ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation:	A NARRATIVE CASE STUDY EXAMINING THE EXPEREINCES OF MEN TEACHING SPECIAL EDUCATION IN THE ELEMENTARY GRADES
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Over the past several decades, the landscape of the workplace has changed in many industrialized nations. In the United States this time period has seen the outright elimination or outsourcing of well-paying "blue collar" jobs. The workforce continues to evolve, change, and become more global, and men and women are making nontraditional occupational decisions, whether by choice or necessity. The traditional views of men and women have begun to shift. However, gender assumptions about masculinity have failed to keep pace with the shift.

There are approximately 1.8 million elementary grade level teachers in United States public schools; of these, a mere 9% are male. The paucity of male teachers in the elementary grades has been a concern for many years. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, roughly 86% of all special education teachers are female. In 2012, 86.2% of all special education teachers were female, and by the following year, the number had dropped to 80.4%. The evidence indicates that more men are embarking on nontraditional career paths. Despite theses changes there is minimal research looking at the experiences of men working as special education teachers

My goal in this study was to obtain a better understanding of the influences on and the process by which men make the decision to pursuing a career teaching special

education in the elementary grades. The study utilized social role theory (Eagly, 1987), and Stead's (2014) social constructionist theory as well as Williams' (1992) *glass escalator* proposition

The findings of this study confirm some of the factors related to career choice, experiences and barriers faced by men in nontraditional careers detailed in the literature. Three themes emerged for each research question: Experiences, advocacy, and benefits. Three themes emerged around the second research question exploring the experiences of men in a female-concentrated profession: The male body, communication, and perception. Three themes arose around the third research question: administration, My Masculinity, and pay. The findings run counter to Williams' glass escalator proposition, which posits men working in female-concentrated professions are at an advantage. The findings advance support for Buschmeyer's theory of (2013) alternative masculinity.

A NARRATIVE CASE STUDY EXAMINING THE EXPEREINCES OF MEN
TEACHING SPECIAL EDUCATION IN THE ELEMENTARY GRADES

by

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DEDICATION

For my beautiful, caring, amazing wife, Maria, and your unwavering dedication, support, and love. Thank you.

"I can't do everything, but I'd do anything for you" Dire Straights

For my two boys, Dominic and James, who fill my life with pure joy and happiness every day. You are my everything. Reach for the stars. Kick down walls!

Daddy loves you.

To Mom, Michael, and Lauren. I love you and thank you.

Dad - You left this world way too young, but thank you for teaching me the value of education. I love you.

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To all those along the way who said I couldn't do it, thanks for the continued motivation.

<p style="text-align: center;">"Time to kick the tires and light the fires"</p>

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Work is often seen as central to a man's identity (Hancock, 2012; Shen-Miller & Smiler, 2015). Over the past several decades, the needs and landscape of the workplace have changed dramatically in many western industrialized nations. In the United States, specifically, this time period has seen the outright elimination or outsourcing of well-paying "blue collar" jobs (Shen-Miller & Smiler, 2015). Furthermore, the workforce continues to evolve, change, and become more global, and men and women are making nontraditional occupational decisions, whether by choice or necessity. The traditional views of the man as "breadwinner" and the woman as "homemaker" have begun to shift (Perrone, Wright, & Jackson, 2009; Roberts, 2012). Despite this shift, gender assumptions about masculinity have failed to keep pace with the changing landscape of the current workplace (Lee & Owens, 2002).

Despite the "shift" described by Perrone (2009) and colleagues, Gadassi and Gati (cited in Hartung, 2009) discovered that women and men continued to report occupational preferences that were considered traditional to their sex type. To date, messages and beliefs that certain jobs are more appropriate for men and others more appropriate for women are still part of the national discourse on occupation (Kantamneni, 2014). Additionally, boys and girls see and hear messages about what types of careers they should enter based on their sex. Failure to adhere to what is considered "traditional" career choices and gender roles may result in discrimination in their work, social, and

family lives (Kantamneni, 2014). The shifting and ever changing landscape of the United States workforce both men and women must make occupational choices that do not correspond with traditional gender roles and gender socialization.

However, there lies the juxtaposition between the reality of current occupational structures and traditionally held beliefs about sex-type and work. Technological advances, civil rights movements, and the women's liberation movement have made jobs available to those who were formerly barred or discouraged from entering certain professions. Skills that were prized in the labor force, even two generations ago, favored men, but are much less relevant in today's industrial and post-industrial economy (Shen-Miller & Smiler, 2015). Hayes (1989) alluded to the changing sex composition in occupations over twenty-five years ago, when he predicted that more females would move into male-concentrated occupations and more males would enter female-concentrated occupations.

Changes in social norms have created new opportunities for many groups previously lacking such career opportunities. Men and women place a high value on both work and family roles (Gordon &Whelan-Berry, 2005). In the United States, the vast majority of men and women combine work and family roles (Perrone et al., 2009). Clearly, a shift is occurring in the United States whereby new social norms are taking root. Dual-earner families are the most prevalent type at 65% with children under the age of 18 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2007, p. 381). It is evident that the outdated image of man as the breadwinner and the domestic woman as homemaker are no longer applicable to the majority of Americans.

The mismatch between men's occupational choices and aspirations and outdated stereotypes and expectations is at the heart of the matter when investigating men who enter nontraditional occupations. The recent social changes, which are undoubtedly positive and necessary, have led to other issues. Men still are avoiding female-dominated occupations and face social pressures and barriers when entering female-dominated careers (Williams, 1993).

Statement of the Problem

Roberts (2012) makes an eloquent and resoundingly optimistic declaration about the current state of affairs when he states, "Things are not the same as previous generations -- there has been a change in attitudes, a change in what is acceptable, a change in what is possible" (p. 678). There are studies and evidence supporting these general claims, but upon further examination, many things remain the same.

Men's participation in the labor force has decreased over the past 50 years, while at the same time, women's participation has increased (Kantamneni, 2014). Recently, the world has moved to a more global market, and as a result, many jobs traditionally held by men have been outsourced to other countries or have become obsolete, leaving men with fewer options, especially "traditional" ones when selecting a career. With these changes, men may be required to make occupational choices that do not correspond to traditional socially accepted gender roles.

Women and men who attempt to enter fields typically dominated by the other gender frequently encounter stereotypes, prejudice, or discrimination (Clow & Ricciardelli, 2001; Kantamneni, 2014). Furthermore, messages about what types of careers are "appropriate" simply based on an individual's sex are prevalent in today's

society (Kantamneni, 2014). The messages that we as a society are receiving continue to influence and circumscribe the occupational decisions of women and men. These messages have influenced men entering female concentrated occupations across a range of professions.

The teaching profession has not been immune to the messages, barriers, and pressures of societal expectations. From an early age, boys and girls learn different occupational values and expectations from parents, schools, textbooks, media, and guidance counselors; these expectations and pressures are backed up by peer group pressure (Koenig & Eagly, 2014; Williams, 1995). The percentage of male teachers working in elementary schools has fallen steadily since 1981 and rapidly in the past ten years (Riddell & Tett, 2010). There is a widespread call to increase the representation of male teachers across the elementary grade levels and diversify what has been, historically speaking, a female dominated profession (Perrone et al., 2009). In 2007, the National Education Association (NEA) declared they were "waging a drive to get more men into teaching" (Santullova-Allison, 2010, p. 28).

There are approximately 1.8 million elementary grade level teachers in United States public schools; of these, a mere 9% are male (Santullova-Allison, 2010). The paucity of male teachers in the elementary grades has been a concern for the profession for many years (Drudy, Martin, Woods, & O'Flynn, 2005; Wiest, Olive, & Obenchain, 2003). This phenomenon does not only apply to general education teachers, but applies to special educators as well. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, roughly 86% of all special education teachers are female (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2009). However, unlike general education, recent trends show an increase in the number of men entering the

female-dominated profession of special education. In 2012, 86.2% of all special

education teachers were female, and by the following year, the number had dropped to

80.4% (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014). The evidence indicates that more men are

embarking on a nontraditional career, especially in special education, path that has been

historically occupied by females. As more men embark in the nontraditional career of

special education it is important to understand how men maintain their sense of self and

how they navigate and negotiate gender roles in their work.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to obtain a better understanding of the influences

on and the process by which men make the decision about pursuing a career teaching

special education at the elementary grade levels. A secondary purpose is to gain a better

understanding of men's experiences of working in a female-concentrated profession and

how those experiences shape their professional and personal lives. Furthermore, the study

examined how men displayed their masculinity in a female-concentrated profession, and

how their sense of self was maintained. This study expands on previous work

investigating male experiences in the nontraditional, female-concentrated occupations of

elementary school teaching (Galbraith, 1992; Mistry & Sood, 2015; Roulston & Mills,

2000; Werhen, 2010; Wiest et al., 2003), nursing (Heikes, 1991), and social work

(Dahlkild-Ohman & Eriksson, 2013; Pease, 2011), and explores the nontraditional career

experiences of men who are elementary school special education teachers. This study

expands on the current understanding and knowledge of men who make nontraditional

career choices. This line of work is especially salient, given the changing structure of

work and the workplace and the impact this has on career decisions.

The study employed the qualitative methodology of narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 1990; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Kim, 2016; Riessman, 2008; Wells, 2011) using case study to address the following research questions:

1. How do men teaching special education at the elementary grade level describe the influences on and the processes that shaped their decision to pursue, enter, and remain in the career of teaching special education?

2. How do men teaching special education describe their experiences as a male in a female-concentrated profession?

   a. Do they experience any overt advantages/disadvantages in the workplace due to sex-type?

   b. Do they experience a different set of standards/expectations than female colleagues?

3. How do men teaching special education apply/not apply masculinities when performing/explaining job functions, considering mobility/promotions, and remaining in the classroom?

Theoretical Frameworks

Two theoretical frameworks guided this study: Eagly's (1987) social role theory (gender role socialization), and social constructionist theory (Stead, 2014).

Eagly's (1987) social role theory provided a foundation and lens through which to view and understand men's decisions to enter and experiences in a nontraditional career. Social role theory recognizes the historical division in labor between women, who often assumed duties at home, and men, who often assumed duties outside the home (Eagly,

1987). As a result of the associated sex differences in social behavior, the expectations of men and women began to differ (Eagly, 1987). These expectations are transferred to future generations and, in turn, begin to shape the social behavior of each gender (Eagly, 1987; Eagly & Diekman, 1997; Eagly, Wood, & Diekman, 2000) and represent sexual stereotypes (Williams & Best, 1982). Accordingly, the behavior of men and women is governed by the stereotypes of their social roles. The present study applied the concepts of gender role socialization (Katamneni, 2014) to investigate the impact of expectations and pressures from parents, peers, self, and their influence on individual career decisions. Eagly's (1987) theory provided a foundation for understanding the process by which an individual (in this study, a male special education teacher) decided to pursue and remain in the career of special educator. Socialization practices in the United States have influenced the occupational and educational decisions of men and women (Kantamneni, 2014). Powell and Greenhaus (2010) highlight the impact of gender role socialization, stating, "Gender roles and stereotypes are instilled during childhood by gender socialization processes and reinforced during adulthood by expectancy confirmation processes" (p. 1012). Social role theory will be used as a foundation for understanding participants' decision-making processes and influences.

In addition to social role theory, I employed a social constructionist lens to discuss the study's findings. There is not one agreed upon definition of social constructionism, nor can the theory be linked to a single author or book; rather, it can be seen as "a collection of approaches that have more or less similar ways of understanding the social sciences" (Stead, 2014, p. 37). Social constructionism is interested in the narratives of people in context, as opposed to providing grand narratives in the search for

universal truths (Stead, 2014). Social constructionism is well positioned to understand people and communities who have often been marginalized, and those whose experiences are not indicative of the norm (Stead, 2014). The theory also encourages the dominant view to be challenged and questioned. Additionally, social constructionism emphasizes the importance of challenging the status quo, which compromises peoples' well-being (Stead, 2014). Examining findings from a social constructionist perspective is appropriate for this study because each individual's experience and narrative are at the core of this research on the nontraditional career choice and experiences of male special education teachers. Additionally, the research examined the impact of gender role socialization (gender roles) on participants' experiences and decision-making processes over the course of their career, as well as in the future.

Research Design

The study used narrative inquiry (Clandinin, 2013; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Kim, 2016; Riessman, 2008), a qualitative methodology. A case study methodology was used in conjunction with a narrative approach. The research questions that guided the study demonstrated the need for inductive exploration, discovery, and understanding that are the foci of qualitative research. Qualitative inquiry encourages the exploration of the multiple realities of how male special educators teaching in the elementary grades make decisions, and allows for the participants' realities to be shared and understood holistically (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Narrative inquiry, the study of the ways humans experience the world (Clandinin, 2013; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Kim, 2016), is a means by which the participant narrates his or her personal experience in the form of stories (Clandinin & Connelly,

2000), as well as an exploration of the "social, cultural, familial, linguistic, and institutional narratives within which individuals' experiences were, and are, constituted, shaped, expressed, and enacted" (Clandinin, 2013, p. 18). Narrative inquiry, in educational research, is a way of organizing human experience, since humans lead storied lives individually and socially (Clandinin, 2013). Utilizing narrative inquiry yields stories that reveal the influences on and the processes by which participants make the decision to pursue a nontraditional career in special education teaching. Stories serve as effective means by which information about a person's life can be accessed, and by which the readers are shown the narrator's reality (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998). Narrative inquiry focuses on the growth and transformation in a participant's story (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) and on the content and structure of one's story (Riessman, 2008).

The study used purposive sampling to recruit six male special educators currently teaching students with disabilities in kindergarten through sixth grade. All participants were from a large suburban school district in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States. The primary source of data was collected via one-on-one semi-structured interviews. Supplementary data was collected using a participant form and researcher field notes, as well as official county information. Several validation measures were employed to preserve trustworthiness throughout the study.

Significance

Despite its limitations, the study and its findings have the potential to make significant contributions to the field of education, and particularly special education. It has been established that the economy is becoming globalized and the landscape of the

workplace is changing. Men and women are now required to make career decisions that place them in nontraditional fields of employment (Kantemneni, 2014). The percentage of men participating in the workforce is decreasing, while at the same time, the percentage of women participating in the workforce is increasing. Men are competing with women for many jobs they did not have to compete for in the past, and more qualified women are entering the workforce. Men, by choice or out of necessity, are pursuing nontraditional careers that were nearly void of men a generation prior. Furthermore, the study reported here is critical to help understand how men pursue and remain in a nontraditional career. Individuals, often through work, can exercise self-determination, and have the right to pursue work that they are intrinsically interested in and that represents an expression of their true self-concept (Kantemnemi, 2014). Therefore, it is critical to study and examine the unique experiences of men teaching special education in the elementary grades to gain a better understanding on the experiences of men working in this nontraditional career.

Definition of Terms

Elementary Grade Levels. Kindergarten through 6th grade.

Gender Roles (stereotypes), A set of expectations associated with an individuals sex-type, social position, and setting.

Masculinities. Ideals and actions that are expected of men based on applying gender roles.

Nontraditional Occupations (female-concentrated/male-concentrated). Defined as any occupation (career) whereby one sex-type has less than 25-30% of the workers in the given occupation (U.S. Census Bureau, 2007). The term female-

concentrated and/or male-concentrated will be used in favor of male-dominated or female-dominated as per Hayes (1989).

Special Education Teacher. A person who currently teaches, with full state certification, students with disabilities in a public elementary school.

Sex-Type. The term sex-type will refer to the biological chromosomal distinction between the sexes. This term does not refer to gender.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature reviews reveal the findings, conclusions, and theories of previous studies or text and identify the connections between those works and the proposed study (Creswell, 2003; Rudestam & Newton, 2001). The literature review reveals gaps in the selected area of study and areas in need of further inquiry within the current literature base, thus placing the current study in the context of the larger field. In qualitative research, the literature review can be used at the end of a study as a means of comparing the study's findings with previous research or earlier in the study to set the foundation for the research being proposed (Creswell, 1998). In this study, the literature review fulfills both of those roles. The current chapter sets the groundwork for the study by exploring the current literature and identifying gaps and omissions in the literature regarding men's decision-making processes regarding entering a nontraditional, female-concentrated profession, and their subsequent experiences. In Chapter 5, I use the literature as a basis of comparison between the study's findings and findings from other research in the field.

The present research employed the qualitative research methodology of narrative inquiry using a case study design to explore how men working in special education describe the influences on their decision to go into special education, as well as the processes by which they pursued a career in teaching students with disabilities. The studies also sought to understand the experiences of men working in the nontraditional field of special education teaching, and determine the impact, if applicable, of individual

experiences on career decisions. To paraphrase Creswell (1998), the literature review allowed me to understand what has already been studied, who still needs to be studied, and how to best conduct that study.

The literature review is divided into two major sections. The first major section presents research that investigated the factors that influenced men to enter a nontraditional career. The second major section focuses on literature that investigated how men defined and navigated "masculinity" while working in a female-concentrated career. The concepts of gender roles and masculinity were used as a framework to analyze the findings and place them within context for the larger body of research. The section also included and presents studies that investigated the impact of gender role socialization on men working in nontraditional careers. This second part of the literature review also discusses research applied or discussed William's (1995) proposition of "a glass escalator." Last, I will present overall conclusions, themes, and outline the need for the present study within the larger literature base.

The following section will present research related to men's entry into nontraditional occupations. All of the studies included participants who were enrolled in a pre-service program or actively working in female-concentrated occupations at the time of the research. This criterion was vital because it provided insight into the lived experiences and decision-making process for men who chose a nontraditional career path. The first of the two groups of studies will be divided into two sub-groups: the first sub-group of studies looked at men across multiple nontraditional careers (Lease, 2003; Lupton, 2006; Simpson, 2005). The second sub-group of studies looked at men who

specifically entered teaching (Priegert-Coulter & McNay, 1993; Santullova-Allison, 2010; Werhan, 2010; Wiest et al., 2003).

Men's Entry into Nontraditional Occupations

As the number of men entering nontraditional careers increases, there is a growing need to study and understand men who make nontraditional career decisions (Dodson & Borders, 2006). Furthermore, it becomes imperative to study and understand the impact of these career choices on the individual men, their families, and society (Dodson & Borders, 2006).

Lease (2003) investigated the factors that influenced men to enter female-concentrated occupations. To examine occupational choice, Lease conducted a longitudinal study of a sample of men who were assessed at two different times; once during their first year of college in 1986 and four years later in 1990. The sample included 354 male students who met the criteria for selecting traditionally male and female careers. One hundred and fifty-four men represented the ten most "female-dominated" careers, and 200 men represented the 10 most "male-dominated" occupations. Data were analyzed using regression-based path analysis. The longitudinal design allowed the researcher to account for socializing experiences on participants over the course of four years in college.

The study concluded that social attitudes, degree aspirations, and socioeconomic status were predictive of career choice for the young men in the study. Men holding more politically liberal attitudes were more likely to choose a nontraditional career. Participants with higher socioeconomic backgrounds and who held higher degree aspirations gravitated towards more traditional career choices. The variable of prestige

measured the importance placed on prestige of career in the decision making process, and the results indicated that men entering traditional careers placed a greater importance on prestige than did those participants selecting nontraditional careers. Furthermore, perceived academic ability and the importance of having a prestigious career at Time 1 had significant impact on occupational choice. Men making nontraditional career decisions placed less emphasis on achieving status and may have valued other components of their work. Interestingly, perceived academic ability was a significant indirect predictor of occupational choice, with higher perceived academic ability predicting traditional occupational choices among the participants (Lease, 2003).

Lupton's (2006) descriptive case study used in-depth interviews of 27 male participants who worked in six occupational groups in the United Kingdom. Three groups were from female-concentrated occupations: primary-school teaching, human resources management, and librarianship. The male-concentrated occupations, used for comparison were law, computing, and accounting. Of note, all occupations were graduate-entry positions, so educational decisions did not unequally impact occupational choice. The author wanted to gain an understanding of men's experiences in female-concentrated work, as well as gain insight into the processes and reasons behind one's decision to enter female-concentrated occupations.

