LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO
AD·MAJOREM·DEI·GLORIAM 1870

eCOMMONS

Loyola University Chicago

Loyola eCommons

Dissertations   **Theses and Dissertations**

2018

Gender Beliefs of Teachers in Orthodox Jewish Early Childhood Programs

Ilana Chai Dvorin Friedman

Follow this and additional works at: https://ecommons.luc.edu/luc_diss

Part of the Early Childhood Education Commons

Recommended Citation

Friedman, Ilana Chai Dvorin, "Gender Beliefs of Teachers in Orthodox Jewish Early Childhood Programs" (2018). *Dissertations*. 2956.
https://ecommons.luc.edu/luc_diss/2956

LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

GENDER BELIEFS OF TEACHERS IN ORTHODOX

JEWISH EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO

THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

PROGRAM IN CHILD DEVELOPMENT

BY

ILANA CHAI DVORIN FRIEDMAN

CHICAGO, IL

AUGUST 2018

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

progress. You are a phenomenal educator and mentor, and your insights into critical issues within early childhood and higher education are inspiring. I am lucky to have been able to benefit from these talented educators and scholars from both Erikson Institute and Loyola University Chicago and am grateful for the extraordinary professors and mentors I have learned from other the years.

This milestone in my life was attainable due to the endless support and love of my entire family. I am beyond lucky and blessed to have such caring and giving people in my life, such as my husband, children, parents, in-laws, siblings, grandmother, cousins, aunts, and uncles. When I considered earning a doctorate, my husband, Jeremy, encouraged me to apply. His unwavering support of my personal and academic success, even above his own, has not gone unnoticed. Thank you for all that you have done for me and our family to allow me to reach this stage.

My parents, Shirley and Howard Dvorin, have always encouraged me in a myriad of ways to pursue my goals and have confidence in my abilities. I thank them for their guidance and motivation throughout my academic, professional, and personal life. Thank you to my mom who, through her example, taught me how to strive for excellence and fulfillment while navigating a world bound by gender inequality. I must acknowledge my grandmother, Bubby Sima, for her kindness and unprecedented and genuine interest in my goals and accomplishments. Her courage, intelligence, and love continuously motivate me.

Being an identical twin is the greatest gift in the world. Yael, you have gone above and beyond the duties of a sister. Thank you for always being there for me. You are my inspiration.

Thank you to my friends and colleagues who on too many occasions listened to the challenges and exciting moments as my idea turned into a finished product. I want to specifically thank my friend, Devorah, who as an educator and community "insider" reviewed my interview

protocol and provided feedback and motivation. Thank you to Amy for providing me with guidance and support as I prepared for my dissertation defense.

Thank you to the teachers and childcare providers who lovingly cared for my children as I pursued this degree. Knowing that my children were safe and thriving were crucial to my ability to complete this work.

And, of course, thank you to my children, Roey, Nitai and Orianna. You were all born throughout the process of earning this degree. Each of you has inspired me, and I am fortunate to be able to witness your achievements and creativity. Watching my sons play "dissertation writing" brought particular joy to this experience. Your future opportunities and potential identities always remained beneath the surface as I explored gender and Jewish early childhood education.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

GLOSSARY: JEWISH CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS TERMS

Bereishit: Book of Genesis

Boys' bracha: Refers to the blessing on the tzitzit incorporated into the classroom davening, not in reference to the blessing "she'lo asani isha" (thanking God for not making me a woman), traditionally recited by men during morning blessings

Bracha: Blessing or thanksgiving often recited prior to fulfilling a commandment, eating food, or in expressing praise

Brachot/Brachas: Blessings, plural of "bracha"

Challah: Traditional bread eaten on Shabbat

Chazzan: Male cantor, prayer leader, role in classroom davening time

Chazzanit: Female cantor, prayer leader (not a common role within Orthodoxy), role in classroom davening time

Chinuch: Education

Daven, davening: Yiddish for pray, praying

Girls' bracha: Refers to the blessing "she'asni kirtzono" (thanking God for making me in Your image) incorporated into the classroom davening, traditionally recited by women during morning blessings

Halakha: Jewish law based on the Torah and Talmud (collection of Jewish law comprised of the Mishna and Gemara)

Halakhic: Of or relating to Jewish law

HaMotzie: Blessing over the bread, part of the classroom Shabbat party

HaShem: Name for God (in Hebrew, literally "the name")

Kiddush: Blessing over wine or grape juice sanctifying the Shabbat recited in the home at the beginning of Friday night dinner, part of classroom Shabbat party

Kippah: Religious skullcap

Kippot/Kippahs: Religious skullcaps, plural of "kippah"

Kosher: Referring to food or customs surrounding food within Jewish law, used colloquially to express legitimacy/upholding standards

Minyan: Quorum of ten men needed for communal prayer (within Orthodox law)

Mitzvah: Jewish precept or commandment/ "good deed"

Mitzvot/Mitzvahs: Plural of "mitzvah"

Mechitzah: Partition separating men and women during prayer services in Orthodox synagogues

Morah: Female teacher

Parsha: Weekly Torah portion/reading

Parve: Yiddish word to describe kosher food that is not meat or dairy, often colloquially used to describe neutrality

Purim: A post-biblical Jewish holiday

Rabbi: Jewish leader, teacher, and/or scholar, traditionally a male within Orthodoxy

Rosh Hashanah: The Jewish New Year

Shabbat/Shabbos: Sabbath, observed from Friday right before sundown until Saturday night after sundown

Shabbat Abba: Sabbath father, referring to role in classroom Shabbat party

Shabbat Candles: Blessing and lighting of special candles commencing Shabbat, part of classroom Shabbat party

Shabbat Ima: Sabbath Mom, referring to role in classroom Shabbat party

Shabbat Party: Celebration of Shabbat in the classroom, rehearsal of Friday night experiences

Shacharit: Morning prayers

Shemot: Book of Exodus

Shul: Yiddish term for synagogue

Siddur: Prayer book

Siddurim: Prayer books, plural of "siddur"

Tallit/Tallis: Jewish prayer shawl with knotted fringes

Tefillah: Hebrew for prayer

Tefillot/Tefillahs: Hebrew for prayers, plural of "tefillah"

Torah: Five Books of Moses, Jewish Bible

Tzitzit/Tzitzis: Knotted ritual fringes

ABSTRACT

The goal of this study was to explore gender beliefs of teachers in Orthodox Jewish coeducational early childhood programs and give voice to their experiences and viewpoints. Concurrently, a feminist poststructural and queer theory lens was utilized to uphold Gorsetman and Sztokman's (2013) claim that Orthodox Jewish schooling is fraught with messages and discourses that inhibit "educating for the divine image" (p. 30). This study maintained the need to examine gender consciousness within Orthodox Jewish schooling to promote inclusion and equality.

As young children actively engage in gender construction, teachers play a vital role reinforcing and/or challenging norms and available discourses. Research suggests that early childhood educators generally support gender equality and exploration yet are often unaware of their role in promoting heteronormativity relying on gender as naturally developing (Cahill & Adams, 1997; MacNaughton, 2000; Davies, 2003; Blaise, 2005; Hogan, 2014; Warin & Adriany, 2015).

The 15 teachers interviewed described gender differentiation as inevitable, simultaneously affirming values of individual difference and "the classroom is for everyone." Heteronormativity regulated teachers' potential reactions to children, particularly related to boys cross-dressing and "multiple mommies." However, differing perspectives persisted revealing uncertain parameters in the role of the teacher within Orthodox Jewish education, highlighted by a described lack of gender dialogue within schools. The gendered ritual roles within Shabbat

(Sabbath) party and davening (praying) time were relatively unquestioned guided by religiously influenced gender beliefs rooted in traditional or "God-given" differences and values of the idealized family. Teachers, though, described how these experiences within Orthodox Jewish life are more flexible and varied than instituted in the classroom. Some standard classroom ritual practices and individual teacher's choices and concerns differed from Orthodox Jewish norms revealing conflicting notions of the classroom as "its own world" or a reflection of a perceived monolithic Orthodoxy. Navigating multiple often contradictory beliefs about children, gender, Judaism, and teaching was a shared experience with some varying approaches.

Implications of this study suggest rethinking gender in the Orthodox Jewish early childhood classroom to incorporate more intentional gender flexible practices and discourses best achieved via greater critical self-reflection and school-wide dialogue.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Girls who want to go into engineering and science I think it's great…there are definitely girl astronauts. But I know the first thing on my mind was not oh, a girl astronaut. I only know boys who are astronauts...I know there are girl astronauts. You know I have to work at it…um, but I hope in my classroom that I be as non-sexist as possible.

I like that a woman does not have all those rituals…and the things that men are constantly being reminded that they are Jewish. I like the fact that my roles at the home bringing up my kids, bringing up my children to be individuals. Giving them the Jewish background that I gave them and the Jewish upbringing that I gave them.

These two quotes from Rose's interview reveal her incredible openness to explore her

gender beliefs and perspectives. The multiple gender beliefs within secular and Jewish contexts

presented here highlight some major themes explored in this study. Namely, teachers in

Orthodox Jewish early childhood programs maintain gender beliefs, often conflicting, that are

guided by the intersection of their religious and secular contexts. Rose views herself as a teacher

who challenges sexism, reflecting on her biases that may influence her classroom practice.

Simultaneously, she asserts her support of gender differentiation that aligns with stereotypical

roles of women as mothers excluded from public ritual life in Orthodox Judaism. Rose celebrates

her identity while also recognizing the need to engage in regular self-reflection. She upholds

notions of equality, while expressing that some differentiation is ideal. Viewing her own children

as "individuals" she shares her role in "giving" them Judaism, suggesting that children are

perceived as somewhat active in their decision-making yet constrained by gendered ways of

being that undermine that freedom. Overall, these two quotes represent the central themes

throughout this study, particularly related to the cultural and religious nature of gender beliefs and the multiple, potentially conflicting, discourses that teachers bring with them in the classroom as they interact with children and engage in early childhood practices.

Culturally influenced gender beliefs are "structural properties" of society (Davies, 2003, p. 14). These beliefs are formed and negotiated through social relationships, speech, and behaviors, and are dependent on social, political, cultural, and religious contexts. Children are expected to position themselves as female or male by engaging in varying discursive practices in their everyday interactions and behaviors. Discursive practices refer to ways in which language, feelings, and behaviors provide a "framework" for the way people think and behave, in this case related to gender (Blaise, 2005). Individuals play an active role in constructing and recreating discourses and gender beliefs in a variety of situations and settings. Schools are central in this process as young children regularly interact with each other, materials, and the teachers in the classroom.

In preschools, multiple gender discourses circulate within the classrooms. Children's experiences and play are guided, created, supported, and challenged by the schools' curriculum, religious affiliation, goals, and teachers. It is within the play context that children explore and construct gender (Chick, Heilman-Houser, & Hunter, 2002; Gosselin, 2007). Young children interact with each other as they navigate what constitutes being a mom or dad as they "play house," for example. I have witnessed young children questioning each other concerning what moms do and what dads do, such as who is responsible for cooking, working, and child-rearing. Disagreements and negotiations ensue as children actively attempt to perform gender as they utilize available information about behavior and roles.

Teachers spend a significant time interacting with children in a myriad of ways and making decisions in the classroom. Supporting and engaging in children's play, forming relationships with children, and creating boundaries and limits within the classroom are responsibilities of preschool teachers and shaped by cultural values and beliefs. Within these interactions and classroom culture, teachers' gender beliefs and discourses become apparent, as teachers provide information, support, and potentially challenge children's ideas about gender. Exploring perceptions of teachers' gender beliefs and gender experiences in the classroom provide insights into how gender is "constructed and contested" in the classroom (Blaise, 2005, p. 17). Teachers' perceptions of their roles and their visions of the early childhood space become important as MacNaughton (2000) suggests teachers support children's individual needs and development within a perceived gender-neutral space. However, many roles and responsibilities of teachers play an active, yet often unnoticed role in gendering children (MacNaughton, 2000; Browne, 2004, as cited by Blaise, 2005). Furthermore, early childhood classroom structures and classroom management demands often allow for the perpetuation of gender stereotypical expectations (Gosselin, 2007; Warin & Adriany, 2015).

This study recognizes the problem with relying on dominant discourses in child development as they downplay the need to address "larger issues of fairness and social justice" particularly relevant to issues of gender (Blaise, 2005, p. 3), Likewise, the Jewish ritual practices within Orthodox Jewish early childhood education may undermine Jewish precepts of equality and compassion (Gorsetman & Sztokman, 2013). Feminist poststructuralism and queer theory posit that children actively construct gender, suggesting that the gender discourses situated within sexism and power relations affect children's developing identities (Blaise, 2005). Gender

role expectations influence children's beliefs concerning their own development, ideas about education, future participation in the workforce, and can jeopardize children's psychological and physical health (Aina & Cameron, 2011). As gender stereotypes are perpetuated aligning with idealized notions of masculinity and femininity, children's abilities and interests are influenced and shaped. Blaise (2005) asserts that teachers need to be more conscientious of addressing gender equity in the early childhood classroom, as they tend to be unaware of the role it plays in children's learning and development.

While there is little research concerning Orthodox Jewish early childhood education, teachers, and gender, there is a need to investigate how gender expectations promoted within gender ritual experiences and religious discourses might box children into specific roles, making it difficult to address gender equity. As such, Gorsetman and Sztokman (2013) claim that religious education reinforces gender differentiation, which, "gets in the way of educating for the divine image" (p. 30). Warin and Adriany (2015) assert that early childhood educators are in a "unique position" to challenge the perpetuation of traditional gender role expectations early on in children's educational lives (p. 3). However, disrupting gender norms and dominant discourses in this way is infrequent within early childhood classrooms (Warin & Adriany, 2015). It is likely that this type of gender consciousness is even less prevalent within a religious institution where gender differentiation may be a goal or paramount to classroom culture, as described by Gorsetman and Sztokman (2013).

Within Orthodox Jewish education, specific ritual experiences based on traditional gender roles are explicitly promoted and worked into the curriculum. These gendered ritual experiences tend to reflect the mainstream Orthodox Jewish practice of men and women in

Orthodox Jewish communities; however, they are often presented as the "mainstay of Torah" minimizing the importance of more equalizing principles within Jewish practice and theology (Gorsetman & Sztokman, 2013, p. 45). Furthermore, gender expectations of boys and girls based on traditional Jewish practice and gender beliefs and discourses in American society intersect in the Orthodox Jewish educational institutional space. In the Orthodox Jewish community there is a high level of gender equality in terms of educational and professional success. According to Hartman and Hartman (2009), "educational and occupational achievement between husbands and wives is more common among the Orthodox than other denominational groups" (p. 260). This suggests potentially conflicting expectations of men and women in Jewish versus secular spaces and competing messages within both contexts concerning equality and gender stereotypes.

Thus, it is imperative to raise the gender consciousness in Orthodox Jewish schools since "the practices of Jewish education are replete with messages about gender- whether intended or not" (Gorsetman & Sztokman, 2013, p. 1-2). Across contexts, such as Jewish schools, camps, synagogues, and sociocultural ideas about masculinity and femininity are promoted. If, for example, gender beliefs of teachers are "bound up in "excessive assumptions about traditional gender roles," it may limit the children's ability to learn and develop their own Jewish identity and experience (p. 2).

Within the broader literature as well, little research exists concerning teachers themselves, as much of the research on gender in early childhood focuses on children's behaviors and interactions, less often emphasizing the teachers' role in these practices (Davies, 2003; Basturkmen, Loewen, & Ellis, 2004; Änggård, 2005; Blaise, 2005; Lee, 2008; Cheung,

2012). It is crucial to investigate teachers' beliefs and attitudes since they influence student expectations (Lindley & Keithley, 1991) and are regulated by cultural values (Brooks-Gunn & Matthews, 1979; Lindley & Keithley, 1991, as cited by Erden, 2009). For example, if teachers believe supporting gender specific ritual roles is central to educating within an Orthodox Jewish community, or taken for granted, they may not recognize their role in the classroom and in children's development of their understanding of themselves and Judaism. Teachers are in an "ideal position" to create change within their classroom culture (Robinson & Diaz, 2006, as cited by Hogan, 2014, p. 4), and therefore, engaging in an exploration of their beliefs may allow for greater gender consciousness.

My aim was to allow teachers in Orthodox Jewish preschools an opportunity to explore their gender beliefs and their perceptions of how they enact these beliefs in the classroom. Teachers in Orthodox Jewish early childhood programs are usually all women who tend to affiliate with the Orthodox Jewish community. Their perspectives and views are under-researched and are often assumed as homogenous. This study attempted to give voice to their individual and subjective meanings while also considering the shared experiences that framed their perceptions and roles as teachers. Furthermore, utilizing a feminist post structural lens, along with queer theory, provided a useful analysis tool for considering perceived gender discourses in the classroom and the implications for teachers, classrooms, schools, and ultimately, children's lives. A shift in thinking about gender in the classroom is a challenge (Blaise, 2005), but necessary in order to allow children the space to negotiate and explore many gender discourses, gain self-understanding, and connect to Judaism.

Important Gender Concepts and Young Children's Gender Experiences

Though some continue to view gender as "the expression of natural difference" the prevailing notion in gender studies asserts that gender is a social construct guiding concepts of masculinity and femininity situated within male dominance (Thorne, 1993, p. 2). Notions about gender are continuously present in a variety of forms of media, such as movies, television, books, magazines, and advertisements, both Jewish and secular. Children's toys and other materials are greatly gendered as companies promote "girl" and "boy" versions of similar materials or create different products for girls and boys. Characters in movies, television, and in books, even written for children, strongly suggest that men should be strong leaders and women should be beautiful, docile, and passive. These images as well as gendered materials promote normative and stereotypical gender expectations contributing to discourses about femininity, masculinity, and sexuality.

Between the ages of three and five, children begin to construct what it means to be male or female based on available discourses, with a more rigid understanding by age five (Aina & Cameron, 2011). As early as two years of age, though, gender-based preferences begin to emerge including interest in toys, activities, and expression of behaviors. Furthermore, young children demonstrate knowledge of gender stereotypical traits and expectations, such as considering men as powerful and women as helpless (Ruble & Martin, 1998, as cited by Giraldo & Colyar, 2011)**.** Through gender discourses, which include language, dress, and emotions, children further create or challenge gender norms that surround them due to dominant beliefs about maleness and femaleness. While society may urge individuals to conform to cultural notions concerning gender, children are "not passive victims of a socially prescribed role" (Courtenay, 2000, p.

1387-1388). Instead, children play an active role within multiple contexts forming their ideas about gender as they interact with other children and adults and engage in dialogue (Sandstrom, Stier, & Sandberg, 2013).

As children actively interact with gender discourses, they are influenced by the adults in the classroom. Teachers are key figures in children's lives as they help shape children's understanding of a plethora of topics and are central as children learn about themselves and form their self-understandings. It is in the relationship between teacher and child in which gender messages and discourses are rehearsed and negotiated. Teachers may legitimize certain gender-related behaviors, support gender-bending, or inhibit gender exploration and may not realize the messages within these behaviors. However, it is crucial that teachers become aware of their beliefs concerning gender and meanings ascribed to maleness and femaleness. Furthermore, teachers must understand how children's cultural contexts may interact with the available information related to gender (Blaise, 2005).

This study will focus on the male-female binary that has dominated heteronormative gender studies. The construction of gender based on binary categories stems from two sexes. Butler (1990) suggests that there is a cultural presumption that gender must remain binary reflecting two sexes, though questions sex as a social construct itself. Children must "position" themselves when learning discursive practices as either male or female within multiple contexts. It is within the potential for varying expressions that gender is conceptualized as "performance" (Butler, 1990). This process can be physical as children learn to take on markers or signifiers of gender. Physical expressions of maleness and femaleness can include dress but also posture (Davies, 2003). Emotions are also gendered in society, as children learn how to behave

according to what is appropriate for males and females. However, a child's positioning may vary depending on the setting. This process is not straightforward or monolithic; context and social interactions help inform children how to enact or perform gender. Within performance, gender may be enacted in a variety of ways depending on context, suggesting that people experience multiple ways of being and not one coherent sense of self (Butler, 1990; Davies, 2003).

Superficial markers of difference, such as dress, speech, and specific activities help children find their place as either male or female (Davies, 2003). In secular society, boys and girls begin wearing different types of clothing and colors at a young age as parents may put blue on baby boys and pink on baby girls. It is common to see young girls in an assortment of pinks and purples with flowers, bows, and ribbons, and see boys in blues and greens with modes of transportation and sports. This is coupled with a dress code in Orthodox Jewish culture as both genders are taught to dress modestly (differing extents) and that specific types of clothing are designated for men and women. Girls are taught to wear skirts below the knee and shirts covering the elbow; however, girls who engage in this practice generally wait until they are older or grade school age. Boys are taught to wear kippot (skullcaps) and tzitzit (knotted ritual fringes) along with clothing that is specifically designed for boys. Tzitzit thus represents maleness and prominent in the positioning of boys and girls as different. These secular and religious superficial markers are presented within this binary contributing to children's positioning of themselves as either female or male.

Anecdotally, in Orthodox Jewish preschools, I have witnessed teachers encouraging young girls to sit in certain ways due to modesty similar to Wax's (1979) and Haug's (1987) findings concerning different sitting standards of boys and girls (as cited by Davies, 2003).

Interestingly, throughout this study, not a single teacher referenced or discussed girls dress from a religious perspective. In terms of boys, I have heard teachers requesting them to put their kippot back on if they are missing. In past informal and formal observations, I have noticed teachers discussing what children are wearing, amongst themselves or to children, especially telling young girls that their dresses or hair accessories are pretty or make the child look cute. As children position themselves within the male-female binary, these types of comments tell children what is appropriate for male or female bodies and "act as powerful signifiers of masculine and feminine ways of being" (Davies, 2003, p. 17).

This framework focusing on gender performance emphasizes children as active participants recreating gender while engaging in gender discourses is a powerful perspective when researching the role of teachers in the process. As young children rehearse and navigate gender roles and behaviors, teachers engage and interact with them and enter the classroom with their own beliefs about gender, as well as multiple values, ideas, and perspectives related to religion, community, the role of educator, young children, and the early childhood classroom. Teachers continuously navigate these multiple, often conflicting values, as cultural standards further regulate perceptions of gender experiences in the classroom. Furthermore, teachers, like children, actively create and recreate gender as they position themselves within gender discourses within their social and cultural contexts and uphold varied and often inconsistent self-understandings. It is imperative to not just focus on the experience of young children, but also of their teachers as this is widely overlooked.

Beliefs

As teachers discussed their views on gender, other beliefs related to children, religion, families, and communities emerged revealing complex and conflicting approaches to children and the classroom. Research reveals that "teachers' personal beliefs affect their attitudes and classroom practices" (Benz, Pfeiffer, & Newman, 1981; Bledsoe, 1983; Sadker & Sadker, 1994, as cited by Cahill & Adams, 1997, p. 526). However, there is some semantic disagreement and confusion in the field of educational research concerning the appropriate terms to use when gaining insight into teachers' viewpoints, particularly because belief is a "messy construct" (Parajes, 1992). Words such as conceptions, beliefs, and perspectives, allow for some misunderstanding, as some researchers appear to use them interchangeably (as in this study), while others focus on how these are distinct, especially beliefs versus knowledge (as discussed by Parajes, 1992).

Beliefs are subjectively true to the individual, can be conscious or unconscious, and involve an "emotive commitment" that may guide behavior (Borg, 2001, p. 186). Furthermore, peoples' beliefs may be shaped by dominant ideologies within society that are jaded by the interests of power promoting inequality (MacNaughton, 2005). These ideas are challenging to access and analyze and often remain beneath the surface. In this way, ideologies are generally upheld "implicitly, rather than knowing them explicitly" (p. 6). In terms of the educational context, beliefs play a role in the meaning-making process that may influence how teachers make professional decisions concerning a myriad of topics that are relevant in the classroom (Rimm-Kaufman et al., 2006). The roots of these beliefs may stem from a variety of places and experiences within a person's life, including personal, cultural, and religious sources.

Teachers and Sociocultural Communities

Teachers' gender beliefs are situated within social and cultural contexts accompanied by beliefs about multiple features of life. Like children, teachers have been positioning themselves within the male-female binary through engaging in discursive practices, contributing to teachers' understanding of gender. Teachers in preschool, including Orthodox Jewish preschools, are almost exclusively women, have been positioning themselves through their dress, language, emotions, and bodies and are members of specific cultural communities. While teachers take on professional roles when entering the classroom, they bring with them their own experiences, backgrounds, cultures, values, and ideas. It is important to capture the shared experience of these women; simultaneously, these teachers must be viewed as individuals with their own development within their participation of cultural communities guided by community-specific goals. Like beliefs, culture is a complicated construct to operationalize and define as it manifests itself in everything humans do. One approach to culture is considering the transmission of "symbolic (such as beliefs) and behavioral inheritances" that help people "make sense of the life they lead" (Shweder, et al., 1998, as cited by Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000, p. 59).

Life then is understood within this cultural process. Vygotsky (1978) posits that people are born into cultures with tools and cultural artifacts necessary for successful engagement in the world that shape their development. The notion of cultural participation highlights that communities are "groups of people who have some common and continuing organization, values, understanding, history, and practices" (Rogoff, 2003, p. 80). Overall, people in communities share goals and a history, perpetuate dominant ideologies, tend to communicate with each other or support similar conceptions, and use similar tools. However, individual

differences within communities not only exist but are probable. Individuals may have different viewpoints, histories, and customs. People also tend to participate in a few cultural communities simultaneously with some values and practices that "overlap or conflict with each other" (Rogoff, 2003, p. 81). Teachers in Orthodox Jewish preschools tend to be members of similar cultural communities, religiously and secularly, and may have individual differences and perspectives that contribute to their own development of gender beliefs.

Orthodox Jewish Schools

Jewish early childhood programs emerged in the 1930's to help children assimilate into American culture while promoting social interactions with other Jewish children (Vogelstein, 2008). Social changes, particularly related to the increased employment of women and changes in family structures influence the growing demand for early childhood programs. Early childhood education has greatly expanded; programs are available in a variety of settings, such as at synagogues or sites affiliated with Jewish elementary schools. Jewish early childhood programs vary greatly; some are open to all children six-weeks to five-years-old and others are for a select age group. Some programs are full day and others are part time. Jewish early childhood programs face challenges in terms of teacher retention and professionalization, especially considering issues related to compensation and state licensing standards (Segal Handelman, 2000; Vogelstein, 2008). While these challenges exist, professionals in the field promote the potential early childhood education has for providing young children with an opportunity to develop their Jewish identities and encourage Jewish participation of families.

According to the Pew Research Center Survey (2013), 25% of Jewish parents say they have a child who was enrolled in a Jewish day school over that past year. Among Orthodox

Jewish families, 81% report that they have at least one child enrolled in a Jewish day school. A day school is defined as "an educational institution with a dual curriculum, religious and academic" (Schick, 2014, p. 6). Day schools can span in affiliation from any non-Orthodox denomination to "fervently Orthodox"; increasingly, schools are difficult to identify as many opt for "multiple identities" (Schick, 2014, p. 6). For instance, Orthodox Jewish day schools that are coeducational are generally classified as Modern Orthodox. However, many of these schools shift to a gender-segregated classroom approach by middle school or earlier. These types of identities are complicated in the early childhood space as some schools are not affiliated with an upper-level school or that are coeducational just for the younger children.

Jewish early childhood educators emphasize that a goal of Jewish early childhood education is instilling a Jewish identity in young children. In a more specific analysis of the development of Jewish identity in early childhood, Krug and Schade (2004) explain that religious educators strive to foster cultural and religious identity and aim to teach religious content. Thus, they assert that Jewish early childhood education is not just about participating in Jewish practice, but truly exploring religious and spiritual endeavors. They express that teachers are concerned with the moral and spiritual development of young children and that findings in the literature review reveal that young children's abilities to engage in deep spiritual experiences may be more sophisticated than previously understood. In other words, Jewish early childhood programs ideally allow for the exploration of religion and spirituality in a young child's education and formation of Jewish identity.

There is a "tremendous need for research" concerning issues related to gender and Jewish education (Krakowski, 2011, p. 319). Little research exists concerning Jewish early childhood

education and even less concerning specifically Orthodox Jewish spaces. Therefore, when it comes to the specific topic of Orthodox Jewish preschools and gender, there is a great void needing to be filled. Gorsetman and Sztokman (2013) recently published a book that highlights major gender issues in Orthodox Jewish schools through qualitative and quantitative research methodological approaches, not specifically in the context of the early childhood classroom. The aim of the book was to "paint a portrait of how gender is transmitted in day schools in order to raise awareness and impact attitudes and consciousness about gender" (Gorsetman & Sztokman, 2013, p. 24). Concerned about children's emotional health as well as how children proceed when experiences rattle their understanding of the world, Gorsetman and Sztokman (2013) provide an examination of gender messages and gender experiences in Orthodox Jewish day schools.

Gorsetman and Sztokman (2013) do not argue from a place of Jewish law related to ritual customs of men and women important to many Orthodox Jewish people and communities; instead, they propose that schools need to consider the importance of focusing less on gendered ritual roles and more on the meaningful spiritual and religious aspects of Jewish life. Many gender beliefs present in Orthodox Jewish schools are not just related to Jewish constructions of gender but are also in line with general research concerning gender issues in classrooms in the United States. Gorsetman and Sztokman (2013) express the need to explore how Jewish gender messages traverse secular notions of gender, as well.

The significant and broad research conducted by Gorsetman and Sztokman (2013) demonstrates the importance of investigating issues related to gender in Orthodox Jewish schools. In order to consider how to improve gender equity in Orthodox Jewish schools, it is imperative to explore teachers' gender beliefs and perceived gender discourses in the classroom.

Gorsetman and Sztokman (2013) conclude that implementing institutional change is a long and complex process; reflective practice is the underlying foundation of this cultural shift. By interviewing teachers in Orthodox Jewish early childhood programs, a much-needed dialogue emerged, revealing implications for rethinking gender and the role of teachers in the Orthodox Jewish early childhood classroom.

Questioning the role of gender within Orthodox Jewish schooling is supported through the Jewish Orthodox Feminist Organization (JOFA) and their gender sensitive curriculum. Specifically, this curriculum considers different ways of teaching the first two books of the Torah, Bereishit (Genesis) and Shemot (Exodus), by reexamining the traditional approach to education about women in the Torah and commandments. While the modules in the program were designed through research with third-graders and intended for grade school age children, it provides some important insights for the early childhood classroom. In the Forward to the Bereishit curriculum, Greenberg and Dolgin (2005) describe the conflation of Jewish text as Godly within Orthodoxy and how this may cause educators to question the need for a gender sensitive or flexible curriculum. In other words, they actively address the notion presented in this study claiming that religiously infused gender beliefs reestablish gender differentiation as inevitable, making it difficult to evaluate and challenge. Ultimately, Greenberg and Dolgin (2005) propose that values of gender equality that are more present in "contemporary society" uphold the Jewish values of each person as being created in the image of God, necessary to promote within Orthodox Jewish education (p. i).

The implications of JOFA's work and Gorsetman and Sztokman's (2013) research set the stage for this study within the early childhood context. Gorsetman and Sztokman's (2013) book

opens with an anecdote about the rigid ritual practices within Orthodox Jewish early childhood education. As such, they describe the learning of the Jewish Sabbath, Shabbat, as intricately linked to reenactment of stereotyped roles of the mother and father. They suggest the potential to "free" children of these expectations to "embrace the full range of Jewish religious life" (Gorsetman & Sztokman, 2013, p. 2). Therefore, while research within Orthodox Jewish early childhood education is sparse, Gorsetman and Sztokman's (2013) discussion of the rituals of Shabbat reveal that gendered ritual roles are prevalent, perpetuating stereotypes about gender and Orthodoxy that may be hindering young children's Jewish learning and identity development.

Summary of Research Questions and Findings

The following study investigated the gender beliefs of teachers in Orthodox Jewish early childhood programs and their perceptions of gender experiences in their classrooms within children's play and Jewish ritual experiences. The goals were twofold: (1) To provide teachers an opportunity to share their beliefs and for me to represent their shared experience and unique perspectives. (2) To apply feminist poststructuralism and queer theory to interpret teachers' responses considering Gorsetman and Sztokman's (2013) assertions concerning gender inequality in Orthodox Jewish schools.

