain gender and power relations consciously or otherwise.

Interpersonal relationships are often used to build networks which can exclude and alienate members of a community if they have been deliberately isolated or ignored. Such behaviour will make it difficult for minorities to become engaged and partake despite their structural powerful role (i.e. SMs, DHs or HTs) or in some cases, as offered from Ben and Edward above, in spite of their gender. Furthermore research is consistent with the findings from the data and it has been suggested that female teachers often use such social situations as strategies to preserve the status quo

(MacDonald, 2004; Paechter and Head, 1996). This was evident by some of the data in this study:

'As a man when I go to do the washing up, almost invariably it's taken away from me. I don't know whether that's because they don't think I can do it properly, you know, and when I take food in, if I bake or if I make food, they're a bit stunned that I've done that. And I don't know whether it's relevant, I do know it's relevant. Very often the people who struggle with that idea are my Asian female colleagues who are just completely stunned and impressed that I've done the cooking or washing up or whatever. I don't think it's just because I'm Asian, I tend to find that, you know, people are very often just offering to do stuff. I'm sure it's not because I'm charming, do you know what I mean? Whether it's little tasks like making drinks and cutting, you know, doing displays, all that sorts of stuff. As a man, I think you get spoilt'

(Adeel).

Including the below from Joel who asserts that he likes to exploit his minority gender and age:

'But I think because I'm young male...like they feel the need to look after me. Age is relevant you know. Personally I'm really comfortable with being surrounded by women. I think they preferred to look after me and referred to me as cute sometimes. They always give the impression of doing anything for me which is really nice'

(Joel).

From the observations made by Adeel and Joel their gender is the predominant feature of their identity which contributes to how they are treated and integrated within the staffroom as well as their ethnicity (Adeel) and age (Joel). Moreover, Griffiths (2006:403) outlines that feminisation and hegemonic masculinity are labels which 'crowd out other practices', which is evident in the research findings on male teachers' perceptions and feelings regarding social spaces such as staffrooms. From the data it could be argued that male power in primary schools is decreasing which is consistent with the findings of Thornton and Bricheno (2006) and also that education policy (see previous themes) as well as female staff have 'othered' (Blackwell, 1999:43) males in this study when they articulated some of their experiences in school. This is further evidenced in the following regarding the inappropriate and sometimes sexist comments men have to tolerate in schools:

'I found it quite hard to form really good relationships with other teachers. I've formed good, professional relationships, and I know that in the school that it doesn't matter if you've formed good personal relationships but I felt slightly outside of the groups because I'm a male because a lot of times the conversation drifts to things that...gossiping about men or jokes about men and things like that, and I just don't feel like I can join in. Which teachers they fancy? Who's got a nice bum? And there was also things about... comments about dads'

(Ben).

Together with:

'Yeah, staff rooms are I think sexual places. They're places where in my experience women feel that they can say whatever they like and actually very often that men can't, that women feel that men can't, and men feel that they can't. I don't know whether that's because the men are in the minority, right? But there are things that are said in the staff room that I've been slaughtered for saying elsewhere so you know, one of the favourites and it's not overtly sexual but it's implicitly sexual or gender stereotypical. When we have male teachers or male students in they're saying, 'Who's that person?' They flirt like mad and the age gap between the person making the observation is maybe sixteen years you know and they're young, very young adults who are working on work experience. Hang on. How does that work? They're just saying, 'Oh wow,' you know, 'He's getting a lot of attention and he's really enjoying it.' So, you got both ways; you've got the enjoying the attention and the not really knowing what to do about it'

(Adeel).

Plus:

'It's horrendous. It's truly truly horrendous because, you know, some of the things that I've just said just play out, you know. There are female staff who positively drool over the fact that there are going to be male staff and the flirting happens the moment they walk through the door, so that's one element. I think that it is also true for some other people who work with female people, so they have less expectation and they will do. They have less expectation of them. They have lower thresholds of expectation'

(Joel).

Some of the participants (37%) outlined similar comments to the ones offered above. From the data it is clearly evident that avoidance or simply not going to staffrooms was

the main strategy offered by male teachers who felt uncomfortable in social situations by which they felt excluded. This was mainly due to not being able to partake or feeling permitted to contribute to informal discussions (see comments from Ricky, Ben and Edward). A very small number of the participants (6%) described other strategies which included challenging such comments or seeking an alternative to the staffroom all of which lead to detrimental effects:

'...we used to have a Christmas thing like where you bought...you took somebody's name and you bought them a present. Well, all the men, all the men were always...when I say all the men, there're only two or three of us ever at one time, were always almost year in year round given sexual presents. And I mean he got...if you got his name, the person who got his name went straight to Ann Summers, you know? And so he'd be there with his Flashers Mac or his naughty this or his naughty that. And I mean, I get sent, you know I got sent G-strings and thongs and posing pouches, you know? But just think about it the other way around, you know, they all bought each other sexual presents too but had I done that...you know? One year I said 'maybe we should think about the presents you get for bloke?' oh my god you should have heard the reaction... 'who are you? You're not the HT...you can't tell us what to do'. I have since learnt to just keep sthum'

(Adeel).

