

THE PERCEPTIONS AND PRESSURES EXPERIENCED BY MALE PRIMARY ELEMENTARY TEACHERS
AND HOW THESE AFFECT THEIR BEHAVIORS AND CAREER CHOICES

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THE PERCEPTIONS AND PRESSURES EXPERIENCED BY MALE PRIMARY ELEMENTARY TEACHERS
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ABSTRACT

This dissertation was a qualitative study of the perceptions and pressure of male primary elementary teachers and how these may affect their behavior and career choices. The researcher sought, through interviews of all stakeholders, to better understand the world of a male primary elementary teacher and how they are impacted by the thoughts and attitudes of those around them.

Demographically, male primary elementary teachers are rare. The literature provides a variety of reasons why this is true, but many stemmed from the perceptions, both negative and positive, people had of them and the resulting pressures from these perceptions.

It was found, from the interviews, that male primary elementary teachers experience a great deal of pressure to be role-models to fatherless students and to avoid positive physical contact with students, It was also found male teachers change their behavior in order to fit in the elementary culture and to avoid accusations of impropriety. It is recommended that leaders make an effort to hire quality male teachers, defend their reputations, avoid placing difficult students in their classes, and to check their own perceptions of male teachers.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Background

During the latter half of the twentieth Century and the early twenty-first century, the American workplace has seen an ever growing diversity of employees. This diversity has taken the shape of racial, religious, and gender. Diversity has become an important goal pursued by companies and government. Business, academia, and government argue increased diversity leads to more successful work environments. To put it simply, diversity is good (Cayl Institute, 2008).

Sedlak and Schlossman (1987) argued increased gender diversity has been a constant for the last century in the American workforce. This was especially true during World War II when women entered into the workforce in areas where they previously had not worked. Prior to WWII the only jobs where women were dominant were nursing and elementary education (Wiest, 2003). As the landscape of the American workforce changed, women grew in numbers in all sectors.

This growth has led to an increase in the economic and social power of women. Joplin and Daus (1997) stated the economic power of the United States has steadily grown. The American worker continues to hold a dominant position in the world economy. Whether these truths are linked to diversity is not clear. What is clear, is increased diversity has opened up the workplace to a previously

untapped reservoir of skills and talents which has revolutionized and reenergized the nation's economy.

Despite the growth in diversity of the American worker, there still exist areas which do not have a great deal of diversity. One of the least diverse jobs is the American teacher (Gilbert & Williams, 2008). What effect this lack of diversity is having on students is open to question, but if the positive outcomes of diversification, which other areas of the American economy have experienced and continue to experience, are any indication, then a growth in the number of male primary elementary teachers would have a profound effect on schools (Farquhar, 1997).

Rationale and Justification for the Study (Conceptual Underpinnings)

Currently in the United States there is no career, other than elementary teaching, where gender disparity exists. Less than 4% of primary elementary (kindergarten through third grade) teachers are men (Gilbert & Williams, 2008). Historically, this was not always the case. The early days of education in the North American British Colonies consisted of sporadic units of organized education. Usually, education was handled by tutors or family members teaching the basics of living. In New England, where the Puritans held the majority, schooling was much more common and it was overwhelmingly performed by men (Montecinos & Nielson, 1997).

The following brief history is based on the work of Sedlak and Schlossman (1987). Puritans believed it was of religious necessity that children be taught to read and write so they could further read, understand, and implement Biblical

teachings in their lives and their communities. Puritans had a very specific way of viewing the world. John Winthrop, a Puritan leader, believed they were “A light on the hill”. The belief that the world was filled with evil and the devil was continually attempting to subvert and destroy God’s creation led the Puritans to see themselves as the force to oppose the darkness. Coupled with this was a strong belief in the ethic of hard work leading to God’s good favor. To the Puritans, the formal education of children was the logical way to fulfill their beliefs.

This early form of education was built around traveling school masters who were, in almost all cases, men (Montecinos & Nielson, 1997). There was a strong feeling that children were in need of strict discipline and women were simply too fragile to handle this reality, thus men were much better suited for the education of children. The importance of education to the Puritan way of life in no way caused the status of traveling teachers to be high, in fact it was seen as a stepping stone into more important works such as law and medicine. Most tutors never lasted more than five years before they moved into other fields. This was true for men and the few women who were involved in education. The relative ages of teachers also varied greatly. Female teachers generally were in their teens and left the field for marriage and family. Male teachers were a little older in their late teens and early twenties, leaving for other work or advanced education.

Despite the lack of status of teachers, education continued to grow in importance in the young nation following the American Revolution. There was a strong belief the citizenry needed to be literate in order to understand the new

laws and ideas being enacted and discussed. Old colonial feelings about religious and personal freedoms demanded a country in which people could read and understand the world around them. Laws were enacted throughout the young nation which enshrined schools as a part of the social fabric of the nation. As the country moved westward, laws like the Land Ordinance of 1785 guaranteed that as territories were surveyed and divided into townships, part of those townships were reserved for public education. This growth in the importance of education came as a new attitude toward who was responsible for the education of the citizenry, namely, women.

The work of Horace Mann led to a more structured system of education within the United States. He encouraged and worked for the enactment of mandatory schooling laws and the creation of the first Normal, or teaching, schools. As all of this was occurring a change in social ideas was occurring. Children were no longer seen as innately prone to evil and in need of a strong hand to prevent this evil from growing. Rather it was thought children needed to be nurtured into social and religious salvation. During this time period, women were believed to be better geared towards nurturing (Montecinos & Nielson, 1997; Martino, 2008; Wiest, 2003). This began the great exodus of men from teaching and the feminization of the field (Carney, 2007). The men who stayed typically were in the secondary and post-secondary areas or in administration.

As history progressed, women became nearly synonymous with teaching, especially the teaching of young children (Benton & Vogtle, 1997). Today we are at the exceptionally low level of male primary elementary teachers mentioned

earlier. This historical context is important in understanding the current status of men in teaching, especially in the primary grades. Besides history, there are a variety of reasons why men do not enter into the primary levels of the teaching profession. These include: social phobia and sanctions, the feminist movement, strict gender roles, working conditions, status, and masculine ideals (Farquhar, 1997; Allen, 1994; Allen, 1997; Johnson, 2008; Gilbert & Williams, 2008). Many of these reasons, such as status and working conditions are rooted in the history of education itself, others, such as the modern feminist movement, gender roles, and phobias are more modern phenomena. In the end, men do not teach, and if they do, they teach older children. The reasons for the lack of male teachers can be summed up with the idea of barriers, pressures, and perceptions.

Barriers

A variety of barriers exist which prevent men from entering the primary elementary teaching force. These barriers range from social stigmas to a man's need for a higher status job (Farquhar, 1997; Allen, 1994; Allen, 1997; Johnson, 2008; Gilbert & Williams, 2008). The first major barrier is the social phobia which exists about male primary elementary teachers being child molesters (Faquhar, 1997). Additionally, many men in pre-service teaching programs claim they were nervous about entering the primary teaching field because elementary teaching has high levels of touch (Montecinos & Nielson, 2004). Related to this, is the traditionally female role of the elementary teacher. This is summed up with the ideas of motherly, nurturing, and caring (Nielson, 2006). This creates situations where male teachers act less 'male' (Nielson, 2006). Another barrier centers on

the fact that schools are predominately a female workspace (Gilbert & Williams, 2008). Two final, and no less important, barriers to males entering the primary teaching field are wages and status (Johnson, 2008; Farquhar, 1997).

Pressures

Once males enter the primary elementary teaching ranks, they immediately begin to feel a variety of pressures unique to their experience. These pressures range in a variety of directions and can exert a great deal of confusion for the male teacher. One pressure centers on male teachers not being able to positively touch students. This common act is crucial and expected of elementary teachers because of the caring for students which touch implies (Gilbert & Williams, 2008). These same males experience another pressure, to be a father figure to all fatherless students. Finally, men experience the pressure of constantly being made to feel like they are a benefit for society, the profession, and all children (Gilbert & Williams, 2008; Sumsion, 2005) and if they do a poor job, then they will damage the name of all male teachers. These pressures can and do create situations of confusion, contradiction, and stress (Nielson, 2006).

Perceptions

Related to the pressures male teachers, specifically primary teachers, feel is how they are perceived. These perceptions range widely, from intensely positive to intensely negative. On the positive side, these teachers are viewed as essential role models for boys, a benefit to society and the teaching profession itself (Sumsion, 2005). On the negative end of the spectrum, the public views

male primary elementary teachers as gay, feminine, perverted, and potential child molesters (Gilbert & Williams, 2008; Farquhar, 1997; Cox, 2008).

