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**Primary School Teachers Perceptions of  
Gender-Based Differences**

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Master of Educational Psychology  
at Massey University, Albany, New Zealand

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## Declaration

I certify that the thesis titled "Primary School Teachers Perceptions of Gender-Based Differences" was submitted as part of the degree of Master of Educational Psychology and is the result of my own work, except where otherwise acknowledged, and that this research paper (or part of the same) has not been submitted for any other degree to any other university or institution.

Signed:  \_\_\_\_\_

Date: 17 November 2014

## Abstract

This study explores primary school teachers' perceptions of gender-based differences in primary school in New Zealand. In this mixed-method study, the research utilised an online survey to collect data in three domains: teacher as self, teacher-student dynamics, and teacher collegiality.

Quantitative analysis revealed overall no differences; however, quantitative analysis showed differences in the participants' perceptions of teachers' content knowledge, the ability to treat students fairly, and teachers' positive attitude toward the profession. Qualitative analysis also revealed differences in participants' perceptions of the jobs held by males and females in the primary sector with male teachers receiving more negative responses when compared to female primary teachers. Furthermore, all of the participants perceived a need for more male primary teachers in the primary sector. The participants were unsure if male teachers had an adequate amount of content knowledge and whether female teachers treated their students fairly. The participants perceived that male teachers' attitudes toward the profession were not as positive as female teachers' attitudes toward the profession.

Male primary teachers are always in demand in primary schools in New Zealand; but could that be for the wrong reasons? The literature has cast doubt on the common assumptions that male teachers are needed as male role models and that their presence can improve the behaviour and academic achievement of boys. The literature suggests that men in the primary teacher workforce are often viewed in terms of their inherent male qualities rather than personal attributes; their ability to be a role model rather than their caring qualities and ability to build relationships.

The research findings provide insight into primary teachers' perceptions of gender-based differences and could lead to improved teacher education and professional development programs as well as the recruitment of more effective male primary teachers.

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction

#### 1.1 Background to the Study

The perceived need for more male primary teachers has emerged as an international issue with research and media reporting a decline in the number of male primary teachers in Australia, England, New Zealand, Finland, Canada and the United States (Carrington, Tymms, & Merrell, 2008; Cushman, 2008; Drudy, 2008; Martino & Kehler, 2006; Skelton, 2009). In New Zealand, bad press has only served to compound society's perception of work involving children being the role of woman (Cushman, 2008). Such calls can be found in articles and letters in newspapers (Helliwell, 2013; Russell, 2013). Figures from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (2012) indicate the countries with the largest proportion of female primary teachers are Brazil, Germany, Netherlands, New Zealand, Switzerland, England/Ireland and the USA (see Table 1).

Table 1

Countries with the Highest Percentage of Female Primary Teachers

Country	Percentage of female teachers
Brazil	97%
Germany	97%
Netherlands	86%
New Zealand	98%
Switzerland	98%
England & Ireland	95%
United States of America	94%

*Source:* UNESCO 2012

According to Skelton (2011) there are two perspectives in the literature on men and primary teaching. The first perspective is that of pro-feminist and social justice researchers who focus on masculinity as a social construct. A social construct is anything that exists by virtue of social interactions, as opposed to objective reality (Vaughan & Hogg, 2008). According to Butler (2011) gender is maintained as a category through socially constructed displays of gender. The second perspective is one adopted by educationalists that regard

masculinity as the outcome of socialisation and assume all men teach in the same way and relate in typical stereotypical male ways. This thinking has been underpinned by a number of strategies that have been recommended to schools in order to address academic underachievement amongst boys' (Francis & Skelton, 2005).

The first perspective is the one underpinning the perceived need for more male primary teachers in New Zealand (Cushman, 2005). The underlying premise, despite radical changes in gender roles in society, tend to perpetuate traditional notions of masculinity such as male teachers aspiring to roles associated with management, the need for males to discipline boys and the need for male teachers to coach boys in sporting activities (Cushman, 2005). In 2002 only 14% of New Zealand state primary school teachers were male and they filled 60% of the principal positions (Ministry of Education, 2012a). In 2012 only 12% of New Zealand state primary school teachers were males and they filled 30% of principal positions (Ministry of Education, 2012a). The male teacher population has declined by 2% from 2002 to 2012, a low percentage that is not statistically significant and does not reinforce Cushman's (2005) claim to any great extent. Furthermore it is not clear is whether fewer male primary teachers aspire to roles in management or whether there are simply fewer male primary teachers available to fill management roles.

According to Cushman (2008) one of the most commonly espoused reasons underpinning the call for more male primary teachers in New Zealand schools is the need for male role models. An ever-increasing number of children are being raised in sole-parent families raising concerns that many boys in particular lack a positive male role model at home and at school (Farquhar, 2005). The talk of role models is based on the assumption that children are passive recipients of knowledge and that values are transmitted to them rather than the view that children construct knowledge through their own experiences and understanding.

The second perspective underpins the drive to recruit more men in primary teaching in Australia, Canada and the UK (Carrington & Skelton, 2003; Lingard, Martino, Mills, & Bahr, 2002; Martino & Kehler, 2006). This perspective claims that men are able to act as male role models for boys in a feminised education system making the assumption that all boys are the same and relate to their teachers differently based on the gender of the teacher.

It also assumes that male and female teachers have different teaching styles and respond differently to boys and girls depending on their own gender.

Carrington et al. (2008) reviewed two commonly assumed issues which relate to the lack of male primary teachers in England. The first of these relates to boys underachievement and the second relates to the widespread perception that the gender gap in achievement stems from the feminisation of teaching and the dearth of suitable male role models in schools. Although there is a growing body of research challenging the role model argument, the bulk of the teachers interviewed believed that an increased male presence in schools would reduce the gender gap in achievement by increasing boys' academic engagement. A significant minority of teachers believed that the gender of the teacher had an impact on students' learning experiences whilst the students in their classes took a contrary opinion. Carrington et al. (2008) concluded that there was no evidence to suggest that boys' academic engagement was any different in classes taught by men or women, hence student outcomes were not influenced by the gender of the teacher.

There is an abundance of research showing that it makes little difference to students' achievement if they are taught by male or female teachers (Carrington et al., 2008; Driessen, 2007; Lahelma, 2000). Carrington et al. (2008) found that it cannot be claimed that boys do better if taught by male teachers and girls by female teachers, rather boys with more positive attitudes to school are those with female teachers. Francis et al. (2008) and Skelton (2009) both found that students' do not perceive any differences between teachers based on the teachers' gender. Rather the students evaluated their teachers from the perspective of their approach to teaching, the management of the class and if they appeared to be generally concerned about them. Martino's (2008) review further illustrates that there is no validity in the policy drives to recruit more male teachers based on the belief that boys see male teachers as positive role models, and likewise male teachers need not perceive themselves as positive male role models.

There is also some evidence to suggest that teachers themselves regard male teachers as being different to female teachers. For example, seeing masculine males as being better suited to dealing with indiscipline (Carrington & McPhee, 2008) and being better suited to work with older students (Skelton, 2003). According to Skelton (2011) the application of this narrow, constrictive construction of gender which relies on stereotypes to describe the

primary teaching force will not encourage teacher gender diversity in primary schools. Men are different from one another and their identities are shaped by ethnicity, religion, sexual disposition, previous experiences and a whole range of other factors. Current statistics indicate that teacher recruitment drives based on stereo types of male teachers have failed as the number of male teachers entering the profession has declined. According to Skelton (2011) there is a need to understand how masculinity and femininity play out in primary schooling, encouraging men to emphasise their uniqueness in addressing the needs of boys.

A more complex understanding of the construction of gender supports the idea that gender is only one element of a complex interplay of identity and that the needs of students are most effectively addressed through exposure to a diverse environment of perspectives, styles, and teaching strategies. This view argues that girls and boys are actively involved in constructing and shaping their own gendered identities whilst males and females take up a range of different masculinities and femininities that may at times contradict each other.

A mixed-method study research framework, with an emphasis on social constructivism as a set of rules that individuals use for making sense of their world, framed the research question and supported this study. Rather than understanding gender in terms of fixed dichotomies (e.g. male/female, masculinity/femininity), gender is seen as a complex social phenomenon that changes over time and varies across cultures. The ways in which gender is conceptualised as a social construct is not fixed or static but rather is a product that is constructed and performed in interaction. Gender issues are embedded in every part of a learning environment. Curricula, textbooks, and other instructional materials depict males and females in different roles, interacting in different ways. Gender bias can influence how teachers manage their classrooms, how they interact with their students and the perceived gender-based differences they have of colleagues. Hence, a social constructivist framework is a relevant theory and context wherein this study was done. The purpose of this study is to extend this framework towards evaluating if primary teachers perceive gender-based differences between the female and male teachers they have worked with.

## **1.2 Research Objective**

The primary aim of this study is to explore whether primary teachers perceive gender difference between the female and male teachers they have worked with. The study will

examine teachers' perceptions within three categories or domains: teachers as self, teacher-student relationships and teacher collegiality. The study also seeks to examine what, if any, gender-based differences teachers perceive between male and female primary teachers they have worked with; the expected jobs for males and females in the education sector; and whether or not primary teachers perceive the need for more male primary teachers.

In particular the following research question is addressed:

Do primary teachers in New Zealand perceive gender differences between the male and female teachers they have worked with?

### **1.3 Overview**

This study is presented in five chapters. This chapter has introduced the main direction and scope of the topic.

Chapter 2 reviews the literature which provides the background through which this study can be viewed. The background content and knowledge for the current study is addressed in the first section of this chapter. It provides insight into teachers' beliefs and perceptions. Through summarising and linking appropriate and essential literature related to this study, gender in the education sector is then reviewed within three domains: teacher as self, teacher-student dynamics, and teacher collegiality. The first domain, teacher as self, reviews and discusses literature relating to teachers' classroom management styles, content knowledge and instructional effectiveness. The second domain, teacher-student relationships, focuses on literature which relates to various aspects of teacher-student dynamics. The third domain, teacher collegiality, focuses on literature which relates to teacher collegiality. The chapter concludes with a review of the literature relating to teachers' desire to work with children and the perceived jobs for male and females in the education setting.

Chapter 3 describes the methodology and conceptual framework used for this research. It is used to test the research questions using the following sections: participants, research paradigm, survey, procedure, and data analysis.

Chapter 4 provides an analysis of primary teachers perceptions of gender-based differences between the female and male teachers they have worked with. Further analysis relating to expected jobs held by males and females in the education sector, the call for more male primary teachers, and the differences primary teachers perceive between female and male teachers is also provided.

Chapter 5 provides a summary of the entire study. It returns to the research question in the light of the research data to discuss the results and draw conclusions. Implications for the classroom are presented and suggestions for further research are described.

## Chapter 2

### Literature Review

#### **2.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter introduced the main direction and scope of the topic. A review of the literature will show the role that teachers' beliefs and perceptions play in education with regards to the teacher as self, teacher-student dynamics and teacher collegiality.

Relevant literature falls into several categories, each of which is presented in the following sections. Section 2.2 reviews literature relating to gender beliefs and perceptions and demonstrates the importance of understanding teachers perceptions of gender-based difference within the context of the education sector. Since there is limited current literature on teachers' perceptions of gender-based differences amongst the teachers they have worked with, section 2.3 outlines the existing body of literature that explores gender in the learning environment within three domains: teacher as self, teacher-student dynamics and teacher collegiality. Section 2.4 reviews literature relating to teachers' desire to work with children so as to discuss and review current thinking. Section 2.5 reviews literature relating to the perceived jobs for males and females within the education setting so as to discuss and review current thinking. Section 2.6 summarises the review of the literature and demonstrates the need to focus on the broader construction and understanding of what it means to be a primary teacher rather than focusing on gender.

#### **2.2 Gender Beliefs and Perceptions**

The development of gender beliefs and the gender-role stereotypes are learnt very early in life. Children and adolescents are continuously bombarded with deeply embedded expectations about what constitutes suitable gender-specific behaviour according to parents, teachers, counsellors, and peers (Ruble & Martin, 1998). In daily routines children are induced to express beliefs, aspirations, and goals consistent with the prevailing gender categorisations (Barone, 2011).

Gender beliefs are socially constructed in response to local contexts, specifically, sex differences in social behaviour arising from the distribution of men and women into social roles within a society (W. Wood & Eagly, 2002). For example, women are more likely than men to assume the domestic roles of homemaker and as primary caretakers of children, whereas men are more likely to assume the role of primary family provider. The different placement of men and women in the social structures of society yields a variety of mediating processes such as the formation of gender roles. People of each gender are expected to have psychological characteristics that equip them for the tasks that their sex typically performs. To this extent, women, more than men, occupy roles that involve domestic activities (e.g., cooking, provision of emotional support). The associated skills, values, and motives then become stereotypic of women and are incorporated into female gender roles. Conversely, men more than women, occupy roles that involve economically productive activities (e.g., resource acquisition, construction of goods for exchange). The associated skills, values, and motives become stereotypic of men and are incorporated into the male gender roles. Gender stereotypical roles along with the specific roles occupied by men and women then guide expected or perceived social behaviour based on gender.

Gender stereotypes change according to circumstance and over time and can be affected by age, race, ethnic background, religion, class, education, and the geographical, economic and political environment. Hence one could expect that gender stereotypes also affect the career choices people make. The career choice process occurs throughout the life cycle as individuals make a series of decisions that have occupational consequences. The processes by which individuals choose careers is primarily when individuals actually choose to enter jobs rather than decisions made at earlier stages on the paths leading to specific careers (Correll, 2001). However gender differences in the selection of activities that constrain occupational choices often occurs earlier in the life cycle (Correll, 2001).

Drudy, Martin, Woods, and O'Flynn (2005) explored why school students and student teachers in Ireland perceived there were fewer male than female teachers. The perception that primary teaching is a woman's job, or that it relates to a mother's role, was the most frequently offered explanation by both the school students and the student teachers. The second most common reason given by both groups was the attraction of other careers. The third most commonly offered reason by school students was the perception of primary teaching as unattractive, boring, hassle causing, stressful, and requiring too much patience or

low pay. Drudy et al. (2005) suggest that the reason for the decline in the number of male primary teachers indicates a bias towards seeing the ideal primary teacher as female, based on an essentialist belief that a woman's nature tends to make her better equipped to deal with children. This belief was stronger among male than among female student teachers, although most of the student teachers were convinced of the potential of both sexes to teach at primary level.

Teachers hold beliefs about their work, their students, their subject matter, and their roles and responsibilities. Pajares (1992) suggests that there is a strong relationship between a teachers educational beliefs and their planning, instructional decisions and classroom practices. Teachers' perceptions can also affect the way they interact and communicate with their students (Gray & Leith, 2004); influence students' motivation and achievement (Martin, Yin, & Mayall, 2006); and project social representations of gender onto boys and girls (Iverson & Murphy, 2003). Teachers may have a similar knowledge base, but teach in different ways since their personal beliefs and perceptions have a powerful influence on the decisions they make. For example, a teacher may know classroom management procedures and how to execute them, but be uncertain as to when or under what conditions a particular procedure is appropriate.

According to Francis et al. (2008) gender alone can never determine the quality of a teacher. Rather, having a representation of competent male and female teachers who not only illustrate the diversity of masculinity and femininity, but come to teaching well equipped to challenge gender stereotypes, can only enhance the quality of the teaching profession. Evans (2006) also suggests that in Australia male and female teachers' perceptions of gender roles over the past decade have changed. The teachers perceived themselves to be amongst the liberally minded in their attitudes to gender-roles. However, the teachers' perceptions of male and female roles, and of themselves as male or female, were relatively conservative. But Evans (2006) believes much still needs to be done before teachers perceptions of the gender-based roles of teachers will change. According to Skelton (2009), gender-related matters are a particularly important facet of the experience of being a primary teacher.

### **2.3 Gender in the Learning Environment**

Study of the learning environment has developed into an important research field among education researchers. While students' perceptions are often used to measure classroom learning environments, teachers' perceptions are usually used to measure school-level environments. The scope of the school environment is generally broad. It involves a teachers' relationship with students, other teachers, the principal, parents, and the community. Schools and teachers can dramatically influence the extent and quality of learning for all students. To make this possible, a learning environment needs to be created in which all children feel safe and understood, and can reach their potential. The learning environment can also be a place where prevailing gender roles are challenged and reframed so that learners can have more freedom to shape their own identities and determine how they want to play out their own gender roles.