Many respondents expressed concern that their masculinity and heterosexuality were questioned, merely for working in a female-concentrated occupation. One of the participants, Scott, expressed concern over perceived stigmas and the impact they had on his own thoughts and behaviors, despite his self-proclaimed liberal position on sexuality. Men in the study also mentioned that the stigma of being labeled a pervert or homosexual

were real concerns when undertaking a female-concentrated career. Some respondents explained that they went so far as to lie or change their job title and descriptions to appear more masculine to outsiders, given the public stigma held that men holding nontraditional occupations are "abnormal."

Men in the study felt they were at an advantage for promotions and opportunities, given their "token" status in their female-concentrated positions. Furthermore, men in the study cited job security, public sector work (health insurance, retirement funds), and availability to pursue interest and commitments outside of work as reasons for entry into nontraditional occupations. The findings support previous research from two seminal studies regarding men and their "token" status in female-concentrated professions (Hayes 1986; Williams, 1993) as it relates to perceived or real advantages in hiring and promotions.

Simpson (2005) also researched men working in several different female-concentrated occupations. More specifically, the author wanted to investigate participants' experiences related to (a) career entry, (b) career orientation (extrinsic or intrinsic rewards), and (c) role strain. In-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 40 men working across four female-concentrated occupations: nursing, cabin crew (flight attendants), librarians, and primary (elementary) schoolteachers.

The findings showed that there were three distinct entry methods for the men into their current nontraditional occupation. The three entry methods were labeled "seekers," "finders," and "settlers." The first two groups support previous findings from William and Villemez's (1993) study. The third category of "settlers" also emerged for Simpson (2005) during the interviews with participants. There is little to distinguish between

seekers and finders, aside from seekers making a more active choice to enter a nontraditional career, compared to the finders taking a more passive approach, often citing their current career as "second best." Contrary to the first two groups, settlers had a much higher percentage of career changes, and had often worked in more "masculine," traditional careers prior to entering their current nontraditional career. Nearly half of the participants (45%) indicated their entry method into a nontraditional career was that of settler, and of this group, 78% indicated they had undergone a career change, and 66% shared they had worked in a more "masculine" career prior to changing to a nontraditional career. Settlers also indicated experiencing periods of dissatisfaction in their previous jobs, but now felt their nontraditional career choice were the right fit.

Simpson (2005) also explored the value men in nontraditional careers placed on extrinsic (pay, career advancement) and intrinsic rewards (self-fulfillment and job satisfaction). On its own, pay was not cited as a high priority for the study participants. However, a desire to move up the pay scale as quickly as possible was a factor for many respondents, with 35% of the men stating they had ambitions to reach senior positions. Conversely, 53% of the men expressed no immediate or future plans to leave their current positions. Interestingly, variations emerged between respondents when accounting for entry method. Settlers gave a much greater priority to intrinsic rewards rather than extrinsic rewards, as indicated by the 72% of settlers expressing satisfaction in their current jobs, and no desire to pursue promotion or pay increases. These findings partially contradict Williams' (1993) proposition of "token" men entering into nontraditional careers for the advantageous treatment they experience in promotion.

Simpson also investigated role strain and its impact on men working in nontraditional occupations. Role strain is the discomfort that arises when there is uneasiness in expected gender role behavior as a result of tensions between an individual's gender identity and occupational stereotyping. For men in nontraditional occupations, role strain occurs when the need to maintain a masculine identity is in conflict with the feminine associations or demands of the job. Of the respondents, 55% said that they felt some level of discomfort with their nontraditional roles in their jobs. Participants identified feelings of "embarrassment, discomfort, and shame" (p. 372); however, of the 12 respondents in the sample that stated no discomfort, nine (75%) identified as being homosexual. A majority of men in the study indicated their parents and family members were sources of strong support for their career choice. However, the participants also stated male friends and acquaintances were much less accepting of their nontraditional career choice. Overall, across the studies, role strain was a common theme experienced by men in nontraditional occupations.

Throughout the course of the interviews coping strategies began to emerge as a theme (Simpson, 2005). The participants indicated they used these strategies, coping mechanisms, to minimize the potential for being stereotyped and to reduce role strain. One strategy was to emphasize the masculine components of their jobs, or choose a more masculine specialization within their field. Another strategy cited was "Job Redefinition" (Korek, Sobiraj, Weseler, Rigotti, & Mohr, 2014), whereby men manipulated meanings surrounding their nontraditional roles, such as giving minimal or skewed information surrounding job titles or functions (saying teacher, without specifying elementary school teacher).

The three studies reviewed looked at men who had entered multiple nontraditional careers. The following four studies looked specifically at the experiences of men who entered the field of teaching. Results for each of the studies will be presented and then themes that emerged from across the seven studies will be presented.

Men Who Enter Teaching

Gender disparities in teaching have been around for more than a century in the United States (Billingsley, 2004). Women now participate in the workforce at a higher rate than 50 years ago although the work women are doing tends to be focused in traditionally female occupations (Betz, 2005). For example, women represent greater than 90% of the childcare workers, preschool and kindergarten teachers (Kantamneni, 2014). This disparity has continued, in part, due to the practice of gender segregation between occupations, whereby men and women typically enter professions dominated by the same gender (Kantamneni, 2014). However, the workplace landscape has and continues to evolve to where new and different opportunities are open to many groups of people that, until recently, were not afforded the same opportunities as other groups. Changing beliefs and philosophies regarding work and family have also changed the occupational landscape. In recent decades, there has been a growing interest in the career choices of adult men who enter nontraditional careers (Hancock, 2012).

Priegert-Coulter and McNay, (1993) in a seminal study, examined male elementary school teachers. A total of seven men beginning their careers as elementary teachers participated in the study. All participants were Caucasian and self-identified as middle class. The participants ranged in age from 28 to 40 years old, and were all career changers. The seven men participated in focused group interviews starting at the close of

their pre-service year, and every two months thereafter, until the conclusion of their first year of teaching.

Several findings emerged from the study. First, every single participant expressed a positive past experience working with children as a major factor in deciding to enter a teaching career. The men in the study felt that they had something unique to offer children, given their male status in a female-concentrated profession. Many responded that they wanted to model that it was acceptable for boys to act differently than the normal "manly" way expected by society. A unique theme that emerged was that many men said that they did not have to justify the decision to go into the teaching profession, but did have to justify their choice to teach elementary grade-levels.

Participants expressed mixed experiences about the topic of sex and sexuality. Some men stated that they were welcomed by hiring committees and colleagues, while others expressed having an opposite experience, where they were viewed upon with suspicion and, at times, with open discouragement from colleagues. Lastly, the men did not advocate for a particular policy to recruit more men into elementary school teaching.

Wiest, Olive, and Obenchain (2003) also investigated the perceptions of men teaching elementary grade-levels. Their study looked specifically at the experiences of men teaching grades kindergarten through second grade (K-2). The total study sample consisted of 148 K-2 public school teachers in the state of Nevada. The final sample was comprised of 73 men and 75 females, with response rates of 40% and 39%, respectively. The researchers wanted to gain a better understanding of the factors that influenced men into entering the K-2 teaching profession, factors impacting participants' present level of enjoyment in their teaching assignment, and the perceived stereotypes or drawbacks

related to teaching K-2 students as a male. Demographically, the men in the study were significantly older than their female counterparts when they began teaching, were less likely to have entered teaching as their first career, and also had fewer years of teaching experience.

The men in the study cited several factors that influenced them to enter teaching. Many participants stated they enjoyed working with children, and especially enjoyed the K-2 developmental stage. A chance to work with students earlier in the learning process was also a major influence for men. Prior experiences and the opportunity to model great male teaching for the students were also factors. Participants also cited family members and other role models as important influences in their decision to entering teaching.

The men in the study selected personal satisfaction over financial rewards or prestige when making their career choice. Overall, the male participants, compared to the female participants, reported a greater adjustment period to teaching. However, 81% of the men reported being "very satisfied" with their job and job responsibilities.

Surprisingly, when analyzing the results for stereotypes and drawbacks, the researchers found no significant difference between the male and female respondents. The only area where there was a slight difference was in the area of "difficulty gaining trust from parents and students," to which 24% of females responded affirmatively, compared to only 11% of males. Despite these results, the participants in the study still expressed a "fear factor" when it came to student contact and the perceptions of parents or other colleagues may have of them due to the fact they have chosen to work with younger children. The men cited accusations of pedophilia or being accused of "dubious masculinity" as drawbacks and areas of concern. The men shared that they were given

students with histories of behavior problems and were six times more likely than their female counterparts to have plans to "move on" into administration or other non-classroom positions.

Werhan (2010) investigated why men entered the gendered profession of Family and Consumer Science (FCS) and their experiences as pre-service and full-time teachers. The participants in the study were two Caucasian males; one in his 28th year of teaching and the other in his 5th year of teaching. Each man was married, and the older participant had three children and one grandchild. One participant was in his mid-fifties and the other in his late twenties.

Each of the participants cited a genuine interest in the FCS curriculum as a factor in deciding to pursue a career in FCS. Both men also stated they sought a position that was compatible with their perception of a family-friendly career. Specifically, they wanted a career offering stable schedules and ample time to spend with their families. Consistent with the literature, the men in the study did not plan on becoming FCS teachers when they entered college, but were positively influenced by faculty and staff at their respective universities to pursue a teaching career. Family role models were found to be minimal for the two participants in the study, and again, it was role models from faculty and staff that ignited their interest and ultimately, their decisions to enter FCS teaching. Both men also cited spousal support as a major influence in deciding to select a nontraditional career.

The results also uncovered several barriers faced by men working as FCS teachers. Both men revealed that they had difficulties securing their first jobs, and cited gender bias as a possible barrier. The men also reported perceptions from others that they

may be homosexual, and reported their "masculinity" was questioned at times by colleagues and students. One participant stated that his choice to become a teacher was a point of contention with his family, given the low status and pay.

The participants stated they did not feel they were given any advantage due to their "token" status in the profession. Furthermore, neither participant saw their current position as a way up the "glass escalator" to administration or promotion. Both men said they did not have a desire to leave the classroom to move into an administrative position.

The final study in this section, by Sanatullova-Allison (2010), explored the factors influencing men to enter a career in elementary school teaching. The study was comprised of nine male students enrolled in a pre-service program in a midwestern university in the United States. The cases were bounded by time (stage in the program), with three participants representing each stage of the program (first practicum, second practicum, and student teaching).

The participants cited several powerful factors that influenced them to enter the nontraditional career path of elementary level teaching. People they cited as important were their own parents, having a family history of teachers, and former teachers of theirs. Externally, they cited their own positive schooling experiences and positive events earlier in life teaching or helping children. The participants expressed the desire to make a difference in the lives of young students, and being a positive influence on children was an important factor in deciding to pursue a teaching career. The participants cited internal factors (being a positive influence on children) over extrinsic factors (salary and prestige) when making career decisions. Many felt their original job plans in more traditional "masculine" careers did not fit their personal sense of who they were.

Summary of Findings

Several themes emerged from the literature regarding men's decisions to enter a nontraditional career. Three extrinsic factors that emerged from the data were: job security, benefits, and ability to pursue outside interests. Two studies Lupton (2006) and Werhan (2010) found that job security, benefits (health insurance, paid vacation), and the ability to pursue outside interests were major influences as to why the men in the studies decided to pursue a nontraditional career.

Another influential factor for men entering nontraditional careers were parents and family members. Four of the studies (Sanatullova-Allison, 2010; Simpson, 2005; Werhan, 2010; Wiest et al., 2003) concluded that for men entering a nontraditional career, having the encouragement and support of their parents and other family members was critical in the decision-making process. One study (Werhan, 2010) found that faculty members were also significant influences for the men in their study in pursuing a nontraditional career.

Three studies (Priegert-Coulter & McNay, 1993; Sanatullova-Allison, 2010; Wiest et al., 2003) found that positive past experiences working with children had a major impact on men's decision to enter the nontraditional career of teaching elementary school. The experiences were varied across settings, including tutoring, being a camp counselor, or coaching. The participants in these studies all attributed these positive experiences as a major reason they decided to pursue teaching as a career.

Several studies (Priegert-Coulter & McNay, 1993; Wiest et al., 2003) found that men were influenced by the opportunity to offer something unique from their male status.

Participants cited the ability to break traditionally held beliefs and show young students, particularly boys, that teaching was a admirable and positive career choice and option.

There were many positive factors that played a role for the men in deciding to pursue nontraditional careers. However, the literature also uncovered the drawbacks and negative influences when considering or working in nontraditional careers.

The most prevalent stereotype faced by men entering nontraditional careers was the stigma they faced of being labeled a homosexual, pervert, or feeling that their masculinity was under question (Lupton, 2006; Priegert-Coulter & McNay, 1993; Werhan, 2010; Wiest et al., 2003). These stereotypes are confirmed across the literature and continue to be a major drawback when considering entry and working in a female-concentrated career (Hancock, 2012; Kantamneni, 2014; Korek et al., 2012). Men, at times, stated they were viewed in a suspicious light, where they faced discouragement from colleagues, and described a "fear factor" associated with working in a female-concentrated, nontraditional career (Priegert-Coulter & McNay, 1993; Wiest et al., 2003). Gender role socialization continues to greatly impact and influence men's decisions to enter and remain in nontraditional careers.

Role strain is a mismatch between gender expectations of the individual and the gender expectations of a job. Role strain was specifically discussed in two studies (Lupton, 2006; Simpson, 2005). Simpson (2005) found that 55% of the participants in his study felt some level of discomfort and role strain in their jobs. The issue of role strain has been supported across the literature (Cognard-Black, 2004) and has a substantial influence on men's decision to enter into and continue working in nontraditional careers.

Wiest and colleagues (2003) cited receiving students with histories of behavior concerns and the expectation to be a disciplinarian as another drawback and stereotype that some men in the study found unfavorable. This is supported by Gans (1987), who discussed differing expectations for men in female-concentrated positions that he attributed to the gender role expectations found in larger society.

Several of the studies also used William's (1995) glass escalator proposition when analyzing their findings. Four of the studies directly tied their findings back to William's work (Lupton, 2006; Simpson, 2005; Werhan, 2010; Wiest et al., 2003). Interestingly, the findings were mixed when looking for perceived or real advantages men received due to their token status. Participants in Lupton's study felt they were at a clear advantage for hiring and promotion opportunities, given their male status. Wiest et al. (2003) compared the likelihood of men moving into non-classroom positions, and found that the men were six times more likely than females to move into non-teaching positions. Conversely, participants in Werhan's (2010) study stated they had not experienced or perceived any advantages, given their male status. A little more than half (55%) of the male participants in Simpson's study indicated no desire to move into administrative positions, and planned to continue working in the classroom. The literature clearly is mixed concerning William's (1995) proposition of a glass escalator advantage experienced by men in female-concentrated occupations.

The above section presented the factors related to entry, as well as drawbacks faced by men in nontraditional careers. Equally critical to the research field is the investigation of the impact of gender role expectations (stereotypes) on men working in nontraditional careers, and how they impact an individual's masculine identity when

working in a female-concentrated career. The following section will present literature surrounding gender role expectations and the impact on men's masculinity when working in nontraditional careers.

Evolution of the Concept of Masculinity

In order to properly explain the concept of "masculinity" within the context of my research, it is important to provide a brief history of masculinity, roughly covering the past 400 years. The following quote is an excerpt from Connell's (2005) work *Masculinities,* which provides a lens to interpret the concept of masculinity, "…masculinities are not only shaped by the process of imperial expansion, they are active in that process and help shape it" (p. 187). European and American masculinities were deeply implicated in the violence that promulgated European and American culture into dominance (Connell, 2002).

The period between 1450-1650 was the time when modern capitalist economy came into being in the North Atlantic region, which spawned what we now refer to as the modern gender order. Connell (2002) cites four developments that are particularly critical for the making of social practices that we call masculinity.

The first development was the cultural change that produced new understandings of sexuality and personhood in metropolitan Europe. It was a time when Catholicism was changing and the spread of Renaissance secular culture and the Protestant Reformation lead to disruption of long established ideals for men. The stronghold that religion had on intellectual thinking began to weaken during this time. This allowed for a growing cultural emphasis on the wedded household, which replaced monastic denial as the most revered form of sexuality. The new emphasis on individualism led to the concept of the

autonomous self. These two changes, wedded households and individuality, were prerequisites for the idea of masculinity.

The second major development was the creation of overseas empires and the global spread of imperialism. Establishing empires was a gendered enterprise from the start. Men and women's roles were segregated, as men were responsible for soldiering and sea trading, while the women occupied the role of wives or house servants, working under the rule of a man. Men who helped conquer new lands staffed the imperial states established by the empires. Men who fought on the colonial frontier, such as the Spanish conquistadors, were the first group of men defined as masculine. The violence that accompanied advancement and expansion saw the segregation of gender roles and a premium placed on strength and violence.

The next development critical in the development of "masculinity" was the growth of cities that were centers of commercial capitalism that created new settings for everyday life. The cities were both more autonomous and regulated. These changes resulted in further individualism in the 17th and 18th centuries. This individualism was in part a result of the first industrial revolution at the time. This resulted in the accumulation of wealth from trade, slaving and colonies; a "calculative rationality" (p. 188) began to saturate urban culture. This period saw the establishment of the entrepreneurial culture and the workplaces of commercial capitalism established a form of masculinity through the legitimatizing new forms of gendered work and power.

The final development was the onset of large scale European civil war. First the religious wars of the 16th and 17th centuries followed by the dynastic wars of the 17th and 18th centuries. One of the outcomes of the European civil wars was a strong centralized

state. In the time of monarchies the centralized state provided large-scale

institutionalization of power. During 18th century Europe and North America emerged a

gender order and the emergence of modern masculinity.

Men, "Masculinities," and Work

The second group of studies investigated how men interpret, experience, and

navigate their masculinity while working in a nontraditional career. Ten studies in total

will make-up the second major group of studies. Two of the studies looked at men across

several nontraditional occupations (Cross & Bagihole, 2002; Pullen & Simpson, 2009).

Six studies specifically look at male teachers (Haase, 2010; Hjlmarsson & Lofdahl, 2014;

Martino, 2008; Mistry & Sood, 2015; Montecinos & Nielson, 2004; Sargent, 2005). The

final two studies (McDonald, 2013; Roberts, 2012) examined men working in nursing

and the retail sector, respectively.

Cross and Bagihole (2002) looked at the ways in which masculinities are defined,

(re)onstructed, and maintained by men working in nontraditional occupations. The study

consisted of ten men, all white, nine of whom self-identified as heterosexual, working in

female-concentrated occupations in Britain. The researchers used one-to-one semi-

structured interviews to collect data.

The men in the study indicated that they experienced challenges to their gender

identities in the forms of being perceived as unable to perform the emotional duties of

caring, sensitivity, and empathy required of men in female-concentrated positions. Eight

of the ten participants reported that they had experienced a questioning of their sexuality.

One respondent, a male nurse, said the following, "but at the end of the day I still used to

get lots of ribbing from my mates…some of them were actually quite nasty about me" (p.

213). As evident by the quote and participant responses, men in the study felt anxiety about how others may perceive their nontraditional career choice. The researchers also discovered that the men in the study developed different responses and coping mechanisms to respond to challenges about their masculinity. Sixty percent of the men said that they focused on the quality of their work and made a commitment to doing "a more" professional job than their female colleagues. The men placed a greater emphasis on technical knowledge, logic, and assertiveness in their work. Some responded by reinterpreting the work they do, where masculine qualities emphasized over caring and emotional components of their job. Four out of the ten participants shared that they identified with their work as a true indication of their true self. The study shows that men can respond and cope with gender roles and masculinity in different ways. Some men maintained traditional male "masculine" values (power and assertiveness) and demonstrated this through their behavior and practices, while other men reconstructed a new masculinity by identifying with the traditional feminine traits of the occupation (caring and compassionate).

Pullen and Simpson (2009) also studied men across two nontraditional occupations; nursing and primary (elementary) school teaching. The authors wanted to examine men's gendered identities while working in female-concentrated jobs. The study consisted of 25 men in nursing and primary school teaching (15 in nursing, 10 in teaching). The participants were interviewed one-to-one. The researchers focused on the narration of each participant's lived experience and how it reflected the "doing" and "undoing" gender in their work.