Statement of the Problem

Parents, teachers, administrators, and children have perceptions of what teachers are and should be. In the case of primary teachers, these stakeholders almost exclusively have the perception of females who exhibit acts of caring, touch, and in general, act feminine (Gilbert & Williams, 2008; Nielson 2006). These perceptions of teachers are at the root of most of the issues previously discussed.

The barriers and pressures experienced by male primary elementary teachers are shaped by the perceptions held by stakeholders. These conflicting perceptions of male teachers as perverts, gay, effeminate, aggressive, distant, too touchy, role models, and fatherly, all lead to situations of stress and contradiction for males. This stress tends to keep them out of the primary teaching profession, or if they are teaching, they leave for administrative positions or upper grade level teaching assignments. To better understand why there are low numbers of male primary elementary teachers, one must study the perceptions of these teachers and how these perceptions lead to pressures and ultimately to changes in male primary elementary teacher's behavior and career choices.

Purpose of the study

Statistics clearly show a major disparity in the number of male primary elementary teachers versus females in the same category (Gilbert & Williams,

2008). The purpose of this study is to investigate the perceptions held by parents, children, teachers (both male and female), and administrators of male primary elementary teachers and how these perceptions lead to pressures which impact the behaviors and career choices of male primary elementary teachers. This study provides educational leaders with information which may assist: in parents, female teachers, and principals finding knowledge of effects their perceptions have on male primary elementary teachers, in use of this knowledge to foster a re-acculturation of the school, and in reduction of stresses of the male primary elementary teachers.

Research Questions

In the light of the research setting, problem and purpose, the main research question was: How do perceptions of and pressures on male primary elementary teachers by all stakeholders affect the behavior and career choices of those teachers?

This question was informed by the following sub-questions:

- 1) What are the perceptions of parents, children, teachers, and administrators of male primary elementary teachers?
- 2) What gender specific pressures, if any, are exerted on male primary elementary teachers as a result of perceptions?
- 3) Have changes in behavior of male primary elementary teachers occurred as a result of these perceptions and pressures and if so, why?

- 4) Have changes in career choice of male primary elementary teachers occurred as a result of these perceptions and pressures and if so, why?
- 5) How do male primary elementary teachers perceive themselves in their teaching role?

Delimitations of the Study

Researcher bias is always a danger in research. Questions developed for interviews and writing prompts are based on the inherent assumptions of the researcher. While this researcher attempted to be objective, human involvement, both the researcher and subjects, guarantee biases and desires. It is the job of the researcher to be open regarding biases to help with the trustworthiness of the study. Data was studied with careful regard to the role of the researcher. The researcher made every effort to let the data speak and only offer insight into what it is saying, rather than shaping what data is allowed to speak. This enhanced the validity of the study

Ontologically, the researcher wanted to remain objective. Throughout the research process, the researcher sought to remain as objective as possible. This is difficult in a qualitative methods approach, which, by its very nature, has subjective elements. In the case of interviews, the researcher was the data collection instrument. All data was collected and interpreted by him. The choosing of what to ask, in and of itself, is a subjective choice of the researcher. To assist in maintaining objectivity, the researcher should not hide his assumptions and theoretical orientations (Merriam, 1998).

The researcher views reality as having absolutes, which can be understood through careful observation of phenomena, such as human behaviors and attitudes. The researcher also believes human behavior is shaped around these absolutes. Understanding of the absolutes is never complete, but is enhanced with careful considerations of behaviors. It is only through observations of behaviors and attitudes that absolutes can be understood. Incomplete observations of the world around us offer incomplete understandings of absolutes. An understanding of the perceptions regarding male primary elementary teachers helped the researcher better understand what pressures may result, and how these perceptions and pressures shape behavior. Understanding these phenomena allowed the researcher to maintain his positivist frame of reference. He, as Sleeter (2000-2001) wrote, believes knowledge and reality exist and can be understood.

In research, whether qualitative or quantitative, bias exists. Every researcher brings preconceived notions and unique experiences to a study. It is important to reflect upon these biases prior to and during the study (Creswell, 2003). This researcher sought to better understand how perceptions of male primary elementary teachers impact the pressures these teachers experience and how that shapes their experiences in education.

As a male educator, the researcher is particularly aware of the general gender imbalance in American K-12 education. As one of the few males in the school building, he has experienced pressures to behave in expected ways. The researcher readily admits he would like to see more male teachers enter the

primary education work force. He sees this gender balancing as a positive for students and the educational environment in general.

Consequently, the researcher is studying the phenomena of gender imbalance to better inform his own approach to staffing and human resources. He desires to hire the most qualified people for the job and hopes the knowledge gained from this study can help inform him as he seeks teachers for positions. He also hopes it will help him better manage both male and female teachers currently under his direction. With his background acknowledged, the researcher seeks to bring neutrality to his research. He will also acknowledge the biases so the reader will be aware.

The participants in a qualitative study are also sources of bias. Each person interviewed brought unique experiences and beliefs which shaped the answers to the interview questions. A carefully constructed protocol system for speaking with the individuals helped control for some of the bias, but at the same time, since the researcher was interested in perceptions, the participant's bias was informative to the research questions.

Assumptions

There is a strong ontological assumption that qualitative research is subjective in nature for the reasons discussed earlier. Additionally, the researcher was the primary method of data collection. Epistemologically, unlike quantitative research, where data is sifted through programs and mathematical formula, qualitative data is collected and interpreted by the researcher alone. The researcher recognized findings were subjective in nature because the design and

findings of these studies are subjective. The researcher anticipated the findings would add to the understanding of the phenomenon of the gender imbalance in primary elementary schools. He understood his findings could not be generalized to the larger school population, but he saw it as helping to focus on the truth, which he believed to exist, but can only be seen through more careful observation. Additionally, he understood his study could be replicated, but is likely to produce varying results.

Definitions of Terms

Primary Elementary Teachers- For the purposes of this study this designation will be used to identify teachers who teach Kindergarten through third grade.

Instrumentation and Methodology

The researcher conducted a basic qualitative study (Merriam, 1998) to better understand the phenomenon of the gender imbalance in the teaching ranks of primary elementary teachers. This study utilized interviews of teachers, both male and female, parents, and administrators. The researcher attempted to interview five subjects in each of the previously mentioned categories.

Additionally, the researcher collected and analyzed a writing sample from a primary student on positive qualities of teachers. The order of interviews was principals, parents, and teachers first, followed by the writing sample from students. Subjects for the interviews and writing sample were found using a convenience sampling of the researcher's local area schools. This sampling was dependent on principal support and individual's willingness to participate. It was not necessary for subjects to be from the same school, but for convenience it

was beneficial. The student was selected purely through principal, teacher, and parent support and student willingness to participate. The researcher found an online transcription service (www.Babbletype.com) to transcribe and record data which was then analyzed for common themes. These themes were interpreted in light of an extensive literature review. Upon reflection, the researcher wrote the results to the study.

Qualitative research is particularly helpful in finding answers to the types of research questions the researcher is posing. While a quantitative study could answer the questions, it would not answer them to the depth and richness (Merriam, 1998) for which the researcher was interested. Qualitative research studies are highly structured and provide methods for collecting information and coding that same information. This structure allowed for the researcher to maintain an element of objectivity. At the same time, qualitative research recognizes the study needs to go where the data takes it. This emergent quality requires qualitative studies to maintain flexibility to make adjustments.

This study was of a basic qualitative study design (Merriam, 1998). This study was not intended to build theory or understanding of a single cultural unit. Instead, this study crossed into a variety of systems. This study looked for themes in the data from which answers to research questions could be found. Merriam (1998) also wrote all qualitative studies are based on phenomenology. Sleeter (2000-2001) stated that phenomenology is interested in the identification and description of the essence of phenomena. Additionally, this study was interested in “experience and interpretation” (Merriam, 1998, pg. 15). This meant

this researcher desired to learn of the experiences of those involved in education and how they are impacted by the perceptions and pressures associated with male primary elementary teachers.

Anticipated Outcomes

The anticipated outcomes of this study emerged from the results of the interview interpretations and the document analysis of a student writing sample. These themes provided a better understanding of the perceptions and pressures experienced by male primary elementary teachers. Additionally, an understanding of the experiences and choices made by male primary elementary teachers in light of these perceptions and pressures was found. Themes emerged during data analysis. These themes were consistent with the literature, but the researcher allowed the themes to develop naturally as the study progressed. The researcher did not anticipate theory to develop, but did expect for information which could help male teachers make more informed career decisions to emerge. Also, the researcher assumed the findings could be utilized by supervisors to better highlight the impact their perceptions and expectations are having on male primary elementary teachers.

