

Spring 5-16-2015

Factors Preventing Male Teachers From Seeking Employment at the Elementary Level

Robert L. Hyman
robert.hyman@student.shu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarship.shu.edu/dissertations>

 Part of the [Elementary Education and Teaching Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Hyman, Robert L., "Factors Preventing Male Teachers From Seeking Employment at the Elementary Level" (2015). *Seton Hall University Dissertations and Theses (ETDs)*. 2049.
<https://scholarship.shu.edu/dissertations/2049>

FACTORS PREVENTING MALE TEACHERS FROM SEEKING EMPLOYMENT AT THE
ELEMENTARY LEVEL

BY

ROBERT L. HYMAN

Dissertation Committee

Barbara V. Strobert, Ed.D. Mentor

Constance McCue, Ed.D.

Luke J. Stedrak, Ed.D.

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
Requirements of the degree of Doctor of Education
Seton Hall University

2015

© 2015 Robert L. Hyman

SETON HALL UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN SERVICES
OFFICE OF GRADUATE STUDIES

yto

APPROVAL FOR SUCCESSFUL DEFENSE

Doctoral Candidate, **Robert Hyman**, has successfully defended and made the required modifications to the text of the doctoral dissertation for the **Ed.D.** during this **Spring Semester 2015**.

DISSERTATION COMMITTEE

(please sign and date beside your name)

Mentor:

Dr. Barbara Strobert

Barbara Strobert 3/10/15

Committee Member:

Dr. Connie McCue

Connie McCue 3/10/15

Committee Member:

Dr. Luke Stedrak

Luke Stedrak 3/10/15

The mentor and any other committee members who wish to review revisions will sign and date this document only when revisions have been completed. Please return this form to the Office of Graduate Studies, where it will be placed in the candidate's file and submit a copy with your final dissertation to be bound as page number two.

ABSTRACT

FACTORS PREVENTING MALE TEACHERS FROM SEEKING EMPLOYMENT AT THE ELEMENTARY LEVEL

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the perceptions of male middle school educators regarding the prospects of teaching at the elementary level. A semi-structured interview approach was employed in an effort to assess the factors that lead 12 male educators into middle level teaching positions. Subjects were recruited from diverse public school districts in northern New Jersey and each held elementary and middle school certification.

The interview instrument for this study was based on both existing literature surrounding the absence of males in the elementary teaching ranks as well as Brown's (2002) value-based theory of occupational choice and satisfaction. The latter served as the conceptual framework around which this study was designed.

Four themes emerged from this research. The theme, nature of manhood, describes the often-cited differences perceived between men and women and how those differences impact subjects' perceptions of the teaching profession. The theme, nature of students, reflects perceived variation between elementary-age students and the middle school-age pupils currently under the tutelage of the subject pool. The theme, nature of work, refers to the idea that elementary and middle school teaching positions each require unique energies and dissimilar pedagogical skills. Finally, the theme, stigma, speaks to the perceived impact that teaching younger students either could or would have on the reputation of a male in the role of elementary school teacher.

This research has implications in the areas of teacher training and teacher recruitment. The findings offer a rare glimpse at the perceptions of an educational minority—male elementary teachers.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To Dr. Barbara Strobert, I am eternally grateful for the leadership and energy you have brought to this project. When I saw obstacles along the road, you steered me around them. When I saw what I thought were my personal limitations, you saw none. Since the day I stepped foot on campus, your encouragement has kept me afloat. Although I realize that I can never fully repay you for these gifts, I would love to try. Just say the word. Thanks. *Hazard Zet Forward*

To Dr. Connie McCue and Dr. Luke Stedrak, thank you so much for your input and ability to get your thoughtful feedback turned around quickly. This dissertation was motivated by the basic premise that teachers have a profound impact on the lives of young people. Now I know the whole truth. The right teachers can make all the difference for us not-so-young-people too. Thanks.

To Carl Daniels, you might not remember this, but something you said to me in 1995 changed the way I thought about myself as a student and a thinker. Out of respect for that moment, I will keep what was said between us. What you did, however, was turned a friend headed toward collegiate mediocrity into an academic competitor. Thanks for your honesty and your friendship. *Pro Humanitate*

To Dr. Douglas McLeod, thank you for introducing me to the intricacies and power of scholarship. Your faith in me made me realize that I could contribute knowledge to this world and have a good time doing it. Although it has been a while, you will always be a mentor and a friend. Thanks. *Scientia Sol Mentis Est*

To the male middle school teachers that participated in this study, thank you for your time and sincerity. Our conversations taught me more than could ever be contained within these pages.

To my pals, I want you guys to know that you are a big part of this and every other accomplishment I either have or will achieve in my life. Like so many ideas expressed in this dissertation, your influence is tough to quantify. Just know I that I am aware of it. Thanks. *Liberty and Prosperity*

Dedication

This work is dedicated to my wife, Christina, our two beautiful children, William and Cameron, and to my late parents, Carol and Harvey Hyman .

Without the unwavering support, encouragement, and love that Christina has showered upon me throughout our relationship, this dissertation would be nowhere. At the very least, writing a dissertation is a challenge. Writing a dissertation with two young children in the house, however, seemed like an impossibility. Christina's sacrifice and enthusiasm for my success made it possible. I share this accomplishment with the love of my life.

Despite the fact that neither William nor Cameron were born when I first stepped foot on campus at Seton Hall, the thought of them kept me moving toward the finish line from day one. A friend once recommended that if I was going to seek a doctoral degree, I should try to get it done before my kids grew too old. Now that they are both here and as perfect as they are, I truly appreciate the wisdom in that advice. I am an extremely proud father that loves his son and daughter very much. One day, if and when they read these words, I hope that they are half as proud of me as I already am of them.

My parents, Carol and Harvey Hyman, both passed during the writing of this dissertation. The impact that they had on my life, however, is reflected on every page of this work. They taught me about the relationship between passion, hard work, and success. They ensured me that whatever challenges life presented, I would not have to go it alone. Finally, they taught me to finish what I start. Now that I have, I know they would be proud...they always were.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract.....	iii
Aknowledgements.....	v
Dedication.....	vii
List of Tables.....	xi
I INTRODUCTION.....	1
Problem Statement.....	3
Purpose of the Study.....	6
Research Questions.....	6
Overview of Methods.....	8
Conceptual Framework.....	10
Significance of the Study.....	11
Delimitations of the Study.....	13
Limitations of the Study.....	13
Definition of Terms.....	14
Summary.....	14
II LITERATURE REVIEW.....	16
Introduction.....	16
Review Methods.....	20
Criteria for Inclusion and Exclusion of Literature.....	22
Limitations of this Review.....	24
Men in the Elementary Classroom: A Historical Perspective.....	24
Male Teachers and Achievement: Do They Make a Difference?.....	32
A Rare Breed: Who Are the Current Male Elementary Teachers?.....	46
A Man’s Man?: The Role of Masulinity.....	59
The New Recruits: Pre-Service Male Elementary Teachers.....	64
Theoretical Framework.....	72
III METHODOLOGY.....	77
Background.....	77
Design.....	79
Sampling.....	80
Profiles of Participants and Sites.....	82
Rockford Middle School.....	83
Mr. Estefan.....	83
Mr. Van Dyke.....	84
Mr. Samartine.....	84
Mr. Williams.....	85
Clayton Middle School.....	85
Mr. Coletto.....	86

	Mr. Dale.....	87
	Mr. Stokes.....	87
	Mr. Decker.....	88
	Hartsville Middle School.....	88
	Mr. Casey.....	89
	Mr. Jelinick.....	90
	Mr. Disavino.....	90
	Mr. Stengel.....	91
	Data Collection.....	91
	Data Analysis.....	95
	Summary.....	97
IV	RESEARCH FINDINGS.....	98
	The Nature of Manhood.....	100
	Females Nurture...Men Do Not.....	100
	While Women Nurture...We'll Handle the Discipline.....	104
	Creativity: Leave the Arts and Crafts to the Women.....	107
	Other Gender Issues.....	108
	The Nature of Students.....	111
	Relating to an Elementary School Student.....	111
	The Work Ethic of an Elementary Student.....	114
	Higher Order Student Thinking.....	116
	The Emotional Stability of Students.....	118
	Nature of the Work.....	121
	Single Subject Teaching vs. Having the Same Kids All Day.....	121
	The Elementary Workload.....	126
	Pedagogical Considerations.....	127
	Men in Elementary Classrooms and Stigma.....	129
	Perceived Pedophilia.....	130
	Perceived Homosexuality.....	132
	The Impact of Elementary Teaching on Social Status.....	135
	The Perceived Benefit of Men.....	138
	Summary.....	140
V	DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	143
	Introduction.....	143
	Discussion.....	144
	Male Middle School Teachers Value Masculinity.....	144
	Male Middle School Teachers Value Student Relationships.....	146
	Male Middle School Teachers Value their Expertise.....	147
	Male Middle School Teachers Value their Self-Esteem.....	147
	Now What?.....	149
	Recommendations for Future Research.....	151
	Recommendations for Policy.....	153

Impact on Educational Leadership Practice.....	156
References.....	159
Appendix A: Interview Guide.....	165
Appendix B: Letter to District Superintendents Requesting Permission.....	168
Appendix C: Informed Consent Form.....	171

List of Tables

Table 1. Research Questions with Associated Interview Items.....93

Chapter I

The landscape of the American teacher workforce has been reinvented many times in this country's relatively short history. Among the variables that have permutated most is the gender makeup of elementary school faculties. In the colonial era schoolhouse you would likely find a man delivering the day's lesson (Perlmann & Margo, 2001). By the end of the Civil War, however, the battlefield had drained the nation's men from many established professions (Blount, 1996). Male teachers lost their stranglehold on the American classroom and were becoming an aberration at the elementary level.

By the time circumstance brought me into the role of elementary teacher I expected a different scene. Perhaps it was because I had the rare experience of having had a few men teach me at the elementary level. Perhaps it was because I assumed that a profession as large as teaching would not allow such a professional inequity in the 21st century. Regardless of what catalyzed my expectations, when I walked into my first teaching job for the New York City public schools I was taken aback. If the Civil War forced most men out of the elementary classroom, it appeared that not many had made it back--at least not in Brooklyn.

It turns out that my experience was on par with the status of the teaching profession around the country. Beyond the confines of my first classroom lie numbers that tell an even more lopsided tale than I would have fathomed. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics, males account for 23.7% of all public school teachers in the United States. That percentage shrinks to a mere 10.7% in the elementary ranks (Goldring, Gray, & Bitterman, 2013). Under most

circumstances, it would seem that questioning a statistical anomaly such as this would be appropriate. When this anomaly exists in an arena responsible for cultivating the minds of youth in their most formative years, that questioning becomes important.

The existing research on the absence of males in elementary classrooms attempts to answer some of the more critical questions on the subject. For the most part, this body of literature can be divided into two categories. The first category includes studies that attempted to evaluate the true utility of having men in the classroom. Despite having gained acceptance in the world of education reform, the call for male teachers (particularly in elementary schools) is often based on what amounts to common sense axioms. Ideas such as boys working harder for men and male teachers filling a necessary void for father-absent children often are accepted without empirical support. An abbreviated set of studies attempted to remedy this dependence on assumption by investigating exactly how much (or how little) men move the needle in the classroom (Bricheno & Thornton, 2002; Dee, 2006; Driessen, 2007; Mancus, 1992; Sokal, Katz, Chaszewski, & Wojcik, 2007).

The second category of literature on this topic attempted to describe the unique experience of men working in a profession as uncommon to their gender as elementary educator. These studies addressed questions aimed at uncovering the road that led these men into such uncharted territory, as well as the type of conditions that they found when they got there. Often qualitative in methodology, these studies intended to paint a clearer picture of a professional minority

(Galbraith, 1992; Johnston, McKeown, McEwen, 1999; Klecker & Loadman, 1999; Perrachione, Petersen, & Rosser, 2008; Wood, 2012).

What the studies within the two categories do not address, however, is the propensity of men who choose teaching as a career to continually balk at the prospects of doing so in an elementary classroom. This study took a qualitative approach to fill this void in the literature. By interviewing male middle school teachers who had elementary teaching certification, the intention was to unveil the most prominent factors keeping educators from being willing elementary educators. While explaining the virtues of a well-crafted interview study, Weiss (1995) pointed out that through interviews, “we can learn what people perceived and how they interpreted their perceptions. We can learn how events affected their thoughts and feelings.” Ultimately, this study was designed to be a portal to the perceptions that men in education have about elementary teaching. This study was not intended to advocate for an increase in the number of men hired or recruited into elementary classrooms. Instead, the intention was that the findings would peel back an often-unexamined layer of a phenomenon that is gathering increasing popular attention (Sternod, 2011).

Problem Statement

As teacher quality has been thrust to the forefront of the education reform conversation, it stands to reason that each area of the profession is deserving of heightened scrutiny. Nevertheless, a statistical anomaly continues to intensify annually in America’s teaching ranks while failing to attract significant attention from the research community. With the gender gap in teaching continuing to widen

in the 21st century elementary classroom, closer attention must be paid to its academic and social bi-products as well as increasing the understanding of the factors that perpetuate this phenomenon.

In contrast to the limited empirical research on the subject, the popular media has paid a relatively large amount of attention to the shortage of men in education. Headlines from newspaper articles tell the tale of a nation looking toward gender balance in the classroom as a possible antidote to the ailments holding back American students. An example from the *Detroit News* bluntly reads, “Elementary Schools Need More Male Teachers” (Watson, 1991). Courtland Milloy (2013) of the *Washington Post* asserted, “Needed: More Black Men in Schools.” Closer to the setting of this study, Padawer (2006) wrote in *The Record* (in New Jersey’s Bergen County), “It’s Not a Guy Thing: North Jersey Schools Have Fewer Male Teachers than Ever.” Whether the reason for this beckoning is rooted in empirical research or popular assumption, it appears that the call for increasing the male presence in schools (particularly in elementary schools) exists.

Chapter II of this dissertation elaborates on the small amount of literature that does exist. As was stated previously, the existing literature falls mainly upon one of two lines of questioning. For the most part, the studies either addressed the ability of men to have an impact on the elementary student achievement, or it attempted to describe the world of men in elementary education. Despite the latter category, little or no research has addressed the men who have chosen to become teachers, but who resisted opportunities in the lower grades. It would seem that it is this assemblage that is most likely to start filling the elementary gender gap.

Nevertheless, they have been greatly ignored by the educational research community. If some men are willing to teach, why are they not willing to teach in the younger grades?

Along with the lack of research with existing male teachers comes a methodological void. The majority of research reviewed in this dissertation is of a quantitative nature. From studies that have looked into the impact that men had on reading scores to those that examined the satisfaction men reported in their role in a minority faction, the body of existing literature is deficient in qualitative description. Creswell (2009) reminds us that phenomenological qualitative researchers attempt to “identify the essence of human experiences about a phenomenon as described by participants.” Researchers, administrators, and school reformers alike must continually seek a deeper understanding of the experiential factors that keep many male teachers out of elementary education. It seems unlikely that tendencies will ever be reversed without a heightened understanding of the ways in which these men perceive their profession.

Between the dearth of qualitative studies and the lack of attention paid to the men currently teaching outside the elementary level, there is a gap in the existing literature on this topic. Turning research attention to male middle school educators and employing a semi-structured interview methodology are critical steps toward filling that gap. The following problem statement serves as the basis for the design of this dissertation: Little qualitative literature exists that describes the perceptions of American male teachers about the factors that led them to choose to teach outside the elementary level.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the perceptions of male middle school educators regarding the prospects of teaching at the elementary level. For these men, teaching appears to be a career path that they were more than willing to follow. The possible reluctance to work in elementary settings, however, is worthy of a deeper understanding. Ultimately, the comprehensive objective of the study is to synthesize that understanding into policy recommendations and to expose avenues for potential future research.

Research Questions

Four central questions guided this study toward a deeper understanding of male teachers. It should be emphasized that along with several subsidiary questions, these inquiries were focused to explain the phenomenon that men who choose to enter the teaching profession choose to do so in the middle school or high school level far more frequently than they do in elementary school. Limiting this investigation to this unique population is both purposeful and meaningful. It would appear that for these men, teaching is not the professional boundary that they are reluctant to cross. Being a teacher in an elementary school, on the other hand, seems to have some characteristics that serve as barriers for some men, and consequently, this maintains elementary teaching as a frontier few men are willing to approach.

The research questions addressed in this study are as follows:

Research Question 1. How do elementary certified male middle school teachers describe their decision to teach outside of the elementary classroom?

- Subsidiary Question 1. What intrinsic factors, if any, influence middle school teachers to seek placement outside of the elementary classroom?
- Subsidiary Question 2. What extrinsic factors, if any, influence middle school teachers to seek placement outside of the elementary classroom?

Research Question 2. How do elementary certified male middle school teachers perceive the challenges, if any, for men at the elementary school level?

- Subsidiary Question 1. How do male middle school teachers perceive the impact on job satisfaction that may result from working in a female-dominated profession like elementary teaching?
- Subsidiary Question 2. How do male middle school teachers perceive the impact that teaching elementary school might have on the way they are viewed by others?

Research Question 3. What do male middle school teachers perceive as being the greatest advantages, if any, for men at the elementary school level?

Research Question 4. How urgent do male middle school teachers perceive the call for an increase to the amount of men in elementary classrooms to be?

- Subsidiary Question 1. What groups, if any, will benefit from an increased presence of men in elementary school?

Overview of Methods

This study was conducted in the northern half of New Jersey. The male middle school teachers interviewed work in schools that span the state's socioeconomic spectrum. In New Jersey, the socioeconomic status of a school district's student body is classified into one of the categories that the state Department of Education refers to as District Factor Groups (DFG). The existing DFGs are A, B, CD, DE, FG, GH, I, and J, whereas A represents the lowest socioeconomic group and J represents the state's highest (New Jersey Department of Education, n.d-a).

One discriminatory requirement for inclusion in the sample studied was each participant took the traditional route into the teaching profession. The converse of the traditional route in New Jersey is referred to as the *Alternate Route Program* and is "designed for those individuals who have not completed a formal teacher preparation program at an accredited college or university, but wish to obtain the necessary training to become a NJ certified teacher" (New Jersey Department of Education, n.d-b). Although alternate route teachers do acquire the same status as traditional route teachers in the state, they were excluded from this study due to their limited abilities to select the grade level at which they teach. For a number of reasons, alternate route teachers are more likely to have circumstance dictate the nature of their teaching assignment.

An additional prerequisite for inclusion in the study was that the male middle school teachers hold elementary teaching certification. This distinction was made to increase the likelihood that credentials were not the main reason for the

level at which these men were teaching. In other words, if a potential subject held both elementary and middle school certification, factors beyond licensure were most likely responsible for the choice of school level. The possibility of a genuine choice existed.

The 12 teachers that participated in the study were filtered from faculty rosters at middle schools in districts whose superintendents had approved this research plan. School administrators and other professionals with knowledge of staff credentials facilitated first contact with the subjects. They played no part in the recruitment, however, as it was a priority that participation in this interview study be completely voluntary. Coercion was avoided at all stages of the research.

The semi-structured interview questions were designed following a thorough review of the existing research on the lack of male teachers at the elementary level. Before conducting the interviews with the selected subjects, however, the questions were evaluated by a jury of experienced middle school educators. This step was taken in the spirit of assuring qualitative reliability, as described by Creswell (2009). Upon finalizing the interview instrument and associated procedures, the interview process commenced.

The interviews were scheduled to take between 30 and 45 minutes and typically were conducted at the subjects' schools. Audio recordings of the interviews were made using a digital recording device. I then transcribed those recordings and emailed the transcriptions back to the individual subjects. This member-checking step was inserted to assure qualitative validity, as noted by Creswell (2009).

Upon validating the transcriptions, the data was coded using NVivo10, a qualitative support software program. As common themes emerged from the data set, the information was transposed into a descriptive narrative chronicling the world of the male middle school teacher and, more importantly, the barriers preventing male entry into elementary teaching.

Conceptual Framework

From the moment I became interested in the lack of male teachers at the elementary level I began searching for an appropriate theoretical lens through which to craft this inquiry. I often found myself struggling with the application of most gender-related theories to the intricate questions surrounding specific career choices. For example, gender schema theory (Bem 1981; Sokal et al., 2007) spoke elaborately about the ways in which gender identity becomes engrained in individuals as they experience life. It fell short, however, in clarifying the role that one's gender identity plays in influencing major life decisions.

The major life decision in question for this study is the environment in which men choose to work. Turning my attention toward career theories appeared to be a logical shift. Krumboltz (as cited in Brown, 2002) explained that the value of a good theory is to draw a "map" of a particular reality. Popular theorists such as Rokeach (1973) and Super (1990) have made widely applauded efforts to map the reality of choosing and developing a career. Although both men produced sound explanations of decision-making based on behavior and thought, something was still amiss as far as the research questions posed in this study were concerned.

That void was filled by Brown's (Brown, 2002; Brown & Crace, 1996) value-based theory of occupational choice and satisfaction. As the name would imply, Brown's theory incorporated a person's values into their career decisions. Values are defined as, "cognitive structures that are the basis of one's self-evaluation and one's evaluation of others" (Brown & Crace, 2008). Brown contended that while these values are partly rooted in genetics, they are also molded by a number of environmental factors. Factors such as family, media, school, and culture weigh greatly on the value system one carries through life and, more specifically, into their career.

The application of Brown's theory will be elaborated upon in Chapter II. Although it is unlikely that any theory can perfectly serve the specific questions of any study, the introduction of values into career choice offers an invaluable construct around which to formulate questions and interpret results. Creswell (2009) pointed out that theory can serve qualitative inquiry in much the same way that it serves the quantitative world. Simply put, the author points to theory as an attempt to explain behaviors and attitudes. The purpose of this study is to explore the perceptions of male middle school educators regarding the prospects of teaching at the elementary level. Understanding what their values are and where they came from may represent the key to solving that intensifying mystery.

Significance of the Study

According to a segment of the research on the lack of male teachers, men have the potential to bring value into the elementary classroom (Dee, 2006; Mancus, 1992; Martin, 2002). Regardless of the plausibility of this contention, however, very

little descriptive literature exists explaining the barriers to entry that continually halt the reinsertion of men into elementary education. This study attempts to fill this qualitative gap by uncovering the perceptions that male middle school teachers in northern New Jersey have of elementary school teaching.

The significance of this subject pool cannot be overstated as these are the men who have seen their way past the obstacles that keep most men out of education altogether. Many non-educators have cited factors such as low pay and the low status associated with education as deterrents that prevented them from choosing careers in the field (Cushman, 2007). Male middle school teachers, on the other hand, have seemingly come to terms with these elements of the teaching profession. What they have done very infrequently, however, is come to terms with spending their career in an elementary classroom.

This study also distinguishes itself by applying a values-based, occupational theory to an inquiry involving male teachers. Brown's (2002; Brown & Crace, 1996) inclusion of values in career choice typically is applied to the counseling of individuals regarding the career they choose to enter. Although this study is ultimately about a career that men typically do not choose to enter, the model still proved to be an invaluable blueprint of the process.

Finally, this study has great significance for the educational policy and school administration community. Regardless of empirical basis, the call to increase male presence in elementary school is an ongoing campaign. Understanding and addressing the factors that perpetuate the hesitance of men to enlist in the cause is essential to betterment of this effort.

Delimitations of the Study

The delimitations of this study are:

1. This data from this study was extracted from interviews with male middle school teachers. Although high school teachers also qualify as having made the commitment to the teaching profession, they were intentionally left out of the subject pool.
2. Despite an effort to compose a diverse subject pool, subjects were isolated to the northern section of New Jersey. This geographical characteristic limits the ability to generalize the perceptions of middle school teachers in other parts of the state as well as other locations.
3. Teachers that have entered the profession through New Jersey's Alternate Route Program were eliminated from participation in this study. Despite their ability to add value to this inquiry, they were excluded due to the increased likelihood that they had less choice in their grade placement. This is often the bi-product of teaching as a result of a change in profession.

Limitations of the Study

1. The sample size of this study is small. Although this was a conscious decision, the size limits the ability for the outcomes of this study to be generalized to all male middle school teachers.
2. I conducted the interviews in this study in a face-to-face setting. The fact that I am a male may limit the extent to which subjects are willing to accurately report their perceptions. This topic is inherently rooted in masculinity and

femininity. As such, men may be hesitant to display complete candor in front of another man.

Definition of Terms

Middle school teacher refers to any individual teaching in a school including grades 5 to 8 or 6 to 8 (Merriam-Webster’s online dictionary, n.d.).

Alternate route teacher refers to any teacher in New Jersey who has entered the profession through the state’s Alternate Route Program. The program is a “non-traditional teacher preparation program designed for those individuals who have not completed a formal teacher preparation program at an accredited college or university, but wish to obtain the necessary training to become a NJ certified teacher” (New Jersey Department of Education, n.d-b)

District Factor Group (DFG) refers to New Jersey’s system of classifying school districts by relative socioeconomic status. First developed in 1975, the groupings are based on the following six variables: (a) Percent of adults with no high school diploma, (b) Percent of adults with some college education, (c) Occupational status, (d) Unemployment rate, (e) Percent of individuals in poverty, and (f) Median family income. The eight categories that districts can be categorized in are A, B, CD, DE, FG, GH, I, and J. DFG A represents the lowest socioeconomic grouping, while DFG J represents the highest (New Jersey Department of Education, n.d-a).