Two strategies emerged from the data analysis regarding how the men in the study both managed and reinforced their masculinity in their nontraditional occupations. First, men created a differentiation of emotional labor skills from women. Men viewed themselves as having "a different form of compassion" (p. 570), caring in a more "detached" manner, being "more rational," having "more discipline," and having "more authority." The men in the study related their forms of compassion back to stereotypical characteristics associated with masculinity. A second strategy that emerged was associating with a higher status group of males in the profession. For example, many male nurses shared they had social relationships with many male doctors. This strategy was a means for the men to reinforce their status as males and reinforce their masculinity.

Another theme to emerge from the data was "projects of femininity," where, in order to manage differences in response to threats to their masculinity, men activate projects of femininity (Pullen & Simpson, 2009). For some men in the study, feminized work becomes an uncomfortable choice when compared to the work often associated with men. Some men, in order to manage the mismatch between their work and masculine ideals participate in creating "projects of femininity," where men create and maintain a distance from traditional masculinity. Men will "undo" traditional masculinity. Men in this situation will promote feminine characteristics and detach themselves with the normal assumptions of being a man. This is exemplified by the following quote from Keith, a primary school teacher, "I'm really in touch with my caring side, my feminine side if you like. Not like other blokes I know" (p. 574). Keith was able to excel at in his work by acting out traits normally associated with being feminine.

The third theme to emerge from the data was the notion of feeling out of place in feminized occupations. Throughout their interviews, men continually referred to their physical body as being a problematic in nursing and elementary school teaching, especially regarding bodily contact with students. Caring roles required in nursing and elementary teaching require, at times, bodily contact. The men in the study reported their bodies further marked them as different than their female counterparts. This made the men in the study feel constrained in their ability to perform certain job functions.

Gender identities and "masculinity" are defined, redefined, and (re)constructed in many different ways for men in nontraditional occupations. Understanding how men navigate these components of their work is critical for understanding men working in nontraditional occupations.

Hjalmarsson and Lofdahl (2014) conducted interviews with seven male teachers from four elementary schools (grades 3-5) in an urban school district in Sweden. Each teacher participated in a semi-structured interview to gather rich data on each participant's experiences as a male elementary teacher. Three themes emerged from the data analysis: men emphasizing the social aspects of their work, conceptualizing care in their work, and men as disciplinarians in their work.

The social components of their work were clearly divided into two regimes. The first being the idea of a "role model" for some of the children that came to them from more disadvantaged backgrounds. The men in the study viewed their minority (quantitatively speaking) status as important to helping students who do not necessarily have male figures in their lives. Men, to some degree, crossed over into feminine gender roles in efforts to establish and maintain good relationships with their students and

parents. Again, the men in the study revealed that they felt they had an advantage and could connect with students and they "get attached in another way and you get to know the children personally" (p. 286) in order to build relationships. On the other hand, some men shared that being a man was not advantageous for building relationships with parents. Glenn, one of the participants, shared the following, "Parents, especially of younger children, want a female teacher…I feel left behind" (p. 286). Evident by the stark contrast presented above, gender roles and expectations are expressed in various ways for the men in the study.

The second major theme to emerge from the data surrounded the concept of care, and how men navigated care in their work. The study showed that men often formed a grouping with the other men they worked with as a way to emphasize their minority position in the school. Some men cited this as an advantage, in comparison to women. Men shared they are asked to lift and move heavier items in the school: "The women ask men for assistance with traditionally male tasks" (p. 287). The men in the study adhered to gender stereotypical expectations by performing task that are seen as masculine. This is an example of men "doing gender" in the workplace.

The final theme surrounded the topic of discipline. The participants shared that they were expected by colleagues, the administration, and parents to handle "unstable" students. These bias expectations were echoed by Bo, a 54-year-old third grade teacher: "I felt they had greater expectations from me when it came to upholding peace and quiet in the class" (p. 288). Although the men in the study said they received positive comments from staff and administrators, they did not feel that they were any more qualified than female colleagues in their ability to maintain order in class. Being seen as

the disciplinarian, and expected to display "hard masculinity" was not in line with some teachers' own ideals. This expectation can be a source of added pressure and anxiety for male teachers.

Martino's (2008) descriptive case studies explored how two male elementary school teachers negotiated hegemonic masculinity within the broader context of gendered beings. The two teachers taught in grades six and four, respectively. One taught in an inner-city school in Toronto, Canada and the other in a metropolitan school in Perth, Australia. The researcher utilized semi-structured interviews with each participant to ask questions related to their experiences as male elementary school teachers.

One of the respondents cited the "enormous concern and anxiety about child abuse" (Martino, 2008, p. 580). The participant went on to state that as a male teacher, there are more eyes on you and a cloud of suspicion on you that far exceeds that of any female teacher. Ben, the above respondent, also identified himself as gay. He shared the intensified fear he feels if parents were to find out his sexual orientation. He cited the commonly held misconceptions between pedophilia and homosexuality, and reported having to deny his true identity in his professional life. The participants in the study, despite experiencing some gender disadvantages, were quick to acknowledge the "undeserved privilege" (p. 581) they experience. Parents and students both tend to take them more seriously, simply based on their male status.

Similarly to Hjlmarsson and Lofdahl (2014), Martino's (2008) study highlighted the bias experienced by male elementary teachers to be the disciplinarians or the authority figures in the school. Steve, a 6th grade teacher, expressed that he felt he was assigned to his current class, in part, due to his ability to discipline the boys in the class.

Steve shared that he uses his position as their teacher to expose students to alternative masculinities aside from only traditional masculinity. He shared that he cried at assemblies when his students received awards, and crosses his legs when he sits. These are all efforts to show his students that men can embody different roles and display emotion. Steve expressed that this is done to counteract the hegemonic masculinity played out in the "working poor" community where he teaches.

The two men in the study uniquely negotiated hegemonic masculinity within the context of their individual sexual orientation and social class. Each participant was impacted by hegemonic masculinities in larger society. Masculinities influenced how each teacher interacted with students and parents, as well as how they delivered instruction. The politics of gender identity were influential for each participant in Martino's study.

Montecinos and Nielson (2004) examined how prevailing and alternative concepts of masculinity framed 40 white male pre-service teachers' meaning of teaching. The researchers conducted individual, hour-long, in-depth semi-structured interviews with each participant. All participants were enrolled in a teacher preparation program at a midsized university in the Midwestern United States. The participants were bounded by time (program phase), based on their status. There were 10 participants representing each of the four phases: Phases I and II, which were field experiences; Phase III, consisting of teaching methods; and Phase IV, the student teaching experience.

Some of the most interesting findings from the study were the participants' views of nurturing and caring. Participants questioned prevailing ideas that linked caring, teaching, and femininity. The participants discussed the new cultural images of

fatherhood, or "the new man" (p. 5). The "new man" is an involved father who is in touch with his feelings. However, despite the optimism surrounding the new cultural image of "the new man" expressed by the pre-service teachers, it was met with resistance and traditional gender expectations. A participant in Phase III of the program highlights traditional gender roles at play: "The women always looked to me, because I was one of the only guy counselors. They'd go, 'this kid is acting up, will you do something?' Because I was the guy they said that they'd listen to me" (p. 6). Another participant in Phase I shared an excerpt from a conversation he had with his mother regarding his possible desire to teach Kindergarten: "People might have some problems with that. They might wonder what was wrong with me…She was just pointing out the way the rest of society looks at it" (p. 6). The men in the study adhered to more "traditional" masculinities, especially in their interactions with children. One participant, a Phase III student, shared the following: "females can get away with hugging students, where males have to stay at a distance" (Montecinos & Nielson, 2004, p. 6).

The men interviewed presented an emerging cultural image of "the new man," which affords men a place in the caring and nurturing profession of elementary teaching. Despite the emerging image, men expressed care in ways that are congruent for societal expectations for masculinity (hegemonic masculinity). The data expressed four themes by which the males in the study defined teaching, and are as follows: (a) be a male role model, (b) be a sports coach, (c) appeal to reason, and (d) prepare yourself to move into occupations with higher status and financial reward.

Participants shared that they were drawn to elementary school teaching to provide children with male role models, especially children whose fathers were absent in their

lives. One of the participants in Phase IV shared the following thoughts: "I think the students need that, they need males in the classroom…Some of them just don't have dads at home…need males, to show them the way to be a good role model" (p. 6).

For 19 of the 40 participants (48%), it was their interest in coaching that propelled them to pursue a degree in elementary education. This finding supports previous work that showed boys often being judged by their ability to excel in competitive sports (Messner, 1997). The findings also showed that the participants had a strong proclivity to adhere to norms of masculinity that promote independence and rationality. This led them to divide elementary teaching into two separate spheres; one being grades K-2, and the other, grades 3rd-6th. Only six (15%) of the participants expressed an interest in teaching Kindergarten through second grade (K-2), and some even devalued the lower grades.

The final theme to emerge from the study (Montecinos & Nielson, 2004) was that many male pre-service teachers perceived elementary teaching as a doorway into occupations with more status and financial rewards. Only 9 out of 40 (23%) men interviewed indicated that they expected to remain in the classroom for the duration of their careers. Previous research has shown that men who enter the education field do so with the intention of riding the glass escalator into positions with greater status and financial reward (Williams, 1993, 1995).

Sargent (2005) conducted in-depth interviews with men who work with young children, as well as other key persons involved in Early Childhood Education (ECE), like principals, program directors, and college faculty members. In total, Sargent interviewed 54 men working in ECE, 10 elementary school principals, 6 preschool or childcare center directors, and 8 faculty members in colleges of education. The researchers sought to

investigate the lived experiences of men working in ECE, as well as other key persons involved in ECE.

Sargent's (2005) data supports the idea that ECE is a gendered occupation in that it produces and reproduces gender differences and gender division. The results presented three images associated with ECE: "mother-teacher," "homosexual pedophile," and "male role model" (p. 253). These social constructs all work towards the continued reproduction of gender division and inequality within ECE. The image of "male role model" arose in every interview, regardless of the position of the interviewee. However, no single definition or idea of what it means to be a role model emerged. Sometimes it was to fill the void of absent fathers in the homes. Other times, it would place male teachers in the position of masculine authority. The following excerpt is from Javier, a third grade-teacher, who was discussing the desires of some parents for male teachers to be a model of "masculinity." He stated, "I asked one mom why that made her so happy [Her son to have a male teacher] and she said she was becoming concerned that her son was getting into art and poetry a little too much" (p. 254). The men in the study felt that the parents of their students expected them to be someone who displayed stereotypically masculine behaviors and characteristics. Along with this false expectation, is the expectation that all male teachers should be disciplinarians, and as a result, often receive the more difficult students in their classes.

Sargent proposes that the men in their study are trying to present an alternative form of masculinity, but are constrained by the sanctions embedded within the ECE culture. The behaviors presented by the men are not genuine behaviors; rather, they are results of the gendered organization of ECE. Furthermore, when men perform "feminine"

behaviors, they come under scrutiny and suspicion. However, the ECE gendered organizational structure also brings attention to the male teachers when they display "masculine" behaviors. Paradoxically, men teaching in ECE find themselves "trapped" in the gender roles of the ECE culture and organizational structure.

Mistry and Sood (2015) investigated how male trainees in an Early Years (EY), or birth to 5 years old, teacher preparation program, perceived gender stereotyping. They examined some of the challenges these stereotypes present for teacher trainees and teacher leaders in schools, and the strategies that could be put into place to lessen gender stereotyping in the EY sector of teaching. The study consisted of 18 male teacher trainees and 13 male head teachers in primary (elementary) schools. The researchers used questionnaires and face-to-face or phone interviews to collect data. The first question the researchers wanted to investigate was the perceptions of male trainees on gender stereotyping in EY teachers. Several themes emerged from the trainees. First, they felt there were misconceptions that could cause problems and an increased risk of being wrongfully accused of indecent behavior. They also felt that teaching was viewed as a nurturing profession, and females were viewed as more suited for the job, as well as a lack of male role models, given the stereotypical belief that females are a better fit for teaching younger children. The male leaders stated that as male practitioners in EY, it was difficult at first, but over time, parents saw them as not simply males, but as good practitioners. They also shared that there needs to be more of a gender mix of teachers in EY to work towards eliminating gender misconceptions. Lastly, the male leaders shared the difficulties of eliminating gender stereotypes and misconceptions still present in

society. Gender stereotypes and misconceptions were a much greater issue for the trainees, compared to the head teachers.

The second major question addressed in the research was what are the challenges of addressing gender stereotyping in EY? The findings showed that the biggest challenge shared by both trainees and leaders was to thwart negative stereotypes from society and parents that men are not sensitive or caring enough to be EY teachers, and the belief and culture that a female EY workforce is better. Furthermore, trainees shared that providing the needed emotional support to young children without being judged was a challenge. Along with this was the stigma attached with sexuality and physical contact (comfort), which the participants shared EY students need. The leaders stated the biggest challenges are combating the public perception that EY teachers should be female, and the perceived barriers for entry into the profession.

The final question the researchers investigated was the leadership strategies for addressing gender stereotyping in EY teaching. Both the trainees and leaders mentioned that trainees in educational programs should have experience observing and teaching in EY. The leaders considered this from a developmental perspective, and felt that all teachers should have experience in EY development and learning, while the trainees thought this was a good idea to show men that EY placement may be the best fit for them as a teacher, and to recruit more men into the EY level. Each group mentioned leadership support as a tool to address gender stereotyping in EY, both in the pre-service and teaching stages of their careers. A year four trainee shared that providing explicit instruction on barriers they may encounter in a female-dominated EY environment would help address gender stereotyping for male trainees.

The study provided insight into the issues of sex and gender faced by men in EY teaching. There needs to be a change in practices within schools, as well as an understanding of how gender stereotypes are created within larger society. Quality leadership at all levels of the teaching profession was cited as effective strategies to combat gender stereotypes and recruit more men into the EY sector of teaching (Mistry & Sood, 2015).

Haase (2010) investigated the experiences of 11 male teachers in Australia who taught primary age students (ages 6-13). Eight of the participants worked in government-funded schools, and three worked in Christian faith-based, tuition-based schools. The author conducted semi-structured interviews with each individual participant and conducted a culminating focus group with the 11 men. A life history perspective was applied to round the inductive data-analysis and draw conclusions.

Hasse (2010) considers male power as two types: as inscribed on the male body and as "masculine performance" (p. 174). One participant, Mark, viewed his position as a male teacher as one that carried certain expectations. He expressed that it was an expectation that he teach upper grades, coach sports teams, and will manage or support students with behavioral concerns. He went on to express that such expectations were "a pain in the butt." The social expectations attached to male teachers are evident in Mark's comments. Different demands are often placed on men and women, and in the above examples men are expected to adhere to and demonstrate a specific "masculine" performance based on gendered expectations.

Don, another participant, discussed the "father's voice" that he is able to use to gain student attention and respect. The male voice can have the ability to be strong and

controlling, and used as a way to manage student behaviors. Don went on to mention that his students are likely to accept his male "authority" (p. 182) because of the broader social acceptance of men as authoritarian and the ones better suited to manage behaviors. Peter, another male teacher stated, "I do believe that kids listen to male voices differently from what they listen to female voices" Men's bodies command a level of "respect" from students.

Participants also made it a point to share that they intentionally separated themselves from traditional masculinity and oppressive forms of patriarchy. Men in the study made it a point to perform a gentler maleness, caring and compassion, for their younger students to combat the oppressive forms of masculinity they experienced as students or they themselves disagreed with on a personal and professional level.

Participants in Hasse's (2010) study talked about the male "power" they were afforded purely based on their gender. However, the men also stated that they wanted to combat those stereotypical images and expectations held of them simply because of their gender. Men in the study revealed that they did not want to have to teach and exist within the narrow limits of hegemonic masculine performances. To move towards gender equity in the teaching profession the traditional segregation of gender roles needs to be challenged and only then can the profession move towards equity in value and performance.

The final two studies in this section looked at men working in two nontraditional occupations: retail sales and nursing. Roberts (2012) conducted interviews with men in the retail sector and McDonald (2013) studied men in nursing.

Roberts (2012) investigated 24 men, aged 18-24, working as front-line retail employees in Kent County in southeast England. None of the participants had experienced or anticipated experiencing higher education. Over three-fourths of the men described their family as working class, using the Registrar General's classification system, and all the respondents were white. The author individually interviewed each of the 24 men and discussed past experiences, recent circumstances, and future aspirations regarding education, work, housing, and domestic aspirations.

The respondents shared that they enjoyed interaction with customers: "I get a buzz from helping people, especially customers" (Roberts, 2012, p. 675). Many respondents also noted that they enjoyed and preferred to be "physically busy" (p. 675). This may reflect the participants' desire to reflect hegemonic masculinity, where physical labor is recognized and rewarded. The men also stated a preference to work on the floor rather than the till (check-out line). This may be a form of job reconstituting to pursue more masculine activities that the floor offered, when compared to the more mundane work of the checkout line. The floor may offer more autonomy compared to the checkout line.

The results revealed that the men in the study did not adhere to the notion that specific types of employment were more masculine than others. They challenged the notion that their work in the retail sector made them more subordinate and less masculine than typical working-class masculinities. One of the participants made this point quite enthusiastically when he said: "How isn't a job 'manly'? It's fucking stupid. Like everyone is going to be a labourer? I know plenty of lads who labour and get laid off all the time, or don't have work for ages. How fucking manly is that?" (p. 677). The men in

the study were redefining masculinity in the ability to maintain a job and provide continuous earnings, rather than traditionally held views of physical labor and masculinity.

The study demonstrated that the participants, particularly the men from working-class backgrounds, revealed a shift in how masculinity was constructed and acted upon for the men working in the retail sector. Men enacted masculinity in different ways, and attitudes towards what is an ideal masculinity are changing and eroding in some social spaces.

McDonald (2013) investigated the ways in which male and female nursing students "do gender" by conforming to gender norms, and how they "undo" gender by resisting gender norms. The study consisted of 12 participants; 5 male nursing students and 7 female nursing students, at both a large public university and a small community college in the western United States.

Many of the male nursing students in the study emphasized the need to possess and show compassion in order to be a good nurse. Men in these instances were undoing gender (Butler, 2004) when they embraced compassion, which falls out of the masculine gender norms. The men in the study said that in order to be a good nurse, they were required to "do" femininity, and "undo" dominant norms of masculinity, such as logic, physical strength, and power and dominance. The female participants in the study echoed the male students' responses. They, too, believed that men needed to undo masculine gender norms and participate in feminine behaviors in order to become a quality nurse.

Conversely, McDonald (2013) also revealed that male nursing students also perform (do) masculinity when they emphasize the advantages and usefulness of physical

strength in their work and earn a high salary to support a family. These are examples of men doing masculinity; or adhering to hegemonic masculinities, allowing men to maintain some masculine gender norms, while at the same time, working in a profession associated with feminine characteristics and norms.

The above results demonstrate that both male and female nursing students believe that to be a good nurse, one must do and undo characteristics in line with the feminine and masculine dominant discourses. All the participants mentioned having to shift or move from one gender discourse to the other in order to perform job functions.

Summary of Literature

One of the major themes to emerge from the literature was the belief held by some that men were unable, or not equipped, to perform the caring, sensitive, and empathetic requirements of many nontraditional occupations (Cross & Bagihole, 2002; Hjalmarsson & Lofdahl, 2014; Mistry & Sood, 2015). Men were seen as unable to perform the emotional duties required in female-concentrated occupations. These biased assumptions made men feel like they were at a disadvantage and unable to perform certain functions of their job. The long held belief that females are better suited for the job was especially prevalent for the male elementary teachers.

A second theme to emerge from the literature was the issues surrounding child abuse, sexuality, and physical touching for men considering or working in a female-concentrated profession (Cross & Bagihole, 2002; Haase, 2010; Martino, 2008; Mistry & Sood, 2015; Montecinos & Nielson, 2004; Pullen & Simpson, 2009). The men in these studies were acutely aware of the heightened suspicions cast upon them working in female-concentrated occupations regarding sexuality. Men working with children

expressed concerns surrounding suspicion of child abuse, as well. The studies revealed that men working in nursing and teaching expressed that their physical bodies were something that marked them as different from their female colleagues, and hindered them in their ability to perform certain job functions (e.g., hugging a student or a patient to provide emotional support). This was a point of stress and anxiety for many male teachers who taught elementary age children and had to navigate between gender norms and performing job functions that would allow them to perform their job at the highest level. The men also were grappling with "doing" and "undoing" masculinity in their everyday lives.

