

“Girls and Boys”, Same or Different: Understanding How Hegemonic Masculinity
Influences Early Childhood Educators’ Pedagogy

by

Xinyan Fan
Bachelor of Education, Shanghai Normal University, 2012

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Supervisory Committee

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Abstract

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This research adopted the concept Hegemonic Masculinity and inquired how this kind of gender practice influenced early childhood teachers' pedagogy, in order to interpret the gap between the real teaching practice and the ideal gender equity promoted in the elementary schools in B.C. for current years. Combining my growing and teaching experience in the traditional patriarchal society, I interviewed four elementary school teachers and observed their classes. The results presented: (1) hegemonic masculinity within students' conversations and parents' educational attitudes became a barrier to teachers who took gender-neutral pedagogy; (2) hegemonic masculinity emphasized gender binary in teachers' daily language and teaching materials; (3) teachers' expectations to students reflected the needs and requirements of the male-dominant society. I also collected teachers' efforts to avoid hegemonic masculinity and promote gender equity with formulating three stories and my analysis.

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Dedication

To Phillip Chen, Wilson He, Marco Zhou and

All those who have experienced this gendered world with bullying and misery and

Who are still exploring their own identities

“You are not alone”

Chapter 1: Introduction

In the corner of the classroom, a little boy asked his kindergarten teacher,
“Can I pretend to be mum today?” His teacher agreed.

From *Am I a Boy or a Girl?* (Fan, 2014)

From the middle of the last century, i.e. the period after the Second World War, the feminist movement began to flourish due to the change in the division of social labour (Connell, 2002; Greig & Holloway, 2012). Because of the development of post-war industry, the rebuilding of facilities and of the social and financial order, women became freed from the home and enriched the labour market which had developed a greater demand. Following this gender transformation, women’s social status, power and needs generated issues in academia; feminists called for gender equity, women’s social status, and the rights of gender minority (similar to the LGBTQ community consisting of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer people) to be honoured in various realms of society. They began to question the conventional understanding of sex, as evident in Connell (2002)’s discussion, for example, “Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus”. Feminists used the word “gender,” distinguishing it from the traditional dichotomy of male and female, as a way of provoking people to reconsider gender practice as not inherent in the performance of human beings’ biological sex.

The movement to promote gender equity was characterized by success continuously. For example, the Public Health Agency of Canada published several guidelines and documents for the public to update contemporary gender, sex and health theories and to

assist with understanding gender, sexuality and health. *Questions & Answers: Gender Identity in Schools* (Government of Canada, 2014) was one of the Agency publications which introduced the knowledge of sex, sexism and gender variety, promoted equity and safety in the school context, and provided strong support to schools, teachers, and students. In the summer of 2014, the Vancouver School Board verified their gender policy; it began allowing students to use locker rooms or toilets according to their own gender choice (Posadzki, 2014). According to *The Globe and Mail* (June 6, 2014), many parents of transgender children supported this important revolution in education. This provided a safer environment for the gender minority in the school because of the high proportion of bullying and risk in the school washroom (Atkinson, 2014). More importantly, this policy revision provided evidence of schools' gender-inclusive environment, approved the diversity of students' identities, and in practice, aimed to reduce the harassment and bullying in the educational context (Posadzki, 2014). It acted as a vivid and valuable example for current students to understand gender diversity and inclusion.

The previously mentioned examples demonstrated the practice of gender equity from the political perspective, in which the administration supported this attitudinal shift and take it into action (Connell, 2002). Even though these reforms were evident in policy documents, the explanation of gender had its own new language, using diversity and variety, which was expressly different from the dichotomy of male and female.

However, there were still much critiques, backlash and debates criticized which faced by the gender equity movement. Many adults were firmly opposed to the policy revision by the Vancouver School Board (Todd, 2014). They, especially people in the

Chinese immigrant community, crowded around the outside of the Board meeting location and held up protest signs. Those parents described this event as “chaos”; they articulated their viewpoints during the discussion that “boys should be boys, and girls should be girls”; alternatively, “boys will be boys, and girls will be girls”. These words reflected the adults’ expectations and ideas to teach boys and girls to match with the gender-stereotypical behaviours and characteristics (Pollack, 2002). It was not the first time these discourses requiring boys to be brave, strong, athletic, responsible and disciplined (Sargent, 2005) had been heard; girls’ requirements were totally the opposite. For decades, girls were understood as helpful, sensitive, or selfless by educators (Skelton & Francis, 2003). Other words such as “dependence”, “emotion”, “care” were still used to label the female in western society (Francis, 2000). Obviously, boys’ and girls’ education were differentiated by the social gender norms.

Therefore, we had two extremely different kinds of discourses. One promoted women’s rights and gender equity, while the other repeated and reminded us how gender practices worked in societies for thousands of years. The rise and existence of feminist discourse was due to the powerful, rooted, ubiquitous male-dominant discourse which propagated the legitimacy of patriarchy (Connell, 2005). If our society did not manifest men’s privileges and women’s submissive status, there would be no discussion or appeal from feminists or the gender minority. The feminist arguments challenged the traditional male-dominant discourses; however, they still upset very little of the profound patriarchy. We could see the majority of male political leaders without any doubt, while Margaret Thatcher, Hillary Clinton and Empress Wu of China always garnered attention, not because of their political abilities but because they were/are women (Tutchell &

Edmonds, 2015)! The language used by the media to describe them did not usually suit feminine individuals, but instead was more typical of masculinity, e.g. “Iron Lady”, ”Hegemonic Empress”. Putting ourselves into their shoes, we could understand the difficulty of those female politicians to match themselves to the male dominant environment. Men were still thought to be the ‘breadwinners’ in the labour market by the North American families (Connell, 2005; Greig & Holloway, 2012) and women as playing the role of housewives who nurtured the children and supported the husbands (Martin, 1986). In the domain of education, where, due to science, engineering and mathematics still being male-dominant disciplines, feminist scholars were encouraging and supporting girls or women to study or work in these areas (Maynard, 2001; Zhou, 2013). There were numerous examples that could be raised in daily life. People lived around, spoke, or even perpetuated these male-dominant discourses in imperceptible ways. Nevertheless, feminist thought inspired people to rethink the reality of social gender practices and to question the fairness and equality of sources, lifestyles or the value placed on ‘male’ and ‘female’. Therefore, people lived with the circumstances that these two kinds of discourses both influence their way of understanding gender.

As a male investigator of this study, I also grew up under these two kinds of discourses: on the one hand, people taught me to be masculine, strong and tough, while on the other hand, people called on me to be myself which meant just wanting to behave in a gentle, sensitive or approachable way and to be keen on things like dancing, baking, or literature.

I consistently promoted my dream and wish to be a dancer. Once the music was on, a moving image entered my mind; I saw a spirit expressing his emotions and struggling

with his movements bursting out. When I was a child, my parents did not support my dream of learning dancing. This was not only because my family's socio-economic status was not very high, with scarcely any networking with artists or art teachers, and being unable to afford the cost but also, more importantly, they thought that as a boy, I would not have the ability to persevere with my dancing dream. However, people who have dreams never give up. I learnt dancing through the Internet and practiced in the corridor of my block building.

Through my school years, I achieved outstanding academic development, and this satisfied my teachers and parents. However, I did not like the sports class because I felt unsafe and uncomfortable playing with male peers. People seemed to worry more about my behaviour and identity: they were never glad to see my "being effeminate", speaking gently and accompanying many gestures or lack of interest in sports. One example of my weakness was when students bullied me, or even hit or beat me, I never fought back. Many times, those male classmates would call me "gay, sissy, faggot" or "eunuch" and I never argued back.

I was struggling. Externally, the discourses from adults and peers forced me to be "masculine", matched with my biological sex; internally, deep in my heart, my spirit told me "to be myself", a gentle, decent, and friendly person. Finally, the external power of discourse could not suppress the internal eagerness so that my true ego erupted.

Throughout my school years, Physical Education (P.E.) was always taught in the form of single-sex classes. Once, at high school, the girls' class started a subject called "dance sport". To me, it was the only opportunity to learn dancing professionally. Therefore, I begged my P.E. teacher to allow me to change my subject. Fortunately, he

agreed. My previously reluctant attitude to sports changed because I was now finally able to learn what interested me. This happiness, however, was short-lived. My class teacher knew about my choice and told my father at the parents' meeting. My parents could not accept my decision and felt humiliated because I was not clearly living according to my pre-determined male gender identity. My father blamed me with the harsh words as he wanted me to "behave like a man". As he said, "You were born in a male body, which determined you would live out lifelong masculinity".

This experience of "being who I am" was ended by the repression from adults. Again, the real desire of mine was hidden and submerged deep in my heart. However, people never forget their dreams. My true self would always emerge seeking freedom, acceptance, understanding and equal treatment. Thus, I was growing up under the circumstances of both the external male dominant discourse and the inner feeling of being another kind of man; both of the discourses were pulling me to their sides. Based on my perspective of my inner self, I have sought to understand how this sort of male dominant language or discourse regulates me and other people in working gender practice out in the community or society.

Currently, some educators design non-gender or gender-neutral pedagogies or activities to challenge gender discrimination and try to change gender stereotypes (Maynard, 2001). This means that on the one hand, feminist theories or thought have caused a reform of teachers' pedagogies; on the other hand, gender bias has existed in education for a long time. That is why the discourse "boys should be boys and girls should be girls" still spreads and influences teachers' strategies, goals and expectations. Combining my experience growing up and the current educational landscape, it is evident

to research how teachers understand gender as a factor in their daily teaching activities and curriculum design under both discourses.

Therefore, this research is designed to clarify how hegemonic masculinity influences early childhood educators' pedagogy. Connell (2005) introduced the concept of hegemonic masculinity as being the main configuration of gender practice in patriarchal society. It consists of a relationship of male as dominant and female as subordinate. This research has adopted this concept into the research question, because hegemonic masculinity displays the core ideology of the relationship between male and female in the patriarchy and constructs the mechanism of male-dominant discourse. In this research, hegemonic masculinity is seen as a social practice. The research intends to explore how this kind of social practice has been applied or reacted in the school context, especially investigating kindergarten teachers interacting with it. I will explain more about this concept and unfold the previous research about "hegemonic masculinity" in the next chapter. Chapter 3 will expose how hegemonic masculinity is applied in the educational realm. Two topics will be discussed in this regard: the debates on the "Boy Crisis", and men's identities. Based on the literature review both in chapter 2 and 3, my theoretical framework will be built up, in which hegemonic masculinity is widely and deeply practiced in various realms of this society. Because of the lack of the research work in early childhood level, this research plans to extend other scholars' work and find out the evidence of hegemonic masculinity practice in this specific education.

Chapter 4 introduces my method of conducting this research, my participants' information, and the process of data collection and analysis. I collected much data from the interview with four local kindergarten teachers and observing their class. Critical

discourse analysis was used to analyze the power relation between those teachers and their students, to interpret those teachers' understanding of gender in the school context and to display how they challenge the widely grounded practice of hegemonic masculinity. The results are presented in both Chapters 5 and 6. Chapter 5 focuses on how teachers engage in hegemonic masculinity in their language, pedagogies and thoughts, how other factors influence teachers' pedagogy and how the entire school context has been involved with hegemonic masculinity; however, Chapter 6 will record how those teachers also apply other kinds of gender practices in their classes, challenging the practices of hegemonic masculinity. In the last chapter of this thesis, I will revisit the concept of hegemonic masculinity with a discussion of roles that the teachers play in promoting gender equity. The conclusion of the entire study will also be laid out in the last chapter.

Chapter 2: Understanding Hegemonic Masculinity

As I indicated in the previous text, this chapter will firstly present my comprehensive understanding of the concept ‘hegemonic masculinity’. I will also review its evidences as a foundational gender practice within philosophy and science research in the patriarchal society.

Definition of Hegemonic Masculinity

Gender practices present different patterns and relationships in different communities and societies (Connell, 2002). The English language has created two words: “masculinity” and “femininity” to describe conventional male and female patterns; some languages do not have specific words to distinguish male and female, but the ways that these languages are used show this gender dichotomy. It is hard to deny that there are other gender practices which lack specific words describing them, but in this study, my discussion focuses on “masculinity” and “femininity”.

Both Connell (2002) and Chinese feminist Li (2014) claimed that gender was constructed in the social and cultural setting. Human beings are born into two kinds of sex: male and female, and grow to men and women, adopting meaningful social roles. Since gender practice is influenced by social, cultural and geographic factors, masculinity and femininity express diverse meanings. Post-feminist theory asserted that there were a considerable number of masculinities and femininities so that the boundaries between traditional understandings of masculinity and femininity should be blurring (Li, 2014). The descriptions or definitions of masculinities and femininities were consistently

fulfilled by various practices, images, or male and female models (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Therefore, multiple masculinities existed concurrently.

To summarize his core findings here, Connell (2005) interpreted four main patterns of masculinities in current social gender practice, which were hegemony, subordination, complicity and marginalization. Firstly, hegemonic masculinity occupied the leading position for legitimizing patriarchy, thereby establishing the dominant position for men and the subordinate position for women. In contrast, subordinated masculinity characterized those outside of the circle of hegemonic masculinity legitimacy. Gay masculinity could be a good example here; boys who behaved in a soft and effeminate manner also embodied subordination because of the association with femininity. Connell viewed these two patterns as a pair: domination/subordination. The cluster of complicity was defined because not all men exhibit behaviours that followed either a normative standard or hegemonic masculinity. Complicity typified men who benefited from the patriarchal social structure, for example leading roles in family or social organizations; but they might also do household work or show respect to women. The last pattern, marginalized masculinity, was actually defined by the relationship between race relations. This category explains the relationship between white and black men: that black masculinity was marginalized due to the black minority being confronted by the white men's majority in western society. Therefore, another pair of masculinities appeared: authorization/marginalization.

Among those four patterns of masculinity, "hegemonic masculinity" was widely referenced in the interdisciplinary research. After formulating this concept over twenty years, Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) reviewed the studies which referred to this

concept and then extended its meaning. Hegemonic masculinity was used as a theoretical framework to study men and masculinity within diverse cultural backgrounds and a wide range of gender practices. Besides declaring the relationship between male dominance and female subordination, this pattern of masculinity also required people to follow this gender structure as a way of consolidating its legitimacy. This meant that all men were required to be “dominant and masculine,” a behaviour which allowed men to benefit from the “patriarchal dividend” (Connell, 1995, as cited in Skelton, 2001, p. 51); one example was male privilege in the division of labour. Connell (2005) explained that the division of social labour exists not because employers or managers shared a masculine personality, but because the gender practice of hegemonic masculinity eroded the rationale behind labour recruitment, for instance, recruitment for leadership roles or the consideration of maternity benefits for women.

The concept of hegemonic masculinity also replaced the traditional sex role theory or sex essentialism in the research of gender (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Both sex role theory and the theory of essentialism emphasized the differentiation between male and female and the biological difference causing the dichotomy of masculinity and femininity (Connell, 2002). They also clearly classified the features of men and women as fitting into the “masculinity” and “femininity” categories, and emphasized the procreation by women and men’s responsibility for society and family (Li, 2014). These two theories were criticized by the majority of feminists in contemporary research; researchers who focus on men’s studies also deny the arbitrary distinction between male and female (Martino & Greig, 2012). Hegemonic masculinity, however, paid more

attention to understanding the practices between people, the dynamic between gender relations, and the power between masculinity and femininity.

However, the research of hegemonic masculinity was highly related to feminist theory, in which scholars explained the base of gender relation in this society (Flax, 1987). Basically, feminists called on woman's right in every aspect of the society and intend to stop any inequality between men and women (Acker, 1987). Connell's interpretation of this social practice reflected a strong imbalanced power relation between men and women. As Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) reviewed, most research of hegemonic masculinity was conducted through men or boys' life, reflecting male privilege from a male-only perspective. Therefore, understanding of hegemonic masculinity has a complementary relationship with feminist theory (Kronsell, 2005).

Meanwhile, Connell & Messerschmidt reiterated analyzing masculinities constructed in the social gender hierarchy of different settings and necessarily considered how women practiced both femininities and masculinities in social gender interactions. However, women could also engage in hegemonic masculinity in their working positions, family relationships, etc. (Connell, 2005).

The Mechanism of Hegemonic Masculinity

As the foundational gender practice of patriarchy, hegemonic masculinity constructed a concrete mechanism to steady the gender hierarchy, maintained the dominance of men, and created a series of social gender values.

In *History of Sexuality*, Foucault (1988) claimed that people took sexuality back to the language level in order to control it in reality; that meant that they controlled the discussion of sexuality, purified the language system, and built a new discourse system

for the discussion of sexuality. Foucault also demonstrated that the discourse of sexuality played a role in the power dynamic, as an instrument of power for control and suppression. From a political perspective, the discourse of sexuality existed in strong relation to population density, social labour and the maintenance of social relationships. In other words, the discourse on sex required sexual behaviours to serve the reproduction, in order to provide adequate population for the labour capacity to succeed the economic and political goals (Foucault, 1988; Sumara & Davis, 1999). Therefore, non-reproductive sexual behaviours were eliminated from the discourse in the process of legislation or in the research reports of medical science. For example, homosexual behaviours were defined as mental illness (Bailey, 1999), which caused long-term discrimination and marginalization to gay or lesbian people (Auger & Krug, 2013). Foucault's philosophy did not consist of any gender theory (Connell, 2002). He focused more on discussion about power and sexuality. However, he demonstrated how sexuality is manipulated by the power, in which the reproductive sexual behaviours are raised to benefit the economic growth and political stability. Foucault's approach to understanding gender was widespread, until Connell, who used "gender" instead of "sex" to explain more social practices in the process of reproduction. According to Connell, power in gender relations "generated identities and practices" (Connell, 2002, p. 78). This meant that human beings wielding different kinds of power carried out different practices in gender relations.

Hegemonic masculinity was supported by the position of power in gender relations. In its practice, men held more power than women, a circumstance which generated men's dominant roles in society. Foucault's philosophy could assist in understanding how

hegemonic masculinity established its own language/discourse system, generated identities, and controlled social gender dynamics.

Stabilizing social structure and labour division

Hegemonic masculinity constructed a series of discourses in the domain of philosophy and reinforced male-dominated politics. Ancient Greek culture had a permanent influence on modern society (Riley, 2003). This caused much discussion, especially with regard to the philosophy of Plato who established the early theory of university-level education (Orrells, 2011). In Plato's *The Republic Book V*, he treated gender as a difference that made no difference. He continued with his idea that women should obtain an education that was equal to men's (Martin, 1986). This sounds as if Plato already promoted gender equity in education. However, Greek society did not support equality of women. Although Plato did not directly discuss social and cultural stereotypes, his educational ideal was strongly associated with a male-dominated society which reflected on his viewpoint of the division of family labour. He thought the reproductive processes were dysfunctional (Martin, 1986), a view which devalued femininity and women within the gender structure. Meanwhile, Plato's educational ideals had been critiqued by feminists as having drawn on the masculinity that made women lose a sense of identity (Smith, 1994). In contrast, boys were viewed as inevitably becoming heroes: the expression of models of masculine behaviour (Newkirk, 2002). This was a view which held male roles as being much more powerful. Therefore, Plato's ideal, as one of the classical and foundational western philosophies, became part of the male dominant discourses and devalued woman's social status (Martin, 1986; Smith, 1994). Similarly, in Asia, Confucian philosophy also dominated the social ideology and

served the governing class. Confucius said, “How to say a woman? Nothing on earth is held so cheap!” (Hooper, 1975, p. 134). This remark described strong discrimination in traditional thought, which devalued women in society. Confucius’ attitudes towards gender relations, that males were superior to females, largely affected, over a long period of time, not merely ancient (and modern) China, but also other Asian countries (Calder, 1999).