Summary

Chapter 1 of this dissertation set the stage for an inquiry into the decreasing number of men that choose to teach at the elementary level. This is a phenomenon that gained personal relevance when I began my educational career as one of only a

few male teachers in an elementary school in Brooklyn, NY. Although researchers have addressed both the effect that men are capable of having on younger students, as well as the condition they find themselves in on the job, there is a marked lack of research exploring the factors that are preventing men from joining elementary faculties. This void inspired the aforementioned four research questions. The chapter provided an overview of the methodology that drove this study, as well as a preview of the theoretical underpinnings upon which it is built. Additional subsections include an explanation of the significance of the study, the delimitations and limitations of the chosen methods, and definitions of terminology used throughout this dissertation. Chapter II reviews the literature associated with this topic, including a summary of the historical context surrounding this topic.

Chapter II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The profound lack of males in the elementary teaching ranks is certainly not a new American phenomenon. While the earliest teacher workforce of this nation was overwhelmingly male, its current demographic form (predominantly female) began taking shape in the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Blount, 1996; Johnson, 2008). From that time until now, education reformers have been motivated by a multitude of rationales and tried a great number of strategies to increase the number of male teachers in American schools (Cushman, 2007). An even more focused effort has been made more recently at the elementary level, where the representation of males is at its lowest levels. This literature review examines the limited body of empirical research that addresses this unique professional imbalance. It will begin with a more in-depth overview of how the gender makeup of the American teaching core has evolved throughout American history.

One of the recurring themes throughout this review is that the call to increase male teachers has rarely been based on empirical findings. In fact, that understatement does no justice to the role that common sense and popular thought have played in the proliferation of pro-male teacher rhetoric and policy. Often, discourse on the subject is rooted in the idea that male teachers serve as role models for young boys (particularly father-absent boys). Additionally, an influx of male teachers is intended to help motivate young boys who are falling behind young girls academically across the globe. While these ideals often go untested, there have

been limited efforts to substantiate or challenge the value of the male teacher in the elementary classroom. These studies both support and challenge the need to increase male presence in the elementary classroom and make up the first sub-section of literature in this review.

Next, studies designed to reveal the world of the male elementary teacher will be evaluated and presented together. Questions focusing on the nature of the type of men that take this professional “road less traveled,” the job conditions that they find in their unique work environments, and the obstacles they face in their roles will be addressed. Although this study ultimately intended to find out what factors kept most male teachers out of the elementary ranks, it is critical to approach an understanding of how these men perceive their world and describe the factors that drew them to it as well as those that might serve to repel others. Studies pertaining to the condition of the modern male elementary teacher are the subject of the second sub-section of the literature review.

This review goes on to examine the extent to which empirical research has addressed the roles of masculinity and its connection to the perceived feminization of the teaching profession. The importance that men place on these variables and how that level of importance affected subjects’ decisions to enter the profession were paramount to finding answers to the research questions that guided these studies. The casual commentary by many educational outsiders is that men do not teach elementary school simply because it is, and always has been, women’s work. Casual commentary, however, can no longer drive the ship in the world of gender

and elementary instruction. The third sub-section evaluates what the empiricists have uncovered regarding the masculinity/femininity conundrum.

Not surprisingly, researchers have focused a large portion of the limited male elementary teacher research on pre-service teacher candidates. Apart from serving as convenient samples in the university setting, these students represent a portal into the male teacher recruitment world, as well as a glimpse at those who the profession has lost in the battle of attrition. The fourth sub-section provides an analysis of several of the studies that focused on this critical subject pool, as well as identifies the factors that have been identified by research as enticing or repelling male elementary teacher candidates into or from the profession.

In order to structure this study and formulate the research questions that drive this research, a valid and applicable theory was sought. After exploring several theoretical approaches in the areas of pedagogy and gender studies, attention turned to the world of occupational counseling. The factors that keep male teachers out of elementary classrooms are ultimately a matter of job preference. The world of occupational counseling is rich with theorists who are seeking to explain the process that individuals go through when evaluating potential professional paths. Ultimately, their intention is often to apply that knowledge to the counseling of immersing members of the workforce. One theorist in particular, Jerome Brown (as cited in Brown & Crace, 2008) composed a theoretical model rooted in the work of his well-known predecessors with one key added component. His inclusion of values as a critical variable in the job process makes for an applicable model against which to craft a study about entry (or lack thereof) into an

occupation like elementary school teaching. The final sub-section of the literature review explains and validates the appropriateness and applicability of this theoretical approach to this research.

Each of these sub-sections is accompanied by a thorough synthesis of the reviewed literature. These syntheses reveal how the reviewed literature can help inform ongoing research in the field. The cumulative nature of all social research is critical to its prosperity. More important, however, will be the discussion of implications and recommendations to the field of school administration that can be extracted from the literature. Application to policy and practice in our schools and the betterment of student outcomes should be the endgame for all educational research.

Prior to the discussion of historical context and the aforementioned sub-sections, a detailed description of the methodology used in compiling this research is presented. With the ever-expanding array of new technology and access to information, it is important that readers understand the process that went into the selection of research for any review. In addition, the criteria for inclusion and exclusion from the review will be outlined. Ultimately, these sections serve as a blueprint for fellow educational researchers as well as educational professionals to locate and expand upon the literature reviewed.

The literature review methodology section will be followed by a complete description limitations of the literature review. Unfortunately, most, if not all, reviews fall short of being exhaustive and are, in some form or another, a product of the researcher's process and perceptions. Despite being a relatively under-

researched field, it would be impractical and nearly impossible to include every research effort that has broached the male elementary shortage. At the risk of sounding cliché, no literature review can be all things to all readers.

Creswell (2009) pointed out that the purpose of a strong literature review should be to “determine whether the topic is worth studying and to provide insight into ways in which the researcher can limit the scope to a needed area of inquiry.” The existing research is ~~consistently~~ rooted in the quest to improve student outcomes. The fact that the literature focuses on students in their most formative years (elementary school) only strengthens the urgency with which this topic need be addressed. Urgency aside, the relevance and utility of this study is found more in what is not read in this dissertation rather than what is. Whereas the literature reviewed details the male elementary teacher issue, the scarcity of studies addressing factors that deter male teachers from the elementary ranks highlights this as a needed area of inquiry.

Review Methods

It should be noted that the research questions for this study came to me early in my doctoral journey. As part of an applied research course, students were guided through the process of researching a problem in the field of educational leadership and designing an appropriate research proposal. Relying heavily upon my personal professional history, my attention immediately turned to the lack of males in elementary teaching. While I was successfully able to scratch the surface of the existing literature, I soon realized that the methodology employed in that exercise was, for lack of a better term, incomplete. The majority of material that I was able to

locate at that time came by way of Proquest which was made available to me by the Seton Hall University library. As I continued to evolve as a researcher, I began to understand and utilize many avenues through which scholarly literature was obtained. The following list represents those avenues: Proquest (Dissertations and Theses); Proquest (Education Journals); ERIC; EBSCO; Google Scholar; SetonCat at Seton Hall Libraries (including e-Books); and an extensive list of e-journals.

In order to locate the most relevant material, several key phrases were entered along with the Boolean terms *and*, *or*, and *not*. Often, phrases emerged from the literature as common themes throughout the research effort. Among those phrases were: male elementary teachers, male primary teachers, boy crisis, girl crisis, feminization of schools, masculinity in teaching, lack of males in elementary education, lack of males in primary teaching, and gender in teaching.

As I began to read and analyze the associated research, I started to look for common theoretical threads upon which I could build a study. Approaches such as gender schema theory (Katz et al., 2005) addressed the role that gender plays in constructing how boys and girls see the world, however, it seemed to fall short of informing me about the process of choosing or not choosing a given profession. Rightfully so, the theoretical perspectives in the literature were most often geared toward the role that gender plays in the lives of students rather than in the lives of teachers. It was at this point that I went back to the aforementioned databases and searched terms such as *career theory*, *career development*, *selecting or choosing a career*, and *career theorists*. The resulting literature unveiled several relevant occupational theories and approaches. One of those theoretical approaches,

Brown's values-based theory (Brown, 2002), stood out as having a strong foundation in the works of popular career theorists such as Donald Super and Milton Rokeach with one key supplement. Brown's inclusion of values in his model made the approach more malleable and applicable to the type of qualitative effort undertaken in the present study. In order to further explore this approach, searches were conducted using phrases such as *Duane Brown*, *Duane Brown career theory*, *Duane Brown career theorist*, *values-based holistic model*, *values-based approaches in employment*, and *values-based approaches in occupational counseling*.

Criteria for Inclusion and Exclusion of Literature

Despite the under-evaluation of the male elementary teacher condition, the searches detailed in the section above resulted in a relatively large number of results. Criteria had to be adopted to limit this review to the material that was most relevant to and instrumental in informing the research questions of this study. The following list presents the types of sources that were included in this review:

- peer-reviewed studies from recognized journals,
- evidence-based commentary in peer-reviewed journals,
- books on the history of teaching in the United States of America,
- books on the history of education in the United States of America,
- books that address theoretical approaches to the development of careers,
- newspaper articles illustrating the context of media coverage regarding males in elementary teaching, and
- dissertations from accredited doctoral programs.

The relationship between men and the elementary classroom has been fraught with inequity in the United States since the colonial era. This inequity, however, has not always cast men as minorities. As will be elaborated later in this chapter, the gender majority in the teaching of young children has flip-flopped throughout American history. Although the current makeup of the profession began to take root in the late 1800s, the empirical attention paid to the lack of males in elementary education is, for the most part, a 20th century and beyond field. Although the work in the pre-World War II era is not irrelevant, this literature review will exclude any study before 1950.

The dearth of male elementary teachers is certainly not isolated to America. Perhaps the majority of empirical material on the matter comes from other English-speaking nations. Studies from as nearby as Canada and as distant as New Zealand populate the body of literature. Despite certain cultural difference in these and other English-speaking nations, this research is included in this review, as several gender-related themes tend to permeate these boundaries.

Researchers have addressed the call to increase male teacher representation in non-English speaking nations as well. This literature review contains analyses of research performed in Sweden, The Netherlands, Belgium, and a multi-national study of member nations of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), to name a few. Although it first occurred to me that language could serve as an exclusionary criteria for this review, further examination revealed that many of the same gender issues and associated variables exist regardless of the local language. For this reason, these studies are included. It was important,

however, to set some limit for the number of cultures reviewed. For that reason, studies set in nations whose language is not written in the Latin-derived alphabet were excluded from this review.

Limitations of this Review

This review is intended to be a thorough examination of the empirical research that addresses the lack of males in the elementary teaching ranks and the factors preventing their numbers to rise. Because this is an ongoing issue on a global scale, it is likely that new research and related policies emerged during the writing of this dissertation. The inability for this review to include this budding research is one of its greatest limitations. Furthermore, this review is limited by its methodology. The phrases searched, as well as the criteria for inclusion and exclusion, were designed to locate the most relevant material to this study. Despite this intention, it is likely that there is empirical material that would have served the purposes of this study, but failed to surface in these searches. Again, this review is as inclusive as possible, however, not without limitation.

Men in the Elementary Classroom: A Historical Perspective

In their provocatively titled book, *Women's Work: American Schoolteachers, 1650-1920*, Joel Perlmann and Robert Margo (2001) unveiled a truth that might surprise most 21st century educational onlookers. Despite the fact that teaching has become one of this nation's most female-dominated professions today, the earliest teachers were almost exclusively male. The authors pointed out that in colonial New England the educational bias that favored boys, combined with the strong

emphasis on Latin instruction, ensured that men dominated the teaching profession in the region.

The stronghold that men had on the profession, however, would weaken as the era began to welcome women as teachers in what were referred to as summer dame schools (Perlmann & Margo, 2001). Not only were women proving to be well suited for the instruction of younger children during these months, they were also proving to be more than capable of disciplining older boys as well. While men remained the majority in the American classroom through the mid 1800s (Blount, 1996), the shift to a two-tiered schooling system in New England opened avenues to an entirely new participant in the developing country's teacher workforce, the female teacher.

The dame school movement, however, was not the sole factor that has led us to the current gender makeup of today's teacher workforce. Two hundred and fifty years of policy shifts, cultural and economic shifts, as well as landmark historical events have been integral in forming the current demographic appearance of the profession. Gamble and Wilkins (1997) pointed out that the split-term trend established in New England was perpetuated across the nation in rural schools. Men typically served as teachers in the wintertime; when their efforts were not as necessary on the farm. When the summer came, male effort headed back to the fields leaving women in the schoolhouses during those months.

As the second half of the 19th century moved on, two trends began to challenge this policy of alternating teacher genders. First, the profession experienced a movement toward professionalization. New teachers across most

states were increasingly being required to attend teacher-training institutes, as well as receive certification prior to entering the classroom. This required a commitment of both time and money. Furthermore, schools were beginning to abandon the split-term model and moved toward a continuous school year. The new structure of the American school made the teaching profession less attractive to men, who were, for the most part, expected to be the primary breadwinners of their households.

Blount (1996) pointed out another force that served to drain men from the teaching profession in the late 1800s. The onset of the Civil War forced an overwhelming majority of able-bodied males out of the classroom and onto the battlefield. Regardless of the economic feasibility of remaining in the teaching profession, the supply of males available to work in schools was extremely small. Not until World War II would a military event drain men from the workforce and have such an impact on the gender of the American teacher.

It was also in the late 1800s that the gender-divide between elementary school teaching and secondary school teaching began to take hold. Despite the economic, political, and social factors that pulled men out of teaching, there were some who remained. Salary played a large role in the tradition that continually landed these men in secondary classrooms as opposed to elementary ones. Perlmann and Margo (2001) highlighted an 1860 teacher contract in Boston in which the pay scale was graduated depending on the grade level taught. The lower paying elementary positions were almost exclusively filled by women, whereas men

(despite their newfound role of educational minority) were concentrated in the upper grades, as well as in school administration.

Blount (1996) highlighted that an even greater form of economic discrimination led to the increased feasibility of hiring women teachers. Some districts simply structured their salary schedule along gender lines. In York County, Pennsylvania, for example, a distinction was made between the salary paid to a man and that paid to a woman regardless of the teaching assignment in which they were placed. In 1870, men in Goldsboro (a township in that county) were paid \$48, whereas women were limited to a salary of \$25. This type of distinction led to a shift in teacher hiring practices. Women represented a cheaper workforce and, therefore, were more desirable to local boards of education. Consequently, by the turn of the century, classroom teaching was becoming an overwhelmingly female profession. As the 1900s dawned in America, women made up a majority of the teacher workforce and an even larger majority of the elementary teaching workforce. The gender breakdown in the profession was beginning to look very similar to what we see in our schools today (Blount, 1996; Perlmann & Margo, 2001).

With the same gender structure in place as in modern times, recruitment campaigns aimed at bringing the American man back into the classroom proliferated. Johnson (2008) pointed out that, regardless of these efforts, these campaigns almost always fell short of “welcoming men into the primary grades.” The author made it clear that for the first two decades of the century it was commonly accepted that women made the most appropriate teachers of young

children. This was often explained with a reference to a woman's, "innate capabilities to furnish what a child needs in these earlier days." Many of the *women as nurturers* arguments present in today's literature have been firmly rooted for well over 100 years.

On the other hand, men were viewed as needed additions to the upper grades. Whether they were teaching boys or girls, the "analytical and critical intelligence" of a man was coveted in the higher grades as it was deemed to not be available under an all-female teaching staff. A divide was developing that cast women as caretakers and men as intellectuals. This academic bias toward men was, of course, only one of many acts of social discrimination that has challenged both genders throughout the evolution of the profession.

One challenge faced by both male and female teachers in America has been the idea of sexual deviance and its association with gender and teaching. Blount (1996) pointed out that, prior to World War II, many if not most board of education policies restricted female teachers from marrying. The argument was that while single women made for superior nurturers of young children, married women's roles were in the home as both mother and homemaker. Ultimately, the eugenic importance of preserving the American household superseded the need to supply qualified women to the American classroom.

After the war, however, the tides began to turn as the ban on married women was systematically lifted, and married women were encouraged to enter the classroom. The once idealized single female teacher, however, was attracting a new scrutiny. As their numbers declined, single women were increasingly being viewed

as probable lesbians. Literature such as, *Factors in the Sex Life of Twenty-Two Hundred Women*, by Katharine Bement Davis (1929) unveiled empirical data that nearly half of the study's female sample had some form of sexual experience with another woman. The study focused specifically on single women with college educations. The findings caused many to fear that single women were no longer fit to teach children as they might try to indoctrinate their students with their alternative lifestyle. Blount (1996) referred to this "spinster threat" as a major social contributor to the decline of single women in teaching after World War II. Despite the fact that this phenomenon did not deplete the overall numbers of women in the profession, it demonstrates the role that social perception could play in altering the profession.

Men were certainly not immune to the effects of social fears. Males in the classroom posed their own perceived sexually charged threat. The 1948 release of Albert Kinsey's *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* (as cited in Blount, 1996) was widely read and accepted across the country. It was estimated that one in every five Americans read the book at that time. Among the wide breadth of sexually charged revelations was the claim that, "persons with homosexual histories are to be found in every age group, in every social level, in every conceivable occupation, in cities and on farms, and in the most remote areas of the country." Whereas homosexuality may have not been on the minds of most Americans, the immensely popular book brought the topic and its associated fears to the forefront of society. Following the lead of the military, attempts to root homosexuals out of the teaching profession were widely undertaken. Some states, Florida for example, changed education

policy to exclude from certification eligibility anyone even suspected of homosexuality. These policy changes reflected the sentiment of much of the population at the time. One study funded by the National Institute of Mental Health reported that 77% of Americans believed that homosexuals did not belong in teaching roles (Klassen & Levitt, 1974). The perceived threat of homosexuality was intensifying while it became a mainstream ideal.

As the decades passed, the homosexual threat was a cause for concern for both homosexuals and heterosexuals alike. Concerted efforts were made to avoid suspicion. Drastic steps such as marrying for the sake of proving one's heterosexuality and amending one's physical appearance were not uncommon. In teaching, however, more subtle modifications were made by both men and women to assure that they were associated with the "appropriate" sexual orientation. Among other measures, teachers were unlikely to teach any curricular area that would normally be associated with the opposite gender. Men were more and more likely to seek positions in traditionally masculine fields like physical education and coaching. In the latter half of the 20th century, this trend made males seeking elementary teaching positions an endangered niche in the profession. Stigmatization that in modern society would likely fall into the category of social injustice was making a major contribution to the barriers that kept men from teaching younger children.

Synthesis

This dissertation is intended to unveil the factors that prevent male teachers from selecting a life in an elementary classroom. While some of these factors may

be unique to the 21st century, several are likely to be deeply rooted in the nation's relatively short history. Regardless, this brief synopsis of the historical gendering of the American teacher offers a window into what has made and is still keeping the nation's elementary classrooms so overwhelmingly female.

The historical events and trends documented in this section can be divided into two categories. The first category contains historical events and movements in policies that are frozen in time. For example, despite having a profound impact on the gender makeup of the teaching profession, the Civil War is not an ongoing factor. In other words, the war is over and its legacy is cemented. Other shifts, such as the change to a full year term and the move toward mandating certification in teaching, also are of a dormant nature. Despite slight variations in these areas over generations, the parameters of the profession are not likely to transform enough to have a large impact on the influx of males into elementary teaching.

The second category contains historical information that often lacks a clear beginning and rarely has a hard chronological ending. The homosexual threat, for example, is still a potential factor in some men's decision as to what subject matter they choose to teach and the grade level at which they choose to teach it. The regularity with which new legislation opens avenues for homosexuals around the world and within American borders would indicate that this factor may be evolving as much now as it was in the latter half of the 20th century. Despite a movement toward acceptance, it would appear that the page on the homosexual threat has not fully turned.

Other fluid variables mentioned in this review, such as the notion that women are superior nurturers and the idea that men are more capable in the critical thinking curricular areas, also remain potential predictors of the grade level preference of male teachers. They too are seemingly ongoing and are likely to weigh on the perception people (both teachers and non-teachers) have on which gender belongs teaching at a given grade level. Consequently, these are the factors that educators and reformers can work with in reshaping the ideals that result in so few males in elementary classrooms. Understanding the historical context in which they arose should make them that much more malleable to the change agents and caretakers of the profession.

Male Teachers and Achievement: Do They Make a Difference?

A great deal of the existing scholarly literature on the lack of male teachers in elementary schools focuses on the impact that men can have on young students. Whereas media discourse and popular practice may openly accept axioms that suggest the ability of a male presence to fortify instruction, some educational researchers have been inclined to question their utility. While there are those who have found empirical evidence that supports the call for an increased male representation in elementary schools (Dee, 2006; Mancus, 1992), there are even more whose findings contradict the commonly accepted ideals that consider the male teacher to be a critical component to bridging the gap between young girls and young boys (Bricheno & Thornton, 2002; Driessen, 2007; Katz et al., 2005; Sokal et al., 2007). Although findings in these studies vary and are occasionally contradictory, this sub-set of literature is quite possibly the most important one to

address this issue, as student growth is at the root of the collective research question.

One of the rare research efforts to produce empirical evidence supporting the call of men to the classroom was conducted by Thomas Dee (2006). Despite being limited to the eighth grade, the study offers the field multiple findings that may be worth repeating in the lower grades. Dee was looking to examine a less-studied component of the single-sex education argument that had been gaining momentum in recent years. Whereas the majority of single-sex literature was focused on the dynamics between male and female students, the author intended to use a rich data source to examine the relationship between pupils and their teachers on gendered lines. Ultimately, this study questions whether or not boys learn better from male teachers and girls learn better from female ones.

The methodology employed by Dee proved to serve as one of the study's greatest sources of power. Data was extracted from the National Education Longitudinal Survey that was initiated in 1988 and intended to gather data from a nationally representative sample of 24,599 eighth graders. The survey reported test data across multiple subjects along with information about each student gathered from two teacher surveys per participant. The teacher survey component sought to evaluate both the academic and behavioral performance of the included students. The diversity of the instrument as well as the size and breadth of the sample resulted in findings that were as meaningful as they were surprising.

Comparable results were found in science, social studies, and English achievement. The effect of having a female teacher as opposed to a male teacher

resulted in a rise in girls' performance by 4% of a standard deviation for these subjects. Boys' achievement, on the other hand, suffered 4% of a standard deviation when they were taught by females. Despite the fact that this 8% gap appears to be strongly linked to the teacher gender, Dee does warn against jumping too quickly toward generalization. Because the instrument only offers a cross-section of student performance (eighth grade), there is no way to determine if the 8% gap was the result of instruction in earlier grade levels.

Despite this major limitation, the teacher survey component was able to expose possible explanations for students' diminished academic returns when taught by opposite-gender teachers. Although levels of statistical significance were left unclear, Dee (2006) pointed out that boys taught by women were more likely to be disruptive in class. Teachers in the study also reported that girls were far less likely than boys to look forward to class and to view class as important to their future when taught by a man. Furthermore, girls were found to be less likely to ask questions under male tutelage. Whether or not these factors resulted in the observed variance in academic achievement is unclear. What is clear, however, is that there is empirical support for the notion that gender may, in fact, bear an impact on the educational experiences of a wide variety of students. Although the impact that teacher gender had on girls is not without value, the true significance of this study is the support it gives to the notion that boys benefit from male teachers.

Mancus (1992) paralleled Dee's (2006) assertion of the value of a male presence in the classroom. Critical to the present study, however, is the fact that her findings were made in an elementary setting. In an effort to assess the impact that

men have on variables such as students' stereotyping behaviors, the author employed the Teacher Gender and Competency Instrument. Rather than assessing gender related differences in academic achievement, this instrument "was developed to test children's attributions of positive and negative descriptor statements to male and female teachers."

The instrument has simple instructions. Subjects were read a statement about a hypothetical teacher's behavior and given an opportunity to assess whether or not that was typical of a male or female teacher. The selected teacher behaviors were designed to represent stereotypical gender-related behaviors. A nurturing item, for example, came in the form of the following statement: "The teacher comforted the crying child with a hug." Other statements were designed to represent teachers with greater authority, as well as with higher levels of academic competence.

The simplicity of the instrument served the study well considering the unique subject pool. Mancus's (1992) study represents a rare research endeavor in which elementary students served as subjects in an experimental design. These particular students attended one of two private schools in a southeastern city. One hundred and three of them attended the control school that offered grades pre-school through grade 8, was parochial, and did not staff a single male teacher. The treatment school, on the other hand, consisted of an approximately 33% male staff. Unfortunately, the presence of these male teachers was not the only methodological difference. The treatment school was a college laboratory school, paid a higher teacher salary to teachers, and used an open-classroom philosophy. While the

presence of male teachers in the treatment school was the reason for its involvement in the study, it is difficult to assess the impact that these other confounding variables had on the results.

Despite these limitations, this study produced findings that inform the study of teacher gender effects. Whereas the differences in responses were not statistically significant between the two schools, there was a significant interaction of sex by school. Control school student responses fell along stereotypical lines. Boys attributed negative statements to female teachers and girls attributed negative statements to men. The treatment school students, on the other hand, tended to be far more equitable in their attributions. Boys and girls alike were more likely to assign negative statements to their own gender. Overall, the statistical analysis of the associated data revealed that children from the treatment school were far less stereotypical and had “less rigid gender-role assignments” when they were taught by a male and a female staff. In addition, Mancus pointed out that male presence had an even more profound impact on the boys from the treatment school.

Although Mancus’s (1992) methodology was plagued by the lack of comparability of the two schools, the findings were both significant and relevant to the study of the depleted male teachers corp. As was the case in the study by Dee (2006), the Mancus study shows the potential benefits that students can reap when taught by a bi-gender faculty. These benefits are not isolated to test score outcomes either. Mancus was able to show social and emotional gains that are often understated in the call for an increase in male elementary teachers. Although these two studies succeed in establishing a foundation for the potential advantages that

men might bring to the elementary classroom, other studies warn against an oversimplified acceptance of this movement.