Several of the studies discussed the idea of being a "male role model" for men teaching younger children (Hjalmarsson & Lofdahl, 2014; Montecinos & Nielson, 2004; Sargent, 2005). Two of the studies discovered that the male participants found their status as a male as advantageous, and provided them with a unique opportunity to provide guidance and leadership for their students, especially male students (Hjalmarsson & Lofdahl, 2014; Montecinos & Nielson, 2004). However, participants in Sargent's (2005) study expressed that they were negatively impacted by the expectation to be a "role model" to students. They were expected to act and model gender norms and perform stereotypical male "masculinity" in their roles. This was a point of contention and stress for male teachers because they wanted to combat traditional masculinities through their behavior and teaching, and felt constrained by gender expectations.

Two studies (Hjalmarsson & Lofdahl, 2014; Sargent, 2005) specifically addressed the expectation that male teachers needed to be disciplinarians. They were expected to adhere to acting out a "hard masculinity." Many of the men in the studies expressed great

contempt with being placed in the role of disciplinarian, based solely on their gender. Participants went on to express that they felt men and women were equally capable of quality classroom management, and several men expressed that discipline is an area of weakness. This expectation from parents, administrators, and other colleagues caused added pressure for male teachers, as they were often assigned students with intense behavior issues. Gender norms and expectations placed men in a disadvantageous position. Montecinos and Nielson (2004) investigated how pre-service male teachers interpreted masculinity and gender norms. Through their interviews, the researchers discovered that men frame teaching according to gender expectations. The participants shared four ways they defined teaching as: (a) being a role model, (b) being a sports coach, (c) appealing to reason, and (d) preparing to move into occupations with greater status and financial reward. Interestingly, pre-service teachers all defined teaching in ways that were congruent with societal expectations for hegemonic masculinity, despite expressing personal resistance to "traditional" masculinities and gender expectations.

These findings suggest that as a society we continue to struggle with long-standing gender norms about masculinity. This has, and continues to have, a significant impact on the career decisions and experiences for men working in nontraditional, female-concentrated occupations. The next section will discuss strategies that men across the studies implemented to help lessen the pressures and biases created by gender roles and expectations.

The most prevalent strategy cited across the literature was for men to reinterpret their work in order to successfully work in a nontraditional occupation (Cross & Bagihole, 2002; Martino, 2008; McDonald, 2013; Pullen & Simpson, 2009; Roberts,

2012). This reconstructing and reinterpreting took on many forms; for example, some men emphasized their physical strength as an asset in performing certain job functions, deemphasized emotional labor skills, and emphasized masculine traits such as logic and rationality in their job functions.

Men also coped by identifying with a higher status group of male colleagues (Hjalmarsson & Lofdahl, 2014; Pullen & Simpson, 2009). This was especially true for male nurses and teachers, where they associated with the male doctors and administrators, respectively. This allowed men to maintain their gender advantage and status in the workplace.

Other men used the feminine characteristics and expectations of their job as a coping strategy. Men from several studies adapted "projects of femininity" as a coping strategy (McDonald, 2013; Montecinos & Nielson, 2004; Pullen & Simpson, 2009). The men embraced the feminine characteristics and expectations of their nontraditional occupation as a deliberate way to distance them from "traditional masculinity" in order to perform certain job functions. The men said that they could move as needed from performing both feminine and masculine gender norms within the parameters of their work.

Lastly, two of the studies (Cross & Bagihole, 2002; Roberts, 2012) revealed that some men found their work in a nontraditional career as a true indication of self. These men circumscribed more traditional career choices for a career in a nontraditional occupation. They were outliers in the fact that they were "rejecting" traditional gender norms and expectations from the onset of their career choice and preference.

Men across the studies used a variety and range of strategies for coping with masculinities and gender norms in nontraditional occupations. The following section will discuss the implications of this body of research on the study reported here.

Implications for Research

The studies in this literature review show that men are choosing nontraditional careers, whether by choice or out of necessity. The job landscape locally, nationally, and globally is ever-changing, given advances in technology. The traditional view of the man in the role of "bread winner" and sole financial provider is no longer the norm. Another result of the structural changes in our employment landscape is that women and other minority groups who were denied access to traditional jobs in the recent pass are now able to pursue a much larger range of occupations that were once closed off. Men and women are each faced with making career choices that are not aligned with traditional male and female occupations.

The changing employment landscape means that some men find themselves in careers that are female-concentrated. This can lead to a conflict between gender role expectations and expectations of the job and to "role conflict" This is in large part, due to gender socialization practices within the United States. Young boys and girls see and hear messages about what careers are appropriate and inappropriate solely based on their gender from an early age. The process of gender socialization and expectations greatly impact the occupational and educational decisions made by men and women.

There has been a call in the research community to conduct research that focuses on investigating the work experiences and career decisions of men working in female-concentrated professions (Hancock, 2012; Shen-Miller & Smiler, 2015). The research

needs to examine structural impediments and obstacles to entry for men into female-concentrated fields, as well as their experiences while working in these nontraditional, female-concentrated occupations. The present study will examine how the male teachers in the study defined and maintained their sense of self while working in a female-concentrated profession.

Statistical evidence shows that more men are entering special education teaching, a female dominated profession. The percentage of men teaching students with disabilities is nearly 20% of the special education workforce. As a result of the present literature review, I have concluded that, to date, there have been no studies conducted that specifically look at the experiences of men working in elementary special education, despite the increased presence of men in the special education workforce. Several studies examine men in elementary education, but none investigated and disaggregated the experiences of only male elementary grade level special educators. DeMik (2008) investigated retention and attrition issues for special education teachers at the secondary level. Using a longitudinal design, Billingsley (2007) studied why special educators were leaving the urban district under study over a five-year span. Lopez-Estrada and Koyama (2010) investigated the reasons influencing the retention of Mexican American special educators. However, none of the studies looked at the experiences of only men teaching special education at the elementary grades.

To address these concerns, this study is a narrative case study that investigated the experience of men teaching elementary special education in public schools. Two broad questions, "Why men are opting for a career in special education?" and " What are the experiences of men who are teaching elementary special education?" were used to guide

the present study. Qualitative interview data were used to answer the research questions

under investigation. These specific research questions, and the procedures used to collect

data, address fidelity and validity issues, and analyze my findings, will be discussed in

the following methodology chapter.

CHAPTER 3

DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2014), approximately 83.7% of all special education teachers are female. This rate is down from 2012, when 86.2% of all special educators were female. In 2013 females comprised 80.4% of the special education workforce. The data clearly shows a trend of more men entering the profession of special education teaching.

Research Questions

The purpose of this narrative case study was to examine the experiences of men teaching students with disabilities in the elementary grades. The specific research questions examined are described here.

1. How do men teaching special education at the elementary grade level describe the influences on and the processes that shaped their decision to pursue, enter, and remain in the career of teaching special education?

2. How do men teaching special education describe their experiences as a male in a female-dominated profession?

    a. Experience any overt advantages/disadvantages in the workplace due to sex-type?

    b. Different set of standards/expectations than female colleagues?

3. How do men teaching special education apply/not apply masculinities when performing/explaining job functions, considering mobility/promotions, and remaining in the classroom?

The theoretical traditions of case study and narrative were utilized in this study. These were used to approach and answer the research questions. According to Yin, (2003) "The distinctive need for case studies arises out of the desire to understand complex social phenomena 'because' the case study method allows investigators to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events" (p. 5-6). "Narrative descriptions exhibit human activity as purposeful engagement in the world. Narrative is the type of discourse that draws together diverse events, happenings and actions of human lives" (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 5).

Work is a major component of human existence. We work for many different reasons and are motivated by many different rewards, both intrinsic and extrinsic. As the world of work becomes more global, as new opportunities arise, both men and women are faced with new opportunities and challenges in their careers. Statistics show that more men are entering the nontraditional career of special education teaching. However, as demonstrated by the literature, men still face as well as perpetuate gender norm expectations to perform traditional masculinities from people within and outside of the profession. This qualitative research study on male special educators experiences provides insight into the phenomenon for those considering a career in special education, current teachers, administrators, community stakeholders, and policy makers in order to ensure men are represented in the profession.

This chapter describes my study design and methods including an explanation of qualitative research and the theoretical orientation. The data sources, collection methods, and how they were analyzed are described in detail. The chapter concludes with trustworthiness, limitations, and ethical concerns.

Rationale for Qualitative Research

Qualitative research was chosen for this study given its value in discovering insights into real-life events as the participants experience them. "Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (Merriam, 2009, p. 5). Qualitative research utilizes a naturalistic approach that seeks to understand phenomena in content-specific settings, such as "real world settings [where] the researcher does not attempt to manipulate the phenomenon of interest" (Patton, 2002, p. 39). Yin (2011) proposes that there are five features of all qualitative research:

1. Studying the meaning of people's lives, under real-world conditions.

2. Representing the views and the perspectives of the people in the study.

3. Covering the contextual conditions in which people live.

4. Contributing insights into existing or emerging concepts that may help to explain human social behavior.

5. Striving to use multiple sources of evidence rather than relying on a single source alone (pp. 7-8).

In conducting a qualitative research study, I began my research with several goals in mind. I was hoping to gain insight into why men choose to pursue the nontraditional career of special education teaching, specifically in the elementary grades. I wanted to

understand their experiences given their minority status as a male in a female-concentrated profession, whether they faced specific obstacles or expectations given their male status, and how they navigated those expectations and obstacles within the context of their work. I hoped to find out if men entered teaching under the assumption they would ride the glass escalator to higher status and paying positions or entered with the intent of remaining in the classroom. Through in-depth, one-to-one interviews, I sought to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences of men teaching special education in the elementary grades. The theoretical traditions of case study and narrative inquiry were utilized to obtain these goals.

Theoretical Tradition of Case Study

Case study research has a long history in the social sciences. The origin can be traced to studies in anthropology and sociology, including LePlay's study of families in the late 1800s, Malinowski's study of the Trobriand Islands in the early 1900s, and the University of Chicago's sociological studies in the mid-1900s (Creswell, 2007, p. 73).

Yin (1984) defines the case study research method as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used" (p. 23). Research utilizing case study methodology "excels at bringing us to an understanding of a complex issue or object and can extend experience or add strength to what is already known through previous research" (Soy, 1997, para. 1, as cited in Devilbiss, 2014). Bogden and Bilken (2003) define case study as "a detailed examination of one setting, or a single subject, a single depository of documents, or one particular event" (p. 54).

Case study design may contain a single or multiple cases (Creswell, 2007; Yin, 2009; Yin, 2013). The case(s) represent a single individual, several individuals, a setting, a program, an event, or an activity (Creswell, 2007). Multiple-case study design consists of a few in-depth, illustrative cases (Hagan, 2006). Stake (2006, as cited in Merriam, 2009) provides a clear explanation of multiple-case study research:

> In multicase study research, the single case is of interest because it belongs to a particular collection of cases. The individual cases share a common characteristic or condition. The cases in the collection are somehow categorically bound together. They may be members of a group or examples of a phenomenon. (p. 49)

Stake (1995) proposes a series of necessary steps for completing the case study method, including posing research questions, gathering data, and analyzing and interpreting data. Yin (2003, 2013) also provides a framework for conducting a case study:

1. Presenting a clear and adequate specification of the theoretical issues and, from this, the questions that frame the study.

2. Clearly defining the unit(s) of analysis, including possible sub-units if these are warranted.

3. Deciding on the appropriate number of cases to explore within the study.

4. Clearly specifying the selection criteria for choosing the cases studies. Choosing an appropriate and effective data collection and analysis strategy.

5. Developing appropriate test to ensure the validity and reliability of the approach taken in conducting the case study.

The research reported here was a multiple case study comprised of six male special education teachers who currently teach in grades K-6 in a public school setting. Each teacher represented a single case; the individual was the primary unit of analysis. This design was selected to strengthen the precision, the validity, and the stability of the findings (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The more cases included in a study, the more compelling an interpretation is likely to be. Through looking at a range of similar and contrasting cases, a single-case finding can be understood, grounding it by specifying *how* and *where*, as well as the *why* (Merriam, 2009). Each case in the study, as part of the larger multiple case study, will serve to strengthen the conceptual framework. Including multiple cases is a common strategy employed in research to enhance the external validity of the findings (Merriam, 2009). The evidence from multiple case studies is often considered more compelling, and overall study is considered more robust (Yin, 2014).

Theoretical Tradition of Narrative

Narrative research originated from "literature, history, anthropology, sociology, sociolinguistics, and education" (Creswell, 2007, p. 54). In recent history, late 1980s and early 1990s, research in the social sciences has taken "a sharp turn to narrative" (Clandinin, 2013, p. 10) to studying experience.

Dewey's (1938) theory of experience is most often cited as the philosophical underpinning of narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Dewey's (1938) two criteria of experience-interaction and continuity endorsed in situations-provide the grounding for attending to a narrative notion of experience through the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space with dimensions of temporality, place, and sociality (Clandinin, 2013).

Connelly and Clandinin (1990) argued for the development and use of narrative inquiry through inspirations by a view of human experience in which humans, individually and socially, lead storied lives:

> People shape their daily lives by stories of who they are and others are and as they interpret their past in terms of these stories. Story, in the current idiom, is a portal through which a person enters the world and by which their experience of the world is interpreted and made personally meaningful. Narrative inquiry, the study of experience as story, then, is first and foremost a way of thinking about experience. Narrative inquiry as a methodology entails a view of the phenomenon. To use narrative inquiry methodology is to adapt a particular view of experience as phenomenon under study. (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990)

The present study applied and incorporated a Deweyan inspired understanding of experience and Connelly and Clandinin's (1990) application of narrative inquiry. Narrative inquiry is an approach to the study of human lives conceived as a way of venerating lived experiences as a source of important knowledge and understanding.

> Narrative inquiry is a way of understanding experience. It is collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or series of places, and in social interaction with milieus. An inquirer enters this matrix in the midst and progresses in the same spirit, concluding the inquiry still in the midst of living and telling, reliving and retelling, the stories of experiences that made up people's lives, both individually and socially. (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 20)

For this study, I interviewed six male, special education teachers who were currently teaching in grades K-6 in a public school, encouraging them to share their

personal stories related to teaching and working in a nontraditional occupation. White and Epston (1990) stated, "Not only do the stories that persons have about their lives determine the meaning that they ascribe to experience, but these stories also determine which aspects of lived experiences are selected out for the ascription of meaning" (p. 40). Through these stories I learned about individual experiences of each participant working in the nontraditional, female-concentrated occupation of special educator. Through their stories, I discovered how men navigate gender norms, their masculine identity, and their position as a male in a female-concentrated profession.

Design and Methods

Site Selection

The setting for the study was a large suburban school district located in the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States. The district serves a total of 153,852 students. The site was selected for its accessibility, diversity, and ability to address the research questions.

The district serves 74,834 elementary school students, with a diverse population: Hispanic (30.4%), Asian (13.8%), Black/African American (21.2%), White (29.4%) and American Indian/Alaskan Native and two or more races each representing less than 5% of the student body, respectively (Schools at a Glance, 2015). The most current published data from the district from 2014 reported that 10.4% of the total elementary student population is receiving special education services.

The site selection was grounded in Marshall and Rossman's (1999) definition of what constitutes a realistic site to conduct research:

(a) entry is possible, (b) there is a high probability that a rich mix of the process, people, programs, interactions, and structures of interest is present, (c) the researcher is likely to be able to build trusting relations with the participants in the study, (d) the study can be conducted and reported ethically, and (e) data quality and credibility of the study are reasonably assured. (p. 62)

Access to research participants in the site selected for research was facilitated by the fact that, at the time of the study, I was employed at the school district for over four years as a special education teacher for an elementary Learning Center program. There was a district wide initiative to recruit and retain a more diverse workforce; the study reported here directly addressed this initiative. The school district's procedures for conducting research were followed.

Participant Selection

Purposeful sampling targets a specific group. "This is a strategy in which particular settings, persons, or activities are selected deliberately in order to provide information that can't be gotten as well from other choices " (Maxwell, 2005, p. 88). Purposeful sampling is used to gather in-depth information with which to achieve the study's aim (Patton, 2002). Because this study specifically focused on male special educators teaching in grades K-6, only men currently teaching special education in grades K-6 were invited to participate. Criterion sampling was the specific method of purposeful sampling used for participant selection. "Criterion sampling involves selecting cases that meet some predetermined criterion of importance" (Patton, 2002, p. 238). The criterion included men who were currently special education teachers in the elementary grades. The goal of participant selection in the case study was to select cases that were likely to

replicate or extend the emergent theory, or to fill theoretical categories and provide examples of polar types (Eisenhardt, 1989). The following paragraphs discuss recruitment of participants.

A letter of support from the district Director of the Department Special Education Services (DSES) was written in support of the study (October 14, 2015). The researcher conducted a manual search of publicly available staff directories for each of the 131 elementary schools and three "special schools" (total 134 schools) in the district where the research was conducted. All male special education teachers serving students in programs in grades K-6 were recorded onto a master list in Excel (n=27). Individual letters were sent to the twenty-seven potential participants outlining the purpose of the research (see Appendix A) and inviting them to participate. At the conclusion of a two-week waiting period the researcher randomly selected six names from the list of 10 respondents to participate in the study. The 10 names were inputted into Microsoft Excel and using the randomized function the researcher randomly selected the six study participants. Yin (2013) equates being able to conduct six to 10 effectively arranged case studies in a multiple-case study designs analogous to conducting six to 10 experiments of a related topic. All participants who were selected for participation consented to participate. (See the Institutional Review Board (IRB) consent forms, Appendix B).

Data Collection

Data collection in case study research is typically extensive and draws from multiple sources of information (Creswell, 2007). Yin (2013) lists six major sources for collecting evidence in case study research: documents, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant observation, and physical artifacts. For this study, I collected

basic demographic information using a standardized form (see Appendix C), observational field notes, and interview transcripts. The use of multiple sources of evidence and methods "reduces the risk that conclusions will reflect only the systematic biases or limitations of a specific method, and allows to gain a better assessment of the validity and generality of the explanations" (Maxwell, 1998, p. 236).

Interviews. Interviews play an important role in the qualitative research process. According to deMarrais (2004),

> Qualitative interviews are used when researchers want to gain in-depth knowledge from participants about particular phenomena, experiences, or sets of experiences. Using interview questions and follow-up questions, or *probes*, based on what the participant has already described, the goal is to construct as complete a picture as possible from the words and experiences of the participant. This can only be accomplished when the qualitative interview is open ended enough for the participant to provide a depth of knowledge on the research topic. (p. 52)

Patton (2002) stresses that interviews are used because researchers cannot observe everything. A participant's thoughts and feelings cannot be know without speaking and listening to the participant.

> We cannot observe how people have organized the world and the meanings they attach to what goes on in the world. We have to ask people questions about those things. The purpose of interviewing, then, is to allow us to enter into other person's perspective. (Patton, 2002, p. 341)

Interviews are a valuable data collection tool when conducting intensive, in-depth interviews of a few individuals. Participants were asked to share their personal stories and

experiences as male special educators in a nontraditional, female-concentrated profession. The information revealed in the interviews provides the reader with a better understanding of the individual experiences of male special education teachers working in elementary schools.

The study used an open-ended interview with semi-structured questions approach, which allowed for follow-up probing questions. "This approach requires carefully and fully wording each question before the interview" (Patton, 2002, p. 344). Questions were asked about the experiences of men in special education teaching and how their unique position as males in a female-concentrated occupation impacts their everyday lives and experiences as special educators. (See Appendix D for interview questions.). Each interview was asked the guiding questions from the interview protocol. The order of the questions began with more open-ended "Tell me about your journey to get to where you are today teaching special education?" then moved into my theoretical, "Has your status as a male brought different expectations?" and finally moving to the more specific questions "what were your motivations in choosing to teach special education, and what drew you towards teaching in the elementary grades?" The questions are ordered in such a manner to allow the participant to feel comfortable, openly share their experiences, and allow the researcher time to develop a report before asking more specific, personal questions. All interviews were transcribed verbatim and analyzed by the researcher.