Including:

'One of the phrases that's used in the staff room is having a blonde moment, okay? And it's just common vernacular in the staff room. I once said it in front of a group of female teachers and was absolutely torn apart...and I've never recovered from it. I was absolutely vilified and the fact that I said, 'Hang on, all women at this school say it,' just didn't get me anywhere. Right? But let me go further than that. The women in the school, a group, not all of them but there are a group of women in the staff room who talk about everything womanly so they talk about the bits of them that they're having waxed, they talk about the size of their breasts, they tease each other about the size of their breasts. They then have the thing of 'oh, man' — not quite oh man victim but oh-man-exciting, oh man we can say what we want and actually it's going to be okay, you know?'

(Brett).

The notion of power, as evidenced in the comments above from Adeel and Brett, is significant in influential in the daily practices of both men and indicative of similar

comments made by the participants. Interestingly, Adeel shares that the female members of staff resented the fact that he challenged their inappropriate behaviour, reminding him that such power was the preserve of the HT (i.e. telling them what to do). The perceived status of the HT's power as articulated by the female staff in Adeel's account is counterbalanced by the actual power of such female staff who inform and significantly contribute to his daily practice and professional identity. This is also similar to the experience articulated by Brett by which he felt isolated as a male and was not permitted to utilise accepted language amongst the female staff yet had to content with inappropriate comments. Indeed 'how professionals understand themselves and their role including the more informal and implicit aspects of professional cultures' (Stone and Rixon, 2008:110) is evident from the data of this study. The culture being scrutinised being the informal yet powerful space of the staffroom. Moreover from the comments above it is clear that 'power, in this formulation, becomes distributed, built into the minutiae of human relations, the assumptions of our discourses, the development of our bodies and the fabric of our buildings' Paetcher (2001:3).

Foucault's (1978) conception of power outlines that it can be located in a range of sources throughout an array of societies. In addition Paetcher (2001) interprets Foucault's notion of power within group situations as including micro-powers as well as micro-resistances. Avoiding staffrooms, which is cited as a main strategy for avoiding power dynamics, could be viewed as micro-resistance on part of the participants on this study (30%). Such power is entrenched and was influential in daily as well as professional practices. How the struggle of power influences the daily routines and practices has been outlined by the data presented in this chapter this far. A small number (3%) of the participants outlined how in terms of the power apparent in social situations they actively formed their own explicit form of micro-resistance:

'In one school I worked in a group of the blokes on the staff just starting meeting in my classroom at lunchtime. Nothing formal just chilling chatting, doing a bit of work, eating our sandwiches and this sort of became a habit really. This didn't go down too well and started to cause trouble. In fact the DH came to us and had a go...saying we were creating a clique and we should go to the staffroom more...I couldn't believe it... this was our own time... how dare she'

(Ricky).

The dominance and power of females in the staffroom and therefore associated stereotypical female behaviour in terms of conversation was the reason cited by Ricky for informally seeking other males as supportive networks. Again the notion of power being attributed to professionals in management roles is articulated here (see previous comment from Adeel in relation to HT 'telling them what to do'), as the example from Ray and previous one from Adeel demonstrates the frustration amongst staff at being told what to do during lunch times. The interface between the antithetical differences faced by males who decide to deploy micro-resistant strategies by forming all male social groups in female dominant settings such as staffrooms has also been identified by Cushman (2005). Cushman suggests that when male teachers 'on the rare occasions chose to sit together in staffrooms to share common interests, they could expect to get a hard time from the females' (2005:201). The data from this study chimes with Cushman's findings and power apparent in such social situations is maintained by the majority i.e. females in the staff room. As alluded to in this theme the notion of power is complex, particularly when one considers gender, professional and informal identities and behaviours. Indeed existing epistemological constructs of masculinity and femininity mean that when the female and male worlds come into contact it usually entails 'supervising men managing the working lives of women and this is true in the world of education' (Hargreaves, 1994:104). The extract above offered by Ricky was the only example that outlined males seeking other males as an avoidance and micro-resistance strategy. What is clear based on the experiences of some the participants (30%) is that staffrooms are places where power exists and behaviour is monitored and performed to in terms of gendered expectations.

#### **Overview of Section 4**

The final section in this chapter has informed all the research aims but explicitly addresses the following research sub-questions:

- b. How do male primary school teachers position themselves in discourses around primary education?
- c. What contributes to the construction of professional identities amongst male primary school teachers?

From the data in this section it is feasible to state that the male participants in this study felt an element of covert positive discrimination towards them from their female

counterparts. The main example of this being that of male teachers being constructed as natural leaders and the professional myth that males are over represented in the role of headship. In fact statistics do not substantiate this (DfE, 2013). Such perceptions and expectations have had a negative impact on the professional identities and daily practices of the participants in this study and furthermore it has been an added pressure for males to seek promotion rapidly (see comments from Tim, Ray, Gavin, Liam, Edward and Mike).

