

ABSTRACT

Shannon McMahon, EDUCATORS FOR GENDER EQUITY: PROMOTING GENDER EQUITY IN AN INTERNATIONAL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL (Under the direction of Dr. Marjorie Ringler). Department of Education Leadership, May 2023.

Disparities, bias, and inequities persist between girls and boys as the result of gender inequities in schools (Sadker & Sadker, 1994). In this participatory action research (PAR) project, I investigated how educators and educational leaders promote gender equity in an international elementary school. The project took place in the elementary school at Escola American de Campinas (EAC) where I was the principal at the time of the project. I led the PAR project's co-practitioner research (CPR) group comprising five elementary educators through three cycles of inquiry. At the completion of the inquiry cycles, five themes emerged and were unanimously promoted by the CPR group as the project's findings: (1) gender is a learned construct; (2) girls miss out; (3) storytelling is a critical transformation tool; (4) crossing boundaries strengthens relationships and learning; and (5) the people closest to the issues are best suited to discover solutions. My use of the ecologies of knowing (Guajardo et al., 2016) in the design and implementation of the inquiry cycles and activities informed a progressive, thorough investigation centered on the initial insights derived at the level of self. It was at the level of self that profound connections regarding gender and subsequent learning were experienced and shared by the members of the CPR group. From the level of self, recognition and interaction with gender at the organization and community levels were identified and recommendations created to address gender and gender inequity in the elementary school at EAC. The process of coming to understand at the level of self, then using this knowledge and experience to inform work at organization and community levels is the basis for this PAR project's theory of change to promote gender equity in an international elementary school.

EDUCATORS FOR GENDER EQUITY: PROMOTING GENDER EQUITY IN AN
INTERNATIONAL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

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CHAPTER 1: NAMING & FRAMING THE FOCUS OF PRACTICE

The moment a little boy is concerned with which is a jay and which is a sparrow, he can no longer see the birds or hear them sing. Eric Berne

Gender is the set of socially constructed roles and responsibilities imposed on men and women that determine what is expected, allowed, and valued based on one's categorization as male or female. Gender influences how persons perceive themselves and others, how they act and interact, and the distribution of power and resources in society (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, 2020; UNESCO, 2005). Perspectives, assumptions, and cultural beliefs surrounding gender are prevalent across all facets of life, including the field of education (Connell, 2010). Disparities, bias, and inequities persist between girls and boys as the result of gender inequities in schools (Sadker & Sadker, 1994).

Gender directly affects the experiences and opportunities afforded to girls and boys, women and men. While social discrepancies brought about by gender inequity are now widely acknowledged at many levels of society and around the world, this recognition has not led to substantive change in the way we identify and engage with the concept of gender (Baily & Holmarsdottir, 2015). Without change—as Berne (1964) so poetically lamented at the opening of this chapter—the destructive afflictions brought about by gender inequities will continue to oppress, subjugate, and exclude.

Educators are positioned to disrupt the perpetual cycle of inequity brought about by ingrained constructs of gender cultivated in their schools. Drawing from the seminal work of Sadker and Sadker (1975, 1986, 1994), Sadker et al. (1991), and Sadker (2000) I posit that educators have rarely been afforded the professional opportunities and/or training they need to: (1) develop an understanding of self and beliefs about gender; (2) examine their own practices

with regard to gender equity; (3) implement equitable gender instructional practices; and (4) develop as leaders to promote gender equity. At the school where I am the elementary principal, we were poised to examine these questions: How do educators, therefore, develop an understanding of gender? How can educators contribute to the implementation of equitable gender instructional practices? And how can educational leaders work with educators to promote gender equity?

Escola Americana de Campinas (EAC) is a private, American international school located in Campinas, São Paulo, Brazil. Established in 1956, EAC remains the school of choice for the city's foreign families seeking a competitive international education. Following a downturn in the Brazilian economy in recent years, the city's non-Brazilian population decreased significantly, leading to relatively fewer foreign enrollees at EAC. While at the school's inception, international students represented approximately 85% of EAC's student body, the international contingent of the school's 820 students is now less than 15%, and Brazilian students are the dominant nationality.

While remaining an international school with a strong commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion, EAC is comparable to other international schools worldwide catering to a growing number of domestic, upper-middle-class families seeking international education for their children. Political, social, and economic instability in Brazil have contributed to heightened rates of repatriation of expatriate families as well as a decrease in international postings from multinational companies. As a result, international schools throughout the world are less diverse in culture and nationality than before. Additionally, families at EAC predominantly identify as white, and Christian. This sector, in the city of Campinas, is known nationally as particularly

traditional in its social and political outlook with especially conservative views on binary gender norms.

I engaged in a participatory action research (PAR) project that took place in the EAC elementary school to question how educators in an international school could develop deeper schoolwide understandings of gender and implement practices that lead to greater gender equity at a classroom and leadership level. These questions encompass the focus of practice (FoP) for this project. In the next section, I present the rationale for the FoP and PAR project. Additionally, I explore the FoP assets and challenges that define the PAR process. Finally, I outline the significance of the project for practice and leadership along with the FoP's direct connection to equity.

Focus of Practice: Educators' Understanding and Use of Equitable Gender Practices

Gender is a social construct that applies subjective characteristics to categorize a person, his or her behaviors, and societal roles as boy or girl, man or woman (World Health Organization, 2020). In this way, people are affected by gender through implicit and/or explicit social norms. Upon arrival at EAC, I was struck by overt examples of the influence of gender norms within the school community. Promotional photos on the school's website depicted young boys playing football with girls in short skirts on the sidelines as cheerleaders. My first impressions led me to wonder whether this was a school that intentionally upheld traditional gender roles and behaviors.

Over time, I frequently encountered children sitting or lining up in alternating boy-girl arrangements intended to keep them from interacting. Teachers used this strategy believing that boys and girls are different and do not interact or get along and that the children's degree of discomfort with the opposite gender would increase the likelihood of disruption if they were in

proximity. Children were regularly addressed as “boys and girls,” demarcating them into two distinct groups. Additionally, educators often gave gender-based explanations for child behavior or learning development.

I engaged in and facilitated discussions promoting gender equity to gain insight into whether these behaviors, strategies, and theories were conscious on the part of the elementary educators. What emerged through those conversations was overwhelming support and acceptance of gender equity, which I interpreted as evidence that educators at EAC were not intentionally upholding traditional gender roles and behaviors but doing so unconsciously. In line with Sadker and Sadker’s (1975, 1986, 1994) findings, elementary educators at EAC instead appeared to be: (1) unaware of gender inequities in their milieu; (2) unaware of their personal biases and contributions to gender inequities; (3) untrained and ill-prepared to address gender inequities; and (4) unsupported by school leaders to promote gender equity. In direct response, I defined the focus of practice (FoP) for this participatory action research (PAR) project: To develop educators’ understanding and use of equitable gender practices in an international elementary school.

Next, I describe the relevance of the FoP through the analysis of the micro, meso, and macro assets and challenges of the project’s setting, EAC. I then consider the potential significance of the PAR project for practice, policy, and research and explore its connection to equity.

Assets and Challenges to the Focus of Practice

A focus of practice (FoP) is a topic or area of concern that helps us narrow a research study to a particular topic that we can investigate. The project’s FoP was to develop educators’ understanding and use of equitable gender practices in an international elementary school. To

start this investigation, I analyzed the micro, meso, and macro assets and challenges to the FoP. The following section presents the assets and challenges for the FoP at the micro, meso, and macro levels as depicted in Figure 1.

Micro Assets and Challenges

In our preliminary discussions, the majority of educators expressed a willingness and need to learn about gender equity. In informal conversations and staff meetings, educators shared experiences, observations, and reflections that described language, behavior, and views that contribute to gender inequity at EAC. They further substantiated the collective desire of the educators for personal and professional development relating to gender equity and the importance of addressing gender inequity in the elementary school at EAC. The educators discussed curriculum developments that increased opportunities to promote gender equity in classrooms, including the implementation of a concept-driven program of inquiry based on the progressive science and social studies learning standards of the *Base Nacional Comum Curricular* (National Common Curriculum, BNCC).

The elementary school's revised 2019 social-emotional curriculum was another asset as it had embedded learning standards relating directly to diversity and inclusion. However, educators voiced a reluctance to interpret and fully embrace diversity and inclusion within their teaching without an explicitly defined shared understanding of gender and gender equity. This reluctance was due to a lack of confidence, experience, and understanding as well as fear of reprisal from the parent community.

Finally, educators identified the range and availability of extracurricular activities as an asset to promoting gender equity in the elementary school. They expressed that while extracurricular activities theoretically were equally accessible to boys and girls, traditional

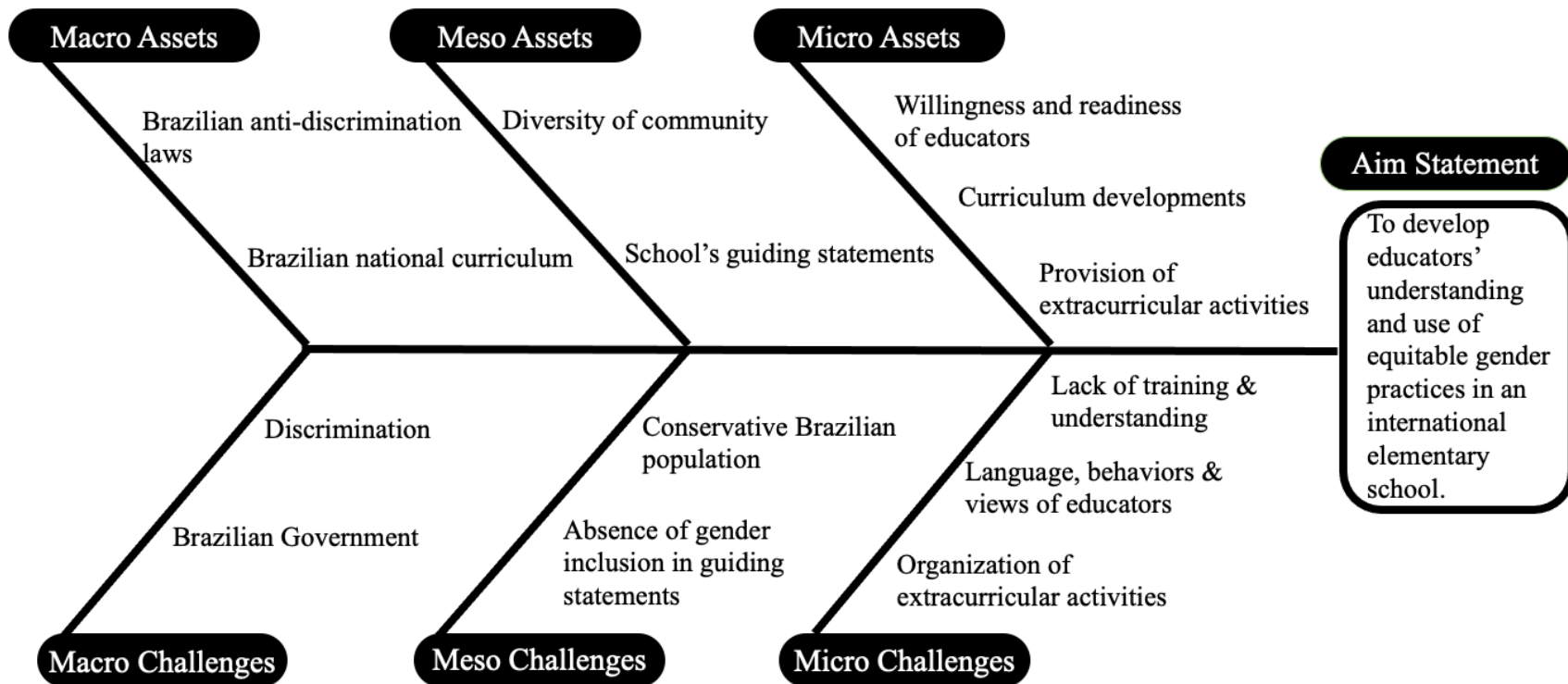


Figure 1. Fishbone diagram identifying assets and challenges to the focus of practice.

gender norms persisted given the disproportionate enrollment of girls in activities such as cheerleading and gymnastics while boys played soccer and basketball.

Meso Assets and Challenges

EAC possesses a diverse representation of cultures and nationalities and appeals to Brazilian and international families seeking an alternate education experience to those offered in local schools. Educators viewed the community's diversity as an asset for proposing increased openness towards gender equity. While international students add diversity to the student body, a challenge at the meso level is the predominance of the Brazilian cultural group. Educators perceived that the mostly white, upper-middle-class families who make up more than 85% of the school community tend to hold conservative political and social views and could be resistant to the PAR project's topic. The educators substantiated this perception by referring to a town hall meeting convened in 2018 to address parents' allegations that the school encouraged "gender ideology," by which they meant gender and sexuality education inconsistent with traditional, heterosexual, binary ideals. School leaders identified two challenges after the town-hall meeting: (a) the need for strengthening the school's identity and (b) a strongly change-resistant traditional contingent within the parent community.

The school responded to the town hall event by promoting its core values, coining and sharing an official statement of diversity and inclusion, and publishing the underlying principles of learning to which the school adheres. Educators perceived these guiding statements as assets relating to gender as they uphold a learning environment rooted in equity, open-mindedness, empathy, and inclusion. On the other hand, educators perceived that the school had no specific stance on or definition of gender equity.

Macro Assets and Challenges

Educators identified the BNCC, Brazil's national curriculum, as a macro asset for the investigation of gender. Launched in 2016, the curriculum outlines to a socially and politically progressive approach to teaching and learning for its estimated 31 million students in more than 142,000 schools throughout the country (OECD, 2015). Equity, diversity, and inclusion are clear agendas laid out in the BNCC, which is designed to support educators in bringing these social agendas to life in Brazilian schools. The BNCC is in direct alignment with the Brazilian Constitution and anti-discrimination laws on social equality (Joaquim, 2006). Other macro level assets relevant for the PAR project identified by the educators were the protection of sex, gender, and gender identity under state and federal laws and the advancement and defense of human rights in Brazil (UNESCO, 2019a).

Nevertheless, even though men and women in Brazil share the same legal rights prohibiting discrimination based on gender, significant disparities in economic participation and opportunity, education, health, and political representation remain (World Economic Forum, 2018). In addition, while blatant discrimination is illegal, it remains pervasive, especially in predominantly white middle- and upper-class areas (Bradford Burns, 2020).

Additionally, Jair Bolsonaro's election in 2018 as Brazilian President resulted in a shift in public sentiment relating to diversity, equity, and social justice. Bolsonaro restored conservative leadership to Brazil as reflected in the new president's perceived homophobic, misogynist, and racist positions that deepened social polarization (Bradford Burns, 2020). Dissent towards anti-discrimination laws surfaced in Brazilian communities such as at the 2018 town hall meeting at EAC. Educators perceived the strength of this conservative contingent within EAC's community as a challenge to the PAR project.

The Significance of Approaching This Study Through Participatory Action Research

As gender equity is an issue worldwide (World Economic Forum, 2019), developing educators' understanding and use of equitable gender practices may be applied well beyond this PAR project's setting.

Practice

School practices worldwide continue to create divergent life paths for children by treating boys and girls not just differently because of their gender but as different species (Sadker & Sadker, 1994). Educators sustain disparate expectations due to gender biases, which ultimately can obstruct opportunities for children. The scale and relevance of gender in the lives of children worldwide must not be underestimated. UNESCO (2019b) defines any form of exclusion based on gender as a violation of human rights as well as a significant barrier to society's future. The findings of this PAR project could apply to classrooms and schools throughout the world. The disruption of gender inequities is therefore of paramount significance.

Policy

The results of this PAR project will inform local policy at EAC. Additionally, the opportunity exists to share experience and knowledge derived from the project with other schools in Brazil and beyond. In this way, school-based education policies could be broadened to support equitable gender practices and complementary professional learning opportunities to facilitate equitable learning for all children and educators.

Research

Gender equity is not only a fundamental human right but a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous, and sustainable world (United Nations, 2020b). Dissemination of the findings of the PAR project could stimulate further research on equitable gender practices at a

school level. The study is designed to foreground how the project could promote more equitable gender practices and leadership in schools and ultimately minimize the destructive impact of divisive gender practices.

Connection to Equity

The FoP for this PAR project is related to sociological, philosophical, and psychological equity frameworks described at the macro, meso, and micro levels. I offer an initial summary of each frame here, followed by analyses of each level. First, I use a sociological framework to explore gender at a macro level and consider the co-dependent relationship between education and society in maintaining gender constructs in line with the works of Labaree (2008), Eubanks et al. (1997), and Wilkerson (2020). At a meso level, I use McKenzie and Scheurich's (2004) paralogical equity trap and apply the philosophical equity framework based on educators' attitudes, beliefs, assumptions, and behaviors. Finally, at a micro level, I incorporate Steele's (2010) stereotype threats and the psychological equity frame to the gender stereotypes of students at an elementary level.

Gender is a construct in which people define acceptable social practices and roles and dictate what is "normal," "who we are," and "how things should be" (Eubanks et al., 1997). As a hegemonic culture and form of casteism, through gender people maintain the social discourses that sort, delineate, and discriminate based on conventions associated with being male or female (Eubanks et al., 1997; Wilkerson, 2020). The co-dependent relationship between schooling and society leads to constructs of gender being created and perpetuated in both settings. According to Labaree (2008), "Schooling is not just a structure that shapes education and preserves its form over time; it is also a discursive and behavioral pattern that shapes the way society functions" (p. 459). Without conscious disruption of gender bias by school leaders, children will continue to be

sorted in schools to maintain existing cultural expectations (Eubanks et al., 1997). The FoP is directly related to a sociological framework because the current social order taught and reinforced in schools promotes divisive distinctions between boys and girls, leading to situations of bias, systematic power and oppression, and relationships of dominance and subordination.

Educators' philosophical foundation directly influence student access to equitable learning environments and opportunities. McKenzie and Scheurich (2004) highlight as sources of inequity educators' paralogical beliefs and behaviors, which they define as: "a conclusion drawn from premises that logically do not warrant that conclusion" (p. 624). In this PAR project, educators readily shared gender-related paralogisms through conversations, and observations, such as:

- Boys have more energy than girls.
- Girls learn to read faster than boys.
- Girls don't enjoy soccer as much as boys.
- Boys can't concentrate for as long as girls.
- Boys are louder than girls.
- Girls are neater than boys.

To carry out this PAR project, we had to identify paralogical beliefs held by elementary educators that undermine the ability of educators to create equitable schools (McKenzie & Scheurich, 2004). Therefore, a philosophical equity framework and approach were essential to this PAR project.

Finally, we applied a psychological frame on the harms of stereotype threats. A stereotype threat is a "socially premised psychological threat that arises when one is in a situation or doing something for which a negative stereotype about one's group applies" (Steele

& Aronson, 1995, p. 797). Stereotype threats affect our social identities, academic performance, professional opportunities, career paths, health, and quality of life. According to Steele (2010), “Despite the strong sense we have of ourselves as autonomous individuals, evidence consistently shows that contingencies tied to our social identities do make a difference in shaping our lives” (p. 14).

Gender stereotypes are prevalent in all societies; they are restrictive in that they maintain a divisive social structure based on perceived notions of male and female. Within an educational setting, gender stereotype threats result in reduced participation, performance, and engagement and affect the self-worth of learners. Thus, gender equity requires the recognition of gender stereotypes prevalent in the elementary setting before exploring the associated gender stereotype threats and their management.

Participatory Action Research Design Fit With FoP

In action research, participants take active roles in the design, methodology, and research itself, “shift[ing] the locus of control from professional or academic researchers to those who have been traditionally the subjects of research” (Herr & Anderson 2015, p. 2). In contrast to traditional research approaches, participatory action research (PAR) is inquiry carried out in collaboration with members of a given community who are themselves invested in the problem at hand. The focus of this PAR is educators’ understanding and use of equitable gender practices in an international elementary school.

I led a team of five co-practitioner researchers (CPR) through three iterative cycles of inquiry, each aimed at exploring the Focus of Practice (FoP) through personal, social, professional, and hegemonic lenses. Next, I detail the PAR purpose and research questions.

Thereafter, I present the PAR project's theory of action along with the FoP and associated research activities.

Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to develop educators' understanding and use of equitable gender practices in an international elementary school. The theory of action was that if educators develop deeper understandings of self and gender and use those understandings to examine practices, then we can implement classroom and leadership practices that promote gender equity in the elementary school. The overarching research question for the study was: *How do educators promote gender equity in an international elementary school?* The sub-questions were:

1. To what extent do elementary educators develop an understanding of self and beliefs about gender?
2. To what extent do elementary educators examine their practices about gender equity?
3. To what extent do elementary educators implement equitable gender instructional practices?
4. How do I grow and develop in my leadership as I work with educators to promote gender equity?

Study Considerations

I enacted external ethical safeguards in advance of the PAR project's commencement including permission to conduct the project from the head of school at EAC, Institutional Review Board Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (IRB CITI) certification, and submission of the project's proposal to East Carolina University's Institutional Review Board (ECU IRB).

These safeguards protected the project's participants and ensured the integrity of the project and its findings.

I ensured the trustworthiness of the PAR project and its degree of credibility by prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, referential adequacy, member checking, and peer debriefing. These measures reduced researcher bias over the course of the project and thus strengthened the confirmability of the PAR project's findings.

Educators are positioned to disrupt the perpetual cycle of inequity brought about by divisive constructs of gender in our schools. The PAR project sought to develop educators' understanding and use of equitable gender practices in an international elementary school through the engagement and empowerment of a CPR group of invested elementary educators. The CPR group was guided by Guajardo et al.'s (2016) CLE axioms and ecologies of knowing to: (1) develop an understanding of self and beliefs about gender; (2) examine one's own practices with respect to gender equity; (3) implement equitable gender instructional practices; (4) develop as leaders to promote gender equity.

Chapter 2 is a review of literature relevant to the FoP including gender, gender equity, culture, education, feminism, and feminist praxis. Chapter 3 is an outline of the PAR methodology, and Chapter 4 gives a description of the place and people of the PAR project. Chapter 5 consists of the personal and professional portraits of the CPR group members, and Chapter 6 is a presentation of the PAR project's findings. In Chapter 7, I propose the resultant theory of change along with a discussion about the project's future implications and my leadership learning over the course of this PAR project experience.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Throughout the world, differences remain between the opportunities offered and experiences available to boys and girls, women and men. Education is a socio-cultural conduit and mechanism for the perpetuation of these gender inequities. In fact, Connell (2010) says that education is “the moment in social process when people as agents enter the historical constitution of gender relations” (p. 609). Despite the common assumption that education is the key to opportunity for those who put forth the effort, because gender inequity remains deeply rooted at every level of modern education systems (Bauer, 2000), it undermines that potential. Gender inequity in education is the basis for this participatory action research (PAR) project and literature review. The PAR project aims to address gender inequities for boys and girls by developing educators’ understanding and use of equitable gender practices in an international elementary school in Campinas, Brazil.

Following an initial discussion of gender and gender equity, I introduce the foundations of gender and gender equity theory. I have chosen to present gender equity theory at the societal, relational, and individual levels to highlight the scope of influence that the social construct of gender has on boys and girls, men and women. Then, I examine gender and gender equity in Brazilian culture and Western education. Finally, I identify feminism as a conceptual approach for disrupting gendered structures of power and oppression, patriarchy, and hegemony through the feminist praxis of leaders and teachers at school and classroom levels. Figure 2 represents the three sections of this review.

In describing the relationships among sex, gender, and society, Epstein (2007) wrote:

The gender divide is not determined by biological forces. No society or subgroup leaves social sorting to natural processes. It is through social and cultural mechanisms and their

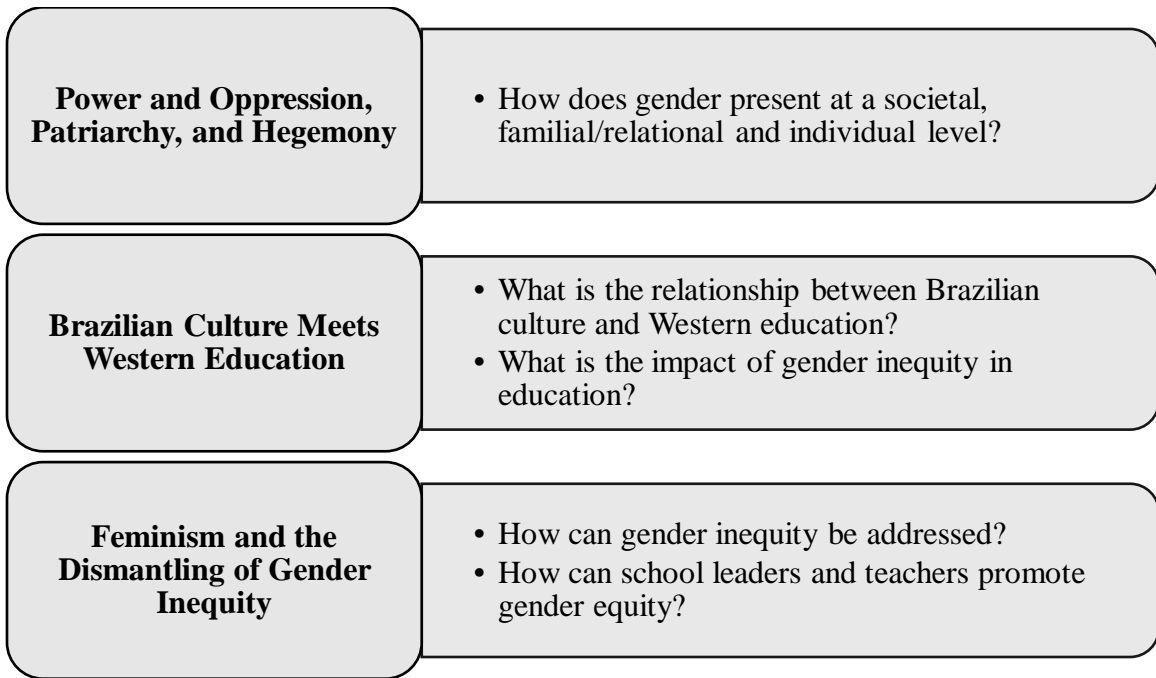


Figure 2. Literature review overview.

impact on cognitive processes that social sorting by sex occurs and is kept in place—by the exercise of force and the threat of force, by law, by persuasion, and by embedded cultural schemas that are internalized by individuals in all societies. (p. 4)

The power and influence of gender are captured by Stromquist (2013), who defines it as a “system of tangible as well as subtle oppression that, building on social constructions of femininity and masculinity, permeates institutional practices and individual beliefs in ways that render the asymmetrical distribution of freedom and power a ‘natural’ and uncontested reality” (p. 29). Baily and Holmarsdottir (2015) note the breadth of social constraints with which gender is associated:

Gendered expectations can restrain people in physical, emotional, and cultural ways and can prevent people from attaining equitable and just treatment. From conception to the rituals of death, the social construction of gender determines the treatment of men and women in society. This could begin with son-preference, gendered roles in childhood games, and courtship rituals in youth; it continues into midlife, later life, and through to the last rites performed at a person’s passing. These gendered expectations of men and women put an additional burden on women who face not only threats to life and safety in extreme cases, but also discrimination and marginalization on a daily basis. (p. 838)

Baily and Holmarsdottir (2015) also identify gender as a social construction that hinders both men’s and women’s quality of life through the choices they make. The vast majority of contemporary gender and gender theory researchers recognize gender disparities between men and women and the disproportionate effect on women as the result of male-dominant political, legal, and societal systems. Despite such focus, gender remains a social barrier for both men and women worldwide. While women are at greater risk in terms of gender impact, ignoring social

constructions of gender as relevant to men does a “disservice to men who are allies, advocates, and also victims of socialized notions of gender” (Bailey & Holmarsdottir, 2015, p. 839).

UNICEF’s (2017) definition will be used as the foundational reference for gender equity in this literature review:

Gender equity can be understood as the process of being fair to men and women, boys and girls, and importantly the equality of outcomes and results. Gender equity may involve the use of temporary special measures to compensate for historical or systemic bias or discrimination. It refers to differential treatment that is fair and positively addresses a bias or disadvantage that is due to gender roles or norms or differences between the sexes. Equity ensures that women and men and girls and boys have an equal chance, not only at the starting point, but also when reaching the finishing line. It is about the fair and just treatment of both sexes that takes into account the different needs of the men and women, cultural barriers and (past) discrimination of the specific group. (p. 3)

I have chosen this definition as it incorporates the relationship between gender equality and gender equity. In this review, I utilize research to describe inequalities in social and educational opportunities and results for men and women, boys and girls. By doing so, I highlight the need for gender-equitable measures to be considered to address the bias and disadvantage brought about by gender inequality.

The United Nations Human Development Report Office (HDR) (2020) and the World Economic Forum’s Global Gender Gap Report (2019) are tools to monitor international progress relating to social, economic, and environmental development. These reports offer quantitative measures of gender equality and confirm that no country in the world has achieved gender equality. Despite progress in some areas, “Gender disparities are a persistent form of inequality

in every country . . . all too often, women and girls are discriminated against in health, in education, at home, and in the labor market—with negative repercussions for their freedoms" (HDR, 2020, p. 1).

The HDR's (2020) Gender Inequality Index, which measures the health, education, and economic status of men and women, shows a relative decrease in progress towards gender equality in recent years. The authors calculate that based on current trends in economic opportunity, power and leadership, it would require 257 years to close the gender gap. According to the United Nations (2020a) Gender Social Norms index:

Close to 90% of men and women hold some sort of bias against women; half of the world's men and women feel that men make better political leaders; and over 40% feel that men make better business executives and that men have more right to a job when jobs are scarce. 28% of people think it is justified for a man to beat his wife. (para 4-5)

The World Economic Forum's (2019) Global Gender Gap Report 2020 shares similar variances between the genders, noting:

On average, only 55% of adult women are in the labor market versus 78% of men while over 40% of the wage gap (the ratio of the wage of a woman to that of a man in a similar position) and over 50% of the income gap (the ratio of the total wage and non-wage income of women to that of men) are still to be bridged. [Further,] in many countries, women are significantly disadvantaged in accessing credit, land or financial products, which prevents opportunities for them to start a company or make a living by managing assets. (p. 5)

The preceding section gave an orientation to gender, and through equality data I highlighted the need to address systems that sustain gender inequity worldwide. Having

established the existence of gender inequality and gender inequity, I build upon this by introducing the foundations of gender and gender equity theory. Gender equity theories give us insights into how to analyze the catalysts for gender inequity. I present Gender equity theory at three related levels—societal, relational, and individual—to highlight the scope of influence that the social construct of gender has on boys and girls, men and women. Figure 3 represents the three sections of this review; the next section, Power and Oppression, Patriarchy, and Hegemony, is highlighted.

Power and Oppression, Patriarchy, and Hegemony

I examine gender through three levels: the societal (macro) level of power and oppression, the familial/relational (meso) level of patriarchy, and the individual (micro) level of hegemony. Figure 4 shows the tenets of gender I discuss, the underlying literature and corresponding theorists, and the related social contexts. First, I present gender at a societal level of power and oppression, and through the work of Launius and Hassel (2018), I examine gender as a form of social stratification and the supporting systems that perpetuate inequity.

Power and Oppression

Gender, like class and race, is a social hierarchy that differentiates people into groups receiving disparate distribution of resources, opportunities, and status. At a societal (macro) level, gender is ascribed by being born male or female. The categorization of one's gender at birth is not in and of itself a mechanism of inequality. Gender stratification and institutionalized systems of laws, rules, policies, and practices sustain inequality between the genders (Little, 2012).

Launius and Hassel (2018) define oppression as “prejudice and discrimination directed

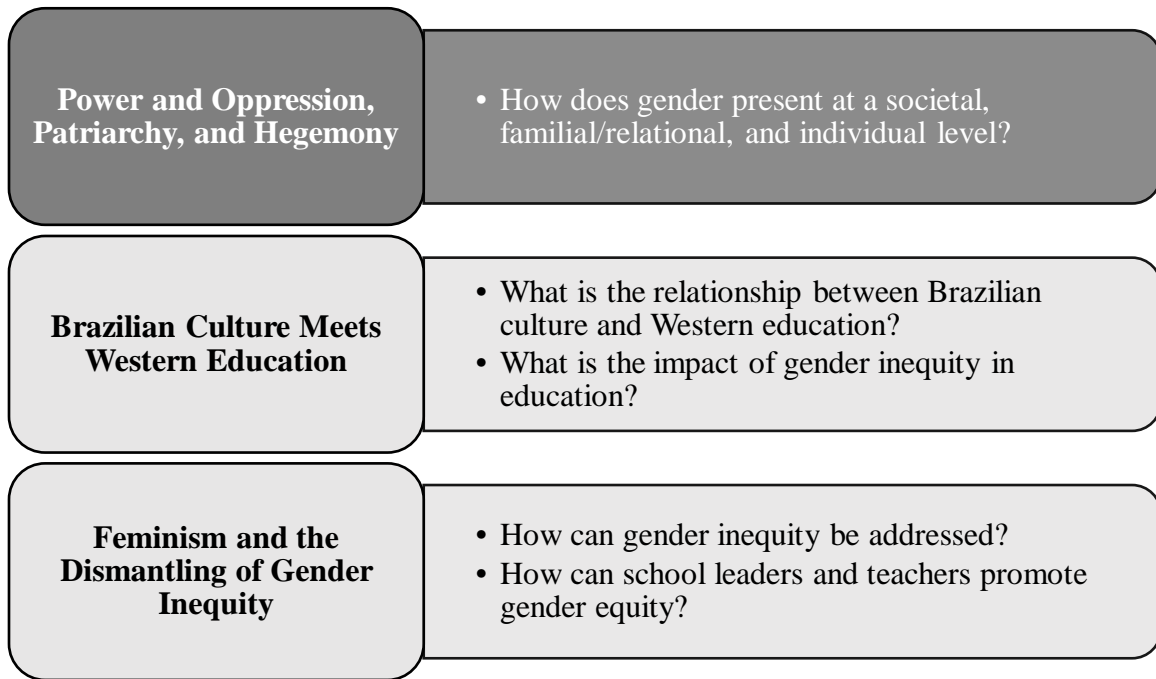


Figure 3. Section 1: Power and oppression, patriarchy, and hegemony.

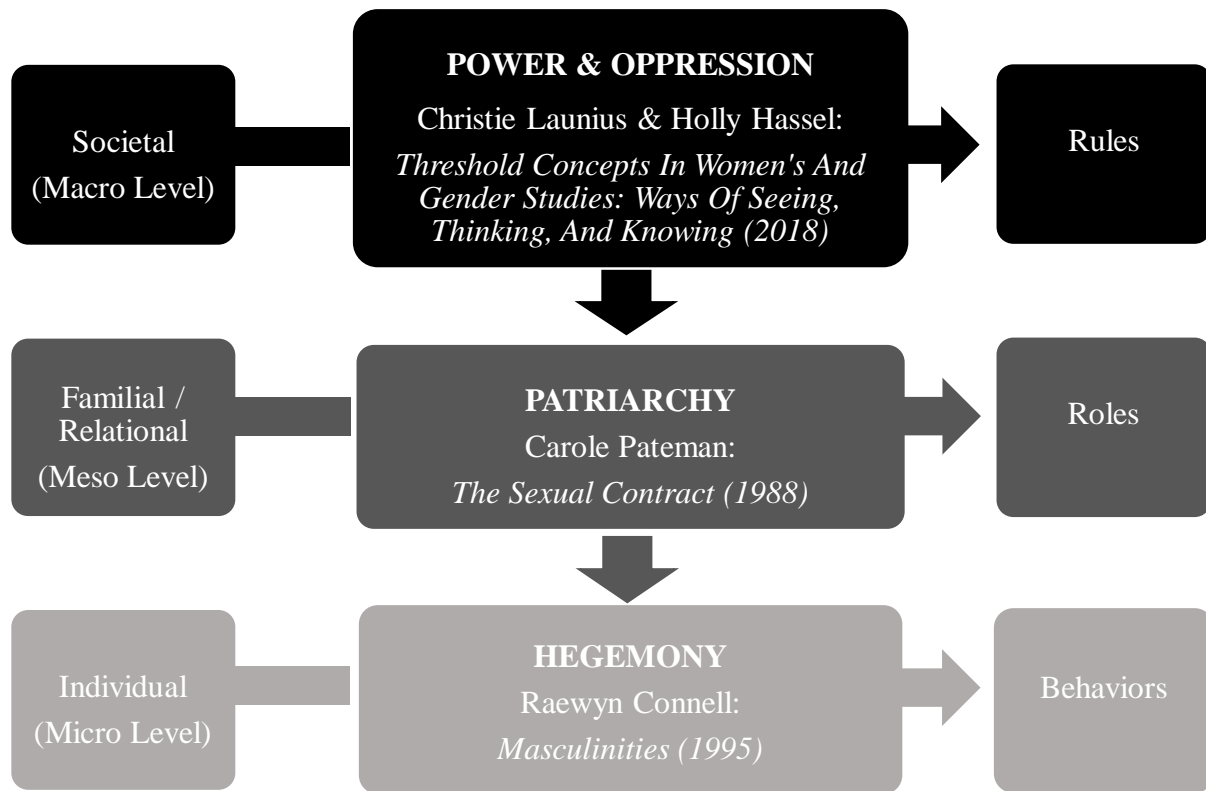


Figure 4. Power and oppression, patriarchy, and hegemony literature overview.

toward a group and perpetrated by the ideologies and practices of multiple social institutions” (p. 91). Within each system of oppression, there is a dominant group and a marginalized group. The dominant group establishes its ideologies as the norm with the marginalized counterpart considered the “other” (Freire, 2018; Launius & Hassel, 2018).

According to Launius and Hassel (2018), the dominant group’s ideologies become the cultural, legal, symbolic, and material fabric of the society, and it is through these forms that power is awarded and stratification is institutionalized. Brazilian philosopher Paulo Freire (2018) argued that the oppressors’ consciousness, their voracity for power through possession, domination, and exploitation, leads to the dispossession of the oppressed and their subsequent reduction to non-beings, that is, less than human. The oppressors’ use of seized power motivated by their passion to profit and possess becomes an inalienable right (Avinash, 2014; Freire, 2018). The dominant group wields its power to establish and maintain social stratification and keep the social hierarchy, along with its advantages and privilege, intact (Freire, 2018; Launius & Hassel, 2018; Wilkerson, 2020).

Launius and Hassel (2018) assert that people in almost all modern societies promote and value masculinity and the mythical norms associated with men more highly than that of femininity. Through the societal idealization of the mythical male norm, the oppression of women as the “other” becomes ingrained, accepted, and reinforced. Feminist writer Simone de Beauvoir (1949) in her book *The Second Sex* illustrates the stratification and power imbalance between the genders along with men’s social and institutional influence: “Representation of the world, like the world itself, is the work of men; they describe it from their own point of view, which they confuse with absolute truth” (p. 143).

Gender as a system of oppression is produced, negotiated, and sustained at every level of social interaction (Chafetz 2006; Danaj, 2016). Connell (2002) describes the divergent economic representation and prominence of men and women at a societal level as an example of oppression, noting, “Most wealth is in the hands of men, most big institutions are run by men, most science and technology is controlled by men” (p. 5).

Patriarchy

Researchers and theorists have sought to recognize, explain, and dismantle gender imbalance through the concept of *patriarchy*. Patriarchy is a historical legal term drawn from Greek and Roman law denoting the structures of the household whereby the male reigned through absolute legal and economic power over dependent female and younger male family members (Pateman, 1988). While men no longer possess absolute legal and economic power over women, modern patriarchy remains a system that perpetuates gender disparities that liken women to possessions and therefore subordinate to their male counterparts through the patriarchal family unit. According to Pateman (1988), within the patriarchal family unit, “a man's power as a father comes after he has exercised the patriarchal right of a man (a husband) over a woman (a wife)” (p. 3).

Lerner (1986), like Pateman, describes the family unit as a modern form of patriarchy and calls it “the manifestation and institutionalization of male dominance over women and children in the family and the extension of this male dominance over women in general” (p. 238). Both Pateman and Lerner describe patriarchy as an imbalance at a familial, social-relational level that enables the subordination of women through a hierarchical understanding of the place, expectations, and roles played by each member of the family. According to these two theorists, the influence of the ancient Greek and Roman law of patriarchy can be identified in modern

households through hierarchical structures that continue the dominance of men and the oppression of women in the family unit.

Johnson (2005) adds that the oppression of women is the byproduct of a male-centered, male-identified, male-dominated familial and social structure:

Patriarchy encourages men to seek security, status, and other rewards through control; to fear other men's ability to control and harm them; and to identify being in control as both their best defense against loss and humiliation and the surest route to what they need and desire. In this sense, although we usually think of patriarchy in terms of women and men, it is more about what goes on among men. (p. 53)

According to Pateman, Lerner, and Johnson, patriarchy is a meso level force by which male dominance presides over female subordination and is manifested in familial, relational contexts.

Hegemony

Hegemony is the dominance wielded by one group over another (Connell, 1995; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Giroux, 1981; Gramsci, 1971). I present gender hegemony with a focus at a micro level specific to the actions, behaviors, and practices of individuals using Connell's (1987, 1995) theory of hegemonic masculinities.

Connell (1995) identifies attitudes, behaviors, and practices that perpetuate gender inequality that involve both men's domination over women and the power of some men over other men. Connell describes masculinity as not simply male attributes but a social position, a set of practices, and the effects of the collective embodiment of those practices (Schippers, 2007). Rather, masculinities "concern the position of men in a gender order. They can be defined as the patterns of practice by which people (both men and women, though predominantly men) engage that position" (Connell, n.d., para. 1). Messerschmidt (2019) agrees and connects hegemonic

masculinities and their influence at a micro level to individual behavior, arguing that “constructs of masculinity shape a sense of what is acceptable and unacceptable gendered behavior in specific situations” (p. 90). Jewkes and Morrell (2012) add that hegemonic masculinities “are a set of values and behaviors established by men that function to include and exclude and to organize society in gender unequal ways” (p. 40).

One of Connell’s major contributions is the idea that gender hegemony operates not just through the subordination of women to a male-oriented view of hegemonic masculinity, but also through the subordination and marginalization of other men and their perceived/exhibited masculinities. Masculinities influence people to demonstrate identifiable behaviors in accordance with and within a (fluid) hierarchy of masculine dominance. The demonstration of select behaviors by individuals at a micro level guarantee (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men through their portrayal of masculinity (Connell, 1995; Schippers, 2007). Connell’s hegemonic masculinities are configurations of social practices that shape what is acceptable and unacceptable behavior in specific situations and that in doing so perpetuate male dominance (Messerschmidt, 2019).

I have positioned gender as a social construct that dictates the rules, roles, and behaviors expected of women and men and described gender’s divisiveness in modern relationships, homes, and societies. In situating this PAR project within the frame of gender equity, next I detail the intersection of Brazilian culture and Western education through historical and contemporary lenses at school, classroom, and teacher levels, as depicted in Figure 5.

Brazilian Culture Meets Western Education

Culture is created and sustained by dominant ideologies and beliefs built upon historical events that affect the present. Educational systems, structures, and practices, as well as

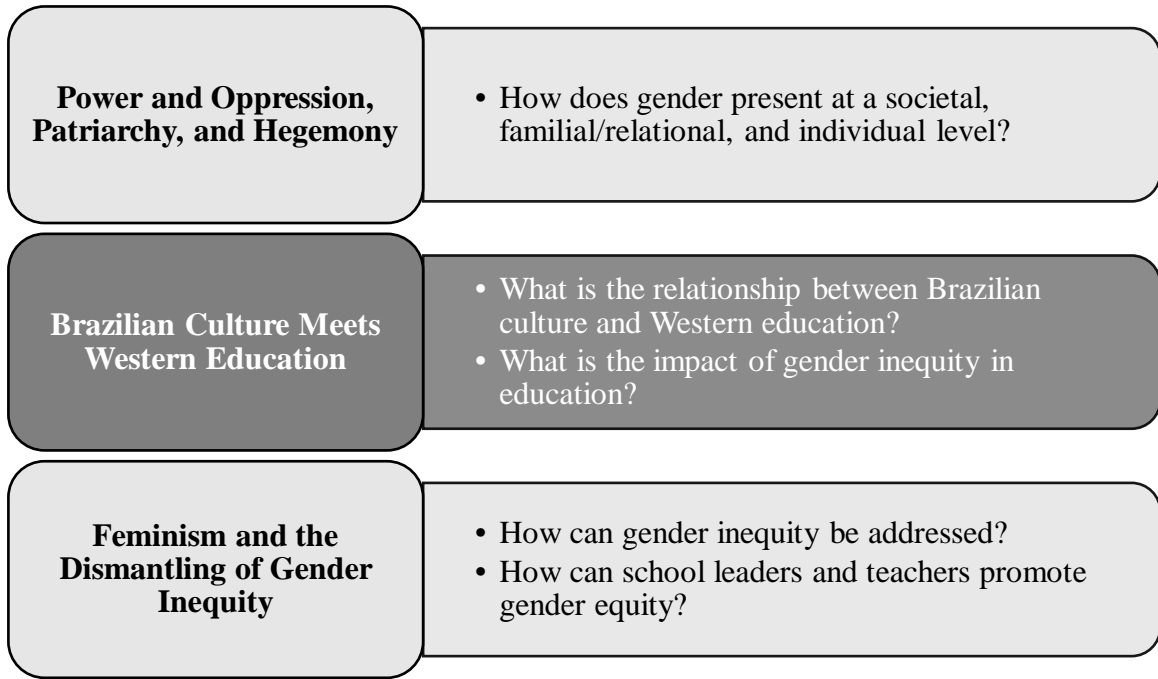


Figure 5. Section 2: Brazilian culture meets western education.

discourses around education, reflect and reinforce a culture's dominant ideologies and beliefs. As is the case in most Western societies, systemic oppressions are embedded within the structures of the education system, which uphold unequal power relations that privilege some and marginalize others (Roegman, 2017; Rusch & Horsford, 2009). As is shown in Figure 6, gender equity is the intersection between culture and education and the focus of this PAR project. Therefore, I offer in the next section a discussion of gender in the Brazilian context recognizing the influences of Brazilian culture and contemporary Western educational findings.

Political, Religious and Economic Framing of Gender in Brazil

Four cultural ideologies are salient to the issue of gender and gender equity in contemporary Brazil: (1) Portuguese colonization and indoctrination of hierarchical socio-political structures; (2) Catholic doctrine's perpetuation of patriarchal gender norms of *machismo* and *marianismo*; (3) post-dictatorship changes in civil liberty, justice, and equality laws and powerful associated social movements; (4) emergence of evangelical Christian socio-political lobbies and their influence on conservative national politics. Because of the deep tensions embedded among these competing ideologies in Brazil, gender and gender equity manifest in complex ways within modern Brazilian culture.

Officially known as the *República Federativa do Brasil*, Brazil is the fifth largest country in the world and the fifth most populous, occupying more than half of the South American continent and comprising one-third of Latin America's population (Momsen et al., 2021). A modern melting pot of peoples and cultures, Brazil's 210 million residents are predominantly of Portuguese heritage, stemming from the country's 300 years of colonization, with Italian, Spanish, German, and other European immigrants strongly represented since the late 19th century (O'Neil, 2021). Brazil is home to the largest Japanese population outside Japan due to

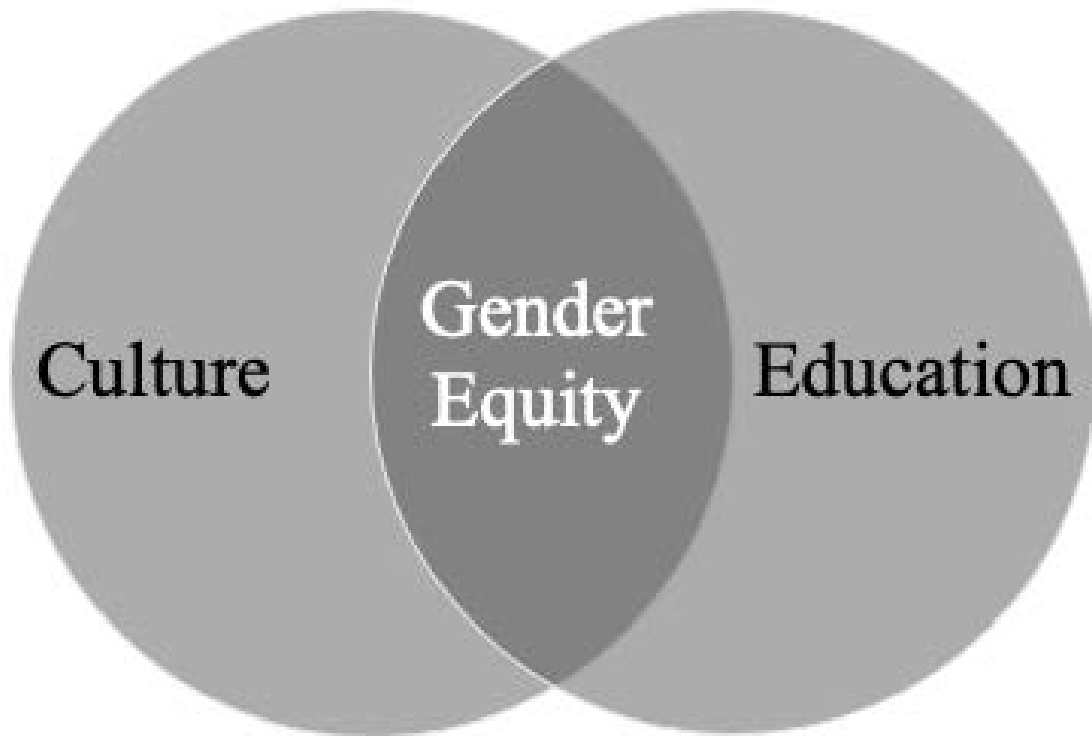


Figure 6. Gender equity occurs within the intersection between culture and education.

labor migration during the early 1900s. Black Africans, most of whose ancestors were forcefully introduced as slaves during the 1800s, represent approximately 9.1% of the population with Indigenous Indian cultures representing less than 1% (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics, 2018; Statista Research Department, 2022). According to the national census of 2021, 47% of Brazilians were *pardos*, meaning “brown-skinned”, a category used to designate people with a mixed ethnic ancestry, with 43% of the population identified as white (Statista Research Department, 2022).

Christianity was introduced in Brazil during colonization and remains the dominant religion at approximately 86% of the population, according to the most recent national census (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics, 2018). More than 65% of the population, 126 million Brazilians, identify as Roman Catholic, the largest number of Catholics of any country in the world (O’Neil, 2021; Pew Research Center, 2013).

Brazil’s colonial history was complex. Claimed by Portugal in 1500, battles ensued among the Portuguese, French, Dutch, and British armies in the struggle for outposts and territorial dominance. Independence from Portugal was achieved in 1822, and the República Federativa do Brasil was established. Over the past 200 years, the country has been led by elected presidents as well as by military dictators. After more than 2 decades of military dictatorship, a political period called the “New Republic” began in 1985 and continues into the present (Brandão & Cabral, 2019). Democracy in Brazil was reinstated in 1988, and a Citizen’s Constitution was drafted and ratified that contains a commitment to social, civil, and political rights for the people of Brazil (Brandão & Cabral, 2019). Today, the country’s constitution guarantees basic human rights to all Brazilians, including gender rights (Teixeira, 2019).

Despite its progressive equality laws, gender roles in Brazil reflect a traditional patriarchal society (Scroope, 2018; Velloso, 2017). Patriarchal norms introduced with Portuguese colonization and Catholicism persist within families and in Brazilian society (Meade, 2009). Men are associated with authority and strength, and women identified by weakness and subservience (Margolis et al., 2001; Santos & Hilal, 2018). According to Baldwin and De Souza (2001), the key to understanding Brazilian gender relations is the gendered concepts of *machismo* and *marianismo* (Diekman et al., 2005; Torres et al., 2002). “*Machismo* relates to male over female power, focusing on strength, sexuality, violence, and aggression whereas *marianismo* refers to female piety, sacrifice, and virtue” (Santos & Hilal, 2018, p. 489). *Machismo* and *marianismo* act as cultural scripts and reproduce traditional roles (Moreno, 2007). The social and cultural influences of patriarchy and *marianismo* and *machismo* mean that “Brazil has a persistent gender hierarchy that advantages men over women in material resources, power, status, and authority” (Lovell, 2000, p. 89) with men “typically in positions of power and control in public and private spheres” (Scroope, 2018, para. 4).