One such study attempted to measure the impact that a male presence had on third and fourth grade boys who were struggling in reading. Sokal, Katz, Chaszewski, and Wojcik (2007) designed an experimental intervention to evaluate the role that teacher gender plays on reading performance, self-perceptions as readers, and the gender that boys associate with reading. These dependent variables were isolated due to the authors' contention that reading competence is the best predictor of overall academic success. The findings gathered were from a relatively diverse sample of 175 boys in Manitoba, Canada who struggled with reading.

The intervention in this study was a one-to-one pairing of each boy in the sample with either a male or a female research assistant. The research assistants were undergraduates in an education program and served as reading tutors. The boys and their male or female tutor met for 30 minutes every week for 10 weeks. It should be mentioned that no tutor was a certified teachers. This fact limits the ability to generalize this study's results. Regardless of the tutors' credentials, however, all subjects benefitted from the additional instructional time.

The dependent variables were measured using three separate instruments before and after the 10-week intervention. Reading performance, self-perception, and gender association with reading were measured by the Alberta Diagnostic Reading Program Readers' Self Perception Scale and the Gendered Activities Q-Sort respectively. To the many who insist that men are the answer to the lag in the achievement of boys, the results might seem counterintuitive.

The effect that teacher gender had on overall reading performance was insignificant. In fact, the authors reported that the intervention overall was unable to produce significant improvement in the boys' performance on the Alberta Diagnostic Reading Program. Perhaps the brevity of the intervention or some curricular factors prevented the desired performance outcome. Repeating these measures on a more elaborate basis might produce more powerful results.

Teacher assistant gender also failed to have a significant impact on how the struggling boys assigned gender to the activity of reading. Only 6% of the subjects viewed reading as a masculine activity prior to the intervention period. Regardless of whether the tutor was male or female, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) failed to show any significant main effect on the view of reading as a feminine activity.

The only significant main effects of the intervention were on the boys' general perceptions of themselves as readers. Interestingly, the statistical analysis showed that the boys that worked with female research assistants made more positive strides in this area than those who worked with males. Sokal et al. (2007) attempted to explain this split by pointing out the higher frequency of praise to the students offered by the female research assistants. Whatever the reason, this result does not support an urgent need for boys to receive reading instruction from men. Despite methodological limitations of the study, the results offer a warning against oversimplifying the solution to the reading dilemmas of boys. Male teachers may not be the cure-all that some presume.

Bricheno and Thornton (2002) designed a study with the intention of putting common assumptions about male influence to the test. The research evaluated the

relationship between staff gender balance and scores on the Key Stage 2 examination in Great Britain. The Key Stage 2 exam is taken by students between years 3 and 6 in school (ages between 7 and 11), specifically in England and Wales.

Data was obtained from 846 randomly selected primary schools for the 2001-2002 school year. Specifically, the researchers gathered data on the number of males and females teaching in schools, along with associated test scores. In an effort to address the subsidiary questions, the researchers sought information about the types of schools, the geographical areas of the schools, the types of locality, and the genders of the head teachers.

One of the subsidiary questions asked whether or not the gender of the head teacher (a position equivalent to an American principal) had any bearing on the gender balance of a school's staff. It was found that in schools with a male head teacher, only 10% of them failed to staff a male teacher. When the head teacher was female, that statistic rose to 20%. Although the authors confessed that trust in these findings should be only tentative, it seems possible that male heads are more likely to staff male teachers at the primary level. Other potentially meaningful findings from this study include an indication that men are more highly concentrated in schools with larger student bodies. Despite the potential for these and other results to spawn future research, the study's most potent results came from the test score research question.

Bricheno and Thornton pointed out that that their rationale for questioning the benefit of male teachers at the primary level was due to the fervor with which policymakers and mass media continually labeled men as the answer to the "boy

crisis.” The popular idea that balancing the male and female teaching population will promote boys’ achievement has rarely been tested. This study offered a rare empirical examination of the effect of gender balance on student outcomes, as well as a potential wake-up call to those who continually fail to use social science to guide high-stakes decision-making.

ANOVA analyses were used to identify any remaining interactions between variables. No significant relationship was found between gender balance and results on the Key Stage 2 examination. In short, the presence (or lack of presence) of male teachers had little effect on the academic health of the overall pool of primary schools in the study. Analyses did reveal, however, that in addition to the trend that more male teachers were in schools with male head teachers, male-headed schools were more likely to produce students that scored in the highest achievement bracket (scores of 4 and above). Although this does not necessarily support the call for more men in the primary classroom, this does raise an interesting research question regarding school leadership that should be examined more thoroughly. Ultimately, this study provided further evidence that quantifying the benefits that men might bring into the classroom is both a complex and dense endeavor.

Additional evidence of this complexity was provided in Helbig’s (2010) multinational study of teacher gender effects. Helbig used international test data to evaluate two gender-related hypotheses that question whether younger students learn best from same-gender teachers. Similar to the study by Dee (2006), Helbig sought an empirical understanding of whether or not boys learned better from male

teachers and girls learned better from female teachers. The data were taken from the 2006 Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) and the 2007 Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and analyzed over a large sample of 146,315 fourth grade students. That particular grade level was selected due to the fact that most of the participating international school systems had similar structures up to that age.

Perhaps even more powerful than the sample size, however, was the number of nations whose students were evaluated. The authors used student performance information from 21 member nations of The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). The sampled nations included both English and non-English speaking populations from as far away as Asia and as close as The United States and Canada.

Multiple regression analyses were conducted to evaluate effects between PIRLS scores, TIMSS scores, and several other variables, including student and teacher gender. The overall results showed only a limited relationship between gender and test performance. In Austria, Denmark, and Romania it appeared that girls did perform better on the PIRLS (measuring reading in their own language) when taught by a female teacher. This relationship did not exist in any of the other 18 nations in the study. Boys, on the other hand, showed no significant benefit in reading when taught by a male teacher. This result was consistent across all nations.

Similar findings were uncovered in mathematics. Neither boys nor girls scored higher on the TIMSS when taught by same-gender teachers in most

countries. The one exception was that girls in Norway scored slightly better when taught math by women. Combined with the results regarding reading, this means that boys in all 21 nations did not benefit from having male teachers in either subject. These results are particularly relevant to the present study as they call into question the popular assumption that boys will do better with male teachers. That relevance is heightened by the fact that American student data was a part of this analysis. Although not without methodological limitation, this study contributes international credence to the argument that men may not be the clear-cut answer that so many assume they are. Repeating these measures using alternative test data in other locations would be valuable in the continuing examination of this important educational issue.

A final attempt to measure the impact that men have in the lower grades comes out of The Netherlands. Similar to other researchers reviewed (Bricheno & Thornton, 2002; Helbig, 2010), Driessen (2007) expressed bewilderment over the consistency with which male teachers were offered as answers to modern educational problems without scientific support. In an effort to empirically test the ability of male teachers to improve educational outcomes, Driessen used data from the Primary Education Cohort Study (PRIMA). The data set consisted of information regarding the cognitive and non-cognitive competencies of 5,181, eighth grade students from the classes of 251 teachers in 163 Dutch schools.

Although the study addressed several gender-related research questions, the particular findings that are relevant to this dissertation were related to the final question. That question addressed the effects of teacher gender on student

achievement, student attitudes, and student behavior. Student information was disaggregated based on how many male teachers the subjects had been taught by during their primary school years (between 0 and 6). This measure was taken to establish the cumulative effect of having (or not having) male teachers throughout a student's primary schooling. Results also accounted for a phase effect that encompassed only years 7 and 8, as well as a moment effect that was contingent on whether or not a student had a male teacher at the end of year 8. Regardless of the segment of a primary educational experience that was analyzed, the results were extremely similar.

Academic achievement was quantified with both the language and math components of PRIMA. No significant differences were found between year 8 students who had relatively few male teachers in primary school grades and those who had several. Differences were equally unapparent in both phase and moment effect analyses as well. This information is in direct contrast to the popular contention that the feminization of Dutch schools was responsible for dwindling academic success. Once again, male teachers may not be the cure-all that they are often purported to be.

Driessen (2007) addressed the possibility that the benefit of increased exposure to male teachers might lie beyond just language and math scores. In an attempt to quantify this, Driessen isolated aspects of PRIMA that had both students and teachers assess students' self-confidence, work attitudes, social behaviors, and relationships with their teachers. For all of these variables, no significant relationship was found between competency and teacher gender. As was the case

with the achievement data, the presence of male teachers appeared to have no influence on these attitudinal and behavioral variables. While this directly contradicts the popular rationale for male teacher initiatives, Driessen was hesitant to completely dismiss the movement claiming, "...there may still be emancipatory motives to pursue a more generally balanced distribution of male and female personnel." This statement seemingly invites further research aimed at identifying the outcomes that might benefit from gender balance.

Synthesis

The incongruous results of the studies reviewed in this sub-section lead to several conclusions. First, it is evident that isolating the impact of one's gender is, at the very least, a complex undertaking. Whether observing test scores, student perceptions, or student behaviors, findings hinge upon a wide variety of methodological considerations. For example, different researchers operationally define academic achievement in different ways. Authors such as Dee (2006) and Helbig (2010) depended on large-scale examinations of data to evaluate the educational impact that male teachers made in their chosen locations. Sokal et al. (2007), on the other hand, leaned only on outcome data from a small-scale intervention when evaluating achievement. While both methods had their advantages, the inconsistency against which social science is forced to measure outcomes is typical when dealing with a topic as ambiguous as the value that is added by a demographic variable like gender.

It can also be concluded that location bears a major impact on the value of male teachers at any level. This sub-section of literature began with two studies

that support the overall need for an increased male presence in the classroom (Dee, 2006; Mancus, 1992). Coincidentally, both studies were conducted in American. Despite Helbig's (2010) incorporation of some American data, however, the remaining research was done abroad. These studies were far more likely than their American counterparts to produce findings that directly contradicted the popular call to bolster the male teaching ranks. Although the scarcity of research in the field makes it difficult to ascertain, perhaps gender is a more active variable in American schools than it is abroad. Additional research is required before the field can confidently generalize these findings and apply them to the creation of sound policy. The literature reviewed serves as a solid springboard to a future body of research that accounts for the intricacies of gender in education.

Finally, the frequency with which the aforementioned researchers referenced their collective frustration with the lack of empiricism applied to this area of study should be noted. Commentary such as, "...it is remarkable how rarely teacher sex has been addressed as a variable in school-based educational research..." (Bricheno & Thornton, 2002) points to a research community that has grown weary of the use of common sense in making high-stakes decisions. Until that community grows, however, it appears that the push to increase the amount of men in teaching is not going anywhere. It is this fact that makes the research questions addressed in the present study so important. If the world of education is going to press on in an effort to bring men back to the elementary classroom, it is imperative that we gain an understanding of the factors that make so many men so reluctant to get involved.

A Rare Breed: Who Are The Current Male Elementary Teachers?

As overwhelmingly female as elementary teaching has become, males do exist in the profession. Although current male elementary teachers may not be ideal for isolating the factors that keep men out of teaching, their collective path into the classroom has the potential to enlighten this dissertation. Studies that address these novel professionals exist in two forms. First, the literature that addresses the factors that led these men into elementary education will be reviewed. The discussion of these studies will be complemented with a discussion of studies that evaluated the conditions that men were met with while on the job. This latter category consists of inquiries of both job satisfaction and the perceptions that outsiders have of men in elementary classrooms.

Galbraith (1992) attempted to better understand the career choices of men who enter fields that are typically associated with women. For this reason, Galbraith included both male elementary teachers and male nurses in his survey study. Their responses were contrasted with those of women in those fields, as well as with responses of men from the engineering profession. It was reported that engineers were chosen due to the field's heightened association with masculinity.

The study was designed with two research questions in mind. The first question asked about the personality differences between men and women in elementary education, whereas the second question asked about the similarities and differences in perceptions of men in teaching, nursing, and engineering. To most accurately address these variables, the author designed a 35-minute questionnaire based on preexisting scales. Questions seeking information about what different

respondents felt was important to their careers was taken from the Important Components of Career (ICC) scales. To determine personality differences, Galbraith employed the Cattell 16 Personality Factor measure. Finally, Bem's Sex Role Inventory was used to determine how participants assigned masculinity and femininity to relevant scenarios. It should be noted that these measures were all evaluated for construct reliability.

Despite what the author described as a displeasing response rate (only 387 of 1,000 questionnaires were returned), the study did gather meaningful data. Male elementary teachers measured significantly higher than the other subject groups in a number of areas. They were more likely than women in teaching and nursing and men in nursing and engineering to have had a previous career. Also, male teachers were the least likely (36%) of the groups to be willing to leave their careers, and the most likely to be pleased with the way their career was meeting their expectations. In sum, it appears that when men finally do find the elementary classroom, they are relatively committed and pleased with what they find. It is unclear, however, if these characteristics are due to their compatibility with teaching or the fact that they are getting a fresh start in a new career. A closer examination of second-career teachers seems like an area of study ripe for additional research.

The male elementary teachers studied did have some negative job perceptions in comparison to the other groups, however. For one, the subjects in this group were the most likely to feel isolated in their respective roles. While this makes sense when comparing this group to men in a male-dominated career like engineering, it is unclear why male teachers would feel more isolated than male

nurses. Identifying the variables that foster this distinction would make for both a logical follow-up study that could produce sound information useful in crafting male elementary recruitment campaigns.

A final significant finding was that men in elementary teaching were more likely to be viewed as feminine than their male counterparts in both engineering and nursing. Although the author failed to address possible reasons for this perceptual divide, it should be noted and compared with findings from other studies. The role of masculinity and femininity in teaching will be elaborated upon later in this chapter.

Despite their contribution to the study of men in elementary education, the results of the aforementioned studies should be viewed with caution. Galbraith was quick to point out that the study should not be generalized beyond the population of Southern California, from which the subjects had been drawn. Combined with the low response rate, the limitations of this work make further investigation into the types of men that teach elementary school essential. Fortunately, other researchers have attempted to account for the factors that lead men into the overwhelmingly female world of elementary education.

Thornton, Bricheno, and Reid (2002) conducted related research in England. They used a mixed-methods approach that combined data from 1,611 questionnaire responses with data from 148 follow-up interviews. It is important to point out that although the members of the subject pool were all still in the pre-service phase of their career, they were specifically recruited into primary teaching and accurately

represented the gender breakdown of primary school teachers in England (15% male and 85% female).

The authors classified their findings into what they referred to as “push” and “pull” factors into teaching. Push factors refer to aspects of teaching or life in general that pushed subjects into the profession. For example, the common theme that teaching fits better with the demands of parenthood was a common push factor with the female participants in the study. Push factors, such as a desire to change careers or an overall lack of quality job opportunities, were significantly more common among male subjects. In fact, given that not all male subjects had prior work experience, the authors were surprised to find that 43% of male participants expressed negative feelings about their prior work experiences.

Despite their value, however, Thornton, Bricheno, and Reid pointed out that push factors should take a backseat to pull factors when formulating primary teacher recruitment campaigns. Pull factors are the positive aspects of the profession that are so appealing that they pull candidates into it. Common pull factors for all subjects included: the joys of working with young children, the satisfaction the job might offer, and the day to day challenges presented in a primary classroom. Although these pull factors were not broken down along gender lines, it is clear that both men and women in the study experienced at least some of them. For example, a male participant named Guy pointed out that “...job satisfaction is most important for me. I’m one of those strange people that think they are here for a reason.” A deeper look into pull factors that are particularly predominant among males might help in the formulation of future male recruitment campaigns.

The other significant development from this study was the compilation of perceived deterrents that keep people out of primary teaching. Although all of the study participants had already made the decision to teach young children, they were still able to offer insights as to why many people are hesitant to follow them. Among the most popular reasons offered were low pay, low status, and large workload. In fact, of all of the transcriptions that were included in the anecdotal section of the article, none failed to highlight the financial shortcomings associated with teaching.

All of these findings have the potential to inform the research questions addressed in the present study. Like Galbraith (1992), however, the findings should be viewed tentatively. Among several methodological limitations are that the results are isolated to England and that the participants were still in their pre-service training. This latter fact certainly does not disqualify the results, though. In fact, it is possible that pre-service teachers are the most appropriate group to discuss their initial entry into teaching because they have not had their understanding of the process tempered by both time and job experience. They can still remember why they wanted to teach primary school in the first place.

Thornton, Bricheno, and Reid (2002) are not the only researchers to use pre-service teachers in their subject pool. Johnston, McKeown, and McEwen (1999) conducted a survey study of 334 bachelor-level students in two primary education training programs in Northern Ireland. Similarly, they used a subject pool that reflected the gender breakdown of the nation's primary teaching ranks (15% male and 85% female). It should be noted that focus groups were used in the formulation of the questionnaire.

In an effort to avoid oversimplification, the authors pointed out that, "...this study reveals the complexity of the nature of the career decision-making process and where teaching as a career choice is located within it." Although the study revealed the perceptions of both genders, it is the male perceptions that are particularly relevant to the present study. The authors identified several recurring themes. In general, male teachers held the perception that teaching primary school is a job that assigns high value to "maleness." Despite the recognition that primary school is, perhaps, best suited for female teachers, the male respondents did not feel that primary teaching is solely a woman's domain. Overwhelming agreement to statements such as, "If there were no male teachers in primary school, children would be disadvantaged," demonstrated a collective sense that male primary teachers are essential in counterbalancing the influence of a female majority.

Not all of the findings of the study portrayed male entry into primary teaching in such a utilitarian light, however. One of the primary findings was that men viewed primary teaching as a career that has a high likelihood of being seen as "inappropriate for males." The authors pointed out that there is at the very least a chance that male primary teachers will have to confront "societal negativity" that is often associated with situations where grown men are around young children. The men in this study remained in teaching despite facing the ever-existing possibility of being suspected of inappropriateness. Nevertheless, suspicions of pedophilia and other unsavory behaviors join a growing list of deterrents that make elementary education an uninviting profession for men.

Nevertheless, other researchers have been moderately successful in locating males who have had success in elementary education. Perrachione, Petersen, and Rosser (2008) conducted a survey in Missouri in an attempt to redirect the attention toward the positive aspects of elementary teaching. Their research explored factors within the profession that were linked to job satisfaction. The 201 subjects in the study were from each of the 30 counties in Missouri, and they accounted for 67% of the total 300 surveys sent out. Of the randomly selected subjects, only 16 (8%) were men.

The results of the study combined quantitative data with qualitative responses to six open-ended questions. Overall, job satisfaction was apparent as 79% of respondents answered either *very satisfied* or *somewhat satisfied* to a question that assessed their sentiments regarding the teaching profession. Reasons for this satisfaction included mostly intrinsic variables, such as the joys of working with students and the perceived self-efficacy of teachers. The latter variable was evident in open-ended responses such as, "Teaching has its challenges but I feel good almost every day knowing I've made a difference to at least one child."

Interestingly enough, several of the respondents that considered themselves some level of satisfied gave negative responses to the open-ended questions. Extrinsic factors such as role overload and low pay were among the most common themes represented in these answers. Comments such as, "I would be very satisfied if I could just teach the kids" and "It is a rewarding job...the low salary makes the job disappointing" were relatively common considering the high overall satisfaction percentage.

One of the most potent conclusions of the study involved the relationship between job satisfaction and teacher retention. Perrachione, Petersen, and Rosser found statistical support for a positive correlation between job satisfaction and teacher intent to remain in their position. Ultimately, regression analyses yielded the conclusion that teachers that were the most satisfied in the profession were the most likely to want to continue teaching. While this may seem obvious, this study offers empirical support for the idea that isolating and emphasizing factors that increase job satisfaction can have a direct link to strengthening teacher retention rates.

Although these findings are not disaggregated along gender lines, there was no indication that they are any less representative of the male subjects than they are of the females. A closer investigation into how intrinsic and extrinsic factors affect job satisfaction could likely have a profound impact on recruitment campaigns, as well as efforts to improve rates of retention. Limiting the study to male teachers and replicating these procedures in alternative locations would make for worthy follow-up efforts.

Kleckler and Loadman (1999) did account for gender differences in their study. The purpose of their study was to assess aspects of elementary teaching that contributed to both satisfaction and dissatisfaction, to determine if men and women differed in these areas, and to evaluate the impact of teaching experience on job satisfaction for men.

To address these issues, the authors crafted a survey instrument based on The Job Satisfaction Subscale of the National Survey of Teacher Education

Graduates. The sample consisted of teachers employed at what were classified as Venture Capital Schools across the state of Ohio. Despite the effort to survey each staff member at all 129 of these institutions, the survey was returned by only 42% ($n=1874$) of potential subjects. Of those surveyed, 15% were males. It was not specified if that percentage was comparable to the percentage of men working in Ohio's elementary schools at the time of the study.

Overall, subjects rated each of the seven aspects of The Job Satisfaction Subscale positively. Scores on the 7-point Likert scale showed that the teachers rated "interaction with students" most positively (6.01), while "general working conditions" was rated least favorably (4.47). It should be noted, however, that even the general working condition score was on the favorable side of the *neutral* score on the instrument (4.0).

Despite the study showing no interaction between gender and years of experience, significant differences between male and female elementary teachers were revealed. Although still rating these variables on the positive side of the scale, men were significantly lower than women in rating the degree to which they found the job challenging and the quality of their interactions with colleagues. The author alluded to the low representation of males as a potential connection to the interaction differences. In all, however, it was repeatedly stressed that elementary teaching appears to be a satisfying profession for both males and females alike.

Beyond being limited to the state of Ohio, this study is limited by its inclusion of only Venture Capital Schools. The nature of this grant-based program is that it is in the midst of a multi-year grant intended to help fund the restructuring of the

schools. It is unclear if the nature of these restructuring campaigns bore any impact on the satisfaction of the teaching staffs within them. Replicating this study in traditional public schools in and out of Ohio would be a logical next step for future research.

Finally, a study by Wood (2012) attempted to explain exactly who male elementary teachers are. Instead of going directly to the source, however, Wood used a mixed methodology to assess how other teachers perceived their male coworkers. The survey instrument consisted of both open and closed-ended questions and was answered by 217 teachers (of 1,170 who were invited to participate) who worked in four school districts near an urban area in the American Midwest.

Wood (2012) divided the findings into three sub-sections that included the teacher as self, teacher to student, and teacher to teacher domains. Teacher as self consisted mostly of efficacy-type items, including classroom management and content knowledge. Although none of the quantitative results reached statistical significance, the qualitative data were telling. Whereas responses regarding content knowledge were relatively neutral, there were a large number of respondents who questioned both the management and teaching efficacy of their male coworkers. Comments such as "...at times they can be overly strict" and "My male colleague tends to manage his class in a military style, and some students do not respond well to it" suggested that some elementary teachers (women in these cases) questioned the methods and overt use of masculinity as a teaching style employed by some male elementary teachers. A common thread that linked the open-ended responses

was that the elementary teachers in this study were slightly hesitant to attach too much value to simply being a male. Maleness was not viewed as a sufficient replacement for sound pedagogical practice.

Again, the teacher to teacher domain produced no statistically significant quantitative data. The qualitative data, on the other hand, seemed to echo many of the same sentiments reflected in the teacher as self domain. Respondents were hesitant to agree that male teachers have the ability to serve as role models any more than their female counterparts do. Statements such as, "Good male teachers can be hard to find, and students can tell when they have a good male teacher," indicated a sentiment that practice far outweighed gender in defining the impact that teachers had on their students. Also, the qualitative data shows that male teachers are slightly deficient in their ability to offer the sensitivity and nurturing expected of teachers at the elementary level. This is evident in comments such as "I think women are naturally more nurturing than men..." and "Some male teachers are not as sensitive as female teachers."

The findings from the teacher to teacher domain were the study's most ambiguous. Wood described this domain as pertaining to the abilities of teachers to foster professional relationships with their colleagues, along with positive attitudes. Although the author reported that this was the area in which men were given the most negative responses, the open-ended commentary that was reported in the write-up included benign statements such as, "[men] do not let a lot of things get to them" and "...they are more positive because [the profession] was their choice." If male teachers are less effective in forming and maintaining relationships at work,

the data did not reflect this phenomenon. Further investigation into the professional and communicative dynamics between male teachers and their coworkers is seemingly required.

Despite intermittent negativity toward their male colleagues, both female and male respondents agreed that there is a need to increase the amount of men in elementary education. The author points out that nearly every respondent answered as such. This study, however, should be processed tentatively. The author offers that the predominantly white female respondents may have had their perceptions skewed by their own gender biases. Regardless, methodological amendments should be made in order to strengthen the quantitative portion of the findings as well as to offer a voice to other potential subject groups.

Synthesis

The aforementioned subset of research regarding the impact that male elementary teachers have on student achievement may very well be the most important to the world of education reform. This section, however, bears the greatest impact on the present study. The aforementioned studies aimed to identify just who the men in elementary education are. Ultimately, the present study has a similar yet inverse focus in that it uncovers who the men in elementary education are not.

The research reviewed suggests that male elementary teachers have more in common professionally than they do in contrast. For one, it appears that despite being a professional minority, men are typically satisfied with their elementary teaching jobs (Klecker & Loadman, 1999; Perrachione, Peterson, & Rosser, 2008).

Factors such as the joys of working with children and personal efficacy are credited with much of that satisfaction. It appears, however, that one's pathway into the profession may also be partly responsible. Both Galbraith (1992) and Thornton, Bricheno, and Reid (2002) alluded to male teachers commonly having entered teaching by way of a previous profession. Are men at the elementary level more prone to arrive in the classroom by way of a career change than men teaching at other levels? Not only should this inquiry inspire future research, it is included in some form in the interview instrument of this dissertation.

