Teachers' perspectives of gender differences in the social behaviours of preschool children

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Abstract

The present research study explored early childhood teachers' perspectives about social behaviours and gender in young children, in particular the way in which children's gender related to teachers' reports of the prevalence of, perspectives about, and strategies used in response to children's social behaviours. The specific social behaviours examined within this study were prosocial behaviours, social leadership, social dominance, and aggressive behaviours. This study was designed within an interpretivist and pragmatic epistemology, and used a mixed methods online survey to investigate teachers' perspectives. The online survey was comprised of four sections: demographics; defining social behaviours and their traits; social behaviour scenarios; and gender and *Te Whāriki*. To allow investigation of differential responses related to gender, two versions of the survey were created where the gender of the child portrayed in the social behaviour scenarios differed across survey versions. The gendered scenarios were used to gather data on whether there was a difference in teachers' perspectives about and the teaching strategies used for children's social behaviours based on the gender of the children involved. The majority of the responses to the survey indicated that the teachers identified there to be little difference in the display of social behaviours in young children based on children's gender. However, the two social behaviours which were reported by the teachers as having the most differences based on gender were social leadership and aggression. The teachers' strategies identified in the findings showed that there was some difference in teaching strategies used based on the children's gender, specifically in the areas of social dominance and aggression. The findings provide a snapshot of the way in which teachers define and interpret social behaviours, and suggest that gender plays a limited, but still potentially significant role in the teaching practices they chose to adopt in a variety of scenarios. The teacher's acknowledged the importance of ensuring gender equity in their practices, but findings suggest that further support may be needed to aid in the delivery of equitable practices.

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1. Overview

This research study explored teachers' perspectives about social behaviours and gender in preschool children. The social behaviours examined were prosocial behaviours, social leadership, social dominance, and aggressive behaviours. The study investigated how children's gender related to teachers' reports of the prevalence of these social behaviours in boys or girls; the strategies that teacher's adopted in response to social behaviours in a preschool setting; and how children's gender influenced the perspectives about social behaviours and the selection of teaching strategies to respond to different social behaviours. The study was conducted through a mixed methods online survey which investigated the perspectives of 24 teachers from three Kindergarten Associations across the central North Island of New Zealand. Guiding this study was an interpretivist paradigm, which seeks to understand individuals' interpretations of the social world around them (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). Also guiding this study was a pragmatic paradigm, which emphasises the research problem and utilises many different approaches to collecting data to best understand the research problem or phenomenon under investigation (Creswell, 2014). This chapter outlines the background and rationale for the present study, in particular the lack of previous research in the intersection of social behaviours and gender differences in young children. The research aims that guided the study, definitions of key terms, and a summary of the chapters of this thesis are also included.

1.2. Background for the Study

This research study sits within the broader research area of social competence in young children. In New Zealand, there have been two longitudinal studies which have looked at the lives of young children growing up in New Zealand and factors that affect positive social competence. The "Dunedin Multidisciplinary Health and Development Study" (i.e., the Dunedin Study; University of Otago, 2017) and the "Christchurch Health and Development Study" (University of Otago, 2017a), which have followed individuals

across their lifespan since 1972 and 1977 respectively, investigated a range of health, social, emotional, and physical factors influencing children. These longitudinal studies have also studied the effects that these factors have on children as they move into adulthood. From the Dunedin Study, findings have identified that social and academic success in adulthood have connections with social engagement, positive coping skills, and prosocial values that are gained in childhood (Olsson, McGee, Nada-Raja & Williams, 2012).

Previous research has found that a key aspect to social and academic success in later childhood and adulthood is the positive development of social competence in early childhood (White, Connelly, Thompson & Wilson, 2013). Social competence is a broad construct, which encapsulates a range of constructs which young children use to navigate social situations, including social, emotional, behavioural, and cognitive competencies and skills. An important feature in the positive development of social competence in early childhood is how children express social behaviours, including prosocial behaviours, social leadership, social dominance, and aggressive behaviours.

There are many behaviours that can be classified as social behaviours, however, for the purposes of this study 'social behaviours' will refer to prosocial behaviours, social leadership, social dominance, and aggressive behaviours. Extensive research has been conducted on these social behaviours, particularly how the characteristics of these behaviours are displayed (Carter & Ellis, 2016; Hawley, 2003; Hay & Cook, 2007; Murray-Close & Ostrov, 2009; Shin, Recchia, Lee, Lee & Mullarkey, 2004). However, the majority of research into these social behaviours has been conducted with primary school aged children rather than with children in early childhood.

Gender has been an area of educational research since the 1960's, although, until recently, the focus has mainly been gender role stereotypes. Gender can be described as "the social division of femininity and masculinity" (Scott & Marshall, 2015, p. 91). The early studies on gender identified the construct as binary, where an individuals' gender

was seen as only male or female, and was related to biological sex. More recent research has discovered that gender can be thought to be on a spectrum, rather than binary (Browne, 2004), where gender is highly individual, and children develop their own gender identities through life experiences and unique desires, as well as through interactions with other children, teachers, and parents. Due to teachers having an influence on young children's gender identity development, it is imperative that gender bias is not reflected through their practices with young children. Teachers should be developing practices that ensure equitable opportunities for all children regardless of the child's gender identity (Aina & Cameron, 2011).

Te Whāriki is the early childhood curriculum framework that underpins the curriculum and teaching practice for every licensed early childhood service in New Zealand. The aspiration for all children, as expressed in *Te Whāriki,* is that they become competent and confident learners, who are secure in their sense of belonging and know their contribution to society is valued (Ministry of Education, 2017). *Te Whāriki* is a framework supported by four curriculum principles (empowerment, holistic development, family and community, and relationships) interwoven with five curriculum strands (well-being, belonging, contribution, communication, and exploration), which early childhood services use to create a responsive curriculum for the children and families in their setting. As *Te Whāriki* is a curriculum framework, it is "not prescriptive, and does not tell teachers 'what to teach'; rather, it focuses on supporting learning dispositions and broad competences" (ECE Taskforce, 2011, p. 114). The Education Review Office (ERO) (2016) found that due to *Te Whāriki*'s broad framework, early childhood services in New Zealand utilise *Te Whāriki* in varying ways. ERO found that around 10 percent of services were not using *Te Whāriki* effectively in their practice and the teachers did not have adequate knowledge and understanding of the curriculum framework, which they concluded would lead to poor outcomes for the children in these services (ERO, 2016, p. 8). An update of *Te Whāriki* has recently been released with some substantive changes, and for this reason throughout the thesis both version of *Te Whāriki* will be

referred to (Ministry of Education, 1996, 2017) as appropriate, and any differences will be highlighted.

1.3. Rationale for the Study

According to Ministry of Education statistics, 96.2% of four-year-old children attend some form of early childhood education service in New Zealand (Ministry of Education, 2016). The high percentage of children participating in early childhood, combined with the findings by ERO (2016) regarding early childhood services utilisation of *Te Whāriki*, and evidence from longitudinal studies on the importance of early experiences on the positive development of social competence for future success in children, highlights the importance of determining how teachers understand social behaviours in relation to children's gender, and how their teaching practices are influenced by these understandings. As there is so little research in the area that intersects social behaviours, gender, and ECE teaching practices in New Zealand, it is important to investigate teachers' perspectives and teaching practices related to the social behaviours (prosocial behaviours, social leadership, social dominance, and aggression behaviours). *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 2017) currently has limited guidelines as to how teachers in New Zealand should address gender in their environments, so this research study is important in building a body of work to help teachers support gender equity.

A further reason for choosing this research topic came from personal curiosity. As a mother of two young children (a girl and a boy), I noticed that they exhibited behaviours differently. My oldest was identified by her early childhood teachers as having great leadership skills, and I wondered if the teachers also viewed these traits as leadership skills in a child of the opposite gender or if they might alternatively be viewed as being bossy and controlling. With an undergraduate degree in Educational Psychology, I was curious to know whether teachers interpreted any differences between genders, as well as wanting to know if teachers' strategies reflected these differences.

1.4. Research Aims

The purpose of the present research study was to gain an understanding of teachers' perspectives of social behaviours in preschool children, and how children's gender related to teachers reports of the prevalence of, perspectives about, and the strategies used in response to children's social behaviours. The specific social behaviours examined in the context of the present study included prosocial behaviours, social leadership, social dominance, and aggressive behaviours. This research seeks to add to the wider understanding of social behaviours and gender in early childhood, as well as larger issues of gender equity in New Zealand. The specific research aims for this study were the following:

- To examine teachers' understandings of the key social behaviours in early childhood.
- To examine whether teachers' understandings of the social behaviours differ based on child gender.
- To examine teachers' strategies for responding to these behaviours when exhibited by preschool children.
- To examine how teachers' strategies may differ based on the gender of the child.

1.5. Introduction to Key Terms

This section provides a description of the key terms used throughout this research study, including an overview of the social behaviours examined in the study, as well as gender and gender equity. The definitions provided reflect the common definitions that appear in the literature.

Social Competence. Social competence is a broad construct, which consists of a range of social, emotional, behavioural and cognitive competencies and skills. It has been described in the literature as a child knowing what is acceptable and expected of them in a social situation (Ladd, 1999), while others (Lillvist, Sandberg, Bjork-Akesson & Granlund, 2009) suggest that social competence is a developmental construct which is continually developing as the child gets older.

Social Behaviours. A key component in the development of social competence is the display of social behaviours in young children. For this study, the following social behaviours have been investigated: prosocial behaviours; social leadership; social dominance; and aggressive behaviours. These social behaviours are described below.

Prosocial Behaviours. Prosocial behaviours have been defined as "voluntary behaviours intended to benefit another" (Eisenberg, Fabes & Spinrad, 2006, p. 646). Some examples of prosocial behaviours are empathy, friendliness, cooperation, and helping another person.

Social Leadership. Social leadership has been defined as the ability to exert influence over others in a social situation (Shin et al., 2004). An example of a social leadership characteristic in young children is that they are able to use explicit directing behaviours to influence what other children do with their play, such as assigning roles to others during dramatic play.

Social Dominance. Social dominance has been defined as the urge to control resources or situations within a social group (Roseth, Pellegrini, Bohn, Van Ryzin & Vance, 2007). Social dominance differs from social leadership in the methods used to influence their peers. For example, social dominance uses coercive methods of control, whereas social leadership uses prosocial methods.

Aggressive Behaviours. Aggressive behaviours have been defined in the literature as "behaviours that are intended to hurt, harm, or injure another person" (Murray-Close & Ostrov, 2009, p. 828). However, in early childhood it is difficult to determine the intent of aggression. For this study, both physical and relational aggression was investigated.

Gender. For the purposes of this study, the term 'gender' is used to refer to whether young children are identified as boys or girls, as per the traditional societal

understanding of gender. It is noted that this is a binary approach to understanding gender, and that gender can also be viewed as a spectrum where gender identity is individualised and is produced through life experiences, desires, and interactions with others (Browne, 2004).

Gender Equity. Equity can be described as treating individuals fairly based on their individual differences, rather than treating every individual the same (Browne, 2004). Therefore, gender equity approaches are based on providing opportunities for success for both boys and girls, and not limiting these opportunities based on their gender (Blaise & Taylor, 2012). Another aspect of gender equity approaches is limiting the continuation of gender stereotypes that are typically held by society (Browne, 2004).

Gender Stereotypes. Gender stereotypes are the beliefs that people hold regarding exhibiting behaviour that is typical of a man or a woman (Archer & Lloyd, 2002). Between the ages of three and five years old, children begin to understand what it means to be a boy or a girl. It is around this age that children also develop gender stereotypes that they use to navigate their understanding of gender in themselves and others (Aina & Cameron, 2011).

Gendered Response or Gendered Difference. The terms 'gendered response' or 'gendered difference' are used throughout this study to refer to occasions when individual participants' reported that different social behaviours were typically seen more or less in boys or girls. As will be further explained in the results the majority of participants reported behaviours were seen equally, thus the terms are used solely for the purposes of describing participant response patterns when a difference between boys and girls was reported by at least some of the respondents.

Behaviour Traits. For the purposes of this study, the term 'behaviour traits' refers to characteristics of each social behaviour. These characteristics were identified through

the literature search, as well as ideas from the piloting of the survey. A full list of behaviour traits is available in Table 3.3 (p. 48).

Behaviour Classifications. For this study, the behaviour classifications are the broad labels identified during data analysis. These behaviour classifications encompass many of the initial codes that were assigned during the analysis of the responses to the qualitative questions. These behaviour classifications were identified through the literature, and a full list of behaviour classifications for each social behaviour and their definitions are provided in Appendix F.

Early Childhood Education (ECE). ECE consists of a broad range of early childhood services in New Zealand, with a range of philosophies underpinning their practice that have emerged due to changing social contexts, educational aims, and parental values (Ministry of Education, 1996, 2017). ECE in New Zealand encompasses state and community-based kindergartens, parent-led playcentres, and early childhood education and care services (centre-based, home-based, and hospital-based).

Teacher. Throughout this study, the term 'teacher' has been used to describe the group of participants who completed the study. The teachers were all qualified (having completed a recognised initial teacher education programme) and registered with the Education Council (https://educationcouncil.org.nz/), and were employed by a kindergarten association in New Zealand.

1.6. Summary of Chapters

Chapter Two provides a review of current literature in the areas of social competence and gender. Research relevant to the social behaviours and teachers' perspectives are discussed, as well as research related to the intersection of these social behaviours and gender. The review of literature identifies the need to examine further the intersection between gender and social behaviours in preschool children in the New Zealand context,

as there is a gap in the research in this area. The research questions are also developed from the literature review, and are outlined at the end of the chapter.

Chapter Three examines the selection of the mixed methods approach in this research study, which utilised an online survey comprising of a mix of qualitative and quantitative questions. Methods of recruiting participants and the development of the survey are discussed, along with an explanation of ethical considerations and methods of analysing the data collected.

The findings associated with each section of the survey are presented in Chapter Four. This chapter is organised by findings from the sections which were the same across survey versions first, followed by the findings from the sections which differed by survey version. A description of the participants is included for both sections, with key themes and important trends from the findings following this description.

Chapter Five discusses the significance of the findings in relation to the specific research questions of this study. The themes which emerged in Chapter Four are examined in this chapter in comparison to relevant existing literature. Following this, strengths and limitations are discussed, along with implications for practice and future research. This is followed by a conclusion that summarises the main findings from the research study and comments on their significance.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

The present study focused on understanding teachers' perspectives of social behaviours in preschool children, and whether children's gender is associated with teachers' understanding of, and responses to, specific social behaviours. In doing so, the study examined teacher's reports of the prevalence of social behaviours in boys and girls in early childhood and identified teaching strategies adopted by teacher's in response to specific social behaviours of preschool children. This chapter is organised in five main sections. The first section is an overview of the aims of the study, while in the second section, the search strategy used to locate research using Massey University Library article databases is described. In the third section, an overview of social competence in early childhood is explored. The third section is broken down into six sub-sections, including: the importance of social competence in early childhood; prosocial behaviours; social leadership; social dominance; aggressive behaviours; and teachers' perspectives of social behaviours. In the fourth section of this chapter, an overview of gender is explored, including how social behaviours have been previously researched in combination with child gender. The final subsection examined in the fourth section focuses on research surrounding how teachers' perspectives of gender are developed. In the fifth section, a summary of previous findings are presented, a justification for this study is introduced and the research questions for this study are discussed.

2.2. Research Aims

The aims of the present research study sought to understand teachers' perspectives of social behaviours in preschool children, and how children's gender related to teachers reports of the prevalence of, perspectives about, and the strategies used in response to children's social behaviours. This research seeks to add to the wider understanding of social behaviours and gender in early childhood, as well as larger issues of gender equity in New Zealand. The specific research aims for this study were the following:

- To examine teachers' understandings of the key social behaviours in early childhood
- To examine whether teachers' understandings of the social behaviours differ based on child gender
- To examine teachers' strategies for responding to these behaviours when exhibited by preschool children
- To examine how teachers' strategies may differ based on the gender of the child

2.3. Search Strategy

The search strategy for this literature review used several sequences of search terms in a range of databases available through the Massey University Library. To begin the literature search, the following search terms were used: social competence, early childhood, peer relationships, preschool children. Following from this search, the following search terms were used in conjunction with the earlier terms: social dominance, prosocial, aggression, social leadership, social behaviours, exclusion, relational or physical aggression, and conflict/conflict resolution. An additional search term of teacher perspectives was added afterwards and then gender and gender equity was searched along with all the earlier behaviour search terms. Article databases used were ERIC, Education Source, A+ Education, as well as the Massey University Library Discover, which searched article databases as well as the entire library catalogue. No date limit was utilised to gain a range of publications in this area of research. The literature identified from the searches was examined to determine the relevance to this research. Alternative articles and books were then identified from the reference lists of core articles.

2.4. Social Competence

Social behaviours are a key element in the development of social competence in early childhood. Social competence is a broad construct that is made up of a range of social, emotional, cognitive and behavioural skills. Lillvist et al. (2009) suggested that social competence is a developmental construct, which develops and takes on different forms

as the child gets older, with expectations shifting according to the age of the child. Ladd (1999) described social competence as a child knowing what is acceptable and expected of them in a social interaction; for example, a child might need to listen and take turns with others in a conversation, or a child might need to greet others and ask questions to start a conversation. Thus, being able to identify what skills are needed and use them in appropriate ways for the context is the main goal of social competence.

Social competence can be further separated into two categories: intrapersonal skills and interpersonal relations. Intrapersonal skills can include intrinsic qualities such as self-esteem, empathy, autonomy, participation/engagement, and problem solving, while interpersonal relations can include extrinsic qualities such as interactions with peers, being a peer group leader, and communication (Lillvist et al., 2009). The key social competence skills for young children, as described by Denham et al. (2012), are: being able to express and regulation emotions, interaction with peers in prosocial and non-aggressive ways, and to become involved in classroom activities and with materials constructively. Additionally, White et al. (2013) suggested that this skill set also includes that a child needs to be able to behave in ways that conform to the expected norms of the education setting.

The following section on social competence examines the key topics for this study, including: the importance of the development of social competence in early childhood; prosocial behaviours; social leadership; social dominance; aggressive behaviours, including physical and relational aggression; and teachers' perspectives on these social behaviours.

2.4.1. Importance of Social Competence.

The development of social competence in early childhood is a key factor in later academic and social success (White et al., 2013), as previous research has suggested that there is a link between the positive development of social competence in early childhood and future academic and social success in a child's life (Richardson, Myran &

Tonelson, 2009). While further research has also demonstrated that failure to develop these key social skills in early childhood may lead the child into a cycle of failures both academically and socially in their future schooling and social lives (Denham et al., 2012). White et al. (2013) argued that identifying social and behavioural difficulties during early childhood is essential to provide intervention to decrease the potential of failure for these children during their school years and into adulthood.

2.4.2. Prosocial Behaviours

Prosocial behaviours are an important set of social skills that children learn during early childhood. They are "voluntary behaviours intended to benefit another" (Eisenberg et al., 2006, p. 646). Hay and Cook (2007) further stated that prosocial behaviours may be divided into three categories: feeling for another, such as friendliness, affection, and concern; working with another, such as being cooperative, sharing resources, and helping another; and ministering to another, such as nurturing, comforting another, and responding to another person's wishes. It is understood that prosocial behaviours are social acts directed towards others without an expectation of reciprocation, such as kindness, caring, comforting others, helping, sharing, and cooperating (Carter & Ellis, 2016).

As discussed previously, the importance of young children developing key social competence skills and behaviours in early childhood are essential as they lead to positive social and academic achievement later in life. Doctoroff, Greer and Arnold (2006) expanded on this concept in their study of the relationship between prosocial skills and emergent literacy in 123 preschool children in the United States of America. The author's findings suggested that aggressive behaviours towards peers or teachers were related with poor emergent literacy skills, whereas prosocial behaviours were linked with age appropriate emergent literacy skills (National Early Literacy Panel, 2008). Furthermore, an analysis of gender differences found that boys with emergent literacy problems also had problems with aggression and few prosocial interactions but found no correlation for girls. Doctoroff et al (2006) suggested that this finding is consistent

with previous research in this area which states that boys' disruptive behaviours and difficulties with peers are linked with learning disabilities. Of note while there was a link between prosocial behaviours and emergent literacy skills; a gendered link between prosocial behaviours and emergent literacy was not directly established.

Prosocial behaviours help children form, navigate, and maintain peer relationships. As shown in the research described, prosocial behaviours have been identified as being transformative for children's success. The following section will investigate social leadership, which has been identified in literature as a prosocial method to influence peers in a social setting.

2.4.3. Social Leadership

During the early childhood years, peers can both influence others or become influenced by others (Shin et al., 2004), which is achieved by the social leadership of young children. Shin et al. (2004) described that young leaders give directions and commands to others, with whom they appear to have some influence over, and receive cooperation and submission from. However, Trawick-Smith (1988) stressed the importance of understanding that effective leaders may show either leading or following behaviours, depending upon the situation. Trawick-Smith (1988) further explored the idea that leadership in young children can be expressed in two ways: by using a more prosocial and diplomatic leadership style, or by using methods consistent with social dominance. The first of these looked at is the notion of prosocial/diplomatic leadership, with social dominance examined in the following section.

Examining the notion of different social leadership styles, Shin et al. (2004) investigated characteristics of leadership in young children, and found that there are several common characteristics that young leaders have despite which leadership style they undertake. These characteristics are: "they are often one of the oldest children in the classroom; showed a high level of verbal, communicative abilities; had a high level of attendance in the classroom; and had a greater amount of group-care experience" (Shin et al., 2004,

p. 306). From the observations of six young leaders from a University-affiliated early childhood centre in New York, NY, Shin et al. (2004) identified that, along with the common characteristics described above, other emerging characteristics were evident among most of the young leaders. These other characteristics included a dynamic, outgoing and charismatic personality, playfulness, creativity and humour, which attracted peers to them, and caused them to stand out in a group. Leadership characteristics were also examined in Arnott's (2013) study in two preschools in Scotland, where the author claimed that previous research on leadership in early childhood explores how leadership styles turn children into figures of authority and allows them to mediate their situations on their own, as well as to help eliminate power struggles which may occur in peer relationships. The characteristics of leaders that emerged in Arnott's (2013) study are described as: using explicit directing behaviours; being viewed by peers as a person of authority; peers look at them for direction or approval; they have an autonomous decision-making ability; they direct the play theme; they direct other children in the group; they appeared to be an expert or had superior knowledge of the activity (Arnott, 2013).