The Gender Inequality Index (GII), an aggregate intended to reflect gender-based inequalities in the dimensions of reproductive health, empowerment, and economic activity, placed Brazil at 95th out of 189 countries in 2020 (Bekhouche et al., 2013; Santos & Hilal, 2018; United Nations Development Programme, 2020). The GII 2020 revealed that only 15% of parliamentary seats in Brazil were held by women, far short of the worldwide average of 25.5%, ranking Brazil 142nd among 188 countries on this metric (Inter-parliamentary Union, 2021). Women’s participation in the labor market was 54.2%, compared to 74.1% for men in 2019 (United Nations Development Programme, 2020). Conversely, 61.6% of adult women reached at least a secondary level of education compared to 58.3% of their male counterparts (United

Nations Development Programme, 2020), a trend that continues into post-secondary education with women in Brazil earning more advanced degrees than men (Costa & Beck, 2017).

Brazilian men continue to earn more than women with an estimated gross annual income per capita in 2019 for women being (Brazilian real) R\$10,535 (US\$1,956) compared to R\$18,574 (US\$3,450) for men (United Nations Development Programme, 2020). Thus, though they are investing more in their career path, women still earn less than men in Brazil (Albuquerque, 2017). In addition to the gender pay gap, Brazilian women shoulder the majority of household domestic and care work contributing 18.1 hours per week compared to men's 10.5 hours (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics, 2018).

Brazil's transition to democracy brought heightened awareness of the need for a greater balance of gender representation and equity, which enabled women to engage politically. As a result, women have become more visible in Brazilian politics and social movements. Feminist activists have achieved significant legal reforms in areas such as family leave, labor legislation, and legal recognition of the equality of the sexes. Yet, these reforms have not erased the widespread gender stratification of Brazilian society (Lovell, 2000). "Violent protests, conservative reactions, and nonconformity among various social segments in the country, mainly from religious sectors and wealthier classes" have resulted (Brandão & Cabral, 2019, p. 77). Growing support for Christian evangelical groups and conservative right-wing political agendas pose challenges to gender equality and the rights of women in Brazil.

Religious conservatism has advanced in Brazilian politics through the increasing number of fundamentalist and neo-Pentecostal evangelicals throughout the country (Zanatta et al., 2016). The conservative Christian movement has fueled religious activism that seeks to rescue traditional family values based on Christian dogma (Brandão & Cabral, 2019; Junqueira, 2017;

Teixeira, 2019). Despite the wide range of civil movements and laws consolidated over the past 20 years, support for right-wing federal policies culminated in the election of Jair Messias Bolsonaro as president in October 2018 (Brandão & Cabral, 2019). The surge of conservative morality in the political sphere has led to the continuous dismantling of civil rights and equality laws. With Brazil's state and culture currently divided, not only has the country's gender equality agenda been suppressed by conservative politicians, access to and promotion of liberal education has been narrowed.

These socio-cultural and political influences have affected Brazilian education and partially restored a heteronormative paradigm critical of gender equality and diversity (Schwarcz, 2019). Bolsonaro's then Ministry of Education discouraged philosophy and sociology courses as well as gender research (Teixeira, 2019). Religious and political groups leveraged the rhetoric of recovering family values and protecting innocent children to eliminate gender discussions in the national curriculum, including the punishment of teachers who disobey their ideas (Teixeira, 2019). Progress towards gender equality for all Brazilians has eroded (Zanatta et al., 2016). Furthermore, "The anti-gender rhetoric seeks to nullify the critical and emancipatory potential of feminism and gender studies, promoting an ultraconservative, antifeminist and antagonistic agenda to democracy and to human rights" (Brandão & Cabral, 2019, p. 77).

Next, I discuss the Western educational structures and policies that uphold the dominant ideologies and beliefs of culture. I highlight systemic oppressions and unequal power relations that lead to situations of gender inequity.

Gender and Western Education

I offer an overview of gender in the context of Western education alongside and within the established socio-political and cultural backdrop of modern Brazil. First, I share a discussion of male and female educational achievement utilizing the empirical contributions of scholars Claudia Buchmann and Thomas DiPrete (Buchmann & DiPrete, 2006; Buchmann et al., 2008; DiPrete & Buchmann 2006, 2013). I reveal post-education and vocation trends by gender, along with the compounding influence of religion as a prominent contextual factor for this PAR project. Finally, through the expansive research of Sadker and Sadker (1975, 1986, 1994), Sadker et al. (1991), and Sadker (2000), I explore gender equity at the school, classroom, and teacher levels.

Gender, Education, and Achievement

Not long ago, women lagged considerably behind men in their educational achievement (DiPrete & Buchmann, 2013). From the end of the 19th century until the 1960s, the educational disadvantages of women were central to debates about gender because girls attained lower educational levels within a male-dominated system up through tertiary education (Hadjar et al., 2014). According to Buchmann and DiPrete (2006), underperformance and underrepresentation of women in education resulted from the relationship between investment (financial and time) and return (access to involvement in the labor market). Until the 1960s, the traditional pattern of lower educational participation of women in industrialized countries was due to a strong societal expectation that they would remain tied to the domestic sphere and not enter the labor market. The women's liberation and gender equality movements, along with the heightened cost of living and stronger demand for labor in service professions, increased educational returns for women and their families (Hadjar et al., 2014). The increase in educational returns led to higher

participation rates of women particularly in upper secondary schooling and higher education (Buchmann & DiPrete 2006; Buchmann et al., 2008; DiPrete & Buchmann 2006).

Since the 1960s, women's educational attainment has improved significantly compared to men's in Brazil, the United States, and almost all Western industrialized societies (Buchmann & DiPrete, 2006; Buchmann et al., 2008; DiPrete & Buchmann, 2013; Hadjar & Berger 2011; Hadjar et al., 2014; Hannum & Buchmann 2005; van Hek et al., 2016). In most industrialized Western countries, van Hek et al. (2016) found, "the female advantage in education has grown to such a degree that researchers and policymakers are increasingly worried about the large and growing number of boys underperforming in education" (p. 274).

The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) (OECD, 2020) reports greater variances in boys' and girls' achievements than those found by DiPrete and Buchmann (2013) and van Hek et al. (2016). The OECD's (2020) PISA international assessment research: has consistently found that girls outperform boys in reading and, to a lesser extent, that boys outperform girls in mathematics, on average across all participating countries and economies. Gender disparities in achievement are a matter of considerable concern, as they may have long-term consequences for girls' and boys' personal and professional future. Those boys who lag behind and lack basic proficiency in reading may face serious difficulties in their further education, in the labor market, and in everyday life. Equally, the under-representation of girls amongst top performers in science and mathematics can at least partly explain the persistent gender gap in careers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields—which are often amongst the highest-paying occupations. (p. 142)

Women have made “substantial gains in all realms of education and now generally outperform men on several key educational benchmarks” (DiPrete & Buchmann, 2013, p. 1). Further, the superior performance of girls in language is greater than that of boys in mathematics (Hadjar et al., 2014; Parker et al, 2018). In many countries, opportunities for women’s transition and successful completion of upper secondary education have increased. Similarly, women’s tertiary level enrollment and completion have increased now exceeding those of men (Buchmann et al., 2008; Buchmann & DiPrete, 2006; Clark et al., 2008; DiPrete & Buchmann, 2013; Hadjar & Berger, 2011; Hannum & Buchmann 2005; Jackman & Morrrain-Webb, 2019; Parker et al., 2018; van Hek et al., 2016).

Gender and Post-Education Opportunities

Despite compelling evidence from Western societies that women now outperform men in their educational achievement, this educational advantage does not translate into a similar position on the labor market (Schwab et al., 2017). After completing secondary education, women remain disadvantaged in relation to men and lag behind in wages and career development (Charles, 2011; van Hek et al., 2016). Hadjar et al. (2014) described the phenomenon of the “leaky pipeline” of the progression of women in leadership and professional positions, noting that “with every step in the [professional] hierarchy, the overrepresentation of men increases—with only a small percentage of women at the highest level[s]” (p. 118). Converting educational credentials into matching labor market outcomes, addressing the comparative lack of women in business and leadership positions, and fostering gender-equitable communities and workplaces remain challenges for women worldwide (Baily & Holmarsdottir, 2015; van Hek et al., 2016).

Gender plays a decisive role in the vocation, type of work, and educational outcomes of men and women. According to Baily and Holmarsdottir (2015), “gendered delineations in

education are guided by forces that exist outside of education” (p. 841). Hadjar et al. (2014) reveal prominent patterns in choice of study and vocation by men and women and note the relation between these patterns and socialized gender stereotypes. “Gender still reinforce[s] workforce separation in terms of women more often becoming nurses, teachers, or engaging in other service professions, and men being more likely to choose professions that are characterized by higher authority, prestige and status” (p. 119).

Perceived gender roles, choice of vocation, and men and women’s contributions to the workforce are reinforced by religiosity. In their empirical research, Van Heck et al. (2016) investigated the gender gap in education and the effect of religiosity on women’s education and post-education outcomes. They found that a high degree of religiosity correlated to decreased educational attainment for men and women and noted that traditional gender norms in Brazilian religious communities limited women’s educational and vocational opportunities.

Gender, Schools, and Classrooms

Baily and Holmarsdottir (2015) assert that education must be assessed in terms of quality of educational provision for boys and girls:

The benchmarking of certain milestones that are calculated through parity might provide an illustration of equitable opportunity[; however,] gender equality in education means going beyond parity to include, for example, appropriate learning opportunities, fair treatment in schools, and equal employment opportunities, all of which link to issues of equity [and] oftentimes girls get ‘less than’ in these areas. (pp. 829-830)

Sadker and Sadker’s (1994) *Failing at Fairness: How America’s Schools Cheat Girls* draws on more than 20 years of educational research examining the impact of gender in classrooms and schools and reveals that neither girls nor boys receive their educational due with

girls systematically denied opportunities in areas where boys are encouraged to excel, often at the hands of well-meaning teachers unaware of the impact of their practices. They summarize gender injustices in the classroom:

Sitting in the same classroom, reading the same textbook, listening to the same teacher, boys and girls receive very different educations. From grade school through graduate school, female students are more likely to be invisible members of classrooms. Teachers interact with males more frequently, ask them better questions, and give them more precise and helpful feedback. Over the course of years, the uneven distribution of teacher time, energy, attention, and talent, with boys getting the lion's share, takes its toll on girls. Since gender bias is not a noisy problem, most people are unaware of the secret sexist lessons and the quiet losses they engender. (Sadker & Sadker, 1994, p. 1)

Bailey and Holmarsdottir (2015) promote the revision of traditional systems within schools as paramount to progress towards gender equity for boys and girls. Similarly, Unterhalter (2012) underlines the need to “draw out the interconnections of relationships associated with power” and to “explore how schools and processes of learning operate both to reproduce and to transform [gender] inequalities” (p. 67). In this work, Unterhalter highlights three power and structural consistencies that emerge in schools and perpetuate gender inequity: “(i) the curriculum is gendered, (ii) assumptions are made about what kinds of knowledge are appropriate for girls and boys, and (iii) there are subjects defined as being either those which girls are ‘good’ at or those which they are not.”

Viewing Unterhalter’s framework through Sadker and Sadker’s (1994) foundational findings helps to illustrate the power structures within schools and classrooms that enable gender inequity as shown in Figure 7 and discussed hereafter.

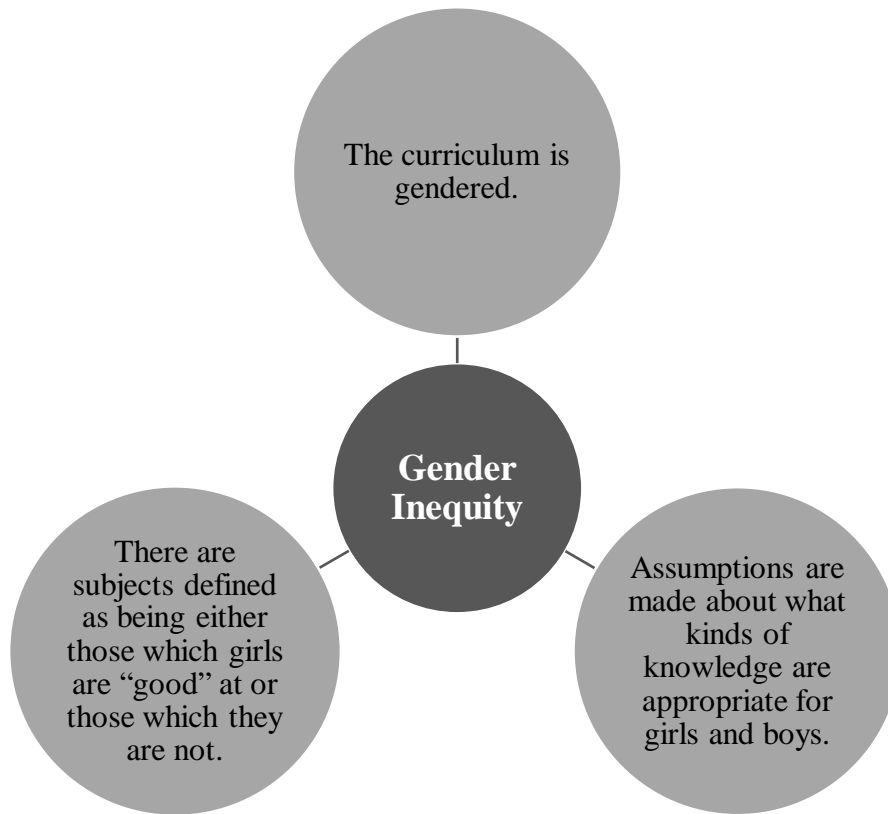


Figure 7. Unterhalter (2012) highlights three power and structural consistencies that emerge in schools and perpetuate gender inequality.

The Curriculum is Gendered. School curriculums continue to perpetuate male dominance and gender inequality (Sadker & Sadker, 1994; Sadker et al., 1991). The authors of *Lifting Limits* (2021) argue that:

men have historically dominated many fields, and this is reflected in who is taught across curriculum subjects. Even where schools do make efforts to include notable women in given fields, taken as a whole—across subjects and across year groups—men (and predominantly white men) still dominate, sending powerful messages to children. (para. 2).

The impact when women are left out, according to Sadker and Sadker (1994), is that children fill in gaps with stereotypes and distortions. The result is “a twisted view of half of the people and their history” (Kindle location 1362, para. 1). The portrayals of men and women in school learning materials lead to distorted attitudes, beliefs, and gender-role identities among students (Frawley, 2005; Moser et al., 2013; Zittleman & Sadker, 2002) because the unbalanced portrayals of women “influence girls to expect less of themselves and their ability to be a valuable member in the classroom” (Bauer, 2000, p. 23).

Sadker and Sadker (1994) revealed two major areas of gender inequality in school curriculum: the imbalanced representations of men and women in course materials and the relative absence of women and their contributions in history texts?

Learning materials, including, inter alia, textbooks, basal readers, literature, and computer software, continue to portray stereotyped gender-role behaviors, emotions, and occupations in schools and classrooms worldwide (Bauer, 2000; Finsterwald & Ziegler, 2007; Frawley, 2005; Kollmayer et al., 2018; Sadker & Sadker, 1994; Sadker et al., 1991). Bauer (2000) reported that women are frequently portrayed in learning materials as needy while men are shown as helpful.

In textbook and storybook pictures, men appear more often, and women, if included, typically maintain supportive, spectator roles rather than as leaders and active participants. Finsterwald and Ziegler (2007) analyzed textbooks depicting more than 800 people and found that men are represented more frequently in workplaces while women are shown in family/household contexts. In addition, male characters are individualistic, competitive, and more willing to take risks; girls are depicted as more submissive than boys. Sadker et al. (1991) posited that despite increasing awareness of gender inequalities in textbooks, learning materials in schools and classrooms remain representative of stereotypical gender roles.

The lack of attention to and misrepresentation of the historical importance of women in school learning materials also serve to perpetuate gender inequality in classrooms and beyond (Sadker & Sadker, 1994). Unlike Anglo-American men whose impact dominates student learning, female historical figures are scarcely referred to; when mention of females does occur, the discussion is limited to a select few individuals during specified lessons (Bauer, 2000; Sadker & Sadker, 1994). Sadker and Sadker (1994) offered an example of the predominance of male influence and the marginalization of women's contributions on the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT):

While many SAT questions do not include people, those that do are more likely to represent the male world. For example, a recent group of SAT reading comprehension questions mentioned forty-two men but only three women. One of the three was anthropologist Margaret Mead whose research was criticized throughout the passage.

(Kindle location 2733, para. 2)

Assumptions About What Knowledge Is Appropriate for Girls and for Boys.

According to the Council of Europe (2015), schools are a subsystem of our societies and reflect

social values: “Gender differentiation continues to be a key principle in shaping the practices and curricula of schools” (p. 8). In this way, boys are educated and groomed for public life through roles of higher authority, prestige, and status while girls are educated to be the carers in society and encouraged to engage in service professions (Council of Europe, 2015; Hadjar et al., 2014). Heller et al. (2010) examined beliefs about gender-specific aptitudes in schools and found that girls are more often encouraged to pursue careers in education, medicine, or languages while boys are advised to study mathematics, engineering, or technological subjects. Gender-stereotyped beliefs at a school level about students’ qualifications have a strong impact on students’ self-concepts, motivation, and future paths (Heller et al., 2010; Kollmayer et al., 2018).

Subjects Girls Are “Good” at Versus Those They Are Not. Despite scientific consensus that girls and boys have similar levels of academic aptitude (DiPrete & Buchmann, 2013; Sadker & Sadker, 1994), “the perception that subjects can be categorized into ‘boys’ subjects and ‘girls’ subjects prevails” (Council of Europe, 2015, p. 8). Traditional gender stereotypes and norms influence students' perceptions of their and others’ abilities. Subjects associated with science, mathematics, and technology are typically perceived as difficult, requiring a higher degree of intelligence, and therefore more suited for men than women (Council of Europe, 2015). Schober and Finsterwald (2016) surveyed 244 students about their understanding of girls’ and boys’ success in mathematics. Participants attributed the success of girls in mathematics primarily to effort and failure to a lack of talent. For boys, the opposite attribution pattern was observed: participants associated success primarily to talent and failure to a lack of effort (Kollmayer et al., 2018; Schober & Finsterwald, 2016). School personnel either consciously or unconsciously perpetuate these stereotypes when advising and interacting with

students and through curricula and learning materials (Council of Europe, 2015; Sadker & Sadker, 1994).

Unterhalter's (2012) framework, as shown in Figure 7, illustrates the power structures within schools and classrooms that enable gender inequity: "(i) the curriculum is gendered, (ii) assumptions are made about what kinds of knowledge are appropriate for girls and boys, and (iii) there are subjects defined as being either those which girls are 'good' at or those which they are not" (p. 67). The socialization patterns of girls and boys in schools often lead to distorted perceptions of gender from an early age (Byrnes & Kiger, 1992; Marshall & Reinhartz, 1997; Sadker & Sadker, 1994), thus maintaining the systems and structures that remain the foundation for gender inequitable schools and classrooms.

Gender and Teachers

The harmful effects of gender bias and differential treatment on children's self-esteem and academic achievement have been a focus for researchers for the past 30 years with girls emerging as the comparative losers (Bauer, 2000; Marshall & Reinhartz, 1997; Sadker, 2000; Sadker & Sadker, 1994; Sadker & Zittleman, 2009). Grossman and Grossman (1994) showed that while a teacher's gender alone has little impact on student learning, the instructional style and its compatibility with students' learning style is important for educational achievement. According to Grossman and Grossman (1994), there is little evidence that girls learn more in classes taught by female teachers. Similarly, Hadjar et al. (2014) note that "on the individual level, the gender of the teacher has been shown not to influence boys' educational success" (p. 120). What has been established is that student achievement is related to whether the teacher's instructional style, regardless of gender, matches that of the student's learning style (Marshall & Reinhartz, 1997).

In a comparative study of teachers' teaching strategies, Grossman and Grossman (1994) found that "male teachers tend to be more direct with students, more subject-centered, and more inclined to use a lecture mode of instruction" (p. 334). Further, male teachers tend also to be "more dominant and authoritarian and conduct their classrooms with greater teacher control and organization" (Grossman & Grossman, 1994, p. 334). By contrast, female teachers often favor a more indirect, student-centered approach and strive to create warmer instructional environments where students ask more questions and take more risks (Durkin, 1987; Grossman & Grossman, 1994; Marshall & Reinhartz, 1997).

Frawley (2005) noted that "boys receive more teacher consideration, acclamation, and constructive feedback than girls do. They are called on by name more often and are asked more complex and abstract questions than girls are" (Frawley, 2005, p. 224). Teachers afford boys greater opportunities to expand their ideas than girls (Marshall & Reinhartz, 1997). As a result, boys tend to control the conversations in the classroom, ask more questions, and receive more praise and correction for their mistakes (Bauer, 2000). Teachers facilitate male dominance in the classroom when they make boys the focus of instruction and give them more frequent and more meticulous attention (Sadker, 2000). Ultimately, boys receive more precise attention (positive as well as negative), thereby enhancing their performance (Frawley, 2005; Sadker, 2000; Sadker & Sadker, 1994).

Girls are more often forgotten within the classroom environment (Sadker, 2000; Sadker & Sadker, 1994). Whether to verbally reprimand, answer questions, elaborate on comments, or help with schoolwork, teachers typically interact less with girls (Bauer, 2000; Frawley, 2005). Girls tend to receive less precise and/or helpful feedback to assist them in grasping the subject matter and often receive less wait time for arriving at correct answers (Sadker & Sadker, 1994).

In addition, girls receive subtle indicators that they are unable to think critically on their own, often receiving premature help and/or less intense feedback and elaboration on certain topics (Bauer, 2000; Sadker, 2000; Sadker & Sadker, 1994; Sadker & Zittleman, 2009). Finally, teachers also tend to assume that girls cannot tolerate constructive criticism; therefore, girls are more often praised for effort while boys are recognized for their ability (Kollmayer et al., 2018).

Teacher gender bias directly impacts student self-esteem and academic achievement, creating an invisible and destructive barrier to equal opportunity for boys and girls (Bauer, 2000; Carlana, 2019; Frawley, 2005; Sadker & Sadker, 1994). Gender bias occurs when one's perception and beliefs about gender interfere with impartiality and/or impair group members' performance (Carlana, 2019). Teachers' perception of gender differences influences how they treat and interact with students (Frawley, 2005; Sadker & Sadker, 1994). Gender biases held by teachers have far-reaching consequences for boys and girls (Hadjar et al., 2014). Sadker and Sadker (1994), Marshall and Reinhartz (1997), and Hand et al. (2017) all independently reported that gender bias in classrooms and teacher practices is so subtle that teachers are often unaware it exists.

How teachers engage and interact with children and teachers' expectations of them has a profound effect on students' self-confidence and achievements (Council of Europe, 2015). In a review, Marshall and Reinhartz (1997) maintain that "teachers' personal communication with and informal instruction of students—often referred to as the "hidden curriculum"—have a major impact on the achievement and future success of both girls and boys" (p. 333). The hidden curriculum is inclusive of all formal and informal interactions with students and refers to the subtle, daily lessons encountered through teachers' behaviors, feedback, classroom practices, and instructional materials (Council of Europe, 2015; Frawley, 2005). Manifestations of teachers'

conscious and subconscious biases convey powerful messages that influence children's self-esteem, contribute to the perpetuation of gender stereotyping and gendered self-perception, and limit children's ambitions and accomplishments (Carlana, 2019; Council of Europe, 2015; Frawley, 2005; Sadker & Sadker, 1994; Sanders, 2003).

According to theories of social psychology, the development of self-esteem and academic self-concept begins in childhood and is strongly influenced by stereotypes communicated by teachers (Carlana, 2019; Ertl et al., 2017). When messages received from teachers are biased by gender stereotypes, students can develop self-assessments of their abilities and worth based on the biases. Frawley (2005) argues that "girls experience school in qualitatively different ways than boys do" (p. 221). Bauer (2000) found:

[B]ecause males tend to be the active participants in the classrooms and in the playgrounds, they also tend to have more confidence in themselves and their abilities. Having these needs met and being perceived as the dominants in the classroom increase boys' self-esteem while decreasing the self-esteem of the girls who are considered the subordinates. (p. 24)

The importance of self-esteem is shared by Sadker and Sadker (1994) who state that self-esteem "is not only a vital sign of mental health, it is also a connection to academic achievement and a direct link to career goals and hopes for the future" (p. 77). They further posit that the imbalance in teacher attention, coupled with the quality and quantity of interaction, results in the lowering of girls' levels of achievement and self-esteem.

Implicit or explicit teacher gender bias can lead a student to invest less in an area of study as well as lower investment in the student on the part of the teacher. Carlana (2019) found that "teachers' erroneous expectations lead to a self-fulfilling prophecy whereby prior beliefs are self-

confirming in equilibrium: biased teachers set a lower bar for the learning of students from stigmatized groups or fail to encourage them to fulfill their potential” (p. 1,165). Carlana (2019) provides an example:

Teachers are likely to believe mathematics is more difficult for girls than for equally achieving boys, and they implicitly convey their stereotyping through their classroom instruction. By the end of middle school, girls are more likely to consider themselves bad at mathematics if they are assigned to a teacher with stronger gender stereotypes, even controlling for their ability measured by standardized test scores. (pp. 1,165)

Next, through contemporary literature, I present strategies for dismantling the inequities in schools and classrooms brought about by cultural and institutional constructs of gender.

Feminism and the Dismantling of Gender Inequity

Feminism and feminist praxis offer opportunities to dismantle established inequities perpetuated by cultural and institutional constructs of gender in schools and classrooms (Figure 8). Figure 9 shows the tenets of gender previously established in this review: power and oppression, patriarchy, and hegemony at societal, relational, and individual levels and the gender forces promoted within this section to dismantle inequity at the school and classroom level. First, I explore feminism as a socio-political movement committed to equity for women and men. Then, I examine gender equity and feminism in the context of contemporary Western and Brazilian schools, highlighting persistent structures of power and oppression specific to this PAR project. Finally, I consider feminist praxis at school leadership and teacher levels in response to gendered constructs of patriarchy and hegemony in school and classroom settings.

Feminism

Feminism is the social and political movement that advocates for equity for women and

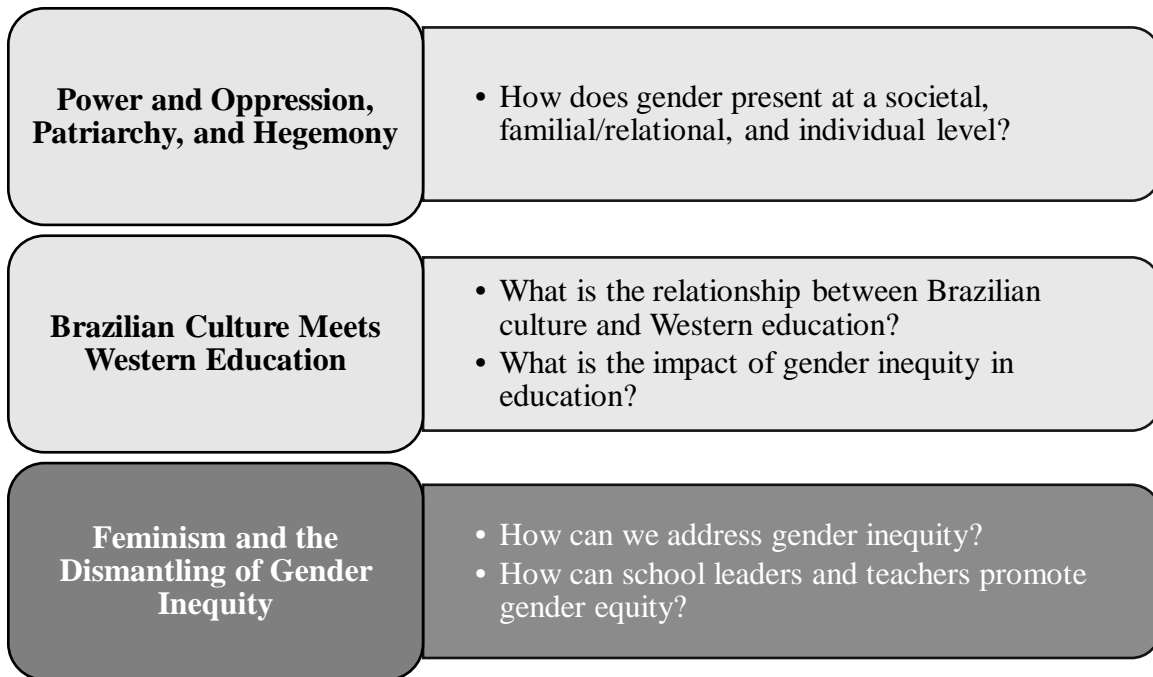


Figure 8. Section three: Feminism and the dismantling of gender inequality.

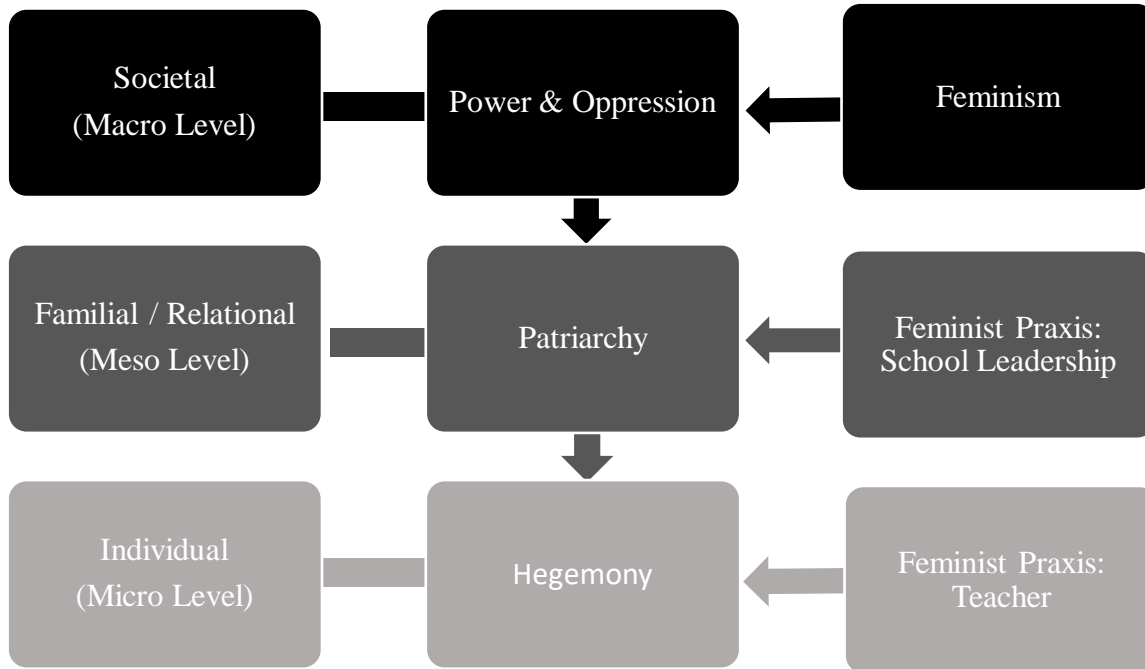


Figure 9. Gender and the dismantling of inequity at the school and classroom level.

men. Derived from the French term *feminisme* (Launius & Hassel, 2018), feminism as a socio-political movement became well-known in most Western societies in the 1960s. Prominent feminist writer and historian Estelle Freedman (2002) defines feminism as “a belief that women and men are inherently of equal worth” (p. 7). Both Freedman and distinguished feminist and social activist bell hooks acknowledge the historic power and privilege of men as a group over women; Hooks (1984) adds that “feminism is the struggle to end sexist oppression” (p. 26). Both authors recognize gender as a social hierarchy (Freedman, 2002; Hooks, 1984); Hooks (1984) posits that feminism is the “necessary struggle to eradicate the ideology of domination” (p. 24) as well as a commitment to reorganizing society “to eradicate the underlying cultural basis and causes of sexism and oppression” (p. 31). Feminism is therefore a social-political movement to counteract the limitations, injustices, and inequities maintained at a societal (macro) level through gendered power and oppression.

Crawley et al. (2008) emphasize that feminism is a way of looking at the world and at one’s self:

[F]eminism is also an epistemological shift away from a history of androcentric bias in the sciences, social sciences, and humanities. As such, it is not just an ‘area study’ (again, not just about ‘women’) but something much deeper: a way of orienting to academic work that is attuned to power relations, both within the academy and within knowledge construction itself. (p. 2)

Today, feminist reforms aimed at gender equity and justice in education in Brazil and throughout the West co-exist with forms of anti-feminism and popular misogyny (Gill, 2016). While powerful contemporary feminist movements have made visible inroads towards gender equity and justice, they continue to be undermined by virulent forms of reactionary, anti-feminist

politics. An example of a feminist movement and a contrary anti-feminist reaction on an international scale has been the #MeToo movement addressing gendered abuse towards women. According to Keddie (2019), anti-feminist politics have generated counter-movements such as #HimToo that reflect concerns for boys and men as victims for being held to account sexual misconduct perpetrated in their youth. Backlash politics against feminism reflects a zero-sum game for all where gender as a social construct is maintained along with the imbalance of power between men and women (Keddie, 2019).

As schools reflect the social constructs that molded them, they too can fall prey to societal gender politics, including anti-feminist movements and subsequent backlashes. From the mid-1990s, a “What about the boys?” countermovement permeated gender debates in schools, positioning boys as victims of feminism and “girl-friendly” schooling. According to Francis and Skelton (2005), anti-feminist movements in schools produce competing victims and zero-sum results that obscure gendered realities and reinstate masculine hegemony and entitlement.

Keddie (2019) generated empirical data drawn from the experiences of 16 students at an elite independent school in the USA and found that “discourses of masculine entitlement permeate the landscape of [private] schools and contribute to the consolidation of an upper class that is fundamentally Anglo-Saxon and patriarchal” (p. 522). Further, these discourses:

are associated with many boys and teachers trivializing girls and femininity, dismissing or displaying contempt for feminism, and stigmatizing girls for expressing feminist views or behaving in ways that deviate from traditional femininity. While all boys certainly do not subscribe to these behaviors and views, they are all subject to the pressures arising from the discourses of masculine entitlement circulating in their lives that powerfully speak them into existence. (p. 522)

Amid the polarity and tumult of Brazilian and greater Western gender politics, the equality of women and men and girls and boys remains crucial to support gender justice and equity from a societal view and within schools. As the antithesis of gender domination that creates inequalities, feminism seeks to dismantle the underlying causes of sexism, imbalances of power, and oppression that create differential opportunities for women and men (Freedman, 2002; Hooks, 1984; Launius & Hassel, 2018). Therefore, feminist praxis at school leadership and teacher levels offers a possible response to gendered power and oppression, the influence of patriarchy, and hegemonic masculinity in school settings.

Feminist Praxis: School Leadership

Praxis was succinctly and famously defined by Freire (2018) as “reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it” (p. 51). Launius and Hassel (2018) shape praxis as “the intersection of theory and practice, involving a visible and deliberate set of actions informed by theory, by research, and by evidence” (p. 237). Addressing praxis through the lens of feminism, Berger and Radloff (2011) define feminist praxis as the “integration of learning with social justice [and] applying one’s knowledge to challenge oppressive systems and unequal traditions” (p. 44). Characteristic of feminist praxis is the recognition and positioning of self, followed by the implementation of informed action to disrupt systems of oppression.

Drawing on the work of Fonow and Cook (1991), Crawley et al. (2008) describe feminist praxis as a combination of epistemology, pedagogy, and activism. Launius and Hassel (2018) argue that the “feminist stance,” an orientation for educators and educational leaders that captures the pillars of feminist praxis:

- stresses the importance of locating oneself within structures of privilege and oppression;

- analyzes how systems of privilege and oppression operate in a number of contexts (for example, in one's personal life and relationships, in experiences of one's body, in societal institutions);
- prioritizes generating visions for social change and identifying strategies for bringing about that change (p. 193).

When applied to school leadership, one of the main goals of feminist praxis, according to Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2006), is to support social justice and transformation and to redress the many inequities and social injustices that continue to destroy the opportunities and lives of girls and boys. Similarly, feminist educator praxis raises one's own as well as students' awareness and consciousness of power and oppression (Launius & Hassel, 2018).

Fonow and Cook (1991) in their research on feminist pedagogical scholarship and leadership describe four themes applicable to and representative of feminist praxis in school leadership: (1) reflexivity, (2) action orientation, (3) attention to affect, and (4) use of the situation at hand (p. 2). Not intended as discrete steps or mutually exclusive components, these themes are seen more as touchstones, ethical principles for guiding the fluid process of feminist leadership that address, question, and dismantle cultural and relational constructs of gender (Crawley et al., 2008; Fonow & Cook, 1991).

Fonow and Cook's (1991) first theme of feminist leadership is reflexivity. Reflexivity refers to the feminist leader's epistemological examination and exploration to gain insight into one's underlying assumptions about situations of power, oppression, and gender relations. An epistemological approach to feminist praxis reveals "the role of reflexivity as a source of insight" (Fonow & Cook, 1991, p. 2).

Fonow and Cook (1991) also emphasize action orientation as key to feminist leadership, the idea that feminist leaders should focus on positive social change and social justice (Crawley et al., 2008). Hence, feminist praxis and leadership must have an underlying intention toward social action. Fonow and Cook describe feminist leaders as those who strive for justice in knowledge construction, teaching, policy, and political action (Crawley et al., 2008).

In their third theme of feminist leadership, attention to affect, Fonow and Cook (1991) encourage the feminist leader to refuse to “ignore the emotional dimensions” of one’s being (p. 9). They maintain that this aspect “involves not only acknowledgment of the affective dimension [of leadership], but also recognition that emotions serve as a source of insight or a signal of rupture in social reality” (Fonow & Cook, 1991, p. 9). Similarly, Crawley et al. (2008) recognize the need for leaders to be “conscious of the relationship between the rational and emotional in the human experience.” Feminist praxis, instead of prioritizing the rational, “translates [this] false dualism into a dialectic that informs” feminist leadership (p. 6).

Finally, in Fonow and Cook’s fourth theme of feminist leadership, “use of the situation at hand,” they encourage leaders to be present in their immediate realities and focus on defining and rectifying local issues, themes, and situations. Crawley et al. (2008) concur, saying that “feminist work begins with a concern for everyday life” (p. 7) of one’s own world, community, or local area. Making authentic points of connection between the role of the leader and our everyday lives maintains a connection to the immediate environment, the relationships, structures, and people that can lead to meaningful, sustainable change that upholds a commitment to equity and justice.

Feminist Praxis: Teachers

Sadker and Sadker's extensive body of work highlighting gender inequity in schools offers frameworks that remain relevant some 40 years later. In one of their first studies, they criticized teacher preparation programs for failing to prepare teachers to counteract sexism in American schools. They concluded that "sexist practices in classrooms across the country limit the potential of boys and severely inhibit the potential of girls" and that "teacher education programs do little or nothing to prepare teachers who are able to reduce sexism in schools" (Sadker & Sadker, 1975, p. 57). Drawing on foundational research on the effects of sexism in classrooms (Frazier & Sadker, 1973), Sadker and Sadker (1975) outlined a "competency-based teacher education program sensitive to the need of providing equal and full opportunity to both boys and girls" (p. 60).

In light of contemporary research on the continued disparity in experience, achievement, and educational outcomes for girls and boys, the four tiers of teacher competencies offered by Sadker and Sadker (1975) remain highly relevant and consistent with a feminist praxis stance in combatting gender hegemony: (1) awareness, (2) clarification, (3) classroom behaviors, (4) professional and societal behaviors (pp. 60-61). Sadker and Sadker's tiers of teacher competency will be outlined here in relation to school teachers, feminist praxis, gender equity, and hegemony.

The first tier of teacher competency Sadker and Sadker promote to disrupt sexism is *awareness*. Sadker and Sadker suggest some sample competencies for the awareness tier that include the investigation of societal and school practices, policies, and programs that discriminate based on gender. They emphasize the need to recognize gender stereotyping and bias in various aspects of school life inclusive of but not limited to: (a) curricular materials, (b)

segregated activities and courses, (c) school staffing, (d) teacher student interaction patterns, and (e) peer interaction patterns. The awareness tier is ultimately “designed to provide teachers with an insight into the forms and results of sexism in school and society” (Sadker & Sadkery, 1975, p. 60) and to heighten understanding and awareness of the impact of these occurrences on student self-esteem, achievement, and career aspirations of girls and boys.

The next level of Sadker and Sadker’s (1975) competency hierarchy, *clarification*, entails the analysis of sexist practices and attitudes. This analysis occurs at two levels, one’s own attitudes and actions and societal and school attitudes and practices. They explain that “it is through this kind of analysis and clarification that teachers can begin to make personal commitments concerning the eradication of sexism” (Sadker & Sadker, 1975, p. 60).

Clarification as a teacher competency is consistent with feminist praxis of leaders as described by Fonow and Cook (1991) through the epistemological view of reflexivity.

The third sequential tier in Sadker and Sadker’s (1975) framework, *classroom behaviors*, involves translating this knowledge to teacher attitudes and behavior, thereby directly aligning with the aims of feminist praxis. Their outline of competencies is directed at developing teacher classroom behaviors that combat and disrupt gender inequity. This is inclusive of, but not limited to, employing strategies to broaden the scope of experiences in the classroom beyond stereotypical male and female roles and seizing opportunities to address gender stereotypes that limit an equitable learning environment for girls and boys.

Finally, Sadker and Sadker’s (1975) fourth tier of feminist teacher competency, *professional and societal behaviors*, involves understanding and embracing teachers’ influence at a classroom, school, community, and societal level. They pose that a teacher’s role in a classroom is a microcosm of the teacher’s role as citizen in a community. Sadker and Sadker go

on to suggest that competencies beyond the classroom might also be a part of teacher preparation, encompassing the teacher's role in the school at large, in professional organizations, and in the community. Such competencies might include organization and participation in curriculum development programs to revise gender biased texts and materials, advocating and supporting candidates for elective positions (in school, organizations, and the community) on the basis of competence rather than gender stereotypes, supporting programs designed to increase the number of females appointed to school leadership positions as well as increasing the number of males involved in education during the early childhood and elementary school years. The professional and societal behaviors tier is consistent with Fonow and Cook's (1991) use of the situation-at-hand feminist leadership theme, both of which position the feminist leader and the teacher as models within their communities.

Feminism and feminist praxis present opportunities to dismantle cultural and institutional constructs of gender. I have presented feminist praxis approaches at school leadership and teacher levels that aim to respond to gendered constructs of patriarchy, and hegemony in school and classroom settings.

Conclusion

Girls and boys, women and men, enjoy different opportunities and experiences based on their gender. Education is a socio-cultural conduit for the perpetuation of gender inequity in Brazil and throughout the world. Women are the losers due to the grave impact of inequitable gendered education on their life prospects and opportunities. However, feminism and the feminist praxis of school leaders and teachers can address the manifestations of gender inequity, oppression, patriarchy, and male hegemony in education and society. Figure 10 is a conceptual

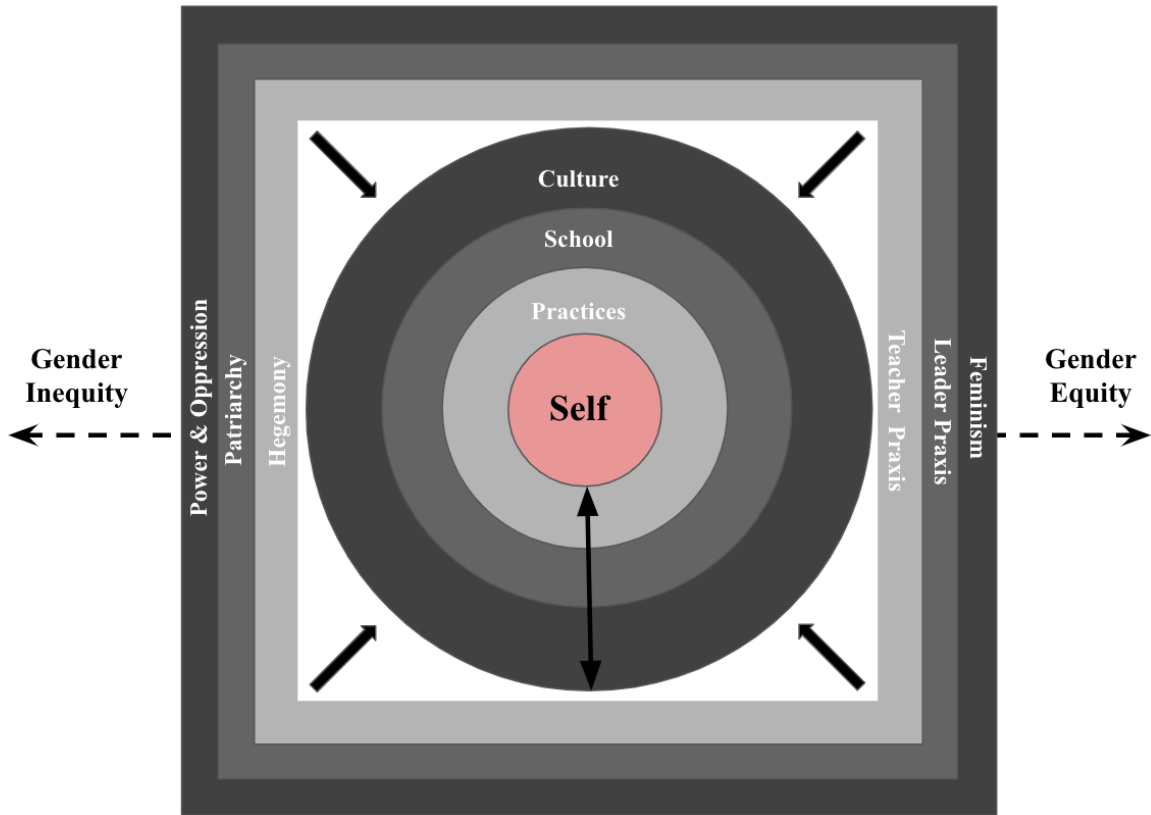


Figure 10. A conceptual framework depicting the theoretical foundations and basis of practice for this Participatory Action Research (PAR) project.

framework depicting the theoretical foundations used in this review and the basis of practice for this PAR project.

What is depicted in the conceptual framework and what I have derived from this review of literature is that shifts in understanding of gender, behavior, and teacher praxis begins with the individual teacher. However, these shifts are often confined by the culture and politics of one's school and community creating a barrier to equitable practices. The literature I reviewed suggests that often power and oppression, patriarchy and hegemony resist teacher efforts. On the other hand, the literature suggests that teacher praxis, leadership praxis, and feminist values that advocate for equity and inclusion can support teacher change.

In the next chapter, I provide the methodology for the project and the proposed means for data collection and subsequent analysis to better grasp the study's FoP to understand educators' knowledge of and use of equitable gender practices in their classrooms. In addition, I share potential limitations to the project, emphasizing the measures to be taken to ensure trustworthiness and validity. Finally, I outline how I will maintain a high degree of confidentiality along with ethical research practices.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The team of Co-Practitioner Researchers (CPR) who carried out the Participatory Action Research (PAR) project included four elementary educators and the school principal from Escola Americana de Campinas (EAC). Their goal was to explore educators' understanding and use of equitable gender practices in an international elementary school. The PAR was based on the following theory of action: If educators develop deeper understandings of self and gender and use those understandings to examine practice, then they can implement new classroom and leadership practices that promote gender equity in the elementary school.

I assumed the role of lead researcher, and together with the CPR we took on the following commitments: participation in regular meetings to address the research questions; consent for observation and post-observation conversations; and member checks to provide feedback on the data that I collected and analyzed as the lead researcher. The CPR members were invited to participate based on their capacity and willingness to contribute to such a project. The CPR group engaged in three iterative cycles of inquiry (PAR Pre-cycle, PAR Cycle One, PAR Cycle Two) to explore, understand, and take action to promote equitable gender practices in an international elementary school.

In this chapter, I describe the methodological foundation for the project, including the relevance and application of qualitative Participatory Action Research (PAR) and the strategic inclusion of Community Learning Exchange (CLE) axioms, as well as a discussion of ecologies of knowing appropriate for the study. First, I describe the setting where the project was hosted and the research questions that guided the project, and I share the qualitative research process of the project by elaborating on the PAR framework. Then, I describe the action research cycles undertaken and the project's participants as well as the processes of data collection and analysis.

Finally, I outline the limitations of the project and discuss validity, confidentiality, and ethical research practices.

Qualitative Research Process

Qualitative research is an approach commonly used to investigate, explore, and understand social or human problems (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Based on emerging questions and procedures, qualitative research is an inductive style of social inquiry that is often employed to uncover meaning within complex situations. Unique to qualitative research is the privileging of research participants' perspectives, "illuminating the subjective meaning, actions and context of those being researched" (Popay et al., 1998, p. 345). Fossey et al. (2002) describe the important roles participants play in qualitative research:

[C]entral to the quality of qualitative research is whether participants' perspectives have been authentically represented in the research process and the interpretations made from information gathered; and whether the findings are coherent in the sense that they 'fit' the data and social context from which they were derived. (p. 723)

PAR is a specific type of qualitative research in which investigators value the involvement of participants. For the proposed project, PAR was an appropriate approach for utilizing emerging questions and iterative inquiry processes to explore an identified social/human problem, namely, gender inequity in an international elementary school, through the involvement of educator-participants. In this section, I describe the project's institutional setting and guiding research questions. I present the qualitative research approach of PAR grounded in activist research and the supporting methodologies used in the project: the reflect, plan, act, and observe (RPAO) (Hunter et al., 2013) action research model; the CLE axioms and ecologies of knowing; and the PAR project's action research cycles.

Context

The PAR project took place in an international school in Campinas, Brazil. Campinas is a city in the state of São Paulo founded on a colonial heritage of agriculture. Now a major education and technology hub in Brazil, Campinas is politically polarized between progressive and conservative influences. This political and social polarization is present within the community of Escola Americana de Campinas, the site of this PAR project.

Escola Americana de Campinas (EAC) is a private American international school with a proud, 65-year history boasting an “American heritage, Brazilian home, global family.” Founded in 1956 by a small group of international parents seeking an alternative to the local education system, EAC remains the school of choice for upper-middle-class families who value an international experience for their children. Serving 820 students between 2 and 18 years of age, EAC is organized into three developmental sections: preschool, elementary school, and upper school. I was the principal of the elementary school, made up of 320 students and 65 educators, and carried out the research there.

The issues addressed in the PAR project, gender and gender equity, were not new to EAC or the elementary school. During the lead-up to the federal election in 2018, a time marked by highly polarized political discourse and debate about moral issues, the elementary school was accused by members of the parent community of supporting and enforcing gender ideology. Driven by a greater socially conservative political movement, a group of parents took exception to a male student in Grade 2 choosing to portray the character of Cinderella in a class-based performance. The disgruntled group took legal action against the school. While the suit was subsequently dismissed, the discontent resulted in a town hall meeting that drew approximately 150 people from the school community. As the principal, I was the recipient of the discontent

expressed during the meeting, fielding questions, accusations, and support in a 3-hour display of the polarizing nature of gender as it was perceived in the community as well as a demonstration of the socio-political climate of the time.

Shortly thereafter in 2019, as a result of a town hall meeting, the school administration drafted and released a school-wide diversity and inclusion statement. In addition, the elementary school administration held discussions and adopted a gender equity agreement that established common language and ideals for the section. Over time, the perceived relevance of the internal gender equity agreement decreased on the part of the elementary educators, paralleling the decrease in sensational political rhetoric in the broader community following Jair Bolsonaro's election as Brazilian president.

At the inception of this PAR project, disparate experiences for boys and girls remained evident. From classroom seating arrangements, to the gendered language teachers used to address groups and individuals, to the biased assumptions and comments that emerged during learning meetings, to the portrayal of exclusive male and female images used as marketing fodder by the school, gender inequity remained part of the culture of EAC. I had observed the presence and impact of gender inequity in the school, and I engaged other educators to fully enact the school's policies. This investment led to the proposed PAR project's theory of action: If educators develop deeper understandings of self and gender and use those understandings to examine practices, then we can implement new classroom and leadership practices that promote gender equity in the elementary school. Having established gender equity as an area of importance, I then present the project's research questions that guided the PAR project with the aim of putting the theory of action into practice.

Research Questions

The aim of this PAR project was to develop educators' understanding and use of equitable gender practices in an international elementary school. I facilitated three action research cycles to develop educators' understanding and use of equitable gender practices in the elementary school at EAC. The PAR's overarching research question was: How do educators promote gender equity in an international elementary school?

Four sub-questions guided the inquiry:

1. To what extent do elementary educators develop an understanding of self and beliefs about gender?
2. To what extent do elementary educators examine their practices about gender equity?
3. To what extent do elementary educators implement equitable gender instructional practices?
4. How do I grow and develop in my leadership as I work with educators to promote gender equity?

I addressed the research questions through aligned PAR experiences that were designed to produce specific data. I designed the PAR project's qualitative processes for data collection, codifying, and categorizing to reveal responses to the research sub-questions and, ultimately, to lead to the project's findings and outcomes.