The literature reviewed also exposed several perceived deterrents to elementary teaching. Issues such as the low pay and low status associated with teaching, the overall workload, social isolation, and suspicion of inappropriate behavior with young children were common reasons offered by elementary teachers for why many men hesitate to enter the profession (Galbraith, 1992; Thornton, Bricheno, & Reid, 2002; Johnston, McKeown, & McEwen, 1999; Perrachione, Peterson, & Rosser, 2008). These negative aspects are supported by Cushman's (2007) review of the associated literature. In it, Cushman synthesized the most prevalent findings given for keeping men out of the teaching profession altogether. Similar to the literature in this sub-section, the common themes were low salaries, low status, and issues related to working with young children.

Although extremely relevant, these collected findings have only an indirect impact on the research questions posed for the present study. Despite being limited in its own right, this literature reviewed reported the perceptions of either teachers who already worked at the elementary level or men who had opted out of education

altogether. While the former are obviously not part of the elementary void, the latter appear unlikely to bridge the gender gap in elementary education. Current male teachers at higher grade levels, however, have made the commitment to the classroom. For whatever reason, they have chosen to avoid doing so at the elementary level. Although it seems logical to go directly to the source to research this phenomenon, the absence of this type of literature represents a significant gap. That is the gap that the current study is designed to begin filling.

A Man's Man?: The Role of Masculinity

Although difficult to isolate, the role that masculinity plays in both entering and continuing in elementary teaching deserves deeper analysis. For a man to elect a career teaching younger children is to knowingly defy the gender expectations established in most societies. Simultaneously, one's maleness may be contrary to what is often expected of a typical elementary-grade teacher. Few researchers have attempted to make sense of the complex relationship between masculinity and the elementary classroom.

One research effort by Skelton (2003) examined the perceptions of pre-service teachers seeking Primary Post Graduate Certificates in Education at several institutions throughout England and Wales. Although the sample consisted of a similar number of males and females (118-males; 92-females), the ultimate objective was to produce comparisons among the male respondents. This was accomplished by segregating the male respondents into lower primary groups (training to work with students 3 to 6 years of age) and upper primary groups (training to work with students 7 to 11 years of age). The survey data was

strengthened by using a mixed-methods approach that included 36 follow-up interviews.

For the most part, both men and women in this study agreed that primary teaching was suitable for both genders. Furthermore, there was no significant difference between the genders regarding the statement that more men at the primary level would likely enhance the status of the profession. Both men and women tended to agree or were unsure in regards to this sentiment. There were, however, statistically significant differences between male and female respondents when asked whether more males were needed to serve as role models and whether the public was more likely to be wary of men who work with young children. In both of these instances, men were more likely to agree with the statement. Male teachers' heightened sensitivities toward the suspicion of child abuse makes sense in the wake of what the author refers to as a "media/public preoccupation with pedophilia." One respondent, Mark, appeared overly conscious of the impact that his masculinity has in this realm, as he stated, "As a man, it does worry me how one child's comments could end your career."

Another male respondent pointed out that issues such as child abuse are a big part of the reason that far more men opt for upper primary positions than lower primary ones. Numbers, however, are not the only differences between men in these primary school segments. Response to the survey statement, "The gender of teachers is irrelevant in the primary school," fostered one of the largest divides between men in upper and lower primary training. Whereas 61% of men who taught in lower primary grades were in agreement with the statement, 62% of the

men who taught upper primary grades disagreed. Skelton suggested that this result supported the notion that men in upper primary teaching are significantly more concerned with issues of masculinity than their lower primary counterparts.

If for no other reason, the results of this study are meaningful in that they demonstrate that masculinity is far from a concrete variable. The overarching conclusion that I derive from this study is that the impact that being male has on primary teaching registers in a lot of different ways for a lot of different people. This ambiguity is noted by the author who suggested that further research would be appropriate to gain an understanding the role that gendered behavior plays across a wider array of populations, as well as determining how masculinity and femininity can be “intertwined into the daily management and organization of primary schools.”

Ashcraft and Sevier (2006) examined the interaction between common reasoning for increasing the number of male elementary teachers and the reality that some men perceive on the job using teachers from the area of Denver, Colorado. They made a particular effort to emphasize diversity in their selection of 14 male elementary teachers for their convenience sample.

Throughout the interviews, several themes emerged that suggested that the expectations associated with an increased male presence in elementary school did not always correlate with the realities of being a male elementary school teacher. At other times, however, the realities were in harmony with the expectations. The conception, for example, that men can be more effective in handling difficult boys seemed to match the experiences of the subject pool. One male elementary teacher

commented that, "There are students that respond differently to me." He elaborated commenting, "...being 6 foot 3 makes a difference." While several subjects stated that they were really no tougher or better at classroom management than their female counterparts, they recognized that their masculinity served them well in this regard.

Another ideal often attached to a male presence in elementary school is the idea that children need to see men in nurturing roles. Beyond serving their students as male role models, the male elementary teachers in Ashcraft and Sevier's (2006) study agreed that part of their value was that children were able to see men in roles that were beyond the typical expectations of masculinity. This virtue was evidenced in one of the participants comments that suggested that, "...a strong male can watch Nova and the Broncos, having, you know, a mix of, to be able to have some of the conventional male things...also having the other side where we can enjoy the symphony or be able to read a good book."

Ironically, the expectation that men can offer alternative pedagogies is often undermined by a desire for men to deemphasize their roles as nurturers. For example, several of the participants were demonstrative about distancing themselves from the motherly practices of their female coworkers. One male teacher insisted, "I don't do fluff and that kind of thing...I don't have that cutesy-wutesy, I don't do cute." Comments like these were common throughout the study and were credited by the authors as perpetuating traditional ideas of masculinity.

Clearly, the interaction between masculinity and the objectives associated with increasing the amount of men in elementary education is complex. Ashcraft

and Sevier highlighted the paradox between the tendency of the men in the study to question traditional gender expectations, while simultaneously overcompensating with “manly” behaviors as grounds for future research. All in all, while the call to increase the number of men teaching in elementary classrooms is not in question, the rationale appears to require further thought.

Synthesis

The scarcity of empirical research regarding the role of masculinity in the elementary classroom makes a great deal of sense. Masculinity, as a research construct, is as difficult to assess as it is to operationalize. Nevertheless, two studies are meaningful in that they demonstrate the complex lens through which a myriad of educational professionals view gender dynamics. A concentrated effort to construct a methodology effective in addressing issues of masculinity appears to be both a large and appropriate undertaking.

One methodological concern continually occurred to me throughout my reading of Ashcraft and Sevier (2006) in particular. While I can only assume that they did everything within their power to assure reliability, I found myself questioning the authenticity of many of the male teachers’ comments. While Creswell (2009) did suggest that the presence of an interviewer often introduced bias and inaccuracy to an interview study, I wondered if asking men to be forthcoming about masculinity might intensify this bias. Furthermore, the gender of the interviewer (which was not specified by the researchers) seemed to be a potential roadblock in assuring accuracy.

My interest in this particular issue is based greatly on the fact that this dissertation culminates in an interview study addressing the factors keeping most male educators out of elementary teaching. Ultimately, I am a male researcher who discussed a primarily female career with male subjects. The thought that masculinity was not a factor in the accuracy of the data retrieved seems unlikely. What did happen, however, was that a concerted effort to craft interview questions and protocol that maximize the authenticity of the interview data was prioritized. If nothing else, this subset of data serves to highlight the intricacies of research involving sensitive variables like gender.

The New Recruits: Pre-Service Male Elementary Teachers

Several empirical studies have sampled pre-service teachers due to their high levels of both availability and agreeability (Thornton, Bricheno, & Reid, 2002; Johnston, Mckeown, & McEwen, 1999; Sokal, Katz, Chaszewski, Wojcik, 2007). Literature does exist that calls upon this group for reasons beyond convenience. Cushman (2007) pointed out that the poor attrition rate in teacher training programs was among the top factors that slowed the rise of the male elementary-level teacher population. The studies reviewed in this sub-section attempted to make sense of the current state of male pre-service teachers.

Gamble and Wilkins (1997) surveyed the department heads of 38 New York State colleges that offered elementary education programs. They developed an open-ended survey instrument with three purposes in mind. They intended to quantify the gender gap within the group of pre-service elementary teachers in the

state, identify the perceived explanation for the gap held by department heads, and solicit possible strategies for increasing male enrollment in their programs.

Representatives from 38 of the 62 institutions solicited (47%) returned the questionnaire. Combined, their respective schools had 5,961 students who were majoring in elementary education programs. A mere 448 of those students (7.5%) were male.

The first open-ended question sought to expose explanations for this low number of male students, as perceived by the department heads. As might be expected, the most frequent reasons offered by the respondents were the low pay and low prestige commonly associated with elementary education. Issues involving working with young children and the perception that elementary education is often considered women's work were also toward the top of the list. Although not as common, the department heads credited the fact that men are often single-subject oriented and, therefore, not open to the curricular structure of most elementary subjects.

The department heads surveyed also attributed the low numbers of males in their programs to flawed recruitment practices. Many of the respondents commented that school administrators and policymakers were less than aggressive when seeking male hires to balance the gender of their faculties. Furthermore, they expressed concern with how infrequently high school guidance counselors recommend elementary programs to their male students.

The questionnaire asks department heads to suggest ways to increase male representation in their programs. Naturally, raising the pay for elementary teachers

topped the list. Other popular ideas included educating guidance counselors about the virtues of elementary education programs and placing additional emphasis on gender in the admissions process. In addition, there was a strong sentiment that proactive measures should be taken to change the public perception that elementary teaching is a feminine domain. Ideas such as media campaigns were suggested as a possible means by which to change potential students' notions that men did not belong in elementary education.

Although these findings were limited to New York State, they represent a rare empirical effort to unveil ways to change the status quo. The proximity of New York to the setting of the present study (Northern New Jersey) lessens the impact of this limitation, however. Nevertheless, putting numbers to the gender gap at the undergraduate level serves to illustrate that the lack of men in elementary teaching is not an issue isolated to the professional world. It exists at the university level and will likely require reform at that level if men are to be adequately represented in elementary education.

In a related study, Gosse, Parr, and Allison (2008) used a rarely-examined subgroup from northern Ontario, Canada to examine the male elementary teacher conundrum. They sought the perspectives of five male students that had withdrawn from a primary teacher B.Ed. program. Although the six students that remained in the program were also interviewed, only the information gathered from the withdrawn students was included in the findings of the study.

Those findings were reported using a rather unique methodology called arts-informed research. Ultimately, the researchers combined qualitative data that was

acquired through interviews with creative writing. In this case, the data appeared in the form of a narrative about a fictional male B.Ed. dropout named Rod. The authors explained their choice of arts-informed research by citing its appeal to audiences beyond the realm of educational research, as well as its ability to elicit a more emotional reaction from readers.

When reading Rod's story, two phenomena appear to be at the heart of his decision to withdraw from teacher training. First, the violation of social expectations represented by a man in primary teaching was clearly weighing on Rod. Working class men from Northern Ontario just were not supposed to study to teach young children. In the narrative, Rod points out that, "...when I mentioned to some friends about going to Teacher's College, they asked me why I wasn't going to be teaching high school. I got a few strange looks."

Perhaps more influential to the decision to withdraw, however, was what the authors referred to as "symbolic violence." As opposed to physical violence, symbolic violence usually takes the form of leaving someone out of a group or judging one's behavior against a different set of values than those used for others. The issue of hugging students, for example, really seemed to be a source of dissonance for Rod. He pointed out that, "...if a man has a natural bond with children, at some point in his career it can be an issue! In the meantime, I saw women crouching down and hugging little kids all the time."

Both social expectation and symbolic violence are strong starting points for future research on the dropout rate of men in elementary teaching programs. The study by Gosse, Parr, and Allison should be viewed, however, as no more than just a

starting point. Its limitations include an extremely small sample size and that the participants came from an isolated portion of a Canadian province. Nevertheless, Rod's story reiterates other research findings that suggested that men pursuing elementary teaching felt as isolated in elementary schools as they did in their personal and social lives.

So how do some men effectively cope with some of the negative aspects of male elementary teacher life? Weaver-Hightower (2011) attempted to clarify the answer to this question by using an intentionally small sample of three male, undergraduate, pre-service, elementary teachers. This number was purposefully kept small as a means to promote "micro-level discourse analysis that would also produce generative themes." The researcher sought to ensure this depth of inquiry by employing multiple qualitative strategies including interviews and classroom observation.

The findings were presented along the lines of themes that emerged from the data. All subjects reported that they had faced significant teasing as their friends learned of their decisions to teach elementary school. The subjects coped with the teasing in different ways, however. When George, for example, was asked whether or not he spent his time at school learning to read upside down, he acquiesced, and pointed out that there were, in fact, "blow-off classes" in his program. Stanley, on the other hand, dismissed the teasing as "good natured" and appeared eager to remove any culpability from those friends that have teased him. Regardless of the coping mechanisms that were employed by the subjects, it was clear that the teasing

within one's social circles was among the most pressing issues for these pre-service men.

The "cuteness" issue also proved to be an obstacle for these subjects. Whether that cuteness came in the form of affection for students or unnecessary decoration of the classroom, the overwhelming coping strategy used was avoidance. Stanley's claim that he would not be, "putting smiley faces and rainbows on everything" serves as an example of the ways in which the men in the study attempted to distance themselves from the female majority. The men in this study made it clear that although they willingly chose a profession that is often associated with cuteness, they had recreated their job description along more masculine lines.

Ironically, the subjects' intellectual achievements served to fuel discouragement from their family members. Comments such as, "Are you sure this is something you want to go into?", as asked by Stanley's father, were commonplace. Subjects reported being repeatedly told that they were shortchanging themselves and their abilities by choosing elementary education. Collectively, they coped by leaving the doors to other careers open for their futures. Statements such as Stanley's confession that his "future's wide open" suggest that the repetitive second-guessing of their career choices had caused the subjects to undermine their commitment to an elementary teaching career.

A final drawback of elementary teaching derived from this study that was consistently reported by the male subjects was what the authors referred to as *sexual subjectification*. As opposed to the sexual objectification often reported by women in the workplace, sexual subjectification exists when individuals are

“perceived as always already sexual initiators or, worse, aggressors.” Sexual subjectification often manifests itself by creating a fear in male elementary educators that they will be labeled as either homosexuals or pedophiles by parents and other stakeholders. Coping with this fear was not always easy for the subjects, who reported a variety of mechanisms with which they attempted to do so. Stanley, for example, claimed that it was this exact issue that encouraged him to forego his plans of teaching kindergarten or first grade. He stated, “I mean people sometimes are freaked out by the idea of males you know spending lots of time around four and five year olds you know and stuff like that. ...It’s definitely a gender factor that’s influenced my, you know, decision.” That decision was to opt for training in upper elementary school teaching (fourth and fifth grades) instead.

After a reevaluation of the data, the author asserted that the coping mechanisms employed by the subjects were chosen consciously. They were fully aware that overcoming the aforementioned obstacles was a consistent part of surviving as a male in an overwhelmingly female domain. The strategies presented seemed to work, however, it should be pointed out that these subjects were still in their pre-service training years. Questions as to whether or not these issues are still present and, if so, how they are managed when candidates actually join the teaching force fulltime, are grounds for future research. Despite the small sample size, this research provides a solid foundation for examining the ability to cope with the social pressure felt by male elementary teachers. It leaves a lot of holes, however, that must be filled by subsequent empirical efforts.

Synthesis

The subjects that participated in the studies included in this section shared similar perceptions about the realities of being a male pre-service elementary school teacher. Regardless of whether they were education department heads (Gamble & Wilkins, 1997), current undergraduate students (Weaver-Hightower, 2011), or pre-service dropouts (Gosse, Parr, & Allison, 2008), many of the same obstacles were reported by the individuals involved in elementary education training. For the most part, these obstacles can be divided into two categories. Some of the issues that surfaced in this research are beyond reform. Others, however, could be improved given the right policy and practice initiatives.

The low pay associated with elementary teaching is an example of an issue that may quite possibly be beyond the scope of small-level reform. The likelihood that the profitability connected to this profession will be augmented in a way that draws the attention of a large number of profit-minded men seems small. In fact, it is this very idea that inspired me to focus my inquiry on male teachers that are already working in the profession. A middle school teacher, for example, is not likely to lean on pay as a deterrent to a career in the elementary classroom. Public school contracts are typically structured in ways that reward experience and education level. In other words, male middle school teachers earn the same salary as their elementary counterparts. Factors beyond money are keeping them out of elementary education.

Perhaps some of those factors could be improved. The department heads cited by Gamble and Wilkins (1997) pointed out that an overall lack of exposure to the potential for men to pursue elementary careers may be rooted in high school.

They pointed out that training guidance counselors to promote elementary teaching careers for both male and female students could offer a bridge to parity. Other ideas such as media campaigns geared at dispelling the thought that elementary teaching is solely the domain of women also appear to be both logical and feasible.

While altering these perceptions will surely be a colossal undertaking, an issue that may be even more difficult to overcome is the widely cited fear of being linked to sexual predation. Gamble and Wilkins (1997), Gosse, Parr, and Allison (2008), and Weaver-Hightower (2011) all made significant reference to the regularity with which males connected to elementary education felt uncomfortable with this component of their profession. Whereas no simple solutions were offered in any of the aforementioned studies, the popularity and severity of this issue make it an obvious part of any thorough inquiry into the factors that keep men out of elementary education. If for no other reason, this sub-section of literature cemented the necessity that the subjects of this study be asked a rather difficult question. That question seeks the role that the fear of sexual accusation played in subjects' decisions to teach outside of the elementary classroom.

Theoretical Framework

In the early conceptual stages of this study, it became clear that it required a solid theoretical basis from which to build avenues of inquiry. As I availed myself of many potential theoretical approaches, it occurred to me that I placed as high of a premium on clarity as I did upon applicability. It was not until I stumbled upon Duane Brown's (2002; Brown & Crace, 1996) values-based theory that I was satisfied that both of these criteria were met.

The links between gender and a wide variety of educational phenomena have been approached in a vast array of ways. The infrequency with which men take up teaching elementary school, however, has implications that extend beyond the realm of educational research. As much as the gender makeup of America's teaching force has been connected to several areas associated with student outcomes, the issue of whether or not men teach and, furthermore, whether they teach elementary school, is more a matter of career theory. That realization led me to Brown.

Built upon earlier theorists, such as Rokeach (1973) and Super (1990), Brown (as cited in VanVoorhis & Protivnak, 2012) looked to a particular trait, referred to simply as *values*, as the key to understanding both job preference and job satisfaction. An individual's values are the bi-product of both genetic and environmental factors. Those environmental factors can range anywhere from experiences within the family to exposure to various media images. Brown (year?) pointed out that cultural variables such as race, religion, and yes, gender could play a major role in the crystallization of those values. While some values may be more relevant to one's occupation than others (for example, job security vs. spirituality) Brown was clear in his declaration that this is a holistic approach and no aspect of the human experience can be isolated from the rest.

Brown's (as cited in Patton & McMahon, 2006) value-based theory was simplified by the offering of seven related propositions. The following is a summary of those propositions, along with their relevance to the questions about male hesitation to teach in elementary school. It is important to note that these relevancies are my own interpretation and not part of Brown's explicit theory.

1. Highly prioritized work values are the most important in determining one's career choice. Beyond a simple inventory of a subject's values, it is important to assess where those values fall in each individual's hierarchy of importance. For example, a subject may claim a preference for single subject instruction. In that instance, it is critical to evaluate how that value measures up with others uncovered in the interview process.
2. Collective social values (such as those that stem from one's family or group) are extremely influential in the decision making process. Throughout this study, it was important to assess the origin of subjects' values. The subsection of literature dealing with pre-service teachers, for example, highlighted the issue of men being teased for choosing elementary teaching careers. Such issues need to be further explored to determine the importance that subjects assign to pleasing groups with shared values.
3. Variation of values should be expected between subgroups due to differences related to socioeconomic status, culture, and gender. Elementary teaching provides a prime example of this proposition. If the statistical breakdown of elementary teaching tells us anything, it is that men and women appear to have at least some extremely divergent values when they consider occupational choices. The socioeconomic component of this proposition supports the need to gather male subjects from a wide span of communities. This is precisely the reason that the spectrum of New Jersey's district factor groups was used in the recruitment of subjects for this study.

4. In order to attain job satisfaction, career choices must be made in conjunction with one's values. It is important that as the interview process was conducted, an ongoing effort was made to assess job satisfaction.
5. The interaction between occupation and other aspects of life (marriage, leisure, etc.) results in life satisfaction. Subjects were assessed as to the degree to which their overall quality of life was impacted by their professional life. Are the values that were important in choosing a career related to those that make the subjects feel fulfilled?
6. Individuals that are successful at work have well developed and highly prioritized values. According to this proposition, individuals who have value structures firmly in place should have a higher potential for success. An effort was made to evaluate just how aware the subjects were of the values that drove them.
7. Job success is partially the result of the relationship between the values of the worker, the supervisor, and one's colleagues. This proposition brings the values of the subjects' coworkers into the equation. For this reason, it was critical to assess the perceptions that male teachers had not only of the values of their current colleagues, but also of the colleagues that they would have worked alongside of had they entered the world of elementary education.

Chapter III focuses on the methodology employed to assess these and other critical matters related to the research questions of the study. Creswell (2009) pointed out that qualitative researchers often used theory as a lens through which

they viewed a topic and created meaningful questions. Looking at career decisions in the context of values is made clear and manageable with the help of Brown's theory. Without this pragmatic view of a complex decision, this inquiry had little chance at success. With it, the possibility of filling a much-needed gap in the literature and stimulating the conversation surrounding gender and teaching was far more realistic.

Chapter III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the perceptions of male middle school educators regarding the prospects of teaching at the elementary level. This complex endeavor required the acquisition of data that was as deep as it was elaborate. To that end, I committed to a qualitative methodology. Creswell (2009) pointed out that “qualitative research is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (p. 4). In the present study, the problem in question is the dearth of men choosing to teach at the elementary level. The intended source of meaning was a group of men that had elementary school certification, but were teaching in the middle grades.

This chapter begins with a detailed narrative of my professional path, as well as my interest in the status of men in elementary teaching. I go on to discuss the design of the current study, as well as my reasoning for choosing the methodology. Part of that discussion includes a detailed explanation of the recruitment of the sample, along with biographical information for each of the participants interviewed. Finally, I discuss data analysis. This critical stage of the study is aimed at the revelation of emerging themes that are worthy of discussion and interpretation in the remaining chapters.

Background

At the time of this writing, I am completing my 12th and final year as a public school teacher. Of those 12, the last 11 years have been spent teaching language arts, social studies, and drama in a large suburban middle school. Despite my

passion for pedagogy and the joys that I have experienced working closely with young people, I have chosen this time to activate my certification and pursue a career in public school administration.

My interest in the gender makeup of elementary teaching staffs predates my days in the middle school classroom, however. Between the years of 2000 and 2002 I was living the prototypical life of an aspiring actor. When I was not rehearsing for an off-off Broadway production or attending an acting class, I was working a wide array of jobs in an effort to make the rent.

One of those jobs, substitute teacher, left my nights free and offered me at least a small amount of flexibility in my days. The more I substitute taught, however, the more I realized that working with children appealed to me beyond simple logistical advantage. Teaching offered an outlet for both my creative and academic sides and, perhaps more importantly, made me feel like a worthy contributor to society. As the 2002-2003 school year began, I started down a new path. By way of a large-scale teacher recruitment program sponsored by the New York City Department of Education, I was a full-time public school teacher. There was a catch, however. I was assigned to an elementary classroom.

I learned a lot about teaching and public education in my year in an elementary classroom. Perhaps most vividly etched in my memory, however, is the manner in which people outside of the field reacted when they learned what I did for a living. Comments such as, “those kids need male role models,” or, “young boys will perform better for men,” were common reactions to the news. This type of dialogue was so common, in fact, that I began to take its veracity for granted. It was

not until I availed myself of the associated literature as part of a doctoral course that I realized that these popular claims may or may not be rooted in fact.

Regardless, the more I learned about the small number of men in elementary school teaching, the more I wanted to know what was behind this intensifying trend. To some, answers to questions about the barriers keeping male educators out of elementary classrooms were intuitive. It has become clear, however, that intuition cannot take the place of empirical research. When the time to commit to a dissertation topic was upon me, I had little trouble locating the question that I wanted most to investigate. Although many worthy topics had occurred to me throughout my educational studies, the question that occurred to me on my first day in the field still burned the strongest: What is keeping the men out of elementary education?

Design

In order to best explore this question I elected to use a multiple case study approach. At minimum, choosing a specific career is a complex endeavor worthy of investigation that is both broad and deep. To that end, I decided to employ semi-structured, open-ended interviews with several male middle school educators. The particular type of data collection was intentionally selected to allow the subjects a high degree of freedom with which to explain their experiences.

Wengraf (2001) warned against the assumption that the semi-structured nature of these interactions makes them easier to prepare for. In fact, the author pointed out that while this may be counterintuitive, they often pose an even greater challenge for the interviewer. With that in mind, I designed a fluid interview

instrument based on the literature review and theoretical framework (see Appendix A). Each part of the interview was intended to address the research questions that guided this study, while allowing the interviewee the flexibility to elaborate on their experiences.

The interviewees in this study were male middle school teachers who were also eligible to teach at the elementary level. This sample was selected in order to identify only male teachers that genuinely faced an elementary/middle school conundrum. Having certification that spans both levels heightened the likelihood that it was the individuals themselves and not their credentials that were most responsible for the level at which they were assigned. The socioeconomic status of the teachers' districts, however, was not limited. In order to best identify themes from a variety of environments, teachers from diverse districts around northern New Jersey were sampled. This process is detailed in the following sub-section.