Social leadership has been described in the research as being expressed in two primary ways: in a prosocial and diplomatic way, or in a socially dominant way. This section addressed the prosocial and diplomatic way. Key findings from research examining this side of leadership indicates that children who display prosocial leadership skills are described as charismatic, outgoing and playful that attracted other children to them, have knowledge of activities, good at making decisions, and were viewed as a person of authority by peers and teachers. For the purposes of this study, social leadership will refer specifically to prosocial and diplomatic social leadership. The next section will look at social dominance and how young children can influence their peers using dominant methods.

2.4.4. Social Dominance

Social dominance can be defined as an urge to control resources and situations within a social group (Roseth et al., 2007). Studies of social dominance in children were originally derived from studies by animal behaviourists in which the dominant hierarchies of animals gave rise to the resource-centred view of social dominance, whereby obtaining access to resources is the key motive for control of a social situation between peers (Hawley, 1999). Early studies on dominance in children were seen in developmental research as early as 1927 (Buhler, 1927, as cited in Hawley, 1999); however, studies on the relationships between peers and the methods used to gain control of the peer group started to gain more attention from the 1970s (Ladd, 1999). Emerging research suggests that similar to findings from animal studies, children also organise peer groups hierarchically.

As social dominance is characterised by the need to control resources and situations in a peer group, the dominant individual will generally be a central and influential member of the group. Hawley (2003) suggests that there are various strategies to gaining control of the situation and the resources, including coercive strategies that are directive and aversive (for example, threatening the other child, or just taking the resource that they want). Some researchers (Vaughn & Santos, 2007) have suggested that socially dominant children require a sophisticated balance between aversive and affiliative strategies, while other researchers (Hawley, 1999) believe that affiliative strategies of control do not emerge until the age of four to five years old.

Charafeddine et al. (2015) examined cues of dominance in young children, and whether children could make sense of dominant relationships. They argue that “the assessment of dominance requires the ability to detect who is dominant and who is subordinate, to interpret situations in which dominance is established, and to anticipate the outcomes of interactions between dominant and subordinate individuals” (p. 588). They propose five different cues of dominant behaviour, including: decision power, age, resource control, physical superiority, and agonistic behaviour. The first dominance cue, *decision*

power, is the ability to issue commands that lead to compliance; while the second cue *age*, is when an older child exerts control over a younger child. *Resource control* is third dominance cue, where a child has control over toys or other resources that children want to play with; while *physical superiority* is when the biggest child exerts control over a smaller child. Finally, there's *agonistic behaviour*, which are behaviours such as pushing another child (Charafeddine et al., 2015).

In summary, social dominance is a method of controlling a social situation by gaining control of resources in the early childhood environment. The main dominance strategy used by children is a coercive strategy where the children are directive and aversive. A prosocial, affiliative strategy can also be used, but it is seen more in children representing social leadership skills. Even though dominance behaviour can include physical attributes, aggression and social dominance are different constructs. While dominance focuses on resource control and control of situations, aggression is behaviour that is intending to hurt, harm or injure another person. The next section examines aggressive behaviours, which include physical and relational aggression.

2.4.5. Aggressive Behaviours

Aggressive behaviour is defined as "behaviours that are intended to hurt, harm, or injure another person" (Murray-Close & Ostrov, 2009, p. 828). In young children, the issue of intent can be difficult to determine. Young children might engage in behaviours that cause harm to others but might not have the intent to harm. For example, a child wants a toy that another child has, and instead of using their words to ask for the toy, the child hits the child and rips a toy from his or her hands. Murray-Close and Ostrov (2009) examined the different forms and functions of aggression in early childhood in their study of 101 preschool children from a Northeastern city in the USA. Theses authors suggest that are two main forms of aggression: physical and relational. Physical aggression is defined as behaviours that hurt another person using physical means, such as kicking, punching, and pushing, while relational aggression is defined as behaviours that hurt another person through relationships, feelings of not being accepted, and

group exclusion (Murray-Close & Ostrov, 2009). Murray-Close and Ostrov also identify two functions of aggression: proactive and reactive. Proactive aggression is planned and goal-oriented, whereas reactive aggression is usually in retaliation from provocation or frustration.

Even though there are four main forms and functions of aggression, for the purpose of this study, aggression relates to physical and relational aggression. As the behaviours mentioned above are social in nature, one way of obtaining data regarding these behaviours is to examine teachers' perspectives of young children's behaviours. The following section will consider previous research on teachers' perspectives on behaviour in early childhood.

2.4.6. Teacher Perspectives

Statistics indicate that 96.2% of four-year-old children will attend some form of early childhood services before they start school (Ministry of Education, 2016). Given increasing participation rates, and the importance of early experiences in relation to social and emotional competence, it is pertinent to gather data related to early childhood teachers' perspectives of children's social behaviours. Although teachers' perspectives can be a 'messy' concept, Pajares (1992) argued that teacher beliefs can be the most important construct in educational research. For the purposes of this study, the construct of teacher perspectives was drawn from the idea presented by Clark and Peterson (1986, as cited in Pajares, 1992) who defined perspectives as "a reflective, socially defined interpretation of experience that serves as a basis for subsequent action… a combination of beliefs, intentions, interpretations, and behaviour that interact continually" (p. 314). By examining teachers' perspectives there is the opportunity to gain insight into teacher expectations and actions as well as learn about the behaviours that children engage in.

How teachers respond to a situation in early childhood will be based on the internal definitions and attributions that individual teachers have for the social behaviours

exhibited. Mullarkey, Recchia, Lee, Shin and Lee (2005) investigated this difference in understanding and suggest that teachers may struggle to define the boundaries of leadership qualities in early childhood children in the USA. These authors investigated how early childhood teachers conceptualise leadership in young children, and how they consciously and unconsciously encouraged or discouraged leadership in their educational setting. When the teachers were asked about their thoughts on leadership in young children, phrases were used that cast the traits of social leadership in a positive light, such as the children are confident, independent and empowered (Mullarkey et al., 2005). The teachers were then asked to share their ideas about specific young leaders in their classroom and these children's leadership traits. The responses given to this section shifted from the consistently positive thoughts on leadership and leadership traits that were identified when discussing social leadership in theory, towards areas of the young leaders' behaviours that they were concerned with. For example, one of the teachers gave the following description of a young leader's behaviour in their setting: "She's able to structure her own play, and yet, she has a lot of work to do with accommodating other children" (Mullarkey et al., 2005, p. 126). Furthermore, the positive and idealised traits of social leadership that the teachers had identified earlier did not emerge in all the children identified as young leaders. Mullarkey et al. (2005) indicate that this is due to a disconnect between teachers' theoretical beliefs and the realities of how children display social behaviours.

Teacher perspectives play an important role in understanding young children's behaviour in early childhood, because teachers would have a greater understanding of the child and their typical behaviour, than a researcher would have going into a centre to do observations of children. However, teachers' perspectives can be a 'messy' construct to use due to teachers differing understanding of key behaviours.

2.4.7. Summary

In summary, developing social competence in early childhood is a key factor in the overall social development of a young child. This can be seen by previous research that

suggested positive development of social competence in early childhood leads to positive social and academic achievement in later schooling (White et al., 2013). A key aspect in the development of social competence is how social behaviours are exhibited such as prosocial behaviour, social leadership, social dominance, and aggressive behaviour. Prosocial behaviours are voluntary behaviours intended to benefit another, such as empathy, helping another, sharing, and cooperation. By using these prosocial behaviours, young children can form, navigate and maintain peer relationships. Social leadership behaviours are those that give direction and command to others from children who appear to have some influence, such as telling another child what their role in a game will be. Social dominance behaviours are those that gain control of resources and situations in a peer group by use of coercive methods, such as just taking the toy or resource they want from another child. Social leadership uses prosocial, cooperative methods to get children to do what they say, while social dominance uses coercive, affiliative methods to get what they want. Lastly, aggressive behaviours are those that are intended to hurt, harm or injure another. Aggressive behaviours may also be separated into physical, such as hitting or pushing, or relational aggression, such as excluding another child from the play. However, the issue of intent can be hard to determine in early childhood, which can add to the complexity of teachers' responses. One method of gathering data that examines the social behaviours above is by analysing teachers' perspectives of these behaviours exhibited in children. Pajares (1992) contends that teachers' perspectives are a messy construct unless the construct of what is being investigated is clearly defined.

In the following sections, the idea of gender is introduced, including theories on how gender is developed in young children. Following that, research studies that have investigated the intersection between gender and social behaviours are examined, along with the intersection of teacher perspectives and gender.

2.5. Gender

Research on gender, gender stereotypes, and gender equity has been a focus in educational research since the 1970s (Blaise & Taylor, 2012). Browne (2004) described gender as being "inextricably linked with all aspects of ourselves, including race, ethnicity, social class, language, background, and disability" (p. 2). That is, gender is a multifaceted construct which develops differently in individuals based on life experiences, as well as unique needs, desires, and pressures to conform to a certain gender identity. Previously, an equal opportunities approach was used to address gender; however, this fails to acknowledge individual differences and diverse life experiences (Browne, 2004). Gender equity emphasises the importance of treating individuals fairly by considering their differences. Browne (2004) expands this to explain that gender equity approaches are not based on an assumption that there is a binary of genders (boys and girls), but rather they acknowledge that there are differences in individuals and those differences need to be taken account of to challenge gender inequity. This section begins by examining gender role stereotypes and how previous research has suggested these stereotypes are developed. Following this, there is an examination of the feminist poststructuralist views on gender and queer theory.

One predominant aspect of gender is the development of gender stereotypes, where young children are exposed to patterned and expected gender norms from birth through their parents, grandparents, or teachers' beliefs (Kanka, Wagner, Schober & Spiel, 2011). Archer and Lloyd (2002) expand this to explain that gender role stereotypes are related to the beliefs that people hold about exhibiting behaviour typical of a man or a woman. Kanka, Wagner, Schober and Spiel (2011) argue that by age three children can recognise their own sex and know which behaviour patterns are appropriate for being a boy or a girl. Since the 1960s various theories on how children develop gender identities have been developed, including biological theories, social theories, cognitive theories, and gender schema theory. Biological theory contends that gender stereotypes arise from the influence of genes and hormones (Ruble, Martin & Berenbaum, 2006). Social theories view gender stereotyped behaviour as patterns based on imitation and

identification through social interactions (Bandura, 1976, as cited in Kanka et al., 2011). Cognitive theories of gender stereotyping are based on gender-constancy, which happens around age seven; cognitive theories state that once gender-constancy is reached, gender-identity is linked to gender-stereotyped attitudes (Kohlberg, 1966). Finally, gender schema theory is a combination of cognitive development and social learning (Bem, 1981).

An alternative to gender role stereotypes, is the feminist poststructuralist views on gender, which question the assumption that there is a binary of gender, where there is only male and female. Feminist poststructuralism falls within a postdevelopmentalism framework which is used to examine alternative perspectives that question assumptions of truth and certainty (Blaise, 2005). A key feature in understanding feminist poststructuralism is the notion of discourses, which Bilton et al. (1996, p. 657, as cited in Browne, 2004, p. 6) describes as "a body of ideas, concepts and beliefs which become established as knowledge or an accepted worldview. These ideas become a powerful framework for understanding and action in social life". Blaise (2005) contends that young children take an active role in the development of their gender discourses, which are not determined by biological factors or socialisation into particular ways of being. Gender discourses in young children are developed because of how the children make sense of and enact gender in their lives. From these gender discourses, the children can determine whether they construct themselves as a boy, a girl, or identifying with aspects of both genders (Blaise, 2005). Discourses are a principal factor in the development of gender identity, in that they create a 'reality' that produces a conceptual framework for making sense of individual experiences and experiences of others. These discourses determine what individual sees as normal in the display of gendered behaviours.

From a feminist poststructuralist view of gender development, has emerged queer theory. Queer theory insists that the development of gender identity is linked to heterosexual norms, rather than biological instinct or socialisation (Blaise & Taylor, 2012). This theory is set within a feminist poststructuralist paradigm to analyse how

gender stereotypes were constructed as well as how children make sense of gender themselves. By understanding gender discourses, which also regulate gender behaviour in children, young children and teachers can establish what society considers normal gender behaviours. Queer theory questions the assumption that there is a 'normal' expression of gender, challenging the dominant gender discourse that society holds (Blaise & Taylor, 2012). The common belief in feminist poststructuralist theories is that the dominant gender discourse is what causes gender inequalities in society, as there are dominant beliefs in that there are correct ways of being male and female (Blaise, 2005). According to Browne (2004), many teachers will then base their practices on this dominant gender discourse that society holds, rather than on allowing children to take an active part in understanding masculine and feminine roles during play.

In addition to teachers' views of gender identity, children may become aware of and use gender to guide their behaviours. Glassman (2000) found that around three years of age children start to segregate themselves by gender. Glassman reported this segregation intensifies as the years' progress and engage in different behaviours. Previous research has found that boys typically move in a direction toward physical aggression and rough-and-tumble play whereas girls move in a direction toward relational aggression and cooperative, turn taking play (Maccoby, 1990). Glassman (2000) investigated if the gender of the child affects the type of adult/child interaction, and if those gender-related interactions therefore lead to gender segregation in preschool children from the USA. He found that there were twice as many adult/child interactions involving girls than boys, and explains that this could be because females are more socially precocious at age three or that both the girls and the boys engage in interactions, but that the girls are recognised more often. Since this study was conducted only with female teachers, it may suggest that female teachers seemed more aware of the girls' social behaviour, and that there may possibly be a gender bias in regard to the nature of teacher/child interactions.

The literature examined in this section has indicated that there are differing perspectives on how gender identity is developed in young children. Perspectives on

gender identity development range from biological and socialisation theories to feminist poststructuralist theories of gender discourse development. The following sections will examine research on whether there are differences in prosocial behaviours, social leadership, social dominance, and aggressive behaviours based on children's gender (defined as boys or girls). Following this, teachers understanding of how gender is developed in young children will be investigated.

2.5.1. Prosocial Behaviours and Child Gender

It has been thought that girls are more prosocial than boys, while boys are more aggressive, as described by previous research (Eisenberg et al., 2006). However, as Bouchard et al. (2015) describe, the evidence is inconclusive as to whether there is a gendered difference in prosociality in early childhood, as research suggests a difference between children's perceptions and teacher views. From this, Bouchard et al. (2015) explored the correlations between perceived, expressed and observed prosociality among boys and girls. This study gathered data from 174 children, with a mean age of 55.7 months old, and 22 early childhood teachers, all from Montreal, Canada, using a questionnaire for the teachers' perspectives (perceived prosociality), interviews with children to get their perceptions on interpersonal problem-solving scenarios (expressed prosociality), and observations of the children during free play (observed prosociality) (Bouchard et al., 2015). It was found that there was a perceived gendered difference in prosociality, whereby the teachers believed that girls were more prosocial than the boys, yet there was no gendered difference in the expressed or observed prosociality in these boys and girls. The researchers suggested that this might show that teachers have a gendered bias towards the notion that girls are more prosocial than boys, which may inadvertently shape their teaching practices towards children in their classroom. Bouchard et al. (2015) state that based on traditional studies of the Pygmalion effect, they believed that the way in which a child's behaviour is perceived can lead them to act in accordance with what is expected of them. That is, if a teacher perceives children of a specific gender to be less prosocial than the other, then gender differences may be perpetuated though self-fulfilling prophecy and social conditioning.

2.5.2. Social Leadership and Child Gender

Lee, Recchia and Shin (2005) sought to examine the gendered differences in social leadership in early childhood. Lee et al. (2005) assert that previous studies on leadership in young children were investigated as part of studies into other social topics, such as peer acceptance, aggression, competence, and adjustment, rather than studying social leadership as its own topic. The aim of their study was to investigate the differences in leadership styles in four young children from a University-affiliated childcare centre in New York, NY, who were identified by their teachers as being the leaders in the classroom. Observations of the children, combined with insights from the teachers, gave Lee et al. (2005) rich descriptions of four leadership styles: 'The Director', 'The Free Spirit', 'The Manager', and 'The Power Man'. It was found that there were common characteristics of all four leadership styles, such as advanced social and cognitive capabilities, proficiency of verbal language, creativity, imagination, independence, and being the oldest child in the classroom. Lee et al. (2005) found that 'The Director', who was a three-year-old girl, used directive, authoritative and persuasive language to direct her peers into doing whatever play scenario she had imagined. She seemed unable to play alone and wanted peers to be actively involved in her play ideas, so she was good at adjusting her ideas to accommodate peer's suggestions. 'The Free Spirit' was a three-year-old girl who was described as a quiet and independent leader. She was charismatic and other children were drawn to her, even though she was quiet and played independently often. Like the director, she was authoritative and followed peer's lead in play, however she only followed another conditionally and selectively when she was interested in the play idea. 'The Manager' was a four-year-old girl who was a powerful and influential leader, who assigned roles to other children and spoke her mind a lot. She convinced other children that her ideas were the best, and she enforced rules verbally and nonverbally. She was described as dominant and authoritative. Lastly, 'The Power Man' was a four-year-old boy, whose behaviours were identified as challenging by the teachers. He was very charismatic and attractive to peers, but he pushed the limits to see what he could get away with. His teachers described him as "really not that

nice to anybody, but he's charismatic and people really like him" (Lee et al., 2005, p. 143). He was also very physical in his play, intimidated other children, and used his social standing to include or exclude other children. This study described four potential leadership styles in early childhood, but also affirms that there are diverse ways of influencing other children and demonstrating leadership in the early childhood setting.

Mawson (2010) extends Lee et al. (2005) study to investigate leadership styles during collaborative play in early childhood in a New Zealand context. His research was based on the notion that there are gendered differences in how children portray their leadership. Previous research in this area has also found that there are gender differences in children's play, where girls tend to use indirect demands and persuasion to influence another child, while boys more typically use direct demands, threats, and physical force (Neppl & Murray, 1997). Mawson (2010) used case study design to explore 22 three and four-year-olds at a day-long child care centre and 47 four-year-olds at a kindergarten and observed the leadership styles that emerged through their collaborative play. Results affirmed that there was a distinct difference in how the boys exhibited their leadership compared to how the girls exhibited leadership in these settings. The boy leaders used a dictatorial approach, where control was established through a mix of aggression and intimidation. Other characteristics of leadership in boys were loud voices, repeated demands, excluding others who did not listen, and physical control. In comparison, the girl leaders used a more directorial approach to gain leadership, where cooperation was utilised. The girls' leadership style used negotiation skills to overcome conflicts, as well as creativity and imagination to capture other children's attention. It was also seen that in the kindergarten the leadership and control patterns regularly changed because of the number of children who left and new children started, so the role of the leader in a group of friends was regularly under contestation (Mawson, 2010).

2.5.3. Social Dominance and Child Gender

Research on gendered differences in social dominance in children has found that girls and boys differ in how they attempt to control their peers (Neppl & Murray, 1997). For example, girls are more likely to use indirect commands whereas boys are more likely to use direct commands. Neppl and Murray (1997) investigated in their study of eight girl-girl pairs and 16 mixed-gender pairs, aged between four and five years old, if girls would dominant over boys in typical feminine activities. These young children were observed during free play with a wooden doll house and dolls, and with a wooden pirate ship. The research findings were inconclusive mainly because the mixed-gender pairs were involved in parallel play, rather than cooperative play, and therefore one child did not take up a leadership role. However, their findings did support previous literature on dominance and social interactions between same-sex pairings, since there were leaders who emerged in the girl-girl pairs.

Conflict and the resolution of that conflict are a central feature of social dominance and essential in the production and maintaining of friendships in early childhood (Ashby & Neilsen-Hewett, 2012). Chen et al. (2001, as cited in Ashby & Neilsen-Hewett, 2012) contend that conflicts are events where a person resists, retaliates or protests the actions of another. Joshi (2008, as cited in Ashby & Neilsen-Hewett, 2012) explained that conflict resolution reflects social process, where children who can resolve disagreements peacefully will have a higher chance of forming peer relationships later in life. From this, Ashby and Neilsen-Hewett (2012) explored gender differences in conflicts and conflict resolution in toddlers from Australia. They observed conflicts in eight children, aged between two years and two months to two years and ten months, in same-sex pairings over two weeks. It was found that girls engaged in conflicts more often than boys did, with 8.1% of their time playing spent engaged in conflict with peers, compared to boys who spent 1.4% of their time playing engaged in conflict. The strategies for conflict resolution also differed between genders, with girls standing firm against another girl and boys giving in to the other boy. It is important to note that this

study is a small-scale research project that did not measure conflicts between genders and only measured conflicts in toddlers.

2.5.4. Aggressive Behaviours and Child Gender

Previous studies on gendered differences in aggression have mainly focused on forms of aggression that are most common in boys, whereas forms of aggression common in girls have been investigated less. Therefore, to redress this imbalance in information, Crick et al. (2006) conducted a study to measure gender differences in aggression, and hypothesised that relational aggression would provide information about future peer exclusion of preschool girls. The observed relational and physical aggression rates, as well as peer rejection of 91 preschool children from two preschools in Midwestern USA, aged between 30 and 52 months old, were assessed twice (with 6 months in between), using observations, interviews with children, and teacher ratings of aggression and peer rejection. They found there was a difference in aggression across the genders, with girls being more relationally aggressive than boys, but also that girls were more relationally aggressive towards other girls than they are towards boys. Similarly, Crick et al. (2006) found that boys were more physically aggressive towards other boys, rather than being physically aggressive towards girls. Crick et al. (2006) explained that this is not surprising given the gender-segregated play milieu in early childhood, and that young children usually play with same-sex friends. Also, they argued that studies on relational aggression may be a useful tool for understanding psychosocial risk in young girls, because their results indicated that relational aggression increased girls risk for peer exclusion later.