In general there is not a comprehensive amount of research that has focused on perceived gender-based differences between male and female primary teachers. Demetriou, Wilson, and Winterbottom (2009) noted that male and female teachers employ different strategies to deal with challenges such as disruptive and disengaged students. Female teachers are inclined to go to greater lengths to re-engage learning whilst the male teachers were more inclined to communicate the subject knowledge and hope this will enthuse their students sufficiently to get them to engage in their learning. Green, Shriberg, and Farber (2008) showed that when faced with similar behavioural challenges female teachers' perceived the behaviour to be more severe than male teachers. According to Green et al. (2008) male teachers may be more dominant in the classroom which in turn may result in them managing disruptive behaviour more effectively than female teachers. Robinson (1992) also noted that classroom discipline practices was an area where gender-based strategies were used to deal with disruptive behaviours. Girls that did not conform to the stereotypically appropriate behaviours incurred the harshest consequences.

Another difference between male and female primary teachers is the roles they are likely to play in the learning environment. Rice and Goessling (2005) noted that society has stereotypical roles they expect males to fill in the education sector (e.g. administrators, janitors, or physical education teachers). Skelton (2009) supports this expectation stating that primary teaching is viewed as a female profession based on the stereotypical expectation that

teaching is a female job as it involves caring for children. Smith (2004) believes that the call for more male role models in primary schools assumes that all boys need male role models and that men and women teach differently, and it places unrealistic and confusing expectations on men to model masculinity while doing a job commonly regarded as women's work. Skelton (2003) views the male role model as a simplistic and naive notion that has its roots in sex-role socialisation theories which view masculinity and femininity separately in men and women respectively.

Huang and Fraser (2009) investigated science teachers gender-based perceptions of their school environment in secondary schools in Taiwan. Both the male and female teachers perceived the school environment from a favourable position and reported getting on well with their colleagues. The female teachers reported significantly more favourable perceptions in terms of greater collegiality, professional interest, and gender equity than male science teachers. The male teachers reported significantly more favourable perceptions in terms of teacher-student relationships. Francis (2008) states that it is absurd to expect male teachers to teach, or relate to pupils or colleagues, in predictable ways on the basis of their maleness. Furthermore, male teachers ought not to be assumed to employ different teaching styles to female teachers simply on the basis of their gender.

### **2.3.1 Teacher as self**

In this domain literature is analysed that discussed teachers' classroom management styles, teachers' content knowledge and teaching styles or teachers' instructional effectiveness. Knowledge about how children learn, and understanding what constitutes effective teaching and classroom management has increased considerably over the past decades. Though teaching is generally a group activity, learning is very individual and effective teachers need to be sensitive to these differences and take action so as to provide an optimal learning experience for each student. Effective teaching and learning cannot take place in a poorly managed classroom, and teachers content knowledge can make a significant contribution to the quality of instruction (D. K. Cohen, Raudenbush, & Ball, 2003).

Effective teachers have strong subject matter knowledge coupled with an understanding of their students and effective representations and instructional strategies. Teacher knowledge is not a solitary construct which resides only within the individual but

tends to be acquired and developed through professional socialisation (Barnett & Hodson, 2001). Barnett and Hodson (2001) characterised teacher knowledge as originating from both internal and external sources: internal sources include reflections upon experiences with students, parents, and colleagues; external sources include subject matter knowledge and contextual knowledge of the district, school, as well as state and national standards. Teachers form collective knowledge developed through discussions of experiences, problems, and solutions taking place during professional development opportunities, at teacher meetings, in the plan room, and in the hallway (Barnett & Hodson, 2001). Teachers construct new knowledge that is based upon their understanding of teaching, experiences in the classroom, and identification of what does and does not work.

Teachers must know the subject they teach. Teacher knowledge and curriculum materials are two key instructional resources that make a significant contribution to the quality of instruction or pedagogical content knowledge (D. K. Cohen et al., 2003). Any inaccurate and inadequate content knowledge might transfer the teachers' misconceptions to their students (Ozden, 2008). Teachers who do not themselves know a subject well are not likely to have the knowledge they need to help students learn this content. At the same time, however, just knowing a subject well may not be sufficient for teaching. According to Farquhar (2005) effective teachers use content knowledge confidently to support and extend children's learning.

Al Khatib (2007) investigated teachers' knowledge of learning disabilities and whether this differed as a function of gender. The sample consisted of 405 primary school teachers (55% male teachers) in 30 schools in Jordan. Sixty-four percent of the teachers had a bachelor's degree and over 50% had been teaching for more than ten years. The findings indicated that all the teachers had acceptable levels of knowledge of learning disabilities. Female teachers were found to be significantly more knowledgeable than male teachers. Teachers' levels of knowledge were unrelated to teachers' age, teaching experience, or academic qualifications.

Teaching styles refer to a teacher's preferred way of solving problems, carrying out tasks, and making decisions in the process of teaching, and, besides differing from individual to individual, may sometimes differ between different groups (Fan & Ye, 2007). A variety of

factors can influence a teacher's choice of teaching styles, such as their educational experience, professional level, and their dedication to teaching.

Two hundred and three primary school teachers (64 male, 139 female) from China participated in an investigation to evaluate the relationship between teaching styles and teachers' characteristics (Fan & Ye, 2007). Significant correlations were found with gender, age, and educational level. Compared with their male colleagues, the female teachers preferred to follow a conservative thinking model in teaching. Although male teachers did not prefer to compare or analyse in their classrooms like their female colleagues, they did like to attempt new teaching methods or content. Age was another important factor in influencing teaching styles. Younger teachers were inclined to be more creative and open, and less compliant or conservative in their teaching practices than their older counterparts. According to Fan and Ye (2007) the main reason for this might be that the older teachers had ample teaching experience, and they also knew what to do and how to do it.

Teachers' classroom management is a broad umbrella term describing teachers' efforts to oversee a multitude of activities in the classroom including learning, social interaction and student behaviours (Ritter & Hancock, 2007). It further determines the kind of instruction that will take place in a particular classroom. A teacher's classroom management style communicates information about the teacher's beliefs on content and process and creates an individualised style of classroom management (Martin et al., 2006). Marzano and Marzano (2003) identified classroom management as being the first in a list of important factors such as school policies regarding curriculum, assessment, staff collegiality, and community involvement that impacted on student achievement.

Bélanger and Longden (2009) reviewed the dimensions of teacher personality, classroom environment and teaching style characteristics of 1,883 undergraduate and graduate students across ten European countries. Out of the total number of respondents, 47% were males and 53% females. Analysis of the data revealed that there were no differences when controlling for gender. The students expected teachers to be strong knowledgeable classroom managers who could communicate effectively and connect the material to real life. The students also expected certain leadership qualities from their teachers, such as being inspiring, rational, confident, enthusiastic, supportive, decisive, and

assertive. The students also wished for their teachers to be approachable, friendly, patient, kind, considerate, and caring.

Martin et al. (2006) conducted a study to investigate the different classroom management styles of teachers with respect to classroom management training, teaching experience, and gender. Data was collected from 163 certified teachers employed by public school districts in the south-western United States. Results revealed differences between male and female teachers and between novice and experienced teachers. Male teachers who had not been exposed to any classroom management training were more likely to be in controlling, reactive modes than those who had received some training in classroom management who scored less on controlling. In contrast there were no differences between female teachers who had or had not received management training. Teachers with more than six years' experience had more realistic expectations regarding how to effectively manage their classrooms whilst inexperienced teachers were overly reliant on control and survival skills to manage their students. The results further indicated that the experienced teachers may have had more realistic expectations regarding effective management of their classroom whilst inexperienced teachers naively believed that students and teachers were always working towards the same goals.

Ritter and Hancock (2007) studied the classroom management beliefs and practices of 97 middle school teachers from public schools in the south-eastern United States. The sample consisted of traditionally certified expert teachers, alternatively certified expert teachers, traditionally certified beginning teachers and alternatively certified beginning teachers. Traditionally certified teachers come through the university ranks whilst the alternatively certified teachers are typically older students that have experienced other careers, thus potentially enriching the traditional school climate. The study focused on classroom management beliefs and practices of teachers relative to years of teaching experience and type of teaching certification. The results indicated that neither source of certification nor experience level alone affected teachers' orientation to classroom management. However, teachers with traditional certification and many years of experience exerted significantly less control over classroom activities and students' behaviour than the other group of teachers with less experience and different certification types.

Ünal and Ünal (2012) explored the role of years of experience and gender on teachers' classroom management beliefs. The data was collected from 268 primary teachers in Turkey. The analysis of the data demonstrated that experienced teachers were more likely to prefer to be in control in their classroom and chose to believe in maximum teacher responsibility. In contrast, beginning teachers showed that they favoured shared responsibility for classroom control, shared work on developing classroom rules, focusing not only on behaviours but also feelings. The findings also indicated that teachers tended to change their beliefs as they gained experience over time. As teachers became more experienced, they were more controlling on both behaviour and instructional management. There were no significant differences between male and female teachers in their classroom management beliefs regarding behaviour and management style. Both female and male teachers were found to be more controlling of behaviour management than instructional management.

In the light of gender stereotypical beliefs one would assume that female teachers are submissive and tend to manage their classrooms through co-operation. In contrast male teachers would be expected to be more dominant in the management of their classes. Francis (2008) questions the assumption that teachers teach in particular ways based on their gender identity. Brinia's (2012) review of educational leadership and gender indicated that no matter the gender of a teacher, a good teacher remains a good teacher. Although characteristics such as impartiality, confidence, objectivity and analytical thoughts are considered as common for a man; characteristics such as emotionalism, sensitivity, cooperation, intuition and tactfulness are considered common for a woman, but in general most of these characteristics remain for both genders (Brinia, 2012).

Robinson's (1992) review of teachers' traditional perceptions of femininity and stereotypical attitudes, in a relatively conservative Australian community, concluded that this was reflected in their teaching methods and classroom practices. Classroom discipline practices were an area where these practices flourished, and girls that did not conform to the stereotypically appropriate behaviours incurred the harshest consequences. Robinson (1992) indicated the need for raising teachers' awareness about their own attitudes towards gender roles and the need to increase their knowledge of gender issues in all aspects of society so as to allow all children to reach their educational potential and ultimately their future career choices.

### 2.3.2 Teacher-student dynamics

In this domain literature is analysed that discusses teacher-student dynamics. It focuses on teachers as role models and their ability to be nurturing, patient, fair, and sensitive to their students' needs. It further addresses teachers' ability to motivate and engage their students. It discusses teachers' desire to work with children and their ability to develop relationships with their students.

The topic of male teachers as role models in schools has become one of the most popular solutions suggested to overcome the perceived crisis in boys' education, in particular primary schools (Cushman, 2008). In New Zealand, where dominant masculinities are strongly associated with rugby, it is plausible that the desired attributes of the male role model and the rugby role model have much in common. Rugby is rough, confrontational and fiercely competitive in New Zealand. Because of its status as the national game, these values are exalted and seen as natural masculine qualities (Ferguson, 2004).

Cushman (2008) examined the findings of a survey of 169 New Zealand primary school principals and found that 94% of male and 87% of female principals agreed there is a need for more male role models in primary schools. The participating principals suggested that these role models should possess the qualities of real men, reflect dominant masculinities, but also show that men can be nurturing. The participating principals suggested more male role models in their schools are needed but not as a link to improving academic outcomes or behaviour management skills, but rather in response to social concerns regarding the lack of effective role models in homes. Cushman (2006) argues that although she can see the need for male role models for boys coming from fatherless homes, the responsibility of providing male role models should not be placed solely on the shoulders of schools.

Carrington and Skelton (2003) also expressed concern at what they see as an uncritical acceptance of the role model argument in terms of the male primary school teacher. For example, is the male primary teacher as a role model expected to model the qualities of a good male person or a good male teacher? Does society agree on the qualities of a good man?

The essence of being a good man in the 21<sup>st</sup> century was a question that gave rise to the Good Man project (Lashlie & Pivac, 2004). Twenty-four high schools in New Zealand ranging from decile 3 to decile 10 participated. This included 17 state funded, four integrated and three private schools. Conversations were held with staff and management and with as wide a range of students as possible. Approximately 110 members of staff were interviewed and conversations held with 180 Year 7 to Year 13 classes. When asked what the top three characteristics of a good man are; trust, loyalty and humour stood out above others in terms of the number of times they were mentioned. Lashlie and Pivac (2004) draw importance to the fact that when defining a good man the intention was not to compare it to the definition of a good woman, and it does not provide a definitive definition but rather seeks to expand on discussions around the concept of a good man.

The notion of male role models becomes more problematic with men who do not behave in stereotypical masculine ways and hence fear being perceived as deviant (Francis & Skelton, 2001). Driessen (2007) argues that by matching according to sex the notion of a role model, we are simply reinforcing and strengthening stereotypes. To be viewed as a role model by pupils, teachers must earn respect and admiration.

Carrington and McPhee (2008) interviewed 51 primary school teachers (25 males, 26 females) in England to assess the possible influence of gender on classroom interactions. Both the male and female teachers indicated that they did not view the gender imbalances in the primary workforce as being of any concern, but they did indicate that a balanced workforce would provide much-needed male role models. The teachers further indicated that male teachers relate better to boys because of their shared sporting interests. Carrington et al. (2008) sought to draw further attention to the limitation of the role model hypothesis, especially in regards to matching teachers and learners by gender. Drawing on the educational experiences of 8,979 eleven year old students from primary schools in England, there was no evidence to support the claim that male teachers enhanced the academic performance of boys, and female teachers did not enhance the academic performance of girls either. Carrington et al. (2008) caution that male teachers could have greater salience as role models for boys in primary schools where male teacher's are conspicuous by their absence.

McGrath and Sinclair (2013) reviewed the perceptions of year six students and their parents in primary schools in Australia, regarding the importance of teacher gender. While an

overwhelming number of students indicated that the gender of the teacher was unimportant, the majority of students also indicated the social benefits of having male teachers in primary schools. For example, males are required to act as father figures for boys in particular who may seek help and confide in males; for boys to learn about puberty from males; and for girls to understand men and their own self-image. The primary reason given by the parents for the need for male role models was based on the lack of a male role model in the single-parent home environment. While participants indicated the need for more positive male role models, they indicated that all students ought to be taught by high quality teachers of both genders.

Jones (2006) also explored teachers perceptions of male teachers who had been teaching for five to seven years in primary schools in England. A sample of 13 female and 18 male teachers were interviewed. The overwhelming response from the male teachers was the need for more male role models and exposing students to a positive male influence. Cushman and Clark (2013) caution that the call for more men in primary education in New Zealand, driven by the need for male role models who reflect a hegemonic masculinity might be misguided.

Teacher-student relationships are often reported on in terms of the dimensions of closeness and conflict. Close relationships are characterised by warmth, trust, and open communication. These warm and open relationships have been shown to foster students' motivation for learning and subsequent gains in academic achievement (Hughes, Luo, Kwok, & Loyd, 2008). Conversely, conflict relationships are characterised by discord and mistrust which can undermine students' careers (Hamre, Pianta, Downer, & Mashburn, 2008; Hughes et al., 2008). The impact of teachers on students learning is further increased when teaching is combined with a sense of caring about students (Stronge, Tucker, & Hindman, 2004). Caring can be expressed in many ways, including demonstrating patience, fairness, positive engagement, being a positive role model, being sensitive to students' needs, being nurturing, and knowing students on a personal level. Teven (2001) found college students' perceptions of teachers levels of caring were positively related to their perceptions of their teachers' immediacy, responsiveness, and assertiveness. According to Teven and Hanson (2004), to be effective in the classroom it is in teachers' best interests to be perceived as both competent and trustworthy. In turn, teachers who are better able to monitor their behaviour in the classroom may subsequently be able to achieve greater learning outcomes in their students.