The discourses of hegemonic masculinity emerged in the theories of these two significant early philosophies. Furthermore, based on the influence of these two philosophies, a win-win mechanism existed between the philosophers and the higher class in society: on the one hand, philosophies supported the dominant class which helped superstructures (male regime) stabilize the basis of governance (Elias, 2008). On the other hand, the upper class perpetuated the philosophies, or male dominant discourses, by constantly practicing and operating to solidify patriarchy (Nichols, 2014).

The thought of the division of social labour was also grounded in these philosophies, i.e., men were the “breadwinners” (Connell, 2005), while women were the family caretakers, a view which was associated with the discourse male dominance versus female submission. In the conventional family structure, men earned the money and control the finance or more social capital, but women had nothing and had no choice but to be submissive to men. For another detailed example found in Rousseau’s *Emile*, Emile was described as an educated person whereas Sophie, his partner, supportively took on the role of a household mother (Martin, 1986).

Through industrialization, social labour divisions began to change, reforming politics, economics, and other social aspects. Women had the opportunity to occupy more

positions in society, a situation which shook the traditional male-dominant structure in the work environment (Greig, 2012). However, when carefully distinguishing the types of work available for women, it became evident that the basis of gender structure did not significantly change. There could be “no problem” for women— but one would exist for men who could not find jobs since they were still supposed to be the “breadwinners” (Greig & Holloway, 2012). It did not mean that women were flexible whether being employed or not; instead, it showed unequal working opportunities between male and female. The labour market provided more privileges for male to accumulate wealth (Connell, 2005) and offered limited positions (e.g. caring and nursing) to women based on the stereotypical understanding of femininity. This led to strong criticism from Marxist feminists who argued for equity in the labour market (Lorber, 1994).

The division of labour in society was also a powerful model in relation to education. If we take a look at the doll corner in a preschool class, it is easy to find that boys refuse to go into the doll corner and take care of baby dolls. Paley (1984) talked with her male students and found that they did not view doll corner as boys’ play, but understood caring for dolls as girls’ behaviour.

At the university level, few female students choose science as their major (Zhou, 2013). Those gender practices demonstrated how students in different age groups were influenced by the dichotomous labour market with locating themselves in stereotypical positions. Meanwhile, gendered occupations such as early childhood male teachers or nurses encountered quite a lot of judgment (Sargent, 2005); this delivered a negative message to male students that “they had better not choose those jobs”. In addition, female politicians played their roles as tough and as firm as men, as they “try to copy the alpha

male” (Tutchell & Edmonds, 2015, p. 63) in the gender hierarchy as well; this was evident in the way that they engaged in hegemonic masculinity in their positions and proved their power in management and governance (Connell, 2005).

Early philosophers formulated their theories favouring this patriarchal gender practice. Over time, those theories drove the division of social labour which guided men and women to take on different social responsibilities; these theories perpetually regulated the roles for men as breadwinners and women as householders within the family structure. These roles maintained gender segregation while concurrently stabilizing hegemonic masculinity discourses in society: males remained dominant while females continued to be subordinate. Therefore, hegemonic masculinity preserved the power of male discourses.

Formulating scientific language

In the mid-nineteenth century, reproduction and physiology gave rise to scientific language as an element supporting the establishment of scientific discourse and the knowledge system (Foucault, 1988). Gender practice in daily social life has been strongly related to reproduction, including “sexual arousal and intercourse, childbirth and infant care, bodily sex difference and similarity” (Connell, 2005, p. 71). Reproduction ability was not used to distinguish or even polarized males and females; however, it was utilized by those in power to endow males and females with different meanings in terms of gender relations constructed through patriarchy. The scientific discourses enhanced male power over females through exploring and explaining reproductive processes, in which hegemonic masculinity was also exercised to sustain male privilege (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

Feminists critiqued science for its exaggerated masculine discipline, whatever the scientific theories or practice might be (Zhou, 2013). Science seemed to hold absolute authority; this may possibly result from its theories being made credible through concrete data and facts. “The ordinary man believes in the solar system, atoms, evolution, and the circulation of the blood on authority— because the scientists say so” (Lewis, 1956, p. 62). However, According to Foucault's theory of power and sexuality(1988), power, authority and science have been combined. Scientific discourses were utilized to support the power of hegemonic masculinity, under which human beings obeyed or followed authority and constituted their knowledge system.

Science is an absolutely male realm (Haraway & Manifesto, 2000). Scientific research studies seek the evidence to prove gender difference and how it persuades people to adopt normative gender power relations. In this section, I will present some understanding of gender relations as presented by some fundamental theorists. This will be followed by others’ critique.

First of all, Connell (2005) critiqued essentialist scholars, who regarded men as active and women as passive. Essentialists defined masculinity in an exaggeratedly arbitrary way, simply selecting one feature from men’s way of life to define the entire concept. He also disagreed to categorize men’s or women’s characteristics. However, the thoughts of gender essentialism have been an influence for a long time, as we use the gender dichotomous words like “active” or “energetic” to label boys, and “quiet” or “sensitive” to label girls.

Since 1970s, sex-role theory or gender difference theory prevailed on a large scale (Connell, 2002; Eagly & Koenig, 2006). Some scholars tried to explain why boys did not

play the doll corner through the theory of cognitive development. This cognition theory maintained that children recognized gender identities early, in a restricted and steady process; any cross-gender behaviour would greatly confuse them (Skelton, 2001). In other words, very young children took on mono-gender roles corresponding to their biological sex. For example, if a boy pretends to be a mum, other children will consider his gender changed. Piaget's theory explained that in the preoperational stage, children's cognition of things was not reversible (Richmond, 1970). In one of his experiments, children in preoperational stage could not figure out the conservation of quantity when Piaget poured the liquid from a narrow glass to a wide glass. Children thought the quantity of liquid decreased. Therefore, young children would consider that gender changes when a boy wore girl's cloth. Nevertheless, this theory merely reflected children's gender identity at the early stages. The theory was also weak when the transgender identity of children was considered when they self-identified their gender as being opposite to their biological sex. Connelly critiqued Piaget's work as having been arbitrary and uncritical to understand the children's development of gender identities, and also lacking concern for the intervention of other factors such as "the equal access to the same range of toys and materials" (Connelly, 2003, p 116) in their play. Another cognitive psychologist Kohlberg raised the concept "gender constancy" (Golombok, 1994) that children gradually understood gender was not changeable regardless of the transformations of appearance, clothing, or hairstyle through their age from three to seven (Huston, 1983). However, in this process, children understood gender through interacting with the environment; in other words, the information from this gender dichotomous world still influenced children's cognition at the very beginning.

Contemporary research (e.g. Arnold, 2004; Cosgrove, Mazure, & Staley, 2007; Kimura, 1993; Wager, Phan, Liberzon, & Taylor, 2003) focused on differences in brain function between male and female; here, hegemonic masculinity sought more convincing scientific discourses to prove the distinction. Those scientific research reports tried to convince the public that male brains were different from female brains. Indeed, their results were full of concrete data and proof of their experiments. However, Connell claimed: “Gender exists precisely to the extent that biology does not determine the social” (Connell, 2005, p 71). Connell wanted to remind us that those research works were driven by the male dominant ideologies based on the patriarchal society. Also, the biological experiments were lack of consideration of cross-cultural, regional, and historical diversity in gender. For example, we had communities or societies that women were not determined to be care givers or servants; but no research mentions any evidence has been found in a women-respectful community or society. Therefore, if conducting those biological experiments is for proving “men are different from women” or “men are higher than women”, language could always be manipulated in those scientific reports. There was also a report explaining no significant differences existed between the male and female brain (Cahill, 2005). Therefore, whether there was difference or not, science was obviously utilized to support the power and social hierarchy.

Those theories are still popular in gender studies. To some extent, hegemonic masculinity controlled those discourses and perpetuated the misunderstanding of gender difference. We saw how science, embodying the strong masculine identity, ruled gender relations. The scientific evidence over emphasized humans’ biological sex differences as being a determining factor in human beings’ growth. As a result, the solutions for

educational problems were also taken from the gendered realm and are applied absolutely and arbitrarily to all boys and all girls. Although this theory was critiqued by researchers such as Skelton (2003), Greig and Cahill (2012), these discourses still prevailed in our current culture and society.

In this section, it will be shown how scientific theories and research studies interacted with mass media and affected the public. The media implanted powerful beliefs and information in the public's understanding of masculinity. Biological differences constituted an unacceptable factor buried in people's understanding of gender relations. Paley (1984) portrayed a metaphor of an "invisible curtain" existing between men and women to separate and clarify their gender relations in the hierarchy. However, hegemonic masculinity was the hidden power which pulled the strings to manipulate those discourses as its way of governing.

In conclusion, hegemonic masculinity, the main and dominant gender practice, showed itself to be generally permeating politics, culture, finance, the division of labour, and science, in the form of formulating various discourses to control and stabilize the legitimacy of patriarchy. Hegemonic masculinity also created and disseminated its own discourses (philosophies, scientific theories, etc.) to establish the cognition/knowledge in society of male dominance and female subordination.

Elaborating on this concept, Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) claimed that hegemonic masculinity was a growing concept. They thought much more research needs to focus on the following: firstly, the relationship between hegemonic masculinity and the gender practice of women. Gender came in patterns and was always related to or interacted with each other (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Through history, women

were also involved in forming masculinity. Women's roles in the society as mothers, wives or girlfriends influence and characterize men's gender practice while also reflected their own practice. Since women could also put on the cloth of hegemonic masculinity in the gender hierarchy (Connell, 2005), it is worth analyzing the power dynamic in the all-female environment, for example, kindergartens consisting of a majority of female teachers, to understand how hegemony unfolded under those circumstances. Secondly, they suggested more research needed to examine the relationship between hegemonic masculinity and other masculinities. As hegemonic masculinity built up the ideal male model and required all men to live it out, it is important to research how it worked on subordinated masculinity, for example how gay men or effeminate boys understood male roles and lived out their masculinity. Foucault pointed out that "discourses on sex did not multiply apart from or against power, but in the very space and as the means of its exercise" (Foucault, 1988, p 32). Foucault demonstrated since the eighteen century, people talked, recorded or expressed the discourse on sex everywhere. The effect was that sex was not prohibited to talk; instead, discourse on sex was regulated and normalized in various disciplines such as education, medical science, biology, etc. This process generated the norm of discourse on sex. Until homosexuality or infidelity appeared, the normal discourse on sex sanctioned the "unnatural" sexual behaviours. Similarly, people's talk and discussion realized the popularity of value or knowledge of gender structure, so that a norm was generated in this way. The norm itself became a powerful discourse and could affect other practices which were beyond the norm. Therefore, hegemonic masculinity worked to legitimize patriarchy so that the latter did not exclude other masculinities but influenced them to solidify its governance by

controlling others' discourses. Thirdly, research must study additional forms of hegemonic masculinity being exercised in the various communities. Influenced by culture, ethnicities, geography and age, gender practice in society gives meaning to various masculinities. Hegemonic masculinity has been continually generating its internal meaning and external practices at the different levels of communities (local, regional or global). Since the feminist's thought spreads and social structure is changing, I believe more kinds of gender practices between men and men, men and women, or women and women occur which will broaden and enrich this concept.

Chapter 3: Understanding Hegemonic Masculinity in Education

Hegemonic masculinity legitimized the current social gender structure by requiring all men to be “disciples” of the main dominant discourses. In Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary (2005), ‘education’, a configuration of teaching and learning, was responsible for spreading knowledge, skills, and values. Hegemonic masculinity used education as a channel, pouring its systematic knowledge and discourses into the minds of the public, and educating people in the right way to practice male dominance and female subordination (Morris, 2012; Renold, 2009). Therefore, hegemonic masculinity always pushed the education of boys and men into the spotlight, just like Foucault said that people talk, discuss, and care for it, actions which made this phenomenon more powerful and worthy. In this chapter, I focus on the current research on boys and interpret the ways that hegemonic masculinity influences the public to understand boys and girls and gender relations in the educational institutions.

The Debate about a “Boy Crisis”

In 2012, one of the high schools in Shanghai started an experimental program of a boys-only class to rescue boys from academic underachievement and behavioural problems (see “Boys only class in Shanghai stirs debate” - *People’s Daily Online*, 2012). The reason this news article caught my eye is because, on the one hand, I spent three years in this high school and the teachers had told me that the government-funded program would be continuing for several years in the future. Research teams were organized and university scholars invited to join this program to search for better approaches to teaching boys. On the other hand, it is not the first time I heard media

reported claiming that “girls are better educated than boys”, or seeing teaching publications of on how to educate boys. From a global perspective, the phrase “boy crisis” was not merely a Chinese issue; it was also concerned scholars in many developed countries (Martino & Rezai-Rashti, 2012). Nor was this topic a new one in the area of educational research (Skelton, 2001). How to teach boys has always been a concern in the field of education, because hegemonic masculinity perpetuated the discourses to make men and boys so significant in society.

The public participated in this huge debate on the existence of a “boy crisis”; but many comments simply focused on the fact that boys lagged behind girls in different aspects. In fact, neither the public media nor general educators critically defined with their findings whether boys were in crisis or not in daily life. For instance, they compared the exam scores between boys and girls and came out the assertion that boys were under-achieving in academic. This kind of comparison was arbitrarily over generalized. Certainly, the researchers also began their work to demonstrate whether this public concern had merit.

Therefore, what is this “boy crisis”? The explanation can be summarized as people’s worry about boys’ underachievement in school or with personality development. This underachievement is mainly reflected in their academic outcomes (low scores, especially for language study) and their behaviours (in the form of aggression). At the same time, some scholars are also concerned about today’s boys being effeminate as being another kind of crisis (Sun, Li, & Zhao, 2010). However, why has this become a major issue? To answer this, I will first examine the debates mentioned above.

From the mid-1990s until now, this “boy crisis” has been increasingly emphasized globally, focusing on the boys from 5 to 17 years old (Francis, 2006; Martino & Rezai-Rashti, 2012; Morris, 2012; Skelton, 2001). Since 1996, some UK media reported that British boys are reluctant to learn the subjects of literacy and language (Foster, Kimmel, & Skelton, 2001); they merely pass standard tests with low scores. Australian boys were also labelled as “failing boys” (Foster, Kimmel, & Skelton, 2001, p4) with moral problems. American best seller books used the phrases “protecting boys” or “rescuing boys” in their titles (Foster et al., 2001). From the racial perspective, African-American boys representing black people with a marginalized culture encountered discrimination, violence and lack of resources; they also faced numerous crises in the dominant white culture (Davis, 2001). At the same time, Australian indigenous boys failed to continue towards or obtained their degrees or diplomas after finishing compulsory education. Their choice contributed to the imbalanced ratio between girls and boys in higher education (Simpson, Mcfadden, & Munns, 2001). Canadian boys inescapably faced several problems or obstacles during their growth as well: alcohol and drugs, the commission of crimes, diagnosed learning disabilities, potential suicide, and reluctance to engage in higher education (Mathews, 2003). A group of educators, psychologists, and school board consultants expressed their serious concerns about these disadvantaged boys in the form of data on the above boys’ underachievement as compiled by the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) in Ontario (Martino & Rezai-Rashti, 2012). Chinese scholars Sun, Li and Zhao (2010) used a large quantity of data to discuss how Chinese boys undoubtedly faced problems in their development. They showed that: (1) boys got lower grades than girls; (2) boys displayed low scores on physical tests, especially

compared with Japanese boys; (3) boys easily developed internet addiction and depression; (4) boys had problems with interacting with others, and easily become aggressive.

In short, those scholars concurred with claims expressed in the mass media that boys faced huge problems in today's society. Some scholars even called on the public to pay keen attention to today's boys because they were not equipped to take on any social responsibility in the future(see Sun et al., 2010). To use a metaphor, "boys facing crisis" is like a deadly virus spreading around the world. Almost no country could prevent this disaster! Here, hegemonic masculinity formulated the discourses of "boy crisis" among the public, a concept which caught people's attention and caused public fear about the failure of boys' education.

In contrast, other groups of scholars used several perspectives to radically critique this growing concept of "boys in crisis". First of all, defining boys' academic underachievement compared to girls' study outcomes was neither reasonable nor logical. In fact, it was unacceptable to attribute boys' failure in school studies to girls' success. The outcome of media statistics and the way they collected data was suspect because the data pertained only to a small group of academically excellent girls selected for comparison with a large group of boys (Skelton, 2001). The way the media crudely used insufficient samples to represent *all* boys and *all* girls caused the students' academic work to be widely misunderstood in the UK and Australia (Foster et al., 2001). Media repeating those hegemonic masculinity discourses not only heightened gender inequity in education as a way of protecting boys, they also ignored or denied the progress and efforts made by girls (Xu, 2010). The media also labelled *all* boys with negative terms

and disregarded the good students (Simpson et al., 2001) as a way of causing social attention. Because of these critiques, boys chose to leave academic achievement behind as they defined school success as being a girls-only domain (Foster et al., 2001; Mathews, 2003). By this logic, boys rejecting school success was an expression of clarifying self-gender identity and reinforcing the understanding of what masculine behaviour actually was (Beckett, 2001; Skelton, 2001). Therefore, male students generated their identities through this gender practice, whereby they obtained the sense of male privilege; in the gender hierarchy, men were still favoured whether they were good students or not.

Secondly, regarding boys' aggression, Newkirk (2002) interpreted two kinds of misinterpretations of boys' violent thoughts during their literacy learning: one was the adults' antiquated opinions which understood boys' writing only in a narrow focus in current culture; another was the belief that boys writing violent stories would lead to them engaging in violent behaviour. In other words, no connection existed between their playing violent games such as video games and engaging in violent behaviours. Here, how people defined "violence" was on the different scales. Killing could be thought as a kind of violence (Newkirk, 2002); but pretending gun play could also be considered as a violent behaviour which was prohibited in school (Dunn & Hughes, 2001). Therefore, boys' energetic or boisterous behaviours could be magnified and understood by some teachers or researchers as violence or antisocial behaviours. Some reports (Anderson et al., 2008; Bartholow & Anderson, 2002; Silvern & Williamson, 1987) showed the connection between playing violent-theme video games for a long term with behavioural aggression; however, the research was conducted in an experimental environment, which was not enough to prove boys hurting others or committing crimes. Meanwhile, another

research study showed that in rough and tumble play, young boys were capable of distinguishing between play and truly violent behaviours (Tannock, 2008). Lastly, regarding boys committing crimes or developing mental problems or addiction, Chinese scholar Xu (2010) declared that if the conclusion that boys were “in crisis” was based on the statistics involving these social problems, then that conclusion was based on a lack of adequate proof; this was because girls were also vulnerable to depression, early pregnancy and other kinds of emotional problems in their growth. The concept of a “boy crisis” was simply an exaggerated concern or wrong information to “rescue” boys from the majority of the media (Skelton, 2001), while also disregarding girls in crisis.