One 30 to 45 minute, in-depth interview was conducted with each of the participants at a time and location chosen by each participant. Participants were interviewed to share their unique perspectives and experience of being a male in nontraditional occupation. A Semi-structured interview protocol ensured fidelity and

validity among the participants. Probing and clarifying questions afforded each

participant the opportunity to share more personal experiences, thus providing the

opportunity for a deeper level of understanding.

Each participant was provided an electronic copy of the IRB consent forms at

least a week in advance of our scheduled interview for his review. All correspondence

was sent from password protected computers and e-mail delivery software to maximize

confidentiality. Participants were informed in writing and in-person that their

participation was entirely voluntary; they could dropout of the study at any time without

penalty, and were encouraged to ask questions of the researcher at anytime via phone, e-

mail, or in-person.

The interviews were audio recorded. Farber (2006) states,

Tape recording interviews is an important part of the interview process, because

unless you are gifted with infinite memory, it will be necessary to record your

conversations so that you can later go back and analyze the 'data' from your

interviews. (p. 370)

Participants were informed that they were being recorded. Patton (2002)

recommends the researcher clearly explain the need of the audio recording and secure

permission for its use during the interview. He also suggests that the researcher remind

the participant that they may cease the recording at any time during the interview.

Form. Each participant was given the opportunity to fill-out a form at the

completion of the interview. The form was used to collect basic demographic information

(see Appendix D for questions) about each of the participants. The supplemental

demographic information is to aid the reader in understanding the participants in the

study, which in turns allows them to more accurately apply the findings for their desired outcome.

Documents. The collection and analysis of documents is often an important source of data in qualitative research. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) state that documents "can be categorized as personal documents, official documents, and popular culture documents. Sometimes these documents are used in connection with, or in support of, the interviews and participant observations" (p. 133). Researcher field notes and official district documents were used, to supplement and, as a way to support the participant interviews.

Data Management

Data management is an important consideration when conducting research. The current study accumulated a large amount of data. According to Miles and Huberman (1994), "The main issues are ensuring (a) high-quality data, (b) documentation of just what analyses have been carried out, and (c) retention of data and associated analyses after the study is complete" (p. 45).

The demographic data collected was stored in a secure locked file cabinet in the researcher's home along with hard-copies of researcher field notes from each interview. The field notes as well as the interview transcripts were transcribed on the researchers personal, password protected computer using the Word. The audio files from the interviews were uploaded to the researcher's personal computer for transcription purposes. All files were backed up to the researchers personal portable zip drive and the main frame to ensure the information was not lost. At the conclusion of the study all

audio files were destroyed, all other files were copied onto a zip drive and given to my advisor along with all hard copies for confidential storage.

Data Analysis

The practical goal or outcome of the data analysis is to answer the research questions proposed at the beginning of the study. The findings of the study should answer those proposed questions (Merriam, 2009).

These multiple narrative case studies integrated narrative in-case analysis and cross-case analysis to provide meaning and insight into the experiences of men teaching special education. Narrative analysis is a method utilized to better understand the lived experiences of the participants. For this study, six cases were analyzed and compared to generalize the findings and extend the understanding of the phenomenon. Narrative analysis was employed on each individual case. The data within each individual case consisted of a demographic questionnaire, researcher field notes, and an interview. The data was coded and analyzed to determine themes and patterns. In the early stages, the researcher used the process of *open coding* because he was open to any possibilities. Then, through assigning codes to the data, categories began to be constructed (Merriam, 2009). This process of grouping the open codes into categories is called *axial coding* (Corbin & Strauss, 2007) or *analytical coding*. Richards (2005) described *axial coding* as "coding that comes from the interpretation and reflection on meaning" (p. 94). The themes and patterns developed were compared and contrasted among cases to establish themes and a deeper level of understanding.

The methodology of comparing and synthesizing multiple cases has been termed cross-case analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994) or cross-case synthesis (Yin 2009, 2013).

Miles and Huberman (1994) define cross-case analysis as searching for patterns, similarities, and differences across cases. In multiple case study research the goal is to compare and contrast the selected cases (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007).

Within Case Narrative Analysis

Patton (2002) positions that "the central idea of narrative analysis is that stories and narratives offer special translucent windows into cultural and social meanings" (p. 116). As the participants shared their stories and experiences as male special educators, they provided insight into a world they have experienced. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) state, "Experience is what we study, and we study it narratively because narrative thinking is a key form of experience and a key way of writing about it…narrative inquiry is stories lived and told" (p. 18). The stories were used to investigate the experiences of men teaching special education in grades K-6, how these men defined and navigated the concepts of masculinity and gender norms in their everyday lives.

There are not a specific series of steps in the method of narrative analysis and interpretation (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). However, they put forth a *three-dimensional inquiry space* that provides a blueprint for analysis and interpretation in the form of three dimensions: the temporal, the personal/social (a continuum between the two), and place, akin to Dewey (1938). Each of the text (transcripts, field notes) were read, analyzed, and reanalyzed numerous times to ensure understanding. The three dimensions were used to restory and categorize the information, allowing themes to be identified.

Thematic and enumerative coding was utilized to analyze the data collected within each case. According to Grbich (2007), enumerative inquiry "involves the listing

or classifying of items by percentages, frequencies, ranked order, or whatever is useful to the research questions" (p. 24). In the analysis of qualitative data, coding is an essential step in making sense of the data. According to Miles and Huberman (1994), "Codes are tags or labels for assigning units of meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during the study" (p. 56). Thematic analysis includes grouping each coded item into similar groups and then classifying them into major themes. Braun and Clark (2006) described thematic analysis as "a qualitative analytic method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within the data" (p. 79).

The study employed the standard open-ended, semi-structured interview with follow-up probing questions. This allowed a more natural flow of information and the opportunity to gain a more in-depth information and data. The interview data was analyzed, first, using the general principles of qualitative data analysis. This is comprised of: examining raw data, reducing them to themes through coding and recoding processes; and representing the data in figures, tables, and narratives in the final research text (Kim, 2016). Kim (2016) outlines the processes succinctly, she states:

> So, first you will go through multiple coding processes in which you attempt to find a word or short phrase that can be an attribute for a portion of your data. Then, you find relations between similar codes and combine them to make a category. And then, you identify an emerging pattern in each category, which then can be built as a theme. (see Figure 3.1) (p. 188)

Figure 3.1. Elements of Qualitative Data Analysis. From "Understanding Narrative Inquiry" by J. H. Kim, 2016, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

The intent of this narrative analysis was to investigate and discover true and insightful information on how men experienced working in a nontraditional occupation, special educator. The intent was also to explore how gender norms and the concept of "masculinity" influenced men working in a nontraditional occupation.

Cross-Case Analysis

After conducting narrative analysis within each individual case, a cross-case analysis was conducted to compare and contrast the data between cases. Creswell (2007) writes,

When multiple cases are chosen, a typical format is to first provide a detailed description of each case and themes within the case, called a within-case analysis,

followed by a thematic analysis across the cases, called a cross-case analysis, as

well as assertions or an interpretation of the meaning of the case. (p. 75)

The cross-case analysis in the study consisted of an in-depth description and

interpretation of each case followed by a comparison of data among the cases, and

continuously *looping* back to previous cases. Merriam (2009) emphasizes that it should

be clear that categories are abstractions derived from the data and not the actual data

itself. Glaser and Strauss (1967) state that the categories derived from the data should

have a life of their own separate from the data, which they came from. The construction

of categories is a highly inductive process. It is not until the data has reached saturation

that the researcher can think more deductively about "testing" the tentative categories

against the data (Merriam, 2009). Cross case data is important because it allows the

researcher to make generalizations and better understand the data (Miles & Huberman,

1994).

Narrative Analysis

The methods described above will be used to organize and analyze the data. The

following section will describe the specific narrative methods that was employed to

perform within and cross-case analysis.

The perspective used to approach the narrative data was the *interpretation of faith*

(Kim, 2016) perspective in the stories told by the participants. The perspective is

operationalized on the belief that what our participants are telling us is a story that is true

and meaningful to their sense of their subjective experience (Kim, 2016). The story is

taken at face value. Kim, elaborates of the aim of this perspective, stating, "to represent,

explore and/or understand the subjective world o the participants and/or the social and

historical world they fell themselves living in" (Cited in Kim, 2016 from Jasselson, 2004, p. 5).

The study uses an *analysis of narratives approach* (pragmatic mode of analysis) (Polkinghorne, 1995, cited in Kim, 2016, p. 196). The mode of analysis relies on paradigmatic cognition, a thinking skill we use to organize our experiences as ordered and consistent while attending to general features and common categories and characteristics (Kim, 2016). An analysis of narratives approach is an effort to classify general features into different categories. According to Polkinghorne (1995), paradigmatic cognition "produces cognitive networks of concepts that allow people to construct experiences as familiar by emphasizing the common elements that would appear over and over" (p. 10). These methods of analysis examine the narrative data to focus on the discovery of common themes or constructs in storied data, and then organize them into several categories of data (Kim, 2016). In the analysis of narratives, findings are arranged around descriptions of themes that are common across collected stories. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) also note, "An inquirer composing a research text looks for the patterns, narrative threads tension and themes either within or across an individual's experience and in the social setting" (p. 132).

The following section will outline how the researcher addressed trustworthiness and ethical issues in the research design.

Trustworthiness

Research is concerned with producing and presenting valid and reliable knowledge in an ethical manner (Merriam, 2009). In the social sciences, much of the research is to study people's lives, thus, trusting the research results is paramount in the

applied sciences (Merriam, 2009). Consumers of research need to trust themselves to be able to act on the implications of the research. Findings from research are used to construct policy and legislation within their field. Research needs to be able to be trusted by those reading and applying their results.

The notion of trustworthiness is established through the rigor of the research. Joppe (2000) defines validity in quantitative research as "whether the research truly measures that which it is intended to measure or how truthful the research results are. In other words, does the research instrument allow you to hit 'the bull's eye' of your research object" (p. 1). Qualitative research validity is defined differently. Some qualitative researchers argue that validity is not applicable to qualitative research, though they acknowledge there is a need for some level of checks in truth in measurement. Winter (2000) describes validity not as a single concept but "rather a contingent construct, inescapably grounded in the processes and intentions of particular research methodologies and projects" (p. 1).

Relatedly, reliability is defined different in quantitative and qualitative research. In quantitative studies, reliability is defined as "(1) the degree to which a measurement, given repeatedly, remains the same, (2) the stability of a measurement, over time; and (3) the similarity of measurements within a given time period" (Kirk & Miller, 1986, pp. 41-42). Similarly to validity, some researchers feel reliability does not apply to qualitative studies. "This measure (reliability) is arguably of limited relevance to qualitative research, since the experience of the researcher, and his/her professional but subjective interpretation of the research materials" (Association for Qualitative Research, 2011). However, other researchers assert that reliability refers to the quality and trustworthiness

of the study. Yin (1989) points out that "the goal of reliability is to minimize the errors and biases in a study" (p. 45).

The following section will discuss how trustworthiness was addressed and established. The terms created by Lincoln and Guba (1985) to address the external and internal validity concerns in quantitative research are termed creditability, consistency, dependability, and transferability.

Credibility. Lincoln and Guba (1985) put forth the following concept of *credibility*, stating that a study is credible when the findings match the data used to develop the findings. Four strategies were used to address credibility.

The first strategy used was *triangulation*. Triangulation was achieved through the use of multiple methods of data collection (Denzin, 1978). "Triangulation strengthens a study by combining methods. This can mean using several kinds of methods or data" (Patton, 2002, p. 247). Triangulation, according to Maxwell (2005) "reduces the risk that your conclusions will reflect only the systematic biases or limitations of a specific source or method, and allows you to gain a broader and more secure understanding of the issues you are investigating Semi-structured interviews, a demographic questionnaire, and researcher field notes were used to triangulate the data. By using a variety of data sources, credibility and validity of the study was addressed.

The second strategy used to address used to strengthen the studies credibility was the use of *member checks*. Member checks were used throughout the course of the study, first after the initial transcription of the interviews for comments and edits, and also after preliminary findings were generated, again to solicit participant feedback and comments. Maxwell (2005) stresses the importance of member checks as a strategy for strengthening

a study's credibility. He says member checks are the single most important way of ruling out the possibility of misinterpreting the meaning of what the participants say and do and the perspective they have on what is going on. Member checks can also be an important way of identifying your own bias. Member checking allow participants to clarify statements, clarify errors, present new information, offer new perspectives of their situation, and reconcile any discrepancies.

The third strategy used to address credibility was adequate engagement in data collection. Interviews, surveys, field notes allow the researcher to reach the point of *saturation* where no new information surfaces as a result of new data collection.

The fourth, and final, strategy utilized to strengthen the overall credibility of the study was researcher's position, also referred to as *reflexivity*. As the researcher I recognized my possible influence on the participants during data collection, called reactivity. Reactivity refers to "the influence of the researcher on the setting or individuals studied" (Maxwell, 2005, p. 108). In qualitative studies, unlike quantitative studies, researchers and consumers of research assume that the total elimination of researcher influence is impossible. Maxwell (2005) points out that the goal is not to eliminate researcher influence but rather understand it and use it appropriately. Patton (2002) uses the term reflexivity to describe the researcher's role in reducing reactivity.

> Reflexivity reminds the qualitative inquirer to observe herself or himself so as to be attentive to and conscious of the cultural, political, social, linguistic, and ideological origins of her or his own perspective and voices of those she or he observes and talks to during fieldwork…The observer, therefore, during

fieldwork, must observe self as well as others, and interactions of self with others.

(p. 299)

The concept of reflexivity was applied to control for researcher reactivity in the study.

Consistency. In quantitative research, reliability refers to another researcher's ability to repeat a study and yield the same results. In qualitative research, it is not possible to replicate human actions, feelings, responses, and behaviors. Rather than being able to exactly replicate a study to establish reliability, in qualitative research, consistency or reliability, as defined by Lincoln and Guba (1985) "a researcher wishes outsiders to concur that, given the data collected, the results make sense- they are consistent and dependable" (Merriam, 2009, p. 221). To establish consistency in this study, *triangulation, researcher's position*, and an *audit trail* were used. The audit trail was established through the use of a project history journal. The history journal included data collection methods, how categories were developed during analysis, personal reflections, questions, decisions made with regards to problems, issues, or new ideas that were encountered while collecting data (Merriam, 2009). It is a detailed account of the data collection and analysis procedures and process.

Transferability. The question of *transferability*, external validity, has plagued qualitative investigators for some time (Merriam, 2009). In qualitative research, a single case, or small, nonrandom, purposeful sample is selected to understand a particular person, group, or phenomena, not to generalize findings to many people, locations, or situations (Merriam, 2009). In qualitative research, transferability, also referred to as generalizability, is best understood through the perspective of how other researchers and consumers of the study are applying the results. It is the role and responsibility of the

person reading the research to determine whether or not the findings apply to their particular situation or needs. In order for the consumers of your research to be able to make this determination the researcher must provide a detailed description of their study to allow the reader to determine if the study "fits" their particular situation and needs (Merriam, 2009). Eisner (1991) believes qualitative research is generalizable in the fact that it contributes to "the accumulation of knowledge" (p. 209). He asserts that qualitative research accumulation is not vertical, but horizontal (Merriam, 2009). *Thick description* refers to the highly descriptive, detailed presentation of the setting(s) and the finding(s) of the study (Merriam, 2009). This allows others to design closely related studies in order to accumulate knowledge in the field. Additionally, it allows readers to best interpret and apply the study's findings to their particular situation.

Ethics. In order for a study to have sound validity and reliability, you must have an investigator who is committed to sound ethical research practices. Stake (2005) states "Qualitative researchers are guest in the private spaces of the world. The manners should be good and their code of ethics strict" (p. 81).

At the time of the research I was teaching special education in the elementary level in the district where I was conducting my research. While it is important to bring my personal experiences to the study, it was equally important that I did not bring my assumptions. Much of the information I had regarding male special educators was situational, and personal to my experiences. I had never taken the time to truly understand the phenomenon under investigation. My motivation for the study was to understand men who are experiencing a similar situation as myself, a male special educator working in an elementary school. I needed and wanted to understand their stories, lives, and experiences

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as men in our profession. I wanted to understand each of their unique and individual stories and let go of my personal experiences and preconceived notions so I could understand and report on their story and their experiences.

The study included interviews and a survey where participants shared personal and revealing information about themselves. As their colleague I was in a position of influence. It was imperative that I presented myself as a researcher looking to understand their stories and experiences. I took precautions to ensure I did not judge the participants and that they did not feel judged by me. I made certain that I was highly objective in my questioning and commenting throughout the study. I reassured participants that they could dropout of the study without any consequences, all personal information would not be shared, and their privacy and confidentiality were paramount.

Ethical practices and procedures must be followed to ensure participants are treated with respect and consideration. I adhered to all ethical standards set by the University Institutional Review Board (IRB) and the school districts standards for conducting research as well as my own ethical standards and foundation to ensure the research was meeting the highest ethical standards.

The following chapter presents the findings from the data analysis. The findings help create a clearer understanding of the experiences of men working in the nontraditional career of special education in elementary schools.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Men working in predominantly female occupations, such as elementary education, continue to suffer stigmas (Lupton, 2006). Recent scholarship highlights the importance of a balanced workforce in primary schools in promoting successful school and student outcomes. Furthermore, we must combat what Connell (2002) termed the "gender regime" in our nation's elementary schools (Connell, 2002, p. 49). At the same time, gender roles in families are in flux. The traditional view of the male as the "breadwinner" and the female as the "homemaker" has shifted over time (Perrone et al., 2009, p. 9). Men and women are now sharing roles.

The purpose of this research was to understand the unique and individual experiences of men who decide upon a career in special education teaching in the elementary grades. Narrative case study methodology was used to investigate the following central research question: how do men teaching special education in the elementary grades describe the influences and processes that shaped their decisions to pursue, enter, and remain in the classroom as special education teachers? Sub-questions included (a) how do men teaching special education describe their experiences as a male in a female-concentrated profession, and (b) how do men teaching special education apply or not apply masculinities when performing/explaining job functions, mobility, promotions, and remaining in the classroom?

These questions will be addressed in the data analysis portion of this chapter. The data were collected through one-to-one interviews conducted with each participant and demographic questionnaire. Themes emerged through the data analysis process that answer the research questions.

Data Sources

The primary data source used in the study was the individual, open-ended, semi-structured interviews (see Appendix C) with each of the six participants. The interviews lasted approximately 30-45 minutes. The standardized open-ended interview approach was utilized along with follow-up probing questions. Standardized open-ended interviews help ensure fidelity and validity of collected data. Questions were asked to gain insight into the unique, individual experiences of the participants. Participants selected the location and time to participate in the interview. Additionally, probing and clarifying questions were utilized for the purpose of allowing participants to share their personal experiences while the researcher gained a deeper level of understanding. All interviews were audio recorded. The participants were informed that they were being recorded for the purposes of transcription.

Participants

The study consisted of six male special education teachers teaching in the elementary grades (K-6th). All names used in this dissertation are pseudonyms. Five of the participants self-identified as White/Caucasian, and one participant identified himself as Asian. Years of teaching experience varied between two and 19 years (see Appendix E). Two participants identified as career changers, and the average age of first year of teaching was 26. Three participants (50%) stated they were never married, two (33%)

were married, and one (17%) participant identified as being divorced at the time of the study. One participant had three children; the others had none. Four participants (66%) identified as living in a single-earner household, and two (33%) identified as living in a dual-earner household.

Rich. Rich was a 19-year veteran of teaching. His current position was that of classroom teacher for student's ages 9-11 with moderate to severe disabilities. Rich worked in a special school that was designed for students working towards certificates of completion as opposed to a high school diploma. He was married and had three children. Rich stated that teaching was not his first career, but he was a residential supervisor in a home for adults with developmental disabilities.

Peter. Peter was in his first year teaching in the county after transferring from a neighboring county where he worked for 6 years at the middle school level. Teaching was not Peter's first career, and he did mention working in hourly jobs for years leading up to entering teaching. He was the 4th and 5th grade resource teacher at a comprehensive elementary school. The students on his caseload were on the diploma track and participated in classes with non-disabled peers.

Michael. Michael was in his seventh year teaching. He has been teaching at the same school in the Life Skills Program for his entire career. The students are pursuing a Maryland certificate of completion. He teaches students in grades 3 through 5. The program uses a self-contained model to deliver instruction to students, with inclusion opportunities during electives (art, music, Physical education, and Media). Michael and his wife are both teachers in the county. Teaching is Michael's first career.