The two main research questions were: (1) What are Orthodox Jewish coeducational preschool teachers' perceptions concerning appropriate roles and behaviors of boys and girls in their Jewish and "secular" lives? (2) How do teachers think they enact these beliefs in the Orthodox Jewish early childhood classroom?

Chapter Two presents a review of current literature that helped frame the research questions. Feminist poststructuralism and queer theory claim that children actively perform and

construct gender based on the gender discourses that are available to them in their varying

settings. These theories assert that gender discourses are fraught with inequality revolving

around the heterosexual norms that perpetuate notions of dominant masculinity and subordinate

femininity. As such, children are presented with normative ways of being that may or may not be

challenged. These discourses are situated within broader cultural structures. Teachers come to

the classroom with a variety of beliefs and perspectives guided by cultural and religious values

and lifestyles. This cannot be separated from an examination of gender beliefs of teachers. As

such, Chapter Two explores the construct of beliefs within educational research and the role of

culture in shaping gender beliefs and values about the early childhood classroom. This sets the

stage for the discussion of Orthodox Jewish rituals within the classroom, and Gorsetman and

Sztokman's (2013) research that insists on an examination of gender in Orthodox Jewish

schooling to promote inclusion and equality.

Chapter Three summarizes the methodological considerations that guided this study. I

describe the potential for considering both feminist phenomenology and feminist

poststructuralism, as I engaged in a "double bookkeeping" (Simms & Stawarska, 2013, p. 10)

presenting rich descriptions of teachers' shared experiences while also applying a critical lens to

the data analysis. Furthermore, this chapter highlights the recruitment procedures, participant

descriptions, data collection, data analysis procedures, and trustworthiness. As an interviewer

and researcher, especially as a member of an Orthodox Jewish community, I describe the

continuous process of reflexivity throughout this study.

Chapter Four highlights the main findings within the "secular" context in the classroom.

Participants revealed gender stereotypical gender beliefs reflecting notions of hegemonic

masculinity and emphasized femininity as boys were generally viewed as "physical" and "more aggressive," while girls were generally described as "nurturing" and "more welcoming." These gender differences were viewed as innate or a reflection of social influences, aligning with gender theories rooted in biological differences or socialization. Teachers viewed these differences as "not from us," supporting notions of child-centeredness that may hinder teachers' view of themselves as actively gendering children. They simultaneously upheld values about young children as individuals with unique needs and a general support and intentional practices that promote gender exploration and self-discovery. Teachers described the appropriateness of "mixing" and "crossover" in the classroom as children are inclusive, open to explore a classroom that is "for everyone." However, within the children's play, particularly related to boys' cross-dressing and girls playing multiple mommies, teachers revealed inconsistent boundaries or limits to children's play due to heteronormative standards in their community.

Chapter Five describes gender beliefs of teachers within two Jewish activities in the classroom, Shabbat (Sabbath) party and davening (praying). This chapter reveals the relatively unquestioned gender roles within Jewish ritual activities in the classroom as a reflection of community standards and home life. Heteronormativity and set notions of masculinity and femininity were promoted within these rituals, with some examples of how the teachers created classroom experiences that differed from Orthodox norms. Teachers, thus demonstrated conflicting notions of the Orthodox Jewish early childhood classroom as a unique space severed from standard Orthodox Jewish practice and the classroom as a reflection of idealized Orthodox Jewish life, especially as teachers revealed some differences in their beliefs about gender, rituals, and families. Within the hypothetical instances of children questioning their jobs, teachers

described their desire to support individual children and honor their perspectives, while considering the need to incorporate ritual standards in the classroom. A lack of clear policies related to certain rituals and how to respond to potentially questioning children was evident as teachers described varying approaches and insights.

Chapter Six, Discussion and Implications, portrays the shared experience and varying perspectives of teachers noting nuances in Jewish ritual beliefs and roles within the early childhood classroom. The major theme across contexts described in this chapter is the regulatory role of culture as teachers shared navigating multiple and conflicting values. As teachers described gender as "just the way it is," particularly within the religious context, they reinforce gender as fixed within an opposing dichotomy. In order to reconsider gender within the Orthodox Jewish early childhood space and further uphold their values of inclusion and equality described in Chapter Four, three specific areas were addressed: (1) Teachers' beliefs about gender construction. (2) Teachers own self-understandings related to femininity and Orthodoxy, and (3) The role of language and dialogue.

The implications of this study, while challenging teachers' current conceptions of gender, are not meant to undermine the role of Orthodox Jewish culture and religion in their lives or criticize beliefs important to teachers. Instead, these implications suggest the benefits of rethinking gender in order to best achieve Gorsetman and Sztokman's (2013) claim that Orthodox Jewish schools should educate children based on the notion of equality, as children were all created in the "divine image." Letting go of gender as innate or fixed, allowing children access to multiple ways of being, as teachers described experiencing in their own lives, and

reexamining the role of language in perpetuating gender expectations and the need for dialogue are critical.

 This work provides insights and implications for the field of child development, early childhood educators, and the intersection of religion and early childhood education. While the topic of gender within a religious context may seem controversial, by recognizing the cultural and social contexts of educators as vital to their beliefs and identities, addressing gender beliefs and gender consciousness should be and can be addressed. Furthermore, this study implies the potential for feminist poststructuralism and queer theory, which recognize misogyny and sexism as central to gender discourses, in the discussion about the intersection of gender, religion, and education.

 Other Jewish denominations and religions may promote varying goals and assumptions about gender and religious practice; exploring these beliefs, though, is essential as teachers may or may not realize how notions of gender as innate or inevitable may conflict with other important religious, cultural, or educational values. Furthermore, it is important to recognize that teachers' hold multiple beliefs and identities, which may complicate their perceptions of their classrooms and decisions. While child development promotes following the child's lead, diversity, and individual differences, viewing gender as the way it is may counter notions of the early childhood classroom as a place of exploration and equality. In other words, raising gender consciousness challenges notions of child-centeredness to focus on broader issues of social justice in the classroom and is essential for reevaluating the goals of religious education.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The current literature concerning teachers' gender beliefs in the Orthodox Jewish coeducational settings is practically nonexistent, particularly within the early childhood context. This literature review will attempt to contextualize issues related to teachers' gender beliefs in Orthodox Jewish early childhood settings by first discussing important approaches to gender construction that will inform the conceptual framework for data collection and data analysis. This will be followed by a discussion of the construct of beliefs and the role of culture in shaping teachers' understandings of gender and perceptions of the early childhood classroom. The literature review will address the Orthodox Jewish context by discussing the gendered Jewish ritual experiences incorporated into early childhood programs, along with the potential discourses embedded in these experience and teachers' potential identities as women within Orthodoxy. A feminist poststructural and queer theory lens along with notions of gender consciousness and pedagogical change are employed as this research aimed to support Gorsetman and Sztokman's (2013) goals of educating in the divine image for equality.

Conceptual Framework

This study attempted to give voice to teachers' individual and diverse experiences by providing rich descriptions of their beliefs and perceived classroom practice via interview research. Concurrently, a feminist post structural lens, along with queer theory, was utilized to investigate the perceived gender discourses and gender experiences of young children in the

22

classroom. In particular, this study considered heteronormativity, and in turn, dominant

masculinity and subordinate femininity within both secular and Jewish contexts. Social science

research reveals that there are many meanings ascribed to femininity and masculinity in different

time periods and cultures, and thus is ideal when considering gender discourses within a specific

sociocultural group (Hargreaves, 1967; Willis, 1977; Connell, 1995, as cited by Blaise, 2005).

The choice to utilize this perspective was to further explore Gorsetman and Sztokman's (2013)

assertion that "gender hierarchies," particularly within Jewish ritual education, need to be

investigated to educate for "inclusive practice" as "children and adults construct a halakhic

[based on Jewish law] Jewish society" (p. 3).

Gender construction is conceptualized in a variety of ways depending on discipline and

field of study. As such, several theories exist stemming from psychoanalytic theory, cognitive

theories, social learning theory, and gender schema theory (Bem, 1983). The common thread in

most of these models is the role of adults in passing their "beliefs about gender roles for adult

behavior onto children" (Cahill & Adams, 1997, p. 518). Social learning theory conjectures that

cultural and social factors are important in the socialization process rejecting the notion that

children develop through cognitive stages. Instead, social learning theory assumes that children

learn stereotypes concerning their gender in similar ways as other behaviors. Walter Mischel

(1966), a social learning theorist, highlights the environmental determining factors of children's

gender construction. Albert Bandura's (1969) social modeling paradigm theorizes that children

initially observe gender-role stereotypes, imitate these behaviors, and are encouraged to

strengthen these stereotypes and behaviors through social conformity and reinforcement. This

theory recognizes that children's understanding of gender roles is likely to vary "as the social

models to which children are exposed and their experience with reinforcement for sex-role behavior can differ with a number of cultural, social, and family factors" (Albert & Porter, 1988, p. 187).

These approaches, however, emphasize biology and socialization, which promote adults as actively transmitting gendered ways of being to children and assumptions of identity as involving a unified self (Davies, 2003; Warin, 2006). Hogan (2014) claims that gender research within early childhood education over the last decade proposes that early childhood educators tend to have "persistent and simplistic understandings and beliefs about gender as being biologically and socially determined" (p. 44). These approaches often ignore the "complexities of relationships" within children's worlds and their ability to be active in the process (Blaise, 2005, p. 14). Furthermore, the child-centered discourse in early childhood, while aiming to honor children's individual ways of being, often mitigates the importance of helping children challenge gender. In this way they reaffirm gender as innate as children demonstrate these "natural" interests (MacNaughton, 1997; Blaise, 2009, as cited by Warin & Adriany, 2015). Ultimately, child-centered discourses may undermine the role gender plays in everyday interactions within children's experiences in the classroom. As such, feminist poststructuralism and queer theory provide a framework to "rethink gender" in the early childhood classroom, particularly the reliance of gender as "natural" or learned and challenge the role of early childhood educator as actively aware of gender discourses that perpetuate gender inequality (MacNaughton, 1997; MacNaughton, 2000; Davies, 2003; Blaise, 2005; Hogan, 2014; Warin & Adriany, 2015).

Feminist Poststructuralism

Poststructuralism is a framework for "understanding the relation between persons and their social world and for conceptualizing social change" (Davies, 2003, p. xii). Since poststructuralism posits that gender is situated within a social structure which is constraining but also has the potential to change, conflicting messages may be present as a person attempts to become a "unitary, rational being" independent but understandable to others (p. 14). People are perceived as actively employing discourses in different ways, creating subjectivities (which refer to people's conscious and unconscious thoughts of identity) that support or challenge expectations. It is within this framework that people are viewed as complicated, evolving, and at times, contradictory. Individuals, therefore, have multiple ways of being that they actively utilize depending on the context and available discourses. By recognizing contradictions, Davies (2003) suggests that it should not be viewed as "failures of rational thought, but as creative source of new understanding, new discourse" (p. 165). This challenges the approach that identities are rational and unitary; instead people employ "multiple identities" depending on the context (Blaise, 2005, p. 20).

Feminist poststructuralism views gender as socially constructed as it considers how "mechanisms of power and how meaning and power are organized, enacted, and opposed in our society" (Blaise, 2005, p. 15). Central to this perspective is not only the aspects of poststructuralism, but also the role of power in the male-female binary. In other words, the ways in which gender scripts lead to inequality is pivotal to feminist poststructuralism. Furthermore, "social and relational aspects of gender" in particular contexts and how people further construct gender through language, behavior, and interactions with others are necessary to investigate

(Thorne, 1993; Bohan, 1997, as cited by Blaise, 2005, p. 19). Discourses, which include the way

we speak, talk, think, emote, and behave are often viewed as "natural" and are often "taken for

granted" contributing to the conception that gender is fixed and difficult to reconceptualize

(Blaise, 2005, p. 16). Thus, gender discourses are viewed as mechanisms for normalizing gender

steeped in inequality. By enacting a feminist post structural lens, early childhood educators are

encouraged to view their classrooms differently in order to pay specific attention to the multiple

gender discourses in children's play and experiences (Davies, 2003; Blaise, 2005).

Language is an important element to post structural analysis. According to Blaise (2005),

language is utilized in the creation of social constructions and represents knowledge or

meanings. With this in mind, language, then, "is where social meaning, power and subjectivity

are formed" and can be challenged and changed (Blaise, 2005, p. 15). Thus, via communication,

people are actively constructing what is considered femaleness and maleness either by enacting

gender stereotypes or challenging norms and roles. Discourse, then, is not just about words used

in interaction but refers to the "theoretical grid of power and knowledge" and provides structure

and a framework for interactions (Blaise, 2005, p. 16). Included in discourse are ways in which

people talk, behave and emote providing a lens for experiences. Furthermore, dominant

discourses, as is the case with gender, are assumed as expected and common making it difficult

to consider variations.

Queer Theory: Hegemonic Masculinity and Emphasized Femininity

The concept of heteronormativity promotes the notion that heterosexuality is a "superior

and privileged status" (Gunn, 2011, p. 281) and normal in that there is a "heterosexual

presumption" (Epstein & Johnson, 1994, as cited by Gunn, 2011, p. 281). Queer theory considers

"normalization and privileges found within heterosexual culture" (Blaise, 2005, p. 20). It is "not a theory about gay and lesbian identity"; instead, it "questions the assumption that there is any normal expression of gender" (Blaise & Taylor, 2012, p. 88). Utilizing aspects of feminist poststructuralism, such as discourse, queer theory considers how heterosexuality as a norm constructs gender, particularly hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity. Thus, heteronormativity promotes notions of gender as binary and steeped in gender hierarchies.

In its formulation in the 1980s, hegemonic masculinity was seen as "the pattern of practice" related the dominance of men over women within institutional and cultural structures (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 832). Within a specific context, an idealized version of masculinity persists. Hegemonic masculinity should not be understood as typical masculinity; instead, it should be perceived as normative and idealized demanding that men and women place themselves in relation to it. This assumes that multiple masculinities exist within a system in which hegemonic masculinity is favored and preferred. Within this framework, heterosexuality, which is reinforced and rewarded, is central in people's performance of gender (Blaise, 2005). Heterosexuality, thus, becomes mutually exclusive with gender performance, as it is part of what dictates the gender expectations and norms for boys and girls. Haywood and Mac an Ghaill (2012) assert that in order to broaden the perspective on hegemonic masculinity, along with femininity, it is necessary to try to theoretically separate gender from sexuality.

According to Connell (1987), hegemonic femininity cannot exist as women are subordinate as well to hegemonic masculinity. However, within this framework an emphasized femininity persists promoting the subordination to men by the need to accommodate their needs. Within emphasized femininity women position themselves as beautiful in relation to be desirable

to men (Connell, 1987; Thorne, 1993). Other aspects of emphasized femininity relate to women as nurturing care providers and sensitive to others. This idea contributes to the stereotypical expectation tied to assumptions of innate differences that girls naturally provide care for others. The early childhood setting reinforces the attractiveness of enacting the maternal role as young girls typically transition from being cared for by mothers or other women, to teachers in early childhood who tend to be women. As such, through these relationships girls may be encouraged to perform femininity through engaging in nurturing personas (Davies, 1994, as cited by Rodriguez, Peña, Fernandez, & Viñuela, 2006).

In current American culture, hegemonic masculinity in simple terms refers to White, Christian, middle-class, heterosexual men that are aggressive and competitive, while subordinate masculinities include "ethnic, racial, and religious minorities and poor and working-class men as well as gay, bisexual men and others" (Katz, 2010, p. 58). "The Boy Code" (David & Brannon, 1976) is a pervasive cultural convention concerning an idealized masculinity. Boys are inculcated with four major components of "The Boy Code" that create a normative masculinity including: "sturdy oak" (strong and independent), "give 'em hell" ("boys will be boys"), "big wheel" (power), and "no sissy stuff" (like empathy) (Pollack, 1998, p. 24). Pollack (1998) asserts that this code causes boys to "feel ashamed of themselves" and compels them to "tough it out" (p. 25). The ubiquity of this "boy code" enables a double standard in which boys are expected to act tough while simultaneously being criticized for their lack of sensitivity and empathy.

"Act Like a Man Box" (Kivel, 2006) shares similar notions of normative masculinity that dictates idealized ways men should and should not behave and feel. The use of the term "box" is intentional as Kivel (2006) claims that "it feels like living in a box…every time a boy tries to

step out he's pushed back in…" (p. 2). Kivel's (2006) box is divided into three sections, "Men Are," "Feelings," and "Men." The "Feelings" section is placed in the middle as it is suppressed by the other two sections. The "Men Are" section includes notions such as "bread winners, violent, tough, angry, strong, successful, and in control over women." Phrases such as "have no emotions, stand up for themselves, can make it, don't cry, take charge, and push people around" are included in the "Men" section. Being subdued and inhibited in the middle of these sections are feeling "confused, angry, scared, ashamed, powerless, vulnerable, and worthless," for example. Kivel (2006) claims that there are cultural variations concerning these notions but suggests that there are strong similarities across cultural groups in the United States.

Differential Treatment and Upholding Hegemonic Masculinity

Dominant discourses within emphasized femininity are often met with resistance (Kelly, Pomerantz, & Currie, 2005). However, defying or questioning hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity pose challenges. As such, while it is possible for some boys to construct a non-hegemonic masculinity, "in doing so, hegemonic gender and sexual relations are both reinforced and subverted" (Renold, 2004, p. 248). Thus, in constructing and enacting "other," non-hegemonic masculinities, including femininities, emotional and social costs may be experienced, particularly for boys. However, current educational research is challenging a rigid perspective of hegemonic masculinity and suggesting that there may be room for other masculinities that are not necessarily subordinate (Swain, 2006, as cited by Haywood & Mac an Ghaill, 2012). This is complicated due to the connectedness of gender to heterosexuality and a heterosexual matrix, which is the "grid of cultural intelligibility through which bodies, genders, and desires are naturalized" (Butler, 1990, as cited by Blaise, 2005, p. 151).

Boys who try out behavior ascribed to girls are more likely to receive criticism from teachers, peers, and parents than when girls try out boy roles (Freeman, 2007, as cited by Millan, 2012). Jordan (1995) reflects upon a cycle in which young boys enter school believing in the "warrior narrative" as part of their understanding of masculinity. Concerned that boys who act out on this fantasy will not succeed in school, teachers begin preparing boys for navigating school encounters with those who resist being a "warrior." Thus, the discourses support that being a boy is one who resists following expectations of schools. The alternative approach then, is taking on feminine characteristics. If boys avoid being like girls, they will evade being called names like "wimps." Young boys are provided two definitions of masculinity, one that suggests you are a "sissy" if you comply with school expectations, and one that suggests being a sissy involves identifying with girl activities, dress, and behavior. This subordinates girls and femininity.

Research indicates that differential treatment towards boys and girls persists in the early childhood setting (Chick, Heilman-Houser, & Hunter, 2002). For example, teachers praised boys for engaging in "traditional male activities" (Fagot, 1977) and care providers "were more responsive to infant boys' assertive behaviors" (Fagot, Hazan, Leinbach, & Kronsbet, 1985), which reveals gender-typed expectations of teachers (as cited by Ewing & Taylor, 2009, p. 93) in-line with hegemonic values of masculinity. Current research continues to support these notions, as "boys still receive more praise and attention from teachers" (Sadker & Sadker, 1994; Altermatt, Jovanovic, & Perry, 1998; Duffy, Warren, & Walsh, 2001, as cited by Ewing & Taylor, 2009, p. 93). However, there is a "flipside for boys" and the differential treatment which tends to favor boys may also be hurting them (Pollack, 1998; Kindlon & Thompson, 2000;

Gorsetman & Sztokman, 2013). Kindlon and Thompson's (2000) "emotional miseducation of boys" suggests that the idealized masculinity does not allow boys to develop a "full range of emotional resources" (as cited by Gorsetman & Sztokman, 2013, p. 32). This "miseducation" can also be extended to literacy (Pollack, 1998).

Other research reveals how early childhood educators view their classrooms and roles as providing equal opportunities, supporting diversity and differences (Hogan, 2012). However, within this perspective, teachers often are unaware of their roles in gendering children (MacNaughton, 2000). As such, while teachers may have more open views about gender within the early childhood space, gender stereotypical expectations, particularly related to heteronormativity persists. Cahill and Adams's (1997) survey research of 103 mostly female early childhood teachers found that the teachers held more nontraditional gender beliefs compared to a sample of college women. However, inconsistencies recurred concerning teachers' beliefs of gender expectations related to boys. Teachers surveyed were more accepting of cross-gender behaviors from girls than from boys, perhaps related to teachers' homophobia. Cahill and Adams express that teachers may ultimately discourage children from engaging in cross-gender play in favor of traditional roles, especially to appease parents' concern about children's future sexual orientation. This reluctance to support gender exploration of boys is consistent with theories concerning heteronormativity and the rewarding of heterosexuality (Blaise, 2005; Gunn, 2011). Furthermore, the desire to appease parents is parallel to Kane's (2006) research that suggests that while parents support some gender exploration, they ultimately tend to promote heteronormativity.

Children's Performance and Understanding of Gender Discourses

A myriad of research considers children's cognitive understanding of gender, particularly concerning gender categories, gender-norm violations, and internalization of gender stereotypes relying on psychological approaches to gender, like social learning theory (Blakemore & Russ, 1997; Martin & Ruble, 2004; Freeman, 2007; Grace, David, & Ryan, 2008). However, some researchers are utilizing feminist poststructuralism and queer theory as a framework to examine how children perform gender and interact with gender discourses in the classroom. Furthermore, these studies reveal the importance of the early childhood classroom as a space to reconceptualize gender and challenge gender norms and dominant gender discourses.

Davies's (2003) research with children in a handful of preschool settings sought to understand how the male-female binary was navigated in the preschool context. More specifically, Davies (2003) explored what being male or female meant to young children and how they related to boundaries set-up by the male-female binary. One way, Davies (2003) investigated how children react to boundaries and challenge information concerning maleness and femaleness was through the "sense children make of feminist stories" (p. 45). Davies (2003) explored children's understandings of four stories, *Oliver Button Is a Sissy*, *The Princess and the Dragon*, *Rita the Rescuer*, and *The Paper Bag Princess*. Children whose mothers were working had greater "access to interpretive possibilities" necessary to recognize the feminist messages of the stories (2003, p. 63). Furthermore, individual children held different meanings of the stories depending on their knowledge about gender and with which characters children align themselves. Most children wanted a different ending (in the story the princess rejects the prince) that upholds their knowledge of romantic relationships concerning males and females. For those

who understood the feminist meaning, the princess was viewed as navigating gender meanings, particularly "contradictory positionings" as she challenged the power imbalance in the binary male-female construction (Davies, 2003, p. 71). This research reveals the active nature of children in their construction of gender as they navigate gender information from a variety of contexts.

Along with stories and children's narration, children's interactions with each other in the classroom reveal children's experiences with gender discourses. Utilizing a feminist post structural and queer theory framework, Blaise (2005) focused on aspects of heteronormative discourses, particularly related to "wearing femininities" and power that were present in her observations of children in the kindergarten classroom. For example, Blaise (2005) observed the discourse concerning makeup, as children were talking and drawing about makeup in the classroom. Liza, one preschooler, brought makeup as her show-and-tell. Blaise writes that young children considered their knowledge of the heterosexual matrix which informs them that makeup is for girls. For instance, Cheng's interest in makeup was ignored by Liza during show-and-tell, perhaps because Liza knows makeup is for girls. This may be how children regulate gender in the classroom, which Davies (2003) refers to as category maintenance. In other words, the categories of maleness and femaleness are mediated by young children in their classroom based on their practice and knowledge of the heterosexual matrix or a desire to "play it straight" (Blaise, 2005).

This category maintenance (Davies, 2003) was apparent to Blaise (2005) in her observations of five-year-old Alan, as he explained, "…boys are supposed to do boy things and girls…they do all those girly things…boys play football, girls are cheerleaders…and we aren't

going to mess with that" (p. 97). Alan's stereotypical views of masculinity are central to how he navigates and regulates gender with his peers. His views are known to the other children, and Alan became the leader who boys turned to for guidance. Counter-discourses were presented to him, such as during show-and-tell, when children have an opportunity to do so, challenging the gender discourse utilized by Alan.

As children interact in the classroom, teachers' beliefs concerning gender construction may play a role in the types of materials and activities available to them. Blaise (2005) details Isabel's (the teacher) interactions with children related to gender. For example, four girls in her classroom began dominating the Lego area of the classroom frustrating one of the boys who views Legos as a masculine activity. Since Isabel believes in gender equity, she intentionally and explicitly supported the girls' interest in the Lego area. Research utilizing a post structural approach like Davies (2003) and Blaise (2005), concerning children should be conducted to further explore child-teacher interactions, and learn more about the beliefs and behaviors of teachers' vis-à-vis rethinking gender, like Isabel, in the classroom.

Implications of Feminist Poststructuralism and Queer Theory

Feminist poststructuralism and queer theory along with research about young children's gender performance and how they actively navigate gender in the classroom (Davies, 2003; Blaise, 2005) provided important implications that helped frame the research questions and data analysis. This approach asserts that gender is constructed and reconstructed within available gender discourses. Inequality and stereotypical notions of gender are normalized and often taken for granted. Gender discourses are viewed as expected and as such, contribute to perceptions of gender as fixed or innate. Thus, feminist poststructuralism counters notions that gender is

biological/passively learned and supports that we may have contradictory ways of being and self-understandings.

Heteronormativity promotes gender as a binary in which hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity are perpetuated within the heterosexual norm. This includes idealized notions of masculinity, particularly related to boys as physical and emotionless and girls as nurturing and pretty/desirable. Depending on the context, children may be seeking out a way to challenge these discourses. Research suggests that the classroom promotes girls to enact nurturing roles in their play while also providing a relatively open environment to challenge some aspects of femininity. However, there tends to be less openness to boys who challenge dominant discourses of masculinity, potentially due to homophobia or parental concerns.

Notions about gender as performance based on available, often contradictory, discourses that tend to uphold hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity framed the research questions. Furthermore, values of child-centeredness and structures in the early childhood center, as well as religiously infused beliefs, may promote notions of gender as innate inhibiting children from expanding their gender understanding and experiencing equality. Therefore, the research questions attempted to investigate teachers' beliefs about boys and girls and the way they perceive their role in children's gender construction in the classroom. While the conceptual framework and above studies reveal some examples of gender discourses and the role of heteronormativity within the secular early childhood context, I had to consider how these ideas were relevant within the Jewish ritual context.

I questioned if there were commonalities and contradictions in the way teachers described their gender beliefs in both contexts. Were there countering discourses circulating in

the classroom similar to Gorsetman and Sztokman's (2013) notion that unequal and conflicting messages about gender are embedded within Orthodox Jewish schooling? Was the classroom viewed as an active space for gender flexible exploration or were Jewish rituals in the classroom mechanisms for promoting specific notions of masculinity and femininity? Were there specific Orthodox Jewish beliefs and practices that perpetuated gendered ways of being based on traditional roles? These types of questions were not contemplated as a way to undermine teachers' beliefs or Orthodox Jewish law. Instead, they framed the research questions and the lens for exploring teachers' gender beliefs since these beliefs play an important role in children's gender construction and development of their self-understandings.

Overall, the conceptual framework of this study considered the usefulness of feminist poststructuralism and queer theory to reimagining the Orthodox Jewish early childhood classroom and role of the teacher, as explored by Blaise (2005) and Davies (2003), while supporting Gorsetman and Sztokman (2013)'s goal of critically investigating gender in Orthodox Jewish education.

Teachers' Gender Beliefs and Sociocultural Communities

Feminist poststructuralism and queer theory provide a valuable lens applicable to investigating gender beliefs of teachers in Orthodox Jewish early childhood programs. It is important to consider that teachers enter the classroom with a myriad of beliefs and as members of specific religious and cultural communities. As such, it is necessary to consider the role of religion within teachers' notions of gender and the role of the early childhood classroom in promoting or challenging gender norms. While some problems exist concerning researching teachers' beliefs, such as the "messy construct" and lack of definition of beliefs (Parajes, 1992),

the focus on researching teachers' beliefs has been important in the field of education (Skott, 2015). Research of teachers' beliefs spans the gamut of education-related topics, such as the self, environment or context, content, teaching practices, teaching techniques, and students and utilizes a variety of methodologies (Fives & Buehl, 2012). Parajes (1992) proposes that beliefs are "the single most important construct in educational research" (p. 329), thus demanding attention. Some confusion in the field of education is related to lack of agreement in relation to how the concept of beliefs is defined. For example, there are debates related to whether or not beliefs are implicit or explicit, stable or dynamic, and individual or systems related (Fives & Buehl, 2012).

Explicit beliefs suggest that teachers are aware of their beliefs since they can verbalize and discuss their perceptions. The implicit nature of beliefs assumes that beliefs are hidden. Furthermore, many of our beliefs are steeped within "dominant ideologies" within our societies and are implicitly held. These uphold inequalities while promoting the interests of "powerful groups" and we often "miss their effects on us." In that way, they are hard to "see" and are often "taken for granted" (MacNaughton, 2005, p. 6). Fives and Buehl (2012) argue that interviews and reflective practice act as "attempts to access teachers' implicit beliefs" which "may well bring these conceptions into the explicit realm" (p. 474). Once explicit, beliefs are more accessible to explore and analyze. Warin and Adriany (2015) poignantly question "when do implicit assumptions about gender become critically available to a person and therefore transformable into explicit theory?" (p. 23). As such they explore the potential for critical reflection in developing the gender consciousness necessary for reconceptualizing gender and supporting gender exploration in the classroom.

In this way, understanding beliefs as stable or dynamic refers to whether or not beliefs can be changed. In other words, if the goal is to consider ways to rethink gender and education within the Orthodox context, what beliefs are being questioned and to what extent can perspectives be modified? Fives and Buehl (2012) assert that for research, it is necessary to characterize beliefs as having some degree of fluidity and some degree of stability. Beliefs may be harder to change if they are formed earlier and "involve the nature of oneself" and one's sociocultural context (Rokeach, 1968, as cited by Mansour, 2009, p. 27). As subjective truths, beliefs rely on a "considerable degree of conviction"; however, people may be able to see other approaches as reasonable (Skott, 2015, p. 18). While relatively stable, beliefs may change based on context and experience. The amount of stability may be related to where beliefs come from, such as personal experience, religion, and education.

Teachers come to the classroom with belief systems, which guide and regulate "decisions of teaching practice" (Han, 2012, p. 254). These beliefs might be related to dominant discourses within early childhood education, roles of teachers, Orthodox Judaism, and gender. Through the lifelong engagement in gender discourses and positioning as well as the specific sociocultural context of the Orthodox Jewish community, gender beliefs may be incredibly stable and deeply tied to religion, since gender is "produced, actively and collaboratively in everyday life" (Thorne, 1993, as cited by Gorsetman & Sztokman, 2013, p. 3). Furthermore, teachers uphold a variety of beliefs related to their religious affiliations and professional contexts. As such, teachers continuously navigate complicated values related to their understanding of early childhood education, young children, and their roles as early childhood educators. The complexities are heightened as teachers within Orthodox Jewish communities also balance

personal and professional choices with cultural and religious responsibilities. Thus, it is necessary to consider not only beliefs as a construct but how beliefs and perceptions of classroom practice are navigated and constrained within specific sociocultural communities.

Teachers are people situated within social and cultural communities who have a gamut of beliefs outside of just school (Rogoff, 2003; Mansour, 2009). Therefore, teachers' beliefs pertaining to any topic within the field of education must be examined within their sociocultural context. Since the present study explores beliefs of teachers in Orthodox Jewish preschools, it is necessary to consider the role of culture and community in these beliefs since teachers participate in cultural communities (Rogoff, 2003) and the dominant ideologies beneath the surface (MacNaughton, 2005). According to Lemke (2001), "individuals are not simply free to change their minds...all cultures reflect the fact by making the viability of beliefs contingent on their consequences for the community" (as cited by Mansour, 2013, p. 348). Similarly, teachers (like children) engage in multiple discourses but are bound by what is available. Teachers' contexts must be considered as major contributors to their beliefs and perceptions of gender discourses in the classroom (Mansour, 2013).