According to Skelton *et al.* (2006) and others (Arnot and Miles, 2005; Mahony and Menter, 2004; Moreau, Osgood and Halhall, 2007) hierarchical management structures in primary schools are increasingly masculine. The data in this study contradicts the assertion made by Thornton and Bricheno (2006) that males within primary schools, generally produce, plan, and evaluate the knowledge, processes and rules that are carried out by subservient teachers, generally women resulting in a demonstration of how women are constrained by gendered distinctions that preserve inequalities and power. The notion of power and how it is manifested in the primary schools of the participants is far more complex. Much of the literature states that in primary schools there is conflicting tension which has been established whereby primary teaching is constructed as women's work (Thornton and Bricheno, 2006), yet educational policy and management structures are increasingly associated masculinity and power (Mahony *et al.*, 2004). The implication here is that males are more powerful in primary settings, which was not evident from the data in this study. Indeed who has power in primary schools from the stance of the participants in this study, are members of the school community who are not necessarily senior members of staff. Those that hold power are female staff members – teaching and non-teaching. The findings in this study indicate that many male primary school teachers are 'othered' in social situations and daily routines in primary schools, whether intentional or not (see comments from Ricky, Ben, Adeel, Joel and Brett).

From the data, it is evident that some of the participants (37%) may have felt isolated and ostracised and so powerless in social situations. Many had adopted strategies to overcome this issue or had developed coping mechanisms to alleviate the social taboo of being a male, thus a minority, in a primary school setting. The variation of isolation and powerlessness experienced by the participants in schools was dependant on context and many factors as outlined in this section; however a common experience

shared by the participants was concerned with the challenge of being a minority in social settings and the less formal space of the staffroom. The participants in this study did not view this as intentional or calculated but an expected consequence of working within a mainly female environment.

### **Summary of Findings**

In this chapter there has been an attempt to form a greater understanding of the questions which were originally posed relating to the professional identities and lived experiences of male primary teachers in English schools. For instance, the findings in this research demonstrate that policy rhetoric does indeed influence the professional identities and lived experiences of the participants in this study. Again how male teachers position themselves in line with gendered expectations and 'gendered performance', (Butler 1990:25) was also unearthed. Thirdly, the many influences from macro-, meso- and micro-levels (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), which contributed to the professional identities of male teachers in this study was outlined in this section. The data shows that many of the participants (90%) of this study felt the need to portray traditional versions of masculinity in order to survive and indeed succeed in primary schools. This is in line with current education policy, as outlined in Chapter 2, and the vast majority of participants in this study were keen to offer that such versions of masculinity are compliant with the expectations of the school community; most notably female members of staff, who are the majority in the school communities and parents. In this study each theme extrapolated from the data has been outlined and the association of these with each research question has been presented in the summary of each theme. Having discussed all these and clearly acknowledged the main themes in this research, this thesis now moves to present the conclusions which will draw upon the analysis, in the following chapter.

## **Chapter 5 – Conclusion**

### **Introduction**

This chapter begins with an overview of the main findings of this research and then highlights the contributions of this research to knowledge relating to perspectives of male primary school teachers and reflects on previous literature, findings and discussions of the study. The theoretical and practical implications of the contribution to knowledge are thus considered. In the penultimate section, I outline further work that is needed in the light of the current research findings and then conclude with recommendations on how practitioners, policy-makers and educationalists can reflect upon in light of this study's findings. This chapter presents an overall picture of the conclusions and recommendations drawn in relation to the aims and purposes of this study which is to address the following main research question: 'How does policy rhetoric relating to the promotion of male teachers in English primary education correspond with the lived experiences and professional identities of male teachers in primary schools?'

In tandem with this, three sub-questions were also addressed throughout the study:

- a) How does policy attempt to define and shape the role of male primary school teachers?
- b) How do male primary school teachers position themselves in discourses around primary education?
- c) What contributes to the construction of professional identities amongst male primary school teachers?

The next section considers the overall themes evident from the data and outlines how these themes are interrelated.

### **The Main Themes**

The decision to engage in a small scale qualitative case study to illuminate an area of interest has been fruitful, as has been the case for other researchers engaged in investigating male teacher identities (Ashley and Lee Carrington and McPhee, 2008; Cushman, 2005; Marino, 2009; Mistry and Sood, 2013; Szwed, 2010). The main themes extrapolated from the data were the notions of the importance of male

teachers as role models; engaging in stereotypical gender behaviour; safeguarding and the juxtaposition of power.

From the data obtained in this study it is very clear that male primary school teachers view themselves as important role models in the lives of children they interact with. Yet an observation of policy initiatives do not only 'perpetuate problematised notions of role models within the context of fuelling moral concern about the 'feminisation' of schooling' (Martino, 2008:209), but they often validate the many indictments and qualms parents, and female teachers alike, have about males teaching children.

The putative connection between the underachievement of boys and the lack of male 'role models' in the classroom is a widespread phenomenon, which links to the 'failing school' discourse mentioned earlier (Mills *et al*, 2004). Commentators (DCSF, 2008; Drudy *et al* 2005; Haase, 2008; Newman, 2008) have focused on the need for an increased number of male teachers but there is limited research as to why this is important. The main justification provided for needing more male primary practitioners and one shared by the participants in this study is that they are required to be role models to influence boys currently working below national expectations in schools. This is a rather simplistic solution as 'it simply does not occur to boys that their male teachers might be role models unless they are asked' (Ashley and Lee, 2003:109). As has already been established throughout this study the notion of a role model is 'uncritically embedded' (Sargent, 2001; Jones, 2007) in the debate of primary school teachers, particularly male primary school teachers in the discourse of teacher identities and professionalism. Government initiatives to increase male recruitment have been presented in official discourse as 'panaceas for the recalcitrant behaviour of many working class boys in schools and their generally lower levels of achievement' (Carrington and Skelton, 2003:254). Policy-makers have generally assumed that more male primary teachers will provide alternative forms of masculinity to disengaged, working-class boys, in order to counter their adverse attitudes towards schooling (Dermott, 2011). This is a theory that the majority of participants (97%) in this study agreed with. Yet, while an uncritical acknowledgment of the term 'role model' is not merely constricted to prominent figures in England, as well as participants in this study, the demands for additional male role models from policy-makers appears to advocate an unquestioning acceptance of gender differences, and an acknowledgement that men and women teach differently (Smith, 2005). Furthermore,