Participatory Action Research

Traditional approaches to research can remove the researcher from the participants and sometimes disregard the participants' insights, expertise, and value, relegating communities and individuals to mere subjects. According to Freire (2018), research largely based on extracting information from the subjects is an act of oppression as it treats research participants as less than

fully human. In contrast to traditional research approaches, PAR is an inquiry carried out in collaboration with members of a given community who themselves are invested in a problem. In this way, PAR encourages research participants to take active roles in the design, methodology, and/or research itself, “shift[ing] the locus of control from professional or academic researchers to those who have been traditionally the subjects of research” (Herr & Anderson 2015, p. 2).

Activist research requires that researchers move from their general roles as passive participants and/or observers to being agents of change. By adding the requirement that research make “a positive difference in the lives of those suffering disadvantage or oppression” (Hunter et al., 2013, p. 21), activist research seeks to pose and solve problems that will transform consciousness—and ultimately society—through local knowledge, participation, and leadership. Activist research, therefore, is a process and an effective instrument of what Freire (2018) terms a humanizing pedagogy “in which leadership [activist researchers] establish relationships of dialogue with the oppressed” (p. 68) to enact purposeful, informed, sustainable community change. Furthermore, activist PAR in its iterative qualitative approach is suited to studies focusing on equity, social justice, and oppression as it enables researchers to renegotiate social power dynamics (Hunter et al., 2013). Finally, I chose activist PAR for this project as the key features of the methodology aligned directly with the study’s focus of practice and commitment to equity and its participatory, collaborative, emancipatory, and transformative nature (Hunter et al., 2013; Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000).

Effective community action requires common protocols that allow participants to share, test, and generalize local learning through use of improvement science (Bryk et al., 2015). Bryk et al. (2015) propose that community action requires a disciplined approach to inquiry that draws from a core set of protocols that form a science of improvement. “These protocols guide local

efforts to introduce changes and examine whether these changes actually are improvements” (Bryk et al., 2015, p. 21). A commonly used model of improvement is the Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) cycle (Langley et al., 1996). By using the PDSA model, researchers aim to guide a community to realize improvement by addressing three essential questions:

- What problem are we trying to solve?
- What changes might we introduce and why?
- How will we know that a change is actually an improvement?

PDSA also “provides a structure for testing a change and guides rapid learning through four steps that repeat as part of an ongoing cycle of improvement” (Shakman et al., 2017, p. 5).

Participants often undertake multiple PDSA cycles, each building on what was learned previously, thus moving the process closer to the project’s aim (Shakman et al., 2017). Drawn from the improvement science and PDSA, the Reflect, Plan, Act, Observe (RPAO) model (see Figure 11) incorporates the essential characteristics of qualitative action research that support systematic experimentation and learning (Hunter et al., 2013). RPAO is the research model I used to guide this PAR project and the work of the CPR group with the intention of incorporating a greater emphasis on reflection in advance of proposing and acting. While both PDSA and RPAO models are cyclical and involve participant reflection, RPAO emphasizes reflection as a shared starting point to inform actions that empower change.

Additionally, RPAO was consistent with the project’s underlying research questions that necessitated educator learning and exploration of gender relative to self as the first step in the inquiry. Therefore, activist PAR guided by the RPAO research model led to what Freire (2018) termed praxis, that is, informed reflection to act and acting to address oppression. Moreover, this

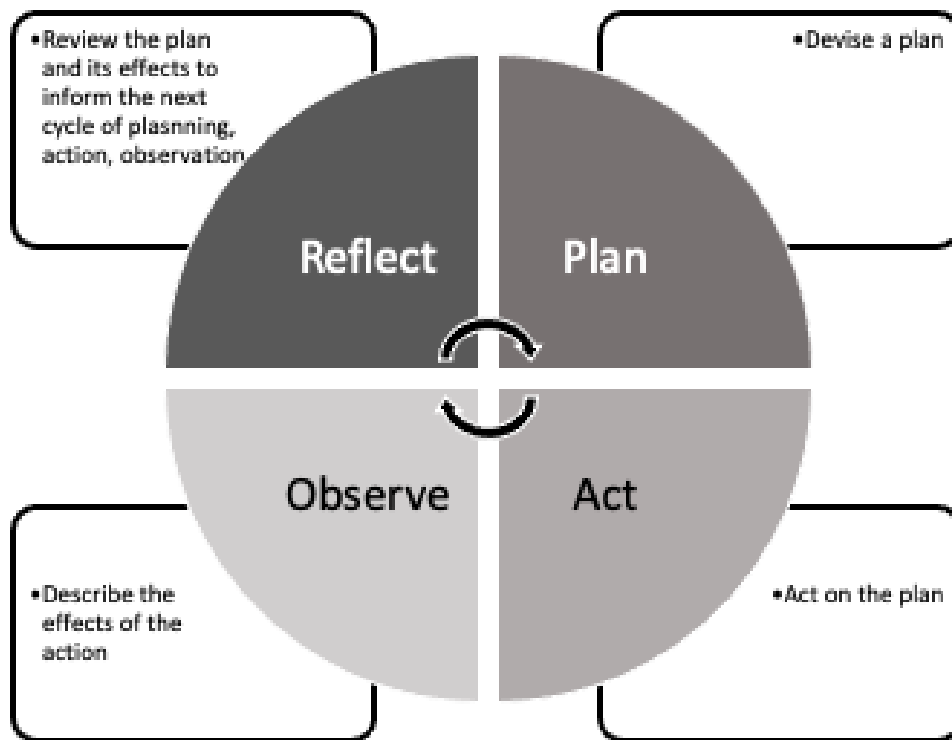


Figure 11. The RPAO action research model.

intimate process leverages what Freire (1998) refers to as “epistemological curiosity,” participation in the construction of knowledge that results in an instrument to transform reality.

In the PAR, I facilitated three iterative cycles of inquiry guided by the action research characteristics of RPAO and driven by the FoP’s theory of action. The PAR experiences upheld qualitative research’s inductive style of social inquiry (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) by privileging research participants’ perspectives (Popay et al., 1998) as well as the context within which the research was based (Fossey et al., 2002), thus striving “to develop and use strategies that empower local people in their own spaces to find solutions that are organic in order to meet the needs of the people that will live in and sustain healthy communities” (Guajardo et al., 2016, p. 9).

Each PAR experience was designed and guided by Guajardo et al.’s (2016) CLE axioms, which formed the project’s basis of praxis: (a) learning and leadership are dynamic social processes; (b) conversations are critical and central pedagogical processes; (c) the people closest to the issues are best situated to discover answers to local concerns; and (d) crossing boundaries enriches the development and educational process (pp. 24–27). In this way, PAR experiences were central to maintaining the locus of control with those positioned to enact relevant and sustainable change.

Additionally, the CLE axioms I presented within an ecology of knowing that scaffolded and organized the CPR members’ lived experiences oscillating between the I/We dynamic so as to inform a collective construction of understanding (Guajardo et al., 2019). The ecologies of knowing I referred to map the PAR project’s experiences in a dialogical way beginning at the micro level of self, moving to the meso organization, and finally to the macro-level forces. This

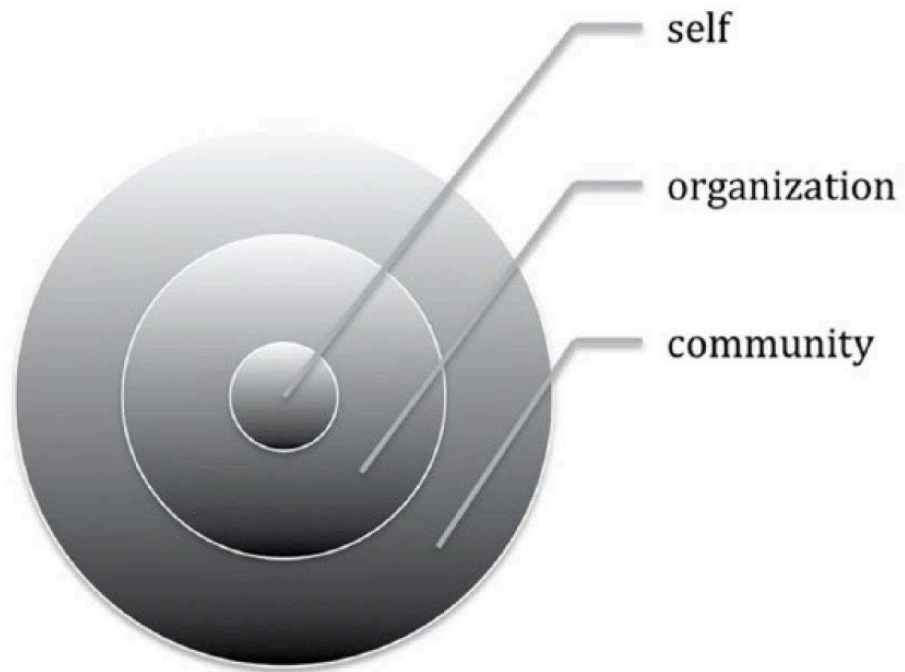
process was guided by ongoing conversations between and within the three ecologies of “self,” “organization,” and “community” (Guajardo et al., 2019) as represented in Figure 12.

In summary, this project utilized a qualitative research approach (see Figure 13) to address the social problem of gender inequity in an international elementary school setting. I chose an activist approach to PAR as it promoted strategic collaboration with participants to enact informed, relevant community change. I used the RPAO model to guide the process of inquiry, which utilized a core set of protocols allowing participants to share, test, and introduce change. I deemed RPAO appropriate for this PAR project because of the incorporation of reflection as its initial inquiry step.

Complementary to RPAO’s reflection step was our utilization of CLE axioms. These axioms in conjunction with the ecologies of knowing enabled us to scaffold and organize the CPR members’ lived experiences to construct our understanding collectively. The PAR experiences I designed and delivered so as to empower CPR members to find solutions relevant to the community. The PAR experiences based on the CLE axioms and RPAO inquiry cycles were explicitly guided by the project’s research questions.

Action Research Cycles

Using the RPAO action research model presented by Hunter et al. (2013), I collected and analyzed data based on the findings of the three iterative action research cycles. Reflection, action, and research occurred simultaneously throughout the three cycles based on the principle that I, with the CPR team, engaged in evidence-based actions by collectively planning, observing, and reflecting. Each of the three cycles of inquiry (PAR Pre-cycle, PAR Cycle One, PAR Cycle Two) was based on the RPAO process with participants engaging in PAR ecology of knowing (Guajardo et al., 2016). Table 1 shares the PAR timeframe alongside the cycles of



Note. (Guajardo et al., 2019).

Figure 12. The ecologies of knowing.

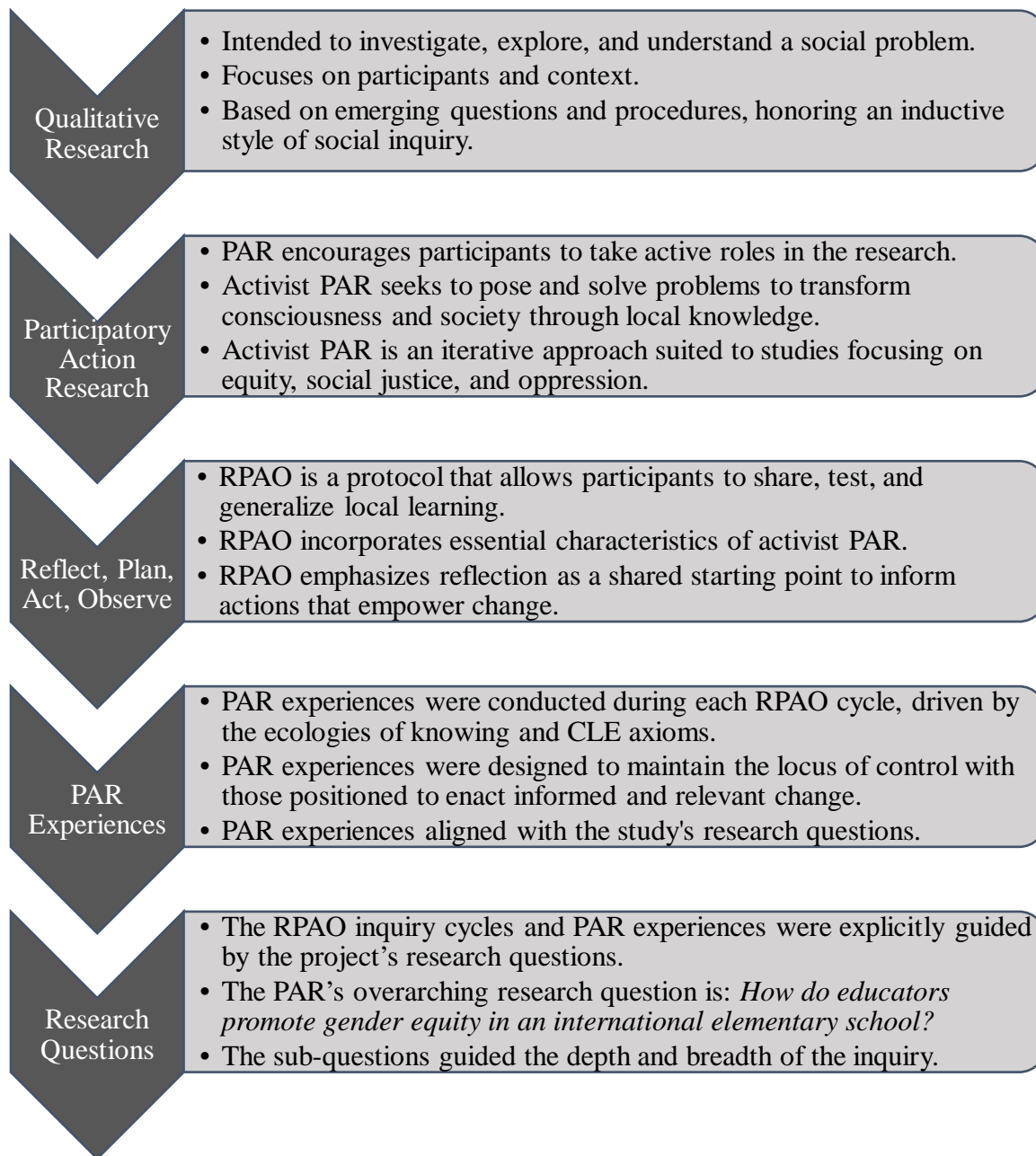


Figure 13. The qualitative research process.

Table 1

PAR Timeline of Events

Date	PAR Event	Ecology of Knowing
September 2021	Pre-Cycle	Self
January 2022	Cycle 1	Self, Organization
August 2022	Cycle 2	Self, Organization, Community

inquiry and the respective ecology of knowing. Next, I present the project's participants and the work they undertook in line with the theory of action.

Participants, Data Collection, and Data Analysis

Qualitative research “relies on text and image data, has unique steps in data analysis, and draws on diverse designs” (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 179). The CPR group utilized multiple methods to collect and analyze qualitative data. In this section, I detail the participants who guided the project through their work as the CPR group and the systematic data collection and analysis techniques they utilized.

Participants

The PAR participants were elementary educators at EAC. I assumed the role of lead researcher and worked with the educators as co-practitioner researchers (CPR). Upon approval of the dissertation proposal, I invited four co-practitioners to join the CPR group. As I was the elementary school principal, all four educators were known to me and had been my EAC colleagues as members of the section for from 1 to 4 years. My aims for this PAR project were to emphasize the role of educators in developing deeper understandings of self and gender and to use those understandings to examine practices and implement new classroom and leadership practices that promote gender equity. The CPR group therefore comprised elementary educators who possessed such capacities along with a personal and professional willingness to contribute to the project.

I used purposeful sampling to create the CPR group. Purposeful sampling is a technique widely used in qualitative research when resources are limited to identify participants whose selection could lead to the most effective, information-rich contributions (Patton, 2002). According to Suri (2011), the power of purposeful sampling comes from selecting participants

who can contribute most to the issues of central importance to the inquiry. Purposeful sampling, therefore, aligns with the tenets of PAR by valuing the involvement of the participants as well as the unique culture of the setting where the research is undertaken. Additionally, purposeful sampling aligned to two of the CLE axioms: The people closest to the issues are best situated to discover answers to local concerns; and Hope and change are built on assets and dreams of locals and their communities (Guajardo et al., 2016). I created purposeful sampling criteria, drawn from the works of Bernard (2017), Creswell and Plano Clark (2011), and Spradley (2016), for participant selection. These criteria included as desirable participant characteristics: (a) knowledge; (b) availability; (c) willingness; (d) communication; (e) collaboration; (f) involvement; and (g) representation. Purposeful sampling took place following Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval. Table 2 shows the PAR project's CPR participant criteria and guiding questions.

I had tentatively identified nine potential participants whom I felt could be eligible for CPR group selection. Alongside the purposeful sampling criteria, I applied assessment indicators of (1) no; (2) maybe; (3) yes. I applied the sampling criteria and assessment indicators through direct interactions with the potential participants. The four participants I chose registered 'yes' in all seven sampling criteria. I was therefore confident my identification of participants would lead to the most effective CPR group to provide information-rich contributions and the necessary commitment to fulfill the intended scope of the PAR research project. I informed the four educators whom I had invited about the purpose and nature of the project before they agreed to participate as co-practitioners. Each educator gave written consent following IRB approval and confirmed their understanding that they could leave the project at any time. The CPR group convened outside of the school day.

Table 2

CPR Participant Criteria and Guiding Questions

Level of Application	Criteria	Guiding Questions
Individual	Knowledge	Has the candidate demonstrated prior knowledge in the subject area?
Individual	Availability	Does the candidate have the time necessary to participate in the project?
Individual	Willingness	Is the participant able and wanting to participate in the project?
Individual	Communication	Can the candidate communicate experiences and opinions in an articulate, expressive, and reflective manner?
Individual	Collaboration	Does the candidate operate effectively in collaborative situations?
Group	Involvement	Would the candidate's inclusion encourage positive experiences and learning?
Group	Representation	Would the candidate's inclusion offer a balanced representation of the EAC community in terms of gender, ethnicity, role, teaching experience?

I established the CPR's role and importance to the PAR as a commitment to: self-reflection and contribution to the school, identification of problems, gathering and analyzing of data, co-generation of plans using the RPAO model, and member checking as a quality control measure to improve the accuracy, credibility, and validity of the findings (Bryk et al., 2011; Hunter et al., 2013). In this way, the CPR engaged purposefully in praxis through a commitment to learn and act on behalf of themselves and others to enact social change (Freire, 2018).

Data Collection

I utilized a range of methods to collect data. In line with Creswell and Creswell (2018), I used three main qualitative collection procedures: observation, interviews, and relevant documents. Next, I outline each collection procedure and its application and relevance to this PAR project.

Observations

In qualitative observations, the researchers take notes on the behaviors and activities of individuals (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). CPR group members performed observations as part of the action step in the RPAO inquiry cycle. Selective verbatim and pre-established coding processes (Saldaña, 2016) were utilized to collect and collate data from the observations. Following observations and the subsequent collection of data, CPR group members met to debrief. Appendix E provides the observation protocol.

Interviews

Qualitative interviews in this project were based on unstructured, open-ended questions intended to elicit views and opinions from participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). I conducted face-to-face, individual interviews and coded them using Saldaña's (2016) open coding technique. The interview protocol is provided in Appendix F.

Documents

Relevant documents for qualitative research are public and/or private artifacts, which include but are not limited to notes, meeting minutes, and emails (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This PAR project utilized a range of relevant documents, which included artifacts from CPR meetings, CPR meeting notes (Appendix G), and reflective memos (see Appendix H).

I employed a process for cross-examination known as *triangulation* to increase the credibility and validity of the findings. Triangulation is the use of two or more methods to verify a study's findings, thereby offering a more detailed and balanced representation of a situation (Altrichter et al., 1996). According to Cohen and Manion (1986), when applied to qualitative data collection, triangulation attempts to “map out and explain fully the richness and complexity of human behavior by studying it from more than one standpoint” (p. 254). Table 3 shares the project's research sub-questions, data collection protocols, and the methods used to triangulate and verify the data collected.

PAR Pre-Cycle

The PAR Pre-Cycle took place over the course of 8 weeks between October and December 2021. During that time the CPR group convened on four occasions and engaged in activities designed to promote reflection and dialogue about the relationship between self and gender with the collective intention to elicit baseline information and build shared understandings. I purposefully created agendas and activities to develop trust, that is, to engage in deep conversations and create a gracious space for learning and dialogue. I also recorded reflective memos and engaged in reflective dialogue with my ECU coach throughout the 8-week period. Next, I detail the activities that took place during the PAR Pre-Cycle.

I intentionally designed and facilitated the PAR Pre-Cycle activities to invoke Guajardo

Table 3

Research Sub-Questions and Data Collection Protocols

Research Sub-Questions	Data Collection Protocols	Triangulated with
To what extent do elementary educators develop an understanding of self and beliefs about gender?	Interviews Documents	Reflective Memos Member Checks
To what extent do elementary educators examine their own practices about gender equity?	Interviews Documents Observations	Reflective Memos Member Checks
To what extent do elementary educators implement equitable gender instructional practices?	Interviews Documents Observations	Reflective Memos Member Checks
How do I grow and develop in my leadership as I work with educators to promote gender equity?	Reflective memos	Interviews Member Checks

et al.'s (2016) ecology of knowing, "self." The exploration of self was aimed at organizing CPR group members' thinking beginning at the micro-level so as to generate opportunities for authentic connection to the PAR project, to each other, and to their own world of knowing (Guajardo et al., 2016). This approach directly aligned with the PAR project's Research Question 1 (To what extent do elementary educators develop an understanding of self and beliefs about gender?). The activities conducted included CPR group meetings, journey lines, personal narratives, and a photo walk.

In addition to group activities, I maintained a regular practice of preparing reflective memos as a strategy to organize my thoughts in light of the CPR group's progress and to relate this progress to emergent theory and research. Table 4 shows the engagement timeline of the PAR Pre-Cycle activities. Thereafter, a summary of each PAR Pre-Cycle activity is given alongside the associated data collected for analysis.

CPR Group Meetings. The CPR group participated in four CPR group meetings during the PAR Pre-Cycle. I provided formal agendas in advance of the meetings and allowed participants to seek clarification prior to attendance. I maintained a consistent format and approach for all agendas clearly stating the meeting's purpose and guiding questions to incrementally explore each participant's relation to self and gender. Table 5 shows the purpose of each PAR Pre-Cycle CPR meeting, the guiding questions, and the supporting activities.

I initially intended for the meetings to last 60 minutes. However, after the excitement and engagement from the first meeting, the participants insisted on longer meetings. Subsequent meetings lasted at least 90 minutes. I utilized Guajardo et al.'s (2016) five CLE axioms to guide the meetings. The group reviewed the CLE axioms at the opening of each meeting to reiterate the nature of the PAR as a collaborative project and to establish shared understandings of the

Table 4

PAR Pre-Cycle Timeline and Activities

Pre-Cycle Activities	Week 0	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6	Week 7	Week 8
CPR Group Meeting (n=5)		•		•		•		•	
Personal Narrative (n=5)		•		•		•		•	
Journey line (n=5)		•		•					
Photo Walk (n=5)						•		•	
Interview (n=2)								•	•
Reflective Memo (n=1)	•		•		•			•	

Note. (n) denotes the number of CPR members involved in each activity.

Table 5

PAR Pre-Cycle CPR Group Meetings' Purpose, Guiding Questions, and Supporting Activities

Meeting	Purpose	Guiding Questions	Activities
1	Setting the Stage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is our role? • What do I bring to this project? • What is gender to me? 	Personal Narrative Journey Line
2	Looking Back to Look Ahead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When has gender been prominent in my life? • How does gender influence my life? 	Personal Narrative Journey Line
3	Making Connections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do my gender stories connect to yours? • Where am I seeing gender now? 	Personal Narrative Photo Walk
4	Checking In and Calling It Out	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How is gender showing up in my school? • What am I feeling about this process? 	Personal Narrative Photo Walk

purpose and approach to the group's time together. Similarly, I explicitly referred to the project's focus of practice (to develop educators' understanding and use of equitable gender practices in an international elementary school) and Research Question 1 at each meeting launch. During each CPR meeting, I utilized several protocols to ensure structured and collaborative dialogue. My intention was to allow the team to build relationships and reflect upon their experiences with gender. The artifacts from each of the protocols were coded and developed into PAR Pre-Cycle data.

Personal Narratives. I utilized personal narratives to build trust, increase my knowledge and understanding of the CPR group members, and provide opportunities for the group members to examine the ecology of self. Personal narratives engage participants in conversations about real-life personal experiences that hold significant meaning. I utilized arts integration, quotations, and poems to spark discussion about a specific story in one's experience. Through the prompts I encouraged personal reflection leading to the creation of mutual understanding and a connection to others (Duffy, 2018). I incorporated personal narratives in all four PAR Pre-Cycle CPR group meetings to engage in reflection and sharing. I used prompts to stimulate reflection and sharing at key moments in each meeting. Table 6 includes a sample of the experiences and associated personal narrative prompts that I used over the course of the four PAR Pre-Cycle CPR group meetings.

Journey Lines. Journey lines allow participants to reflect on their specific experiences in light of a prompt/learning objective. Reflecting on one's life experience supports greater awareness of the relationships among events, time, and the evolving story of self (Swain et al., 2020). Journey lines, when shared, can lead to collective knowledge and action through a collaborative understanding of our collective stories. The CPR group created personal journey

Table 6

PAR Pre-Cycle Sample Personal Narrative Prompts

Meeting	Experience	Personal Narrative Prompt
Meeting 1	Journey Line	Record points of gender that stand out to you during your school years. Then, be prepared to choose one to share with our group.
Meeting 2	Meeting Opening	What did you take with you from our last meeting? What was surprising/delightful for you? Did a situation of gender present for you? If so, in what way?
Meeting 3	Photo Walk	With a partner, take our discussions and your emerging thoughts for a walk around our Elementary campus. As you walk and talk, take photos of evidence of gender in this setting. Upon your return, be prepared to share.
Meeting 4	Meeting Closing	How is gender showing up in our school? What are your feelings about this process?

lines, then engaged in investigations of their journey line specific to their school years (5–18 years of age). Figure 14 shows two examples of journey lines created by CPR group members. Shared prompts and instructions guided the CPR members throughout the journey line and journey line deep dive experiences as shown in Table 7.

Photo Walk. I facilitated a photo walk and subsequent conversation during Meetings 3 and 4 of the PAR Pre-Cycle. Photo walks use imagery to evoke ideas, thoughts, and feelings, encouraging reflection and stimulating engagement and conversation (Leading Effectively Staff, 2020). For this PAR project’s photo walk, I asked CPR group members to consider preceding conversations while walking through elementary spaces with a partner. Within their partners, the CPR group members took photos of evidence of gender beliefs, stereotypes, or biases throughout the school and recorded these images along with supporting notes on a shared template. Upon return to the meeting, CPR group members discussed their experience and images with the greater group. Figure 15 shows a sample of the responses to the photo walk activity.

CPR Group Interviews. Interviewing is a conversational practice “where knowledge is produced through the interaction between an interviewer and an interviewee” (Given, 2021, p. 2). During the PAR Pre-Cycle, I jointly interviewed the CPR group members using a semi-structured interview approach. I asked each CPR group member three open-ended questions designed to elicit responses to Meeting 3 and Meeting 4 guiding questions (refer to Table 5). The three questions were:

1. Where are you seeing gender now?
2. How is gender showing up in our school?
3. What are you feeling about this process?

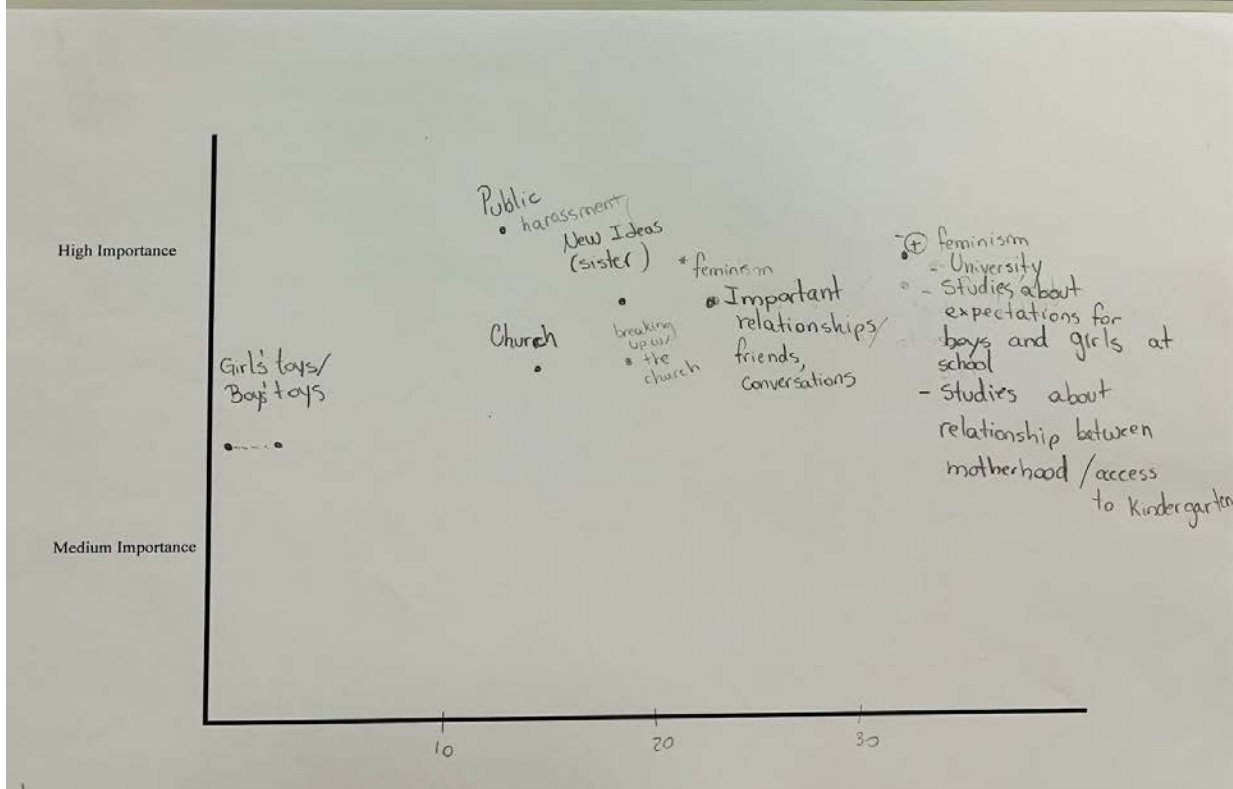
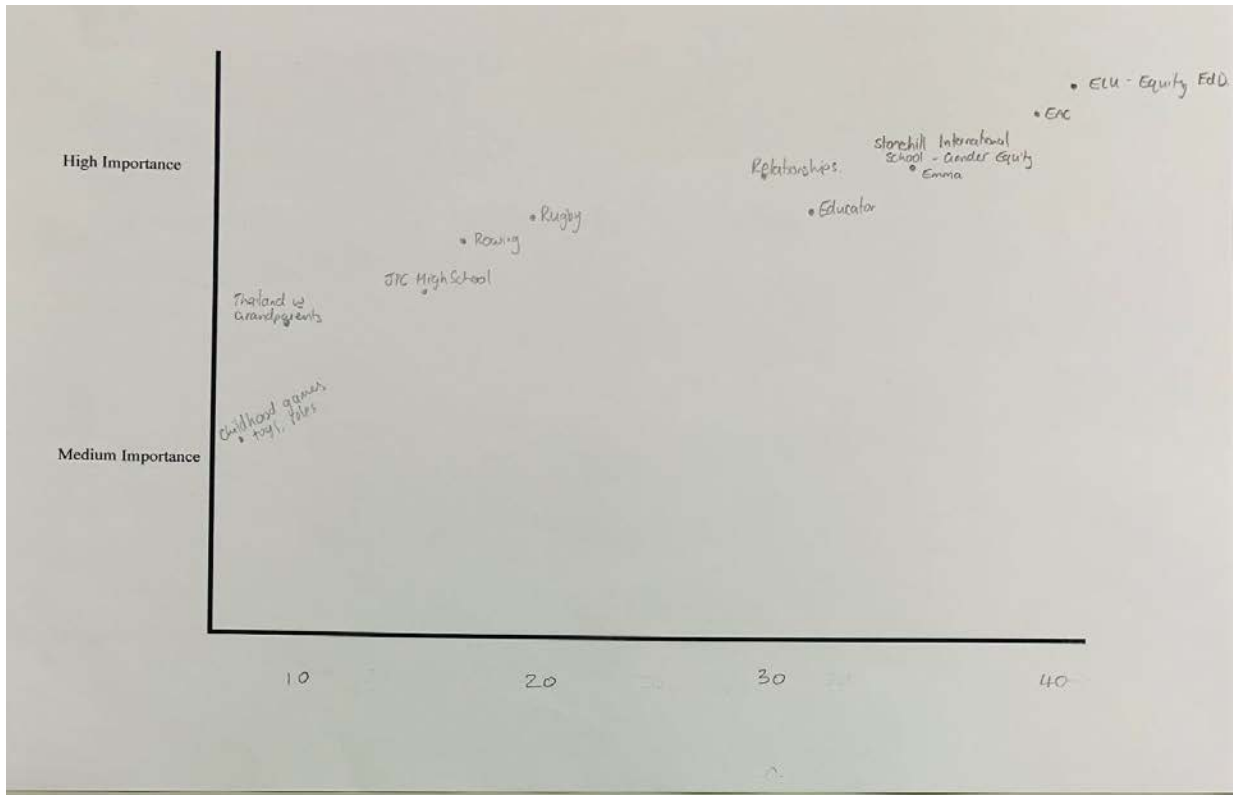


Figure 14. CPR group member journey lines.

Table 7

PAR Pre-Cycle CPR Group Journey Line Prompts and Instructions

Meeting	Journey Line Prompt	Journey Line Instructions
Meeting 1	<p>What have been the major experiences, encounters, incidents that have been significant in shaping your relationship with gender, be it your own or your understanding of gender broadly?</p>	<p>For your lifetime, chart 5-6 points of gender. Some experiences may be of “high importance,” others of medium “importance” but still important in your journey. Then be prepared to choose one to share with our group.</p>
Meeting 2	<p>This time, we will focus specifically on our school years, between the ages of 5 and 18 years.</p> <p>What are the memories, experiences, encounters, incidents, understandings, connections that have been significant in shaping your relationship with gender, be it your own or your understanding of gender broadly?</p>	<p>Record points of gender that stand out to you during your school years. Then, be prepared to choose one to share with our group.</p>





Photo	Description	Connection to Our Work / Your Learning
	<p>This is the large field at EAC. During lunch recess, G3, G4, and G5 students have access to the field as well as the adjacent playframe.</p> <p>As is seen in this photo, while all students have the right to play here, it is dominated exclusively by boys. At times, girls attempt to join the soccer games or to use the field for other activities. Inevitably, they retreat, this is seen as a boys' area, and boys play soccer at EAC.</p>	<p>This is an example of gender socialization - boys play soccer, they have the right to dominate space and it is accepted that this is exclusive of girls. It's also accepted/assumed that boys like soccer but girls prefer less physical games.</p> <p>Students who go against these stereotypes are not accepted by the larger group.</p> <p>As a leader, allowing this imbalance to continue shows a passive acceptance and encouragement of the dominance of boys in shared spaces, the notion that girls aren't the priority, and the stifling limitations of gender stereotypes for all children.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Girls bathroom</p> 	<p>The pictures on the left show 2 bathrooms used by Elementary students: the girls' bathroom painted in pink, while the boys' bathroom is painted in blue.</p>	<p>This is an example of gender socialization - boys being represented by the blue color, and it is accepted that this is an exclusive color of boys. It's also accepted/assumed that all girls like pink.</p>
	<p>Backpacks in the second grade cubbies. Cubbies are labeled with a student name and a sun image.</p>	<p>The girls have pink backpacks, or backpacks with pink and the boys do not. Girls have backpacks with unicorns and sparkles. Boys have video game characters and darker colors. Absent is pink.</p>
	<p>This is the cheerleading uniform. Currently, 100% of students enrolled in the after-school activity are Elementary girls.</p>	<p>Why is there a need for a girls' and boys' uniform? Why would young girls be encouraged to wear short skirts in a sport that requires tumbling, jumping, inversions etc? Why is it somehow better for boys to wear shorts during this activity than girls?</p> <p>To me, this is an example of sexualizing young girls. It is not a benefit for any child to perform sports in short skirts.</p>

Figure 15. Sample responses to the PAR Pre-Cycle CPR group meeting photo walk activity.

While the three questions provided structure to the interview, we pursued other lines of discussion the group deemed meaningful.

Field Notes and Reflective Memos. Field notes are an “essential component of rigorous qualitative research” (Phillippi & Lauderdale, 2018, p. 381). They are used to enhance data through the provision of rich contexts for analysis that can ultimately lead to improved depth of findings. I used field notes in the Pre-Cycle to document the CPR group’s experiences and insights and the effectiveness of the cycle’s design and implementation through reflective memoing and selective verbatim notetaking before, during, and after CPR group experiences.

Reflective memoing is the process of recording notes pertaining to a researcher’s experiences and subsequent learning. Memos are written ideas about emerging concepts and their relationship to a researcher’s work (Given, 2021). During the Pre-Cycle, I engaged in reflective memoing to record my thoughts and insights both in advance of and following CPR group meetings. I wrote reflective memos in Weeks 0, 2, 4, and 7 of the Pre-Cycle. In the reflective memos I wrote before CPR group meetings, I recorded the purposeful approach to the meeting’s design and intended engagements. The memos I wrote after the CPR group meetings captured subsequent insights, questions, and connections that arose during the CPR group’s time together.

The Pre-Cycle established that gender inequity for the CPR group was present in our own lives and worthy of investigation there as well as within the elementary school at EAC. Cycle One built upon the CPR group’s willingness to explore gender through lenses of self and community. The five CPR group members willingly participated in an introspective exploration of gender through the cycle’s pivotal mandala experience. The processes of the mandala creation and sharing revealed the relevance of gender in the lived experiences of each CPR group

member and uncovered connections and affinity among the members of the group. The project's research Sub-Questions 1 and 2 were prominent during the cycle as CPR group members worked towards developing understandings of self and beliefs about gender and in turn examined their personal professional practices through a gender equity lens.

PAR Cycle One

PAR Cycle One took place over 10 weeks between March and May 2022. During that time, the CPR group convened on six occasions, each meeting purposefully designed as a stepping stone to fulfill the project's overarching research question: How do educators promote gender equity in an international elementary school? The CPR group participated in activities to encourage reflection and dialogue and specifically to inquire into and address the project's first two sub-questions:

1. To what extent do elementary educators develop an understanding of self and beliefs about gender?
2. To what extent do elementary educators examine their practices about gender equity?

As the CPR group leader, I remained invested and intentional about upholding the relational trust that had been established during the Pre-Cycle process. I continued to develop agendas and activities to foster deep reflection, opportunities for personal and group learning, and shared dialogue. I engaged in reflective dialogue with my ECU coach throughout the 10 weeks to seek alternate perspectives regarding the direction and progress of the cycle as well as to receive feedback on my approach as the CPR group leader. Next, I detail the activities that took place during Cycle One.

As the CPR group leader, I maintained a commitment to Guajardo et al.'s (2016) ecologies of knowing by designing and facilitating Cycle One activities to focus on the levels of

“self” and “organization.” The exploration of self was aimed at getting CPR group members to think about how to generate opportunities at the micro level for authentic connection to self, each other, and one’s own world of knowing (Guajardo et al., 2016). Additionally, Cycle One experiences helped CPR group members explore at a meso level of understanding. At the meso level and in line with Guajardo et al.’s (2016) ecology of knowing, “organization”, CPR group members explored gender and the mediation between one’s understanding and expectation of self with that of the role of educator and one’s responsibility towards the larger society (Guajardo et al., 2016). Table 8 shows the alignment between the project’s Pre-Cycle and Cycle One, the ecologies of knowing foci explored, and the research sub-questions used to guide the CPR group’s activities.

The mandala experience was instrumental to the success of Cycle One as I led CPR group members through guided reflection, prompts, and discussions within a shared space of trust and mutual commitment to the PAR project. Following the mandala creation, I led activities designed to elicit further reflection on the part of the CPR group members through in-depth discussion, group member connection, group member checking, and the collection of data specific to the project’s research Sub-Questions 1 and 2. These additional activities included CPR group meetings, personal narratives, observations, and interviews. Complementary to group activities, I maintained a practice of reflective memoing as a strategy to organize my thoughts in light of emergent theory and research. Table 9 shows the engagement timeline of Cycle One activities. A summary of each PAR Cycle One activity follows.

Mandala. Each CPR group member created a personal mandala in Week 1 of PAR Cycle One. A mandala is an artistic representation of thought and meaning in the form of a geometric symbol to focus one's attention (Mark, 2020). The purpose of the mandala is to “center an

Table 8

PAR Project's Research Cycles, Ecologies of Knowing, and Research Sub-Questions

PAR Project Cycles	Ecologies of Knowing	Research Sub-Question
Pre-Cycle	Self	1
Cycle One	Self, Organization	1, 2

Table 9

PAR Cycle One Timeline and Activities

Activities	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6	Week 7	Week 8	Week 9	Week 10
Mandala (n=5)	•									
CPR Group Meeting (n=5)	•		•		•	•			•	•
Personal Narrative (n=5)			•		•	•		S P R I N G		
Member Checks (n=5)					•	•		B R E A K	•	
Observation (n=4)									•	
Interview (n=5)										•
Reflective Memo (n=1)	•	•	•	•						

Note. (n) denotes the number of CPR members involved in each activity.

individual or community on a given narrative to encourage introspection and, ultimately, an awareness of one's place and purpose in the world” (Mark, 2020, para. 2). In collaboration with my doctoral coach, I created a Mandala Protocol (see Appendix I) to guide the CPR group through the process of mandala creation. I led the group through the creation of their four quadrants (My Storyline: Mo‘ōlelo, Story; Pilina, Building Relations ; Kaia’ulu, Building Community; and, Mālama ‘āina, Caring for the whole, the global picture) which each participant uniquely represented and addressed. A summary of the four mandala quadrants and their relevance to the PAR project is shown in Figure 16.

Within each of the four quadrants, I shared guiding questions (see Appendix I) to elicit inquiry and reflection from CPR group members that aligned with the ecologies of knowing and the project’s sub-questions. The alignment between the mandala quadrants, the respective ecologies of knowing, and the PAR project’s research sub-questions is shown in Table 10. The mandala experience became the foundation for Cycle One. I led the CPR group through experiences and conversations that explored personal insights relating to gender, based on provocations within the mandala’s Quadrants One, Two, and Three. As the cycle progressed, we systematically revisited the mandalas. The physical representations of the individual CPR group members’ mandalas and the subsequent Mandala Sharing experience became the main data points and framework for each member’s portraiture.

CPR Group Meeting and Member Checks. The CPR group participated in six CPR group meetings during Cycle One. I shared each meeting’s purpose and a formal agenda in advance to inform participants and enable them to seek clarification prior to attendance. Table 11 shows the purpose of each Cycle One CPR meeting, the guiding questions, and supporting

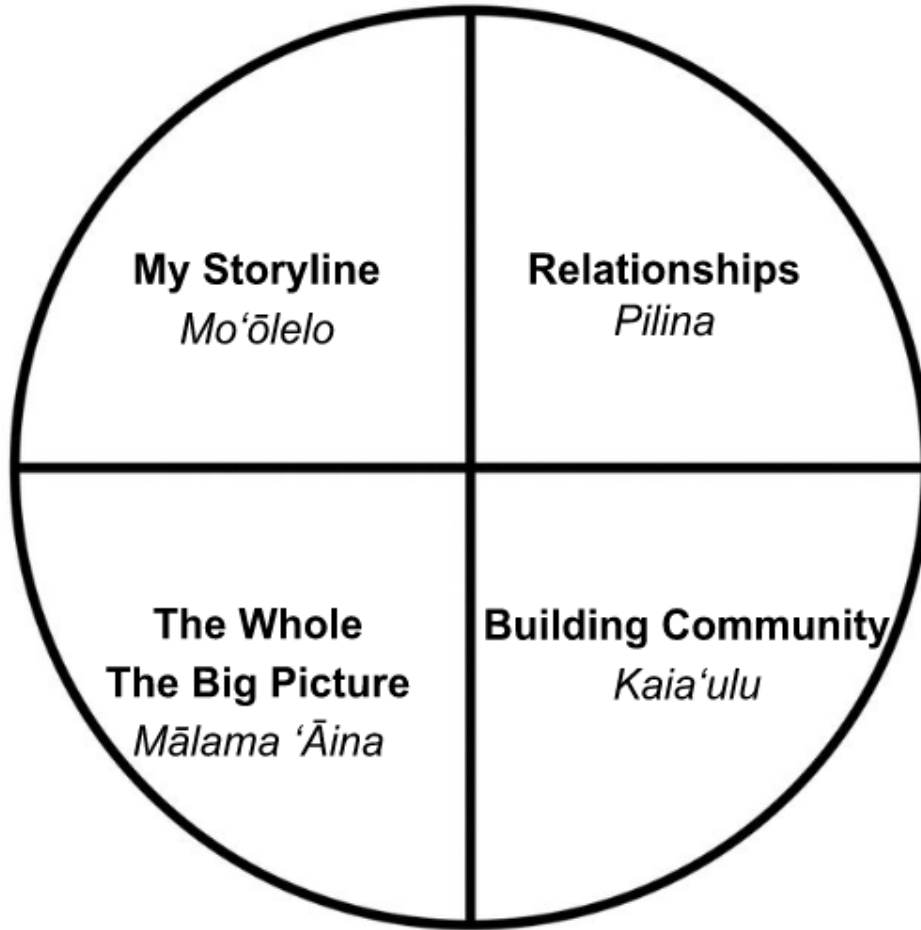


Figure 16. The four mandala quadrants.

Table 10

Mandala Quadrants, Ecologies of Knowing, and Research Sub-Questions

Mandala Quadrant	Ecologies of Knowing	Research Sub-Question
One: My Storyline	Self	1
Two: Relationships	Self, Organization	1, 2
Three: Building Community	Organization, Community	2, 3
Four: The Whole, The Big Picture	Community	4

Table 11

PAR Cycle One CPR Group Meetings Summary

Week	Purpose	Guiding Questions	Activities
Week 1	Mandala Creation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What have been the critical moments in my life? • Whom am I connected to? • Where does EAC fit in? • What is my influence on my communities? 	Mandala
Week 3	Mandala Sharing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When has gender been prominent in my life? • How has gender influenced me? 	Personal Narrative
Week 5	Mandala Connections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does my story connect to yours? • What are we noticing? 	Personal Narrative Member Checks
Week 6	Gender and Educators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where can I see gender in my classroom? • What does the literature say? • What do I want to know more about? 	Personal Narrative Member Checks
Week 9	Gender in My Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do I seek to find out about? • How will I examine my practices? • What is my hypothesis? 	Observation Member Checks
Week 10	PAR Cycle One Reflection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In what ways have I developed my understanding of self and gender? • What did I find when examining my practices about gender equity? • What contributed most to my learning about self and gender during PAR Cycle One? 	Reflection Interview

activities. Each CPR group meeting lasted approximately 90 minutes. I continued to utilize Guajardo et al.'s (2016) five CLE axioms to guide the meetings. The group reviewed the CLE axioms at the opening of each meeting to reiterate the nature of the PAR as a collaborative project and to establish shared understandings of the purpose and approach to the group's time together. Similarly, I explicitly referred to the project's focus of practice (to develop educators' understanding and use of equitable gender practices in an international elementary school) and Sub-Question 1 (To what extent do elementary educators develop an understanding of self and beliefs about gender?) and Sub-Question 2 (To what extent do elementary educators examine their practices about gender equity?) at each meeting launch.

I utilized protocols to ensure structured and collaborative dialogue and to elicit responses and contributions most relevant to the scope of the project. Two examples of Cycle One protocols are the Mandala Protocol (see Appendix I) and the Cycle One Interview (see Appendix J). The intentionality of the protocols allowed the team to build relationships and reflect upon their experiences with gender. Additionally, I regularly embedded opportunities for member checks in CPR group meeting agendas and added guiding questions. I would present data derived during CPR group meetings, associated activities, and the contributions of participants to seek clarity and check for understanding as a quality control measure to improve the accuracy, credibility, and validity of the PAR project and the data drawn from it.

For example, an explicit member check was embedded into Week 5, Mandala Connections. During the previous CPR group meeting (Week 3, Mandala Sharing) participants presented their mandalas to the group through a personal narrative supported by guiding questions. As each group member shared their mandala and personal narrative, I recorded selective verbatim notes. For the Week 5 experience, I presented to each group member the notes

previously recorded to check for accuracy and understanding. Figure 17 is an excerpt from the agenda of Week Five, Mandala Connections. During the activity titled “Mandala Review and Coding,” I encouraged each member to return to the personal narrative notes recorded during the Mandala Sharing exercise. I then asked them to compare and contrast each other’s experiences, to review drafted codes as they had emerged for me during the coding process, and to offer alternate views on my interpretations. I coded the artifacts from CPR group meetings during Cycle One, which were utilized in the creation of each member’s portraiture and to identify the cycle’s emergent themes.

Personal Narratives. I continued to utilize personal narratives to build trust, increase my knowledge and understanding of the CPR group members, and provide opportunities for the group members to examine the ecology of self and organization. I incorporated personal narratives in three of the six Cycle One CPR group meetings to stimulate reflection and sharing. I strategically offered prompts at key moments in each meeting. Table 12 includes a sample of the experiences and associated personal narrative prompts that were used throughout the meetings.

CPR Group Interviews. I individually interviewed the CPR group members in the final week of Cycle One using a semi-structured interview approach. I asked seven open-ended questions of CPR group members, each question designed to elicit responses to and experiences relating (predominantly) to Sub-Question 1 and Sub-Question 2. The template used for Cycle One interviews is shown in Appendix J. Additionally, Table 13 shows the interview questions asked and their correlation to the sub-questions.

As part of the Cycle One interview, CPR group members were asked to record their thoughts and understandings about contemporary research on gender and teachers drawn from

Time	Experience	Notes
5 min	Circling Back - Past, Present, and Future Protocol <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What have you been noticing, reflecting on, and changing? ● Have any connections emerged between your learning and/or our work? ● What have you been wrestling with? 	
30 min	Mandala Review and Coding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Mandala Sharing ● Clarifications ● Code ● Connections ● Disconnections What are we seeing? What are some contrasting stories? What are we not seeing?	
10 min	Homework <input type="checkbox"/>	

Figure 17. Week 5, Mandala connections member check example.

Table 12

PAR Cycle One Sample Personal Narrative Prompts

Week	Purpose	Personal Narrative Prompt
Week 3	Mandala	<p>Consider your identity in light of your journey and your stories.</p> <p>Turn your attention to your associations and connections, the people, partnerships, and power dynamics that influence your relationships.</p> <p>Focus on the role EAC plays or does not play in realizing gender equity.</p>
Week 5	Mandala Connections	<p>What are we seeing?</p> <p>What are some contrasting stories?</p> <p>What are we not seeing?</p>
Week 6	Gender and Educators	<p>Notice gender in your workplace and daily practices.</p> <p>Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationships • Communications • Spaces • Assumptions/approaches

Table 13

The Correlation Between PAR Cycle One Interview Questions and the PAR Project's Research

Sub-Questions

PAR Cycle One Interview Questions	Related PAR Project Research Sub-Question
1 To what extent did the mandala experience support you in developing your understanding of self and beliefs about gender?	1 To what extent do elementary educators develop an understanding of self and beliefs about gender?
2 To what extent did the CPR discussions support you in developing your understanding of self and beliefs about gender?	1 To what extent do elementary educators develop an understanding of self and beliefs about gender?
3 What did you learn about yourself and gender during this Cycle 1 experience?	1 To what extent do elementary educators develop an understanding of self and beliefs about gender?
4 What were you motivated to find out about, and why was this important to you?	2 To what extent do elementary educators examine their practices about gender equity?
5 What did your investigation reveal?	2 To what extent do elementary educators examine their practices about gender equity?
6 What part of the research shared in Gender and Teachers resonated with you and your investigation? Why is this so?	2 To what extent do elementary educators examine their practices about gender equity?
7 As a reflective practitioner and gender equity advocate, what does this mean for you and your instructional practices? Where to from here?	3 To what extent do elementary educators implement equitable gender instructional practices?

Chapter 2 of this project. I further prompted group members to relate their understandings of the research to the experiences they had had and insights drawn from being part of the CPR group. I invited CPR group members to record their answers in writing in advance of our interviews. We used their written responses in our conversation, and I added further details as they arose during the interview. The data drawn from the interviews were particularly helpful in creating a synthesis of the experiences, influence, and understandings of each CPR group member as the direct result of Cycle One. Participants utilized this data when composing their portraits as they perceived clear connections between their personal experience and their role educators exploring their own practices through a gender lens.