Carl. Carl is a third year teacher working in an Autism program housed in a comprehensive elementary school for students in grades 3 through 5. Carl's students are working towards a certificate and participate in the Alternative Learning Standards. There are three classes that make up the program at his school. Female colleagues teach the other two classes. The program supported the inclusion model (lunch/recess, music, gym, media, and art with non-disabled peers). He completed his undergraduate studies in special education. Teaching is Carl's first career, and he has no children and is unmarried.

William. William began his teaching career later, at age 32, and has been teaching for nine years. He was in his first year at the school he was currently working. Previous he was at another elementary school in the same district. He was a teacher of 1st and 2nd graders in an EBD program. The program supported the inclusion model (lunch/recess, music, gym, media, and art with non-disabled peers). He identified as being divorced and having no children.

John. John has been teaching for four years, all in a program for students with Autism housed within a comprehensive elementary school. He teaches students in grades 4 and 5 self-contained classrooms with opportunity for inclusion in specials (see William above). Teaching is a first career for John, and he received his undergraduate degree in special education.

With the exception of Rich, all of the other programs were housed in a comprehensive elementary school within the district, and students not enrolled in the specialized program were attending their home (neighborhood) school. Each of the programs, excluding Rich's, supported opportunities for specials with their non-disabled

peers. Each of the five teachers stated that their students participated in fieldtrips and school wide assemblies and other activities along with their non-disabled peers.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Partici-pants	Yrs. Teaching	First Career	Age 1st year teaching	Race/ ethnicity	Marital Status	Children	Dual-Earner house-hold
Rich	19	No	28	C	M	3	Yes
Peter	7	No	31	C	N	0	No
Michael	7	Yes	22	C	M	0	Yes
Carl	3	Yes	22	C	N	0	No
William	9	Yes	32	C	D	0	No
John	4	Yes	22	A	N	0	No

Note: C = Caucasian; A = Asian; M = Married; N = Never; D = Divorced

Research Question 1

How do men teaching special education in the elementary grades describe the influences and processes that shaped their decisions to pursue, enter, and remain in the classroom as special education teachers?

Themes

Three relevant themes emerged after analyzing the interview data: reasons men enter and remain in the classroom, experiences, and reasons men choose elementary education.

Reasons Men Enter and Remain in the Classroom

Advocacy. Participants cited several reasons for remaining in the classroom as special education teachers. All participants cited advocacy as a major factor in their

decision to remain in the classroom. One participant, Rich, a 19 year veteran teaching students with moderate to severe disabilities, shared that "it's really successful students that keep me coming back for more." Peter, a resource teacher working with students in grades four and five in a comprehensive elementary school setting, shared "working with and seeing successes in challenging students sticks with you." Rich also shared that "working with students who don't have a voice of their own drives me. I want to be their voice, their advocate." Michael, a seventh year teacher working in a certificate bound Life Skills Program shared, "something about the kids really appeal to me" The above excerpts are categorized as student advocacy at the individual level. Participants commonly expressed this type of advocacy.

Programming. Programming was another reason for remaining in elementary education. Rich, who worked with students working towards a state certificate of completion, shared his past experiences assessing and implementing service plans in residential facilities and his desire to work at the other end of the special education programming process. This led to his decision to teach elementary special education. John, a participant working in an autism program serving students in grades 4 and 5 housed in a comprehensive elementary school, shared that he observed programs that were "just not meeting the needs of the students" during his student teaching experiences. This is one reason he teaches and continues to teach. He wants to ensure that students receive proper and rigorous programming. To this point, John shared the following: "I want to show the potential of each of my students." Ensuring quality programming for students was a factor in his retention in special education teaching.

Personal experience. Personal experiences also influence teachers' interest in advocating for students. John said on several occasions throughout the interview that "this [special education teaching] was definitely a calling for me" and discussed his personal connection to teaching students with disabilities. John believes he is in a position to advocate for children with special needs. William, who taught 1st and 2nd graders identified as having Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD) shared that his experience growing up impoverished, under-served, and in a single-parent home was his motive for entering a career as a special educator. William expressed a responsibility towards social justice as part of his role as a special education teacher.

Colleagues. One of the major factors expressed by several participants that kept them in the classroom was comrade with colleagues. John commented, "I've made a lot of friends, a lot of mentors, that's been the biggest support." He went on to share specific examples of the ways in which colleagues played an important role in his career. "There is a community of teachers. We have plenty of opportunities to come together, collaborate, and share stories. There are a lot of positives, and 'wow' moments that really keep the drive going" (John). He gains support and positivity from his professional relationships. Michael, a seventh year teacher working in a Life Skills program, for students in grades 3 through 5, also alluded to the importance of colleagues. "I work with a great team of colleagues which is a huge staying factor" (Michael). Carl commented, "my colleagues have played a significant role in my retention as a special educator." Collegial working relationships provided social benefits and professional development, learning communities and continuing education, for all of these participants. These benefits greatly influence their continuation as special education teachers.

Benefits. Participants cited financial benefits as an important factor for staying in their jobs as special education teachers. Peter mentioned pensions as a significant factor, stating that "the fact that we still have a pension, which is no longer the norm, is definitely a plus." Carl mentioned tuition reimbursement from the school district as an important benefit, stating that "tuition reimbursement is a great thing. Something I definitely want to take advantage of." The last benefit cited by participants was the ability to have job mobility and experience different positions within the school district. Mike stated, "I love that I can move to a different position within the district, easily." Participants' decision to join and remain in special education professions was influenced by these career-related factors. The next section will address the second major theme that emerged from research question one.

Experiences. Analysis of interview responses demonstrated two distinct types of experiences that were most influential on participants' choices to pursue and remain in careers as special education teachers. These experiences were categorized as either work or personal.

Work. Three participants: Rob, Carl, and John, cited experiences in early adolescents and high school as major influences in their decisions to pursue careers in teaching special education. Rich and Carl cited early experiences as camp counselors as being very influential in their career decision. Carl, a third year teacher working in a self-contained autism program for students in upper elementary grades shared his experience volunteering at a camp for students with special needs. "I remember the first day. I was younger than a large majority of the campers, so they just put me with the youngest group, and I ended up loving it" (Carl). John shared that an internship in high school was

very influential in his decision to teach. He participated in an art program for students

with and without disabilities that really drew him to teaching. Participants also shared

that experiences in college were pivotal in their decision to teach special education. Two

participants, William, a teacher of students in a combined 1st and 2nd grade self-contained

class for students identified as having EBD, and Michael, shared that jobs as Applied

Behavior Analysis (ABA) therapists in college were major influences of their career

choices. John cited a college academic counselor as the person who helped steer him in

the direction of teaching students with disabilities.

Personal. The interview data showed that participants' personal experiences and

connections were considerable factors in their decisions to pursue special education

careers. John has a cousin diagnosed with autism, and Carl has an older brother

diagnosed with autism, and both teach in the districts autism program. Having family

members diagnosed with autism had a profound impact on each participant's career path.

Michael mentioned his mother was a special education teacher in an urban school district,

Seeing the impact she had on students made him want to dedicate himself to a similar

career teaching students with disabilities.

Reasons Participants Selected Elementary Education

The third and final theme to emerge from the first research question was the

reason(s) men chose specifically elementary education as opposed to teaching at other

grade levels.

Social/emotional issues. Participants preferred teaching at the elementary level to

avoid social and emotional issues often present in older students with disabilities. "In

middle school and high school you're dealing with more issues. You have the hormones,

the dating" (Rich). Aside from these physiological concerns, Rich also mentioned emotional concerns surrounding older students with disabilities. He stated that "older students have a greater understanding of their status as a student with a disability, and this can be hard on them, much more so than elementary students." The participants pointed out that they are not averse to helping older students with the above issues, but that they prefer to focus on more academic concerns rather than social-emotional concerns such as dating, friendships, and hormonal changes. Several participants mentioned the overall lower stress levels of teaching in elementary grades as a factor for choosing their specific profession.

Resources. Availability of resources emerged as an important factor for the men in the study to remain in the elementary grades. William shared that "in elementary grades you have a wealth of books, interventions, computer resources, all easily accessible and ready to use." Peter, an inclusion teacher, talked about being able to find materials for his students' individual needs as a major plus in his job. "It's great, we have an enormous book room, with leveled texts covering every possible genre. It really helps my students stay interested and engaged in reading" (Peter). Participants shared that the resources available to them were important factors in continuing to teach in these elementary grades. These resources enabled them to best address and meet students' academic needs.

Summary of Research Question 1

How do men teaching special education in the elementary grades describe the influences and processes that shaped their decisions to pursue, enter, and remain in the

classroom as special education teachers? Responses to this first research question revealed several themes and interpretive codes within the themes.

Personal and work experiences were large factors in participants' decisions to pursue careers in special education. Internships, volunteer opportunities, work experiences, and family members influenced participants' career decisions. Benefits, both financial and professional, were cited as another deciding factor for participants.

Advocacy was another factor influencing participants' decision to enter teaching. Advocacy for individual students and advocacy for student programming emerged as the two most prominent categories in the interview results. Each type of advocacy was cited as an important reason participants entered and remained in teaching positions with students with disabilities.

Benefits, both intrinsic and extrinsic, were also determining factors in choosing a career in teaching. Participants discussed the importance of the relationships developed with co-workers. These relationships played an important role in the participants' well-being and professional development. Financial benefits such as pensions and tuition reimbursement were important factors that influenced their decision to continue teaching in the special education classroom.

Research Question 2

How do men teaching special education classes describe their experiences as a male in a female-dominated profession? The intent of this question was learn about participants' experiences related to the perceptions of others in terms of their masculinity and gender roles. Are there unique expectations for these instructors based on their minority status as men in a female-concentrated profession? Furthermore, the question

aims to address whether there are any true advantages and disadvantages to being a male in a female-concentrated profession. Three primary themes emerged from the data analysis: the male body, communication, and perception. Each theme is discussed in the sections to follow.

The Male Body

Two major topics emerged regarding the male body as it relates to the participants' work as special educators. The first was the belief that their bodies were sexualized and this misperception, in larger society, followed them in their work. The second focuses on the physicality of the male form.

Sex-type. Each participant discussed the ways their sex-type might be perceived when interacting with children. Data revealed that participants felt they were being judged unfairly, simply because they were men working around young children. In reference to allegations of misconduct (sexual/physical), William, who teaches in a program for students with emotional and behavioral disorders, shared a powerful statement. "We are guilty before we are innocent" (William). John, working in a program for 4th and 5th graders diagnosed as having autism, shared a personal experience of an allegation of misconduct that occurred with another staff member during his first year of teaching, "So, yeah, when that happened it was a major disadvantage with me being a male. I think I was labeled" (John). Again, this speaks to a feeling of judgment and guilt shared by the participants. A female colleague of William's made the following telling statement: "yeah, it's kind of different for you guys." Carl, a third year teacher of a self-contained autism program shared the perception often faced by males teaching younger

students "I think there is sort of a stigma attached to it [teaching younger children]." The above excerpts highlight the unfair prejudice man teaching younger students face.

Viewing the male body in a sexualized manner occasionally negatively affected relationships with parents and students. Related to parental perceptions, William, who works with students with emotional needs, shared, "I think about it a lot, especially, I think about the parents." He went on to explain the frustrations he experiences due to the sexualizing of the male body. He shared that it often has a significant impact on his approach to doing his job. The following quote addressed a time when a younger student was trying to hold William's hand in the hall, but he felt it necessary to pull away. "It sucks…you really want to show the students that being a guy, a male, doesn't exclude being sensitive and caring to children" (William). This is a valid concern and fear expressed by the participants. Rich, who has been teaching for 19 years shared, "and even after 19 years, well it's always out there, and I want to keep myself in a position where that won't happen." Rich used the word "that" to refer to sexual misconduct allegations. The participants described their bodies as being viewed in a negative manner, in a "hazardous" manner around children. For men like William, their bodies became a barrier to providing necessary social-emotional support for students.

Physical characteristics. Physical characteristics of the male body were another topic that emerged from the data. This manifested itself in terms of physical strength and the male voice.

Physical strength. Rich shared that on several occasions the principal would get on the public announcement system and say "Rich, Ken, Stan…and any other males in the building come out to the buses" in order to restrain a student on the bus when the

driver and attendant were female. John shared that his physical attributes are counted upon in his school. "I'm counted on a lot within the school to deal with aggressive behaviors and restraint situations" (John). The participants never expressed any contempt for the expectations given their physical attributes. It was expressed as a point of pride for the men, as evidenced by their responses and their body language, as they shared their experiences during the interviews.

Participants shared that they were often asked to do physical labor. Peter, who works with students receiving special education services in their home school, described a typical interaction. "Hey, can you come down here and help move these boxes" (Peter). Rich, who works with students who have moderate to severe and other multiple disabilities, echoed Peter's statement saying, "male teachers are looked to transport students, carry this, push that." Again, as was the case with physical attributes needed to control aggressive behavior, the participants found this responsibility a point of pride within their jobs.

Voice. Another emergent theme related to the men's physical bodies was the male voice. Rich discussed how his voice can be used to rein in students. "Sometimes a kid will listen to you just because you're a male, and you have a stronger, louder voice" (Rich). John also shared how his female colleagues will reach out to him. "A lot of my colleagues have personally asked me to try and speak to their students in a mentor mindset" (John). Men in the study, again, did not see this as a burden or disadvantage in their work. It was beneficial in it allowed them to gain the attention of students.

Communication

Communication, specifically, miscommunication between themselves and female co-workers was discussed by two participants. John shared that his communication style, at times, puts him at a disadvantage. "It's a disadvantage in terms of interpersonal skills. It does take a lot of interpersonal skills, conversational skills to collaborate within a predominantly female field. It's a lot harder" (John). Michael shared his difficulty in speaking with female colleagues. "I want to be direct, just come out and say it, but I can't do that like I would with friends. At work, I have to approach my conversations in a very different style" (Michael). The participants felt that they had to change their communication style when interacting with female co-workers. The men felt they had to go against their natural style of communicating and make concessions in order to meaningfully communicate with their female co-workers.

Perception

Many people outside, and even some people within the public education system, have a perception that men teaching elementary special education will experience an advantage solely due to the fact they are male. Many of the participants believed this to be false, and one participant described a time when he was blatantly passed-over for a position because of his gender. Peter shared the following: "I think there was an assumption from the beginning on other people's part that, because I was male, I was somehow at an advantage with my students." William said he was told on multiple occasions "oh you're going to have an easier time, and the kids will respect you more because you're a male." He explained that he was always skeptical of that viewpoint. Rich shared an experience in which he felt discriminated against at a job because of his gender. The following quote

is what he was told by the female interviewer. "I'd have a very hard time giving you the position because of who you'd be talking to, young parents. You'd be talking to them about parenting, and you know, they may not want to hear it from a man" (Rich). Clearly, the men in this study did not point out any obvious examples of being at an advantage because they were male in a female-concentrated profession. However, Michael did share the following: "I get extra cookies around the holidays, but no, I've never experienced any clear benefits because I'm male." The perception, especially from the greater public and from some within education, is that men automatically will be at an advantage with student discipline, teaching, and job opportunities based solely on the fact that they are male. The participants were skeptical of this perception, and Peter shared a powerful thought on the matter. "And day-to-day in the classroom, I think it's all about how the students view you, how you treat the students, how well prepared you are, and not necessary much to do with your gender" (Peter).

Summary of Research Question 2

The second research question examined participants' experiences as men working in a female-concentrated profession. Are there expectations, advantages, or disadvantages due to their status as men? Three themes emerged from the data that address the second research question.

The male body emerged as an important theme from the data. Men shared that they felt their bodies were viewed negatively and that an unfair level of scrutiny was placed on them because they were males working around younger students. A feeling of been unfairly judged was shared by all participants. The men said that they were often asked to help more, lift, and carry things around the school. Lastly, the male voice was

noted as having stronger, more authoritative characteristics than female voices. Participants shared that female co-workers would ask them to speak with their students.

Communication, more specifically a mismatch between the participants' communication styles and those of their female colleagues, was cited as a disadvantage. Participants felt they needed to change their mode of communication to match the style of a particular female co-worker, or just change in general. This was necessary for the men to communicate effectively in the workplace.

The final theme addressing the second research question was perception. Participants were perceived to have some professional advantage due to their sex. Many participants shared that they encountered these assumptions both within and outside of the education profession. However, participants reported no perceived advantages based on the fact that they are male.

Research Question 3

How do men teaching special education apply/not apply masculinities when performing/explaining job functions, considering mobility/promotions, and remaining in the classroom? Three themes that emerged from the data addressing the third research question were administration, my masculinity, and pay.

Administration

Administration is discussed in terms of whether or not activities are required as part of participants' chosen career paths. Three interpretive strands emerged from this topic: no influence, not a direct influence, and why administration. The following section will examine these three interpretive strands.

No influence. Nearly all participants shared that going into administration was not a consideration related to their choice to enter the field of special education teaching. Two participants outwardly expressed that not only was it not an influence, but that they have no desire to pursue a path in school administration in the future. John, who was working in a autism program, made the following statement when asked about the influence of pursuing administration as a factor in his career mobility. "I've never considered a role in administration. Administration never influenced my decision to enter the profession" (John). Peter echoed that statement saying, "I have no desire to go into administration." For these two men, the pressures of adhering to traditional masculinities did not have an influence on their career decisions or trajectories.

Not a direct influence. Five of the participants shared that administration was not an influencing factor in their decision to enter a career in special education, but also indicated that it was a possibility and something they did not rule out. Rich shared the following: "becoming an administrator did not influence my decision to enter a career in special education teaching." However, later in the interview, he made the following comment: "well, not right away…but it has been something I've always thought about" (Rich). Rich shared that he was completing his internship in school leadership, and considering pursuing that path. William made this statement when discussing leadership: "I really haven't been too interested, but I haven't really pursued it." Carl, similar to Rich, said "no, I would not say it influenced me. I don't think it's something for me, but it was definitely something I thought about when I decided on a career in teaching." Peter described his disinterest in administration as being "at least not for now, anyways, but things change." Knowingly or not, each of these four participants shared that they are

open to entering administration, even though they said that it was not an influencing factor in their decision to enter a career in special education.

Why administration. Some participants shared that it was their goal to be a school-based administrator. In his interview, Rich shared the following: "I want to be an administrator in a building that has a significant special education population. I want to be involved in advocacy at a larger level." William, like Rich, viewed administration as a vehicle for advocacy on a larger scale. "I've thought, how do I reach the most students, have the greatest impact? That may be through school administration" (William). Each of the two men saw administration as a means to advocacy for students on a larger scale.

Man as the breadwinner. The study validated gender roles in place for generations, a division of labor based on gender. This view of gender roles no longer matches the changing job landscape. Despite this shift in the professional opportunities for both genders, traditionally held masculine views of work and how it is divided among the sexes still prevails in the United States and other post-industrial nations.

A poignant quote from Rich illuminated how we, as a society, generally view work roles. "Obviously for most males, not all, but most are the heads of the household. They generally make more than their wives. So obviously, earning more money and the potential to earn more money is important" (Rich). William, like Rich, spoke to masculinity and gender roles and how they are portrayed in the teaching profession. "I mean there are a lot of reasons they don't pay as well, when you look at it as mainly a female profession, females tend not to be the breadwinners" (William). These two participants, both working in a non-traditional, female-concentrated career, refer to men

as primary breadwinners and teaching as women's work. It became evident, even for some men in nontraditional roles that traditional gender stereotypes still exist.

My Masculinity.

The second theme to emerge was that of personal expressions of masculinity among participants. The research investigated if and how men in female-concentrated professions displayed their masculinity. None of the participants felt any pressure to display masculinity in their work. Carl put it simply by stating "I don't feel I have to portray myself a certain way." Peter shared, "I've never come to any specific conclusion about how I need to act." Michael expressed his masculinity with the following: "I think I'm pretty masculine, but I certainly have displayed emotion. I've teared-up and gotten choked up talking about my students. I certainly don't feel that I have to portray myself other than what I am." The men in the study did not feel pressure to act a certain way or to display masculine traits. Rather, the men were comfortable just being who they are, whatever that was, regardless of how they could be perceived. Participants also shared that being male never changed job expectations or roles. Carl specifically addressed this in his interview stating "I don't think anything extra has been asked of me or I have certain assumed roles because of my gender." None of the six participants conveyed that they felt they had to prescribe to a certain type of masculinity or take on tasks that may be viewed as more gender specific given their status as men in a female-concentrated profession.