Recent research on aggression and antisocial behaviours has concluded that physical aggression needs to be a distinct construct from other non-aggressive antisocial behaviours. Spilt, Koomen, Thijs, Stoel and van der Leij (2010) investigated this idea of separating physical aggression from other antisocial behaviours in regard to gender differences. Spilt et al. (2010) describe nonaggressive antisocial behaviours as “behaviours that violate social norms and are potentially harmful to others but not

physically or verbally abusive" (p. 130). Their study was based on previous research that has mainly focused on boys' aggression in middle to late childhood, and has paid limited attention to aggression and antisocial behaviours in early childhood or girls' behaviour. Data was collected from two samples, which were both elementary schools in rural and suburban areas of the Netherlands, using the Preschool Behaviour Questionnaire (PBS; Behar, 1977, as cited in Spilt et al., 2010). The first sample included 19 preschool teachers who reported on 487 children, with a mean age of 65.2 months old, while the second sample included 84 preschool teachers who reported on 1557 children, with a mean age of 67.8 months old. The responses from the teachers suggested that boys had a higher rate of physical aggression than girls did, but there was no significant gender difference in reported nonaggressive antisocial behaviour. Spilt et al. (2010) concluded from these findings that physical aggression has a gender-specific manifestation, whereas other forms of antisocial behaviours do not.

There are two key beliefs about aggression that have dominated the field of research in early childhood: that boys are more aggressive than girls and girls are more prosocial (Bouchard et al., 2015); and that since young children have limited cognitive and social capacities, preschoolers are incapable of using more sophisticated forms of aggression, such as relational aggression (Burr, Ostrov, Jansen, Cullerton-Sen & Crick, 2005). The following research investigated the latter of these claims, whereby Burr et al. (2005) looked at the relationship between friendships and relational aggression in early childhood. Findings indicated that the majority of the relationally aggressive children had a group of friends and that these friendships were stable over the year they were studied. This data suggests that preschoolers do have the cognitive ability to use relational aggression, but that the relational aggression does not necessarily negatively affect peer friendships in early childhood (Burr, et al., 2005).

2.5.5. Teacher Perspectives and Child Gender

Although research suggests there might be gendered differences in children's social behaviours, this research is not conclusive and individual variations would be expected

across children. For these reasons, there is an imperative in early childhood education to avoid gender stereotyping in planning and practice, and ensure gender equity. Brody (1998, as cited in Erden, 2009) contends that teacher beliefs about gender have an impact on teachers' behaviours in the classroom towards students, as well as impacts the teachers learning and developing from reflecting on their practices. Younger and Warrington (1996, 2006) claim that most teachers believe they treat both genders equally, yet the perceptions that teachers hold of both genders is usually unequal and therefore the children are treated and taught differently. For example, Gray and Leith (2004) suggested that some teachers believed that girls are more motived, better behaved and less demanding compared to boys. To investigate teachers' perspectives on gender equity issues, Gray and Leith (2004) looked at four areas of gender equity issues in primary school education, including: the extent to which gender issues in the classroom are addressed in teacher training; teacher views on gender differences in children's attitudes; teacher perceptions of gender differences in classroom behaviours; and the prevalence of occupational stereotyping. Questionnaire responses were received from 285 primary teachers in Northern Ireland, where it was found that only 10% recalled gender issues being taught during their teacher training and many of the teachers were aware that the curriculum did not address gender equality (Gray & Leith, 2004)

Another study which looked at whether teachers are taught gender equity in their preservice training, is that conducted by Erden (2009) who looked at whether taking a semester long course in gender equity would change the gender role attitudes of preservice teachers. Their study was based on research conducted in the 1980s that found teachers treat children differently based on their gender (Sadker & Sadker, 1986, as cited in Erden, 2009). Since previous research has found that teachers acquire and change their attitudes about teaching during preservice training, Erden (2009) investigated the impact that a course on gender equity in early childhood and elementary education would make on their attitudes and beliefs surrounding gender roles in young children. They used a two-group pre-test and post-test design, with the

first group involving 33 students who had enrolled in the course and the second group involving 100 students who had not enrolled. The students' beliefs about gender were collected pre- and post- the course using the 'attitudes towards gender roles scale' (Erden, 2009). By analysing and comparing the responses to the gender attitudes scale, Erden (2009) found that the attitudes of the students taking the course changed positively, where the mean score went from 65 to 78, whereas the mean score for the control group stayed at 65 across the pre- and post-test. However, even though the attitudes of the group who attended the gender equity course developed more favourable attitudes towards gender issues, it does not mean that this change will last once the teachers are employed in an early childhood service, with other teachers who may have differing views on gender. Erden (2009) also made it apparent that gender equity issues were not taught in preservice teacher training programmes in Turkey, and therefore preservice teachers were going into childcare centres without a strong gender discourse.

In early childhood, it is important that teachers are aware of potential biases, and aim for gender equity in their practices with young children. Aina and Cameron (2011) stress that the time period that children are in early childhood are a crucial period for contesting gender stereotypes, and teachers should support children to develop their own gender identities. Research suggests, teachers' personal beliefs may influence this process. For example, Chapman (2016) investigated how early childhood teachers' perceptions of gender influenced where children played, what children play with, and how they engaged in play. This study was based on a feminist poststructural view of gender, and sought to identify whether teachers' perceptions of gender role stereotypes influenced the children. Data collection involved semi-structured interviews with four teachers across two early childhood settings from different socioeconomic neighbourhoods in Melbourne, Australia, along with observations of children's play. Teachers perceptions of gender were found to transfer to the children through their planning, the resources provided, feedback to the children, general interactions with children, and the amount of facilitating involved (Chapman, 2016). Also examined in the

interviews with teachers, was their perceptions of why gendered play occurs. Across the four teachers, there were differing views of how gender is developed and therefore different beliefs about how these gender identities are displayed through the children's play. The teachers from setting one believed gender was developed by biological factors, which was reflected in their planning where the children were offered gender stereotypical play, such as rough-and-tumble for the boys and dramatic play area for the girls. Setting two, however, were more open to the children developing their own gender identity, with one teacher exclaiming, "there is no typical girl play and no typical boy play" (Chapman, 2016, p. 1280). This study offers an insight into differences in the ways that teachers view gender development in young children, as well as how their perspectives of gender are reflected in their practices in their setting.

2.5.6. Summary

In summary, the notion of gender equity and social behaviours in early childhood is a complex area of research. Gender role stereotypes are the beliefs that people hold about exhibiting behaviour typical of a male or a female (Archer & Lloyd, 2002), with multiple theories being held about how children develop these gender role stereotypes. The alternative to this are the ideas held by feminist poststructuralism, whereby young children take an active role in the development of their own gender discourses and therefore their own gender identities, rather than the idea that gender is developed by biological or socialisation factors. There is a limited amount of research that investigates the intersection of these two concepts in early childhood, and those studies that do investigate this tend to have mixed findings with inconclusive evidence. This can be seen in Bouchard et al. (2015) study, where they found that teachers perceived girls to be more prosocial than boys, however expressed and observed notions of prosociality found no difference between boys and girls. An important study that investigated the intersection of gender and social leadership was that of Lee et al. (2005), who found that there were four distinct leadership styles seen in young children. These results were replicated by Mawson (2010), who examined the leadership styles of young children in a New Zealand context, and found that boys and girls exhibited different leadership

styles in different childcare contexts. Also important to note is that two different studies investigated teacher beliefs surrounding gender equity, and found that gender issues may have limited attention in initial teacher education programmes (Gray & Leith, 2004; Erden, 2009). The findings from Gray and Leith (2004) and Erden (2009) could also explain why teachers in Chapman's (2016) study had differing ideas surrounding how gender is developed in young children, which therefore reflected in the teachers' planning and strategies when working with children of different genders.

2.6. Research Questions

The present review of the literature has described children's social competence and key social behaviours including prosocial behaviours, social leadership, social dominance, and aggressive behaviours in early childhood. Research reviewed suggests that social behaviours are key aspects in the development of social competence in early childhood. Prosocial behaviours are voluntary behaviours to benefit another, which are used by young children to form, navigate and maintain peer relationships. Social leadership and social dominance are similar in their end goal, but differ in the methods used to get what they want. Social leadership uses prosocial, cooperative methods, while social dominance uses coercive, affiliative methods. Finally, aggressive behaviours are behaviours that intend to hurt another child, however in early childhood the issue of intent is hard to determine due to the age of the children involved.

The present study is focused on the four social behaviours (prosocial, social leadership, social dominance, and aggression) and how gender is associated with these behaviours, as there are few studies on these important constructs in early childhood. Many of the existing studies were conducted using observations of the behaviours, which tend to be limited in accuracy because the observer has a time limit on observations, as well as being limited in observing the diversity of contexts which behaviours can be seen. A few of these previous studies also use peer nominations of behaviours, which can be valuable as peers have high levels of exposure to other children's behaviours, but they may be limited in accuracy due to not having the cognitive or perceptual skills needed

to distinguish among behaviours. Furthermore, there is little evidence of teachers' perspectives of gendered differences in these behaviours and whether teachers' practices and strategies are influenced by children's gender.

After reviewing current literature in the areas of these social behaviours and gender, it is clear that the majority of these studies were conducted in the USA and throughout Europe. It is also clear that there is limited New Zealand research in this area. Given the importance of these social behaviours in relation to the development of social competency, and the potential for gender to influence social behaviours, research into teachers' perspectives of these behaviours and how the gender of young children influences these perspectives is essential. Also integral is to understand how teachers' strategies in response to these social behaviours are developed, and how children's gender may affect these strategies. As different countries may have different socio-cultural expectations around gender compared to New Zealand, it is important to understand these issues from a New Zealand context. The early childhood education sector in New Zealand is guided by Te Whariki, the early childhood curriculum, where one of the goals in *Te Whāriki* states that children should "experience an environment where there are equitable opportunities for learning, irrespective of gender, ability, age, ethnicity, or background" (Ministry of Education, 2017, p. 37).

Given the importance of understanding teachers' perspectives of the association between early childhood social behaviours and gender, the research questions that guided the study as are follows:

- What are teachers' perspectives of prosocial behaviours, social leadership, social dominance and aggressive behaviours in children in early childhood?
- Do teacher's report social behaviours as more or less prevalent in boys or girls in early childhood?
- What strategies do teachers report using to respond to different social behaviours in children?
- Are teachers' perspectives and strategies influenced by the gender of the child?

Chapter Three: Methodology

3.1. Introduction

The present research study explored teachers' perspectives about social behaviours and gender in preschool children. The social behaviours examined were prosocial behaviours, social leadership, social dominance, and aggressive behaviours. This study investigated how children's gender related to teachers' reports of the prevalence of these social behaviours in boys or girls; the strategies that teacher's adopted in response to social behaviours in a preschool setting; and how children's gender influenced the selection of these teaching strategies. This chapter describes the mixed methods approach used to collect both qualitative and quantitative data from an online, anonymous survey to gather information about teachers' perspectives. The survey was sent to teachers from three Kindergarten Associations from the central North Island, where permission from the Associations to contact the teachers was gained prior to sending out the survey link. Information about the survey design process, including piloting of the survey with three stakeholder groups from the early childhood sector, and how the survey questions were developed and revised, is discussed. The purpose of each section of questions in the survey is described as well as examples of the content of the questions. Also discussed in this chapter are the ways in which data collected were analysed using different methods of analysis, as well as how construct validity has been considered for this study. Ethical considerations for this research study are also discussed later in the chapter.

3.2. Epistemology

Social research is concerned with understanding the world we live in and how we view the world around us (Cohen et al., 2011). The present study was framed in an interpretive epistemology, which seeks to understand individuals' interpretations of the world around them. Cohen et al. (2011) explain that an interpretive paradigm suggests that social research is subjective, as a researcher works to understand individual views of social reality. Creswell (2014) describes interpretivism as being combined with social

constructivism, whereby individuals construct subjective meaning of certain objects or things. The present study also sat within a pragmatic paradigm, which emphasises the research problem (or phenomenon under investigation) and utilises the most appropriate approaches to understand and explore this problem or phenomenon (Creswell, 2014). Pragmatism is associated with mixed methods research, in that researchers use both qualitative and quantitative methods to gain understanding of their research problem (Newby, 2014). Feilzer (2010) expands this to conclude that pragmatism aims to "interrogate a particular question, theory, or phenomenon with the most appropriate research method" (p. 13). As the intent of this research was to gather individuals' perspectives on social behaviours in preschool children, a mixed methods research design underpinned by an interpretive and pragmatic epistemology was devised.

3.3. Methodology

The present study used a mixed methods approach within an online, anonymous survey. Johnson, Onwuegbuzie and Turner (2007) position mixed methods research as an approach to research that considers multiple viewpoints and perspectives of the participants involved, while Creswell (2014) describes mixed methods research as when the researcher collects, analyses and mixes both qualitative and quantitative data. As this research study focused on teachers' perspectives, a convergent-parallel mixed methods design (Creswell, 2014) was used whereby the qualitative and quantitative data were collected at the same time in the context of the survey, analysed separately, and then combined to draw conclusions. The present study utilised a mix of open-ended, multiple choice, and Likert scale questions. The majority of the questions were open-ended (qualitative) to explore teachers' perspectives using their own words. This research design assumes that the qualitative and quantitative data will highlight different but complimentary aspects of the phenomenon in order to provide more robust results (Creswell, 2014).

3.4. Methods

The research questions for this study sought to understand teachers' perspectives of prosocial behaviours, social leadership, social dominance, and aggressive behaviours in early childhood; whether teachers reported the social behaviours as more or less prevalent in boys or girls; what strategies the teachers used to mediate the social behaviours in children; and how those perspectives and strategies are influenced by the gender of the child. Since the nature of these questions may have been potentially sensitive in relation to gender bias, it was decided that the best way to collect data would be by using an online, anonymous survey. By using an anonymous survey, the participants do not need to worry that their identities will be known by the researcher and their individual responses would not be used and reported.

3.5. Survey Design

The survey was designed using the online survey software, Survey Monkey. The survey began with an introduction page to introduce and describe the survey the participants would be completing and ended with a concluding page to provide the participants with more information about the design of the overall study. The survey was made up of 26 questions and separated into four sections: demographic questions; defining social behaviours and their traits; social behaviour scenarios; and gender and *Te Whāriki*. To allow investigation of differential responses related to gender, two versions of the survey were created. The versions differed by the gender of the child portrayed in the scenarios in section three. A copy of the two different versions of the survey can be seen in Appendices A and B. Half of the teachers invited to complete survey received survey A and the other half received survey B. The distribution protocol ensured that there was even distribution of invitations for two surveys within each Association.

The survey was designed first by the researcher with guidance and feedback from the research supervisors. It was then sent via email to three stakeholder groups for piloting to support refinement of the questions and to ensure that the survey technology was functioning appropriately. The first pilot group were four postgraduate students who

had various roles in the early childhood sector. Following their feedback, more social behaviour traits were added to the behaviour traits questions in section two and the wording on some of the questions changed to enhance clarity. Once these changes were made, the survey was sent to a group of early childhood teachers to pilot. Their suggestions for changes in the survey surrounded the describing of social behaviours as well as the questions around *Te Whāriki* and gender in early childhood. A final piloting was conducted with a group of kindergarten teachers, who suggested including a progress bar at the bottom of each page of the survey.

3.5.1. Section One: Demographic Questions

The first section of the survey comprised of five demographic questions to gain an overview of survey participants, including age group, gender, qualifications and teaching experience. The purpose of these questions was to describe the characteristics of this sample of participants.

3.5.2. Section Two: Defining Social Behaviours and Their Traits

Section two focused on defining the characteristics of the four social behaviours, gaining an understanding of how teachers view these behaviours in four-year-old children, and asked whether the behaviours were seen differently depending on the gender of the child. This section provided the participants with definitions of the different behaviours (Table 3.1, p. 48) and asked the participants to describe one or two examples of this behaviour in four-year-old children.

Table 3.1: Definitions of the Social Behaviours

Social behaviour	Definition
Prosocial Behaviours	Voluntary behaviours that are intended to benefit another
Social Leadership	Behaviours that give direction and command to others from children who appear to have some influence
Social Dominance	Behaviours that gain control of resources and social attention in a social setting
Aggressive Behaviours	Behaviours that are intended to hurt, harm, or injure another person

In the second part of section two, teachers were presented with a table of social behaviour traits, and they were asked to indicate whether each trait is *seen more commonly in boys*, *seen more commonly in girls*, or *seen equally in both genders* (Table 3.2, p. 49). These social behaviour traits were compiled as a result of the literature review, with additional suggestions from the stakeholders who piloted the survey. Forty-two traits were listed in relation to the four social behaviour categories described above. The purpose of this question was to determine whether teachers saw specific social behaviours as more evident for a specific gender or whether the behaviours were considered to be gender neutral. The traits were listed in random order in the survey. This section of the survey was the same across the two versions of the survey.

Table 3.2: The List of the Social Behaviour Traits

Social Behaviour	Traits of the Behaviour
Prosocial Behaviours	Shares toys and other belongings
	Gives in or compromises with others
	Takes turns
	Resolves conflicts
	Stands up for other children's rights
	Invites other children to play
	Shows affection for other children
	Plays with several different children
	Cooperates with others
	Expresses their feelings and emotions
	Is empathetic towards others
	Can approach other children and ask to play
	Greets teachers and other children
Social Leadership	Is seen as a person of authority by peers
	Is seen as the leader of the group
	Uses nonverbal cues to persuade others into doing what they want
	Has skills that are admired by other children
	Assigns roles during play
	Listens to peers ideas and adjusts the play accordingly
	Uses persuasive language
	Is charismatic and peers are drawn to them
Social Dominance	Uses commands towards others
	Takes ownership of toys and other resources
	Is the centre of other children's attention
	Uses age or physical height to control others
	Uses force to get other another child to do what they want
	Leads an alliance against other children
	Takes charge of a group situation
	Tells tales on other children to get them in trouble
Aggressive Behaviours	Teases or makes fun of others
	Hits/kicks/pushes other children
	Takes things away from other children
	Threatens other children
	Becomes physical after being provoked by another child
	Excludes other children from play and other activities
	Spreads rumours about other children
	Tells other children they won't be their friend anymore
	Uses verbal insults directed at another child
	Invades other children's personal space
	Intimidates peers
	Pushes the boundaries of rough and tumble play

3.5.3. Section Three: Social Behaviour Scenarios

The third section of this survey aimed to capture data related to teachers' responses to specific social behaviours enacted by boys or girls in typical interactions from an early childhood setting. Teachers were presented with four scenarios, one for each social behaviour examined, which portrayed a situation between peers which may occur in an early childhood setting. The participants were asked to imagine that they were a reliever in a kindergarten and respond to the questions following the scenarios. Requesting that the participants imagine themselves as reliever was utilised to avoid respondents thinking of children from their centre while completing the survey, so that answers to the questions were not confounded with feelings or responses towards actual children. There were three questions following each scenario. The first two questions asked the participants to identify any positive behaviours occurring in the scenario and any behaviours that might concern them. The third question asked the participant how they would respond if they witnessed the scenario occurring in their setting. This section of the survey was the only section that differed across the two versions of the survey. Differences between the survey versions related to the genders of the children portrayed in the scenarios (Table 3.3, p. 51). The purpose of using two different versions of these scenarios was to investigate if there were differences in teachers' responses based on the gender of the child.

Table 3.3: Social Behaviour Scenarios from Both Survey Versions

Social behaviour		Scenarios
Prosocial Behaviour	Survey A	A group of young children are running around a playground, when Emily falls over, scrapes her knee and starts to cry. Many of the children do not stop running and playing to help Emily on the ground, except Amber, who stops to see if she is ok. Amber gives Emily a hug and comforts her until a teacher arrives. Amber then asks Emily if she wants to go play on the playground with her.
	Survey B	A group of young children are running around a playground, when Michael falls over, scrapes his knee and starts to cry. Many of the children do not stop running and playing to help Michael on the ground, except James, who stops to see if he is ok. James gives Michael a hug and comforts him until a teacher arrives. James then asks Michael if he wants to go play on the playground with him.
Social Leadership	Survey A	A group of children have moved into the family corner to play, and decide they want to throw a pretend birthday party for one of the teachers. Molly starts telling the other children what things they need to find, such as plates, cups, a table cloth, some balloons and a present for the teacher. Kylie has been told to find the cups for the table, but she tells Molly that she wants to find a present instead. Molly says, “No Kylie, you can’t! I’ve told you to get cups. If you don’t get them, you won’t be able to play with us because everybody has a job to do."
	Survey B	A group of children have moved into the family corner to play, and decide they want to throw a pretend birthday party for one of the teachers. Patrick starts telling the other children what things they need to find, such as plates, cups, a table cloth, some balloons and a present for the teacher. Henry has been told to find the cups for the table, but he tells Patrick that he wants to find a present instead. Patrick says, “No Henry, you can’t! I’ve told you to get cups. If you don’t get them, you won’t be able to play with us because everybody has a job to do."
Social Dominance	Survey A	A group of children are playing in the sandpit together, when Michael decides that he wants the spade that James is using to dig with. Michael asks for the spade first, but when he is denied he starts saying that James will not be able to play with them anymore if he doesn’t give him the spade. James still refuses to give Michael the spade, so Michael takes it out of his hands. Michael then says to the rest of the group of children “Come on, lets dig over here instead”, leaving James, while the rest of the group of children follows him.
	Survey B	A group of children are playing in the sandpit together, when Amelia decides that she wants the spade that Nicole is using to dig with. Amelia asks for the spade first, but when she is denied she starts saying that Nicole will not be able to play with them anymore if she doesn’t give her the spade. Nicole still refuses to give Amelia the spade, so Amelia takes it out of her hands. Amelia then says to the rest of the group of children “Come on, lets dig over here instead”, leaving Nicole, while the rest of the group of children follows her.

Aggressive Behaviour	Survey A	Two children are having an argument about what they are making with the blocks. Liam can be heard saying to Henry "I don't want to play with you anymore. You are NOT coming to my birthday party!" After this, Liam is seen playing with a third child and when Henry tries to join in, Liam says "You're not my friend now!" and runs away with the third child.
	Survey B	Two children are having an argument about what they are making with the blocks. Hannah can be heard saying to Kate "I don't want to play with you anymore. You are NOT coming to my birthday party!" After this, Hannah is seen playing with a third child and when Kate tries to join in, Hannah says "You're not my friend now!" and runs away with the third child.