White's (2011) study invited men who were teaching in early childhood, primary and secondary settings in New Zealand, and who were also fathers, to comment on their perceptions of how their dual roles impacted on each other. There were 18 participants in the survey. Nearly all of the fathers indicated that being a parent had brought a caring, patient and nurturing approach to their teaching. According to the participants this allowed them to understand students' needs more fully. A number of participants said that being a teacher and dad gave them a more realistic understanding of their own children's achievements and they appreciated having more time to spend with their children.

Fairness is a popular concept that is derived from the notion of equal benefits and that unequal treatment must be justified (Berry, 2008). Fairness refers to the teacher's ability to provide students with what they need to succeed whilst fostering a classroom environment that is balanced and harmonious (Welch, 2000). Fairness can be seen as treating everyone the same, rewarding those who perform well, and ensuring the needs of all are met. Students' perceptions of fairness are influenced by many variables, including age, context, relationships, culture, understanding and adult direction (Welch, 2000).

Since fairness is often embodied in classroom rules, this demonstrates the importance of perceptions, beliefs and values as powerful determinants of fairness (Stronge et al., 2004). Students associate respect with fairness and consistency in providing opportunities for students to have input into the classroom (Stronge, 2007). For example, teachers know and understand the facts before responding to any disciplinary situation, and then tell the students specifically what they did wrong and what they need to do right. Chory (2007) states that a teacher's character was found to play an integral role in students' perceptions of classroom fairness.

Carrington et al. (2007) examined whether the gender of the teacher really mattered with more than 300 seven to eight year old primary school students in England. When asked if the teacher treats everyone in the class fairly, 83% of the girls and 72% of the boys answered affirmatively. When matching teacher and student to gender 73% of the boys taught by female teachers replied positively compared with 71% of boys taught by male teachers. The corresponding figures for the girls were 83% and 78% respectively. The

majority of students believed that their teachers acted in a consistent, fair and even-handed manner. From the children's standpoint the gender of the teacher was largely immaterial.

Whilst some contest that boys are unfairly treated because they are reprimanded and disciplined more often than girls, others argue that boys dominate the classroom, in terms of teacher time, attention and levels of interaction, and that as a result of this girls are marginalised. Spilt, Koomen, and Jak (2011) reviewed gender match in teacher-student relationship quality amongst 649 primary school teachers (182 males and 467 females) and 1,493 students (685 boys and 808 girls) in the Netherlands. The focus of their study was to review if a teacher's gender had any influence on the teacher-student relationship. The results indicated that both male and female teacher's reported overall poorer relationships with boys than with girls. More specifically greater conflictual relationships were reported with boys than girls. Thus, both female and male teachers seem to experience special difficulties in relating to boys. The most conflictual relationships were found between boys and male teachers. According to Spilt et al. (2011), this finding runs counter to the expectation that a same-gender match results in more positive relationships. Female teachers also reported having closer relationships with girls rather than boys, and overall better relationships with their students than male teachers. According to Spilt et al. (2011), the main explanations for these findings was that teachers perceived that boys had poorer self-regulation skills and exhibited more anti-social behaviour than girls since females are more socialised to cultivating nurturing relationships with other and more be accepting of students' misbehaviour and comfort seeking behaviour.

Lahelma (2000) interviewed 90 thirteen to fourteen year old students and their teachers (20% male) at secondary schools in Finland. The participants were asked to describe their ideal teacher and what kinds of teacher they liked. The students indicated that the teacher's gender was not that relevant, rather the teacher's level of competence. Students further indicated the need for teachers who were good at teaching and keeping order, but were also friendly and relaxed. Characteristics like fairness, sense of humour, consideration and gentleness were mentioned by several girls and boys, and were attributed to their male as well as female teachers. Both teachers and students perceptions of a good teacher did not differ greatly.

Driessen (2007) reviewed the relationship between the sex of 251 primary teachers and the attitudes and behaviours of 5,181 students in primary schools in the Netherlands. The results indicated that the sex of the teacher had no effect on the achievement, attitudes or behaviour of either the male or female students. Those students that presented with challenging behaviours did not necessarily benefit from having a male teacher in their classroom.

Robinson (1992) reviewed whether teachers' perceptions of gender-affected classroom discipline based on the stereotyped belief that male and female teachers' disciplinary measures are different. The participants were 720 students and 110 teachers from high schools and colleges in Tasmania. The results indicated that teachers' approaches to class-room discipline depended largely on the gender of the students. Overall, girls were perceived by teachers to be passive, submissive and controllable. The active, aggressive and domineering behaviour of boys was much more a disruptive problem for teachers. Many male teachers talked about how they often did not know how to deal with certain behaviours of girls, especially that behaviour which they saw to be inappropriate for young women. Many stated that they felt more at ease in dealing with boys who were a concern, as boys responded more to their aggressive, short-term threats. However, male teachers used similar tactics on difficult girls as they used with male students.

Motivating students represents another component in teacher-student relationships. Teachers' enthusiasm for teaching their students and their knowledge of the subject matter is an important part both in supporting positive relationships with students and in encouraging student achievement. Teachers can choose among an almost limitless selection of activities and approaches on how to motivate their students. Teachers base these decisions on their personal experiences as well as the goals they have for their students.

Marsh, Martin, and Cheng (2008) reviewed the effects of teacher gender on student motivation amongst 964 (48% girls and 52% boys) year eight and ten students from five Australian coeducational government schools. In total, 101 classrooms, taught by a total of 69 teachers (58% female and 42% male), were surveyed. Using the matching hypothesis that male teachers are better able to motivate boys and female teachers should be able to motivate girls, the effect of student motivation did not vary as a function of the gender of the teacher. Using the gender-stereotypic hypotheses girls were generally found to be more positively

motivated than boys, but gender differences in favour of girls were generalised across school subjects. The bulk of variance in motivation occurred at the student level with both male and female students indicating they had better relationships with female teachers than with male teachers, but there was little or no evidence to support the assumption that boys fare better academically under male teachers.

Demetriou, Wilson and Winterbottom (2009) investigated whether differences exist between male and female teachers' approaches to their teaching and whether their emotional responses to students may affect students' motivation and emotional responses. Within the group of 305 teachers from schools in London, 63% were female and 37% were male. Though most of the teachers appeared to communicate effectively with their students, the male teachers in particular often felt trapped by communication barriers. For example, male and female teachers visualised the role of emotion in teaching differently, and they employed different strategies to deal with challenges such as disruptive and disengaged students. Female teachers were inclined to go to greater lengths to re-engage learning whilst the men were more inclined to communicate the subject knowledge and hope this would enthuse their students sufficiently to get them to engage in their learning. Male teachers did not cope as well when confronted with a lack of enthusiasm for learning from their students, thinking less laterally and were less patient than the female teachers.

Burusic, Babarovic, and Seric (2012) examined teacher-pupil gender effects on students' academic achievement in 844 Croatian primary schools. In Croatian primary schools the percentage of students taught by male teacher's ranges from 4.5% to 6%. School achievement was measured using school marks and standardised knowledge tests for almost all subjects in the school curriculum. The results across different age groups were similar. The achievement of girls, as measured by school marks, was higher than those of boys and students taught by female teachers attained better results than those taught by male teachers. Overall the results indicated that students' gender differences in school achievement are independent of teachers' gender.

Skelton and Read (2006) examined primary school students perceptions and relations with their male and female teachers. The data was collected from 307 students (153 boys and 154 girls) and 51 teachers (26 males and 25 females) from schools in north-east and south-east England. Most students indicated that they did not believe their teachers responded to

them differently based on the gender of the teacher. Skelton and Read (2006) suggested that these results may indicate that teachers do not treat their students differently according to gender. A minority of teachers (16% male and 14% female) indicated that they did not distinguish on the basis of the gender of the pupil in either their teaching or classroom management styles. The teachers who responded that they did differentiate their teaching and/or management approaches according to gender provided two main justifications. The first justification was the importance of mixing boys and girls, whilst the second was treating students the same but differently.

Relationships with teachers are a foundational component of young children's experiences in school. Hamre et al. (2008) provide strong evidence for the salience of teacher-student relationships as an important part of classroom contexts associated with the development of children's academic and social outcomes extending from early childhood through adolescence. Teacher-student relationships provide an essential foundation for effective classroom management and are key to high student achievement. Students need effective teachers rather than teachers based on gender.

### **2.3.3 Teacher collegiality**

Teacher collegiality is a practice that involves teachers working professionally together and supporting their colleagues socially and emotionally. A collegial relationship between colleagues encompasses respect for one another and a commitment to work towards a common goal. A collegial approach as opposed to an individualistic approach enhances the school's climate and the learning environment for students, creating a sense of community and empowerment (Stronge et al., 2004). Primary teachers frequently link teacher-collegial practices with student learning outcomes, but often neglect the social benefits of collegiality for teachers themselves (Jarzabkowski, 2002). Collegiality improves the quality of teaching, the emotional health of the school environment and reduces emotional stress and burnout amongst teachers (Jarzabkowski, 2002). Collegiality also provides a supportive working environment that can have a significant impact on teachers' attitudes toward the teaching profession (Harris & Anthony, 2001). Attitudes may be considered as natural or instinctive, develop gradually over a long period of time through socialisation, and express how people feel about something. Attitudes towards the teaching profession are a pivotal quality that

determines a teacher's willingness to develop and grow as a professional, directly affecting the school climate (Tok, 2012).

Bektas and Nalcaci (2012) evaluated the extent to which the personal values of student teachers predicted their attitude towards teaching. The participants consisted of 350 student teachers from Anakara University in the United States. The findings indicated that the personal values of teachers are of great significance in predicting their attitude towards the teaching profession. Discipline and responsibility along with sharing and respect, were found to be significant in explaining teachers' attitudes towards the teaching profession. According to Bektas and Nalcaci (2012) everyone is directly or indirectly shaped by values as they shape behaviours and judgements, social relationships and social development.

Huang (2001) assessed high school teachers' perceptions to determine if male and female teachers' perceptions of the school environment were different. A total of 275 teachers (127 male and 148 female) from eight high schools in the southern region of the United States participated in the study. The findings indicated that most high school teachers' perceived their school environment as favourable. The majority thought positively of their principals and felt that most of their colleagues had a professional commitment and worked well with each other. In terms of gender, female teachers perceived their school environment as more favourable than male teachers. They also reported better relationships with colleagues and students. Female teachers also reported better discipline control and job satisfaction. Huang (2001) provides one plausible explanation for the disparities. Men and woman have different communication styles and this may influence the way in which they work.

People in general, whether in social or work situations, are influenced by their relationships with others. Teachers make important career decisions based on collegiality or whether there is positive social interaction in their schools. Every teacher is either contributing to collegiality or presenting barriers to achieving it. In the best-case scenario, collegiality is high and teachers are fulfilled in their careers. It is hard to be satisfied and happy in a teaching career when people do not get along, hence a successful school is built around teachers who are successful both inside and outside the classroom.

## 2.4 Teachers' Desire to Work with Children

Rice and Goessling's (2005) literature review found the following factors deter men from choosing a career in education: low social status, low salary, women's work, potential complaints of child abuse and sexual harassment and few male peers. In light of these factors one could ask why some men remain in teaching despite all the above factors that may deter them in the first place.

According to Colker (2008) teachers do not enter early childhood education for the monetary reward or occupational glamour. Many are driven by the desire to make a difference to children's lives and to ensure they get all the opportunities and nurturing they need and deserve. Colker (2008) defined twelve personal characteristics that contribute to making early childhood education a good career match: passion, perseverance, willingness to take risks, pragmatism, patience, flexibility, respect, creativity, authenticity, love of learning, high energy and a sense of humour.

Ponte's (2012) review of male teachers in Hawaii found that several participants stated that being able to positively affect the lives of those in their community was a highly motivating factor for choosing teaching as a profession. Most of the participants indicated that they wanted to make learning fun and interesting. Furthermore they wanted to break away from the dominant discourse that has traditionally presented teaching as a feminine career that has been avoided by men. Many of the participants felt they had been inspired to become teachers by others already in the profession, such as family members, former teachers and friends.

Cushman (2005) conducted small group informal discussions with 17 primary school male teachers from schools in New Zealand. The teachers experience ranged from one to 31 years, with an average of twelve years. The focus of the open-ended questions was to gain an understanding of what had attracted the male teachers to primary teaching as a career. The most influential factor in the choice of choosing teaching as a career was the desire to work with children. Only five of the participants had gone straight into teacher education once they had left school. The other teachers made the decision later in life to make a change in their career choice. Many of the teachers had thought of teaching as their first career choice, but feared negative responses from friends and family, hence had made other career choices.

Cushman (2011) indicated that teachers in New Zealand are often unprepared to deal with the many gender-related issues inherent in the school environment. As a result, stereotypical views of males and females can dominate teachers' views of colleagues, and they can be seen as essentially different. Cushman (2011) highlights the need for teacher education institutions to provide comprehensive evidence-based programmes that engage students in reflection and debate on issues around gender.

## **2.5 Role of Males and Females in the Education Setting**

Gender stereotypes are a set of specific beliefs about the characteristics that women and men are likely to possess. Characteristics associated with women include being cooperative, team-oriented, sociable, caring, sensitive, and gentle. Male traits on the other hand emphasise characteristics such as being energetic, individualistic, proactive, dominant, means-end oriented, assertive, and strong. The expected jobs for males and females that are ascribed to gender are not stipulated but rather are socially constructed and are capable of changing. In other words, people think that success in certain occupations requires characteristics stereotypical of a particular sex. Gender stereotypes can lead people to believe that certain occupations (e.g. nurse, secretary, and teacher) are female occupations and others (e.g. mechanic, engineer, and builder) are male occupations.

Evans (2006) reviewed teachers' perceptions of gender perceptions of themselves, their careers and the adults and children in their lives. The participants consisted of four male and four female teachers from two primary schools in Australia. The teachers maintained that there had been changes to sex roles, especially for women. However, the teachers' perceptions of male and female roles, and of themselves as male or female, were relatively conservative. The male teachers, each of whom was married, saw the changes as more significant than the female teachers. The female teachers perceived these changes were as a result of more women having to work. The male teachers' clearly saw the responsibility of mother as a woman's job, and the working women's role was seen as bolstering her husband's bread-winning wage. When asked to describe the sorts of jobs their girls would do when they left school, the teachers did not envisage any particular girl in their classes making a career for themselves (something they could envisage for most boys); they hoped some girls would pursue a career. Evans (2006) saw no marked changes to gender roles amongst teachers even

though the past decades support the view that there may have been modernisation to the social structures.

## **2.6 Summary**

The study of teachers' beliefs forms part of the process of understanding how teachers conceptualise their work which in turn is important to the understanding of teachers' practices and their decisions in the classroom. All teachers hold beliefs about their work, their students, their subject matter, and their roles and responsibilities. Personal beliefs play a role in how an individual views their lives and provides a structured process through which they evaluate everything in their lives. Teachers' beliefs and perceptions represent the rich store of general knowledge of objects, people, events and their characteristic relationships that teachers have which affects their planning and their interactive thoughts and decisions, as well as their classroom behaviour.

The variety of experiences encountered by teachers in the classroom and their unique beliefs creates a multitude of individualised styles of classroom management, teacher-student relationships and teacher collegiality, irrespective of the teacher's gender. The literature has indicated that teachers' management training and years of experience can influence teaching styles and classroom management. But there is no universal consensus that the gender of the teacher plays a role. Furthermore there is no indication that classroom management styles can be defined according to stereotypical beliefs that males and females teach in a specific way. The literature has highlighted differences in teacher-student dynamics and collegiality, relative to the gender of the teacher and students; but, this may be in alignment with the higher percentage of female to male primary school teachers.

## Chapter 3

### Method

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter outlines the design and method used in this study. Section 3.2 provides justification for the mixed-method approach which was selected for this study. Section 3.3 outlines the role of the researcher. Section 3.4 outlines the data collection method used in this study. Section 3.5 and section 3.6 detail the setting of the study, the participants and the research schedule. Section 3.7 and section 3.8 describe the data analysis used in the study and the measures taken to ensure the validity and reliability of the findings. Section 3.9 summarises the methods used to ensure ethical standards were upheld at all times.