Field Notes. I used field notes in Cycle One to record my observations of the CPR group's interactions, including individual contributions during times of discussion, sharing, and reflection through selective verbatim note-taking.

Reflective Memos. During Cycle One, I prepared reflective memos in Weeks 1, 2, 3, and 4 to document my meaning-making process. I used the reflective memos to link ECU coursework related to my understanding of organizational theory and my leadership practices as the CPR group leader.

PAR Cycle Two

PAR Cycle Two took place over 9 weeks between August and October 2022. During this time, the CPR group held four meetings that I designed to address the project's overarching research question: How do educators promote gender equity in an international elementary school? The goal of the activities was to address the final two sub-questions:

3. To what extent do elementary educators implement equitable gender instructional practices?

4. How do I grow and develop in my leadership as I work with educators to promote gender equity?

As the CPR group leader, I continued to uphold the relational trust and gracious space established during the Pre-Cycle and Cycle One processes. In line with the previous two cycles, I developed agendas and activities to encourage deep reflection, opportunities for personal and group learning, and dialogue. I engaged in reflective dialogue with my ECU coach throughout the 9 weeks to seek alternate perspectives as well as to receive feedback on my approach as the CPR group leader. Next, I detail the activities that took place during Cycle Two.

I maintained a commitment to Guajardo et al.'s (2016) ecologies of knowing by designing and facilitating Cycle Two activities to elicit the forces, tensions, and contributing factors surrounding gender at EAC at the levels of organization, community, and self. Table 14 shows the alignment between the project's three cycles of inquiry, the corresponding ecologies of knowing foci explored, and the research sub-questions used to guide the CPR group's activities.

Our Cycle Two exploration at the meso level of organization leveraged CPR group member's learning from Cycle One in which each CPR group member identified an area of gender inequity in their own practices as part of our inquiry into the role of educator and one's responsibility towards larger society (Guajardo et al., 2016). In Cycle Two CPR group members considered and enacted strategies to address the identified gender inequities in their own classrooms, thus addressing the project's third sub-question, To what extent do elementary educators implement equitable gender instructional practices?

At the macro-level of community, CPR group members returned to their mandalas, especially quadrant three (Building Community) and quadrant four (The Whole, The Big

Table 14

PAR Project's Research Cycles, Ecologies of Knowing, and Research Sub-Questions

PAR Project Cycles	Ecologies of Knowing	Research Sub-Question
PAR Pre-Cycle	Self	1
PAR Cycle One	Self, Organization	1 & 2
PAR Cycle Two	Organization, Community, Self	3 & 4

Picture) to propose answers to the local, micro-, and meso-level concerns specific to gender inequity at EAC. At the same time, we considered sub-question four, How do I grow and develop in my leadership as I work with educators to promote gender equity?

I embedded opportunities for self-reflection through reflective memoing and designed activities to elicit feedback from CPR group members on my leadership of the PAR project and as a gender equity leader in the community. Cycle Two also included CPR group meetings, personal narratives, and observations. Table 15 shows the engagement timeline of Cycle Two activities; a summary of each activity follows.

Mandala. The mandala experience was the foundation for PAR Cycle One. Quadrants One, Two, and Three were the focus of PAR Cycle One. The physical representations of the individual CPR group members' mandalas and the subsequent Mandala Sharing experience provided the raw material for each member's portraiture. During PAR Cycle Two, our focus shifted to Quadrants Three and Four (corresponding to Sub-Questions 3 and 4) with CPR group members exploring gender equity in the contexts of their own classrooms and practices (organization) and greater EAC (community). Table 10 shows the alignment of the mandala quadrants, the ecologies of knowing, and the sub-questions.

CPR Group Meeting and Member Checks. The CPR group participated in four CPR group meetings during PAR Cycle Two. I shared the meeting's purpose along with a formal agenda in advance of each meeting to inform participants and answer any questions in advance. Table 16 shows the purpose of each PAR Cycle Two CPR meeting, the guiding questions, and the corresponding activities.

Each CPR group meeting lasted approximately 90 minutes and was guided, as in Cycle One, by Guajardo et al.'s (2016) five CLE axioms. Similarly, at each CPR meeting launch, I

Table 15

PAR Cycle Two Timeline and Activities

Activities	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6	Week 7	Week 8	Week 9
CPR Group Meeting (n=4)	•			•			•		•
Personal Narrative (n=4)	•			•			•		•
Member Checks (n=4)	•			•			•		•
Observation (n=2)			•	•					
Reflective Memo (n=1)						•	•	•	

Note. (n) denotes the number of CPR members involved in each respective activity.

Table 16

PAR Cycle One CPR Group Meetings' Purpose, Guiding Questions, and Supporting Activities

Week	Purpose	Guiding Questions	Activities
Week 1	Our Stories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What was my response to reading my own portraiture? • What was my response to reading others' portraitures? • Which of the CLE axioms were prominent when reading my own and others' portraitures? • Based on what I learned and was revealed by the PAR Cycle One investigation, what am I going to do to take action, and how will I assess if my action has made a difference to my practices? 	Personal Narrative Member Checks
Week 4	Gender in My Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where was gender inequity identified in my practices? • How might this be addressed? • What did I do? • What did I find out? • What does this mean for me and my practices? 	Personal Narrative Observation Member Checks
Week 7	The Whole, The Big Picture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What needs to be in place/developed to realize gender equity at EAC? • What do I expect of leaders with regard to gender equity? • What is the role of educators in moving gender equity forward at EAC, and what do they need to succeed? • Where do you I/we fit into the movement towards a gender-equitable EAC? 	Personal Narrative Member Checks
Week 9	PAR Reflection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the major understandings/takeaways/themes/ideas that have emerged for me during this work together? • To what extent did I develop an understanding of self and beliefs about gender? • To what extent did I examine my practices about gender equity? • To what extent did I implement equitable gender instructional practices? • How did I grow in my leadership to promote gender equity? 	Personal Narrative Member Checks

explicitly referred to the project's focus of practice (to develop educators' understanding and use of equitable gender practices in an international elementary school) and Sub-Question 3 (To what extent do elementary educators implement equitable gender instructional practices?) and Sub-Question 4 (How do I grow and develop in my leadership as I work with educators to promote gender equity?). I utilized protocols to ensure structured and collaborative dialogue and elicit responses and contributions most relevant to the scope of the project. Two examples of PAR Cycle Two protocols are the Where To From Here Protocol (see Appendix K) as part of the Week 7 CPR group meeting and the PAR Reflection and Takeaways (see Appendix L) used during the Week 9 CPR group meeting. The protocols I introduced and used were intentional and allowed the team to co-create recommendations from their PAR project experience as well as verify the shared takeaways from their work together.

Additionally, I embedded opportunities for member checks regularly in CPR group meeting agendas and included guiding questions. I would present data derived during CPR group meetings, associated activities, and the contributions of participants and solicit feedback to improve the accuracy, credibility, and validity of the data. For example, CPR group members read their own and others' portrayures during the Week 1 CPR group meeting to verify accounts and ensure fair and respectful representation of each participant's story. In addition, during the Week 9 CPR group meeting and as part of the PAR Reflection and Takeaways, I invited CPR group members to rate as either (1) high importance, (2) moderate importance, (3) not important the five themes that had arisen from the data collection and coding processes. Figure 18 shows a sample of the recorded assessments offered by the CPR group members.

Personal Narratives. I continued to utilize personal narratives to build trust and to facilitate connections, the sharing of experiences and understandings, and joint reflection about

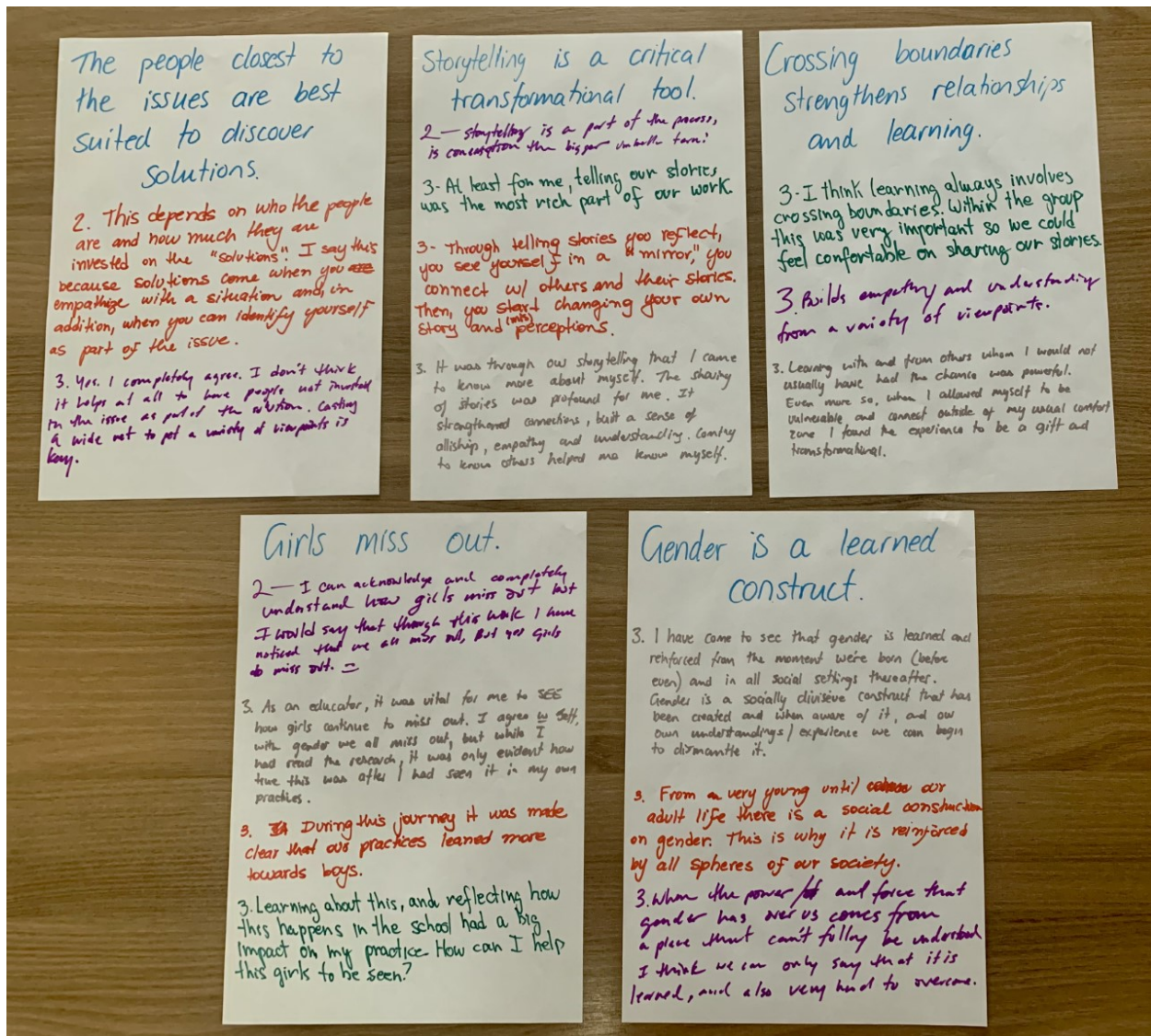


Figure 18. Week 9, PAR reflection and takeaways member check sample.

gender equity at the organization and community levels. The three personal narrative prompts used at each meeting during PAR Cycle Two were:

- What have you been noticing, reflecting on, changing?
- Have any connections emerged between your learning and/or our work?
- What have you been wrestling with?

Field Notes. As in Cycle One, I used field notes in Cycle Two to record the CPR group's experiences, insights, and contributions through selective verbatim note-taking.

Reflective Memos. During PAR Cycle Two, I prepared reflective memos to reflect upon and document my meaning-making process. I wrote reflective memos in Weeks 6, 7, and 8 to link learning derived from ECU coursework on equity and educational leadership to the outcomes of the CPR activities. The process of memoing helped me consider my contribution to and leadership of the PAR project in my role as CPR group leader.

Data Analysis

Qualitative research data analysis is a sense-making process in which collected data is analyzed by conducting systematic processes to derive meaning (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Data analysis is “the search for patterns in data and for ideas that help explain why those patterns are there in the first place” (Bernard, 2011, cited in Saldaña 2016, p. 9). For this project, I relied on the processes of *codification*, the application and reapplication of codes to qualitative data to divide, group, reorganize, and link data elements to derive meaning and develop explanations (Saldaña, 2016). I applied these data methods to codes, which are words or short phrases that symbolically indicate a summative attribute (Saldaña, 2016). I first grouped codes into categories (PAR Pre-Cycle data), then emergent themes (PAR Cycle One), and finally findings (PAR Cycle Two). Through the consolidation of categories, the data analysis process I used progressed

towards thematic, conceptual, and finally theoretical outcomes (Saldaña, 2016). Figure 19 represents the codification process adapted from the work of Saldaña (2016, p. 14) that was applied to this PAR project.

I utilized open coding to organize data into sets of evidence and then analyzed for patterns relating to each research question (Saldaña, 2016). Then I triangulated the data through first- and second-level coding. I developed emergent categories for initial coding drawn from the PAR Pre-Cycle and confirmed them with second level coding following PAR Cycle One. By the conclusion of PAR Cycle Two, the consolidated themes from the previous cycles became findings and eventually responses to the PAR project's research questions. The multi-step data analysis approach I chose for this project, recommended by Creswell and Creswell (2018), is detailed here.

1. Organize and prepare the data for analysis. This included transcribing interviews, typing field notes, and sorting and arranging data into different types depending on the sources.
2. Read all the data to get a general sense of the information and a chance to reflect on its meaning.
3. Code the data. This step included taking text, documents, and artifacts gathered, segmenting chunks into categories, and labeling the categories with a term. Coding was also used to reveal overarching themes derived from the data, which became the foundation for the project's findings.
4. Generate a description and themes. The coding process was used to generate categories and themes for analysis. Descriptions included information about the PAR project's CPR, the elementary school, and the project activities.

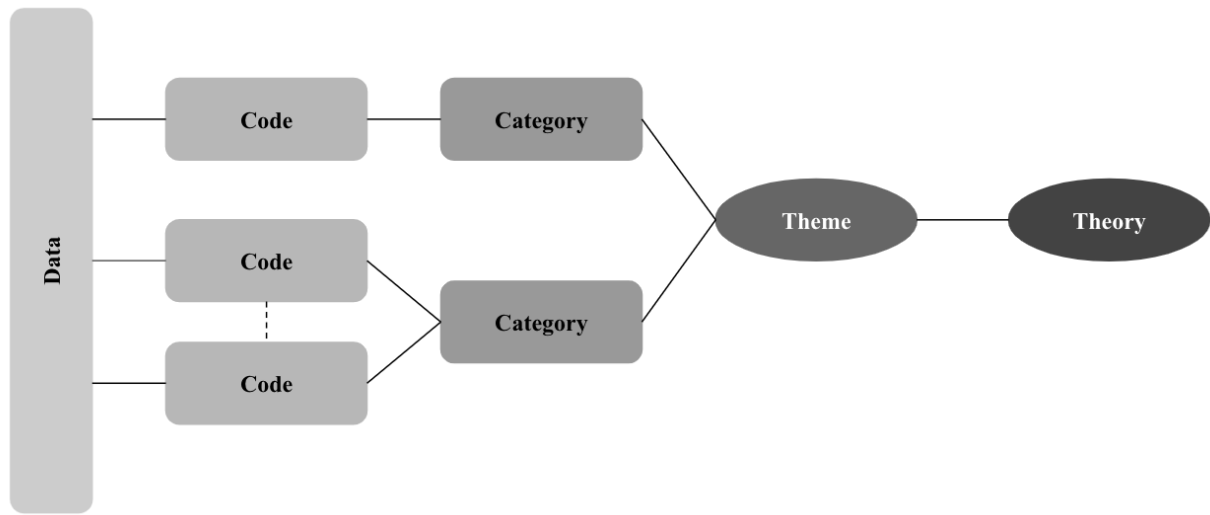


Figure 19. The codification process.

5. Represent the description and themes. Narrative passages were used to convey the findings, substantiated by the incorporation of visuals, figures, and tables.

While experiencing the Pre-Cycle with the CPR group, I used the reflective memos to link learning from ECU coursework and my leadership practices. Table 17 summarizes the data and areas of focus that emerged from the reflective memos. I collected artifacts from the CPR group meetings to use as evidence, including individual journey lines, personal narrative notes, and the photo walk table. I collected data from the CPR group meeting agendas and notes. In addition, I interviewed each CPR group member.

I inductively coded data using what Saldaña (2016) describes as exploratory coding. I created a codebook that listed the data collection experience and evidence alongside initial subcodes. From the subcodes, I defined iterative codes and recorded the frequency of each code (see Figure 20). I then transferred codes and subcodes along with their frequencies to a summary sheet. After this process was repeated for several pieces of data, I employed deductive coding by grouping codes of the same or very similar names. I added or modified codes where necessary while maintaining subcodes to ensure the integrity of the data. Finally, I combined frequency tallies to reveal the comparative dominance of codes. Throughout the coding process, patterns or categories of codes began to emerge. I placed categories alongside the code column on the summary sheet. I continued to keep codes and subcodes on the summary sheet to remind myself of the origin of the code and its origin. Figure 21 is a sample of the coding summary sheet.

Throughout Cycle One and Cycle Two and like the Pre-Cycle experience, I found the CPR group meetings to be critical in the data collection process. Specifically, the mandala experience, observations, and interviews led to rich discussions, reflections, and new understandings related to self, organization, and gender. I collected CPR group meeting artifacts

Table 17

PAR Pre-Cycle Reflective Memo Data

Codes	Subcodes	Data Frequency
Commitments	CLE axioms	5
	Transform reality	10
	Vulnerability	6
	Gracious space	7
Leader Focus	Relevance	6
	Purpose	5
	Focus of practice	4
	Research questions	4
	Honor voices	11
	Distributed/collaborative leadership	12
	Reduce coercion	3
	Data collection	1
Feminist praxis	1	

Code	Subcode	Evidence / Notes	Frequency	Activity / Experience / Data Collection	Date
Family	Expectations	Grandparents, parents	II	CPR Meeting 1: Journey Line	21/10/2021
	Rules	cans and can not	I		
	Role models	What is done New insights - older sister	III		
	Discussions	father	I		
	Opportunities	Opportunities offered to me by my parents	I		
School	Expectations	Girls do... vs boys do.... Dress code	III		
Recreation	Games	Roles	II		
	Toys	Girls toys vs boys toys	II		
	Sports	Encouraged involvement - Basketball, soccer Discouraged involvement - Rowing, rugby	I I		
Religion	First communion		I		
	Church	expectations breaking-up with the church	III		
Professional Learning	Educator	Students - Responsibilities as an educator towards contributing to gender differences or not	IIII		
		Norms - Males are underrepresented in elementary settings	I		
	Educational Leader	Responsibilities as an educational leader towards leading for gender equity	II		
Personal Learning	Informal learning	Psychoanalysis, feminism, motherhood, Language Going to the university I met so many people who helped me open my mind and got in touch with some texts about feminism that shaped my idea of what it is to be a woman. Some friends made me question the neutrality of speech although it was not easy to leave behind expressions that sounded natural.	IIII		
	Formal learning	University, masters, doctorate	II		
Relationships	Experiences / Perspectives	Learning about gender from friends' experiences and views Travelling	IIIIII		
	Sexuality	Coming out	I		
	Marriage		I		
Harrassment		Being heckled on the street Public harassment	II		
		Bullying - Called "fag"	I		

Figure 20. Exploratory coding process.

Category	Code	Subcode	Evidence / Notes	Frequency	Data Set	Date	Subtotal	Total
Interpersonal Gender Education	Family	Grandparents, parents						
		Expectations	How much of what we hear about gender from s Another student in G5 when he was in G3 did a	III	Journey Lines	21/10/2021	11	57
			A PE teacher pointed out that boys tend to enjoy cans and can notis	I	Photo Walk	2/12/21		
		Rules		I	Journey Lines	21/10/2021		
		Role models	What is done New insights - older sister	III	Journey Lines	21/10/2021		
		Discussions	father	I	Journey Lines	21/10/2021		
	Opportunities	Opportunities offered to me by my parents	I	Journey Lines	21/10/2021			
	Relationships	Rules	The rules for girls vs the rules for boys My relationships x My brother's relationships Boys and girls apart except when they wanted to Friendships - In high school, I had more friends Prom/Dances - Assumed that you would ask a g	IIIIIIII	Journey Lines	4/11/2021	20	
		University Experiences	Going to the university I met so many people w	III	Journey Lines	21/10/2021		
		Experiences / Perspectives	Learning about gender from friends' experiences Travelling	IIIIII	Journey Lines	21/10/2021		
		Sexuality	Coming out	I	Journey Lines	21/10/2021		
		Marriage		I	Journey Lines	21/10/2021		
	Recreation	Sports	Encouraged involvement - Basketball, soccer Discouraged involvement - Rowing, rugby girls used to do ballet, boys soccer. Did not want to play little league but was comp Breaks - Boys played sports Marching Band - Leader was always male, flag It's also accepted/assumed that boys like soccer Cheerleading is considered by many people an e	IIIIIIII	Journey Lines	21/10/2021	20	
		Games	catch and kiss - boys chased the girls to kiss the boys games x girls games I noticed the division between girls and boys. G	II	Photo Walk	2/12/21		
				III	Journey Lines	4/11/2021		
		Toys	barbies were about dress-ups, Ken had cool cars I wanted a tool kit, but my father pointed out th As a young child I was always allowed to play v I remember preferring to play with "boy's" toys	IIII	Journey Lines	4/11/2021		
	Personal Inquiries			I	Interview: Paula	2/12/21	4	
Media	TV, movies	Psychoanalysis, feminism, motherhood, Langua women were emotional and needed the protectio representation of women's sports on TV was alr	II	Journey Lines	21/10/2021			
			III	Journey Lines	4/11/2021			
Systemic Gender Education	School	Representation	Norms - Males are underrepresented in element	I	Journey Lines	21/10/2021	8	
		Socialisation	This is an example of gender socialization - boy Students who go against these stereotypes are no This is an example of gender socialization - boy married women talking to married women whil boys tend to sit with boys, girls tend to sit with g	III	Photo Walk	2/12/21		
			In the different expectations for boys and girls, boys play soccer, they have the right to dominat	I	Interview: Paula	2/12/21		
		Space	Looking with new eyes at these photos, of the l. (Signage) Reinforces stereotypes of girls only w	I	Interview: Paula	2/12/21		
	Religion	Church	At church there were expectations for men and v	III	Photo Walk	2/12/21	1	
	Higher Education	University, masters, doctorate	I	Journey Lines	4/11/2021	1		
	Workplace	Work	University, masters, doctorate	II	Journey Lines	21/10/2021	2	
			Power differences between men and women	I	Reflective Memo	10/10-2/12/21	1	

Figure 21. Coding summary sheet sample.

and meeting notes as data sources. I also utilized CPR group member interviews, field notes, and member checks to triangulate the data CPR members presented during the CPR group meetings. I used open coding to analyze the data from each PAR Cycle One engagement, and the CPR group's emergent themes were revealed through this process. I designed the mandala experience to be the PAR project's central engagements that served to triangulate and verify the definitive themes of the project. Both Cycle One and Cycle Two produced rich data from the mandala experience as well as through associated observations and reflections. I again used field notes and regular member checks to triangulate the data relevant to the PAR project's themes.

Study Considerations

External ethical safeguards enacted in advance of the PAR project protected participants and ensured the integrity of the project and its findings. First, permission to conduct the PAR project was granted by the head of school at Escola Americana de Campinas (see Appendix D). I completed the Institutional Review Board Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (IRB CITI) certification in December 2020 to ensure compliance with the ethical requirements of human research (see Appendix B). Finally, I submitted the project's proposal to East Carolina University's Institutional Review Board (ECU IRB) which was accepted in November 2021 (see Appendix A).

Researcher Positionality

I recognize that a key limitation was the influence I possessed as the elementary school principal. In inviting participants to take part in the project, I was aware of my influence and worked to gain consent without coercion or obligation. Participants could withdraw their consent and end their role in the project at any time without reprisal. As the primary researcher for the PAR, I came to the project with ideas of what I wanted to study and which potential CPR

members might join me in the research. As a CPR group, we planned and implemented the CPR meetings together, then reviewed the artifacts produced during the meetings. I conferred with the CPR group throughout the PAR cycles and encouraged participants to express different views. In addition, we discussed validity considerations for the study.

Qualitative research methodologies are best suited for understanding complex realities, phenomena, and the meaning of actions in a given context (Queirós et al., 2017). Qualitative researchers must take into account the potentialities and limitations of the methodology and their advantages and disadvantages in shaping the course and findings of a study (Queirós et al., 2017). Additionally, the trustworthiness of qualitative research and the conduct of a study are crucial to the usefulness and integrity of the findings (Connelly, 2016; Cope, 2014). Next, I offer an overview of the measures established to uphold the validity and trustworthiness of the PAR project.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness, or rigor, refers to the degree of confidence in the approaches to data collection and interpretation and the methods used to ensure the quality of a study (Amankwaa, 2016; Connelly, 2016; Polit & Beck, 2018). Guba and Lincoln (1982) outline five criteria for establishing trustworthiness in qualitative research: credibility, dependability, confirmability, transferability, and authenticity. As not all criteria are used in every study (Connelly, 2016), only the criteria and complementary procedures used to establish trustworthiness for this PAR project are discussed.

Credibility

Analogous to internal validity in quantitative research, credibility seeks to answer the question, "Was the study conducted using standard procedures?" According to Gerdes and Conn

(2001), common limitations associated with qualitative research credibility include restricted time frames, depth of inquiry, generalization of findings, researcher bias, the accuracy of findings and their relevance to participants, and researcher accountability. Table 18 shows these common limitations juxtaposed with how Gerdes and Conn's mitigating techniques were incorporated to uphold a high degree of credibility.

Confirmability

I wrote and analyzed reflective memos as a means of data collection, and the CPR conducted regular peer debriefing and data analysis to reduce the influence of lead researcher bias. Additionally, we implemented member checking to verify the data collected and its interpretation to minimize researcher bias (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Creswell & Guetterman, 2019).

Transferability

Transferability is "the extent to which findings are useful to persons in other settings" (Connelly, 2016, p. 435). Transferability in qualitative research is supported by rich, detailed descriptions of the study's context, location, and people and through a high degree of transparency about data analysis (Connelly, 2016). I have shared a vivid picture of the PAR project's context, setting, participants, data collection, and analysis to inform readers. The PAR project was designed to contribute to the broader body of research and understanding of how educators can promote gender equity in international elementary schools. The project's resultant learning and design is therefore transferable to other contexts and studies.

Confidentiality and Ethical Considerations

Before beginning the project, I finalized all necessary processes for consent. Consent forms (see Appendix C) as a requirement for all participants were completed and approved by

Table 18

Qualitative Research Credibility Limitations, Techniques, and PAR Processes and Protocols

Credibility Limitations	Establishing Qualitative Research Credibility	PAR Processes and Protocols Used to Upload Credibility
Time	Prolonged engagement: the researcher is actively involved in the setting and with participants for an extended time.	PAR project consisted of three iterative action research cycles over 12 months involving the lead researcher and CPR.
Depth of inquiry	Persistent observation: the researcher utilizes a direct and probing mode of inquiry, over time, in an attempt to “dig deeper.”	Complementary to the three action research cycles, CPR meetings were driven by the FoP’s theory of action and research questions.
Generalization	Triangulation: the researcher attempts to determine if common findings are coming from different sources.	Reflective memos and member checks were used to triangulate the PAR’s dominant data collection protocols (interviews, field notes, observations).
Researcher Bias	Referential adequacy: the researcher documents decisions making note of personal thoughts/reflections that might occur concerning the data.	Reflective memos were used to record and reflect upon thoughts/connections/ideas that occurred during the PAR process.
Accuracy and Relevance	Member checking: the researcher clarifies the contributions of participants and checks for understanding.	The CPR used member checking as a quality control measure to improve the accuracy, credibility, and validity of the PAR project.
Researcher Accountability	Peer debriefing: the researcher is “debriefed” by a third party to stay focused and to cross-check data.	The CPR met outside of the school day to attend to its role, which included self-reflection and contribution, identification of problems, gathering and analyzing of data, co-generation of plans using the RPAO cycle, and member checking.

ECU IRB. All participants were made aware that participation was entirely voluntary and the duration of participation was at their discretion. The participants in the PAR project were elementary school educators at EAC. Each educator offered assets and was able to contribute to the project. Participant eligibility was based on predetermined criteria (see Table 2) of knowledge, availability, willingness, communication, collaboration, involvement, and representation. Each criterion was intended to maximize efficiency and the project's validity.

As lead researcher, I was cognizant that the PAR's focus on gender, specifically in relation to self, could promote a degree of vulnerability and intimate response from the educators. In addition, I continued in my capacity as the elementary school principal and the direct supervisor of each of the educators. The sensitive nature of the PAR's focus and my professional obligations required that I work to cultivate and maintain a high degree of trust, confidentiality, honesty, and empathy with the educators.

The aim of the project was to support educators to develop understandings of gender and engage in classroom practices that promote a gender-equitable school. Gender in education has been established as an area of controversy, and the CPR was required to maintain an awareness of the socio-cultural context within which they were operating and to be sensitive towards the students and educators. The CPR process systematically used member checking in which the researcher clarified the contributions of participants and checked for understanding as a quality control measure to improve the accuracy, credibility, and validity of the PAR project. The project's findings have been shared publicly with the school to improve its practices. To protect the PAR project's participants, data security and confidentiality were maintained through the following measures:

1. Electronic-based resources and data were housed in password-protected folders.

2. Non-electronic-based resources and data were housed in a locked file cabinet.
3. Participants could withdraw from the study at any time without consequence.

In this chapter I outlined the research design and methodology for the PAR project aimed at addressing the study's theory of action, that is, if educators develop deeper understandings of self and gender and use those understandings to examine practices, then we can implement new classroom and leadership practices that promote gender equity in the elementary school. The CPR group enacted three iterative cycles of inquiry guided by the action research characteristics of RPAO. Additionally, each inquiry cycle incorporated specific ecologies of knowing and related experiences, thus forming the basis of the group's engagement, addressing the PAR project's underlying research questions, and supporting epistemological curiosity. An activist PAR using the RPAO research model and guided by the CLE axioms set the stage for praxis, which is informed reflection to act and acting to address oppression (Freire, 2018). The data collection and analysis processes have been described in detail along with the study's potentialities, limitations, and ethical considerations. The next chapter will elaborate on the people and place of the PAR project.

CHAPTER 4: THE PLACE AND THE PEOPLE OF EAC

In the following chapter, I offer a description of the national and socio-cultural environment and the demographic make-up of the school where this PAR project was set. First, I explore Escola Americana de Campinas (EAC), particularly the elementary school, and discuss the school's growing local Brazilian population and declining foreign enrollment. Then, I consider family financial access to the school through an examination of household income and school tuition. Next, I analyze the gender composition of the student body, after-school activity participation, and adult staff. The final section is a description of the people leading the PAR, the co-practitioner research (CPR) group, including brief biographies of each.

The “Gender” Setting at Escola Americana de Campinas

Escola Americana de Campinas (EAC) is a private, American international school located in Campinas, São Paulo State, Brazil. Established in 1956, EAC remains the school of choice for the city's foreign families seeking a competitive international education for their children. At the school's inception, international students represented approximately 85% of EAC's population. By contrast, the international contingent of the school's 820 students is now less than 15%. As a not-for-profit private institution, EAC relies on student tuition for its financing. In 2021, the elementary school student tuition was approximately USD 9,515 per year. Currently, 320 students are enrolled in the elementary school from 275 families, creating an average tuition expense per year per family of approximately USD 11,418 since some families send more than one child. In 2020, the average Brazilian household net-adjusted disposable income per capita was USD 12,701 per year (OECD, 2020). Therefore, elementary student tuition at EAC is 89% of the average household income, far beyond the means of most Brazilian families.

Despite a deep national recession and the high economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic (OECD, 2021), student enrollment at EAC increased by 9% between 2014 and 2022 (see Table 19). EAC's steady enrollment growth is comparable to other international schools worldwide that cater to affluent local families seeking international education for their children (Bunnell, 2021; Gardner-McTaggart, 2016). EAC's student body is now predominantly from Brazilian, white, Christian, upper-middle-class families. Gender representation at EAC aligns with the population beyond the school gates. Boys constitute 45% and girls 55% of the student body. In the elementary school, the difference is only 4% between boys and girls enrolled in Grades 1 through 5.

EAC parents view the school's after-school activities program as an asset. The program provides a range of enriching activities such as sports, wellness, arts, and technology classes. The activities occur on weekday afternoons after the general school day. Elementary students through Grade 5 have the highest participation rate with an average daily rate of 86% (see Table 20). The variance between participation rates in after-school activities is minimal averaging 8% between Grade 1 and Grade 4. However, Grades 2 and 3 show strong participation by girls. By Grade 4, boys' participation rises to 97% while girls' participation begins to decline. Enrollment in the after-school activities program decreases for boys and girls in Grade 5 with participation of boys at 80% and that of girls dropping to 60%, the lowest participation rates for both across the five grades.

Gender participation rates for each after-school activity offered to elementary students reveals biases in line with traditional gender norms and align with the gender representation of the adult leaders. Girls are overrepresented in cheerleading and arts and wellness activities (violin, sewing, gardening, design and sculpture, painting and drawing, cooking, drama, music

Table 19

EAC Student Enrollment

	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
Preschool	145	158	168	146	129	131	85	113
Elementary School	279	266	287	285	297	274	309	313
Upper School	292	280	300	300	333	345	354	395
Whole School	716	704	755	731	759	750	748	821

Table 20

Elementary School After-School Activity Participation Rates Per Grade Level

Elementary School	Boys (%)	Girls (%)
Grade One	90	83
Grade Two	85	96
Grade Three	88	93
Grade Four	97	88
Grade Five	80	60

expression). Boys, on the other hand, are a majority in soccer, basketball, and technology (robotics, coding) (see Table 21). The only activities that do not reflect this gender pattern are technology and volleyball: 66% of technology activity leaders are women while the participation rate for girls is only 37%. In volleyball, the participation rate of girls is higher than that of boys (56%) even though all volleyball coaches are men.

Gender norms are also evident in staffing at EAC as shown in Table 22. Women are overrepresented at 66%, and women dominate in the lower grade levels, preschool, and elementary. While there are more men in the middle and high school sections, they remain significantly fewer than women in those positions. Men and women are equally represented only in whole school departments such as the library learning commons; in physical education men outnumber women by 34%. Administrative roles at EAC are dominated by women except for security and maintenance positions.

Although women outnumber men at EAC, leadership positions within the school are almost entirely held by men. Outside of the pedagogical leadership comprising section principals and the head of school and the area of communications, men fill all other leadership roles (see Table 23). The trend toward more female teachers and more male leaders is consistent in all Brazilian schools as well as worldwide (DODS Diversity & Inclusion, 2021). Moreover, the predominance of male leadership aligns to “traditional” gender roles with females filling leadership roles in only pedagogical and communication areas.

The Co-Practitioner Research (CPR) Group

I established the co-practitioner research (CPR) group as the first task of the PAR Pre-Cycle. After obtaining approval from East Carolina University’s Institutional Review Board (ECU IRB) in October 2021, I developed CPR group member criteria. I then contacted

Table 21

Elementary Student and Coach After-School Activity Gender Representation

Activity	Students Boys (%)	Students Girls (%)	Coaches Men (%)	Coaches Women (%)
Basketball	74	26	84	16
Soccer	70	30	67	33
Technology	63	37	34	66
Volleyball	44	56	100	0
Arts and Wellness	20	80	40	60
Cheerleading	0	100	34	66

Table 22

EAC Staffing Gender Representation

EAC Staffing	Men (%)	Women (%)
Preschool	0	100
Elementary School	9	91
Middle and High School	44	56
Physical Education	67	33
Library Learning Commons	50	50
Administration	32	68
Security and Maintenance	92	8

Table 23

EAC Leadership Gender Representation

EAC Leadership	Men (%)	Women (%)
Board of Trustees	100	0
Pedagogical Leadership	33	67
Extracurricular Leadership	100	0
Business and Human Resources	100	0
Communications	0	100
Technology and Infrastructure	100	0
Facilities Management	100	0
Health and Safety	100	0

each participant via email and followed up in person to describe the project's aim and to extend a personal invitation to join the CPR group. Participants unanimously responded to the emails and subsequent conversations with enthusiasm, willingness, and a desire to participate.

I had tentatively identified nine potential participants who could be eligible for CPR group selection. I created sampling criteria and assessment indicators based on optimal personal attributes of CPR group members (see Table 2). Four of the nine potential participants fulfilled all seven sampling criteria, and it was these four people who became the study's CPR group. I was confident that my choices would lead to the most effective and committed CPR group to obtain the information necessary to fulfill the intended scope of the PAR project. Table 24 shares information about the CPR group members. Next, I include a brief biography of each CPR group member, beginning with my own.

Shannon

I was born and raised in Brisbane, Australia. At the age of 8, my family moved to a country town, Kingaroy, some 3 hours northwest of Brisbane where my father, a college teacher, had been transferred. We lived in Kingaroy until my 12th birthday when we moved back to Brisbane. I lived in Brisbane throughout my high school years as well as my initial university experiences when I studied health science as an undergraduate and primary education as a postgraduate. Upon graduation as a primary school teacher, I moved to the city of Gold Coast where I began my career as an educator.

In January 2006, having completed 3 years of teaching experience at a local, private Lutheran School in Gold Coast, I made the decision to move to Beijing, China, to try my hand as an international school teacher. I stayed in Beijing for 4.5 years before moving to Ho Chi Minh

Table 24

CPR Group

Name	EAC Elementary School Role	Gender	Nationality	Years at EAC
Shannon	Principal	Female	Australian	5
Paula	Homeroom Teacher	Female	Brazilian	6
Vinye	Homeroom Teacher	Female	Brazilian	5
Jeff	English Second Language Teacher	Male	American	5
Lucas	Music Teacher	Male	Brazilian	7

City, Vietnam, where I continued my teaching career. In 2013, I accepted the role of primary curriculum coordinator and assistant principal at an international school in Bangalore, India, where I spent another 4 years enjoying my first experiences in educational leadership. In 2017, I joined the community and team at EAC as the elementary school principal.

I embarked on the PAR project with enthusiasm for finding out more about my personal and professional interest in gender equity with equal measures of enthusiasm to work and learn with my co-practitioners in the CPR group.

Paula

Paula began working at EAC in 2015 as a preschool teaching assistant. From 2017 to 2019, she coached the after-school cheerleading program. Paula moved to the elementary school in 2019 as a Grade 2 teaching assistant. In June 2021, Paula became a homeroom teacher. At the commencement of the PAR project, Paula was in the fourth month of her first year of teaching. Paula is recognized by colleagues for her positive approach to her work and life. She exhibits a professional willingness to learn and apply new understandings. Paula experienced an international upbringing with a Brazilian mother and Uruguayan father. She, her parents, and two siblings lived in France between the ages of 2 and 6. Paula returned to Brazil to attend private elementary and high schools and public universities in São Carlos and Campinas, both in São Paulo State. Paula is fluent in Portuguese, Spanish, French, and English.

In January 2022, Paula announced she was in the first trimester of her first pregnancy. Due to the COVID-19 restrictions in place at the time, Paula operated remotely as a homeroom teacher and as a CPR group member between January and March of 2022, joining CPR group meetings and experiences virtually. Paula returned to on-campus and in-person duties as of March 2022 as health restrictions were revised in the city of Campinas. In August 2022, Paula

began maternity leave and welcomed her first child shortly afterward. Paula participated in the CPR group during the Pre-Cycle, Cycle One, and the initial meeting of Cycle Two.

Vinye

Vinye was raised in the city of Campinas, São Paulo State, where she lived the first 35 years of her life. At university, Vinye followed her passion as an educator and subsequently began her teaching career at EAC in 2010 in the capacity of English teacher. Vinye spent time as a teaching assistant before moving into the role of Grade 1 teacher in 2013. In 2016 she took a 2-year leave of absence from EAC and pursued studies in Perugia, Italy, before moving back to Campinas. In 2020, Vinye returned to EAC and when this research project began was a homeroom teacher in Grade 4.

As an educator and member of the EAC community, Vinye advocates for equitable approaches to teaching and learning and demonstrates a willingness to learn and apply new understandings in her classroom. Vinye shared her enthusiasm for being part of this research project in her response to the invitation:

I much appreciate you thinking of me to engage in such an important initiative. I observe that as an institution we have a path to build in terms of implementing equitable gender practices; but, on the other hand, colleagues I have from other institutions also share their experiences in this field, and I can say that we are a vanguard. Do count me in. (EAC internal email, September 28, 2021)

Vinye confidently converses in Portuguese, English, and Italian.

Jeff

Born in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, to American expatriate parents, Jeff spent his childhood living abroad and attending international schools in Malaysia, Hong Kong, and

Mexico before moving to the United States for his college education. After completing an education degree in 2011, Jeff worked as a kindergarten teacher at a bilingual (Spanish/English) elementary school in Austin, Texas, serving children from low socio-economic backgrounds. Jeff moved to Campinas in 2017 to join the EAC team as a Grade 3 homeroom teacher. Jeff served as a Grade 3 team leader for 3 years from 2018 to 2020 before being appointed elementary English as a second language (ESL) teacher at the beginning of the 2021–2022 academic year.

Jeff is an advocate for community diversity, equity, and inclusion. He is recognized by colleagues for the thoughtful, reflective approach he brings to his professional life and teams. Jeff stays abreast of advances in education, particularly those relating to the promotion of inclusion and learning within diverse communities. Jeff is fluent in English, Spanish, Portuguese, and Mandarin.

Lucas

Lucas was born and lived in London, England, with his Brazilian parents for 2 years. When his father's work in London ended in 1994, Lucas and his parents returned to Brazil and settled in the city of São Jose dos Campos, São Paulo State. From an early age, Lucas had an obvious passion for music. Lucas became a proficient violinist during his youth and eventually returned to England to pursue further musical studies. Lucas became a music educator, teaching private violin lessons from the age of 15. In 2014, Lucas joined EAC's after-school activities program offering on-campus violin lessons for elementary students. At the same time, Lucas substituted for the preschool/elementary school music teacher when needed. In 2018, Lucas became the preschool/elementary school music teacher at EAC, a role that requires him to teach the foundations of music education to almost 400 students between the ages of 4 and 11.

Lucas is respected by his colleagues for his dedication to providing child-centered approaches to music education. A reflective, humble person and professional, Lucas shares an enthusiasm for Brazilian cultural and socio-political history and contemporary social movements and has read widely in these areas. Through Lucas' knowledge of music history, he has a working knowledge of Italian and French and speaks fluent Portuguese and English.

Summary

In this chapter I described the setting of the research project and the people involved in it. I depicted through national and cultural community representation the school's growing local Brazilian population and declining international enrollment. I portrayed family financial access to the school through an examination of household income and school tuition. Then, I analyzed the gender representation in student enrollment, after-school activity participation, and adult staff contributions. Finally, I introduced the CPR group and offered a brief biography that described the personal background and experience each CPR group member brings to this PAR project. In the next chapter, I further explore the context of the PAR project through the rich stories of the CPR group members presented by way of personal portraits.

CHAPTER 5: THE PORTRAITURES

I offer here, with respect and gratitude, the CPR group member portraits.

Lucas: Teachers Can Be the Source of Change

Lucas is a young man of stoic conviction and delightful complexity. At first meeting, one quickly comes to appreciate that behind the quiet, gentle, and unassuming veneer is an educated, fervent soul whose passion for the arts and their infinite beauty in form and interpretation is juxtaposed by equal devotion to Brazilian history and socio-cultural politics. Lucas is measured in what he reveals of himself and often adopts the role of quiet supporter. However, when he does speak, Lucas's succinct contributions are respected and heard.

Throughout the project's Pre-Cycle and Cycle One, Lucas contributed with enthusiasm and honesty. He listened and reflected deeply often bringing to the CPR group revelations and considerations derived from his own life and classroom. Lucas shared towards the end of the Pre-Cycle his experience as a member of the CPR group:

I believe that our meetings made me much more aware of gender in my everyday life. We know that Brazil has a very conservative culture regarding many aspects, but the meetings pointed out very concrete examples of how gender works in our lives as an ideology. Since we started, I've been reflecting a lot not only about how gender plays a role in elementary school, but also how it played a role in my life and how it still does. It has been a great experience to learn from the discussions and listen to the stories each member of the group is bringing. Many of the discussions and reflections that showed up during the meetings have been very important for me to reflect on, not only as an educator but also as a person. (Lucas, Past, Present, and Future Interview, December 2, 2021)

Lucas is the elementary music teacher at EAC. An accomplished musician in his own right, Lucas's first iterations of self were created through his steadfast dedication to the violin and music, which shaped his interpretations of the world around him and his place within it. Lucas highlighted his creative process and aesthetic appreciation during the mandala experience in Cycle One in which he represented his journey by connecting the variables of the quadrants in an infinity shape (see Figure 22).

Completing the first three quadrants made clear to me how there are parts of my identity that I don't usually show at school since I don't know how it is going to be accepted. Having the group discuss our personal experiences while creating the mandalas was a very meaningful experience to me. I felt that there are other people at school that share very similar values and experience similar discomforts. I must say that since our very first meeting I still get flashes all the time of childhood memories that gender played a part but I was never conscious [of]. As a white, straight, male it would be very easy for me not to see or recognize these elements of me and my life. (Lucas, PAR Cycle One Reflection and Interview, May 5, 2022)

Lucas's story begins in London, England. Lucas's father, a recent science graduate, was offered a teaching job in 1992 in London where Lucas was born that very year. Although he left the UK at age 2, Lucas returned some years later in what would prove to be a key moment of awakening for him. The family returned to their homeland of Brazil in 1994 and eventually settled in São José dos Campos, a small city by Brazil's standards 90 kilometers outside of São Paulo. Lucas's father continued to teach science at a local university, and his mother established a small dental clinic.

In the public schoolyards and classrooms of São José dos Campos, Lucas' felt an

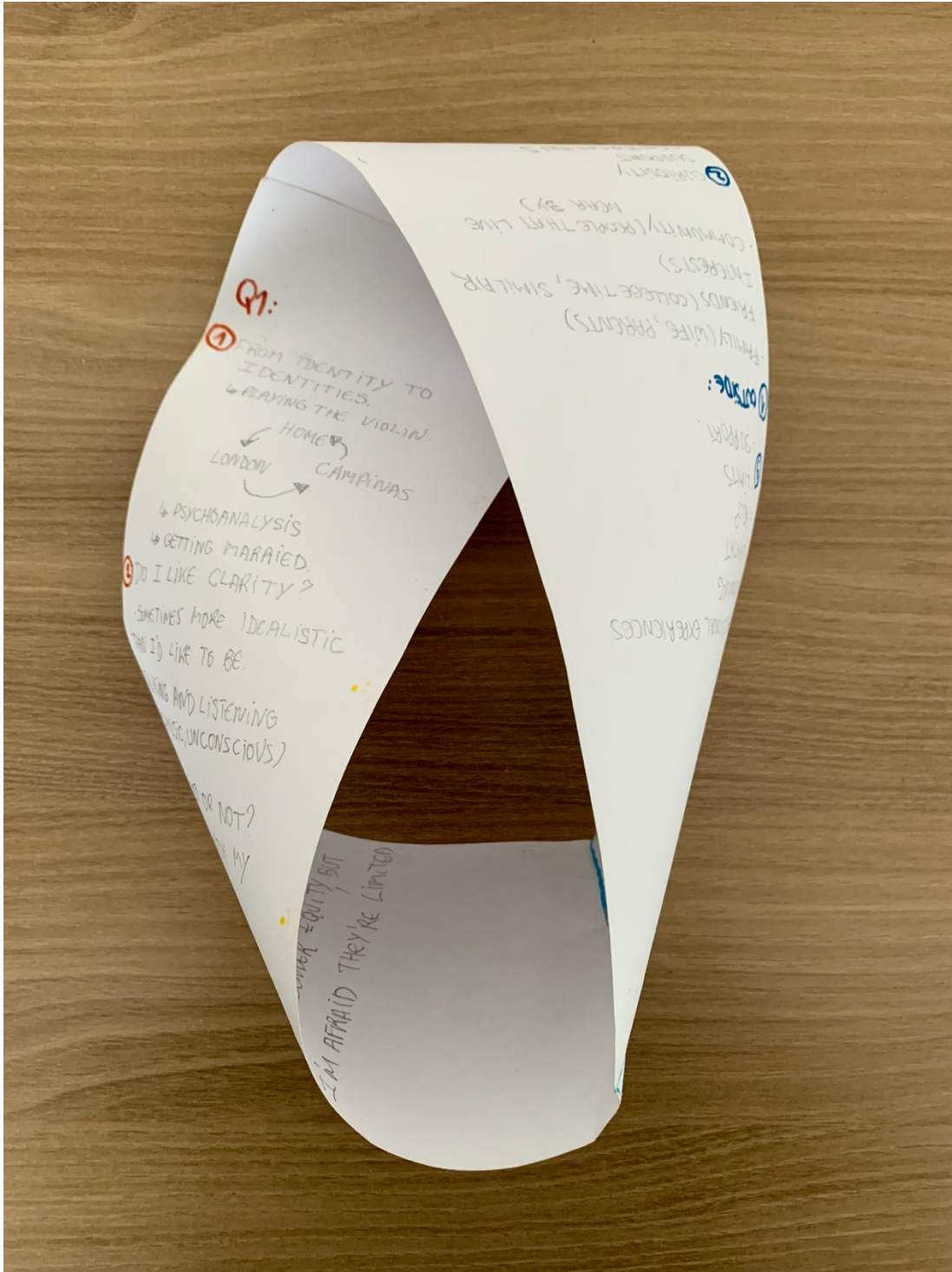


Figure 22. Lucas's mandala.

overwhelming sense of discomfort and displacement during his elementary and middle school years. He didn't share the popular habits and ideals of the groups around him. "Discomfort is the word that describes this experience. Trying to fit in and the need to fit in was something big for me since the beginning" (Lucas, Mandala Sharing, March 19–20, 2022). Gendered stereotypes, according to Lucas, were present throughout his childhood, from the toys and games children would play to gendered participation in sports as well as the expectations of children as learners in classrooms. During the CPR Group's Journey Line Deep Dive (November, 2021) activity, Lucas shared the gender influences that were present when he was a young child:

At that time—early 90s—it was very common for boys to play with toy guns and action figures that always played a violent role in the games. At this age, my best friend was a girl that lived in the apartment next to ours. It was very common for us to play together and mix our toys. When our playing involved our toys, it was very common for us to do a "Power Ranger and Barbie marriage," "action figure killing Ken to be with Barbie," or "Power Ranger saving Barbie from a certain threat." All these games were based on stereotypical gender narratives that we were used to (Lucas, Journey Line Deep Dive, November 18, 2021).

Later, sports became strong symbols of the gendered division between boys and girls.

According to Lucas:

I remember that it was around this age [6–11] that most of the school activities related to sports were divided into "boys" and "girls." Boys would play soccer, and girls would play volleyball. I never liked to be placed together with the "boys," and it was around this age that I started refusing to play some sports.

Around this time, Lucas remembers his dismay when his father, in a gallant effort to spend time in shared interests, would insist Lucas join him in the yard to kick the football. Lucas saw it as an innocent attempt to do what men should do—bond and learn the lessons of life modeled through sport. Lucas equally recalls his father’s disappointment at his apparent disinterest in the engagement. Instead, Lucas had developed a passion for music, and at the age of 8 pleaded with his parents to allow him to learn the violin. Even as a child, he saw in the violin prospects for himself beyond the narrow confines of the social and cultural milieu around him (Lucas, Mandala Sharing, March 19–20, 2022). He saw that music required interpretation, divergent perspectives, access to language, artistry, and dramatization far removed from the stifling schoolyard and classrooms to which he was subjected (Lucas, Mandala Sharing, March 19–20, 2022).

Lucas remembers his middle school years with a feeling of being an outsider:

I remember my colleagues being openly racist, homophobic, sexist people. My parents were never like that, but these people’s parents were. There’s always this political and social aspect that I never fit in in the schools I went to in Brazil.

Gender, in particular, continued to be divisive in Lucas’ school experience, extending to the expectations of boys and girls in school. He shared:

Some stereotypes started to be imposed on the whole cohort by teachers, families, and people around us. Boys are disorganized, and girls are well organized with their materials. Boys are immature, and girls always mature before boys. Boys are more engaged with physical activities because they have a lot of energy while girls prefer to talk and study. (Lucas, Journey Line Deep Dive, November 18, 2021)

By the end of middle school, Lucas stopped trying to fit in or make friends. Instead, Lucas shifted all his energy, thoughts, and time on his passion as a violinist (Lucas, Mandala Sharing, March 19–20, 2022).