Sampling

One of the principles most responsible for my decision to recruit interview subjects across the socioeconomic spectrum was what Patton (2005) referred to as *maximum variation sampling*. In short, Patton explained that the findings of a study grow increasingly more powerful when data is gathered from a variety of environments. In this particular study, those environments ranged from New Jersey's poorest districts to its most wealthy. The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of male middle school teachers in New Jersey. While there may be vast differences between those teaching the state's poorest and richest

students, the commonalities unveiled by this study were empowered by the diversity of the research settings.

The emphasis on diversity is supported by what Mason (2010) referred to as *saturation*. A sample can be considered saturated when additional data fails to further inform researchers about the research question at hand. While the limitations and delimitations of the present study may preclude reaching genuine saturation, the male teachers interviewed for this study worked in districts that included all of New Jersey's socioeconomic tiers. Producing a heterogeneous sample was a methodological priority.

New Jersey's school districts are classified in a way that makes socioeconomic segmenting rather convenient. In 1975, the state established district factor groups (DFGs) for the purpose creating a socioeconomic lens through which to view student achievement data (New Jersey Department of Education, n.d.). Currently, the district factor groups are labeled A, B, CD, DE, FG, GH, I, and J with A referring to the poorest districts and J referring to the most wealthy. These classifications are updated every 10 years in conjunction with the decennial census. The factors that contribute to a district's placement in a district factor group include:

1. percent of adults with no high school diploma,
2. percent of adults with some college education,
3. occupational status,
4. unemployment rate,
5. percent of individuals in poverty, and

6. median family income.

For the convenience of my sample, I decided to group the DFGs into more general, manageable categories. Those categories were simply titled low income, medium income, and high-income districts. To that end, my low-income district teachers were comprised of only districts that fit into DFG A or DFG B. Middle-income DFGs included CD, DE, FG, and GH, while I and J constituted the high-income category.

Ultimately, my intent was to recruit an equal number of male middle school teachers from low, medium, and high-income districts. In the spirit of maximum variation, my sample consisted of four male middle school teachers from the low income category, four from medium income school districts, as well as four from high income environments. While this sample falls short of exhausting the diversity that is celebrated in New Jersey, it was believed to be representative of the men teaching middle school in the northern half of the state.

Profiles of Participants and Sites

The male middle school teachers that participated in this study were recruited from three middle schools in northern New Jersey. These three schools were chosen due to their status as either low-income, medium-income, or high-income environments as classified by New Jersey's District Factor Group construct. This section outlines those three schools and the four male teachers within each that were interviewed in the winter of 2015. In an effort to protect confidentiality and assure anonymity, pseudonyms were assigned to the participants and the schools.

Rockford Township Middle School

Rockford Township is an affluent town in northern New Jersey that is situated approximately 15 miles from New York City. Rockford has been categorized in District Factor Group J, which consists of the state's wealthiest districts. Of the nearly 2,400 students active in Rockford schools, nearly 600 attend Rockford Middle School.

The teaching staff at Rockford Middle is comprised of 63 teachers, of whom, 18 are men (less than 29%). While this was slightly higher than the national middle school average of 27% male (Goldring, Gray, & Bitterman, 2013), it is consistent with the gender division throughout the district. The elementary schools in the district employed a total of 89 teachers in four buildings. Of these 89 faculty members, only 8 were men (9%). This heightened district-wide shortage of male teachers may or may not have influenced the perceptions of the following male participants in this study.

Mr. Estefan. At the time of the study, Mr. Estefan was a first year physical education (PE) teacher at Rockford Middle School. He taught sections of PE and health across the four grade levels at this fifth through eighth grade middle school. As a Rockford native, he was anxious to get involved in athletics in his hometown. Upon finishing college, he felt lucky to get assistant coaching positions for both the Rockford High football and lacrosse teams.

Because of his passion for interscholastic athletics, Mr. Estefan was eager to find a career that allowed him the opportunity to get to practice on time. Having just recently acquired his standard physical education certificate, he would have

taken any teaching job that was offered to him. He was relieved, however, that the middle school had an opening as their school day ends 30 minutes before the local elementary schools do. This allowed him the freedom to carry on in his coaching roles. Although new to the profession, this young teacher in his mid-20s was in what he considered to be the best role for him.

Mr. Van Dyke. At the time of the study, Mr. Van Dyke had been teaching middle school science for 12 years. He was, however, in his first year at Rockford Middle School. Minutes before my interview with Mr. Van Dyke, a school administrator volunteered a telling statement. He pointed out that, when he called Mr. Van Dyke's former district to check his references, the person on the other phone said, "If you get Mr. Van Dyke, you'll be taking the best teacher that we have." It did not take long to realize that his new coworkers felt much the same about his pedagogical prowess as the person on the other end of that phone call.

It should be noted that Mr. Van Dyke was aware that both his age and lifestyle influenced his perceptions of elementary education. He is a single man (a "bachelor" in his words) in his mid-30s. In particular, he made it clear that while he aspired to one day have a family, the fact that he did not have children impacted his perceptions of younger students.

Mr. Samartine. At the time of the study, Mr. Samartine had been teaching mathematics at Rockford Middle School for 12 years. Also in his mid-30s, he explained that he was certified at a time when New Jersey offered a K-8 general education certification. Since then, he has become "highly qualified" in what he considered to be his area of expertise; middle school mathematics.

Despite having a certification that allows him to teach at the elementary level, Mr. Samartine had yet to do so. He explained that his knowledge of younger children came strictly from his interactions with his own kids and what he heard secondhand.

Mr. Williams. At the time of the study, Mr. Williams had been a middle school teacher for nearly 20 years. Most of that time was spent teaching a number of subject areas in a large urban district within the county. For the 3 years prior to the study, however, Mr. Williams was teaching technology at Rockford. He recognized that his experiences in both an urban and a wealthy suburban district have given him a unique perspective of middle school education.

At the time of the study, Mr. Williams was active in his church parish. This involvement often led him to stints as a Sunday school instructor, teaching children of all ages.

He pointed out that much of what he believed about younger children stemmed from these experiences. In fact, he was the only interview participant from Rockford that had significant firsthand experience with students of elementary age.

Clayton Middle School

Similar to Rockford, Clayton is a short drive away from New York City. The Clayton Public Schools fall into District Factor Group GH, which is at the wealthier end of the middle-income groups as delineated by the DFGs. People in Clayton are competitive, upwardly mobile, and enjoy one of the most ethnically diverse populations in the region. It is not uncommon to see a well-known sports celebrity

sitting side-by-side with a stay-at-home mom at school and town functions. Clayton is a unique place.

The teaching ranks of Clayton's public schools have the fewest male teachers of any school in the three districts from which interview candidates were recruited. Of the 44 teachers at the lone elementary school, only three were men (7%) at the time of this study. The middle school employed only eight male teachers (19%) on its 42-teacher faculty. Despite falling far below the national secondary school average, the men at Clayton Middle School who were interviewed seem united in the opinion that there was a large difference between being a man in the middle school and being a man in an elementary school.

Mr. Coletto. Of all the men interviewed in this study, Mr. Coletto had one of the most unorthodox entries into teaching. In order to earn enough money to study physical therapy, he joined the Navy and served his country as a medic. He explained that one responsibility of a naval medic was to educate seamen about health dangers that existed in their unique line of work. It was from this work that he discovered his love of teaching young people.

Instead of rushing into a classroom career, however, Mr. Coletto moved to New England and explored his options as a volunteer with children of just about every age; from pre-k classrooms all the way to the upper high school grades. In his mid-40s at the time of the study, he has been entrenched at Clayton middle school for the last 15 years. He was teaching sixth grade social studies at the time of the study.

Mr. Dale. At the time of the study, Mr. Dale had spent 16 of his 19-year career at Clayton Middle School. He was teaching 8th grade social studies when we met. Surprisingly, he spent his first 3 years in the district teaching in the elementary school in a second grade classroom. Those 3 years, however, were not by choice. Upon being hired he was placed in the elementary school with the understanding that he could go the Clayton Middle School when a spot opened up. When one finally did, he did not hesitate to jump at the opportunity to join the middle school faculty.

Also in his mid-40s, Mr. Dale insisted that he had a big spot in his heart for Clayton Middle School; the very school he attended as a young man. Despite having a young child at home that he reported takes up a lot of his time, he still coached both the soccer and basketball teams at the school.

Mr. Stokes. Mr. Stokes came into teaching after a brief time as an IT recruiter. A major obstacle for him in the IT position was that the hours at the job did not permit him to get to his basketball-coaching job in time for practice. When he realized that he and the IT career were a bad match, he went back to the field that he had prepared for in college. His undergraduate focus in both math and education allowed him to attain K-8 general education certification, with highly-qualified status in math. He got a job and worked as a math teacher in a nearby town for 3 years.

Ten years prior to this study, he joined the faculty at Clayton Middle School. Concurrently, he was divorced from his then wife who, at the time, was an elementary school teacher in his previous district. That proximity to elementary

education taught him a lot about teaching younger students. At the time of the study, he was in his mid-30s, remarried, and had children of his own. His experiences in and out of the classroom had a large impact on how he perceived elementary and middle level teaching.

Mr. Decker. Mr. Decker was in his third year teaching eighth grade math at Clayton Middle School at the time of the study. Prior to joining the Clayton faculty, he taught middle school for 1 year in a neighboring district. Teaching, however, was not his first career either. Out of college he activated his finance degree and took a job on Wall Street for 2 years. He recalled during the interview that his short stint in the finance industry was not in vain, however. Not only did he come to grips with the fact that Wall Street was not for him, he also met his wife. They went back to school and ventured into public school careers together.

Mr. Decker reported that his wife worked in an elementary school in a nearby district. Still in his 20s and without children, much of what Mr. Decker knows about life as an elementary teacher seemed to come from dinner table discussions with Mrs. Decker. He explained that because they entered the profession together, their relationship functioned as a built-in peer support group.

Hartsville Middle School

Although technically a suburb, Hartsville has a lot of urban characteristics. Neighborhoods throughout the town vary from low-income housing to upscale luxury apartment living. Third and fourth generation Hartsville families live harmoniously among an ever-increasing immigrant population in this district factor group B township. In the middle of the community sits Hartsville Middle School.

With a student body of over 1,300, it is by far largest of the three schools profiled in this section.

Hartsville Middle School had the most masculine faculty of the three schools. That is to say, with 30 out of the 80 (38%) teachers in the building being men, Hartsville exceeded the national average of male middle school staffing by more than 10% (Goldring, Gray, & Bitterman, 2013). It should be noted that male representation does not necessarily beget stereotypical male responses, however. The men from Hartsville that participated in this study had perceptions of elementary teaching that were as diverse as the town itself.

Mr. Casey. At the time of the study, Mr. Casey was in his 19th year as a public school educator. Despite his youthful and eccentric appearance (Mr. Casey wears a full beard with long hair), he was one of the senior teachers interviewed for this study. As a proud history connoisseur, he had been entrenched in the middle school social studies department for 14 years at the time of the interview. He had started his career as an elementary teacher, however.

Mr. Casey's time at the elementary level was split between first and fifth grade. For his first 3 years he taught a first grade title I class. He spent the remainder of his time teaching a language arts/social studies block in his school's fifth grade. His transition to middle school teaching was a result of a structural shift in the Hartsville Public Schools. When the district moved the fifth grade into the middle school, Mr. Casey went with it. He has been at Hartsville Middle School ever since.

Mr. Jelinick. Similar to Mr. Casey, Mr. Jelinick has a passion for history. In his 10th year at Hartsville Middle School at the time of the study, he settled into a fifth grade social studies position that allowed him to focus exclusively on this, his preferred subject matter. Prior to taking a role as a middle school teacher, he spent time at the elementary level in two separate, long-term, substitute-teaching positions.

At one point during his undergraduate education, Mr. Jelinick was headed down an entirely different career path. He reported that he had his heart set on a future in law enforcement. It was not until he started substitute teaching in Hartsville Middle School (the school he attended as a child) that he reconsidered his path. With a little encouragement from the school principal at the time, he changed his course of study and was able to earn K-5 certification with highly-qualified status in social studies.

Mr. Disavino. After completing his student teaching in an elementary special education classroom more than 20 years ago, Mr. Disavino has yet to return to the lower grades. Of his 20 years as a middle school special education teacher, the last 7 have been at Hartsville Middle School. At the time of the study he was teaching special education science in all four grades of this fifth through eighth grade school.

Although in his mid-40s at the time of the study, Mr. Disavino indicated that the end of his teaching career was near. He stated that he was considering several fields outside of the realm of education. He expressed the hope that whatever he

pursues, however, would leave him with an equal amount of free time to dedicate to his young child.

Mr. Stengel. Mr. Stengel is another example of a man who chose teaching as a second career. His original career was in public relations where he realized that his future was limited. He returned to school and earned a standard teaching certificate. While studying, he taught physical education in a Catholic school in a neighboring town for 3 years. That experience exposed him to students from kindergarten through the eighth grade.

Fifteen years prior to this study, Mr. Stengel was hired here at Hartsville Middle School, and he has served the school in several capacities during this time. At the time of the study, he was teaching eighth grade language arts. He pointed out during the interview that he is the only male language arts teacher in the building. He also insisted that that fact did not affect him in the slightest.

Data Collection

The data in the present study was collected through semi-structured qualitative interviews. Prior to recruiting subjects for these interviews, however, this research proposal was examined and approved by the Seton Hall University Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB accounts for federal regulations and ensures that the rights and welfare of subjects are protected.

Following IRB approval, I followed a strict procedure for connecting with subjects. First, I solicited 12 superintendents from diverse socioeconomic locations in northern New Jersey for permission to conduct my research in their districts. A letter containing a complete outline of my research questions and chosen

methodology was included in the correspondence (see Appendix B). The first three responses from each of the respective demographic categories came from Rockford, Clayton, and Hartsville. This, combined with the superintendents' enthusiasm for this research, made these districts a logical fit for inclusion. Once permission was granted, I was put in contact with building principals and assistant principals for the purpose of identifying eligible subjects. These administrators were extremely helpful in determining which male faculty members met the criteria for inclusion in this study. Furthermore, they made contacting potential subjects (usually through email) more efficient. The final step in this process consisted of asking subjects to participate, volunteers signing a consent letter (see Appendix C), and ultimately arranging a time and place to meet for the interview. The first four participants from each location that were able to coordinate their work schedules with my school visits were interviewed and included in this study.

The interview instrument that guided these meetings was inspired by the research questions articulated in Chapter I as well as Brown's (2002; Brown & Crace, 1996) value-based theory of occupational choice and satisfaction. To ensure reliability, a jury of experienced middle school educators evaluated the interview questions prior to their inclusion in this study. Table 1 provides a summary of the relationship between each interview item and the four research questions that guide this inquiry.

Table 1

Research Questions with Associated Interview Items (Some interview questions may apply to more than one research question.)

<p>How do elementary certified male middle school teachers describe their decision to teach outside of the elementary classroom?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe how you came to teach in your current assignment/certification area. • What factors were most important in deciding the grade level certification that you would pursue? • Have you ever considered teaching or were you encouraged to teach at the elementary level? • How intellectually challenging do you find your current job? • What professional values do you hold most sacred?
<p>How do elementary certified male middle school teachers perceive the challenges, if any, for men at the elementary school level?</p> <p>AND</p> <p>What do male middle school teachers perceive as being the greatest advantages, if any for men at the elementary school level?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why do you feel that women are represented at such a higher rate than men in the elementary classroom? • How might teaching elementary-age children be different from teaching middle school-age children? • What is your opinion of the common arrangement where elementary teachers teach all subjects to one group of students? • According to the literature, there are far more females than males teaching in most elementary schools. Describe the virtues and vices of this phenomenon. • Do you perceive any stigma attached to elementary teaching?
<p>How urgent do male middle school teachers perceive the call for an increase to the amount of men in elementary classrooms to be?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you believe that younger students benefit from having more male teachers at the elementary level?

It should be noted that both the research questions and their associated interview items have been deeply impacted by the literature reviewed in chapter 2 of this dissertation. Concepts such as extrinsic and intrinsic motivation

(Perrachione, Peterson, & Rosser, 2008), push and pull factors (Thornton, Bricheno, & Reid, 2002), and the ways with which men cope with external forces (Weaver-Hightower, 2011) shaped an interview instrument that was designed to provoke reflection, while allowing subjects the freedom to speak openly about their perceptions about the prospects of teaching at the elementary level.

One measure designed to promote this freedom was my choice of where and when to hold the interviews. Interviews were scheduled on school days, usually took between 30 and 45 minutes, and were conducted during or close to school hours. I met with the male teachers in their classrooms or in locations of their choosing. The motivating factor of these choices was to provide a sense of “home turf” that would, in turn, promote unguarded responses.

Turner (2010) provided suggestions for other, subtler ways that a researcher could encourage open discourse. For example, he encouraged that note taking be handled carefully. Sometimes, when an interviewee sees the researcher jump to take a note, they can get a sense of approval or disapproval that could cause them to adjust their responses accordingly. Because of this, I made a conscious effort to limit my note taking and, instead, check regularly that the audio recorder was functioning properly.

Throughout this study, the audio recorder was an Olympus LS-10 USB voice recorder. All subjects signed consent forms granting permission for the recording of their interview. Interviewees were informed that the recordings in this case were in the form of SD memory cards that were to be kept in my home in a locked closet until they were no longer of use. After 5 years, the memory cards will be destroyed.

An important methodological consideration was that the interview subjects were emailed a copy of the transcript of their interview. This measure was put in place for multiple reasons. Primarily, sharing the transcripts with subjects was considered a critical means with which to ensure the validity of the data. On some occasions, however, the transcript inspired further insight that subjects felt should be shared with me. This safeguard was important in preserving both the accuracy and plenitude of the data.

Another factor that promoted a heightened level of comfort for subjects was the assurance that their identities would be kept confidential. All names and identifying details were redacted from all of the transcripts produced from the interviews. In addition, each subject was assigned a pseudonym based on a system known only to my dissertation committee and me. The names of the districts that employed the male middle school teachers that volunteered for this study were not included in any reporting. Protecting and preventing harm to any and all of the participants of in this study was and will continue to be a top methodological priority.

Data Analysis

After the data collection procedures were completed, it was time to analyze what amounted to several hours of digital audio recordings. Creswell (2009) simplified the concept of data analysis by explaining that this is where the qualitative researcher makes sense out of text. Creswell also recommended a multi-step process to do this, with a specific-to-general progression.

The first step of that process is to prepare the data in a way that makes it able to be organized and eventually coded. In the present study, this meant transcribing the interviews verbatim directly from the audio files. Although speech-to-text software and professional transcription services were available at the time of the study, I chose the most labor-intensive method. This decision allowed me to familiarize myself that much more with my data. Creswell (2009) pointed out that data analysis often occurs concurrently with data collection. Maintaining an intimate relationship with this data allowed for me to capitalize on the analytic progress I had made while interviewing the subjects.

After transcribing, repeatedly reading, and notating the interview texts, it was time for perhaps the most critical step in data analysis, coding. Simply put, coding takes place when the data is organized into chunks. Again, there are benefits to employing a more traditional approach. Color-coding and literally cutting and pasting hardcopies of text are viable alternatives in the coding process. For this study, however, I used a qualitative computer software program called NVivo 10. This program offered an efficient way to label segments of uploaded text and supplied a multitude of tools that were useful in evaluating how those segments (codes) related to each other.

To this point, the pivotal moment in the coding process came after I had completed the initial coding of all 12 interviews. It was at that point that I found myself with data lumped into more than 30 *nodes* (an NVivo term for code). NVivo, however, encourages data analysts to use the “node classification” tool to merge nodes into related, more overarching, categories. Four major themes were

identified. Those four themes, the nature of manhood, the nature of the work, the nature of the students, and stigma will be expounded upon in Chapter IV.

Summary

This chapter summarized the methodological decisions that were made in order to address the research questions. I established the tone of this critical part by sharing some of my personal experiences that inspired this inquiry. After outlining both the research design and sampling methods, I provided information about the male teachers that participated in this study, along with the locations from which they were recruited. Finally, I described the methods used in the collection and subsequent analysis of the data. The findings from this effort are presented by theme in Chapter IV.

Chapter IV

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Twelve male middle school teachers participated in this qualitative, semi-structured interview study. Throughout the time that I spent with these men, I had a genuine feeling that they were unveiling authentic and unguarded perceptions about the prospects of teaching at the elementary level. At no point did I feel that the subjects were searching for the correct answers to my questions, nor did I have the sense that they were answering in the spirit of professional preservation. In fact, at times these educators shared sentiments that, in another context, might have been considered unpopular or inappropriate. By the time the final interview was completed, I was satisfied that the process had produced rich and valuable data that could help answer the following research questions:

Research Question 1. How do elementary certified male middle school teachers describe their decision to teach outside of the elementary classroom?

- Subsidiary Question 1. What intrinsic factors, if any, influence middle school teachers to seek placement outside of the elementary classroom?
- Subsidiary Question 2. What extrinsic factors, if any, influence middle school teachers to seek placement outside of the elementary classroom?

Research Question 2. How do elementary certified male middle school teachers perceive the challenges, if any, for men at the elementary school level?

- Subsidiary Question 1. How do male middle school teachers perceive the impact on job satisfaction that may result from working in a female-dominated profession like elementary teaching?
- Subsidiary Question 2. How do male middle school teachers perceive the impact that teaching elementary school might have on the way they are viewed by others?

Research Question 3. What do male middle school teachers perceive as being the greatest advantages, if any, for men at the elementary school level?

Research Question 4. How urgent do male middle school teachers perceive the call for an increase to the amount of men in elementary classrooms to be?

- Subsidiary Question 1. What groups, if any, will benefit from an increased presence of men in elementary school?

After an in-depth analysis of the data, four themes were identified from the interview data. The theme, nature of manhood, describes the often-cited differences perceived between men and women and how those differences impact subjects' perceptions of the teaching profession. The theme, nature of students, reflects perceived variation between elementary-age students and the middle school-age pupils currently under the tutelage of the subject pool. The theme, nature of work, refers to the idea that elementary and middle school teaching positions each require unique energies and dissimilar pedagogical skills. Finally, the theme, stigma, speaks

to the perceived impact that teaching younger students either could or would have on the reputation of a male in the role of elementary school teacher. It should be noted that although certain themes interacted more powerfully with certain research questions, it is the relationship between all four that satisfied this inquiry. That relationship will be expanded upon in Chapter 5.

The Nature of Manhood

Without exception, the subjects interviewed for this study frequently highlighted the differences between men and women. Although the fact that gender difference exists is hardly earth-shattering news, an analysis of the data revealed common perceptions of how those differences serve as boundaries between elementary and secondary teaching. For example, the heightened ability of women to nurture young people was the most common factor attributed by the subjects (?) to the overwhelming female dominance of America's elementary teaching force. Other related differences, such as the ability to discipline and the predisposition toward creativity, populated the data. Each of these is deserves a closer examination.

Females Nurture...Men Do Not

An NVivo word frequency query revealed that the word *nurture* and its related forms appeared nearly 40 times in the 12 primary interview transcriptions. It should be noted that the word *nurture* neither appeared nor was alluded to at any point throughout the interview document. I relied solely on the interview subjects to bring it up. All things considered, no other word was so dominant in the

overarching discussion of gender and elementary teaching. For example, Mr. Jelinick stated,

I think the elementary setting is perceived as a field where women tend to be a better fit. I don't know if it's that women have that inherent nurturing quality that makes them gravitate toward the elementary level. Maybe it's that males feel that women can maybe handle that position better than they could. Or maybe males just don't feel that they have the qualities or personality type to be that nurturing to those students.

The thought that nurturing is a naturally female trait and not a learned behavior was common throughout many interviews. Mr. Casey pointed out that, "Females by nature just seem like more caring individuals and understand that whole motherly nature."

Mr. Coletto added, "Now, being married with kids, I think that women are probably more nurturing."

Mr. Dale pointed out that the single most powerful variable responsible for the gender divide in teaching is the "female biological need for nurturing" mixed with the fact that "young kids need more nurturing...outwardly anyway."

Mr. Williams expressed similar sentiment when he took an introspective look into his family life. He shared,

I know from my own life and my family that, at the younger ages, kids really need the nurturing of a woman. Women tend to be much more nurturing. When something goes wrong and my son gets upset, he's really not running to me for comfort...he's going to her. You see that the mothers are more

nurturing. I'm a pretty patient person but women, for the most part, tend to be able to put the kids at ease. They are accustomed to going to their mom.

Subjects went beyond simply identifying females as having more motherly and nurturing tendencies. Several pointed out that it is these very traits that stack the odds in favor of female success in the elementary classroom. Mr. Stengel, for example, explained, "I think for the younger grades you need that mother figure."

Mr. Disavino agreed when he stated, "They need more of a loving and caring feel in the younger grades. I think a female teacher can offer that way more than a man can."

Mr. Decker suggested that the elementary teacher is an extension of a child's mother between the hours of 8AM and 3PM. He offered the following rationale:

A kid's first bond is with their mother. I think when they first go to school it's still like a friendly face. It's a warm face that may have some of the same qualities as the parent that they've spent the most time with up until that point in their lives. It's that maternal instinct that the mom is generally the one that hands them off and they generally want to hand them off to the work mom. That's the teacher.

The data presented shows that the perceptions of the subjects were that women are inherently nurturing. This only helps to explain, however, why women become elementary teachers. Does the concept of nurturance play any role in why men do not choose to teach younger children? Mr. Van Dyke attempted to address this question with the following introspection:

Maybe it's because I'm single but I just don't have that nurturing side. That's why you see so many more women in the elementary school. They are more likely to be nurturing. Maybe after men have kids they get that nurturing instinct. I have friends that have kids and they tell me that the instincts just happen when the baby is born. Still...I don't think those friends would teach kindergarten, though.