The pros and cons presented above focused mainly on two aspects of this “boy crisis”: academic schoolwork and mental health. To analyze these aspects, I found that the arguments of those who supported the existence of a “boy crisis” were based on data taken from mass research studies, especially in Sun et al's (2010) research, which was supported by a large quantity of data. The opponents of the concepts, however, attack the accuracy of the data and their influence on the portrayal of the truth. Meanwhile, another viewpoint focused on the inequity of excessive concern over boys as a consequence of ignoring girls.

Personally, I did not think there was any crisis among boys. “Boy Crisis” was a topic produced by the hegemonic masculinity to prevent male privilege from erosion by other discourses or practice within the gender structure. In the relation between the proponents and opponents of the concept, we saw how they approved or denigrated male dominance. However, in any case, male dominance was talked about, discussed or argued, which made it a prevailing concern. And indeed, this was the strategy with which

hegemonic masculinity stabilized the patriarchy. In fact, the popularity of this topic indicated the importance of fostering boys and to what extent, thereby protecting male privilege. Some of the scholars were misled by the “pro” camp. For example, when Xu (2010) mentioned the girls’ problems of emotions, study, and sustainability, her point caused educators to pay attention to girls’ problems as well. This fact reflected how people still over-emphasize the difference between males and females. This difference caused the girls’ or boys’ preference to be emphasized. This idea was influenced by the sex-role theory, which emphasized the natural differences between males and females; according to Connell and Messerschmidt (2005), this theory was out-of-date. However, within the gender relations of hegemonic masculinity, this kind of theory was perpetuated and wide-spread; many educators considered using different pedagogies or materials to teach them. This kind of understanding led educators to not only rethink the feminized school environment as one initial reason for causing boys’ underachievement (Skelton, 2001), but also to develop “boy-friendly” teaching strategies as methods for saving boys. Consequently, male teachers were recruited to rescue the boys from the crisis, although Greig (2012) declared that no empirical study supported the idea that male teachers change the boys’ situation. So-called boy-friendly strategies, promoted based on scientific research, were still associated with male privilege as well.

If “all men benefit[ted] from the patriarchal dividend” (Connell, 2005, p. 74), it was not difficult to explain why the public saw only boys’ problems, and not those of girls, because males, benefitting from the above view, definitely maintained their interest. In fact, boys in society did experience some obstacles or troubles while maturing; nevertheless, girls admittedly also experienced similar problems. If the focus was

consistently on the differences and either boys or girls were emphasized, this would only cause more discussion and debate about the “boy crisis” or the “girl crisis” and whether the “crisis” exists or not. This repeatedly perpetuated boys and men as being the dominant topic, a fact which pandered to the rationale of this patriarchal social hierarchy and kept the politics of dominant masculinity strong (Lingard & Douglas, 1999, as cited in Greig & Holloway, 2012).

From the debate of the “boy crisis”, we saw how hegemonic masculinity protected male privilege in boys’ education. The discourse of gender difference induced educators to worry about male students more than female. Even though feminist educators argued against this bias, educators in general still saw boys as being different from girls. In this research, I intend to see how early childhood teachers unfold their understanding of the “difference” between boys and girls.

Men’s Identities

In the nineteenth century, western philosophers raised the question “who am I?”. People were keen to discuss it as a way to explore and understand human beings. Concepts like “identity” were created verbally to include a sense of “who am I?”, something which was significant to every person in the world (Connell, 2002). The answer included different aspects of people. As gender was constructed by the practices in society (Connell, 2005; Li, 2014), people’s identities were formulated through the interaction with the communities and societies and with different races, ethnic groups, cultures, ages, finances, politics, etc. If the patriarchy produced its dominant gender structure as hegemonic masculinity, the process of humans exploring their identities

would be affected by those factors which were infiltrated by the male-dominant discourses.

My identity is that of a biological man from a traditional family in Shanghai, China, Asia. Geographically, Shanghai is one of the biggest cities of the world, consisting of various races, ethnic groups, cultures, etc. I was educated by being exposed to a wide variety of information and diverse cultures. I knew I loved dance and music; I wanted to be friendly and loving but not tough and firm, as one part in my diverse identity; but my parents and other adults felt angry and shamed when I did not behave like a “traditional” man. I found “who I am”; but others told me “who you are”. It was not hard to see a contradiction between me and others. Based on my story, I displayed that identity as a way of exploring features or characteristics through interacting with the environment; nevertheless, external power like others’ discourses, social culture and gender relations constrained us to generate our identities to match with the mainstream value. This was the way hegemonic masculinity stabilized the patriarchal regime. Men still explored their identities through living in society, interacting with other people or things and reflecting and establishing their identities. However, once their identities did not match the requirements of hegemonic masculinity, they must be corrected. Based on Foucault's(1988) philosophy, hegemonic masculinity spread its power to gain control and corrected harmful and limiting discourses, and then penetrated the dominant discourses.

Another example was when I was working as a kindergarten teacher; my co-worker complained to me that the boys in her class preferred playing with girls’ magic sticks. She thought boys should play with swords and pretend to fight. It was interesting that people defined “boys’ toys” or “girls’ toys” in line with traditional culture or convention.

One research study showed that boys and girls preferred playing with more toys matched with their own sex than with cross-gender-typed toys (Cherney & London, 2006). The data also supported the notion that girls preferred toys such as dolls or stuffed animals, while boys liked playing with constructive toys. There was a similar story I experienced in the local community about color. In my dancing class, I asked a boy whether he wanted to drink some water. His mum took out his pink bottle. Another girl's mother saw it and said, "What a beautiful pink bottle, but is this really suitable for your son?" I interrupted immediately saying, "It is okay for boys to use *pink* bottles!" I was quite sensitive at that time after just beginning my research. However, the boy's mum replied, "You really don't know how serious the teachers are here! They classify these colors clearly, ensuring that boys use blue bottles and girls use pink ones. I am now looking for a blue one for my son."

As one research study showed, gender stereotyping like toy or color preference still suffused the public mind in every aspect of social life, in spite of the promotion of anti-stereotyping (Cunningham & MaCDAe, 2011). We should not underestimate the influence of the discourse behind color or toy preference. That discourse regulated children in terms of gender segregation and propagandized the discourse of hegemonic masculinity. The boys in my co-worker's class were taught to be aggressive, while the boy in my dancing class was infused with choosing the stereotypical color for males. None of them had any choice but to passively adopt these discourses, practices and values. In this way, hegemonic masculinity achieved its regime and educated boys to be men who were the disciplined dominant class. Tutchell & Edmonds (2015) reported that the public still perpetuates treating boys and girls differently starting when they were

babies; these researchers critiqued children in their early years being exposed to the predetermined images of the ideal man and woman. However, it was still true that children's identities were generated by society and required to have the images of dominant male and submissive female.

The question of "how to be a man" may always accompany children's growth where they would have a different understanding of manhood, from the simple to the complex. Beginning when children were around two years old, self-identification and gender identity was in fact the process in which everyone could explore and perceive masculinity and femininity (Golombok, 1994). In the situation of gender segregation, classifying male and female as opposites (Connell, 2005; Martin, 1986), children figured out their self-gender identity by matching their behaviour to gendered behaviours (Skelton, 2001). Hegemonic masculinity asserted this practice as being the *normative* definition of masculinity or femininity which emphasized gender differences and provided the criteria defining what men or women ought to be (Connell, 2005). Therefore, boys accepted the modeling of male characters as being tough and strong. In Paley's work, even kindergarten boys already drew a clear line separating them from the girls. They had begun to define and classify what kinds of things they should do or what only boys could do, and what kind of things only girls did (Paley, 1984). Both Paley and another kindergarten teacher Fay (see Naughton, 1998), who tried to eliminate the boundary in the classroom between the doll corner and the block area, failed to mix the boys and girls because both groups were already framing their identities as reflected in their concrete play action. During their processing of distinguishing gender difference, boys rationalized

themselves into adopting masculine behaviours as per their discourse: “If I am doing something only boys do, then I must be a boy” (Paley, 1984, p 18).

Again, boys refusing academic improvement and leaving school prematurely might also be attributed to the external behaviours resulting from self-identity. This dominant gender relation supplied adults with a reason to accept and deal with boys’ aggression and poor academic performance (Skelton, 2001); however, it also created an excuse for boys to leave school or to become aggressive (Beckett, 2001; Foster et al., 2001). Since boys conceived of school as being a feminine place detracting from their masculine identity, boys gradually accepted both lagging behind girls and the idea that they were incapable of study. Based on this cluster of thoughts, boys’ scholastic underachievement and aggressive or violent behaviour could be attributed to their self-determined gendered identity which labelled their behaviours as “masculine,” according to how hegemonic masculinity framed this. Gradually, this trend became a kind of perception of gender which infiltrated their values (Morris, 2012).

However, not all men intended to be tough and aggressive, like me; but were we allowed to be “who I am”? Hegemonic masculinity not only established the gender relation and male privilege, but also affected other kinds of masculinities (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). The worry about “boys becoming feminized” was the expression of the dominant male discourses influencing subordinated masculinity (Atkinson, 2014; Skelton, 2001).

On the level of language, the terms fag, sissy, or gay were extremely negative words used to label those boys who were not masculine (Beckett, 2001; Leighteizer, 2013; Skelton, 2001). I was called similar words when I was young, and I knew I was not the

only one who suffered from that. Currently, several Canadian provinces already included social justice courses, approved by the provincial Ministries of Education, in order to promote a diverse culture (Leighteizer, 2013). However, deep in people's minds there remained an invisible line separating masculinity and femininity, and also the view that traditional femininity represented the passive and masculinity represented active principles (Beckett, 2001). To a large extent, the existence of these words is a product of hegemonic masculinity, and their use was a way of devaluing subordinated masculinity. This kind of thought or discourse not only maligned and discriminated strongly against the LGBTQ community, but also dominated the main definition of "being a man", confusing those boys' own identities. Under these circumstances, those who did not behave in tough or strong ways were bullied by other boys or even by some girls (Foster et al., 2001; Mathews, 2003). For instance, boys who were reluctant to participate in physical education felt deep anxiety and fear prior to athletics classes. They were averse to showering in the locker room because they were the targets of bullies who hit and punched them and verbally abused them, isolated and humiliated them, etc. (Atkinson, 2014). This was because the development of modern sports athletics represented the competition of power and strength as an inherent part of male culture; they gradually excluded any feminine element and were summed up as "male hegemony" (Parker, 1996). Both the boys in Atkinson's research (2014) and I were customarily punished by bullying and ignorance by teachers for not matching the dominant male discourses. Similarly, gay or lesbian students lived in anxiety and insecurity within the dominant gender structures which defined what was normal and proper in the school context (Beckett, 2001).

During the process of boys coming to understand how to be men, an internal identification became grounded through facing those issues such as choosing play mates, selecting a preference of courses or major as the external expression. This process gradually made boys perceive the meaning of manhood because they understood that some behaviours and actions represented the norm of masculinity, while others did not. They learnt to fear being labelled as homosexuals with suspicion about their masculinity identity (Connell, 2002). Therefore, hegemonic masculinity pushed most boys into a closet (Sumara & Davis, 1999) whereby they consequently behaved tough and strong, where they hid their emotions and real desires, and where they were required to be “masculine” (Martino, 2001). However, to boys who did not behave strong and tough, who wanted to do something that the majority of girls were doing, or who even found they were gay or transgender, they faced inner struggles and pressure from outside, such as from peers, parents, or community (Chu & Gilligan, 2014; Connell, 2006). Hegemonic masculinity caused the conflicts in those boys’ lives, like being given a miserable choice of being “who I am” or adhering to the definition of others regarding “who you are”. At the same time, boys did not have a choice to experience the things and practices that were defined as feminine work (Chu & Gilligan, 2014). To some extent, it was a loss for boys to explore gender through interacting with girls and genuine practice.

People worried about boys’ identities or personalities driving them away from the normative definitions. Once again, hegemonic masculinity reinforced its gender hierarchy and regime (Lingard & Douglas, 1999) which protected the domination of traditional male-privilege and required all men to follow this regulation.

Besides, men who worked in a position or industry which consisted mainly of females also feel pressure or misunderstanding from society. From 2012 to 2014, I worked in a kindergarten in Shanghai, where I received many negative comments. Actually, the comments were raised when I selected my major in undergraduate study as Early Childhood Education. People around me could not understand why an academically outstanding young man would choose to work in kindergarten, because in their mind kindergarten was a completely feminized place (Skelton, 2001) in which the employees are all female. They thought I deserved to work in a better position. During work hours, I was required by parents and principals to display masculine behaviour to boys; for example, most parents' comments about me on the first school day can be summed up as "We are so fortunate to have you, a male teacher, so that our children can avoid an all-female environment. Our sons can learn more from you about being masculine!" This was the same situation that the male teachers in Sargent's investigation (2005) experienced. Such demands created heavy pressure on the male teachers in the form of providing powerful male modeling and pedagogies which met the dominant male discourses. Some teachers felt uncomfortable that the goal of teaching boys to be masculine was deeply rooted in so many parents' and teachers' minds, and even in some of the mothers and female teachers (Sargent, 2005). In fact, the need to recruit male teachers at the elementary level consisted of balancing the gender ratio and providing masculine characteristics from which boys could have good modeling and students were taught to be strong (Greig, 2012). However, if the male teacher was not firm, aggressive or strong, or if the male teacher provided an extremely masculine model but did not want to practice this kind of pedagogy, did those requirements for "being a man" from our

society become pressure for male teachers? As Li (2014) said, those main dominant discourses not only placed women in subordination, but also created suppression for men.

Regarding the Research

The above two sections in this chapter display how hegemonic masculinity applied to the education realm. On one side, the discussion of the “boy crisis” enhanced the male dominant status through people questioning the reality of boys’ education and the public’s worry about boys’ future as men in society. On the other side, those discourses associated with hegemonic masculinity promoted men’s identities so that men who did not practice male dominance would be challenged, criticized and requiring correction. Through those two cases, the mechanism of hegemonic masculinity was eventually realized as enhancing dominant male roles during the practice. People discussed male status verbally and experience concerned about it mentally.

I illustrate my theoretical framework with the following figure.

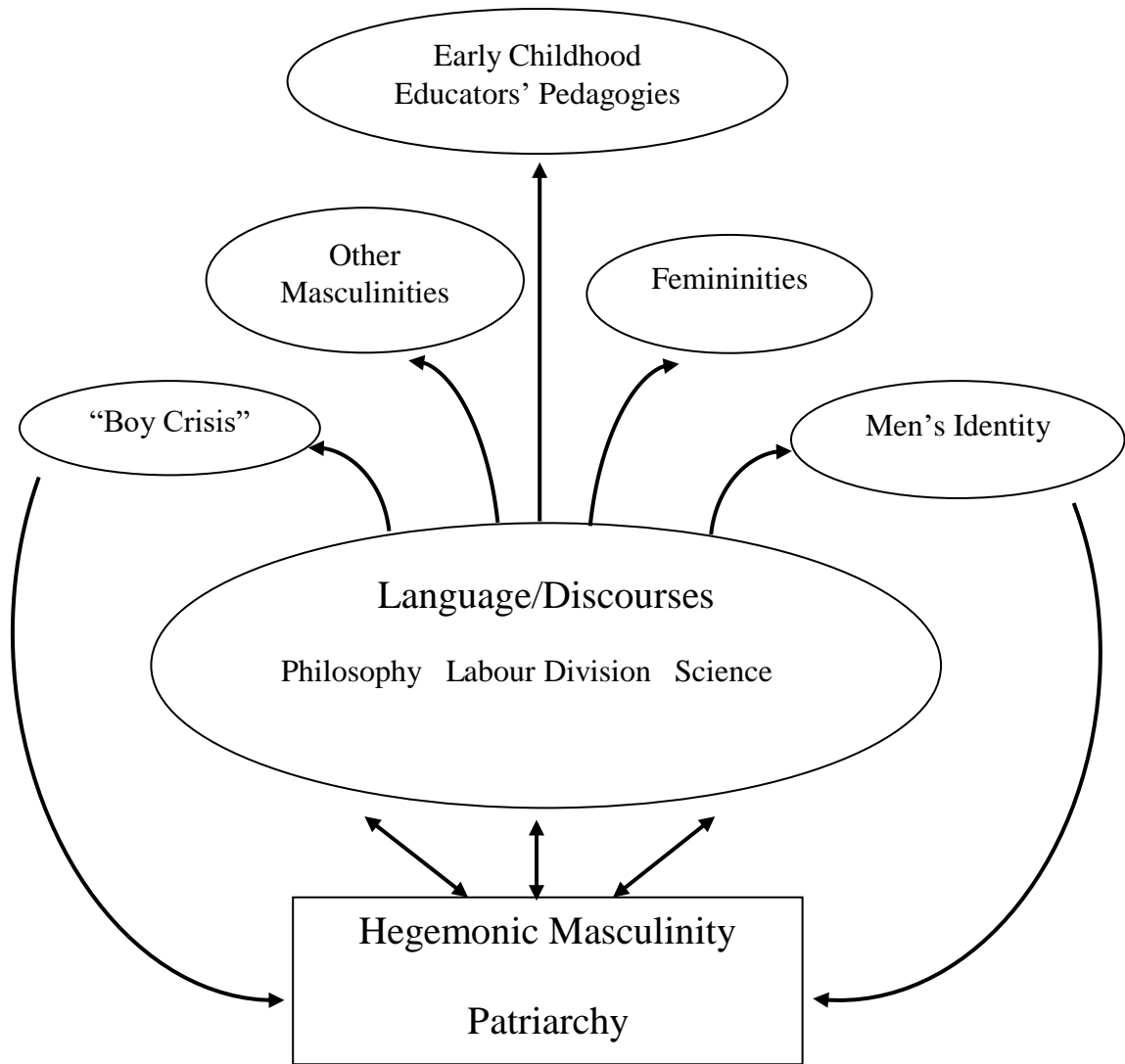


Figure 1: theoretical framework

As shown in this figure, I have divided my literature review into three layers. First of all, the core concept of “hegemonic masculinity” is placed in the foundational layer because it determines the dominant gender relations (male dominance and female subordination) in the patriarchy. The second layer illustrates hegemonic masculinity as formulating different discourses in the multiple research theories, where male dominant discourses permeate the language of philosophy, labour division, politics, science, etc. Those discourses are widely applied in society and educate people’s understanding of

hegemonic gender relations. I use double arrows between both layers to display how the mechanism of hegemonic masculinity is practiced in different domains, with the practice itself supporting the governance of hegemonic masculinity. In the last layer, several contents like “boy crisis”, “men’s identities”, “femininities”, and “other masculinities” are presented which I discuss in this chapter. We see how hegemonic masculinity influences those issues and how it controls, maintains and perpetuates the dominant gender relations in which male dominant discourses are grounded and practiced in those issues by supporting hegemonic masculinity. I also put my question in the last layer as an applied research to understand how early childhood educators express their thoughts around gender structure in their pedagogies.

According to Connell and Messerschmidt (2005), the meaning and scope of hegemonic masculinity was updated in the aforementioned research studies which highlighted how this philosophy expended its power, control and oppression. As they suggest, this concept needed to be updated through various research studies focusing on different levels of society and considering various factors within the society such as culture, ethnicity, region, etc. Hegemonic masculinity can be practiced in a simple classroom or in a small community where people share the same culture; or it can be practiced in a multi-cultural group or society. I think understanding hegemonic masculinity can enrich the diverse practices, forms and power relations in different communities consisting of people with different backgrounds. In the literature review, I found research topics about boys’ and girls’ education which analyzed gender dynamics more through the students’ perspective; so in this research, my intention is to seek out how teachers interpret gender in their teaching and thinking. My research participants are

designed to be elementary school teachers not only because I was once a kindergarten teacher, but also because the previous literature I reviewed also discusses the education on this level.