What came next for Lucas proved significant. “The violin took me away from home in Brazil to London at 15, and it changed my life” (Lucas, Mandala Sharing, March 19-20, 2022). With his parents’ support, Lucas was sent to the United Kingdom to learn English, but the young man’s desire as an artist and dedication to the violin saw him instead spending most of his time under the tutelage of his violin teacher and immersed in a world distant from São José dos Campos. Lucas romantically reminisces about this period:

It was the first time I went to Europe, experienced diversity, and heard different perspectives. I went from a small town in Brazil to Bollywood, Turkish films, French-speaking, German-speaking—there were so many experiences I’d never had before. My eyes were opened; I saw so much, and I learned a lot. (Lucas, Mandala Sharing, March 19–20, 2022)

Lucas emerged from his London experiences a different person, but the return to Brazil was so jolting that it further solidified his determination to become a violinist. He felt he could not belong in the milieu of his Brazilian high school and its celebration of prejudice and ignorance and aspired to escape it.

When he embarked, in 2010, to university studies in performing arts, he found his people, his place, and for the first time a sense of belonging. Learning went well beyond lectures, rehearsals, and performances. In college Lucas was exposed to people and insights that broadened his horizons. Lucas recalls college as “the first moment to begin thinking about these things of gender, sexuality, politics, culture, identity, religion.” Alongside a grueling schedule of

practice and performance, Lucas continued to explore interests in literature, languages, psychology, and politics. Although already lauded as a performer, Lucas came to understand that he was already much more than this one dimension and identity. Lucas candidly shared this aspect of his personal journey and reflection on self, identity, and belonging:

Growing up, I always wanted to be a violinist. My relationship with my father was very difficult. Because he's a scientist, I wanted to be an artist as far from his choices as possible. This was an identity that I insisted on, now with some regret. As I grow, I am accepting of more than this one identity. I don't care about clarity in my identities; I like them to be blurred. What I do know is that I've always wanted to fit in.

Since his early teenage years, Lucas has taught private music lessons. He found a sense of satisfaction and ease working in this capacity with people of all ages and supporting the same passion for music he had. After completing his postgraduate degrees, Lucas pursued music education as his chosen vocation. His relationship with EAC began in 2014 when Lucas began offering private violin lessons to elementary students as part of the after-school program. When the preschool/elementary music teacher retired, Lucas was appointed to teach music to almost 500 students from the ages of 4 to 11. Lucas punctuated this life phase aptly: "Then started a different part of my life, being a teacher at EAC. It was ironic for me to see that I ran away from being like my father to being just like my father, a teacher."

Early in the CPR group's exchanges, Lucas was animated when recognizing gender inequity in the elementary school at EAC and shared his interest in coming to understand how his practices as an educator were or were not contributing to an environment of gender equity. Lucas's enthusiasm was shared during the Past, Present, and Future Interview (December, 2021):

Our work gave concrete examples of gender, like a slap in the face. I was shocked by it. We have concrete examples of gender stereotypes in our environment. We live with it; we live within it. Most times we don't think about it.

As early as the Pre-Cycle, Lucas shared an interest in investigating whether gender was influencing the way he assessed and worked with students:

I have to be conscious about it. Sometimes, given two groups, I have an urge to be tougher on the boys. I have this in the back of my mind: "Wait, why am I doing this, why am I calling this student's attention and not another's?" Our meetings have brought this up even more than before.

Towards the end of Cycle One, Lucas was motivated to investigate gender in his classroom. Lucas's reflections on his investigation and supporting rationale were recorded as part of the Cycle One Reflection and Interview (May, 2022):

At first, I came up with a hypothesis of how active participation in class could be framed from the gender perspective. Before I even started [the investigation], I realized that rather than judging student dispositions, I should be investigating my own. So, I wanted to see in my practice how gender and gender bias play a role. I decided to review the grading for two units of the fourth-grade classes. I wanted to see if any patterns would emerge regarding how I attributed grades and gender. The investigation revealed that in the fourth-grade units, even though there was not a big disbalance between boys and girls when I looked at which ones were considered as exceeding expectations, I discovered that despite the close numbers, boys tended to be considered more as exceeding expectations (see Appendix M). During our [CPR group] discussions and remembering about these projects, I identified that behavior demands from boys played a big role in

this. In this project (which is an individual one), redirecting behaviors probably led to additional time of instruction.

Upon reflection and when guided back to the Gender and Teachers literature found in Chapter 2 during the Cycle One Reflection and Interview (May, 2022), Lucas made connections with his investigation and findings. Lucas highlighted Sadker's (2000) sentiments referring to male dominance in the classroom being facilitated by teachers when they give boys more frequent and meticulous attention (positive as well as negative), which ultimately enhances their performance (Frawley, 2005; Sadker, 2000; Sadker & Sadker, 1994). Appendix N shows the highlighted excerpt of the literature mentioned by Lucas.

Having made a personal connection between student assessment and the difference in attention and time offered to boys as opposed to girls, Lucas offered the following reflection on how to address this gendered disparity:

I believe that in my practice I'll get even more intentional regarding grouping and how I can act on this relation of behavior-instruction. This means that my next objective is to find practical ways of managing my instructional time to guarantee a balance between boys and girls.

Finally, Lucas was asked to consider the impact of the CPR discussions in developing his understanding of his beliefs about gender.

I felt very supported by the group, and it has been a great opportunity to have them as peers. We managed to create a place where we're all comfortable sharing and at the same time very eager to find out more and learn from each other. The discussions of the group made me question a lot about myself and my positions. I heard Vinye's story, and it was interesting because I realized gender was so prominent and maybe women have

experienced gender overtly. Having the group to frame things about gender is really helpful because we're seeing through our discussions where there are social intersections that are in effect.

As the new school year began in August 2022, Lucas kept his commitment to balance his instructional time between boys and girls (Lucas, PAR Cycle One, Reflection and Interview, May 5, 2022). Lucas used a checklist to record and reflect upon each individual student's performance after every class. If he could not recall observing or spending time with a student, he would make a note and commit to having more time with that student in the following lesson (Lucas, PAR Cycle Two, Gender in My Practices CPR Group Meeting, August 25, 2022). Lucas shared that the checklist made him aware of whether or not he had established a gender-equitable learning environment. "Not only the quantity of instruction time but also quality varies when I'm interacting with students. When I make the effort to reflect on how much time and the quality of time spent with a small group or individual, I can support a much more equitable learning space" (Lucas, PAR Cycle Two, Gender in My Practices CPR group meeting, August 25, 2022).

Having identified a disparity in achievement between boys and girls in fourth-grade music during Cycle One, Lucas set out to decrease this difference. During Cycle Two's The Whole, the Big Picture CPR Group Meeting, Lucas reflected upon the effectiveness of the checklist strategy, noting that "because I was thinking about our work, I was looking for girls who were lost. Upon reflection, if I had not sought out these students [girls], they may have slipped past me" (September 13, 2022). Lucas utilized the checklist to compare his notes and observations with the incremental grades allocated to each student as the learning unit/module went on. At one point, Lucas found that six girls were meeting achievement goals as opposed to only three boys in one of his fourth-grade classes. Lucas recognised that "had I not relied upon

the checklist system and had this not been initiated then, these students might not have been noticed as less than meeting expectation” (Lucas, Cycle Two, The Whole, the Big Picture CPR Group Meeting, September 13, 2022).

Lucas identified the importance of our CLE axiom, “Conversations are critical and central pedagogical processes” (Guajardo et al., 2016), in the PAR process:

When we look back and see how powerful the discussions and reflections were, this idea became more alive than ever. Conversations are at the core of any change in the lives of those involved in education. We shared our stories, conflicts, and reflections, and this was the conductor of all personal and professional changes. (Lucas, Cycle Two, Our Stories CPR Group Meeting, August 4, 2022)

Lucas also shared about the importance of reading his own and fellow CPR Group members’ portraits:

It's always a surprise to have another person write and talk about yourself, especially when this happens in a reflective and welcoming environment like the CPR group. I believe that being able to read some of the impressions I made during our conversations gives me rich material to understand a little bit more about myself. From a very early stage, we all identified connections in our trajectories and how the feeling of "not fitting in" was very connected to gender and gender stereotypes. Reading and listening to the stories of the female members of the group made a huge impact on me, on how absolutely unfair gender stereotypes play a role in our society. This may seem like the most obvious thing since we all know it happens, but it's a completely different thing to see it in action in the lives of people that you get to know in their stories, aspirations, changes throughout life, their reflections, and choices. If when we started this work, I

already deeply respected my colleagues for the amazing professionals they are, after what we've been through and reading their portraits, this respect is also combined with admiration. (Lucas, PAR Cycle Two, Our Stories CPR Group Meeting, August 4, 2022)

Lucas recorded the major understandings that had emerged for him through his participation in the project (Lucas, Cycle Two, PAR Reflection, September 29, 2022):

- Sharing and reflecting about our stories have a big impact on our practices.
- As teachers, our relation to gender in the classroom is deeply connected to our personal journeys.
- Observations, discussions, and sharing are the basis of how we can improve ourselves as teachers.

Finally, Lucas presented three areas for action by way of recommendations as the result of his experience and interaction with the PAR project. From the outset, Lucas maintained a firm view that “at an institutional level action towards gender equity can be limited. I believe that the role of teachers can be decisive to a shift in the institution mindset” (Lucas, Cycle Two, PAR Reflection, September 29, 2022). Lucas emphasized the need for adequate time and supportive structures for the sharing of experience through stories and conversations. He also pointed to the need for further research to reflect upon gender in the EAC and its community and for gender equity to be an intentional goal of macro policy (Lucas, Cycle Two, PAR Reflection, September 29, 2022).

- Teachers need time to engage in reflections that follow a similar structure to the CPR group. Conversations in small groups should be the basis for a shared understanding about gender equity.

- Funding gender equity research and sharing the results with the community are essential for understanding gender equity within our reality and community.
- The school's staffing policies must be as gender equitable as possible.

As Cycle Two came to an end in October 2022, Lucas embraced the final task of composing a concluding paragraph to his portraiture, the story that had led to his current and future relationship with gender at a personal and professional level. Always measured and thoughtful, Lucas took his time to compose the following succinct sentiments, capturing the hopeful influence the PAR project had for the young educator:

As our work together developed, there were, and still are, so many memories related to gender that I didn't remember or didn't give value to. As these memories emerged, I felt compelled to see them not only using the gender lens and to reflect on their relation to our work but also on how they affected me as a person. Walking through this path made me reflect on practices I could change to support gender equity in my classroom and also led me to listen to my students more empathetically. Remembering once again how much school life experiences are not only about curriculum learning but also about the struggles and obstacles imposed on us by living in a society.

Vinye: Discovering and Re-Discovering Self and Voice

It comes from my family. I'm from a strong family of women who are white, who worked at home, and who suffered a lot emotionally and physically working on coffee plantation farms. My role models were people who had tough lives; these women were not ones to bake cakes, and I'm not either (Vinye, Mandala Sharing, March 19–20, 2022).

Vinye is a woman of conviction; outwardly, she portrays a down-to-business resolve with determination and resilience. Inwardly, she's vulnerable, kind, and complex. Vinye actively

seeks to distance herself from the mold of women she comes from. While the women who came before her didn't have the chance, Vinye says that on occasion she does secretly enjoy a hearty cake bake-up. Vinye's self-image, layered with her resolve to break free from the models that came before, makes for a woman of strength, passion, humor, sensitivity, and certitude. The elder of two children born and raised in the sleepy suburbs of Campinas, São Paulo State, to educated, middle-class parents. Her mother was a university professor, and her father an engineer. Vinye conveys the complexity of her family dynamics growing up and her attempt to balance the poor health of her mother, the absence of her father, and her desire for a sense of belonging and connection:

My growing up was about me trying to break the cycle of women who are really sick, men who are really absent, and trying to bring connections to these people. I would suffer for not having these connections and would reach out to make other connections.

Vinye's desire to make connections is strong in all facets of her life, personal and professional. She has lived rich experiences at home and abroad. Vinye's relationships are extensive and diverse, and she speaks knowledgeably about an array of subjects though she derives more joy from listening and learning. "I am able to navigate relationships; I like to connect with people, to hear their stories. This is my passion, my honesty, in relationships, in everything." Vinye's demonstrated her focus on connections and relationships through her mandala depiction (see Figure 23). Vinye represented the four quadrants of her mandala in the form of a tree, sharing the important connections and relationships needed to survive and thrive as well as those challenging aspects.

Vinye seems confident and assured, but below the surface she expresses a desire for deeper connection within her own family. "I've come now to have a very big sense of

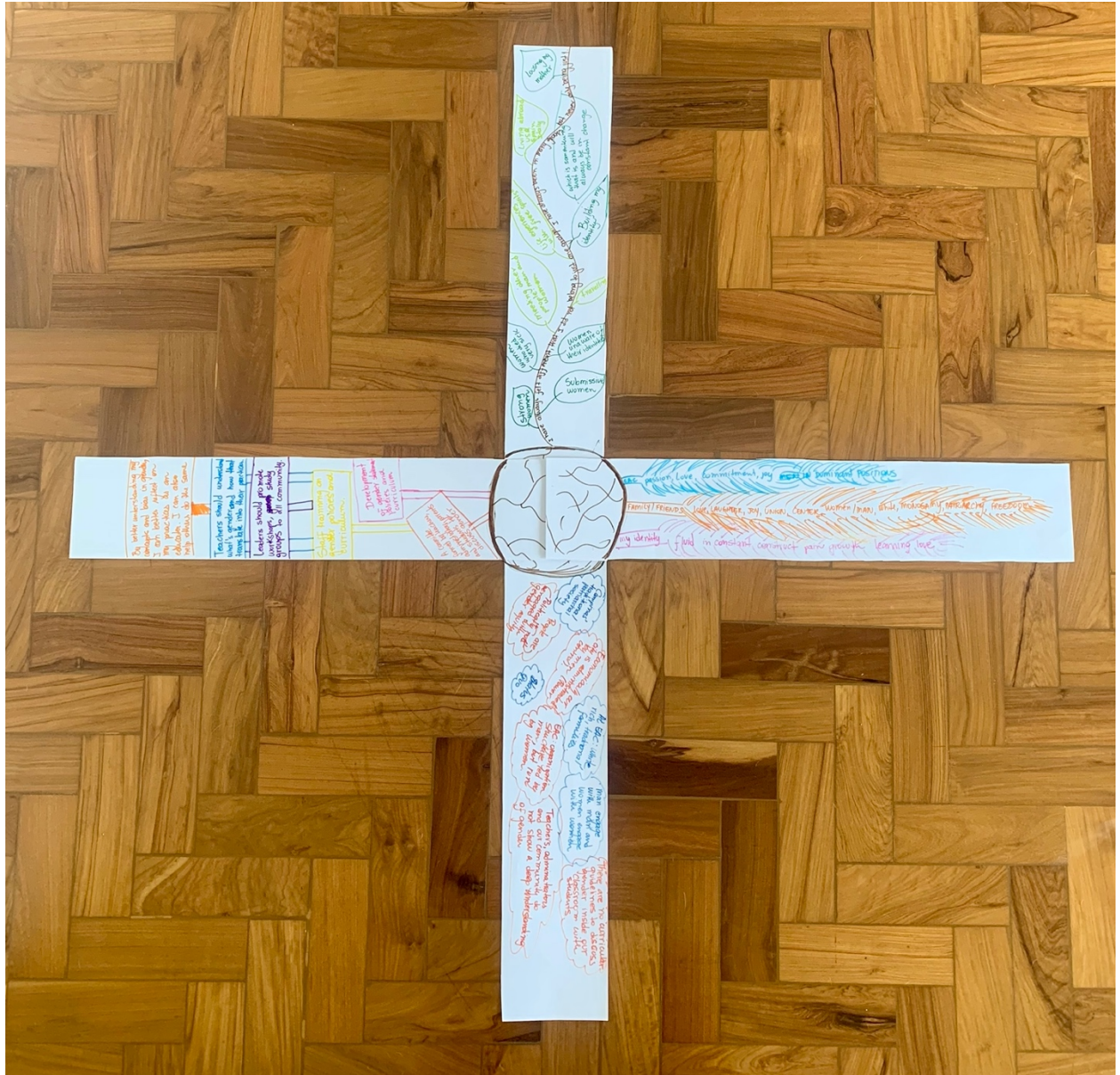


Figure 23. Vinye's mandala.

practicality with relationships. All the way throughout my life, I have not felt that I fit in anywhere.” She perceived the social structures of gender from her childhood. In elementary school Vinye noticed disparities in the way girls and boys dressed, played, and interacted: “Girls wore lots of pink, bows and laces” (Vinye, Journey Line Deep Dive, November 18, 2021); toys were gendered with, “Barbies being about dress-ups and Ken having cool cars and weapons,” and in the classrooms “boys were naughty, girls were well-behaved. I was in between—I struggled to identify what would be considered acceptable for boys and girls.”

Vinye recognized the divergent expectations for boys and girls and questioned the double standards of family rules and behaviors that were leveled at her but relaxed for her younger brother. It was at this point that Vinye’s relationship with her stoic, traditionally-minded mother became turbulent:

My relationship with my mother has always been difficult emotionally and physically.

My mother always maintained traditional ideals which were hard for me to reconcile. My father was always out working, and so my perception of men was based on work and the roles of men and women in the household. (Vinye, Mandala Sharing, March 19–20, 2022)

Vinye attributes her success in forming connections inside and outside the family unit to her growing-up experiences, recognizing that “it’s always been easier for me to get closer to and maintain relationships with men than women” (Vinye, Mandala Sharing, March 19–20, 2022). At age 15 with a growing taste for new and diverse perspectives, Vinye found a group of people whom she could rely upon, relate to, and learn from. She explored “many things surrounding sexuality and gender.” Vinye reminisces about this time with fondness adding, “By the time I

went to university, I had already experienced everything. So, I was the one introducing my university friends to these new experiences.”

Along with Vinye’s quest for belonging, her want for relational comfort, and a safe space to rest and fit, she battles the boxed, social confines often leveled at her along the way. “People tell me that I am many stereotypes, and I work against them.” Vinye is indignant when described as masculine for her assertiveness and direct approach to uncertainty and is equally uneasy when labeled a feminist and warrior when she questions the socio-political status quo. On rare occasions, Vinye will reveal her vulnerability and show a degree of sadness at being labeled through others’ gender lenses as too much or not enough. But then Vinye will offer softly, “I have a strong sense of self. I like to know about people’s passions. I like to know about who people are. I have lots of strong relationships of power and ruptures, and I have no regrets.”

Like other aspects of Vinye’s world and person, she approaches her work as an educator with purpose, commitment, and intention. Vinye is conscious and deliberate in the experiences she offers to the students in her care, always seeking to foster a sense of connection and community with her students, possibly a gift she seeks to give herself. Hence, she embraced the opportunity to be part of the CPR group and recognized the importance of the work:

Bringing these conversations to life and having space to talk about this is needed and important. Gender is not something that can be easily tackled with one conversation. At EAC this work is like trying to draw a line in the sand that the wind keeps blowing away. I say this because our community is conservative, and there are gendered expectations. There are roles and pressures that are placed on the children by their parents that are traditional: girls are pampered; boys are told they should be doctors. Girls play with girls,

and boys play with boys. My class is a melting pot of tension between boys and girls and almost becoming gendered and sexualized.

As the result of the Pre-Cycle experience, Vinye described a greater understanding of gender and a sense of awakening to gender in her own world:

I have been observing that my conception of gender is becoming more sensitive and expanded. This has been generating questions and changes in my personal beliefs and in the way I interact with others. I observe that I am more sensitive and more aware of the subject. [I am interested in] how I can bring this into my work, my teaching, my relationships with colleagues and outside of my profession. (Vinye, Past, Present and Future Interview, December 2, 2021)

Vinye contributed by listening intently to her fellow CPR group members throughout Cycle One. Vinye relished the opportunity to discuss gender and come to know others' stories using these insights to question and reflect upon her own gender experiences and understandings:

The discussions were supportive in helping me to interpret my own story alongside others and also becoming more aware of my own definition of gender with and without stereotypes. The way our discussions are led, along with the group's contributions, have been a great source of inspiration and reflection into my understanding of myself. (Vinye, Cycle One Reflection and Interview, May 5, 2022)

The experiences of Cycle One brought about a few revelations for Vinye about gender and herself. The first is the profound role the connections with others, particularly during her formative years, have played in influencing the person she is today:

During this first cycle, I have learned that even though I had many different experiences and role models while growing up, my ideas towards gender are still biased. I would say

that my life's story and the people in it reinforced and still reinforces that (Vinye, Cycle One Reflection and Interview, May 5, 2022).

Additionally, Vinye reflected on and shared her personal notions of gender, masculinity, and femininity, eventually recognizing a conflict with self-identity:

The group often remarks, “I don’t see you that way” when [I’m] sharing about the way I see myself. This has prompted me to consider what I perceive masculine and feminine to be. I am coming to realize that I am very accepting of others, their conceptions, and expressions of gender, but I am not the same way with myself. In this sense, the way I see and express myself [is] not related to what is expected by the status quo, but deep down I wish they were. I have known that for some time, but now I am able to see and feel the extent of it. In my conversations with the group, I have rejected the ideas of being too/not enough feminine or too/not enough masculine. My voice, convictions, and passions were seen by myself as too much or not enough. When observing who I am, my ideas of gender start to get blurry” (Vinye, Cycle One Reflection and Interview, May 5, 2022).

While grappling with the learning and reflective process as part of Cycle One, Vinye recognized and acknowledged the place and importance to her of the CPR group:

I have been receiving a lot of support to honor who I am, my voice and ideas. This has been a wonderful self-reflection process that I have been doing in order to deconstruct the feminine and masculine and start building my own sense of self and gender. I feel that this is the first time that I am part of a group that acknowledges my voice and its power. I wish I had more time with them, more experiences with them” (Vinye, Cycle One Reflection and Interview, May 5, 2022).

Finally, Vinye expressed a desire to come to know more about the people and voices valued in her classroom. Having self-identified that establishing relationships with boys and men is easier for her than with girls and women, Vinye sought to investigate whether this influenced her teaching practices. “I was curious to find out if my interactions with boys and girls were done the same way and had the same depth because I felt that I often wouldn't give the girls in my classroom enough voice” (Vinye, Cycle One Reflection and Interview, May 5, 2022).

Jeff volunteered to observe Vinye’s practices and joined her class of 22 students (11 girls and 11 boys) on two unannounced occasions. It was important to Vinye that the observations be an accurate snapshot of her interactions with students and a representation of her practices. To avoid altering her practices either consciously or unconsciously, Vinye asked Jeff not to disclose the details of how or when she would be assessed (How Gender Is Showing Up in Our Practices, April 28, 2022). In consultations with me, Jeff chose to focus on Vinye’s management of and response to student behavior, noting if neutral and/or direct instruction was given to students, a redirection for negative behavior or affirmation for positive behavior. The results of the two observations and the comparison between interactions with boys and girls are shown in Appendix O.

Over the course of the two observations, Vinye responded to girls on five occasions compared to 27 times for boys. Affirmations for positive behavior were equally low for both boys and girls with only one occasion each recorded in the second observation. In addition, Jeff noticed a disparity over the two lessons between direct instructions given to boys (16 times) and girls (twice) as well as negative behavior responses for boys (11 times) and girls (twice). When reflecting on the Cycle One observation experience and feedback, Vinye acknowledged that “I do interact with boys much more often [than girls, and ...] I do not compliment good behavior

regardless of the gender. The girls in my classroom tend to speak less than boys in general” (Vinye, Cycle One Reflection and Interview, May 5, 2022).

Along with these realizations and in considering the research shared relating to gender and teachers, Vinye mentioned the “hidden curriculum,” the manifestation of teachers’ conscious and subconscious biases (Carlana, 2019; Council of Europe, 2015; Frawley, 2005; Sadker & Sadker, 1994; Sanders, 2003) as an area relevant to her practices as the result of the observation experience (see Appendix P):

I am realizing how much I was unconsciously unaware of biases towards myself and by extent towards others. This is making me think that if I doubt my own voice and convictions, how can I make others trust their own? How can I be a role model to my students, friends, and family? Now, looking ahead, I want to better understand myself—why is it so hard for me to acknowledge my voice? My strengths? I understand that this would break with years and years of people hindering my voice. It is an identity process, a powerful one” (Vinye, Cycle One, Reflection and Interview, May 5, 2022).

A new school year began in August 2022 with Vinye again leading a Grade 4 class comprising 21 students, 13 girls and 8 boys. This time, Vinye brought with her the revelations and reflections that resulted from both the mandala experience and personal professional investigation during Cycle One. She was determined to create a more gender-equitable learning environment for all students in her class, and at the launch of Cycle Two, Vinye recorded her considerations for herself, her students, and the new school year:

There is a history of women not having a voice. Girls not having a voice perpetuates the behavior of girls being passive. My difficulty is relating to women in general. I’m asking myself how this relates to me and my Mandala and what do I do about this. By being

more conscientious about how and why I interact with students, I will be creating not only a more equitable learning space but a space that allows for all voices to be heard and acknowledged. (Vinye, Cycle Two, Gender in My Practices, August 25, 2022)

Vinye surmised that she afforded more attention and time to boys in her class than she did girls, especially on boys' negative behavior. With this in mind, Vinye brought an intentional approach and emphasis to her new class:

I noticed I had more girls than boys this year. I didn't want to fall into the same patterns and was trying not to self-sabotage [by] thinking that I would naturally give more attention to the boys than girls. I made an effort to recognize the positive behavior of all students rather than giving the attention to the negative behavior. I feel my connection to the girls has grown stronger, and I am being more conscious of embracing this. I've been planning my interactions with students with intention and reflecting on what has worked (Vinye, Cycle Two, Gender in My Practices, August 25, 2022)

In September 2022, Jeff once again joined Vinye and her Grade 4 class to observe Vinye's management of and response to student behavior. Using the same criteria for observation as in Cycle One, Jeff recorded three elements of Vinye's classroom management and response to the behavior of boys and girls: (1) neutral behavior direct instruction, (2) negative behavior response, and (3) positive behavior response (shown in Appendix Q). He recorded an increase in interaction with girls. While negative behavior response remained dominant with a 4:1 ratio of negative behavior response towards boys as opposed to girls, this was a decrease in comparison to the original 6:1 ratio observed during PAR Cycle One. In addition, Vinye gave direct instruction on six occasions to girls with no record of direct instruction shared with the boys. Jeff reported:

The quality of interactions between Vinye and the girls in her class appeared stronger. There seemed to be more warmth and more of a relationship this time with the girls. At one point, Vinye moved [physically] closer to a group of girls, and this seemed intentional to give more attention. (Jeff, Cycle Two, The Whole, The Big Picture, September 15, 2022)

After considering the comparison between the two observations, Vinye noted the power of analysing gender through a lens focused on self and applying this to one's own professional practices:

A lot has changed in my approach and relationships with girls at school and women in my profession in and outside of school. I feel I can relate better now and that I can accept things about who I am so that there is less of a power struggle. I feel lighter. I had the awareness about my cultivating relationships easier with men [than women]. The group has helped me to see this clearly in my practices and in my life, and it's something I am aware [of]. Knowing this and seeing it now means I don't have to keep giving it the same amount energy. I can adjust, I can be conscious, and I can understand. This is what will make a difference for me, and for my students. (Cycle Two, The Whole, The Big Picture Meeting Sept. 15, 2022)

During the Reflection CPR Group Meeting, Vinye summarized her major understandings that had emerged during our work together in five points:

- Gender is a complex topic; it is ingrained in all aspects of life, including who we are.
- My upbringing up has shaped my views and understandings on gender.
- The more I study, learn, and converse with people about gender, the more my perceptions and my professional practices expand.

- Building an understanding of gender and equitable practices will always be a work in progress; it will not happen overnight.
- As a teacher, my journey to develop a more gender-equitable practice is connected to my life's story and the stories of others on the topic. (Vinye, Cycle Two, PAR Reflection, Sept. 29, 2022)

Finally, Vinye was invited to write a concluding statement to capture her story and journey through this PAR project. As always, Vinye's capacity to convey herself, her essence, and her convictions was poignant.

After having started working with this group, I see gender everywhere. I see gender when we are talking about voices, choices, role models, groupings, clothing, music, materials—everything I need to use to "educate." This is simply because, as our conversations and observations of our students have shown, children already show signs of being in a gender-biased society, and so I feel that my role as an educator is to promote a safe space for dialogue, inquiry, and conversation when and if the moment arises. From the beginning of our studies, I had already an understanding that my practice might lean towards paying more attention or establishing a closer relationship to boys than girls. My assumptions became true after we led a series of peer observations. Leading an educational practice that was more dedicated, unconsciously, towards boys shocked me. From then on, my efforts are daily to diminish this and to develop a more critical role of providing equal gender learning opportunities, roles, and voices. After those discoveries, I sense a movement of mine towards my students who identify themselves as girls in ways that are more authentic and meaningful to both sides.

This is why an important understanding that I came across was that every construct that we have made in life takes time to be rebuilt. Maybe it is something that will never be ready like the "La Sagrada Familia" church in Spain. By the way, every time you go to that church, even though its construction isn't finished, it still displays breathtaking architecture.

Jeff: Seeing Gender in the Classroom

Jeff is a man of deep thoughts and few words. Jeff's colorful life experiences, unwavering moral compass, and sassy sense of humor can be easily and sadly missed upon a superficial encounter. But upon signaling interest and asking the right questions, Jeff will reveal reflective wisdom and unrivaled wit. He is an American living in Brazil and working at an international school. A teacher of English as a second language teacher at an elementary school where he works with children and teachers to support equitable access to the school's language of instruction. Jeff's childhood is similar to that of the children he works with: he was brought up as an expatriate child and attended international schools in Malaysia, Hong Kong, and Mexico before relocating to the United States to attend college and begin his teaching career (Jeff, Mandala, March 5, 2022).

During Cycle One, Jeff was comfortable with the personal reflection portion of the mandala experience. Jeff responded to the prompts by writing personal stories into the center of each quadrant of his mandala and filling the surrounding spaces with connected streams of thought that afforded a glimpse into a man of depth and complexity (see Figure 24). At the completion of his mandala, Jeff summarized the experience:

The mandala was a synthesis of all conversations, activities, and inquiries since the first

journey line and gave me the chance to express the big ideas as they have emerged in this journey. Through making the mandala, I reached clarity about the big ideas for myself in this work. A strong theme for me was “struggling to fit in, finding my place in the world, almost like a rollercoaster.

Jeff’s rollercoaster began in his early childhood years when as a boy he was encouraged by his parents to play sports (Jeff, Journey Line Deep Dive, November 18, 2021). The pressure to conform to family and social gender norms would lead Jeff to feel contrary:

Growing up, traditional male roles and what it means to be a man or boy were all around me. There was pressure in life about sports, and the ideas of masculinity came through sports. Culturally, where I’m from, football was a big part of the way my parents were raised. My dad was a jock and played football. Football was for my parents what boys and men did; that’s all they knew. When I was younger, I wanted to play piano, but it wasn’t an option because my parents didn’t have that experience. I can see there are times in my life when I was interested in things but didn’t pursue them because I didn’t feel I fitted in (Jeff, Mandala Sharing, March 19–20, 2022).

In the early 2000s as Jeff grew through adolescence, so too did his discomfort with overt, traditional models of masculinity as portrayed in sports, changing rooms, and the schoolyard. These displays exacerbated Jeff’s sense of exclusion, and as a growing boy, Jeff longed for the sense of comfort in his own skin and identity and simply to fit in (Jeff, Journey Line Deep Dive, November 18, 2021; Jeff, Mandala, March 5, 2022). Jeff’s adolescent years became a time of personal exploration as he navigated the exciting landscape of Hong Kong and embraced the freedoms afforded to him as a young, white, affluent expatriate. Inspired by his yearning to belong, Jeff was drawn to peers who also sought to find their place socially. Hong Kong offered

the perfect backdrop for such a search, and Jeff's world expanded to include diverse people and portrayals of gender, masculinity, femininity, and sexuality.

While Hong Kong was a wild ride and a burgeoning coming of age and character for Jeff, his feelings of alienation amid the confining models of masculinity, sexuality, gender identity, and expression, along with traditionally laden social roles and expectations, remained. As a young adult preparing for college and another new beginning, Jeff's concept of self, his identities, and sense of self-worth began to emerge. His solo relocation to Oregon in the United States for college was complementary to this. Jeff spoke of this period in his life during the Mandala Sharing (March, 2022):

It's been a cleanse, a shed over time, with the final years in Hong Kong and high school, and then college as the apex. Starting at adolescence where it was all about expectations and roles, then college when you figure things out. Not that it changes, but it's not as tumultuous, to then knowing I am who I am, a maturity emerges.

As a member of the CPR group, Jeff would listen intently and consider new insights in relation to his own experiences. He would rarely contribute unless directly prompted. Jeff's comfort in expressing thoughts, learning, and conflict with gender and the PAR project was registered poignantly in his written reflections on the Pre-Cycle process and the Past, Present, and Future Interview (December, 2021):

I think this process has been enlightening. I am learning a lot from my peers. In the beginning, I struggled to see or name how gender has expressed itself in my life. This group has enabled me to name some feelings I have had all my life and allowed me to understand them better through another lens. I feel, from listening to my peers' stories, that I am more aware of ways I unknowingly may have perpetuated some gender

stereotypes. As a result of this process, I think I am seeing gender more, especially in broader society, and gender stereotypes with women. The CPR group has brought a broader awareness of what female colleagues go through and how gender is shared and expressed during our group.

The mandala experience during Cycle One and subsequent CPR group discussions led to new personal insights for Jeff:

The group has been helpful because it showed me that many of my peers in the group struggled with the same concerns about identity as I have, particularly about fitting in. I learned that even as a person that considers themselves open-minded and advocates for gender equity, I still carry bias (Jeff, Cycle One Reflection and Interview, May 5, 2022).

At the April 2022 CPR group meeting, Jeff made a connection between his experience and comfort with cultural and social displays of masculinity and his practices as an educator. Jeff shared a situation that took place in a Grade 2 classroom where he was co-teaching with students working in small groups

The boys were dressed in soccer jerseys; they like playing soccer. Both teachers were going to the groups and listening to students, and I found myself purposely avoiding this group of boys because I didn't like the 'energy' that they had. (Jeff, How Gender is Showing Up in Our Practices, April 28, 2022)

When prompted to consider why, Jeff made connections to his own story and his discomfort with overt portrayals of masculinity and as what he termed "dominant gender" (Jeff, Past, Present, and Future Interview, December 2, 2021): "Similarly, when walking through the upper school, I notice groups of loud boys socializing in aggressive ways in the hall, and I purposely avoid them

because I find them tedious, and I don't like being around those types of displays" (Jeff, How Gender is Showing Up in Our Practices, April 28, 2022).

Finally, Jeff came to realize that his preference for working with younger grade levels was connected to gender and portrayal of masculinity:

Compared to higher grades levels, boys in lower grade levels are less likely to follow gender stereotypical roles. For me, it is easier to relate to boys in lower grade levels, because I don't relate well to that type of gendered, masculine energy many boys can show in the higher grade levels (Jeff, How Gender Is Showing Up in Our Practices, April 28, 2022).

During Cycle One, Jeff became interested in investigating the attention he was giving to boys and girls by "visiting all the Grade 2 and Grade 3 classes and identifying the students whose names are known and not known [to me]" (Jeff, PAR Cycle One Reflection and Interview, May 5, 2022). Jeff's hypothesis was: "I give more time and attention to boys than girls. I think this has to do with behavior. I tend to learn the boys' names because they interject more or they are taking away from the learning" (Jeff, PAR Cycle One Reflection and Interview, May 5, 2022).

The results of Jeff's investigation were in line with his hypothesis as he describes (see Appendix R): "In two of the five [classes], I knew all names. Of the sample, I knew all boys' names. When I didn't know a student's name, it was a girl" (Jeff, PAR Cycle One Reflection and Interview, May 5, 2022). In relating his own gender investigation to the literature presented during the April CPR group meeting (April, 2022), Jeff identified passages drawn from the work of Sadker (2000), Sadker and Sadker (1994), and Frawley (2005) about male dominance in the classroom resulting preferential attention to boys and their performance (see Appendix S). Jeff

recognized in his own practice that he inadvertently gave more attention and therefore learning opportunities to boys than to girls in the same classroom.

When reflecting on this experience, Jeff shared further questions relating to himself and his practice as an elementary educator:

I'm at the point where I need to accept it, accept that we are like this, that we carry biases. I don't think this could be reconciled; instead, be aware of it, and be willing to see it and respond. . . . I find it difficult in thinking of what to do, especially the latest piece of data we have been working with, giving attention, even negative attention to boys. . . . I don't think I want girls to be as negatively demanding as the boys either (Jeff, Cycle One Reflection and Interview, May 5, 2022).

At the completion of Cycle One, Jeff's awareness of gender had developed. "I have become more aware of the attention given to boys, [and] I believe now that I am beginning to notice gender, it will be difficult to not notice it" (Jeff, PAR Cycle One Reflection and Interview, May 5, 2022). "I need to learn the girls' names because they're people, and I feel horrible because I can't keep them straight" (Jeff, How Gender is Showing Up in Our Practices, April 28, 2022). However, for Jeff, this also prompted further questions about how to change the disparity of experience between boys and girls in his classroom.

August 2022 ushered in a new school year at EAC as well as the launch of Cycle Two. For the CPR Group members, the initial shared experience was the reading of their own and their fellow group members' portraits. Jeff shared his personal response to the portraits, capturing the power of the experience for himself through written reflection (Jeff, PAR Cycle Two, Our Stories CPR Group Meeting, August 4, 2022):

Reading my own portraiture made me feel uncomfortable, like any type of activity that focuses attention on myself, especially my personal life. By nature, I am very guarded, and I am not quick to open up to others. Reading my portraiture provides a sense of validation and clarity and in turn comfort in who I am. At the same time, there is a sense of discomfort or conflict as I feel the writer and maybe the group still do not truly understand who I really am. Well, people are complex, and how can I expect other people to understand me when I am still understanding myself? In the end, all anyone wants is to be acknowledged, seen, and heard. I found reading my co-members' portraits like a summary of all the conversations and work we have done over the last few months.

While reading the portraitures, I am reminded how despite our differences we have much in common, in particular this feeling of discomfort and not fitting in. There is a sense of connection I think that will last even after the group ends, where we might not speak much together but implicitly know that we are allies to each other and a common cause.

As Cycle Two progressed, Jeff's personal reflections on the findings of his Cycle One investigation were ever-present. At the completion of Cycle One, Jeff appeared concerned with his capacity to address the imbalance of attention he gave to boys and girls in his learning environments. However, as Cycle Two got underway, Jeff became more determined. During the Gender in My Practices CPR Group Meeting (August 25, 2022), Jeff announced his plan to "consciously make an effort to learn the names of girls at the beginning of the year." Jeff's justification for this effort was his prediction that he would inevitably "learn the names of the boys passively because of their actions, behaviors, and the social bias towards boys" (Jeff, Cycle Two, Gender in My Practices CPR Group Meeting, August 25, 2022).

Over the course of the 2 weeks between the Gender in My Practices and The Whole, The Big Picture CPR Group Meetings, Jeff interacted predominantly with two classes, 1A and 1C. He intentionally learned the names of the girls in the two classes as promised. In advance of the The Whole, The Big Picture CPR Group Meeting, Jeff assessed his recall of the children's names in the two classes, and as predicted, he knew all of the boys' names in the two groups without having intentionally learned them. He was also able to recall the names of all but one girl (a newcomer), a marked improvement from his PAR Cycle One investigation (see Appendix T). Furthermore, Jeff observed a new influence on his practices: "I was calling on the girls more because I knew their names; I was interacting with the girls more." Jeff highlighted that it was through the work of the CPR Group that he realized he was not noticing the girls (Jeff, PAR Cycle Two, The Whole, The Big Picture CPR Group Meeting, September 15, 2022).

During the Cycle Two Our Stories CPR Group Meeting (August 4, 2022), Jeff and the other members of the CPR Group considered their experiences during the PAR project in light of the CLE axioms. Jeff identified four of the five axioms as being very important to his PAR experience:

- Learning and leadership are dynamic social processes: I think I have seen through our CPR group that learning about an issue and exhibiting leadership require a dynamic social process to engage with the issue. I don't think our group would have gotten to the point we are today without engaging in the conversations and action research that we did. The mandala session, in my mind, sticks out as a particular dynamic process that led to intense conclusions and required strong leadership.

- Conversations are critical and central pedagogical processes: Throughout the CPR process we were engaging in conversations, conversations that were sometimes uncomfortable, intense, but always taking place in an environment of care.
- The people closest to the issues are best situated to discover answers to local concerns: All the members of the CPR group had a vested interest in exploring gender, and I think we were able to have the conversations and engage in a dynamic social process because we were close to the issue. I wonder if a member who was more removed from the issue would be able to engage as deeply.
- Crossing boundaries enriches the development and educational process: Learning in public and taking risks I think have been ways that we have crossed boundaries and have resonated with me in this project [and] helped me to continue to understand myself and my beliefs about gender, which in turn allowed me to examine my own practices and aim to create more equitable gender instructional practices. (Jeff, Our Stories CPR Group Meeting, August 4, 2022)

As part of PAR Reflections CPR Meeting at the end of Cycle Two, Jeff was prompted to consider the personal and professional journey this had provided and to summarize the major themes that had emerged for him during our work together:

- Everyone has a personal experience with gender.
- Everyone has gender bias.
- Overcoming gender bias is challenging work.
- Change comes through engaging with a group of people with a common interest or concern.

- People become very willing to talk about their experiences when they are part of a safe community (Jeff, Cycle Two, PAR Reflection, September 29, 2022)

Jeff is a man of deep thoughts and few spoken words. Jeff lived these very sentiments during the PAR project with his insights shared in succinct bites that were pivotal and provocative for our CPR Group's journey. As the final CPR Group meeting came to an end, I encouraged the members to share their final thoughts and draft the concluding paragraph to their own portraiture and this journey. The prompts I offered as a guide related directly to the PAR project's first three research questions (Cycle Two, PAR Reflection, September 29, 2022):

- To what extent did you develop an understanding of self and beliefs about gender?
- To what extent did you examine your practices about gender equity?
- To what extent did you implement equitable gender instructional practices?

Jeff's synthesis of his experience and final words in this particular story continue to reveal the thoughtful, succinct, and sincere person and educator he is:

The initial journey line activity and mandala activity were the start of exploring gender, and then the investigations were the real meat of the study. While my own investigation was a self-study, reflecting on how many names I knew, I think working with Vinye on her investigation was also really powerful. I observed Vinye and also had opportunities to reflect with her on her data. This also made me reflect on my own practice as a result. I became more aware of gender in the classroom and as a result tried to unlearn different habits. Through the investigation and CPR conversations, I was able to identify that I would always "see" the boys before girls without even realizing it, so I decided to make a conscious effort to learn the names of the girls. I didn't even practice the boys' names

because I knew that I would learn them because in the initial investigation I knew all boys' names. By only focusing on girls' names, I was able to learn all students' names. Now and because of this PAR experience and the work with the CPR team, I feel that I am more equipped to confront gender when I see it in the classroom, even outside my classrooms, for example, when working with other faculty and staff or the community at large, especially as questioning gender continues to become a current issue (Jeff, Cycle Two, PAR Reflection, September 29, 2022).

Paula: United in Our Search For Belonging

Paula is readily described by friends and family as a sweet girl (Paula, Mandala Sharing, March 19–20, 2022). Her bubbly character, ever-positive outlook, warmth, and genuine interest in others make her a joy to be around. Paula is an educated, intelligent woman, a professional with strong convictions, possessing an ongoing willingness to learn in all aspects of her life and defend those ideals she holds dear. However, as evidenced by her stories shared with the CPR group, Paula's perceived sunny disposition juxtaposed with her dynamic professional approach can surprise and at times confuse those around her (Paula, Mandala Sharing, March 19–20, 2022). Aware of this tension for others, Paula shares a brief sense of disappointment but quickly switches the narrative with a bubbly quip in her characteristically high-pitched voice: "Oh well, it's okay. I think we're all trying to work this [life] out, aren't we?" This is a typical example of how Paula carries herself, gracefully and respectfully navigating the world around her.

Paula's upbringing, similar to so many of the children in her Grade 3 class at EAC, was influenced by the multicultural settings of her early childhood as the child of an Uruguayan father and a Brazilian mother. Paula was schooled in France where her family resided as part of her father's work as a mechanical engineer. In 1996, when Paula was 7, the family relocated to

Brazil and regularly traveled to Uruguay to visit her paternal relatives. By the age of 11, Paula had studied in English, French, and Portuguese in various elementary schools while speaking Portuguese and Spanish at home. Paula recalls a sense of displacement:

One constant is a want for belonging. As a child, there were moments when I felt completely out of place. In terms of nationality, I feel I belong, but I've always had things pointed out that are important to others. I am conscious of what other people think. Brazilians don't think I'm Brazilian, and Uruguayans don't think I'm Uruguayan. (Paula, Mandala Sharing, March 19–20, 2022)

According to Paula, her parents gave her the love, guidance, and freedom to develop into the person she is. Upon the birth of her brother when she was 6, she realized she would no longer be the youngest family member. "I remember telling my mother that he bothered me. My mother's response was so embracing and comforting at the time. This influenced my identity. Her warmth and caring way made me feel loved and special." Similarly, Paula credits her father for her capacity to process conflict and appreciate alternate perspectives:

When I was 12 years old, I started going to church with a friend of mine from school. Initially, I thought it was interesting because it was new, and I was learning about Christianity. My father never discouraged me from having this experience. When I'd arrive home, we'd talk about my church and what I was learning and thinking. During these conversations, he would always ask questions that would make me question some convictions and dogmas, which usually felt uncomfortable at the time. The situation and tension [these conversations brought about] helped me to feel comfortable with questioning, and now as an adult, I can deal with different ideas and perspectives.

As an adult, Paula enjoys a strong and close relationship with her family, inclusive of her older sister and younger brother, commenting, “I feel supported by my family to pursue my interests and achieve my goals. I’m thankful for this. I know my family wants me to find my success and be happy.”

Paula was an active member of the CPR group and willingly engaged in reflection and discussion throughout Cycle One (Paula, How Gender is Showing Up in Our Practices, April 28, 2022; Paula, Cycle One Reflection and Interview, May 5, 2022). Paula’s investment in the PAR project was captured in the Cycle One Reflection and Interview (May, 2022):

The CPR discussions have played an important role in developing my understanding of self and beliefs about gender. Listening to the other members of the group and participating in the discussions and activities also helped me "step away" to better understand my practice as a teacher and understand how some behaviors that would otherwise go unnoticed can influence how gender appears in my classroom and how they can perpetuate or offer resistance to gender stereotypes.

The mandala experience for Paula was a powerful one as the process guided her reflection to better articulate inwardly and to others her various identities. Paula’s approach to her mandala was thoughtful, detailed, and methodical (see Figure 25). In describing this experience Paula noted:

I had to do a self-reflection exercise that did not come easily. . . . as I went deeper into the reflection, the connections between gender and identity started to appear. It forced me to reflect on moments that shaped me, myself and my identity.

As Paula identified the impact of gender in her life, she desired to know more and to take action:

I'm now seeing gender in my students' behavior, in everything they say. I am hearing and noticing now. Once you see it, you can't unsee it. Things I never thought would be related to gender are now clearer. It comes with a responsibility—what should I do, how should I act to help the children? If we don't do something to disrupt, it will stay this way and be reinforced (Paula, Past, Present and Future Interview, December 2, 2021).

In a Journey Line Deep Dive exercise (November 18, 2021), Paula shared her connections with gender in four areas of her life: childhood and adolescence, as a young adult, as a woman, and as a wife and mother-to-be. Paula relayed memories of disappointment at the reinforcement by adults of “how girls are expected to behave and being constantly reminded that I should avoid doing cartwheels and climbing trees and choose clothes that would cover my body.” As a result of the expectations leveled at her and girls in this age group, Paula recalled that “boys seemed to have more fun at the playground. They would run around and climb the equipment. Girls would sit and talk.” Paula also spoke of understanding at a young age how material items were assigned based on gender. Paula shared two instances of shopping with her father where gender was reinforced:

I wanted a tool kit, but my father pointed out that that was a boy's toy and invited me to choose something else. Another time, we were buying shoes. I chose a purple pair, and my father asked if I would prefer the pink ones because they were for girls. I said that I preferred the purple ones, and in the end, I was given the purple shoes. (Paula, Journey Line Deep Dive, November 18, 2021)

During her adolescent years, Paula noted a disparity between girls and boys concerning social expectations around sexual behaviors. “Students started kissing each other, and girls were

way more stigmatized. Boys were celebrated for their sexual interactions, and while boys encouraged girls to join them in these encounters, girls were simultaneously socially shunned for doing so.” In addition, Paula became disillusioned with the gender messages being perpetuated at her church:

At church, there were expectations for men and women I didn't identify with. I ended up questioning some gender expectations, and I ended up leaving the church. There was a widely accepted idea that women should obey men, that the man is the "head" and the woman is the "body" (Paula Mandala, March 5, 2022).

In 2008, at the age of 18, Paula moved away from her family home in Campinas to attend university in São Carlos, São Paulo State. There, Paula first explored feminist ideas, which she emphasizes in her mandala as a time of personal significance in the shaping of self and her identities. “Going to the university, I met so many people who helped me open my mind. I got in touch with some texts about feminism that shaped my idea of what it is to be a woman” (Paula, Journey Line Deep Dive, November 18, 2021). Furthermore, and according to Paula, “college made a difference because of the conversations I could have with diverse people and perspectives—about sexuality, gender expression, etc.—that I hadn’t yet been exposed to. Having different ideas about women’s conditions and issues and having the chance to discuss this and be in touch with different perspectives influenced me (Paula, Mandala Sharing, March 19–20, 2022).

Paula notes tension in response to occasions when she engages in an assertive and/or direct manner (Paula, Mandala, March 5, 2022). During the Mandala Sharing (March, 2022) she elaborated:

People tend to think that I'm very sweet. Gender shows up when I'm more assertive than what people expect. Sometimes people can be shocked when I'm direct. When I step up, there are situations where people find this hard. I think if I were a man, they would not be shocked.

In 2019 at the age of 30, Paula married her partner of 13 years. Over the course of their relationship, Paula has come to recognize the traditional gender perspectives held by her husband's family. While her husband does not directly share these perspectives, Paula laughed about a recent encounter that highlighted a difference in beliefs about the responsibilities of the husband and the wife as held by her husband's family:

There are things that piss me off. When on holiday with my husband's family recently, my husband wore some shorts, and they got wet and smelly, and his mother explained to me how I could clean them! My husband's family has traditional views of women's and men's roles in families. I see this as a possible worry and challenge. (Paula, Mandala Sharing, March 19–20, 2022)

At the completion of the Pre-Cycle in December 2021, Paula shared the exciting news that she and her husband were pregnant with their first child (Paula, Mandala, March 5, 2022). While happy about being a parent, Paula recognized the potential disparity between expectations of men and fathers in parenthood compared to those of women and mothers.