Despite being a father, Mr. Stokes shared a similar disinterest in the role of classroom nurturer. When asked if he had ever considered teaching in an elementary setting, he responded, "No interest. I feel like you'd have to be more nurturing. I'm not a nurturing type of guy." He pointed out that the level of nurturance that some middle school kids require turns him off. "You actually have some sixth graders that are a little soft, in my opinion," he added. "I'm like, dude, you're in sixth grade. You can't let your peers see you cry every day. Suck it up. Hold it down. Suppress some stuff."

Despite having elementary teaching experience, Mr. Casey pointed out the reasons he thought that his maleness would be less harmful at the middle school level. "Little kids...they need more love at that age. I could show no love and just teach all the time. For a 12 year-old that's not going to be too detrimental." He reinforced his self-perceived limited ability to nurture with a humorous recollection of his elementary teaching days. "I could remember as a young guy...do you really want to go with little Johnny to the bathroom and make sure he doesn't poop himself?"

Despite being older when he we was exposed to elementary students, Mr. Coletto described a similar uneasiness with the nurturing aspect of elementary teaching. He stated,

I had experience with kindergarten and preschool. Now as a dad I understand. Not that I wasn't in touch with my emotions, but it's weird having a strange kid hang on you. I was a 35 year-old ex-Navy guy and I had like 4 1/2 year-olds, and they'd be crying and you're trying to sooth them. I'd be holding their hands. I guess it was nice but it was just different for me. The nurturing aspect made me a little uneasy as a middle-aged man.

Whether the men interviewed for this study were emphasizing how just how nurturing women are or just how nurturing they are not, there was no escaping this concept. In the eyes of these 12 men, nurturing was synonymous with femininity. While each of the 12 participants referenced the nurturing qualities of female educators, not one was willing to assign these qualities to himself. In short, the ability to nurture is an intrinsic factor that serves as a barrier to the elementary level for these and potentially many male educators.

While Women Nurture...We'll Handle the Discipline

While it was clear that the participants thought that nurturing was a woman's game, there was a popular sentiment among participants that assertive student discipline was a man's. While they were not suggesting that women have classroom management issues, the male middle school teachers often explained that their disciplinary style would be inappropriate for younger students. Mr. Williams stated,

From a discipline standpoint, men are more used to disciplining in a manner like “here’s the line...draw it.” There is a line and you are not going to cross it. You go that route with a young child and right away the tears start.

Where with a middle school child, you say, “here’s the line and don’t cross it,” they will usually try to pull it together. So patience and the way you deal with discipline is totally different. For younger kids you have to explain. You have to get down. You have to be very calm. Not that you’re not calm with the other ones, but it’s just a way different approach to discipline.

Mr. Decker agreed with Mr. Williams in that he felt that one of his strongest tools, his assertiveness, would be wasted if he taught at the elementary level. He pointed out, “I consider myself a common guy. A man’s man. I just wouldn’t want that job (elementary school teacher).” He went on to describe the poor fit that his personality would be with elementary-age children. “Younger kids...they’re fragile. A lot of my strengths come with being assertive and loud. I just wouldn’t be able to use those strengths.”

As a teacher of students that range from fifth to eighth grade, Mr. Disavino saw a significant difference in the way he disciplined students across that span. He shared,

I think it’s harder for males to teach younger kids in terms of behaviors. Males have a better grasp in terms of having control over older kids than they do over younger ones. In my room, I let my fifth graders get away with a little more than my seventh or eighth graders. With the older kids I get a

little louder and a little angrier and it does the trick. That'd probably freak out those fifth graders.

One participant, Mr. Stengel, had the unique experience of teaching kindergarteners during the same stretch that he was teaching eighth graders. He reported that he had infinitely more trouble managing the younger students. He explained,

When I had my first job teaching k-8 phys. ed, the worst day was Wednesday. That was kindergarten day in the gym. I remember being in a panic and asking the kindergarten teacher how they control them. They laughed at me and said, "We've seen you control the eighth graders. How can you not control these kids?" I had to tell them, that's why I am here. They finally just said to make everything a game.

Mr. Samartine put it most bluntly when he said, "I like middle school because you can flex on these kids. It's easier when you're a man. If you come at them hard enough they're not going to cross you. I wouldn't try that with a little kid, though."

Unlike nurturing, not every participant mentioned student discipline when perceptions of elementary teaching were discussed. The five that did bring it up, however, felt very strongly about it. Whether explicitly stated or implied, they considered their gender to be an advantage at the middle school level. In their estimation, that advantage would be surrendered with younger children who would not be as receptive to assertive discipline.

Creativity: Leave the Arts and Crafts to the Women

Another intrinsic factor that multiple subjects attributed to the feminization of the elementary classroom is the need for creativity. Creativity, in this sense, refers to the heightened call for arts and crafts and related activities that are so often woven into the elementary routine. Three men pointed to this phenomenon as being explicitly female. For example, Mr. Stokes said,

It's a lot of hands-on things. A lot of projects. A lot of coloring things. A lot of cutting things out. Women are into arts and crafts and things like that.

That's something that I don't excel in. There's a lot of doing. This is math.

There's a lot of doing here too, but you know what I mean. There's a lot of projects. All day you see these women doing hands-on projects and setting up centers. It's not for me. It's just not me.

Mr. Stokes also commented that the appearance of a typical elementary classroom is inherently female. Having once been married to an elementary teacher, he has had a firsthand look at the creative room as a part of elementary school culture.

The appearance of the classroom goes right back to nurturing. I feel like females decorate the classroom. They have stuff all over the place. They have posters up to document birthdays. There's all these aesthetically pleasing things. You walk into an elementary classroom and you immediately notice the things on the walls and all the colors. It's very artsy. My ex-wife was a third grade teacher. She was constantly changing the room

around. It's good for those kids...it'd just be a little odd if that was being done by a guy.

Mr. Dale reflected on the way that the call for creativity did not sit well with him during his 3 year tenure in a second grade classroom. The building-wide focus on bulletin board appearance did not seem to match his masculine sensibilities. He recalled,

I like fishing, hunting, and sports and stuff. The next thing you know I am trying to figure out what border to staple up around my bulletin board. It was ridiculous. After a while I just convinced the other teacher to do it for both of us. She was into it. It was embarrassing.

Not all participants that brought up creativity in the classroom did so with disdain. Mr. Williams viewed the elementary emphasis on creativity in a positive light, however, he was aware that it can be a little intimidating for the average man. He explained,

If you're not an artistic person you might be a little intimidated by the fact that you may have to do a lot of hands-on things...work with manipulatives and things like that. You have to do cutouts and artwork that goes with it. The artistic side...women tend to be a little more artistic than men. Me, I kind of like that stuff. I guess that's why I'm one of the rare men that wouldn't mind teaching elementary school.

Other Gender Issues

Similar to nurturing and discipline, creativity was not introduced by me at any point in the interview. Their presence in the data is significant as the probability

that they represent authentic perception and not merely responses to provocative questions is higher. They were not, however, the only perceptions unveiled by the interviews. They were simply the only gender-related perceptions that were offered repeatedly.

One gender-related issue was presented by Mr. Casey and involves career options for less academically inclined female college students. Simply put, he felt strongly that when all other options seem unlikely, females in college could always fall back on elementary education careers. He said,

I feel like elementary school teacher is a goal for the...how can I be nice? You know what? I won't be nice. It's a goal for the dumb chicks. It's for the dumb chicks in college that can't do anything more challenging. You know that old adage? Those who can do...do. Those who can't do...teach. It's for girls that just don't have any avenue. You know...you gotta be smarter than a 5 year old.

Although he stopped short of claiming that men are intellectually superior to women, one might infer that Mr. Casey believes that elementary teaching is a less intellectual endeavor than secondary teaching. Furthermore, one might interpret that he believes that due to its simplicity, it is more appropriate for a female than a male teacher. Again, this was the only occurrence of a male participant hinting at an intellectual divide between genders.

Another gender-related thought presented throughout the interviews had to do with socializing with coworkers. Mr. Dale seemed to feel that the social differences between men and women played a big part in why men are so reluctant

to teach at the elementary level. He reflected on his time working in an elementary school to illustrate his point.

One of the reasons that I think some men don't want to get into the profession (elementary teaching) or some of them have a difficult time with the profession is the faculty room. Even in the middle school, I don't go in there. It's usually all women. You lose that camaraderie. This middle school has gone up and down as far as how many men work here. A few years back, it seemed that we got a lot more guys. We were going to happy hour every Friday. There'd be a good mix of guys and girls. I was looking forward to coming to work everyday...and still do. Whereas, when I was in the elementary school...sure we'd go out every once in a while but it was just me and 5 or 6 women. Normally I wouldn't mind that (laughs), but this wasn't exactly what I was looking for. It's an entirely different scene.

Again, socializing during and after work was not an issue presented by other participants. Nevertheless, all of these factors provide a small window into the way men perceive themselves as well as their female counterparts. Despite the fact that 8 out of the 12 men that participated in this study have had some classroom exposure to elementary age students, most of them see elementary teaching as a female enterprise.

The differences between men and women, however, were not the only factors that the participants felt to be relevant to this study's research questions. This next section presents the perceptions that the participants had of the most critical players in elementary education, the students themselves.

The Nature of Students

Although the gender makeup of elementary and middle school faculties certainly makes the levels unique, there is another variable that creates even greater variance. The students in elementary school are as young as 5 years old and are rarely older than 11. Middle school students, on the other hand, usually range in age from 10 and 14 years old. Typically, these differences in age come with differences in both maturity and cognitive ability. These dissimilarities play a significant role in forming male middle school teachers' perceptions of elementary education.

For the most part, the 12 participants viewed the differences between elementary-age students and the students that they encountered in their middle school positions through four lenses. They saw great variation in elementary and middle school students' abilities to work, abilities to think, and their abilities to manage their social and emotional selves. Furthermore, they saw a wide gap in their own abilities to communicate and relate to students at different levels of schooling.

Relating to an Elementary School Student

Overall, the male middle school teachers that participated in this study valued the relationships that they had forged with students throughout their perspective careers. Several participants were able to find virtue in the fact that middle school students are able to communicate with adults in a familiar way. That familiarity, however, does not necessarily exist when dealing with elementary school students. Mr. Stokes simplified the matter when he stated, "I feel that with

my personality I could have more fun with older kids than younger kids.” When asked if he ever considered teaching at the elementary level, he stated,

I thought about it and then I thought again. I’m pretty sure people would steer me away from them (elementary age students). It’s my sarcasm. I don’t necessarily think that I’d have a problem teaching that level, I just wouldn’t enjoy it as much. I could probably conform and teach that age group but I wouldn’t be myself. They wouldn’t get my humor. I use sarcasm mixed with a dry sense of humor. The things I would say to them would go right over their heads and they wouldn’t get it. It would be wasted on a younger audience.

As a former volunteer in an elementary setting, Mr. Coletto had firsthand experience with elementary students’ inability to process sarcasm. He recalled, “There was no sarcasm. I was making comments to little kids about how they’re dressed. They weren’t getting it. It was right over their heads.”

Mr. Decker also mentioned sarcasm when he explained the communicative barriers that existed between a younger student and himself. He, however, focused more on some of the characteristics he enjoys most about the middle school students he was working with at the time of the study.

I like the kids at this age. I can’t prove it scientifically but they’re like real people almost. They understand sarcasm. You can be tough on them. You don’t have to baby them. You can treat them like anyone else almost. I appreciate that here. I don’t know if it’s the same with sixth graders but by the time they get to eighth grade they’re tough enough where...you still

rule...but you can speak to them like equals. I've done just a little work in a third grade classroom but I felt I had to really slow it down for them. I had to change the way I talk. You can't burn a kid. You can't make an example out of anyone.

Despite Mr. Decker's description of having tough-love interactions with his middle school students, one gets the feeling that he truly appreciates the common ground that he shares with his kids. In this regard, he has a lot in common with Mr. Williams who seemed to value the fact that his humor was not lost on his middle schoolers. He stated,

With middle school kids there's a degree of being able to have more mature conversations. With the lower grades there's less joking and my personality is one that enjoys plays on words and jokes and that's totally lost at the elementary level. It goes right over their heads. What I really enjoy about fifth, sixth, and even seventh and eighth grades are that that's where more critical thinking and even a play on words or some joking around come into play. They're old enough to realize that there's something a little more than just what I said going on. It might be a joke. It might be a pun or something else like that.

Whether it is for the purpose of giving students a hard time or just having some laughs, several participants in this study viewed middle school students as having a greater ability to communicate on a common level than their elementary counterparts. Although not all 12 participants verbalized this perception, it should be noted that not a single male teacher interviewed contradicted this idea. Relating

to students in a conversational manner, however, was not the only concern voiced in regard to students of different ages. The ability for an elementary school student to work at an acceptable level also was discussed.

The Work Ethic of an Elementary Student

Several of the male middle school teachers interviewed for this study noted the inability of elementary age children to work diligently in class. A perceived drawback of working with younger students is that there is an excessive call in the lower grades for managing time and refocusing energy. Mr. Stengel reflected on his own experience. He stated, "At the charter school I taught fourth grade. It's a little different than teaching middle school. You have to have a heck of a lot more patience teaching in an elementary school."

Mr. Van Dyke discussed how elementary student sensibilities contradict what he loves most about science instruction. He seemed to feel strongly that he would not be able to take his preferred approach with less responsible (and younger) students. He stated,

I love it (science) when it's hands-on. I like the kids to really get involved in the materials that I introduce into class...particularly the labs. I can only imagine how I'd have to change the way I do things with the little kids. I'd have to be on top of everyone making sure they weren't misusing everything or playing with the chemicals or something like that. Instead of leading an investigation I'd be babysitting.

Mr. Jelinick also discussed how the differences between elementary and middle school students affect the type of strategies a teacher is forced to employ at either level. He stated,

Students at the elementary level can't sit down for 20 minutes without deciding to deviate from the task. The elementary teacher has to be on their feet the entire time. They have to be interactive with the students. The middle school age students are a little more independent and can handle a lot of different types of activities. I like it when I can just have the kids do.

Finally, Mr. Stokes objected to the elementary-level imbalance between work and play. Although he did not suggest that elementary teaching should take on another form, he recognized his personal disinterest in having to counter every academic objective with fun and games. He explained,

That's another thing. It's made to be a lot more fun in the elementary school. When you get to the middle school it's more serious. It's grade driven. I'm not going to say that either is more important but when you talk about rigor...the middle school is obviously more rigorous. You can't work those elementary kids for too long before you gotta bring in the fun and games. If that's your thing then go teach elementary school.

It seems likely that the lack of academic endurance of the elementary-level students is related to their inexperience with higher order thinking. In fact, Mr. Dale theorized that, "...elementary students are conformists. It's like monkey see, monkey do with kids that age." The next section examines the role that subjects' perceptions of student thinking play in their grade level preferences.

Higher Order Student Thinking

A critical objective of most educators is to encourage their students to use higher order thinking skills. The male middle school teachers that participated in this study spoke fondly of the fact that, in their opinion, this ability begins to take root during the middle school years. Mr. Casey, for example, spoke enthusiastically about the thinking that goes on in his middle school social studies classes.

You can tap into things with 11 and 12 year olds that you just can't with a 6 year old. For instance, we're doing a unit on political ideology right now. I can talk about fascism and they can look at what Hitler did and say, "Oh! That's fascist!" Younger kids just don't have that synthesis and analysis. There it's more concrete stuff. Know your math and your ABCs. I guess it gets back to the nature of what you teach and what you could learn. I just feel that, with middle school kids, as they get older it's just expanding and they can see things that are more abstract. That was inviting to me.

Mr. Samartine expressed a similar sentiment when he discussed middle school math instruction. His aversion to teaching the fundamentals solidified his desire to teach middle school and avoid elementary education at all costs. He insisted:

I love teaching math. With the exception of gym, that's pretty much the only thing that I'd want to teach. I couldn't do it in elementary though. I like the application and the challenge of it all. Teaching simple addition and subtraction would bore me to death. If I had to teach that I'd go find something else to do.

Mr. Dale expanded upon his thoughts about elementary “conformists” by contrasting that perception with the idea that middle school minds are far more malleable. He seemed to take particular pride in his ability to affect the viewpoint of his students. He stated,

Elementary kids don’t really start to develop their own voice. In middle school they are in that flux state. They’re learning about themselves and who they are, where they stand in society. Basically their role. They are very malleable at this stage. They can be influenced. They haven’t made up their minds about a whole lot of things. They starting to form their own opinion and you can kind of shape that. It’s like if you were given stone and then it turns to clay only to revert back to stone again. I want that clay.

Mr. Jelinick considered his own career and came to a similar conclusion as Mr. Dale. He reported that one of the factors that made middle school teaching so much more appealing to him was the impact that he felt that he could make on students that are coming of age. He stated,

When I was subbing I was placed in the elementary schools a lot. I did a long-term substitute assignment as an aid for a girl in third grade. At that level I felt like the kids liked me. I had a good time with them. I wouldn’t necessarily say that the kids came of age because of their time with me. That’s why I felt that the middle school age group was where I could be most effective at guiding them. I feel like the 11 or 12-year-old mark was a better fit for my style of teaching and my personality. I could get them to think and help them onto a path of success.

Clearly, the four male middle school teachers that addressed this issue recognize the tendency for middle school students to think at a higher level than their elementary counterparts. While that is certainly no surprise, what is significant is just how much of a factor the matter was in forming these individuals' perceptions of elementary teaching. While the ability to relate to elementary students and elementary work ethics mattered, it appears as if thinking was most directly connected to the sense of worth and meaning that subjects placed on their profession. It is unclear, however, whether the strength of this connection is due to internal or external forces.

The Emotional Stability of Students

A final factor related to the nature of students that weighed on the participants of this study was the emotional stability (and instability) of children. Subjects were not in agreement, however, in their perceptions as to which group presented the emotions that were the most difficult to manage. Mr. Decker, for example, found the emotional rollercoaster that many elementary students ride to be a major turnoff. He pointed out, "I see it with the stories that my wife tells me in her (elementary) classroom. Kids are having a good time one minute and it's tears the next. I've got no interest in that."

Mr. Disavino relied on his training to assess the strain that emotional instability puts on an elementary school teacher. He remembered,

I did my student teaching in an elementary school for TMR. That's "trainable mentally retarded." That's how they classified them at the time. The kids were 8-years-old and self-contained. It was challenging. The whole

perception of the grammar school...you have to baby them and stuff like that. You really have to worry about their feelings. You gotta make sure they don't bully each other, because it happens at that age.

Mr. Jelinick considered the emotional needs of elementary students to be among the most powerful variables perpetuating the lack of men at the elementary level. He suggested that, "it's the neediness, for lack of a better term, that's making men a little apprehensive about going down to elementary school." While he went on to highlight other pressing factors, this was his initial assessment.

Again, not all subjects viewed elementary students as being the more emotionally perplexing of the age groups. Two men, in fact, considered the emotional complexity of middle school students to be as, if not more, vexing. Mr. Stengel considered managing the emotions of middle school students to be a greater challenge. This challenge, however, appeared to appeal to him. He stated,

When you teach middle school you're a different breed. They always say that's the toughest. That's pretty much all I've known. You have kids that are going through all these issues. They're going through puberty. Their bodies are changing. They're starting to like boys. They're starting to like girls. They want responsibility as an adult. It's challenging. It's what keeps this job from getting boring.

Mr. Coletto is one of the few participants in this study that was open to teaching at the elementary level. Unlike many of his peers, he considered the suppression of emotion often found at the middle school level to be a deterrent. He

looked favorably on the practice of elementary students wearing their emotions on their sleeves. He stated,

They (elementary students) aren't old enough or sophisticated enough to be guarded or whatever. It's there for you. When you have an impact, it's immediate. You can kind of see that. But here (middle school) it's a little more complicated. Especially when you go up to seventh and eighth grade. They try to be more stoic. I have this one student, Stacy. She's got a lot going on but only once in a rare while will there be a break. There's this protective thing there. With the younger grades...not as much.

Regardless of whether one examines students through an emotional, academic, or communicative lens, it is inevitable that significant differences will be detected between grade levels. The majority of the male middle school teachers that participated in this study considered the nature of elementary students as a deterrent to elementary teaching. The thoughts that those children cannot think, cannot work, and cannot talk to adults, regardless of its veracity, greatly impacted their perceptions of the level.

It is impossible to ignore a relationship that is evident between the first two sections of this chapter. The gender identity issues raised in *The Nature of Manhood* were often reflected in the student-centered comments highlighted in *The Nature of Students*. How does this interconnectedness fit into the theoretical framework of this study? While this matter is elaborated upon in Chapter V, it should be noted that both sections have provided a snapshot of the values that drove the 12

participants and the career choices that they made since joining the education profession.

Throughout the interviews, however, manhood and students were not the only variables to surface. The interviews also revealed that the participants perceived important differences in the work itself. The next section exposes how these differences impacted their grade-level preferences.

Nature of the Work

Once again, it should be of no surprise that the male middle school teachers that participated in this study perceived a difference between the structure and day-to-day tasks of elementary and middle school teaching. What is noteworthy, however, is how some of those structural differences affected their comfort and willingness to consider elementary teaching. Single subject teaching, or the lack thereof, in elementary education, ranked among the biggest concerns expressed throughout the interviews. The perceived increase in the workload, along with pedagogical differences between levels, also contributed to the diminished allure of elementary teaching.

Single-Subject Teaching Versus Having the Same Kids All Day

Single-subject teaching represents perhaps the most profound structural difference that teachers find in secondary instruction. In most middle and high schools, teachers are assigned multiple sections in which they teach one subject throughout the day. Most often, elementary schools are structured such that students spend the majority of their day with one teacher who divides the day between the core subject areas. While this disparity was not completely uninviting

to every participant in this study, several considered the elementary structure to be one of the more unappealing characteristics of the level. In fact, Mr. Samartine described it as a deal breaker.

I couldn't imagine teaching at the elementary level. The amount of work that goes into it...I couldn't imagine it. I would consider elementary if it were more subject-oriented, though. That's one of the problems with the way elementary schools are. The teachers typically don't know the subjects all that well. I would consider teaching younger kids if it were just math.

Mr. Decker was able to reflect upon stories shared with his elementary-teaching wife. He explained, "She teaches every subject. Her job is way harder than mine." Similar to the comments of Mr. Samartine, he expressed distaste for instruction that was beyond his mathematics expertise. He reflected upon his training when he said,

When I did my student teaching it was a middle school but in this fifth grade you had to teach all of the subjects. They rotated. Math was in the morning. It was great. The kids seemed into it. I knew what I was doing. The writing and things like that were difficult to me. Modeling writing strategies just wasn't for me.

Mr. Van Dyke's passion for science was one of the main reasons he became a teacher. Not only did he express little interest in teaching anything beyond his area, but he expressed little faith that science instruction has an appropriate presence in elementary classrooms. He explained,

I was always very centered on science. I've always had this dream of hosting my own science show on TV. You know, like Bill Nuy. That hasn't happened yet. I've never had an interest in teaching kids their ABCs and handwriting. That's a major reason I like teaching at the middle school. A lot of times they're not even teaching science often in the elementary school. Definitely not as much as they're teaching language arts and math.

Mr. Williams simplified the issue when he pointed out, "It could be that people have one content area that they're very comfortable with. That's another thing that might turn some men off." It should be noted, however, that subject matter represented only a portion of the single-subject division. The other side of the coin is the fact that elementary teachers have the same kids all day. Mr. Stokes appeared equally concerned about both his comfort with math and his desire to have a new group in class every period. He said,

I like the idea of having 140 kids per day rather than having 25 all day. Teaching seven subjects is also not for me. I don't like LA. I'm not into reading. Teaching language arts doesn't appeal to me at all. Teaching reading...you know, comprehension...no interest in any of that. I like the idea of getting a new batch of kids every 42 minutes.

The need to see new faces regularly throughout the day also seemed to play a part in Mr. Disavino's disinterest in teaching at the elementary level. As a special education teacher at the time of the study, he had portions of his schedule that resembled a self-contained setting. He pointed out that this was not ideal for either him or the students that he taught. He stated, "The kids I teach want to be like

normal kids and get the four minute break between classes. Self-contained is hard. They need a break.” He went on to share his memories from an even more traditional elementary structure.

Teaching all the subjects really doesn’t appeal to me. I taught in a situation where I had to teach three subjects at three different grade levels. It was really hard. Like wow. What makes it more difficult is that the kids are in your face all day. They are in your classroom all day.

Mr. Dale considered the possibility that single-subject teaching added to the esteem associated with middle school teaching as well. While he expressed no real predisposition toward one subject or opposition to teaching just one group, he explained how a multiple-subject teacher might not be held in high regard. He suggested,

In the lower grades you’re a generalist. Maybe you’re not good at anything. Maybe you can just handle kids. I think a lot of people think that anyone can do that job. You might not be able to be a high school teacher because you don’t know a lot about history, for example. I think that in the high school and middle school level there’s more of a sense of professionalism with regard to your subject area. In a smaller group of friends, when you’re talking about what you do, you’re a professional.

Not every participant looked at the elementary structure in a negative light. Mr. Coletto, for example, viewed the single-subject nature of middle school education as a drawback of his current job. When asked about how he felt about the

typical elementary self-contained structure, he answered, “I like that. That’s a negative of doing this (teaching middle school).”

Mr. Williams agreed with Mr. Coletto’s assessment of single-subject teaching. He pointed out that the redundancy involved with teaching the same thing all day played a role in a decision earlier in his career. He recalled,

I always enjoyed teaching something twice. I dreaded teaching something more than twice though. In fact, when the opportunity came in a sixth grade where we had seven people teaching I volunteered to be self-contained.