policy-makers appear to assume that masculinity is an outcome of socialisation in which males are needed, as a homogeneous group, to relate with boys' in 'typically male ways' (Carrington, *et al.*, 2008). This was the overwhelming finding in this study amongst the participants who viewed themselves as role models (97%) and feel the need to behave in gendered expected ways (90%).

However, an analysis of the current literature illustrates the extent to which government initiatives fail to be foregrounded upon research-based evidence, and are established on somewhat simplistic ideas of men as 'role models', which are implemented upon the back of general gender assumptions (Skelton, 2004) that men teach differently to women; that boys and girls respond differently and 'better' towards teachers of the same sex; and, that men teachers share something quite similar and unique in terms of masculinity (Skelton, 2007:688). It appears particularly naïve of policy-makers to assume that boys will connect instantly with male teachers, which indeed is underpinned by essentialist gender perspectives, whereby schools have implemented strategies which solely target boys' underachievement, leaving the needs of girls disregarded, as their achievement success in recent years has proved inviolate (Francis and Skelton, 2005; Younger and Warrington, 2005; Skelton, 2007).

Furthermore, governmental strategies, such as the TTA's corporate plan for 2003-06, which set out initial aims of increasing male trainees by a further 20%, have often emphasised the necessity for male teachers' whom exhibit 'proper masculinity' in order to 'combat the 'laddish' behaviours of boys' (Martino, 2008:214). While no definition of what constitutes 'proper masculinity' exists, such strategies again appears rather simplistic and limited sex role socialisation theories, 'whereby masculinity and femininity are located solely within male and female bodies' (Martino, 2008:214). Research appears to reinforce this notion of 'proper masculinity', as typically, schools favour male teachers who demonstrate 'hegemonic' masculinities (see Haase, 2008; Cushman, 2008), which as defined by Connell (1995:164), is a concept of proposed practices that promote the dominant social positioning of men within society; 'it is a mistake to identify hegemonic masculinity purely with physical aggression'. Again this resonates with the data in this study as many of the participants (90%) shared their strategy of behaving in traditional masculine ways in order to satisfy the qualms of the school community. In order to counteract such unsophisticated 'role model' conceptualisations, it seems necessary to consider the fact that masculinity and

femininity are not fixed inherent biological constructs, which are situated within a property of bodies, 'but it is intertwined into the daily management and organisation of primary schools' (Skelton, 2003:207). The conviction by which the participants in this study articulated their position as role models resonates with research cited above.

The professed rhetoric of academic underachievement of boys has been a pervasive theme in political and public debates over the last twenty years. In England, previous and the recent governments have recognised the underachievement of boys to be a predicament for education and has been described in the media using the language of crisis (Francis and Skelton, 2005). The increasing availability of national performance data, which has since focused on the gender gap between the levels of achievement among boys and girls in all forms of schooling, has constructed a 'status as a king of globalised moral panic' (Epstein *et al*, 2000:3). Again the findings in this study resonate with the perceived need for male primary school teachers to solve the problem of the underachieving boys. Consequently, a parallel shift has been discernible as academic and policy makers' interests has altered from a concern regarding girls' success within the educational system, to a new superior problem in which boys' underachievement is the main focus and the most simple solution is to have more male role models in order to close the gender achievement gap. This is a concept embraced and maximised by the majority of participants in this study (90%). The notion of males as natural leaders was also prevalent in the research as many of the participants (80%) expressed their awareness of the professional myth of males being over-represented as primary HTs whilst some (56%) outlined their frustration in relation to this perceived power and influence of males in primary education.

From a social constructionist perspective, although the dominance of women in teaching has ensured that 'the chalkface remains a female domain' (Coffey and Delamont, 2000:16), the calls for more male teachers by policy-makers suggests that 'being masculine' or 'being feminine' is restricted by one's physical embodiment (Skelton, 2003; Mills *et al*, 2004). Social constructionists consider masculinity and femininity to exist throughout discourses which situation gender identity in specific ways (Haase, 2008; Francis, 2008). Again this was articulated by many (90%) of the participants in this study who shared the importance to behave in school in line with gender expectations.

From this perspective, government initiatives appear contentious as children appear to overlook the gender of teachers (Martin and Marsh, 2005; Carrington *et al*, 2007; Carrington *et al*, 2008 and Drudy, 2008). Therefore, as dominant policies as well as the participants in this study, continue to focus upon gender, more significant factors of predicting achievement, such as social class, race, and religion are disregarded (Francis and Skelton, 2005). As the female domain of primary schools has been subjected to ostracising the achievement of boys (Epstein *et al*, 2000; King, 2000), the simplistic calls for more dominant constructions of masculinity within primary schools appears to be underpinned by the idea that women lack the ability to sympathise with boys (Douglas, 1964:73), and that males, through their masculinity, can offer something unique. From the findings in this research it would appear that little has changed over the last twenty years as the sexual division of labour within teaching ensures that;

'...women are more likely to teach young children, men older ones; women to teacher girls, men boys; women to teach domestic subjects and humanities, men technological subjects and physical sciences; women to have pastoral responsibilities, men administrative and curricular ones'

(Acker, 1994:76).