Subsequent Chapters

This paper follows a five chapter format. Chapter one serves as an introduction with elements of a literature review, methodology, and description of the study's purpose and guiding questions. An exhaustive review of literature surrounding the phenomenon of the perceptions of male primary elementary teachers is contained in chapter two. Chapter three highlights the methodology of

the actual study and outlines what and how data was collected and analyzed. A complete presentation of the data analysis is contained in chapter four. Finally, chapter five includes a summary, the study's findings and conclusions, and recommendations for future study.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Currently in the United States there is no career like teaching where gender disparity exists; less than 4% of primary elementary (kindergarten through third grade) teachers are men (Gilbert & Williams, 2008). Teaching in general, and especially the primary grades, has been dominated by women. Much of this phenomenon can be traced back to Horace Mann in 1853 when he stated, "That woman should be the educator of children I believe to be as much a requirement of nature as that she should be the mother of children" (cited in Hill, 1996, p.30). The product of this attitude has shaped the teaching world up to the present, and does not appear to be changing. In the last several years, there has been some concern voiced over this phenomenon. Benton and Vogtle (1997) state many researchers argue the "transformation of the school teacher role from male to female was so complete that teaching was irrevocably feminized (p. 37). In some cases the concerns have led to the creation of organizations like MenTeach and courses in colleges, as at the University of Missouri and Indiana University. Students and professors in these courses have started to study this issue and are looking at ways to increase the numbers of men going into the field of primary education.

The literature focuses on a variety of issues related to male primary elementary teachers. It can be divided into three broad categories. First, the literature speaks of the perceptions of male primary elementary teachers. Second, it discusses the pressures placed on these teachers. Finally, it highlights

the variety of ways male primary elementary teachers respond to the perceptions and pressures. These three broad categories will be discussed in this review of literature.

This literature review provided information to answer the following research question and its sub questions. How do perceptions of and pressures on male primary elementary teachers by all stakeholders affect their behavior and career choices of those teachers?

This question was informed by the following sub-questions:

- 1) What are the perceptions of parents, children, teachers, and administrators of male primary elementary teachers?
- 2) What gender specific pressures, if any, are exerted on male primary elementary teachers as a result of perceptions?
- 3) Have changes in behavior of male primary elementary teachers occurred as a result of these perceptions and pressures and if so, why?
- 4) Have changes in career choice of male primary elementary teachers occurred as a result of these perceptions and pressures and if so, why?
- 5) How do male primary elementary teachers perceive themselves in their teaching role?

Perceptions

Parents, teachers, students, administrators, and the public at large have preconceived notions of what primary elementary teachers are and should be.

These stakeholders almost exclusively have the perception of females who exhibit acts of caring, touch, and, generally, act motherly (Gilbert & Williams, 2008; Nielson, 2006). Johnson (2008) points out societal norms regard teaching as caring, nurturing, and domestic, which are all seen as non-masculine. Perceptions and expectations of male primary elementary teachers lead to a variety of pressures experienced by these teachers and ultimately to behavioral and career changes.

The literature discusses a generalized perception of what primary elementary teachers should be. A common trait throughout the literature is primary elementary teachers must demonstrate an attitude of caring and this is often expressed through touch (Gilbert & Williams, 2008). They go on to argue there is a widespread belief that early childhood education is about caring and caring is about women's work. Hansen and Mulholland (2005) develop this further by stating the link between the western definitions of masculinity and caring is extremely difficult. Couple this with the common belief among men that teaching is a finger painting degree (Morgan, 2002) adds to the more female oriented perception of teaching. Finally, historically, women have been seen and expected to be the role models of moral behavior and more emotionally connected with youth (Wiest, 2003). All of these perceptions and attitudes have created a general mindset of primary teachers as being females who care and nurture, much like mothers. To round out the perception of teaching, the research commonly points (Johnson, 2008; Benton & Vogtle, 1997; Steel, 1998) to men's view that teachers are poorly paid, have little prestige, and a high level of

physical contact with children and thus women are more suited for the profession.

Perceptions of male primary elementary teachers range widely, from intensely positive to intensely negative. On the positive side, these teachers are viewed as essential role models for boys and a benefit to society and the teaching profession itself (Sumsion, 2005). There is also the perception of male primary elementary teachers having a hiring advantage (Allen, 1997; Wiest et al, 2003). On the negative end of the spectrum, the public views male primary elementary teachers as gay, feminine, perverted, and potential child molesters (Gilbert & Williams, 2008; Farquhar, 1997; Cox, 2008). Even within the research, the perception of male teachers is full of contradictions, a United Kingdom Study (2007) found boys felt male primary elementary teachers set good examples, were more understanding, offered good advice, improved behavior, increased school enjoyment, and helped in the overall confidence of the male students. On the flip side, the Maine Boys Network Report (2008) found, while boys express a desire for male primary elementary teachers, more often than not, boys talked negatively about the male teachers they have or have had.

Negative Perceptions

Male primary elementary teachers deal with a variety of negative perceptions. These perceptions are based on stereotypes, fear, and isolated incidents. One example was researched by Faquhar (1997). Faquhar studied the phenomenon of low levels of male primary elementary teachers in New Zealand. She pointed out this is a worldwide problem. In New Zealand, a major reason for

a lack of males in the primary level exists because of a few widely reported cases of child molestation by male caregivers. Rates of males participating in teacher programs plummeted. In the end, it was found in the Faquhar's (1997) New Zealand example, the worry over male teachers being molesters was totally baseless, but because of widespread media coverage, the damage was done. Faquhar implies this same type of over coverage of isolated incidents occurs throughout the world and has done lasting damage to the male elementary teacher.

Related to this negative view of male primary elementary teachers is the attitude that these men must be perverts to choose to work with small children (Montecinos & Nielson, 2004). Wiest (2003) found parents have an initial leeriness of men who choose to work with small children. An article in Newsweek (Scelfo, 2007) told the story of one male primary elementary teacher and how one mother of a child in his class insisted the child be moved simply because she assumed the teacher must be gay and perverted to work with small children. This anecdotal story appears to be somewhat common throughout the research literature and popular press (Allan, 1994; Wiest, 2003; Nielson, 2006; Faquhar, 1997).

Secondly, male students in teacher education programs tend to view males in primary positions as acting less 'male' (Nielson, 2006; Montecinos & Nielson, 2004; Nielson, 2006). There is a perception among male teacher candidates that, to teach in the primary grades, one must be more feminine. This pressure to act 'female' is a response to the predominantly perceived female

nature of the workplace. Martino (2008) wrote this perception has been around for many years and in the nineteenth century male primary elementary teachers were routinely referred to as effeminate men. Throughout a male's training for teaching, he is bombarded with images and ideas of the teaching world and this world is almost exclusively filled with women (Gilbert & Williams, 2008). The images in teacher textbooks were found to be only ten percent male and only ten percent of those showed males touching children (Gilbert & Williams). Many anecdotal accounts of male primary elementary teachers relate stories of being met with laughter and skepticism from their peers, families, and strangers when they state their job as a primary elementary teacher (Hedger, 2008). This negative perception of male primary elementary teachers being seen as less male also leads many parents to question their competence as a teacher (Scelfo, 2007; Nielson, 2006).

Third, and linked in the public's mind to the feminized nature of the workplace, is the feeling male primary elementary teachers must be homosexual. Additionally, the public routinely uses words like 'gay' and 'pervert' almost interchangeably when speaking of male primary elementary teachers. A recent Newsweek article (Romano & Dokoupil, 2010) focused on the drifting perceptions of masculinity in the world today. It speaks of men still being fearful of 'women's work' and choosing unemployment rather than jobs traditionally filled by women; the reasons given range from being labeled as gay, unmanly, or status. The previously told story by Wiest (2003) is a haunting reminder of the power of parent fears and perceptions. Wiest also related another story where an early

childhood teacher was accused of molesting a child. It later turned out the child was actually being molested by a family member, but the mother feared speaking out and thought everyone would believe the charge against the teacher. Things like this leads to Allen's (1994) and Nielson's (2006) arguments that males fear primary grades and do everything to stay away from them and if they are in them to leave them as soon as possible.

