

# Male teachers in school: representations and dynamics



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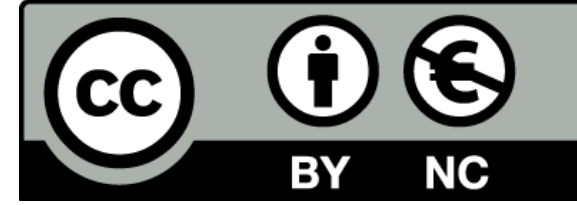
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The aim of an ongoing doctoral research, is how **masculinity** is endorsed, performed, or subverted in educational and school environments through **narratives** of educators and teachers.

This contribution, part of a larger project within my Ph.D. program, illustrates the first phase of the study, focusing specifically on the consequences for teachers' well-being, through the analysis of data from **Focus Groups**.

## Background

**3%** The percentage of male teachers in preschool and primary school in Italy (Miur, 2021)

**4%** Average of OECD Countries (2022)

Gender imbalance (OECD, 2017) raises some questions about social motivations and educational implications, as the following factors come into play: **feminization of the teaching profession** and the persistence of an **essentialist view** that excludes males from caregiving practices. Relevant literature portrays the school as a "gender regime" (Connell, 1996) that supports traditional notions of masculinity and femininity through a gendered binary (Biemmi, 2017; Cruickshank, et al. 2020; Skelton, 2003).

The theoretical framework comprises contributions from:

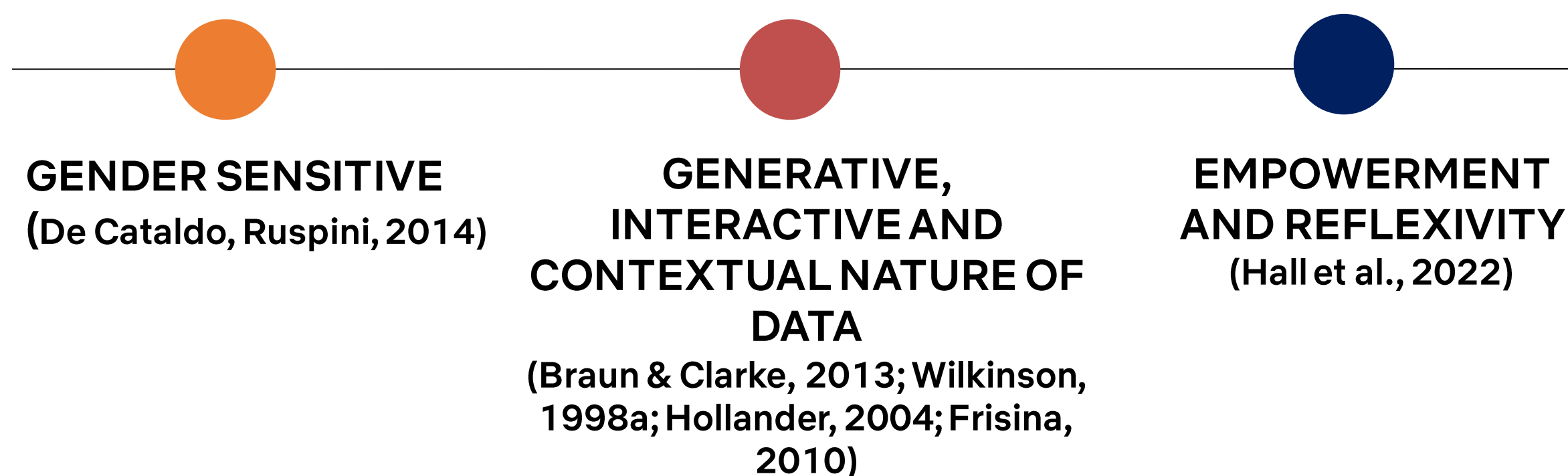
➤➤➤ **Masculinities studies**  
(Connell, 1996; 2011; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005)

Gender and organizations studies  
(Acker, 1990, 1992; Mathos, O'Neill, Lei, 2018; Berdahl et al., 2018)

➤➤➤ **History and History of School**  
(Bellassai, 2004; Covato, 1996; Santoni Rugiu, 2006)

## Methods

### FOCUS GROUP



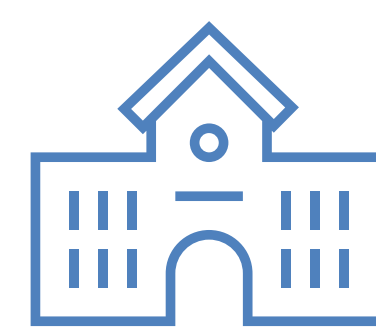
A qualitative study has been conducted in Italy in 2023:

- 3 Focus Group with 12 in service teachers and educators working in nursery, kindergarten and primary school
- FG's followed informed consent, were audio/video recorded and transcribed.
- Data were analyzed thematically (Braun & Clarke, 2006; 2022).

Focus on **three levels**:

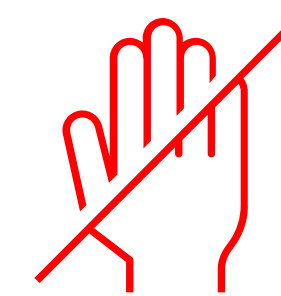


## Results



School as an **ambivalent system** that considers the male presence relevant as long as it is traditional and hegemonic, yet distant and subsidiary in feminine models of teaching.

To comply with **gender expectations**, often teachers take positions in physical education and sports or crafts.



They establish **boundaries to prevent ambiguity**, stating adopting careful measures to avoid excessive emotional and physical involvement.

Although teachers believe that in their daily practices they put in place cooperative ways in classroom management, aimed at equity and developmental opportunities for all, implicit adherence to gender stereotypes is impacting their performances and relationships.



“Because it's easy to raise suspicion, to put yourself in the condition of having to prove that that hug [...] is a teacher's hug.

Edmond, 55 - Primary Sc.Teach., 27 y. of exp.

Parents are pleased that there is a man, you are held in consideration because you are the rare one: if there was the liberalization of salaries, I would earn more than women, because we are few.

Matita, 49 -Primary Sc.Teach., 9 y. of exp.

## Conclusions

Early analysis showed that male teachers frequently and implicitly endorse a **model of traditional masculinity** in order to comply with gendered standards and expectations.

Although the narratives on teachers' masculinities are seemingly framed as equal, thematic analysis allowed us to trace how men are pursuing an **essentialist narrative**.

Male teachers and educators are, at the same time, negatively affected and suppliers of hegemonic beliefs of gendered expressions and believes. Sometimes they describe themselves as gender expressions rather than as subjectivities that embody an odd way of being a man.

## Acknowledgments

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## Bibliography

