AN EXAMINATION OF TEACHER'S CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT: DO GENDER STEREOTYPES MATTER IN THE STUDENT-TEACHER RELATIONSHIPS?

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Abstract: The objective of this study seeks to shed light on gender stereotypes conveyed by high school teachers with regard to classroom management. Using the Critical Incident Technique (CIT) (Flanagan, 1954), we interviewed 429 high school students in the Quebec City area (Canada) and asked them to recall an event in which they had witnessed a behavior from a teacher that is deemed to perpetuate gender stereotypes. We then asked students to explain the reported behavior. The results of this research enabled us to identify the focal areas of these gender stereotypes, and the reasons why teachers exhibited stereotypical behaviors in their social relation with students. We discuss strategies that can be implemented by teachers to avoid conveying gender stereotypes in the classroom.
Keywords: Classroom management, social relations, gender stereotypes.

INTRODUCTION

A gender stereotype, as it pertains in this study, is defined as a constellation of traits and roles generally attributed to men and women (Williams, Bennett, & Best, 1975) as well as a few components including characterizations about personality, physical traits, roles, occupations, and sex role orientation (Deaux & Lewis, 1983). Gender stereotypes are also defined by excessive attitudes and rigidity; it is the ideological framework that justifies and organizes people's attitudes and behaviors (Brannon, 1999; Durut-Bellat, 1990; Hurtig & Pichelin 1985; Tap, 1985). It is also an important dimension of discrimination defined as "harmful actions towards others because of their membership in a particular group" (Fishbein, 1996, p. 7). Some argue that "discriminatory actions have become increasingly subtle and ambiguous, requiring individuals to make attributions about the motivations of others on the basis of situational information" (Brown & Bigler, 2004, p.714). In fact, teachers are often unaware of the biases that their gender stereotypes introduce into their own classroom management: they believe they have identical attitudes and reactions towards girls and boys even when it is not the case (Baudoux & Zaidman, 1992). Researchers stress the fact that boys and girls experience something profoundly different in schools, a socialization influenced by gender stereotypes (Martin & Ruble, 2010; Zaidmamn, 1996). In what ways are these gender stereotypes, initiated by teachers, conveyed in the teacher-student relationship? How do students explain these behaviors?

At an early age, students are exposed to gender norms and discrimination even if they are not aware of it (Gosselin, 2007; Martin & Ruble, 2010). It goes without saying that schools may struggle to avoid situations where there are inequities regarding gender stereotypes. For instance, we know that students' textbooks (Blom, Waite, & Zimet, 1970 ; Blumberg, 2008; Jacklin, & Mischel, 1973; Mustapha, 2013; Trecker, 1973; U'Ren, 1971; Weitzman & Rizzo, 1974), educational programs (Descaries-Bélanger, 1980; Dunnigan, 1975; Gérin-Lajoie, 1991), school organization (Gilbert, 1990), summative assessment approaches (Howe, 1997), and the promotion of the vocational integration of young people (Trottier, Cloutier, & Laforce, 1994) can convey gender stereotypes. Despite the efforts to reduce the presence of gender stereotypes in textbooks, social relations are still at risk. In fact, research has also shown that classroom social interactions with the teacher may be marked by gender stereotypes (Baudoux & Noicent, 1993; Erden, 2009; Lo, 2015; Sadker & Sadker, 1985; Subirats & Brullet, 1988), and can spur inequalities between girls and boys in school (Gérin-Lajoie, 1991).

Teachers' attitudes towards students can generate social division between boys and girls (Descarries-Bélanger 1980, Féat & Solomon 1991; Gosselin, 2007; Gilbert 1990), and can also reinforce boys' aggressive and independent behaviors while influencing emotional and dependent behaviors among girls (Simmons, 1980). Boys generally receive more attention than girls (Eccles & Blumenfeld 1985, Fenema & Peterson, 1985, Sadker & Sadker, 1985; Smith & Glynn 1990; Zaidman, 1996). More specifically, boys receive more attention when they are aggressive or turbulent (Baudoux & Zaidman, 1992). Teachers' criticisms made to girls are more related to the intellectual value of their work rather than to the effort they should put into their work (Baudoux & Zaidman, 1992). Male teachers are generally more protective and reassuring with girls and will embody courage from a physical and intellectual standpoint while interacting with boys. Female teachers will be more supportive

and nurturing with girls, while being more controlling with boys. Regardless of the teachers' gender, girls are supported and taken care of while boys will experience confrontation in which they will have to find their own solutions. Finally, the old myth that teachers have a negative effect on girls' achievement in mathematics and applied sciences is still true (Jackson, 2003). In doing so, girls and boys may adopt stereotyped behaviors later in life.