Positive Perceptions

A heavily discussed positive perception is the idea that male primary elementary teachers are excellent role models. Throughout the research, male teachers are routinely described by parents, fellow teachers, and administrators as role models for fatherless children, those needing strong discipline, those needing to be taught what it means to be a man, and a whole host of societal problems needing solutions (Montecinos & Nielson, 2004; Nielson, 2006; Johnson, 2008; Sumsion, 2005; Allan, 1994; Farquhar, 1997; Cox, 2008; Hansen & Mulholland, 2005). "Sadly, the degree to which men avoid elementary school teaching may be the simplest and most direct indicator of what boys think of school" (Mancus, 1992 as related in Wiest, 2003). This fearsome statement leads to the fear that the fewness of male primary elementary teachers is a threat to the democracy (Johnson, 2008). This fear hinges on the idea that because we espouse equality and diversity, schools, which is where children are cultured in democratic values, should reflect these beliefs. It is not just the research literature speaking of the role modeling nature of male primary elementary teachers; the popular media spends a tremendous amount of time offering

stories and anecdotes on the need for more men in teaching (Chalkboard **no author listed**, 2007; Cox, 2008; Rogers, 2008; Scelfo, 2007; University of Missouri college of Education **no author listed**, 2007; Romano & Dokoupil, 2010). Martino (2008) found and wrote about the widely held popular belief of the feminization of schools and boys and how male primary elementary teachers can combat this trend.

One interesting subset of the larger idea regarding the positive perceptions of male teachers is what students themselves think of them. Carrington, et al (2007) conducted a large study of primary elementary students and ideas these kids have about their teachers. There were some differences; girls tended to positively view teachers who they described as nice, kind, generous, helpful, were relationship oriented, and had a pretty appearance. Boys on the other hand, liked teachers who provided challenging work, had knowledge and intelligence, who had an air of authority, and were fun and funny. Skelton (2007) further studied this issue and found there is an inherent assumption in the call for more male teachers. She found people believed male teachers would teach differently and students would respond better to teachers of their same gender. What was found between these two studies (Carrington, et al., 2007; Skelton, 2007) was students largely view teachers the same way irrespective of their gender or the teacher's gender. These findings are by no means universal. As will be seen in the next paragraph, there are other researchers who are saying gender matters.

Another perception is the societal good a male primary elementary teacher can bring to a school, community, and the teaching profession (Sumison, 2005). Administrators and parents speak often of how, if they had more male teachers, there would be less behavioral problems. School aged boys seem to agree with this value of male teachers, they routinely say male teachers set good examples (Training and Development Agency for Schools News Release, 2007). A study of boys attitudes in Maine found they want more male teachers (Maine Boys Network Report, 2008) Benton and Vogtle (1997) found more male primary elementary teachers leads to more positive views of schools by boys. They also argue male primary elementary teachers create a curricular and methods balance in schools. Another thought regards the feeling female teachers are over feminizing boys and male primary elementary teachers, by their very presence in schools, can stop this and bring balance to a child's upbringing (Montecinos & Nielson, 2004; Johnson, 2008). This is possible, so goes the logic, because male primary elementary teachers can identify with boys and their needs (Sumsion, 2005). Mancus (1992) stated male teachers have more influence on boys' view of teaching than females. An inquiry (Morgan, 2002) into male teaching numbers in Australia found a 'male' perspective in the classroom is good for kids. Recommendations were made and implemented by the Australian Ministry of Education based on this finding.

Ultimately, perceptions of male primary elementary teachers are full of contradictions (Nielson, 2006) as males are routinely asked to act less stereotypically male for fear they might not be caring enough for teaching young

children, while at the same time they are asked to act more male for fear of their sexual orientation towards children and the perceived of more male role models for children. These perceptions lead to the next area of study in the literature, pressures.

Pressures

Once males have entered the primary elementary teaching ranks, they immediately begin to feel a variety of pressures unique to their experience. These pressures can range from not being able to positively touch students, to being father figures to boys, and finally to being some sort of benefit for society, the profession, and all children (Gilbert & Williams, 2008; Sumsion, 2005). These pressures can and do create situations of confusion, contradiction, and stress (Nielson, 2006). The literature (Gilbert & Williams, 2008; Montecinos & Nielson, 2004) spends a great deal of time speaking to what pressures are placed on males as a result of the perceptions of them. These two areas, perceptions and pressures, are closely linked and difficult to neatly separate. Generally speaking, if there is a perception, there is a corresponding pressure.

One major area of pressure for primary male elementary teachers surrounds the issue of touch (Gilbert & Williams, 2008). They conducted a study looking into the issue of touch in an elementary school setting. They argued a teacher being allowed to touch students is crucial to their job as a primary educator. Furthermore, they conducted research to show males are pressured to not touch students. The male teachers had constant fear they would be labeled

as perverts or molesters if they were seen hugging or conducting comforting touch.

Touch is a major part everyday job of primary teachers. Students routinely need hugs, reassuring pats on the shoulder, and in some cases assistance with buttoning pants, shirts, and etcetera. Many men, in light of the perception of them as being molesters, perverts, or gay, are nervous. Pre-service males in teaching programs point out they were nervous about entering the primary teaching field because of this reality. The texts utilized to teach teachers contain very little in the way of images depicting males touching students in a positive manner (Gilbert & Williams, 2008). These men feel a need to not touch students, whereas their female counterparts have no problems giving a child a hug (Montecinos & Nielson, 2004). King (1998) stated flatly, male primary elementary teachers should not place themselves alone with children.

The popular media tells stories of men being pressured to put themselves in 'safe' situations when touching kids. A particularly powerful example was related by Scelfo (2007). She told the story of a male primary elementary teacher who, as a part of the job, must assist students in buttoning pants after restroom breaks. This teacher makes a point of only doing this in the hallway in plain view of other adults. It has gone so far in some districts that official policies have been adopted forbidding teachers from touching students, however, female teachers' report this policy is only applied to male teachers (Sargent, 2001).

A second area of pressure is in the conflicting situation male teachers find themselves. Many male primary elementary teachers report being met with

laughter and skepticism, especially from their families, when they announced their intention to teach (Hedger, 2008). These teachers routinely are asked to act more female, while acting like men (Nielson, 2006; Allen, 1994; Allen, 1997). In one study, Nielson, (2006), found when males act like males they are seen by teachers as incompetent. It was also found when males act more like their female counterparts they are seen as gay. This conflicting situation is further complicated by the power structure which is controlled and dominated by the female teacher (Nielson, 2006). “Men elementary teachers find themselves gender anomalies, vulnerable, and needing to negotiate a career course between alliances with principals, based on shared gender, or alliance with women colleagues, based on shared position, experiences, and desire for respect and autonomy”(p. 7). These teachers find themselves constantly torn between the male principal and the female fellow teacher. This dynamic is changing yet again as the numbers of female administrators rise in primary elementary schools. “Men elementary teachers work within a contradictory social situation, where contradiction arises from gender position in bureaucratic hierarchy and the power of relative proportions” (Allan, 1994, p. 5).

A final, and most heavily discussed pressure, is the idea male primary elementary teachers should be role models. The research speaks to the changes in parenting issues and the growth of single parent homes. The public and schools themselves constantly make the argument kids in schools need a male role model because they lack it at home. This argument has gained a great deal of momentum in non-research arenas (Cox, 2008), while losing credence in the

research world (Sumsion, 2005). Throughout the research, male teachers are routinely described by parents, fellow teachers, and administrators as role models for fatherless children, those needing strong discipline, those needing to be taught what it means to be a man, and a whole host of societal problems needing solutions (Montecinos & Nielson, 2004; Nielson, 2006; Johnson, 2008; Sumsion, 2005; Allan, 1994; Farquhar, 1997; Cox, 2008). Johnson (2008) stated female gains in the job market have feminized schools and boys have suffered due to the lack of male role models. Allen (1994) goes on to state that while role modeling is important, school officials feel a need to only have a few males on staff to fulfill this perceived requirement. Hansen and Mulholland (2005) go one step further and say male primary elementary teachers provide a much needed balance to schools and they must show characteristics of strength, bravery, and protection. This is a heavy weight on the shoulders of men in teaching and as will be seen in the next section, leads many males to leave teaching or to change who they are.

Males are also pressured to be role models for future teachers. “Sadly, the degree to which men avoid elementary school teaching may be the simplest and most direct indicator of what boys think of school” (Mancus, 1992 as related in Wiest, 2003, p. 64). The Australian inquiry into the numbers of male teachers (Morgan, 2002) concluded if students view teaching as a female role then the decline in male primary elementary teachers will continue.