Pay

All participants mentioned strain or concern with pay at some point during their interview. William made an interesting comment. While laughing, he shared "my

girlfriend makes twice as much as I do" (William). Carl highlighted the pay difference between teachers and other jobs. "Compared to my friends in other professions, I know I'm definitely lagging behind" (Carl). Michael and his wife are both teachers, and he made a poignant statement. "At times, it is definitely tough having two teacher incomes" (Michael). Rich said that he thinks men focus on money; "making money faster is a great motivator for males." These are only some of the excerpts from participants. The theme of pay was discussed by all participants, and is clear across the cases. The pressures, real and perceived, surrounding pay were concerns shared by all participants.

Moving into an administrative position and pay are both areas that relate to traditional views of hegemonic masculinity for the men in this study. The participants expressed pressure, whether real or perceived, to move into positions with greater prestige and higher pay. Pay was a major interpretive theme to come out of the data. Men alluded to outside pressures they feel to earn more money, be the breadwinner, and the discrepancy of pay between teaching and other professions. Most participants reported at least some pressure to enter administration in order to earn more money, and to have a position viewed as more appropriate for a male.

Final Summary

The purpose of these narrative case studies was to investigate and understand the experiences of men teaching special education in the elementary grade levels, a female-concentrated profession. Personal interviews and demographic information were collected to determine how men experienced their careers in special education, and how their status as a male in a female-concentrated profession impacted these experiences.

Similarities and differences among the six participants emerged during data collection and analysis. The participants varied in their years of teaching experience and the types of assignments they had prior to teaching elementary special education. Teaching was a second career for two of the six participants. All six of the participants cited advocacy, either for individual students or program-wide, as a major factor in deciding to enter and remain in a teaching profession. Additionally, five of the six men specifically cited volunteer and work experiences in high school and college as key influences in their choice to teach special education. Many shared that the relationships they have developed with colleagues were instrumental in their decision to remain in the classroom teaching. Half of the men also cited financial benefits as an important factor in selecting a career in teaching special education.

Each participant felt the male body was seen in a negative light, as something threatening in the elementary grade levels. They felt greater pressure and scrutiny from peers, parents, and from the general public as males teaching younger children. Despite this, none of the participants felt they had to alter their masculinity or adhere to specific gender roles. They shared that they were open to sharing emotions, and acted the way that was natural to them as an individual rather than in a manner that was expected. One of the most interesting findings to emerge was the perception of a male advantage. All six of the participants shared, in one way or another, that they never received any advantage in promotion, task assignment, or role assignment due to being male.

In chapter five, I will discuss the findings of each research questions and place them in context of previous research in the field. I will proceed by sharing the specific

contributions of this study to the field of special education and masculinity studies,

limitations of the study, conclusions, recommendations for policy, and further research.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Due to a decline in well-paying jobs in industry, business, and commerce, careers that are traditionally considered men's work, more men are beginning to target and pursue jobs traditionally considered women's work (McDowell, 2015; Shen-Miller & Smiler, 2015). Dramatic changes have taken place in the work landscape, changing the needs of the workplace. Some of these changes include a greater number of men entering female-concentrated occupations (Lupton, 2006). The Bureau of Labor Statistics (2014) supports this trend, showing that more men are entering the special education field.

Despite changing workforce demographics in post-industrialized nations, society's expectations of traditional gendered behavior and characteristics continue to dictate stereotypes that have become naturalized. Gender is the cultural construct imposed on people as a result of their biological sex. This construct places constraints on how each sex should perform within society, and frames and controls the roles we view as suitable for women and men (McDowell, 2015). Gender stratification by occupation still exists, and men working in female-concentrated occupations continue to suffer stigmas (Lupton, 2006). The societal expectations and constraints resulting from these expectations are increasingly at odds with our changing workplace. McDonald (2013) referred to the gendered characteristics of occupations as being in a "state of flux" (p. 561). Men are entering occupations that have historically been classified as female, and it is imperative that we study the experiences of these men to gain a deeper understanding

of how they construct masculinity and how it plays out in their daily lives. The results of this study provide some insights into the specific experiences of men working as special education teachers in the elementary grades. Additionally, the study provides insights into how men experience masculinity while working in a female-concentrated profession.

Narrative case studies were used to gain a better understanding of the experiences of men working as special education teachers in the elementary grades. The study investigated how men navigated and displayed their masculinity. Furthermore, the study looked at how gender roles played out for the men in the study, and if the men experienced advantages given their status as a male in a female-concentrated occupation. The unit of analysis for the study was the six individual participants: special education teachers employed in elementary grade levels. This chapter discusses the findings described in the previous chapter in relation to the original research questions that served to guide the inquiry, and the relationship of these results to existing literature. This chapter will also include discussions of the study's impact, limitations, recommendations for policy and practice, and concluding remarks.

My Position as the Researcher

As a researcher I used researcher reflexivity to minimize my own personal bias and impact on the study. Despite taking these measures to improve the strength of the findings, I'd be remiss not to discuss my personal background in relation to the study.

At the time of the research, I was teaching in a regional, self-contained, special education program for students in 4th and 5th grade in the district where the research was conducted. It was my personal position as a male special education teacher in the elementary grades that ignited my interest in the present study. It was my years of being

the only male at meetings, and being the only male classroom teacher in my building some years that got me interested in researching the experiences of other men in my position. I wanted to study their experiences and see if they were similar to what I was experiencing or different or some of each. I love my job as a special education teacher. I love teaching students with unique learning needs and strengths. For me, it's a very rewarding career and I know the value and importance of great teachers for our students. This made me want to conduct research to find out how we may be able to entice great candidates into the profession.

Decision to Pursue, Enter, and Remain: Research Question 1

The first research question explored broad concepts regarding participants' career decisions, interests, and goals. The question asked participants to share the experiences that brought them where they are today: teaching elementary special education. Three themes emerged from the data addressing the above question: reasons men enter and remain in the teaching profession, experiences, and reasons men choose professions in elementary education. The following will address these themes in relation to previous literature.

All of the participants shared that advocacy was a prominent factor in their decision to pursue and remain in a career teaching special education. Advocacy for individual students and advocacy for high quality, appropriate programming emerged as reasons for entering a career teaching students with disabilities. Participants cited individual student success as the greatest reward of their job and the motivation that keeps them returning to the classroom each year. All participants reported enjoyment from helping students reach their potential and being a voice for their students. These

findings are consistent with previous research. Simpson's (2004) study found that men teaching in primary grades (K-6th) cited enjoyment working with children as an important factor in deciding on a career in teaching. Additional support is found in the work of Litosseliti and Leadbeater (2013) in which personal motivation and interest in students was cited as a significant factor in becoming speech-language therapists.

Experience, both personal and work, had a tremendous impact on the participants' decision to pursue a career in special education. Personal experiences were powerful motivators for entry. Participants shared stories about siblings diagnosed with autism and family members who were teachers as major influences on their decision to enter teaching. Volunteer and work experiences in high school and college were another type of experience that influenced the career decision of the men in the study. Five (83%) of the men shared a specific volunteer experience or job they had during high school and college, and expressed the importance of the experience in ultimately shaping their career decision to teach students with disabilities. These findings are broadly in line with Lopez-Estrada and Koyama's (2010) findings from their research examining the factors as to why Mexican American special educators remain in the classroom. The participants in their study cited experiences with and exposure to individuals with disabilities in their younger years as an important reason in continuing to teach special education (Lopez-Estrada & Koyama, 2010).

Another major finding of my research is the importance of collegial relationships in participants' decisions to remain teaching. Several men shared that having a "community of teachers" (Carl, William) allowed them to share ideas and have a positive support group with their peers. The importance of building and maintaining professional

relationships is often overlooked when researching male retention in special education teaching professions. However, its importance cannot be understated. The findings from the present study support that claim. My findings are consistent with several studies that address men working in female-concentrated occupations (Galbraith, 1992; Lopez-Estrada & Koyam, 2010; Simpson, 2004). Building meaningful professional relationships with colleagues emerged as a crucial factor in male special educator retention. The participants cited relationships with colleagues, regardless of sex-type, was critical for job satisfaction. Men did not only identify with males, rather they sought support in job-alike co-workers. This is an important finding because it demonstrates that men working in a female-concentrated profession can seek support and meaningful professional relationships with all colleagues, and that they should not feel as a "minority" simply given their status as a male in a female-concentrated profession. It is also important for men to see the benefits and importance of seeking support from female and male colleagues.

One of the goals of the study was to investigate why men decide to teach in the elementary grades as opposed to the secondary grades, which are perceived as more suitable or more gender appropriate for men. The participants shared that elementary schools have more resources suitable for instruction, students have fewer emotional issues to address, and that elementary teaching is less stressful. Other studies discuss general reasons why men may enter the profession of teaching (Lopez-Estrada & Koyama, 2010; Weisgram, Bigler, & Liben, 2016). However, currently no studies address specific reasons why men decide to enter teaching at the elementary grades. The findings from the present study have important links to recruitment and retention issues

surrounding male special educators. The men in the study were adhering to the ideals of "traditional" masculinities by emphasizing the technical supports (resources) and non-caring aspects of the job. This is not to say the participants are not caring individuals, but, rather they gravitated to aspects of teaching that were in line with expected gender roles and masculinity. When discussing recruiting and attracting qualified candidates to the profession, we as an educational community, need to emphasis the technical and caring aspects of the work at all levels of school. The gender roles ascribed to women as caring and men not are both false and counterproductive for the special education field, and such stereotypes end up impacting the students.

The Few, the Welcomed, the Men: Research Question 2

The second research question was anchored in the concepts of Connell's (1995) masculinities and William's (1992, 1995, 2013) *glass escalator* experienced by men working in female-concentrated occupations. The question addressed how men define and enact their masculinities in a female-concentrated profession. The question investigated whether men received advantages in their work and whether they were expected to adhere to traditional gender role behaviors.

Gender roles (stereotypes) are rooted in the division of labor between men and women. It was through this division of labor that men and women engaged in different tasks based on their gender. Gender and gender roles are cultural constructs that change over the course of history. The roles assigned to men and women are solely based on biological sex, thus the roles that are deemed appropriate by society become ingrained in the collective psyche and constrain what is acceptable behavior for both men and women. The industrialized economy that established current concepts of career-related gender

roles is no longer applicable in post-industrial nations such as the United States. The patriarchal social norms that emerged from warfare, intense agriculture, and complex economies in which males were encouraged to enact and value a more dominant style and females were to value a subordinate style are no longer valid (Wood & Eagly, 2002). The aim of the second research question was to explore how men define and enact gender roles in their work. Three themes emerged surrounding the second research question: the male body, communication, and perception. The findings will be discussed below.

Participants all spoke of the misfit between the male body and outside perceptions related to working with younger students. The men shared feelings of being under suspicion because they taught younger students. The men in the study said they often thought about how their interactions with students may be misconstrued. Participants viewed their bodies in a negative manner in relation to their role as teacher. The association of being male with sexual abuse was something all participants were aware of, and frankly, something they accounted for in their daily work, whether consciously or subconsciously. Men's bodies were seen paradoxically, as both hazardous (threatening in a sexual context) and valued (handle conflict, teach "difficult" students, move heavy objects) in the elementary school environment. The participants shared they had to alter ways they interact with students. This influenced their teaching and their ability to provide the social-emotional support their students needed. These findings are in keeping with Heilman's (2012) notion of prescriptive gender stereotypes. These gender role stereotypes designate what men and women *should* be like. These roles establish artificial expectations of what normal behavior is for men, and penalizes them for violating these norms. For men teaching elementary special education, the consequences of violating

established gender roles are very real and can carry serious implications, including accusations of abuse and sexual misconduct.

The findings above are consistent with previous research. There have been numerous studies investigating how men's bodies are perceived, scrutinized, and considered dangerous. Buschmeyer (2013) stated that men avoid situations of physical contact with their students for fear of being seen as too masculine and a possible sexual offender. Other studies also support the findings in the present study: men feel scrutiny when working with young children (Harding, 2007; Peterson, 2014; Sargent, 2013). Participants in King (1998) and Thornton's (1999) studies also shared concerns of being falsely accused of abuse and sexual misconduct. The scrutiny and fear, or potential for, is a major deterrent for some men to consider a career teaching special education in the elementary grade levels. Gender norms penalize men for displaying caring and sensitive characteristics. Men entering teaching, especially of younger children, feel the pressures of adhering to certain norms as prescribed by society, even when that means neglecting aspects of their job that may be critical, such as students' social-emotional well-being. The men in the present study all felt gender norms were still valid, and they were expected to adhere to these norms while negotiating their jobs.

Participants in the present study discussed their bodies in terms of physical strength. The men were often expected to help restrain students in crisis or demonstrating aggressive behavior. They were also tasked with transporting students for toileting and transitioning, and with general moving and lifting of items around the school. My findings are at odds with previous studies that found the above tasks to be negative stereotypical gender role work assigned to men. Sayman (2015) reported participants'

perceptions of being used as a "work horse" when asked to assist with patient transport and lifting of heavy things (p. 14). These gendered work roles resulted in feelings of exploitation in male workers. However, the male teachers in my study expressed enjoyment of the physical aspects of their job, and welcomed it. This may have been a source of validation of their masculinity. They did not feel exploited when asked to assist with lifting and moving. Although these findings are generally compatible with previous research showing men may be assigned or asked to perform physical task that can be viewed as gendered, the men in the present study widely expressed this being a point of pride for them in their work. Past research positions the physical work asked of men in female-concentrated professions as negative, a drawback for men working in such occupations. The findings in the present study run counter to these traditionally held beliefs. The participants considered their physical strength a point of pride and distinction in their work. The male special educators in the current study, contrary to their responses, may have used their physical masculinity as a way of gaining an advantage in their work. Having the ability to distinguish themselves from the majority of their female co-workers was definitely a point of pride; however, it may knowingly or unknowingly be used to benefit the male workers, and may actually to working to perpetuate gender roles within the special education teaching profession.

Furthermore, the above findings raise an important question. Are male special education teachers being placed in programs where masculinity is valued and at a premium? Given the demands of many special education programs, such as behavior intervention and discipline, transporting students, toileting, men are seen as a valuable assess and benefit different programs to a greater extent than a similarly qualified female

given their status as a male. It may be a case where school districts are perpetuating gender role stereotypes, and placing a value on certain masculine ideals, as defined by larger society. Looking ahead, its important that as a system, we balance where male special educators are placed. There is a premium for skills that men possess, but it also important that men be giving the opportunity to work in all types of special education programs.

Several men in the present study cited communication, specifically miscommunication with female colleagues, as a point of frustration. The men shared a disconnect in interpersonal communication styles with female co-workers that caused them to change their communication style to match that of the female majority. Literature is extremely sparse concerning communication styles and mismatches. McDowell (2013) addresses linguistic behaviors and relationships between gender and professional communication for male nurses. The men in McDowell's study did not use typical masculine linguistic indices to emphasize their masculinity to distinguish themselves from their female colleagues. Although the findings were different, both my study and McDowell's show that men ultimately had to adhere to the accepted female-dominant communication style.

People in and outside of the education field have a perception that men who teach special education in elementary grades will experience advantages purely due to their status as a male in a female-concentrated profession. These advantages include having an easier time gaining student respect, better class management, and increased promotional opportunities. The assumption that men enter elementary teaching as a stepping stone into administrative positions continues to be a perception held by many, especially many

people outside the field of education. The men in this study were skeptical of this point. Not a single man mentioned receiving advantages in their work roles, tasks, or assignments because of their male status. Mitrano (2014) interviewed men teaching elementary grades and found that participants never felt or experienced any advantages in their jobs as teachers because they were male. Men shared that they felt overwhelmingly welcomed by their female colleagues. They stated that these colleagues never treated male colleagues in a stereotypical manner, except for asking them to perform physical tasks at times, nor did they suggest men were unequipped to teach younger students. Men and women, from the findings here, viewed each other as equals, and most importantly saw each other as teachers of children with disabilities instead of male or female teachers of students with disabilities.

These findings run counter to the conventional view that men, as a condition of their minority status in female concentrated occupations, experience advantages in hiring, work preferences and promotions (Acker, 1990; Williams, 1995). Williams (1995) posits that men working in female-concentrated professions, as *token* males will use their gender to gain, establish, and maintain their positions of power and privilege. The outdated perceptions that the men in the current study experienced support Connell's (1987, from Pease, 2011) concept of gender regimes, defined as an unequal power relation between men and women in which gender roles are assigned based on these power relations. The current findings support the notion that traditional gender roles were not reproduced and upheld for men working in female-concentrated professions. These traditionally held gender roles and views of masculinity are no longer applicable, and are deliberately rejected by male teachers. Gender stereotypes perpetuate gender imbalances

in the special education teacher workforce, and further promulgate outdated messages about gender roles to the next generation of potential teachers. However, it is important to address whether or not men truly are blind to the advantages afforded to them because of their male status. The participants stated that they could not recall moments whereby they received direct advantages, but this may be the case of the men not actually recognizing the privileges extended to them in their work because of their male status.

It's My Masculinity and I'll Cry If I Want To: Research Question 3

The goal of the third research question was to examine masculinity in terms of influence on male special education teachers' definitions, performances, and applications of masculinity when making career decisions. The question examined if and how ideals of masculinity influence men working as special educators in elementary schools. Three themes emerged based on the third research question: administration, my masculinity, and pay.

The findings in the present study reveal interesting details regarding professional promotion in elementary school special education. Nearly all participants stated that going into administration was not a factor in their decision to enter a career in special education. However, four men (67%) also indicated that moving into administration was possible and is something that they did not rule out. The men who shared their specific motivations for entering administration shared that they wanted to be in a position to have the greatest impact on the greatest number of students. Administration was seen as a means to advocacy on a larger scale than the individual classroom. My findings reflect Thornton and Bricheno's (2000) study that explored the relationship between gender and promotion for primary school teachers in the United Kingdom. Male respondents

positioned their career advancement in the context of being able to impact and influence the greatest number of students (Thorton & Bricheno, 2000). The participants in my study shared that moving into administration, a position that carries high pay and prestige, was not relevant to their decision to pursue the non-traditional, female-concentrated profession of teaching special education. Yet the majority of the participants shared that they would be open to the move into administration. This apparent contradiction implies that these men may be negotiating multiple masculinities and gender roles given their position in a female concentrated profession. On the one hand, participants may outwardly project the image of a teacher who is entirely motivated and dedicated to classroom teaching while they may internally feel pressure and desire to adhere to traditional gender roles and masculinity by pursuing an administration position that is considered more appropriate work for men.

My findings also reflect a long-standing drawback of teaching: pay. The issue of pay is often cited as a deterrent to attracting more men into the teaching profession (Perra & Ruspini, 2013; Rice & Gosseling, 2005). Money is a significant factor in recruiting more men, but low pay did not deter the participants in the present study from entering and remaining as classroom teachers. All participants emphasized the strain of low pay during their interviews. Pressure to adhere to traditional gender roles may be a reason the majority of participants were open to the possibility of entering administration even though it was not a motivating factor in their decision to enter teaching. The pressure to earn more money and reach positions of higher prestige may not be motivating factors for men to enter the profession, but over time, it may become more significant. The men that do enter special education teaching are often lost to higher paying, higher prestige non-

classroom based positions. The next section will discuss the findings above in relation to how they impact the field of special education.

The participants in the study acted out different types of masculinities, depending on the situation or the specific need, to maintain their sense of self in their work. Gender roles, and the power afforded to men, such as physical power and authority was rewarded when men acted out certain gender roles as a display of masculinity. On the other hand, men also displayed counterintuitive gender roles of caring and compassion in their everyday work. These runs counter to the traditional view of what it means to be masculine in our society. The men in the current study acted out gender roles and thus masculinities in ways that were both in support of and diametrically opposed to what would be expected of a male. The men here carved out their individual sense of self in their work by applying and rejecting certain gender roles and expectations, as a way to be comfortable and successful in their work.