Early Childhood Teachers' Gender Beliefs and the Role of Culture

Thus, culture plays a significant role in teachers' beliefs as they "bring to the classroom a part of the society in which they function" (Leder, 1984, as cited by Mittelberg & Lev-Ari, 1999, p. 76). Research supports that teachers maintain beliefs about many culturally driven constructs, and teachers' own religious values may play a role in the classroom (Subedi, 2006). Furthermore, the early childhood classroom is a "potent location for the entrenchment of gender differences and perpetuation of stereotypes" (Warin & Adriany, 2015, p. 5). Multiple studies

have explored how gender beliefs of teachers situated within shared sociocultural contexts promote culturally specific discourses of hegemonic masculinity (Bhana, 2009; Jackson, 2010) and emphasized femininity (Rodriguez, Peña, Fernandez, & Viñuela, 2006; Gunn, 2011).

Bhana's (2009) ethnographic and interview-based research among a select group of teachers of first and second graders in South Africa investigated the discourse of "boys will be boys" and "rugger buggers" (p. 329). Due to Apartheid, Bhana (2009) posits that a hierarchy of both gender and race, specifically white men and boys, "occupied the apex in social hierarchy" (p. 327). Bhana (2009) expresses that white boys are inculcated with the importance of sports, like rugby and cricket beginning at a young age. While new masculinities are developing, hegemonic white masculinity persists and continues to be influential. This type of ideal boy was perceived in the classroom as teachers perpetuated associated rugger bugger behaviors as dominant, which in turn suggests girls are the opposite. Ultimately, Bhana (2009) recommends future work with early childhood teachers to further understand their constructions of masculinity.

Along with dominant forms of masculinity, studies have also focused on emphasized or subordinate femininity in certain sociocultural contexts. Rodriguez, Peña, Fernandez, and Viñuela (2006) explored the gender discourses employed by nursery school teachers in the Principality of Asturias in Spain through focus groups using a feminist poststructuralist framework. In order to explore aspects of idealized femininity, the researchers accepted the notion of hegemonic masculinity and society's role in promoting gender expectations. Teachers in their study discuss that caring behaviors were apparent in girls' play as they pretended to be mothers or pregnant. This research suggested the presence of heteronormativity in the context of

the early childhood classroom in promoting the male-female binary. Similarly, Gunn (2011) engaged in a study to explore the reproduction of heteronormative discourses within New Zealand early childhood education. Teachers in the study tended to intentionally promote or support variations in gender performance, such as with male dress. For example, one teacher, discussed a boy who "always dressed in pink dresses and comes in pink dresses from home with his handbags and his high shoes" (Gunn, 2011, p. 286). However, the teacher explained that it is better for the teachers if the boy wears something resembling a kilt so they can say, "boys and men wear kilts in Scotland" (Gunn, 2011, p. 286). She supported boys' exploration of dress but desired to reframe it to promote an ethnic and cultural tradition. Gunn (2011) explains that this is where "heteronormativity resides" (p. 286) as teachers attempt to normalize gender and interpret behaviors within a heteronormative and cultural lens.

Heteronormativity shaped by cultural norms and the amount of gender awareness in the early childhood classroom influence teachers' perceptions of their roles and views about children. Warin and Adriany (2015) compared their independent studies from Indonesia (Adriany, 2013) and Sweden (Warin, 2012) that explored practices and beliefs related to gender and the potential for gender flexible approaches in each setting. Warin and Adriany (2015) claim that gender beliefs influenced "preschool pedagogy and practice" and were constructed through the specific "cultural, political, and religious context of their different countries" (p. 22).

Adriany's (2013) research with teachers in an Indonesian kindergarten revealed the distinct gender differentiation and expectations of teachers. These differences were reinforced by their "implicit ideas about biological essentialism" that were related to "Islamic religious discourse" and that teachers' should not challenge gendered practices (Warin & Adriany, 2015,

p. 12-13). However, one teacher, Bunda Intan, insisted that the early childhood classroom is a place to "let them explore. Don't differentiate them." This revealed the potentially conflicting values and the possibility to provide discourses that challenge traditional gender roles in the classroom. The teachers in this setting held a specific "set of assumptions" that were rooted in an "unquestioned essentialism" as gender differences were described as innate and important to the children's wellbeing and development (Warin & Adriany, 2015, p. 23).

Orthodox Jewish Early Childhood Practices and Teachers

Traditional beliefs concerning gendered ritual roles, whether or not they remain relevant, are deeply embedded in Orthodox Jewish schooling; often, "gender-typing" is an overt goal of schools (Gorsetman & Sztokman, 2013). Pollock (2004) asserts that while many religious traditions are equally relevant for boys and girls, "there are traditions in which gendered existence begins at birth" (p. 145). Overall, the early childhood classroom is perceived as a space that often perpetuates gender differentiation. Due to the intersection of Jewish and secular/American culture in teachers' communities and lives, the role of religion in shaping gender beliefs and teachers' roles were considered (as cited in Warin & Adriany, 2015). The precedent for studying the role of heteronormativity that perpetuates culturally influenced notions of hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity within specific sociocultural communities (Rodriguez, Peña, Fernandez, & Viñuela, 2006; Bhana, 2009; Jackson, 2010; Gunn, 2011) helped frame the exploration of Jewish rituals within the Orthodox Jewish early childhood classroom. Rituals, then, "reaffirm" differences between men and women and "establish gender" by supporting socially acceptable forms of masculinity or femininity (Pollock, 2004). Within Orthodox Jewish schools, particularly in early childhood, two activities are incorporated into the

curriculum that rely on gendered ritual roles namely davening/tefillah (praying/prayer) and

Shabbat party.

During the morning davening or tefillah, children recite a variety of prayers, or shortened

versions of prayers, that are traditionally recited during the morning prayer service known as

Shacharit, accompanied by other songs. In Orthodox Jewish communities, men tend to recite

these prayers in a group of men in the synagogue within a minyan or quorum of ten men with a

male prayer leader. Women are allowed, and in many communities, encouraged to attend

synagogue or engage in prayer at home. In the Orthodox Jewish synagogue, there is a mechitzah

(partition) separating the men and women during prayer. In the beginning of the service, there is

one blessing in which men thank God for not making him a woman and women recite a blessing

thanking God for creating her according to his will.

Orthodox Jewish men are required to wear tzitzit, knotted fringes on their undershirts and

tallit, Jewish prayer shawl with knotted fringes, which require special blessings. Many

communities promote that boys wear tzitzit daily beginning at around three years of age. In

Orthodox Jewish early childhood programs, from experience in a variety of classrooms, a

handful of prayers and songs have been included in the morning tefillah circle time. Boys and

girls alternate as the prayer leader. Boys tend to recite the blessing on the tzitzit and girls recite

the blessing thanking God for making her according to his will. The children pray together

without a partition. The only gendered ritual is related to what is known as the "boys' bracha

(blessing)" and the "girls' bracha." This experience models a few gendered ritual behaviors but

does not completely reflect the prayer and synagogue norms for men and women in their

communities. Nevertheless, this daily experience promotes gender discourses in relation to

Jewish ritual life, particularly related to boys as active, in control of rituals and leadership, and girls as observers of this experience, as their blessing is not accompanied by a physical action.

The Shabbat party in the classroom allows the children an opportunity to pretend to prepare for and celebrate the Shabbat, which begins on Friday evenings. A common practice during Shabbat party is role-playing Shabbat Ima and Abba, or the Sabbath mom and dad. In this situation, one boy and one girl are asked to be the parents that Friday during the class's Shabbat party in which they rehearse common Shabbat practices and customs. The Shabbat Ima tends to help the teacher light the Shabbat candles and recite the blessing, a ritual traditionally performed by women as Shabbat begins. The Abba generally leads the class in the blessings over the grape juice (wine) and the challah (traditional bread). While the Shabbat Abba generally "attends" synagogue, this practice tends to vary across classrooms.

In the Orthodox Jewish preschool classroom, this Sabbath celebration and role-playing described above may or may not reflect the practice children experience at home, yet it perpetuates notions of boys and girls as opposing due to heterosexual norms. Even in Orthodox Jewish communities, some of these roles are more fluid. Not all Jewish families and communities support completely separate roles for the Shabbat Ima and Abba, as generally rehearsed in many, even Orthodox Jewish preschools. Furthermore, not all children come from normative families with two heterosexual, married parents, and therefore, these weekly rituals may or may not be performed at home in the ways the school endorses. Either way, embedded in these school practices are assumed roles of boys and girls that surround young children's experience as they navigate gender positioning and explore ritual participation.

Teachers as Women within Orthodox Judaism

In exploring teachers' gender beliefs, it is important to address the gender of these educators and research concerning Orthodox Jewish women. Teaching has been associated with women due to traditional perspectives of women as mothers (Drudy, 2008). According to Acker (1994), the disproportionate number of female teachers further perpetuates stereotypes of women as needing to serve and mother. Teaching, particularly within early childhood, promotes aspects of emphasized femininity as women are viewed as naturally nurturing care providers. Prior to Jewish immigration from Central and Eastern European countries women were absent from settings of formal Jewish education as "learning had been traditionally reserved by men" (Kobrin, 2009). A cultural and attitudinal shift from excluding women to viewing them as the ideal educators occurred in the mid-twentieth century (Kaplan, 1932, as cited by Kobrin, 2009). "The femininization of teaching" discourse reveals the conflation of teaching and "women's work" that may discourage men from entering the field (Gorsetman & Sztokman, 2013, p. 249). The "gender imbalance" of teachers in early childhood contexts potentially limit children's ability to expand their views on gender, as well (Warin & Adriany, 2015, p. 6)

Since educators within Orthodox Jewish early childhood programs are almost exclusively women, it is imperative to explore how they view gender and have positioned themselves as females throughout their lives and within their communities. Teachers, as all people, have agency and are not passive recipients of information, yet are bound by available discourses within their surroundings. As described with children, teachers regularly rely on available and multiple discourses vis-à-vis gender as they enact and perform femininity. As this study continued, and teachers referred to their own self-understandings considering women's roles

within Orthodoxy, it became evident that some additional research concerning women within Orthodox Judaism would be beneficial.

Numerous research studies and academic works exist concerning women, feminism, conservative religions, Orthodoxy, and Jewish identity from a variety of disciplines, perspectives and across geographic locations (Kaufman, 1993; Wolowelsky, 1997; Ross, 2004; Ringel, 2007; Longman, 2008; Israel-Cohen, 2012; Milligan, 2014). Two major themes emerged highlighted by Ringel's (2007) and Israel-Cohen's (2012) research that exposed countering discourses concerning Orthodox Jewish women's self-understandings and views of their role within tradition: (1) Orthodoxy as empowering for women and (2) Orthodoxy as a site for resistance. Both of these discourses, while potentially contradictory, were important to consider within the data analysis.

Ringel's (2007) interview research with 13 self-identified urban Orthodox Jewish women asserted that "the lives of Orthodox Jewish women can be viewed as different from other feminist models, but as no less vital, fulfilling and empowering" (p. 38). These women viewed their roles as mothers and wives as highly important, as caring for family was often viewed as a priority. Traditional roles of husbands and wives were generally upheld, while revealing some variations. Participants addressed the seemingly judgmental and negative beliefs about Orthodox men and women in secular society. In doing so, they suggested perspectives in which women are perceived as more spiritual than men, as leaders of home responsibilities. This was supported as a justification as to why Jewish prayer and religious rituals were viewed as for men. Ultimately, the Orthodox Jewish women viewed their life within Jewish law as a "preferred choice" (Ringel,

2007, p. 38). The unique beauty of Orthodox Jewish femininity was viewed as not subordinate to the Jewish male experience or secular lifestyles.

Israel-Cohen's (2012) research, with Modern Orthodox Jewish women in Israel countered some of these understandings of femininity within Orthodoxy, particularly related to ritual participation. While Israel-Cohen (2012) similarly drew attention to the traditional home structure and ritual/public leadership roles, she suggested that women struggle with how to handle "patriarchal practices that they see as compromising their feminist sensibilities" (p. 5). As such, Israel-Cohen (2012) outlines aspects of passive and active resistance that women enact within conservative religious contexts. In this way, women attempt to affirm the relevance of feminism within religion while also remaining within the religious tradition. In Orthodox Judaism, this would be most successful by aligning feminist approaches within Jewish law; this may be challenging as historically the world of Jewish text included only men. One participant, Rivkah, demonstrated the importance of "raising new consciousness" while maintaining "good standing" in the community (Israel-Cohen, 2012, p. 13). Israel-Cohen (2012) reveals the potential for active resistance for future change within Orthodox Jewish ritual life, as the synagogue is viewed as a "focal point of friction between Orthodoxy and feminism" (p. 22).

Women in both studies recognized the gender differentiation and hierarchy embedded within religious discourses and ways of being. However, these studies highlighted the countering approaches employed by participants based on different interpretations of feminism and femininity. As such, in Ringel's (2007) study, women viewed their differing role as an empowering choice, while women within Israel-Cohen's (2012) study challenged gender inequality in Orthodox Jewish ritual and synagogue life. By presenting teachers with

hypothetical situations and their potential reactions to children who challenge norms, these notions about women's roles as empowering or requiring greater awareness and resistance were important discourses that regulated teachers' potential decision-making. The extent to which femininity within Orthodoxy is viewed as innate and linked to empowerment or more fluid with the potential to change may influence teachers' views of the early childhood classroom and their role in children's gender construction. As women with varying beliefs and self-perceptions within Orthodoxy, teachers' individual perspectives as well as their shared experiences as members of a community were important to explore.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to contribute to the currently sparse research concerning gender beliefs of teachers in Orthodox Jewish early childhood programs. Gorsetman and Sztokman (2013) assert that Orthodox Jewish schools inculcate and perpetuate gender beliefs that are entrenched in traditional beliefs often countering values of inclusion and equality within both Jewish and secular contexts. Along with religiously shaped and reaffirmed notions of gender differences as the way it is, secular notions of the "child-centered" early childhood classroom often perpetuate these differences. While early childhood teachers tend to endorse values concerning gender exploration and freedom, relying on gender as innate or fixed and the constraints of heteronormativity inhibit teachers' gender consciousness in the classroom. Teachers in Orthodox Jewish early childhood centers are members within a shared sociocultural community drawing both from secular and religious contexts, thus, it was necessary to investigate teachers' gender beliefs in both secular and religious contexts and the extent to which

they potentially inhibit or promote gender freedom in the Orthodox Jewish early childhood

educational space.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to conduct interview research to gain insight into teachers' gender beliefs and perceptions of gender experiences in their Orthodox Jewish early childhood classrooms. The decision to engage in interview research was to (1) Give voice to teachers' experiences and beliefs and (2) Utilize a feminist post structural and queer theory lens to analyze teachers' gender beliefs and the perceived gender discourses in the Orthodox Jewish early childhood classroom experience. Thus, considering the actual language of teachers and engaging in discussion was the optimal way to uphold these aims.

Previous research has utilized surveys of teachers' beliefs or observations of their practices and the gender discourses in their classrooms (Cahill & Adams, 1997; Davies, 2003; Änggård, 2005; Blaise, 2005). This research has provided important information and implications about gender in the classroom. However, in a study about teachers' perceptions of gender, interview research is ideal. Utilizing surveys minimizes the ability of teachers to express the richness of their experiences and consider actual language of participants. Observations focus on children or the child-teacher relationship. While this is important, it is not the ideal data collection tool to gain insight into teachers' beliefs and perspectives. The two main research questions were: (1) What are Orthodox Jewish coeducational preschool teachers' perceptions concerning appropriate roles and behaviors of boys and girls in their Jewish and "secular" lives? (2) How do teachers think they enact these beliefs in the Orthodox Jewish early childhood

classroom?

Very little research exists concerning gender and Orthodox Jewish education aside from Gorsetman and Sztokman's (2013) recent work, which focuses on grade school age children. Thus, there is a great need to investigate this topic, specifically within the Orthodox Jewish early childhood context. Previous research concerning teachers' gender beliefs and perceptions utilize a variety of qualitative methodological approaches. Engaging in interview research has previously been conducted within other specific cultural communities, particularly exploring heteronormativity, a key feature within feminist poststructuralism and queer theory (Rodriguez, Peña, Fernandez, & Viñuela, 2006; Bhana, 2009; Jackson, 2010; Gunn, 2011, Warin & Adriany, 2015).

Since research suggests that teachers' beliefs influence their classrooms practice (Benz, Pfeiffer, & Newman, 1981; Bledsoe, 1983; Sadker & Sadker, 1994, as cited by Cahill & Adams, 1997, p. 526), engaging in interview research with teachers is critical and a compelling starting point to investigate gender and Orthodox Jewish early childhood context. The use of interviews provides a great degree of "faithful representations" (Abd-el-Khalick & Lederman, 2000, as cited by Skott, 2015, p. 20) and best allows teachers to reflect on themselves and their values. Conducting interview research with teachers is fitting for an exploratory study with the goals of encouraging dialogue about a potential controversial and personal topic.

Beliefs are complicated and involve individuals' culture, experiences, and subjective perspectives. This research focused on teachers' perspectives of their experiences and not the researcher's interpretation of observed classroom behavior requiring an investigation of individuals who share a common experience. Phenomenology is an ideal approach for this type

of study as it recognizes the need to understand the experience of individuals who share a cultural community. However, in order to reveal the potential gender discourses in the classroom and teachers' perceived roles, the need to consider a feminist perspective within phenomenology and the benefit of interpreting data utilizing feminist poststructuralism/queer theory became even clearer. This study emphasizes the importance of exploring the experiences of women within a religious, cultural, and professional community. An emphasis on discursive practices as people position themselves as male or female within a specific social structure provided a useful critical lens for describing teachers' beliefs about gender and how they related to perceived classroom practice.

Phenomenology

The intention of phenomenological research is to "obtain a view" into the "research participants' life-worlds and to understand their personal meanings constructed from their 'lived experiences'" (Johnson & Christensen, 2012, p. 383-384). In other words, phenomenological research focuses on individuals' subjective experiences and meanings related to a specific phenomenon (King, 2014). Researchers using a phenomenological approach aim to reveal personal meanings of "intense human experiences" (Merriam, 2009, p. 26), such as the experience of teaching within a specific cultural community or beliefs of teachers.

Since the meanings of "events, objects, and experiences" vary from person to person, phenomenology allows a researcher to consider the participants' individual perspectives (Johnson & Christensen, 2012, p. 384). Capturing participants' specific viewpoints is important. However, researchers engaging in phenomenology do not assume that all individuals' experiences within their study are unique; instead, they attempt to find commonalities and

themes across participants. By exploring commonalities, researchers aim to discover the "essence" or "basic structure" of an experience (Merriam, 2009, p. 25). Teachers working at Orthodox Jewish early childhood centers are colleagues in a school community and are members of the same or similar cultural and religious community. It was important to investigate their individual perspectives and explore the common experiences as they navigated multiple beliefs and expectations in the classroom.

Feminist Phenomenology and Feminist Poststructuralism

Participants in this study were all women discussing their beliefs about gender related to their work with young children and Jewish ritual and family life. As teachers openly discussed their perspectives concerning the role of women in Judaism and as teachers, it became evident that this study provided the participants an opportunity to give voice to their experiences and perspectives as women within a specific cultural community and professional community. Some feminist thinkers contend that phenomenology and feminism are irreconcilable as the focus on the essence is based in upholding a "male bias" undermining the potential for a uniquely female perspective (Fisher & Embree, 2000). Furthermore, many feminist thinkers are weary of supporting notions of any experience being representative or "essentializing" of women's experiences.

However, many feminist thinkers recognize the value in the application of phenomenological theory to feminist issues (Fisher & Embree, 2000). As such, Butler (1988) describes how personal experiences are framed by "political and cultural structures" which are best understood by considering "issues in a broader and shared cultural context" (p. 522). This suggests the potential for discovering the commonalities among experiences of women while

also considering the individual perspectives which vary from woman to woman. Butler (1988) thus asserts that "it remains politically important to represent women, but to do that in a way that does not distort or reify the very collectivity the theory is supposed to emancipate" (p. 530). In this way, representing the teacher's ideas as shared yet unique was an intentional goal of the study.

Feminist phenomenological researchers provide rich descriptions of the lives of the participants within a "gendered existence and to allow for a clearing where women's voices can be heard" (Simms & Stawarska, 2013, p. 10). Along with this position, I actively incorporated aspects of feminist poststructuralism into my analysis. Feminist poststructuralism emphasizes the role of discourse situated within power and inequality to reexamine the male-female binary. More specifically, "it shows how relations of power are constructed and maintained by granting normality, rationality and naturalness to the dominant half of the binary" (Davies & Gannon, 2005, p. 318). Discourse, which involves not just language, but provides a "framework for how we think" (Blaise, 2005, p. 16) reveals "contradictory possibilities" (Davies & Gannon, 2005, p. 318) or subjectivities based on multiple discourses that individuals encounter as they position themselves as male or female (Davies, 2003). These aspects of feminist poststructuralism were central in the analysis of how teachers relate to gender in both their secular and religious lives and the multiple experiences within the classroom.

Historically, feminist phenomenology and feminist poststructuralism have been at odds due to conflicting interpretations of the concept and nature of experience and the role of discourse. Stoller (2009) contends that feminist phenomenology might "represent a phenomenology of gender experience capable of incorporating the poststructuralist critique of

experience", as these two philosophies and approaches "complement" each other (p. 730). As a researcher I recognized the need to engage in a "double book-keeping" by respecting the personal accounts of the participants' lived experiences while also utilizing a "critical perspective" when interpreting the data (Simms & Stawarska, 2013, p. 10). While the word "critical" is conflated with "negative ways of thinking" within everyday life, "critical" has an alternative meaning. Enacting a "critical" lens allows the researcher to consider how "dominant ideologies" that guide our understanding of the world are steeped in "power structures." These hierarchies and inequalities are "often masked" and seem invisible (MacNaughton, 2005, p. 6). A critical approach challenges these ideas and makes them visible.

Thus, in this study, I attempted to give voice to the teachers' experiences as women within a shared cultural and professional community by representing them as individuals and revealing their commonalities. I also employed a critical lens by utilizing key features of feminist poststructuralism and queer theory in the analysis to reveal the inequality in "dominant ideologies" about gender and the Orthodox Jewish early childhood educational space.

Recruitment of Participants

Since it is imperative that participants have a relationship with the phenomena being studied (Englander, 2012), participants were not chosen randomly but instead through purposive sampling. In order to explore teachers' perceptions of their gender beliefs and behaviors in the classroom, it was necessary to interview teachers who currently work in Orthodox Jewish coeducational schools. Thus, teachers working in gender-segregated schools, which exist within some Orthodox Jewish communities, were excluded from the study. In finding potential participants, I contacted directors of six Orthodox Jewish coeducational early childhood

programs in the Midwest. Four schools agreed to participate and signed a letter of consent. The directors then forwarded the information concerning my study to the teachers. Since recruitment was low, I also recruited potential participants directly using publicly accessible contact information, and I opened my recruitment pool to include assistant teachers, as well. The first few interviews allowed for piloting of the protocol and minor tweaks to a few interview questions.

Description of Participants

15 teachers, all women, from two Orthodox Jewish early childhood programs voluntarily participated in the study. All 15 teachers were given pseudonyms in order to uphold confidentiality and anonymity. Eleven of the 15 teachers were lead teachers and four were assistant teachers. Fourteen of the 15 teachers worked in morning classrooms and one teacher worked only in an afternoon classroom (she also was a member of the administrative staff). Two lead teachers and two assistant teachers worked in both the morning and afternoon program or classroom. This is important to note as teachers often referred to their current classrooms in discussing their gender beliefs and a few teachers were describing multiple classroom contexts. However, in terms of obtaining information concerning Jewish educational or ritual activities, according to the teachers in the study, only the morning classrooms utilize a Jewish curriculum. Thus, while the afternoon programs were offered at the Orthodox Jewish schools, their content did not include Jewish ritual activities that are directly related to the study. Considering the morning classrooms, nine teachers worked in classroom with three-four-year-olds and five teachers worked in classrooms with four-five-years-olds. Only the afternoon teachers worked in

classrooms with children ages three-five. The number of children in each classroom ranged from 12-18; seven of the classrooms had 14-16 children.

In terms of participants' educational backgrounds, seven of the 15 teachers had either an early childhood certificate, bachelor's degree (one in progress), or master's degree in an early childhood related field (such as, early childhood education, early childhood special education, and teaching and curriculum in early childhood). Participating teachers varied in their number of years of experience working as teachers in an early childhood classroom. In terms of years of experience as an assistant or lead teacher in their current schools of employment, seven teachers had one-five years of experience, three teachers had ten-eleven years of experience, and five teachers had 15-19 years of experience. Four teachers were 22-25 years old. Three teachers were 30-39 years old. Three teachers were 42-49 years old. Three teachers were 50-54 years old. Two teachers were 60-61 years old. Thirteen teachers were married and eleven teachers had their own children.

Table 1. Participants' Demographic Data

Name	Age	Role/Age of children in class	Years teaching	Years at current school	Educational background	Marital Status	Children
Aliza	50	Lead Teacher (afternoon: 3-5-year-olds) Administrative team	1 year as substitute 1 year as assistant 18 years as lead	3 years	Bachelor's in Science Master of Business Administration Early Childhood Certification	Married	3
Beth	60	Lead Teacher (morning: 3-4-year-olds) (afternoon: 3-5-year-olds)	12 years as lead (part time) 7 years as lead (full time)	19 years	Bachelor's in Public Health and Education Master's in Early Childhood Education	Married	3

					Early Childhood Certification		
Nina	54	Lead Teacher (3-4-year-olds)	6 years as assistant 4 years as lead	10 years	Bachelor's in Business Administration, minor in Psychology	Married	4
Rose	54	Lead Teacher (3-4-year-olds)	1 year as assistant 18 years as lead	15 years	Bachelor's in Early Childhood Master's in Early Childhood Early Childhood Certification	Married	6
Tamar	30	Lead Teacher (3-4-year-olds)	1 year as assistant 4 years as a lead	2 years	Bachelor's in Biology Master's in Teaching and Curriculum in Early Childhood	Married	2
Dena	39	Lead Teacher (morning: 4-5-year-olds) (afternoon: 3-5-year-olds)	4 years as assistant 11 years as lead	15 years	Bachelor's in Judaic Studies, minor in Science (additional courses, director qualifications)	Married	2
Sarah	25	Lead Teacher (4-5-year-olds)	1 year as assistant (Kindergarten) 3 years as lead	3 years	Bachelor's in Early Childhood Master's in progress: Literacy Education	Married	1
Gila	33	Lead Teacher (3-4-year-olds)	11 years as lead	11 years	Bachelor's in Special Education Master's in Early Childhood Special Education	Married	4
Leora	42	Lead Teacher (3-4-year-olds)	4 years as assistant 13 years as lead	10 years	Bachelor's in Psychology, minor in Communication	Married	4

					Teaching certificate (Israel)		
Cara	25	Lead Teacher (3-4-year-olds)	3 years as assistant 2 years as lead	4 years (not consecu-tive)	High School Diploma Currently working on Bachelor's in Early Childhood	Not married	0
Molly	23	Assistant Teacher (4-5-year-olds)	3 years as assistant	3 years	Bachelor's in Education Pre-requisites for ultrasound technician	Married	0
Eve	22	Assistant Teacher (4-5-year-olds)	2 years as assistant	2 years	Bachelor's in progress: Psychology	Married	0
Julie	49	Lead Teacher (3-4-year-olds)	19 years as lead	18 years	Bachelor's in Biology and Sociology, minor in Jewish Studies	Married	3
Vera	49	Assistant Teacher (morning: 3-4-year-olds) (afternoon: 3-5-year-olds)	1 year as a substitute 1 year as assistant	1 year	Bachelor's in History	Not married	0
Ora	61	Assistant Teacher (morning: 3-4-year-olds) (afternoon: 3-5-year-olds)	16 years as assistant	16 years	Bachelor's in Psychology	Married	4

Data Collection

Participants were provided a consent form, which followed the appropriate ethical

standards approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). Once the consent form was

reviewed and signed, each participant received ten dollars as a token of appreciation for their participation. The location of the interview was chosen by the interviewee in order to find a place that would allow the interviewee to feel safe and comfortable to share during the interview time. Eight of the interviews were conducted in the interviewees' homes, six were conducted at the schools where they work, and one was conducted in neither of those locations at the request of the interviewee. While interviews are "socially contrived" (King, 2014, p. 172), my goal was for the interviews to feel like a comfortable conversation in which the participants could share detailed descriptions of their experiences and beliefs. The one-time interviews took thirty to ninety-five minutes depending on the openness of the interviewee. I provided the interviewees with my contact information in case they wanted to contact me before or after interviews with questions, concerns, or more details. I sent all the participants a summary of their interviews for them to check to ensure that I represented their ideas accurately and to give them an opportunity to add to their responses. Follow-up conversations were held with three participants in which they added a few clarifying points. Only two other participants responded approving the summaries.

Description of Interview Protocol

One-time semi-structured interviews were conducted with 15 early childhood educators from Orthodox Jewish coeducational early childhood programs. Interviews as a way of data collection are central to phenomenological research, especially when researchers want to elicit an interviewee's interpretation of his or her lived experiences and gain an understanding of the essence of the phenomena (Merriam, 2009). Thus, I designed questions that would encourage participants to "explore their experiences"; Johnson and Christensen (2012), assert that "they

must be able to focus on the experience and nothing else" (p. 387). I attempted to create questions that would allow participants to think about specific relevant experiences by asking them for descriptions or to consider "what comes to their minds."

While developing the interview protocol I considered that discussing ideas about gender and religious beliefs can be a personal and emotional process that requires honesty and self-reflection. I wanted the teachers to feel comfortable and openly describe their views about their class and classroom practice. Once teachers answered more general questions about their classroom and themselves as teachers, the interview progressed with questions that were more specific to the research topic, namely gender. This also provided me with an opportunity to discover teachers' views about children and their roles as educators, which were ultimately important factors in teachers' perceived decision-making concerning gender in their classrooms.

I created four sections to the interview protocol. First, I asked the teachers questions about themselves, such as background information about their careers as teachers, years of employment at their current school, and their educational background. I then asked teachers questions related to their school of employment and their classrooms. By asking about their schools of employment, I learned more about the schools' religious identification and the teachers' Jewish affiliation. Furthermore, teachers provided information concerning their schools' curriculum and the role of Judaism and Jewish culture, as well as their role in creating and implementing curriculum. Learning more about teachers' perceptions of their roles as educators was essential to the discussion about gender related practices and conversations in their classrooms.

Second, once teachers discussed their schools, curriculum, and information about themselves, the interview questions transitioned to specifically addressing what they have noticed about the experiences of boys or girls in their school and how they felt about them. Discussing gender and gender beliefs can be very personal, and I wanted teachers to feel comfortable and open to sharing. Therefore, I began the conversation about gender by asking teachers to think broadly about their schools and less specifically about themselves. Then, I asked teachers to reflect on interests and behaviors of boys and girls, including conversations about gender in their specific classrooms. As a way to gain information concerning boys' and girls' play behaviors and children's and teachers' responses to children who veer from the discussed play norms, I asked teachers to give me a "virtual tour" of their classrooms.

Third, the conversation shifted to focus specifically on Jewish ritual activities in the classroom. Two ritual activities tend to be prominent in Jewish, especially Orthodox, programs, the Shabbat party and davening time in the morning. I asked teachers to describe these experiences and discuss the gendered roles in these activities. Since the way questions are worded is critical in qualitative interview research and word choices should "make sense" to the participants (Merriam, 2009, p. 95), I chose to use language to describe Jewish ritual experiences that are common in Orthodox Jewish early childhood settings. For example, when I wanted teachers to reflect on prayer in their classroom, I specifically called it "davening," the Yiddish word for praying. Some teachers used the word, "tefillah" when responding, which signaled to me to switch to the Hebrew word to continue discussing the topic. Throughout our conversations about Jewish ritual activities in the classroom, teachers provided descriptions of the different jobs or participation expectations of boys and girls while also exploring their potential reactions

to those who would ask to participate differently. This provided me with information concerning not only their views on gendered ritual participation but values concerning children and their role as a teacher in the early childhood context.