This helps demonstrate the extent to which gendered discourses associated with femininity and masculinity, such as nurturing and caring, can act as a resistant force to women in occupying administrative positions within education and males from occupying roles in EY, as evidenced in the data from this study.

There was significant difference between the responses of male teachers working in KS2 and those working in KS1 and EYs. The dichotomy relating to physical contact with children and subsequent allegations of child abuse was significant. The reality of males working in EYs and KS1 did not resonate with the concerns expressed by the potential deployment in EYs from KS2 male teachers. Perceptions of vulnerability relating to child protection and paedophilia accusations was evident in the data this study, which resonates with empirical research regarding the liability and suspicion of male teachers in primary education (Mills *et al*, 2004; Hansen and Mulholland, 2005). In addition to experiencing feelings of isolation, participants conveyed concerns relating to child protection and paedophilic intentions. The majority of participants (80%) acknowledged that they often susceptible to wrongful accusations that have the

potential to label them as paedophiles and child molesters, which reflects past research findings (see Skelton, 1991; Smedley, 1999; Sumsion, 1999; King, 2000; Roulston and Mills, 2000). As the widespread 'moral panic' and media preoccupation regarding paedophilia has been examined in Chapter 2, participants discussed how they live in 'fear' of child abuse accusations due to their work choice. Past research in this field also documents this male concern (Pepperell and Smedley, 1998; Lewis, 2001). Landor and Eisenclas (2012:499) discuss the pejorative gender-labels used to describe men in primary schools, such as paedophile or pervert. Accordingly, participants indicated a degree of self-surveillance in regards to avoiding any physical contact with pupils in order to adopt individual 'strategies' to protect themselves. Drawn from the experiences discussed by participants, it can be argued that the need to evade physical contact and distance from children further reinforces the stereotype of men as not caring, thus unsuitable for primary teaching. In relation to data in this study, this manifested as KS2 male teachers avoiding teaching positions in EY and KS1. Given that male teachers are often looked upon with 'suspicion and even considered dangerous' (Thornton and Bricheno, 2006:61), the experiences discussed by participants were not necessarily surprising. However, it is rational to suggest that the linking of child abuse and paedophilic accusations force men to abandon caring (and therefore female) work (Burns, 2004:217).

Interview findings in this research also reveal that both primary and secondary socialisation have an influence on the professional identities of male primary school teachers. When considering identity construction, male primary school teachers, as any group, are a group of individuals with different family, educational, professional and cultural backgrounds who are seeking to establish identities in professional settings. From the findings in this study it is evident that the main influence on such identities are colleagues, in this case female colleagues which resonates with one of the theoretical frameworks which has influenced this study, Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological theory (see Chapter 2). Similarly, from the findings it is apparent that the identities of male primary school teacher are likely to be dependent to some extent on levels of personal and social interaction to create feelings of belonging coupled with the pedagogy and supervision style and content. In light of this, social interactions need to be taken into account when considering the narratives shared by the participants as this was a theme deluged. The selection, exclusion and isolation felt by some of the participants (37%) had an impact on their everyday practice. Social

culture is concerned with collective and deeply-held values, beliefs and attitudes that bind a group of people together at the detriment of excluding other groups. This continues to reinforce what Southworth (1998:2) calls 'the way we do things here'. As has been outlined in the previous chapter, ethos and values of social spaces in primary school environments can help male primary teachers develop a sense of disconnection. Therefore, in addition to professional practice and the desire to behave in gender expected fashions, the participants in this study also had to develop calibre and resilience when considering informal and often inappropriate conversations amongst female staff.

### **Contribution to Knowledge**

The study has made several contributions to the body of knowledge relating to policy rhetoric and the perspectives of male teachers by applying an interpretative humanistic approach. Ribbins and Gunter (2002:378) suggest that the main purpose of humanistic research is to 'contribute to enabling and improving' current practice that could bring about change. This small-scale research has offered male primary school teachers the opportunity to review, reflect and explore their own professional practice and identities, which is often neglected in social science as outlined by Ashley and Lee (2003) and Lyons (2010). This focused reflection could contribute to collegiate dialogue and discourse regarding male primary school teachers' lived experiences and professional practice and thus potentially improving the experiences of a minority group in primary school settings. The research could also inform school leaders and provide insight for managers into how their male teacher employees are inducted and supported into the school community. This information could therefore be used to redesign the staff structure and social spaces such as staffrooms, mentoring systems and retention of such employees.