Impact of the Study

Gender roles in the United States are based on a patriarchal view of society, strengthened by the division of labor between men and women during the industrial revolution at the turn of the 20th century. Men are traditionally expected to be the primary source of income for a household while women are expected to manage the home and children. These traditional views about gender are less applicable in our changing economic and social landscape. We no longer have the luxury, as a society, to adhere to such an outdated way of thinking. Men are entering non-traditional, female-concentrated occupations at a rapid rate, and should feel welcomed and proud to work in non-traditional occupations. The logic is similar to times when women and other marginalized

groups did not have opportunities to work and contribute in the labor market. This analogy can be applied in special education teaching. Special education grossly overlooks a significant pool of potentially high-quality teachers. The fact that we are not tapping into the full resource pool for our students is at the crux of my research. As educators, we need to work toward new representations of the teaching profession, especially teaching students with disabilities.

The findings of the present study support previous research investigating men who enter non-traditional occupations. The participants cited past experiences, family, colleagues, and advocacy work as reasons for entering and remaining in the classroom. Men shared reasons why they were attracted to teaching elementary school as opposed to secondary schools. My study offers evidence that men teaching elementary level special education may experience a welcoming and supportive work environment. This is especially salient given the disproportionate number of male identified and served in special education. This runs contrary to much of the literature regarding men working in non-traditional occupations that describe pressures to adhere to masculinities and display traditional gendered behaviors. This evidence provides a better understanding of how male special education teachers experience gender roles and whether or not there is a real pressure from self and peers to perform acts of traditional hegemonic masculinity. My findings support Buschmeyer's (2013) concept of alternative masculinity. Alternative masculinity was developed by observing men in female-concentrated professions who purposively evaded presenting hegemonic masculinities in their work (Buschmeyer 2013). Men did not feel pressure, either internally or externally, to act out specific gender roles and masculinity in their work with younger students.

My findings support the argument that men teaching younger children continue to be viewed in a suspicious manner. Their sexuality is questioned, and their interactions with children are scrutinized. This supports the conclusion that, as a society, we are still applying traditional gender roles to men and women. Teaching younger children is still generally viewed as feminine work more suited for women. These gendered connotations of teaching elementary aged children continue to perpetuate the stereotype that men are not suited to, and even incapable of, teaching younger children.

One of the objectives of this research was to investigate Williams' (1992) *glass escalator* proposition. It was important to investigate the motivation and experiences of men who embarked on a career in teaching special education. Williams' glass escalator proposition was in direct opposition to Kanter's (1977) concept of *tokenism*. Williams' position holds that men occupying positions of *token* status do not experience the same negative effects that women do, as outlined in Kanter's work. In fact, *token* status was seen as an advantage in hiring and promotion. Williams posited that men feel the "glass escalator effect" in which they rise to quickly to administrative positions (Williams, 1992). Men in female-concentrated professions, according to Williams, must actively try to stay in non-administrative positions because of the pressure of gendered expectations for them to rise to administrative roles. She equates this struggle to the act of trying to stay in one location on a moving escalator.

In 2013, Christine Williams wrote an article published in *Gender & Society* titled "The Glass Escalator, Revisited." Williams (2013) outlined limitations to her original propositions and took the position that we should no longer apply the glass escalator to investigate men working in non-traditional occupations. To Williams' credit, she

campaigns for an intersectional approach when studying gender in the workplace. This approach takes race/ethnicity, class, and sexuality into account when studying gender and workplace equity. She goes on to outline a significant limitation of her original work. Her original work was based on a historically specific form of work organization, and assumed stable employment, clear job hierarchies, and career ladders (Williams, 2013). These features are not commonplace in all jobs in the current labor market. It may appear that Williams' original work no longer applies in today's labor market. However, I argue that the profession of teaching still adheres to the original tenants of Williams' 1992 article. The structures of many jobs have changed, and can be characterized "neoliberal" work organizations (Williams, 2013, p. 620). The teaching profession aligns with Williams' original parameters used to developing the *glass escalator* proposition; they are job security (tenure and unions), full-time schedules, career ladders, and rewards for loyal service (compensation).

The current study appears to run counter to Williams' (1992) concept of the glass escalator even though the workplace meets the original assumptions. Participants shared that they never experienced overt advantages in assignments, tasks, evaluations, or promotions due to their male status. One participant even shared a contrasting case in which he was passed over for a job that he was qualified for because of his status as a male. A few participants shared that being male may have helped in hiring, but they have no way to ever substantiate the claim. Overall, participants reported being held to the same standards as their female colleagues, and failed to recall any situations when they received an advantage due to their male status. The large size of the school district used in the present study may have influenced these findings, because there may be more

policies in place to ensure non-discriminatory practices. Unfair practices may still occur, but based on the interview responses given, it seems that the participants in this study - males working as special education teachers in the elementary grades - received no favors or advantages due to their *token* status. These findings suggest that men in non-traditional work do not receive clear advantages nor do they feel they have to adhere to certain masculinities to fulfill expected gender roles. However, through physicality men may be asserting their power and exhibiting their individual masculinity, and demonstrating their natural "advantage" to perform certain job functions. This supports the notion of alternative masculinity and the potential to change gender norms in society.

Limitations

All research has limitations. The following section will discuss possible limitations of the present study. The greatest concern and critique of narrative case studies is their external validity and generalizability of the findings. The findings in the present study are not generalizable to all males teaching special education in the elementary grades. The current findings may only be applicable to similar cases and does not warrant causality. It is up to the consumer of narrative case study research to determine if the findings from one study are applicable to their situation and purpose. Narrative case studies are valuable in scientific development, and can help guide future research.

Researcher bias is another limitation. It was important for me to be aware of my position as a researcher and as a male special education teacher in the elementary grades. It was also critical for me to examine my own assumptions, experiences, and views to understand and limit possible researcher bias. Reflexivity, "the process of reflecting

critically on the self as researcher, the 'human as instrument'" was applied to limit researcher influence and bias (Lincoln & Guba, 2000, p. 183 from Merriam, 2009). Future studies might benefit from using research assistants or researchers whose background is unrelated to that of the participants to conduct interviews.

The findings in my study are limited by the demographics of the participants. Five of the six participants identified as Caucasian. The results may suffer from "white solipsism" in which the white experience is the norm therefore becomes the model for all groups or individuals (Rich, 1979). The high percentage (83%) of white male participants may raise concern about the findings. The choice was made to select participants from a random pool of potential participants that demonstrated an interest in being in the study. I employed rigor in the analysis to strengthen the findings. Within-case and cross-case analyses were applied to enhance the credibility of the findings. Member checks with participants were used to confirm the meaning of interview responses and participants' perspectives. This limitation can be addressed in future studies by employing purposive sampling methodology to ensure the inclusion of a greater diversity of cases with respect to race and ethnicity

Suggestions for Practices and Policy

Results from the present study can be extremely useful for school counselors and career counselors. Young men of high school and college age should be exposed to a wide-variety of career choices. Counselors need to be aware of the changing gender composition of the labor-force. Specifically, counselors must recognize that men are now looking, and should be looking, into entering occupations that are historically labeled *female* occupations. This shift needs to be taken into account when providing

recommendations and resources to young men navigating potential careers. A career teaching special education is rewarding, demanding, and exciting, and may be a great fit for many men. Furthermore, the findings from the current study are consistent with previous research about men entering female-concentrated positions; career-counseling experiences are vital determinants for men who enter teaching, specifically teaching students with disabilities. Counselors need to match students with quality experiences working with children and adults with disabilities in a variety of settings as a way for students to discover possible career interests. Policy should be put in place that creates opportunity for work and volunteer experiences for high school and college students, or at least exposure to different types of work such as speakers, tours, week-long internships, distance learning, and formal course offering. These may provide students with invaluable experiences that ultimately help them narrow down their career interest.

Schools can benefit from this research to better understand the importance of practices that deliberately foster collegial working environments. The findings show that men cited collegiality as a considerable factor in their career retention. Principals can provide formal activities like weekly common planning time for special education staff, staff-developed professional development, and professional learning communities. These initiatives should come in the form of policy from the superintendent's office, and formal professional learning should be provided to school-based administrators and other personnel to inform them about the benefits of establishing practices that promote and encourage collegiality among staff.

My research findings also suggest that school districts would benefit from policies that require more transparency in processes, procedures, safeguards, and rights for

employees accused of abuse or sexual misconduct. It is widely documented that male teachers working with younger students are under much greater scrutiny regarding their interactions with students and their motives for teaching. Participants in the current study expressed that these feelings of suspicion impact their teaching and the level of social-emotional care they provide to students. Federal, state, and local legislation and policies need to ensure that male employees are afforded the safe safeguards, due process, and rights that will allow them to perform necessary job functions that have the greatest impact on student social-emotional growth, well-being, and academic growth. The men in the present study expressed constant anxiety about potential misperceptions of their interactions with students. Gender stereotypes that punish nonconforming gender acts, like men working with younger children, stigmatize men. These concerns are major stressors for men in the field, and a deterrent for potential male teachers.

The findings in the study support the need to update outdated stereotypes associated with teaching at the elementary school level. Simpson's (2004) study showed that men teaching elementary aged children had positive outcomes. The men in her study shared that their decision to teach younger students positively impacted their values and self-esteem, and that they were tremendously satisfied in their career choice (Simpson, 2004).

Policies at the state and district levels need to be in place that ensure the images and rhetoric used in posters, job announcements, and official school literature portray images of men as caring, compassionate, and competent teachers. Additionally, job descriptions should place equal emphasis on the social-emotional and technical requirements for special educators. Special education documentation and literature should

be gender-neutral in both word-selection and job description and duties. School districts need to ensure that they have male special educators on their recruitment teams and as representatives at events like college job fairs or conferences. Community outreach is another critical step for high school and college age male students to meet educators, ask questions, and learn about the different benefits of a career teaching special education.

Lastly, the images of teachers of elementary students in popular culture need to reflect a diverse workforce prominently showcasing male special educators. The perception of the public needs to be influenced to help eradicate outdated gender roles for men and women, and the message we are sending about what is an appropriate career based on sex-type alone, and not accounting for current marketplace, changing roles, and social reform. If the field of special education is to be successfully at changing outdated images of masculinity and gender then aggressive initiatives need to be undertaken in our social media culture to impact potential candidates.

Future Research

There are a number of potential areas for future research suggested by the results reported here. First, future studies in urban and rural school districts as well as studies with ethnic and racially diverse respondents could replicate the present study. Replication will strengthen the external validity of the findings and will help refute or strengthen my findings. This will contribute to literature in the area of men working in non-traditional occupations, specifically male special education teachers working with younger students.

Another area for future research should include comparison groups for the present study. These might include women special educators working in elementary schools, male general educators working in elementary schools, or male secondary special

educators. Comparison groups would strengthen the findings, and help determine whether the results are unique to male elementary special educators or are true across multiple populations of special education or general elementary school teachers. These are critical questions to be answered, and will influence policy makers' practices.

The findings in the present study support Buschmeyer's (2013) alternative masculinity schema. Future research may test Buschmeyer's schema on men teaching elementary special education. The findings presented here imply that the men do not feel pressure or obligation to adhere to a specific type of masculinity. Participants felt free to express themselves as a cross-section of masculinities. Further research needs to be conducted to further support or refute Buschmeyer's concept of alternative masculinity. Future studies should investigate whether men teaching in a specialized program versus men teaching in a more traditional inclusion setting are viewed differently by colleagues, and how masculinity is applied or not applied for these two groups of men. Studies might investigate and measure how male special education teachers, and men in other traditionally female-concentrated occupations, define and enact masculinity in their work.

The present study took place in a large, diverse school district. Future researchers should conduct replication studies in similar and different districts in respect to size, geographic location, and student demographics. Replicating the study with different variables will help strengthen the current findings and provide confirming or refuting evidence and strengthen the overall field.

Concluding Remarks

The current study is significant for several reasons. First, the findings in this study offer an updated view of how men teaching in a non-traditional occupation define and

display masculinity. The study also provides meaningful insight into perceived gender advantages men receive given their so-called token status. The findings demonstrate a shift in applying and defining gender roles for men in the field of education, and in society more generally. We live at a time of unprecedented changes in work, family, individual choice, and personal expression. With these changes comes a restructuring of jobs and who fills them. Everyone has a right to openly pursue any career they find most appealing, and this pursuit should be free of stigmas and gender stereotypes. We have the responsibility, as a society and specifically within the field of education, to educate each other about gender stereotypes and the impact they have on career choice. The field of special education is a rewarding, fun, ever-changing, and challenging field. It is our responsibility as researchers and teachers to ensure that a major group of potentially high-quality teachers, men, are not left out of our classrooms.

APPENDIX A

Introductory E-mail to Potential Participants

Dissertation Research in Montgomery County Public Schools, Maryland

Dear Mr. _____

I hope this reaches you well. Hello, my name is Jonathan Ferrari, and I'm a doctoral candidate at the University of Maryland, College Park working on my dissertation in Special Education Policy. I'm currently a Learning Center teacher in Montgomery County Public School where I've been for the past four years, and I was an inclusion teacher at the middle school level for four years in Howard County Public Schools, where I also taught the Extended School Year program for students with moderate to severe disabilities for four summers.

The premise behind my research is that far few men are entering the special education teaching profession, even when the majority of students served in special education programming are males. I'm interested in understanding the experiences of men like you teaching in a female-concentrated profession. I am interested in learning why men like yourself decided to embark on a career in special education, what factors supported/hindered you on your path to special education teaching, what factors are important for you to continue teaching special education, how/if societal expectations, gender norms impact your work, and your insight into initiatives/programs we can put in place to recruit and retain high-quality males into the profession, specifically at the elementary school level.

I would only ask that you participate in one individual interview and review the transcript and my preliminary findings. The interview can take place at any time and location that works best for you (school, local library, Starbucks, home, etc). For your participation you will receive a $75.00 dollar gift card.

If you are interested in participating in the study you may contact me via e-mail at Jonathan_R_Ferrari@mcpsmd.org or by phone at 301-538-8994.

I appreciate you taking the time to read this letter and for considering participating in the study. I look forward to hearing from you soon. Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

Jonathan Ferrari
Doctoral Candidate: Department of Special Education
University of Maryland, College Park

APPENDIX B

Institutional Review Board (IRB) Participant Consent Forms

Project Title	Narrative case studies exploring men teaching special education in the Elementary grades
Purpose of the Study	The research is being conducted by Jonathan Ferrari and Dr. Peter Leone at the University of Maryland, College Park. We are inviting you to participate in this research project because you are a special educator who teaches in an elementary school. The purpose of this research project is to obtain a better understanding of the influences on and the process by which you made the decision to embark on a career teaching special education at the elementary grade levels. A secondary purpose is to gain a better understanding of your experiences working in a female-dominated profession and how these experiences have shaped your professional and personal lives.
Procedures	The procedures involve participating in a one-to-one interview. During the interview I will ask questions related to your decision to enter the special education teaching profession, and about your personal experiences as a male in a female-dominated profession, and if your status as a male has impacted your experiences. We will also discuss ways that the field of special education can recruit more male special educators into the profession. The interview should last approximately 30-45 minutes. It will take place at a location selected by you. The interview, with your permission, will be audio recorded. You have the option to turn the recording device off at any time without penalty. Following your participation in the interview you will be asked to fill-out a short five-minute questionnaire with demographic information and information about your teaching background.

Procedures	You will be asked to review the researcher's interview transcripts and preliminary findings at which time you may add your comments, edits, new information, and feedback..
Potential Risks and Discomforts	There may be some risks from participating in this research study. There are possible risks involved in all research endeavors such as anxiety, concerns about being interviewed, and concerns about being misrepresented. These risks are minimized by the fact that you are encouraged to ask the researcher questions throughout the duration of the study. You do not have to answer any questions that make you feel uncomfortable. You may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.
Potential Benefits	There are no direct benefits from participating in this research**.** We hope that, in the future, other people might benefit from this study through improved understanding of the experiences of men working in the nontraditional career of special education.
Confidentiality	To protect your privacy during the study a) your name will not be included on the interview transcripts, researchers field notes, surveys or other collected data, (b) you will be assigned a pseudonym and will be referred to as such on all interview recordings and documentation; a code will be placed on all collected data; (c) only the student investigator and faculty advisor will have access to your real identity. All data will be kept by the researcher and stored either in password-protected files for digitally gathered forms (digitized interview audio files), or a private, home file cabinet. Only the student investigator and the research advisor will have access to this data. The researchers will ensure that all notes and raw data are shredded or erased from computer files when the final report or related writings are completed or 7 years after the completion of the study, whichever is later.

All written reports will preserve the confidentiality of research participants by attributing information to a generic group (e.g., special education teachers) or to other non-identifiable referents such as study participant, respondent, informant, or through the use of pseudonyms. If we write a report or article about this research project, your identity will be protected to the maximum extent possible. Your information may be shared with representatives of the University of Maryland, College Park or governmental authorities if you or someone else is in danger or if we are required to do so by law. |

Compensation	You will receive $20.00 for your role as a research participant. You will be responsible for any taxes assessed on the compensation. If you do not earn over $100 only your name and address will be collected to receive compensation.
Right to Withdraw and Questions	Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate in this research, you may stop participating at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you stop participating at any time, you will not be penalized or lose any benefits to which you otherwise qualify. If you decide to stop taking part in the study, if you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or if you need to report an injury related to the research, please contact the investigator: **Investigator** Jonathan Ferrari 14028 Wagon Way Silver Spring, MD 20906 Phone: (301) 538-8994 E-mail: jferrari@umd.edu Or **Co-Investigator** Dr. Peter Leone Room: 3112 D Benjamin Building College Park, MD 20742 Phone: (301) 405-6489 E-mail: leonep@umd.edu

Statement of Consent	Your signature indicates that you are at least 18 years of age; you have read this consent form or have had it read to you; your questions have been answered to your satisfaction and you voluntarily agree to participate in this research study. You will receive a copy of this signed consent form. If you agree to participate, please sign your name below. You will be audiotaped during the interview. Please check YES if you agree to be audiotaped or No if you do not agree to be audiotaped. Yes _____ No _____	
Signature and Date	NAME OF PARTICIPANT [Please Print]	
	SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT	
	DATE	

APPENDIX C

Participant Questionnaire

1. How many years have you been teaching in public schools?

2. How many have been at the elementary grade levels?

3. Is teaching your first career?

4. At what age did you start teaching (teacher of record)?

5. How would you best describe yourself? (Pick one, please)
   a. American Indian or Alaskan (AM)
   b. Asian (AS)
   c. Black or African American (BL)
   d. Hispanic/Latino (HI)
   e. Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (PI)
   f. Two or more (multiple) races (MU)
   g. White (W)
   h. Other: _____

6. Which best describes your status?
   a. Married
   b. Never Married
   c. Divorced

7. Do you have any children?
   a. Yes
   b. No
   If you answered yes above, how many children do you have?

8. Do you live in a dual-earner household?

9. Please feel free to share any additional comments about your experiences as a special educator in the space below.

   _____

   _____

APPENDIX D

Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

1) Can you discuss your life experiences that lead you to a career in special education teaching?

    a. Were there a specific person(s) that was particularly influential in your decision to become a special education teacher?

    b. Have you experienced any negative influences along your path to becoming a special education teacher;

    c. Or in your career as a special education teacher?

    d. How do family and friends view your work?

2) What factors have been influential in your continuing your career as a special education teacher (administrators, job security, colleagues, benefits, mobility)?

3) Have you experienced any advantages or disadvantages solely because of your status as a male in a female-concentrated profession?

        i. In hiring?

       ii. Work delegation?

      iii. Work expectations

      iv. Promotions?

       v. Task/role preferences

4) As a male, how do you feel your female colleagues perceive you?

    a. In your teaching ability?

    b. Only trying to move into administration?

    c. Sexual orientation?

5) When deciding to enter a career in special education teaching, did the possibility of becoming an administrator influence your decision to enter teaching?

6) Do you have an interest in pursuing a non-classroom based teaching position at any point in your future?

7) Do you feel you have to portray a certain form of "masculinity" as a man in a female-concentrated, nontraditional profession?

    a. For colleagues

    b. Parents

    c. Friends and Family

8) As a profession, how can more men be recruited into the profession? And how can we go about retaining quality male special education teachers once hired?

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