Therefore, this research is aimed at understanding how hegemonic masculinity influences early childhood educators' pedagogies. The goals of this research are: (1) to determine the real practice and evidence of the concept "hegemonic masculinity"; (2) to analyze the local elementary school teachers' understanding of gender relations; (3) to find out how teachers react to the discourses of hegemonic masculinity.

Chapter 4: Method

Selecting what kinds of methods to use for this study should not be based simply on either a quantitative or qualitative preference; instead, it ought to be driven by the research question and interest (Roth, 2007). As Connell (2005) brought up, research on gender relations should consider the culture, region, ethnicity, race, age and other different background factors. More importantly, research into understanding hegemonic masculinity practices could be conducted through a range of different groups; for example, research could be done in a small community or designed to seek results from a global perspective (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Therefore, investigating gender relations as practiced in different communities does not attempt to seek results which can be generally popularized in other disciplines, but instead intends to portray a holistic picture of how power, relationship and discourses present in practice (Creswell, 1998). It is valuable for deconstructing what form gender relations take within a community in order to design some strategies for dealing with the gender equity issues and to resist the negative influence of hegemonic masculinity (Skelton, 2001). Therefore, this research should be qualitative research, in which case the concept of hegemonic masculinity will be extended and examined together with other current practices. Moreover, my research topic is “How does hegemonic masculinity influence early childhood educators’ pedagogies?” In this regard, I intend to explore how local early childhood teachers talk, think, and practice gender relations. Therefore, the results will present different sorts of practice, discourses and thoughts along with my analysis and interpretation. Thus, my research topic determines the nature of the method as well.

Based on the previous chapters, we see hegemonic masculinity stabilize its regime through language and discourses as used in various theories and applied research. Language contributes significantly to understanding gender and power relations; this applies not only to such words as “masculinity” and “femininity,” but also to the way that language is used to express the power dynamics in social practice (Connell, 2002). Language is also highlighted as an important element reflecting knowledge and thinking, enhancing conversation and understanding, and shaping cultural contexts and human life (Roth, 2007). Language and discourses are used not only to express what we think, but also to structure the way we think and understand things (Lucey, Brown, Denvir, Askew, & Rhodes, 2003). Therefore, analyzing how people use language in conversation reveals the way they understand concepts, knowledge, and culture. In addition, research into masculinity requires using a critical lens to understand teachers’ discourses (Young, 2004). People use language to consolidate their power and control (Fowler, 1985), through which the gender relations of hegemonic masculinity are practiced everywhere. Therefore, my study chooses critical discourse analysis as the method of analyzing teachers’ discourses in order to see how they address themselves in the relationship between teachers and students, teachers and parents, teachers and society, and to ascertain their thoughts and practices in gender relations (Rogers, 2004). There are multiple forms of discourses, such as language, gestures, etc. (Georgakopoulou & Goutsos, 2004). In this research, discourses are narrowed down and specifically point to teachers’ language.

Rogers (2004) explained Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as different from other kind of discourse analysis which interprets discourse within a context; instead, CDA

explains discourses from a critical lens with analyzing how discourses work within a social context and exploring the power relation behind the speakers (Rahal & Vadeboncoeur, 2013; Rogers, 2004). The word “critical” in this method breaks down the thought from conventional understanding of social practices, or scientific results. With a critical perspective, investigators try to expose the power relationships, inequality or discrimination in the society (Rogers, 2004). In addition, discourse analysis is operated to understand the words, phrases or sentences in the text from a linguistic perspective. Texts are the basic units of communication; therefore using language to communicate with students is a form of teaching by teachers (Georgakopoulou & Goutsos, 2004). Regarding the research question, CDA is suitable for this work to analyze the power relation behind teachers’ speech in order to explore the gender bias or inequality in the daily school life.

Meanwhile, I also want to address some weaknesses of using CDA through my investigation. First of all, CDA focuses on text/words to process its analysis through those sentences. However, words do not represent all of meaning expressed by human beings because language itself is structured by rules and orders (Janks, 1997). Selecting this method in this research obviously excludes other aspects of participants’ behaviours in the class and through the interview. My data also would be limited by the participants’ language capacities and their awareness of constructing sentences and operating conversations. Subsequently, from a linguistics perspective, CDA requires the high maintenance of language and discourse to the researchers who should critically understand the words and texts in various meanings within different situation (Janks, 1997; Rogers, 2004). Personally, it is a challenge for me as an ESL (English as second language) investigator to uncover the discourses accurately within the cultural, regional

and lingual context. What is more, Frantz (2003) also critiqued this method saying that it would easily guide the researcher to the results related to their preset hypothesis. As Rogers claimed, analysts easily revealed the results which they suspected previously (Rogers, 2004). Therefore, I paid strong attention to those limitations of this method in order not to arbitrarily analyze my data.

In this chapter, I introduce the entire process by which I have conducted this research and portrayed my participants, and I demonstrate the way that I analyzed the data.

Participants

Based on the theories presented in my literature review and my research topic, I set my participant requirements as elementary teachers who are: (1) teaching in kindergarten, Grades 1 or 2; (2) working in the public schools of the local communities in Victoria; (3) not limiting race, age, or ethnicity, etc. Previous research has focused on young boys' education and contributed considerable results in analyzing gender relations in younger children. My research intended to analyze adults' intervention from the teachers' perspective to see how gender and power practices manifested in the relationship between teachers and younger students. Another criterion was that the participants came from public schools. This was because public schools are managed by the school districts and offer the same curriculum and similar school activities. Victoria communities do have other kinds of schools like private schools and church-funded schools. They do not use always the same curriculum with the result that their values and practices related to gender can be expressed differently. Currently, public schools in Victoria promote anti-bullying programs, conditions where education meditates hegemonic power and violence.

It is worth digging deeper to examine how gender relations are practiced in the school context and how the teachers play their role. Meanwhile, I originally intended to find two male teachers and two female teachers who teach in lower grades. This would have facilitated an analysis not only of how male teachers participate in gender relations as part of the existing debate of recruiting male teachers in kindergarten (Sargent, 2005), but also of how female teachers assume power in the school context (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). No other factors were required because gender is constructed by social practice. Participants' own cultural backgrounds should be considered in the analysis, a step which helped me better understand their positions in the power relations.

The approach I took during the process of recruitment was direct requests and snowball sampling. I sent my invitations via email to the other graduate students in the Faculty of Education, University of Victoria and to the elementary teachers' or principals' email addresses posted on their school websites. In addition, I also asked them in the invitations to distribute my research needs to other potential participants who were interested in this topic. Eventually, I recruited four teachers (two men and two women) from three local public schools in two school districts. They are all Caucasian. For confidentiality purposes, all participants presented in this research are anonymous.

Sam is a male kindergarten teacher who has been teaching in the local community for over twenty years. As he said, he has a good reputation in the community and is welcomed as a male teacher in his school. Currently, Sam is teaching a kindergarten class in which the gender ratio is fifty-fifty, and which includes one child with special needs. Sam also has a student teacher in his class. During the interview, Sam answered my question with many gestures or actions. When he told stories about dealing with students'

troubles, he directly showed me some actions by touching my body. For example, when he introduced the boys playing outside, he displayed some movements which he also does with them, namely touching my shoulder. I marked his speech style and some actions as data supplement for considering his role in the class, the power relation with students when I analyzed those parts of conversation.

Tracy is a fifty-three-year-old female who has been a kindergarten teacher for around twenty-five years. Tracy was born in a big family with five sisters and one brother. She was raised in a Catholic school; she described its restricted hierarchy of students and teachers. Consequently, she wanted to change the classroom context where she promoted gender equity and fairness. Now, she is teaching nine girls and eleven boys in a public school located in the suburbs of Victoria. During the recruitment, her school principal introduced Tracy as a senior kindergarten teacher with a good reputation. The awards she got were presented on the wall in front of her classroom.

Kate and Thomas both teach in a public school located far from downtown. As they described it, most students in their school enjoy a medium to high socio-economic status. Kate and Thomas are young teachers who have taught in elementary school for around 10 years. As a woman, Kate is keen on promoting gender equity and putting feminist theories into practice in her classroom. Currently, she is teaching a twenty-three-student class which combines kindergarten, Grade 1 and Grade 2. She is also studying for her Master's degree in graduate school.

Thomas is a male teacher who identifies himself as being a gentle and lenient man. The fact that he was a male kindergarten teacher once placed him under suspicion by parents and colleagues about his private life and gender identity; however, now he is

totally accepted by others in the community. His voice is kind and friendly. He is quite talkative, thus providing me with many stories about his gender-neutral pedagogies. He obtained his Master's degree in the east of Canada. His supervisor was a Marxist feminist so that he was influenced considerably by feminist theories. Thomas's class consists of ten boys and ten girls. There is one special-need boy in his class accompanied by a special-needs student assistant. Thomas trains a student teacher as well.

Procedure

Since this research used critical discourse analysis to determine how teachers practice gender in their teaching, the approach to collecting data and the form the data takes must be language-based materials. I requested an in-person interview with each participant and observation of their class with a short debriefing. The opportunity of observing vivid classes provided me much information from my participants; I recorded teachers' actions and words. However, because of using critical discourse analysis, I only analyzed teachers' language in the class at last.

The interview was the main strategy in the data collection portion of qualitative research (Creswell, 1998). After comparing the interview to other approaches, I selected interviews for my investigation for reasons of convenience and accessibility to my participants. According to my research topic, I needed to query teachers' attitudes to first, gender relations in the school context; second, their thoughts on boys' or girls' education, and lastly, the strategies used in designing courses and activities. The interview constituted a flexible approach which used language to ask, discuss or debate with the participants. Moreover, interviews also gave a large space for my participants to share their teaching stories or experiences, a situation which did not require them to do their

own writing or provide extra documents or diaries to me. My interviews were semi-structured. The interview questions focused on several topics:

- the evaluation of boys and girls
- teaching strategies
- expectations of boys and girls
- understanding the “boy crisis”
- the influence of social media
- school policies related to gender issues

The first three points were actually three key elements of the curriculum; those were educational goals, pedagogies and processes, and evaluation, all of which matched my research topic: inquiring about teachers’ pedagogies and teaching. Questions also included requesting participants’ thoughts on the “boy crisis”, social media and policies relating to my literature review. During the interviews, I not only asked for their thoughts on those topics, but also asked them to provide me with stories and examples as much as possible. All interviews covered all of the topics but unfolded in different sequences. Many times, I followed up on participants’ examples by raising corresponding questions. On average, each participant’s interview lasted forty minutes. All interviews were recorded on audiotape.

The second part of data collection was observation. One idiom says “walk the talk,” which means practicing what one preaches. If the interview portion displayed participants’ thoughts on gender relations, experiences, and reflection on previous teaching, observation offered me an opportunity to see what they did in real-life classes. In this section, I focused on teachers’ practices of power relations, the way they unfold teaching

language, and their reaction to students' behaviours or words. Because I focused mainly on the dynamics between the teacher and students in the classroom, I did not restrict the time, topic or course of the observation. Mainly, the participants arranged times that were convenient for them and when they felt confident and comfortable opening their classes to me. Eventually, I observed each participant for about thirty minutes, except in the case of Tracy who opened her class for ninety minutes. The content of the observation is presented as follows:

Both Sam and Tracy opened their class in the morning when they greeted students, did the calendar, and listened to the principals' announcements. Tracy also showed me how she led the students in walking a trail with the parents accompanying them, and snack time.

Kate and Thomas showed me one of their courses. Kate's teaching topic was "gender stereotypes" in which she explained the meaning of this concept, brought up examples, and opened discussion of stereotypes in students' lives. Thomas taught his kindergarten class to alphabetically review the writing of capital letters.

After the observation, I took approximately ten minutes with the participants for debriefing. According to what I saw in their teaching, I asked the reasons for their arrangement of the class settings, the design of their courses, some reactions to the students, and the discourses they used in class. All of the observations were recorded by the taking of notes which were then transferred into story pieces. Debriefing was recorded on audiotape.

Data analysis

All of the audiotapes were transcribed. I used the *Express Scribe Transcription Software* to dictate the records of interviews and debriefing word-by-word. Then I printed these transcripts and used the traditional way to analyze data sources manually. As articulated above, I chose to use critical discourse analysis as a suitable method of analyzing how (hegemonic) masculinity influenced the gender dynamic.

I did three rounds of reviewing all of my data. In Round 1, I generally reviewed all of the interview processes and coded the discourses by different words or abbreviations due to the fact that each interview had different structures and sequences. Consequently, Round 1 codes were matched with the interview topics (e.g. evaluation, strategies, gender differences, etc.) with following up some new codes like “single mum”, “male modeling”, “students’ awareness of gender differences”, “teachers’ self-reflection”, etc. All those codes were marked on the hardcopies of the transcripts.

Through Round 1, I roughly reviewed participants’ answers, examples of teaching, and other discourses. Before moving into Round 2, I numbered participants’ replies for classification and management in the dialogues in my transcripts. This strategy helped me locate participants’ discourses in the next two rounds of analysis. After that, in Round 2, I classified those codes into several genres which were helpful in the subsequent steps of organizing and interpreting meaning (Georgakopoulou & Goutsos, 2004). These genres were “Evaluation”, “Treating boys and girls”, “Expectations and Strategies”, “Cross-gender behaviours”, “Rough and tumble play”, “Male teacher and female teacher”, “Attitude to ‘Boy Crisis’”, “Media”, “Gender policies” and “Students self-stereotypes”. I listed on paper the number of their reply, the codes, and particular discourses under each

genre. Sometimes, some codes or discourses could have been put into different genres because they did express multiple meanings.

Round 3 is a step in which I analyzed those identifying words in detail. During the analysis, I referred to Naughton's process of employing this method (Naughton, 1998). This was because her theory was similar to Connell's. It maintained that gender was to be identified within the relations between men and women who practiced gender discourses within the social structures or institutions. This process identified how people categorize themselves and others and analyzes the social practices between those entities; this process also required the researcher to analyze who benefited from the particular discourses and power relations as constructed in the teaching. Following Naughton's process, I listed several questions arising from the data analysis as follows:

- What kind of discourse reflects how participants categorized students? How did participants use gender as a category in their teaching?
- What emotional investment did participants have to teach the students in a specific way?
- How did participants order themselves with regard to this teaching position?
- How did other discourses from the media and parents influence these participants and their pedagogies?
- What kind of discourse did participants use to talk about gender policies, and what examples did they use to support their viewpoints?

Guided by these questions, I found that participants answered the questions in their own specific ways. For example, when I asked them to evaluate the boys and girls in their class in general, Sam used several adjectives to describe the students directly; however,

Tracy did not directly answer my question, replying instead with “I treat them the same”, a response not strongly related to my question in the dialogue. Thomas’s answer was to bring up boys’ or girls’ behavioural problems. This showed that he used negative examples to reply to this question as a way to evaluate students. From these different perspectives as answers to my questions, the participants revealed their attitudes toward categorizing students by gender. Some teachers avoided classifying boys and girls because they were reluctant to answer my question, or did not reply to the discourses along the same lines as I had asked. Others viewed the discourses differently, like Sam using “active” or “aggressive” to describe the boys and “good at writing tasks” for the girls.

Moreover, I also focused on how language is used. For example, I paid attention to how participants used pronouns when talking, and the meaning of the pronouns used; I did the same for how they quoted examples to support their viewpoints, and the relationship between their examples and opinions (Creswell, 1998). Some of the participants brought up their examples by using “you” as the pronoun, and others would use the third-person pronoun. In the interview, the shift in pronouns used brought to light different power dynamics and meanings of relationship (Dijk, 1985). When Sam declared his expectations of students, he began with the sentence “I want them to learn how to solve problems”; then he changed the pronoun and the discourse was “If you are comfortable to be a good person, you are able to do other things,” in the same dialogue afterwards. This shift allowed me, who used to be an outsider in his class, to mingle with his students. In other words, I became a “student” to whom he was teaching his ideas. This reflected his practice of power relations between him and his students. That is, Sam

differentiated himself and his students by placing everyone in two different classes, i.e., teacher-students, where he occupied the dominant role of teaching with his students needing to follow his requirements. Similar discourses also happened at the time when Kate introduced me to her students during my observation. When I called Kate by her first name, she was a bit worried because her students began to call her by her first name. Therefore, Kate explained to her students that only her friends could call her by her first name; in class, the students should call her Mrs. XXXXX. Later on in the debriefing, Kate revealed that she thought younger students called teachers by their last names, whereby they had the sense of the relationship between adults and children. According to Kate's discourse, the power dynamics between teachers and children were manifest in the hierarchy in which two classes (teachers-students) must be distinct. Thus, teachers still occupied the power side and control the class.

I also found many discourses were contradictory. For example, teachers said, "I treat them all the same"; however, later they said "they are different." Some teachers said they did want to differentiate between them and they had the same expectations of boys and girls. The discourse of "same" and "different" was used strikingly often throughout all of the transcripts. Therefore, I classified all these discourses together. In Chapter 3, the debate on the "boy crisis" reflected a binary attitude toward boys and girls in the literature, where hegemonic masculinity promoted discourses like "boys dominate girls" or "girls exceed boys". As the mechanism of hegemonic masculinity, those discourses differentiated boys and girls in order to realize the relations as male dominance and female subordination. Through the data, it is possible to go further to see how hegemonic masculinity controls people's words about the "same" and "different."

Although hegemonic masculinity practiced the traditional gender order, my participants already had a sense of promoting gender equity in their pedagogies. Based on the data, another genre including codes such as “gender-neutral pedagogies,” “fairness and equity,” and “feminist pedagogies” formulated another kind of discourse in which participants practiced their reaction to hegemonic masculinity. The discourses such as “there is long way to go” expressed teachers’ attitudes and feelings toward practicing another kind of gender relations within the school context. These discourses expressed the resistance harboured by students, families and society.

After three rounds of reviewing, classifying and analyzing particular discourses in the data, I conclude these genres, discourses and stories pieces and generate my results. Regarding my research topic, the results will be presented in two sections: on the one hand, it is possible to see how hegemonic masculinity emerges in teachers’ daily teaching, thoughts of gender relations and pedagogies; on the other hand, it is also evident how teachers practice gender equity and feminist pedagogies as the way of reacting to the existing social gender order. The next two chapters will present these results in detail.

Chapter 5 Behind the Same and the Different

Hegemonic masculinity emphasizes the power relations between classes in the gender hierarchy. It legitimizes the gender order in the patriarchy and it creates the discourses to dictate people's understanding of social structure. All these thoughts regarding the differentiation between male and female or dominance and subordination suffuse and rule people's lives; some are even rooted in their minds. Every day, teachers, as one of the significant elements in the school context, interact with the students, parents, and colleagues or principals on the basis of these invisible discourses, knowledge, and thoughts. The roles in the power and gender relations are dynamic and they also manifest on this stage in the form of various feelings and approaches. If hegemonic masculinity dominates people's practice of gender relations, teachers will also manipulate power and be controlled by power, a phenomenon which may become visible in different forms.