Finally, the last section of the interview asked teachers to provide narrative information concerning how they developed their beliefs concerning gender over time. This question was purposefully designed to be open-ended in order to provide teachers with the opportunity to answer it from their own perspectives; I decided not to ask specifically about the role of socializing agents, like parents, schools, and religious institutions in order for teachers to answer the question based on their own interpretation of the question. Variations in openness persisted and some probes were provided for teachers who provided brief or vague answers.

I utilized a combination of question types by considering Patton's (2002) six types of questions, such as experience and behavior questions, opinion and value questions, feeling questions, knowledge questions, sensory questions, and background and demographic questions. I also incorporated hypothetical questions, as discussed by Strauss, Schatzman, Bucher, and Sabshin (1981), in order to elicit what participants would do in certain situations. This approach often leads to the participants sharing their real experiences with the interviewer (as cited by Merriam, 2009).

Data Analysis Procedures

I began the data analysis process as I continued collecting data. There are many benefits to beginning the analysis process while conducting research (Merriam, 2009). By conducting and transcribing my own interviews while also providing notes in the margins, I recognized the importance of analyzing each interview on its own in order to capture the important and unique

ideas of each interviewee. Furthermore, I considered what I learned in the interview which informed future interviews, particularly the need to modify and add questions. For example, originally the transition question into the discussion about gender asked about teachers' perceptions of the treatment of boys and girls in their school. Teachers seemed defensive reassuring me that they felt there was equality. In order to allow the teachers to feel more comfortable and utilize the first question as a way to ease into a potentially controversial and personal discussion, I re-wrote the question asking teachers to comment generally on what they notice about the experience of being a boy or girl in their schools. Also, after a few interviews I added a follow-up question about why the teachers chose to include the gender roles in their Jewish ritual experiences to gain more insight into teachers' beliefs about gender, rituals, and the early childhood classroom.

As I read the interviews, I considered how data analysis in qualitative research is a continuous and inductive process to make sense of the data with many levels of analysis (Merriam, 2009). Furthermore, since the phenomenological researcher attempts to "depict the essence of basic underlying structure of an experience" (Merriam, 2009, p. 25), it is useful to explore teachers' actual language used in the interviews. Therefore, I engaged in in vivo coding, which utilizes specific and actual language used by the interviewees in order best represent teachers' perspectives and gain insight into their worldviews. By using the actual language of the participants, researchers "prioritize and honor the participant's voice" (Saldaña, 2016, p. 106).

Feminist poststructuralism focuses on the language within discursive practices and thus paying close attention to actual language used by participants was important to the data analysis. For example, as teachers described differences between boys and girls, I noted their use of words

like "innate" and "just society." This best ensured that I represented their views accurately by using their own words; simultaneously, this specific language aligned with biological and socialization theories of gender construction. This was important to code as it related to notions of gender being fixed within a natural male-female binary. Within the religious context, for example, teachers shared that the Shabbat Ima and Shabbat Abba with distinct roles as "the way it is" or a "reflection of home" similarly aligned with notions of gender being fixed and learned. By using actual language of the participants, their perceptions about gender construction became apparent across contexts.

Using actual language of the participants was particularly important for this research study as many of the terms were culturally and religiously specific and meaningful within the subculture relevant to my research. Participants were either familiar with my general religious and cultural identity or were able to assume based on my dress, topic of study, and language within the interview script. Therefore, teachers tended to use specific words and phrases, to discuss ritual experiences in the classroom and cultural and religious beliefs and customs. For example, teachers would use words such as "Shabbat," "davening," "tefillah," "halakha," "mitzvah," "kippah," "bracha," "tzitzit," and "Torah." Two teachers asked what type of language to use when describing Jewish rituals. I encouraged them to use whichever language and words were most comfortable for them to use. In terms of the protocol questions, investigating specific practices related to Shabbat party and davening, while I utilized in vivo coding to capture the actual language of the participants, I also engaged in protocol coding, or "a priori coding" which utilizes pre-determined codes (Saldaña, 2016). For example, I charted Shabbat party practices by

utilizing pre-established codes such as "Shabbat Abba makes Kiddush" or "Shabbat Ima lights candles" which were used to keep track of these central practices in the classroom.

While in vivo coding considers the participants' perspectives and culturally specific terminology, utilizing other types of coding were also important since Saldaña (2016) asserts that in vivo coding can inhibit the researcher's ability to "transcend to more conceptual and theoretical levels of analysis and insight" (p. 110). Therefore, I also utilized values coding, which considers values, attitudes, and beliefs of participants that allow the researcher to gain insight into their worldviews. For example, as teachers described the importance of boys and girls getting along and accepting each other, the value of "inclusion" became apparent. I also considered how this related to religiously inspired gender beliefs, such as "gender pride" as a code for one of the discourses about women's role within Orthodoxy.

Furthermore, utilizing values coding requires the researcher to consider their own "positionality" and determine the best way to code to represent the "personal ideologies" and worldviews of the interviewees (Saldaña, 2016, p. 135). Thus, "values coding is values-laden" and the conceptual framework of the study guides the coding process (Saldaña, 2016, p. 135). This tension became apparent as I attempted to uphold teachers' perspectives and worldviews while also employing a critical lens necessary within feminist poststructuralism and queer theory. As such, discussions about marriage as between a man and a woman were coded, depending on the context within the interview, as "heteronormativity" or "homophobia" as opposed to "traditional marriage" (Saldaña, 2016, p. 135). Similarly, as teachers described this "gender pride" associated with the girls' bracha, I also focused on language such as "boys go first" or "girls just stand there" to unveil a countering discourse of "passivity." As I utilized

values coding, I continued to mark down important phrases, statements, and excerpts highlighting the actual language of the participants. Overall, most of my initial codes in the first round utilized actual language of the teachers in this study.

After the first cycle of coding I re-read the codes by interview several times. To better visualize the themes of the codes, I wrote down the codes and specific language (certain quotes) of participants on pieces of paper using different color pens for organizational purposes. I utilized the order of the interview, the four sections previously described, and the research questions to guide how I recorded the codes. I wrote down all the codes related to teachers' perspectives about the school, curriculum, and teachers' self-descriptions, which ultimately provided the information helpful for "setting the stage" in the beginning of Chapter Four. Then, I recorded codes pertaining to secular and religious beliefs on separate papers, aligning with the order of the interview. Within the secular context papers, I created a section that focused on teachers' perceptions of beliefs and a section that emphasized how teachers described enacting those beliefs in the classroom, based on the research questions. In terms of Jewish rituals and Judaism, I created separate pages for Shabbat party, davening, and women in Judaism. Since the topics of family, conversations in the classroom about gender, and age of children were recurring, I also created separate pages with specific quotes pertaining to those topics.

Recording the codes in this way, guided by the research questions and sections of the interview, provided an effective transition to code mapping and sorting codes via initial categories. As I read the codes again, I was able to break down the broad sections into more specific categories. For example, for the gender beliefs within secular contexts section, I was able to connect "natural difference" and "gender stereotypical behavior" as supporting

heteronormativity, and "all children are different" as a counter discourse. I also engaged in operational model diagramming as a way to create a "think display" which can help integrate perspectives from coding, categories, and memo writing (Miles et al., 2014, as cited by Saldaña, 2016, p. 226). Through "shop-talking," or frequent discussions with peers and my advisor concerning the emerging themes and categories (Saldaña, 2016), as well as re-reading codes and memos, I created numerous iterations of the think display to better visualize emerging themes and their relationships to each other to best explain the phenomena described by the participants. Accompanying the think displays, I charted the areas of the classroom in which boys and girls played and the specific roles within Shabbat party in order to see the themes and differences in teachers' perceptions and practices.

While major categories and relationships began to emerge via code mapping and think displays, I still needed to condense the amount of data to provide for more specific and analytic codes and major themes. For example, when reviewing my codes about Shabbat party, I listed codes related to teachers' explanations as to why they included gendered ritual experiences into their Shabbat party. Original codes that emerged from this included "it's just a given," "come from Orthodox families," "typical," and "unquestioned." Seeing these together revealed a pattern and a more specific theme that within gendered ritual roles was a promotion of heteronormativity as core to Shabbat observance. By engaging in this pattern coding from the proposed categories in the first cycle, and I was able to see themes emerging across secular and religious contexts.

<center>**Trustworthiness**</center>

This research study attempted to develop more in-depth perspectives of teachers, to give credence to their voices and personal experiences, thus the focus on interviews as a single source

of data collection was utilized. Furthermore, interviews provided teachers with an opportunity to use their own language to describe their views on gender, giving insight into the discursive practices that regulate their perspectives. I further had to consider that bringing a critical lens to analysis had to be done in a sensitive way as to not undermine interviewee's identities and values. This "double-bookkeeping" with the need to accurately and positively represent participants while also engaging in critical analysis continuously played a role in the analysis procedures and decision-making throughout this process.

While the interview was the sole data collection tool, I engaged in a few practices to uphold trustworthiness throughout the data collection and data analysis. Since the interviews were conducted by one researcher, triangulation, which attempts to increase credibility via multiple methods or multiple investigators did not occur; however, I utilized multiple sources of data, by conducting interviews with teachers who have different perspectives. While I employed purposive sampling to ensure the participants had a relationship with the topic of study, I interviewed teachers with varying years of experience, educational backgrounds, teaching positions, and age. Throughout the interviews, I learned that teachers had varying perceptions about Orthodox Judaism and grew up in a variety of religious and cultural communities.

Teachers were provided with interview summaries and encouraged to provide modifications or additional information. A few follow-up conversations ensued from this process. Creating and utilizing these member checks or "respondent validation" is a useful strategy for "ensuring internal validity or credibility" (Merriam, 2009, p. 217). By providing participants with a summary of the interviews that highlighted the important topics and their own quotations from the interviews, I allowed for participants to continue to voice their ideas and

comment on my understanding of their perspectives. The interview summary followed the interview lineup by providing participants with responses concerning the main topics and questions.

A major goal of this study was to understand the experiences of the participants and their perspectives based on their feelings, beliefs, and histories which requires sufficient engagement collecting data. This strategy suggests that a researcher needs to consider the time in observation or number of interviews (Merriam, 2009). As I continued to interview teachers, while each of their experiences are important and unique, many of the themes and ideas were repeated, suggesting the findings felt "saturated." I also engaged in data collection for a significant amount of time. Due too low recruitment, my data collection time, while aiming to last six months, continued for over a year. This provided me a lot of time to transcribe carefully and cautiously, re-read interviews multiple times, and review field notes. I spent a long time making sense of the data and attempted to find not just patterns but variations within the interviews. According to Patton (2002) "credibility hinges partially on integrity of the researcher to 'look for data to support alternative explanations'" (as cited by Merriam, 2009, p. 219). I searched for data that challenged some emerging themes as a way to ensure that my interpretations were more trustworthy.

Reflexivity

Since the main tool of qualitative research is the interviewer, it was important for me to continuously reflect upon my role in the research, particularly as I am an insider to the Orthodox Jewish community and the early childhood programs. Not only did I have some familiarity with the participating schools, but I knew most of the research participants from personal and/or

professional experiences. 14 of the 15 teachers interviewed were women who I either worked with, am friends/friendly with, or know my family in some way. Having this connection to the community and the participants allowed for honesty and comfort as many teachers expressed an excitement to help me explore this topic and work towards my doctorate. I was able to understand the cultural jargon and customs described or alluded to such as Hebrew, Yiddish or other religious terms, as well as the classroom practices and educational language.

However, I had to also consider that participants may have withheld information or skewed their perspectives based on their interpretation of my ideas of the topic. For example, one interviewee described her support of boys' and girls' differences, particularly as they come into the classroom with these interests. As she shared her views, she openly declared that I "may not like this." I, therefore, had to consider not only my own perspectives but the ways in which the participants interpreted or viewed my beliefs and opinions from previous knowledge of each other.

Throughout the process I reflected upon how my experiences and beliefs influence my use of language, how I construct knowledge, and the lens for which I learn new information. As someone who supports the need to "rethink gender" and view gender differently in the early childhood classroom, I had to constantly consider how this influenced the way I conducted interviews (body language and tone) and how it infiltrated my perception of the data and analysis. I often took notes about my ideas, feelings, and thoughts as a way to remind myself of my biases and assumptions. This was an incredible challenge, but I aimed to "bring a critical self-awareness" (Finlay, 2009, p. 12) to the analysis process by being honest and open with myself. Furthermore, I aimed to uphold a "critical" lens, as well concerning my own beliefs

steeped in dominant ideology within multiple sociocultural communities. In this way, I had to recognize the power hierarchies within the interviewee-interviewer relationship and experience.

I regularly reflected upon how my own beliefs and relationships related to my understanding of the data**.** I had to consider that I also position myself utilizing discursive practices as a female member of the Orthodox Jewish educational community and broader secular culture. Ultimately, this topic was chosen due to my beliefs around the importance of teachers and the need to focus on teachers' experiences and perspectives as they play a role in their professional satisfaction and decision-making. Furthermore, I chose this topic as a Jewish woman who, while belonging to an Orthodox Jewish community, affiliates with a more open and egalitarian approach on the progressive end of the Orthodox Jewish spectrum. Through my experiences as a teacher and on the administrative team in an Orthodox Jewish early childhood program and a parent of young children, I developed an interest in the role of teachers in children's development of their understandings of maleness and femaleness in secular and religious contexts and their ability to recreate and challenge the presented information.

My self-identification as a feminist in my secular life and within Orthodox Judaism and the gender discourses within my life were critical to contemplate. I had to remind myself that the teachers in the study have their own perspectives concerning Orthodoxy and the role of women. As such, research on women in Orthodoxy and the discourse of empowerment and choice within traditional roles was important to consider. I regularly reaffirmed my commitment to honoring that women's voices and perspectives are potentially shared, yet unique, and as a feminist, should all be celebrated. I constantly took a step back to reexamine how my assumptions and opinions, particularly related to ritual participation, influenced the ways in which I interpreted

the participants' viewpoints. I utilized aspects of feminist poststructuralism and queer theory in my analysis and supported Gorsetman and Sztokman's (2013) assertion that gender messages in Orthodox Jewish educational contexts may be hindering the development of children's understanding of inclusion and equality. Simultaneously, it was imperative that I upheld my other goals of providing rich descriptions of the participants' experiences and providing the teachers, all women, voice, even if those perspectives differed from my own.

CHAPTER FOUR

"JUST PLAYING": PERCEPTIONS OF GENDER IN THE "SECULAR" SPACE

The goal of this study was to explore teachers' gender beliefs within Orthodox Jewish early childhood classrooms and the enactment of these beliefs in their classrooms, in a variety of contexts, including classroom play and Jewish ritual activities. My aim was to provide an opportunity for teachers to share their perspectives in order to understand their "lived experiences" as women and teachers in an Orthodox Jewish community, while also considering how a feminist post structural lens could allow for an important discussion of gender, often not explicitly thought about in the early childhood and Jewish contexts.

The two main research questions were: (1) What are Orthodox Jewish coeducational preschool teachers' perceptions concerning appropriate roles and behaviors of boys and girls in their Jewish and "secular" lives? (2) How do teachers think they enact these beliefs in the Orthodox Jewish preschool classroom?

Organization of Findings

The findings will be divided into two chapters: the first chapter will focus on the "secular" component of the research questions and the second chapter will explore the Jewish ritual context. The word "secular" is not used to claim an understanding about how people integrate or compartmentalize aspects of their religion into their lives; some of the beliefs discussed in the "secular" section may be related to teachers' religious and cultural values and communities. For the purposes of this study, "secular" simply refers to teachers' gender beliefs

74

that are not specifically related to Jewish ritual participation or Jewish activities and tend to focus on children's traits, behaviors, and play choices in the early childhood classroom.

This chapter provides a detailed description of teachers' perceptions of their views on gender, experience of gender in their classrooms, and their own classroom practice. While teachers described "natural," gender stereotypical roles and play choices, especially as children get older, they viewed themselves as actively encouraging exploration and upholding their beliefs concerning difference and inclusion in the early childhood classroom. Children were viewed as generally inclusive and conversations about gender were seen as unnecessary or absent. Within this active role, however, teachers described potential hesitations or boundaries related to boys' dress and role-playing due to cultural norms within their communities.

Setting the Stage: Teachers' Perceptions of their Schools and Themselves

Prior to detailing these findings, the following section will highlight important perceptions of the Orthodox Jewish early childhood classrooms, particularly concerning teachers' views on the curriculum as child-centered while also regulated by the Jewish calendar and Jewish values. Teachers revealed the role of culture and the community within their classroom practices, simultaneously maintaining the freedom and autonomy they have as teachers to make choices. This sets the stage for the tensions between child-centeredness and gender exploration, the teacher as facilitator or observer, and the role of culture, community and religious norms within teachers' "free reign."

"Child-Centered" Curriculum, Classroom Community, and Teacher Autonomy

The 15 teachers, 11 lead teachers and four assistant teachers, in coeducational classrooms with children three-five years of age described the educational environment in their schools and

particularly their classrooms as student-driven. Whether they were describing their schools or

their individual educational philosophies, the teachers viewed their classrooms as "child-guided,"

in which "experiential learning" is promoted and children are encouraged to gain problem-

solving skills. Molly described that the teachers "follow the lead of the children" and invite

children to explore the classroom. A focus on social and emotional competence was central to

many teachers and prevalent throughout their discussions about their classrooms. Beth conveyed

that she engages in a lot of "observing and watching" and ultimately "teaching them better social

skills." Nina specifically articulated that the best context for gaining important social skills is

through play.

Many teachers described the importance of children becoming independent and becoming

part of a classroom community. Eve said, "my specific role is helping them learning their

independence and how to do things by themselves." Teachers also explained that young children

should have the ability to learn about themselves and freely explore the room and its materials.

Rose articulated, "I really feel that the nursery, pre-nursery years, that times to be able to give

that child that time to kind of find themselves." In promoting young children's independence,

self-discovery, and social skills, teachers also emphasized the classroom as a community and that

the classroom is a shared space for all children to utilize. For example, Ora expressed that they

want children to learn "how to be together" and that by the end of the year there is a "cohesive

classroom."

Along with a child-guided, emergent approach, many teachers described some

perspectives about children, not gender specific, that were important in their description of their

classrooms and selves as teachers. The phrase "it depends" was commonly used to discuss

classroom dynamics and children's differing abilities and varying needs. Furthermore, teachers described a flexibility in their roles as teachers based on the children and challenges in the classroom environment. For example, Leora expressed the need to "embrace the fact that children learn differently." In other words, teachers, especially those with more experience, discussed that children are all different influencing the educational practices and classroom experiences.

The teachers, specifically the lead teachers, described that they feel that they have the freedom to make decisions in their classroom within their school settings and that "it's really left up to the teachers" (Gila). Sarah expounded that her school was "very open to different teachers doing that their own way." This "free reign," as described by Leora, was due to her understanding that "the director has confidence in us." The assistant teachers, while admitted that they do not always have a direct role in decision-making, enjoy supporting the lead teacher or revealed that the lead teacher appreciates their input. Some teachers described that they collaborate with other teachers A few even shared how they plan all activities together and feel like a teaching team (Beth called it the "dream team"). However, the majority voice was that regular collaboration was not really a reality in their schools. For example, Nina admitted, "we should be collaborating. It doesn't happen" because we "have completely different styles and approaches."

The Jewish Curriculum: The Jewish Calendar and Jewish Values

All the teachers described the central role of Judaism, Jewish values, and Jewish holidays in their school environment, curriculum, and community of families. Specifically, teachers emphasized that the Jewish calendar played a significant role in the classroom curriculum. As

Tamar shared, "the curriculum is really child-led, I think, you know?" but "obviously the Jewish holidays" are incorporated. Dena shared that not only was teaching about Jewish holidays important but that it is an explicit "goal" of the curriculum and the "Jewish calendar is probably the loose structure of the school." The Jewish holidays provided teachers with a guide as to the important Jewish topics to include in their curriculum but also a springboard to discuss other related, secular topics. For example, during the holiday of Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year, in which Jewish people eat apples and honey, a few teachers mentioned that they use that as an opportunity to teach about bees or other science related topic that seem interesting to the children. Beth described that ultimately her goals are to integrate STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) into the Jewish curriculum.

Along with the Jewish calendar, some teachers articulated that Jewish values played a major role in either the curriculum or how they speak in the classroom. According to Vera the values they "instill in the children are very Orthodox Judaism based" as they "talk about treating each other...we thank HaShem (God)...we use words like...do a mitzvah" (good deed). One teacher, Ora, expressed the importance of helping young children learn about "how to be a good Jew and how to live things that we learn in the Torah...to be nice to our friend or even not our friend...treat them the way we want to treat us."

Since all the teachers explained that they work in schools affiliated with Orthodox Judaism or an Orthodox Jewish community, teaching about Jewish holidays and Jewish values is important to the school and the community. While a handful of teachers mentioned that they would also teach in schools that are not Orthodox Jewish, all of the teachers interviewed expressed some connection to Orthodox Judaism, as many of them sent their own children to the

school in which they teach, enjoyed that the school reflected their lifestyles, were more comfortable teaching in an Orthodox Jewish space, or felt connected to the Jewish curricular approach. For example, Beth shared,

> I think it's a passion for me and I like what I can do is, it's not just tell the kids about the holidays, but it's really showing them that my interest in the holidays and observing them and knowing about them is important in my life and if it's important in my life, it's easier for me to be enthusiastic about teaching it.

Only one teacher revealed that she did not identify as Orthodox but confided that she feels comfortable in her place of employment, as there is a "warm environment" and prefers it to schools that observe differently.

Natural Gender Differences: Hegemonic Masculinity and Emphasized Femininity

Boys and girls were viewed as having natural differences pertaining to traits, behaviors, and interests aligning with stereotypical gender roles supported by a hegemonic form of masculinity and an emphasized femininity. These differences were described as the norm and inevitable with age. Teachers viewed these differences as "the way it is" and not due to their curricular decisions, classroom design, or personal behaviors.

"Innate" Differences

Teachers described gender differences as "innate" and "inbred" further developed through socializing agents, aligning with social learning perspectives of gender construction. Teachers discussed "natural" differences believed to be a combination of learned behavior and biology, and "goes to what society…expects." Dena articulated that whether the differences were based on genetics or coming from "TV, their homes, friends, older siblings, or parents" these differences seem to be "consistent over time." Family structures and dynamics were viewed as

influential, as one teacher shared that girls are "catty" due to the behaviors of their mothers. Ora expressed that she felt fathers may "subliminally" encourage their sons and not daughters to be athletes. Similarly, teachers shared that boys or girls who differed from the norm or gender typical traits and behaviors might be due to their siblings.

Gender Stereotypical Behavior as Normative

Teachers generally described gender stereotypical behaviors and play interests of boys and girls, revealing opposite roles, while also alluding to this as potentially problematic. As Dena shared, "sounds like so stereotypical gender. But it's what I see all the time." Words used to describe boys were similar to Kivel's (2006) "Act like a Man Box" of normative masculinity. For example, some of the words or phrases used to describe boys were "energetic," "physical," "rough," "more active," "wild," "more dominant," and "rambunctious." Alternatively, teachers tended to describe girls as "nurturing," "welcoming," "sweet," "inclusive," and better at developing relationships coinciding with emphasized femininity. Girls were described as better at using their words and while some teachers discussed that all children enjoy talking, girls were viewed as superior communicators. Furthermore, when considering boys' and girls' playmate choices, teachers explained that the girls were generally more particular as they were developing relationships and boys played with other children who they felt were engaging in interesting or "cool" experiences. Girls were also described as being interested in their looks or clothing, as Sarah shared, girls might be "talking about their shoes" and "looking pretty."

While girls were perceived as warm and welcoming, many teachers also viewed girls as exclusive, cliquey, "catty," or even "vicious," suggesting that girls are subject to multiple discourses about what it means to be a girl. Julie even expressed that, while generally the girls

are welcoming, a girl might be more likely to exclude another girl instead of a boy because there might be "girls who want to control the other girls...it's a power role thing to be the queen." Sarah explained that "it' just gender roles" that girls can be mean. She expressed that teenage boys might beat each other up, but girls will "tear each other up emotionally."

Gender-Segregated Play and "Balance"

Along with gender stereotypical traits and behaviors, teachers voiced that they notice gender-segregated play in their classrooms as girls tended to play with girls and boys tended to play with boys. Furthermore, teachers often used language in gender stereotypical ways as they labeled activities, materials, and behaviors as "girly" or "boyish" or boys as "boys' boys." Teachers also used male-dominant language when describing what they called gender-neutral or community helpers/jobs costumes. For instance, teachers often used terms such as "fireman" and "policeman" to describe costumes that were intended for all children, potentially revealing ideas of what is appropriate for boys and what is appropriate for girls.

Boys were viewed as more interested in activities that demanded gross moss skills and girls with fine motor skills. Often play areas that tended to boy dominant or girl dominant were described as "girls' activities" or "boys' activities." Girls were mostly described as playing in the "kitchen" or dramatic play area and the writing center. Sarah explained that on the playground, for example, even if boys and girls hang out together for "girls' activities," this meant that the boys were really just "hanging out" and girls "are playing house." Boys were described as mostly playing in the block area, playing with cars and trucks, and playing with Legos. Ora even shared that because "energetic boys have gravitated" to the Lego area, "perhaps other kids have not."

This description of boys and girls as opposites who engage in different types of play was reinforced by the trend that teachers preferred classrooms that had a relatively equal number of boys and girls. Teachers often mentioned how having a "balance" of genders is important in the class because of these differences. One teacher said that she likes a class that has a "balance of genders" because it "affects the classroom dynamic and flow of the class." Gila expounded that "more parts of the classroom are used with a good balance of the genders." This "balance" was also believed to help keep children safe and so it is not "too wild" in the room, as Eve discussed.

"Natural" Gender Division: "Just the Way It Is"

Teachers maintained that children "come in this way" into the classroom and "naturally divide themselves" on their own, suggesting teachers do not perceive themselves as promoting or reinforcing gender differences. Julie stated that this "natural" division "is not from us as far as I can tell" since "they come in with their interests." Leora explained that while it depends on the year, sometimes it is just the way it is and "it's not structured that way, like the boys like to play with the blocks. The girls tend to play in the kitchen…I mean it happens that way." In other words, teachers often shared that gendered interests, behaviors, and play occur on their own as these differences are "natural" and take place without teachers' involvement. Within this perspective, teachers described supporting children's interests, even if they are stereotypical, as they valued the individual children and their needs in the classroom. This relates to ideas that upholding the classroom as child-centered is conflated with supporting gendered differences, since it is perceived as coming naturally from the children (Blaise, 2009, as cited by Warin & Adriany, 2015). As such, Cara expressed supporting that it is "fine if they want to play with different things" since that is what the children reveal is important to them.

Exceptions and the Classroom as a Place of Exploration

While teachers revealed "stereotypical" differences, most teachers were concerned about messages of inequality and differentiated treatment. As such they viewed the classroom as a place of gender exploration and openness. Rose shared that the experience within the classroom is "a little stereotypical," but she believed that "we've gotten better over the years" and recognize "sexism" that exits in broader society and the classroom. Therefore, she revealed an ongoing and open reflection concerning gender equity in her classroom, which was situated within a broader discussion of inclusivity and equity (Hogan, 2012). Furthermore, simultaneous to natural gender differences, teachers described values about children as all different and the classroom as a place for exploration. Teachers revealed an intentionality in promoting exploration and structuring a classroom that promoted mixed play and openness. Supporting children's gender exploration seemed to compete with teachers' views that children are inevitably and naturally gendered.

"All Children are Different"

Teachers maintained that children may not be bound by gender stereotypes and that "all children are different." One teacher, for instance, described how there are a few boys in her current class who leave the play with other boys when it is too wild, and Eve expressed that "some girls get wild," both examples of exceptions to the "boys are wild" discourse. Furthermore, teachers asserted that children are "all different" in a myriad of ways, such as their traits, behaviors, play interests, and other non-gender related aspects. Teachers explained that the amount of gender stereotypical behaviors and play often varied year to year and was dependent on the specific children in the class and their history together. Ora, who has been an assistant teacher for 16 years, said that during the current school year the children play together and that it

is "more often" dependent on "the type of child they are." Nina, a teacher for ten years, shared that this particular year was very much "defined by boy things and girl things" but that this was not the case the previous year. Essentially, each year is different because children are all different.

"Mixing," "Crossover," and "The Classroom is for Everyone"

Teachers asserted that the classroom is open for all children to explore in ways not determined by gender expectations, revealing that "mixing" or "crossover" is common, upholding an ideal that the classroom should be gender neutral or promote equality. Rose declared, "boys and girls can do pretty much anything they want to do" in terms of their play choices. Teachers maintained the importance of inclusion and exploration as the "classroom is for everyone," "we are all friends," and "everything here belongs to everybody." Children were described as playing in "gender neutral" play spaces or "mixing" in play spaces that are often associated with boys or girls.

Some areas and materials in the classroom were viewed as "gender neutral," such as small manipulatives, the magnatiles, the sensory table, projects, the science center, and the library were viewed as areas or activities in the classroom that were not gender-specific: either boys or girls played there, together or in gendered groups. As Gila shared, "a lot we try to keep neutral and parve" (Yiddish word to describe kosher food that is not meat or dairy, often colloquially used to describe neutrality). Other examples of "mixing" involved stereotypically gendered areas or activities in which children have been known to play together. Some teachers described that girls and boys play together in more boy dominant areas such as the block area.

Eve expressed how it depends on what children are building, but recently boys and girls were working together to build a balance beam.

While "crossover" and "mixing" were often used interchangeably, some teachers specifically used the term "crossover" to describe boys or girls whose behaviors or interests went against the stereotypical gendered play. For example, Dena, said that there are "always some boys who like to do artwork and there are some girls who like to build rocket ships" and that there are "always boys who crossover." This suggests that artwork is considered for girls and building rocket ships is for boys, but some children "cross" to engage in activities that teachers associate with the other gender.

Encouragement and Intentionality: Supporting "Mixing" and Exploration

Some teachers viewed themselves as active facilitators of exploration denouncing gender expectations in their classrooms, potentially conflicting with beliefs that gender differences are natural. For example, Beth explained, "I don't define their roles in the classroom. Anyone can play with anything. I don't discourage it. I encourage it." It is with this perspective she perceived her classroom as being a space in which there is "no sense…that whatever you choose is inappropriate in terms of your gender." In other words, Beth viewed her classroom as a space for all children to challenge stereotypical roles of boys and girls and that she played an intentional role implementing this gender freedom.

Intentionality in supporting "mixing" and exploration was described as teachers utilized a variety of approaches. Gila discussed the importance of sitting with children and encouraging them to play together. Similarly, Cara described a time she encouraged a boy to help bring a girl over to the block area to allow her feel more comfortable when she was sad. Nina focused on

how the setup of her classroom is purposeful to encourage mixing as she would "put toys from the block rug onto the circle time rug just to see if the boys would migrate through the kitchen area and see what the girls were doing and show some interest in it." Rose also intentionally rearranged the classroom to promote boys and girls playing together by making the block corner bigger to accommodate more children. In Ora's classroom pictures of children engaging in the particular part of the classroom or center intentionally had boys and girls as she felt it was important for children to see their genders represented. Ora reported, for example, that the block area, traditionally a boy dominant area, was used by both boys and girls and that there are pictures of girls using the blocks next to the block rug. Similarly, Rose shared that she uses pictures during circle time that represent both boys and girls to promote their equal involvement.