While it’s more work, the great part about being self-contained is that you can find a thread that runs through everything and develop interdisciplinary lessons. The other way, it takes more planning with other people to be able to do that.

Finally, Mr. Estefan took a practical stance on the issue. As a physical education teacher he interacted with nearly every student in his school. While he appreciated that, he seemed to feel that it limited his ability to really engage with individuals. He said, “Elementary teaching would be really cool because you’d really get to know those kids. You’d be with them all day.” His interest in this arrangement was not going to lead him to seek an elementary role any time soon, however.

Clearly, the structural differences between elementary and middle school education have influenced the willingness of the subjects to consider teaching at the elementary level. Although it is impossible to ignore the relationship between the

two factors, the workload presented by teaching in the lower grades proved to be influential as well.

The Elementary Workload

Several participants in this study recognized that, regardless of the legitimacy they associated with elementary teaching, it came with a greater workload. Some, like Mr. Williams, did not seem to view this as a particularly negative. Other men, however, seemed to view this characteristic as a burden to avoid. Mr. Decker, for example, stated, “There’s too much. Elementary is way harder. All of that is not so attractive to me.”

Mr. Coletto seemed to agree with the assessment that elementary education comes with a greater workload. He explained, “It’s not that I don’t work hard but it’s different in a middle school. It’s not as intense.”

Mr. Jelinick also considered workload to be among the leading deterrents to keeping male educators out of elementary schools. He pointed out, “It’s a pretty big factor. Males realize that that age group requires a lot more attention and I would say a greater workload.”

Mr. Stokes reflected back on his thoughts about single-subject teaching when he considered the effort that would be required to be able to teach more than one subject proficiently. He stated,

You have science. What do they even learn in the early grades? I don’t know any of that stuff and I’d have to learn it. That’s another thing. I have no desire to read. You know these people that have to read the entire chapter

before they teach it? That's more work. You should already know this stuff. I value being an expert in your field.

While Mr. Stokes's sentiments may suggest apathy, it was clear during his interview that he took pride in being what he considered to be an expert mathematics teacher. Adding subject matter outside of his field struck him as work that not only would detract from his math instruction, and he just simply did not want to do it.

Again, it is clear that most, if not all, of the themes presented affect how the subjects perceived the difficulty of the work in an elementary classroom. This subsection isolates the comments by the subjects that focused specifically on effort and workload. The means with which that work is executed in the classroom, or pedagogy, is a separate but related topic.

Pedagogical Considerations

Some of the participants' concerns went beyond the structure of elementary schools and the increased workload that came with it. There were those who felt that the pedagogical requirements at either level placed elementary teaching outside of their comfort zone. Mr. Disavino, for example, suggested that there was something inherently female about the way that elementary instruction was typically packaged. He said, "Women offer a more structured setting. There's corners and stations. Women in general are more interested in comfort in the classroom. Men don't do that as much."

While it is unclear whether the other subjects would agree with Mr. Disavino's generalization, there were two subjects who thought that pedagogy held

an importance in an elementary classroom that was less critical with older students.

Mr. Dale stated,

I think the art of teaching comes into play more at the elementary level. Your pedagogy. It can come into play in a middle school but you can get away with poor pedagogy in a middle school by just standing up and lecturing. You're going to cater to a lot of kids. A lot of them just want to soak up information. Whereas in an elementary school, you can't always get away with that lecture type of presentation. You need to be interactive. The kids will act out. They can't just sit and listen.

Mr. Samartine seemed to agree with Mr. Dale's assessment that one's pedagogy is more important at the elementary level. He stated, "I think it's more important (at the elementary level) that you're an expert in pedagogy than in any particular subject area."

Mr. Williams, on the other hand, might not go as far as to say that pedagogical considerations are more important at either level. He simply recognized that they are different. He compared:

It's a different approach to teaching. Even in the construct of the lessons. At the higher levels (middle and high school) you spend a lot of time developing a lesson plan. The lesson plan is really driving the lesson and everything else. At the elementary level, on the other hand, it's less lesson planning and more prep work in the sense of cutouts, manipulatives, organizing everything and creating the models. There's a lot more prior to the lesson and that can be time consuming.

Whether or not pedagogy plays a more imperative role in one level of schooling over another is debatable. What is not debatable, however, is the fact that some of the participants considered the pedagogical requirements of elementary and middle school instruction to be rather dissimilar. The interview data reveals that the men that participated in this study preferred the common ways that lessons are delivered at the middle school level.

Unlike the first two sections of this chapter that centered mostly on the people involved in teaching careers, this section focused on the work itself. These male middle school teachers expressed their perceptions of single-subject teaching, workload, and pedagogy with what appeared to be passion and candor. On the contrary, there was one additional theme that emerged from the data that the men were not always as comfortable discussing. Whether they were discussing their own sentiments or those of society in general, the subjects seemed to perceive a great deal of stigma to be associated with a man teaching in an elementary setting.

Men in Elementary Classrooms and Stigma

The participants in this study voiced concern that a man that teaches in an elementary school does so under either a suspicious or judgmental eye. Of the three categories of stigma that populated the data, the first two fell under the category of sexual subjectification (Weaver-Hightower, 2011). That is to say that suspicion of pedophilia and homosexuality comes with a preconception that men are the initiators or aggressors in a sexual capacity. The third category of stigma reflects the perceived social status of a man who does a job typically reserved for a woman.

Perceived Pedophilia

Throughout the data collection process, there was a sense that whether or not the subject being interviewed felt there was anything wrong with a man in an elementary setting, society might. Several of the subjects indicated that this issue becomes greater the younger the students are. For example, Mr. Samartine said, “Not me...but you could see people looking at a man that is teaching like kindergarten or first or second grade and being like what’s wrong with him?”

Mr. Van Dyke agreed. In his opinion, the thing that is wrong with such an individual might be perceived as sexual in nature. He suggested, “One thing that many people might immediately think of about a man teaching elementary school is that he’s a sexual predator.” He went on to emphasize, however, that this was a societal hang-up and not one he subscribed to.

Mr. Stokes, on the other hand, claimed that a man teaching at the lower elementary level raises a red flag in the minds of many, including his own. He stated, “You have a personality and desire to want to teach at that age. I don’t know what drives you to want to teach 7-year-olds. I don’t know what the draw is.” He agreed that others, particularly the parents of younger students, might have similar, if not more pressing, concerns. “Pedophilia might come into it. Touchy feely type of thing. Parents might think...a male, huh.”

Mr. Disavino, who is a parent, shared some of the societal concerns that can be associated with men who teach in the lower elementary grades. Having a male acquaintance that teaches first grade had caused him to consider this in the past. He explained,

Why is the big question. Why is he teaching younger kids? It's strange almost. I think that there's a perception of strangeness that....a male kindergarten teacher? A male first grade teacher? It's like, what's wrong with that guy? People are thinking that there's something behind it. Did they do a background check? But if it's a woman it's normal. I think my mind even goes that way. It's funny. My wife's friend's husband is a first grade teacher. Really tall guy. He does a great job but I'm like it's so weird to me. I've hung out with him a couple times. He's a regular guy. I know him well enough to know that I don't think he'll do that.

Mr. Dale recalled learning just how hung up many people were with suspicion of men working with younger students. He thought back to his student teaching assignment and stated,

There is a stigma with pedophilia. I was made aware of that during my first week of student teaching when the woman who was observing me saw me working with a kid and I had my hand on his shoulder. She pulled me aside and was like don't ever touch the children. I was like this is how I have to reach this kid. He won't listen to me if I'm just standing near him. I'm a physical guy but I've learned that you can't touch the kids.

Finally, Mr. Williams seemed to summarize the issue when he pointed out that it is all about parents needing to feel that they have put their children in the safest environment possible. It seemed that, in his estimation, the perception is going to be that younger children are safest with women. He said,

If you were dropping your child off at a daycare or a pre-k, most parents would be concerned if it was a place run by men. They would question if their child was safe there. But to hand them off to a woman, there's a feeling like nothing is going to go awry. You look at the world we live in and most of the abuse, whether is sexual or whatever, occurs by men. It's probably 90%.

Whether participants agreed or disagreed with there being a fear of pedophilia associated with men in elementary teaching, it was clear that those who brought it up saw it as a deterrent to teaching at the elementary level. The thought that teaching younger children could put even the most well-intentioned men under suspicion was viewed as a barrier to entry into the profession. While the thought of being suspected of homosexuality was also present, the next sub-section suggests that participants were less concerned about any social ramifications associated with this perception.

Perceived Homosexuality

Despite the fact that most of the subjects did not attach the same negative connotation to homosexuality that they did to pedophilia, 10 out of 12 subjects made mention of it. It should be noted that the popularity of this perceived stigma was not a result of my mentioning homosexuality during the interviews. It was simply a common response to the question of whether or not subjects perceived any stigma in connection with men teaching at the elementary level. Mr. Van Dyke answered this question bluntly by pointing out, "People might think he's a homosexual."

Mr. Williams agreed that, particularly in the younger elementary grades, suspicion of homosexuality is inevitable. He explained, "I think that there's a stereotype like is this guy straight?" Furthermore, Mr. Williams presented the idea that a child that has no male presence at home may not reap the same benefit from a male teacher with an atypical lifestyle. He explained,

If you have a child that has no father at home it (school) might be a good opportunity to get to know a man. But at the same time, if you're a mom dropping off your child at school you want to know that the male that's in the room represents men. He can be a role model for lack of a better term. He's a man's man and not...you know (facial expression).

Mr. Coletto was adamant about his support for people of all sexual orientations. Nevertheless, he pointed out what he viewed as a correlation between elementary teaching and male personalities. He stated, "I do notice that in this district, the two or three men that actively teach elementary school are a little effeminate. They might be gay." Regardless of this observation, he insisted that this would have had no effect on his willingness to teach at the elementary level.

Mr. Casey looked back at the early years of his career when he discussed how prevalent he thought the homosexual stereotype was throughout his community. He seemed to have firsthand experience with just how quick people often are to assume the sexuality of a male elementary school teacher. He recalled the following:

Start at the bottom. If you're a pre-k or a male kindergarten teacher, you're probably looked at and people have questioned your sexuality. Even from my own perspective, when I used to tell people that I worked in an

elementary school they used to automatically assume I was a gym teacher. Automatically. It's like if you're a male teacher in an elementary school and you're not in the gym it's not perceived as a male position. I'm sure people thought I was gay. I think people look down on a man teaching elementary school.

Mr. Jelinick saw and heard the homosexual stereotype when it was applied to an unlikely colleague in his district. He stated that many people, even those within the teaching profession, stigmatized men who taught in elementary classrooms. He described stated,

I have a colleague of mine that teaches third grade. He's a pretty muscular guy. He played D1 football. He's teaching third grade. You wouldn't say anything openly but most people think, "Why is he teaching third grade?" There's something fishy with that. Can I say homosexual? I think many people when they hear a male teaching first, second, third grade that the male teacher has qualities of a female, thus making him homosexual. I would equate it to a male nurse.

Mr. Stokes expressed a similar relationship between the qualities required of an elementary teacher and the qualities of a homosexual male. Employing a far less diplomatic approach, he stated the following:

They're (male elementary teachers) perceived as...let me use a sports term...soft. I think that's a common perception. If you hear of a male teaching kindergarten, automatically they're gay. He can relate to 5-year-olds? He has the mental capacity to reach them? He can nurture? He might

go that way. They have feminine qualities. There's nothing wrong with that, though.

While he did not dispute the idea that many people can be quick to label a male elementary teacher as gay, Mr. Dale seemed to think there was some utility to staffing men with at least some female traits at the elementary level. He stated,

There's a stigma that in lower level elementary and you're a guy and you're teaching first grade or kindergarten you might be gay. I'm curious to know what percentage of younger elementary male teachers are gay. I don't mean to stereotype but people who are homosexual tend to be a little more nurturing. You know, a little more attention to detail. Because of that, it might attract them to the younger kids the same way that women are attracted to those positions. They want to nurture other people. That's stereotypical but...

Again, 10 out of 12 participants in this study commented that either society or they themselves view male elementary school teachers as potentially homosexual. While most subjects claimed to have no animosity toward homosexuals, they were, for the most part, in agreement that they would not be comfortable being labeled as something that they were not. Fair or not, this phenomenon was clearly considered to be a major obstacle to men who would otherwise want to teach at the elementary level.

The Impact of Elementary Teaching on Social Status

Ideally, any individual willing to dedicate their professional life to the betterment of young people would hold a high status in society. Unfortunately, this

is not often the case. The men that participated in this study seemed to perceive the world as a place where educational outsiders look down on those who answer the call to the classroom. Even more detrimental to one's place in his social circles is answering that call at the elementary level. Mr. Decker expressed what he believed was a reality for a male elementary teacher among his peers in the following statements:

I'm sure if you're out with your buddies that you don't work with they gotta give you a hard time. They'll say things like, "Oh, your job is so easy. We gotta work hard for a living. We're working with our hands and you're finger-painting." Things like that. I don't think they (male elementary teachers) are applauded by their buddies. Nobody's ever applauded but they gotta get ribbed extra.

Mr. Coletto stated that he felt somewhat judged even in his middle school teaching role. That judgment, however, he seemed to think paled in comparison to the one he thought would be experienced by a man teaching at an elementary school. He stated,

I think there's this perception like, "What does this guy do all day? He plays with kids." I don't really care anymore because I have kids of my own. I'm saying that in a pejorative way not in a good way. It'd be worse as an elementary teacher but even now as a middle school teacher...you go to parties. Maybe your friend is a successful dentist. Then I come in. Nobody says anything but you can feel it.

Mr. Dale seemed to think that many people in and out of education viewed elementary education in a less-professional light. He connected much of this to his thoughts regarding single-subject teaching:

I think that at the high school and even at the middle school there is more a sense of professionalism. It goes back to your subject area. In smaller groups of friends when you're talking about what you do, they see you as a professional. You know that subject so well that you can teach it to others.

The subjects seemed to think that the social bias against elementary teachers came from outside of the profession. Mr. Casey stated that he perceived status issues within his district. He stated, "It's the old saying...shit rolls downhill. You're automatically looked down upon by the high school if you're an elementary teacher."

Mr. Disavino recognized that he was guilty of perpetuating some of the status issues amongst teachers. He referenced a male elementary teacher with whom he socialized as he explained the following:

If I taught that level I wouldn't want to talk about it. You're like, "I teach first grade kids." I keep going back to that one dude I keep talking about. He's a first grade teacher and he's like 6'6". I'm like, "Dude, you must be like Kindergarten Cop." All I want to do is shoot jokes at it. I don't know if that bothers him or not.

Despite his insistence that he was above such petty attitudes, Mr. Stengel acknowledged that teasing was inevitable. He explained:

If you're going to judge me on that then whatever. I mean, your buddies that

you have known your whole life are going to give you a little grief. So what. So be it. It's your buddies busting your chops.

Regardless of Mr. Stengel's or any other participant's reportedly strong will, the aforementioned comments make it clear that there is a perception that teachers at all levels take a backseat to other professionals. This second-class status is perpetuated at the elementary level.

Most of the men interviewed for this study would probably claim that they are unconcerned with what others think of them. This might, in fact, be true. The fact remains that they seemed extremely aware of the ways that society stigmatized men in elementary teaching careers. It seems unlikely that the issues of pedophilia, homosexuality, and social status have not had an impact on their collective career paths.

The Perceived Benefit of Men

The data presented in this chapter addresses all four of the research questions of this study. Although few advantages to being a male elementary teacher were revealed (research question 3), it seems evident that the interview instrument served its intended purpose. One interview question, however, is directly related to research question 4 and deserves a closer look. That research question is: How urgent do male middle school teachers perceive the call for an increase to the amount of men in elementary classrooms to be? An accompanying subsidiary question asked which groups would benefit the most.

The associated interview question reads: Do you believe that younger students benefit from having more male teachers at the elementary level?

Mr. Jelinick worked in the lowest-income district involved in this study. He reflected on Hartsville's demographics when he stated,

I think so. Especially in this demographic. In my school there are students that are raised in single-parent homes. There's not that many male figures in their lives. I think students would benefit more from having more males in the elementary level. I just think most males wouldn't opt to teach at that level.

Mr. Casey completely seemed to agree with Mr. Jelinick's assessment. He stated, "These kids need male figures. Especially at that age (elementary) and they're not getting it at home. They're not getting it at school now."

The thought that a male teacher can fill a void not found in the home was not solely an urban ideal. Mr. Estefan worked in one of northern New Jersey's wealthiest districts, yet he pointed out,

In a lot of situations there might not be a father around. A male teacher can provide that male influence...particularly for young boys. Both genders can benefit from having male and female teachers, though.

While Mr. Williams did not agree that more men is always the answer, he did recognize the power of a male teacher when father-absent children are involved. He explained as follows:

It really depends on the circumstances of the child. There is the argument that there are kids who come from broken homes and divorce situations. They don't have a male role model around. You really need that at that age.

Finally, Mr. Disavino asserted that the greatest benefit would be to young boys who have inadequate male influences. He pointed out the need for diversity when he stated,

...the boy population mostly. They need someone to look up to. If the male figure's not there in the home and not there in the classroom then they are surrounded by that female view of life. And that's only one view. Where are they going to get that? Maybe PE class. Maybe after school in a sport. Other than that they are surrounded by one view of life and that could damage a kid.

It should be noted that this interview question was asked of all 12 participants. Although some elaborated more than others, all 12 indicated that more men are, in fact, needed at the elementary level. This unanimity is particularly interesting given that all 12 were able to speak at length about the many reasons that the call for more men in elementary teaching would likely go unanswered. If nothing else, the juxtaposition of a real need and a seemingly endless list of reasons not to fulfill it make for an interesting problem.

Summary

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the perceptions of male middle school educators regarding the prospects of teaching at the elementary level. This chapter revealed those perceptions in the form of verbatim interview data. While the male middle school teachers that participated in this study were free to

take the discussion in any direction they chose, the majority of the data fit into four primary themes.

The Nature of Manhood highlighted the many ways that subjects perceived the differences between themselves and the women that they knew of who populated elementary classrooms at the time of the study. They focused their explanations primarily on gender gaps involving the ability to nurture, the ability to discipline, and their lack of desire to bring creativity and arts and crafts into their work.

In the section, The Nature of Students, I examined the differences between elementary and middle school students and how those differences affected the subjects' attitudes toward elementary instruction. Several participants described divisions between age groups' ability to relate to adults, to work consistently, to employ higher-order thinking, and to control their emotions in class.

In the section, The Nature of the Work, I exposed the different ways that the 12 male middle school teacher-participants envisioned work at the elementary level. The focus of this section was on how structural differences like single-subject teaching, heightened workload, and pedagogical shifts between levels impacted the desirability of teaching at the elementary level for the participants.

Finally, in the section, Men in Elementary Classrooms and Stigma, I presented the three prevailing stigmas that were perceived by the 12 subjects. The fear of being suspected of pedophilia and homosexuality, combined with the judgment that elementary teaching holds less esteem, clearly impacted the subjects' perceptions and willingness to teach at the elementary level.

In Chapter 5, I discuss how these results can inform and advance the literature regarding the lack of men in the elementary teaching ranks. In addition, I make recommendations for future research and teacher recruitment policies. Finally, I address how this information informed me in the role of school leader, as well as how it will impact my professional practice.

Chapter V

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This study was motivated by a literary void. First, there are a limited number of qualitative studies that address the lack of men teaching at the elementary level. Furthermore, very little of what has been written has utilized male secondary teachers as a subject pool. I designed this study to fill both of these gaps in the literature.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the perceptions of male middle school educators regarding the prospect of teaching at the elementary level. It is important to point out that middle school teachers were the subjects of this investigation because they viewed teaching as an acceptable career. At the onset of the study it was not known whether elementary teaching was something they were willing to do. The following research questions and their corresponding subsidiary questions were the foundation upon which this inquiry was built:

1. How do elementary certified male middle school teachers describe their decision to teach outside of the elementary classroom?
2. How do elementary certified male middle school teachers perceive the challenges, if any, for men at the elementary school level?
3. What do male middle school teachers perceive as being the greatest advantages, if any, for men at the elementary school level?
4. How urgent do male middle school teachers perceive the call for an increase to the amount of men in elementary classrooms to be?

This chapter provides a discussion of how the findings of the study align with the literature. Concurrently, I assess the compatibility of the data and the theoretical framework, Duane Brown's (2002; Brown & Crace, 1996) "Values-Based Model of Career and Life-Role Choices and Satisfaction". Finally, I present recommendations for future research, as well as for policies and educational leader practices.

Discussion

Brown and Crace (2008) described values as "cognitive structures that are the basis of one's self-evaluation and one's evaluation of others." Simply put, values are the standards that people judge themselves and others against. Even more simply put, one's values represent what is important to them. The professional and personal values of 12 male middle school teachers are part of the data collected. As Brown (Brown & Crace, 1996; 2002) might have predicted, these values played a role in these subjects' career choices.

Male Middle School Teachers Value Masculinity

The findings of this study reflect four themes that emerged through the interviews. The first, the nature of manhood, reflects the differences that the subjects perceived between themselves and women in education. Participants reported that they differ from women because men do not have a comparable ability to nurture young people. They seemed to agree that nurturing was something that was vital to the growth of students who are of elementary age, and that nurturing should be handled by women.

The findings of Ashcraft and Sevier (2006), in their study of male elementary teachers in Colorado, were similar to those of the present study. The subjects used by Ashcraft and Sevier did, in fact, teach at the elementary level, and many of them demonstrated a desire to deemphasize the nurturing side of their jobs. The subjects in that study seemed to value *not* being nurturing.

The male middle school teachers in this study appeared to share that value. Despite the fact that nurturing was a frequent term used throughout the interviews, not a single participant hinted that they either could have or had any interest in being a nurturer. Several subjects, in fact, went to great lengths to disassociate themselves from the idea of being nurturing entirely.

One difference among the 12 men that participated in this study and those that participated in the Ashcraft and Sevier (2006) study is that the men in the present study, despite having the credentials to do so, had avoided entry into the elementary classroom. It seemed clear from the interview data that the avoidance of nurturing was an important value and one way this value was preserved was by not taking a job in which nurturing was a prerequisite.

Nurturing, however, was not the only value associated with manhood revealed in the data. The men that participated in this study highlighted the fact that they were assertive disciplinarians who did not necessarily use arts and crafts in the classroom. It was insinuated that being a strong disciplinarian was an inherently masculine trait. On the other hand, being creative and artistic in one's instruction was inherently feminine.

While nurturing, assertiveness, and creativity may not stand alone as values around which to base a career, they were perceived to be components of masculinity. Being masculine is a value that appears to influence grade level preference. In sum, the male middle school teachers that participated in this study value their masculinity and preserve it by avoiding elementary teaching, which was recognized as a woman's domain.

Male Middle School Teachers Value Student Relationships

Another theme that emerged from the data is the perception of a wide gap between middle school and elementary school students. Participants expressed concern that elementary students did not have the abilities to work diligently, did not use higher order thinking strategies, and were emotionally unstable. The ability to relate to students, however, was the perception that appeared to have the greatest impact on the desirability of elementary teaching.

In an effort to assess elementary teachers' ratings of their own job satisfaction, Klecker and Loadman (1999) surveyed teachers in Ohio. The aspect of their jobs that these respondents rated most favorably was the interactions that they had with their students. These results demonstrated that elementary teachers in Ohio valued the relationships that they had with their students.

The present study produced similar findings. The participants were enthusiastic about their ability to interact in a comfortable way with their middle school students. Elementary students, on the other hand, were perceived as having a hard time relating to adult humor and sarcasm, among other things. While those thoughts may represent simple luxuries associated with teaching older students, the

real variable that subjects value are relationships. The perceived inability to forge similar relationships appeared to be a barrier to entry into elementary teaching.

Male Middle School Teachers Value their Expertise

Another theme, the nature of the work, was comprised of perceptions and objections to the day-to-day demands placed on teachers at the elementary level. While the heightened workload and the need to employ undesirable pedagogies at the elementary level certainly impacted subjects' perceptions, the absence of single-subject teaching at that level was the most frequent objection throughout this theme. Single-subject teaching, however, was merely a bi-product of the value that subjects actually held sacred. Subjects tended to link it to content area expertise and, ultimately, personal efficacy.

Perrachione, Peterson, and Rosser (2008) indicated that personal teaching efficacy was one of the top three reasons that their subjects were satisfied at work. Those subjects were elementary teachers. The middle school teachers that participated in the present study also valued personal efficacy. They often equated this, however, to the mastery of their assigned content and not, as Mr. Dale stated, to being an effective elementary "generalist." The male middle school teachers that participated in this study valued their content area expertise.

Male Middle School Teachers Value their Self Esteem

The final theme that emerged from the data was, men in the elementary classrooms and stigma. In particular, subjects reported an awareness that a man teaching elementary school is subject to scrutiny. That scrutiny was perceived to take several forms, the most frequent of which were suspicion of pedophilia and

homosexuality, along with the judgment that elementary teaching holds a lesser status in society than most professions.

The fear of being suspected of pedophilia is not unique to the perceptions of the 12 men that participated in this study. Skelton (2003) and Weaver-Hightower (2011) suggested that, fair or not, it was a reality for the subjects in their studies as well. Weaver-Hightower also presented data that suggested that participants in the study also felt that, for one reason or another, their proximity to young children increased the potential that others would accuse them of being homosexual.