Men and women undeniably have biological differences. Biological differences are accentuated and influenced by students' social and cultural environment, hence the social construction of gender (Brannon 1999; Durut-Bellat 1990; Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974). During the process of socialization - modeling, reinforcement, imitation - the child acquires and assimilates attitudes and behaviors that typically belong to his or her gender. These gender stereotypes develop and become internalized in response to interactions with the environment (Bandura, 1986, Brannon, 1999; Brown & Bigler, 2004; Cushman, 2010). According to Williams and Best (1990), gender stereotypes are to be found everywhere in the world. These authors suggest that men are perceived in all countries as adventurous, authoritarian, harsh, dominant and independent. They also note that women tend to be perceived as emotional, affectionate, docile, sociable and dependent. Even today, adherence to these gender stereotypes exists and is observed in the parent-child relation as well as in the teacher-student relation (Lajoie, 2003).

RATIONAL OF THE STUDY

In light of this, it is clear that teachers may display different behaviors in the presence of girls and boys. This is our motivation to explore students' perceptions regarding gender stereotypes conveyed by teachers in the pedagogical relation, which is a key element of classroom management and one of the most significant relationship a child builds outside of family members (Jerome, Hamre, & Pianta, 2009). However, studies exploring gender stereotypes in the pedagogical relation have for the most part been carried out outside Quebec (Canada), and focus mainly on preschool and elementary school teachers. To date, studies on this matter are scarce, and the present research is therefore designed to contribute to a joint reflection that concerns the quality if this pedagogical relation. To do this, we will give the floor to teenagers wishing to share their experience. The overall purpose of this study is to explore, from the students' perspective, how gender stereotypes conveyed by teachers manifest themselves at school? More precisely, the aim of the study is twofold. First, it explores gender stereotypes in the teacher-students' relation. Second, it identifies the reasons cited by students to explain gender stereotypes conveyed by teachers.

METHODOLOGY
Participants and instrument development
Participants in this study were 429 high school students from 10th and 11th grade from the Québec city area (Canada). The Critical Incident Technique (Flanagan, 1954) was used to explore students' perceptions of gender stereotypes conveyed by teachers. This technique allowed us to collect testimonies of significant events that happened to the participants. Participants in the study were asked to tell an incident that happened in school (statement A), and then (statement B) explain their teachers' behaviors. First, a certain number of answers obtained were validated by pre-experimentation procedures, and a preliminary version of the questions was submitted to a group of master's students. Second, the questions were then tested with three groups of students from 10th and 11th grade (N = 96) that gave rise, finally, to the final version of the instrument.

Try to remember an event while you were in high school where you witnessed a behavior from a teacher that you think is gender stereotyped.

  a) Please describe what the teacher did or said at the time. Be specific and detailed so that we know where the event took place (in class or out of class), what was the subject taught and what you were doing (individual, group work, etc.)

  b) What do you think explain the behavior of the teacher?

Data collection
Initially, the meeting began with a five-minute presentation during which the researcher first explained that he wanted to know the students' opinion on the issue of gender stereotypes. To do this, the researcher explained the concept of *gender stereotype* by giving examples of gender stereotypes. In order to ensure students' understanding of what was asked, the researcher had to draw participants' attention to an explanation of what gender stereotypes are:

Gender stereotypes are as old as humanity and reflect the idea that we have of those who are different from us. A gender stereotype can manifest itself through a popular, caricatured behavior or word, idea or image of an individual or group, based on an over-simplification of character traits that are true or imagined.

The researcher then read the statements A and B and asked the participants to tell an event or story that they experienced in their high school years, insisting that it had to be as accurate as possible. The researcher invited them to respond and told them not to write their name so as to ensure that the answers were anonymous. However, students had to identify their gender, age, and grade level. The approximate duration of a meeting was 20 minutes.