Some teachers intentionally engaged in seat selection ("mix them up seating wise") for children during circle time and snack or meal times. Julie described a practice in which she engages in "forced play groups" by choosing children's playmates for them. However, the intentions behind this purposeful approach to mixing seemed to be utilized to not only promote gender mixing but to mitigate certain behaviors that occur due to generally gender-segregated playmates and play groups. For example, some teachers expressed that choosing seats helps children make other friends and other teachers focused on how it is a classroom management technique to encourage boys to be less wild and girls to be less "chatty." A few teachers described asking children to sit in a "boy girl" pattern, which emphasizes the opposing nature of boys and girls within a binary.

Perceptions of Children's Levels of Inclusion Based on Gender

Children are Accepting Since "We are All Friends"

Overall, teachers asserted that children are inclusive because of their young age and due to the classroom culture of "we are all friends here" and a "small little community." As Tamar shared, "I think that's the nice thing about kids is that you think they are going to notice something and question it and kids are just like whatever." Thus, teachers claimed children are generally supportive of each other's exploration and differences and only a few teachers have ever observed exclusionary behavior based on gender. Nina expressed that "crossover" in play in her classroom demonstrated a "level of acceptance" and further voiced that "kids with their personalities were just very open and welcoming" (to a child with disabilities). Similarly, Aliza shared that when a girl played with the boys, "no one seemed to blink about it." Nina and Aliza revealed that this acceptance was mostly due to the fact that they are young children, though Dena maintained that it further "depends on the children's personalities. Some are more welcoming and open." Ora shared that she has not heard this type of exclusion this year because perhaps "society has evolved," suggesting that young children's openness is based on cultural and social shifts in gender beliefs.

Instead of excluding explicitly based on gender, children were perceived as being more concerned about how children would enter the play or expect to play in an already established activity or game. Acceptance was viewed as more likely to occur if children entering the play would be "helpful" and not want to "break something." A few teachers described that it would depend on the boy and his attempt to join the play, as Leora shared: "if a boy's chiming in there" and is "like a bull in a china shop," girls would be less likely to accept the boy into their play or

play area. This description, though, alludes to ideas about boys as generally "wild." Overall, girls were viewed as accepting of boys entering their play or girl dominant areas. Gila attributed this to girls being "more nurturing and accepting." Dena and Molly shared that girls would be happy if a boy wanted to play in the dramatic play area because they would want him to play "daddy." However, Sarah expressed that girls would be "annoyed" or "frustrated" if a boy came to the dramatic play area assuming that the boy was there to take things for his own play somewhere else. Julie suggested girls, although viewed as welcoming, may exclude other girls to maintain or exert power, aligning with countering notion of girls as "vicious."

Boys were also generally viewed as accepting, as well, but some teachers maintained that they would "assume that girls wouldn't know what they are doing" or "let girls play unless they want to change the play." Alluding to ideas about masculinity and dominance, Molly felt that boys would allow them to play in the same area but not talk to them. While girls were described more often as "cliquey," Sarah shared that there might be a "boy clique" who would not allow boys or other girls to enter the play. Overall, most teachers upheld that a lack of acceptance in the play would be more based on perceived intentions and behavior of those attempting to join the play or the group dynamics than children's notions of gender or gender differences. However, the described behaviors aligned with notions of wild boys and welcoming girls and other ideas about the nature of girls and boys.

Teachers' Interventions: Promoting Inclusion and Problem-Solving

Teachers would hypothetically intervene if children were excluding others based on gender by focusing on values of inclusion and problem-solving without explicitly addressing children's gender beliefs or comments. All 15 teachers expressed that if there were an altercation

related to exclusivity in children's play based on gender that it would not be allowed and teachers would intervene by reminding the children that the classroom belongs to all children and it should be a "shared space." The intervention that teachers would potentially provide focused on their inclusionary beliefs about "the classroom is for everyone" and "all children are different" without a specific need to address potentially limiting notions about gender.

Typically, gender was viewed as one of many differences children needed to accept in the classroom. One teacher particularly saw her role as a facilitator helping children become inclusive: "that's what we are there for." Utilizing this belief that "all children are different" two teachers, Cara and Julie, also described catering their potential responses based on the children involved. Cara asserted, "they are all different and all need different things." Julie, for example, described a certain child who might exclude others because he is sensitive to space and that would influence her response.

Ultimately, the hypothetical intervention focusing on inclusivity promoted the classroom community and connected to the goal of children learning prosocial behaviors and problem-solving skills. Some teachers described that they would "put it back on the kids" to think about their feelings and have them "work out their issues." Sarah shared that she would have children solve the problem and since the classroom "belongs to all of us," she would guide children by suggesting they "find something for her to do." A few teachers would have taken a more direct role. Gila described sitting with the children to help them play together. Julie and Molly discussed that exclusionary behavior that was not changing would result in perpetrators being asked to leave the play area. Thus, teachers promoted inclusivity especially in play as during play children continue to learn "about sharing and being nice" (according to Nina).

A few teachers would have used that hypothetical moment of exclusion as an opportunity to discuss and challenge gender norms, specifically children's attitudes concerning boys and girls while providing an inclusion talk. For example, Cara said that she would respond, "girls build and boys build and boys play with dress up and girls wear different things." This demonstrates an explicit conversation about accepting gender role exceptions and "mixing." She would conclude the intervention by saying, "we are all friends here" continuing to emphasize the centrality of the belief in inclusion and community. Similarly, Eve would also emphasize that "we are all friends here" but would say "it doesn't matter if a boy or girl," as Ora would also assert.

Aliza, one of just a handful of teachers who described witnessing exclusion based on gender in her classroom, shared how she has heard boys say girls could not do something. Her response directly discussed gender as she told the children "oh, of course girls can do that. Girls can do anything boys can do." While not in a moment of exclusion, Vera revealed hearing children make gender claims as she heard a girl say "girls don't play basketball" in response to her telling the child that she plays basketball. Vera expressed that she immediately joined the conversation: "Yes they do. Girls play sports." She challenged the child's understanding of appropriate interests and activities of girls. Generally, teachers described that children and teachers do not talk about gender, and that there has not "been a need to do so" in their classrooms.

Heteronormativity: Dramatic Play Area as "Safe Space" for Exploration?

Many teachers promoted the dramatic play area as a "safe space" for gender exploration and performing gender in different ways as it is within the context of "pretend play." Some

teachers affirmed that within this safe space of dramatic play, girls could pretend to be boys and boys could pretend to be girls. Sarah articulated that if a boy expressed interest in playing the girl, "I would be encouraging. We are playing pretend right now, so if he wants to pretend to be the girl, that's fine." Furthermore, teachers discussed the changing roles of parents and how boys engage in playing house. However, it became evident notions of hegemonic masculinity regulated boys pretend play, particularly based on teachers' descriptions of boys being too "macho."

The norm of heterosexuality within the community framed the potential limits of exploration. Throughout the interviews, most teachers did not explicitly discuss their own personal beliefs about homosexuality; instead, teachers tended to discuss the families within the community and the religious institutions in which they work. This was particularly relevant to children's role-playing of multiple mommies or daddies or boys cross-dressing. Some teachers revealed that their values about children and play were central in their promotion of the dramatic play area as a "safe space" for exploration, while other teachers suggested how heteronormativity structured their responses to children's play and choices.

The Blurring of Roles within Families

Many teachers revealed their observations and beliefs in role fluidity within families as "parenting tends to be more equal; parents work." Thus, Ora intentionally does "not just ask who bakes with their mommy...I say who bakes with their mommy and daddy." Similarly, Leora was conscientious of not talking about parenting roles in gendered ways aware that there were some stay-at-home dads in the program. "The roles are getting a little more blurred," as Aliza expressed. Cara emphasized that this is particularly true within the Orthodox Jewish community

as "people have six kids. Roles are gunna mix." Within this perspective along with beliefs that children are all different, teachers revealed supporting boys who wish to play in the dramatic play area. For example, Ora expressed there are "boys who do sometimes take dolls and play." She continued: "feel free…everybody should play with whatever is here."

Hegemonic Masculinity and Emphasized Femininity: Regulating "Playing House"

While teachers shared that young children are exposed to notions of role fluidity of parents as well as the notion that classroom is for everyone, most teachers revealed that young children draw upon an idealized notion of family with stereotypical roles of moms and dads in their pretend play. Teachers shared that when girls play mommy and utilize "typical" or "generic" scripts it is understood as a reflection of cultural observations and experiences, similar to the results of Gunn's (2011) study of heteronormative discourses of early childhood teachers.

Furthermore, many teachers described that boys playing "house" goes against normative masculinity which is viewed as a reason why boys tended not to play with dolls or in the kitchen area. This suggests that hegemonic masculinity regulated boys' decisions as how to perform as a male. Dena shared that if a boy wanted to play house the girls would be "thrilled" there would be a daddy, but some boys are too "manly," associating "man" with activities outside of playing house. Some teachers described boys as "macho" or "being a guy about it," in terms of playing with materials associated with girls' play, revealing that boys understood that there is a specific normative way to be masculine, and engaging in play that is viewed as "girly" went against their understanding of maleness. Teachers, thus, allowed these experiences to remain unchallenged.

"Multiple Mommies": Promoting Homosexuality?

As girls often argued about who would be the mommy in their play, teachers shared that they tell children that there could be multiple mommies since "there is all different kinds of families." As Julie expressed, "you can have more than one mommy…you can be anything you want to be here…you get to be whatever you want." She affirmed that the early childhood classroom is a space for engaging in role-playing even challenging norms about heterosexuality within the community. Dena had a similar approach, especially as the role of teacher in the children's lives: "I never tell them what they can/can't do because I'm not their parent" so they can "pretend to marry whoever they want." Dena shared that besides playing mommy and daddy children discussed marriage and act out a boy marrying a girl. She revealed that there have been times when two boys jokingly pretended to get married, and another child proclaimed, "you can't marry him. He is a boy." Dena later expressed that while she grew up in a "very typical family" she also had "a lot of nontypical families within our family." She specifically articulated that her role as a teacher was to support this type of play, but outside of the context of pretend, it was not her role as teacher to engage in conversations with children about marriage and homosexuality. As such, Dena felt that it was fitting to tell children "things like there are some families who have two moms," but she did not think it was appropriate "to tell them much more than that" because she felt she has a "responsibility" as part of the school to not "expose them to things that their parents would not want them to be exposed to." She promoted "anything happening in her classroom," as long as they were not "offending anybody."

Thus, Dena alluded to the controversial nature of potentially promoting homosexuality. While some teachers revealed that within the context of play, it was appropriate to share that

multiple mommies or daddies were allowed in the classroom space, other teachers were more explicitly uncomfortable promoting this type of exploration, particularly attributing their reluctance to the school families and community. Tamar maintained, "I'm not interested in getting into those types of conversations...I think that's a personal decision that family members need to have with themselves." This was a different response than when she worked in a non-Orthodox Jewish school in which there were families with two moms or two dads and her classroom practice reflected this type of acceptance. She also specified that she would have to be familiar with the specific family of the child when responding or intervening in this type of role-play, suggesting that her support of multiple mommies and daddies was potentially case-specific.

Similarly, Sarah's approach was that "in a religious institution you are not going to be like you both be moms…don't want to get involved in that…too complicated." While she expressed that she was a member of the community, she attributed her decision to not promote role-playing of multiple mommies and daddies to the school itself and not her own beliefs. Gila recognized the potentially controversial topic within the community and alluded to it being against her own views as she shared, "in the context of my outlook in life, but in terms of three-year-olds playing...it is more of a social interactions and trying to teach them things, and just guys just share the role." This suggests that she does not support homosexuality but is comfortable with young children engaging in role-playing multiple mommies as it relates to her values concerning young children's social and emotional development and problem-solving skills.

"That One Boy" and Cross-Dressing

Many teachers revealed potential concerns with boys ("that one boy") who defy gender typical dress and behaviors, either due to personal discomforts with homosexuality, parental concerns, or community norms. In terms of "that one girl," Sarah explicitly explained that "girls can dress in a more boyish way and they are just considered a tomboy." Ora shared that there is one girl who "defies typical expectations and I actually love that" as the child liked sports, wore pants, and liked Batman. Including that she "love[d] that" suggests an acceptance of a girl who regularly defies stereotypical gender roles, as teachers can just "chalk it up to she's a tomboy." While girls were viewed as stereotypical "nurturers" and future mothers, teachers described supporting girls' exploration of play choices, interests, and dress, especially compared with support of boys' crossing, consistent with previous research with early childhood teachers (Cahill & Adams, 1997; Freeman, 2007, as cited by Millan, 2012; Blaise, 2005; Gunn, 2011).

Mostly, teachers viewed "that one boy," particularly the boy who tries on dresses, as just exploring, and that "it doesn't matter," aligning with their values concerning exploration, inclusion, and the classroom as for everyone. Dena, for instance, shared that many years ago there was a three-year-old boy who she said she was "fairly certain from the age of three was gay…and he is" who used to play with heels and jewelry and "no one said anything." Ora shared that while boys wearing dresses used to make her a little uncomfortable the lead teacher in the class encouraged her to be more comfortable with it, as young children were "just playing," revealing differing perspectives of teachers and the potential flexible nature of these perspectives within the early childhood space.

One teacher even commented how girls' dress up options were beautiful, bright, and nicer than dress up for boys as an explanation as to why boys would be attracted to them. Many teachers also commented that the other children do not seem to really notice and do not say anything, though some boys may not engage in trying on dresses due to the concern over their friends' potential responses, suggesting young boys are encouraged by normative masculinity. However, Eve said that one boy who put on a tutu told the teacher that he looked "silly" because he was wearing a "girl's skirt." The boy asked her to take a picture. His friends laughed but then they all played together while he was wearing the tutu.

Even teachers who said "it doesn't mean anything" described a possible concern alluding to the relationship between cross-dressing and future sexuality. In other words, some teachers expressed that boys' "crossing" was likely related to future homosexuality, which was potentially worrisome Rose, who was supportive of boys exploring in her classroom shared that "bells start to go off a little bit…and even if they are…doesn't mean that you know, I don't think it really means anything in the long run," hinting that there is a potential connection between "that one boy's" behavior and his future sexuality. Thus, Rose described the approach of "observing"; teachers engaging in a "watchfulness" of gender-bending boys is consistent with previous research (Cahill & Adams, 1997; Kane, 2006).

Some teachers discussed that parents, not teachers, are concerned that young boys' play behaviors are somehow related to future sexuality and that parents are worried about homosexuality. Leora, for example discussed a boy in a different school where she worked who carried a purse around with him at school. The parent was uncomfortable and the teacher believed this was due to the parents' potential homophobia: "they for sure...were really scared

that he was gay." The parent brought a sports bag for the boy and asked the teacher to discourage him from playing with the purse. While Leora wanted to respect the parent, she allowed the boy to play as he wanted to since he was perceived as just a young child exploring. Similarly, Julie shared that she has had parents who were concerned about homosexuality as it is "not readily accepted in our community." Julie, though a member of the community, expressed being accepting as she has a gay religious brother and that she has responded to parents by telling them that she will "make sure they play everywhere in the room and make sure they have a great time." Tamar said that "crossing" was more accepted at the Conservative Jewish school where she worked, but that it is "very different in this school and that she didn't "think that it would be okay, per se" due to families and community standards.

Other teachers more explicitly discussed their concern with boys cross-dressing in their classrooms as it is perceived to be linked to homosexuality. As Sarah articulated, "but when boys try to dress more girly, suddenly they are labeled as like gay…I feel like that's just a societal norm." Thus, Sarah shared that she would have intervened and would not have allowed the cross-dressing, expressing concern about how the other children would react. For example, she said that if a boy came to school in a dress, she would "for sure say something" and potentially quickly seek advice from the director. While she believed that at her school "we don't judge here," Cara explained that this was challenging to uphold due to her own discomfort. Attempting to not "make a big deal of it," she felt that encouraging the boy to find something else to do instead of directly declaring boys don't wear dresses was important. Her discomfort stemmed from her feelings that if it were her own son (she does not have children), she would not appreciate a teacher supporting the cross-dressing and claimed that other teachers with sons in

the program would feel the same about their own sons, even if they do not seem to mind when it is a boy in their classrooms.

The Role of Age

Children's young age was described as an important factor in teachers' views on the importance of inclusion and gender exploration and that as children got older, gender differences became inevitable. Teachers who described children playing together with less of a gender divide or children who did not fit in with gender stereotypical interests or behaviors felt that it was mostly due to age. 13 of the 15 teachers worked with children as young as three in the morning or in the afternoon, with ten of the 14 morning teachers working in classrooms with children three-four years of age. These teachers particularly described how much age seemed like a factor in the expression of these stereotypical gender roles in young children's play. As Dena, who teaches four-five-year-olds in the mornings and three-five-year-olds in the afternoon, shared "age range makes a difference…difference in play was much more pronounced with the older fours and fives." Younger children, especially in the three-four-year- old range, were perceived as having less differences due to gender in terms of their behaviors, interests, play choices, and playmates. Overall, teachers discussed how younger children notice gender differences less and that more "mixed" play is expected and accepted at a younger age. Even for children older, such as in the four-five-year-old range, many teachers discussed how they should all play together. Furthermore, Gila and Eve even expressed that such gender differentiation and exclusion based on gender that they do see is "sad" because the children are so young and should all be friends.

However, teachers explained that gender differentiation and differences tend to be inevitable and any behavior that goes against one's specific gender will become more

problematic for children as they get older. For instance, Tamar said, "because at this age, it's okay to send your kids [boys] to school in a dress…but the older the kids, the meaner they get." Beth similarly shared that when boys explore nail polish or dress up, "…they're three-years old. It's not like they are in Kindergarten." Leora, who teaches children three-four-years-old, described that as young children they tend to play together but that differentiation develops later on in the year due to parental involvement: "parents will say, well what boys do my son play with…they want to maybe guide that way…mothers will ask what girls does my daughter play with? And that's where the division starts."

Summary of Gender Beliefs and Perceptions of Classroom Practice

Teachers revealed simultaneous and potentially conflicting beliefs that gender differences are innate and inevitably learned and ideals about individuality, children's active nature in the classroom, and exploration. Hegemonic ideas of masculinity and values of girls as nurturers were embedded in their discussions about gender in the classroom, even in the discussion that children are inclusive and the classroom is for everyone. While teachers supported gender exploration and inclusion, particularly in the dramatic play area, personal or cultural values of heterosexuality framed potential limits or uncertainty as to the classroom boundaries, particularly within an Orthodox Jewish community. Underlying values concerning the classroom as a place for freedom and self-discovery and young age as a time for openness and learning were countered by views of gender as inevitable and cultural values about family. This tension continues to emerge in the upcoming discussion of gender and religious ritual participation in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

"THE WAY IT IS": JEWISH RITUALS IN THE CLASSROOM AS ROLE REHEARSALS

As discussed in Chapter Four, within the secular context and children's play, teachers described natural, innate, and inevitable gender differentiation, while simultaneously promoting individual differences, openness and exploration with some inconsistent parameters related to the regulatory role of heteronormativity within an Orthodox Jewish school community. Although some contradictions emerged, teachers generally upheld that within the early childhood classroom "you can be whatever you want," supporting children who align with gender norms or challenge them. This approach to gender exploration was comparatively absent within the context of Jewish rituals in the classroom.

Jewish ritual experiences, specifically the Shabbat party and davening time, were viewed differently than contexts of children's play; instead, they were framed as important role rehearsals for future Jewish expression and opportunities for home life reenactment. Teachers revealed that within the religious context, children engage in positive and meaningful ritual experiences. They were viewed as imparting information to young children about the relationship between gender and practice perceived as the norm within the Orthodox Jewish community. Gila highlighted the countering approaches across contexts as she supports boys wanting "pink crayons" or wearing a "princess dress" since "we don't specify according to gender or anything, but at the same time because it's a Jewish preschool I feel like by default there are things that end up boy roles and things that end up with girls."

Cultural and religious values regulated teachers' perceptions of their roles and decision-making in the classroom as they navigated multiple values across contexts. For example, teachers often described the desire to prioritize young children's needs and engagement in positive Jewish experiences while also upholding firm community norms. Furthermore, variations in Orthodox Jewish practice were described as central to teachers' perceptions of their classroom practice. Even among nuanced models embedded within the Jewish ritual experiences in the classroom was the celebration of specific roles for girls and boys linked to cultural values of maleness, femaleness, and heteronormativity. Ultimately, teachers revealed the role of religiously and culturally shaped hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity, which promoted notions of the idealized family within a heterosexual marriage. This was seen as inextricably tied to Jewish practice. While teachers often viewed the incorporation of gendered rituals as opportunities for Jewish learning and celebration of Orthodox Jewish life, implications of the gender discourses in the classroom remained fairly unexplored by teachers.

Shabbat Party

The Shabbat Ima and Shabbat Abba with distinct ritual roles were upheld in the classroom as reflections of Orthodox norms, teachers' personal beliefs, and reenactments of children's home lives. Lighting the Shabbat candles as Shabbat commences and making Kiddush (blessing on the grape juice) at Shabbat "dinner" were exclusively delegated to the young child assigned to be the Shabbat Ima and Shabbat Abba respectively. Along with Kiddush, in most classrooms, the Shabbat Abba also recited HaMotzie (blessing on the challah bread) and often "goes to shul" (synagogue), engaging in a greater number of jobs within the Shabbat experience.

Teachers perceived the lack of questioning of these assigned roles by young children as substantiation that they are experienced by children as typical reflections of their home lives. As such, Dena asserted, "I don't think they are exposed to anything other than that to question it," further suggesting teachers perceive children as passively reenacting "what happens at home" as a "given," modeling ritual behaviors of their moms and dads. The underlying assumption that young children associate with the same gender parent and make strong connections between the classroom Shabbat party and home experience guided the inclusion of gender-based ritual roles. However, one teacher revealed that while Kiddush is for boys in her classroom, her 11-year-old daughter makes Kiddush at home after her husband's turn. This counters the assumption that children solely experience ritual activities with the parent of the same gender at home as teachers described as a justification of their decision-making.

Table 2. Shabbat Party Roles and Practices

Teacher	Shabbat Ima (Mother)	Shabbat Abba (Father)	Both/Whole Class	"Going to Shul" (Synagogue)
Beth	Shabbat Candles	Kiddush	HaMotzie recited by Ima and Abba	
Nina	Shabbat Candles	Kiddush HaMotzie		Abba goes to shul All children are supposed to act it out at the table
Rose	Shabbat Candles	Kiddush HaMotzie		
Tamar	Shabbat Candles	Kiddush HaMotzie		
Dena	Shabbat Candles	Kiddush HaMotzie		Abba takes everyone to shul Abba "leads davening"

Sarah	Shabbat Candles	Kiddush (then all children recite blessing)	HaMotzie recited by the whole class	Abba brings a friend with him to shul
Gila	Shabbat Candles	Kiddush HaMotzie		Abba goes to shul Sometimes Ima goes to shul, too
Leora	Shabbat Candles	Kiddush HaMotzie		Abba brings a friend with him to shul
Cara	Shabbat Candles	Kiddush	HaMotzie recited by the whole class	Everyone goes to shul
Molly	Shabbat Candles	Kiddush HaMotzie		Abba takes everyone to shul
Eve	Shabbat Candles	Kiddush HaMotzie		
Julie	Shabbat Candles	Kiddush	HaMotzie, led by Abba, recited by the whole class	Abba and Ima go to shul
Vera	Shabbat Candles	Kiddush HaMotzie		Abba brings a friend with him to shul
Ora	Shabbat Candles	Kiddush HaMotzie		Abba goes to shul*

*When this assistant teacher leads Shabbat party, she invites the Ima and children (whoever is interested) to attend shul.

The Promotion of Heteronormativity within Shabbat Observance

Within this reenactment, the connection between Shabbat observance and the idealized family was promoted as Shabbat in the classroom was necessitated by distinct roles of a mother and a father. Bound within creating a microcosm of the Orthodox Jewish life, teachers promoted Shabbat as tethered by heteronormativity, assuming all children come from a home with two heterosexual parents, described as the "typical mother" and the "typical father." This further links heterosexuality with making Kiddush (and usually HaMotzie) and lighting Shabbat candles

as innately part of being a Jewish man or Jewish women. This was highlighted by Tamar's

scenario in which she had two Shabbat Abbas one week. One parent teased that it was so

"progressive." Tamar shared:

> …you know what, why does it matter? Why does it have to be looked at like a same-sex couple? Hey there are more boys. And I knew he was just joking but I was just kind of like, why does it even, why does it matter? I'm trying to give everyone, this is more about equal turns than equal opportunities.

As such, both the parent and teacher recognized the centrality of heterosexuality within Orthodox

Jewish life and ritual practice and that situations that suggest otherwise are viewed as supporting

homosexuality or challenging the heteronormative norms.

Gendered rituals as "the way it is" at home and within Orthodoxy framed teachers'

inclusion or understanding of these practices and were further bolstered by teachers' reflections

of their own values and experiences. Specifically, these practices were related to their own

upbringings or current practices at home. For example, Molly, Gila, and Eve, discussed growing

up in a home in which their mothers lit Shabbat candles and fathers made Kiddush. The Shabbat

ritual roles in Eve's home growing up is linked to "...why it just makes sense in my head" for the

Ima to light candles and Abba to make Kiddush and HaMotzie. Thus, upholding these practices

at school were regulated by teachers' own practices which tended to be viewed as reflections of

the norms.

Exceptions to "Ima lights the candles" and "Abba makes Kiddush" were recognized as

possible in real life and in the classroom but remained within the structure of the idealized

family. As such, teachers supported young children who were described as reciting the blessings

along with the Ima and Abba. As Leora shared: "The father obviously he makes HaMotzie, but

the kids who aren't Shabbos Ima and Abba, they end up doing it with him." Gila explained that

when the Shabbat Ima was absent she did not replace the Ima with another girl in the class.

Instead, she connected this to a potential scenario that would happen in a child's home:

"sometimes the mommy isn't home to light the candles, so the Abba lights the candles." While

teachers described scenarios in which boys or girls recited the blessing associated with the other

gender or that there is room for role flexibility, these exceptions were only promoted as

secondary to the ideal ritual performers within the family.

HaMotzie: Gendered or Fluid Ritual?

The model that "this is the way it is" as a support for rigid Shabbat Ima and Abba roles

was met with some resistance when considering the ritual of HaMotzie. While Kiddush and

candles were inextricably tied to masculinity and femininity within Orthodox Jewish practice,

HaMotzie was viewed with varying perspectives. In other words, not all teachers associated

HaMotzie as "obviously" the role of the father as Leora described. As such, one teacher shared

that there might be some girls in the school whose "mother always does make HaMotzie and

maybe they would want to do it because that is what their mother does," questioning the

assumption of monolithic practice within the community. Similarly, Beth was vocal about her

role in making HaMotzie in her own home and that her husband who grew up in an Orthodox

Jewish home is supportive of her role. Therefore, Beth deliberately questions HaMotzie as a

"male thing" within her classroom's Shabbat party, suggesting that, at least with HaMotzie,

rituals are not intrinsically tied to gender. However, Eve who shared that while she has spent

Shabbat with families in which the woman made HaMotzie, wondered about it "halachically,"

revealing differences in teachers' practices and interpretation of Jewish customs and norms.

Shul is for Boys

The inclusion of a role-playing "going to shul" activity within Shabbat party promoted a discourse that "shul is for boys" as seven of the nine teachers who included the practice revealed that it exclusively involved the Shabbat Abba or his leadership. In standard Orthodox Jewish synagogues, while men and women may attend services, men are counted in a minyan, or quorum of at least ten men needed for communal prayer. Women who attend prayer on the other side of the mechitzah or partition are described in Jewish law as not having the same type of obligation to pray within a minyan as men, while still having basic requirements to engage in prayer, even at home.

This experience of "shul is for boys" supports Gorsetman and Sztokman's (2013) assertion that children receive messages within Orthodox Jewish schools that prayer and the synagogue are for boys, which limits and/or contradicts other values about "going to shul" and the importance of prayer for all people and children. Nina expressed that while the Shabbat Abba goes to shul in her class, the other children are encouraged to act it out at the tables. She shared, though, that "it starts off fine and then the girls, by the end of the year the girls have lost" and no longer act it out because "the inequity of them." Nina revealed her recognition that the "Abba goes to shul" discourse positions girls as seemingly irrelevant in the Jewish prayer experience yet continued to engage in the practice.

Furthermore, the concern that "shul is for boys" promotes "absolute responsibility for public prayer domination and exclusion of women" as concerning for boys, as well (Gorsetman & Sztokman, 2013, p. 207). As such, boys are presented with a hegemonic ideal that Jewish masculinity involves regular shul presence and leadership, as teachers encouraged and expected

this role-playing experience for boys. This may not always be possible or realistic within real life contexts. In Sarah's class, the Abba goes to shul but is allowed to bring a friend, a boy or a girl. When choosing a girl, Sarah shared that she has heard children say "girls don't go to shul at night." Whether or not this is common practice within Orthodoxy, Sarah revealed that she asserts that "he can bring whoever he wants" promoting that "girls can daven at shul, also." While she challenges children's thinking about shul as for boys, she simultaneously encourages the Abba to attend shul perpetuating the ideal and that he is in control of the experience by deciding who is able to join him.

Julie and Cara both created a "going to shul" activity in their classrooms during Shabbat party that involved either the whole class or both the Shabbat Ima and Abba attending shul together, revealing teachers' individual freedoms to modify certain practices in the classroom context. The inclusion of this activity provides a different model in which shul and prayer is for everyone. Similarly, Ora, an assistant teacher shared that when she has the opportunity to lead Shabbat party she encourages the Ima and all the children to attend, which differs from the usual routine supported by the lead teacher. She felt that shul is a place for both boys and girls but stipulates that the differentiation within the community is often due to needs of the home or childcare.

Number of Jobs: Potential Messages of Inequality

In most of the classrooms, the Shabbat Abba had more jobs than the Shabbat Ima; embedded within the unequal number of jobs are notions of hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity as the boys were encouraged to engage in more active, leadership roles. In 12 of the 14 classrooms with a Shabbat party, the Shabbat Abba had more jobs during the

Shabbat party than the Shabbat Ima. For example, in half of the classrooms, the Shabbat Ima was responsible for candles (one job) while the Abba was responsible for Kiddush, HaMotzie, and "going to shul" (three jobs). In these classrooms where boys had more jobs than girls, teachers said that children, particularly girls, have commented on the unequal number of jobs. While infrequent, children noticing and questioning these differences reveals a contradiction to children's rehearsal of ingrained norms. Within the perspective that children are capable of actively challenging gender, Vera shared that she was surprised that the children in her classroom have never said anything about the unequal number of jobs for boys and girls in the Shabbat party. She expressed that it is a "good question" and likely to come up in her classroom but had never been discussed with the other teachers.

While some teachers recognized the unequal number of jobs, ways to address or solve the inequality had been uncertain or explored only on a case-by-case basis. Rose shared, "I haven't quite figured out if there is another job the little girl can do" and continued by expressing the other "jobs" she does at home before she lights candles, like "give tzedakah" (money to charity) and "make the meal." Dena has responded by asking the questioning girl "what other job would you like to have?" One girl suggested naming the food that the class pretends to prepare at the start of their Shabbat party. The inclusion of another job was instituted based on interest of the individual child, though outside the confines of ritual practice.

Tensions Between "They are Just So Young," Ritual Roles, and Parental Concerns

While upholding gendered rituals within the Shabbat party as important and meaningful for young children, teachers also described navigating multiple factors and conflicting values as they contemplated the hypothetical scenarios of children questioning their assigned Shabbat

party roles. As such, many teachers hesitated when discussing how they would respond to a child

hypothetically asking to perform the ritual designated for the other gender. Since young children

were viewed as just "so young," teachers discussed the importance of understanding the

individual child and respecting and honoring their views and needs, reflecting notions about their

role as teachers in the early childhood classroom, as discussed in Chapter Four. Teachers wanted

young children to feel validated and have meaningful experiences. For instance, Leora expressed

that before even making a decision about how to proceed she would want to know why the child

wanted to perform the other's role in order to validate the child's feelings and "not undermine

their decisions."