Secondly, Ribbins and Gunter (2002:378) propose another rationale for humanistic research is to 'theorise from empirical work'. This study has continually highlighted the dearth of academic research into the perspectives of male primary school teachers and the researchers in such projects being male. The majority of previous empirical research on this topic has been conducted from a feminist perspective and therefore this research is innovative and original. This study provides data gathered from 30 semi-structured interviews, which has already disseminated information regarding

important issues highlighted by participants which inform their daily practice. Moreover, such data could alert the research community to the possibilities of empirically based projects regarding the experiences of minority groups in the work place or education settings. Indeed Ribbins and Gunter (2002:379) assert that the main aim of correspondence within the humanistic domain is to announce findings to 'the research community, policy makers and practitioners'. Consequently, in order to further inform the literature and research regarding male teachers in primary schools, it is intended that I will continue to disseminate and share the knowledge gained from the data in this study in a range of articles and conferences suitably pitched for either an academic or professional audience.

### **Limitations Within This Research**

As previously cited, the research employed semi-structured interviews with 30 male primary school teachers in 17 primary schools located in a narrow geographical area of the Midlands region of England and supplemented interview data with documentary analysis. While this provided an insight into the role and perceptions of male teachers in primary schools to address my research questions; it does place limitations on the extent to which the knowledge gained in this research is transferable to other localities outside this geographical region. It would be helpful to have further research with a much broader sample of male primary teachers and primary schools nationally, using survey questionnaires for instance, to find out the extent to which the current study's findings can be corroborated by other English or UK institutions.

The data gathered in this research was taken from semi-structured interviews and was in the interpretative position. As the researcher I was aware that I had the power to create versions of reality. Even though I acknowledged that there is no single truth, I am still making a claim to present a legitimate and authentic account of other people's lives and their perspectives. I identified that this was a dilemma and have attempted to present authentic accounts whilst also recognising that the study reflects my own interpretations of significant aspects in my participants' accounts. In addition, the inquiry developed means that the participants' lives and experiences are presented in a fixed and unchanging way. Despite these limitations, this research does highlight areas of interest regarding professional identities and experiences of male primary school teachers.

## **Suggestions for Future Research**

There are a number of areas this study that could benefit from further research. First, the research was conducted with established male primary school teachers, who have been in the role of primary teaching for a minimum of 2 years. While this was valuable in providing data to answer my research questions, it would be beneficial to conduct further case study work with newly qualified male primary school teachers and trainee male primary school teachers whom currently I engage with. A longitudinal study would be useful in order to consider if their perceptions change over time and how transformation of professional identities could be relevant in order to ascertain 'autobiographical reasoning' from the participants (McAdams and Olson, 2010:523). Such participants could also be questioned as to whether they had considered working in a predominantly female environment as a factor and if this had been a possibility for not joining the profession.

In a similar vein, a more in-depth study which includes discussions with significant people working with male primary school teachers in primary schools, such as Teaching Assistants, female primary school teachers, pupils in primary schools, parents as well as observations of classes and the use of focus groups to discuss the role of males teaching in primary school would definitely provide an extra dimension to this study. This could triangulate the data and offer a more rounded view and therefore enhance understanding of how male teachers have learned to teach and adapt in primary school environments and how males have established coping mechanisms to survive as a minority.

Although these findings are useful in providing perceptions and narratives of male primary school teachers, they are however based on the views of male primary school teachers in 17 case study primary schools only. Further cross-sector research would be useful to find out the contributions of male secondary school teachers which could be compared with other sectors to, for instance higher education sectors and such analysis could compare this with the findings of this research. The study, however, serves to provide key insights to inform the under-researched agenda of male primary school teachers which could now be broadened to include a wider range of other educational institutions.

In addition, it would be beneficial to further explore the reasons why the participants in this study were reluctant to consider positions in EY or KS1. Moreover, the perceptions of male EY or KS1 teachers could also be sought in order to contribute to this contentious debate. Additionally, research could also be conducted exploring a specific minority group within the male primary teaching sector; for example gay male primary school teachers, male primary school teachers from ethnic minority groups, differentiating between Asian and Afro-Caribbean males and also males who are employed in faith schools. Clearly the role and experiences of male teachers in primary schools remains an under-researched area in England and as such it is an exciting time, particularly against the backdrop of rapid policy amendments in education (Arthur, 2013; Doherty and McMahon, 2007; Fuller, 2013), for those seeking to undertake investigations that are aimed at understanding this important role. This, and all of the modifications discussed above, would be worthy of consideration in plans for future research in primary schools.

## **Recommendations**

The research that I have undertaken has developed me in my role as a professional educator and this robust research has already had impact as well as improve policy and practice within the context of my workplace. The findings have thus provided a basis on which to make recommendations on the topic of male primary school teachers' professional identities and practice and these are outlined in this section. First, this study's findings have alluded to a possible lack of a shared and firm understanding of the function of a role model amongst the community of male primary school teachers, and indeed this is evident in education policy. As this has been a central feature of government policy when considering a need for more male primary school teachers one recommendation would be to consider exactly what needs to be modelled by male primary school teachers in terms of pedagogy, conduct, practice and professional identities. Despite central government's drive over the last two decades for a more representative gender balance of males and females in the primary teaching profession the analytical voices of the male primary teacher, an under-represented group is considerably lacking and absent (Lyons, 2010). Throughout this study it has been identified that current education policy is too rapid and lacking a research-based approach (Alexander, 2010; Ball, 2006; Tucker, 2004). The findings from this research

could be utilised as the foundations of a strategic framework at a national and local level to inform, shape and impact on current and new education policy.