During the interviews, the participants replied that they treated boys and girls the same now; they had the same expectations of them, even while they said students were individuals and different. For those statements, they also provided their examples or stories. This chapter goes further to ascertain the reasons why their discourses were contradictory, and how hegemonic masculinity perpetuates its discourses in their teaching.

External Power

Paley said kindergarten children are very much self-stereotyped (Paley, 1984). For teachers who want to promote an equal learning environment and reduce gender boundaries, the power emanating from outside of their classroom must be faced. Through my participants' discourses, I identified their positions in their interactions between

families, social media and other kinds of discourses, respectively, in which they were also in subordination and passively accepting of those discourses.

Restriction from Parents

The most powerful external factor influencing gender relations within the school context might be the parenting from each different family (Cavanagh, Schiller, & Riegler-Crumb, 2006). As Tracy said when I asked the teachers to say something generally about the boys and girls in their class, “They are (were) more like individuals.” No doubt each child came from families with various different backgrounds. The school context was not the first place for children to experience gender discourses; their parents were their first teachers inculcating gender thoughts. Tracy added later that when a baby was born, his/her environment was already set: the boy would have a blue blanket while the girl would have a pink one. Tracy’s example indicated that parents applied stereotypical education strategies to their children from the time they were born, even before they were born, and continued fostering those thoughts in them as they grew. Therefore, when children began their school years, they had already formed a systematic understanding of gender relations, that was, boys were different from girls; they favoured different toys and different types and subjects of play. Truly, students came individually into the school context; but they brought similar thoughts of gender segregation which were combined together as a collective power in the class. Then, the teacher of the class faced a strong stereotypical group of students in which the power dynamic changed. Four teachers all explained their similar strategies to their students who talked the discourses of differentiation, like “boys’ play” or “girls’ play.” For example, Sam stated: “There is no special boys’ table or girls’ table in our class.” Sam’s reply explained every table in his

class was for each student without gender differentiation. In her class, Tracy reminded the boy on “special helper” duty not only to pick boys to answer her questions, but to give girls more opportunities. She said, “There’re a lot of girls raising their hands.” Under these circumstances, teachers did act in their position as teachers by requiring or suggesting that students paid less attention to gender boundaries; the teachers hereby used their power to change students’ minds. However, the main question was the sequence in which the dialogues unfolded; that was, students being the ones who often first talked or practiced those discourses and teachers always reacting after hearing or observing their stereotypical words or behaviours. Despite teachers preaching down to the students from above, they dealt passively with those discourses. Therefore, the efforts they made played only a weak role in changing students’ stereotypes; in contrast, parenting with views including deeply-rooted gender segregation influenced each child. Kate and Thomas always had students from the same family. As Thomas related, sister and brother siblings studied in his class respectively. The sister was an outstanding student in his class, while her brother was extremely boisterous. Thomas explained that their parents treated them differently: they were more relaxed with regards to the boy’s problems but were serious toward the girl. According to Thomas’s introduction of the parenting of this family, it was evident that in their family structure the parents practiced the gender relations of hegemonic masculinity: hegemonic masculinity shielded the boy from any blame or punishment due to his mistakes or problems. However, the girl was treated more strictly. The different criteria applied to the boy and girl within one family did not match the teacher’s thinking of treating boys and girls the same. To some extent, teachers were limited and subordinate in the interaction between them and parents. Kate claimed that

the socio-economic status of the family influenced students' understanding their status in the social hierarchy. Since her school is located in a wealthy community near a mountain, students would compare their own status through where they live. One of her students said he was rich because his family was "moving up the mountain." Based on her example, this student already had a sense of wealth relating to his geographic living environment which reflected his power in the social hierarchy. As his family provided a strong financial background, he gradually recognized his power and used it by talking about wealth and behaving in a dominant way. This put his teacher Kate under considerable pressure; she later admitted that she sometimes felt like a servant. The power dynamic shifted from teacher-student to servant-master, whereby social relations were reinforced by families' socio-economic status. Previous literature displayed the idea that men are the "breadwinners" and women are house carers. This kind of family structure made men valuable because they earned income for the family. In other words, better economic condition provided men more power in the gender relation. Similarly, high socio-economic status of that family brought that student a feeling of superiority, which caused Kate to be uncomfortable. Thus, teachers lost their initiative vis-à-vis powerful families that emphasized gender differences or a wealthy status.

Discourses in Media

Teachers also found that social media played a role in students' perception of gender. The movie *Cinderella* was being shown during the time that I interviewed those teachers; so I asked them how they saw social media in relation to their pedagogies, and how it influenced students. Kate said once her students saw a trailer of *Cinderella* on YouTube, they went "crazy". The truth was that animated films, especially Disney movies, were

really welcomed by all children. Tracy said, “Disney has done a good job,” with its success spanning over eighty years (Forgacs, 1992). The information from media, the discourses spoken in the movies and the gender practices in the animated show also influence us pervasively. When I asked Sam why he viewed boys and girls as being different, he replied that students were influenced by “what they see on TV, what they see in video games and computer games,” whereby he attributed students’ stereotypes to media in society. Admittedly, these stories and gender practices in the media taught students a lot. Kate said her students would not differentiate *Cinderella* as a boys’ movie or girls’ movie; however, the point was that students watched how the characters acted out their roles and gender relations in the movie. Therefore, in the classroom, students fit themselves into the role of prince or princess in the fantasy play as their expression of those roles after watching the movies. Again, the teachers in the study reacted to this case through changing the students’ perceptions. For instance, when students categorized play, Sam said he would tell his students that he played princesses and dolls with his daughters. In this way, he provided an alternative model for students so that boys could play princesses or dolls which were typical female-oriented games. Using a similar strategy to Sam’s, Thomas told his students: “That’s okay. I like *Frozen*.” Here, an imbalance in the power relation between teachers and students also became evident. The majority of students were trying on gendered roles in the play or speaking the stereotypical discourses; at this time, both teachers could only provide accessibility that men could also love so-called feminine movies or toys. In their discourses, they were using the first-person pronoun “I”, indicating an individual attitude to the stereotype. Compared to students, the majority, those discourses from teachers were weak. Students may have

accepted their suggestions or thinking, or they would adopt the teachers thinking and said “it is okay”, but the discourses of hegemonic masculinity would still perpetuate in their minds. When I discussed with Tracy about the cross-gender play in her class, she encouraged male students walking into the kitchen corner; however, they quickly left it again. As she said, “They don’t gravitate towards that.” The verb “gravitate” here expressed a passive tone of the discourse, that is, gender stereotype was like categorizing play by girls or boys being deeply rooted in students’ minds, and also the fact that teachers’ interventions were not strong enough to change that situation. Combining two male teachers’ reactions and Tracy’s discourse, I saw the efforts made to reform students’ gender practices and provide modeling and space within the class context; but eventually, students still followed the dominant gender practice presented in movies or other social media because they are not interested in other possible gender practices, or even there is no chance, no model or resource for students to try, to learn or to refer from other gender practices. Therefore, to whatever extent, the teachers’ strategies did not really work. In other word, the teachers’ pedagogies and the discourse of social media, which was grounded in students’ minds, were not interacting. Again, those educational strategies manifested their weakness under the dominant hegemonic masculinity discourses.

Scientific Language

Besides the discourses from families and social media, teachers were also rooted in other discourses, such as the scientific discourses, which were discussed in Chapter 2. Science explained many situations or phenomena, provided authoritative explanations and created discourses that people could refer to and adopt as they encounter phenomena in life; i.e. scientific discourses made people feel normal or conventional to many social

practices (Bhaskar, 2014). When I asked the teachers why they found students behaving differently, Sam said, “It is the way we are wild; that’s the way we were born.” Tracy claimed, “They just naturally group together,” and Thomas answered, “A five-year-old boy’s brain is equivalent to a girl’s brain which is three”. The words “wild” and “naturally” which the teachers used in their discourses indicated that they considered gender difference as being part of nature. Meanwhile, Thomas quoted brain research results to support his understanding of gender difference; the scientific discourses based on authentic research and experiments convinced him to believe in the existence of gender difference. All the discourses proved that science language blended into real life and teachers were passively influenced by those discourses (Catsambis, 1995). Certainly, those teachers wanted to treat students the same; however, students’ self-stereotypical behaviours associated with the silent discourses they adopted from books, previous education or any other channels made them believe that gender difference existed and was binary, namely in the form of either boys or girls. “Nature” is a strong argument stating that human beings can hardly change, just as human beings can stop neither a sunrise nor an earthquake (Johnson, 1998). When teachers considered the differences in students’ behaviours as stemming from nature, they lost their initiative to the powerful discourses of nature and were convinced by, or adopted, those discourses which were expressed in scientific evidence.

Part of the reasons that teachers related both the same and different strategies back and forth during the interviews was that their claims, pedagogies and thoughts were restricted by external factors such as parents, media or what the students or the teachers had learned universally. The limitations arose because the power of the teachers’

discourses was inconsistent with the external discourses, which were much more dominant. Thus, the teachers' practice of gender equity was not as effective as they wanted. This was one instance where hegemonic masculinity controlled the majority of the discourses in various realms to reduce any situation that would diminish its reign; thus it limited the teachers' gender equity practices in within their pedagogies by the power emanating from outside the classroom, in the form of parents' interruptions and diffusion from the other educational sources (media, books, research reports, etc.).

In the Classroom

Although all of the teachers in the study insisted on promoting equity in their classroom, they also lived in the patriarchy where they faced those dominant discourses everywhere. They might either resist those powerful discourses or were also influenced by the deeply-rooted social structure and thoughts of gender differences, just as Thomas used the brain research report to support his understanding of boys and girls. Those discourses of hegemonic masculinity affected those teachers and also reflected in their practice.

Labelling

Hegemonic masculinity used discourses to label and name students, by making the power relations evident within the hierarchy in the form of specific ways in which people addressed each other or deal with gender. The way teachers called their students was discussed during the four interviews, and what they really said in class was personally witnessed. Sam always called his students "boys and girls;" Tracy mixed "boys and girls" and "the class" when she called on her students; Kate avoided using "boys and girls" but

she said it once during the study's observation; Thomas never said "boys and girls," but in the debriefing he said he would "probably say boys and girls a couple of times."

Actually, the phrase "boys and girls" was commonly used by teachers throughout all grades. It was also used in the situation that teachers want to call on the entire group/class to do something or call students' attention. However, this phrase included only two categories: male and female, a situation which demonstrated a strong gender dichotomy. Teachers said it often when they stand and students sit; alternatively, both of them may stand, but not on the same level. Rather, it was a form of address spoken from up to down. Therefore, in real practice, the use of this discourse demonstrated that two different classes of people exist within the hierarchy: teachers as dominant and students as subordinate. Moreover, gender classification was unfolded from the upper dominant class (teachers) to label the students "boys and girls." Sam was heard to say "boys and girls" consistently during the observation. In the debriefing, he was asked about the way he addressed the students. The conversation went as follows:

Fan: During the observation today, I mostly heard "boys and girls," "boys and girls." So that's the way that you regularly call them?

Sam: Yes, that's the way I usually do it. Now, if I had, that the parents I was talking about who doesn't want them, then I would say "class" all the time, I will just change for that year.

Fan: But it's good you don't have that kind of parents, yes?

Sam: No, No, I don't have. It's nice.

He replied, "That's the way I usually do it," except that the students' parents did not want him to use that phrase. The word "usually" showed the high frequency with which

he used that phrase, indicating again that he saw boys and girls as different and that there are only two gender categories. He might have compromised in the presence of parents who did not emphasize gender, or who wanted gender to be understood as more than a binary, with more complexity; however, he would not actively call the entire group with gender-neutral words because the following discourse was “I will change for that year” (“that year” makes the time specific when parents did not want him to say “boys and girls”) and “it is nice” now that he did not encounter those kinds of parents. To him, saying “the class” was a phrase he used unwilling and only to meet parents’ requirements; the discourse “it is nice” showed his disagreement and negative attitude toward the situation in which parents requested that he used gender-neutral words. Therefore, Sam revealed strong evidence in his pedagogy that hegemonic masculinity only differentiated gender into two categories, a view which worked directly on his students. The phrase “boys and girls” was actively used by teachers and passively heard by the students daily; students unconsciously adopted the words “boys” and “girls” as the gender categories. Perhaps Sam was the most typical teacher among the four who stressed “boys and girls”. He firmly expressed his viewpoint about using this phrase that it is the way he “usually” does. Sam insisted calling students “boys and girls” also because he believed they were born in that way naturally. However, Tracy, Kate and Thomas sometimes also used this phrase while teaching. All of them promoted gender equity in the class, but may not have addressed the gender difference when they spoke. Nevertheless, over the years hegemonic masculinity has not created any other discourses to address the students in the language used in teaching, except “boys and girls;” as a result, it is hard for teachers to introduce any other words in class. That was why those teachers could not help saying it.

In addition, this phrase was perpetuated and passed onto other teachers. Sam's student teacher also called the class "boys and girls." As the supervisor, Sam used this model when helping the student teacher learn how to teach; to whatever extent, his practice of gender relations affected his student teacher. Therefore, the term "boys and girls" played an important role in the language of daily teaching; it revealed the binary gender and power relation between teachers and students under the practice of hegemonic masculinity.

Between individual students and adult teacher, the gender relation and power dynamic also presented through other asymmetric discourses, for example, the use of appellation. Generally, during classroom observation, teachers were heard to call students by their first names, while students called the teachers by their last names and used the forms of address Mr., Mrs., or Ms. Thomas's class was the exception; he called students names combined with the titles Mr. or Miss. Later on, Thomas was asked whether this was his strategy in the language of teaching. He thought it was "a more friendly approach." Indeed, friends, colleagues and people in the same social hierarchy class address each other by name or equivalent title. When Thomas called his students by name and by the same kind of title as the students addressed him by, he raised students' status and put them on the same level as him within the power relation; as a result, he said, students felt that the teacher was showing them more respect. In contrast, the way that students and teachers address each other was still conventional in the other classes: teachers were called by their last names and the title, and students were called by their first names, a situation which demonstrates the existence of two different classes (teacher-student) within the hierarchy. In the visit to Kate's class, she wanted me to do a

self-introduction to her students for their curiosity. I said, “I am Kate’s friend, but you may call me Mr. Fan”. This triggered a strong interest in her students and they repeated “Kate” several times. Kate spoke extensively about how the students were to address each other in class. She told students that her first name could be used only by friends, but in class they should call her Mrs. XXXXX. She also added to her students that she had had no idea how to address me to her students before I said my last name with the honorific. At the end of the debriefing, Kate used the following discourse to explain that she felt students at a younger age still “see us (teachers) as adults.” All of Kate’s discourses on being addressed in the class reveal the power relation of hegemonic masculinity between two separate social classes. She did not know how to introduce me before she knew my last name because she wanted her students call me by the same form (Mr. Fan) of address that they called her. This presented a clear distinct between adults and children. Then, she explained many rules people after students had repeated her first name, thereby reminding the students to be aware of the relationship between teachers and students so that they should call her Mrs. XXXXX. Also, her last discourse (“see us (teachers) as adults”) presented her understanding of the relation in the classroom, teachers as adults versus students as children. Therefore, the convention of calling teachers by their titles in the class exposed the strong hierarchy which made teachers more powerful. What is more, even Thomas practiced an equivalent approach to address the students; but the honorific “Mr.” and “Miss” were associated with a strong binary gender model which still differentiated gender through the use of language and might cause similar effects as the phrase “boys and girls” did.

In addition, hegemonic masculinity made its discourses evident in the way that teachers labelled their students. In the literature review, Connell critiqued the over-generalization of applying the terms “masculinity” and “femininity” to all men and women; he stated that it was arbitrary to use some features of male and female behaviour or performance in social gender practices. Nevertheless, some features became relevant under the mechanism of hegemonic masculinity consolidating its gender relations and practices. In other words, in the gender hierarchy of patriarchy, men and women were required to follow the norm of social gender practices to which they should match those features. This was still perpetuated in current teachers’ discourses. When the teachers were asked about their thoughts about a “boy crisis”, most of them disagreed with describing boys’ problems as a crisis. Every day they faced those boys who had learning difficulties or behavioural problems; but the teachers did not magnify the boys’ problems. Sam raised an example in which a conversation opened between him and a parent of a special-needs child. He did not intend to report the many bad behaviours the child engaged in daily at school; instead, he praised what the child did well, because his parent “had heard since he was born how bad he is.” Sam’s original statement showed how language affected individuals. For example, when a child with special needs was discussed, the following discourses contained concepts such as problems, bad behaviours, etc., whereby the child’s merits were forgotten. The labels were so powerful that they narrow people’s focus. Thomas also said that in his class, the experts had designated a boy, who was struggling with learning, as having learning disabilities; but they “couldn’t guarantee” a positive outcome at the current time. This negative view showed that the experts were concerned with exercising the power of diagnosis and labels on a child.

Those teachers viewed students' problems as common in their growing and emphasized providing them with help.

However, the contradictory statements demonstrated that labelling still exists. At the beginning of the interviews, teachers were asked how they generally felt about the boys and girls in their classes. Sam described how boys were "more active, more physical, and more aggressive," and how the girls were doing well, sitting and finishing their written tasks. This discourse consisted of some adjectives used to describe boys' and girls' good behaviours; these adjectives matched with the general thinking in society about boys and girls. Without a doubt, the answer revealed the binary gender model; by using those words as labels, Sam also powerfully summarized the general (and his own) attitude toward his students. After the observation, when describing the students in more detail, Sam was aware of their individual differences so that another kind of discourse came up. A similar discourse also became evident in Kate's interview, during which she had felt much earlier like labelling the girls (but not the boys) with words like "chatter". She also added, "I have girls that are very physical, but perhaps they are different". Teachers easily fell into the trap of picking a typical feature of boys and girls to describe them all, although the feature was later found to be inaccurate. Those inconsistent discourses demonstrated that hegemonic masculinity controlled the way teachers generally saw the students in two gender categories, a perception which made the teachers arbitrarily label the students with the existing gendered words. It was a powerful way for teachers to ignore the individuality of the students and consider them as strictly belonging to two gender categories.

Labelling students did not end at the group level; it also continued exerting its influence on individuals, especially on the minority within the school context. Kate answered the first question, she said, “They (her students) are pretty stereotypical,” and followed this up with an example of a female student who “exists in the world of a princess.” Although Kate verified using “stereotypical” to reply to the first question about the entire group of students, the impression of that female student in Kate’s mind was defined as an extremely feminine girl. Compared to Sam, Kate did not emphasize the gender dichotomy in her words; however, the discourse of “stereotypical” associated with the description of the girl made evident Kate’s practice of labelling her students by the gender structure.