Researchers have begun to argue male primary elementary teachers should not be pressured to be male role models; rather, they should be hired

strictly to provide a multi-cultural example in the school (Montecinos & Nielson, 2004). These same researchers also argue male teachers should be hired to help break down gender stereotypes (Montecinos & Nielson, 2004; Johnson, 2008; Sumsion, 2005; Allen, 1994). These researchers feel a male in a primary teaching role will act, if not pressured to act as a traditional male, in ways which are totally in contrast to stereotypical gender roles.

Changes in Behaviors and/or Career Choice

Male primary elementary teachers have a variety of perceptions place on them of what and who they are and these lead to a variety of pressures being applied. Men make choices on how they will respond to these perceptions and pressures. These choices come in a variety of ways. They can choose to be more 'manly' or act more 'feminine' (Nielson, 2006; Allen, 1994; Allen, 1997). They can embrace the idea of a role model or they can buckle under responsibility. Many men never choose to enter the ranks of primary teaching or to move quickly into administrative capacities or higher grade levels (Allen, 1994).

The literature shows a variety of reasons why men do not enter into the primary levels of the teaching profession. These include: historical traditions, social phobia and sanctions, the feminist movement, strict gender roles, working conditions, and masculine ideals (Farquhar, 1997; Allen, 1994; Allen, 1997; Johnson, 2008; Gilbert & Williams, 2008). No less important, barriers to males entering the primary teaching field are wages and status (Johnson, 2008; Farquhar, 1997). Traditionally, teaching small children has not carried with it the

status or pay many primary wage earning fathers need. Statistics show men are more likely to try other careers before teaching, even if they thought of teaching first (Benton & Vogtle, 1997). In addition, males who do teach in the primary levels move into the administrative levels fairly quickly (Allen, 1994). Allen goes on to state traditionally, women teach and men manage and this power structure and limited opportunities for movement into administration may be one of the reasons men stay away from teaching.

Once males make the choice to enter the profession, they immediately have to respond to the pressures placed on them. One researcher found men have generally positive job satisfaction, but not as high as their female counterparts (Klecker & Loadman; 1999). Wiest (2003) compiled many findings of research and produced this list of common characteristics of male primary elementary teachers. She found these teachers came from a prior career, they chose teaching later in life than women for personal reasons, they hold a desire for a job which has deeper satisfaction, and they want the chance to make a lasting impact. She also found these men generally have doubts regarding their abilities, they desire to move into administration, and they lack any kind of prior child-care experiences.

These characteristics of male teachers are prevalent around the world. A government study in Australia (Morgan, 2002) found male primary elementary teachers have a strong sense of isolation in the predominantly female workplace. Alone, these men become the sole example of 'maleness' to students in the school. Allen (1994) found because of this anomalous nature of the male primary

elementary teacher, they tend to form gender alliances with the male principal in order to combat this isolation. This response to the isolation is being made more difficult by the increasingly larger numbers of female administrators. Nielson (2006) pointed out many male primary elementary teachers begin to act more like 'females'. Additionally, Allen (1997) stated "men must adapt to women's ways of communicating in order to get along in the workplace" (p. 17).

Becoming more 'female' is in stark contrast to what Montecinos and Nielson (2004) stated about how men respond to the pressures and perceptions placed on them. They found male primary elementary teachers typically back up traditional gender roles. There is a lot of discord among researchers as to whether males should back up these gender roles. As Martino (2008) succinctly put it, male primary elementary teachers are in a conflicting situation. They are pressured to act more 'male' for issues such as role modeling, but at the same time, much of the job of the elementary teacher falls under the category of 'female'. Sumison (2005) put it this way "while male early childhood educators flout social expectations about gender in their choices of occupation, they may nevertheless frequently, if inadvertently, act in gender stereotyped ways" (p. 113).

In many areas men make choices to behave differently because of the perceptions and pressures placed on them. Two main areas of changes in behavior surround the issues of role modeling and touch. All through college men are receiving pressure to breakdown gender stereotypes. At the University of Missouri, an entire student program (Mizzou's Men for Excellence in Elementary

Teaching) has been established to encourage men to enter the ranks of teaching with the goal of breaking down the hyper-male stereotype (Boys Can Cry, 2007). As seen in the earlier sections of this literature review, schools and parents have a very different perception of what male teachers should provide to students, namely an example of what it means to be a man. Male primary elementary teachers must make the choice to break down stereotypes or to build them up. Allen (1994) found male primary elementary teachers tend to exaggerate certain aspects of maleness, while suppressing others. Hansen (2005) likewise found male teachers choosing paths of balance. Over time, it is clear, male primary elementary teachers act more 'female' (Nielson, 2006). Sargent (2001) quoted one male primary elementary teacher after a question was posed regarding being a role model, "When I started out in teaching, I prided myself on the fact I was going to be a role model for kids. Now it's my greatest nightmare. It's an albatross around my neck" (p.117).

Another area and probably, the most difficult for male primary elementary teacher, is the issue of touch. Because of the perceptions of molesters and pedophiles surrounding male primary elementary teachers and the pressure not to touch students, men in the classroom tend to keep kids at an arm's length (Hansen, 2005). Many districts have established policies forbidding any kind of touch between teacher and student (Sargent, 2001). It has been found these anti-touch policies are selectively applied to men only (2001). Men in Sargent's (2001) study stated they changed how they taught and interacted with the students as a result of pressures, perceptions, and policies. Hansen (2005)

talked of many male teachers going to the extreme of never being alone with children. One article from a non-research magazine told the stories of men who carried out basic functions of the elementary teacher's job, such as assisting children with buttoning pants, doing so only in hallways in full view of others or of passing this task to female teachers around them (Scelfo, 2007).

In the end, men are faced with perceptions and pressures surrounding the job of teaching, almost from the moment they enter schools as students. Mancus (1992) stated "sadly, the degree to which men avoid elementary school teaching may be the simplest and most direct indicator of what boys think of school" (p. 127). As students begin choosing careers the boys tend to think of teaching as a woman's job. This is backed up by parental and societal sentiment. Ultimately, very few men think about teaching as a career and of those, few actually enter the field. As shown earlier, the male teacher is constantly being pushed to play the role of the male ambassador and role model to students, while at the same time being nurturing and loving like the rest of the female teachers. If they demonstrate caring, they then suffer from the perception of being gay or, worse yet, they must be pedophiles. Many men cannot handle this tremendous pressure and avoid primary elementary classrooms altogether. Instead, they gravitate towards higher grade levels. Once a male enters the primary ranks they tend to move out quickly in pursuit of administrative jobs or higher grade levels more convenient to after school activities like coaching.

This literature review was designed to give background and context to the phenomenon of the low numbers of male primary elementary teachers. It sought

to inform the reader of the perceptions faced by male primary elementary teachers, the pressures placed on them, and ultimately how they respond to those perceptions and pressures. This was not an exhaustive review of the literature, but it encapsulated the many sides to this growing field of study. This literature review informed the researcher in formulating the research problem and questions, the interview protocols, as described in the next chapter, and guided the process of interpreting the resulting data.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

Introduction

In this chapter, the problem, purpose, research questions, study overview, research methods and design, instrumentation, reliability, validity, and the method of data collection and analysis are presented.

Statement of the Problem

Parents, teachers, administrators, and children have perceptions of what teachers are, and what they should be. In the case of primary teachers, these stakeholders almost exclusively have the perception of females who exhibit acts of caring, touch, and in general, act feminine (Gilbert & Williams, 2008; Nielson 2006).

One thing which is clear is the barriers and pressures experienced by male elementary teachers are shaped by the perceptions held by stakeholders. These conflicting perceptions of male teachers as perverts, gay, effeminate, aggressive, distant, too touchy, role models, and fatherly, all lead to situations of stress and contradiction for males. This potential stress tends to keep them out of the primary teaching profession, or if they are teaching, they leave for administrative positions or upper grade level teaching assignments. To better understand why there are low numbers of male primary elementary teachers, one must study the perceptions of these teachers and how these perceptions lead to pressures and ultimately to changes in male primary elementary teacher's behavior and career choices

Purpose of the study

Statistics clearly show a major disparity in the numbers of male primary elementary teachers versus females in the same category (Gilbert & Williams, 2008). The purpose of this study was to investigate the perceptions held by parents, children, teachers (both male and female), and administrators of male primary elementary teachers and how those perceptions lead to pressures which impact the behaviors and career choices of male primary elementary teachers. This study provided educational leaders with information which may assist: in parents, teachers, and principals finding knowledge of effects their perceptions have on male primary elementary teachers, in use of this knowledge to foster a re-acculturation of the school, and in reduction of stresses of the male primary elementary teachers.