Data processing

In a preliminary phase of data processing, we classified the answer sheets by gender and school grade. A second reading was undertaken to highlight the key words and the salient facts of the students' incidents. Overall, this revealed that the students understood what was expected of them. When there was more than one incident described by a student, the additional incident was taken under consideration. Using the method proposed by Bardin (2001), the analysis allowed us (a) to group the answers, (b) to define the categories and subcategories emerging from the incidents, and (c) to assess inter-rater reliability. In this regard, some thirty critical incidents were classified by three analysts. This procedure allowed us to achieve a satisfactory degree of agreement (83%) between the three analysts, and our own classification. Finally, the data were quantified in terms of percentages and number of events included in each category.

RESULTS

The examination of the incidents reported by the participants led us to identify six categories under which gender stereotypes fall into (table 1): (1) supervision; (2) informal comments; (3) attention that teachers devote to students; (4) evaluation of students' work; (5) gender-based segregation; (6) formal comments. We now describe each category in more detail.

Table 1

Categories of incidents related to the presence of gender stereotypes

in teachers' classroom management

Categories in which gender stereotypes fall into	Gender		%	Total/Cat.
	M	F		
Supervision	51	49	23.3	100
Informal comments	40	51	21.2	91
Attention that teachers devote to students	18	60	18.2	78
Evaluation of students' work	31	35	15.4	66
Gender-based segregation	23	33	13.1	56
Formal comments	22	16	8.8	38
Total	185	244	100	429

Categorization of the incidents (statement A)

Supervision: supervision is about the inequities with regard to verbal or written reprimands, punishments, and other disciplinary approaches. The fact of reprimanding boys more frequently than girls because they are heckling while girls do the same is a perfect example of this first category. This category ranks first among all other categories in terms of the number of incidents reported (100). In 81% of incidents, male teachers were involved, and in 19.5%, female teachers were involved. We reclassified these 100 incidents and came up in five sub-categories that emerged from this broader category (supervision):

- heckling
- undone homework
- lateness of students
- non-compliance with the school dress code
- granting permission to students
- disciplinary actions

Results indicated that boys are reprimanded verbally more often than girls in an unjustified manner. Boys are often scolded because they heckle, disturb, and talk. These behaviors sometimes result in student's expulsion from the classroom, which are denounced by both girls and boys. This confirms the uncompromising behaviors of teachers towards boys (especially female teachers) (Maccoby 1990, Durrut-Bellat 1990).

Informal comment: this category refers to general remarks made by the teacher about men or women. These remarks are not specific to the academic content or the actual reality of the classroom which may hinder gender equity. For instance, a student reported a teacher's comment: "it is well known that girls are always more sensitive than boys." This category contains 21.2% of all the incidents listed and ranks second. We classified the reported incidents into five sub-categories which contain gender stereotypes:

- Intellectual, psychological or physical characteristics that are specific to boys and girls
- Predictions about the chances of academic success, opportunities for career advancement, and more broadly, opportunities for full development of boys and girls
- A discriminating opinion based on a biased conception of men and women

Teachers' statements in the present category can be explained by taking into account the theories developed in the field of social psychology, and more specifically the social representation theory. Social representations are values, ideas, metaphor, beliefs, and practices that are shared among members of groups and communities. Social representations are developed through experiences, but also from knowledge transmitted through tradition, education and social communication. Among many things, social representations guide behaviors and communications (Jodelet, 1989).

Attention teachers devote to students: these are the gender inequities regarding the quantity and quality of interactions with female and male students. These interactions can be verbal or nonverbal and take place in and out of class. For instance, a student reported that "my math teacher responds more spontaneously to boys' questions than to girls." This category accounts for 18.2% of all the incidents collected and ranks third among all other categories. Gender bias is a behavior often displayed by teachers in their ways of paying attention to students. In general, this is observable through the quantity and quality of social relations. Our findings confirm in some respects those of Zaidman (1996) that teachers - whether men or women - spontaneously give more attention to boys than girls, and spend more time discussing some issues with boys than girls.

Evaluation of students' work: this category refers to gender inequities that students experience when complimenting and criticizing them. These inequities can be seen in a written or verbal way. This category ranks 4th and corresponds to a form of "pre-assessment" related to teacher's expectations of students' achievement. Expectations correspond to the teacher's predictions of the students' achievement based on teachers' experience, beliefs, and prejudices (Morency, 1993). According to Morency and Bordeleau's (1995) study of the pygmalion effect, variables associated with physical appearance, behavior, physical and intellectual abilities may be at the origin of an individual's expectations. Researchers clearly showed a correlation between teachers' expectations and students' level of achievement (Morency & Bordeleau, 1995; Peterson, Rubie-Davies, Osborne, & Sibley, 2016; Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968)