#### **3.2 Justification for Methodology**

This study used a grounded theory research strategy to investigate if New Zealand primary teachers perceive gender based differences between the female and male teachers they have worked with. A grounded theory is both an overall approach to research and a set of procedures for developing theory through the analysis of data (Punch, 2014). Using a grounded theory research strategy, the objective of collecting and analysing the research data is to generate a theory to explain the data (Punch, 2014). This is in contrast to research that aims to generate theory and research that aims to verify research. Guided by the research question, a data sample is collected and analysed. Any subsequent data collection is guided by the previous data analysis. This theory models the way humans have always learned (Punch, 2014), and applies an as openly minded an approach as possible. Grounded theory analysis aims directly at generating abstract theory to explain what is central in the data (Punch, 2014). All of the procedures are orientated to this aim. Grounded theory can be tailored to work well in any of the three major forms of research - qualitative, quantitative and mixed-method.

Mixed-method research combines elements from both qualitative and quantitative paradigms to produce converging findings in the context of complex research questions.

Quantitative research is considered to be more objective because it captures empirical data, is conducted on a large scale and is easier to analyse and interpret, particularly if online survey software is used (Punch, 2014). Qualitative research, on the other hand, aims to achieve depth of insight by collecting the perspectives and views of research participants (Punch, 2014). These tend to be smaller studies and aim to illuminate or construct a way forward and as such are more subjective and not that easy to analyse and interpret (Jackson, 2009). Both types of research are valid and useful. Since qualitative research and quantitative research are not mutually exclusive it is possible for a single investigation to use both methods (Jackson, 2009).

After a thorough reflection on a range of data collection methods, a mixed-method online questionnaire was selected as the most appropriate approach for the following reasons. Firstly, the strength of an online questionnaire is the relatively low cost and speed of data collection. Secondly, an online questionnaire allows for the collection of comprehensive, in-depth written information from the respondents. Thirdly, the teachers varying schedules allowed them to complete the questionnaires at a time that best suited them. Lastly, the choice of open-ended and closed questions allows for qualitative inquiry and quantitative measurement in a single research study. The quantitative data collected from the closed-ended items from the questionnaire exposed all participants to the same response categories whilst the qualitative inquiry allowed participants the opportunity to add comments describing their past or present experiences, and clarify their responses to the closed-ended questions.

### **3.3 The Researcher's Role**

As the primary instrument for the gathering and analysis of the data the research was able to collect and yield meaningful data. Although I have research experience, this study presented new challenges for me as a researcher. The greatest challenge was acknowledging that all findings and interpretations were not influenced and shaped by my identity and viewpoint. As an individual with my own beliefs and perspective of gender I needed to constantly reflect back on the issues being analysed and this lead to a more insightful and perceptive analysis.

### **3.4 Data Collection**

The data collected during this study consisted of an online questionnaire. Both the qualitative and quantitative data was collected simultaneously. This section describes the questionnaire that was used in this study.

#### **3.4.1 Survey research**

According to Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2011) a survey provides an effective, economical and efficient mechanism for developing a broad understanding through the gathering of mainly quantitative data, which can then be processed statistically. It has a number of advantages such as: representing a wide target audience; gathering standardised information (the same questions and instruments being used for all participants); deriving frequencies by manipulating variables and key factors; capturing data from multiple choice questions, closed questions or observation schedules; and providing inferential, explanatory and descriptive information. It allows for responses from a wide population which allows generalisations to be made about the given factors or variables with a degree of confidence.

However, while surveys can be easy to administer and have the above advantages, they can also be difficult to design. Consciously and carefully planning the survey with analytical considerations in mind from the outset is critical to ensuring difficulties or even insurmountable problems are avoided when it comes to data analysis (Glesne, 2005). Prior thought needs to include consideration around coding and non-responses and how open-ended questions will be treated so that essential factual information is not lost. It also requires the consideration of the formation of individual questions and the justification for including each question. How the survey is structured (taking into consideration the response formats selected and the range of options), the difficulty, complexity, clarity and pertinence of questions requires consideration (L. Cohen et al., 2011).

An online survey has an added advantage as the data is gathered and collated electronically, at a comparatively low cost and ensures the confidentiality of responses. It also provides greater opportunities for respondents to think about their responses, check information and complete the survey when and where they prefer to do so. Moreover, there is no risk of interview bias (L. Cohen et al., 2011). Glesne (2005) cautions that online

surveys can present with low response rates and response bias resulting from participants' disinterest, technical difficulties or responding to items in a way that will appease the researcher instead of answering truthfully. Hence the need for an explicit survey right from the outset enabling respondents to review the context of the survey. The appearance, the size of the survey, the manner in which questions are ordered and varied and the wording and clarity of the instructions provided all influence the quality and quantity of responses (L. Cohen et al., 2011).

### **3.4.2 Design of the questionnaire**

The Survey Monkey questionnaire (Appendix A) was aimed at capturing a broad perspective of the demographic of primary school teachers perceptions of gender-based difference in primary schools in New Zealand.

The literature study had suggested some key challenges associated with primary school teachers' classroom management, teacher-student dynamics and teacher collegiality that warranted further investigation. These challenges included understanding if teachers perceived gender-based beliefs influenced classroom management, teacher-student dynamics, and teacher collegiality. There is no universal consensus that the gender of teachers does or does not play a role in classroom management, teacher-student dynamic and teacher collegiality, relative to either the gender of the teacher or the student.

Both the literature study and Wood's (2012) pre-existing questionnaire were thus used to identify pertinent research data that needed to be collected, analysed and interpreted. Permission was obtained from Wood (2012) to use the questionnaire in this study. Although questionnaires often lack validity for a number of reasons (i.e., participants may lie or give answers that they believe are desired of them by the researcher) questionnaires are strong on reliability as they rely on a constant measuring device that can produce similar results if used again in similar circumstances (L. Cohen et al., 2011). Wood's (2012) relied on peer reviewing to augment validity in terms of trustworthiness and used evidence based on content which suggests that the items were appropriately represented for the research topic. Wood (2012) piloted the questionnaire items with a group consisting of former primary teachers currently teaching at the middle school level, along with primary teachers' working at primary schools other than his own. The group consisted of both females and males. The

participants provided valuable feedback which aided in the development of the online questionnaire.

The online questionnaire thus comprised a comprehensive list of questions that generated a combination of quantitative and qualitative data. The bulk of the questions were structured closed-ended questions. The quantitative data collected from the closed-ended items exposed all participants to the same response categories whilst the qualitative inquiry allowed participants the opportunity to add comments describing their past or present experiences, and to clarify their responses to the closed-ended questions. None of the questions were compulsory and the final questions related to demographic information. The intention was to provide an adequate scope to capture teachers' perceptions and experiences of the female and male teachers they had worked with, which would allow the research to identify any themes that might emerge.

### **3.5 The Research Study: Settings, Sample and Schedule**

This section provides the setting of the study, the details of the participants and outlines the phases of the study.

#### **3.5.1 The setting and the sample**

The study was conducted at state funded primary schools in east and south Auckland. Using group sampling 26 primary schools ranging from decile one to ten were selected to become the sample group. This sampling strategy known as purpose sampling, that is, selecting participants on the basis of the characteristics that are being sought, best suited the purpose of this study (L. Cohen et al., 2011).

In New Zealand, decile rates were designed as an administrative tool to group schools according to the socio-economic status of the families of the student population so as to reduce socio-economic disparity (Ministry of Education, 2012b). A school's decile does not indicate the overall socio-economic mix of the school but rather the socio-economic communities in which the majority of children are drawn from. There are ten decile ratings with decile one schools having the highest proportion of students from low socio-economic communities. The lower the school's decile rating, the more funding the school receives so as

to provide the required resources needed to support their children's learning. Schools then choose how to best cater for the needs of their students with the allocated funds.

Following an email, containing an invitation (Appendix B) from the researcher to the principals of the selected 26 schools, only three schools agreed to participate in the study. The reason cited by principals for declining the request included: the school's already participating in other research projects; the teachers were already overloaded with work; and involvement in education reviews with the Ministry of Education. Consent from principals as gatekeepers of their schools was deemed crucial in ensuring the study was conducted in an ethical manner. This approach was planned to ensure informed consent on the part of the school and their teachers, as well as anonymity and confidentiality for potential participants. An advantage of the approach through the principals was that this ensured that the identities of all the teachers in the school were not known to the researcher.

In order to gain access to and recruit participants, an information letter (Appendix C) was emailed to the principals of the identified schools. In the email the assistance of principals in forwarding the email to teachers was requested. The letter informed the teachers about the study and provided a link to the online Survey Monkey questionnaire so that they could view the questions.

Following the invitation, thirteen teachers agreed to participate in the research, reflecting on their perceptions of the female and male colleagues they have worked with. All the participants were female teachers and all were from a decile two school. Two schools did not participate in the study and neither of the principals provided any insight into why their schools did not participate.

### **3.6 Schedule**

Two weeks after the initial letter to the principals was sent out, a poor response required that a follow-up email was sent to the principals who had not declined. They were once again requested, if they approved.

### **3.7 Data Analysis**

The data collected was recorded, analysed and interpreted. Cohen et al. (2011) asserts that a representative range of responses is what the researchers should aim for. Although the number of participants was relatively small, the researcher was able to answer key questions and meet the objectives of the study. The data was exported from Survey Monkey's database and imported into Microsoft Excel. The three domains used in the questionnaire design provided the framework and headings for the data analysis and interpretation of both the quantitative and qualitative data.

#### **3.7.1 Quantitative data**

Items on the questionnaire were scored on a 1-5 basis; 1 for strongly agree and 5 for strongly disagree. The number of participants whose responses matched each other was added up and the results were graphed so as to illustrate and compare the extent to which the teachers' perceptions of their male and females colleagues varied. A number of questions were not answered by the participants and hence the number of responses per question is noted. All results were reported separately for teachers' perceptions of male and female teachers.

#### **3.7.2 Qualitative data**

The qualitative data was collated by grouping the teachers' responses for both female and male colleagues. Similar responses relating to teachers' perceptions with regards to male role models in primary teaching were grouped. Similar responses to the roles and types of jobs for male and females in the education setting were also grouped. Throughout the analysis, pertinent comments made by the participants were selected for reporting in the findings.

#### **3.7.3 Comparative analysis**

The typed up analyses of primary school teachers perceptions of gender-based differences were studied. Information was grouped into the three domains: teachers as self, teacher-student relationships, and teacher collegiality. The findings were then reported under

the appropriate headings. The perceived jobs for male and female teachers in the education sector, the perceived need for male role models in primary schools, and relevant demographic data were grouped and the findings reported under the appropriate headings.

### **3.8 Validity and Reliability**

Establishing validity and reliability within qualitative research is challenging, but is key to effective research (L. Cohen et al., 2011). Validity is achieved by ensuring the key objectives or actual research aims are closely aligned with the concepts around which the data is gathered, that is, it measures what it actually sets out to measure. To ensure reliability in qualitative research, examination of trustworthiness is crucial. Trustworthiness can be established through the use of triangulation of data (L. Cohen et al., 2011). Reliability within quantitative research is demonstrated when a test can be replicated and produces consistent results (Punch, 2005). The online questionnaire, which could easily be replicated, ensured consistency in terms of the phrasing and order of questions and also enabled teachers to complete the questionnaire without bias and the influence of others.

By using multiple sources of data collection, both qualitative and quantitative, a wider and deeper view helps to eliminate bias that can result from over-reliance on one research method. Hence this mixed-method approach provided greater confidence in the findings of this study. Using an online questionnaire that enabled both qualitative and quantitative data analysis helped to establish reliability and validity within this study. The design of the questionnaire, wording of the questions, sampling; and the coding and categorising of the responses and the analysis and interpretation of both the quantitative and qualitative data were all carefully considered. The demographic data produced objective empirical data which further strengthened the validity and reliability of the data by allowing generalisation across demographics.

#### **3.8.1 Limitations**

Many of the limitations of mixed methods research also apply to qualitative and quantitative research: namely small sample size, inability to generalise to other situations, and reliance on participants perceptions (Punch, 2005). With regards to the use of questionnaires, participants could find the pre-coded questions restrictive, and the researcher may be

compelled to make assumptions with regard to the extent to which the responses are typical of teachers.

The research sample constituted only of female teachers and hence this could have compromised the validity of the research as this research only presents female teachers perceptions of gender-based differences.

### **3.9 Ethical Considerations**

This study was designed and conducted in accordance with the Massey University Code of Ethical Conduct for Research, Teaching and Evaluation involving Human Participants (Massey University, 2013). The ethical standards including key principles of informed consent, confidentiality, minimising harm, truthfulness and social sensitivity were upheld at all times for all participants. This study was deemed low risk with no potential conflicts of interest.

Informed consent was obtained from each participant by including a consent page as the first page of the online questionnaire. It also included a confidentiality and anonymity statement. The participants then consented to completing the questionnaire and were able to withdraw at any stage or not to respond to every question.

### **3.10 Summary**

This chapter began by outlining the research question used in this study. The selection of the research paradigm and use of design research followed naturally from the social constructive perspective of this study. A mixed-method approach was selected as the most appropriate method of obtaining data which would provide answers for the research questions. Simultaneous collection of both qualitative and quantitative data was done using an online questionnaire. The study was performed in a clearly documented and ethical manner. Data was analysed using a grounded theory approach of identifying and grouping codes and comments made by participants. The findings of this study are documented in Chapter 4.

## Chapter 4

### Results

#### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter describes primary teachers' perceptions of gender-based differences between the male and female teachers they have worked with. The demographic information is presented in section 4.2 so as to provide an overview of the population of participants in this study. Section 4.3 describes the participants' perceptions of their colleagues' classroom management styles. Section 4.4 describes the participants' perceptions of their colleagues' teacher-student relationships. Section 4.5 describes the participants' perceptions of their colleagues' collegiality. Section 4.6 describes the participants' responses to the three open-ended items: expected job types, perceived differences between female and male teachers, and teachers' perception regarding the need for more male primary teachers. These responses provide insight into the participants' responses to the closed-ended items listed above.

It is important to note that not all participants responded to all the questions, hence the sample of participants who responded to each question is noted in each of the tables. In an attempt to clarify primary school teachers' perceived gender-based differences between male and female primary teachers, questions will be discussed in pairs.

#### 4.2 Participant Demographics

##### *Ethnicity*

There were a total of thirteen female participants ( $n = 13$ ) in this study. The New Zealand government's ethnicity census categories were utilised to classify the ethnicity of participants. One participant identified as Pākehā, three (23%) participants identified as Māori, seven (53%) participants identified as European, one participant identified as Indian, and one participant identified as Pasifika. Whilst 23% of the participants identified their ethnicity as Māori, 71% (school roll of 679) of the ethnic composition of the students at the school is reported as Māori/Pacific Islander (Education Review Office, 2011). The low

number of participants did not afford the opportunity to analyse teachers perceptions of gender-based differences from an ethnic perspective (See Figure 1).

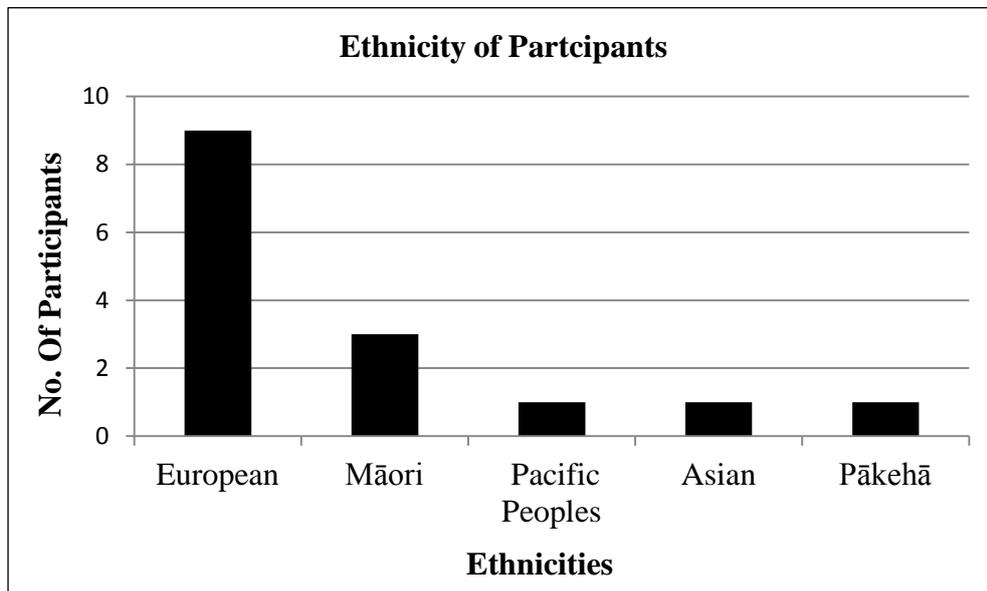


Figure 1. Ethnicity of Participants

#### Age

One of the fifteen participants did not indicate their age. Five participants were under the age of 32, five participants were between the ages of 32 and 46, and two participants were over the age of 46. Fifty percent of the participants were under the age of 38 (see Figure 2).