Other teachers described the importance of children having positive Jewish experiences

as potentially more important than rigid roles since they are so young. For example, if a Shabbat

Ima or Abba wanted to recite the other one's blessing, Beth would have them do it together: "I

wouldn't care. If it made the kid feel good that's fine with me. We're talking three-year-

olds…enjoy the ritual." And Gila shared, "especially when they are so young, I mean that they

want to be able to do all the mitzvot, like let them. That is so good." Thus, when presented with

the hypothetical child challenging gendered ritual experiences, teachers revealed that their values

concerning young children and the early childhood classroom were central even within Jewish

ritual experiences.

However, teachers described reservations about switching children's jobs in the moment

due to classroom management and a responsibility to all children in the class. For example, Gila

expressed, "in general, I wouldn't care, but I feel like just to run a classroom, I would say okay

this is his job." Similarly, Rose said she would not want to take the job away from the other child

and perhaps let the child "try after maybe the Shabbat party?" She concluded by saying it is an "interesting dilemma," recognizing tensions at play between upholding values of exploration, respecting all children's needs, and promoting Orthodoxy.

Other teachers, however, would use this hypothetical situation as an opportunity to impart information concerning religiously guided gender norms. In other words, in a moment of questioning, teachers would provide specific expectations perceived as bound by Jewish law or community expectations. For example, Molly shared that she would explain that these jobs are based on the Torah, and Eve would say "that's why our Shabbos Abba does it today," promoting that the Shabbat party roles are ultimately a reflection of home life and halakha. Eve's approach by asking the child to reflect on who does the ritual at home represents a common concern of teachers that actively changing the Shabbat party would counter parents' beliefs and practices. Teachers were concerned about making someone uncomfortable or going against community standards. They often expressed a balancing act between wanting to accept some flexibility to accommodate children's interests in exploring these ritual behaviors, the fact that they are so young, and not wanting to go against the expectations of the community or school families.

Questioning the Idealized Family and Challenging the Script

Some teachers described hypothetically navigating individual children's interests and questions on a case-by-case basis; however, a few teachers revealed the potential for challenging the Shabbat party script altogether and considering ways to institute class-wide change. One reason for questioning the tying of Shabbat rituals to notions of femininity and masculinity was revealed by Cara who explicitly stated: "I don't think that defines them...girls can make Kiddush. Boys can light Shabbat candles" since "there's nothing wrong with it." Furthermore, one teacher

revealed that families and households may not have the "typical dad" and "typical mom" as "there are plenty of women…where there are just women in the household."

Gorsetman and Sztokman (2013) write, "divorce, blended families, single parenthood by choice, death of a parent are among the scenarios that create shifting roles within the house" (p. 230). Similarly, Cara explicitly discussed this issue as there were children in her class with "single moms." As the school year was just starting at the time of the interview she shared that she was "glad it's coming up now and that I'm already thinking about it now." In other words, she revealed that children with single moms may not witness an Abba making Kiddush at home. As such, these children are not only receiving messages about family undermining their home lives but that they may also have a different family member, potentially their mothers, making Kiddush. Since the school should "provide the needs of the community," Cara discussed that she needed to reconsider how instituting Shabbat Ima and Abba with distinct roles promotes the "typical family" that may not be relevant to the lives of all of her students or to their futures.

Besides for considering alternative family structures as important to challenge within the Shabbat party script, two teachers questioned whether or not promoting gendered ritual experiences, even within Orthodox Jewish schools aligned with values of the early childhood space. Sarah discussed having had an Orthodox Jewish professor in college who promoted not including these prescribed roles for Shabbat party questioning the need to enforce gendered roles that were not "stipulated by Jewish law," countering some teachers' insistence that it is based on "the way it is." Nevertheless, Sarah chose to incorporate the Shabbat Ima and Abba in her class Shabbat party as it felt like a given in the school community in which she teaches, reflected her own practice, and that she did not want to be the "different one" going against a standard

classroom experience. However, she encourages the children to recite the blessing on the grape juice after the Shabbat Abba as she believes each child is still responsible for making his or her own blessing.

Nina, on the other hand, discussed an interest in challenging the gendered ritual roles that are deeply rooted in the Shabbat party experience in the classroom as they conflict with her values concerning young children and the potential freedom of the early childhood classroom. Though her current classroom practice upheld gendered rituals within Shabbat party, Nina openly shared that she "worries" that "they're so focused on what a role is for a Jewish girl and what a role is for a Jewish boy" which is "so clear in their mind" as "there's no gray area now." But she asserted, "and shouldn't it all be gray when you are three and four?" As such, she considered the idea to "not even call it Shabbos Ima and Shabbos Abba because already the kids have a predisposition in their heads of what that means." Instead, Nina explored the idea of calling it "...our special Shabbat host...completely generic and then see what happens." Nina recognized the potential for change by shifting the language, providing a different discourse for young children. She anticipated asking the two "hosts," one boy and one girl, to engage in all the Shabbat party rituals together.

Nina poignantly alluded to the major tension within the Jewish context of the early childhood classroom that promoting prescribed rituals based on gender assumes that young children passively enact one specific way of being male or female contradicting values concerning young children and the early childhood classroom. However, she expressed hesitation and concern about her idea for the following year as she was concerned about the parents' potential reactions, revealing the responsibility teachers had to upholding perceived

communal norms. While specific ritual practices are central to the perceived lifestyles of members of the school community and the individual teachers due to Jewish law or Jewish customs, Nina underscored the potential to challenge their place within the early childhood classroom. This approach suggests an interest in providing young children access to multiple ways of being that align with other values within early childhood education and Jewish practice.

Davening

The davening experience in the classroom challenged the notion of the microcosm of Orthodox Jewish life during Shabbat party while simultaneously promoting differences as "the way it is" with even more rigidity than the roles of Shabbat Ima and Abba. The incorporation of a davening helper/leader that was either a boy or girl, chazzan or chazzanit, challenged the Orthodox norm signifying to children that shul, prayer, and leadership is for all. While teachers described the "equal" and "identical" roles of chazzan and chazzanit as the classroom is "its own world," they described a "boys' bracha" and "girls' bracha" "inherited" into the curriculum as essential to uphold. During tefillah time, the boys are asked to stand up and say a blessing on their tzitzit and kiss their tzitzit and the girls are asked to stand and recite the blessing "she'asani kirtzono" (that you made me according to Your will, referring to God). This blessing is part of Bircat HaShachar, the morning blessings. In Orthodox Jewish prayer books, the counterpart blessing for men is "she'lo asani isha," acknowledging that God did not make me a woman. This blessing is not recited in any classroom. Wearing of tzitzit was viewed as innately male and central to idealized notions of Jewish masculinity. The girls' bracha was perceived as both empowering girls while also positioning them as passive observers who "look pretty." Overall, teachers simultaneously revealed the ability to create their "own world" in the classroom while

also recognizing the need as Jewish early childhood teachers to uphold standards related to masculinity, femininity, and heteronormativity.

Chazzan/Chazzanit: Our "Own World" in the Classroom

The incorporation of a chazzan and chazzanit revealed the potential within Orthodox Jewish early childhood classrooms to facilitate Jewish experiences not necessitated by gender norms prominent in Orthodox Jewish practice. In standard Orthodox Jewish synagogues, only men perform the role of cantor or chazzan, yet all 14 teachers described boys and girls performing this role. Modifying this Orthodox norm within the early childhood classroom was not perceived as challenging Orthodoxy, as most teachers described their own contentment and support of gendered ritual experiences related to prayer and synagogue in their own Orthodox Jewish lives. Sarah articulated that it is "not normal thing for girls to be leading a minyan or anything" and described being "perfectly comfortable" with these practices in her life, like Tamar who positively expressed "not having an interest" in aspects of ritual leadership in the synagogue. However, within their classrooms it is a "normal thing" as girls leading prayers was a standard classroom practice. Unlike concerns of challenging gendered Shabbat party rituals, teachers did not suggest any potential implications for challenging normative practice within the early childhood space related to the enactment of a chazzanit.

Within the model of the classroom as "its own world" as opposed to a reflection of home life as with Shabbat party, some teachers discussed how children do not notice or say anything about the inclusion of a chazzanit, which differs from the Orthodox Jewish synagogue experience or information they receive at home about prayer. Furthermore, there were differing perspectives as to whether or not children make these connections to outside of the classroom or

know about synagogue practices, differing from assumptions that children directly connect

Shabbat party to their home experiences, including synagogue culture like "Abba goes to shul"

(as Sarah addressed). Vera reflected:

> No one has questions that come to think of it…women don't lead davening, so it's
> interesting how that hasn't come up…that's interesting because the kids in shul, they
> don't see their mommies getting up and leading…so how come they don't ask about
> that…they are too busy just focusing on the job they get and not thinking about how it
> related…

In a similar way, Leora, whose class passes around a plush Torah on mornings that the Torah is

read in the synagogue expressed how the children never question or comment about a girl

passing out the Torah. While Ora recognized that some children's families attend synagogue and

prayer experiences that have "more egalitarian stuff" outside of typical Orthodox Jewish ritual

and synagogue practices, she similarly asserts that children "don't seem to make big connections

from inside what we do in this class to outside." In other words, the classroom was viewed as "its

own world" in which children rely on their assigned jobs within the classroom context and not

their potential familiarity with synagogue practices promoted in their homes or life outside of

school.

Unchallenged "Boys' Bracha" and "Girls' Bracha": Reflection of Home Life

While teachers described their "own worlds" for davening in which boys and girls both

take on active leadership roles that counter Orthodox norms, the "boys' bracha" on tzitzit and the

"girls' bracha" were perceived as reflections of what children see at home or in their

communities. Thus, teachers returned to their conception that children directly connect school

and home practices and, as such, reenact roles of same gender parents. Children were described

as never questioning or challenging their assigned brachot since "it's just not something that they

are exposed to…it's just it's not what they are doing in their home," as Leora expressed, like Kiddush is for Abba and candles are for Ima. Leora's claim assumes young children witness their parents saying these blessings or intrinsically understand these gendered brachot as part of being Orthodox.

Teachers simultaneously shared that children's reenactment of these brachot are due to the schools' role in standardizing these rituals for boys and girls and teachers' active facilitation in upholding the home-school connection. As such, teachers described that "young threes" are not clear on the dichotomy and categories of boy and girl. Tamar expressed that one girl said, "Morah, am I a girl?" and that "they just will genuinely stand up and I'll say, no you are a girl. Like they have no concept of what it is." Similarly, Gila explained that some younger three-year-olds have a harder time remembering the difference and she might ask the child, "are you a boy?" Thus, teachers revealed their role in reminding younger children of their categories as they learn to relate to same gender parent within ritual expression, as these become "ingrained" in them at home, as well.

Standing up for each other's blessing "as a joke" and not as a "political statement" or challenge to the norms was described by 13 teachers. A few teachers said that when this happens they ask the children to sit down, wait for their bracha, since "davening is serious," reaffirming these differences. Reciting the other's blessing while sitting down was viewed as acceptable as it was not perceived as challenging the norm. For example, Beth expressed that after asking a girl to sit down she wouldn't "…care if they say the bracha while they're sitting there…I don't care." Rose similarly shared that she had a girl in her class who said the boys' bracha all year.

Furthermore, one teacher explained that some children do not really say any bracha and do not actively participate at all.

A few other teachers commented that girls often recite the boys' bracha perceived as related to stereotypical gender beliefs about boys' and girls' abilities and behaviors. For example, Julie explained that it is "because they [girls] hear it and the boys are quieter, so the girls just kick in." Similarly, Eve said that "girls are better at saying the bracha than the boys" who are "pulling on tzitzit." Vera shared that boys in particular might stand for the girls' bracha especially in the beginning of the year because they are not paying attention: "boys sometimes need directions repeated." These perceptions seem to be connected to stereotypical notions concerning "girls are more verbal" than boys who may be more "rambunctious."

Encouraging Boys to Wear Tzitzit, the Inherent "Boy Thing" from "HaShem"

The "boys' bracha," specifically making a blessing on wearing tzitzit, was perceived as central to Jewish law and important for teachers of young boys to promote. Wearing tzitzit was described as a Jewish commandment for boys beginning at age three. Thus, including this blessing was not only perceived as a reflection of home life or Orthodox Jewish practice in adult life but as innately connected to Jewish boyhood. Within the hypothetical situation of a child questioning tzitzit as a "boys' thing," Gila would say that "this is the bracha that HaShem gave to boys and they have the mitzvah of wearing tzitzit and girls have other mitzvahs to do, like light [Shabbat] candles." Similarly, Vera would explain that the mitzvot are different due to HaShem's will: "I would just…boys wear tzitzit and girls don't…maybe throw in this is what HaShem wants us to do or something." Thus, teachers would reiterate to children that gendered differences, and specifically wearing tzitzit, are God-given.

Since most teachers viewed tzitzit as innately "for boys" and important to the early childhood age, actively encouraging boys to wear tzitzit and say the bracha on them was described. The encouragement of tzitzit reveals a promotion of an ideal Jewish masculinity like "Abba goes to shul" that subordinates a girl as she "isn't going to wear tzitzit" and boys who do not wear tzitzit. As such, Dena said, "not all boys wear tzitzit" in the class, similar to Cara's claim and tone when sharing that "you'd be surprised" that not all fathers wear tzitzit, as well. Teachers further reaffirmed this idealized masculinity by positively speaking about boys sharing their tzitzit with boys not wearing them and their words of praise and support, like being "so happy all the boys are wearing tzitzit today."

Although teachers encouraged boys to wear tzitzit, they also described the importance of considering the feelings of the individual boy and his wellbeing, important values concerning young children described in Chapter Four. As such Cara conveyed that it is fine if boys do not say their bracha and that she does not "force" them. This was similar with a boy not wanting to wear his kippah. She expressed how she did not push because "I don't want him to have negative feelings towards kippah." In other words, Cara prioritized the individual boy's perspective as important in facilitating positive Jewish connections, similar to Beth's notion of "enjoy the ritual" within the Shabbat party, since these children are "so young."

Kissing the tzitzit that the boys do after making the blessing, was perceived as potentially more fluid than actually wearing the tzitzit. Thus, Dena said "unless there is a halachic issue, and I don't think there is in terms of kissing the tzitzit," revealing some uncertainty about the parameters within Jewish law. Another teacher shared, though, that if a girl asked to kiss tzitzit she "wouldn't mind if they kiss tzitzit one time but wouldn't want it to become a trend" as she

was worried about classroom management and a concern that all the girls would then want to do it even if it was not important to them. While she would want to honor the individual girl's feelings and ideas, the need to assess scenarios case-by-case due to a responsibility to the whole class was similarly described within hypothetical scenarios during the Shabbat party.

Conflicting Perceptions of the "Girls' Bracha": Passive Bystanders or Gender Pride?

Like tzitzit for boys, the girls' bracha was similarly viewed as intrinsically tied to femaleness. Furthermore, it was linked to beliefs about women's role in Orthodoxy as empowering or bound by aspect of patriarchy, echoing themes presented by Ringel (2007) and Israel-Cohen (2012). Teachers described the inclusion of these blessings as obviously and automatically part of early childhood davening. However, a few teachers, explicitly described the inclusion of a girls' blessing as an educational necessity or default. Cara shared that the inclusion of the girls' bracha was because "chinuch (education) wise" they should "both have a bracha," In other words, the educational implication of only having a blessing for the boys was viewed negatively as it is important to give the girls "something to do."

Though the inclusion of a girls' bracha can be viewed as empowering and equalizing, a few teachers recognized the inequality as boys have a well-defined, active role while the girls were viewed as not having "any idea" as to "what they are saying." Rose articulated this opposing experience of boys and girls as "the boys get to do more for their bracha than the girls…the boys get to hold something, get to kiss something" and within their individualized siddurim, "for the boys, you are holding…you have tzitzit." You are holding actually something. For a girl, you are just standing pretty." She explicitly revealed that while the blessing is

instituted to equalize the experience for boys and girls it potentially promotes notions of powerlessness and support of men within emphasized femininity.

Other aspects within the discursive practices of the boys' bracha and girls' bracha supported messages to girls about their passivity as observers. First, some teachers used language like "everyone" and "everybody" when praising boys for wearing tzitzit; even though they are talking to the boys, it carries with it the messages that girls are irrelevant in ritual practice. Second, most teachers shared that the girls' bracha was recited after the boys' bracha, furthering that it is less important. One teacher described how the order of the boys' bracha and girls' bracha is based on the gender of the davening leader; if there is a chazzanit that day, then the girls recite their blessing first. The general ordering of the blessings and the language involved in the experience may support girls' ritual experience as passive and less significant.

Some teachers described a counter discourse that Jewish femininity is powerful and special. As such, Rose expressed feeling "…very good about a girl in Judaism" and this type of gender pride and empowerment was viewed as part of the experience of reciting the assigned bracha and less often viewed as a moment of inequality. Teachers generally described feeling pride in being a woman within Judaism and in their secular contexts, thus viewing this blessing as an opportunity to reveal the meaningfulness and specialness within femininity. Both Ora and Nina expressed standing for the girls' bracha to demonstrate feeling proud about being a girl, since they are women and also recite this blessing. Nina said that she calls "them both our special bracha" further demonstrating her connection to the girls' blessing as less about not being able to wear tzitzit, but more as an opportunity for young girls to proudly and positively celebrate their femininity within a relationship with God.

Though the girls' blessing was presented as countering the boy's blessing as innately and obviously feminine, it was within the discussion of the girls' bracha in which teachers revealed some inconsistencies concerning the blessing's meaning. As mentioned above, the actual words of the blessing thank God for making me according to Your will. While siddurim within Orthodoxy ascribe this blessing to women, it is not explicitly mentioned in the text. However, a few teachers conflated the text to its intended audience. For example, Molly expressed that it doesn't make sense for children to say each other's blessing, since "a boy isn't going to say thank you for making me a girl," as Gila similarly would say to the hypothetically questioning child, "okay, this is the bracha we are thanking HaShem that we are a girl." Perhaps rewriting this blessing in their descriptions was unintentional since it is accepted as a blessing for women; on the other hand, it represents how teachers tended not to discuss the actual language of the blessing and its potential messages about femininity within Orthodoxy.

Challenging Brachot: Outside of Teachers' Role

Since these gendered brachot were viewed as reflections of parents' practices, community standards, or Jewish law, any discussion of challenging these norms was described as more appropriate for parents. Dena expressed that she would "probably put it more on the family" to answer questions about these differences, as she similarly described in terms of talking about homosexuality discussed in Chapter Four. Likewise, Tamar suggested that there may be room within her role as a teacher to support challenges to "tzitzit is for boys" only after "conversation to be had with parents first." Therefore, teachers viewed modifying "tzitzit is for boys" even in support of a child's interest or challenging of gender norms as outside of the role of the Orthodox Jewish early childhood educator.

The "tzitzit is for boys" belief was viewed as more rigid than other gendered rituals in the classroom and upheld by teachers as essential within Orthodox Jewish culture. However, Ora described that while she would respond "boys wear tzitzit" to a girl who questioned the practice, she revealed "much as it would pain me…in a way." This connects to her insights and concerns related to gender differentiated roles in the early childhood classroom, life, and even within Orthodoxy. Her comment suggests the potential for discussing the educational implications within the compulsory inclusion of "tzitzit is for boys" as "the way it is" within halakha and what Gorsetman and Sztokman (2013) describe as a need to examine "language used to justify women's and girls' exclusion" (p. 224). In other words, Ora revealed some inequality in the experience and in its potential effect on girls. As such, she hints at the need to further explore how to address this topic with young children while ritual and equality.

No teacher proposed rewriting the davening script either to allow for flexibility of roles like chazzan/chazzanit or excluding the brachot altogether. However, Vera discussed that the inclusion of these brachot for boys and girls was in some ways surprising when she began teaching. She said that she would have expected tefillot and brachot at this young age to be more "communal" as "there's a lot of brachas we could be saying." Her observation suggests the potential idea that the early childhood classroom as "its own world" could support tefillah that excludes these blessings from the practice while instituting other relevant prayers experienced equally by all. She revealed, though, that her love of teaching in a school that imparts Jewish values and traditions outweighs these perspectives. As such, if the davening experience includes these blessings, "so be it."

Acceptance within the Context of Play

Highlighting that Jewish ritual experiences are viewed differently than play within the secular context, a few teachers expressed an acceptance of Jewish gender exploration when it is clearly outside the confines of Jewish ritual rehearsals. For example, Beth shared that if a girl were to play with the tzitzit that might be in the dress up area of the classroom "nobody says anything," since it is experienced within the context of play. Gila felt similarly and that when there are tzitzit or tallit (prayer shawl with knotted fringes) available in the dress up area (usually around the holiday of Purim) anyone is welcome to play with those materials. Furthermore, Nina shared that girls often role-play male characters when acting out stories from the parsha (weekly Torah portion), especially since it is mostly "men, male roles in those stories." The clear line between dramatic play and ritual role rehearsal influenced teachers' comfort with supporting gender exploration or cross-gender play, particularly girls performing with typically male roles within Judaism. However, these scenarios were described as infrequent or absent in many classrooms.

Summary of Gender Beliefs and Practices Related to Jewish Rituals in the Classroom

Jewish rituals within the Shabbat party and davening time were thus viewed as role rehearsals outside of the general confines of supporting gender exploration in play. These rituals were linked to the promotion of heteronormativity, hegemonic masculinity, and emphasized femininity within Orthodox Jewish culture. Ritual experiences were perceived as reflections of Orthodox Jewish practice and children's home lives providing young children with opportunities to rehearse Jewish life. While certain standards were upheld by all teachers, particularly related to candles, Kiddush, and "tzitzit is for boys," some diverse perspectives concerning Orthodox

Jewish practice and the early childhood classroom as "its own world" emerged in certain contexts. Teachers' personal experiences and values were continuously referenced as they described their actual or potential decision-making that navigated multiple, often conflicting beliefs about young children, gender, families, Judaism, the early childhood classroom, and the role of educators. However, the relationship between rituals, sexuality, and family life, whether or not intentionally instituted by individual teachers, possibly framed the experiences in the classroom related to Shabbat and tefillah for young children.

CHAPTER SIX

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Restatement of Purpose

The goal of this study was to explore teachers' perceptions of their gender beliefs within

the Orthodox Jewish coeducational early childhood setting and examine the perceived gender

discourses prevalent in their classrooms. Interviewing teachers provided an opportunity to give

voice to their shared experiences as teachers and women within the Orthodox Jewish educational

community. Furthermore, the use of a feminist poststructural/queer theory lens provided an

effective tool for analysis considering what Gorsetman and Sztokman (2013) describe as the

likely conflicting gender experiences in Orthodox Jewish schools that may inhibit children from

developing values of inclusion and equality. The underlying assumption of this study is that

although the early childhood classroom may perpetuate gender stereotypes, teachers are in an

ideal position for actively challenging presumptions within the gender binary as they interact

with children in their early years (Davies, 2003; Blaise, 2005; Warin & Adriany, 2015). The role

of heteronormativity in both secular and religious contexts and values about the nature of gender

and children provided insights and implications for teachers, schools, and the intersection of

education and religion. Since there is a gap in the research about gender in Orthodox Jewish

early childhood programs, this exploratory research encouraged the beginning of an important

conversation.

Summary of Main Findings

The following were the two research questions which guided the data collection and data analysis in this study: (1) What are Orthodox Jewish coeducational preschool teachers' perceptions concerning appropriate roles and behaviors of boys and girls in their Jewish and "secular" lives? (2) How do teachers think they enact these beliefs in the Orthodox Jewish early childhood classroom?

In terms of the "secular" context, teachers described "natural," gender stereotypical behaviors, interests, and play choices highlighting aspects of hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity. Teachers supported a child-centered approach in their classroom, which also attributed to teachers' description of gender difference as "just the way it is" coming from "children's interests." Simultaneously, teachers valued exploration and difference viewing themselves as active facilitators of children's learning and discoveries. Teachers valued the needs of individual children by describing some support of children who challenge gender norms. Within this active role, teachers described potential hesitations or inconsistencies related to boys' dress and role-playing due to cultural and community values and the role of heteronormativity. Teachers, thus, revealed potential conflicts between multiple values and classroom roles.

Concerning the Jewish rituals in the classroom, teachers discussed unquestioned gendered ritual roles that were understood as a reflection of home and community norms and viewed as "tradition as opposed to discrimination." These ritual experiences within Shabbat party and davening were linked to values of heteronormativity and specific expressions of masculinity and femininity. Curricular decisions during the Shabbat party and davening revealed

contradictory notions of the early childhood classroom as "its own world" or a microcosm of Orthodox Jewish life with countering perspectives of children's home-school connections. In considering how to respond to children who would hypothetically question their roles, teachers described the need to balance religious beliefs and values in relation to respecting children's differences and supporting their individual needs.

Anecdotally, when discussing the topic of gender beliefs of teachers in Orthodox Jewish early childhood programs with interested individuals and colleagues, especially those familiar with (or members of) the Orthodox Jewish community, I received comments questioning the need to engage in such research or that this study would be futile. I encountered assumptions that teachers in Orthodox Jewish schools would unequivocally support certain gendered experiences in the classroom or that the topic itself is too controversial to explore due to cultural norms and the role of halakha in Orthodoxy. This guided my decision to consider how feminist phenomenology could allow for discovering teachers' unique perspectives via rich descriptions while also exposing a shared experience that should not be ignored or undermined. Simultaneously, I recognized the need to utilize a feminist poststructural lens with aspects of queer theory to engage in analysis in support of Gorsetman and Sztokman's (2013) assertion that examining gender expectations within Orthodox Jewish classrooms is the "first step in creating a compassionate and inclusive religious practicing community" (p. 3).

Shared Experience and Varying Perspectives

Participants often expressed that teaching in an Orthodox Jewish early childhood program was a "passion" of theirs, as they revealed deep connections to their schools and surrounding community. While teachers described curricular goals of the school to implement

Jewish learning related to Jewish holidays and values, they also described their own enjoyment of and commitment to teaching Judaism. Teachers, thus, alluded to how Jewish values and communal standards are infused in the classroom via the responsibility to uphold their own and the school's religious ideals. However, teachers' values and their perceptions of communal norms and responsibilities varied. For example, Leora described HaMotzie as "obviously" male while Beth openly challenged it as a "male thing." Ora revealed the potential shifts in Orthodoxy as women are becoming rabbis (within a liberal subgroup within Orthodoxy), while other teachers matter-of-factly upheld gendered ritual differences as men as public and women as in the home. Some teachers perceived the community and their personal beliefs as identical, while others openly noted points of divergence.

Furthermore, the discussion of communal norms as uniform was countered by teachers who also recognized differing approaches within the school community. Thus, teachers shared that while their schools involved mostly Orthodox Jewish families, there were multiple "levels" of practice; one teacher reported enjoying the "diversity" within Orthodoxy at the school. While teachers described their roles in the classroom as independent from others with their own amount of control, expectations within Orthodox Jewish practice and a perceived responsibility to parents and community members structured the amount of "free reign" teachers employed. As such, Gila expressed that "embedded in my class and every classroom is just a reflection of the teacher's beliefs, also."

Since beliefs are subjective, dynamic, complex, involve varying levels of conviction and may be countered in the classroom practice due to other beliefs (Fives & Buehl, 2012; Zeng, 2013; Skott, 2015), teachers described multiple contextual factors and values regulating their classroom practice

and gender beliefs. Managing competing values related to young children, family, and religion within their perceptions of their roles as teachers was a shared experience with varying outcomes and insights. Participants grappled with conflicting values about how much children are constrained by gender norms or are too young to notice gender at all. For example, teachers generally perceived children as inclusive as they do not recognize differences while at the same time describing children as having "ingrained" understandings of gender. Teachers also presented conflicting perspectives concerning children's connections between classroom procedures and home experiences. Balancing these contradictory beliefs about children, as well as their roles as teachers within Orthodox Jewish schooling was a shared experience with varying and often inconsistent responses.

The Regulatory Role of Culture and Reconciling Contradictions

While teachers revealed noteworthy differences, the major tension shared by teachers across secular and Jewish contexts was the conflicting perceptions of the classroom as "its own world" or a microcosm of broader society or an idealized Orthodox Jewish life. Participants viewed the early childhood classroom as inclusive, diverse, and in many ways, neutral towards gender. Thus, the early childhood classroom was perceived as relatively immune to gendering children as "its own world" unlike other contexts in which children exist ("society," "siblings," "media," etc.). As such, Hogan (2012), writes about the "strong perception that early childhood teachers can mitigate these influences" in the early childhood classroom "by creating an environment that celebrates diversity and offers all children equal opportunities" (p. 5). Values about the early childhood classroom as a site for exploration, though, were countered by ideas

that gender is innate or passively reenacted and language that revealed beliefs in hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity.

Thus, teachers are often not aware of the ways in which gender expectations infiltrate the classroom (MacNaughton, 2000; Hogan, 2014). However, in Jewish ritual activities, teachers overtly recognized gender expectations, although they may not recognize how these discourses circulate within the classroom, as they are linked to religious and cultural notions about roles. Teachers viewed ritual roles as existing outside of their notions about equality and gender that they aimed to achieve within the play context of the early childhood classroom. Differences were generally upheld as "the way it is" with a mix of positive and critical interpretations. Since these practices were related to children's religious affiliations, teachers believed children similarly recognized the distinction in their continued gender construction.

The following discussion will consider these tensions by addressing three specific areas: (1) Teachers' beliefs about gender construction; (2) Teachers own self-understandings about femininity and Judaism; and (3) The role of language and dialogue. By exploring the implications of these three central areas, the potential for "rethinking gender" (MacNaughton, 2000; Davies, 2003; Blaise, 2005) and reconciling contradictory visions of the early childhood classroom become more apparent. To clarify, the following (and this study in general) is not an attempt to undermine teachers' religious beliefs and their complex and positive views of themselves as women within Orthodoxy; instead, the goal is to outline a different way of viewing gender within the early educational context. Engaging in greater and a more nuanced understanding of texts and perspectives within halakha is important and will be further explored. However, the goal is not to undermine or overturn halakha but to best support teachers in

viewing the early childhood classroom as "its own world" while also a site for rich Jewish educational experiences.

Teachers' Theories about Gender Construction and Cultural Norms

When teachers rely on gender construction as biologically innate or achieved through socialization they inhibit the recognition of gender discourses in classroom and their role in children's process of gender construction (MacNaughton, 2000; Blaise, 2005; Hogan, 2014). Teachers expressed supporting young children and their interests as individuals whether they reflected or challenged gender norms; however, the general description that gender is innate or "inbred" limits teachers' abilities to view children as active in the process. In this way, relying on the "child-centered" discourse in the early childhood classroom makes it even more difficult to challenge gender expectations as teachers are "following the child's natural interests and motivations" (Blaise, 2009, as cited by Warin & Adriany, 2015, p. 4). The promotion of gender as biologically-driven suggests that gender differences are immutable. It can be used to uphold the value of "following children's lead" while simultaneously contradicting views of children as all different.

Furthermore, relying on an explanation of biological differences begs the question whether any type of intervention or facilitation is meaningful or necessary (Blaise, 2005). If gender is believed to be based on definitive, fixed, and opposing categories, then is there a need to incorporate intentional practices as children passively present gender norms? Leora alludes to the problem with relying on biological theories by disapproving of the discourse "boys will be boys" as it should not be "an excuse" for negative behaviors. In other words, Leora suggests that "boys will be boys" as a way to justify innate differences limits teachers' ability to question and

challenge behavior and view boys differently. Similarly, if girls are viewed as innately more "nurturing" then will teachers openly support boys who play in nurturing ways or encourage such play? Furthermore, if boys are naturally "wild," are boys who do not exhibit these behaviors viewed as subordinate to the typical boy or less "macho?" Ultimately, relying on gender as innate undermines children's active nature in performing gender, boxes children into specific forms of masculinity and femininity, and challenges teachers' potential role in encouraging authentic exploration.