Kate also related a conversation between her and her colleague, a conversation which focused on a student’s identity. She began by saying “There is a student who...I think I identified him as gay in our Grade 6 right now;”she quoted her colleague’s comment that “He was diagnosed as being gay.” Topics of gender identity or sex orientation were sensitive because gay masculinity played a subordinate role under the hegemonic masculinity in the gender hierarchy. In the interview, Kate told me she explained the word’s meaning to her students by saying, “I have gay friends; they are not bad;” this demonstrated that she was open and friendly to gay people. However, when she talked about the student’s identity, the discourses of hegemonic masculinity showed themselves again. The verb “identified” as Kate used it means a hidden thing had been found. The boy’s sex orientation was his private matter; but when it had been found out and talked about by others, it was exposed. The meaning of “identified” also stated that being gay is different, i.e. we did not identify heterosexual people. Until now, gender

practices had already generated a distinction between two categories. Furthermore, Kate's colleague used the more powerful verb "diagnosed." Lexically, "diagnosed" is used to identify a disease, medical problem or disorder, and this word is used in the relationship between doctor and patient. When the teacher used this verb in the passive voice, she agreed with a medical statement of this boy's identity, in which her understanding of "gay" stayed on the level of disease/problem/disorder. Therefore, "being gay" was eventually in this conversation devalued as a medical problem, while this male student was labelled by this word with its strong negative meaning and was placed in a subordinated position in the gender hierarchy. Again, hegemonic masculinity suppressed any other masculinity in the gender relation by manipulating and demeaning the value of other discourses; and here, labelling "gay" was one of the forms in its gender practice.

Restricting

Hegemonic masculinity controlled other kinds of gender practices in every aspect of teaching, including the limitation of language and materials, and the monitoring by colleagues and parents. The aforementioned discourses, whereby teachers addressed the students individually or collectively, had already proven the lack of gender descriptions in the language system. This limitation already made our understanding of gender in a dichotomous way, whereby it was taken for granted when "boys and girls" or "Mr. and Miss" were said, depending on others' biological sex. At the same time, this limitation restricted teachers from addressing other discourses outside the binary gender. When Kate introduced to the researcher an activity design about teaching students how to understand gender stereotype, she still had "hesitation" and was "not really comfortable doing that." In fact, she gave that activity when the researcher revisited her class;

however, during the interview, her hesitation and negative feeling showed that she was still not ready or confident to discuss gender stereotype with her students. On the one hand, stereotypes were powerful and rooted in students' minds and practiced in their lives, facts which formulated the visible dominant gender discourses in class; on the other hand, Kate wanted to break the stereotype, to make students rethink gender practices and to input a new kind of non-stereotype discourse. The power relation between the two sides was not balanced, so that if Kate were not prepared enough and felt weak, the intervention into the stereotypical discourses would be restricted. The dominant discourses made people careful and discreet when talking, speaking or practicing other possibilities of gender practice.

Kate also gave me another similar teaching experience and shared her concern. Once when she read a story to the whole class on a carpet, she witnessed a couple of boys lying on the same pillow and holding each other's hands, which was "sweet," as she said; therefore, she just let it go without addressing anything. By contrast, she would not allow girls to play with each other's hands or hair. According to her storytelling, teachers did treat boys and girls differently without a doubt. Behind the different strategies, it was evident how hegemonic masculinity controlled the discourses influencing those practices. On the one hand, Kate did not address boys' intimate behaviours. Because compared to the boys' enthusiasm, it was not easy to see they are quiet, kind and friendly to each other. Therefore, she did not "ask them to stop", even though she thought "it not in the range of appropriate touching". Her strategy gave those boys the chance to experience another kind of feeling with friends; on the other hand, she did not want to cause "negative potential" since she worried about "how others might perceive this." Those discourses

again made her worry evident about the misunderstanding of those boys' behaviours and possible negative comments from others, all of which would make those boys vulnerable. In this gender practice, boys' intimate behaviours were allowed to continue under the governance of hegemonic masculinity discourses, but this practice could not be addressed and magnified or generalized, since it did not match the dominant male discourses (boys as active, aggressive, tough, etc.). Then, the teacher's concern about potential criticism from others was a way that hegemonic masculinity restricted the influence of other gender practices by controlling the use of language. What is more, the different treatments between boys and girls demonstrated the protection of male privilege under the gender structure of hegemonic masculinity. Kate's requirement was: "We need to respect each other's space." The pronoun "we" included all the students in her class. However, in this practice, girls' intimate behaviours were taken for granted by her, a fact which might cause fights or conflict. As she said, she knew girls would play each other's hair, then causing hurt, fighting and crying. However, when boys acted out with those behaviours, she became hesitant. Perhaps Kate as a female teacher was more familiar with girls than boys according to her previous statements, but she was concerned more about boys than girls in this situation, a view which was inconsistent with her requirements for all of the students. Therefore, the practice of hegemonic masculinity again placed boys on a more important level than girls, a situation which processed boys' behaviours in the acceptable discourses. One more example from Kate displayed the hegemonic masculinity controlled over other kinds of gender practices. She narrated the experience of explaining the concept "gay" to her students, in which she rebuilt the meaning by eliminating discrimination. However, she felt "that was horrible" and

worried about the discussion between her students and their parents after school. Her negative self-evaluation of that course not only demonstrated her lack of confidence, but also reflected on the topic of “gay” as causing conflict and being unsuitable for young children to talk about. There was also the pressure from parents who would disagree with her work. Hegemonic masculinity made the teachers vulnerable and places them in a lower power position in the practice of talking about topics outside the main stream discourses in order to restrict the influence of other gender discourses. Even Kate blamed herself by saying, “I didn’t feel I necessarily did a really good job because I did the talking.” This statement, combined with her use of “I” three times and two adverbs (“necessarily” and “really”), totally devalued her efforts to accurately understand the meaning of the concept and, more importantly, it demeaned the topic of talking about the concept “gay;” this demonstrated how gay masculinity was subordinated in the gender hierarchy.

The lack of gender-neutral teaching materials was another restriction under hegemonic masculinity. Actually, it was another kind of phenomenon illustrating the discourses of gender dichotomy. Thomas showed me around his class before the observation. He pointed out one teaching poster displaying the phrase “Community Helpers” and listing various occupations close to students’ life. The words were all gender-neutral: police officer, fire fighters, etc. instead of policeman or fireman. Thomas said, “It is hard to find things to do that.” Usually he found the storybooks dividing the animal characters into male and female categories; as he said, “It has to do with a boy butterfly and then a girl butterfly”. I also noticed that the name cards made by Tracy used two colors: boys’ names were written in blue and girls’ in red. She explained that the

colors on the cards were just for her to organize the class conveniently, and she admitted, “I’ve been color-coding for years”. Throughout the years, teachers have used colors in the teaching materials to differentiate boys and girls, and this link has provided them with a much easier approach to locate or check on a student. However, this reflected how the teaching supplemental products fall into a strong stereotype with gender dichotomy. What Thomas found in the storybooks shows that currently many materials used in education invisibly reinforced the gender roles in two categories as well as vocabularies with the suffix (“-man” or “-woman”) distinguishing male and female, for example, policeman and policewoman. Indeed, it was difficult to either find gender-neutral teaching products or to practice a non-gender-preference color code. Hegemonic masculinity regulated all aspects of gender relations, with its language strongly associated with teaching materials and limiting the use of other kinds of discourses. The storybooks, posters or other things found outside the school are produced in the traditional descriptions of male and female; also, teachers perpetually created or designed teaching supplements, there in differentiating gender, color, etc. The discourses like “girls in pink and boys in blue” continuously influence teachers’ pedagogies, in which hegemonic masculinity in practice constructs gender order with color.

School washrooms were also a place where hegemonic masculinity practices its discourses of biological sex differences and restricts other gender discourses. In Chapter 3, the previous literature has already reported the bullying taking place in the school washrooms. From the teachers’ perspectives, the dichotomous washrooms also played a role in limiting gender practice under the influence of hegemonic masculinity. One phenomenon described by Thomas is how female teachers freely go in and out of both

male and female washrooms if they want to call the students, and people feel “it is okay;” but this would be an issue for him as a male teacher, so he chose not to go into the female washroom. A similar thing had happened to him before, when he was a student teacher: the school and his supervisor had set many processes in place before he walked into the classroom. Examples were requesting the consent of parents and telling students that he is a male teacher. Actually, female teachers took their roles as nursery carers or caretakers for granted, roles which were constructed by the social gender relation under hegemonic masculinity. It then became a convention for them to rush into both female and male washrooms without a thought. Nevertheless, this convention with males in the elementary school context was not generated over years; another discourse about washroom harassment or school bullying was filled with male violence. That is why Thomas found it not easy to walk into a classroom “like a female student teacher” and why he assumed not rushing into washrooms was a way of preventing those negative discourses of sexual harassment. Hegemonic masculinity repeatedly made female social roles stay faithful to those conventions, and controlled males encountering such situations to differentiate the division of labour. However, as Thomas said in this practice, hegemonic masculinity did not grant a “privilege” to female teachers, but instead reinforced the female teachers’ social responsibilities of nurturing and caring for children, keeping them in a subordinated class in the gender hierarchy.

In the Name of “To Be a Good Person”

A Chinese proverb says, “Children are our hope of the future.” Teachers and parents used their educational strategies to teach and raise their children; the strategies reflected what kind of people they wanted their children to become. For example, students were

taught to share toys with others because society doesn't want them to be selfish. This was because one day in the future they will also become adults, interacting with others in society. Teachers used various strategies to educate children according to its expectations. The expectation could be either short-term or long-term, but it revealed the social values and principles of being a person, which reflected on the children. During the interview, I asked about each teacher's expectations of their students and whether they would consider gender differences to be part of them. Their answers were similar: they had the same expectations of both boys and girls; they were: "I want them to be a good person." At first glance, this statement was a very common expectation without any gender bias. Thomas thought that girls being kind but not "submissive to the boys" as a gender-neutral goal which showed that his understanding of being a nice person would be equal between girls and boys. However, this expectation was very ambiguous; within the gender structure of the patriarchy, "to be a good person" could be not only practiced differently under gender bias but also invested in the details with discourses of hegemonic masculinity.

Students' crying is a common occurrence in the school context. Sam shared some educational thinking according to which he would not let the students cry. One of his experiences was when he taught a girl returning from a long sick leave. The girl cried all the time, so Sam said to her "you don't cry, you ask for help". The girl used "crying" as a signal to let the teacher know she needed help; Sam's reaction was to stop the crying and offer another way to problem-solve. Based on this discourse, he indicated that students should express their needs by using language instead of crying. Thus, crying was not an acceptable expression from his perspective. Later on, he reiterated, "I really don't let the

children cry” when he recounted another experience in which a student’s parents encouraged that kind of emotional expression. This caused a conflict in the treatment of this student. As a result, the parents changed the school for their child. To Sam, he felt “it’s fine” and claimed that “I am not going to change the way I deal with things either”. On the one hand, crying indeed could not solve problems, and the teachers’ responsibility was to foster students’ competency in problem-solving; on the other hand, Sam’s discourses in a negative tone showed him limiting crying as a negative emotional expression, in which he insisted on his attitude and continued with his strategies. From his idea, it was evident that he wanted the students to be strong, no matter whether they were boys or girls; as he said, “strong in body, and strong in mind.” Something similar was also observed in Tracy’s class. When a boy fell down during the class walk in the wild, Tracy encouraged him by saying “It’s okay”. It was common in the school context to hear teachers use this discourse to comfort students who got hurt. In this way, students’ feelings were assuaged; but at the same time, this discourse taught students to minimize any hurt or weakness and to be brave and control their emotions. Being strong was one of the general expectations within teachers’ pedagogies. “To be a good person” included “being strong” and being able to control personal emotions. Within the practice of hegemonic masculinity, being strong and firm was one of the principles followed in society. This requirement covered all aspects of social practices, including the expression of emotions, the use of language, and the execution of actions within interpersonal relations or dealing with affairs. No matter whether the person was male or female, how strongly the person performs determined his/her position in the power dynamics. For instance, a recruiter would hire a person with a strong competency but would not

consider whether the candidate lives in poverty. Female politicians were also a good example of this: they took on the powerful roles within the realm of male-dominant politics. Therefore, being strong was one of the male dominant discourses applied widely under the mechanism of hegemonic masculinity; otherwise, showing weakness would only place people in the subordinate position in the power relation. Hence, teachers requiring students to be strong promoted the social requirements of how to be a person in the patriarchy. In back of the discourse “to be a good person,” educators implemented the patriarchal requirements, regulations and setting in their daily interactions with students.

School as an institution was actually not a feminized place (Skelton, 2001); instead, it was a site of gender configuration in which hegemonic masculinity realized its practice(Connell, 2005). “To be strong” or “to be a good person” formulated training in the school context as a process that cultivated human beings matching with hegemonic masculinity discourses before walking into society.

In addition, every teacher said they would treat boys and girls the same, although realistically they did not completely make that happen in current practice. Sam reinforced that “Our school basically again treats everybody the same.” This kind of discourse reflected the thinking that teachers and schools were supposed to provide the same materials with the same criteria all under the same teaching goal, which seemed equal and fair to each student. However, at the same time those teachers also recognized that the students were different and individualized. Thus, a contradiction was generated between those two discourses. Compared to the individual student, school was still a powerful and collective institution. Students’ personal needs in the majority cannot be one hundred-percent satisfied; nevertheless, the educational institutions which stood in

dominant positions could require all of their students to meet the unified social expectations. Between individual growth and collective requirements, schools played a role to partly restrict the individuals' characteristics, personality and needs, instead reinforcing that the social criteria needed to be satisfied. This was easily utilized by the practice of hegemonic masculinity, in which the value of gender structure was practiced in teachers' expectations and teaching strategies. Thomas declared that he had found that "this society is still more geared towards the traditional alpha male," thus continuously influencing teachers' thinking for raising boys and girls and applying the criteria of being male and female within social gender practices. As a result, the dichotomous discourses were applied in the teachers' language; being strong as an ideal influences the teachers' attitudes. When Sam was asked how he felt about the other class being addressed as "children" instead of "boys and girls" and an open gender-neutral washroom, regarding one family did not want to address child's gender; he thought this practice "singled out their child for reasons of gender." His discourse of "singling out" demonstrated that the school was a collective institution and should apply the same criteria to every student; but this kind of practice did not satisfy students' needs, instead making the student special. However, if that class did not adopt those strategies, then it would realize the dominant gender dichotomous discourses applied by the majority with the price of the individual's needs being sacrificed. Perhaps the educators had a sense of the discourses like "the same", "equity" and "fairness" due to feminist efforts. However, hegemonic masculinity still applied its male dominant discourses within teachers' pedagogies and educational thinking under cover of treating students the same; and schools took the responsibility to shape the students through reducing their individual practices which did not match up

with hegemonic masculinity but taught them “to be a good person,” a notion which would qualify under the ideal of hegemonic masculinity.

In this chapter, I have demonstrated how hegemonic masculinity applied its requirements, ideals, and practices in the school context from the teachers’ perspective. In fact, I was not the only person who lives in both kinds of discourses; others were also facing the problems of behaving with equity and fairness, and treating students the same in the discourses of hegemonic masculinity. Those teachers were under pressure from the families, social media and other prevailing discourses of gender bias. They faced the students’ self-stereotypes. They also practiced those gender dichotomous discourses in their teaching language by addressing, naming and labelling students either individually or collectively. Hegemonic masculinity also restricted the teachers from teaching other kinds of gender practices or using other kinds of discourses. In addition, their expectations made evident the value of raising the students to this male dominant society as fulfilling the criteria of patriarchy within the educational institutions, where hegemonic masculinity translated its discourses into practice as a way of stabilizing its dominance. The patriarchal society would be the eventual beneficiary that earns the graduates who match with its expectation from the educational institutions.

Chapter 6 Challenging Hegemonic Masculinity

Connell (2005) defined hegemonic masculinity as the foundational gender practice in patriarchy. Despite the efforts of feminists and the promotion of other kinds of masculinities, the position of hegemonic masculinity was steady. Truly, patriarchal society practiced its gender discourses and perpetuated its relations between male and female and between differentiated classes in the hierarchy. It was also a growing concept which was enhanced by more practices by people of different races, ethnicities, and cultural background in various communities, regions or societies. Feminist practices such as calling for the rights of women in the working environment (Weinberg, Treviño, & Cleveland, 2015), reconstructing the responsibilities of women and men in families (Bolzendahl & Myers, 2004), and requiring more opportunities for female students to access higher education (Li, 2014; Zhou, 2013) were also intensifying as a reaction to and challenging of the male dominant discourses and the inequity of women and other gender practices. When I inquired of my participants how hegemonic masculinity influences teachers' pedagogies, I found out that teachers were both behaving in accordance with its male dominant discourses and also beginning to take action to challenge inequity in gender and power relations. In this chapter, I will introduce teachers' experiences with other gender practices that I collected during the interviews or that I witnessed in the classroom as they challenged hegemonic masculinity.

Through daily school life

First of all, teachers challenged the practice of hegemonic masculinity within its dominant discourses, by caring about the subordinated female students, being concerned

about gender differentiation, and reducing the control of the situations dominated by male students. In the last chapter, I mentioned some teacher practices such as encouraging cross-gender role play, replying to discourses by reacting to students' stereotypical discourses, and providing gender neutral materials in the classroom. In the relations between those teachers and the students with stereotypical thoughts, the teachers' efforts might lack power; some practices of teaching students diversity and reducing gender bias were passive. However, what the teachers did outside of the discourses of hegemonic masculinity should be addressed, acknowledged and appreciated. No teachers would divide students into a boys' group and a girls' group. The teachers practiced in the classroom the same as they had answered during the interviews. Sam said he never divided the students according to gender; especially during outdoor exercises, he wanted "the girls to be able to touch the ball because sometimes the boys don't pass the ball." He noticed that boys dominated the games during the sports time, and he wanted the girls to also have the chance to engage in them. Sports area space filled with male dominant discourses (Parker, 1996); but Sam was aware of helping the female students have the opportunity to share in the games and reduce the control of the games by male students. To whatever extent, hegemonic masculinity practice was inhibited through Sam's interventions. I visited Sam's class in the morning when I saw he set students' name cards on the carpet; so I asked him whether he has any consideration for this. He replied that the seats were changed every day and he "just mixed (sic) them (the name cards) and put them out wherever they ended up." This strategy of randomly withdrawing name cards demonstrated that Sam would not consider arranging students by gender. Tracy chose a different strategy which also mediated students' self-stereotyping. Every morning

she requested that students chose a partner for working together through all of the activities during that day. The partner could not be the same over a period of two weeks. She said, “Regardless of whether they like it or not,” a statement which indicated her attitude of encouraging students to work with others who were not their close friends or the same gender as they were. When Tracy led the class work on the calendar, she let the student who was the special helper that day pick students to answer her questions. She noticed that the boy picked only other boys; she said, “There are a lot of girls with their hands up who want to answer the questions.” Although this statement also makes gender dichotomy evident, she did make an effort to remind the boy and create a gender-equal environment for responses. Tracy reduced the situation of the boy picking students and provided more opportunities to the girls, whereby she raised the boy’s awareness of being equal to both girls and boys. Kate would start a conversation when her students gathered together with same-gender mates. When her students wanted to play “boys against girls,” she would “talk about this later” with them and questioned them: “Do you think it is important to play boys against girls?” As she claimed, she may have let students play in separated gender groups when the situation like “boys against girls” occurred; but she would lead a discussion and question her students, thus cultivating students to critically re-think gender as a factor in their practice. Based on those practices and their discourses, the teachers already had a sense of the students’ self-gender stereotype and began applying different strategies to break the practice of hegemonic masculinity by students. The teachers’ actions might have been active like Tracy’s who designed the pedagogy of choosing partners. Her strategy required that students worked with peers without gender differentiation; alternatively, the teachers’ practices might be passive, with them reacting

to students' practices of gender stereotype whenever they encountered it. However, in any case, teachers intervened to challenge students' gender practices as a way of stopping or mediating the practice of male dominant discourses. Those practices were still associated with the gender dichotomous discourses that teachers might still use to categorize gender into two groups like "boys" and "girls", which they might not recognize. However, the teachers noticed the subordinated groups in the gender relations and the imbalance within the power relations between the two groups, and tried to reduce it using gender categories in their pedagogies.