3.5.4. Section Four: Gender and *Te Whāriki*

The fourth section of the survey focused on investigating the intersection between teaching practices and teachers' knowledge and understanding of how gender may influence these practices. This section was important in that it brought together the earlier sections regarding gender differences in children's social behaviours with teacher practices in response to these social behaviours, and how they might adjust their practices for more equitable outcomes for children. The following statement was given to teachers to elicit their beliefs about this goal of the contribution strand in *Te Whāriki*, and how it influences their perspectives of children's behaviour, as well as influences their teaching practices in response to children's behaviour:

> *The first goal of the Contribution strand of* Te Whāriki *states that "children experience an environment where there are equitable opportunities for learning, irrespective of gender, ability, age, ethnicity or background" (1996, p. 66), however, recent research has suggested that gender does have an impact on the expectations of behaviour that teachers have for young children in their centre.*

Teachers were asked to respond to a Likert rating scale that asked the extent to which participants believe that the gender of the child influences teachers' perspectives of the child's social behaviours, from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Participants were then requested to describe an example of a time when they believed gender influenced a teachers' perspective of a child's social behaviour. Questions were phrased generically to any teacher rather than the individual participant, to allow the participants to describe potentially discriminatory actions in a way that is removed from personal

ownership. Participants were also asked to describe what actions they take to ensure that there are equitable opportunities for children of different genders to meet this goal of *Te Whāriki* in their teaching practice. This section of the survey was the same across the two versions of the survey.

3.6. Survey Participants

As the scope of the research problem specifically targeted teacher beliefs regarding the social behaviours of four-year-old children, the survey participants needed to be teachers of this age group. For this reason, the invitation was distributed to all teachers employed by three Kindergarten Associations in the central North Island of New Zealand. A purposive sampling strategy was used to select the three Kindergarten Associations instead of including all the kindergartens across New Zealand. Cohen et al. (2011) explain that purposive sampling is used to gain access to knowledgeable people in their field who have an in-depth knowledge related to the focus of the research. The decision to identify three Kindergarten Associations was based on a desire to access a range of teacher perspectives but limit the possible number of teacher respondents so more open-ended questions could be used and feasible to analyse. The three Kindergarten Associations were from the central North Island and represents small through mid-size Associations supporting children across a diverse range of urban and rural settings. By viewing each association's website and the Education Counts website (https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz) a list of 39 kindergartens were organised.

3.7. Dissemination of the Survey

To disseminate the survey, permission from the three Kindergarten Associations was obtained. An email to a senior leader at each association was sent explaining the research and describing the survey, as shown in Appendix C. After permission was granted from the three Kindergarten Associations, emails were sent to all 39 kindergartens with an invitation for the teachers to participate and the links to the survey on Survey Monkey, as shown in Appendix D. As there are approximately four or five teachers at each kindergarten, the e-mail noted that more than one person could

access the survey from the link provided. The survey was open from 7th October 2016 until 10th December 2016. Considering there were two versions of the survey, a key aspect in the dissemination of the survey was to assign which kindergarten got which version. This was needed as the university-supported subscription to Survey Monkey could not randomise who got the different versions using one link. Thus, half of the kindergartens were sent a link to version A and half were sent a link for version B. To do this a list of kindergartens in the three associations were compiled and ordered alphabetically within each of their associations, and then every second kindergarten was sent the link to version A of the survey and the other kindergartens were sent the link to version B of the survey. The kindergarten email addresses were kept in their association lists, rather than mixing the associations together, in order to balance possible responses within each association.

3.8. Validity

Validity is the "degree to which the researcher has measured what he has set out to measure" (Kumar, 2014, p. 213). To make sure that the validity was considered throughout the research design process, the definitions of the social behaviours and the definitions of the other key aspects of the research questions were discussed with research supervisors, as well as the best way to capture data that made sure the survey questions aligned with the aims of the research study. Questions were first discussed and revised with research supervisors, and then following feedback from sector stakeholders during the pilot, questions were amended to ensure that the questions were capturing the intended data in order to answer the research questions.

3.9. Data Analysis

As this research study used mixed methods design to collect data, both qualitative and quantitative data was collected through the survey. Therefore, the analysis of these data included two different approaches to gather meaning from the responses. Quantitative data was analysed into frequency and percentages, while qualitative data was analysed using a thematic and content analysis procedure. As appropriate, qualitative data sets

for specific questions were also transformed into quantitative measures (i.e., counts of key themes or terms emanating from teacher responses across the two survey versions) using a procedure called data transformation (Creswell, 2014).

The survey responses were extracted from Survey Monkey in the form of an EXCEL spreadsheet for each survey version, which were then merged together to form one combined spreadsheet of data. All the responses to the demographics questions and the behaviours traits questions were transformed into numbered categories ready for analysis. The responses to all the other questions were left as qualitative responses. The following sections provide details on the methods of analysing these data sets.

3.9.1. Quantitative Data Analysis:

This mixed methods survey involved eight quantitative questions which investigated different aspects across the survey. All five questions in the demographics section were quantitative, which asked the participants to choose from a pre-selected category of responses. The pre-selected categories were also seen in the two behaviour traits questions, where participants chose between three categories. Question 24 in this survey was a Likert scale, which asked participants to determine the extent to which they agreed gender influenced teachers' perspectives of a child's social behaviours.

All of the responses to the demographics questions, as well as the responses to questions 10 and 11 about the behaviours traits, were able to be numerically coded into nominal data. For both sets of data, frequency and percentage tables were developed in order to illustrate how many respondents answered for each category. These frequencies and percentages were calculated through SPSS, and then translated into a table for presentation. The purpose of the demographic data was to describe the sample of respondents and has not been used for comparative purposes, due to the focus of the study, and the small sample size.

Question 24 in the survey used a Likert scale to examine the extent to which the respondents believed gender influenced their perspectives on a child's social behaviours. The data resulting from this question was transformed into ordinal data, which SPSS was then utilised to identify the frequency and percentages of responses.

3.9.2. Qualitative Data Analysis:

The remaining questions in the survey were all open-ended, qualitative questions; therefore, to examine emergent themes within the data collected, an exploratory analysis was conducted. Guest, MacQueen and Namey (2012) explain that exploratory analysis is content-driven, whereby data is explored extensively for any trends, themes or ideas before any codes are derived.

The qualitative responses within Section Two and Section Four were all analysed in the same way, which began with reading through the responses. Following this, an initial thematic code was assigned to each idea within a participant's response, so that one response could have two or three codes assigned to it. These codes in turn were categorised into broader classifications, which were identified through reviewing the literature. After the completion of this thematic analysis of the data, a content analysis and data transformation was performed in order to determine a frequency of responses to each behaviour classification. This is the point in data analysis where qualitative data was transformed into a quantitative measure (i.e., frequency counts), when appropriate.

The responses to the questions following the scenarios were analysed in a similar way to the questions above, however the responses to each version of the survey were compared against each other. Prior to analysis of the gender-based scenarios, the research supervisors removed any indication of gender from the responses (i.e., gendered names replaced with neutral names, pronouns switched to his/her or s/he), while also randomising the response order intermixing survey A and B. These steps were taken to remove any expectation bias of the researcher while analysing this data set.

Once any indication of gender or survey version had been removed, a thematic analysis with initial coding as well as organising into behaviour classifications was conducted on all the scenario questions. Following this analysis, the research supervisors organised the responses back into survey versions for comparison. A content analysis and data transformation then occurred to determine the rate of responses to each classification. A comparison was then able to occur, whereby rates of responses were descriptively compared to examine emerging themes as well as any differences across survey versions.

3.10. Ethical Considerations

The ethics screening questionnaire provided by Massey University Human Ethics Committee (MUHEC) was completed online. Completing a full ethics application was necessary for the present study, because some deception was used in this study. Specifically, teacher participants were not informed about the dual versions of the survey and intention to compare responses across the surveys at the outset of the study. This information was shared with teachers upon completion of the survey. It is important to note, consenting associations were informed of the dual versions of the survey prior to the researcher inviting teacher participation. The full ethics application was completed and approval was gained by MUHEC on 14th September 2016, as seen in Appendix E. Other key ethical issues raised were informed consent of participants, confidentiality of responses, and ensuring no risk of harm occurred. Participants were recruited from three kindergarten associations, where permission from the association needed to be gained before contacting the teachers. All the email addresses that were emailed the link to online survey were gained through publicly available information.

The email with the link to survey had an information sheet attached to it, which informed the participants that by completing the survey consent was implied but that they could refuse to answer any questions if they were not comfortable answering and could stop at any point. The first page of the survey repeated this information, so they were fully aware of what they were consenting to answer. As the participants were not

aware that there were two versions of the survey, to meet the need for full disclosure, a final page at the end of the survey explained the purpose of the research study and the reason for the two versions of the scenarios. The study involved this low-level form of deception because fully informing the participants of the nature of the study could potentially have altered the responses received. However, it was not anticipated that participants would experience any harm while taking part in this research study, and all possible steps to reduce harm were taken. This included explaining the full nature of the study to the Association representatives prior to dissemination to teachers, and participants were invited to contact the research supervisors if they had any further questions or concerns, once they were aware of the full intent and scope of the study.

3.11. Summary

This chapter has outlined the key theoretical and design features of this research study. A mixed methods approach, which sat within an interpretive and pragmatic paradigm, was used which comprised an online, anonymous survey to collect both qualitative and quantitative data. This survey examined kindergarten teachers' perspectives on gender differences in the social behaviours of preschool children, and whether their teaching practices differed based on the gender of the child. The survey had four sections which explored different aspects of the research questions: demographic questions; defining social behaviours; social behaviour scenarios; and gender and *Te Whāriki*. It was disseminated to kindergarten teachers from three Kindergarten Associations across the central North Island of New Zealand, whereby permission to contact the teachers was gained from the associations first. Many steps were taken to make sure that the validity and ethical considerations were upheld, and ethics approval was gained through MUHEC before data collection could occur. There was qualitative and quantitative data collected from the surveys. The qualitative data was analysed using a thematic content analysis to examine any themes that emerged from the responses collected, while the quantitative data was analysed using frequency and percentage tables, with themes that emerged from the tables analysed. The following chapter outlines the key findings from the study.

Chapter Four: Findings

4.1. Introduction

The findings reported in this chapter explore teachers' perspectives of social behaviours in preschool children, their reports of the prevalence of social behaviours in boys and girls, and how these perspectives are associated with children's gender. The data further identifies teacher's reported strategies for responding to these specific social behaviours, and how these strategies relate to the gender of the child. The social behaviours examined were prosocial behaviours, social leadership, social dominance, and aggressive behaviours. This chapter presents the key findings from the online survey used in the present study. Results from the two versions of the survey are summarised in two primary sections. The first section describes the results from the areas of the survey that were the same questions from both versions; included in this section are the findings related to describing the behaviours, the traits of each behaviour, and the intersection of gender and teacher's practices. The second section includes the responses to the scenario questions, which differed by gender across the two versions of the survey. In this section, scenario responses were examined to identify teacher reported positive behaviours, concerning behaviours, and how the teachers would have responded if they observed the scenario in an early childhood setting. This chapter follows the sequence of the research questions, intermixing findings from different sections of the survey as they correspond to the research questions. The research questions were as follows:

- What are teachers' perspectives of prosocial behaviours, social leadership, social dominance and aggressive behaviours in children in early childhood?
- Do teacher's report social behaviours as more or less prevalent in boys or girls in early childhood?
- What strategies do teacher's report using to respond to different social behaviours in children?
- Are teachers' perspectives and strategies influenced by the gender of the child?

4.2. All Survey Respondents

The two versions of the survey were disseminated to teachers from three kindergarten associations across the central North Island of New Zealand. The surveys were open for responses for nine weeks and in that time 30 participants responded to the surveys. Survey A had 17 responses, while Survey B had 13 responses. Once the survey was closed, analysis of each response was conducted to determine which participants' data were to be included in the data analysis. Participants that did not answer any questions after the demographic section were not included in the data analysis. The final number of responses for analysis were 24 responses overall (12 in survey A and 12 in survey B). Of these 24 responses, there were 23 female participants (96%) and one male (4%); which is consistent with the low proportion of male to female early childhood teachers across New Zealand (Ministry of Education, 2015).

Further analysis of the demographic information indicated that the majority of participants were over 40 years old (78.5%), with many participants having over 11 years teaching experience (70.5%) as shown in Table 4.1 (p. 61). This high percentage of older teachers with many years of experience may be because the survey invitation got emailed to the centre's email address, where the head teacher might have been the individual reading the invitation. Over half of the participants had a Bachelor of Teaching (ECE) (58%) and a further 25% of participants had a Graduate Diploma of Teaching (ECE).

Table 4.1: Demographic Information All Respondents

Characteristic	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Age group		
Under 20	0	0
20-29 years	3	13
30-39 years	2	8
40-49 years	8	33
50-59 years	8	33
60+ years	3	13
Gender		
Female	23	96
Male	1	4
Registered Teacher		
Yes	24	100
Years' experience teaching		
Less than one	0	0
1-5 years	3	12.5
6-10 years	4	17
11-15 years	6	25
16-20 years	2	8
20+ years	9	37.5
Highest qualification		
Diploma of Teaching (ECE)	3	13
Teaching – Bachelor's degree (ECE)	14	58
Graduate Diploma of Teaching (ECE)	6	25
Teaching – Bachelor's degree (Primary)	0	0
Postgraduate Qualification	1	4
Other[a]	0	0

Note: N= 24.

[a]There were four participants who responded to 'highest qualification' with "other", but were allocated to other categories for analysis based on the description of the qualification that they provided.

4.2.1. Describing the Behaviours

Participants were presented with a definition of each social behaviour and were asked to provide one or two examples of this behaviour in four-year-old children. The responses were analysed initially into codes that described the example participants had reported. The codes were then organised into broader behaviour. A full list of behaviour classifications with definitions and examples can be found in Appendix F. Overall, more classifications were identified for behaviours associated with social leadership and social dominance behaviours than for prosocial and aggressive behaviours. The numbers of behaviour classifications represent the range of examples that teachers associated with different social behaviours. Results are presented by social behaviour in the following order: Prosocial behaviours, social leadership, social dominance, and aggressive behaviours. The responses identified for each behaviour are outlined in tables below with illustrative examples to highlight participant responses that captured the behaviour classification.

Table 4.2 outlines the range of coded behaviour classifications and the number of times (shown as frequency) that each behaviour classification occurred in the examples described from teachers. In addition, Table 4.2 (p. 63) includes an illustrative example of the teachers' responses. The behaviour classification with the highest number of reported examples was *sharing* (*n* = 11); this means there were 11 occurrences of examples coded as sharing across all teachers' responses. The behaviour classification with the lowest number of reported examples was the *keeping safe* (*n* = 1); this means there was only 1 occurrence of an example which was coded as keeping safe across all teachers' responses. Other categories were *cooperation*, *supporting peer relationships*, *helping others*, and *empathy*.

Table 4.2: Prosocial Behaviour Classifications and Example Behaviours

Behaviour Classifications	Frequency (n)	Example
Sharing	11	*A child sharing equipment with another child.*
Cooperation	10	*Children learn problem solving and negotiation skills.*
Supporting peer relationships	9	*Supporting a friend in trying something new or while developing a skill.* *Advocating for the rights of others.*
Helping others	8	*One child helping another and reinforcing what the rules are.*
Empathy	8	*Helping another child when they are hurt (i.e. asking if they are ok, giving them a hug, finding an ice pack).*
Keeping safe	1	*Children learn to keep themselves and others safe during appropriate risk taking.*

Note: Participants' quotes are italicised.

For social leadership, the behaviour classifications are shown in Table 4.3 (p. 64) and included: *supporting peers*; *organising activities*; *allocating roles*; *promoting positive behaviour*; *demonstrating desired skills*; *using verbal language*; and *problem solving/creativity*. The distribution of frequencies across these classifications are varied, with two classifications with the highest number of responses, *supporting peers* and *organising activities*, having an equal number of responses (*n* = 11), while *demonstrating desired skills*, *using verbal language*, and *problem solving/creativity* only having two responses each.

Table 4.3: Social Leadership Behaviour Classifications and Example Behaviours

Behaviour Classifications	Frequency (n)	Example
Supporting peers	11	*Offering an invitation to a child to join the group even after someone has said that the child could not enter into play*
Organising activities	11	*Organising other children through asking what they would like to do*
Allocating roles	8	*"I will be the Mum you can be the sister" allocating roles in socio-dramatic play*
Promoting positive behaviour	5	*We also provide opportunities for modelling of appropriate behaviours to their peers and younger students through a Virtues programme*
Demonstrating desired skills	2	*Monkey bar skills - we have had a number of children who have mastered this skill but will remain in the area to demonstrate for others, offering suggestions, encouragement, and support.*
Using verbal language	2	*Has a good grasp on verbal language*
Problem solving/ creativity	2	*Is creative and comes up with ideas and solutions to problems*

Note: Participants' quotes are italicised

Table 4.4 (p. 65) shows the classifications given to the responses about social dominance, including: *taking/controlling resources*; *directive/controlling behaviours*; *manipulating the situation*; *excluding others*; *using aggressive behaviours*; and *asking for a turn*. The behaviour classification with the most responses was *taking/controlling resources* (*n* = 12), such as "*Knowingly hiding limited resources or play equipment to return to at a later time".* There was one category that was unexpected – *asking for a*

turn. Typically, asking for a turn is consistent with the literature that would fit more as an example of prosocial behaviour than social dominance.

Table 4.4: Social Dominance Behaviour Classifications and Example Behaviours

Behaviour Classifications	Frequency (n)	Example
Taking/ controlling resources	12	*Knowingly hiding limited resources or play equipment to return to at a later time*
Directive/ controlling behaviours	9	*Controlling the play when everyone is taking turns and denying a certain child a turn because they have decided to.*
Manipulating the situation	9	*Child crying loudly until friend goes gives toy she wants to her*
Excluding others	4	*Telling certain children that they are not allowed to join their group to play*
Using aggressive behaviours	4	*Snatching a toy off another child.*
Asking for a turn	1	*Asking another child for a turn with something.*

Note: Participants' quotes are italicised

For the aggressive behaviours, there were only four behaviour classifications reported by the participants: *physical actions*; *verbal/relational actions*; *snatching of resources*; *and destruction of property* (Table 4.5, p. 66). However, the majority of the examples given (*n* = 21) were coded as physical actions such as hitting, pushing or biting. Two of the other categories, *snatching of resources* and *destruction of property*, could also be identified as physical actions, however there were an adequate number of examples to merit their own behaviour classifications. An interesting finding in the examples of aggressive behaviour was that only nine examples were *verbal and relational actions* compared to the 21 examples of *physical actions*.

Table 4.5: Aggression Behaviour Classifications and Example Behaviours

Coding category	Frequency (n)	Example
Physical actions	21	*Becoming physically aggressive when they lack appropriate negotiation and problem solving skills*
Verbal/relational actions	9	*"You're not my friend" statements - emotional hurt*
Snatching of resources	5	*Removing an object that another child has that want to play with by snatching it from them*
Destruction of property	4	*Becoming bored and destructive as they are not support enough to challenge themselves as they have been at Kindy for a long time and have done everything.*

Note: Participants' quotes are italicised

Table 4.6 (p. 67) summarises the behaviour classifications across the four social behaviours. Generally, the classifications across the four social behaviours are viewed as distinct sets of behaviours. There are, however, three behaviour classifications which appear to be similar across the four social behaviours; the first was *supporting peers/peer relationships* which were seen in both prosocial and social leadership behaviours. The second exception was *using aggressive behaviours* in social dominance and *physical actions* in aggression, where the classification in social dominance included all the physically aggressive actions participants indicated in their responses. Finally, the third exception was *taking/controlling resources* in social dominance and *snatching of resources* in aggression, which are both very similar behaviour classifications.

Table 4.6: Behaviour Classifications Across All Social Behaviours

Prosocial Classifications	Social Leadership Classifications	Social Dominance Classifications	Aggression Classifications
Sharing (11)	Supporting peers (11)	Taking/ controlling resources (12)	Physical actions (21)
Cooperation (10)	Organising activities (11)	Directive/ controlling behaviours (9)	Verbal/relational actions (9)
Supporting peer relationships (9)	Allocating roles (8)	Manipulating the situation (9)	Snatching of resources (5)
Helping others (8)	Promoting positive behaviour (5)	Excluding others (4)	Destruction of property (4)
Empathy (8)	Demonstrating desired skills (2)	Using aggressive behaviours (4)	
Keeping safe (1)	Using verbal language (2)	Asking for a turn (1)	
	Problem solving/ creativity (2)		

4.2.2. Behaviour Traits

In the second half of Section two of the survey, the participants were asked to identify whether the pre-identified behaviour traits listed were *seen equally in both genders*, *seen more commonly in girls*, or *seen more commonly in boys*. The paragraphs that follow will describe the data for each of the four social behaviours and the trends in the responses reported across successive tables. A complete table of data related to teacher responses for all behaviour traits can be found in Appendix G. It is important to note that behaviour traits were not organised by category in the survey.

4.2.2.1. Prosocial behaviours.

Across all nominated prosocial behaviours traits, the predominant response was that participants believed the behaviour traits were *seen equally in both genders*. However, when a participant did indicate that a behaviour trait was likely to be seen more frequently in one gender, then prosocial behaviours were more commonly attributed to girls, as shown in Figure 4.1. An example of when participants indicated a trait was seen in both genders is the *greets teachers and other children* behaviour trait, in which 78% of participants responded with *seen equally in both genders* and only 17% saw it being a trait *seen more commonly in girls*. In comparison, 52% of participants believed that *expresses their feelings and emotions* was *seen more commonly in girls*, while only 43.5% reported it was *seen equally in both genders*. The three traits that had the highest percentage of responses for *seen more commonly in girls* were those related to emotions and conflict resolution, including: *is empathetic towards others*; *resolves conflicts*; and *expresses their feelings and emotions*.