Research Questions

In the light of the research setting, problem and purpose, the main research question was: How do perceptions of and pressures on male primary elementary teachers by all stakeholders affect their behavior and career choices of those teachers.

This question was informed by the following sub-questions:

- 1) What are the perceptions of parents, children, teachers, and administrators of male primary elementary teachers?
- 2) What gender specific pressures, if any, are exerted on male primary elementary teachers as a result of perceptions?

- 3) Have changes in behavior of male primary elementary teachers occurred as a result of these perceptions and pressures and if so, why?
- 4) Have changes in career choice of male primary elementary teachers occurred as a result of these perceptions and pressures and if so, why?
- 5) How do male primary elementary teachers perceive themselves in their teaching role?

Sample/Subjects

This qualitative study was conducted by interviewing a variety of stakeholders in primary school. First and foremost, male primary elementary teachers were interviewed. The researcher interviewed five of the individuals. He interviewed four primary teachers and one upper elementary teacher. Additionally, female primary elementary teachers and parents of primary students were interviewed. The researcher interviewed five subjects in each category except the female teacher, where seven individuals were interviewed, two of which were upper elementary teachers. The researcher relied on convenience sampling and asked for help from principals to find parents willing to be interviewed. The researcher also interviewed principals (both male and female) of primary grade buildings. Finally, the researcher sought information from primary elementary students. Again, the researcher relied on principals to find students to participate in the research, in the end, only one student responded. The researcher looked for participants in school settings in an Eastern Missouri

County. While somewhat suburban, this county still maintains characteristics of much of the more rural areas of Missouri, such as small towns, a lack of incorporated areas, and a high level of agriculture.

Instrumentation

As previously stated, the researcher relied on interviews for the bulk of the data. The interviews were conducted with male and female primary elementary teachers, parents of primary students, and primary principals. These interviews sought to find answers to the research questions. These interviews were based on strict interview protocols (Appendices A-D) developed by the researcher. The researcher utilized a document analysis of writing samples (Appendix E) of primary elementary students when asked to write about what makes a good primary elementary teacher.

The researcher submitted his research proposal to the University Institutional Review Board (IRB) where it was reviewed and he was approved to conduct research. He was especially aware of the importance of this part of the process in the light of the fact children are part of the study.

Following approval of the IRB, the researcher informed superintendents of his intention to conduct research utilizing their teachers and principals. This contact took place through a formal letter (Appendix F). The researcher contacted the selected primary schools in an Eastern Missouri County. This contact was by a formal letter to the principals of those schools (Appendix G). This letter detailed the research project and commitment necessary from the principal. This letter also asked for permission to contact teachers and parents.

The letter asked for permission to have students, with parent permission, respond to a writing prompt (Appendix E) in which they will describe what makes a good teacher. The researcher failed to make contact with a few principals and followed up the letter with a phone contact asking if the principal is interested and if there are any male primary elementary teachers at the school. Informed consent forms (Appendix M) were sent to the principal with the letter (Appendix G). The researcher understood the support of the principal was crucial to the process of obtaining support from the teachers, just as support from the teachers is important to obtaining parental participation.

The researcher utilized the principals to help set up interviews with the teachers. He provided a formal letter of contact and informed consent forms to the female teacher (Appendices H & L) and the male teachers (Appendices I & L) at the school. The researcher relied on the principal to set up interviews with parents. The researcher provided each parent with a formal letter of contact (Appendix J) and an informed consent form (Appendix N). Finally, the researcher once again utilized the assistance of the principal to gain writing samples from students. Formal letters of contact (Appendix K) were sent to parents asking for permission to have their child participate in a writing sample. Parents were also provided an informed consent form (Appendix P), a permission letter to the child (Appendix O), and the writing prompt (Appendix E). Parents and students were asked to return the prompt and forms to the school, where it was returned to the researcher.

Once all interviews were conducted and transcribed verbatim by an online transcription company, www.Babbletype.com. The transcripts were analyzed for themes. The researcher then looked to see how the themes interact with the literature and the research questions.

When conducting the interviews it was important for the researcher to be face to face with the subject. To make subjects feel more comfortable the researcher utilized a strict interview protocol (Appendices A-D). Occasionally it was necessary to stray from the protocol when it was necessary for clarification or an important point needed to be explored. Additionally, the researcher assigned a pseudonym to all subjects to protect their identity. Also, the specific schools each subject was affiliated with were changed to protect their anonymity. In all cases, interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed. These transcriptions and copies of the finished study were provided to all participants. This member checking, to be discussed later, is an important step in assuring the trustworthiness of the study.

Assuring Trustworthiness

Qualitative research is commonly criticized as being too subjective and unreliable. Lincoln & Guba (1985) argue this critique is baseless as long as a researcher spends time assuring the trustworthiness of the study. This can happen when the researcher takes the time to establish credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Each of these adds to the overall trustworthiness of the study. To increase a study's trustworthiness, the researcher utilized triangulation, member-checking, rich-thick descriptions,

clarification of researcher bias, presentation of discrepant information, peer debriefing, and the audit trail (Creswell, 2003; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Triangulation

Triangulation is based on the idea that multiple methods to locate data will be utilized. These different data streams can then be compared for similar themes. The thought, according to Lincoln & Guba (1985), is the credibility of the study will be increased if similar data and findings are produced from different methods. In this study, the researcher utilized interviewing and an analysis of student work. He sought to find similar themes from different methods. Additionally, the researcher conducted interviews with a variety of stakeholders. The researcher saw it was important to the establishment of credible findings that no one group's thoughts dominate the findings. Instead this study highlighted information elicited from parents, teachers, administrators, and students. Finally, the researcher compared his findings to the current literature. All of these attempts at triangulation demonstrated the study has credibility.

Member-Checking

The researcher demonstrated credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) by utilizing member-checking. Member-checking occurred when the researcher provided transcripts, themes, and findings to the participants of the study. They then had the opportunity to determine if what the researcher recorded or found matched with their intentions. If, at this point, a participant had wanted to correct something, the researcher would have provided the forum for this to be accomplished. This served two purposes. First, it allowed the researcher to make

the participants feel more comfortable prior to participating in the study. Second, and most importantly, it contributed to the credibility of the study. In this particular research study, the researcher provided the transcripts of all interviews along with the initial findings and gave the participants a chance to comment. Once the study was completed, the researcher will also provide the participants with a copy of the study.

Rich-Thick Descriptions

The researcher sought to provide readers with a thorough picture of the setting and participants of the study. This description as detailed by Creswell (2003) and Lincoln & Guba (1985) must allow a future researcher to be able to read the study and determine whether it is transferable to their research. This can only be accomplished by the vivid description, anything less would make any possibility of transfer impossible. This does not guarantee transferability is going to occur, or whether it should occur, but it will keep the doors open. Additionally a thorough description of the study ensures the reader understands every facet of the presented findings. This understanding is what ultimately will lead to increased trustworthiness.

Clarification of Researcher Bias

In research, whether qualitative or quantitative, bias exists. Every researcher brings preconceived notions and unique experiences to a study. It is important to reflect upon these biases prior to and during the study (Creswell, 2003). This research study sought to better understand how perceptions of male

primary elementary teachers impacts the pressures these teachers experience and how that shapes their experiences in education.

As a male educator, the researcher was particularly aware of the general gender imbalance in American K-12 education. He was the principal of a Kindergarten through third grade school made up of one thousand students and over one hundred adult employees. In this setting, there are, including himself, three educators and two support staff who are male. Since entering the primary educational setting, he was previously a middle school social studies teacher; he has been interested in the phenomena of female dominance of education, especially primary education. The researcher readily admitted he would like to see more male teachers enter the primary education work force. He saw this gender balancing as a positive for students and the educational environment in general. That being said, the researcher has had several opportunities to hire male teachers, but has not done so because of a lack of qualified candidates for the position. Consequently, the researcher studied the phenomena of gender imbalance to better inform his own approach to staffing and human resources. He desires to hire the most qualified people for the job and hopes the knowledge gained from this study can help inform him as he seeks teachers for positions. He also hopes it will help him better manage both male and female teachers currently under his direction.

The researcher utilized a qualitative approach partially because of his background in social studies. He was interested in the story behind phenomena. Numbers and data, while important, do not bring out the interesting details.