Moreover, teachers also checked their language and re-thought their gender practices in their teaching in order to question the practice of hegemonic masculinity. One assertion in the last chapter demonstrated that hegemonic masculinity disseminated its male dominant discourses in teachers' language; however, teachers began to self-reflect on their language use in relation to gender categories as a way of challenging the practice of gender bias or differentiation. When Kate was asked about her strategies to deal with boys and girls, she acknowledged, "I probably do have a lot of underlying practices that I haven't yet recognized as being biased;" with a similar discourse "in the back of my mind, I wonder, is this an okay thing to do?" This question appeared when she talked about boys playing against girls in a ball game. The first discourse was an emphatic sentence in which she used the word "underlying" and the negative expression "haven't yet recognized" to demonstrate her self-evaluation of her pedagogies; that is, she knew her work might have unconsciously applied hegemonic masculinity practice in her applied teaching. Because of herself-reflection, she would "make an effort to no longer say good girls or good boys." At least, Kate avoided expressing dichotomous gender categories in

her teaching language; and this stopped reminding her students of only two genders in daily school life. Meanwhile, the second sentence also indicated that the situation of boys against girls was paused in her mind with the following question, so that she would open a conversation with students to discuss gender differentiation. Both discourses had a strong causal relation to her follow-up actions. In other words, due to her rethinking of her own teaching language and her observing of students' practices of gender categorizing, she avoided or controlled the dichotomous address or naming discourses and taught students to consider hegemonic masculinity practices. Her reflection helped Kate elaborate her pedagogies by reducing gender bias discourses and encouraging her understanding of students' gender practices in order to challenge hegemonic masculinity. After my observation of her class, the first question was raised by her: "Did I call them boys and girls?" This again displayed her concern about the language she was using in the class; she wanted to hear from me, an observer, outside of the relations between her and her students, to tell her the result of my observation. Later on, she added that she heard herself calling boys "buds," and girls "guys" something which I had not even noticed. This discourse showed that she checked her words in detail throughout her teaching. Thomas used similar words in the debriefing phase, and even I had appreciated that he never said "boys and girls" during my observation. He added, "I probably say boys and girls couple times (sic), for sure." According to their understanding of gender practice, teachers saying "boys and girls" exposed their pedagogies as being related to hegemonic masculinity discourses; however, they did not avoid talking about their using these discourses, and they shared their thinking about elaborating on the language. Both teachers admitted the existence of gender dichotomous language in their teaching, a

characteristic which demonstrated their strong sense of responsibility to check their own practice of gender bias or categorizing in order to control or resist those discourses from appearing. Language was one of the channels through which hegemonic masculinity conveyed its gender practices. Nevertheless, teachers gradually noticed what their language revealed in relation to gender and tried to control the language of hegemonic masculinity on their own as they applied it in their teaching.

Three specific stories

Under the governance of hegemonic masculinity, teachers normally expressed the dominant gender discourses in patriarchy. However, their efforts with regard to two things should be appreciated: that they tried to model other gender practices through adjusting their pedagogies in order to provide more equity among students, and that they resisted the influence of those dominant gender discourses in their own language. In the rest of this chapter, I will present three excerpts from stories that I collected from my interviews and observation, in which those teachers took the initiative to support other gender practices and created other kinds of discourses.

Shorts over pants

During the second time I visited her class, Kate said that her school was drafting a new dress code policy which would be applied both to students and teachers.. She thought the new policy would be influenced by a strong gender bias, in which female teachers and students had more dress limitations. In fact, within the discourses of hegemonic masculinity, the bodies of human beings were given too much meaning related with gender bias (Connell, 2005); for example, women's dress exposing too much

of the body would be thought to sexually arouse men. Therefore, women were required to dress more modestly for the sake of men. Certainly, this kind of discourse again put males in the dominant position and females in the subordinate one, and hegemonic masculinity resisted women's freedom to dress as they pleased to protect both men's dominance and discipline in the public environment.

However, this hegemonic masculinity practice also affected how men dress as well. The dress code did not regulate what kinds of things men could or could not wear, but it generated the discourses about what men commonly wore and if any man dressed outside of that norm, would be considered strange. For example, if a man wore a skirt on the street, others might pay more attention to him with curiosity. Men were also restricted in the clothing requirements of hegemonic masculinity. During the interview, Sam shared a story of a boy at school who dressed differently. Sam noticed this little boy used to be shy and nice; that day, he was hiding behind his father when he came to school. Seeing how he was acting, Sam then began a conversation with him.

Sam: What's going on?

Boy: Well, I wore my shorts over my pants because I want to, and I think people are going to tease me.

Sam: You know what? They might tease you, but who cares? You wear them if you wanna wear them."

Boy: No, I am going to change.

Sam: No. You are not. You are not going to change. You are going to wear them because you want to.

Because the boy was worried about how he had dressed that day, he hid behind his father; his behaviour showed his lack of confidence in how he dressed. Perhaps according to his perception, people did not usually wear clothes in that way. Therefore, when Sam asked him what the problem was, he expressed his worry of being teased by others. Sam reassured and encouraged the boy about potentially facing the situation of being teased. When Sam said, “Who cares?” along with his questioning tone and his statement supporting the students’ own choices, his discourse conveyed his strategy of confirming the existence of dominant male discourses and that these discourses could operate in the form of judging the little boy’s manner of dress. However, Sam still used supportive discourses to make the boy more confident. Next, the boy displayed his hesitation and wanted to change his clothes; Sam’s reply was consistent with the first discourse, just with more insistence. Eventually, the boy kept those clothes on that day and later updated Sam by telling him that nobody had teased him. Sam replied, “They won’t; they might,” whereby he indicated his own worry about teasing happening among students. Therefore, the next day, he, his male colleague, and the principal all wore shorts over pants. This really impressed me because teachers generally would just use language to comfort or encourage students; but in this case, not only Sam who was involved with this issue, but also other staff in the school context aligned together as a powerful team to display a model demonstrating that there is no problem with wearing shorts over pants. They expressed a powerful discourse by practicing this dress style not only to support this little boy, but also to resist the practice of dominant male discourses like teasing or judging this kind of dressing-up. Although most students or staff in that school dressed normally

during the time I visited them, the young boy was protected from any judgement and supported by his teachers.

As I demonstrated in the last chapter, the practice of hegemonic masculinity pervaded the school context; school played the role of a collective institution that was often concerned more with societal norms and needs of the majority. However in this story, the teacher considered this little boy's individual needs and supported his gender practice, which did not match the norm of male dress style. Sam knew his own modeling might not be powerful, so he called on other two people: another male teacher and the school principal at the very top of the school staff hierarchy. Together with the principal's powerful modeling, two male teachers provided the possibility of men putting on shorts over pants, a situation which makes this practice succeed. What they performed provided everyone in this school community with a good example of dressing freely, and especially teaching students the feasibility of the practice of men wearing shorts over pants. In this case, the discourse of hegemonic masculinity eventually did not affect this student; more importantly, Sam paid attention to the individual gender practice of challenging the normative dressing within the school context of male dominant discourses and actively provided a good alternate model in order to validate this practice in his school.

“I love you”

One assertion made in last chapter claimed that teachers' expectations were strongly influenced by the discourses of hegemonic masculinity, which reinforced students “being strong” and developing problem-solving skills in the process of socialization. Hegemonic masculinity laid more emphasis on this kind of requirement for strength in order to make

people live under its social hierarchy rather than being concerned with emotions like sadness with crying or being sensitive. Under these circumstances, emotional care was easily ignored within the school context of such hegemonic masculinity practices. I could not say teachers were apathetic; but mostly their teaching other kinds of emotional expression was passive. For example, Sam said he would hug a student, because the student “wants a hug”. In fact, two students “asked for” hugs as Sam answered. Based on his discourse, the action sequence consisted of the student bringing up the need for a hug first and then Sam giving it, which demonstrated that Sam passively expressed those kinds of emotional discourses to the student. Since the discourses of emotional expression were controlled by the practice of hegemonic masculinity, Kate would hesitate, as described in last chapter, to address boys’ intimate behaviours. Generally, teachers followed their daily class plan and go through each section of teaching or activities; however, emotional care not only appeared merely in fragments of time, but also some emotional teaching was associated with teachers’ uncertainty and hesitation.

However, Tracy took the first step in challenging this kind of restraint required by hegemonic masculinity practices. She spent fifteen minutes leading a section for the Special Helper student every day. On that day the entire class was observed moving from desks and chairs to the carpet after the Calendar time. The students were seated in a circle. Tracy also sat with her students on the carpet and said an opening remark to begin this section. Then all the students asked the Special Helper student of that day to stand in front of the mirror hanging behind a pillar located to the rear of the carpet. When the boy was ready there, Tracy led the rest of the class in saying “Mirror, mirror on the wall, who’s the loveliest of us all?” After two seconds, the class called the boy’s name in

unison and welcomed him as he walked back to stand in the middle of the circle. Then each student made a comment to this boy. Some students praised him and others asked him to play with them; but everyone ended with the sentence “I love you.” Turning to a student with a slight speech disorder, Tracy accompanied him and said the comment together with him. The last comment came from Tracy. She repeated the sentence “I love you” to show her appreciation for his contribution to the class and his help with his peers.

Students commonly helped teachers in the class; the activity of “daily special helper” or “daily VIP” was frequently used by many teachers. However, most teachers would seldom schedule this activity at a particular time for the student who contributed to the class in this way. Tracy’s activity for the special helper was designed with her care and consideration. During the debriefing, I asked her for the reason and process of this design. Tracy replied, “These kids need lots of love;” however, in her more than twenty-year teaching experience, she had never said “I love you” to students before. Therefore, she came up the idea with the well-known sentence “Mirror, mirror, on the wall, who’s the fairest one of all?” but she changed the word “fairest” to “loveliest” in the practice, because the word “loveliest” was much more accurate for this activity of sharing love. Then she thought about the comment part and added the sentence “I love you.” She taught students that if they did not know how to comment on others, they could just say these words. Thus, the special helper student also received others’ blessings that day.

This pedagogy of hers was powerful and moving as another kind of gender practice in the school context. It totally broke down the hierarchy and traditional power relation. Tracy did not sit on a chair when students sat on the carpet; she sat with them, thereby demonstrating that the physical hierarchy and distance between students and teacher was

decreased. Her action as a kind of discourse reduced a powerful character of her as a teacher. The relationship between teachers and students was not as evident as other practices. The role taken by Tracy was not a teacher in an authoritative position, but more like a friend. When the special helper stood in front of the mirror and heard the class call his name after the classical discourse, he felt respected, included, and appreciated. Those powerful discourses reinforced his confidence and self-esteem. In addition, when each student and the teacher spoke another powerful and moving sentence, namely “I love you,” to the special helper, he as the listener would feel totally filled with love through those discourses. Therefore, that young male student received love, care and friendship rather than the information of being strong, tough or dominant.

Meanwhile, this practice also involved other students as the speakers of those moving discourses. Tracy shared a testimonial describing how a girl was reluctant at first to tell the student with the speech disorder “I love you;” but ultimately that student actively said “I love you” to her so that the second student replied “I love you.” Indeed, “I love you” was a powerful discourse to express one’s feelings to others; the special helper with the speech disorder was supposed to receive “love” from others, but he actively shared the “love” with the girl; and the girl was moved to reply with the same sentence. “I love you” was a simple sentence, combining two pronouns with a verb; but it also combined the relationship between the speaker and listener with the emotion of love. This discourse not only influenced the feelings of the listener, but also induced the speaker to give and share love and appreciation.

Tracy’s practice absolutely broke through the mechanism of emotional expression under hegemonic masculinity, which restricted those kinds of moving, sensitive and

emotional discourses to the specific relationship. Students might hear or say “I love you” in the relationships with family members, or perceive this discourse appearing in romantic relationships. However, Tracy’s pedagogy extended the discourse so that peers could apply it to peers and friends to friends. With this practice, everyone experienced the emotion of love within the interaction and learned to express to, and share appreciation with each other. Moreover, Tracy also created balanced power relations between teachers and students and students and students. Every student called the special helper by his/her name in connection with the phrase “the loveliest of all,” followed by different comments to the student; these discourses required each student to be concerned with the different strengths of their classmates and the care of personal feelings and needs. Everyone took turns, making everyone care about others.

Hegemonic masculinity practices emphasized the male dominant discourses which stated that men were defined as rational (Li, 2014); this view transferred to the practice of teaching “being strong” in the school context in order to cultivate students’ behaviours so they matched this discourse. Tracy, however, practiced more emotional interaction in her pedagogy, whereby every participant in this class cared, appreciated and shared love with each other equally.

Talking about Gender Stereotype

The last story came from Kate. During our interview, she shared the idea of talking about gender stereotypes with her students. At that time, she expressed her hesitation about this activity. I considered this kind of practice which challenged the discourses of hegemonic masculinity as being restricted due to the power imbalance between Kate and her stereotyped students. However, when I attended her class for the observation, she put

her plan into practice by introducing the concept of stereotype and opening a discussion with the students.

At the beginning of the class, Kate provided the students with the word “stereotype,” teaching this word from a grammatical perspective; then she gave out stickers to the students and requested that the students wrote down three hobby activities they would engage in during their leisure time. After the students finished this step, Kate made them share with each other what they had written, and she hung two posters on the blackboard which had two circles on them, respectively. Then she asked the boys to stick their stickers on the poster on which was written “boys’ play,” while the girls stuck their stickers on the “girls’ play” poster. After this step, Kate hung up a third poster on which the words “children’s play” were printed, and began the discussion. She picked up a sticker from the “girls’ play” poster, read the activity “swimming,” and asked the students, “Does anyone else like swimming?” Many students raised their hands and replied that they did. Consequently, Kate put the stickers related to swimming on the “children’s play” poster, and said, “It is not only girls who like swimming, but also boys.” The same conversation went on for several rounds until the stickers on the “boys’ play” and “girls’ play” posters were reduced in number. Some specific stickers caused a discussion in the class. For example, one sticker read “girls like make-up”. Some students said boys did not use make-up. Kate replied with the example of men on TV shows wearing make-up. Finally, Kate asked the students how they understood the word “stereotype,” and reiterated how the word meant something we used to think of as belonging only to boys or girls, a separation which was not generally/necessarily true.

Compared to other teachers who noticed students' stereotypical discourses and reacted passively by using some words denying the situation of gender differentiation, such as Sam saying "this is neither a boys' nor a girls' table," Kate responded differently. She actively opened the discussion of gender stereotypes with young children in her class and explored how students categorized activities or hobbies in relation to gender. This was a big step for her because discussing an abstract concept with young children was usually challenging; especially in this case, she discussed the topic of understanding stereotypes, roles which, under hegemonic masculinity, the students were consistently practicing daily. Thus, her efforts promoted another kind of discourse which was different from the traditional discourses of gender differentiation, and which gave the students a sense that things should not be classified by gender categories. This was a milestone in that she started those conversations and caused students to recognize the existing but invisible male dominant discourses, which they practiced constantly. This practice still received some backlash when Kate heard some boys say, "Do I look like a girl?" as they used some gestures such as lifting up their shoulders and being coy. Their actions still reflected the influence from the deeply-rooted practice of gender differentiation: those boys dichotomized gender into two categories and acted coy as their understanding of reducing stereotype. However, students had the awareness that "not all boys are mean and not all girls are sweet," a realization which shook the foundation of the hegemonic masculinity practices in their class. In other words, Kate was no longer the only person who thought about the gender dynamics in the class; rather, students also started to think about gender practices. Thus Kate activated other gender discourses in her class, an action which provided more room for other gender practices. Because of her

contribution, the students also became more critical when facing the different kinds of gender practices.

In the conclusion, teachers did practice hegemonic masculinity discourses; but more importantly, they also changed the current practices of the dominant discourses by promoting other gender discourses and creating room for the practice of gender equity. In this chapter, the teachers' efforts to challenge hegemonic masculinity, either passively or actively were evident. The result was that within the existing discourses of binary gender and the ideals of the patriarchy, the teachers reacted to the students' stereotypical words and controlled their own gender categorizing. They participated in other gender practices, they cared for students' personal needs and emotional interactions; some of the teachers directly challenged the dominant discourses by talking them over with the students in order to arouse their awareness of those practices. Motivated by their thought of promoting gender equity, the teachers engaging in those practices were appreciated. Hegemonic masculinity still perpetuated its practices in patriarchal society today; nevertheless, the teachers took a big step to attentively practice other gender discourses in their classroom. Furthermore, as teachers of young children, they conveyed those gender discourse practices to their students in order to foster them to be more critical and conscious of the practices of hegemonic masculinity.

Chapter 7 Discussion and Conclusion

As an investigator in this research, I identify myself as a male who was born and grew up in the Asian country of China and for two years now has been living in the North American city of Victoria. My background makes me concerned about the possibility and accessibility of conducting this research into gender relations in a western context, because the practice and interpretation of gender relations are constituted differently within the communities and societies within diverse cultures, geographies, ethnicities, etc. (Connell, 2002; Li, 2014). The reason these gender practices within the local community are still accessible to me is that both China and Canada share patriarchy as the dominant gender structure. Western feminists have been calling for women's rights and gender equity from the middle of the last century (Parker, 1996), while the theories of feminism are also promoted and developed in China. In practice, women's social status is in the subordinate position socially; women are given the responsibility of caring for families and children (Li, 2014). Females do not have the same equity of education or work position as males in the Chinese social structure (Zhou, 2013). All this evidence proves that gender practices in China still keep males in the dominant position and females in the subordinate one. Having grown up under this social gender structure, I am aware of this gender bias and the male privileges operating in various relationships and in different forms. Therefore, both my understanding of gender relations within the patriarchy and my critical thinking about the various practices in the gender structure motivated me to conduct this research in the local western community.

Meanwhile, it is not only women who contemplate unfair social practices between males and females in this man-made world (Tutchell & Edmonds, 2015); as a male

researcher here, I conducted this qualitative inquiry from my male perspective to understand this phenomenon under patriarchy. Although I did not totally benefit from this social gender structure (Connell, 2005), my growing up and teaching experiences were mixed with both the restraints imposed by the social requirements of men and the benefits of being a man. For example, when I was a child, neither my parents nor my teachers permitted me to learn dance; however, during the recruitment for the position, I was welcomed as a male kindergarten teacher. These experiences I encountered have aroused my curiosity to understand the mechanism of patriarchy. During the research, I also collected similar stories from my participants. Tracy was a female teacher who grew up in a Catholic school, where she felt the repression in the hierarchy and thus she wanted to be equal with and fair to the students. Thomas, who was also a male kindergarten teacher, suffered uncomfortable interrogations concerning his private life by parents and colleagues; he mentioned that while growing up, he had not been a typical masculine boy. These experiences induced him to practice gender-neutral pedagogies in class and to respect each of his students. Our experiences with gender relations under those restraints motivated us to be critically aware of the gender dynamics in the school context; especially for Thomas and me, our gender practices were questioned by others, something which made us more eager to understand how gender relations were powerfully practiced around us. Due to my male identity, my perspective in this study combines feminist research with the theories of understanding masculinities.