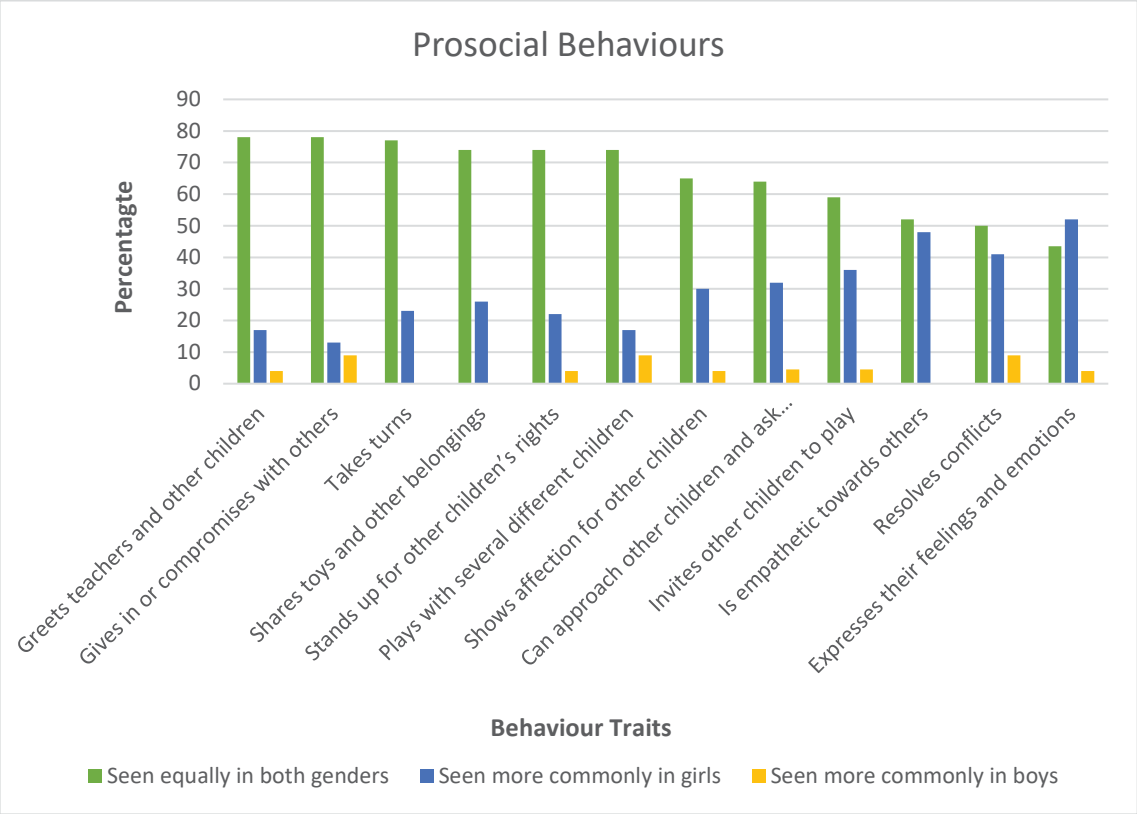

Figure 4.1: Teacher Reports of Behaviour Prevalence by Gender for Prosocial Behaviours

4.2.2.2. Social leadership behaviours.

The social leadership graph (Figure 4.2) shows a similar pattern to prosocial behaviours in which most behaviour traits were reported as *seen equally in both genders*. However, of the participants indicating a gendered response, teachers were more likely to nominate traits as *seen more commonly in girls*. Overall, the trend appears to be comparable to prosocial behaviours where *seen more commonly in girls* responses were identified in the majority of the behaviour traits, with a few behaviour traits with a low number of *seen more commonly in boys* responses. One key finding that has emerged from the social leadership behaviour traits, is that *seen more commonly in girls* (61%) was identified at a higher rate than *seen equally in both genders* (39%) for the trait *uses persuasive language*.

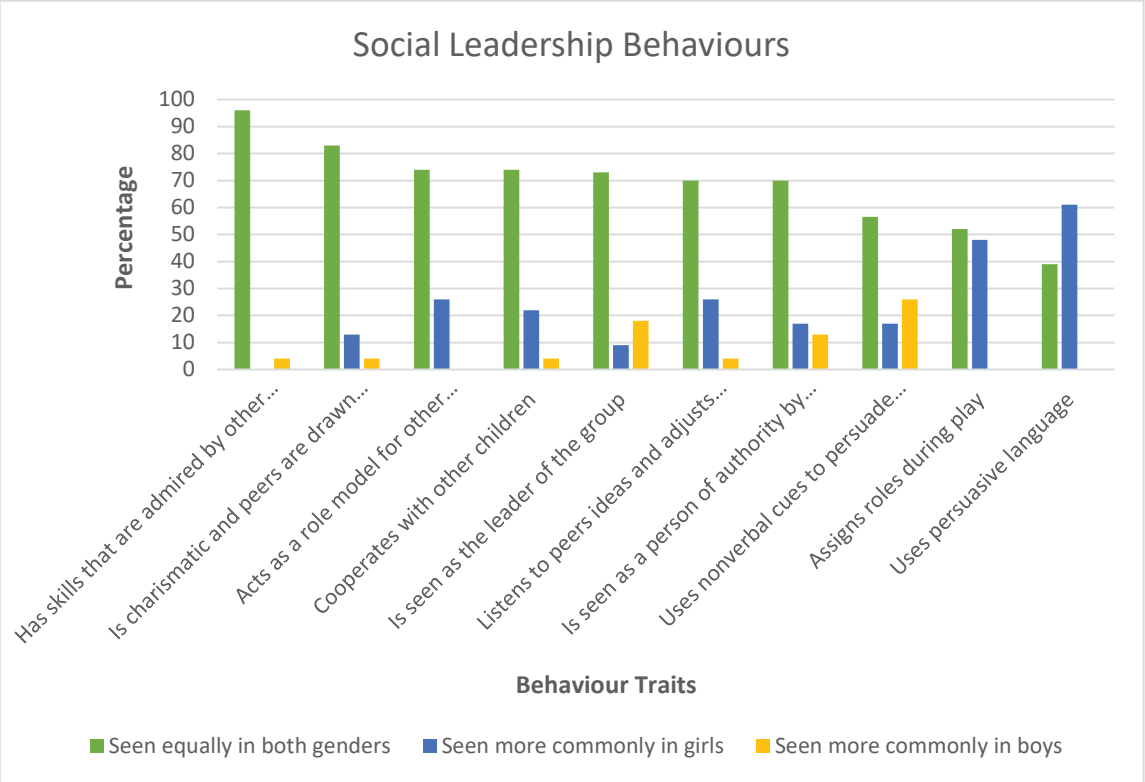

Figure 4.2: Teacher Reports of Behaviour Prevalence by Gender for Social Leadership Behaviours

4.2.2.3. Social dominance behaviours.

Behaviour traits related to social dominance is where *seen more commonly in boys* starts to occur when gendered response were given. As shown in Figure 4.3, even though most participants have again predominantly reported that the identified traits are *seen equally in both genders*, there are several behaviour traits shown as *seen more commonly in boys'* responses. Eighty-two percent (82%) of participants responded that boys were more commonly seen to *use force to get another child to do what they want*, while a further 36% responded that boys are more commonly seen to *use age or physical height to control others*. In comparison, in this domain of social dominance, there was one trait in which teachers responded that it was seen more commonly in girls (41%) at a higher rate than boys (4.5%), which was *tells tales on other children to get them in trouble;* although 54.5% reported this as *seen equally in both genders.*

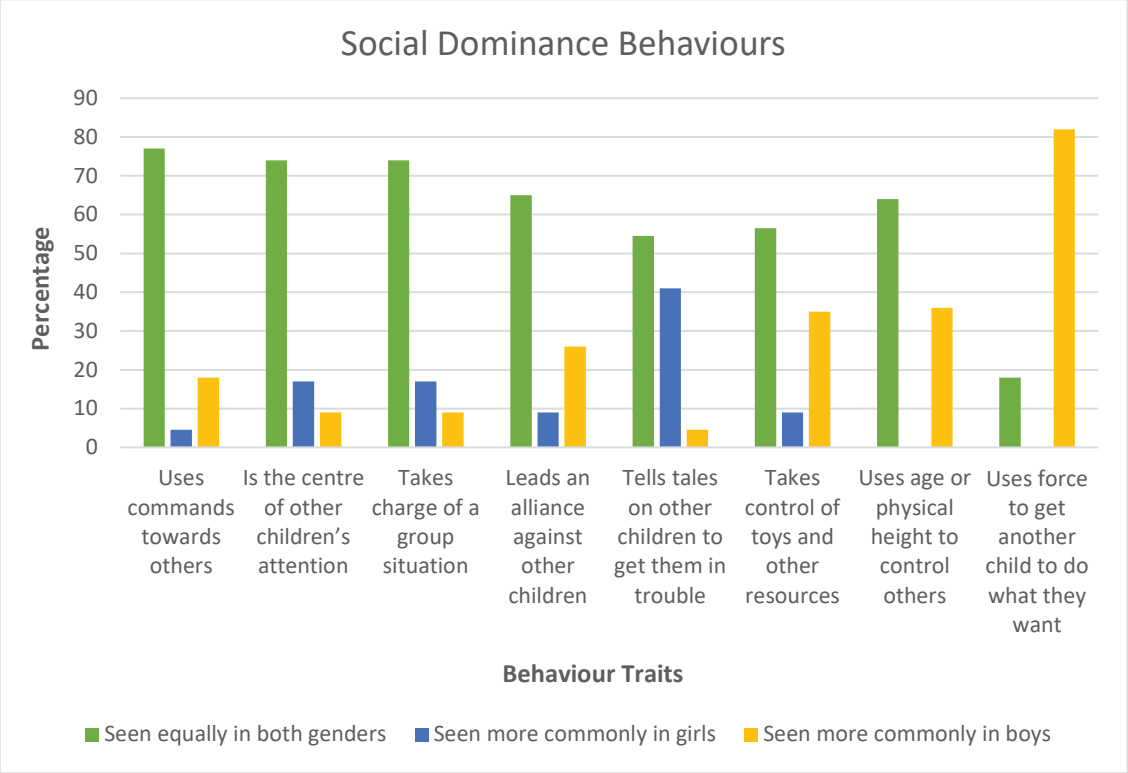

Figure 4.3: Teacher Reports of Behaviour Prevalence by Gender for Social Dominance Behaviours

4.2.2.4. Aggressive behaviours.

Aggressive behaviours traits were presented as two categories because of their distinct characteristics: relational aggression and physical aggression. Relational aggression behaviour traits were traits that used verbal actions to hurt or alienate a peer, whereas physical aggression traits were traits that used physical or intimidation tactics to hurt another. The relational aggression traits (Figure 4.4) show that participants reported that they were *seen equally in both genders*, however those participants who saw the traits as more common in either gender were more likely to select *seen more commonly in girls*. For example, 52% of participants responded that *tells other children they won't be their friend anymore* is *seen more commonly in girls*. The exception to this trend is the behaviour trait of *teases or makes fun of others*, in which boys (30%) were selected more than girls (17%) with 52% of participants indicating that teasing was seen equally.

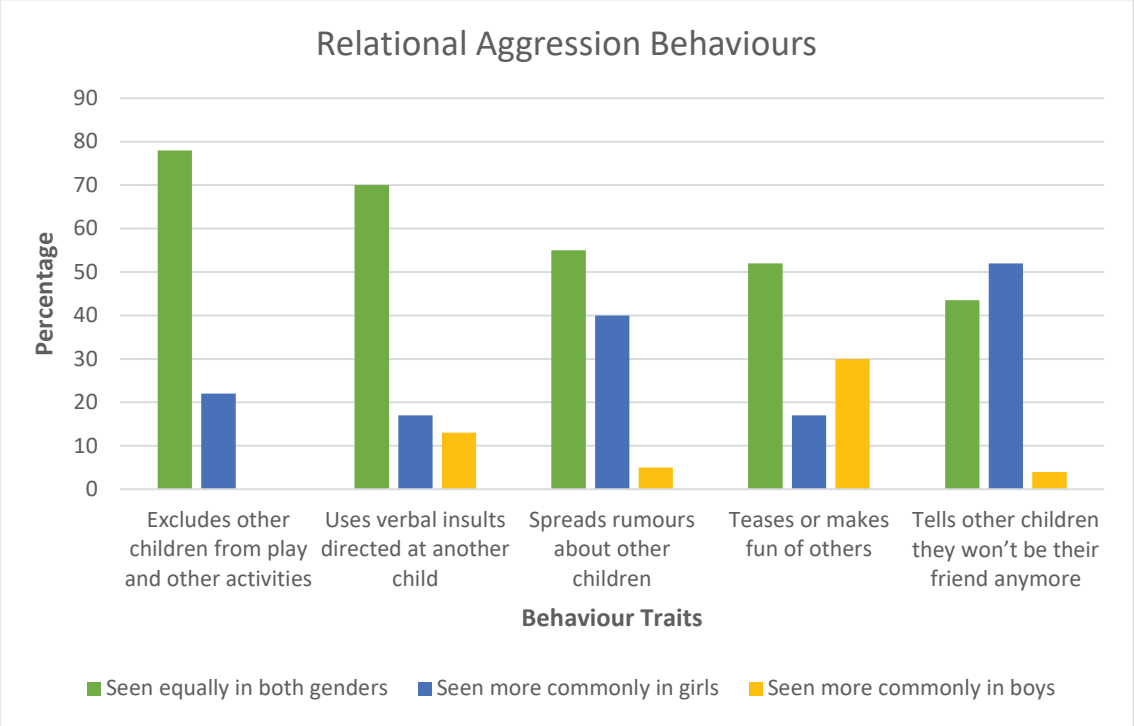

Figure 4.4: Teacher Reports of Behaviour Prevalence by Gender for Relational Aggression Behaviours

Figure 4.5 illustrates participant responses to traits identifies as including physical aggression. This domain reflects much stronger gendered responses, particularly in relation to traits being *seen more commonly in boys*. Eighty-seven percent (87%) of respondents believed that the trait *pushes the boundaries of acceptable rough and tumble play*, was *seen more commonly in boys*. Likewise, 70% of respondents reported that it is more commonly seen in boys to *become physical after being provoked by another child*.

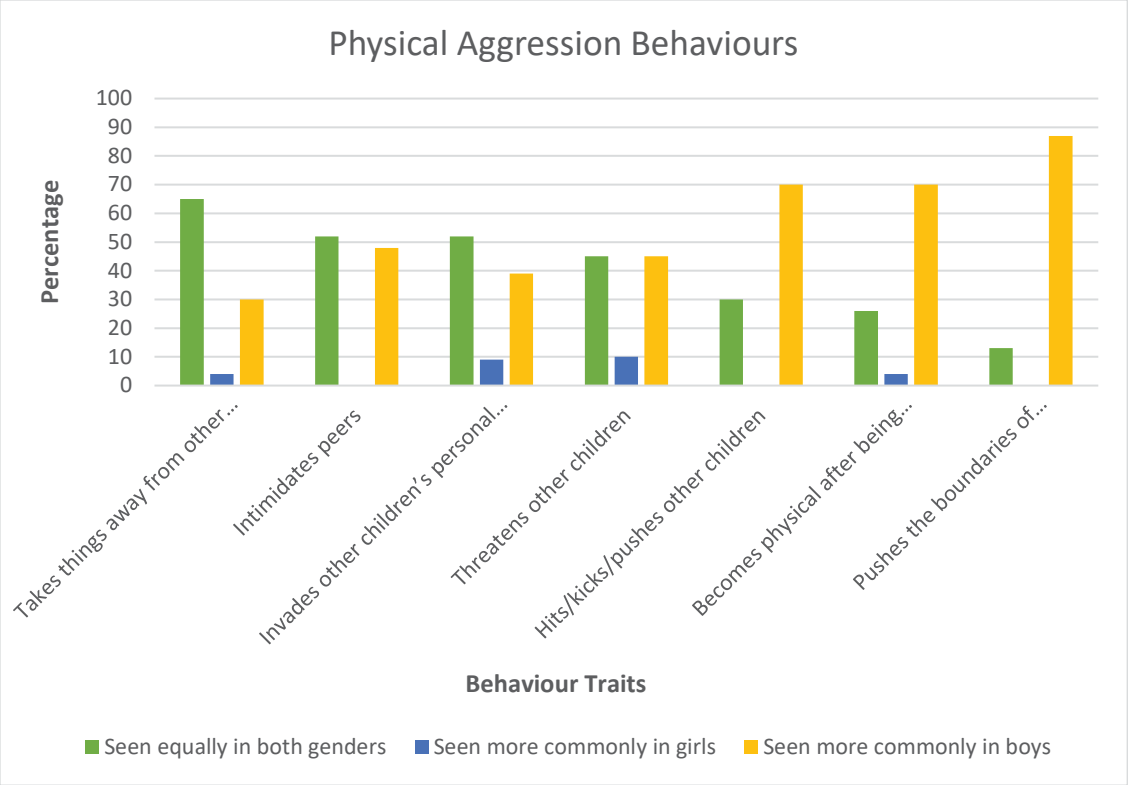

Figure 4.5: Teacher Reports of Behaviour Prevalence by Gender for Physical Aggression Behaviours

4.2.3. Gender and *Te Whāriki*

This section of the survey examined the intersection of whether teachers believed that gender influenced their perspectives about children's social behaviours and if their teaching practices reflected that perspective. Table 4.7 (p. 73) displays the response rate for a Likert scale which asked the participants to identify the extent to which they believed gender influenced their perspectives on a child's social behaviours. Most of the

participants (65%) agreed that gender did influence their perspectives children's social behaviours while 25% disagreed or strongly disagreed. A further 10% of respondents were undecided. When the participants were asked to provide an example of a time when gender had influenced teachers' perspective on social behaviours, whether it was their own perspectives or those of another teacher, there were three distinct classifications that emerged from the data: *emotional expectations*; *gendered play expectations*; and *language abilities*. Emotional expectations included examples where teachers reported greater social acceptance for a girl to be upset, compared to if a boy being upset; 30% of responses included these types of examples. For example, one teacher commented *"I believe if a boy is hurt, more often they are encouraged to be 'brave' where as for girls, it's often ok to cry."* Gendered play expectations were mentioned in the examples of most by the participants (50%), and included examples about it being acceptable for boys to be rough, for example a teacher reported seeing times where others, *"accepted physical roughness from boys with the same behaviour not being tolerated by girls."* Finally, for the language abilities classification, 20% of teachers cited examples related to this which suggested that teachers may respond differently to boys and girls in a given situation due to girls being seen to have stronger language abilities than boys. As one teacher commented, *"girls are often better at articulating themselves than boys at a similar age which can make a difference with how and what you deal with."*

Table 4.7: The Extent to Which Gender Influences Teachers' Perspectives

Likert Response	Frequency (*n* = 20)	Percentage (%)
Strongly Disagree	1	5
Disagree	4	20
Undecided	2	10
Agree	13	65
Strongly Agree	0	0

Participants were then asked about what actions they take to ensure equitable opportunities for children to meet the first goal of the Contribution strand of *Te Whāriki*: "children experience an environment where there are equitable opportunities for learning, irrespective of gender, ability, age, ethnicity or background" (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 66). The responses received were classified into four categories: 1) *challenge children's thinking*; 2) *inclusive, open-ended resources and materials*; 3) *encourage children to engage in all activities*; and 4) *teacher awareness of potential bias*. An example of a teacher's comment that was coded as *challenge children's thinking* was:

> *I ensure that boys can express their feelings just as girls can - having that expectation of both genders. As a female, also saying that I like blue and that I too can wear the batman cape! Saying girls are strong too.*

While *inclusive, open-ended resources and materials* was described as "*An environment with open ended resources where children are encouraged to play anywhere. Images and stories of females undertaking more male typical jobs and vice versa. Allowing children to explore with dress ups".* Related to *encourage children to engage in all activities*, one participant noted:

> *We view our environment as being able to meet the needs of all children, regardless of any diversity. We include "range" in whatever we do - this is about providing an environment that equitably meets the needs of all, regardless of gender, age, stage of development and ethnicity*.

The final classification was teacher awareness of potential bias, which one participant described as "*reflect on my practice. Notice occasions where I'm not providing equitable opportunities and when I am*." As part of completing the survey, some of the teachers recognised that gender equity was an important area for them to consider and reflect upon within their teaching practice, with one teacher commenting that *"Gender equity is not something that I stop to think about and evaluate within myself. I guess it is another facet of teaching that we need to be mindful of."*

4.3. Social Behaviour Scenarios

The following analysis present the findings from the point of the survey at which the two versions (Survey A and Survey B) were differentiated by the gender of the children portrayed in the scenario. The participants were not aware at the time of completing the survey there were two sets of scenarios, or that their responses were to be compared against the other version during analysis to determine if responses varied in accordance with gender of the child in the scenarios; this information was provided to respondents in a disclosure statement after completion of the survey. Information about the participants for each survey is presented in Table 4.8 (p. 76). As shown, the demographic information for participant across the two survey versions were generally comparable. However, the main point of difference is that the participants of Survey B appear to be older with more years' experience than those who responded to Survey A.

The following sections describes and compares the findings from across each version of the gendered scenarios, identifying the emerging themes arising from the comparison. The participants were given four scenarios, one for each social behaviour, which portrayed a situation that may typically occur within a peer group in an early childhood setting. All scenarios asked the participants to identify any positive behaviours occurring in the situation, any behaviours that concerned them, and asked what teaching strategies the participants would use to mediate this situation if they observed it in their setting. To reduce the possibility of researcher bias when analysing the responses to the scenarios, the raw data were neutralised by removing any gendered pronouns and names and the responses were rearranged for coding. After the data were coded into classifications, the responses were reorganised back into their survey versions to compare the percentage of frequencies for the responses to each question.