During Cycle One as the result of the mandala experience, CPR group members considered their own practices in relation to gender equity. Paula shared a hypothesis that she “tend[ed] to be more careful and patient when dealing with girls, giving them more room to share their social-emotional needs” (Paula, Cycle One Reflection and Interview, May 5, 2022). Upon further reflection, Paula offered:

It is an important aspect of my relationship with students that could perpetuate the stereotype that boys shouldn't ask for support when it comes to their emotions, and I understand that this can have serious consequences for them. (Paula, PAR Cycle One Reflection and Interview, May 5, 2022)

Paula enlisted Vinye to observe her interactions with boys and girls in the classroom for two lessons over consecutive days in May 2022 (see Appendix U). After debriefing with Vinye about her observations, Paula wrote:

Although my hypothesis was that I give girls more room to share their social-emotional needs, the observations' outcome is that I spent substantially more time interacting with boys than girls in the classroom. Also, the quality of these interactions is different. I called on girls more often. However, during the learning time, boys would demand more attention than girls. Scaffolding was given to boys more than girls. I was more direct when giving instructions to girls, [and] I would expect girls to be more independent in the feedback they were given whereas boys would get more attention and time. This was shocking! Why do I scaffold more when instructing boys? Has my way of responding to social-emotional issues and learning impacted their behavior? Are they somehow asking for attention? Am I overlooking the girls' call for attention? (Paula, PAR Cycle One Reflection and Interview, May 5, 2022)

Paula's embrace of the feedback offered by Vinye, her reflective response, and openness to professional self-improvement is a demonstration of Paula's open-mindedness and ever-present willingness to learn. In light of Paula's experience and the valuable observation data, I invited Paula to return to the Gender and Teachers literature shared previously at the April 2022

CPR Group Meeting. Paula highlighted certain passages as important to her observation experience (see Appendix V) and added:

These passages show that teachers are usually not aware of gender bias in their classrooms, and the investigations showed me that I am no exception. The second part I have selected explains how male students usually receive more, and more meticulous, attention than girls, and it helps me understand how the interactions I have in place with students is perpetuating this. I had read the research shared, and I thought it was all interesting, but it wasn't something that resonated with me. I didn't think this was part of my practice. Following the observation, I realized I was no exception; this happens—was happening—in my own classroom. (Paula, PAR Cycle One Reflection and Interview, May 5, 2022)

Paula's contribution to Cycle One concluded with a reflection on the process and the discussions and experiences she had had. Her responses show her commitment to the gender equity project as well as her humble and determined character:

I had a perception about how I interacted with children, and as it turns out, it wasn't right. The CPR discussions helped me to study myself with more of a critical eye. I had good intentions, but being part of the group and the discussions helped me to see the importance of this critical eye and make a change. I'm thankful for the opportunity to develop this awareness and discuss this, seeing it where I wouldn't have before. I value this, and it gives me the conditions to be a more aware educator and promote gender equity in my practice. My next step is to understand what is behind the different kinds and amounts of attention I give to boys and girls, and just as important as it is for me to give boys the space they need to talk about their emotions, I need to commit to giving the

girls the amount and quality of time they need to thrive. (Paula, PAR Cycle One Reflection and Interview, May 5, 2022)

In August 2022, Paula was already 8 months pregnant and increasingly anticipating a new chapter in her story. We were lucky enough to enjoy one final engagement with Paula during the Our Stories CPR Group Meeting (August 4, 2022). At that meeting Paula read her own and her counterparts' drafted portraits. She had this to say:

It is interesting to see that even after a long process of reflection into my own journey and experiences and after finding a way to put them in words, reading it through someone else's lens helped me see connections between different experiences that at first sight for me did not seem to be related. Reading the other group members' portraits was a rich experience that allowed me to better understand the trajectory that paved each of these colleagues' identities. The experience of participating in this group made me nurture a deep feeling of respect for each of them and for the stories they have shared. Reading the portraits made me recall meetings in which they shared the experiences reported and also helped me notice some elements that had been overlooked. One thing that struck me is the connection that can be established among all these different stories when it comes to a search for "fitting in," or for a feeling of "belonging" at some point in our histories.

(Paula, PAR Cycle Two, Our Stories CPR Group Meeting, August 4, 2022)

Paula also shared her views with regards to the CLE axioms that were prominent in her view during the CPR Group meetings throughout the Pre-Cycle and Cycle One. Paula identified two axioms as strongly connected to the PAR project:

- Conversations are critical and central pedagogical processes: Through this process of exchanging experiences and sharing reflections reported in the portraits, we could

develop a better understanding of how one's sense of identity can be affected by the relationships and values that surround them, and knowing this is helping me learn how to review my practice in order to follow a direction that points to gender equity.

- Crossing boundaries enriches the development and educational process: Our work together was taken seriously by all members, and because of this, it was possible to create an environment where, as far as I can see, we could speak our truth and share our opinions, experiences, and reflections without fear of judgement. We all had to cross boundaries, of our own, and with each other. Sharing our experiences and reflections allowed us to better understand our own history and beliefs, reflect on our practices, and adjust it with the aim of promoting gender equitable instructional practices. (Paula, Our Stories CPR Group Meeting, August 4, 2022)

Paula commenced maternity leave soon after the aforementioned reflections were recorded and was thrilled to announce the arrival of her daughter shortly thereafter. While Paula was not able to complete Cycle Two with her fellow CPR Group members, the strong convictions she holds as a person, coupled with her ongoing thirst for and willingness to learn in all aspects of her life, were evident in her commitment to continue the work she began with the CPR Group and to share her final contribution as a personal resolve for gender equity in her practices and for the children in her care:

I am now aware of the quantitative and qualitative differences in the interactions I have with boys and girls in my classroom. This is a priority for me to overcome. With it being so clear, I will focus on the approaches I use and keep an awareness of my practices when giving instructions and providing feedback to be more gender-equitable. I will ask one of the [CPR] group members to observe one or more of my lessons and take notes of their

observations in a similar process that was conducted by Vinye in Cycle One. This is something I know will make a difference.

Shannon: Disrupting the Inequities of Gender

The PAR project and interacting with the CPR group have allowed me the opportunity to reflect on my journey within a space of care and acceptance and to consider facets of who I am and the influences that have brought me to this moment. I've found the experience to be an enlightening and revealing one, especially as I've had the chance to make connections between my journey and those of my fellow CPR group members. While I have come to understand the importance of orienting self, the act of outwardly sharing my story with others was uncomfortable. Writing the stories of my colleagues was a fulfilling process, which I took seriously. However, I find no joy, despite the urging of my doctoral supervisors, in doing this for myself. Wondering why this was so very hard and looking for inspiration to launch it, I returned to my mandala (see Figure 26) and found clarity.

I am Australian, born in Brisbane, Queensland, to young parents, Eugene and Vicki, in June 1979. With my older sister Serena, we lived as a white, middle-class family does in the suburbs of Brisbane. My parents worked to make a comfortable life for us all while doing their best to propel Serena and me into opportunities that would bring us good health, independence, financial stability, and happiness.

I am compelled to acknowledge here that the Indigenous peoples of Australia are the land's traditional custodians, having inhabited the island for more than 80,000 years before British colonization in the late 18th century (Evanson, 2022). As the result of colonization, the social make-up of the country changed, leading to the newly dominant, European-like mainstream that was established and marginalized Australia's Indigenous peoples and their

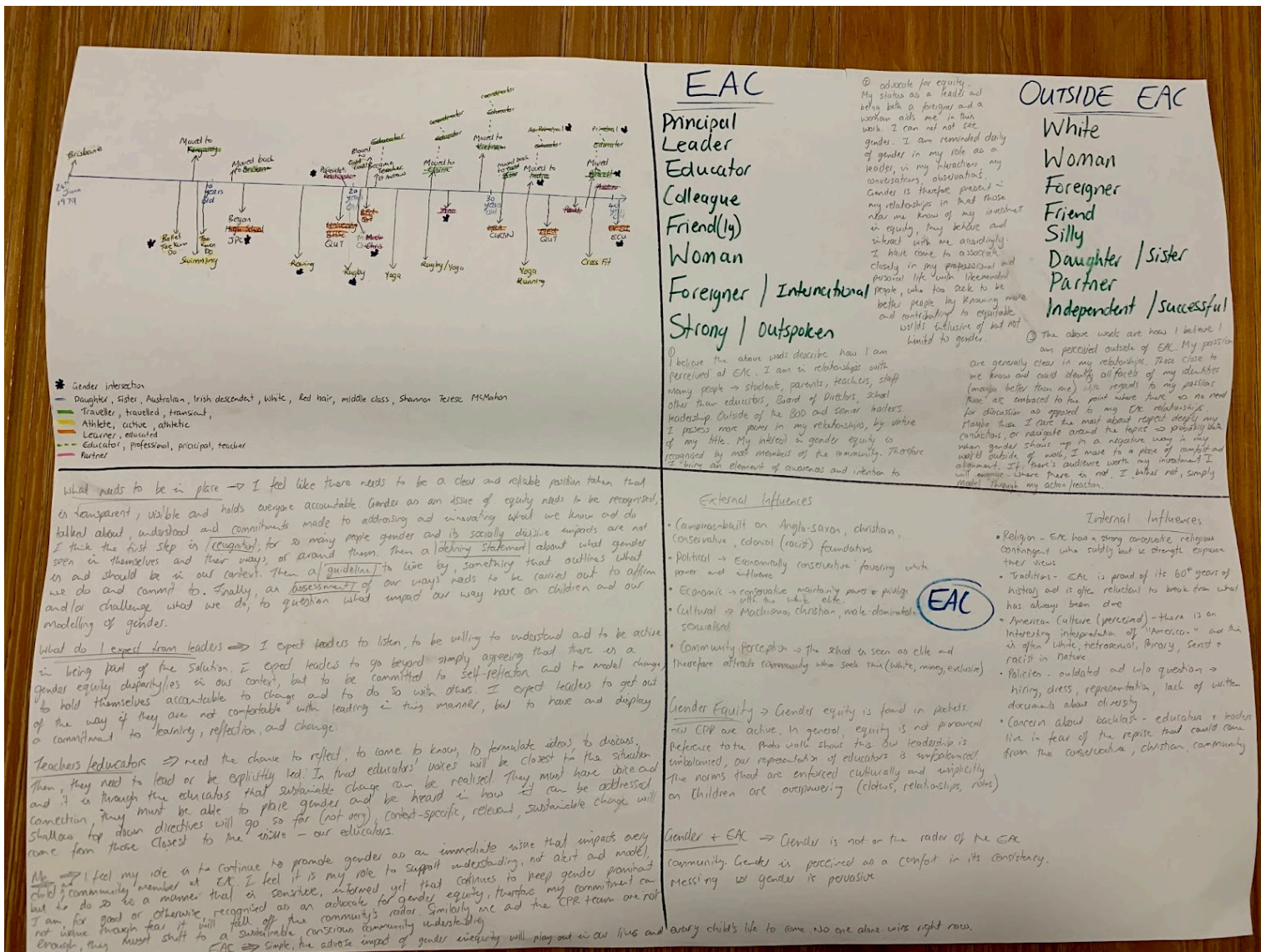


Figure 26. Shannon's mandala.

cultures over the last 250 years (Evanson, 2022). Still today, those who demand the majority of power, privilege, and influence are white and of British descent, precisely that of my family's lineage.

In this newly dominant Australian culture, humor and self-deprecation are encouraged (Goddard, 2009). We Australians use humor, especially sarcasm, to lighten moods and to approach difficult topics indirectly. We also readily self-deprecate to be perceived as humble, trustworthy, and relaxed (Evanson, 2022). We use humor, indirect communication, and self-deprecation to avoid appearing pretentious and to ensure we are not seen to be taking ourselves or our causes too seriously (Goddard, 2009; Thornhill, 1992), which in Australian culture is seen as contrived and obnoxious (Evanson, 2022). I believe this is why I have found the act of sharing my personal journey so uncomfortable and why my attempts were dotted with sarcasm and humor. I also believe this cultural trait has contributed to my relationship with and understanding of gender, especially in my formative years.

Like most children, curiosity and exploration kept me entertained and in trouble for much of my childhood. The phrase most synonymous with those years is that sung at a high note by my mother, "Girls, go outside and play!" And that we would do, Serena usually choosing to bring a doll or toy, me with a ball, or better still, a hammer if I could get my hands on one. I navigated my home and the outside world by observing my elders and the modeling of other children and adults known to me as well as those I'd see on TV.

My father was and remains a man's-man, fulfilling just about all stereotypes of an Australian bloke. Strong in character, authoritative within the family as the breadwinning head of the household, a fit, strong, outdoor-loving sportsman who can talk about all things machines and cars, possessing mischievous, youthful humor and a character who loves nothing more than a

beer around the barbeque with his mates. Equally fitting to the traditional stereotype of an Australian Sheila is my beautiful mother. She left high school and became a secretary, a very fitting occupation for young women in the 1970s. When my mother shared with her then employer in local government that she was pregnant with my sister Serena, she was peremptorily dismissed as it was assumed that women should be at home with their children and had no place in the workforce, especially when pregnant.

My mother was a wonderful caretaker of the family. When it was deemed acceptable for her to return to the workforce, she did so with gusto and continued to maintain her employment as well as her duties as wife, mother, household, and carer. My mother has a warmth and embrace for anyone who enters her home, never short of food to offer or a space to be comfortable. She has a love of shoes—the highest, most death-defying design the better—and she finds great joy in sewing, especially frilly princess dresses for little girls in her life or in anyone else's.

During my childhood, I remember quite a few times I was told I could or could not do something based on my gender. Never did this come from my parents or my sister. I would usually go about doing whatever I wanted regardless of the “you look like a boy” or “that’s for boys” comments. I was, however, heavily influenced by explicit and implicit messages that were ever-present in my life. I don’t recall my parents ever explicitly sharing expectations they held for me that were attached to my gender. Instead, I felt my parents’ focus was on me being a good, responsible person without regard to my gender. My father would at times share his view about young women’s weight gain when they left high school. In my father’s eyes, this was a real tragedy because these young women were no longer as attractive to men. I often wondered

whether my father would have had the same conversation had he had boys and whether the concern for staying slim would be as important for a young man.

While my parents encouraged an outdoors and active lifestyle for me and my sister, we would usually get to watch about half an hour of the soaps in the early evening before dinner and maybe a movie and the latest music videos on the weekend. What I came to understand at an early age from interacting with the messages shared on Australian TV was that men were the heroes and that they were much more important than women (Shannon, Journey Line Deep Dive, November 18, 2021). Men were superior both physically and intellectually. Men could and should be more aggressive because they were under so much pressure as the leaders. I saw that women were not strong but rather emotional and quite annoying, unable to make their own decisions and generally getting into ridiculous situations that required a good strong man to save them (Shannon, Journey Line Deep Dive, November 18, 2021).

From a young age, I remember recognizing and embracing that I was a girl, but I found it harder to identify with the models of women that were around me. As I grew up, most of my friends were girls, but my interests were dominated by those associated with what boys were having all the fun doing (football, martial arts, surfing, woodworking). All of these interests I pursued as I grew older, but even as a young adult, I knew when to speak of these interests in social situations and when to remain silent to avoid returning to the “you look like a boy” or “that’s for boys” rhetoric.

In primary school, I knew that boys were the dominant gender. As a girl, my role was to be sweet, caring, and quiet. With this, I would be a “good girl.” Boys, on the other hand, were loud; they took up most of the space on the classroom carpet, and they were naughty (Shannon, Journey Line Deep Dive, November 18, 2021). The first time I remember knowing that boys

were better than girls was when Ben was caught in the girls' bathrooms in Grade 2. His punishment for the day was to wear a girl's skirt instead of his shorts. In punishing Ben for breaking a rule, the teacher publicly humiliated him by likening him to a girl. To be considered a girl was the worst punishment possible for a boy (Shannon, Journey Line Deep Dive, November 18, 2021).

In 1992, at 12 years of age, I entered high school at a conservative, private, coeducational, Christian day school. My parents worked hard to send Serena and me to this school and equally as hard to keep me from being invited to leave. Although there are many positives that came from my 5-year high school experience that have shaped me as a person and professional, my interaction with gender in high school was not one of them. A strict and outdated approach was taken to all things gender-related under the guise of healthy, accepted Christian values. Gender, sexuality, race, and religion—if outside of cis-gender, heterosexual, white, and Christian norms—were not discussed nor entertained except by the rebellious students.

The dress code for girls at the school was an example of the school's antiquated norms. Women on the faculty were prohibited from wearing pants of any description. A strict skirt- and dress-only policy was enforced for women. Similarly, girls wore long, heavy skirts below the knee as part of the day uniform and pleated skirts for sports. On the other hand, boys wore shorts above the knee or long pants as their day uniform and shorts for sports. Boys were not allowed to grow their hair below the collar; this was only acceptable for girls. In my memory of my senior years in high school, boys dominated the subjects of manual arts, design, physical education, and higher-level mathematics. In contrast, girls were the majority in secretarial studies and home economics (Shannon, Journey Line Deep Dive, November 18, 2021).

In 1994, in Grade 10, I was encouraged to meet with the guidance counselor to choose my subject electives for my final years. He asked me questions about what area I'd like to pursue when I left high school, looked at my grades, and then offered his expert opinion that the appropriate course for me would be Secretarial Studies. When I inquired as to why, the guidance counselor explained that it would be good for my communication and organization skills. At that point I was doing well in academic subjects. I balanced high-level competition in my chosen sports with my academics and was especially good in English. As far as I could tell, there were no obvious deficits in my communication or organization skills.

While somewhat apprehensive, I took the counselor's advice, and on the first day of Grade 11, I presented, along with the other 40 Secretarial Studies students, to a room filled with rows of desktop computers. I couldn't help but be perplexed as to why 38 of us were girls and only two boys. Over the next 2 years, I formatted documents, learned the outdated skill of shorthand, and probably added another 5 words per minute to my typing speed. All this led me to feel that I was equipped to join the local government job my mother held during the mid-1970s. I wondered how it was that so many girls needed typing practice and familiarity with how to format other people's work to be successful in their future careers. Much like my primary school experience, a divide between boys and girls emerged and was encouraged by the culture and environment we were part of. Alongside academic subject choices, co-curricular activities were often defined by gender. Netball and field hockey were strictly for girls while rugby was only open to boys.

The school's pride was evident in its well-received marching band. The group would perform at all major school events, even in the downtown area of the city, dazzling onlookers and passersby on a weekend to drum up the school's prestige. I loved watching the marching

band perform during my early years in high school. I was fascinated with the talent my peers had to play an instrument while in choreographed synchrony with 80 other people. My enthusiasm for the marching band began to wane when I recognized a pattern in its foundation. The drums were the powerhouse and, in my mind, the real show of the band. Throughout the 5 years I spent watching the marching band, all but one of the drummers were boys. The leader of the marching band would twirl the baton high in the air, and we'd hold our breath as it came plummeting to earth to land gracefully in the grasp of the leader. An important job, this was always reserved for a boy. Finally, the flag girls would twirl their skirts and swoosh their flags as they marched in formation beside the band, zig-zagging and smiling at the crowd. A prerequisite for a flag girl was to be comfortable wearing a skirt that was obscene in comparison to our below-the-knee day uniform. Everyone else in the marching band wore long baggy pants all the way to their shoelaces (Shannon, Journey Line Deep Dive, November 18, 2021).

Finally, between primary school and high school, not much changed with regards to gender roles. As a girl, my role was to work hard, to be quiet, to not encourage the boys' bad behavior, and, above all, to carry myself with an air of dignity and poise. I recall we girls were often reprimanded during learning and social times for behavior that was deemed unladylike. To me, unladylike behavior seemed to include anything but sitting up straight with one's knees together and ankles crossed. Boys remained loud; they dominated most of the physical spaces in classrooms, around classrooms, and anywhere else they could find. They continued to be naughty, but now they did so in groups, enjoying the bravado that would go along with boys-being-boys (Shannon, Journey Line Deep Dive, November 18, 2021).

As I came to the end of my high school years and throughout my undergraduate time in university, I became heavily involved in competitive rowing and the Australian Surf Lifesaving

community. While gender stereotypes were prevalent, these communities opened my social sphere to include diverse representations of culture, sexuality, gender, socio-economic status, and education. I was forever learning new perspectives from the people I encountered as I trained to compete at a high level. At this time in my life, I finally saw that women too could be strong and competent and hold positions of leadership in their own image, not that of a man's. I also met men who were both open to and embracing of women playing more than the wife or girlfriend role. This is not to say it was all roses. Misogyny and negative stereotypes for both men and women were ever-present as well, but I had now seen an alternative to the role models I'd become used to on TV and at school. With this new outlook, I had enough of a voice and character to demand more for myself and others.

I chose to be an educator. After fulfilling short-term teaching and substitute contracts in the city of Gold Coast where I had relocated at the completion of my time as a full-time student, I landed a primary teacher position at an established, private K-2 school. I was thrilled! The school had a great reputation, and I was well-supported by my colleagues who mentored me during my formative years. I was a Grade 3 classroom teacher with 32 pupils. As I look back on this experience with a gender lens, I remember more of the boys I taught than the girls. This is not surprising to me for two reasons: first, boys were more likely to be naughty, loud, and disruptive and would therefore receive more of my attention. Second, I realized early in my career that I felt a closer connection to young boys in my groups than the girls. In my mind and as I would share outwardly, I could identify more with the naughty "characters," and these were boys. I wonder why it is that I never identified a girl as being a "character." In the same way, I wonder if I was overlooked by my teachers as a quiet good girl. Would anyone remember me?

I spent 3 years as a young teacher in Gold Coast before deciding to flee Australia and try my hand on the international school circuit. I excitedly accepted my first position at a brand-new school in Beijing, China, where I continued teaching Grade 3. I stayed in Beijing for almost 5 years before moving to Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, for 2 years, then on to Bangalore, India, for another 4 years. Finally, my international path brought me to Campinas, Brazil where I have lived for 6 years.

Early on in my education career, I had my sights set on leadership. My leadership journey began in a curriculum, head of subject area capacity, that led to curriculum coordinator, assistant principal, and then principal. I couldn't help but note from my beginning days in Gold Coast that while I was always surrounded in my profession by women, the important people were all men. It appeared the workhorses, the teachers, and clerical and support staff were predominantly if not entirely women. Sometimes women were in middle-level management holding head of department and assistant principal positions, at times even principals though infrequently. Rarely, if ever, were women around me represented in the head of school positions or positions of high-level leadership.

I found it fascinating and infuriating that the handful of men in the primary/elementary schools at which I worked were often outwardly groomed for leadership positions like prodigal sons. Their voices in collaborative meetings would have more weight and their contributions more often considered than those of their women counterparts. Although I respect, learned from, and enjoyed working with just about all of these men, I had to question why the minority gender represented in our industry would almost always filter to the top over the countless women who often were equally as experienced and equipped for promotion.

As I gained experience as an educator, my focus broadened from simply surviving each day to a growing appreciation of each child as a capable, whole being. Over time, I was better able to draw on my understanding of my students' worlds inside and outside of the classroom to make stronger connections and relationships. It became easier for me to interact with my students' families and other professionals who also shared a child's best interest, inclusive of but not limited to teacher assistants, counselors, specialist teachers (physical education, music, visual arts, etc.), and internal and external educational support professionals. I found that professional conversations were often dotted with explanations, comments, theories, and assumptions about a child's development and/or perceived needs related to their gender. For example, I heard phrases such as "Girls naturally learn to speak and read earlier than boys." "Boys are more physical than girls; it's how they are." "Boys have a shorter attention span than girls." "Girls are naturally better than boys at handwriting." "Girls become cliquy at that age." and "Boys are better at mathematics."

Early in my career, I would accept these comments as they were in line with my own cultural biases. However, as I gained experience, I began to question the validity of such gendered claims. As I questioned, my eyes became opened to increasing instances of baseless gendered assumptions being attached to my own and others' approaches to interacting and educating. At my schools in India and Brazil, I was already recognized as an advocate for gender equity. Therefore, the decision for gender equity to be my chosen PAR project focus was a natural one. The process of learning alongside the CPR group and exploring gender equity at EAC and in our own lives has been a wholly satisfying and enlightening experience as I shared during the Cycle One Reflection and Interview (May, 2022):

I learned that none of us have escaped the impacts of gender. Every member of our group is unique, yet the social confines of gender have had effects on who we are, the pressures we feel to comply, and have limited and continue to limit our lives and who we are. No one has lived a life free of the stifling construct of gender.

The CPR group's contribution to my learning experience and understanding of gender was profound. The discussions moved my thinking forward in terms of the importance of professional dialogue, creating spaces of respect and trust, and the intersections of gender in my life and in the lives of my colleagues:

The [CPR group's] discussions were powerful in supporting me in having a clearer sense of how my identities intersect with gender. Being part of a supportive, respectful group of professionals who are as committed to such self-inquiry was helpful and powerful. I felt safe and understood. The difficulties that at times became apparent stemmed from our want to correct the injustices or status quo and not having a definitive understanding of how to do so at that time. Hearing my fellow CPR members' stories has been a gift; each person with their own journey weaves a beautiful collective narrative of the group.

(Shannon, Cycle One Reflection and Interview, May 2022)

In Cycle One, we investigated ourselves through the creation of a personal mandala. I found this exercise to bring a heightened sense of clarity to the presence and influence of gender in my life that I had not previously considered. The experience enhanced my capacity to reflect upon my choices, circumstances, and relationships and find tangible intersections with gender:

I found the progression of the questions and quadrants to be helpful in revealing the intersections of my identity with gender. This included my own lived experiences, situations, and major points that begged for reflection. I was surprised at just how often

gender was present in my world. Previously, I could have named a couple of instances, but these seemed isolated. (Shannon, Mandala, March 5, 2022)

Along with my fellow CPR group members, I conducted a personal investigation into an area of interest I had with regard to my own gender-related practices. The notes recorded at the Cycle One Reflection and Interview (May, 2022) relay my motivation for the investigation undertaken as well as my hypothesis:

I came to realize I had a greater degree of comfort interacting with boys than girls. I believe I have the same degree of care and investment; however, I felt that I connected better with boys at an elementary level than with girls. This made me wonder whether this would manifest in my connection with the students. As a principal, my interactions, while less frequent and of a different nature to teachers, are still important in that children are always watching, and I am modeling for not just children but the community what healthy leader/adult-child connections should be. I decided to investigate whether I connect with girls in the same way I do with boys. I thought that knowing a child's name is a measure of connection and one that makes a difference in the life of a child (and an adult for that matter). I randomly selected a class from each grade level to visit, and while there I would test my recall of all children's names.

Appendix W is a summary of my gender investigation. The investigation supported my initial hypothesis and showed that while, "I have a much stronger connection with the children in older grade levels than those in younger grade levels, I have significantly more connections, measured by the names I could identify, with boys than girls." Further, "of the boys present at school on the day of the investigation and of the sample I visited, I knew 63% of the boys as opposed to 43% of the girls" (Shannon, PAR Cycle One Reflection and Interview, May 5, 2022).

The result of this investigation was disappointing though not surprising. Upon reflection, the bias I recognized as a young Grade 3 teacher remains with me today as I continue to connect with boys differently. I believe this is influenced heavily by my own experiences growing up and in primary and high school as I came to see the dominance of boys inside and outside the classroom. The responses of the adults and children I experienced at that time I am myself perpetuating as a woman and educational leader.

Additionally, I recorded an immediate response to the investigation I conducted at the Cycle One Reflection and Interview (May, 2022):

This means I need to learn the names of the 57% of girls I do not know and the 37% of boys I overlooked. This means, for me, I have to commit to experiences where I can make a connection enough to be able to greet and refer to a student by their name and do so with confidence regardless of gender. I also need to commit, and for me this means encouraging others to join me to hold me accountable, periodically checking in randomly in classes throughout the section to test my knowledge of students' names.

When returning to the literature presented in Chapter 2 relating to gender and teachers, I saw in light of the investigation of my practices the profound impact of the way teachers engage with children on confidence and achievements (Council of Europe, 2015) and the impact of teachers' approach to informal communication on students' future success (see Appendix X). As I explained:

I chose this passage because, while unintentional, my capacity to remember the names of boys more than girls demonstrates a bias in my behavior. It means I have stronger connections with boys than girls, and knowing children's names shows value and care,

which I, therefore, dedicate more of both to boys than girls. The way I engage and interact with children has an effect on their self-confidence and achievements.

Cycle One came to a conclusion for the CPR Group in May 2022. Between May and July 2022, I spent much of my time revising the Pre-Cycle and Cycle One experiences, meetings, and data to draft the CPR Group members' portraits. As Cycle Two got underway in August 2022, the first CPR Group had the chance to read the portraits for the first time. Though I was the author of these pieces, having time to be acquainted with them again as a reader brought even more insight to our journeys. During the PAR Cycle Two, Our Stories CPR Group Meeting (August 4, 2022), I reflected:

I found the experience of writing my portrait surprisingly interesting. I was reluctant to begin for quite some time. I found the process of writing my team members' portraits to be enlightening and inspiring. I was surprised at how the writing process led me to new understandings of my own journey with gender, and in an organic way, free of detailed planning, old experiences, situations, and relationships emerged that I had not previously considered. I felt a sense of validation as I wrote my portrait and reread it that gender is an important conversation that must be had and is a barrier to equity not just in elementary schools but in my world and in everyone else's. I was initially very uncomfortable with the thought of writing my story; laying it out for me and others to read felt indulgent and exposing. As I wrote however, it became easier and enjoyable. I was inspired as I wrote my CPR group members' portraits. I felt humbled by the degree of trust and openness offered and the gifts given by the sharing of their stories throughout the Pre-Cycle and Cycle One experiences. I was surprised by the many aspects of our stories that are the same, for example:

- the desire to fit in,
- the prominent models of gender that surrounded us and that we found constricting in childhood,
- the stifling confines of masculinity and femininity as they were forced on us as adolescents,
- the freedom of finding our people/tribe and sharing in new perspectives in early adulthood,
- the realization that we are equally part of the problem and solution as educators,
- the recognition that girls are missing out.

I felt a greater connection to my CPR team members having had the chance to share my story and to come to know theirs in a safe and accepting environment. I have an immense amount of respect for each member of the group, for their journeys, for what their stories share about them as people, and for their convictions in questioning such an intimately conflicting part of each of us. (Shannon, PAR Cycle Two, Our Stories CPR Group Meeting, August 4, 2022)

Like my CPR Group counterparts, I too was keen to counteract the gender inequities I was responsible for in my disparate interactions with boys and girls as was revealed in my Cycle One investigation. At the commencement of Cycle Two I shared with the CPR Group my intention for change:

My investigation revealed I have more connections with boys than with girls. I feel my connections with children have largely been the result of the children coming to me (behavior, learning, conflict, family influences). Instead of being passive in the connections, I feel I should be proactive in making the connections based on interacting

with children more equitably in their learning environments. I will create a space and time in each class with the intention of coming to know the name of every child. I will gauge the degree of success of this initiative by undergoing the same investigation as in Cycle One. I predict that I will not only know a higher percentage of girls' names than before, but I will also know more students' names in general. (Shannon, PAR Cycle Two, Our Stories CPR Group Meeting, August 4, 2022)

Over 2 weeks, I visited the same sample of classroom as I had done in Cycle One. As this was the beginning of a new school year, the student compositions within each class were different. While in the classrooms I was purposeful in interacting with students to become familiar with them and to associate each with their name. The hypothesis for my Cycle Two investigation was recorded as: "If I am active and intentional about the interactions I have with children, then my connections will be more equitable, and girls will not be overlooked" (Shannon, Cycle Two, Gender in My Practices CPR Group Meeting, August 25, 2022). When re-enacting the investigation and considering the results, I was encouraged by the outcome (see Appendix Y). Of the boys present at school on the day of the investigation, I knew 98% of the boys as opposed to the 63% I knew during Cycle One. Similarly, and even more encouraging was the improvement in the girls whose names I knew: 96% as opposed to 43% during Cycle One.

This PAR project experience was powerful in establishing my need, as an educator and leader, to be aware that if approached in a passive way, my connections with and attention shown to children will be biased towards boys, and I will overlook girls. However, I can correct this imbalance by being proactive, intentionally creating opportunities for connections, and in doing so, I can support a more gender-equitable environment for all children. I incorporated the CLE

axioms into my planning of the CPR Group meetings and activities. They were a fixture of the group's agendas, and we strategically referred to them so as to maintain a commitment to the collective responsibilities of each group member. During Cycle Two's Our Stories CPR Group Meeting (August 4, 2022) and along with the other CPR Group members, I considered the role the CLE axioms played in the PAR project, especially their relevance to our CPR Group's journey. To this prompt, I highlighted and described the importance of three of the four CLE axioms to our work:

- Conversations are critical and central pedagogical processes: The portraits stemmed from the conversations we hosted. It was from these conversations that my understanding of gender as a socio-cultural construct was emphasized. While theory was prominent in my dissertation journey, I learned more from my CPR group members as they gave context and examples to the theory, questioned perspectives, and proposed opportunities for rethinking the status quo that alone I would not have come to.
- The people closest to the issues are best situated to discover answers to local concerns: I enjoyed the opportunity to reread each member's portrait. Each group member identified a component of their professional practice relating to gender that was of interest to them as the result of the journey they had undertaken. Because of the focus on self, team members were willing and able to identify areas of concern, and while consistent with contemporary research and theory, this simply validated what was already known by the group because of their shared experience and the proximity they had to the situation at hand—the prominence of gender in teachers' practices. Without the experience, the theory was accepted but not internalized. With

experience, the issues are revealed and internalized. Only then can answers begin to be formed.

- **Crossing boundaries enriches the development and educational process:** Many boundaries were crossed in the process of sharing, writing, and reading the portraits. I feel the crossing of boundaries both professional and personal has brought a degree of cohesion, understanding, empathy, and empowerment to our group. Crossing boundaries through the portraits has strengthened trust and a sense of allyship. With the boundaries crossed, I had with the team a richer experience and learned with and from each group member. (Shannon, Our Stories CPR Group Meeting, August 4, 2022)

The PAR project has been a challenging yet profound experience for me. With the support and allyship of the CPR group, I explored aspects of myself and my relationship with gender that I had not before considered or even known existed. I feel as a person, educator, leader that I can see gender in my life; I can identify my beliefs and biases; and I can work towards disrupting them in a way I was not equipped to do prior to this PAR experience. I created space and time to examine my practices with more fidelity and success than had this been presented to me in a different context. My investigation showed that I am able to both identify deficits in my practices related to gender and employ strategies that work towards a more gender-equitable learning and living environment for children (Shannon, Cycle Two, PAR Reflection, September 29, 2022).

The time I was afforded to work with and learn from the four other members of the CPR Group was a gift. Through their willingness to share of themselves, I was able to cross boundaries of admitted difficulty for me as a leader and reveal of myself in a more vulnerable

and true way than I had expected I ever would in a professional setting. I am buoyed by the thought that through collective inquiry, engagement, and commitment to learning, we as people and educators can make a difference towards building environments that are cognizant of the inequities the social constructs of gender perpetuate, and we can disrupt them. We can, through coming to know ourselves, recognise gender in our lives and professional practices, and we can take measures to counteract these and through making small changes create a big difference for the children, particularly the young girls, whose stories are just like mine.

CHAPTER 6: FINDINGS

In the Participatory Action Research (PAR) project, four elementary educators and the school principal from Escola Americana de Campinas (EAC) formed a team of co-practitioner researchers (CPR) to develop educators' understanding and use of equitable gender practices in an international elementary school. The PAR drew from the project's theory of action: If educators develop deeper understandings of self and gender and use those understandings to examine practices, then we can implement new classroom and leadership practices that promote gender equity in the elementary school. Throughout three iterative cycles of inquiry, the CPR group engaged in collaborative qualitative research to investigate, explore, and understand the social problem of gender inequity in the elementary school at EAC (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). As the PAR project and CPR group leader, I designed each inquiry cycle and its activities to uncover meaning through the privileging of research participants' perspectives. I illuminated the meaning, actions, and context of those doing the social inquiry—the CPR group—to accurately capture and report the complexities of gender inequity in the elementary school at EAC (Popay et al., 1998).

In this section I share the PAR project's themes as they emerged from the iterative Pre-cycle, Cycle One and Cycle Two inquiries. First, I share the categories that emerged as the result of the Pre-cycle experiences and data collection. Then, following the Cycle Two experiences and associated data collection, and in consultation with the CPR group, I identified emergent themes that built upon the categories established in the Pre-cycle. Finally, I outline the themes that were prominent at the completion of Cycle Two and were unanimously promoted by the CPR group as the PAR project's findings. I reveal here and discuss, as the result of the three cycles of inquiry and data coding processes, the PAR project's findings: (1) gender is a learned construct; (2) girls

miss out; (3) storytelling is a critical transformation tool; (4) crossing boundaries strengthens relationships and learning; and (5) the people closest to the issues are best suited to discover solutions.

PAR Pre-Cycle Process and Emergent Categories

At the PAR project's launch and the initial experiences for the CPR group, I intended to accomplish two goals for the pre-cycle: (1) to create a connection between the project's focus of practice and the individual members of the CPR group and (2) to develop relationship trust and create a gracious space so that CPR group members felt comfortable sharing their true thoughts and feelings. I designed engaging activities that elicited individual reflection on the participants' lived experiences and group interactions to position gender in relation to self and place.

I found the CPR group meetings particularly instrumental in the pre-cycle process. The journey line and photo walk activities provided thoughtful individual connections. Paired with subsequent personal narratives and group discussions, we created rich shared understandings related to gender. I collected CPR group meeting artifacts and meeting notes as data sources. I also utilized CPR group member interviews, field notes, and reflective memos to triangulate the data CPR group members presented during the CPR group meetings. I used open coding to systematically analyze the data from each pre-cycle engagement, and through this process, the CPR group's initial understandings emerged as four categories: (1) gender is learned through interpersonal experiences; (2) gender is learned through systemic experiences; (3) gender's impact on people; and (4) how to address gender inequity. Table 25 presents the Pre-Cycle's emergent categories and data codes.

Interpersonal Gender Education

We defined the emerging category of Interpersonal Gender Education as the informal,

Table 25

Pre-Cycle Data Emergent Categories and Codes

Emergent Categories	Codes	Data Frequency
Interpersonal Gender Education	Family	11
	Relationships	20
	Recreation	20
	Personal Inquiries	2
	Media	4
Systemic Gender Education	School	8
	Religion	1
	Higher Education	2
	Workplace	1
Impact of Gender	Harassment	4
	Clothing/Accessories	8
	Career Path	1
	Behaviors	10
	Participation	4
	Educator Bias	3
	Curriculum	11
	Dress Code	5
Addressing Gender Inequality	Educator Response	21
	Leadership Response	6
	Awareness	68
	Language	7
	Disruption	5

interpersonal ways CPR members learned about the social construct of gender throughout the course of their lives. The primary evidence for this category was the result of coding individual CPR group member journey line experiences. In the initial journey line exercise of plotting experiences of importance relating to gender in one's life, as well as the subsequent journey line deep-dive exercise that focused on gender in one's school years (5–18 years of age), we recorded 52 instances in which participants mentioned significant interpersonal gender experiences. Supporting the dominance of the journey line data in this emergent category was data derived from the CPR group experiences including the photo walk and personal narratives as well as individual CPR group member interviews. Within Interpersonal Gender Education, the Relationships code included inputs relating to social-relational gender experiences with people outside the family unit.

More specifically, the subcode of Rules covered enforced social expectations that perpetuate gender norms and experiences for boys and girls, men and women. An example was CPR group members' mentions of the subliminal rules aimed at young adults as they form personal and physical relationships. Members recalled the social rules and commentary surrounding young adults' dating practices and how they differed vastly for young women. Members' related how women were chastised for developing personal relationships whereas young men were celebrated for similar behavior. One group member described this as "the rules for girls versus the rules for boys"; another noted that "students started kissing each other, and girls were way more stigmatized" (Journey Line Deep Dive, November 18 2021).

Through this open coding process from each Pre-Cycle engagement, the CPR group began to understand that gender is learned through interpersonal experiences. For example, recreational activities with regard to sports, games, and toys appeared numerous times within the

Interpersonal Gender Education category. This code alone amassed 20 references by the CPR group with the sub-code of Sports recorded 10 times. The CPR group described experiences where encouragement and social pressure were placed on participation in certain sports dependent on one's gender. While in these instances there were no formal gender exclusion rules, subtle coercion would influence participation in some sports as opposed to others with the criterion of gender the obvious determining factor. During the photo walk CPR group experience, members identified subliminal social-relational understandings within the project's context of the elementary school at EAC. Under the Recreation code, CPR group members shared that "cheerleading is considered by many people an activity for girls. Cheerleader boys would not be aligned to gender stereotypes. "It's also accepted/assumed that boys like soccer, but girls prefer less physical games."

Systemic Gender Education

Another category, Systemic Gender Education, comprised the formal ways members of the CPR group learned about the social construct of gender throughout their lives. This emergent category was the culmination of the initial codes of School, Higher Education, Religion, and Workplace. Grouped under the four initial codes were the social and professional settings and the systemic structures the CPR group perceived to reinforce gender differences between boys and girls, men and women. Members mentioned Systemic Gender Education 12 times during the Pre-Cycle. Of these 12 instances, eight were school experiences. Therefore, I interpreted school as the dominant site of reinforcing gender understanding. From the CPR group's photo walk experience, they recognized reinforcement of gender differences through the physical spaces of the elementary school. One group member noted the use of the school's largest green space and primary play area for elementary students:

While all students have the right to play here, it is dominated exclusively by boys. At times, girls attempt to join the soccer games or to use the field for other activities.

Inevitably, they retreat; this is seen as a boys' area, and boys play soccer at EAC. (Photo Walk, December 2, 2021)

Gender representation through physical spaces was also noted in a collection of large, glossy, framed photos inside the elementary school principal's office:

Looking with new eyes at these photos, of the 15 students in the photos, one is a girl. Not only that, the boys are engaged in what appears to be technology and science-related learning and soccer. The one girl in the photos is holding a pink book with a bunny on the cover, and she appears not to be the focus of the photo—the two boys on either side of the teacher are the main event. This was inadvertent, but clearly an imbalance is represented in these photos. (Photo Walk, December 2, 2021)

Finally, CPR group members recognized the reinforcing of gender through spaces in the elementary school at EAC in the colors used inside the respective boys' and girls' bathrooms. The walls and stall doors of the bathrooms were painted blue for boys and pink for girls. Upon reflection, a CPR group member explained:

This is an example of gender socialization [with] boys being represented by the blue color. It is accepted that blue is an exclusive color of boys. It's also accepted/assumed that all girls like pink. (Photo Walk, December 2, 2021)

Impact of Gender

The primary evidence for a third emerging category, Impact of Gender, was a result of coding reflective memos, CPR meeting evidence, and CPR group member interviews. Journey line experiences were again pertinent to the CPR group's contribution to this body of data. This

let the group to identify the impact of gender on one's school experience as significant. The Curriculum subcode was referenced 11 times by the group, the most frequent representation within the category. In addition to the impact of gender through the school curriculum, other codes within the category were: Behaviors, Participation, Educator Bias, and Dress Code, all of which dealt with situations that occurred at school. Therefore, Impact of Gender as an emergent category is overwhelmingly in reference to the school experience (33 of the category's 46 data points).

Within the emergent category of Impact of Gender, the Behaviors code included mentions of ways gender has influenced one's own behavior or the behavior of others. During the Pre-Cycle experiences, Behaviors were referenced 10 times, seven of which came from the CPR group's journey line experience. Furthermore, boys' and girls' perceptions of their experiences were different: Boys' experience was recalled as fun and engaging while girls described their experiences as modest:

“Boys were naughty; girls were well-behaved; boys dominated space.”

“Boys seemed to have more fun at the playground, would run around and climb the toys. Girls would sit and talk.”

“Constantly reminded that I should avoid doing cartwheels and climbing trees and choose clothes that would cover my body.”

“There was an underlying shame to our changing bodies. Girls were expected to keep our bodies hidden away and not talk about it.” (Journey Line Deep Dive, November 18, 2021)

Addressing Gender Inequity

A final emergent category, Addressing Gender Inequity, received the most frequent references during the Pre-Cycle (95 data points). Most of these references (82) came from CPR group member interviews, personal narratives, and my reflective memos. Addressing Gender Inequity references were drawn from CPR group members' identification of opportunities for addressing gender inequity. Furthermore, Reflection, Recognition, Questioning, Conversations, Contextual Relevance, and Intersections were sub-codes of the emergent category's major code, Awareness. The sub-code Reflection comprised a number of examples where the CPR group member's acts of reflection contributed to the individual member's understanding and/or the shared experiences of the group. Table 26 shows examples of Reflection along with the experiences from which they were derived.

Similar to Reflection, the sub-code of Recognition also presented as prominent within the Awareness code of the Addressing Gender Inequity emergent category. Under the sub-code of Recognition, I grouped experiences CPR group members had shared about identifying and recognizing instances of gender bias during the Pre-Cycle. Table 27 shows examples of Recognition along with the experiences they were drawn from. However, the most dominant of all the emergent categories (95 data points) was Addressing Gender Inequity, which arose from CPR group member contributions that were the result of their involvement in the group. The codes of Educator Response and Leadership Response included opportunities and ideas for addressing gender inequity. Awareness, Language, and Disruption codes contained data on the CPR group's process and its construction of understanding of gender as the Pre-Cycle progressed.

Table 26

Examples of the Reflection Sub-Code and Their Respective Data Sources

Reflection Sub-Code Example	CPR Group Experience
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I see now that I have a heightened awareness of gender (inputs, environment, communication), and I am becoming more sensitive to gender than ever before. • I have a strong sense of gratitude to be involved in this (CPR) group. 	Personal Narrative
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As a teacher, I wonder when and how these "non-verbal" or even silent agreements are formed. While we ask students to create relationships that are non-judgmental, are we modeling that during our daily interactions with staff members? 	Photo Walk
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why do we know about it and not change the status quo? • I wonder where this comes from; how has an 8-year-old come to a point where she accepts difference and refers to it? • I wonder why this was never noticed by me. 	Reflective Memo
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I'm thankful for the opportunity to develop this awareness and discuss this, seeing it where I wouldn't have before. I value this, and it gives me the conditions to be a more aware educator and to promote gender equity in my practice. • In the beginning, I struggled to see or name how gender has expressed itself in my life. This group has enabled me to name some feelings I have had all my life and allowed me to understand them better through another lens. • Our work gave concrete examples of gender, like a slap in the face. I was shocked by it. We have concrete examples of gender stereotypes in our environment. We live with it; we live within in. Most times we don't think about it. • Many of the discussions and reflections that showed up during the meetings have been very important for me to reflect not only as an educator but also as a person. 	CPR Group Member Interview

Table 27

Examples of the Recognition Sub-Code and Their Respective Data Sources

Recognition Sub-Code Example	CPR Group Experience
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● I find myself recognizing and calling out my own and others’ gendered behaviors. ● In comparison to my female group members, I recognize now that gender has had a different and maybe less of an impact on my life. 	Personal Narrative
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● I now have a heightened awareness of the power difference between men and women, especially in my professional experiences. 	Reflective Memo
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● I am hearing and noticing gender now. Once you see it, you can’t unsee it. ● I am seeing gender more, especially in broader society, and gender stereotypes with women. ● I am noticing gender more through the lens of what it means to be male and masculinity and how that is expressed, reinforced in children. ● My awareness of gender has been heightened already. ● I am more aware of ways I may have perpetuated some gender stereotypes. ● I am more sensitive to my colleagues' speech and practices in terms of gender equity (or the lack of it). ● Our meetings and exchanges with the CPR group is broadening my perception and the way I observe, see, feel, and interact with gender. 	CPR Group Member Interview

The Pre-Cycle was the PAR project's launch and included the initial experiences for the CPR group. I designed the cycle to accomplish two goals: (1) to create a connection between the project's focus of practice and the individual members of the CPR group and (2) to develop relationship trust and create a gracious space so that CPR members felt comfortable sharing their true thoughts and feelings. I designed engaging activities that elicited individual reflection on the participants' lived experiences and group interactions to position gender in relation to self and place. I used open coding to systematically analyze data from each Pre-Cycle engagement, and through this process, the CPR group's initial understandings emerged as four categories: (1) gender is learned through interpersonal experiences; (2) gender is learned through systemic experiences; (3) gender's impact on people; and (4) how to address gender inequity.

PAR Cycle One Process and Emergent Themes

Over the 10-week period of Cycle One, my intention as the CPR group leader was to uphold the relational trust and gracious space established during the Pre-Cycle process while designing and engaging the CPR group in activities that would encourage reflection and dialogue on the project's first two sub-questions:

1. To what extent do elementary educators develop an understanding of self and beliefs about gender?
2. To what extent do elementary educators examine their practices about gender equity?

I maintained a commitment to Guajardo et al.'s (2016) ecologies of knowing during Cycle One intentionally invoking facets of self and organization within the cycle's activities. Similar to the Pre-Cycle experience, I found the CPR group meetings to be instrumental. Specifically, the mandala experience, observations, and interviews led to rich discussions, reflections, and new understandings relating to self, organization, and gender. I collected CPR

group meeting artifacts and meeting notes as data sources. I also utilized CPR group member interviews, field notes, and member checks to triangulate the data CPR members presented during the CPR group meetings. I used open coding to analyze the data from each Cycle One engagement. As I analyzed the data from Cycle One, I incorporated and built upon the data and categories that presented during the Pre-cycle. This process led to the CPR group's emergent themes: (1) no one fits in; (2) gender is a learned construct; and (3) girls miss out.

No One Fits In

No One Fits In as an emerging theme was originally, I Don't Fit In. During the Mandala Creation and specific to Quadrant One of the mandala, CPR group members were guided to consider their identities in light of their life journeys and stories (see Appendix I for Quadrant I: My Storyline guiding questions). During the subsequent Mandala Sharing in Week 3, when CPR group members individually shared their mandalas through personal narrative, each member explicitly stated that at some point in their journey they had a strong feeling that they did not fit in. By the end of Week 3 as I coded the mandalas and Mandala Sharing transcripts, I Don't Fit In emerged as a consistent statement among the CPR group members' personal narratives (see Table 28).

In Week 5, the CPR group participated in the Mandala Connections experience and together performed a member check. At this meeting, the group analyzed the Mandala Sharing transcripts that I coded. They recognized the theme of I Don't Fit In as a consistent element in each member's story, and it became a strong thread that connected the group members. Members of the CPR group suggested a new title to show a unified sentiment; as a result, No One Fits In became the emergent theme for Cycle One and was an important piece of each member's portraiture. Indirectly, the theme of No One Fits In applies to gender. CPR group members

Table 28

CPR Group Member Statements Related to the I Don't Fit In Emergent Theme

Category	Code	CPR Group Member	Evidence
Fitting In	Struggling to fit in	Jeff	A strong theme for me was “struggling to fit in,” finding my place in the world, almost like a rollercoaster.
Fitting In	Trying to fit in Need to fit in I never fit in	Lucas	For me, <i>discomfort</i> is the word that describes this experience. Trying to fit in and the need to fit in is something big for me since the beginning. I was always trying to fit in to a certain point, but by 8th grade and high school I gave up on trying to make friends. There’s always this political and social aspect that I never fit in in the schools I went to in Brazil.
Fitting In	Not enough Not a fit	Paula	I feel I belong, but I’ve always had things pointed out that are important to others. Brazilians don’t have a great sense of identity or feel proud of being Brazilians. Brazilians don’t think I’m Brazilian; Uruguayans don’t think I’m Uruguayan.
Fitting In	I didn’t fit in	Vinye	All the way throughout my life I have not felt that I fit in anywhere. In the process of moving, I needed to come to EAC and tell them I needed to take time off, and I was told I didn’t fit in.

acknowledged their personal and collective conflict with the confines of social structures and norms that had been placed on them. No One Fits In is therefore linked to the second Cycle One emergent theme, Gender is a Learned Construct.

Gender is a Learned Construct

The Cycle One emergent theme of Gender is a Learned Construct incorporates the Pre-Cycle emerging categories of Interpersonal Gender Education and Systemic Gender Education, that is, the implicit and explicit ways CPR members learned about the social construct of gender throughout the course of their lives. The primary evidence for this theme was the data established in the Pre-Cycle through my coding of individual CPR group member journey line experiences as well as the subsequent journey line deep dive exercise. In the latter, I recorded 64 instances where participants identified significant interpersonal (implicit) and systemic (explicit) gender experiences. In addition to the Pre-Cycle data, Cycle One experiences of the Mandala Creation, Mandala Sharing, and Mandala Connections revealed consistencies in the way CPR group members learned about gender throughout their childhood and adolescent years. This discovery enabled the group to formulate a tentative answer to the project's Sub-Question 1 (To what extent do elementary educators develop an understanding of self and beliefs about gender?). Table 29 represents the Cycle One data codes and emergent categories that led to the Gender is a Learned Construct emergent theme.

The category Implicit Gender Education refers to instances of unequal treatment shared by CPR group members that arose from gender stereotypes and associations during childhood and adolescence. In these recorded instances, gender was not directly named. Rather, through subtle immersion and reinforcement, gender as a divisive construct was established through CPR group members' interactions with and use of differing toys and clothing for girls and boys

Table 29

PAR Cycle One Data Emergent Categories and Codes

Categories	Codes	Jeff	Vinye	Lucas	Paula	Shannon
Implicit Gender Education	Toys		•	•	•	•
	Clothing	•	•		•	•
	Behavior	•	•			•
	Role Models		•	•	•	•
	Social Roles		•			•
Explicit Gender Education	Sports	•		•		•
	Educators		•	•	•	•
	Parents		•		•	
	Church				•	

(Vinye, Lucas, Paula, Shannon), through the displays of masculinity and femininity reinforced through popular role models on television (Jeff, Vinye, Shannon), and through the encouragement of gendered roles in social behavior (Vinye, Lucas, Paula, Shannon).

Explicit Gender Education includes situations from childhood and adolescence shared by CPR group members in which gendered expectations were directly named and enforced. For Jeff, Lucas, and Shannon, this included the intentional delineation of sports into those appropriate for boys and for girls. CPR group members recalled instances when they were expected to perform well in a certain sport or were excluded from another based on gender. Similarly, members recorded the direct teachings of the church (Paula), parents (Vinye and Paula), and educators (Lucas, Paula, Shannon) as having a profound influence on their understanding of gender.