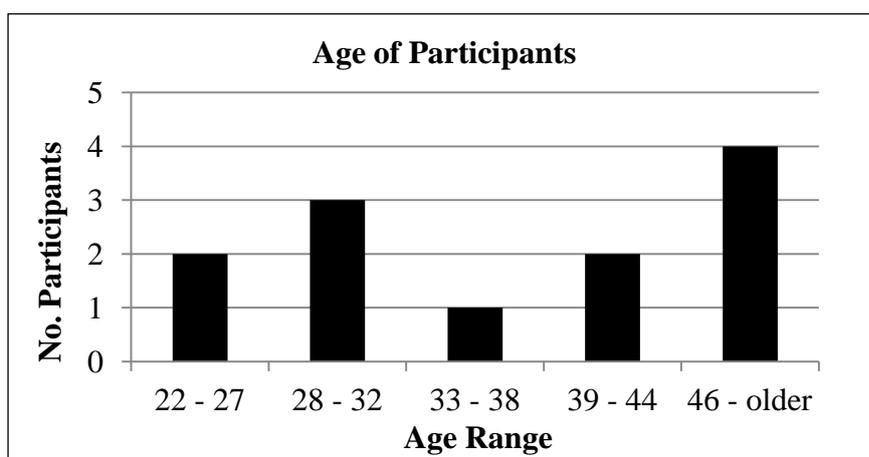


Figure 2. Age of Participants

#### Teaching Experience and Qualifications

Fifty percent of the participants ( $n = 6$ ) indicated they had more than thirteen years' teaching experience, whilst 50% of the participants ( $n = 6$ ) had less than four years' teaching experience. One participants ( $n = 1$ ) indicated that they had a TESOL diploma. Seven participants ( $n = 7$ ) indicated that they had a bachelor's degree in Teaching. One participant ( $n = 1$ ) indicated that they had a master's degree, whilst two participants ( $n = 2$ ) indicated that they had specialist degrees. Two participants ( $n = 2$ ) indicated that they had obtained a postgraduate diploma in teaching after completing a bachelor of arts (see Figure 3).

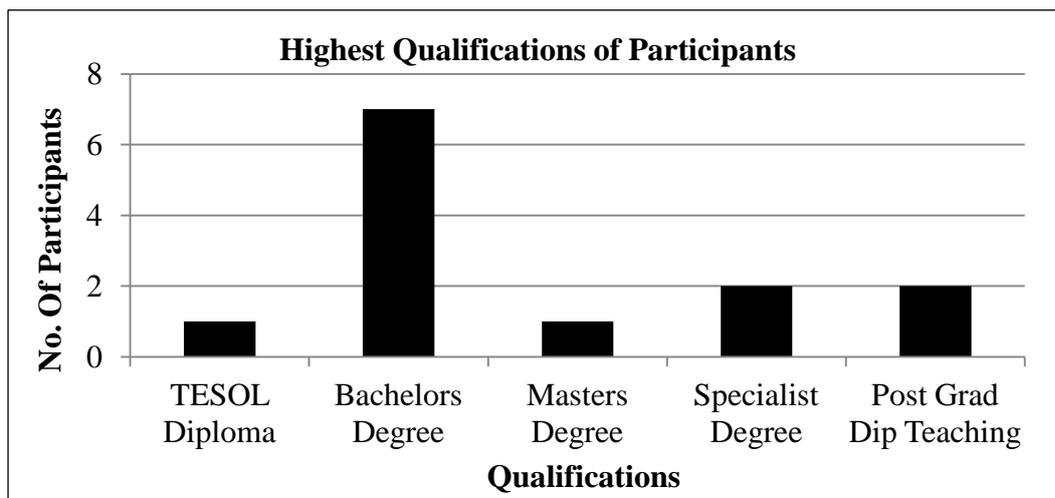


Figure 3. Highest Qualifications of Participants

### 4.3 Teacher as Self

The teacher as self domain focuses on the responses to three items on the questionnaire: the teacher's classroom management styles, and the teacher's content knowledge and instructional effectiveness. The participants responded to each item on a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 indicating they strongly agreed and 5 indicating they strongly disagreed.

#### 4.3.1 Classroom management

Classroom management includes activities from learning to social interaction and student behaviours that are managed by teachers so as to ensure learning takes place. Classroom management is unique to each individual teacher and is influenced by many factors including their beliefs and perceptions, content knowledge and instructional effectiveness.

The participants were asked if they perceived that the female and male teachers they had worked with had effective classroom management styles. Quantitative data from the questionnaire indicates that for the most part, participants perceived that the effectiveness of classroom management is not determined by gender of the teacher. Table 2 summarises the responses to the questions for male and female teachers.

Table 2  
Classroom Management Styles

	Gender	Sample ( <i>n</i> )	Strongly Agree ( <i>n</i> )	Agree ( <i>n</i> )	Neither ( <i>n</i> )	Disagree ( <i>n</i> )	Strongly Disagree ( <i>n</i> )
Management Styles	F	13	3	9	0	1	0
	M	13	3	7	1	2	0

*Note.* M = Male and F = Female, *n* = Number of participants

Of the participants (*n* = 13) that responded to this item, 70% of the participants (*n* = 9) agreed that the female teachers they had worked with used effective classroom management styles, whilst 53% of the participants (*n* = 7) agreed that the male teachers they had worked with used effective classroom management styles. There was no difference between the number of participants that strongly agreed that female and male teachers they had worked with used effective classroom management styles. One of the thirteen participants was unsure if the male teachers they had worked with used effective classroom management styles. One of the thirteen participants indicated that they disagreed that the female teachers they had worked with used effective classroom management styles. Two participants disagreed that the male teachers they had worked with used effective classroom management styles. No participants strongly disagreed that either the male or female teachers they had worked with used effective classroom management styles. The results from this pair of questions suggest that the participants perceived that both the male and female teachers they have worked with use effective classroom management styles. No additional comments were provided by the participants.

#### 4.3.2 Content knowledge

Content knowledge is defined as knowledge about the actual subject matter that is to be learnt or taught. Strong subject matter knowledge coupled with effective instructional

strategies tends to be acquired and developed through experiences and during professional development opportunities. Teachers construct new knowledge that is based upon their understanding of teaching, experiences in the classroom, and by identifying what does and does not work in the classroom.

The participants were asked if they perceived that the female and male teachers they had worked with had adequate content knowledge. Quantitative data from the questionnaire indicates that for the most part, participants perceived that teachers' content knowledge is not determined by the gender of the teacher, but some were unsure if the male teachers they had worked with had an adequate amount of content knowledge. Table 3 summarises the responses to the questions for male and female teachers.

Table 3

Content Knowledge

	Gender	Sample ( <i>n</i> )	Strongly Agree ( <i>n</i> )	Agree ( <i>n</i> )	Neither ( <i>n</i> )	Disagree ( <i>n</i> )	Strongly Disagree ( <i>n</i> )
Content Knowledge	F	13	5	7	0	1	0
	M	12	5	3	4	0	0

*Note.* M = Male and F = Female, *n* = Number of participants

One of the thirteen participants did not respond to the item regarding male teachers' content knowledge. Although five of the thirteen participants strongly agreed that the male and female teachers they had worked with had adequate content knowledge, there were differences on the other scales. Whilst 54% of the participants (*n* = 7) agreed that the female teachers they have worked with had adequate content knowledge, only 42% of the participants (*n* = 5) agreed that the male teachers they had worked with had adequate content knowledge. Four of the twelve participants were unsure if the male teachers they had worked with had an adequate amount of content knowledge. One of the thirteen participants perceived that the female teachers they had worked did not have adequate content knowledge. The results from this pair of questions suggests that some participants were unsure if the male teachers they had worked with had adequate content knowledge, and the majority of participants felt the female teachers they had worked with had adequate content knowledge.

### 4.3.3 Teaching styles

Whilst content knowledge is an understanding of the concepts within the domain being taught, teaching styles or pedagogical content knowledge is the ability to convey one's understanding of the content knowledge through multiple models of teaching for student understanding, comprehension and achievement. An effective teaching style is required to ensure that the subject content is presented in a manner that ensures learning can take place.

The participants were asked if they perceived that the female and male teachers they had worked with had effective teaching styles. Quantitative data from the questionnaire shows that for the most part, participants perceived that the teaching styles of female and male teachers they had worked with are not determined by the gender of the teacher. Table 4 summarises the responses to the questions for male and female teachers.

Table 4

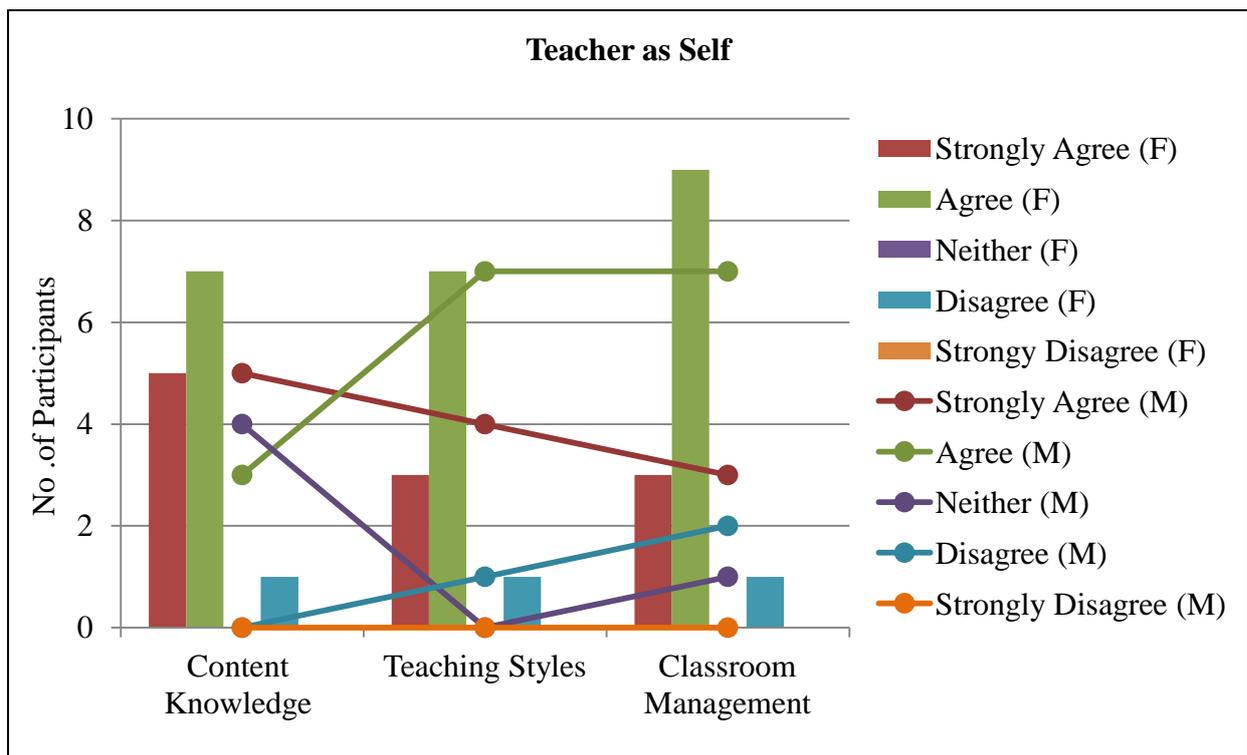
Teacher Styles

	Gender	Sample (n)	Strongly Agree (n)	Agree (n)	Neither (n)	Disagree (n)	Strongly Disagree (n)
Teaching Styles	F	11	3	7	0	1	0
	M	12	4	7	0	1	0

*Note.* M = Male and F = Female, n = Number of participants

Only eleven and twelve participants respectively responded to the items relating to effective teaching styles. Whilst 63% of the participants ( $n = 7$ ) indicated that they agreed that the female teachers they had worked with had effective teaching styles, only 27% of the participants ( $n = 3$ ) indicated that they strongly agreed that the female teachers they had worked with had effective teaching styles. Similarly 58% of the participants ( $n = 7$ ) agreed that the male teachers they had worked with had effective teaching styles, whilst 33% of the participants ( $n = 4$ ) strongly agreed that the male teachers they had worked with had effective teaching styles. Only one of the twelve participants indicated that the male and female teachers they had worked with did not have effective teaching styles. The result from the pair of questions suggests that the participants perceive that both the male and female teachers they had worked with had effective teaching styles. One participant made the following comment: *"Some of the female and male teachers I have worked with do and don't have effective teaching styles."*

Figure 4 offers a visual representation of the participants responses to each of the questions in the classroom management domain. The paired questions suggest that overall the participants did not perceive that classroom management and teaching styles are significantly different between the male and female teachers they had worked with. The only item of interest relates to the number of participants ( $n = 4$ ) who were unsure if the male teachers they had worked with had an adequate content knowledge.



Note. M = Male and F = Female

Figure 4. Teacher as Self

#### 4.4 Teacher-student Dynamics

Teacher-student dynamics focuses on the teachers ability to motivate and engage their students; serve as role models; and be nurturing, fair, patient, and sensitive to their students needs. It also includes teachers desire to work with children and to develop relationships with their students. To be an effective teacher not only involves having deep content knowledge, effective management and teaching styles, but also creating a warm classroom climate and interactive teacher-student relationships. A good relationship between a teacher

and student forms the foundation for behavioural, social and academic learning. This relationship occurs as a result of unconditional acceptance of the student by the teacher. Through this acceptance the teacher shows their students that they are valued as an individual worthy of respect. By treating their students in this manner the other components in the classroom will be more effective. Failure to establish this relationship will result in a lack of effectiveness in the overall programme and possibly resentment and hostility on the part of the students. The participants responded to each item on a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 indicating they strongly agreed and 5 indicating they strongly disagreed.

#### 4.4.1 Role models

Often, there is a debate about whether teachers should be role models for students. Teachers serve as role models by telling the truth, respecting others, accepting and fulfilling responsibilities, playing fair, earning and returning trust and living a moral life. Ideally all children need both male and female role models since gender role models are dynamic and multifaceted. This allows each student to form their own gender identity and to respect the gender diversity present in society.

The participants were asked if the female and male teachers they had worked with effectively served their students as role models. Quantitative data from the questions indicates that the participants perceived that the ability to serve as effective role models for students is not determined by the gender of the teacher. Table 5 summarises the responses to the questions pertaining to teachers effectively serving their students as role models.

Table 5  
Role Models

	Gender	Sample (n)	Strongly Agree (n)	Agree (n)	Neither (n)	Disagree (n)	Strongly Disagree (n)
Role Models	F	12	2	8	1	1	0
	M	12	2	7	1	2	0

*Note.* M = Male and F = Female, n = Number of participants

Not all the participants ( $n = 12$ ) responded to this item. Eighty-four percent of the participants ( $n = 10$ ) perceived (strongly agreed or agreed) that the female teachers they had worked with effectively served their students as role models. Similarly 75% of the participants ( $n = 9$ )

perceived (strongly agreed or agreed) that the male teachers they had worked with effectively served their students as role models. One of the twelve participants was unsure if the male and female teachers they had worked served their students as effective role models. Although the positive results were very similar for both male and female teacher's ability to serve as effective role models for their students, a difference emerged in the negative category. One of the twelve participants disagreed that the female colleagues they had worked with served as effective role models for their students, two of the twelve participants disagreed that the male teachers they had worked with served as effective role models for their students. Results from the pair of questions suggests that whilst the majority of participants perceived that male and female teachers they had worked with served as effective role models for their students, a small number were either unsure or disagreed that the male and female teachers they had worked with had served their students as effective role models.