While socialization approaches recognize the need to examine gender information surrounding children, it also promotes children as passive and differences as inevitable. Teachers often described children as modeling and rehearsing information about gender that they observe or learn through the media, their families, peers, and association with same-gender parents. This approach asserts that children are bombarded by messages that are then regurgitated based on associations with gender appropriate expectations. As such, girls were sometimes described as "catty" just like "their mothers." Upholding that children "soak it up" suggests their passive role in the process. In this way, teachers are "socializers" actively supporting what they view as cultural norms (Blaise, 2005). Teachers and the classroom structures as "socializers" inhibit the ability to view children as actively engaging in decision-making (Davies, 2003; Blaise, 2005). Hogan (2014) claims that the limits to socialization theories, while they have been "well-documented" continue to be a "complicating factor" (p. 46). Teachers who felt that children can be "whatever they want to be" are constrained by their reliance on gender as inevitable. Thus, teachers may neglect to notice how their own beliefs about gender construction potentially limit their values about gender equity and freedom within the early childhood classroom.

Teachers' reliance on biological differences and gender as natural was particularly present within the Jewish context, especially since teachers viewed Jewish rituals as socializing "rehearsals." Teachers more explicitly demonstrated their roles as socializers as expectations for boys and girls were steeped in rituals substantiated by perceptions of halakha and its importance in the classroom. "God-given" differences enacted through ritual as "the way it is" reaffirmed teachers support of gender as natural. According to Yulandissari (2006), religions exert a "powerful reinforcement" of gendered differences conflating biology with "true natures" (as cited by Warin & Adriany, 2015, p. 10). Thus, biology as the root of gender differences is deeply connected to religious discourses (Warin & Adriany, 2015).

As such, teachers viewed boys performing the Shabbat Abba role as immutably for boys. Dena and Molly even described how boys imitate their fathers based on their reenacting behaviors related to Kiddush or HaMotzie. "Tzitzit is for boys" was described as so intricately tied to masculinity and explicitly outlined in halakha that teachers had a hard time even imagining a girl asking to engage in the ritual. Furthermore, only a few teachers recognized the potential discourse that girls "just stand there and look pretty" for their blessing and what that might mean for girls (and boys) and that boys had more jobs than girls. This reliance on "the way it is" in terms of gender within the religious context upholds notions that teachers are socializers and children are passively enacting gender and that the classroom is a place to rehearse these norms.

Due to the centrality of halakha in Orthodoxy and its perceived place in early childhood education, presenting the potential benefits of viewing gender differently may be countered with resistance. Religious beliefs underlying gender differences make presenting a need to reimagine

gender even more challenging. After all, the implication is the need to consider feminist theories to explore gender in Orthodoxy. This may be viewed as threatening to religious discourses. Gorsetman and Sztokman (2013), write that "feminism and calls for gender equality can be very confronting and challenging to some basic norms of Jewish educational life. Judaism values communal needs, while feminism values individual rights" (p. 271). It is in this way that teachers were wary of rearranging their classroom rituals to accommodate the hypothetical girl who challenged her roles. While teachers wanted to support her individual concerns, the communal needs of the class and norms of Orthodoxy placed boundaries on teachers' potential decisions.

Recognizing the need to think of gender construction differently, even in the Jewish context, best supports teachers' visions of the early childhood classroom as its "own world" of exploration and inclusion. Teachers' views of socializing children to specific ritual roles can be conflated with "child-centered" values as teachers "follow their lead." However, this inhibits teachers from considering their active role in reconceptualizing "child-centered" to truly allow for equality and freedom. This is similar to Gorsetman and Sztokman's (2013) push for educating in the divine image by promoting equality. This stance requires teachers to view children as actively involved in gender construction as "children make sense of and enact gender discourses everyday" (Blaise, 2005, p. 183).

Upholding Contradictions and Varying Self-Understandings

Letting go of gender as innate and passively internalized is connected to viewing identity differently. Identity as "variable and fluid" based on one's "social environment" and cultural context, supports notions of gender experiences as dependent on "what options are available" to people (Butler, 1990, as cited by Warin & Adriany, 2015, p. 7). In this way, contradictory

contexts and discourses may exist. Teachers generally recognized potentially conflicting

approaches to gender in their own lives as they described performing different types of

femininities. For example, teachers revealed multiple ways of being feminine describing

themselves in a variety of ways. Teachers simultaneously shared their love of "frilly" and "girly"

things, while also identifying with "getting dirty" and playing sports. The ability to perform

femininity in stereotypical and challenging ways while also addressing sexism was common

among teachers.

However, gender differences within the religious context were viewed as more

compulsory, seemingly contradictory to the secular context. As such, while Vera described her

disapproval of limiting boys' and girls' interests and behaviors, when it came to religion, she

reflected that she supported differentiated roles in which "that's what the men do and this is what

the women do...I have no desire to daven in anything but a place with a mechitzah." Similarly,

Sarah maintained her comfortability with "gender roles" in the religious context as she was

"never into equal rights" in Orthodox Jewish ritual performance in the synagogue. Teachers

seemingly upheld contradictory gender views as feminists addressing issues of sexism, while

also feeling pride in their roles as women in Orthodox Jewish ritual norms, even if they seem

linked to inequality. Yet, a few teachers revealed some progressive views about gender in

Orthodoxy, such as women taking on more leadership roles in communal life, which countered

norms and standards within Orthodoxy. However, they maintained their Orthodox Jewish

affiliation and connections, similarly, which demonstrates some contradictions.

Instead of questioning how teachers in Orthodox Jewish schools cognitively balance

contradictory perspectives between their secular and religious gender beliefs, or multiple ways in

which they perform femininity within the same context, it is critical to recognize that people's identities are inconsistent as they rely on multiple discourses towards their development of self-understanding. As such, people have the ability to position themselves or are constrained in a variety of ways within a social structure, enacting or challenging varying discursive practices available to them (Davies, 2003). Across Jewish and secular contexts, teachers in this study expressed celebrating being female, engaging in gender pride, while at other times questioning gendered expectations that render girls powerless or unequal or bound by feminine stereotypes.

A central implication of this study is not the need for teachers to resolve potential inconsistencies or contradictions in their views on gender and identity, but to recognize the different subjectivities within discursive practice and insist that children have the opportunity to engage in a similar freedom (Davies, 2003). Challenging the notion of a rational identity as upheld within psychology, varying or inconsistent self-understandings are normal. Since teachers described their perspectives of femininity in different and conflicting ways, so too should children have an opportunity to experience multiple discourses and actively perform and challenge gender. Thus, it is imperative that teachers consider providing young children with support in the many ways they explore femininity and masculinity or challenge norms as teachers revealed they do in their own lives. This can be best achieved by intentionally creating a classroom environment in which teachers actively support this exploration and gender flexibility Teachers can best implement this by viewing children as active in their gender construction, gaining an awareness of gender discourses available to children in the classroom, and accepting the role of teachers to challenge gender stereotypes.

One might argue that teachers instituting gendered ritual roles and relying on "the way it is" in the religious context versus a more open "be whatever you want to be" in the secular context of the classroom does provide multiple discourses for children. This is similar to teachers who generally described feminist inclinations in their secular lives but felt gender pride in their differentiated role in Jewish ritual life. Yet, Gorsetman and Sztokman (2013) assert how feminism can be a "spiritual and educational idea" and that gender equity is pivotal for young children's Jewish identity development, as well (p. 271). Many teachers in this study recognized that gendered ritual practices reenacted in the classroom supported heteronormativity that may not be relevant or that exaggerate roles as binding. Even within the secular context, Warin and Adriany (2015) claim that if children are provided "rigid options," they will be more likely to "adopt traditional gender beliefs" (p. 7). As children actively develop their varying Jewish self-understandings, they are limited by the discourse that Shabbat observance is only maintained within the idealized family, for example. In this sense, teachers are providing children with gendered expectations that undermine the nuances of the ritual experience outside of the classrooms, as teachers themselves recognized exceptions to this model and varying perspectives within their lives and within diverse families.

The inclusion of a chazzan and chazzanit suggests the potential that teachers and children view the classroom as "its own world." Whether or not intentional, teachers are creating a meaningful Jewish experience for young children that counters norms of Orthodox Jewish practice. However, it was not perceived by teachers as challenging Orthodoxy. Similarly, many teachers promoted gender bending behaviors antithetical to heteronormativity without considering its relationship to cultural values of heterosexuality, viewing the classroom and play

as "a safe space." It is within this idea of a new space or separate world that the Shabbat experience could utilize a similar approach: the classroom as "its own world" or allowing children to connect to Shabbat rituals and tefillah not bound by gender stereotypes.

One teacher, Nina, shared her concern with ascribing specific gender roles at such a young age, particularly related to the Shabbat experience. She discussed her contemplation about instituting change related to the Shabbat party in the upcoming year by having Shabbat leaders who together light Shabbat candles, make Kiddush, and make HaMotzie. During the interview she discussed her desire to incorporate this change while recognizing concerns about how other teachers, her boss, and parents would respond. Many months after her interview, she expressed that she instituted the change in her classroom and that it was well received. She expressed that not a single parent commented about boys and girls performing ritual roles together. While someone might argue that parents perhaps would be more resistant to switching roles than performing them together, this change challenged assumptions about family and school expectations and demonstrated how rituals in the classroom could deemphasize traditional differences by downplaying gender differentiation. It further demonstrated that the severing of Shabbat from gendered ritual roles may not erase important educational experiences of Shabbat.

"You are Making Me Think So Much": Need for Dialogue

Many of the tensions related to the classroom as "its own world" or reflection of rigid and traditional gender expectations were related to what teachers described as a lack of gender dialogue. Teachers revealed assumptions about cultural standards and school responsibilities conflicting with views of "freedom" in decision-making. Furthermore, gender differentiation as developmentally inevitable challenges the importance of recognizing gender discourses in the

classrooms and their potential influence on children's experiences. By viewing gender as "the way it is" or outside of teachers' role to challenge, gender was perceived as invisible in the classroom. This was supported by teachers' perceptions that children do not exclude others based on gender. Since children are welcoming and inclusive, gender is not viewed as "necessary to talk about." One teacher revealed that perhaps a challenge to talking about gender is that "gender beliefs are so much a part" of someone that they "may not even be able to recognize how they enter the classroom space," alluding to notions of beliefs as potentially implicit and, thus, unnoticed.

Across Jewish and secular contexts, teachers maintained that conversations about gender in their schools rarely occur. Overall, teachers claimed that they: (1) Do not hear children talking about gender, (2) Do not talk to children about gender, and (3) Do not talk about gender with other teachers or supervisors. When asked to discuss gender, particularly in ways that challenged teachers' thinking, the participants often needed time to think, hesitated in their responses, commented that it was a "good question" that they had "never thought about before." This was demonstrated in the differing approaches to certain rituals of Shabbat party that were perceived as necessary to include. Teachers relied on "this is the way it is" not only as a reflection of Orthodox life, but as an assumed shared experience across classrooms. However, one teacher shared that while she and another lead teacher discuss the curriculum regularly, they never really discuss Shabbat party. Julie, for example, said she did not know how other teachers structured their Shabbat parties; other teachers assumed the party was just like theirs. It is within this lack of conversation that assumptions about normative cultural values persisted even though varying models were utilized.

The lack of discussion about gender amongst staff was also highlighted by the differing perspectives of the role of heterosexuality in influencing perceptions of limits of children's play. As such, a few teachers described that the classroom was "its own world" to explore and play, whether or not they were comfortable with homosexuality in their real lives. Other teachers assumed that the religious affiliation of the school clearly dictated boundaries to this approach. In this way, Tamar revealed that her response to children would be explicitly linked to the religious affiliation of the school as it differed from her teaching approach in a previous place of employment. Again, assumptions of what needs to happen in the classroom due to the Orthodox Jewish affiliation seemed to moderate teachers' decision-making, even though there was no agreed upon policy or explicit approach within the schools. Making gender discourses more apparent is linked to greater dialogue. Through discussion and openness to the topic, teachers may begin to question their assumptions and gain a better understanding of the schools' expectations and responsibilities.

Furthermore, it is essential to consider not only the importance of talking about gender but analyzing teachers' language related to gender. For example, teachers' speech often reflected stereotypical gender norms that supported hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity. As such, Aliza described how teachers may tell girls they look "pretty" while asking boys what they did over the weekend, "like did you watch a Cubs game?" Aliza revealed: "there are stereotypes that people tend to do. I don't think it's intentional. I think it's just normal." This counters teachers' beliefs about individual differences and their perception that gender differentiation occurs "naturally" without their encouragement or interference. Contradictory representations of themselves as open to gender exploration, challenging norms, and encouraging

individual freedoms were countered by language that perpetuates values about masculinity and femininity. For example, Dena shared that boys are "too manly" and as such "would never step foot in the housekeeping area" while simultaneously asserting, "everybody is invited to play any time, any place." Thus, teachers' language revealed ideas about gender as an opposing binary which mitigates their perception that children experience an open and inclusive classroom environment.

It was also noticeable that teachers often engaged in male-dominant speech across contexts, such as costumes for "everyone," such as "fireman" and "policeman" or that "everybody" (referring to just boys) are "wearing tzitzit." The use of this type of language represents gender discourses in their classrooms that suggest to children that girls are questionably part of the group. If boys and girls hear that a police officer costume, representative of the profession and behaviors associated with the job, are only relevant for a "man," whether or not they are presented as for "everyone," provides information to children about what is considered masculine and what is considered feminine. Statements like this potentially limit children's future interests, careers, and self-understandings. Similarly, the "Abba goes to shul" discourse counters the notion that prayer is important for all children upheld in the davening experience. These types of contradictory experiences often allow for discourses that promote boys as powerful leaders and girls as passive observers, even when teachers promote "the classroom is for everyone."

Practical Applications: Recommendations for Early Childhood Education

Nina engaged in change in her classroom based on her own discomfort with gendered Shabbat party roles. As such, she modified her classroom practice while considering the potential

pushback and responsibility within an Orthodox Jewish school, revealing the depth of cultural demands on teachers' classroom practice. Cara, through discussing Shabbat party during the interview, revealed the problem with promoting Shabbat observance within the idealized family as it did not relate to all the children in her class. A few teachers explicitly discussed their intentional practices to equalize the number of jobs during Shabbat party or recognized some messages of inequality and powerlessness to girls about ritual observance. These conversations not only challenged the monolithic view of Orthodoxy and its relationship to the classroom but suggest the potential to make change and engage in important and controversial dialogue.

The potential for critical reflection was already emerging. Some teachers revealed a consciousness about gender in their classrooms and intentionally have challenged "rigid forms of gender" (like Warin & Adriany, 2012, p. 21). However, specific recommendations need to be addressed concerning intentional shifts in gender consciousness and critical reflective practice. One participant sought me out many months after the interview to share with me that she now thinks about gender often before she responds to situations within the classroom and that she appreciated the experience. In this way, becoming aware of gender beliefs is not just a mental exercise but the groundwork for transforming teaching practices which may not be conceived as antithetical to education within Orthodoxy.

While this was a small-scale, exploratory study with a sample size of only 15 participants that utilized a semi-structured interview as the sole data collection tool, the above implications suggest the importance of teachers engaging in critical self-reflection and for Orthodox Jewish schools to support teachers' journey to greater gender awareness. In order to institute change, it is important to consider different levels of recommendations. Gorsetman and Sztokman (2013)

assert the importance of addressing "immediate environments," as well as working towards

"systemic change" within school culture (p. 274).

Recommendations for Pre-Service Teachers and Teacher Educators

As teachers revealed the lack of dialogue in their schools and described conflicting

beliefs and perceptions, this study suggests the importance for greater critical self-reflection

skills, as described in the literature related to teacher training. Pre-service teacher education

rarely incorporates critical reflection of gender as foundational work in early childhood

education. As such intentionally addressing gender is often neglected as teachers are inundated

with demands and "immediacy of classroom management" (Gosselin, 2007, p. 52). This was

similarly seen in a few participants' remarks that revealed their hesitancy to implement change or

challenge gender norms due to classroom "management" and communal demands. Training

future teachers to critically examine gender and its place in their future roles within the

classroom is essential. Therefore, Gosselin (2007) recommends that pre-service teachers become

better prepared to engage in "critical reflective skills" to help create a "habit of mind" for

recognizing and analyzing gender discourses in the classroom (p. 53).

This endeavor cannot only be an exploration of how teachers personally feel about boys

and girls. The "critical" aspect of reflection supports that power and gender hierarchies that often

regulate interactions must be actively explored (Brookfield, 1995, as cited by Gosselin, 2007;

Blaise 2005). This is similar to MacNaughton's (2005) discussion on how "inserting the critical"

into reflective practice "links education to a wider social project to create social justice" (p. 7). In

this way, pre-service teachers are not just being trained to consider the implications of their

beliefs, but that instituting change is tied to undoing "inequitable power relations in the

classroom" (p. 7). Training teachers to recognize and examine dominant ideologies about child-centeredness and gender is necessary for ultimate gender equality.

Hogan (2014) proposes specifically educating student teachers about the lens of feminist poststructuralism. By instilling an understanding of gender through a feminist post structural lens, Robinson and Diaz (2006) assert that teachers were better able to reconsider their perceptions of gender within the early childhood classroom. As such, teachers were better equipped to reconsider classroom practice and decision-making (as cited by Hogan, 2014). This was supported through encouraging teachers to consider the multiple ways in which they perform gender. As detailed in the implications above, teachers in this study revealed their multiple performances of femininity depending on context. According to Robinson and Diaz (2006), pre-service teachers should be supported through their individual investigations of how they "negotiate and construct their own identities, to challenge normalizing discourses that operate on micro and macro levels in their lives" (as cited by Hogan, 2012, p. 2). Furthermore, as teachers in early childhood have the potential to create the classroom as "its own world" challenging dominant gender discourses, teacher educators should not shy away from the potentially uncomfortable or "controversial" exploration of gender. Instead, they should "encourage students to get uncomfortable with their thinking" (Blaise & Andrew, 2005, as cited by Hogan, 2012, p. 2).

Recommendations for Teachers in Orthodox Jewish Early Childhood Programs

While instilling critical self-reflection skills in per-service teachers is highly important for encouraging a cultural shift in child development discourses, it is essential to consider that within the Orthodox Jewish educational context, many teachers do not have official or traditional

educational backgrounds in early childhood education. In this study, of the 15 participants, seven

of them had an educational background in early childhood, such as early childhood certificates,

bachelor's degrees in early childhood (one in progress), and master's degrees in early childhood,

with differing specialties and focuses. Therefore, due to teachers' diverse backgrounds that most

likely do not include traditional early childhood training, it is imperative to focus the discussion

of the above implications for a teaching staff already working in Orthodox Jewish schools. The

above recommendations of encouraging critical reflection and exploration of self-

understandings, directly relevant to the main implications of this study, are necessary to

implement within professional development opportunities for current teachers.

Blaise (2005) and Gorsetman and Sztokman (2013) assert that it is "not enough" for

teachers to identify gender expectations and discourses in their classrooms or engage in gender

awareness as it is only the foundation to implement change. As such, Vera fervently challenged a

young child who proclaimed that girls do not play basketball. While teachers in this study often

promoted independent problem-solving, teachers must also consider the importance of

intervening and actively challenging gender discourses and allowing children to do the same

(MacNaughton, 2000; Blaise, 2005). For example, Tamar described having a "Super Hero and

Princess Day," but as a girl challenged the assumption that girls needed to be princesses and a

boy wanted to explore being a prince and wearing a crown, she described challenging her own

thinking about the experience.

Tamar reconsidered this activity revealing how she now wears both types of costumes

and renamed the day to encourage children to feel more open to choosing. She described an

awareness of her role in promoting gender stereotypes and that she could change by modifying

her decisions in the classroom. This was similar to the how Warin and Adriany (2015) discuss

Marsh's (2010) work with a teacher who incorporated Batman/Batwoman experiences in the

class. However, greater gender consciousness may lead Tamar to consider why she instituted this

practice in the first place and whether or not changing the name truly counters and challenges

notions of heteronormativity.

One way to build awareness and critical self-reflection is to engage in deliberate and

systemic observations and journaling of gender experiences and discourses in the classroom,

including children's gender talk. Through regular and intentional focus on gender discourses in

the classroom, teachers will potentially gain a greater gender consciousness. This ongoing

approach, thus, could be a useful tool for Tamar, for example. Furthermore, many teachers in this

study shared their perception that children do not engage in discussions related to gender. One

teacher said that she was not sure of the details about how girls performed the mommy role. She

suggested that since it was so "typical" she did not even notice. In this way paying attention to

these specific classroom experiences makes the gender discourses and beliefs visible which in

turn can be challenged. Furthermore, teachers should pay special attention to their responses to

children. In this way, Blaise (2005) suggests that teachers carefully observe their own gendered,

sexist, or male-dominant language in their classrooms and the power dynamics within the

relationship.

Along with conducting intentional observations, taking an account of materials in the

classroom is important to making change. Paying greater attention to images, texts, displays, and

materials could encourage or discourage gender exploration in the classroom. For example, Ora

shared how important it was for boys and girls to view themselves in pictures near different play

centers. Thus, she has pictures of girls playing with blocks and shared that the block area is a
more gender-neutral place in the classroom than other teachers described. She was the only
teacher that described the importance of children seeing their gender equally represented in
classroom materials as important within gender construction and gender equality in the
classroom.

This critical self-reflection and bringing gender to one's consciousness should influence
not just immediate or case-by-case experiences but should be utilized as an overarching teaching
philosophy guiding practice (MacNaughton, 2000; Blaise, 2005; Hogan, 2012; Warin &
Adriany, 2015). All of these approaches described above uphold Warin and Adriany's (2015)
assertion that early childhood educators can "model a flexible approach to the performance of
gender" that challenges expectations for boys and girls (p. 2). Thus, Warin and Adriany (2015)
utilize the term "pedagogy" to describe these practices as it includes considerations for both
educators and their teaching. This pedagogical shift is described as gender flexible teaching. To
engage in gender flexible pedagogy, teachers need to intentionally challenge the ways in which
heteronormativity and gender stereotypical norms are embedded within early childhood practice.

Ideally, utilizing this type of critical self-reflection and a feminist post structural lens is
essential for teachers within Jewish ritual practices and discourses, as well. For instance, many
teachers did not recognize inequality underlying the unequal number of jobs during the Shabbat
party. Some participants noticed this but had yet to figure out a solution. Though religious beliefs
and values tend to reaffirm the gender as fixed, this pedagogical shift is possible and highly
important within the Jewish classroom context. Greenberg and Dolgin (2005) claim that gender
equality within Jewish life "ought to mean equal dignity rather than identicalness" (p. i.). While

teachers viewed rituals in the classroom as representative of home lives and the specialness of gender differences given by God, discourses that reveal inequality, passivity, or control potentially undermine equal dignity. For example, including a boys' bracha and a girls' bracha as "our special brachas" may be seen as promoting an "equal" experience during tefillah, as boys and girls each have something meaningful to do. However, what are the meanings and discourses within this practice? Are they experienced as equal? Are there any underlying notions of masculinity, femininity, and Jewish practice that circulate during this experience? Like Gorsetman and Sztokman (2013) assert, gender consciousness within Orthodox Jewish education is upheld through the idea that all people are created by God which promotes the need for equality. This can be upheld through greater intentionality, which is best supported via dialogue ongoing and critical self-reflection.

Recommendations for School-Wide Support

Critical reflective practice and considering the benefits of gender flexible pedagogy are important for rethinking gender in the classroom and creating change. However, implementing these practices to promote gender consciousness as individual teachers or classrooms only perpetuates the concern that Orthodox Jewish schools function via assumptions and uncertain boundaries, discussed by teachers in the study. In other words, these practices cannot be solely explored via the discretion of individual teachers. Gorsetman and Sztokman (2013) recognize how the entire school community plays a role in implementing change and the central role of the leadership in supporting teachers' journey to greater gender consciousness. Through the encouragement and leadership of educators and administrators to intentionally rethink gender as a school, cultural and adaptive change are more likely to transcend over time. In addition to

encouraging this type of work within classrooms, teachers should engage in joint reflective practice to address inconsistencies within practice and varying perspectives about halakha and ritual practices in the classroom (Gorsetman & Sztokman, 2013). Furthermore, schools should consider the importance of collaborative work to improve practice, since teachers described assumptions about their responsibilities and "free reign," such as engaging in action research (MacNaughton & Hughes, 2008; Mertler, 2017).

Throughout the study, teachers maintained the importance of both upholding standards and their own professional and personal freedom to make choices; the many inconsistent assumptions about expectations and school rules were apparent. Teachers revealed opposing notions as to what is expected in the school. Some teachers, for example, shared that boys wearing dresses was appropriate in play and others insisted it countered communal expectations and was therefore deemed as inappropriate for the teacher to allow. Sarah described how she would go straight to her supervisor to best inform her decision, while others shared that supporting this type of play is perfectly normal in the early childhood classroom. These competing perspectives were similarly prevalent within the Jewish ritual context. While Shabbat parties all had Abba making Kiddush and Ima lighting candles, the number of jobs and other roles differed, as some teachers purposefully equalized the number of jobs, while others gave the Abba more jobs, as it is "just the way it is." However, even within these differences, some amount of heteronormativity (all classrooms had a Shabbat Ima and Abba) shaped the Shabbat party experience. By implementing greater reflective dialogue, teachers would gain a clearer perspective of others' classroom practice and a better understanding of the school's goals, mission and vision.

While this study asserted that its goal was not to undermine halakha, it is important for schools to engage in professional development related to the understanding of Jewish law (Gorsetman & Sztokman, 2013). It is necessary to examine and investigate the role of halakha in classroom practice. Teachers shared many approaches as to their potential support or disapproval of children exploring gendered ritual roles. Some teachers relied on their belief that these differences are "in the Torah" or "halakhic" or expressed an uncertain understanding of halakha's position concerning differentiated roles. Other teachers specifically shared, particularly related to the Shabbat experience, that there is some flexibility and fluidity in the gendered roles and family structures. Thus, in promoting the need for professional development of teachers to share and explore their perspectives, it is important to include an honest and open discussion of religious beliefs, halakha, and Jewish texts. Similarly, Gorsetman and Sztokman (2013) suggest the importance of teachers studying sources that provide a more comprehensive background concerning women and ritual experience and engage in conversations openly investigating the gender implications in rituals in the classroom. Furthermore, it is important for teachers to continuously reflect on their goals of Jewish ritual experiences for children in order to reevaluate the assumed need to incorporate gendered roles. By reflecting on the broader meanings of the experiences, teachers may be able to think differently about how to create meaningful Jewish experiences that deemphasize gender role and emphasize educating in the divine image, instead.

Halakhic and Jewish inquiry is one type of investigation important for rethinking gender and implementing change; action research which encourages small scale research studies in schools is another. Action research is a powerful tool that begins with "hopes, dreams, and desires" (MacNaughton & Hughes, 2008, p. 5). In this way, it highlights how making change has

to come from the teachers. Thus, asking teachers to investigate gender from the "top-down" as a request from the leadership undermines how action research empowers teachers. Hopefully, through greater reflection and dialogue the recognition that there is room for transformation, as many of these participants alluded to, will allow for teachers to want to explore gender in this way. Action research differs from other educational research since it necessitates collaboration, the ability to "test" out ideas, and a "critical analysis" of practice (Mertler, 2017, p. 18). Furthermore, action research upholds that "equal and fair educational opportunities are necessary for children" (p. 23). As such, it can be used as a tool for promoting social justice and gender equity.

MacNaughton (2000) describes having engaged in action research to explore gender in the early childhood context for social change within schools. One of the reasons for this choice was that "discourses and practices become transparent/visible when they are held up for rethinking" (MacNaughton, 2000, as cited by MacNaughton & Hughes, 2008, p. 52). Furthermore, MacNaughton (2000) asserts that conducting action research revealed "moments of critical awareness" as well as contradictions within "early childhood pedagogies" that allow for or mitigate gender equitable experiences (as cited by MacNaughton & Hughes, 2008, p. 52). As such, groups of teachers could engage in action research planning and ongoing cycles to reveal gender discourses and how multiple vales about early childhood education within teachers' beliefs and practices inhibit or promote gender flexible pedagogies in their classrooms and schools to best inform their practice.

Limitations of the Study and Future Research

This study included 15 teachers from two coeducational, Orthodox Jewish early childhood programs. While the participants interviewed were from two different schools, many of these teachers worked in one early childhood program. This allowed for a more connected, interrelated community of teachers but also potentially limited access to the perspectives of other teachers. Ideally, I hoped to interview teachers from more Orthodox Jewish early childhood programs, as six schools were originally contacted about the study with directors from four schools signing a letter of cooperation. Furthermore, since the research questions focused on beliefs related to both boys and girls and teachers' perceptions of their roles in the classroom, teachers working in gender-segregated schools were excluded, as the researcher only sought out participants in coeducational programs. Gender-segregated schools are common within Orthodox Jewish educational settings and philosophies, particularly in more religiously conservative communities. This exclusion limited my access to viewpoints of teachers working in different Orthodox Jewish schools.

I conducted one face-to-face interview with each study participant, as the interview was chosen as the main data collection tool. Many teachers throughout the interviews discussed how they had not thought about gender that explicitly in their classrooms, particularly related to how teachers would potentially react if children questioned their gendered role assignments in Jewish rituals in the classroom. Teachers expressed that it was challenging to recall conversations related to gender in their classroom in the moment of the interview or had trouble recalling specific gender-related behaviors and activities in the classroom. Conducting multiple interviews throughout the school year would have allowed the teachers more time and opportunities to

reflect on their beliefs and practices. Furthermore, multiple interviews would have allowed more time to explore teachers' beliefs, and potentially dividing interviews based on "secular" and "Jewish" contexts would have been helpful. Multiple interviews would potentially have encouraged teachers to be more open, feel safe sharing responses honestly with the researcher, and allow for more time to engage in self-reflection.

The choice of the interview as the data collection tool promoted the importance of dialogue and demystifying the topic as controversial. However, making decisions as to how to talk about gender was complicated. As a researcher, I continuously considered how the way I asked questions either hinted at the best responses or limited teachers to discuss gender in specific ways. While I highlighted how teachers often discussed gender as opposing categories, I also asked teachers to tell me about the experience of being a boy and girl in the school. This potentially prompted teachers to discuss them as opposing or separate categories with clearly differentiated interests, behaviors, and abilities. I also asked them to consider conversations in their classroom or hypothetical scenarios without considering that often these answers may best be answered with more time to reflect. As such, incorporating teachers' journaling and their own observations may have been a beneficial tool for collecting additional or clarifying data.

The explicitly stated goal of the study was to understand teachers' perceptions. In other words, gaining access to how teachers thought about their beliefs about gender and how teachers understood their role in the classroom vis-à-vis gender was important to this study. This approach is supported by the notion that teachers' personal beliefs influence their classroom practice (Benz, Pfeiffer, & Newman, 1981, Bledsoe, 1983, Sadker & Sadker, 1994, as cited by Cahill & Adams, 1997; Smith & Niemi, 2007) and that little research exists concerning teachers

themselves, as much of the research focuses on classroom practice or comparing beliefs to

practice, which reveals a complicated relationship (Basturkmen, Loewen, & Ellis, 2004; Lee,

2008; Cheung, 2012). However, focusing on teachers' perceptions limited the scope of the role

of teachers' beliefs in their classrooms and the effects on the gender discourses and experiences

of the children in the class. Conducting observations to gain more information about how

children navigate gender discourses in the classroom and construct gender, while also evaluating

the teachers' role in the process is the suggested next step in the process and the main

recommendation for future research.

Gorsetman and Sztokman (2013) suggest that some aspects of Orthodox Jewish gender

expectations and roles are potentially present in non-Orthodox or pluralistic/multi-

denominational educational settings, as well. Choosing to focus on Orthodox Jewish schools was

a choice by the researcher to focus on a shared cultural community. However, it is important for

future research to be conducted concerning gender beliefs of teachers in other Jewish schools.

While many other denominational groups are more flexible about both men and women

performing Jewish rituals in the synagogue, the intersection of religiously shaped gender

information and secular notions of masculinity and femininity are also necessary to investigate.

As teachers in this study from the two participating schools discussed their beliefs and

perceptions of the enactment of these beliefs in their classrooms, there were often differing views

and perceptions of teachers within the same school and teaching teams. Delving deeper into

school culture and relationships of teachers within a single school could provide more

information about gender experiences and beliefs in the classroom and school community.