Gender as a learned social construct was presented and detailed in the literature review of this dissertation. The emergent theme, Gender is a Learned Construct, is aptly supported by Epstein's (2007) findings:

The gender divide is not determined by biological forces. No society or subgroup leaves social sorting to natural processes. It is through social and cultural mechanisms and their impact on cognitive processes that social sorting by sex occurs and is kept in place—by the exercise of force and the threat of force, by law, by persuasion, and by embedded cultural schemas that are internalized by individuals in all societies (p. 4).

Baily and Holmarsdottir (2015) build on Epstein's (2007) assertion that gender is a social construction that influences both men's and women's lives.

From conception to the rituals of death, the social construction of gender determines the treatment of men and women in society. This could begin with son-preference, gendered

roles in childhood games, and courtship rituals in youth; it continues into midlife, later life, and through to the last rites performed at a person's passing (p. 838).

If gender is a learned social construct for boys and girls, men and women, the third emergent theme of Cycle One is the result: the observed disadvantages facing girls in an elementary school setting.

Girls Miss Out

Unanimously, the CPR group members reported that the ultimate result of their investigation of teaching practices within their elementary school was that girls consistently miss out. Whether it manifests in knowing more boys' names than girls' (Shannon and Jeff), boys receiving higher grades (Lucas), or boys being granted more time and attention (Lucas, Paula, Vinye, Shannon), each CPR group member was moved by the realization that their practices unmistakably favored boys over girls. This emergent theme, Girls Miss Out, is well documented and referred to explicitly in the preceding literature review. During a process of reflection with the CPR group and in processing the gravity of the Cycle One investigations I presented to each CPR group member the research from the literature review that is pertinent to girls missing out at school. The following passages from this dissertation's literature review were singled out by CPR group members in their reflections as salient to the group's experiences.

Sadker and Sadker's (1994) and Sadker et al.'s (1991) classroom observation research suggests that the ways teachers interact differ when engaging with boys and girls. As noted by Frawley (2005), "Boys receive more teacher consideration, acclamation, and constructive feedback than girls do. They are called on by name more often and are asked more complex and abstract questions than girls are" (p. 224). Teachers afford boys greater opportunities to expand their ideas and be animated (Marshall & Reinhartz, 1997). As a result, boys tend to control the

conversations in the classroom, ask more questions, and receive more praise and correction for their mistakes (Bauer, 2000). Male dominance in the classroom is facilitated by teachers when they (often unconsciously) make boys the focus of instruction, giving them more frequent and meticulous attention (Sadker, 2000). Ultimately, boys receive more precise attention (positive as well as negative), thereby enhancing their performance (Frawley, 2005; Sadker, 2000; Sadker & Sadker, 1994). Therefore, girls are generally invisible within the classroom environment (Sadker, 2000; Sadker & Sadker, 1994). Whether to verbally reprimand, answer questions, elaborate on comments, or help with schoolwork, teachers typically interact less with girls (Bauer, 2000; Frawley, 2005). Girls tend to receive less precise and/or helpful feedback to assist them in grasping the subject matter, along with comparatively reduced wait time needed to arrive at correct answers (Sadker & Sadker, 1994).

Cycle One was designed to engage the CPR group in activities that would encourage reflection and dialogue on the project's first two sub-questions:

1. To what extent do elementary educators develop an understanding of self and beliefs about gender?
2. To what extent do elementary educators examine their practices about gender equity?

The three prominent themes that emerged from the CPR group's learning were: (1) no one fits in; (2) gender is a learned construct; and (3) girls miss out.

PAR Cycle Two Process and Themes

PAR Cycle Two took place over 9 weeks between August and October 2022. During this time, the CPR group convened on four occasions to address the PAR project's overarching research question: How do educators promote gender equity in an international elementary

school? The CPR group reflected on and discussed the final group-oriented research sub-question:

3. To what extent do elementary educators implement equitable gender instructional practices?

I also engaged on my personal professional approach to and learning towards gender equity leadership addressing the project's fourth sub-question:

4. How do I grow and develop in my leadership as I work with educators to promote gender equity?

As the CPR group leader, I continued to uphold the relational trust and gracious space established during the Pre-Cycle and Cycle One processes. I maintained a commitment to Guajardo et al.'s (2016) ecologies of knowing, designing and facilitating Cycle Two activities to invoke facets of organization, community, and self. We also leveraged CPR group members' learning from Cycle One to explore in Cycle Two the meso level of organization, including the role of educator and one's responsibility towards larger society (Guajardo et al., 2016) with regard to gender inequity in their own practices. CPR group members considered and enacted strategies to address the identified gender inequities in their own classrooms in response to the PAR project's third sub-question: To what extent do elementary educators implement equitable gender instructional practices?

At the macro-level of community, CPR group members returned to Quadrant 3 of their mandalas (Building Community) and Quadrant 4 (The Whole, The Big Picture) to consider the macro context of the community. Finally, to address Sub-Question 4 (How do I grow and develop in my leadership as I work with educators to promote gender equity?), I designed and embedded opportunities for self-reflection through reflective memoing and solicited feedback

from CPR group members on my leadership of the PAR project and as a gender equity leader in the community.

In addition to reflective memos to organize my thoughts in light of emergent theory and research, I utilized CPR group meetings, personal narratives, observations and member checks concurrently to triangulate the data. I used open coding to analyze the data from each Cycle Two engagement as had been done in the previous two cycles. This coding process assisted me to organize my understanding of each CPR group member's interactions with gender, as they had shared them, and to develop CPR group member's portraits. This in turn revealed intricate details and consistencies at personal and group levels that profoundly influenced the project's resultant themes. Cycle Two and the PAR project's themes are a culmination of the emerging categories and themes from the previous two cycles, as well as processes to support gender equity in an elementary school: (1) gender is a learned construct; (2) girls miss out; (3) storytelling is a critical transformation tool; (4) crossing boundaries strengthens relationships and learning; and (5) the people closest to the issues are best suited to discover solutions.

During Week 9 the CPR group meeting, and as part of the PAR Reflection and Takeaways activity (see Appendix L), the CPR group was invited to reflect on the PAR project experience and record what, in their own words, emerged as most significant. Appendix Z shows the initial reflections recorded by the CPR group members during the PAR Reflection and Takeaways experience. As a CPR group, we shared and analyzed the group's insights and proposed findings. I then presented the five themes that had emerged as pertinent to the PAR at the end of Cycle Two. Following further discussion about the consistencies of the themes shared, I then invited CPR group members to assess and rate as either (3) high importance, (2) moderate importance, or (1) not important, the five themes that I had identified through coding processes.

Figure 18 shows a sample of the recorded assessment offered by the CPR group members to the Cycle Two themes. Additionally, Table 30 represents the numerical ratings collated by the CPR group specific to each proposed theme.

Of Cycle Two's five themes, "Gender is a learned construct" and "Girls miss out" were identified as two of the emergent themes at the completion of Cycle One. The remaining three themes include: "Storytelling is a critical transformation tool," "Crossing boundaries strengthens relationships and learning," and "the people closest to the issues are best suited to discover solutions" (Guajardo et al., 2016; and their Community Learning Exchange (CLE) axioms). The CLE axioms were utilized throughout the PAR project and emerged as pillars that guided the work of the CPR group as well as my design of each PAR cycle. Next, I detail the Cycle Two themes and establish their importance to the CPR group's experience.

Gender is a Learned Construct

The theme Gender is a Learned Construct was drawn from Pre-Cycle and Cycle One data that described the implicit and explicit ways CPR members learned about the social construct of gender. In the extant literature, Epstein (2007) found that gender is not determined by biological forces or natural processes but rather through social and cultural norms and the "exercise of force and the threat of force, by law, by persuasion, and by embedded cultural schemas that are internalized by individuals in all societies" (p. 4). Baily and Holmarsdottir (2015) concur stating "From conception to the rituals of death, the social construction of gender determines the treatment of men and women in society." The CPR group member's journey line and the subsequent journey line deep-dive exercise presented key illustrations of how gender is socially constructed, hence, "learned." Cycle One experiences of the Mandala Creation, Mandala

Table 30

CPR Group Member Ratings of the Cycle Two Themes

Proposed PAR Project Themes	Shannon	Vinye	Lucas	Jeff
Gender is a learned construct.	3	3	3	3
Girls miss out.	3	3	3	2
Storytelling is a critical transformation tool.	3	3	3	2
Crossing boundaries strengthens relationships and learning.	3	3	3	3
The people closest to the issues are best suited to discover solutions.	3	2	3	3

Note. (3) high importance, (2) moderate importance, (1) not important.

Sharing, and Mandala Connections also revealed consistencies in the way CPR group members learned about gender throughout their childhood and adolescence.

The final reflections offered by each CPR group member revealed the importance and relevance of the theme Gender is a Learned Construct. They unanimously rated it as highly important and offered the following comments (Cycle Two, PAR Reflection and Takeaways, September 29, 2022):

Shannon: I have come to see that gender is learned and reinforced from the moment we're born—before even—and in all social settings thereafter. Gender is a socially divisive construct that has been created, and when aware of it and our own understandings/experiences, we can begin to dismantle it.

Vinye: From very young until our adult life, there is a social construction surrounding gender that is reinforced by all spheres of our society.

Jeff: When the power of and force that gender has over us comes from a place that can't fully be understood, I think we can only say that it is learned and also very hard to overcome.

Lucas: Gender is a learned construct. Gender is also taught; this is why engaging with this research has been so important to me. As educators we get to choose how we're teaching it.

Girls Miss Out

In every scenario investigated by a CPR group member, they reported that girls in their learning environment were consistently missing out. CPR group members were moved by this realization during Cycle One and came to acknowledge that their practices were disproportionately favoring boys over girls. The theme Girls Miss Out carried over into Cycle

Two where CPR group members each conducted a follow-up investigation that sought to address the disparity of experience recorded between boys and girls in the classroom through self-identified, targeted practices. While each respective investigation showed improvement in experiences for girls as the result of the practices implemented, the gravity of the original difference recognized by the group remained. Therefore, Girls Miss Out is considered a strong theme of Cycle Two and indeed this PAR project as reflected in CPR members' following comments (Cycle Two, PAR Reflection and Takeaways, September 29, 2022):

Jeff: I can acknowledge and completely understand how girls miss out. I would say that through this work I have noticed that we all miss out. But yes, girls do miss out.

Shannon: As an educator, it was vital for me to see how girls continue to miss out. I agree with Jeff: with gender we all miss out. But while I had read the research, it was only evident how true this was after I had seen it in my own practices.

Vinye: During this journey it was made clear that our practices leaned more towards boys.

Lucas: Learning about this and reflecting on how this happens in the school had a big impact on my practice. How can I help girls to be seen?

The notion of the emergent theme, Girls Miss Out, has been well documented and referred to explicitly in this dissertation's literature review as well as in the preceding description of Cycle One's emergent themes. Sadker and Sadker's (1994) and Sadker et al.'s (1991) classroom observation research supports the Girls Miss Out theme from Cycle Two finding that the ways teachers interact differ when engaging with boys and girls. Similarly male dominance in the classroom is facilitated by teachers when they (often unconsciously) make boys the focus

of instruction and give them more frequent and meticulous attention than they do with girls (Sadker, 2000).

Storytelling is a Critical Transformation Tool

Storytelling and its importance to Cycle Two and this PAR project was a composite part of the first recommended tenet proposed by the CPR group, Conversations and Storytelling, which they realized was needed to transform the reality of gender inequity in the elementary school at EAC. Every member of the CPR group shared the impact that exchanging stories had on their PAR experience as detailed in each member's portraiture. They reported that engagement in conversations and the act of storytelling was the most profound and powerful transformational tool of the PAR project experience (Lucas, Vinye, Jeff, Shannon, Cycle Two, PAR Reflection, September 29, 2022). As Lucas recorded in this session, honoring our own stories and listening to the stories of our colleagues gives value to our journeys, creates connections and understandings, and leads to affinity in a shared movement towards gender equity. Reflection on our own and others' stories led to conversations that made meaning of our experiences, formed shared understandings, and promoted personal actions as agents for gender-equity change and as budding gender-equity warriors.

The CPR group's experience with storytelling was consistent with the work of Guajardo et al. (2016) who promote storytelling as a critical pedagogical tool for building relationships and as a setting for learning through lived experiences. Storytelling invites participants "to think within their lived experience while providing the space to expand it in a socio-cognitive manner" (Guajardo et al., 2016, p. 43). The importance and transformational nature of storytelling in this PAR project was captured in the final reflections of each CPR group member at the end of Cycle Two (PAR Reflection and Takeaways, September 29, 2022):

Jeff: Storytelling is a big part of the process.

Vinye: At least for me, telling our stories was the richest part of our work.

Lucas: Through telling stories, you reflect, you see yourself in a mirror, you connect with others and their stories. Then you start changing your own story and misconceptions.

Shannon: It was through our storytelling that I came to know more about myself. The sharing of stories was profound for me. It strengthened connections, built a sense of allyship, empathy, and understanding. Coming to know others helped me know myself.

Crossing Boundaries Strengthens Relationships and Learning

Guajardo et al. (2016) propose that “the ability and willingness to experience a world that is outside our daily comfort zone is necessary to break the isolation of people, teams, and organizations” (p. 26). CPR group members were called upon to cross relational and conceptual boundaries, to work with and alongside colleagues with whom they had had little prior personal interaction, and to do so with varied conceptual foundations about gender. Compounding these boundaries is the concept of gender itself. Gender as a subject area and conversation piece is controversial and can conjure a myriad of emotions when discussed in public forums and with relative strangers—precisely the situation of the CPR group at the commencement of this project.

Crossing boundaries is critically important to disrupting the status quo, expanding participants’ curiosity and imagination, and constructing new questions and behaviors (Guajardo et al., 2016). Crossing boundaries requires a willingness to be vulnerable to learn in public and to show compassion and empathy in the shared learning journey. Participation in storytelling, on the part of each CPR group member, was an act of crossing boundaries. To share one’s journey and experiences relating to gender is to dig deep within and present an aspect of oneself that is not often articulated amongst colleagues.

Similarly, vulnerability is heightened for many educators when undergoing observations and sharing deficits in one's classroom practices and relationships. The CPR group members were called upon to be vulnerable, to learn in public, to exercise empathy; in doing so, they crossed boundaries and contributed to the findings of this PAR project. The CPR group were unanimous in their rating of this element having high importance as a theme of Cycle Two and their work together. Next are the reflections shared with regards to the theme, "Crossing boundaries strengthens relationships and learning (Cycle Two, PAR Reflection and Takeaways, September 29, 2022):

Lucas: I think learning always involves crossing boundaries. Within the group this was very important so we could feel comfortable about sharing our stories.

Jeff: Crossing boundaries builds empathy and understanding from a variety of viewpoints.

Shannon: Learning with and from others with whom I would not usually have had the chance was powerful. Even more so, when I allowed myself to be vulnerable and connect outside of my usual comfort zone, I found the experience to be a gift and transformational.

Vinye: This is what made this journey much more special. Having a space to be vulnerable, heard, to cry and be accepted made me more open to share and learn. By seeing my peers feeling the same way made me understand and feel the importance and depth of what we were doing. It was when we crossed boundaries that we learned from each other.

Finally, the power of crossing boundaries and the place this holds in a feminist leadership approach is highlighted in the work of Fonow and Cook (1991), which they discuss under the

rubric “attention to affect.” Fonow and Cook (1991) offer that this aspect “involves not only acknowledgment of the affective dimension [of leadership], but also recognition that emotions serve as a source of insight or a signal of rupture in social reality” (p. 9). Crawley et al. (2008) add that attention to affect recognizes the need for leaders to be “conscious of the relationship between the rational and emotional in the human experience” (p. 6) and, instead of prioritizing the rational, expands to incorporate emotion through empathy, the sharing of one’s self, and a willingness to come to understand.

The People Closest to the Issues Are Best Suited to Discover Solutions

This theme was revealed as the direct result of the CPR group members’ personal and professional investigations into gender equity in their own classrooms. Each CPR group member willingly identified an area of their own professional practice to investigate and upon confirming a need for change successfully employed strategies and practices to decrease gender disparities in their learning environments. What’s more, the CPR group’s investment in, proximity to, and understanding of gender equity as it manifests in the elementary school at EAC led to informed recommendations on how educators can promote gender equity. The relevance and potential power of the tenets proposed and shared as recommendations are equally substantiated by extant equity and gender equity leadership research.

In support of this as a theme of significance from Cycle Two and to the PAR project, CPR group members recorded the following reflections (Cycle Two, PAR Reflection and Takeaways, September 29, 2022):

Vinye: Solutions come when you can empathize with a situation and, in addition, when you can identify yourself as part of the issue.

Jeff: I don't think it helps at all to have people not invested in the issue as part of the solution. Casting a wide net to get a variety of local viewpoints is key.

Lucas: I do believe the people closest to the issues are the best to discover the solutions.

Shannon: When I consider my investigation, I had read the research. I knew it, but it wasn't until I saw it in my own practice that I believed it related to me. Had someone told me to change, maybe I would have tried. But because I identified the problem, I came up with a solution that I could and have committed to that can make a difference.

The idea that the people closest to the issues are best suited to discover solutions is based on the premise that "people residing in local communities know the issues first-hand and therefore need to be fully involved in constructing the organizing focus and selecting the pedagogies to these issues" (Guajardo et al., 2016, p. 25). Furthermore, uplifting the voices of those closest to the issues to share their stories and to lead the investigations and discoveries of solutions to their issues fosters a collective creative energy and focus that yields action, results, and development previously unconsidered (Guajardo et al., 2016).

Conclusion

The focus of the PAR project, through the collaborative work of the CPR group, was to develop educators' understanding and use of equitable gender practices in an international elementary school. Based on the project's theory of action: If educators develop deeper understandings of self and gender and use those understandings to examine practices, then we can implement new classroom and leadership practices that promote gender equity in the elementary school. The CPR group participated in three iterative cycles of inquiry leveraging collaborative qualitative research to investigate, explore, and understand the social problem of gender inequity in our setting. I designed each inquiry cycle and its activities to illuminate the

meaning, actions, and context of those doing the social inquiry—the CPR group—to accurately capture and report the complexities of gender inequity in the elementary school at EAC.

At the completion of the inquiry cycles, five themes emerged and were unanimously promoted by the CPR group as the project's findings: (1) gender is a learned construct; (2) girls miss out; (3) storytelling is a critical transformation tool; (4) crossing boundaries strengthens relationships and learning; and (5) the people closest to the issues are best suited to discover solutions. The first finding (gender is a learned construct) describes how it is that the CPR group members came to understand gender and its influences in their lives. Girls miss out, reflects the impact of gender inequity in elementary classrooms at EAC. The final three findings (storytelling is a critical transformation tool; crossing boundaries strengthens relationships and learning; the people closest to the issues are best suited to discover solutions) describe the approaches that led to transformational understanding and action relating to gender equity amongst the CPR group members. Each finding was promoted by the CPR group as pertinent to their experience in the PAR project and their understanding of gender equity in the context of the elementary school at EAC. However, the project's five findings are also offered by the CPR group as the foundations for future gender equity work applicable to educators within and beyond the elementary school and EAC.

In Chapter 7, I substantiate the transferability of this PAR project's findings by way of connection to and with extant gender, equity, and gender equity literature. Additionally, I propose a framework and theory for change towards gender equity derived from the PAR project's findings, that builds upon Guajardo et al.'s (2016) ecologies of knowing. The framework serves to fulfill the PAR project's theory of action: If educators develop deeper understandings of self and gender and use those understandings to examine practices, then we

can implement new classroom and leadership practices that promote gender equity in the elementary school, through interconnected community levels, processes and relationships.

CHAPTER 7: DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of this participatory action research (PAR) project was to develop educators' understanding and use of equitable gender practices in an international elementary school. I predicated the PAR design on the theory of action that: If educators develop deeper understandings of self and gender and use those understandings to examine practices, then we can implement new classroom and leadership practices that promote gender equity in the elementary school. I led a team of five co-practitioner researchers (CPR): myself as the elementary principal; Jeff, an elementary English second language teacher; Vinye, Grade 4, and Paula, Grade 3 elementary homeroom teachers; and Lucas, the elementary school music teacher. Together, we participated in three iterative cycles of inquiry each aimed at uncovering our understandings and insights towards the PAR's overarching research question: How do educators promote gender equity in an international elementary school? I designed each inquiry cycle and the activities to incrementally address the four PAR sub-questions:

1. To what extent do elementary educators develop an understanding of self and beliefs about gender?
2. To what extent do elementary educators examine their practices about gender equity?
3. To what extent do elementary educators implement equitable gender instructional practices?
4. How do I grow and develop in my leadership as I work with educators to promote gender equity?

The depth of insight drawn from this PAR project was the result of the individual investment and personal, professional commitment of members of the CPR group. Each one was motivated to develop deeper understandings of self and gender and then used those

understandings to examine their own practices and to implement new classroom and leadership practices for promoting gender equity in their learning environments.

In parallel to the commitment of the CPR group, I used the ecologies of knowing to guide my design and implementation of the inquiry cycles and activities which centered on the initial insights derived at the level of self. Starting at the level of self, CPR group members made connections through the sharing of gender experiences which subsequently led to new learning and understandings. We recognized and interacted with gender at the organization and community levels and created recommendations to address gender and gender inequity in the elementary school at EAC. The process of coming to understand at the level of self, then using this knowledge and experience to inform work at organization and community levels is the basis for this PAR project's theory of change in developing educators' understanding and use of equitable gender practices in an international elementary school.

In this chapter, I re-examine the project's findings alongside the extant literature presented in Chapter 2. Then, I explain the theory of change by addressing the research questions and subsequent insights derived from the PAR project. I present the recommendations the CPR group proposed and share implications for policy, practice, and research. Finally, I conclude the chapter with a reflection on my leadership development over the course of this PAR project experience.

A Re-Examination of the PAR Project's Findings

The PAR Project's findings were: (1) gender is a learned construct; (2) girls miss out; (3) storytelling is a critical transformation tool; (4) crossing boundaries strengthens relationships and learning; and (5) the people closest to the issues are best suited to discover solutions. Here, I

discuss each of the project's findings, as were presented in Chapter 6, and their relation to the literature I presented and reviewed in Chapter 2.

Gender Is a Learned Construct

The first finding, Gender Is a Learned Construct, aligns with the research of Epstein (2007), Stromquist (2013), and Baily and Holmarsdottir (2015). The body of research accessed in advance of the project's launch (presented in Chapter 2) directly supports the position of this PAR project and the experiences of its CPR group that gender is a construct that people learn and gradually internalize and perpetuate unless the process is disrupted. In her research described in *Great Divides: The Cultural, Cognitive, and Social Bases of the Global Subordination of Women*, Epstein (2007) states:

The gender divide is not determined by biological forces. No society or subgroup leaves social sorting to natural processes. It is through social and cultural mechanisms and their impact on cognitive processes that social sorting by sex occurs and is kept in place—by the exercise of force and the threat of force, by law, by persuasion, and by embedded cultural schemas that are internalized by individuals in all societies. (p. 4)

Similarly, Stromquist (2013) noted the maintenance of gender inequity through societal reinforcement and learning when describing gender as a “system of tangible as well as subtle oppression that, building on social constructions of femininity and masculinity, permeates institutional practices and individual beliefs in ways that render the asymmetrical distribution of freedom and power a ‘natural’ and uncontested reality” (p. 29). Finally, Baily and Holmarsdottir (2015) noted some of the subtle social constructs and systems through which we come to learn about gender:

From conception to the rituals of death, the social construction of gender determines the treatment of men and women in society. This could begin with son-preference, gendered roles in childhood games, and courtship rituals in youth; it continues into midlife, later life, and through to the last rites performed at a person's passing. (Baily & Holmarsdottir, 2015, p. 838)

The theme Gender is a Learned Construct was drawn from Pre-Cycle and Cycle One data about the implicit and explicit ways CPR members learned about the social construct of gender throughout their childhood and adolescence. The final reflections offered by each CPR group member revealed the importance and relevance of the theme, which is captured by Lucas' comments: "Gender is a learned construct. Gender is also taught; this is why engaging with this research has been so important to me. As educators we get to choose how we're teaching it" (Cycle Two, PAR Reflection and Takeaways, September 29, 2022).

Girls Miss Out

The theme Girls Miss Out was cited in this dissertation's literature review through Sadker and Sadker's (1994) and Sadker et al.'s (1991) classroom observation research. CPR group members found that their interactions differed when engaging with boys and girls. Similarly, we found during the classroom investigations in Cycle One and Two that teachers facilitate male dominance in the classroom when they (often unconsciously) make boys the focus of instruction and give them more frequent and meticulous attention than they give girls (Sadker, 2000). Girls Miss Out, was succinctly expressed by Vinye who wrote, "During this journey it was made clear that our practices leaned more towards boys" (Cycle Two, PAR Reflection and Takeaways, September 29, 2022). I shared the importance of this finding to me as an educator and leader at the completion of Cycle Two: "As an educator, it was vital for me to see how girls

continue to miss out. [...] [W]ith gender we all miss out. But while I had read the research, it was only evident how true this was after I had seen it in my own practices” (Cycle Two, PAR Reflection and Takeaways, September 29, 2022).

Consistent with the findings of this project, Sadker and Sadker’s (1994) *Failing at Fairness: How America’s Schools Cheat Girls* found that girls are systematically denied opportunities in areas where boys are encouraged to excel, often at the hands of well-meaning teachers unaware of the impact of their practices. Furthermore, the CPR group member’s reflections on classroom observational data collected during Cycle One strongly align with the positions of Sadker and Sadker (1994) relating to gender inequity in classrooms that lead to girls missing out:

Sitting in the same classroom, reading the same textbook, listening to the same teacher, boys and girls receive very different educations. Female students are more likely to be invisible members of classrooms. Teachers interact with males more frequently, ask them better questions, and give them more precise and helpful feedback. Over the course of years, the uneven distribution of teacher time, energy, attention, and talent, with boys getting the lion's share, takes its toll on girls. Since gender bias is not a noisy problem, most people are unaware of the secret sexist lessons and the quiet losses they engender.”

(p. 1)

The CPR group determined that not only do girls miss out, but through the examination of their own classroom practices, they drew parallels with the extant literature on gender inequity and teachers. For example, during the Cycle One Reflection and Interview, Paula explained the connections she made between gender equity literature and the investigation into her own practices:

[This literature] shows that teachers are usually not aware of gender bias in their classrooms, and the investigations showed me that I am no exception. Male students usually receive more, and more meticulous, attention than girls, and it helps me understand how the interactions I have in place with students is perpetuating this. I had read the research shared, and I thought it was all interesting, but it wasn't something that resonated with me. I didn't think this was part of my practice. Following the observation, I realized I was no exception; this happens—was happening—in my own classroom.

(Paula, PAR Cycle One Reflection and Interview, May 5, 2022)

Consistent with the findings of the CPR group members' investigations, Frawley (2005) found that "boys receive more teacher consideration, acclamation, and constructive feedback than girls do. They are called on by name more often and are asked more complex and abstract questions than girls are" (Frawley, 2005, p. 224). Additionally, Marshall and Reinhartz's (1997) study found that teachers afford boys greater opportunities to expand their ideas than girls. As a result of increased time and opportunity to contribute ideas, Bauer (2000) posited that boys tend to control the conversations in the classroom, ask more questions, and receive more praise and correction for their mistakes. The finding, *Girls Miss Out*, was based on the experiences of the CPR group members and their investigations during Cycle One and Cycle Two. The finding and the broader body of research about gender inequity in the classroom have been shown here to be consistent.

The project's first two findings—"Gender is a learned construct." "Girls miss out." — concern the CPR group's understanding of gender and its influence in their lives and in the classroom. The remaining three themes—"Storytelling is a critical transformation tool." "Crossing boundaries strengthens relationships and learning." "The people closest to the issues

are best suited to discover solutions.”—are each drawn from the work of Guajardo et al. (2016) and their Community Learning Exchange (CLE) axioms. The CPR group used the CLE axioms throughout the PAR project and emerged as pillars that guided its work as well as my design of each PAR cycle. Next, I detail the remaining three findings and establish their importance to the CPR group’s experience and this PAR project.

Storytelling Is a Critical Transformation Tool

Prior to the commencement of the PAR project, my research focused on feminism as a social-political movement to counteract the limitations, injustices, and inequities maintained through gendered power and oppression. I was drawn to feminism, specifically in light of the pending PAR project, as it emphasized a way of looking at the world, inclusive of educational leadership and educator praxis, through the lens of one’s self. Crawley et al. (2008) described feminism as:

an epistemological shift away from a history of androcentric bias in the sciences, social sciences, and humanities. As such, it is not just an ‘area study’ (again, not just about ‘women’) but something much deeper: a way of orienting to academic work that is attuned to power relations, both within the academy and within knowledge construction itself. (p. 2)

Characteristic of feminist praxis and consistent with this PAR project’s theory of change is the recognition and positioning of self, followed by the implementation of informed action to disrupt systems of oppression. Launius and Hassel (2018) encourage educators and educational leaders to enact a “feminist stance” that stresses the importance of locating oneself within structures of privilege and oppression. Furthermore, Fonow and Cook (1991) in their research on feminist pedagogical scholarship and leadership describe four themes applicable to and

representative of feminist praxis in school leadership: (1) reflexivity, (2) action orientation, (3) attention to affect, and (4) use of the situation at hand (p. 2).

Fonow and Cook's first theme of feminist leadership, Reflexivity, refers to epistemological examination and exploration to gain insight into one's underlying assumptions about situations of power, oppression, and gender relations. An epistemological approach to feminist praxis reveals "the role of reflexivity as a source of insight" (Fonow & Cook, 1991, p. 2). In light of this PAR project, storytelling was the transformational tool that enabled the CPR group to position themselves and provided them with opportunities for epistemological examination and exploration. I drew the idea of including storytelling in the CPR group from my interest in Guajardo et al.'s (2016) Community Learning Exchange (CLE) axioms, which I utilized throughout the PAR project. They emerged as pillars that guided the work of the CPR group as well as my design of each PAR cycle.

The CPR group's experience with storytelling was consistent with the work of Guajardo et al. (2016), who promote it as a critical pedagogical tool for building relationships and as a setting for learning through lived experiences. Storytelling invites participants "to think within their lived experience while providing the space to expand it in a socio-cognitive manner" (Guajardo et al., 2016, p. 43). In this way, storytelling as a transformational tool in this PAR project is a practical example of reflexivity and Fonow and Cook's (1991) stance on feminist pedagogical leadership and action.

In the literature review I examined gender through three levels: the individual (micro) level of hegemony, the familial/relational (meso) level of patriarchy, and the societal (macro) level of power and oppression (see Figure 4). I presented hegemony as a system of social dominance that, based on gender, influenced the actions, behaviors, and practices of individuals.

Storytelling for the CPR group led to the examination and exploration of epistemology to gain understanding of members' underlying assumptions and beliefs, which in turn was revealed to influence the actions, behaviors, and practices of each group member. My examination of gender at an individual, micro level in the literature review was the equivalent to the CPR group member's examination of gender at the level of self through storytelling. Consideration given to gender at the micro/self-level encourages people to recognize gender in themselves, their experiences, upbringing, and behavior. By recognizing gender in our own lives, this understanding can be extended to a meso, organizational level where we interact and relate in social and professional settings. As we move from the individual level of self to the relational level of organization, we encounter resistance.

Crossing Boundaries Strengthens Relationships and Learning

The CPR group's fourth finding, Crossing Boundaries Strengthens Relationships and Learning, refers to what is necessary to reduce resistance to actions to dismantle gender inequity at the relational/organization level. Feminist praxis was discussed in the literature review as the "integration of learning with social justice [and] applying one's knowledge to challenge oppressive systems and unequal traditions" (Berger & Radloff, 2011, p. 44). Characteristic of feminist praxis is the recognition and positioning of self, followed by the implementation of informed action to disrupt systems of oppression. Educators' and educational leaders' willingness to identify systems of oppression with the intention to disrupt them is consistent with this PAR project's finding that crossing boundaries is required to enact gender equity change. This process was captured by Paula's sentiments during the Cycle Two Our Stories CPR Group Meeting (August 4, 2022) when she shared:

Our work together was taken seriously by all members, and because of this, it was possible to create an environment where, as far as I can see, we could speak our truth and share our opinions, experiences, and reflections without fear of judgement. We all had to cross boundaries, of our own, and with each other. Sharing our experiences and reflections allowed us to better understand our own history and beliefs, reflect on our practices, and adjust it with the aim of promoting gender equitable instructional practices.

Central to the crossing of boundaries is the second pillar of feminist praxis as proposed by Launius and Hassel (2018): the location and analysis of the systems of privilege and oppression that operate in a number of contexts (for example, in one's personal life and relationships, in experiences of one's body, in societal institutions). Similarly, Fonow and Cook (1991) highlight the power of crossing boundaries and the place this holds in a feminist leadership approach when they discuss the rubric "attention to affect." Fonow and Cook (1991) offer that this aspect "involves not only acknowledgment of the affective dimension [of leadership], but also recognition that emotions serve as a source of insight or a signal of rupture in social reality" (p. 9).

Crawley et al. (2008) add that attention to affect recognizes the need for leaders to be "conscious of the relationship between the rational and emotional in the human experience" (p. 6). Instead of prioritizing the rational, Crawley et al. (2008) propose that feminist leadership with an attention to affect "translates [this] false dualism into a dialectic that informs" leadership through empathy, the sharing of one's self, and a willingness to come to understand (p. 6).

Finally, the finding that crossing boundaries strengthens relationships and learning is one of Guajardo et al.'s (2016) five CLE axioms that the CPR group used to guide their interactions and which I utilized to inform the development of CPR group engagements and activities

throughout the PAR project. The importance of this CLE axiom to the PAR project and the recognition of the need for crossing boundaries to strengthen relationships and learning to enact gender equity change is aptly described by Guajardo et al. (2016) as “the ability and willingness to experience a world that is outside our daily comfort zone . . . to break the isolation of people, teams, and organizations” (p. 26). Furthermore, crossing boundaries is critically important to disrupting the status quo, expanding participants’ curiosity and imagination, and constructing new questions and behaviors (Guajardo et al., 2016).

In addition to the correlation between the individual’s micro level of self through hegemony and the familial/relational meso level of organization through patriarchy are the complexities and systems of power and oppression of the macro level of community and society. According to the CPR group, the most powerful and sustainable method to disrupt oppressive systems at a macro level requires the collective knowledge and action of the people closest to the issues who are the best suited to discover the solutions.

The People Closest to the Issues Are Best Suited to Discover Solutions

This PAR project’s finding that “the people closest to the issues are best suited to discover solutions” emerged from Guajardo et al.’s (2016) CLE axiom. The CPR group and I applied this axiom in our collaboration during Cycle One and Two as CPR group members identified gender inequities in their own classrooms and then implemented practices to counteract the inequity. This aspect of the PAR project was empowering and enlightening for the CPR group members and proved that “people residing in local communities know the issues first-hand and therefore need to be fully involved in constructing the organizing focus and selecting the pedagogies to these issues” (Guajardo et al., 2016, p. 25). Furthermore, uplifting the voices of those closest to the issues to share their stories and to lead the investigations and

discoveries of solutions to their issues fosters collective creative energy and focus that yields action, results, and development previously unconsidered (Guajardo et al., 2016).

My reflection during the Cycle Two Our Stories CPR Group Meeting (August 4, 2022) is an example of how honoring the voices of those closest to the issues and encouraging them to lead investigations and discoveries of solutions creates opportunity for targeted action:

Each group member identified a component of their professional practice relating to gender that was of interest to them as the result of the journey they had undertaken.

Because of the focus on self, team members were willing and able to identify areas of concern, and while consistent with contemporary research and theory, this simply validated what was already known by the group because of their shared experience and the proximity they had to the situation at hand—the prominence of gender in teachers’ practices. Without the experience, the theory was accepted but not internalized. With experience, the issues are revealed and internalized. Only then can answers begin to be formed.

Included in the literature review and consistent with this finding is Fonow and Cook’s (1991) fourth theme of feminist leadership, “use of the situation at hand.” Fonow and Cook encourage equity leaders to be present in their immediate realities and focus on defining and rectifying local issues, themes, and situations. Crawley et al. (2018) concur, adding that “feminist work begins with a concern for everyday life” (p. 7) of one’s own world, community, or local area. Making authentic points of connection between the role of the leader and our everyday lives maintains a connection to the immediate environment, the relationships, structures, and people that can lead to meaningful, sustainable change that upholds a commitment to equity and justice.

The PAR Project's findings comprise the resultant themes that emerged from the three cycles of inquiry and data coding processes: (1) gender is a learned construct; (2) girls miss out; (3) storytelling is a critical transformation tool; (4) crossing boundaries strengthens relationships and learning; and (5) the people closest to the issues are best suited to discover solutions. Each of these findings are consistent with the body of research I shared in Chapter 2. Not only do the findings of this PAR project align with the research, the examination of gender at the micro level of self, the meso level of organization, and the macro level of community I have described as pertinent to the disruption and dismantling of gender bias at the Elementary School at EAC.

Based on the relational tensions that result from both challenges and possibilities among the five themes that emerged from this PAR project, I offer, in the next section, a proposed conceptual framework for addressing gender inequity in an international elementary school setting that represents this PAR project's theory of change (see Figure 27).

Theory of Change

The conceptual framework begins with the PAR project's theoretical foundations as was established in the PAR project's extant literature review (see Figure 10). The framework shows gender at the societal levels of self, organization, and community in relation to EAC.

At the center of the theory of change is self. Understanding and action from the level of self permeates outward from the individual to groups and leadership at the organization level and then to the broader groups of the community, disrupting the systems, structures, and socio-cultural gender norms that sustain inequity. The arrows illustrate the dynamic process of self transformation, shifting mindset and praxis, and action to effect change in the school and the community. At the same time, the movement originating at self crisscrosses into the organization and the community. The circles represent the established systems, structures, and socio-cultural

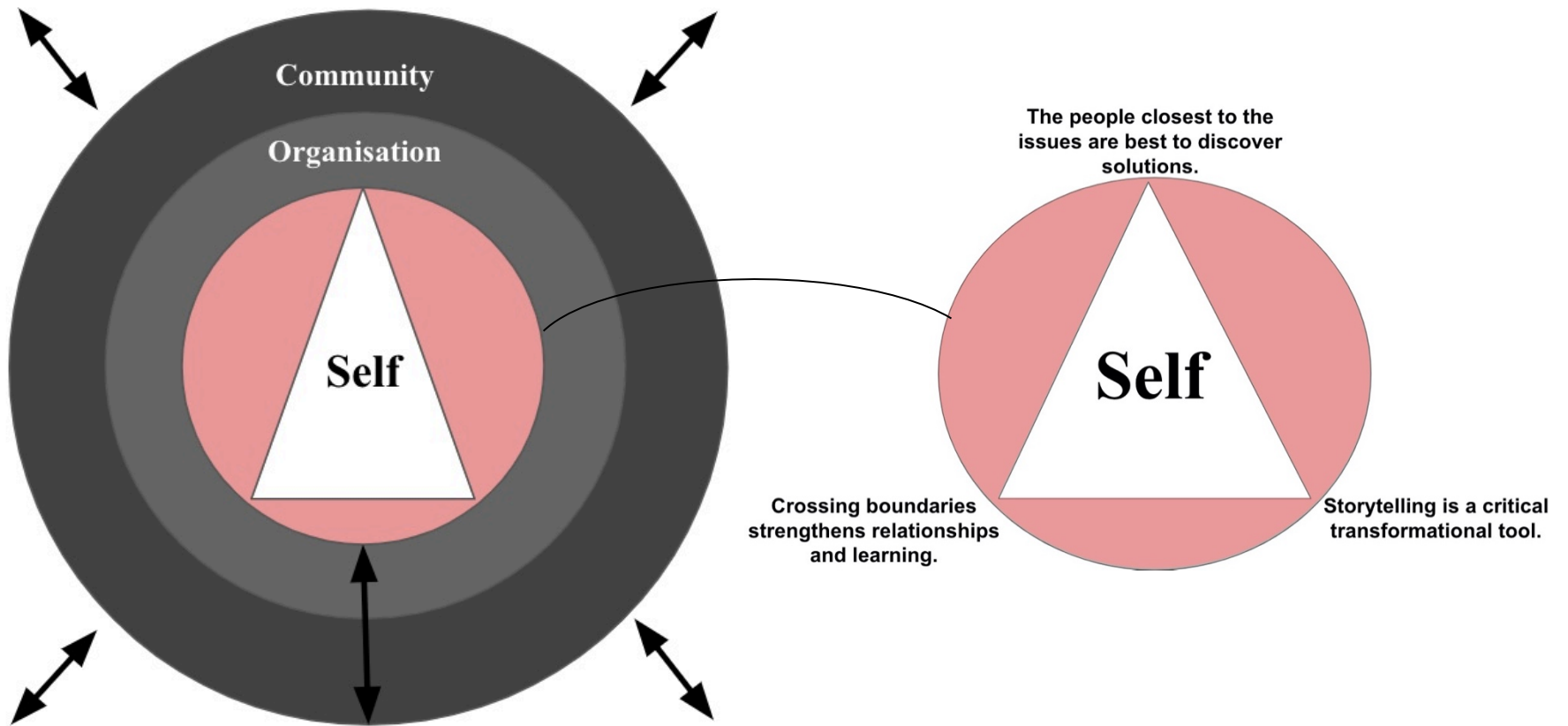


Figure 27. The PAR project's conceptual framework and theory of change.

gender norms that maintain inequity. Hence the back-and-forth dynamics among self, organization, and community results in change towards gender equity being either welcomed or resisted.

The pursuit of individual and group gender understanding and action to dismantle inequitable learned social constructs is at the heart of this theory of change. Therefore, the greater the investment and momentum gained at the level of self, the greater the outward influence and opportunities for gender equity change. While change brings disruption and tensions at all levels of the framework, gender equity leaders embrace these tensions and commit to enacting their understanding through active leadership at the organizational level through systems review and resource allocation. At the community level, gender equity leaders seek to shift teaching and learning practices through policy and curriculum revision and professional development. This important work leads to gender equitable opportunities for all men and women, boys and girls, so that no one misses out. Further elaboration of the theory of change is discussed next at the respective ecologies of knowing levels.

Change Begins with Self

Work at the level of self is the basis of this theory of change. The most profound and impactful learning takes place within the individual who eventually will initiate change in the pursuit of a gender-equitable elementary school. As the result of this PAR project and in collaboration with the CPR group, I have determined that an environment that supports change towards a gender equitable elementary school relies upon three integral elements at the level of self:

- Storytelling is a critical transformation tool.
- Crossing boundaries strengthens relationships and learning.

- The people closest to the issues are best suited to discover solutions.

The extent to which elementary educators develop an understanding of self and beliefs about gender and examine their practices about gender equity (research sub-questions one and two) depend upon these elements.

The CPR group found that during its work at the level of self—through reflection on one’s own and others’ stories—led to conversations that made meaning of experiences, formed shared understandings, and promoted personal actions as agents for gender-equity change. In line with Fonow and Cook (1991), the CPR group described the benefits of conversations and storytelling as a source of insight that led to the examination and exploration of epistemology to gain understanding of members’ underlying assumptions within situations of power and oppression. Exploration at the level of self builds personal clarity, shared understandings, and a sense of affinity and investment in collective forward movement and action.

Learning in public, sharing of one’s stories, being vulnerable, and exercising empathy is the process of crossing boundaries. Crossing boundaries leads to learning through the strengthening of relationships, heightened understandings, and the identification of new connections and perspectives. Crossing boundaries is critically important to disrupting the status quo, expands curiosity and imagination, and leads to the construction of new questions and behaviors (Guajardo et al., 2016), all elements that support change and therefore a critical component of this PAR project’s theory of change. Finally, the people doing the work at the level of self and within a community know the issues first-hand. Uplifting their voices leads to insights and solutions as well as a collective creative energy that brings about informed, sustainable action (Guajardo et al., 2016). Therefore, recognizing that the people closest to the

issues are best suited to discover solutions is the third element necessary to foster change towards a gender-equitable elementary school.

With regards to this PAR project's research sub-question four, the CPR group found that the extent to which elementary educators implement gender-equitable instructional practices is directly dependent on their interactions at the level of self, their opportunities to understand gender in their own history, experience, and learning environment. With these personal insights established, educators are best positioned to determine ways to address gender inequities in their own praxis in ways that are immediately relevant to themselves, their students, and their classrooms.

Self Informs Leadership and Action at the Organization Level

The organization level consists of the interrelated groups that make up a professional environment. At EAC, these groups included the connected education departments and teams (preschool, elementary, upper school), facilities management, communication, admissions and marketing, human resources, and business and finance. These groups and the individuals within them have the right to work and learn in an environment where gender inequity is acknowledged, corrective systems are put in place, and resources allocated to uphold gender equity for all.

When individuals engage and explore at the level of self, this process moves awareness of gender beyond one's immediate experience and highlights the circumstances, systems, and institutional norms that perpetuate gender inequity. Understandings gained at the level of self leads to informed change at an organization level, and leadership for gender equity is recognised as imperative to supporting and sustaining gender equity initiatives. Hence, leadership for gender equity is vital at the organization level. Leaders are responsible for allocating the resources (space, time, money, people, training, materials) to innovate a professional culture in the

direction of gender equity. Leaders at an organizational level personally invest in the movement towards gender equity. They cross boundaries, engage in the process of storytelling and conversations, and thereby model the importance of the exploration of self and of gender inequity in their lives and areas of responsibility.

Also necessary for creating a gender-equitable elementary school are organizational leaders who listen to the insights and recommendations that come from the people doing the work at the level of self. Gender equity leaders recognize that the people closest to the issues are best suited to discover solutions. In collaboration with those closest to the issue of gender inequity, leaders create informed systems and allocate the necessary resources for initiatives that work towards change and realizing gender equity in an elementary school.

Self Informs Change at the Community Level

Not only does exploring gender at the level of self lead to action at an organizational level, it also informs sustainable change through policy and curriculum at the community level. The community level, as shown on the conceptual framework, is the outward most circular layer. For this PAR project, the community level consisted of EAC stakeholder groups inclusive of staff, board members, students, and parents. At this level, shared expectations about community member conduct, values, interactions, and learning are established through guiding statements, policies, and curriculum and are directly influenced by the positions, experiences, and understandings brought to the community by the stakeholder groups and the individuals who represent them.

At the community level and based on the leadership and initiatives developed by the groups and individuals at the organization level, revision of existing or creation of new overarching community guiding statements, policy, and curriculum occurs. The guiding

statements, policy, and curriculum establish shared expectations about conduct, values, interactions, and learning for all members of the community. These go beyond token documentation. Rather, members of the community recognize guiding statements, policy, and curriculum as the shared criteria by which all members are held accountable and by which communities can make strategic decisions in the quest for and a commitment to gender equity for all. The PAR project's theory of change, as represented by the conceptual framework, shows the importance of individuals coming to know about gender through reflection on their own experiences, interactions, and practices. It is from a grounded understanding of gender in relation to self that change can be created for the individual through personal relationships and practices, which lead to the organization through systems and leadership and to the community through informed policy and curriculum. This is the PAR project's theory of change, and this is how gender equity can be promoted in an international elementary school.

Implications: CPR Group Recommendations

At the CPR group's culminating collaborative engagement at the end of PAR Cycle Two, the CPR group members co-constructed and unanimously agreed on the elements educators need to promote gender equity in the elementary school at EAC. This intimate process leveraged what Freire (1998) refers to as "epistemological curiosity," which is participation in the construction of knowledge that results in an instrument to transform reality. The CPR group's recommended instrument comprises three tenets to transform the reality of gender inequity in the elementary school at EAC: (1) conversations and storytelling, (2) leadership for gender equity, and (3) gender equity-informed policies and curriculum. These three transformational tenets are intrinsically linked and represent the CPR members' lived experiences oscillating between the I/We dynamic. Furthermore, the three tenets are the CPR group's collective construction of

understanding as to how educators can promote gender equity in an international elementary school, directly support the project's theory of change, and align with Guajardo et al.'s (2019) ecologies of knowing. They begin at the micro level of self (conversations and storytelling), move to the meso organization (leadership for gender equity), and finally to the macro-level forces (gender equity-informed policies and curriculum).

Fonow and Cook (1991) in their research on feminist pedagogical scholarship and leadership describe four themes applicable to and representative of feminist praxis in school leadership. These themes are not intended as discrete steps or mutually exclusive components but rather as touchstones, ethical principles for guiding the fluid process of feminist leadership to dismantle cultural and relational tenets of gender (Crawley et al., 2008; Fonow & Cook, 1991). Three of Fonow and Cook's (1991) four themes—(1) reflexivity, (2) action orientation, and (3) use of the situation at hand (p. 2)—align directly with the CPR group's instrument for gender-equity change and will be incorporated here to substantiate the importance of the CPR group's recommendations.

Conversations and Storytelling

Storytelling is a critical pedagogical tool, fundamental to the building of relationships and a setting for learning through lived experiences (Guajardo et al., 2016). "Storytelling invites participants to think within their lived experience while providing the space to expand it in a socio-cognitive manner (p. 43). Indeed, it is through conversations and the sharing of stories that participants can "build the skills to name their lived experiences in the social world, the cognitive world, and through dialogue in a relational world. This moves storytelling from a monologue to a space of sharing, interaction, and conversation" (Guajardo et al., 2016, p. 44). The CPR group told personal stories that explored the three ecologies of knowing—self, organization, and

community (Guajardo et al., 2016). Reflection on our own and others' stories led to conversations that made meaning of our experiences, formed shared understandings, and promoted personal actions as agents for gender-equity change.

All the CPR group members described their engagement in conversations and the act of storytelling as the most profound and powerful transformational tool of the PAR project experience (Lucas, Vinye, Jeff, Shannon, PAR Cycle Two, PAR Reflection, September 29, 2022). As recorded by Lucas, to succeed in promoting gender equity in our international elementary school, educators need time to engage in small collaborative groups where exchanges through conversation are based on personal stories about gender and gender equity. Honoring our own stories and listening to the stories of our colleagues gives value to our journeys, creates connections and understandings, and leads to affinity in a shared movement towards gender equity. We are advocates for group interactions that allow for conversations and personal storytelling experiences that encourage individuals to connect, reflect, and learn together around gender.

Gender Equity-Informed Policies and Curriculum

Action orientation, the second of Fonow and Cook's (1991) themes, is the idea that feminist leadership aims at positive social change, that is, social justice through action (Crawley et al., 2008). Action orientation within an education setting means individuals strive for justice in knowledge construction, teaching, curriculum, policy, and political action (Crawley et al., 2008; Fonow & Cook, 1991). Accordingly, the CPR group's second recommendation is to promote gender equity in the elementary school at EAC through gender equity-informed policies and curriculum. As recorded by Vinye during the Cycle Two PAR Reflection CPR group meeting (September 29, 2022), we established understandings through conversations and storytelling

about gender through linking personal experiences to the shared context of the elementary school. In doing so, we recognized the systems identified as enabling and perpetuating gender inequity. For the CPR group, policies and curriculum must be revised through a feminist leadership and gender-equity lens to reduce the disparities in treatment between girls and boys and increase the opportunity for success for all children.

The CPR group's recommendation to address gender inequity at policy and curriculum levels at the EAC elementary school is supported by the findings of Sadker and Sadker (1994) and Kollmayer et al. (2018) who found that the imbalanced representation of men and women in classrooms, coupled with the relative absence of women within learning materials, caused children to fill in gaps with gendered stereotypes and distortions. To this point, the CPR group identified an opportunity for positive social change at the school in the establishment of a policy to hire and promote to leadership throughout the school equal numbers of men and women. Additionally, the CPR group recommended a curriculum review to ensure not only explicit teaching about gender equity but also the removal of inequitable representations and stereotypes within all curriculum areas.

Leadership for Gender Equity

The CPR group members agreed that two forms of leadership are needed for the promotion of gender equity in the elementary school at EAC: decentralized (shared) leadership and leadership that recognizes and responds to the community and local culture of the elementary school. During the Cycle Two PAR Reflection CPR meeting (September 29, 2022) Jeff posited:

We can all make changes that will lead to a more gender-equitable school. As individuals, our contributions would be meaningful, but these would be felt only on a

small scale. Sustainable change and inroads into gender inequity in the elementary school need to be actioned through leadership on a large scale; it can't be the job of a couple of people; it won't work that way.

The CPR group endorsed Jeff's position and discussed who should take leadership responsibility for gender equity. We concluded that it could not be solely the section leader (principal). Rather, a distributed, collaborative leadership approach is needed to maintain the importance and prominence of gender equity, to model gender-equitable practices, and to respectfully demand that community members uphold a gender-equitable learning and social environment (Cycle Two, PAR Reflection, September 29, 2022).