The study also highlights significant implications that could apply to ITE providers in terms of strategies to support males whilst training and as they embark on their NQT year as a possible minority group. Recommendations and support strategies have been suggested from previous research. For example Szwed (2010), who interviewed male trainee teachers, outlined the need to mentor and support male trainee teachers, NQTs and RQTs. This study as previous research by Szwed (2010) and Skelton (2009) suggests that there should be policy intervention in order to support males, a minority in primary schools, in terms of recruitment and retention. In fact there is a need for a national detailed mentoring and coaching framework for the induction of new male primary school teachers and student teachers.

As a consequence of the research findings and due to my new role as Director of Primary Education I have introduced that an agenda item on our monthly meetings always includes staff to share feedback from their research or scholarly activities. The first of these was led by myself, whereby the team discussed the contested term 'role model' in relation to primary teachers. Indeed in this meeting my colleagues and I deliberated whether this phrase should be utilised amongst colleagues when discussing the position of male primary school teachers. In turn this informed one of the Professional Studies teaching sessions whereby the student teachers were asked to analyse and critique the term of role model in light of their own professional conduct and responsibilities in primary schools. In addition to this student teachers have used the taught session as evidence towards Part 2 of the Teacher's Standard which is concerned with Professional Code of Conduct.

As a result of the research findings another example of best practice has been a revision of mentor training which I am responsible for with school mentors. Informed discussions in relation to the induction of male students and NQTs has become a focus and consideration for our partnership schools. Such discussions have encouraged staff in school to consider a change in practice and inform their own school policies. Furthermore I have been invited to meet with the Marketing department in order to share my findings and reevaluate current practice with regards to recruitment, selection

and retention. It is also my intention to publish and make available the findings of this study at conferences and in academic as well as professional journals.

Finally, the findings from this study suggest there is a need for a more focused and bespoke induction framework and development programme for male teachers to ensure their retention within the classroom as effective teachers. This would hopefully reduce the pressure and expectations placed upon this gender group from the school community to seek and obtain more managerial focused promotion away from the classroom.

From the data in this study it is clear that the interrelationships between members of the school, organisational processes, influences of the local community, wider culture, education policy and provision all configure a 'gender regime' in which male dominance is regulated, normalised and legitimatised (Skelton, 2001; Skeggs, 1991). This finding concurs with the theoretical frameworks utilised throughout this work; these being Butler's (1990:25) notion of 'gendered performance', as well as Brofenbrenner's (1979) ecological theory.

In conclusion the findings from this small scale study although valid are by no means being offered as a representation of all male primary school teachers. It acts as a starting point and contribution to this under-researched area. The rich data unearthed from this study offers informative insights into the experiences, responses to policy rhetoric, positioning strategies and lived in experiences of male primary school teachers in

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## Appendix 1: Statement of intent

Dear

My name is John Ryan and I am a doctoral student at the University of Leicester. As part of my Ed.D research, I am conducting a series of interviews which investigate the experiences of male primary school teachers. The working title of my thesis is 'Primary school teachers – a male concern'. The outcome of this research is to hopefully contribute to a better understanding of the perceptions and experiences of male primary school teachers.

I would like to interview in order to capture your experiences and perceptions as you are currently working in primary schools. The interview will last for approximately 30 minutes. I shall be adhering to the BERA (2004) ethical guidelines for research. Your contribution would be invaluable to my research and it will remain anonymous. Results of this study will be made available to the University and selected academic journals. Any information obtained in connection with this study that can be identified with you will remain confidential. In any written reports or publications, no one will be identified and only group data will be presented. I am grateful for your participation in my study, and any transcript relating to this interview will be made available to you to check for accuracy.

If you have any questions about this research please contact me~  
[j.v.ryan@bham.ac.uk](mailto:j.v.ryan@bham.ac.uk), 0121 414 4806.

Thank you for your co-operation and time.

John Ryan  
Lecturer in Early Years and Primary Education

Name of participant .....

Signature of participant.....

## **Appendix 2: Interview Questions for Thesis**

For the Thesis study questions asked of the participants will loosely be based around the themes below:

1. Please could you briefly outline the context within which you work (for example the age group you teach, any responsibilities and other professionals you work with)
2. For my research I am focusing on [male??] professional identity. In your experience, how would you describe how [male??] Primary school teachers view themselves (such as relationships with children, staff and parents, career aspirations, your own family)
3. If you were to advise a male friend considering a career as a Primary school teacher what would you say?
4. What are your views about the work of a Primary school teacher? Why do you think people chose to work as Primary school teachers?
5. Why do you think there is a gender imbalance amongst Primary school teachers? What predicaments, obstacles, opportunities and oppositions have you encountered as a [male????] Primary school teacher?