Gender-based segregation: these are cases where the teacher separates students simply on the basis of their gender (marked division based on gender). Boys and girls may, for example, be required to perform different tasks as part of a course or meet discriminatory gender requirements from their teacher. Just over 13% of all incidents identified are related to gender-based segregation, and rank 5th in all other categories. Two interesting features relate to this category. Gender stereotypes can be observed through the nature of a task to be performed or through the teacher's requirements for the same task to be performed by boys and girls. In the current study, 16 out of 34 incidents are related to physical education, 14 of which concern gender-based segregation related to the difference in the nature of a task to be performed. In this category, 8 incidents could not be related to the context of the classroom or to a particular school subject, but led on asking boys to accomplish tasks requiring physical strength. Researchers argued that students (especially girls) perceive the presence of gender stereotypes

in teaching practices through the activities offered to them (Sadker & Sadker, 1985). In the present context, we can't strip out the presence of the Pygmalion effect. Students go through differentiated learning conditions depending on the teachers' expectations (Morency, 1990). For instance, physical education teachers interact more frequently and more positively with students for whom they have high expectations (Martinek & Karper, 1984).

Formal comments: this category refers to the academic content or the actual reality of the classroom that can hinder gender equality. This is a statement made by the teacher that castles doubt on the possibilities of seeing students succeed in a given discipline. For instance, a student said: "boys are usually better at playing guitar" (incident taking place in a music class). Of all these incidents, 21 are reported by boys versus 15 by girls. Researchers suggest that teachers perceive girls and boys differently by attributing them features that correspond to gender roles, and that expectations are often marked by sexism (Féat & Solomon, 1991; Gilbert, 1990).

Categorization of the incidents (statement B)

In the second part of the research, students were asked to provide an explanation of the reasons why teachers exhibited their gender stereotyped behaviors. We then classified the explanations into 7 categories (Table 2): (1) prejudices against girls and boys; (2) the past of the teachers; (3) students' motivation; (4) students' academic achievement; (5) the mindset of teachers; (6) reactions of the distinctive features of the students; (7) students' adherence to stereotyping.

Table 2

Classification of the explanations given by students

Classification of the explanations	Number of incidents	%
Prejudices against girls and boys	116	30.1
The past life of the teachers	98	25.4
Students' motivation	77	19.9
Students' academic achievement	37	9.6
Students' adherence to stereotyping	23	6.0
The mindset of teachers	23	5.9
Reactions to the distinctive features of the students	12	3.1
Total	386	100

Prejudices against girls or boys: in a proportion of 30.1%, students referred to the fact that the teachers concerned in the incident used a prejudice that was considered unfavorable for girls or boys.

The past life of the teachers: in large numbers (25.4%), students explained their teachers' stereotyped behaviors by invoking their past as a man or woman and by making assumptions about the education they received. Students evoked the potential influences of their environment over the course of their lives, their realities as men or women, and even their sexual orientation. Some students went as far as to mention mental illness (i.e., schizophrenia, nervous breakdown) to explain their behaviors.

Students' motivation: 19.9% of students explained that their teachers' stereotyped behaviors aimed at motivating them, that teachers simply tried to get closer from their students (girls and boys). In other words, students claimed that their teachers' stereotyped behaviors could be considered as pedagogical strategies, which were still highly questionable according to them.

Students' academic achievement: students also report that teachers take more disciplinary actions for boys than for girls. The most common explanations are that girls would be academically superior to boys and don't have to be punished because they are quieter. Indeed, 9.6% of the data collected allow us to indicate that teachers'

behaviors derive from questionable performance criteria. This seems particularly true in physical education where performance very often takes on a masculine face.

Students adherence to stereotyping: 6% of students seem to justify - without denouncing – teachers' stereotyped behaviors. The body of data allows us to induce a certain degree of adherence to gender stereotypes, and this can be seen especially in incidents related to physical education class.

The mindset of teachers: Students also mention teacher's state of mind (5.9%) to explain their gender stereotyped behaviors. Depending on the cases, students indicated that teachers were either tired, old, impatient or frustrated, while other students argue that teachers' behaviors aimed essentially at hurting them.

Reactions to the distinctive features of the students: finally, 3.1% of students reported that teachers exhibited gender bias in the context of students having a particular way of distinguishing themselves (i.e., clothing, piercing, haircut, etc.).