Leverett (2002) endorses the idea of a distributed approach to equity leadership as proposed by the CPR group. Leverett acknowledges the considerable difficulty inherent in leading for equity and poses that "achieving equitable outcomes for all children is beyond the capacity of any individual leader and requires the knowledge and expertise of others in the school working with a shared sense of purpose" (Leverett, 2002, p. 1). Leverett elaborates:

School leadership models that solely rely upon principals or other appointed formal leaders to change systems without using the vast resources of the school community are often not successful in developing the needed critical mass to force the abandonment of old paradigms. The elimination of bad practices in classrooms is more attainable when leadership is spread across the school and when people in the organization share the zeal and commitment to make meaningful change happen. (2002, p. 1)

Who else is responsible for leadership in gender equity if not the elementary school principal alone? According to Leverett, leading for equity relies on an army of equity warriors, "people who passionately lead and embrace the mission of high levels of achievement for all

students.... They view themselves as having the power to influence the teaching and learning agenda in meaningful ways” (Leverett, 2002, p. 1) and are comfortable acting outside of their formally assigned roles in a quest for equity for all children (Leverett, 2002). At EAC my role as principal is to put a priority on developing equity leaders throughout the section and to “provide staff with the resources they need to grow as equity warriors” (Leverett, 2002, p. 2). The CPR group also takes on the responsibility to be the school’s first gender equity warriors in “leading by example, supporting others’ journeys, recognizing and resisting gender inequity as models and leaders in the elementary school” (Shannon, Cycle Two, PAR Reflection, September 29, 2022).

Further, the CPR group identified leadership that recognizes and responds to the unique culture of the community to be important in promoting gender equity. Fonow and Cook (1991) acknowledge context as an important theme of feminist leadership. They encourage leaders to be present in their immediate realities and to define and address local issues, themes, and situations. Crawley et al. (2018) add that “feminist work begins with a concern for everyday life” (p. 7) and that a connection to the immediate environment, the relationships, structures, and people enables meaningful, sustainable change.

In this implications section, I have shared this PAR project’s recommendations and in doing so, honored the voices of CPR group members by privileging their collective answers to the study’s overarching research question: How do educators promote gender equity in an international elementary school? The CPR group’s recommended instrument to transform the reality of gender inequity in the elementary school at EAC comprises three tenets: (1) conversations and storytelling, (2) leadership for gender equity, and (3) gender equity-informed

policies and curriculum. Next, I outline further implications and considerations that have arisen as the result of the PAR project and its findings.

The PAR Project's Implications

The implications for this PAR project relating to future practice, policy, and research will be discussed here in light of the recommendations of the CPR group with the intention to utilize insights and understandings gained from this PAR project to lead to gender equity transformation in the elementary school of EAC and beyond.

Implications for Practice

All CPR group members reported that engagement in conversations and the act of storytelling was the most profound and powerful transformational tool of the PAR project experience. Therefore, to promote gender equity in elementary schools and to make classroom practices more gender equitable, educators need time to engage in small-group exchanges based on personal stories about gender and gender equity. Additionally, the extent to which elementary educators implement gender-equitable instructional practices is directly dependent upon educators engaging in group interactions that allow for conversations and storytelling experiences, such as the ones within this PAR project, that encourage individuals to connect, reflect, and learn together around gender topics and practices. Therefore, the practice implications of this PAR project should be based on answering the question: What are the resources, systems, and training needed to provide an environment where all educators can participate in groups that engage in transformative gender equity-focused conversations and storytelling?

Implications for Policy

Action orientation within an education setting encourages educators and leaders to strive for justice in knowledge construction, teaching, curriculum, policy, and political action (Crawley et al., 2008; Fonow & Cook, 1991). The CPR group identified the revision of policies and curriculum through a feminist leadership and gender-equity lens as essential to reduce the disparities in treatment between girls and boys and to increase the opportunity for success for all children at EAC. The CPR group identified the need to address equal representation of gender in staffing as well as throughout the curriculum as two suggested areas for immediate policy and curriculum action. While important and relevant to EAC, these two steps alone are not enough. Gender equity will not be realised through isolated policy. Positive equity action comes from a comprehensive, sustained approach in which policies reflect a sustained commitment to the community's shared expectations about conduct, values, interactions, and learning for all members of the community.

In this way, decisions made by leaders and within all areas of the school—inclusive of but not limited to human resources, communication, curriculum, after-school activities, marketing, governance and leadership, budgeting and finance, and facilities, along with the people leading these teams and those doing the work—should align with the guiding statements and the community's commitment to equity. Furthermore, educators and leaders should establish measures of success to maintain accountability and shared vision for achieving a gender-equitable learning environment for all. This journey begins with these transformative questions: What will gender equity look like in our setting? How will we know if we are achieving gender equity? What will we do if we are not achieving gender equity?

Implications for Research

Leaders need to be trained to develop their understanding of this conceptual framework and theory of change. According to this PAR project's theory of change, successful application of the theory will depend on those in leadership allocating the resources needed to value the work at the level of self, to listen and act on the initiatives of those closest to the issues of gender inequity, and to establish the systems, policies, and measures for accountability that will promote sustainable and targeted approaches to gender equity throughout the community. These are sizeable responsibilities and functions that have yet to be achieved at EAC.

At EAC, the transformative leadership questions to be addressed should include: What do we expect from our gender equity leaders? How will we know if our gender equity leaders are being successful? What training does each gender equity leader need? What will we do if a gender equity leader is not successful?

Leadership Reflection

This PAR project experience has been a transformative one for me as a person, a learner, an educator, and a leader. I found myself challenged throughout this 18-month journey in ways and to depths I have not before encountered as I navigated my roles—some familiar, some new—as doctoral student, co-practitioner, principal, and colleague. As I reflect on this journey in light of the project's research sub-question four (How do I grow and develop in my leadership as I work with educators to promote gender equity?), the enduring leadership learning for me that resulted from this PAR project is consistent with Guajardo et al.'s (2016) five community learning exchange (CLE) axioms:

- Learning and leadership are dynamic social processes.
- Conversations are critical and central pedagogical processes.

- The people closest to the issues are best situated to discover answers to local concerns.
- Crossing boundaries enriches the development and educational process.
- Hope and change are built on assets and dreams of locals and their communities.

CLEs are collaborative gatherings of community stakeholders that promote the generation and exchange of ideas and strategies for school and community change (Guajardo et al., 2016). The CLE axioms are guiding values that form the basis of a group's engagement and support epistemological curiosity. The CPR group routinely cited the five CLE axioms at the opening of each CPR meeting to reiterate the nature of the PAR as a collaborative project and to establish shared understandings of the purpose and approach to the group's time together. In this way, the CLE axioms set the stage for the CPR group's praxis, the informed reflection to act and address gender inequity as oppression (Freire, 2018). The CLE axioms were embedded within our CPR group work and similarly influenced my leadership understanding inside and outside of the PAR project, as I describe next.

Learning and Leadership Are a Dynamic Social Process

“Relationships—individual and group connections—are at the foundation of effective school and community change efforts and the learning that must occur to support them”

(Militello, 2019, para. 6).

My doctoral student experience began in June 2020 at the height of the Covid-19 pandemic. My return to graduate learning was experienced through virtual environments, online exchanges, and webinars, mirroring the recent situation faced by my team and the children of the elementary school as they too had been suddenly thrust into online learning for the final 2 months of their school year. Through what was an important role reversal for me, I was struck

with a feeling of isolation and recognized my need for connection with my peers and academic supervisors. I found that my enthusiasm for learning peaked when I could collaborate with someone else facing the same situation. Sharing my experience and hearing others' experiences brought me a sense of belonging and confidence.

During one of my first learning experiences as an ECU doctoral student, I was introduced to Guajardo et al.'s (2016) CLE axioms. The first axiom, Learning and Leadership Are a Dynamic Social Process, immediately resonated with me given the situation I was facing both as a student and leader. I was experiencing first-hand the longing for social connection and the benefits of relationships to my learning through my ECU doctoral experience. I drew from this as the 2020–2021 academic school year began virtually, identifying with students, educators, and parents as they grappled with this trying launch of a school year.

I intentionally incorporated a focus on relationships by listening, coming to understand others' experiences, and creating opportunities for connection amongst families, educators, and students. In the elementary school, our shared mantra and priorities became community, relationships, and learning. I invested in initiatives that supported community connection and belonging, and I ensured that there was time for sharing in group settings through reflections and discussion. I knew that without these connections and relationships, the well-being and learning of educators, students, and their families in the elementary school would be further compromised.

As we emerged from the most stringent COVID-19 restrictions and returned to 100% on-campus learning in August 2021, the team's sustained focus on community, relationships, and learning became apparent. The results from a community survey showed high levels of trust and confidence in elementary school leaders and educators, and elementary school enrollment

increased between March 2020 and August 2021. The elementary team’s morale and sense of comradery were higher than I had ever noted, and results of elementary student external standardized tests taken in September 2021 showed student learning levels had been maintained in comparison to pre-pandemic learning levels.

I was not the only leader during this time; I worked alongside a team of people in my capacity as elementary principal. However, my leadership was buoyed by a collective recognition of the importance of establishing relationships, making connections, exercising empathy, and listening to understand, learning that I associate with the CLE axioms and will take with me in the future.

Conversations are Critical and Central Pedagogical Processes

“Relationships are the first point of contact in learning and leading—and conversation and storytelling breathe invitation, grace, and dignity into relationships” (Militello, 2019, para. 6).

Each group member reported that the CPR group’s engagement in conversations and the act of storytelling was the most profound and powerful transformational tool of the PAR project experience (Lucas, Vinye, Jeff, Shannon, PAR Cycle Two, PAR Reflection, September 29, 2022). As recorded by Lucas (PAR Cycle Two, PAR Reflection, September 29, 2022), honoring our own stories and listening to the stories of our colleagues give value to our journeys, create connections and understandings, and lead to affinity in a shared movement towards gender equity. Reflection on our own and others’ stories led to conversations that made meaning of our experiences, formed shared understandings, and promoted personal actions as agents for gender-equity change and as budding gender-equity warriors.

The importance and transformational nature of storytelling in this PAR project was captured in my final reflection of PAR Cycle Two when I shared: “It was through our

storytelling that I came to know more about myself. The sharing of stories was profound for me. It strengthened connections and built a sense of allyship, empathy, and understanding. Coming to know others helped me know myself” (Shannon, PAR Reflection, September 29, 2022). While I was not convinced of the power of conversations as I went into the PAR project, I feel very lucky to have had the chance to be proven wrong. I experienced the transformational nature of conversations and storytelling, and it is my commitment as an equity leader to establish professional environments for others (especially skeptics) to have the chance to experience the power of connecting through conversations and storytelling, to come to better understand oneself and others.

The People Closest to the Issues Are Best Situated to Discover Answers to Local Concerns

“Surfacing and empowering local perspectives and wisdom fosters a creative agency that helps people strengthen and use their power and voice to respond to their local communities and own their destinies together” (Militello, 2019, para. 6).

For some time as an educational leader, I have aspired to provide a working environment based on distributed leadership, which Solly (2018) describes as “giving leaders in schools ownership by empowering them to lead their teams and drive forward their strategies that contribute towards the whole-school priorities” (para 11). If done correctly, distributed leadership can allow schools to become more effective as leaders collectively move in the same direction guided by the same vision and values towards a common set of goals (Solly, 2018).

Before this PAR project began, I appreciated distributed leadership as I had come to recognize the importance of ownership and buy-in by the people doing the work. Partnership in this way can result in sustainable, authentic change and the maintenance of strong systems and practices in a school setting. Without a high level of buy-in, initiatives become the agenda of the

leaders and inevitably are both resented and fall short of the purpose and the outcome they are intended to deliver.

With respect to my own leadership, what I came to recognise during the PAR project was a shortcoming in practice and overreliance on delegation disguised as distributed leadership. Delegation alone is shallow as a strategic leadership approach as it does not incorporate the voice and vision of the community, nor does it allow for solutions to be collectively identified and actioned with fidelity. Prior to the PAR project, I would often set the vision and agenda for an initiative, bring on board my team to sell the reasoning for them, and then encourage them to agree to my predetermined plans. Luckily for me, my team is open to change, and given that we've had some years working together, we have cultivated trust among ourselves through a number of initiatives. I now wonder to what extent these initiatives will be sustained when I move from the position of leadership that I hold. Will these initiatives fall short of the potential change that could have been realized had there been greater community voice and leadership and had I listened to those closest to the issues?

A critical moment for my leadership learning and an example of how the people closest to the issues are best situated to discover answers to local concerns came during the CPR group's work during Cycle One and Cycle Two. Having had the chance to explore self and gender through the mandala experience in Cycle One, each CPR group member identified an issue of gender inequity in their practice. In Cycle Two, each CPR group member implemented measures to counteract the identified problem and promote gender equity in their learning environments. This process provided me the opportunity to uncover and examine issues of gender inequity in my own practices. I was both informed and became invested in implementing strategies to

counteract the issues of gender inequity. I do not believe this experience would have been as powerful had I not had the autonomy to identify the issue as well as discover the answers myself.

Similarly, at the commencement of the PAR project and my engagement with the CPR group, I was already looking ahead to the possible areas for action to address gender inequity in the elementary school at EAC. At that time, I was confident that the drafting of a gender equity policy would be a sound recommendation to come from the project. Thankfully, in embracing a collaborative, co-practitioner approach as opposed to a delegative leadership approach, the insights, perspectives, issues, and answers to our shared concern of gender inequity in the elementary school far surpassed my individual understanding and capacity to do so. What the CPR group collectively proposed as recommendations for moving towards gender equity gave balanced, informed avenues for meaningful change and targeted the specific issues faced in the elementary school community.

These preceding examples illustrated to me the importance of the people closest to the issues being the ones to discover answers to local concerns. These experiences also reinforced to me that, as a leader, my role is to listen to the people closest to the issues and to those doing the work and to honor and support the answers they present.

Crossing Boundaries Enriches the Development and Educational Process

“Crossing boundaries between schools and the surrounding communities—as well as the borders between generations, races, cultures, economic classes, etc.—are an integral part of this work”

(Militello, 2019, para. 6).

At the initial stages of interacting with the CPR group, I realized upon sharing my portraiture that crossing boundaries—be they in a personal or professional capacity—was not something I did easily. As a CPR group member, crossing boundaries meant showing and

sharing my gender stories, experiences, and understandings. It meant reducing the perceived hierarchical distance between me as a principal and my CPR group members as teachers so that we could take our respective places as equals, as educators, as learners, and as gender equity leaders in the elementary school.

By allowing myself to cross boundaries with my colleagues, we cultivated a space that promoted mutual respect, trust, and understanding. I experienced a sense of belonging and safety by sharing my stories. By crossing boundaries, I made stronger connections with the stories and perspectives of my CPR group members, and my learning was enriched. Additionally, by crossing boundaries, the group realized its capacity to propose opportunities for change and solution and our collective investment in and desire to be part of the process.

From this experience and as a leader, I take with me the importance of forming connections that stem from the crossing of boundaries, be they personal, professional, or both. These connections bring about strengthened trust and affinity that lead to powerful learning and understanding that allow me to be a more aware, empathetic, and balanced leader.

Hope and Change Are Built on Assets and Dreams of Locals and Their Communities.

“When participants tell their own story and express their dreams, they begin to map their assets, gifts, ideas, and hopes, allowing themselves and others to view their roles and power in their communities in different, collective ways” (Militello, 2019, para. 6).

This PAR project stemmed from my long-held interest in what I believed to be social inequalities that hold men and women, boys and girls, to different social expectations and encourage behaviours of adults and children that lead to inequities in relationships, education, life opportunities, and self-worth. I wanted to convene a group of educators who were willing to participate in a research project that could validate what I saw as gender inequity in our setting.

Together, we would then write a policy to address it, and I could write about the success of the process and in doing so complete my doctoral dissertation. Thankfully, the experiences I had during this PAR project went well beyond my initial intent and expectations. I see that the most profound understanding for me that emerged during this experience is that hope and change are built on assets and dreams of locals and their communities. As a woman, an international educational leader, and a leader for equity, this is what I will take with me and build upon hereafter.

My fellow CPR group, Vinye, Jeff, Lucas, and Paula, were instrumental in my learning. I thought much of my role would be uncovering for the group instances of gender inequities in our shared setting. How wrong I was. Right from our initial engagements in the Pre-Cycle, I was to take a backseat as the educators, the locals, and the custodians of our EAC community led me to see gender inequity as it was manifesting in ways that I not only did not see but was also part of. Could it be that I was inadvertently, even with my own convictions towards gender, playing a role in its division of the school I was to be leading? Yes, of course! I was quickly to see that the PAR process would be as much a learning and opportunity for revelation for me as it would be for any other member of the CPR group.

As the result of Cycle One, our CPR group's shared dream became starkly clear, and that was, and remains, to belong. Overwhelmingly, the CPR group's work revealed that the socio-cultural confines of gender to which each member has been held since childhood have led to a sense of being on the outside and never quite fitting in. This sense was exacerbated during the years of schooling and continues to this day. The dream for the CPR group is to be part of a community that upholds every person, that affords each community member dignity free of constraint to walk and operate as a valued, unique person and to be embraced with an intention

for care and respect. I believe that every community I have ever been a part of has held this same dream. For this PAR project, working towards this dream, one that had been articulated by those doing the work and closest to the issues, greatly surpassed anything I could have proposed and would never have been realized through an isolated policy about gender equity.

The true asset that each CPR group member brought was themselves conveyed through each one's rich background and experiences with gender that were revealed in our conversations and storytelling. The mandala experience enabled us to take a hard, long look at our gender-battered selves and reveal true connections and affinity in our similarities and our differences. This change can be overwhelming, and there were moments when each CPR member expressed a degree of inadequacy to address the problem at hand and to dismantle the practices of gender inequity in our school and classroom settings. Cycle Two leveraged the connections and affinity established in the previous cycle, and it was through these connections that we fostered our sense of hope, that our understandings, learning, and shared dream would make a difference in our lives and in the lives of the children in our care, even if this was through a small shift like learning a young girl's name.

We sustained our optimism because we were working together with a sense of shared purpose as equity leaders. We made changes, and we celebrated the influence these had on us and the environments we were in charge of. We saw ourselves in this problem of gender inequity, and we revealed issues that we cannot unsee. What we know is that change—personal, small, targeted, and incremental—will make a difference to ourselves, to the children in our care, and to our community.

At the completion of this academic year, as has become the pattern of my life and work, I will transition to a new community as the elementary school principal at an international school

in Johannesburg, South Africa. I will be a guest, a new person to a country rich with unique cultures and peoples, to a new school community with its own history and stories, to a team with their own assets and dreams. Therefore, as I look ahead, I am considering the question that I proposed to myself at the commencement of this journey, How have I grown and developed in my leadership as I worked with educators to promote equity? What this PAR project and the experiences alongside my fellow CPR group members has helped me to see is that, as an educational leader, I am compelled to hold to the dream that everyone deserves to belong. The PAR project revealed a framework that I can apply beyond the school gates of EAC. This framework is the idea that change begins and ends with self and entails cultivating relationships and connections that reveal opportunities for informed community action so that, alongside equity leaders, communities can enact policy and pedagogies that uphold equity for all.

Conclusion

The moment a little boy is concerned with which is a jay and which is a sparrow, he can no longer see the birds or hear them sing. Eric Berne

Disparities, bias, and inequities persist between girls and boys as the result of gender inequities in schools (Sadker & Sadker, 1994). Gender directly affects the experiences and opportunities afforded to girls and boys inside and outside our classrooms. As an educator and educational leader, I had come to posit that educators were rarely afforded the professional opportunities and/or training they needed to: (1) develop an understanding of self and beliefs about gender; (2) examine their own practices with regard to gender equity; (3) implement equitable gender instructional practices; and (4) develop as leaders to promote gender equity. The elementary school at Escola American de Campinas where I was the principal at the time of this PAR project offered a ripe setting for me to lead a group of five elementary educators as the

project's CPR group to question: How do educators develop an understanding of gender? How can educators contribute to the implementation of equitable gender instructional practices? And how can educational leaders work with educators to promote gender equity?

I led the PAR project's CPR group through three iterative cycles of inquiry each aimed at uncovering our understandings and insights towards the PAR's overarching research question: How do educators promote gender equity in an international elementary school? At the completion of the inquiry cycles, five themes emerged and were unanimously promoted by the CPR group as the project's findings: (1) gender is a learned construct; (2) girls miss out; (3) storytelling is a critical transformation tool; (4) crossing boundaries strengthens relationships and learning; and (5) the people closest to the issues are best suited to discover solutions.

The first of the project's findings (Gender is a learned construct) describes how the CPR group members came to understand gender and its influences in their lives. "Girls miss out" reflects the impact of gender inequity in elementary classrooms at EAC. The final three findings reflect the approaches that led to transformational understanding and action related to gender equity amongst the CPR group members. Each finding was promoted by the CPR group as pertinent to their experience in the PAR project and their understanding of gender equity in the context of the elementary school at EAC. However, the project's five findings are also offered by the CPR group as the foundations for future gender equity work applicable to educators within and beyond the international elementary school and EAC.

The depth of insight drawn from this PAR project was the result of the individual investment and personal, professional commitment of the CPR group. Each member demonstrated motivation to develop deeper understandings of self and gender and then used

those understandings to examine their own practices and implement new classroom and leadership practices to promote gender equity in their learning environments.

The overarching research question for the PAR project was: How do educators promote gender equity in an international elementary school? At the CPR group's culminating collaborative engagement, the CPR group members co-constructed and unanimously agreed on the elements educators need to promote gender equity. They proposed three tenets to transform the reality of gender inequity in the elementary school at EAC: (1) conversations and storytelling, (2) leadership for gender equity, and (3) gender equity-informed policies and curriculum. These three transformational tenets are intrinsically linked and represent the CPR members' lived experiences and collective construction of understanding as to how educators can promote gender equity in an international elementary school. Furthermore, the CPR group's three transformational tenets directly support the project's theory of change.

My use of the ecologies of knowing (Guajardo et al., 2016) in the design and implementation of the inquiry cycles and activities informed a progressive, thorough investigation centered on the initial insights derived at the level of self. It was at the level of self that profound connections regarding gender and subsequent learning were experienced and shared by the members of the CPR group. From the level of self, recognition and interaction with gender at the organization and community levels were identified and recommendations created to address gender and gender inequity in the elementary school at EAC. The process of coming to understand at the level of self, then using this knowledge and experience to inform work at organization and community levels, is the basis for this PAR project's theory of change to promote gender equity in an international elementary school. Thus, the PAR project's theory of change is an evolution of the founding theory of action into a declarative statement and

commitment free of the suggestion of 'if', but with conviction toward 'when'. When educators develop deeper understandings of self and gender and use those understandings to examine practices, then we can implement classroom and leadership practices that promote gender equity in an international elementary school.

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[311X2016000800301&lng=pt&tlng=pt](https://www.scielo.br/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S0102-311X2016000800301&lng=pt&tlng=pt)

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APPENDIX A: INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL



EAST CAROLINA UNIVERSITY
University & Medical Center Institutional Review Board
4N-64 Brody Medical Sciences Building· Mail Stop 682
600 Moye Boulevard · Greenville, NC 27834
Office 252-744-2914 · Fax 252-744-2284
rede.ecu.edu/umcirb/

Notification of Exempt Certification

From: Social/Behavioral IRB
To: [Shannon McMahon](#)
CC: [Matthew Militello](#)
Date: 10/11/2021
Re: [UMCIRB 21-001519](#)
Towards Gender Equity

I am pleased to inform you that your research submission has been certified as exempt on 10/10/2021. This study is eligible for Exempt Certification under category # 2c.

It is your responsibility to ensure that this research is conducted in the manner reported in your application and/or protocol, as well as being consistent with the ethical principles of the Belmont Report and your profession.

This research study does not require any additional interaction with the UMCIRB unless there are proposed changes to this study. Any change, prior to implementing that change, must be submitted to the UMCIRB for review and approval. The UMCIRB will determine if the change impacts the eligibility of the research for exempt status. If more substantive review is required, you will be notified within five business days.

Document	Description
Appendix C - Informed Consent Form.doc(0.01)	Consent Forms
Appendix D - Observation Protocol.docx(0.01)	Data Collection Sheet
Appendix D - Observation Protocol.docx(0.01)	Interview/Focus Group Scripts/Questions
Appendix E - Interview Protocol.docx(0.01)	Interview/Focus Group Scripts/Questions
Appendix G - Community Learning Exchange Artifacts Protocol.docx(0.01)	Interview/Focus Group Scripts/Questions
Appendix I - Reflection Protocol.docx(0.01)	Interview/Focus Group Scripts/Questions
McMahon_IRB Proposal.pdf(0.01)	Study Protocol or Grant Application
Recruitment Script.docx(0.01)	Recruitment Documents/Scripts

For research studies where a waiver or alteration of HIPAA Authorization has been approved, the IRB states that each of the waiver criteria in 45 CFR 164.512(i)(1)(i)(A) and (2)(i) through (v) have been met. Additionally, the elements of PHI to be collected as described in items 1 and 2 of the Application for Waiver of Authorization have been determined to be the minimal necessary for the specified research.

The Chairperson (or designee) does not have a potential for conflict of interest on this study.

APPENDIX B: CITI CERTIFICATION



Completion Date 15-Dec-2020
Expiration Date 15-Dec-2023
Record ID 40004804

This is to certify that:

Shannon McMahon

Has completed the following CITI Program course:

Not valid for renewal of certification through CME.

Human Research
(Curriculum Group)

Group 2.Social / Behavioral Research Investigators and Key Personnel

(Course Learner Group)

1 - Basic Course
(Stage)

Under requirements set by:

East Carolina University



Verify at www.citiprogram.org/verify/?w48571c08-1f59-4ce7-8e33-fe237445c2d5-40004804

APPENDIX C: INFORMED CONSENT FORM



Informed Consent to Participate in Research

Information to consider before taking part in research that has no more than minimal risk.

Title of Research Study: Towards Gender Equity: Developing Elementary Educators' Understanding and Use of Equitable Gender Practices

Principal Investigator: Shannon McMahon (under the guidance of Dr. Matthew Militello)
Institution, Division: Escola Americana de Campinas (EAC), Elementary School
Address: Rua Cajamar, 35 - Jardim Alto da Barra 13090 860 - Campinas, SP
- Brazil
Telephone #: +55 (19) 2102-1000
Study Coordinator: Matthew Militello
Telephone #: (919) 518.4008

Participant Full Name: _____ Date of Birth: _____

Please PRINT clearly

/

Researchers at East Carolina University (ECU) study issues related to society, health problems, environmental problems, behavior problems and the human condition. To do this, we need the help of volunteers who are willing to take part in research.

Why am I being invited to take part in this research?

The purpose of this research is to develop educators' understanding and use of equitable gender practices in an international elementary school. You are being invited to take part in this research because you are an educator in the elementary school at EAC and you have been identified by the principal investigator as a person who could contribute to this research. The decision to take part in this research is yours to make. By doing this research, we hope to learn how to promote gender equity in an international elementary school.

If you volunteer to take part in this research, you will be one of about 5 people to do so.

Are there reasons I should not take part in this research?

I understand I should not volunteer for this study if I do not have the time or interest in participating in the project.

I understand I should not volunteer for this study if I am uncomfortable with the purpose of the research (to develop educators' understanding and use of equitable gender practices in an international elementary school).

What other choices do I have if I do not take part in this research?

You can choose not to participate.

Where is the research going to take place and how long will it last?

The research will be conducted at the elementary school of EAC. The total amount of time you will be asked to volunteer for this study is no more than five times per semester over the next two years.

What will I be asked to do?

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to do the following:

Participate in a collaborative meeting every month. Monthly meetings can include community learning exchanges to learn about gender and equitable gender practices, as well as research group meetings where strategies for data collection and data analysis are discussed. You will be asked to meet with me individually every other month for interviews, observations, and/or reflections. Interviews, observations, and reflections may be recorded. Photographs of you or your work may also be part of the data collection process.

What might I experience if I take part in the research?

We don't know of any risks (the chance of harm) associated with this research. Any risks that may occur with this research are no more than what you would experience in everyday life. We don't know if you will benefit from taking part in this study. There may not be any personal benefit to you but the information gained by doing this research may help others in the future.

Will I be paid for taking part in this research?

The time you volunteer while being in this study will be considered professional development. Time offered by the participant outside of Escola Americana de Campinas' (EAC) working hours will be recognized and paid on an hourly basis in line with the school's regular contractual agreement.

Will it cost me to take part in this research?

It will not cost you any money to be part of the research.

Who will know that I took part in this research and learn personal information about me?

ECU and the people and organizations listed below may know that you took part in this research and may see information about you that is normally kept private. With your permission, these people may use your private information to do this research:

The University & Medical Center Institutional Review Board (UMCIRB) and its staff have responsibility for overseeing your welfare during this research and may need to see research records that identify you.

How will you keep the information you collect about me secure? How long will you keep it?

The information in the study will be kept confidential to the full extent allowed by law. Confidentiality will be maintained throughout the data collection and data analysis process. Consent forms and data from interviews will be maintained in a secure, locked location and will be stored for a minimum of three years after completion of the study. No reference will be made in oral or written reports that could link you to the study.

What if I decide I don't want to continue in this research?

You can stop at any time after it has already started. There will be no consequences if you stop and you will not be criticized. You will not lose any benefits that you normally receive.

Who should I contact if I have questions?

The people conducting this study will be able to answer any questions concerning this research, now or in the future. You may contact the advisor for this study Dr. Matthew Militello (militellom14@sfusd.edu) or the Principal Investigator Shannon McMahon at mcmahons20@students.ecu.edu or shannon.mcmahon@eac.com.br

If you have questions about your rights as someone taking part in research, you may call the University & Medical Center Institutional Review Board (UMCIRB) at phone number 252-744-2914 (days, 8:00 am-5:00 pm). If you would like to report a complaint or concern about this research study, you may call the Director for Human Research Protections, at 252-744-2914.

Is there anything else I should know?

Identifiers might be removed from the identifiable private information or identifiable biospecimens and, after such removal, the information or biospecimens could be used for future research studies or distributed to another investigator for future research studies without additional informed consent from you or your Legally Authorized Representative (LAR). However, there still may be a chance that someone could figure out the information is about you.

APPENDIX D: SCHOOL LETTER OF APPROVAL



Tuesday, 13th July, 2021

To Whom It May Concern:

Escola Americana de Campinas (EAC) recognizes the benefits of participating in relevant, well-designed research studies proposed by qualified individuals. Approval for conducting such study is based primarily on the extent to which substantial benefits can be shown for EAC and its mission of educating students. The purpose of this letter is to notify you of the **approval** to conduct your dissertation study titled, *Towards Gender Equity: Developing Elementary Educators' Understanding and Use of Equitable Gender Practices* with participants from EAC. I also give permission to utilize spaces in the Elementary School to collect data and conduct interviews for this dissertation project.

The project meets all of our school guidelines, and safeguards for conducting research on our campus. Moreover, there is ample space for Shannon McMahon to conduct her study and her project will not interfere with any functions of the Elementary School. Finally, the following conditions must be met, as agreed upon:

Participation is voluntary.

Participants can choose to leave the study without penalty at any time.

Any issues with participation in the study are reported to the Head of School in a timely manner.

An executive summary of your findings is shared with the Head of School once the study is complete.

In addition to these conditions, the study must follow all of the East Carolina University IRB guidelines.

EAC is excited to support this important work.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Arcidiacono', is written over a thin horizontal line.

Michael Arcidiacono
Head of School



APPENDIX E: OBSERVATION PROTOCOL

Utilize the chart to take selective verbatim notes. It is important to note the time of all notes. After the observation, analyze the selective verbatim notes and create initial codes.

Date of Observation:

Teacher Code:

Grade Level:

Time	Selective Verbatim	Code

APPENDIX F: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Introduction

Thank you for taking time from your busy schedule to meet with me today. I appreciate your willingness to participate in this interview and will limit the time to one hour.

My name is Shannon McMahon, I am conducting research as a doctoral candidate at East Carolina University. This study aims to develop educators' understanding and use of equitable gender practices in an international elementary school. It is hoped that through this study educators will develop deeper understandings of self and gender, and use those understandings to examine practices, leading to the implementation of new classroom and leadership practices that promote gender equity. The information from this interview will be used to consider next steps in supporting elementary educators to implement equitable gender instructional practices, and for me to grow and develop in my leadership as I work with educators to promote gender equity.

Disclosures:

- Your participation in the study is voluntary. It is your decision whether or not to participate and you may elect to stop participating in the interview at any time.
- The interview will be digitally recorded in order to capture a comprehensive record of our conversation. All information collected will be kept confidential. Any information collected during the session that may identify any participant will only be disclosed with your prior permission. A coding system will be used in the management and analysis of the interview data with no names or identifiers associated with any of the recorded discussion.
- The interview will be conducted using a semi-structured and informal format. Several questions will be asked about both the individual knowledge and skills gained and the organization practices used. It is our hope that everyone will contribute to the conversation.
- The interview will last approximately 60 minutes.

Interview Questions

- To what extent did your participation in the CLE develop your understanding of self and beliefs about gender?
- To what extent have you examined your practices about gender equity?
- To what extent do you now implement equitable gender instructional practices?
How has my leadership and work with you promoted gender equity?

APPENDIX G: CPR MEETING NOTES

Utilize the chart to take notes. It is important to note the time of all notes. After the meeting, analyze the notes and create initial codes.

Date of Meeting:

Participants:

Time	Notes	Code

APPENDIX H: REFLECTIVE MEMOS

Date:

Experience:

Time:

Code/s:

Summary

Reflection

Connection

Action

References

APPENDIX I: MANDALA PROTOCOL

Towards Gender Equity

To develop educators' understanding and use of equitable gender practices in an international elementary school.

Mandala

Mandala represents what cannot be explained in words or language.



*May this work challenge you toward
New frontiers that will emerge
As you begin to approach them,
Calling forth from you the full force
And depth of your undiscovered gifts.*

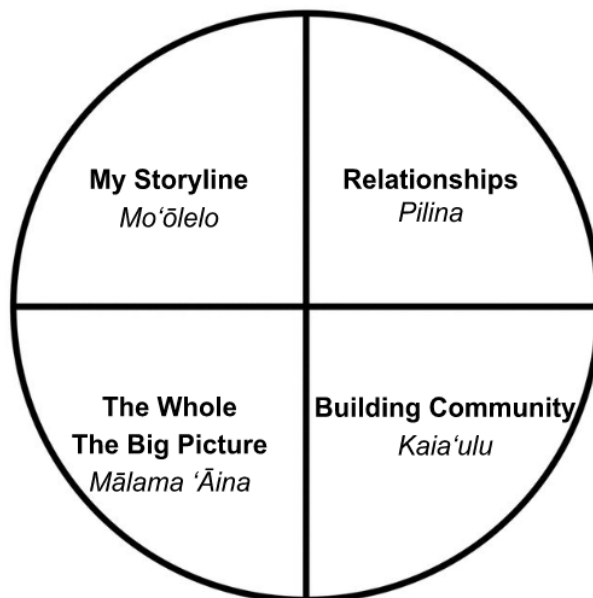
Excerpt from For A New Position by John O'Donohue

Mandala

A mandala is a geometric configuration of symbols. In various spiritual traditions, mandalas may be employed for focusing the attention of practitioners and adepts, as a spiritual guidance tool, for establishing a sacred space, and as an aid to meditation and trance induction. Mandala is a circular

<p>medicine wheel has been telling the truth about change for centuries. That is to say, that everything is in a state of constant change, of things coming together and things coming apart. Change is never random or accidental and is always necessary and connected” (p. 141). Link to Benham article.</p>	<p>sand paintings to medieval alchemy and objects of meditation in early Christianity and Tibetan Buddhism. In all contexts the mandala seems to represent the connection between the whole and the part; the tension between the unity of existence and the infinite ways in which the whole can be fragmented. Primal traditions can help bring down to earth the rather abstract discussion of the epistemology of the quest” (p. 117). Link to Chapter 4 of Herman book. Link to Future Primal Toolkit by Herman.</p>
---	--

Developing one’s own Mandala is powerful to “keep relearning and retelling the big story”
Herman, 2013, p. 389



Create your own Mandala as you think through the quadrants and questions below:

Quadrant I: My Storyline

Return to your journey line and reacquaint yourself with this representation of self. The first quadrant defines the critical moments in your life, your history, and the stories that represent you. As we dig deeper, consider your identity in light of your journey and your stories:

- What are the connections between your journey and your identity/s?

- Where does clarity emerge for your identity/s?
- When has tension been present between your defining moments and your identity/s?
- How has/have your identity/s changed or remained the same? Why is this so?
- Where does gender show up in your journey and identity/s?

Quadrant II: Relationship

Turn your attention now to your associations and connections, the people, partnerships, and power dynamics that influence your relationships.

Begin with your (our) school setting at EAC.

- Define your EAC relationships (eg. with students, parents colleagues, supervisors, leadership/admin)
- What do you bring to these relationships?
- What influence do your EAC relationships have on your passion and power?

Now consider relationships outside of EAC:

- Define these relationships (eg. the community you live, family, friends, clubs)
- How do these relationships connect with your identity?
- What do you bring to these relationships?
- What influence do your outside relationships have on your passion and power?

Take a look at both your EAC and external relations and ask yourself:

- Where does gender show up? Why?
- What influence does gender have on your relationships?

Quadrant III: Building Community

Here you'll focus on the role EAC plays or does not play, in realising gender equity.

- From your experience, what are EAC's external influences (eg. cultural, political, economic) that support or hinder gender equality?
- From your experience, what are EAC's internal influences (eg. traditions, organisational structure) that support or hinder gender equality?
- From your point of view, where does gender equity/inequity show up at EAC?
- From your perspective, who is and who is not doing the gender equity work?

Take a moment to reflect on gender and our community.

- To what extent does this relation build (or not) a learning community that advocates for gender equity?
- What do you think about this?
- How does this make you feel?

Quadrant IV: The Whole, The Big Picture

Now it's time to put it all together. Thinking about EAC and your role as a gender equity leader:

- What needs to be in place/developed to realise gender equity at EAC (eg. guiding statements, policies, standards)?

- What do you expect of leaders with regards to gender equity?
- What is the role of educators in moving gender equity forward at EAC and what do they need to succeed?
- Where do you fit into the movement towards a gender-equitable EAC?

In connecting this final quadrant to the whole, and given your life experiences (personal and professional), your sensibilities and passions, your relations:

- why is a gender-equitable EAC important?

Benham, M. (2002). An alternative perspective of educational leadership for change: Reflections on native/indigenous ways of knowing. *Second international handbook of educational leadership and administration* (pp. 137-165). Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Herman, L.G. (2013). *Future Primal: How our wilderness origins show us the way forward*. New World Library.

APPENDIX J: CYCLE ONE INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

PAR Cycle One Interview

RQ1: To what extent do elementary educators develop an understanding of self and beliefs about gender?

- We have explored self and beliefs about gender through the creation of and reflection on our Mandalas, as well as regular group discussion.
- Return to your Mandala. During Cycle 1 we focussed on quadrants 1-3.
- Take some time to look back at quadrants 1-3 of your Mandala and consider what emerged for you in this process.
- Read through your [Mandala Sharing](#).

Question 1

To what extent did the Mandala experience support you in developing your understanding of self and beliefs about gender? Consider what was helpful, revealing, difficult, surprising.

Question 2

To what extent did the CPR discussions support you in developing your understanding of self and beliefs about gender? Consider what was helpful, revealing, difficult, surprising.

Question 3

What did you learn about yourself and gender during this Cycle 1 experience?

RQ2: To what extent do elementary educators examine their practices about gender equity?

- Having explored self and beliefs about gender through our Mandalas, and group discussion, our attention turned to recognising gender in our surroundings and in our practices.
- Sightings and initial reflections were recorded in the [How gender is showing up in our practices](#) reflection.
- [Gender and Teachers](#) research was shared and discussed.
- An [action plan](#) for investigating an area of interest was devised by each CPR group member.
- Over the course of a week, each group member fulfilled their action plan and then shared the findings and implications.

Question 4

What were you motivated to find out about, and why was this important to you?

Question 5

What did your investigation reveal?

Question 6

What part of the research shared in [Gender and Teachers](#) resonated with you and your investigation? Why is this so?

RQ3: To what extent do elementary educators implement equitable gender instructional practices?

- And now what?

Question 7

As a reflective practitioner and gender equity advocate, what does this mean for you and your instructional practices? Where to from here?

APPENDIX K: CYCLE TWO WHERE TO FROM HERE PROTOCOL

<p>Where To From Here?</p> <p><i>(RQ 3 - How do I grow and develop in my leadership as I work with educators to promote gender equity?)</i></p> <p>Together we will co-create this PAR study's answers to the Quadrant IV prompts:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. What needs to be in place/developed to realize gender equity at EAC? (Vinye)2. What do you expect of leaders with regard to gender equity? (Jeff)3. What is the role of educators in moving gender equity forward at EAC and what do they need to succeed? (Lucas)4. Where do you (we) fit into the movement toward a gender-equitable EAC? (Shannon)	<p>25 minutes</p> <p>5 x 5-minute rounds:</p> <p>Round 1 - individual consideration</p> <p>Round 2 - discussion (1&2 / 3&4)</p> <p>Round 3 - discussion (1&3 / 2&4)</p> <p>Round 4 - discussion (1&4 / 2&3)</p> <p>Round 5 - discussion (whole group)</p>
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APPENDIX L: CYCLE TWO PAR REFLECTION AND TAKEAWAYS PROTOCOL

PAR Reflection and Takeaways

Our CPR team has been engaging in this participatory action research project for the past year. Our purpose has been:

To develop educators' understanding and use of equitable gender practices in an international elementary school.

Considering the personal and professional journey this PAR experience has provided, what are the major understandings/takeaways/themes/ideas that have emerged for you during our work together?

-
-
-
-
-

APPENDIX M: GRADE FOUR MUSIC GRADES

Grade Four Music Unit Grades

Music Unit	Below Expectations		Approaching Expectations		Meeting Expectations		Exceeding Expectations	
	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys
Unit 1	0	0	0	1	28	23	5	9
Unit 2	0	0	0	0	28	21	5	12

APPENDIX N: THE HIGHLIGHTED EXERT OF THE CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE

LUCAS CONNECTED WITH

Sadker and Sadker's classroom observation research (1991, 1994) suggests that the ways teachers interact differ when engaging with boys and girls. Noted by Frawley (2005) "boys receive more teacher consideration, acclamation, and constructive feedback than girls do. They are called on by name more often and are asked more complex and abstract questions than girls are" (p. 224). Teachers afford boys greater opportunities to expand their ideas and be animated, reinforcing boys for general responses more than girls (Marshall & Reinhartz, 2012). As a result, boys tend to control the conversations in the classroom, ask more questions, and receive more praise and correction for their mistakes (Bauer, 2000). Male dominance in the classroom is facilitated by teachers when they (often unconsciously) make boys the focus of instruction, giving them more frequent and meticulous attention (Sadker, 2000). Ultimately, boys receive more precise attention (positive as well as negative), thereby enhancing their performance (Frawley, 2005; Sadker & Sadker, 1994; Sadker, 2000).

**APPENDIX O: OBSERVATIONS OF VINYE’S MANAGEMENT OF AND RESPONSE
TO STUDENT BEHAVIOR**

Observations of Vinye’s Management of and Response to Student Behavior

Students	Observation Number	Neutral Behavior Direct Instruction	Negative Behavior Response	Positive Behavior Response
Girls	1	1	1	0
Boys	1	12	5	0
Girls	2	1	1	1
Boys	2	4	6	1

APPENDIX P: THE HIGHLIGHTED EXERT OF THE CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE

VINYE CONNECTED WITH

Teachers play a vital role in the holistic development of children. How teachers engage and interact with children, and their expectations, have a profound effect on their self-confidence and achievements (Council of Europe, 2015). In their review, and drawn from the work of Gollnick and Chinn (1994), Welton and Mallan (1996), and Sadker (2000), Marshall and Reinhartz (2012) promote that “teachers’ personal communication with and informal instruction of students - often referred to as the hidden curriculum - have a major impact on the achievement and future success of both girls and boys” (p. 333). The hidden curriculum is inclusive of all formal and informal interactions with students and refers to the subtle, daily lessons encountered through teachers’ behaviors, feedback, classroom practices, and instructional materials (Council of Europe, 2015; Frawley, 2005). The hidden curriculum, the manifestation of teachers’ conscious and subconscious biases, conveys powerful messages that influence children’s self-esteem, contribute to the perpetuation of gender stereotyping and gendered self-perception, and limit children’s ambitions and accomplishments (Carlana, 2019; Council of Europe, 2015; Frawley, 2005; Sadker & Sadker, 1994; Sanders, 2003).

**APPENDIX Q: OBSERVATIONS OF VINYE'S MANAGEMENT OF AND RESPONSE
TO STUDENT BEHAVIOR**

Observations of Vinye's Management of and Response to Student Behavior

Students	Observation Number	Neutral Behavior Direct Instruction	Negative Behavior Response	Positive Behavior Response
Girls	3	5	1	0
Boys	3	0	4	1
Girls	4	1	1	0
Boys	4	0	4	0

**APPENDIX R: BOYS AND GIRLS NAMES KNOWN BY JEFF IN GRADE 2
AND GRADE 3**

Boys and Girls Names Known By Jeff in Grade Two and Grade Three

Class	Boys' Names Known (%)	Girls' Names Known (%)
2A	100	100
2B	100	100
2C	100	80
3A	100	85
3B	100	57

APPENDIX S: THE HIGHLIGHTED EXERT OF THE CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE

JEFF CONNECTED WITH

Sadker and Sadker's classroom observation research (1991, 1994) suggests that the ways teachers interact differ when engaging with boys and girls. Noted by Frawley (2005) "boys receive more teacher consideration, acclamation, and constructive feedback than girls do. They are called on by name more often and are asked more complex and abstract questions than girls are" (p. 224). Teachers afford boys greater opportunities to expand their ideas and be animated, reinforcing boys for general responses more than girls (Marshall & Reinhartz, 2012). As a result, boys tend to control the conversations in the classroom, ask more questions, and receive more praise and correction for their mistakes (Bauer, 2000). Male dominance in the classroom is facilitated by teachers when they (often unconsciously) make boys the focus of instruction, giving them more frequent and meticulous attention (Sadker, 2000). Ultimately, boys receive more precise attention (positive as well as negative), thereby enhancing their performance (Frawley, 2005; Sadker & Sadker, 1994; Sadker, 2000).

**APPENDIX T: BOYS AND GIRLS NAMES KNOWN BY JEFF IN GRADE TWO
AND GRADE ONE**

Boys and Girls Names Known By Jeff in Grade One

Class	Boys' Names Known (%)	Girls' Names Known (%)
1A	100	100
1C	100	92

**APPENDIX U: OBSERVED ALLOCATION OF TIME FOR BOYS AND GIRLS IN
PAULA'S CLASSROOM**

Observed Allocation of Time for Boys and Girls in Paula's Classroom

Lesson	Observation	Encounters With Boys	Encounters With Girls
1	Time spent on social-emotional matters	5 minutes	4 minutes
2	Time spent with individual students	17 minutes	3 minutes

APPENDIX V: THE HIGHLIGHTED EXERT OF THE CHAPTER TWO LITERATURE

PAULA CONNECTED WITH

Teachers' perception of gender differences, however, does influence how they treat and interact with students (Sadker & Sadker, 1994; Frawley, 2005). As shared by Hadjar et al. (2014) gender biases held by teachers serve as "anchors" with far-reaching consequences for boys and girls. Gender bias occurs when one's perception and beliefs towards gender interfere with impartiality and/or impair group members' performance (Carlana, 2019). Sadker and Sadker (1994) and Marshall and Reinhartz (2012) independently reported that gender bias in classrooms and teacher practices is so subtle that teachers are often unaware it exists. Hand et al. (2017) noted teachers' difficulty in recognizing gender bias offering, "gender bias can be more understated and therefore, can influence actions and beliefs more easily since the perceiver is often unaware that these beliefs can shape their outward behavior" (p. 931). The combined contributions of Sadker and Sadker (1991, 1994, 2000, 2002) have become the foundations for further gender bias studies in classrooms and instructional practices. Following is a summary of some of the major findings relating to and initiated by these seminal studies.

Sadker and Sadker's classroom observation research (1991, 1994) suggests that the ways teachers interact differ when engaging with boys and girls. Noted by Frawley (2005) "boys receive more teacher consideration, acclamation, and constructive feedback than girls do. They are called on by name more often and are asked more complex and abstract questions than girls are" (p. 224). Teachers afford boys greater opportunities to expand their ideas and be animated, reinforcing boys for general responses more than girls (Marshall & Reinhartz, 2012). As a result, boys tend to control the conversations in the classroom, ask more questions, and receive more

praise and correction for their mistakes (Bauer, 2000). Male dominance in the classroom is facilitated by teachers when they (often unconsciously) make boys the focus of instruction, giving them more frequent and meticulous attention (Sadker, 2000). Ultimately, boys receive more precise attention (positive as well as negative), thereby enhancing their performance (Frawley, 2005; Sadker & Sadker, 1994; Sadker, 2000).

Girls are generally invisible within the classroom environment (Sadker & Sadker, 1994; Sadker 2000, 2002). Whether to verbally reprimand, answer questions, elaborate on comments, or help with schoolwork, teachers typically interact less with girls, relegating them to the losing members of the classroom (Bauer, 2000; Frawley, 2005). Girls tend to receive less precise and/or helpful feedback to assist them in grasping the subject matter, along with comparatively reduced wait time needed to arrive at correct answers (Sadker & Sadker, 1994). In addition, Sadker and Sadker (1994, 2009), Sadker (2000), and Bauer (2000) indicate that girls receive subtle indicators that they are unable to think critically on their own, often receiving premature help and/or less intense feedback and elaboration on certain topics. Finally, there remains an assumption that girls cannot tolerate constructive criticism, and therefore, girls are more often praised for effort, while boys are recognized for their ability (Kollmayer et al., 2016).

APPENDIX W: BOYS AND GIRLS NAMES KNOWN BY SHANNON

Boys and Girls Names Known By Shannon

Group	Boys' Names Known	Girls' Names Known
1B	2	4
2A	2	2
3C	6	8
4C	10	3
5B	11	7
Total Sample	63%	43%

APPENDIX X: THE HIGHLIGHTED EXERT OF THE CHAPTER TWO LITERATURE

SHANNON CONNECTED WITH

Teachers play a vital role in the holistic development of children. How teachers engage and interact with children, and their expectations, have a profound effect on their self-confidence and achievements (Council of Europe, 2015). In their review, and drawn from the work of Gollnick and Chinn (1994), Welton and Mallan (1996), and Sadker (2000), Marshall and Reinhartz (2012) promote that “teachers’ personal communication with and informal instruction of students - often referred to as the hidden curriculum - have a major impact on the achievement and future success of both girls and boys” (p. 333). The hidden curriculum is inclusive of all formal and informal interactions with students and refers to the subtle, daily lessons encountered through teachers’ behaviors, feedback, classroom practices, and instructional materials (Frawley, 2005; Council of Europe, 2015). The hidden curriculum, the manifestation of teachers’ conscious and subconscious biases, conveys powerful messages that influence children’s self-esteem, contribute to the perpetuation of gender stereotyping and gendered self-perception, and limit children’s ambitions and accomplishments (Sadker & Sadker, 1994; Sanders, 2003; Frawley, 2005; Council of Europe, 2015; Carlana, 2019).

APPENDIX Y: BOYS AND GIRLS NAMES KNOWN BY SHANNON

Boys and Girls Names Known By Shannon

Group	Boys' Names Known	Girls' Names Known
1B	8	10
2A	10	10
3C	11	11
4C	11	11
5B	14	8
Total Sample	98%	96%

**APPENDIX Z: CPR GROUP PAR REFLECTIONS AND TAKEAWAYS PROMPTS
AND RESPONSES**

PAR Reflection and Takeaways

Our CPR team has been engaging in this participatory action research project for the past year. Our purpose has been:

To develop educators' understanding and use of equitable gender practices in an international elementary school.

Considering the personal and professional journey this PAR experience has provided, what are the major understandings/takeaways/themes/ideas that have emerged for you during our work together?

Vinye

- Gender is a much more complex topic because it is ingrained in all aspects of life, including who we are.
- It is clear to me that my upbringing has shaped my views and understandings on gender.
- The more I study, learn, and converse with people about gender the more my perceptions on it expand and so does my work practice.
- That building an understanding of gender and equitable practices and policies will always be a work in progress, it is not something that will happen overnight nor be definitive.
- As a teacher my journey to develop a more gender-equitable practice is connected to my life's story and my studies on the topic.

Jeff

- Change comes through engaging with a group of people with a common interest, concern
- Everyone has a personal experience with gender
- People become very willing to talk about their experiences when they are part of a comfortable community
- Everyone has gender bias
- Overcoming gender bias is challenging work

Lucas

- Sharing and reflecting about our stories has a big impact on our practices.
- As teachers our relation to gender in the classroom is deeply connected to our personal journeys.
- Observations, discussions and sharing stories are the basis for how we can improve ourselves as teachers.