Therefore, he opted to utilize interviews as a primary method in research so he could find out more about the participants and how they are affected by the gender imbalance in schools. He also found, through his education, qualitative research appeals to him much more than quantitative. He felt the combined training for his master's and doctorate work and his background in history made him adept at qualitative research.

With his background acknowledged, the researcher sought to bring neutrality to his research. He recognized he could not control the direction the research took him, even with carefully planned interview protocols, he could not determine, nor did he want to, the path the participants took him down.

Therefore, he recognized while he might have anticipated certain outcomes in the research, he may have ultimately found things which contradict his biases and preconceived notions. He knew he must report those findings no matter what they were. He attempted to bring neutrality to his research by having strict methods and protocols. He will also acknowledge the biases so the reader is fully aware of them.

Presentation of Discrepant Information

Creswell (2003) urged qualitative researchers to present all information related to the topic of study, even if it is contradictory or negative to the researcher's ideas. The researcher understood there was going to be a great deal of information existing within the literature which looked at the issue of gender imbalance in education. He recognized, and presented, information related to his research questions. Some of this information appeared

contradictory, but as the researcher believed objective truth can be discovered through careful observation of the world, this is acceptable. The researcher believed a sharper focus on the truth was achieved each time observations were made, this is going to cause different and even contradictory findings to occur as different facets of the truth are revealed. This study served as one more analysis of a question which can further bring into focus the truth.

Peer Debriefing

To further assure trustworthiness, the researcher employed peer debriefing (Creswell, 2003). This ensured the study was looked at by outside observers and maintains a solid grounding in good research practices. The peer debriefer, who was a fellow doctoral student, will also serve to keep the researcher focused on producing a study which is of interest to others. Finally, the research utilized his committee chair as another form of a peer debriefer.

The Audit Trail

A final way of assuring trustworthiness is the audit trail (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1998). The researcher developed a well-documented audit trail so anyone who wishes to carefully examine the study for quality or possible replication will be able to do so. This trail included all used forms, letters, protocols, and communications. It also included the data and an explanation of any coding utilized and how themes emerged. This portion of the audit trail was written into the study as appropriate.

Rationale for Utilization of the Instrument

The use of the interview as the primary instrument is particularly useful in answering the research questions. Since the researcher desired an understanding of perceptions and pressures and how those influence a male primary elementary teacher's daily life, he feels the interview will be an especially useful tool in obtaining this information. The researcher utilized well planned and structured interview protocols to glean information from participants. He recognized all contingencies cannot be planned for and, at times, he needed to stray from the interview protocols to pursue needed information. At times, participants brought up interesting avenues, previously not thought of, which were explored. Quantitative research does not allow for this almost organic approach to collecting data. The researcher saw the flexibility of qualitative research as an important part of finding good rich answers to his research questions. The researcher also feels other school leaders and male teachers will be able to read and identify with the rich, thick (Merriam, 1998; Lincoln & Guba, 1985) description offered.

Method of Processing and Presenting Data

The research utilized interview protocols to speak with each participant. The information gathered during this time was transcribed and analyzed in an objective fashion. Acknowledgement of biases was especially important at this juncture. The data must speak without interference from the researcher. This process of data analysis and presentation followed the general guidelines set out by Creswell (2003). He stated the first step in analysis is the gathering,

transcribing, and organization of the data. From here the researcher read through all documents and data to get a general sense of what the study encompasses. General notes might be kept at this time, but nothing specific. Following this general reading the researcher moved onto the specific close reading and coding of the data. The researcher sought to code with thematic connections in mind (Seidman, 1998). Once coded, the researcher began looking for themes. At this point the researcher presented the themes and findings in chapter four of this document. Chapter five is the researcher's interpretation of the findings and conclusions. Creswell's methods are not necessarily followed in a sequential fashion. In many cases they are occurring simultaneously

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

Introduction

This dissertation was a qualitative study (Merriam, 1998) of the perceptions surrounding and pressures experienced by male primary elementary teachers and how these perceptions and pressures shape choices and behaviors of the teacher. This study focused on male primary elementary teachers in a county in the Eastern Missouri area. It sought to better illuminate the truth surrounding the phenomenon of the fewness of male primary elementary teachers. The main research question is: How do perceptions of and pressures on male primary elementary teachers by all stakeholders affect their behavior and career choices.

This question is informed by the following sub-questions:

- 1) What are the perceptions of parents, children, teachers, and administrators of male primary elementary teachers?
- 2) What pressures are exerted on male primary elementary teachers as a result of perceptions?
- 3) What changes in behavior of male primary elementary teachers are a result of these perceptions and pressures?
- 4) What changes in career choice of male primary elementary teachers are a result of these perceptions and pressures?
- 5) How do male primary elementary teachers perceive themselves and their teaching role?

In this chapter, a thorough presentation of the study, the participants, and the data collected will be discussed. Additionally, an analysis of said data will be presented.

The research question led to a qualitative study of male primary elementary teachers through the use of interviews and document analysis. The interviews were conducted with the male teacher. Additionally, principals, female teachers, and parents were interviewed. Finally, a writing sample was collected from students. All of this information was collected and analyzed for common themes. These themes led the researcher to a better understanding of the main research question and its supporting questions.

Participants

The participants for this study were selected from schools within a county in the Eastern Missouri area. The determination for these participants was mostly convenience. A major factor in this study is the incredibly low number of male primary elementary teachers. As a result of this fact, the researcher looked on school websites of each of the schools in the Eastern Missouri County. He was able to locate five male teachers who taught third grade or below. These teachers were spread throughout the county at a variety of school buildings. The researcher then contacted the school superintendents to inform them of the study and he contacted the principals of the buildings where these male primary elementary teachers worked. From here the researcher sought the help of the building principals in finding willing participants in the study. The principals helped the researcher set up interviews with parents, female teachers, the male

teachers, and also gave of their own time to be interviewed. One principal participated who did not have any male teachers. This principal also helped the researcher in finding and working with participants.

The identities of all involved in the study have been hidden. They will be referred to in the following ways. The principals will be named as P1, P2, P3, P4, and P5. The male teachers will be identified as M1, M2, M3, M4, and M5. The female teachers will go by F1, F2, F3, F4, F5, F6, and F7. The parents will take the names of PT1, PT2, PT3, PT4, and PT5. Finally the one student participant will be called S1. The researcher took great care in protecting the identities of the participants and made every effort to ensure the potential harm to all participants was non-existent. The researcher gave every opportunity for participants to leave the study at any time. He also explained to the participants their rights and reiterated repeatedly that there were no wrong answers. To help ensure the ethical treatment of the participants, the researcher received full approval for the study from the University of Missouri Institutional Review Board. Each participant signed a sheet acknowledging their understanding of their rights and the risks associated with participation in the study.

The Principals

Principal One.

Principal one (P1) is a 42 year old female in her fifteenth year of education.

Principal Two.

Principal two (P2) is a 39 year old female in her sixth year as principal.

Principal Three.

Principal three (P3) is a 46 year old female with twenty-plus years of experience.

Principal Four.

Principal four (P4) is a 42 year old female in her fifth year as principal.

Principal Five.

Principal five (P5) is a 50 year old male in his twenty-seventh year of education.

The Male Primary Elementary Teachers

Male Teacher One.

Male teacher one (M1) is a 34 year old kindergarten teacher with six years of experience.

Male Teacher Two.

Male teacher two (M2) is a 41 year old sixth grade teacher in his seventeenth year of experience. This participant was a last minute replacement for a teacher who was not able to participate in the interview. Prior to the researcher arriving at the school, the principal set up an alternate interview with this participant. While this was outside the methods of research as outlined in Chapter 3 of this dissertation, the researcher took the opportunity to gain the understanding of the research question from the perspective of a male teacher of an older grade level.

Male Teacher Three.

Male teacher three (M3) is a 30 year old third grade teacher in his first year of teaching.

Male Teacher Four.

Male teacher four (M4) is a 28 year old third grade teacher in his fifth year of teaching.

Male Teacher Five.

Male teacher five (M5) is a 35 year old third grade teacher in his thirteenth year of teaching.

The Female Primary Elementary Teachers

Female Teacher One.

Female teacher one (F1) is a 49 year old third grade teacher in her thirteenth year of teaching.

Female Teacher Two.

Female teacher two (F2) is a 36 year old third grade teacher in her second year of teaching.

Female Teacher Three.

Female teacher three (F3) is a 35 year old third grade teacher in her fourth year of teaching.

Female Teacher Four.