DISCUSSION
The categories of incidents related to the presence of gender stereotypes in teachers' classroom management (table 1), and the classification of the reasons why teachers exhibited these behaviors (table 2) allow us to conclude that students are very sensitive to gender stereotypes.

In this study, students made assumptions about the background or past life of teachers to explain their behaviors. Mention is often made of the education received, family, religion, marital status, and sex life. These explanations or hypotheses are only pure projections, but still contain the source of a real questioning. These projections formulated by the students are nevertheless interesting, since they refer to the very foundation of gender stereotypes. From childhood, in fact, gender stereotypes develop in response to social interactions with others (Brannon, 1999), and it allows us to believe that students understand the development of gender stereotypes in men and women. From another perspective, students' explanations suggest that academic performance (e.g. higher performance in physical education and lower performance in language learning, for boys) can lead teachers to convey gender stereotypes. According to the students' perspective, achieving good academic results, often favoring girls, would explain teachers' complacency regarding their disciplinary actions. In addition, students perceive that teachers seem to appreciate more passive, docile, quiet and obedient students (often associated with the "little model girl") to independent, self-confident and active students (features often associated with boys). Researchers assert that teachers have a favorable bias toward female students from a behavioral view point only (Duru-Bellat, 1990; Kramer, 1988).

The data collected in this study provided significant insights into the nature and context where gender stereotypes manifest themselves in school, which make the results very useful for teachers wishing to avoid conveying gender stereotypes. First, students are aware of the presence of gender stereotypes in teachers' disciplinary actions considered to be sometimes unfair even if these actions don't concern students directly. Second, informal comments reported by the students left us very perplexed. Indeed, students reported that teachers made inappropriate comments regarding what should be the "intellectual property" of men and women from a psychological or physical perspective. These derogatory comments are striking: girls are considered gossipers while boys are considered lazier. Third, gender inequities were identified in social interactions and that caught our attention given the importance of social relations in classroom management. More specifically, it was interesting to note that gender bias seemed to influence the duration, the quality and the nature of the social interactions. Fourth, the assessment of students' work is also undermined by the presence of gender stereotypes. The incidents described by the students indicated that gender stereotypes are mainly introduced in the context of verbal assessments of students' work (during a class period) and while handling in assignments, homework, or corrected exams.

To counteract gender stereotypes, teachers must adopt effective strategies that improve the quality of teachers / students' relation. Lo (2015, p. 35) indicates, for instance, "to create safe space for self-expression in their instructional approach to challenging gender norms and stereotypes". Teachers should also seek to engage students in conversations around gender equity by planning insightful lessons on that matter, by embedding gender lessons in curriculum, and by building an awareness of gender at a young age. Lo (2015, p. 38) notes: "talking about gender stereotypes from the primary level or as soon as students start school will ensure that they have an early awareness of the concept and the messages". Finally, Lo (2015, p. 41) stresses the importance to identify the markers of success although it might be difficult to achieve: "[…] it would be a difficult process to fairly judge each student on something so sensitive […]".

CONCLUSION

The vast majority of school-based staff do not even suspect that boys and girls experience gender stereotypes in teachers' classroom management. Consequently, this study aims at opening the doors to introspection for teachers wishing to start considering the possible influences of gender stereotypes in students' path to graduation. Future areas of research should aim at shedding light on the existence of potential links between boys' lack of interest in school and gender stereotypes conveyed by teachers. Also, Lo (2015, p. 49-50) proposes a series of research questions for researchers wishing to explore further this research theme: (1) How can teachers be educated to avoid allowing binary gender stereotypes to affect transgender students, both socio-emotionally and academically? (2) How can the ability to challenge traditional gender stereotypes be transferred to challenge transgender stereotypes? (3) How do the dynamics of sexuality accentuate gender stereotypes? What can teachers do to mitigate this particular cause? (4) How do teachers take into account cultural differences that perpetuate gender stereotypes and challenge them in a respectful manner? As in every study, there are a few limits worth mentioning. First, adolescence is a period of rapid change. Thus, the social representations that the participants described can't be fixed in time. The many social interactions students go through in a school year may contribute to modify the perception of their social environment, and the way they understand and perceive gender stereotypes. Second, the data collected were not from our own observation in the classrooms. Chances are that an effective observable technique would have enhanced proximity with the participants to get a better feel for their perspectives. Despite these limits, this study schows that gender stereotypes are not beneficial for students and must therefore be avoided in the teacher-student relation.

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