The last two chapters presented several situations in which teachers have practiced the discourses of hegemonic masculinity, their positions in gender practices and power relations, and how they reacted to and challenged hegemonic masculinity. At the end of

this study, I will revisit the meaning of this concept together with my research results and discuss the contradiction that teachers face during the realization of gender equity in the school context. The conclusion will be drawn at the end of this chapter.

Rethinking Hegemonic Masculinity

Hegemonic masculinity is one of the gender practices legitimating patriarchy, in which males are dominant and females subordinate (Connell, 2005). This explanation is the red thread throughout all the texts. Based on this understanding, I found evidence in the interdisciplinary literature that showed that male dominant discourses exist in every aspect of society such as politics, philosophies and social labour division. Previous research studies adopted this concept mainly to research men's social practices (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). The concept directed our social value of male roles and their responsibilities in society (Greig, 2012); it provided models for being a father in the family context (Rutherford, 2012); in the education realm, hegemonic masculinity generated its requirements regarding how students were to grow into men (Skelton, 2001); subjects such as mathematics or science were defined in the school curriculum as being male knowledge within its practices (Letts, 2001); and when boys experience underachievement, the situation activated the mechanism of hegemonic masculinity to protect masculinity by safeguarding the male-dominant position in the form of creating the discourses around the "boy crisis" (Greig & Holloway, 2012; Skelton, 2001). Besides, students differentiated male and female roles in the learning environment, and some male students committed sexual harassment and violence on the playground as a way of acting out male hegemony and dominance (Connelly, 2003). Male students engaged in hegemonic masculinity discourses with peers in the classroom (Dalley-Trim, 2007), in

which they demonstrated their masculine identity to themselves and keep “sissy, fag” or so-called feminine characteristics at arm’s length(Renold, 2001).

Most previous research studies chose male participants and interpreted this concept based on how men or male students practiced gender relations in society, or how they identified themselves in gender relations through exerting different kinds of power within the context at the time. Those studies proved the definition of this concept given by Connell and also demonstrated how the majority of men participated in hegemonic masculinity practices, steadily maintaining male-dominant discourses and social structure. My results also revealed that in western society, hegemonic masculinity was the main gender practice in the school context. Teachers faced self-stereotyped students and perpetuate gender dichotomous language, as well as their own expectations and pedagogies associated with patriarchal social expectations. However, my research slices the research another way, in which I examined female teachers taking on hegemonic masculinity practices (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Connell, 2005). Schools were one of the social institutions playing the role of producing masculine subjectivities (Connell, 1989). Therefore, as participants within this kind of institution, female teachers were also influenced by those discourses and practices of hegemonic masculinity. For example, they identify themselves as adults who occupied the more powerful position in their relationship with students; they also practiced male dominant discourses such as differentiating students using gender in their language. However, they, as well as two other male participants in the study who wanted to practice gender equity in their pedagogies, seemed to have no choice but to interact with the discourses of hegemonic masculinity. Female teachers were vulnerable in the classroom where they were

challenged by those boisterous students through language or behaviours; they also faced the difficulty of organizing classes while dealing with students' unpredictable energy (Coffey & Delamont, 2002). My research added to this point as follows: female teachers felt more restraint and challenge when they wanted to practice gender equity or gender-neutral pedagogies as a kind of discourse that was different from hegemonic masculinity. For instance, Kate hesitated to address the boys' "sweet" behaviour, and Tracy quoted parents' demands that she prohibited students' rough and tumble play in class. My research also showed that those teachers faced the challenge not only from the students themselves, but also from the parents who perpetuated the powerful discourses of hegemonic masculinity. Thus, this research broadened the evidence of female teachers practicing hegemonic masculinity as well as being restricted under the discourses of hegemonic masculinity.

Moreover, my results presented a form of hegemonic masculinity in the social structure; that is, under the circumstances of feminist theories widely spreading and with the more awareness of gender equity, hegemonic masculinity would practice its discourses more discreetly under the cover of gender-neutral discourses or non-gender-bias language. In Foucault's theories (1988) of the discourses of sexuality, he demonstrated that before Freud, people considered the discourses of sex as taboos or prohibited; however, using sex discourses became accessible within neutral and scientific viewpoints. Based on this situation, Foucault demonstrated that the discourses of sex were widely spread under the cover of science. Meanwhile, as Foucault said, the morality of sex was reiterated as part of the science or medical norm. In other words, the discourse of sex was no longer taboo or prohibited within the field of science, a situation which

made more space for talking and normalizing the discourses. In a similar way, my research showed how hegemonic masculinity spread its discourses and reinforces its dominance under the circumstances of the spreading of feminist concern of women's rights in education or working environment, caring LGBT communities and reconstructing social responsibility between male and female (Bolzendahl & Myers, 2004). That is, it still revealed the dichotomous discourses as usual, and directly practiced males' dominance with the accompanying devaluation of females. For example, Sam thought the male teachers were firmer and tougher than the female teachers, and he proved his male dominance through comparing his characteristics with those of females. However, the practice of hegemonic masculinity infused the gender neutral discourses that it portrays. When I asked teachers how they viewed and treated the boys and girls in class, they answered "I treated them the same." Their answers created the illusion that they were promoters of gender equity. Nevertheless, as the results showed, they did practice the discourses of hegemonic masculinity and treated students differently. In addition, they had the same expectations for students, namely wanting them to be good people, even though their strategies associated with their expectations were different. Thus, hegemonic masculinity more carefully transformed its gender relations into real practice by cloaking itself in gender-neutral discourses. It strategically extended its power by concealing its essential practices of its gender relations; this might comfort feminists and lulled the public with its gender-equal illusion. However, its rationale still perpetuated male dominance.

Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) also suggested that follow-up research studies could focus on the relationship between hegemonic masculinity and other masculinities.

Some of the previous research studies also adopted the concept “hegemonic masculinity” to study gay men’s social practices. As Connell (2005) introduced, gay masculinity was one kind of subordinated masculinity in the relations. In sports, successful gay athletes performed the dominant male discourses on the one hand and suppressed their identities on the other hand (Anderson, 2002). Gay students and teachers were still vulnerable in the school context (Leighteizer, 2013). Those studies demonstrated gay masculinity as being repressed by hegemonic masculinity because of gay people’s identity and sexual orientation that was inconsistent with heterosexuality as the norm in society.

Heteronormativity was another word to describe gay masculinity as the minority in society; it was powerless and suppressed in gender relations (Sumara & Davis, 1999). In my research, I also revealed the evidence that gay students were talked about within teachers’ negative discourses. What is more, hegemonic masculinity might not stop the practice of other masculinities but did exert extreme control over the practices without allowing them to expand their influence. For example, Kate did not address the boys’ “sweet behaviours;” indeed, her male students displayed another kind of masculinity but this point was not raised again. Meanwhile, as the legitimated gender relation in the patriarchy, hegemonic masculinity required all men to follow its ideals (Connell, 2005). The boys who were reluctant regarding sports were bullied and criticized by other male students (Atkinson, 2014). Also, the boy in Sam’s class who wore shorts over pants was timid and lacked confidence; he was afraid of being teased by others. This demonstrated how boys with other gender practices were disciplined by hegemonic masculinity in order to revise males’ discourses in their practices. Sam wore the shorts over the pants with his colleagues as a way to challenge the dominant male dressing discourse; however, would

those teachers still dress up for challenge the hegemonic masculinity practice if the boy was wearing a dress that day? Under the heteronormativity, crossing gender behaviors are still taboos and restricted by the dominant straight male discourses.

Therefore, my research extended the forms of hegemonic masculinity practiced in the local community: it existed in both female and male teachers' instruction and thinking; it perpetuated its gender relations under the guise of gender-equal discourses; and also it still controlled and managed the practices of other masculinities. This concept could be expanded further by including more practices and research (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). My research limited the participants to public school systems who share the same curriculum and similar courses or structure and timelines in activities; there are also private schools such as Christian church schools and Montessori schools in the local community. Further studies could continue to analyze how hegemonic masculinity practices its discourses within various curricula and different educational ideologies as applied in the school contexts.

Teachers' initiatives in promoting gender equity

Based on my results, teachers who were practicing gender-neutral pedagogies faced two kinds of contradictions: (1) between the powerful self-stereotyped students and the powerless teachers raising other discourses of gender practices, and (2) between the collective institutions functioning with hegemonic masculinity practices and the individuals' gender practices. A classroom teacher is vulnerable and powerless in an isolated environment where students engage in the major gender dichotomous discourses (Coffey & Delamont, 2002). Paley (1984) and Fay (1998) tried to remove the physical barriers of play zones and hoped boys and girls could share their single gender-dominant

play areas; unfortunately, this failed because of the students' powerful gender stereotyped practices. My study demonstrated that those participants responded passively to students' stereotyped words. This caused a vicious circle in that the students continuously raised dichotomous discourses while the teachers replied with a statement denying students' discourses. Besides, those dominant male discourses or models also prevailed in the school context, in which the teachers carried out those discourses as being representative of an institution of hegemonic masculinity. For example, teachers generally thought that male students were good at science while female students were good at language arts (Letts, 2001; Skelton, 2001; Zhou, 2013); in my research, those teachers also used that kind of gender dichotomous language in the class. Those two contradictions led us to rethink teachers' roles in the classroom and how they really practiced gender-equal discourses. Currently, teachers' pedagogies were influenced by Vygotsky's theories that teachers had more child-initiated activities and interaction through teaching (Fleer, 2010), i.e. children's learning should be driven by their own interests and teachers could play the role of scaffolding them within the zone of the proximal development (Vygotsky, 1967). Feminist pedagogy was based on the principle of teachers empowering learners and on the building of power-balanced relationships between the teachers and students (Webb & Allen, 2002). However, this study demonstrated the influence of hegemonic masculinity: it constructed an imbalanced power relation between teachers and students and between the collective and the individuals. Therefore, it is critical that child-initiated pedagogy should be used and the teachers should take the initiative to promote other gender practices or discourses. Three cases presented in Chapter 6 illustrated how the teachers actively created models of other gender practices, cared for personal needs, and

challenged the conventional discourses. Compared to their response to students' stereotyped statements, those three actions strengthened the gender-neutral discourses within the classroom context. Their work was established on the foundation of the students' practice of hegemonic masculinity, and scaffolded the students by emphasizing the critical thinking of gender practice within their zone of proximal development. Thus, the child-initiated strategy was still acceptable within feminist pedagogy as a way to empower the learners. However, this did not mean that the teachers totally lost their initiative; instead, feminist pedagogy needed the teachers to have more awareness of the power dynamics and more respect for everyone's power in the class (Webb & Allen, 2002). This would legitimize everyone's gender experience in the classroom, an experience which reduces the differentiation of gender and status as defined by hegemonic masculinity. Since the teachers' understanding of gender structure and modeling of gender practice would absolutely influence students' gender practice (Lucey et al., 2003), promoting gender equity in the school requires the teachers to still be critical and active in the form of using gender-neutral language, respecting each student's voices and practices, and resisting the dominance of hegemonic masculinity.

More future work needed

During the research design, I planned two questions related to the gender policies of schools. These questions considered the interplay between gender policies and the discourses of hegemonic masculinity. This idea was based on evidence in the literature which exposed the formulation of gender policy in the schools along with the publication of gender identity information by the Canadian federal government (Government of Canada, 2014). However, when I conducted the interviews with my participants and

asked them the question whether any gender policy existed within their schools, they answered with very little information. After I related the news that the Vancouver School Board (Posadzki, 2014) revised gender policies, most of the teachers mentioned the establishment of gender-neutral washrooms in their schools. The reason for the lack of data in this section was as follows: (1) those schools did have a gender policy, but the teachers did not know about those documents; (2) those schools had no gender policy since they were all elementary schools where few case of gender harassment happened; (3) those schools had some strategies to deal with gender issues like bullying, harassment and the inclusion of other gender practices. However, the teachers thought that the strategies did not rise to the level of being policy. The second and third reasons are summarized by a portion of the responses from my participants. Tracy said she had learned about the gender policy revision in Vancouver from the radio; she definitely supported that motion, but she thought it mainly happened in high school because elementary schools had not yet faced any problems with students' identities. Sam, Kate and Thomas provided some examples of how their schools deal with gender issues: replacing the words "boys and girls" with "the class", and discussing the dress code in the school context. However, none of the teachers introduced in detail their school policies related to gender issues. Then, I had to skip the questions of gender policies and replaced them with a request for the teachers to provide other examples of or stories about gender issues. However, no matter what situation school gender policies were framed in, (no policies, policies being formulated, or existing policies), what would still be worth the study of future research is the exploration of policy-making and policy documents in relation to the practices of hegemonic masculinity. The research participants could be

involved with people such as the school principals, policy researchers, or analysts in the relative departments of the Education Ministry.

We still have a long way to go

At the beginning of Chapter 1, I quoted an excerpt from a scene in a children's story book of mine. The story was based on my own teaching experience, and it showed a boy who, in a role play, practices another gender role. This study started at that point and opened up the big picture of hegemonic masculinity practices in the patriarchy along with the questions of my own gender practices. I presented the concept of hegemonic masculinity with other supportive research studies and viewpoints, and also discussed how these kinds of male-dominant discourses influence education, especially the education of boys. Based on the implications of the review work by Connell and Messerschmidt (2005), this study explored gender practices of both female and male teachers in the school context and demonstrated how hegemonic masculinity influenced those teachers' pedagogies. The results demonstrated that hegemonic masculinity repressed the teachers' gender-equal thinking and practice; those teachers also practiced gender-dichotomous discourses and communicated their expectations which matched the values of patriarchy. However, those same teachers also took the initiative themselves and tried to challenge the hegemonic masculinity practices.

It is not easy to promote gender equity under the gender relations of dominant male versus submissive female; as one of my participants said, "It has a long way to go." The good thing is, from the beginning to the end of this study, I consistently claimed the existence of both hegemonic masculinity discourses and feminist discourses, in which all of the feminists' efforts and gender equity practices should be addressed and appreciated.

Certainly, there is a long way to go to promote gender equity and resist the dominant or hegemonic gender discourses in school or in our society. However, I still have my vision that even though patriarchy still dominates gender structures, hegemonic masculinity and other masculinities and femininities will change into having a more harmonious relationship in which other masculinities and various femininity practices will gain more permission and acceptance.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions before Classroom Observation

1. What do you feel are the differences between boys and girls in your class and in school? Can you talk about the reasons for these differences?
2. Have you ever heard the concept “boy crisis”? From what sources? How do you feel about that, agree or disagree?
3. How do you teach boys and girls in your class? Do you have different strategies dealing with boys and girls? Could you give me an example?
4. Do have any different expectations for the boys and girls in your class? Same or different? Have you ever thought about what kind of boys or girls you want to foster?
5. Is there any gender policy in you school? How do you feel it? Is that/Are those useful and applied effectively in the school context? Could give me an example that shows it works? How do you self-evaluate the policy you apply to your class or your teaching?
6. Is there any problem for you if boys are playing doll corner or girls are playing superhero? How you see cross-gender behaviors in your class?
7. Do you feel any problems when you apply gender policies in your class or any resistance from other aspects? How that works? Do you have any reaction to the resistance? How that works?

Appendix B: Interview Questions after Classroom Observation

The second interview is based on observing the participants teaching in class. Questions will focus on the behaviors or words that participants did or said during their teaching. The interview is semi-structured. Sample questions as follows:

1. What is goal of this class? When you design this class, have you considered your students' experience related to this course? During your design, how do you think gender (difference) influences you? Will you consider it is an issue? Do you have different expectation to boys and girls?
2. How do you feel about boys and girls in this class today? Do you feel any difference or do you have any other comments about their interactions?
3. Sample question from observation: "When the girls sitting in the first line raised her hand, why did you say "(quote from notes)" to respond her action?" (Several questions will be asked in this way for requesting participants to explain their reaction or response in class)
4. Why did you divide your class in the way like today's class for group discussion? Why did you put boys and girls evenly/unevenly in each group? How do you think let them group up freely? How do you connect lesson design to group discussion?
5. Other stories or situations will be raised to discuss with participants.

Appendix C: Sample Transcript

Note: X means Xinyan (Main Investigator), and S represents Sam

X: Currently in Victoria, about how they treat boys and girls in their class. And my first question is what do you feel the difference between boys and girls in your school or in your class...

S: In my class, especially, the boys tend to be more active, more physical, ah, more aggressive. That's not all the case because you get exceptions. The girls in kindergarten generally are more able to sit still, and do the written tasks. So I think it is really important in the kindergarten class to have lots of movement, lots of activities. I really try to have a lot of fun of the children. I think if they are having fun, and they are comfortable and they are going to learn, and for me the academics are secondary, the social skills are the most important part of it. And I think if (fine) was the boy that boys in a conflict will solve very quick, and it might be a physical way, it might push the, push somebody, or whatever, and it will be over. and the girls get into sort of name calling and will go on times and times, sometimes. So lot of times, the class spent on problem solving.

X: Problem solving?

S: Yes. So teaching them how to solve the problems.

X: Ah, and so how you feel about the difference? Why you think in your class, like you said, boys are aggressive, active, and girls are more like to be quiet, sit?

S: I think, probably, lots of them come from the society, what they see on TV, what they see in video games, and computer games. (Pause) I think sometimes, it just the way we are. It's the way we are wild, that's the way we were born.

X: Naturally.

S: Yeah! Just to be that a lot! Now I treat the children generally the same. I mean, you sort of have the come each child a little different. I have a, probably two most difficult children in my class are boys. One of them is repeating kindergarten and he has a lot of issues in his family and he just come in the school sometimes quite upset because what happen at home. So I have to be very very firm with him. And I wouldn't talk

some the other children the way I have to talk to him. If I am not really firm with my voice, and really show who is the boss, he doesn't listen very well. And some of the little girls in my class would never talk to them like this now. You know, for instance, say, ah MXXXX, the little boy was misbehavior, 'MXXXXX, Stop right now!!!' (Sharp and firm intonation) But if one of the little girls was doing that, I would say 'excuse me, could you please stop?'(gentle and moderate intonation). I will do it more gently, because she wouldn't need me to be firm like that. Now there are always exceptions of those. I do have a couple of girls who are strong and more aggressive, so it's not like, you know, the boys are like this, and the girls are like this. They can be either ways.

X: And so, like you mean, early year, that especially, today you will feel girls, they have more abilities to face the writing test.

S: Yes, they do.

X: And other academic work, and boys like give you or maybe cause you a lot of problems. they need to solve it and the class discuss how to solve it...So there is a concept I heard, I don't know if you heard, it's called "boy crisis".

S: right

X: Like the people will say' Well, today girls look better than boys. 'So how do you feel about this concept?

S: I think what we have, to be very careful that, we don't make school, just sitting down and writing. like we have to make sure that we do have lots of activities. One of the things that I do every day is I take the children; they have recess their lunch whether outside; but I also take them outside one or other time two. And we just play.

X: wooh

S: You know, they run, they jump, they play on the rocks, climb on the rocks. I think it's really important to do that, especially for the boys. I think to, ah, you can be, you know, a little rough, sometimes, just you know, (voice goes down) like I am going, play with the boys, just play with them. But teach them what those boundaries, what's acceptable and what's not acceptable. We have our program in our school, call the WITS program. I don't know if you know what that is.