#### **4.4.2 Nurturing, patient and fair**

In a classroom, the teacher provides a nurturing atmosphere in group and individual settings during times when emotional support for the group/individual is needed. The goal of nurturing is to develop a trusting and accepting relationship between the teacher and student. The nurturing teacher strives to be accessible, empathetic, and supportive. Being fair is often a prerequisite of effective teaching in the eyes of students. Students expect to be treated fairly in any situation and that teachers avoid favouritism. A teachers ability to endure the expected stresses and irritations of interacting with their students relates to a teachers ability to be patient. Fairness and patience are also essential features of the classroom required to establish the right climate for effective teaching and learning.

The participants were asked if the female and male teachers they had worked with were nurturing; and patient with their students, and treated their students fairly. Quantitative data from the questions indicates that the participants perceived that being nurturing and patient with students is not determined by the gender of the teacher, whilst only a few participants indicated that they were unsure if male teachers treated their students fairly. Table 6 summarises the responses to the questions pertaining to teachers being nurturing, patient and fair to their students.

Table 6

## Nurturing, Patient and Fair

	Gender	Sample ( <i>n</i> )	Strongly Agree ( <i>n</i> )	Agree ( <i>n</i> )	Neither ( <i>n</i> )	Disagree ( <i>n</i> )	Strongly Disagree ( <i>n</i> )
Nurturing	F	12	3	7	2	0	0
	M	11	2	5	4	0	0
Patient	F	12	1	7	3	1	0
	M	12	1	6	4	1	0
Fair	F	12	2	9	0	1	0
	M	11	0	2	7	1	1

*Note.* M = Male and F = Female, *n* = Number of participants

Not all of the participants responded to these items. Whilst 84% of the participants ( $n = 10$ ) either strongly agreed or agreed that the female teachers they have worked with were nurturing and sensitive to their students, 63% of the participants ( $n = 7$ ) either strongly agreed or agreed that the male teachers they had worked with were nurturing and sensitive to their students. Two of the twelve participants were unsure if the female teachers they have worked with were nurturing and sensitive to their students, whilst four of the eleven participants were unsure if the male teachers they have worked with were nurturing and sensitive to their students. There were no negative responses to either of these two items. One participant commented: *"I think there is a very fine line for male teachers when it comes to being nurturing."* This comment may provide some insight as to why four participants were unsure if male teachers they had worked with were nurturing and sensitive to their students. Results from the pair of questions suggest that the participants perceive that the male and female teachers they had worked with were nurturing and sensitive to their students even though some of the participants were unsure.

Only twelve of the thirteen participants responded to these items. Whilst 66% of the participants ( $n = 8$ ) either strongly agreed or agreed that the female teachers they had worked with were patient with their students, 58% of the participants ( $n = 7$ ) either strongly agreed or agreed that the male teachers they have worked with were patient with their students. Whilst 25% of the participants ( $n = 3$ ) were unsure if the female teachers they had worked with were patient with their students, 33% of the participants ( $n = 4$ ) were unsure if the male teachers they had worked with were patient with their students. One of the participants disagreed that

both female and male teachers they had worked with were patient with their students. The results from the pair of questions suggest that a greater percentage of participants perceived that male and female teachers they had worked with were patient with their students. A smaller percentage of participants indicated they that were unsure whether the male and female teachers they have worked with were patient with their students.

There was a difference between the percentages of participants that perceived that the male teachers they had worked with treated their students fairly compared to the female teachers they had worked with. Whilst 18% of the participants ( $n = 2$ ) agreed that the male teachers they had worked with treated their students fairly, 63% of the participants ( $n = 7$ ) were unsure if the male teachers they had worked with treated their students fairly. Nineteen percent of the participants ( $n = 2$ ) either disagreed or strongly disagreed that the male teachers they had worked with treated their students fairly. This is different from the vast majority of participants (92%) who either strongly agreed or agreed that the female teachers they had worked with treated their students fairly. One of the participants disagreed that the female and male teachers they had worked with treated their students fairly. Results from the pair of questions suggest that most of the participants perceived that the female teachers they had worked with treated their students fairly whilst most participants were unsure if the male teachers they had worked with treated their students fairly.

#### **4.4.3 Motivation and engagement**

Motivating students represents another component in teacher-student relationships. Teachers' enthusiasm for teaching their students and their knowledge of the subject matter is an important part both in supporting positive relationships with students and in encouraging student achievement.

The participants were asked if the female and male teachers they have worked effectively motivated their students and kept them engaged. Quantitative data from the questions indicated that the participants perceived that the ability to motivate and engage students is not determined by the gender of the teacher. Table 7 summarises the responses to the items pertaining to teachers being able to motivate and engage their students.

Table 7

## Motivation and Engagement

	Gender	Sample ( <i>n</i> )	Strongly Agree ( <i>n</i> )	Agree ( <i>n</i> )	Neither ( <i>n</i> )	Disagree ( <i>n</i> )	Strongly Disagree ( <i>n</i> )
Motivation	F	13	4	8	0	1	0
	M	13	4	7	2	0	0

*Note.* M = Male and F = Female, *n* = Number of participants

All thirteen participants responded to these items with 93% of the participants ( $n = 12$ ) either strongly agreeing or agreeing that the female teachers they had worked with effectively motivated their students and kept them engaged. Similarly 85% of the participants ( $n = 11$ ) either strongly agreed or agreed that the male teachers they had worked with effectively motivated their students and kept them engaged. Only one of the thirteen participants perceived that the female teachers they had worked with did not effectively motivate their students and keep them engaged. Two of the thirteen participants neither agreed nor disagreed that the male teachers they had worked with effectively motivated their students and kept them engaged. One participant commented: *That it was not the case for all female teachers they had worked with.*" This comment may provide some insight as to why this participant disagreed that the female teachers they have worked with effectively motivated and engaged their students. Results from the pair of questions suggest that the participants perceived that both the male and female teachers they had worked with had the ability to motivate and engage their students.

#### 4.4.4 Have a desire to work with children

Many teachers enter the profession driven by a desire to work with children. Teaching as a career choice can also be the result of having been inspired by their teachers or family members and friends who are teachers. Other teachers have indicated the importance of helping others in their communities as the reason for entering the teaching profession.

The participants were asked if the female and male teachers they had worked with had a desire to work with children. Quantitative data from the questions indicates that the participants perceived that having a desire to work with children is not determined by the

gender of the teacher. Table 8 summarises the responses to the items pertaining to teachers' desire to work with children.

Table 8  
Desire to Work with Children

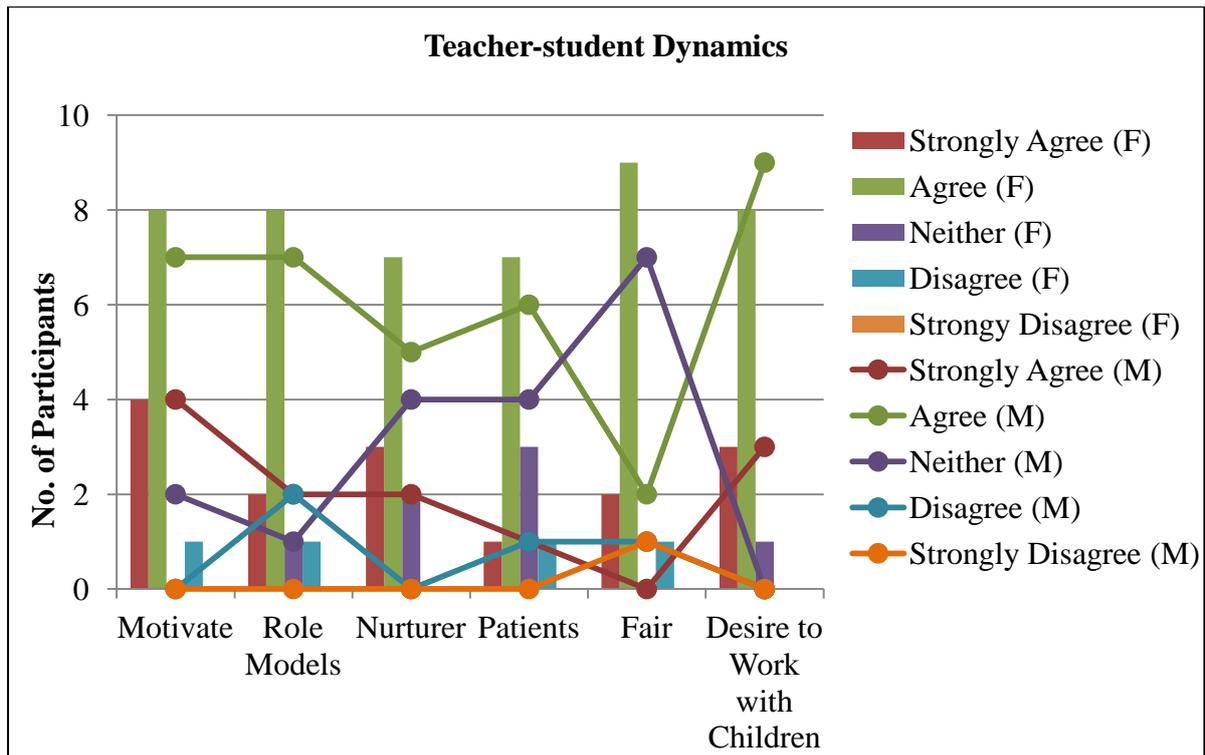
	Gender	Sample ( <i>n</i> )	Strongly Agree ( <i>n</i> )	Agree ( <i>n</i> )	Neither ( <i>n</i> )	Disagree ( <i>n</i> )	Strongly Disagree ( <i>n</i> )
Desire to work with children	F	12	3	8	1	0	0
	M	12	3	9	0	0	0

*Note.* M = Male and F = Female, *n* = Number of participants

Of the twelve participants that responded to these items, 92% of the participants (*n* = 11) and 100% of the participants (*n* = 12) respectively strongly agreed or agreed that that the female and male teachers they have worked with had a desire to work with children. Only one of the twelve participants was unsure if the female teachers they had worked with had a desire to work with children. Results from the pair of questions suggest that the participants perceived that the female and male teachers they had worked with had a desire to work with children.

The data collected from these six questions suggests that both male and female teachers are perceived as effectively serving their students as role models, are nurturing and patient with their students, effectively motivate their students and keep them engaged, and have a desire to work with children. A percentage of participants indicated that they were unsure if the male teachers they had worked with treated their students fairly; whilst the same participants perceived that female teachers they had worked with treated their students fairly.

Figure 5 provides a visual representation of the participants' responses to each of the questions in the teacher-student dynamics' domain. Of significance is the variance between the number of participants who perceived that the female teachers they had worked with treated their students fairly and the number of participants who perceived that male teachers they had worked with treated their students fairly.



Note. M = Male and F = Female,  $n$  = Number of participants

Figure 5. Teacher-student Dynamics

#### 4.5 Teacher Collegiality

This domain focuses on teacher's ability to develop effective collegial relationships; and positive attitudes toward the profession. Although teachers spend most of the day in the classroom with their students, there are periods of time when teachers meet with their colleagues to reflect, analyse and plan lessons. Collegiality plays a role in building teachers' content knowledge and teaching styles through sharing, collaboration and discussion with their colleagues.

The participants were asked if the female and male teachers they had worked with were collegial and generally had positive attitudes about their profession. Quantitative data from the questions indicates that the participants perceived that being collegial is not determined by the gender of the teacher, but perceived differences were noted with regards to male and female teachers' attitudes toward the profession. Table 9 summarises the responses to the survey items pertaining to teacher collegiality.

Table 9

## Teacher Collegiality

	Gender	Sample ( <i>n</i> )	Strongly Agree ( <i>n</i> )	Agree ( <i>n</i> )	Neither ( <i>n</i> )	Disagree ( <i>n</i> )	Strongly Disagree ( <i>n</i> )
Collegiality	F	12	3	9	0	0	0
	M	11	2	7	1	1	0
Positive Attitudes to Profession	F	12	4	4	3	1	0
	M	12	3	6	2	1	0

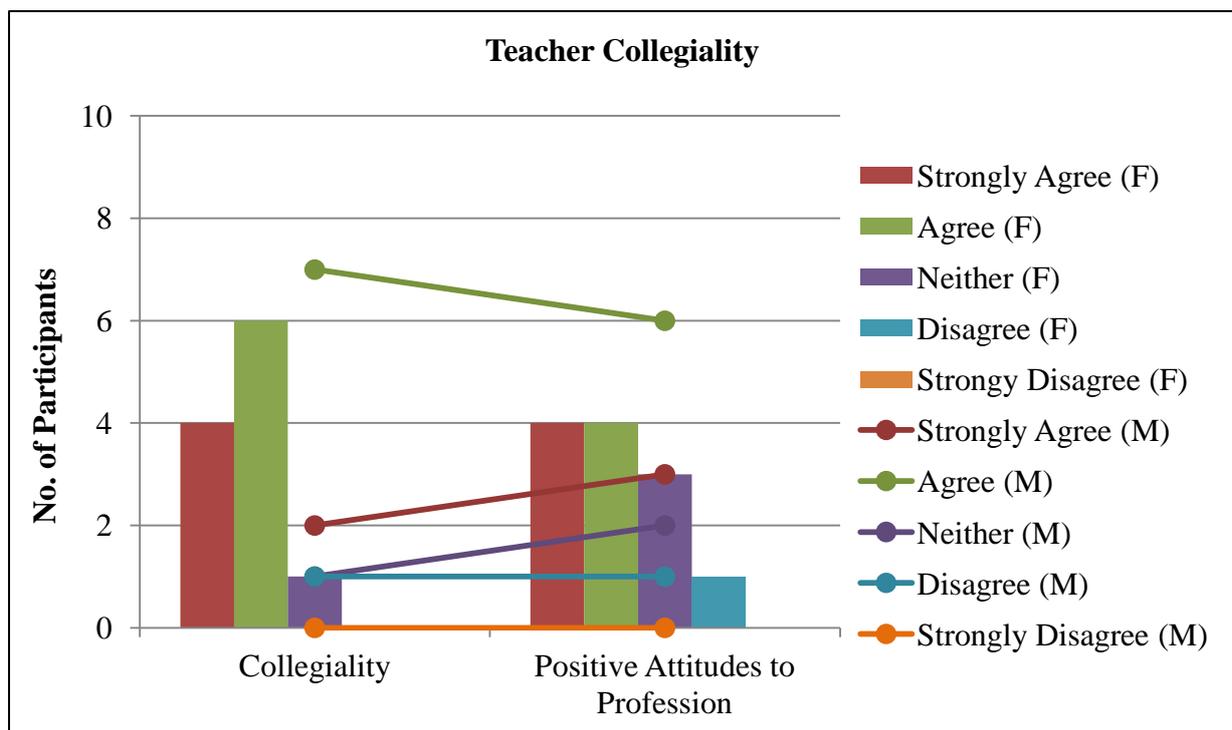
*Note.* M = Male and F = Female, *n* = Number of participants

Not all of the participants responded to these items. Of the twelve participants that responded to whether the male and female teachers they had worked with developed effective collegial relationships, 100% of the participants either strongly agreed or agreed that the female teachers they had worked with developed effective collegial relationships. Eighty-two percent of the participants ( $n = 9$ ) either strongly agreed or agreed that the male teachers they had worked with developed effective collegial relationships. Only one of the eleven participants was unsure whether the male teachers they had worked with developed effective collegial relationships, and one participant disagreed that the male teachers they had worked with developed effective collegial relationships. One participant commented that: "*Female collegiality depends on the amount of time spent teaching.*" Results from the pair of questions suggest that the participants perceived that the female and male teachers they had worked with had the ability to develop effective collegial relationships.