Therefore, another recommendation for future research is to engage in case studies of a single

schools' approach to gender, including teachers' beliefs, conversations about gender in the school, and documentation related to gender.

Conclusion

Vera, a new assistant teacher with the least amount of teaching experience in the study, disclosed her original surprise with the inclusion of the boys' bracha and girls' bracha within the tefillah time in the early childhood classroom. Her surprise was not due to her inexperience with these brachot; as openly and proudly identifying as Orthodox, she supported gender roles within Jewish ritual practice. Instead, it signified that including these blessings is not compulsory or intrinsically tied to Orthodox Jewish early childhood education as other teachers maintained. Vera shared that she assumed prayer for young children would involve a more "communal" approach, as similar to the chazzan/chazzanit modification. She did not view this comment as challenging halakha or Orthodoxy. Rather, it reveals the potential that conscious and critical examinations of gender beliefs and gender discourses in the classroom do not undermine values of Orthodox Judaism. A "communal" approach suggests that young children, both boys and girls, continuously engaging in identity construction deserve a space that is its "own world" in which equality is viewed as Godly.

Participants generally described gender differentiation as inevitable, expressed through children's natural interests and reinforced through religiously shaped notions of gender. However, their vision of the classroom as an inclusive space for everyone counters their perception of the fixed nature of the male-female binary. The promotion of heteronormativity through boundaries within play and ritual activities in the classroom varied due to conflicting values, a lack of dialogue, and uncertain school policies. Critical self-reflection about gender

beliefs and theories of gender construction and identities may inspire teachers to rethink not only gender in their classrooms but their perceptions of children and teachers in these interactions and experiences.

Ora shared, at the end of her interview that "I try to be conscious of it [gender equality] both personally and for the children that I am educating...and influencing. So, it's actually something that is on my mind and I'm not perfect but I do try...to inject gender freedom." She expresses that thinking about gender and considering gender equity and flexibility as part of classroom practice is not off limits for Orthodox Jewish educators; alternatively, it is necessary when working with young children and that the potential to continue this dialogue and engage in gender flexible pedagogy is already emerging within the Orthodox Jewish educational consciousness.

.

APPENDIX A

RECRUITMENT FLYER

Recruitment Flyer

I hope you are doing well. I want to inform you about a research study I am conducting at Loyola University Chicago and the Erikson Institute for my doctorate dissertation since you are a teacher at an Orthodox Jewish co-educational early childhood program. The purpose of this study is to explore the beliefs of teachers in Orthodox Jewish preschools concerning appropriate gender roles and behaviors of boys and girls and the development of these beliefs over time.

The study involves a one-time 1- 1 ½ hour interview. The interview will be audio-recorded. Safeguards will be taken to maintain as much confidentiality as possible. If you are interested, I would like to set up a time and location to interview you that are convenient for you. You will receive a consent form to sign prior to beginning the interview. No identifying factors of the teachers or the school will be included in my dissertation. Whether or not you choose to participate will not be shared with the director of the school.

I know that you are very busy. Please do not feel any pressure to participate. If you are interested, I truly appreciate your willingness to take time from your busy schedule to share your beliefs and experiences about gender roles with me.

As a token of appreciation for participating, you will receive 10 dollars prior to the interview once informed consent has been provided.

Thank you for considering participating in this study. Please let me know if you are interested.

Thank you,

Ilana Dvorin Friedman
847-380-0509
ifriedman@luc.edu
I.Friedman@erikson.edu

APPENDIX B

EMAIL TO DIRECTIORS

Email to Directors

Dear (Director's name),

Thank you so much for distributing the recruitment flyer to lead teachers at in your early childhood programs concerning my study on gender role beliefs of teachers in Orthodox Jewish preschools. I have appreciated their interest and contributions to this study. At this point I am looking to expand my study to include more participants. At your earliest convenience, could you please send the attached recruitment flyer to assistant teachers who have a bachelor's degree in your early childhood program?

I know that you are very busy. I truly appreciate your willingness to take time from your schedule and distribute this recruitment flyer.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

With much appreciation,

Ilana Dvorin Friedman, PhD Candidate
847-380-0509
ifriedman@luc.edu
I.Friedman@erikson.edu

APPENDIX C

EMAIL TO TEACHERS

Email to Teachers

Dear (Teacher's name),

I hope you are doing well. I am contacting you about a study I am conducting at Loyola University Chicago and the Erikson Institute for my doctoral dissertation entitled Gender Role Beliefs of Teachers in Orthodox Jewish Early Childhood Programs. The purpose of this study is to explore the beliefs of teachers in Orthodox Jewish preschools concerning appropriate gender roles and behaviors of boys and girls and the development of these beliefs over time.

The study involves a one-time 1- 1 ½ hour interview of teachers in classrooms with children ages three to five. The interview will be audio-recorded. Safeguards will be taken to maintain as much confidentiality as possible. As a token of appreciation for participating, teachers will receive 10 dollars prior to the interview once informed consent has been provided.

As a teacher in an Orthodox Jewish early childhood program, I thought you might be interested in participating. I know that you are very busy. I truly appreciate your willingness to consider participating in this research study. Please let me know if you have any questions. If you are interested, please let me know and we can schedule an interview at a time and place that work best for you.

Thank you very much.

With much appreciation,

Ilana Dvorin Friedman, PhD Candidate
847-380-0509
ifriedman@luc.edu
I.Friedman@erikson.edu

APPENDIX D

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Project Title: Gender Role Beliefs of Teachers in Orthodox Jewish Early Childhood Programs
Researcher(s): Ilana Dvorin Friedman
Dissertation Committee: Kate Phillippo (Chair, kphillippo@luc.edu, (312)-915-6910)
                            Aisha Ray
                            Luisiana Melendez

Introduction:
You are being asked to take part in a research study being conducted by Ilana Dvorin Friedman for her dissertation studies through the Department of the Graduate School at Loyola University Chicago and the Erikson Institute.

You are being asked to participate because you are a teacher in an Orthodox Jewish co-educational early childhood program with children ages 3-5 years old.

Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before deciding whether to participate in the study, as your participation is voluntary.

Purpose:
The purpose of this study is to explore gender role beliefs of teachers in Orthodox Jewish early childhood programs, gender discourses in the classroom, and the development of these beliefs over time.

Procedures:
If you agree to be in the study, you will be asked to participate in one face-to-face audio-recorded interview, approximately 1 – 1 ½ hours in length. The interview will take place at a time and in a setting of your choice. The interview will include questions about your experiences as a teacher, your typical day in your classroom (including curriculum and school culture), your observations of boys and girls in your classroom, the involvement and participation of boys and girls in Jewish activities in your classroom, and your story about how you came to have your gender role beliefs.

Risks/Benefits:
There are few anticipated risks in this study. There are no foreseeable risks involved in participating in this research study beyond those experienced in everyday life.

You are welcome to skip any question that makes you uncomfortable or that you wish not to answer.

You may find it beneficial to reflect on your experiences related to gender role beliefs and classroom practice and contribute to the field of education.

Compensation:
Each participant will receive 10 dollars as a token of appreciation which will be awarded prior to the interview once informed consent has been provided.

Confidentiality:

- Information gathered will be kept confidential. Electronic data will be stored in password-protected files and paper copies of data/notes will be kept in a locked drawer in the researcher's desk.
- Your name will not be used on any data sources. Names will be replaced with a numerical code. The document that links the numerical codes to the participants' names will be kept on a password-protected file.
- Audio recordings of interviews will not contain the participants' names. Digital files of these interviews will be kept in a password-protected file only accessible by the researcher. The audio-recordings will be destroyed after transcription of the data.
- After a maximum of 5 years the electronic data will be deleted and paper data will be shredded.

Voluntary Participation:
Participation in this study is voluntary. If you do not want to be in this study, you do not have to participate. Even if you decide to participate, you are free not to answer any question or to withdraw from participation at any time without penalty. Participation in this study, or declining to participate in the study, will not alter future and current relationships between you and the researcher.

Contacts and Questions:
If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Loyola University Office of Research Services at (773)-508- 2689.

If you have questions about this research study, please feel free to contact the researcher, Ilana Dvorin Friedman at (847)-380-0509 or I.Friedman@erikson.edu.

Optional Procedures:
I agree to be contacted to review a summary of my interview transcript.
_____yes   _____no

If yes, please provide a non-work email address to receive a copy of the transcript:

_____

Statement of Consent:
Your signature below indicates that you have read the information provided above, have had an opportunity to ask questions, and agree to participate in this research study. You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

_____   _____

Participant's Signature   *Date*

_____   _____

Researcher's Signature   *Date*

I agree to have my interview audio-recorded   no ☐   yes ☐

APPENDIX E

MEMBER CHECKING EMAIL

Member Checking Email

Thank you so much for participating in my research study. It was a pleasure to meet you!

Here is a summary of the interview transcript. Please let me know if you think the summary

reflects your ideas, feelings, and experiences concerning gender role beliefs as discussed in the

interview. If there is anything you would like to change or add, let me know.

Thank you,

Ilana Dvorin Friedman
847-380-0509
ifriedman@luc.edu
I.Friedman@erikson.edu

APPENDIX F

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Interview Protocol

"Thank you so much for participating in this study. I know you are very busy, and I appreciate that you have agreed to participate. I just want to remind you that your participation is voluntary. You are free to withdraw at any time without penalty. You are welcome to skip any questions that make you uncomfortable or you wish not to answer. Please do not use your real name throughout the interview; you can choose a pseudonym. Please do not use the real names of any family members or institutions during the interview."

"First, I want to ask you some questions about yourself."

1. Tell me what led you to a career in teaching

2. Tell me how you came to work here.

3. How many years have you been a lead teacher at this school?

4. Can you tell me about other teaching positions, lead, assistant or otherwise, that you held before this position?

5. Can you tell me about your education?

"Now I am going to ask you questions about your school and your classroom."

1. Tell me about a typical day in your classroom.

2. Tell me about yourself as a teacher.

3. Can you tell me about your curriculum?

   - What is your role in creating curriculum?

4. Tell me about the school where you work.

   - Can you tell me about the school's religious affiliation?

   - Does the school's religious affiliation matter to you?

- What have you noticed about the experience of being a boy or the experience of being a girl in your school?

- How do you feel about this?

5. What have you noticed in your classroom about boys and girls?

- Any differences in their behaviors or interests?

- Are there conversations about gender that you recall?

6. Can you take me on a tour (virtual tour) of the places in your classroom where girls tend to play? What about boys?

- How would a boy in your classroom react if a girl wanted to play in a boy dominant area?

- How would a girl in your classroom react if a boy wanted to play in a girl dominant area?

- How would you respond in these situations?

"I want to ask you a few questions about some Jewish activities that you might include in your curriculum."

1. Do you have a Shabbat party? If so, tell me about it.

- Are there special jobs for girls during this time?

- Are there special jobs for boys during this time?

- Have boys or girls ever questioned their jobs?

- How would you respond if a girl or boy questioned their Shabbat party jobs?

2. Do you have morning davening during circle time? If so, tell me about it.

- Who leads the prayers?

- Are there certain prayers that only girls say?

- Are there certain prayers that only boys say?

- Have girls ever tried to participate in the boys' prayers or jobs?

- Have boys ever tried to participate in the girls' prayers or jobs?

- How did/would you respond to that?

"I am interested in how people come to have their beliefs."

1. Tell me your story about how came to have the beliefs you have.

Questions at the end, if unanswered…

- Are you married?

- Do you have children?

- How old are your children/gender of your children?

- If you don't mind answering, how old are you?

APPENDIX G

LIST OF CODES

LIST OF CODES

Setting the Stage (Chapter 4)

"Student-Driven"

"Experiential learning"   "Child-centered"

"Observe and watch

"Problem- Solve"

"Social Skills"   "Facilitate Independence within a Community"

"Find themselves"

"Be together"

"Children all learn differently"

"Open to different teachers"

"Free reign"   "Teachers' Perceived Autonomy"

"Up to the teachers"

"Jewish holidays"

"instill…Orthodox Judaism"

"Mitzvah"   Jewish Calendar and Values: Goal and Passion

"Kindness"

"passion"

Secular Context (Chapter 4)

"Innate"

"Inbred"   Natural, biologically based gender differences

"Natural"

"What society…expects"

"Subliminally"   Learned, socialized gender differences

"TV", families

Boys as "Physical" "Wild"

Girls as "Nurturing" "Catty"   Stereotypical Expectations, relating to Hegemonic

"Stereotypical"   Masculinity and Emphasized Femininity

 "Just gender roles"

"Girly", "Boyish", "Fireman"

"Girls' Activities", "Boys' Activities"   Gender-Segregated Play/ Gendered Language

"Balance", "Opposites"

"Come in this way"

"Just happens"   "Natural" Gender Divide Happens on its Own

"Not from us"

"Exceptions"

"All different"   "All Children are Different", Counter Discourse

Dependence on "type of child"

"Each year is different

"Crossover"

"Mixing"   "The Classroom is for Everyone"

"Gender neutral"

"I don't define their roles"

"Conscious"   Encouragement and Intentionality

Classroom arrangement/management

"We are all friends"

"Level of acceptance"

Lack of acceptance, perceived intentions   Children as Inclusive, some contradictions

Girls are "cliquey"

Boys dominate

No exclusion based on gender

"back on them", "we are all friends"

"it doesn't matter if a boy or girl", exception

No "need to" talk about gender

Promote Inclusion, Lack of Gender Talk

"Parenting" as "equal"

Multiple kids "Roles mix"

Boys "feel free" to play with dolls

Parental Role Fluidity

Girls play "typical" mommy

Boys play house but too "manly"

"being a guy about it"

Heteronormativity Regulates Playing House

"Different kind of families"

"Be whatever you want" here

"I'm not their parent", not teachers' "responsibility"

Controversial to promote homosexuality

"Too complicated" in religious institution

"Just play"

Role-Playing within Heterosexual Limits

"That One Girl" just "Tomboy", love that

"That One Boy"

"It doesn't matter", "just playing"

"Watchfulness"   Homophobia and Role of Culture

"We don't judge here"

Personal discomfort

Parents' Homophobia

"Age range makes a difference"

Gender exclusion is "sad"   Age Matters

Inevitable divide

Divide encouraged by parents

Jewish Ritual Context (Chapter 5)

Shabbat

Unquestioned Roles

"Typical Mother"

"Typical Father"

"Ima lights candles"   Heteronormativity through Shabbat Observance

"Abba makes Kiddush"

"The way it is at home", "Makes sense"

HaMotzie "obviously male"

Moms might make HaMotzie   HaMotzie is Fluid?

Is it a "male thing"

"Going to Shul", "Abba goes to shul"

"inequity of them"   "Shul is for boys": Leadership and Control

"he can bring who he wants"

"Shul for everyone", exceptions

Boys had more jobs, active

Children/teachers "do not notice"

Some girls notice   Unequal Number of Jobs

Another job for girl, outside of rituals

"So Young", "I wouldn't care"

No switching, do it together   Varied Hypothetical Responses within Norm

This is the "way it is"

"I don't think that defines them"

"Women in the household"

"Singles moms"   Challenging Shabbat Party Roles

"too focused on role"

Countering values about young children

Change Shabbat Party

Davening

"chazzan/chazzanit"

"own world"

"classroom jobs" v. connections to shul life   Classroom Tefillah is "Own World"

Different from "normal" Orthodox practice

"Everyone leads davening", counter "Abba goes to shul"

"Boys' bracha"

"Girls' bracha"

"Morah, am I a girl"   Socialize Role Differentiation

"Joke"

"Girls verbal"

"Boys pull tzitzit" "distracted"

"Tzitzit" is a "Boy Thing"

"God-given"

Encourage boys   "Tzitzit" Innately for Boys, Jewish Masculinity

Not all boys/fathers wear tzitzit

Don't force "so young"

Uncertain Parameters

"Girls' Bracha" for "Chinuch", "Innate"

"Give them something to do"

"Stand there look pretty"   "Girls' Bracha": Passivity v. Empowerment

"Everyone wears tzitzit", passive observer

"Gender pride"

"Put it on the family", Parents

"Boys wear tzitzit" is rigid   Cannot challenge gendered brachot

"A lot of brachas we could be saying"

"tzitzit" in dress-up

"tallit" in dress-up   Acceptable within Play

Role-play male roles

REFERENCE LIST

Acker, S. (1988). Teachers, gender, and resistance. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, *9*(3), 307-322.

Aina, O. E. & Cameron, A. P. (2011). Why does gender matter? Counteracting stereotypes with young children. *Dimensions of Early Childhood*, *39(*3), 11-19.

Albert, A. A. & Porter, J. R. (1988). Children's gender-role stereotypes: A sociological investigation of psychological models. *Sociological Forum*, *3*(2), 184-210.

Änggård, E. (2005). Barbie princesses and dinosaur and dragons: Narration as a way of doing gender. *Gender and Education*, *17*(5), 539-553.

Bajaj, M. (2009). Un/doing gender? A case study of school policy and practice in Zambia. *International Review of Education*, *55*, 483-502.

Basturkmen, H., Loewen, S., & Ellis, R. (2004). Teachers' stated beliefs about incidental focus on form and their classroom practices. *Applied Linguistics*, *25*(2), 243-272.

Bandura, A. (1986). *Social foundations of thought and action: A social cognitive theory*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Bem, S. L. (1983). Gender schema theory and its implications for child development: raising gender-aschematic children in a gender schematic society. *Signs*, *8*(4), 598-616.

Berger, R. (2015). Now I see it, now I don't: researcher's position and reflexivity in qualitative research. *Qualitative Research*, *15*(2), 219-234.

Bhana, D. (2009). "Boys will be boys": What do early childhood teachers have to do with it? *Educational Review*, *61*(3), 327-339.

Blaise, M. (2005). *Playing it straight: Uncovering gender discourse in the early childhood classroom*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Blaise, M. and Taylor, A. (2012). Using queer theory to rethinking gender equity in early childhood education. *Young Children*, *67*(1), 88-96.

Blakemore, J.E.O. & Russ, L.S. (1997). *Preschool children's attitudes about deviations from gender-role behaviors*. Presented at Society for Research in Child Development.

Borg, M. (2001). Teachers' beliefs. *English Language Teachers Journal*, *55*(2), 186-188.

Butler, J. (1988). Performative acts and gender constitution: An easy in phenomenology and feminist theory. *Theatre Journal*, *40*(4), 519-531.

Butler, J. (1990). *Gender trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Cahill, B., & Adams, E. (1997). An exploratory study of early childhood teachers' attitudes toward gender roles. *Sex Roles*, *36*, 517-529.

Cheung, R.H.P (2012). Teaching for creativity: Examining the beliefs of early childhood teachers and their influence on teaching practices. *Australian Journal of Early Childhood*, *37*(3), 43-51.

Chick, K.A., Heilman-Houser, R.A., & Hunter, M.W. (2002). The impact of child care on gender role development and gender stereotypes. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, *29*(3), 149-154.

Connell, R. (1987). *Gender and power: Society, the person, and sexual politics.* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Connell, R., & Messerschmidt, J. W. (2005). Hegemonic masculinity: rethinking the concept. *Gender and Society*, *19*(6), 829-859.

Courtenay, W. H. (2000). Constructions of masculinity and their influence on men's well-being: A theory of gender and health. *Social Science & Medication*, *50*, 1385-1401.

Davies, B. (2003). *Frogs and snails and feminist tales: Preschool children and gender*. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press, Inc.

Davies, B. and Gannon, S. (2005). Feminism/Poststructuralism. B. Somekh & C. Lewin (Eds.). *Research methods in social science*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications Ltd, 318-325.

Deutsch, F.M. (2007). Undoing Gender. *Gender and Society*, *21*(1), 106-127.

Drudy, S. (2008). Gender balance/gender bias: the teaching profession and the impact of feminization. *Gender and Education*, *20*(4), 309-323.

Englander, M. (2012). The interview: Data collection in descriptive phenomenological human scientific research. *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology*, *43*, 13-35.

Erden, F. T. (2009). A course on gender equity in education: Does it affect gender role attitudes and preservice teachers? *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *25*(3), 409-414.

Ewing, A. R. & Taylor, A. R. (2009). The role of child gender and ethnicity in teacher-child relationship quality and children's behavioral adjustment in preschool. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, *24*, 92-105.

Finlay, L. (2009). Debating phenomenological research methods. *Phenomenology & Practice*, *3*(1), 6-25.

Fives, H. & Buehl, M.M. (2012). Spring cleaning for the "messy" construct of teachers' beliefs: what they? which have been examined? what can they tell us? *APA Educational Psychology Handbook*, *2*. Harris, K.R., Graham, S. & Urdan, T. (Eds.)

Fisher, L. & Embree, L.E. (eds.) (2000). *Feminist phenomenology*. Kluwer Academic Publishers, Co.

Freeman, N. (2007). Preschoolers' perceptions of gender appropriate toys and their parents' beliefs about genderized behaviors: Miscommunication, mixed messages, or hidden truths? *Early Childhood Education Journal*, *34*(5), 357-366.

Giraldo, E. & Colyar, J. (2011). Dealing with gender in the classroom: A portrayed care study of four teachers. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, *16*(1), 25-38.

Gorsetman, C. R. & Sztokman, E. M. (2013). *Education in the divine image: Gender issues in Orthodox Jewish day schools*. Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press

Gosselin, C. (2007). Philosophy and the role of teacher reflections on constructing gender. *Educational Foundations*, 39-57.

Grace, D.M., David, B.J., & Ryan, M.K. (2008). Investigating preschoolers' categorical thinking about gender through imitation, attention, and the use of self-categories. *Child Development*, *79*(6), 1928-1941.

Greenberg, B., & Dolgin, J. (2005). Foreword. In JOFA, *Bereishit: A new beginning* (pp. i-iii). New York, NY: The Covenant Foundation.

Gunn, A.C. (2011). Even if you say it three ways, it still doesn't mean it's true: The pervasiveness of heteronormativity in early childhood education. *Journal of Early Childhood Education*, *9*(3), 280-290.

Han, H. (2012). Professional development that works: Shifting preschool teachers' beliefs and use of instructional strategies to promote children's peer social competence. *Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education, 33*(3), 251-268.

Hogan, V. (2012). *Locating my teaching of gender in early childhood education teacher education within the wider discourse of feminist pedagogy and poststructuralist theory*. From the APERA International Conference. Sydney, Australia.

Hogan, V. (2014). Revisiting the "teachers' gaze": Have we changed how we "see" gender in early childhood education? *He Kupu, 3(*3), 44-53.

Haywood, C., & Mac an Ghaill, M. (2012). "What's next for masculinity?" Reflexive directions for theory and research on masculinity and education. *Gender and Education*, *24*(6), 577-592.

Israel-Cohen, Y. (2012). Jewish modern Orthodox women, active resistance and synagogue ritual. *Contemporary Jewry*, *32*(1), 3-25.

Jackson, C. (2010). "I've been sort of laddish with them…one of the gang': Teachers' perceptions of 'laddish' boys and how to deal with them. *Gender and Education*, *22*(5), 505-519.

Jackson, S. (2007). "She might not have the right tools…and he does": Children's sense-making of gender, work and abilities in early school readers. *Gender and Education*, *19*(1), 61-77.

Johnson, B., & Christensen, L. (2012). *Educational Research, Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Approach*. (4th ed). California: SAGE Publication.

Jordan, E. (1995). Fighting boys and fantasy play: The construction of masculinity in the early years of school. *Gender and Education*, *7*(1), 69-85.

Kane, E.W. (2006). "No way my boys are going to be like that!": Parents' responses to children's gender nonconformity. *Gender & Society*, 20, 149-176.

Katz, M.J. (2010). Not-so-nice Jewish boys: Notes on violence and the construction of Jewish American masculinity in the late 20th and early 21st century. In H. Brod, & S.I. Zevit, *Brother keepers: New perspectives on Jewish masculinity*. Harriman, TN: Men's Studies Press, 57-75.

Kaufman, M. (1993). *The women in Jewish Law and tradition*. Lanham, MD: Jason Aronson, Inc.

Kelly, D.M., Pomerantz, S., & Currie, D. (2006). Skater girlhood and emphasized femininity: "You can't land an ollie properly in heels". *Gender and Education*, *17*(3), 229-248. http://doi.org/10.1080/09540250500145163.

King, D. (2014). Deep swimming and murky waters: Phenomenological interviewing reflections from the field. *Education Journal*, *3(*3), 170-178.

Kivel, P. (2006). Boys will be men: Guiding your sons from boyhood and manhood. Boys will be men, 1-5. Retrieved from: www.paulkivel.com.

Kobrin, R. (2009). Teaching profession in the United States. *Jewish Women's Archive Encyclopedia.* Retrieved from jwa.org.

Krakowski, M. (2011). Challenge and response in Jewish education. *Journal of Jewish Education*, 77, 307-325. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/15244113.2011.625491.

Krug, C. & Schade, L. (2004). *Defining excellence in early childhood Jewish education*. Medford, MA: The Center for Applied Child Development Eliot-Pearson Department of Child Development Tufts University, http:// caje.org/earlychildhood/ec_define.pdf.

Lee, I. (2008). Ten mismatches between teachers' beliefs and written feedback practice. *ELT Journal*, *63*(1), 1-22.

Lindley, H. A. & Keithley, M. (1991). Gender expectations and student achievement [GESA Program for professional development]. *Roeper Review*, *13*, 213-15.

Longman, C. (2008). Sacrificing the career or the family?: Orthodox Jewish women between secular work and the sacred home. *European Journal of Women's Studies*, *15*(3), 223 239.

MacNaughton, G. (1997). Who's got the power? Rethinking gender equity strategies in early childhood. *International Journal of Early Years Education*, *5*(1), 57-66.

MacNaughton, G. (2000). *Rethinking gender in early childhood education*. London: Sage Publications, Ltd.

MacNaughton, G. (2005). *Doing Foucault in early childhood studies: applying post-structural ideas*. Retrieved from https://ebookcentral.proquest.com.

MacNaughton, G., & Hughes, P. M. (2008). *Doing action research in early childhood studies: a step-by-step guide*. Retrieved from https://ebookcentral.proquest.com.

Mansour, N. (2009). Science teachers' beliefs and practices: issues, implications, and research agenda. *International Journal of1Environmental & Science Education*, *4*(1), 25-48.

Mansour, N. (2013). Modeling the sociocultural contexts of science education: the teachers' perspective. *Research in Science Education*, *43*, 347-369.

Martin, C. L. & Ruble, D. (2004). Children's search for gender cues: Cognitive perspectives on gender development. *Current Directions on Psychological Science*, *13(*2), 67-70.

Mertler, C.A. (2017). *Action research: Improving schools and empowering educators* (5th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Millan, J. (2012). Birth on the playground: Boys' experiences playing with gender. *The Indo-Pacific Journal of Phenomenology*, *12*, 1-11.

Milligan, A.K. (2014). *Hair, headwear, and Orthodox Jewish women: Kallah's choice*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.

Mischel, W. (1966). *A social learning view of sex differences in behavior*. In E. Maccoby (Ed.), The development of sex differences (pp. 57-81). Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Mittelberg, D, & Lev-Ari, L. (1999). Confidence in mathematics and its consequences: Gender differences among Israeli Jewish and Arab youth. *Gender and Education*, *11*(1), 75-92.

Merriam, S.B. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Parajes, M.F. (1992). Teachers' beliefs and educational research: cleaning up a messy construct. *American Educational Research Association*, *62*(3), 307-332.

Pew Research Center (2013). *A portrait of Jewish Americans: Findings from a Pew Research Center survey of U.S. Jews*. Retrieved from pewforum.org.

Pollack, W. (1998). *Real boys: Rescuing our sons from the myths of boyhood*. New York, New York: Owl Books.

Pollock, K.T. (2004). Gender rituals. In F.A. Salamone (Ed.) *Encyclopedia of religious rites, rituals, and festivals*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Renold, E. (2004*).* 'Other' boys: Negotiating non-hegemonic masculinities in primary school. *Gender Education*, *16*(2), 247-266.

Rimm-Kaufman, S.E., Storm, M.D., Sawyer, B.B., Piant, R.C., & LaParo, K.M. (2006). The teacher belief q-sort: a measure of teachers' priorities in relation to disciplinary practices, teaching practices, and beliefs about children. *Journal of School Psychology*, *44*(2), 141-165.

Ringel, S. (2007). Identity and gender roles of Orthodox Jewish Women. *Smith College Studies in Social Work*, *77*(2/3), 25-44.

Rodriguez, M.C., Peña, J.V., Fernandez, C.M., Viñuela, M.P. (2006). Gender discourse about an ethic of care: Nursery schoolteachers' perspectives. *Gender and Education*, *18*(2), 183-197.

Rogoff, B. (2003). *The cultural nature of human development*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Ross, T. (2004). *Expanding the palace of orthodoxy and feminism*. Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press.

Saldaña, J. (2016). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Sandstrom, M., Stier, J., & Sandberg, A. (2013). Working with gender pedagogics at 14 Swedish preschools. *Journal of Early Childhood Research*, 1-10 DOI:10.1177/1476718X12466205.

Segal Handelman, M. (2000*). Jewish every day: The complete handbook for early childhood teachers*. Denver, CO: A.R.E Publishing, Inc.

Schick, M. (2014). *A census of Jewish day schools in the United States 2013-2014.* Avi Chai Foundation. Retrieved from avichai.org.

Shonkoff, J P., & Phillips, D.A. (Eds.). (2000). *From neurons to neighborhoods: the science of early childhood development*. Washington DC: National Academy Press.

Simms, E.M., & Stawarska, B. (2013). Introduction: Concepts and methods in interdisciplinary feminist phenomenology. *Janus Head*, *13*(1), 6-16.

Skott, J. (2015). The promises, problems, and prospects of research on teachers' beliefs. In H. Fives, & M.G. Gill (Eds.), *International handbook of research on teachers' beliefs*. London: Routledge.

Smith, J., & Niemi, N. (2007). Exploring teacher perceptions of small boys in kindergarten. *The Journal of Educational Research*, *100*(6), 331-335.

Stoller, S. (2009). Phenomenology and the post structural critique of experience. *International Journal Of Philosophical Studies 17*(5), 707-737.

Subedi, B. (2006). Preservice teachers' beliefs and practices: Religion and religious diversity. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, *39*(3), 227-238. http://doi.org/10.1080/10665680600788495.

Thorne, B. (1993) *Gender play: Girls and boys in school*, New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers Univ. Press, and Buckingham, England: Open Univ Press.

Warin, J. (2006). Heavy-metal humpty dumpty: Dissonant masculinities within the context of the nursery. *Gender and Education, 18*(5), 523-537. DOI 10.1080/09540250600881683.

Warin, J. and Adriany, V. (2015). Gender flexible pedagogy in early childhood education. *Journal of Gender Studies*. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09589236.2015.1105738.

Wolowelsky, J. (1997). *Women, Jewish law, and modernity: New opportunities in a post-feminist age*. Brooklyn, NY: Ktav Publishing, Inc.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes.* (M. Cole, V. John-Steiner, S. Scribner, & E. Souberman, Eds.). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Vogelstein, I. (2008). Early childhood Jewish education: If not now, when? In R.L. Goodman, P. Flexner, & L.D. Bloomberg (Eds.), *What we now know about Jewish education* (pp. 373-385). CA: Torah Aura.

VITA

Ilana Chai Dvorin Friedman is from Chicago, Illinois. She received her Bachelor of Arts in Sociology with minors in Education Studies, History, and Near Eastern and Judaic Studies in 2008 from Brandeis University in Waltham, Massachusetts. Ilana was a Harris Leadership Fellowship recipient at the Erikson Institute, where she earned her Master of Science in Child Development in 2011.

While in the Loyola University Chicago/Erikson Institute doctoral program, Ilana has worked at a number of educational institutions as an adjunct instructor teaching human development and early childhood education related courses and has designed and facilitated professional development opportunities for teachers. She contributed to two publications, one on executive function in preschool classrooms and one on the professional relationship between "parent-teachers" and their colleagues.

For years, Ilana worked in a variety of capacities in early childhood programs, particularly within Jewish settings. This contributed to her interest in supporting teachers and their reflective practice, as well as engaging in research concerning the intersection of early childhood teaching, Jewish education, and gender.