While those results cannot be ignored, the judgment that society looks down upon and judges elementary teachers in a negative light was perhaps more personal to the subjects in this study. Data from a study by Gosse, Parr, and Allison (2008) exposed that persons who dropped out of a Canadian teacher preparation program did so in part because of scrutiny from their peer groups. In that study, subjects reported that the public mention that they were going to train to teach primary school was received with “strange looks”. In the present study, the prevailing perception of the participants was that men at the elementary level are subject to increased teasing and may feel inferior when discussing work amongst peers.

While avoiding suspicion and judgment was not representative of a value shared by all of the participants in this study, feeling proud about one’s work certainly was. Although none of the subjects claimed that they opted out of elementary teaching because of heightened scrutiny, none of them failed to acknowledge it either. It was no secret to these 12 men that if they were to take a job in an elementary school, at the very least, their friends would give them a hard

time about it. Regardless of whether or not they subscribed to the stereotypes presented in the data, it is clear that these subjects value being part of something that is respected. They value their reputations and, more importantly, their self-esteem.

Now What?

At the risk of oversimplifying an extremely complex issue, I have attached a prevailing value to each of the four themes that emerged from the data. I extracted the following overarching values: masculinity, relationships with students, personal efficacy, and self-esteem. How can this information be used to improve elementary schools, elementary faculties, and most importantly, elementary student outcomes?

First, it is valuable to examine how these values, or any values for that matter, came to be. Brown (Brown & Crace, 1996; 2002) suggested that one's values are the product of their genetics and their environment. While it is unlikely that individuals in school leadership positions have any power over an individual's genetic makeup, the environment remains amendable. Environment, according to Brown (year?), is the some of several parts. Among them are family life, community life, the media, school life, and culture.

It is not difficult to see the environmental influence on a value like masculinity. Family life, for example, is bound to play an important role in its development. Brown also pointed out, however, that environmental factors play an equally significant role in determining how individuals prioritize their values. If, for example, hegemonic masculinity is learned in the home, it may be devalued at

school. The end product is a prioritized list of values that are critical variables in who we are and the decisions that we make.

It should be made clear that in no way am I suggesting that the 12 men that participated in this study have but four values. Masculinity, student relationships, personal efficacy, and self-esteem represent the four most prevalent values derived from the interview process. They are high-priority values in regard to a guided discussion about men in elementary schools.

While I would not suggest that we attempt to reshuffle the participants' values and convince them to follow a path into elementary teaching, we can learn from this information. For one, it would appear that their collective roles in middle school education correlate with their values. Brown's (2002) posited that career choices made in conjunction with values have the best chances of resulting in job satisfaction (Patton & McMahon, 2006). This leads me to conclude that these 12 men are not appropriate candidates for an elementary recruitment campaign.

Values should be taken into account, however, in determining the right men for elementary teaching jobs. What values correspond to success in elementary teaching assignments? How can policy and practice help shape the environment that perpetuates the values related to elementary teaching? These are the types of questions that make a holistic model like Brown's so adaptable to this and many other problems in education today. Values provide the impetus for the recommendations that follow.

Recommendations for Future Research

The American elementary classroom is an extremely feminine arena. With a mere 10.7% of all elementary teachers being male, it is an educational phenomenon worth investigating (Goldring, Gray, & Bitterman, 2013). I use the term *phenomenon* as opposed to *problem* because empiricists have yet to establish whether or not men have a significant impact on elementary students. In other words, the presence of men in elementary classrooms may or may not make much of a difference in student achievement. The existing literature regarding the academic benefit of men in elementary classrooms provides little support for the notion that students will work harder or learn more from male teachers. Future research endeavors should start by addressing this knowledge gap.

It is often asserted, however, that the benefit that students (particularly boys) reap from having men in the elementary classroom extends beyond the realm of student achievement. The male middle school teachers interviewed for this study regularly suggested that children from broken homes need role models and boys need men to expose them to another perspective on life. While these assertions may be common, they are often unsubstantiated. Future research should attempt to assess these intangibles.

But how do you study the effect that a teacher has on a student's self-image? How can you quantify and evaluate the impact that a man's presence has on a young boy's aspirations? Similar to that used in the present study, a qualitative methodology may be appropriate. Interviewing stakeholders about the impact that men have on students makes for an appropriate start. Regardless, while it may be

more difficult to evaluate non-quantifiable constructs, the story will remain incomplete without this information.

As for the small but significant portion of the male elementary teacher landscape that the present study examined, I have thoughts on how research can capitalize on it. For one, the present study should be replicated in alternative locations. Men in northern New Jersey present a unique perspective on masculinity. To assume that the values shared by the 12 male middle school teachers that participated in this study will match those from other regions is erroneous. Whether the absence of men in elementary teaching is a problem or merely a phenomenon, it is clearly not just a northern New Jersey issue. It is an American issue and should be studied as such.

Also, I would recommend that this study be replicated with men at different stages of their career. What the men in the present study perceived about elementary and middle school education came from firsthand experiences. With the exception of Mr. Estefan, these subjects were seasoned veteran teachers. Their experiences in education have had significant impacts on the ways they perceived their own jobs, as well as elementary teaching jobs. The perceptions of subjects as young as high school males could add meaningful knowledge to this matter.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the perceptions of male middle school educators regarding the prospects of teaching at the elementary level. This purpose statement has appeared in exactly that form throughout this dissertation. What if, however, *male middle school educators*, was replaced with *male education majors*? The perceptions of those men who have chosen teaching as

a career path, but who have not yet entered the workforce can offer a unique and powerful perspective as to the factors that either have or will influence their grade level preference. Again, it is about evaluating individuals' values. Altering the environment will inevitably have a profound impact on what those values are and how they are prioritized.

Finally, I recognize that I grew immensely as an interviewer as I spoke with each of the participants. I grew more adept at listening and capitalizing on opportunities for elaboration. If anything, I feel that there would be value in replicating this study with the benefit of qualitative experience. Despite my satisfaction with the data that I collected, the perfectionist in me knows that I could always go deeper.

Recommendations for Policy

Educational policy can affect the gender gap in elementary teaching with targeted recruitment campaigns. My first full-time public school teaching job came by way of an ongoing program called the New York City Teaching Fellows. The typical fellow entered teaching from another career and was at the mercy of the New York City Department of Education. While I would have accepted just about any assignment, I was placed in a Brooklyn elementary school where I was one of three men in the building. Although I had envisioned myself in a city high school classroom, I openly accepted an elementary placement. What choice did I have?

This type of involuntary flexibility, it turns out, is more common than I had thought. More than one participant in the present study described their entries into teaching in similar terms. Mr. Dale, for example, explained his years teaching first

grade by insisting, “It was because it was available, not because that’s what I wanted.” Although placing men that would rather teach elsewhere in elementary classrooms might not be ideal, it is a practical and immediate way to address the issue.

A closer look into the Teaching Fellows placement policies and practices is appropriate. I recommend that widespread recruitment campaigns such as the Fellows, Teach for America, and Teach.org consider the elementary gender gap when placing new entrants into the teaching profession. Exposure to the elementary school level may be the kind of environmental stimulus that can positively impact teachers’ values.

The National Education Association (n.d.) provides an overview of teacher recruitment on its website. Despite extensive mention of minority recruitment strategies, the association fails to significantly address the gender gap. Some of their policy recommendations, however, may apply to the scarcity of men at the elementary level. For example, it is suggested that there be, “early prospective teacher identification initiatives through secondary school surveys”. This pairs well with “financial aid, including fellowships, scholarships, and forgivable loans”. Although these large-scale policy initiatives are likely to attract qualified minorities, they may also work if geared toward men given the caveat that they serve in the capacity of elementary teacher for at least a portion of their career.

This type of incentive already exists in other areas where a shortage is perceived. The U.S. Department of Education (n.d.) offers federal student loan forgiveness for as much as \$17,500 for eligible educators. The criteria for the

maximum forgiveness is that teachers teach for 5 years in a Title I school in the area of either math or science. Clearly, those were identified as areas of need. If federal policy makers wish to address the dearth of men at the elementary level, perhaps a similar designation can be made.

It should be noted, however, that recruiting and incentivizing the wrong men could be detrimental to the profession and, ultimately, students. For that reason, I also recommend that the identification initiatives be rooted in sound empirical research with an emphasis on the values held sacred by prospective teachers. Again, job satisfaction and success are dependent on the conjunction of values and career choice.

One could interpret the data from the present study as an indication that the 12 male middle school teachers that participated shared an essentialist curricular belief system. The emphases on single-subject teaching and objections to fun and games in the elementary classroom contradict the modern call for problem-based and interdisciplinary learning. If teacher recruitment campaigns are successful in attracting more men into educational training programs, attention should be paid to 21st century pedagogies. Although this should be the case regardless of a pre-service teacher's gender, I recommend that college education departments adopt a male-friendly means by which to highlight these aspects of the profession.

Brown (Brown & Crace, 1996; 2002) emphasized the important role that environmental factors play in forming and prioritizing values. It would seem that one environmental component, media, could be used in informing the values associated with elementary teaching. If we assume that media played a part in the

crystallization of the participants' masculinity values, then it is logical to assume that media can be useful in forwarding the message that elementary teaching does not necessarily contradict masculine sensibilities.

To this end, I recommend that teacher recruitment campaigns utilize both mass and social medias to dispel the notion that teaching in an elementary school is strictly a feminine undertaking. There are few domains in which the landscape changes more frequently than in public education. Media, however, might be one of them. If popular culture has shown us anything in recent years it is that a tactful media campaign can change social perceptions with broad strokes.

Impact on Educational Leadership Practice

When I began writing this dissertation I was in the final year of a rewarding elementary and middle school teaching career. Since then, I have taken an administrative role in a culturally diverse suburban district. In making this move, I have put myself in a position where the decisions I make and the ideals that I perpetuate can have a profound impact on the local environment. That environment can and will have an impact on the values of both the faculty and the student body in the near and distant future.

It should be stressed that leaders in education have been charged with a tremendous responsibility. It is critical that we allow this blossoming knowledge of perception and values to improve our professional practice. One way we can do this is to instill and maintain a culture of diversity in our schools. Perhaps an overwhelmingly female faculty distorts students' worldviews. So too can the perpetuation of a message that insists that masculinity only looks one way. If we

want tomorrow's men to be open to alternative career paths, such as elementary teaching, it is important to model open mindedness along with a variety of masculinities. Where better to affect that environmental message than school? Who better to set that tone than school leaders?

As school leaders, we also find ourselves in a hiring capacity. It is in this role that we can have the most direct and deliberate impact on the gender makeup of districts' faculties. As such, it is critical that we consider the elementary gender gap in considering candidates for teaching positions---particularly at the elementary level. While I firmly believe that an ethical leader's responsibility is to hire the most qualified person for each and every job, it would be inappropriate to eliminate candidates from contention due to demography. So often a search for an elementary teacher becomes a search for the best woman for the job. That mindset has to grow if the profession is to grow. The best candidate may very well be a woman. But if men are left out of the pool of candidates simply by habit, the search should be considered incomplete and corrupt. Again, the change starts with leadership.

Finally, this qualitative experience has enriched my ability to think in a scholarly way. This type of inquiry-based research should perpetuate every decision that we, as leaders, make. Educational issues, whether they are gender-related or not, are often met with gut reactions and what is mistaken as common sense. Common sense, however, is all too often untested and unsubstantiated. While there is a time and place for instinct, real knowledge comes with greater cost. It often takes time, effort, and scholarly sensibilities to get to the root of critical issues. If I have learned anything from conducting a qualitative interview study it is

that sometimes you just have to sit down with people and ask them meaningful questions. If you listen carefully, you might just hear a meaningful answer.

References

- Ashcraft, C., & Sevier, B. (2006). Gender will find a way: Exploring how male elementary teachers make sense of their experiences and responsibilities. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, 7(2), 130.
- Bem, S. L. (1981). Gender schema theory: A cognitive account of sex typing. *Psychological review*, 88(4), 354.
- Blount, J. M. (2000). Spinsters, bachelors, and other gender transgressors in school employment, 1850-1990. *Review of Educational Research*, 70(1), 83-101.
- Bricheno, P., & Thornton, M. (2002). Staff gender balance in primary schools. *Research in Education*, 68(1), 57-63.
- Brown, D. (2002). *Career choice and development*. San Francisco, CA. John Wiley and Sons, Inc.
- Brown, D. & Crace, R. K. (1996). Values in life role choices and outcomes: A conceptual model. *The Career Development Quarterly*, 44, 211-223.
- Brown, D., & Crace, R. (2008). Brown's values-based career theory. In F. Leong (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of counseling* (Vol. 4, pp. 1416-1417). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage.
- Cunningham, B., & Watson, L. W. (2002). Recruiting male teachers. *Young Children*, 57(6), 10-15.
- Cushman, P. (2007). The male teacher shortage: A synthesis of research and worldwide strategies for addressing the shortage. *KEDI Journal of Educational Policy*, 4(1), pp??
- Cushman, P. (2010). Male primary school teachers: Helping or hindering a move to gender equity?. *Teaching And Teacher Education: An International Journal Of Research And Studies*, 26(5), 1211-1218.
- Davis, K. B. (1929). *Factors in the sex life of twenty-two hundred women*. Oxford, England: Harper.
- Dee, T. S. (2006). The why chromosome: How a teacher's gender affects boys and girls. *Education Next*, 6(4), 68-75.

- Driessen, G. (2007). The feminization of primary education: Effects of teachers' sex on pupil achievement, attitudes and behaviour. *International Review of Education*, 53(2), 183-203.
- Galbraith, M. (1992). Understanding career choices of men in elementary education. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 85(4), 246-253.
- Gamble, R. J., & Wilkins, J. (1997). Beyond tradition: Where are the men in elementary education. *Contemporary Education*, 68, 187-193.
- Goldring, R., Gray L., & Bitterman, A. (2013). *Characteristics of public and private elementary and secondary school teachers in the United States: Results from the 2011-12 Schools and Staffing Survey* (NCES 2013-314). Retrieved from National Center for Education Statistics website: <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch>.
- Gosse, D., Parr, M., & Allison, J. (2008). Researching the halted paths of male primary school teacher candidates. *Journal Of Men's Studies*, 16(1), 57-68.
- Helbig, M. (2010). Sind Lehrerinnen für den geringeren Schulerfolg von Jungen verantwortlich? *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie*, 62, 93-111.
- Johnson, S. P. (2008). The status of male teachers in public education today. *Education Policy Brief*, 6(4), 1-11.
- Johnston, J., McKeown, E., & McEwen, A. (1999). Choosing primary teaching as a career: The perspectives of males and females in training. *Journal of Education for Teaching: International Research and Pedagogy*, 25(1), 55-64.
- Klassen, A. D., Jr, & Levitt, E. E. (1974). Public attitudes toward homosexuality: Part of the 1970 national survey by the institute for sex research. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 1, 29-43.
- Klecker, B. M., & Loadman, W. E. (1999). Measuring principals' openness to change on three dimensions: affective, cognitive and behavioral. *Journal of Instructional Psychology*, 26(4), 213.
- Martin, A.J. (2003). Boys and motivation. *Australian Educational Researcher*, 30(3), 43-65.
- Martino, W. (2008). Male teachers as role models: Addressing issues of masculinity, pedagogy and the re-masculinization of schooling. *Curriculum Inquiry*, 38(2), 189-223.

- Mason, M. (2010). Sample size and saturation in PhD studies using qualitative interviews. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research, 11*(3), pp.??
- Mancus, D. S. (1992). Influence of male teachers on elementary school children's stereotyping of teacher competence. *Sex Roles, 26*(3-4), 109-128.
- .Merriam-Webster.com. (n.d.). *Middle school teacher*. Retrieved from: <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/middleschoolteacher>
- Milloy, C. (2013, Feb 20). Needed: More black men in schools. *The Washington Post* Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1288929201?accountid=13793>
- National Education Association. (n.d.). *NEA and teacher recruitment: An overview*. Retrieved from the Official Website of the National Education Association: <http://www.nea.org/home/29031.htm>
- N.J. Department of Education. (n.d.-a). *District factor groups (DFG) for school districts*. Retrieved from the Official Website for the State of New Jersey: <http://www.state.nj.us/education/finance/rda/dfg.shtml>
- N.J. Department of Education. (n.d.-b). *Certification and induction: Alternate route*. Retrieved from the Official Website for the State of New Jersey: <http://www.state.nj.us/education/educators/license/alternate.htm>
- Padawer, R. (2006, Dec 24). It's not a guy thing ; north jersey schools have fewer male teachers than ever. *The Record*. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/426365755?accountid=13793>
- Parr, M., & Gosse, D. (2011). The perils of being a male primary/junior teacher: Vulnerability and accusations of inappropriate contact with students. *McGill Journal Of Education, 46*(3), 379-393.
- Patton, M. Q. (2005). *Qualitative research*. City, state:??John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.
- Patton, W., & McMahon, M. (2006). The systems theory framework of career development and counseling: Connecting theory and practice. *International Journal for the Advancement of Counselling, 28*(2), 153-166.
- Perlmann, J., & Margo, R. A. (2001). *Women's work?: American schoolteachers, 1650-1920*. City, state:?:University of Chicago Press.
- Perrachione, B. A., Rosser, V. J., & Petersen, G. J. (2008). Why do they stay? Elementary teachers' perceptions of job satisfaction and retention. *Professional Educator, 32*(2), n2.

- Rokeach, M. (1973). *The nature of human values* (Vol. 438). New York: Free Press.
- Sanatullova-Allison, E. (2010). Why men become elementary school teachers: Insights from an elementary teacher education program. *Action In Teacher Education, 31*(4), 28-40.
- Skelton, C. (2003). Male primary teachers and perceptions of masculinity. *Educational Review, 55*(2), 195-209.
- Sokal, L., Katz, H., Chaszewski, L., & Wojcik, C. (2007). Good-bye, Mr. Chips: Male teacher shortages and boys' reading achievement. *Sex roles, 56*(9-10), 651-659.
- Spilt, J. L., Koomen, H. Y., & Jak, S. (2012). Are boys better off with male and girls with female teachers? A multilevel investigation of measurement invariance and gender match in teacher-student relationship quality. *Journal Of School Psychology, 50*(3), 363-378.
- Sternod, B. M. (2011). Role models or normalizing agents? A genealogical analysis of popular written news media discourse regarding male teachers. *Curriculum Inquiry, 41*(2), 267-292.
- Super, D. E. (1990). A life-span, life-space approach to career development.
- Thornton, M., Bricheno, P., & Reid, I. (2002). Students' reasons for wanting to teach in primary school. *Research in Education, 67*(1), 33-43.
- Turner III, D. W. (2010). Qualitative interview design: A practical guide for novice investigators. *The qualitative report, 15*(3), 754-760.
- U.S. Department of Education. (n.d.). *Teacher loan forgiveness*. Retrieved from the Official Website of the Federal Student Aid Office:
<https://studentaid.ed.gov/repay-loans/forgiveness-cancellation/charts/teacher>
- VanVoorhis, R. W., & Protivnak, J. J. (2012). Using values-based approaches in employment counseling and assessment: Professional and related occupations. *Journal of Employment Counseling, 49*(4), 160-171.
- Watson, C. (1991, Oct 08). Elementary schools need more male teachers. *Detroit News*. Retrieved from
<http://search.proquest.com/docview/404785339?accountid=13793>
- Weaver-Hightower, M. B. (2011). Male preservice teachers and discouragement from teaching. *The Journal of Men's Studies, 19*(2), 97-115.

- Weiss, R. S. (1995). *Learning from strangers: The art and method of qualitative interview studies*. City, state??:Simon and Schuster.
- Wengraf, T. (2001). *Qualitative research interviewing: Biographic narrative and semi-structured methods*. City, state??:Sage.
- Wood, T. D. (2012). Teacher perceptions of gender-based differences among elementary school teachers. *International Electronic Journal of Elementary Education*, 4(2), 317-345.

Appendix A
Interview Guide

Interview Guide

Thank you so much for participating in this very important study. The purpose of this interview is to identify and evaluate factors that were important to male teachers when deciding the level at which they would teach. For our purposes today, a middle school teacher will be defined as any individual teaching in a designated middle school or junior high school containing grades (5)6-8. Although men make up approximately 40% of all secondary teachers, the fact that that number drops to 15% in the elementary ranks is a central statistic in this dissertation.

I will ask you questions related to your career and your perceptions. This will be recorded, however, the recordings will be for my use only and will remain under lock and key until they are destroyed. Your identity will be protected throughout the process and any inclusion of this data in my dissertation will use pseudonyms for all participants.

Please know that I am not at all trying to either change your opinions about anything or advocate for any action or policy. Simply put, I am trying to gain a better understanding of the mindset of male middle school teachers. Also know that you can halt this interview at any point should you find yourself uncomfortable with the line of questioning. OK....let's begin:

1. Describe how you came to teach in your current assignment/certification area.
2. What factors were most important in deciding the grade level certification that you would pursue?
3. Have you ever considered teaching or were you encouraged to teach at the elementary level?
4. Do you believe that younger students benefit from having more male teachers at the elementary level?
5. Why do you feel that women are represented at such a higher rate than men in the elementary classroom?
6. How might teaching elementary-age children be different from teaching middle school-age children?

7. What is your opinion of the common arrangement where elementary teachers teach all subjects to one group of students?
8. According to the literature, there are far more females than males teaching in most elementary schools. Describe the virtues and vices of this phenomenon.
9. How intellectually challenging or stimulating do you find your current job?
10. Do you perceive any stigma attached to elementary teaching?
11. What professional values do you hold most sacred?
12. Is there anything you would like to add or feel that we have not covered regarding this topic?

Appendix B

Letter to District Superintendents Requesting Permission

Robert L. Hyman
 71 John St
 Wyckoff, NJ 07481

XXXXXXXXXXXX
 Superintendent of Schools
 XXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Dear Superintendent XXXXXXXXXXXX;

My name is Robert Hyman and in addition to being a fellow Northern New Jersey educator, I am a doctoral candidate at Seton Hall University. I am writing to formally request permission to conduct part of my research in your district. My dissertation topic involves the factors preventing male teachers from teaching in elementary settings. In order to better understand this phenomenon, I am hoping to interview one or more male middle school teachers from your district.

Research Purpose: The purpose of my study is to explore the factors and values that land the majority of male educators in positions outside of elementary schools. Although the findings in the literature regarding the actual benefit of adding men to elementary faculties are mixed, the popular call to recruit and staff more men in the lower grades has gained momentum in recent decades. Despite this popularity, however, the percentage of men teaching our youngest children continues to hover around 15%. By interviewing men working in middle schools, I am looking to explore the processes and perceptions that perpetuate this scarcity.

Research Procedures: Male middle school teachers who agree to participate will take part in at least one face-to-face interview conducted by either myself or an interviewer approved by my dissertation committee. The interviews will take between 30-45 minutes and focus primarily on factors that influenced the grade level at which the teachers are pursuing their careers. The identity of all participants will be carefully protected in both the research and reportage phases of this study. **Participation is completely anonymous.

Audio Taping: In an effort to ensure accuracy, all interviews will be audio taped. Participants will be free to listen to any and all recordings. Those recording will be stored in a locked cabinet in my home at all times while they are being transcribed (using pseudonyms). In an effort to ensure research validity, participants will be emailed copies of these transcriptions for their review. At the conclusion of the current study, all audio tapes will be systematically destroyed.

Contact Information: The individuals responsible for this research effort are Robert Hyman, principal researcher (r.hyman@hackensackschools.org; 201-819-4881) & Barbara Strobert, dissertation advisor (Barbara.strobert@shu.edu; 973-

275-2324). Please feel free to contact either party with any questions or concerns regarding this process.

Thanks in advance for your contribution to the ongoing study of public schooling. Your leadership is much appreciated.

Sincerely,

Robert L. Hyman

Appendix C
Informed Consent Form

Informed Consent Form

_____, agrees to participate in a dissertation study on “factors preventing male teachers from seeking employment at the elementary level,” conducted by Robert Hyman, a doctoral student at Seton Hall University, College of Education and Human Services.

The purpose of the study is to explore the perceptions of male middle school educators regarding the prospects of teaching at the elementary level.

As this is a qualitative study, the data will be gathered through interviews, using questions that have been reviewed and approved by a panel of experts. Each interview will take approximately 30 minutes with a follow up interview, if necessary, at a future date. Interviews will be conducted at participants’ schools or at a location mutually agreeable by the participants and the interviewer. Furthermore, there are no foreseeable risks or discomfort to any participant in this study. The following are samples of questions that will be asked in the interview:

- “What factors were most important in deciding the grade level certification that you would pursue?”
- “According to the literature, there are far more females than males teaching in most elementary schools. Describe the virtues and vices of this phenomenon.”
- “Do you perceive any stigma attached to elementary teaching?”
- “What professional values do you hold most sacred?”

Participation in this study is completely voluntary and the participant may withdraw from this study at any time. Discontinuing participation at any time will absolutely not involve penalty for the participant.

All of the participant’s data will be anonymous, confidential, and securely stored on a USB memory device and locked securely in the researcher’s home. Only the researcher will have knowledge of the identity of the participants.

There are no direct benefits to the participants for their participation in this study. The indirect benefit of participation is the addition of knowledge to the study of the absence of male teachers in the elementary classroom.

The interviews will be recorded for reference purpose only, using a pseudonym to identify the participant. The participant is entitled to a copy of the recording upon his/her request. The recordings will remain in a locked secure site within the researcher’s home. Only the researcher will have access to the recordings, which will be kept for a period of three years.

If you have any questions regarding this research, you may contact Robert Hyman, the principal researcher, at 201-819-4881. You may also contact Dr. Barbara Strobert, the Dissertation Advisor, at her office Seton Hall University office at 973-275-2324, or the Seton Hall University Institutional Review Board at 973-313-6314.

Participant

Date