Of the twelve participants that responded to whether the male and female teachers they had worked with had generally positive attitudes about the profession, 66% of the participants ( $n = 8$ ) either strongly agreed or agreed that the female teachers they had worked with had generally positive attitudes about the profession. Similarly, 75% of the participants ( $n = 9$ ) either strongly agreed or agreed that the male teachers they had worked with had generally positive attitudes about the profession. Three of the twelve participants were unsure if the female teachers they had worked with had generally positive attitudes towards the profession, and two of the participants were unsure if the male teachers they had worked with had positive attitudes toward the profession. One of the twelve participants disagreed that the female and male teachers they had worked with had positive attitudes towards the profession. One of the participants commented: *There is greater ambition amongst male*

colleagues." The results from the pair of survey items suggest that the participants perceived that female teachers they had worked with had more positive attitudes towards the profession than the male teachers they had worked with.

Figure 6 provides a visual representation of the participants' responses to each of the questions in the teacher collegiality domain. The only difference that was observed in the teacher collegiality domain was that the participants perceived that the female teachers they had worked with had a more positive attitude towards the profession.



Note. M= Male and F = Female

Figure 6. Teacher Collegiality

#### 4.6 Additional Questions

A further four open-ended questions were asked which pertained to the main research question. These open-ended questions afforded the participants the opportunity to provide additional data regarding their perceptions of female and male primary teachers they had worked with. The first question asked what, if any, are the expected jobs for females within the primary are setting. Twelve of the thirteen participants responded to this question. One participant demonstrated a lack of understanding of the survey items intent and commented

with statements such as: *"To be a role model for the students, to interact with other staff members, and to uphold the schools values."* Four participants stated that: *"There are no specific jobs for females and all teachers should do the jobs they are best skilled at and capable of doing."* Seven participants indicated specific jobs for females within the primary setting which included: *"Classroom teachers, office staff, music teachers, dance teachers, support staff, first aides, physical education teachers, sports teachers, caretakers and gardeners."*

The second question asked what, if any, are the expected jobs for males within the primary are setting. Nine of the thirteen participants responded to this question. Three participants stated that: *"There are no specific jobs for males and all teachers should do the jobs they are best skilled at and capable of doing."* Six participants indicated specific jobs for males within the primary setting which included: *"Classroom teachers, office staff, science/technology teachers, heads of department, support staff, first aides, physical education teachers, sports teachers, senior and middle management, caretakers and gardeners."*

The third question asked what, if any, are the differences between female and male primary teachers? Ten of the thirteen participants responded to this question. A number of participants demonstrated a lack of understanding of the survey items intent and commented with statements such as: *"Women by nature are nurturers and males tend to have more expectations and responsibilities around physical education and technology."* One participant commented that: *"Children need both male and female role models in their life."* Two participants commented that: *"The differences can often be a result of personality, not necessarily gender."* One participant commented: *"That male teachers are more likely to rely on personality strengths to manage behaviour."* Three participants commented that: *"Men don't sweat the small stuff, don't enjoy planning and tend to be more laid back."* One participant commented that: *"Male teachers are more likely to have leadership as a career goal and are less likely to have a comprehensive grasp of the curriculum or pedagogy."* Overall the comments directed at male teachers were more negative than those directed at female teachers.

The fourth question asked if there is a need for more male primary teachers. Twelve of the thirteen participants responded to this question. Nine participants agreed that there is a

need for more male primary teachers. One participant commented that: "*We need amazing great male teacher's not just males who scrap through because they are a male.*" One participant commented that: "*It is important for children to see both men and women as intelligent, readers/ writers, carers, valuing education and to see that school is not just girls' business.*" Two participants commented that: "*Males and females are different and bring different dimensions to the classroom.*" Seven participants commented that: "*Children need positive male role models in their lives.*"

#### **4.7 Summary**

Thirteen female participants provided quantitative and qualitative data relating to their perceptions of the female and male primary teachers they have worked with. Overall the findings from the quantitative analysis suggest that differences between perceptions of female and male teachers were not found. However some participants may have perceived gender-based differences between the male and female teachers they have worked with. A small number of participants were unsure if the male teachers they had worked with had adequate content knowledge and whether the male teachers they had worked with treated their students fairly. The participants also responded more positively to the questions which asked if the female teachers they had worked with had a more positive attitude towards the profession. The qualitative data provided further insight into perceived gender-based differences between female and male primary teachers, the expected jobs for females and males within the primary setting and the need for more male primary teachers.

These findings, as well as those presented in Chapter 3, are highlighted and discussed further in the next and final chapter. Then, in conclusion, the implications of this study, along with the limitations of this study and suggestions for further research, will be discussed.

## Chapter 5

### Discussion and Conclusion

#### **5.1 Introduction**

The intention of this study was to explore primary teachers' perceptions of gender-differences between the female and male teachers they have worked with. A particular focus was on examining teachers' perceived gender-based beliefs and how they influence classroom practices, teacher-student dynamics and teacher collegiality.

The present study, with its small sample, consisted of thirteen female primary teachers from a decile two, state-funded primary school in South Auckland. Fifty-three percent of the participants identified as European. Fifty percent of the participants were over the age of 38. Seventy-five percent of the participants reported having more than thirteen years' teaching experience and only one participant did not hold a university degree.

Drawing together the findings from this study serves to illustrate the complex nature of teachers' beliefs and perceptions and the crucial role they play within the learning environment. In the following sections, key findings are drawn out and links back to relevant literature are made. Section 5.2 summarises the findings within the context of the literature review. It focuses on examining primary teachers' perceptions of gender-based differences within three domains: teacher as self, teacher-student dynamics, and teacher collegiality. In section 5.3 and section 5.4 the implications of this study, for current practice and possible future developments are then considered. Section 5.5 provides a final conclusion to the research.

#### **5.2 Teachers' Perceptions of Gender-based Differences**

Data was analysed in order to determine if primary teachers in New Zealand perceive gender-based differences between the male and female teachers they have worked with. Analysis revealed that overall, primary teachers do not perceive gender-based differences between the female and male teachers they have worked with. However, responses from some of the questions indicate that the participants may have perceived some gender-based

differences between the male and female teachers they have worked with. In particular, teachers' content knowledge, a teacher's ability to treat their students fairly and teachers' positive attitudes to the profession. These perceived differences may have occurred due to the lack of male participants and/or the low number of male teachers in primary schools in New Zealand, making it difficult to compare the participants perceived gender-based differences between female and male teachers. The analysis of the data will be discussed in the following three domains: teacher as self, teacher-student dynamics and teacher collegiality.

### **5.2.1 Teacher as self**

In this section primary teachers gender based perceptions of the female and male teachers they had worked with are examined in relation to three areas: teachers' classroom management styles, teachers' content knowledge, and instructional effectiveness. Positive and negative responses for the items pertaining to management styles, teachers' content knowledge and instructional effectiveness were very similar. However, there were differences amongst the participants when it came to neutral perceptions of primary teachers' content knowledge.

Whilst twelve of the thirteen participants perceived that the female primary teachers they had worked with had adequate content knowledge, only eight of the twelve respondents perceived that the male primary teachers they had worked with had adequate content knowledge. The remaining four participants perceived that the male teachers they had worked with did not have adequate content knowledge.

The data collected from the pair of questions pertaining to teachers' content knowledge supports Al Khatib's (2007) findings that female teachers have significantly more content knowledge than male teachers. Content knowledge is an understanding of the concepts embedded within the domain being taught (Atjonen, Korkeakoski, & Mehtäläinen, 2011). Having good content knowledge is just one of many vital factors and qualities which an effective teacher needs to have in order to enhance their students' learning and achievement. Teacher content knowledge also influences how teachers engage students with the subject matter, how they evaluate and use instructional material, and what students learn.

Positive and negative responses for the pair of questions pertaining to teachers' effective teaching styles were very similar regarding female and male teachers. Whilst 75% of the participants indicated that they had thirteen years or more teaching experience, all but one participant perceived that the female and male teachers they had worked with do not have effective teaching styles. But the number of years teaching cannot necessarily be linked to age as being older does not necessarily mean more experience teacher. The data collected from these items does not support Fan and Ye (2007) findings in terms of gender and age. Fan and Ye's (2007) findings indicated that female teachers preferred a more conservative teaching style whilst male teachers liked to attempt new teaching methods or contents. The younger teachers were also inclined to be more creative and open, and less compliant or conservative in their teaching practices than their older counterparts. According to Carrington and McPhee (2008) teachers vary their teaching style and content to take account of apparent gender differences in children's preferred learning styles. Bélanger and Longden's (2009) findings revealed that there were no differences when controlling for the gender of the teacher, rather the students expected certain leadership qualities from their teachers, such as being inspiring, rational, confident, enthusiastic, supportive, decisive, and assertive.

Positive and negative responses for the pair of questions pertaining to teachers' classroom management styles were very similar regarding female and male teachers. Two participants indicated that they did not believe the male teachers they had worked with had effective classroom management styles, whilst one participant indicated that they did not believe the female teachers they had worked with had effective classroom management styles. Only one participant was unsure if the male teachers they had worked with had effective classroom management styles. There are numerous dispositional and situational factors that influence classroom management such as teacher certification, teacher experience levels, and teachers' classroom management orientations. The analysis of the responses to the pair of questions pertaining to female and male teachers classroom management styles supports Ünal and Ünal's (2012) findings that there were no significant differences between male and female teachers in terms of their classroom management beliefs. The experienced teachers were more likely to be in control in their classroom and chose to believe in maximum teacher responsibility. In contrast, beginning teachers showed that they favoured shared responsibility for classroom control.

### 5.2.2 Teacher-student dynamics

In this section primary school teachers perceptions of gender-based differences are examined in relation to: teachers as role models; teachers' ability to be nurturing, patient and fair to their students; teachers' ability to motivate their students; and teachers' desire to work with children. Positive and negative responses to the paired questions relating to teachers' ability to motivate their students and to be effective role models for their students were very similar. Positive responses for the paired questions relating to teachers ability to be nurturing and patient with their students were very similar. However, there were differences amongst the participants when it came to neutral perceptions of male primary teachers' ability to treat their students fairly. The negative responses for the paired questions in this domain were similar.

The overall positive response to both female and male teachers ability to serve as role models supports one of the most popular solutions suggested to overcome the perceived crisis in boys' education, in particular primary schools in New Zealand. Cushman and Clark (2013) caution that the call for male role models that reflect a hegemonic masculinity in primary education in New Zealand might be misguided. Principals in New Zealand perceived the need for male role models not as a link to better academic outcomes or behavioural management, but rather as a social concern regarding the lack of effective role models in homes. Driessen (2007) argues that by matching according to gender the notion of a role model, we are simply reinforcing and strengthening stereotypes. To be viewed as a role model by pupils, teachers must earn respect and admiration. Carrington et al. (2008) drew further attention to the limitation of the role model hypothesis and found no evidence to support the claim that male teachers enhance the academic performance of boys, and female teachers do not enhance the academic performance of girls either. McGrath and Sinclair (2013) found that while an overwhelming number of students indicated that the gender of the teacher was unimportant, the majority of students also indicated the social benefits of having male teachers in primary schools. The students indicated that they ought to be taught by high quality teachers of both genders. Jones (2006) also found an overwhelming response from male teachers that there was a need for more male role models so as to expose students to a positive male influence.

Positive and neutral responses to the paired questions pertaining to female and male teachers' ability to be nurturing and patient with their students were similar. Whilst there were no negative responses, only a small number of participants were unsure if female or male teachers had the ability to effectively nurture their students. Other than one participant that did not perceive that female teachers treated their students fairly, the overall positive responses indicated that the participants perceived that female teachers treated their students fairly. In contrast, the majority of participants were unsure if the male teachers they had worked with treated their students fairly with only two of the twelve participants indicating that they perceived that the male teachers they had worked with treated their students fairly. There were two negative responses indicating that the participants did not perceive that the male teachers they had worked with treated their students fairly.

These findings do not support Carrington et al.'s (2007) finding where the majority of students believed that their teachers acted in a consistent, fair and even-handed manner. From the children's standpoint the gender of the teacher was largely immaterial. LaHelma (2000) also found that teachers' gender was not that relevant, rather the teachers' level of competence played a greater role. In contrast, Spilt et al.'s (2011) findings do support these findings and indicate that female teachers reported having closer relationships with girls rather than boys, and overall better relationships with their students than male teachers. According to Spilt et al. (2011), the main explanations for these findings were that teachers perceived that boys had poorer self-regulation skills and exhibited more anti-social behaviour than girls. Characteristics like fairness, sense of humour, considerateness and gentleness were mentioned by several girls and boys, and were attributed to their male as well as female teachers. Robinson's (1992) findings indicate that teachers' approach to classroom discipline depends largely on the gender of the students, rather than the gender of the teacher.

Positive and negative responses to the pair of questions relating to teachers' ability to motivate their students were very similar. Although one participant disagreed that female teachers can effectively motivate their students, two participants were unsure if male teachers effectively motivated their students. These findings support Marsh et al.'s (2008) findings that student motivation does not vary as a function of the gender of the teacher. There was little or no evidence to support the assumption that boys fare better academically under male teachers or that girls fare better academically under female teachers. Burusic et al.'s (2012) findings also indicate that students' gender differences in school achievement are independent

of teachers' gender. The school achievement of girls was generally higher than those of boys. In contrast Demetriou et al.'s (2009) findings do not support the findings from this study in terms of female and male teachers' ability to motivate their students. Whilst most of the teachers appeared to communicate effectively with their students, the male teachers in particular often felt trapped by communication barriers. The female teachers generally went to greater lengths to re-engage their students in their learning. The male teachers hoped that by communicating the subject knowledge they would be able to provide sufficient enthusiasm for the subject matter to re-engage the students in their learning.

The overall positive responses to the pair of questions relating to teachers' desire to work with children supports the finding of Rice and Goessling (2005) that despite the low social status, low salary, teaching being perceived as women's work, the potential of false accusation and few male peers some men remain in teaching. Furthermore Colker's (2008) findings suggest that teachers are driven by the desire to make a difference to children's lives and to ensure they get all the opportunities and nurturing they need and deserve. Ponte (2012) found that many teachers were inspired to become teachers by others already in the profession such as family members, former teachers and friends. Cushman (2005) also found the most influential factor in the choice of choosing teaching as a career was the desire to work with children. Cushman (2011) cautions that teachers in New Zealand are often unprepared to deal with the many gender-related issues inherent in the school environment.

### **5.2.3 Teacher collegiality**

In this section primary teachers' perceptions of gender-based differences between the female and male teachers they had worked with are examined in relation to teacher collegiality and teachers' positive attitudes towards the profession. Positive, neutral and negative responses to the paired questions relating to teacher collegiality and attitudes towards the profession were very similar. There were more positive responses to female teachers' positive attitudes towards the profession than those responses for male teachers. Although the positive responses to the paired questions relating to teacher collegiality are similar, one participant was unsure if male teachers were collegial and one disagreed that male teachers were collegial.

The participants responded more favourably towards the female teachers as having positive attitudes towards the profession, whilst male teachers were perceived more negatively. These findings support Bektas and Nalcaci (2012) that the personal values of teachers are of great significance in predicting teachers attitudes towards the teaching profession. Huang's (2001) findings found that female teachers perceived their school environment as more favourable than male teachers. Huang (2001) provides one plausible explanation for the disparity. Men and woman have different communication styles and this may influence the way in which they work.

#### **5.2.4 Additional questions**

In this section primary teachers perceptions of gender-based differences were examined in relation to expected jobs held for males and females within the primary setting, the differences between male and female teachers, and the need for more male primary teachers.

The expected jobs for females and males in the primary setting indicated that some teachers may still perceive gender-based jobs for males and females within the primary setting. This was evident with almost 50% of the participants providing specific jobs for males and females within the primary setting. Less than a third of the participants indicated that there were no jobs based on the gender, but rather based on individual skills. Of interest was the perception that senior and middle management, along with science/technology jobs are only held by males. Music and dance teachers were perceived as female jobs. These findings support Evans' (2006) finding that teachers beliefs still remain relatively conservative in terms of identifying with gender roles in the primary setting.