Table 4.8: Demographic Information of Respondents from Each Survey

Characteristic	Percentage (%)	
	Survey A (*n* = 17)	Survey B (*n* = 13)
Age Group		
Under 20	0	0
20-29	12	8
30-39	23	0
40-49	35	38
50-59	18	46
60+	12	8
Gender		
Female	88	100
Male	12	0
Registered Teacher		
Yes	100	100
Years' Experience Teaching		
Less than one	0	0
1-5 years	24	0
6-10 years	18	15
11-15 years	29	24
16-20 years	0	15
20+ years	29	46
Highest Qualification		
Diploma of Teaching (ECE)	6	23
Teaching – Bachelor's Degree (ECE)	53	61
Graduate Diploma of Teaching (ECE)	41	8
Teaching – Bachelor's Degree (Primary)	0	0
Postgraduate Qualification	0	8

4.3.1. Scenario One: Social Dominance Behaviours

Scenario one was an example of social dominance in preschool children, where a conflict occurred when Child 1 wanted the spade that Child 2 was using, and when Child 1 did not get the spade they excluded Child 2 from the peer group. In this scenario, the children involved in the social dominance conflict in Survey A were boys, and the children in Survey B were girls. Surveys are listed as Survey A Boys and Survey B Girls in this section. Table 4.9 (p. 78) identifies the behaviour classifications that were identified in teachers' responses and the percentage of teachers whose responses were coded with that classification for the positive behaviours, concerning behaviours, and teachers' strategies to the scenario across both survey versions, as reported by participants. The percentage of responses for positive behaviours was similar across survey versions for boys and girls; an example of this is *agency* (11% and 15% respectively), which is the ability to act independently and make their own choices. The exception to the similar percentages of responses is that *playing together* was only identified in Survey A Boys (33%). Also noteworthy, is that *asking for a turn* was identified more in Survey B Girls (54%) than in Survey A Boys (33%).

The concerning behaviours responses were also similar across both versions of the survey. However, *excluding others* was mentioned more for Survey B Girls than Survey A Boys, with a total of 45% of responses for girls. Even though there were still responses for *excluding others* in Survey A Boys (35%), the percentage of responses was equal to the percentage of responses for *taking/controlling resources* (35%), whereas for Survey B Girls the percentage of responses for *excluding others* (45%) was higher than the percentage of responses for *taking/controlling resources* (27%).

The final question for this scenario was about the strategies the participant would use to mediate this scenario if they saw it happening. The percentage of responses for each category of teaching practice were very similar across both survey versions. Strategies included: *ask about and acknowledge feelings and experiences*; *remind them of expected*

behaviours; *provide prompts for alternative strategies*; *redirection*; *stop the incident*; and *foster social problem solving*.

Table 4.9: Social Dominance Scenario Behaviour Classifications and Response Rates Across Survey Versions

Behaviour Classification	Percentage (%)	
	Survey A Boys	Survey B Girls
Positive Behaviours		
Asking for a turn	33	54
Playing together	33	0
Communication	17	23
Agency	11	15
Negotiation	6	0
Directive/ controlling behaviour	0	8
Concerning Behaviours		
Excluding others	35	45
Taking/ controlling resources	35	27
Directive/ controlling behaviour	10	18
Lack of negotiation	15	10
Manipulating the situation	5	0
Teacher Strategies		
Ask about and acknowledge feelings and experiences	25	20
Remind them of expected behaviours	21	20
Provide prompts for alternative strategies	13	25
Redirection	8	5
Stop the incident	4	10
Foster social problem solving	29	20

Note: Survey A Boys (*n* = 12). Survey B Girls (*n* = 12). Percentage data refers to percentage of teachers whose responses were coded with that classification.

4.3.2. Scenario Two: Prosocial Behaviours

Scenario two was an example of prosocial behaviours, where Child 1 fell during play and all the children continued playing except for Child 2 who stops to find out if they are ok and then invites the Child 1 to go play with them. In this scenario Survey A portrayed girls involved in this situation, and Survey B portrayed boys. Surveys are listed as Survey A Girls and Survey B Boys in this section. Table 4.10 (p. 80) displays the percentage of responses for the reported positive behaviours, concerning behaviours, and the teacher strategies to this prosocial scenario. The percentage of responses for the positive behaviour classifications was similar across both survey versions. For example, *shows empathy* had a slight difference in percentage of responses for Survey A Girls (53%) and Survey B Boys (42%).

Another interesting theme that has emerged from this scenario, is that there were slightly less participants who described that *other children continued playing* as a concerning behaviour in girls (67%), than it was in boys (72%). Furthermore, 22% of participants from Survey A mentioned that there were no concerning behaviours in this scenario, compared to the 7% of participant from Survey B. The teacher strategies described in both surveys were similar, with *praise them* having the highest percentage of responses across both survey versions. However, 5% of the participants of Survey B responded with *none*, meaning that they would not interfere if they saw this scenario occurring in their setting.

Table 4.10: Prosocial Scenario Behaviour Classifications and Response Rates Across Survey Versions

Behaviour Classification	Percentage (%)	
	Survey A Girls	Survey B Boys
Positive Behaviours		
Shows empathy	53	42
Supporting friendships	33	37
Helping others	14	21
Concerning Behaviours		
Other children continued playing	67	72
Didn't find a teacher	0	7
Child having little resilience	0	7
Egocentric	0	7
Lack of empathy	11	0
None	22	7
Teacher Strategies		
Praise them	52	47
Provide prompts for expected behaviour	12	10
Ask about feelings of others	12	10
Acknowledge their friendship skills	18	15
Offer support	6	10
None	0	5

Note: Survey A Girls (*n* = 9). Survey B Boys (*n* = 12). Percentage data refers to percentage of teachers whose responses were coded with that classification

4.3.3. Scenario Three: Aggression Behaviours

The third scenario in the survey was an example of relational aggression, where an argument occurred over blocks and Child 1 tells Child 2 that they won't be their friend anymore and won't be going to their birthday party. Survey A portrayed two boys in this situation, while Survey B portrayed two girls in the same situation. Surveys are listed as Survey A Boys and Survey B Girls in this section. Table 4.11 (p. 82) identifies the percentage of responses for the reported positive behaviours, concerning behaviours, and teacher strategies to this aggression scenario. The positive behaviour classifications for this scenario differ substantially with only two common categories between survey respondents: *communication*, and *none*. Survey A participants' responses focused on the *ability to play with someone else* (36%), whereas Survey B participants responses focused on *communication* and *none* (29%).

One of the more significant differences in this scenario was examined in the responses to the concerning behaviours. Participants of Survey B identified that one of the most concerning behaviours seen in this scenario was *excluding their peers* (40%), with the other being *manipulation* (35%). As *manipulation* and *verbal/relational actions* are similar constructs, these two classifications have been differentiated because the examples given by the participants did express different aspects of the behaviours. An example of *manipulation* as described by one participant was "*Emotional coercion to manipulate others behaviour to gain power over a situation,* while an example of *verbal/relational actions* as described by a participant was "*Being hurtful by saying that you are not coming to my party, knowing that would upset Henry*". Notably, *manipulation* was not a category described by the participants of Survey A. However, Survey A did describe *excluding their peers* (50%) and *verbal/relational actions* (34%) as the most concerning behaviours.

Following these concerning behaviours, the teacher strategies reflect these differences in perspectives. Both surveys had four common teacher practices that had similar response rates: *ask about and acknowledge feelings and experiences*; *foster social*

problem solving; *talking about the situation*; and *none*. However, Survey B had three more practices that survey A did not have any responses to: *redirection* (16%); *facilitate friendships* (5%); and *provide prompts to alternative strategies* (5%).

Table 4.11: Aggression Scenario Behaviour Classifications and Response Rates Across Survey Versions

Coding Category	Percentage (%)	
	Survey A Boys	Survey B Girls
Positive Behaviours		
Ability to play with someone else	36	0
Communication	27	29
Common interest	10	0
Persistence in joining peers	0	21
Initially working together	0	7
Conflict is normal	0	7
Dealing with emotions	0	7
None	27	29
Concerning Behaviours		
Verbal/relational actions	34	15
Excluding their peers	50	40
Lack of problem solving	8	10
Normal four-year-old behaviour	8	0
Manipulation	0	35
Teacher Strategies		
Ask about and acknowledge feelings and experiences	27	21
Foster social problem solving	27	21
Talking about the situation	27	27
Redirection	0	16
Facilitate friendships	0	5
Provide prompts to alternative strategies	0	5
None	19	5

Note: Survey A Boys (*n* = 9). Survey B Girls (*n* = 12). Percentage data refers to percentage of teachers whose responses were coded with that classification.

4.3.4. Scenario Four: Social Leadership Behaviours

Scenario four was an example of social leadership behaviours, where a group of children are playing together, when Child 1 starts to organise everyone to get something for their play. Child 2 decides they do not want to get what they have been told to and gets something else instead, which results in the threat of exclusion from Child 1. Survey A portrayed two girls in this scenario, while Survey B portrayed boys in the same scenario. Surveys are listed as Survey A Girls and Survey B Boys in this section Table 4.12 (p. 84) examines the response rates and examples of the positive behaviours, concerning behaviours, and teacher strategies as reported by the participants. *Working together*, *agency* and *role sharing* were three common classifications that emerged from the participants' responses, with similar percentage of responses across both surveys. One unexpected response for a behaviour classification was that of *leadership skills*, which differed for Survey A (20%) and Survey B (45%).

The concerning behaviours were similar across both surveys. For example, *unable to consider peer's idea* was reported by 21% and 20% respectively, as well as *inflexibility* (16% of Survey A responses, and 20% of Survey B responses) and *lack of negotiation* (21% of Survey A responses, and 13% of Survey B responses). One behaviour was indicated slightly more in one survey than the other, *controlling behaviour*, in which it was only mentioned 7% of responses as a concerning behaviour in Survey A, but 26% in Survey B. The percentage of responses for teacher strategies to this scenario were all similar, and there were only four teacher strategies identified: *support all children*; *observe*; *provide prompts for alternative strategies*; and *foster social problem solving*.

Table 4.12: Social Leadership Scenario Behaviour Classifications and Response Rate Across Survey Versions

Coding Category	Percentage (%)	
	Survey A Girls	Survey B Boys
Positive Behaviours		
Working together	40	23
Communication	13	0
Leadership skills	20	45
Agency	20	17
Role sharing	7	5
Negotiation	0	5
Directorial	0	5
Concerning Behaviours		
Unable to consider peer's idea	21	20
Inflexibility	16	20
Lack of negotiation	21	13
Excluding peer	21	7
Agency	7	0
Controlling behaviour	7	26
Lack of knowledge about empathy	0	7
Dictator	0	7
None	7	0
Teacher Strategies		
Support all children	22	18
Observe	22	18
Provide prompts for alternative strategies	22	27
Foster social problem solving	34	37

Note: Survey A Girls (*n* = 9). Survey B Boys (*n* = 11). Percentage data refers to percentage of teachers whose responses were coded with that classification.

4.4. Summary

This chapter has examined the responses to both versions of the survey. The first section identified themes and patterns that emerged from data for all participants. Included in this section were the questions that described the behaviours and their behaviour traits, as well as investigated the intersection of gender and teacher practices. From this section of findings, it has been identified that the social behaviours listed in this study have a range of behaviours associated with them, and each participant had a different view on how these behaviours were expressed in young children. Even though the participants expressed different views on how the behaviours were expressed in young children, the majority of the participants identified that these social behaviours were generally seen equally amongst both genders. However, there were some differences identified in the teachers' perspective on whether the expression of these social behaviours is based on the gender of the child. It was also identified that the participants reported that gender influenced their perspectives of these social behaviours in young children, but they acknowledged that they took action to ensure that equity occurred in their setting.

The second section described the responses for the scenarios, which differed by gender across the two survey versions. The response rates for each behaviour classification were compared to gain understanding of how the gender of the children involved influenced the participants' responses. Generally, the percentage of responses were similar across both survey versions for all four social behaviour scenarios. However, the responses to the aggression scenario was the scenario which differed the most according to the gender of the child. The following chapter will discuss these findings in relation to the research questions.

Chapter Five: Discussion and Conclusion

5.1. Introduction

This research study investigated teachers' perspectives of social behaviours in preschool children, teacher reports of the prevalence of these social behaviours in boys and girls, and how children's gender related to the perspectives about, and responses to, specific social behaviour including; prosocial behaviours, social leadership, social dominance, and aggressive behaviours. This chapter discusses the findings identified in the previous chapter and explores these findings in relation to known literature in this area. There are four main research questions that guided this study, which are attended to in this discussion: "What are teachers' perspectives of prosocial behaviours, social leadership, social dominance, and aggressive behaviours in children in early childhood?"; "Do teacher's report social behaviours as more or less prevalent in boys or girls in early childhood?"; "What strategies do teachers report using to respond to different social behaviours in children?"; and "Are teachers' perspectives and strategies influenced by the gender of the child?" This chapter begins by discussing the findings which relate to teachers' perspectives of social behaviours, including how teachers described the behaviours. Following this, the prevalence of these social behaviours in boys or girls is discussed. Discussion then considers the strategies teachers reported using to mediate these social behaviours, before discussing whether there were any differences in the teachers' perspectives of social behaviours and teachers' reported strategies based on the gender of the child. Findings suggest that the majority of teachers who responded to the survey believed that in general social behaviours are seen equally for both boys and girls. This discussion will highlight particular areas of the findings in which some differences in teachers' perspectives of the social behaviours and differences in the teachers' strategies based on children's gender were identified. In concluding the chapter, the strengths and limitations of the study are discussed, along with key implications of the study and directions for future research.

5.2. Teacher Descriptions of Social Behaviours

In considering teachers' perspectives of social behaviours in early childhood, it is important to establish an understanding of how teachers define and describe key social behaviours, and to consider how these descriptions might align with the extant research literature in the field. In the present study, teachers were given a description of the four social behaviours, and were asked to provide examples of the social behaviours as they saw them exhibited in preschool children.

When describing prosocial behaviours, the teachers in this study made connections to concepts of *sharing*, *cooperation*, *empathy*, *helping others*, and *supporting peer relationships*. These behaviours are consistent with prosocial behaviours identified in the literature, for example, the three categories of prosocial behaviours described by Hay and Cook (2007), including feeling for another, working with another, and ministering to another. Another key aspect of prosocial behaviours defined in the literature is that "voluntary behaviours [are] intended to benefit another" (Eisenberg et al., 2006, p. 646). None of the teachers referred to voluntary actions or actions that directly benefited others, rather they focused on the actions such as *cooperation* and *supporting peer relationships*. While these behaviours might benefit another child, it appears that these behaviours are typically expected of preschool children by their teachers, for their own sake. One of the teacher descriptions of prosocial behaviours, *keeping safe*, did not fit into typical descriptions of prosocial behaviour. However, this area does reflect the third goal of the Well-Being strand of *Te Whāriki*, the New Zealand Early Childhood Curriculum Framework, which states that "children experience an environment where they are kept safe from harm" (Ministry of Education, 2017, p. 27). This goal indicates that children will keep themselves and others safe, as well as develop a sense of responsibility to protect others and know the rules surrounding harming others and the environment. Although not typically used to describe prosocial behaviour, keeping safe through protecting themselves and others from dangers and risk during play appeared to be of value to at least one teacher in this study.

Related to the social leadership examples provided in this study, teachers' descriptions of social leadership in early childhood were categorised into the following behaviour classifications: *supporting peers*; *organising activities*; *allocating roles*; *promoting positive behaviour*; *using verbal language*; *problem solving/creativity*; and *demonstrating desired skills*. As with prosocial behaviours, the behaviours of social leadership were consistent with previous literature on social leadership in early childhood. Social leadership can be described as behaviours where one individual gives directions and commands to others with whom they appear to have some influence over (Shin et al., 2004). Arnott (2013) posits that young children who exhibited leadership used the following characteristics: explicit directing behaviours; viewed as a person of authority by peers; peers look at them for approval or direction; decision-making abilities; they direct the play theme; they direct other children; and appeared to have superior knowledge of the activity. The behaviour classifications identified in this study align with these previously identified classifications of social leadership behaviour.

Social dominance has been described in the literature as the urge to control resources and peers in a group setting (Roseth et al., 2007). The teachers in this study gave examples of social dominance which were categorised into the following behaviour classifications: *taking/controlling resources*; *directive/controlling behaviours*; *manipulating the situation*; *excluding others*; and *using aggressive behaviours*. Hawley (2003) identified that young children who used social dominance, used coercive and direct methods to get control. An example Hawley (2003) used was that of a child threatening another child for a toy, and then after being refused, snatching the toy off the child. In this example, threatening is seen as coercive behaviour and the snatching of the resources is seen as a direct behaviour. The behaviour classifications identified by the teachers in this study align with Hawley's (2003) notion of coercive and direct methods of control, where *taking/controlling resources*, *manipulating the situation*, and *excluding others* are identified as coercive behaviours, while *directive/controlling behaviours* and *using aggressive behaviours* are identified as direct methods of control.

In analysing the teachers' descriptions of aggressive behaviour, the following categories were identified: *physical actions*; *verbal/relational actions*; *snatching of resources*; and *destruction of property*. One notable theme which emerged from these behaviour classifications, is that the majority of the examples indicated physical aggression (*physical actions*, *snatching of resources*, and *destruction of property*), and only 23% of the examples indicated relational aggression (*verbal/relational actions*). While relational aggression is mentioned by this group of teachers as an example of aggression, it is not given equal attention as physical aggression. This suggests that these teachers may prioritise physical aggression as it is more visible, and may present more immediate risk to the physical self, which fits with a wider societal view on the ways in which physical aggression is regarded in comparison to relational aggression. Relational aggression may still be well understood by teachers, but was not acknowledged as much as physical aggression. This might be because teachers may consider it to be in some way less harmful than physical aggression. Nonetheless, aggression is defined by Murray-Close and Ostrov as "behaviours that are intended to hurt, harm, or injure another person" (2009, p. 828) and this can be both physical or relation in nature. From this finding in this study, there may be a need for teachers to give more attention to relational aggression between young children in their setting if it not already at the forefront of their minds, as relational aggression can be just as detrimental to children as physical aggression. This was identified in Crick et al. (2006) study where they found that acknowledging and understanding relational aggression in young children is imperative as relational aggression in early childhood leads to an increased risk of peer exclusion later in life.

5.3. Teacher Reports on Prevalence of Social Behaviours in Boys and Girls

To examine whether teachers reported specific social behaviours as being seen with greater prevalence in either boys or girls, the teachers were presented with a list of behaviour traits and were asked to rate whether each trait was *seen more commonly in boys*, *seen more commonly in girls*, or *seen equally in both genders*. Analysis of the results showed that for most of the specified behaviour traits, the majority of teachers

reported them as being *seen equally in both genders*. These findings challenge the ideas presented by Chapman (2016), who argued that teachers' perspectives of behaviours in young children were consistent with the child's gender (i.e., identifying different behaviours as more of a girl behaviour or more of a boy behaviour). Teachers in Chapman's study reported gendered views of children's behaviours and their views were transferred to the children through planning, resources provided, and facilitation, an outcome not as strongly evident in this present study.

Although most behaviours were reported as seen equally, there were a few specific points of difference in relation to gender expectations. For example, the prosocial behaviour traits of *expresses their feelings and emotions* was reported *seen more commonly in girls* at a higher rate than *seen equally in both genders*. While *is empathetic towards others* and *resolves conflicts,* both had high rates of responses indicating *seen more commonly in girls*, the responses to *seen equally in both genders* was indicated at a slightly higher rate for both behaviour traits. Notably, these three behaviour traits involve emotions and resolving conflicts. Bouchard et al. (2015) contend that teachers perceive girls as being more prosocial than boys, due to a heightened emotional intelligence, and indicate that this may affect how they teach their students; however, the researcher observations did not recognise any difference in the observed prosocial behaviours of young children. The results of this study are consistent with Bouchard et al. (2015) findings of no apparent difference between boys and girls, because most of the responses to these behaviour traits were *seen equally in both genders*; however, since girls were indicated more in traits involving emotions and resolving conflicts, it suggests that these teachers perceived girls as more prosocial in these areas than boys.

The responses to the social leadership behaviour traits showed a similar pattern to the prosocial behaviour traits, where seen equally in both genders were indicated by most of the teachers. However, when a gendered response was given, the following behaviour traits were seen more commonly in girls: *acts as role model for other children*; *is charismatic and peers are drawn to them*; *cooperates with other children*; *listens to*

peers' ideas and adjusts the play accordingly; *is seen as a person of authority by peers*; *assigns roles during play*; and *uses persuasive language*. In contrast, two behaviour traits: *is seen as the leader of the group* and *uses nonverbal cues to persuade others to do what they want*, were reported as being *seen more commonly in boys.* These results are consistent with the results of Lee, Recchia and Shin's (2005) study, which found that there were distinct leadership styles that differed based on the child's gender, which they labelled as: the director; the free spirit; the manager; and the power man. The behaviour traits which were reported by participants as being seen more commonly in boys than in girls when a gendered response was reported are comparable to the description given by Lee et al. (2005) of the power man. The power man is charismatic and attractive to peers, and uses his social standing to include or exclude peers. Mawson's (2010) study extended Lee et al. (2005) research, by investigating social leadership characteristics in a New Zealand context, where he examined that boys and girls exhibited social leadership differently. Similar to Mawson's (2010) study, the present study found that the traits identified as being more common in girls were a directorial approach, where cooperation and persuasive language was utilised; however, the traits identified as more common in boys were not consistent with Mawson's (2010) findings of boys using a dictatorial, physical approach, as these teachers in this study saw traits with non-physical attributes as *seen more commonly in boys*.

The behaviour traits related to social dominance is where *seen more commonly in boys* was reported more often than *seen more commonly in girls* when a gendered response was given. This was identified primarily in the *uses force to get another child to do what they want* behaviour trait. Interestingly, this behaviour trait is comparable with Mawson's (2010) identification of social leadership in preschool boys which identified that boys tended to use a dictatorial approach to social leadership, which involved aggression and intimidation. However, the list of the behaviour traits for the present study were derived from Hawley's (2003) study, which described socially dominant

strategies of control as directive and aversive, such as threatening a child, or forcing a child to give them the resource they want.

The responses to the relational and physical aggression behaviour traits showed some difference in the way teachers reported the prevalence of these two behaviours. For example, when a gendered response was given, *seen more commonly in girls* was reported more for the relational aggression behaviour traits and *seen more commonly in boys* was reported more for the physical aggression behaviour traits. These findings were consistent with Crick et al. (2006) study, which used both observations and teacher reports of aggression in young children, and identified that girls are more relationally aggressive than boys, whereas boys are more physically aggressive.