### Appendix 3: Findings

#### Findings for Theme 1: Role Models

Name	Role Model	Father Figure	Lost Boy	Influence on Girls	Ethnicity	Sexuality
Will	√	√				√
Rob	√	√				
Edward	√					
Richard	√	√	√			
Tony	√					
Mark	√		√			
Ricky	√	√	√	√		
Chris	√	√	√			
Tim	√	√	√			
Joel	√			√		
Toby	√	√				
Liam	√	√	√		√	
Peter						
Andrew	√		√			
Simon	√	√				
Ben	√	√	√			
Rohit	√				√	
Davie	√	√	√			
Devon	√	√				
Ray	√					√
Brett	√				√	
Martin	√					
Fred	√	√	√			
Mike	√					
Gavin	√	√				
Gary	√					
Josh	√			√		
Bobby	√		√	√		√
Adeel	√	√				
Ryan	√					

## Findings for Theme 2: Stereotypical Expectations

Name	Stereotypical Expectations	Discipline	Policy Pressure	Female Discipline	Troops into Teaching
Will	√	√			√
Rob	√		√		
Edward	√	√	√	√	
Richard	√	√	√		
Tony	√	√			
Mark	√	√		√	
Ricky	√	√	√	√	
Chris	√	√	√		
Tim	√	√		√	
Joel					
Toby	√	√	√		
Liam	√	√	√	√	
Peter					
Andrew	√				
Simon	√	√	√		
Ben	√	√	√		
Rohit	√	√	√		
Davie	√	√	√	√	
Devon	√	√			
Ray	√	√	√	√	√
Brett	√		√		
Martin	√	√			
Fred	√	√	√		
Mike	√	√	√	√	
Gavin	√	√	√		
Gary					
Josh	√	√	√	√	√
Bobby	√	√	√		
Adeel	√	√	√		√
Ryan	√				

<b>Name</b>	<b>Football</b>	<b>Cricket</b>	<b>Rugby</b>	<b>Drama/ Dance</b>	<b>P.E.</b>
<b>Will</b>				√	√
<b>Rob</b>					
<b>Edward</b>	√				√
<b>Richard</b>					√
<b>Tony</b>	√				
<b>Mark</b>	√				√
<b>Ricky</b>	√	√			√
<b>Chris</b>					
<b>Tim</b>	√				√
<b>Joel</b>					√
<b>Toby</b>	√			√	√
<b>Liam</b>	√				√
<b>Peter</b>					
<b>Andrew</b>	√				√
<b>Simon</b>	√				√
<b>Ben</b>	√				√
<b>Rohit</b>					
<b>Davie</b>	√				√
<b>Devon</b>	√				
<b>Ray</b>					
<b>Brett</b>					
<b>Martin</b>	√				√
<b>Fred</b>	√				
<b>Mike</b>	√				
<b>Gavin</b>	√				√
<b>Gary</b>				√	
<b>Josh</b>	√				√
<b>Bobby</b>	√	√	√	√	√
<b>Adeel</b>	√		√		√
<b>Ryan</b>					√

<b>Name</b>	<b>Maths</b>	<b>English</b>	<b>Science</b>	<b>I.T.</b>	<b>Music</b>
<b>Will</b>				√	√
<b>Rob</b>					
<b>Edward</b>	√	√			
<b>Richard</b>					
<b>Tony</b>					
<b>Mark</b>	√				
<b>Ricky</b>	√				
<b>Chris</b>					
<b>Tim</b>	√		√	√	
<b>Joel</b>					
<b>Toby</b>	√	√	√		
<b>Liam</b>					
<b>Peter</b>					
<b>Andrew</b>	√				
<b>Simon</b>	√	√			
<b>Ben</b>					
<b>Rohit</b>	√			√	
<b>Davie</b>	√		√		
<b>Devon</b>					
<b>Ray</b>	√	√			
<b>Brett</b>		√	√	√	
<b>Martin</b>	√		√	√	
<b>Fred</b>		√		√	
<b>Mike</b>					
<b>Gavin</b>		√		√	
<b>Gary</b>		√			
<b>Josh</b>	√				√
<b>Bobby</b>					
<b>Adeel</b>				√	
<b>Ryan</b>				√	

### Findings for Theme 3: Safeguarding

Name	Safeguarding	Potential Allegations	Physical Contact with Children	Nurturing/ Mothering	Otherring of EYS & KS1 Male Staff
Will	√			√	
Rob					
Edward	√	√			
Richard					
Tony	√	√	√	√	√
Mark	√	√		√	
Ricky	√	√	√	√	√
Chris	√		√		
Tim					
Joel	√	√	√		
Toby	√			√	√
Liam	√			√	
Peter	√	√		√	
Andrew	√	√	√	√	
Simon	√	√			
Ben	√				√
Rohit	√	√			√
Davie	√		√		
Devon	√			√	
Ray	√			√	√
Brett					
Martin	√				√
Fred	√	√	√		√
Mike	√	√	√	√	
Gavin	√	√	√		
Gary					
Josh	√	√			√
Bobby					
Adeel	√	√			√
Ryan	√	√			

## Findings for Theme 4: Social Spaces and Power

Name	Promotion	Social Spaces	Staffrooms	Sexist Comments
Will	√			√
Rob				
Edward	√	√		
Richard				
Tony	√	√	√	√
Mark	√	√		√
Ricky	√	√	√	√
Chris	√		√	
Tim				
Joel	√	√	√	
Toby	√			√
Liam	√			√
Peter	√	√		√
Andrew	√	√	√	√
Simon	√	√		
Ben	√			
Rohit	√	√		
Davie	√		√	
Devon	√			√
Ray	√			√
Brett				
Martin	√			
Fred	√	√	√	
Mike	√	√	√	√
Gavin	√	√	√	
Gary				
Josh	√	√		
Bobby				
Adeel	√	√		
Ryan	√	√		