The participants perceived differences between female and male primary teachers with male teachers receiving more negative comments than female teachers. Only one participant viewed the differences between male and female teachers in terms of needing both male and female role models in schools. These finding support Cushman's (2008) finding that principals see the need for more male role models as a social concern regarding the lack of male role models in homes. But it remains unclear if the participant perceived the need for more male role models as a link to better academic outcomes or as a social concern. Two participants indicated that it is not necessary gender that differentiates female and male teachers, but rather the personality of the individual. This finding further supports Cushman's

(2008) finding that even though principals perceive the need for more male role models in primary schools, of greater concern is the need for effective primary teachers. The participants also perceived male teachers to be more laid back and not good at planning. One participant indicated that male teachers are less likely to have a comprehensive grasp of the curriculum. This may provide some insight into the number of participants that indicated they were unsure if male primary teachers had adequate content knowledge. It may also be due to the low number of male primary teachers making it difficult for the participants to generalise what they knew about male primary teachers.

Twelve of the participants agreed that there is a need for more male primary teachers, but again the comment is made that they would rather have great teachers rather than more male teachers simply based on gender. The participants perceived the need for male and female teachers, each bringing in their unique and different dimensions to the classroom. Students would then perceive male and female teachers as intelligent people valuing education. These findings support Driessen's (2007) argument that by matching according to gender we are simply reinforcing and strengthening stereotypes.

Wood's (2012) surveyed 217 primary teachers in the United States (88% female) to determine if primary teachers perceive gender-based difference between male and female teachers. Data analysis revealed no statistically significant differences between teachers' perceptions of gender-based difference amongst primary school teachers. However, qualitative analysis showed that there were more negative responses to items pertaining to males than females, especially regarding classroom management, motivation and engagement, and nurturing and sensitivity.

This study further supports Wood's (2012) findings that there were no significant differences between primary teachers' perceptions of gender-based difference between the male and female teachers they had worked with. Further this study supports Wood's (2012) findings that male teachers are more laid back and inclined to hold management positions than female teachers. This study does not support Wood's (2012) findings that both the male and female teachers are perceived to have positive attitudes toward the profession, are nurturing toward their students, and treat their students fairly.

### 5.3 Implications for Primary Teachers

Teaching, in particular primary teaching is one of the many occupations in which there is an obvious imbalance of males to females. The reasons underpinning the cry for more male teachers are varied and diverse. According to Francis et al. (2008) most of the reasons given are based on two implied assumptions. The first being that male teachers behave and teach in a different way to female teachers, and secondly by providing boys with male role models, boys will become more engaged with their learning.

Cushman (2007) contests the commonly accepted rationale for more male teachers, suggesting the value of having teachers of both genders is largely social and psychological based upon social learning and sex role theories. The theories of how gender identities are constructed in early childhood, offer us inadequate understanding between social norms and the relationships between individuals because they do not afford the child the freedom to position themselves in multiple ways, some of which will be recognised as feminine and some masculine (MacNaughton & Newman, 2001).

Martino (2008) cautions that by attracting more males into primary schools there is the potential to deconstruct and reconstruct gender stereotypes in education. By recruiting more men there is the likelihood of reinforcing rather than challenging stereotypes. Martino (2008), for example, found that despite gendered rules impacting heavily on male teachers' practices, these teachers tended to support rather than challenge hegemonic masculinities such as toughness, power, risk-taking, and competitiveness in schools.

Little is known about whether teachers perceive gender-based differences between male and female teachers, and whether these perceptions may in any way contribute to the gender imbalance in primary schools, or whether the teacher gender imbalance could contribute to perceived gender-based differences between male and female colleagues. It is necessary to point out that it may be difficult to compare female and male teachers' perceptions when there are so few male primary teachers, and all the participants in this study were females.

When interpreting the results of this study, the complex nature of teachers' beliefs and perceptions and the nature of how beliefs and perceptions influence the learning environment

must be considered. Interpretation of the results can only provide an emerging understanding of the ways in which teachers' beliefs and perceptions influence the learning environment given that the number of participants was limited.

#### **5.4 Limitations and Further Research**

While the research contributed to knowledge of New Zealand primary teachers' perceptions of gender-based differences, any research has its limitations. The results of this research are based on an empirical analysis of a small sample of female teachers in one school in the Auckland region. Given the small sample the generalisability of the findings for primary teachers' perceptions in the context of different classroom settings in New Zealand may be limited. Yet another limitation that emerged was the fact that all the participants were female, hence the perceptions were only those of female primary teachers. Furthermore, the small sample limited the data analysis based on ethnicity.

Several participants did not answer all the questions. It is unclear whether the participants left several questions blank purposefully or accidentally. One participant responded negatively to all the items and it also remains unclear why they did this. If the data sample had been large, this participant would have been removed as they negatively skewed the data analysis.

The presented findings are based on one researcher's interpretation of data from an online survey. Other interpretations are possible and a wider range of data sources may confirm or not confirm the evidence from this study. Consideration needs to be given to the impact of the data gathered using surveys based on what was discussed earlier in Chapter 2 and the steps taken to minimise these factors. Although more time-consuming, interviews may have provided greater understanding into primary teachers' perceived gender-based differences between the male and female teachers they have worked with. It would have allowed the research to probe for understanding and spend more time with each participant. Observations could also have been utilised as an effective instrument to gather data.

Further research is needed in New Zealand to explore how teachers' past experiences and beliefs influence teacher's perceptions of their colleagues. Of importance is analysing how, when and what factors are significant in changing teachers' beliefs. Further research is

required which draws on Māori and Pasifika dimensions to explore the cultural diversity within the New Zealand context of primary schools.

## **5.5 Concluding Thoughts**

The intention of this research was to explore primary teachers perceived gender-based differences between the female and male colleagues they had worked with. The study revealed findings that add to the research knowledge of primary teachers perceptions of gender-based between male and female primary teachers.

Male primary teachers are always in demand in primary schools in New Zealand; but could that be for the wrong reasons? The literature has cast doubt on common assumptions that male teachers are needed as male role models and that their presence can improve the behaviour and academic achievement of boys. The literature suggests that men in the primary teacher workforce are often viewed in terms of their inherent male qualities rather than personal attributes; their ability to be a role model rather than their caring qualities and ability to build relationships. Male role models are useful for children – boys and girls – who might not otherwise have one. That need not mean anything as profound as a stand-in father figure, but simply the experience of being around a capable male figure that they maybe don't experience at home. Gender in itself makes no difference to teaching and learning; but the presence of male primary teachers can counteract deep-rooted stereotypes before they become embedded at an early age. The literature has shown that gender alone can never determine the quality of a teacher. Rather, having a representation of competent male and female teachers who not only illustrate the diversity of masculinity and femininity but come to teaching well equipped to challenge gender stereotypes can only enhance the quality of the teaching profession.

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## Appendix A

### Survey questionnaire

1. The female teachers I have worked with have adequate content knowledge to teach their classes. Please pick one of the answers below.

<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Neither Agree nor Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree
Comments:

2. The male teachers I have worked with have adequate content knowledge to teach their classes. Please pick one of the answers below.

<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Neither Agree nor Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree
Comments:

3. The female teachers I have worked with have effective teaching styles. Please pick one of the answers below.

<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Neither Agree nor Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree
Comments:

4. The male teachers I have worked with have effective teaching styles. Please pick one of the answers below.

<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Neither Agree nor Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree
Comments:

5. The female teachers I have worked with use effective classroom management strategies. Please pick one of the answers below.

<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Neither Agree nor Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree
Comments:

6. The male teachers I have worked with use effective classroom management strategies. Please pick one of the answers below.

<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Neither Agree nor Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree
Comments:

7. The female teachers I have worked with effectively motivate their students and keep them engaged. Please pick one of the answers below.

<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Neither Agree nor Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree
Comments:

8. The male teachers I have worked with effectively motivate their students and keep them engaged. Please pick one of the answers below.

<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Neither Agree nor Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree
Comments:

9. The female teachers I have worked with effectively serve their students as role models. Please pick one of the answers below.

<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Neither Agree nor Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree
Comments:

10. The male teachers I have worked with effectively serve their students as role models. Please pick one of the answers below.

<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Neither Agree nor Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree
Comments:

11. The female teachers I have worked with effectively are nurturing and sensitive to their students. Please pick one of the answers below.

<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Neither Agree nor Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree
Comments:

12. The male teachers I have worked with effectively are nurturing and sensitive to their students. Please pick one of the answers below.

<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Neither Agree nor Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree
Comments:

13. The female teachers I have worked with are patient with their students. Please pick one of the answers below.

<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Neither Agree nor Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree
Comments:

14. The male teachers I have worked with are patient with their students. Please pick one of the answers below.

<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Neither Agree nor Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree
Comments:

15. The female teachers I have worked with treat their students fairly. Please pick one of the answers below.

<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Neither Agree nor Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree
Comments:

16. The male teachers I have worked with treat their students fairly. Please pick one of the answers below.

<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Neither Agree nor Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree
Comments:

17. The female teachers I have worked with have a desire to work with children. Please pick one of the answers below.

<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Neither Agree nor Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree
Comments:

18. The male teachers I have worked with have a desire to work with children. Please pick one of the answers below.

<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Neither Agree nor Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree
Comments:

19. The female teachers I have worked with are collegial. Please pick one of the answers below.

<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Neither Agree nor Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree
Comments:

20. The male teachers I have worked with are collegial. Please pick one of the answers below.

<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Neither Agree nor Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree
Comments:

21. The female teachers I have worked with have generally positive attitudes about their profession. Please pick one of the answers below.

<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Neither Agree nor Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree
Comments:

22. The male teachers I have worked with have generally positive attitudes about their profession. Please pick one of the answers below.

<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree
<input type="checkbox"/> Agree
<input type="checkbox"/> Neither Agree nor Disagree
<input type="checkbox"/> Disagree
<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree
Comments:

23. What, if any, are expected jobs for females within a primary setting (classroom teachers, administrators, physical education teachers, office staff, etc)? Please type your answer in the space below.

--

24. What, if any, are expected jobs for males within a primary setting (classroom teachers, administrators, physical education teachers, office staff, etc)? Please type your answer in the space below.

--

25. What differences, if any, are there between female and male primary teachers? Please type your answer in the space below.

--

26. Is there a need for more male primary teachers? Why or why not? Please type your answer in the space below.

--

27. Are there any additional comments you wish to make pertaining to this study? Please type your answer in the space below.

Comments:
-----------

28. What is your gender? Please pick one of the answers below.

<input type="checkbox"/> Female
<input type="checkbox"/> Male

29. What is your ethnicity? Please pick one of the answers below and add your comments.

<input type="checkbox"/> European <input type="checkbox"/> Māori <input type="checkbox"/> Pacific Peoples <input type="checkbox"/> Asian <input type="checkbox"/> Middle Easter/ Latin America/African <input type="checkbox"/> Other Ethnicity
Comments:

30. What is your age? Please pick one of the answers below.

<input type="checkbox"/> 22 - 27 <input type="checkbox"/> 28 - 32 <input type="checkbox"/> 33 - 38 <input type="checkbox"/> 39 - 44 <input type="checkbox"/> 45 - older
---

31. How many years have you been teaching in primary education? Please pick one of the answers below.

<input type="checkbox"/> 0 - 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 - 8 <input type="checkbox"/> 9 - 12 <input type="checkbox"/> 13 or more
--

32. What year level do you currently teacher? Please pick the relevant answers below.

<input type="checkbox"/> Year 1 <input type="checkbox"/> Year 2 <input type="checkbox"/> Year 3 <input type="checkbox"/> Year 4 <input type="checkbox"/> Year 5 <input type="checkbox"/> Year 6
--

33. What is the highest level of education you have completed? Please pick one of the answers below and add your comments.

<input type="checkbox"/> Bachelor's Degree <input type="checkbox"/> Specialist's Degree <input type="checkbox"/> Master's Degree <input type="checkbox"/> Doctoral Degree <input type="checkbox"/> Other: Please explain
Comments:

34. What is your school's decile rating? Please pick one of the answers below.

<input type="checkbox"/> One <input type="checkbox"/> Two <input type="checkbox"/> Three <input type="checkbox"/> Four <input type="checkbox"/> Five <input type="checkbox"/> Six <input type="checkbox"/> Seven <input type="checkbox"/> Eight <input type="checkbox"/> Nine <input type="checkbox"/> Ten
---

35. How many female teachers are there currently at your school? Please pick one of the answers below.

<input type="checkbox"/> 0 - 10 <input type="checkbox"/> 11 - 20 <input type="checkbox"/> 21 - 30 <input type="checkbox"/> 31 - 40 <input type="checkbox"/> 41 - 50
---

36. How many male teachers are there currently at your school? Please pick one of the answers below.

- 0 - 10
- 11 - 20
- 21 - 30
- 31 - 40
- 41 - 50

37. What is the greatest number of male primary teachers that have been employed at your school at one time? Please use the blank space below to type in your answer.

## Appendix B

### Letter of Request: Principals

12 February 2014

Dear Principal

My name is Ingrid Booth and I am conducting a thesis project toward my Masters degree at Massey University. I wish to invite your school to assist with a research project on teacher perceptions among primary school teachers in New Zealand. This project involves an online survey in which primary school teachers are asked about their experience of working with primary school teachers in New Zealand.

The online survey will take approximately 10 minutes. No identifying information, such as names, will be collected. Responses will be kept confidential, stored securely, and accessible only to the researcher and her supervisors. The thesis will not identify any individual or school. All information will be destroyed at the completion of the project in December 2014, as required by the ethics approval procedure. A full report of the project will be contained in my thesis available through the Massey University library. A summary report will be made available by emailing me at the address below.

I am seeking your willingness to send an electronic link, via email, to teachers at your school. I will send an email out on the 26 February 2014 to the person nominated by you for distribution to all the primary school teachers (Year 0 - Year 6) at your school. The teachers will be asked to complete the online survey in their own time between the 3 March 2014 and the 20 March 2014. Approximately 100 teachers in East and South Auckland will be surveyed. I believe teachers will find the survey interesting and it could help them reflect on their perceptions of primary school teachers.

If you would prefer your school not to participate, it would be appreciated if you could contact via email so that I can approach another school. Please feel free to contact me if you wish to discuss any aspects of the study. Thank you very much for considering this request.

Researcher: Ingrid Booth  
Email: booth.ingrid@gmail.com  
Phone: (09) 5364236

Supervisor: Roberta Hunter  
Email: R.Hunter@massey.ac.nz  
Phone: (09) 414 0800, ext. 41480

Yours Sincerely  
Ingrid Booth

## Appendix C

### Letter of Request: Teachers

26 Feb 2014

Dear Teacher

My name is Ingrid Booth and I am conducting a thesis project toward my Masters degree at Massey University. This project involves an online survey in which primary school teachers are asked about their experience of working with primary school teachers in New Zealand. The online survey will take approximately 10 minutes. No identifying information, such as names, will be collected.

Responses will be kept confidential, stored securely, and accessible only to the researcher and her supervisors. The thesis will not identify any individual or school. All information will be destroyed at the completion of the project in December 2014, as required by the ethics approval procedure. A full report of the project will be contained in my thesis available through the Massey University library. A summary report will be made available by emailing me at the address below.

Your participation is voluntary. You may choose not to participate or to withdraw at any time. If you decide to participate you have the right to decline to answer any particular question, provide information on the understanding that your name or identifying information will not be used, and be given access to a summary of the research findings on conclusion.

The survey can only be accessed between the 03 March 2014 and the 28 March 2014. Please click on the link below to access the online survey. The password (something) is required to be entered so as to participate in this survey <http://surveymonkey.com/teacher-survey>

Please feel free to contact me if you wish to discuss any aspects of the study. Thank you very much for participating in this survey.

Researcher: Ingrid Booth  
Email: [booth.ingrid@gmail.com](mailto:booth.ingrid@gmail.com)  
Phone: (09) 5364236

Supervisor: Roberta Hunter  
Email: [R.Hunter@massey.ac.nz](mailto:R.Hunter@massey.ac.nz)  
Phone: (09) 414 0800, ext. 41480

Yours Sincerely  
Ingrid Booth