5.4. Teacher Strategies Used to Manage Social Behaviours

Teachers reported a range of different strategies they would use to mediate the social behaviours seen in the scenarios if they experienced the situation occurring in their setting. There were three strategies which were reported as a global strategy the teachers would utilise across the range of social situations described in the scenarios, including: *provide prompts for expected behaviour*; *ask about and acknowledge feelings and experiences*; and *foster social problem solving*. These three teacher strategies link to some of the teaching strategies introduced by Webster-Stratton (2012) in the Incredible Years (IY) program. One of the main principles of IY regards research-based classroom management strategies aimed at strengthening children's social, emotional and academic competence (Webster-Stratton, 2012). All three strategies align with the IY teaching pyramid, which is a tool used throughout the IY program that helps teachers to conceptualise effective teaching strategies. The idea of the IY teaching pyramid is that "a positive teacher-student-parent relationship and proactive teaching and coaching strategies precede discipline strategies, and that in effective classroom environments attention to positive behaviours occurs far more frequently than attention to negative behaviours" (Webster-Stratton, 2012, p. 43). Foundational relationship skills, such as talking, listening, problem solving, and cooperation form the bottom layer of the

pyramid with the intention that these global strategies are used most often. More targeted intervention strategies, such as reminders of expected behaviour, and re-engagement strategies are situated at the top of the pyramid, with the intention they should be used least often, and when other strategies have been implemented effectively.

Teachers identified that their practices to mediate and support social behaviours were guided by the desire to *support all children*. However, more targeted approaches identified for the social dominance and aggression scenarios included *redirection,* which one teacher described as *"Give language and support to resolve and redirect or regroup if the opportunity is there"*. These strategies are also articulated in the IY program, however supporting all children would be in the foundational relationship skills of the pyramid, while redirection is closer to managing negative behaviours. Responses also suggest that teachers see children as having individual social and behavioural characteristics that need a responsive and flexible approach, adopting different teaching strategies to appropriately support all children. Such an approach reflects the intent of *Te Whāriki* which promotes an inclusive curriculum whereby "every child has the right to equitable opportunities to participate actively in the learning community" (Ministry of Education, 2017, p. 36).

5.5. Gender Influences on Teachers' Perspectives

An important finding from the present study is that most of the teachers agreed that gender did influence their perspectives of children's social behaviours; with examples of when this has occurred suggesting that it relates to *emotional expectations*; *gendered play expectations*; and *language abilities*. This finding is important because *Te Whāriki*, the New Zealand Early Childhood Curriculum Framework specifically indicates that the curriculum encompasses an adaptive environment and requires teaching approaches appropriate for all "gender and ethnicity, diversity of ability and learning needs, family structure and values, socio-economic status and religion" (Ministry of Education, 2017, p. 13). The current findings support previous research that suggests that teachers may

have preconceived ideas about gender and young children (Chapman, 2016; Erden, 2009). Given the expectations of the curriculum and the reality of gendered perspectives, an important area of continued research would be to investigate the extent to which teachers preconceived ideas regarding gender influence teaching and learning experiences in the early childhood setting, and more specifically how such experiences serve to influence the development of children's gender identities. Such a focus would be particularly timely given the increasing number of children accessing early childhood services, and from increasingly young ages (Ministry of Education, 2016).

Given that teachers play an important role in establishing the early childhood curriculum, and the teaching and learning experiences that children engage in, the way in which teachers develop an understanding of gender and gender development is an important focus. This includes both pre-service initial teacher education and ongoing professional development. As Erden (2009) investigated, taking a semester long course in gender equity can change the views and practices of pre-service teachers towards gender in early childhood. Even though it is not clear whether the teachers in the present study had their ideas regarding gender and young children change over their years' experience teaching, the results from the Likert scale question do indicate that many of the teachers were able to acknowledge that the gender of the child influences their perspectives and practices of social behaviours in young children. Based on Erden's (2009) findings, if these teachers were involved in a professional development programme which focused on gender equity and creating an equitable environment for young children, then their perspectives and practices could be refined and transformed. This would in turn aid in the development of an environment for young children to explore gender roles where equity is supported.

Although most teachers reported that gender influences their perspectives of children's social behaviours, the findings from their examples described and the comparisons of scenarios based on gender indicate that the influence of gender might be greater for specific social behaviours and expectations. For example, language ability was identified

by teachers when describing how gender influences their perspectives where the behaviour trait of *uses persuasive language* was also reported as *seen more commonly in girls*. The connection between language ability and social behaviours is regularly discussed in the literature, such as Doctoroff et al. (2006) who explain that there is a connection between emergent literacy abilities and prosocial behaviours. They expand on this to discuss that boys who have low language abilities are typically more aggressive and had less prosocial interactions with peers.

5.6. Gender Influences on Teachers' Strategies

When the teachers were asked to provide examples of how they ensure there are equitable opportunities for all children regardless of gender, the responses were categorised into four classifications of teaching strategies: *challenge children's thinking*; *inclusive open-ended resources and materials*; *encourage all children to engage in all activities*; and *teacher awareness of potential bias*. All four of these strategies are provided as examples in *Te Whāriki* under the first goal of the Contribution strand: "Children experience an environment where there are equitable opportunities for learning, irrespective of gender, ability, age, ethnicity, or background" (Ministry of Education, 2017, p. 37). This suggests that the teachers who participated in this survey use strategies to ensure equity in their education setting and that teacher reported strategies align with *Te Whāriki*. Having strategies to address gender equity in early childhood is important because it ensures that all children have opportunities to participate actively in the programme regardless of any differences based on the gender of the child. *Te Whāriki* states that "language and resources are inclusive of each child's gender, ability, ethnicity and background. Children have opportunities to discuss bias and to challenge prejudice and discriminatory attitudes" (Ministry of Education, 2017, p. 39). However, there are limited guidelines in *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996, 2017) regarding specific strategies to promote gender equity in early childhood, and therefore teachers in New Zealand may need to be provided with extra resources about practices which support equity in their classrooms.

Even though the teachers in this study identified the intention that they would support all children, other findings from this study suggest that in practice some teachers have perspectives based on children's gender when considering specific social behaviours in young children. For example, reported teaching strategies were similar across both surveys for prosocial behaviours and social leadership, however, the responses for the teaching strategies of social dominance and aggression were different across genders. This suggests that teachers may need to more than challenge children's thinking; ensure inclusive open-ended resources and materials; encourage all children to engage in all activities; and have awareness of their own potential bias. Research on supporting gender equity in ECE has also identified that children develop their gender identity through observing and modelling what they see, so therefore teachers need to be aware of how they're interacting with and facilitating play and dialogue in their setting (Chapman, 2016). Furthermore, Chapman (2016) highlights that "regardless of whether educators actively facilitate play or choose not to get involved, they have the potential to shape children's understanding of their gender roles" (p. 1282).

5.7. Strength and Limitations

When interpreting these results, both the strengths and the limitations need to be considered. The main strength of this study was the mixed methods approach that was utilised to collect both qualitative and quantitative data from the online survey. Using a mixed methods survey allowed for questions that probed into a complex belief based issue that may have made the participants uncomfortable. For example, the decision to use two versions of the survey, that differed by the gender of the children portrayed in the behaviour scenarios, allowed for the teachers to respond without fear of a potential gender bias. Also, asking the teachers to pretend that they were a reliever responding to the scenarios allowed for the removal of any personal connections to the scenario, such as imagining a child from their own setting.

Another strength of this study was the use of data transformation to translate the responses to the qualitative questions into quantitative data was also a strength of this

research. This data transformation provided a platform for a comparison to be made between survey versions, and therefore conclusions were able to be made based on child gender.

There were also limitations to the study, including the limited number of responses gathered. In addition, the three Kindergarten Associations were chosen to recruit participants from because of their central locations, as well as the ease of contact. However, these three Kindergarten Associations are all small-medium sized associations and therefore the participant pool was smaller than it would have been if a larger association had been contacted. However, the small number of responses was not too surprising as online surveys often have a low participant rate (Punch & Oancea, 2014). Given that this was a small-scale research study involving kindergarten teachers from three associations in the central north island, the results are limited to the settings in which they derived from and should not be generalised to the wider population of early childhood teachers in New Zealand.

Moreover, this study used an online survey, which asked the teachers to respond to questions regarding gender and social behaviours in young children. It is uncertain if the teachers who participated in this study understood the questions and scenarios as they were intended. If they understood the questions differently, then their responses would alter to what was expected. In addition, the teachers' responses were self-reports of teaching strategies which may alter from their teaching strategies if they were to be observed by an outside researcher. However, teacher reports of practice are an important insight into their perspectives, which may be difficult for an outside observer to identify.

Furthermore, this study focused on gender as a binary and differentiated teachers' perspectives between boys and girls, which in turn impacts the generalisability of the results of this study. There are many differing perspectives on gender and gender identity development, and therefore, there would be broader ways to investigate

gender issues in the New Zealand ECE context. Included in this, is the idea of exploring various aspects of masculinity and femininity in young children, which was not the focus of this study.

5.8. Implications and Future Research

As described in the limitations, the findings from this study are limited to the group of teachers that responded, and reflect their perspectives and teaching strategies, and are not intended to be generalised to the wider population of early childhood teachers in New Zealand. Nonetheless, the emerging themes provide some interesting insights into teacher thinking and suggest some implications in relation to supporting young children's social competence and gender equity in New Zealand early childhood contexts.

The findings suggest that teachers have differing perspectives on the how the four social behaviours examined in the present study are displayed in young children, as well as differing perspectives on the definitions and examples of these social behaviours. Teachers could benefit from extending their knowledge of these social behaviours (prosocial behaviours, social leadership, social dominance, and aggression behaviours), and how these behaviours are displayed in young children. If teachers were more aware of the behaviours and their traits, then they could familiarise themselves with teaching strategies that are most effective in supporting children's developing social emotional competence. This area of research would benefit from a more in-depth research study which targeted the intersection between social behaviours and teaching strategies that respond to these behaviours.

A promising finding was that teachers from this study were aware of their potential biases towards gender, and their acknowledgement that gender equity in their practice is something that they need to be more aware of. *Te Whāriki* specifically mentions that children will experience an environment with equitable opportunities (Ministry of Education, 1996, 2017), however, due to the percentage of early childhood services that

do not use *Te Whāriki* effectively (ERO, 2016), how many New Zealand children are not experiencing equitable opportunities in their early childhood education? Children need to be able to develop a stable gender identity in early childhood, which would be hard to do in an environment that was not welcoming to all ideas about gender. Therefore, further policy development and associated professional development that addresses the gender equity issue in New Zealand, would be of value.

5.9. Conclusion

This chapter discussed the findings from this research study regarding teachers' perspectives of social behaviours in young children, whether there are any gender differences evident in the responses to both versions of the survey, as well as teacher's strategies to mediate these social behaviours between children. The majority of the responses to the survey indicated that the teachers identified no difference by gender regarding young children's social behaviours or the strategies they utilise when working with children who display these behaviours. However, when a gendered response was reported by the teachers, these reflected some stereotypical gender norms in relation to language skills, relational skills and the use of physical violence and aggression.

The development of social competence is important in early childhood as positive development aids the child in future academic and social success (White, et al., 2013). This study identified teachers' perspectives of and strategies used in regards to social behaviours that directly relate to children's development of social competence. It is therefore important that teachers are aware of how their perspectives about social behaviours may influence children's behaviours and therefore influence the development of social competence. Research in gender equity has emphasised that teachers need to make sure that their teaching practices ensure that boys and girls are not limited by gendered expectations or gender stereotypes when they are in the process of developing social competence and self-identity, as this may lead to negative outcomes (Chapman, 2016; Erden, 2009).

Given the potential impact that gender stereotypes might have on children's social competence, the findings of this study provide indication of a positive view of how teachers perspectives interface with children's gender and social behaviours in early childhood. The majority of responses indicated gender was not related to teacher reports of social behaviours or had a limited influence. Such findings affirm the intention of the first goal of the Contribution strand of *Te Whāriki*, the early childhood curriculum, where "children experience an environment where there are equitable opportunities for learning, irrespective of gender, ability, age, ethnicity, or background" (Ministry of Education, 2017, p. 37). Nonetheless, the occasions in which gender did appear to influence teacher reports might be worth further investigation. Moreover, the teachers themselves, acknowledged the potential for gender bias in ECE, as well as the importance of ensuring gender equity in their teaching practices. Further support for teachers through professional development programmes may be of value to ensure that teachers can effectively utilise strategies to ensure gender equity in their practices.

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Appendices:

Appendix A: Survey Version A

Gender differences in social behaviours - Teachers' perspectives

Welcome,

Thank you for participating in this research project.

My name is Jessica Smith, and I am completing a Master of Arts in Education at Massey University. As part of my research project, I have designed this online survey to examine teachers' understandings about prosocial skills, aggressive behaviours, social dominance, and social leadership in early childhood and investigate whether child gender influences teacher practices in response to the display of these behaviours.

Please note that this online survey is expected to take approximately 20 minutes to complete. The survey is completely anonymous and no identifying questions will be asked, so it is not expected that you will experience any discomfort or harm whilst undertaking this survey.

The data collected for this research will only be used for the completion of this thesis and any resulting publications of this work, and the data will be stored in a secure and confidential place for five years before being disposed of.

If you decide to participate, please be aware that completion of the survey implies consent but you have the right to decline to answer any particular question if you wish.

I appreciate you taking the time to complete this survey. Once you have completed all the questions, please continue all the way to the end and click 'done' when you are finished.

Please click next to begin.

Gender differences in social behaviours - Teachers' perspectives

Demographic questions

1. What age group do you belong to?

Under 20

20 – 29

30 – 39

40 – 49

50 – 59

60+

2. What is your gender?

Male

Female

3. Are you a registered teacher in New Zealand?

Yes

No

4. How many years' experience do you have teaching in New Zealand?

Less than one year

1 – 5 years

6 – 10 years

10 – 15 years

15 – 20 years

20+ years

5. What is the highest qualification you hold?

Diploma of Teaching (ECE)

Primary Teaching qualification

Teaching - Bachelor's Degree

Postgraduate qualification

Graduate Diploma of Teaching

Other (please specify)

Gender differences in social behaviours - Teachers' perspectives

Descriptions of Social Behaviours

6. Prosocial behaviours are defined as "voluntary behaviours that are intended to benefit another". Please describe one or two examples of prosocial behaviours in four-year-old children?

7. Aggression is defined as "behaviours that are intended to hurt, harm, or injure another person". Please describe one or two examples of aggressive behaviours in four-year-old children?

8. Social leadership is defined as "behaviours that give direction and command to others from children who appear to have some influence". Please describe one or two examples of social leadership in four-year-old children?

9. Social dominance is defined as "behaviours that gain control of resources and social attention in a social setting". Please describe one or two examples of social dominance in four-year-old children?

Gender differences in social behaviours - Teachers' perspectives

Social Behaviour Traits

For each of the behaviour traits listed below, indicate whether you believe the behaviour is more common in boys, more common in girls, or seen equally in both boys and girls.

	More common in boys	More common in girls	Seen equally in both genders
Has skills that are admired by other children	○	○	○
Invades other children's personal space	○	○	○
Is seen as a person of authority by peers	○	○	○
Expresses their feelings and emotions	○	○	○
Takes things away from other children	○	○	○
Takes charge of a group situation	○	○	○
Teases or makes fun of others	○	○	○
Spreads rumours about other children	○	○	○
Assigns roles during play	○	○	○
Takes turns	○	○	○
Plays with several different children	○	○	○
Resolves conflicts	○	○	○
Listens to peers ideas and adjusts the play accordingly	○	○	○
Shares toys and other belongings	○	○	○
Leads an alliance against other children	○	○	○
Threatens other children	○	○	○
Becomes physical after being provoked by another child	○	○	○
Is seen as the leader of the group	○	○	○
Uses force to get other another child to do what they want	○	○	○
Intimidates peers	○	○	○

10. *For each of the behaviour traits listed below, indicate whether you believe the behaviour is more common in boys, more common in girls, or seen equally in both boys and girls.*

	More common in boys	More common in girls	Seen equally in both genders
Stands up for other children's rights	○	○	○
Uses commands towards others	○	○	○
Acts as a role model for other children	○	○	○
Tells other children they won't be their friend anymore	○	○	○
Uses persuasive language	○	○	○
Is the centre of other children's attention	○	○	○
Is empathetic towards others	○	○	○
Cooperates with other children	○	○	○
Excludes other children from play and other activities	○	○	○
Gives in or compromises with others	○	○	○
Takes control of toys and other resources	○	○	○
Hits/kicks/pushes other children	○	○	○
Uses nonverbal cues to persuade others to do what they want	○	○	○
Invites other children to play	○	○	○
Pushes the boundaries of acceptable rough and tumble play	○	○	○
Uses age or physical height to control others	○	○	○
Is charismatic and peers are drawn to them	○	○	○
Shows affection for other children	○	○	○
Uses verbal insults directed at another child	○	○	○
Can approach other children and ask to play	○	○	○
Greets teachers and other children	○	○	○
Tells tales on other children to get them in trouble	○	○	○

For the following four scenarios, please read each scenario and imagine that you are a reliever working in a kindergarten and see these behaviours occurring in four-year-old children in this setting. Then respond to each of the questions below.

A group of children are playing in the sandpit together, when Michael decides that he wants the spade that James is using to dig with. Michael asks for the spade first, but when he is denied he starts saying that James will not be able to play with them anymore if he doesn't give him the spade. James still refuses to give Michael the spade, so Michael takes it out of his hands. Michael then says to the rest of the group of children "Come on, lets dig over here instead", leaving James, while the rest of the group of children follows him.

12. What behaviours might you identify as positive social behaviours in this scenario, if any?

13. What behaviours might concern you in this scenario, if any?

14. How would you respond to this situation if you observed it while working as reliever in this setting?

Gender differences in social behaviours - Teachers' perspectives

Social Behaviour Scenarios

A group of young children are running around a playground, when Emily falls over, scrapes her knee and starts to cry. Many of the children do not stop running and playing to help Emily on the ground, except Amber, who stops to see if she is ok. Amber gives Emily a hug and comforts her until a teacher arrives. Amber then asks Emily if she wants to go play on the playground with her.

15. What behaviours might you identify as positive social behaviours in this scenario, if any?

16. What behaviours might concern you in this scenario, if any?

17. How would you respond to this situation if you observed it while working as reliever in this setting?

Gender differences in social behaviours - Teachers' perspectives

Social Behaviour Scenarios

Two children are having an argument about what they are making with the blocks. Liam can be heard saying to Henry “I don’t want to play with you anymore. You are NOT coming to my birthday party!” After this, Liam is seen playing with a third child and when Henry tries to join in, Liam says “You’re not my friend now!” and runs away with the third child.

18. What behaviours might you identify as positive social behaviours in this scenario, if any?

19. What behaviours might concern you in this scenario, if any?

20. How would you respond to this situation if you observed it while working as reliever in this setting?

Gender differences in social behaviours - Teachers' perspectives

Social Behaviour Scenarios

A group of children have moved into the family corner to play, and decide they want to throw a pretend birthday party for one of the teachers. Molly starts telling the other children what things they need to find, such as plates, cups, a table cloth, some balloons and a present for the teacher. Kylie has been told to find the cups for the table, but she tells Molly that she wants to find a present instead. Molly says, “No Kylie, you can’t! I’ve told you to get cups. If you don’t get them, you won’t be able to play with us because everybody has a job to do."

21. What behaviours might you identify as positive social behaviours in this scenario, if any?

22. What behaviours might concern you in this scenario, if any?

23. How would you respond to this situation if you observed it while working as reliever in this setting?

Gender differences in social behaviours - Teachers' perspectives

Gender and *Te Whāriki*

The first goal of the contribution strand of *Te Whāriki* states that "children experience an environment where there are equitable opportunities for learning, irrespective of gender, ability, age, ethnicity or background" (1996, p. 66), however, recent research has suggested that gender does have an impact on the expectations of behaviour that teachers have for young children in their centre.

24. To what extent do you agree that the gender of a child can influence teachers' perspectives of the child's social behaviours?

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
○	○	○	○	○

25. Please describe an example of a time when you believe gender influenced a teachers' perspective of a child's social behaviour.

26. What actions do you take to ensure equitable opportunities for children of different genders to meet this goal of *Te Whāriki* in your teaching practice?

27. Any further comments?

Gender differences in social behaviours - Teachers' perspectives

Thank you for your contribution to this research study. I appreciate you taking the time to complete this survey, and to give some insight into social behaviours in early childhood.

As you will be aware, the purpose of this study was to examine teachers' understandings about prosocial skills, aggressive behaviours, social dominance, and social leadership in early childhood and investigate whether child gender influences teacher practices in response to the display of these behaviours.

In order to fully examine the notion of gender differences, participants were randomly assigned to complete one of two possible versions of the scenarios, which were identical apart from the gender of the children described (questions 12-23). The purpose of this was to allow for comparison of responses across the two versions of these scenarios to determine whether the gender of the children in the scenarios altered teachers' perceptions of the described behaviours and the response that they would give.

As a reminder, your responses are completely anonymous. The study will report findings related to trends across all survey respondents. Should you have any concerns about this process, please feel free to contact my supervisors, as outlined below.

A summary of the study's findings will be sent to your Kindergarten Association to be shared with the participating teachers.

If you have any further questions regarding this research project, please do not hesitate to contact either myself or my supervisors.

Kind regards,

Jessica Smith
research.jsmith@gmail.com

Tara McLaughlin
T.W.McLaughlin@massey.ac.nz

Karyn Aspden
K.M.Aspden@massey.ac.nz

Appendix B: Survey Version B

Gender differences in social behaviours - Teachers' perspectives

Welcome,

Thank you for participating in this research project.

My name is Jessica Smith, and I am completing a Master of Arts in Education at Massey University. As part of my research project, I have designed this online survey to examine teachers' understandings about prosocial skills, aggressive behaviours, social dominance, and social leadership in early childhood and investigate whether child gender influences teacher practices in response to the display of these behaviours.

Please note that this online survey is expected to take approximately 20 minutes to complete. The survey is completely anonymous and no identifying questions will be asked, so it is not expected that you will experience any discomfort or harm whilst undertaking this survey.

The data collected for this research will only be used for the completion of this thesis and any resulting publications of this work, and the data will be stored in a secure and confidential place for five years before being disposed of.

If you decide to participate, please be aware that completion of the survey implies consent but you have the right to decline to answer any particular question if you wish.

I appreciate you taking the time to complete this survey. Once you have completed all the questions, please continue all the way to the end and click 'done' when you are finished.

Please click next to begin.

Gender differences in social behaviours - Teachers' perspectives

Demographic questions

1. What age group do you belong to?

Under 20

20 – 29

30 – 39

40 – 49

50 – 59

60+

2. What is your gender?

Male

Female

3. Are you a registered teacher in New Zealand?

Yes

No

4. How many years' experience do you have teaching in New Zealand?

Less than one year

1 – 5 years

6 – 10 years

11 – 15 years

16 – 20 years

20+ years

5. What is the highest qualification you hold?

Diploma of Teaching (ECE)

Primary Teaching qualification

Teaching - Bachelor's Degree

Postgraduate qualification

Graduate Diploma of Teaching

Other (please specify)

Gender differences in social behaviours - Teachers' perspectives

Descriptions of Social Behaviours

6. Prosocial behaviours are defined as "voluntary behaviours that are intended to benefit another". Please describe one or two examples of prosocial behaviours in four-year-old children?

7. Aggression is defined as "behaviours that are intended to hurt, harm, or injure another person". Please describe one or two examples of aggressive behaviours in four-year-old children?

8. Social leadership is defined as "behaviours that give direction and command to others from children who appear to have some influence". Please describe one or two examples of social leadership in four-year-old children?

9. Social dominance is defined as "behaviours that gain control of resources and social attention in a social setting". Please describe one or two examples of social dominance in four-year-old children?

Gender differences in social behaviours - Teachers' perspectives

Social Behaviour Traits

For each of the behaviour traits listed below, indicate whether you believe the behaviour is more common in boys, more common in girls, or seen equally in both boys and girls.

	More common in boys	More common in girls	Seen equally in both genders
Has skills that are admired by other children	○	○	○
Invades other children's personal space	○	○	○
Is seen as a person of authority by peers	○	○	○
Expresses their feelings and emotions	○	○	○
Takes things away from other children	○	○	○
Takes charge of a group situation	○	○	○
Teases or makes fun of others	○	○	○
Spreads rumours about other children	○	○	○
Assigns roles during play	○	○	○
Takes turns	○	○	○
Plays with several different children	○	○	○
Resolves conflicts	○	○	○
Listens to peers ideas and adjusts the play accordingly	○	○	○
Shares toys and other belongings	○	○	○
Leads an alliance against other children	○	○	○
Threatens other children	○	○	○
Becomes physical after being provoked by another child	○	○	○
Is seen as the leader of the group	○	○	○
Uses force to get other another child to do what they want	○	○	○
Intimidates peers	○	○	○

10. *For each of the behaviour traits listed below, indicate whether you believe the behaviour is more common in boys, more common in girls, or seen equally in both boys and girls*.

	More common in boys	More common in girls	Seen equally in both genders
Stands up for other children's rights	○	○	○
Uses commands towards others	○	○	○
Acts as a role model for other children	○	○	○
Tells other children they won't be their friend anymore	○	○	○
Uses persuasive language	○	○	○
Is the centre of other children's attention	○	○	○
Is empathetic towards others	○	○	○
Cooperates with other children	○	○	○
Excludes other children from play and other activities	○	○	○
Gives in or compromises with others	○	○	○
Takes control of toys and other resources	○	○	○
Hits/kicks/pushes other children	○	○	○
Uses nonverbal cues to persuade others to do what they want	○	○	○
Invites other children to play	○	○	○
Pushes the boundaries of acceptable rough and tumble play	○	○	○
Uses age or physical height to control others	○	○	○
Is charismatic and peers are drawn to them	○	○	○
Shows affection for other children	○	○	○
Uses verbal insults directed at another child	○	○	○
Can approach other children and ask to play	○	○	○
Greets teachers and other children	○	○	○
Tells tales on other children to get them in trouble	○	○	○

Social Behaviour Scenarios

For the following four scenarios, please read each scenario and imagine that you are a reliever working in a kindergarten and see these behaviours occurring in four-year-old children in this setting. Then respond to each of the questions below.

A group of children are playing in the sandpit together, when Amelia decides that she wants the spade that Nicole is using to dig with. Amelia asks for the spade first, but when she is denied she starts saying that Nicole will not be able to play with them anymore if she doesn't give her the spade. Nicole still refuses to give Amelia the spade, so Amelia takes it out of her hands. Amelia then says to the rest of the group of children "Come on, lets dig over here instead", leaving Nicole, while the rest of the group of children follows her.

12. What behaviours might you identify as positive social behaviours in this scenario, if any?

13. What behaviours might concern you in this scenario, if any?

14. How would you respond to this situation if you observed it while working as reliever in this setting?

Gender differences in social behaviours - Teachers' perspectives

Social Behaviour Scenarios

A group of young children are running around a playground, when Michael falls over, scrapes his knee and starts to cry. Many of the children do not stop running and playing to help Michael on the ground, except James, who stops to see if he is ok. James gives Michael a hug and comforts him until a teacher arrives. James then asks Michael if he wants to go play on the playground with him.

15. What behaviours might you identify as positive social behaviours in this scenario, if any?

16. What behaviours might concern you in this scenario, if any?

17. How would you respond to this situation if you observed it while working as reliever in this setting?

Gender differences in social behaviours - Teachers' perspectives

Social Behaviour Scenarios

Two children are having an argument about what they are making with the blocks. Hannah can be heard saying to Kate “I don’t want to play with you anymore. You are NOT coming to my birthday party!” After this, Hannah is seen playing with a third child and when Kate tries to join in, Hannah says “You’re not my friend now!” and runs away with the third child.

18. What behaviours might you identify as positive social behaviours in this scenario, if any?

19. What behaviours might concern you in this scenario, if any?

20. How would you respond to this situation if you observed it while working as reliever in this setting?

Gender differences in social behaviours - Teachers' perspectives

Social Behaviour Scenarios

A group of children have moved into the family corner to play, and decide they want to throw a pretend birthday party for one of the teachers. Patrick starts telling the other children what things they need to find, such as plates, cups, a table cloth, some balloons and a present for the teacher. Henry has been told to find the cups for the table, but he tells Patrick that he wants to find a present instead. Patrick says, “No Henry, you can’t! I’ve told you to get cups. If you don’t get them, you won’t be able to play with us because everybody has a job to do."

21. What behaviours might you identify as positive social behaviours in this scenario, if any?

22. What behaviours might concern you in this scenario, if any?

23. How would you respond to this situation if you observed it while working as reliever in this setting?

Gender differences in social behaviours - Teachers' perspectives

Gender and *Te Whāriki*

The first goal of the contribution strand of *Te Whāriki* states that “children experience an environment where there are equitable opportunities for learning, irrespective of gender, ability, age, ethnicity or background” (1996, p. 66), however, recent research has suggested that gender does have an impact on the expectations of behaviour that teachers have for young children in their centre.

24. To what extent do you agree that the gender of a child can influence teachers’ perspectives of the child’s social behaviours?

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
○	○	○	○	○

25. Please describe an example of a time when you believe gender influenced a teachers' perspective of a child's social behaviour.

26. What actions do you take to ensure equitable opportunities for children of different genders to meet this goal of *Te Whāriki* in your teaching practice?

27. Any further comments?

Gender differences in social behaviours - Teachers' perspectives

Thank you for your contribution to this research study. I appreciate you taking the time to complete this survey, and to give some insight into social behaviours in early childhood.

As you will be aware, the purpose of this study was to examine teachers' understandings about prosocial skills, aggressive behaviours, social dominance, and social leadership in early childhood and investigate whether child gender influences teacher practices in response to the display of these behaviours.

In order to fully examine the notion of gender differences, participants were randomly assigned to complete one of two possible versions of the scenarios, which were identical apart from the gender of the children described (questions 12-23). The purpose of this was to allow for comparison of responses across the two versions of these scenarios to determine whether the gender of the children in the scenarios altered teachers' perceptions of the described behaviours and the response that they would give.

As a reminder, your responses are completely anonymous. The study will report findings related to trends across all survey respondents. Should you have any concerns about this process, please feel free to contact my supervisors, as outlined below.

A summary of the study's findings will be sent to your Kindergarten Association to be shared with the participating teachers.

If you have any further questions regarding this research project, please do not hesitate to contact either myself or my supervisors.

Kind regards,

Jessica Smith
research.jsmith@gmail.com

Tara McLaughlin
T.W.McLaughlin@massey.ac.nz

Karyn Aspden
K.M.Aspden@massey.ac.nz

Appendix C: Letter to Kindergarten Associations

Teacher perspectives of gender differences in social behaviours in preschool children

Request to contact teachers

Hello,

My name is Jessica Smith. I am currently completing a Master of Arts in Education with Massey University. I am undertaking a research project that investigates teachers' perspectives of social behaviours in preschool children and whether these social behaviours differ by the child's gender.

The key focus of this research is to examine teachers' perspectives about prosocial skills, aggressive behaviours, social dominance, and social leadership in early childhood and explore differences in teacher perspectives related to child gender. Given the importance of the development of these social behaviours in early childhood, the present study will examine teachers' understandings of these concepts and investigate whether child gender influences teacher practices in response to the display of these behaviours.

I would like to send an email invitation to all of the teachers in your Kindergarten Association to participate in my research. I am requesting your permission to contact your teachers by e-mail. I have made a list of email addresses for the kindergartens, which were available through the Education Counts website. The email invite will provide a link to an anonymous survey, and the teachers are under no obligation to accept the invitation. If the teachers do decide to participate, the completion of the questionnaire will imply consent.

The survey will ask teachers questions about their views of prosocial skills, aggressive behaviours, social dominance, and social leadership and then ask them to identify whether specific behaviors are more commonly observed in girls or boys. In order to indirectly examine the influence of child gender on teacher view of social behaviours and practices, there will be two versions of the survey which will differ by the gender portrayed in five scenarios. Teachers will be randomly assigned to a survey using the online survey software. The teachers will not be told about the two differing versions

before participating, but an explanation will be provided to them following the completion of the survey. It is not expected that participants will experience any discomfort or harm whilst undertaking this survey, however, teachers will be invited to contact my supervisors should they have any questions or concerns.

This online survey is expected to take approximately 20 minutes to complete. The survey is completely anonymous and no identifying questions will be asked. The data collected for this research will only be used for the completion of this thesis and any resulting publications of this work, and the data will be stored in a secure and confidential place for five years before being disposed of.

I have included a copy of the teacher invitation letter and information sheet for your reference. Please feel free to contact either myself or my supervisors if you have any questions regarding this research project.

Thank you for your consideration of my request. I look forward to hearing from you.

Researcher: Jessica Smith

research.jsmith@gmail.com

Supervisors:

Tara McLaughlin

T.W.McLaughlin@massey.ac.nz

Karyn Aspden

K.M.Aspden@massey.ac.nz

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, Application 16/36. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Dr Rochelle Stewart-Withers, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, telephone 06 356 9099 x 83657, email humanethicsouthb@massey.ac.nz

Appendix D: Invitation to Participate

Teacher perspectives of gender differences in social behaviours in preschool children

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE

Hello,

My name is Jessica Smith. I am currently completing a Master of Arts in Education with Massey University. I am undertaking a research project that investigates teachers' perspectives of social behaviours in preschool children and whether these social behaviours differ by the child's gender.

The key focus of this research is to examine teachers' perspectives about prosocial skills, aggressive behaviours, social dominance, and social leadership in early childhood and explore differences in teacher perspectives related to child gender. Given the importance of the development of these social behaviours in early childhood, the present study will examine teachers' understandings of these concepts and investigate whether child gender influences teacher practices in response to the display of these behaviours.

With the permission of your Association I invite you to participate in this research by completing a short online survey. I would very much appreciate your contribution in order to gain a deeper understanding of teachers' perspectives regarding social behaviours in preschool children. It is not expected that participants will experience any discomfort or harm whilst undertaking this survey.

This online survey is expected to take approximately 20 minutes to complete. The survey is completely anonymous and no identifying questions will be asked. If you decide to participate, you will be completing one of two possible questionnaires. More than one teacher from your kindergarten is able to complete the survey. The data collected for this research will only be used for the completion of this thesis and any resulting publications of this work, and the data will be stored in a secure and confidential place for five years before being disposed of.

You are under no obligation to accept this invitation. If you decide to participate, please be aware that completion and return of the questionnaire implies consent. You have the right to decline to answer any particular question.

If you consent to complete the survey, please click to follow the link below.

>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>

Please feel free to contact either myself or my supervisors if you have any questions regarding this research project.

Thank you for your consideration of my request.

Researcher: Jessica Smith

research.jsmith@gmail.com

Supervisors:

Tara McLaughlin

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Karyn Aspden

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This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, Application 16/36. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Dr Rochelle Stewart-Withers, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, telephone 06 356 9099 x 83657, email humanethicsouthb@massey.ac.nz

Appendix E: Ethics Approval Letter

Date: 14 September 2016

Dear Jess Smith

Re: Ethics Notification - **SOB 16/36 - Teacher perspectives of gender differences in social behaviours in preschool children**

Thank you for the above application that was considered by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: **Human Ethics Southern B Committee** at their meeting held on **Tuesday, 13 September.**

Approval is for three years. If this project has not been completed within three years from the date of this letter, reapproval must be requested.

If the nature, content, location, procedures or personnel of your approved application change, please advise the Secretary of the Committee.

Yours sincerely

Dr Brian Finch
Chair, Human Ethics Chairs' Committee and Director (Research Ethics)

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Appendix F: List of Definitions and Examples of Behaviour Classifications

	Behaviour Classification	Definition
Prosocial	**Defining the behaviours**	
	Sharing	The joint use of resources or space with other children.
	Cooperation	Children working together to reach the same end goals.
	Supporting peer relationships	Supporting peers while they complete a task/new activity, or support peers during conflicts with others.
	Helping others	To assist another child when completing a task.
	Empathy	The ability to understand the feelings of another child, and to help when another child is hurt.
	Keeping safe	Protecting themselves and others from dangers and risk during play.
	Scenario – Positive Behaviours	
	Shows empathy	The ability to understand the feelings of another child, and to help when another child is hurt.
	Supporting friendships	Supporting peers while they complete a task/new activity, or support peers during conflicts with others.
	Helping others	To assist another child when completing a task.

	Scenario – Concerning Behaviours	
	Other children continued playing	The children did not stop to check on the hurt child.
	Didn't find a teacher	Other children went to find a teacher when a child hurt themselves.
	Child having little resilience	The child not being able to recover from difficulties.
	Egocentric	Children who only think of themselves without considering other children.
	Lack of empathy	Not being able to understand the feelings of other children.
Social Leadership	**Defining the behaviours**	
	Supporting peers	Supporting peers while they complete a new activity, or support peers during conflicts with others.
	Organising activities	A child arranging games and activities for their peer group.
	Allocating roles	Assigning other children to the roles they should undertake during games.
	Promoting positive behaviour	Modelling appropriate behaviours to their peers and younger children.
	Demonstrating desired skills	Showing another child how to do a specific skill that they have already mastered.
	Using verbal language	Using good language skills to influence other children.
	Problem solving/ creativity	Comes up with creative solutions to problems for themselves and for others.

Scenario – Positive Behaviours	
Working together	Everyone contributing ideas to the task.
Communication	The use of quality language to get ideas across to peers.
Leadership skills	A child being in charge of a peer group, being involved and leading the group play.
Agency	The ability to act independently and make their own choices.
Role sharing	Assigning other children to the roles during games.
Negotiation	Discussion between peers aimed at reaching an agreement.
Directorial	A child who is in charge of the peer group, but allows for others to contribute to discussions around play ideas.
Scenario – Concerning Behaviours	
Unable to consider peers idea	Not listening to other children and consider peers ideas for the play.
Inflexibility	A child who is unwilling to change or compromise.
Lack of negotiation	Unable to discuss problems with others, and therefore unable to reach an agreement.
Excluding peer	Not including other children in their play.

	Agency	The ability to act independently and make their own choices.
	Controlling behaviour	Determining all the rules of the peer group.
	Lack of knowledge about empathy	Not being able to understand the feelings of other children.
	Dictator	A child with total power over the rest of the peer group.
Social Dominance	**Defining the behaviours**	
	Taking/ controlling resources	Removing resources and hiding them from other children.
	Directive/ controlling behaviours	Controlling the play and telling other children they can't join in.
	Manipulating the situation	A child influencing the situation so they get what they want.
	Excluding others	Not including other children in their play.
	Using aggressive behaviours	Using behaviours that physically hurt or harm another child.
	Asking for a turn	Asking another child for a turn with something.
	Scenario – Positive Behaviours	
	Asking for a turn	Asking another child for a turn with something.
	Playing together	Inclusive playing with other children.
	Communication	The use of quality language to get ideas across to peers.
	Agency	The ability to act independently and make their own choices.

	Negotiation	Discussion between peers aimed at reaching an agreement.
	Directive/ controlling behaviours	Controlling the play and telling other children they can't join in.
	Scenario – Concerning Behaviours	
	Excluding others	Not including other children in their play.
	Taking/ controlling resources	Removing resources and hiding them from other children.
	Directive/ controlling behaviours	Controlling the play and telling other children they can't join in.
	Lack of negotiation	Unable to discuss problems with others, and therefore unable to reach an agreement.
	Manipulating the situation	A child influencing the situation so they get what they want.
Aggression	**Defining the behaviours**	
	Physical actions	Using behaviours that physically hurt or harm another child.
	Verbal/ relational actions	Using words and actions that affect the relationships between children.
	Snatching of resources	Stealing an object from another child.
	Destruction of property	Damaging furniture and resources.
	Scenario – Positive Behaviours	
	Ability to play with someone else	Inclusive playing with other children.
	Communication	The use of quality language to get ideas across to peers.

Common interest	Children working together towards a shared interest or goal.
Persistence in joining peers	Continuing to try join in the play with peers.
Initially working together	Working together towards a shared goal to begin with.
Conflict is normal	Conflict is a normal part of peer relationships in four-year-olds.
Dealing with emotions	Children are still learning about emotions of others.
Scenario – Concerning Behaviours	
Verbal/ relational actions	Using words and actions that affect the relationships between children.
Excluding their peers	Not including other children in their play.
Lack of problem solving	Unable to come up with creative solutions to problems for themselves and for others.
Normal four-year-old behaviour	This is behaviours consistent of four-year-olds.
Manipulation	A child influencing the situation so they get what they want.
Teacher Strategies	
Ask about and acknowledge feelings and experiences	Acknowledging the child's experience, and talking through what they are feeling.
Remind them of expected behaviour	Modelling or talking about behaviours that are expected in the centre.

Provide prompts for alternative strategies	Providing suggestions for a different way the child could address their feelings with the other children.
Redirection	Suggesting to the child a different area of play they could involve themselves in.
Stop the incident	Intervene and stop the behaviours.
Foster social problem solving	Provide suggestions to allow the children to solve the issues themselves.
Praise them	Praise and reward positive behaviours.
Acknowledge friendship skills	Provide the child with positive reinforcement about their friendship skills towards others.
Talking about the situation	Talking about the children's experience.
Facilitate friendships	Aid in the continued development of a friendship between peers.
Support all children	Provide guidance and suggestions to all children involved in the situation.
Observe	Observe the situation to see if teacher support is needed.

Appendix G: Full Data Set for Behaviour Traits

			Seen more commonly in		
		Frequency (n)	**Both genders (%)**	**Girls (%)**	**Boys (%)**
Prosocial behaviours	Greets teachers and other children	23	78	17	4
	Gives in or compromises with others	23	78	13	9
	Takes turns	22	77	23	0
	Shares toys and other belongings	23	74	26	0
	Stands up for other children's rights	23	74	22	4
	Plays with several different children	23	74	17	9
	Shows affection for other children	23	65	30	4
	Can approach other children and ask to play	22	64	32	4.5
	Invites other children to play	22	59	36	4.5
	Is empathetic towards others	23	52	48	0
	Resolves conflicts	22	50	41	9
	Expresses their feelings and emotions	23	43.5	52	4

Social Leadership Behaviours	Has skills that are admired by other children	23	96	0	4
	Is charismatic and peers are drawn to them	23	83	13	4
	Acts as a role model for other children	23	74	26	0
	Cooperates with other children	23	74	22	4
	Is seen as the leader of the group	22	73	9	18
	Listens to peer's ideas and adjusts the play accordingly	23	70	26	4
	Is seen as a person of authority by peers	23	70	17	13
	Uses nonverbal cues to persuade others to do what they want	23	56.5	17	26
	Assigns roles during play	23	52	48	0
	Uses persuasive language	23	39	61	0
Social Dominance Behaviours	Uses commands towards others	22	77	4.5	18
	Is the centre of other children's attention	23	74	17	9
	Takes charge of a group situation	23	74	17	9
	Leads an alliance against other children	23	65	9	26
	Uses age or physical height to control others	22	64	0	36

		Takes control of toys and other resources	23	56.5	9	35
		Tells tales on other children to get them in trouble	22	54.5	41	4.5
		Uses force to get another child to do what they want	23	18	0	82
Aggressive Behaviours	**Relational Aggression**	Excludes other children from play and other activities	23	78	22	0
		Uses verbal insults directed at another child	23	70	17	13
		Spreads rumours about other children	20	55	40	5
		Teases or makes fun of others	23	52	17	30
		Tells other children they won't be their friend anymore	23	43.5	52	4
	Physical Aggression	Takes things away from other children	23	65	4	30
		Intimidates peers	23	52	0	48
		Invades other children's personal space	23	52	9	39
		Threatens other children	20	45	10	45
		Hits/kicks/pushes other children	23	30	0	70
		Becomes physical after being provoked by another child	23	26	4	70
		Pushes the boundaries of acceptable rough and tumble play	23	13	0	87