Female teacher four (F4) is a 33 year old third grade teacher in her thirteenth year of teaching.

Female Teacher Five.

Female teacher five (F5) is a 29 year old third grade teacher in her third year of teaching.

Female Teacher Six.

Female teacher six (F6) is a 38 year old fourth grade teacher in her thirteenth year of teaching. Most of her career, ten years, was spent teaching third grade. This interview was a deviation from the methods outlined in Chapter 3. The principal of this particular school set the interviews up prior to my arrival. Upon arriving, the researcher discovered the change and rather than demanding a new interviewee, the researcher conducted the interview and incorporated the data into the greater study.

Female Teacher Seven.

Female teacher seven (F7) is a 32 year old fourth grade teacher in her eleventh year of teaching. This interview follows the same circumstances mention on the above participant, F6.

The Parents

Parent One.

Parent one (PT1) is a 33 year old married stay at home mother of two children and she is a college student.

Parent Two.

Parent two (PT2) is stay at home mother of one.

Parent Three.

Parent three (PT3) is a mother of three.

Parent Four.

Parent four (PT4) is a mother of two and a manager of a local restaurant.

Parent Five.

Parent five (PT5) is a mother of two and a guidance counselor at a local school.

The Student

Only one student participated in the student writing sample portion of the study.

This student will be referred to as S1. The researcher attempted to gain writing samples from an entire classroom of students, but only received a response from one.

Data Collection

The data collection for this study occurred over several days in the spring of the 2010-11 school year in five different elementary schools in an Eastern Missouri County. These schools had been selected through a search of school websites for buildings with male primary elementary teachers on staff. The researcher found less than ten male primary elementary teachers in the county. This severely limited the researcher in making contacts and finding willing participants. Fortunately, five principals agreed to participate. The principal participants had been contacted previously by letter and phone calls as outlined in Chapter 3 and with the supporting Appendix documents. From these contacts, the researcher was able to set up interview appointments and elicited the assistance of the principals to find male teachers, female teachers, and parents who were willing to participate. Interviews were conducted, recorded, and transcribed. The researcher took the transcripts and a writing sample obtained by one student participant and analyzed this data looking for themes to emerge. The

researcher looked at the data through the lens of the primary and secondary research questions. Several themes emerged and will be presented below.

Analysis of the data

Themes

The researcher utilized a qualitative research approach (Merriam, 1998). As a part of this approach, the researcher took the interview transcripts and began to analyze them looking for common thoughts, ideas, and language. As the analysis continued some common themes emerged. They were the themes of the touch, nurturer, role model/father figure, fitting in, amazing teachers, and weird. These themes were touched on by all participant categories and a majority of individual participants. In many cases different phrases were used, but implications and meanings were common. These themes help in the production of answers to the above research questions and the compilations of findings and conclusions.

Touch.

The issue of touch was a major component throughout the interviews. It was mentioned by several participants. In each case the mention centered on the idea that male primary elementary teachers had a fear of how touch, such as hugs, would be perceived by others and the potential negative fallout that could occur. The statements also spoke of pressures to not touch or to make certain touch was done in a very public manner. Finally, touch was a major reason provided as to why males change behaviors and move into higher grade levels.

Role Modeling/Father Figure.

A second theme emerged around the concept of the male primary elementary teacher as a unique role model and/or father figure. Many of the participants spoke of children of single parent families who are in need of a father-figure. This common theme was spoken of in positive terms by all participants, including the male primary elementary teachers. This perception did lead to spoken pressures to live up to this father figure ideal. It was something the male teachers appeared to be accepting of, but they did speak with a bit of trepidation.

Fitting In.

Many of the participants, except for the parents, spoke of the difficulty of male primary elementary teachers fitting into the nearly all female world of the primary elementary school. Several of the participants spoke of this difficulty in a tongue-in-cheek manner, while others spoke of it in a more sympathetic manner. A few participants were more hostile in their answers about males entering into the female world of teaching. Some participants spoke of gender differences as a reason for this difficulty in fitting in.

Amazing Teachers.

All participants spoke in positive terms about the male primary elementary teachers they have worked with in very positive terms and routinely used highly positive adjectives. Participants who have never worked with male primary elementary teachers also spoke about male primary elementary teachers, presuming they have to be great.

Weird.

Weird was an adjective used by one male teacher to describe male primary elementary teachers. While this word was only used once, it sums up many of the ideas expressed throughout the interviews. Several participants spoke of the novelty, the uniqueness, the strangeness, and the uncommonness of a male in the primary teaching world.

These themes are consistent throughout the interviews. As the presentation and description of the data is related below, keep in mind these themes. It is through these themes that the researcher will be able to find answers to the research questions and get a more complete view of the truth (Sleeter, 2001-2002).

Presentation and Description of the Data

As noted throughout this dissertation, there are very few male primary elementary teachers. As such, the interviews conducted with principals, male teachers, female teachers, and parents and the writing sample from a student elicited a variety of reactions to the questions regarding male primary elementary teachers.

The interview questions were structured in a way to first pull out perceptions of teachers in general and, male primary elementary teachers specifically. From this the questions moved to getting the interview subjects to discuss the pressures experienced by male primary elementary teachers. The subjects then answered questions regarding the behaviors of those male primary elementary teachers. The interviews concluded with the subjects stating why

they think male teachers stay out of education or when in it, they go for the higher grade levels and/or administration.

The researcher began by asking participants to focus their answers on teachers in general. The responses to this helped to develop a constant to compare answers to questions specifically about male primary elementary teachers. The interviews paint a portrait of what makes for a good primary elementary teacher. These qualities were described in a variety of ways, but can be summed up with the following adjectives, compassionate, caring, and nurturing. Some discussed creativity and patience.

When asked about what they thought of when someone mentioned a male primary elementary teacher, the participants used a different set of adjectives. They enthusiastically stated male primary elementary teachers were good role models and father figures. They also stated male primary elementary teachers are organized and fair. One participant (M2) stated that they are “weird”, in that it is unusual to see one.

Participants did all agree that being a male primary elementary teacher comes with unique and difficult challenges. Some spoke of actual events they have witnessed of false concerns and accusations from parents, while others spoke of the need for male primary elementary teachers to fit into the female dominated world of primary schools.

Perceptions

The first sub-research question asked, what are the perceptions of parents, children, teachers, and administrators of male primary elementary

teachers? This question was posed to all the participants and a variety of answers were given. For presentation purposes these will be reported by participant category with the emergent themes discussed after each participant category are discussed.

Principals.

The principals were unanimous in their assertion they think male primary elementary teachers are a good thing for education and they all said positive things about male teachers they have worked with. A variety of adjectives were used by the principals, these include, phenomenal, quality, father figure, role models, organized, and fair. Only one principal described male teachers with the words caring and nurturing.

The main sentiment expressed was male primary elementary teachers serve as role models for students, especially for students from single-parent homes. This perception was discussed by each group interviewed. In one instance stated "Sometimes the father figure is not around. I think we need more male role models for our younger students" (P2).

P3 did reference assumptions on the part of parents that male primary elementary teachers are going to be "...overly dominating and probably more strict" than their female counterparts. She also stated that male primary teachers experience the stereotype of being a homosexual because of the predominately female orientation of the profession.

Female teachers.

The general response to the question from the perspective of the female teachers was two-fold. First, they all agreed that male teachers are great, especially those who have had personal experiences working with one or being taught by one. Second, they agreed with the male role model aspect. About half of the female interviewees stated that male primary elementary teachers brought a different perspective to the school building.

Female teachers generally stated that male primary elementary teachers were a good thing. Various adjectives were used, including; creative, out of the box, and engaging. F3 added, that while having male primary elementary teachers is great, she feels that it must be hard for them to financially support their family.

Role modeling was mentioned several times. F4 spoke of her excitement to be working with a male primary elementary teacher because "...to many kids do not have a male role model in their life". F5 added to this by stating "I think it is really important for some students that don't have that figure at home to be able to have that here in school, to form a relationship with".

Another common statement was that male teachers bring a different perspective to the school building. One (F2) called it creativity and said that "when it comes to reaching kids and they don't seem to hesitate when they want to try something". F4 spoke of her enjoyment at working with a male primary elementary teacher and how this is allowing her to see things from a different side. While generally agreeing that male primary elementary teachers bring a

different perspective to teaching, F6 had some different feelings surrounding this question. "I think it's rare, right? You don't see it a lot, but I don't think that it's necessarily wrong. I think that it could have its benefits. It could be beneficial, but you don't see it a lot. I think it's rare. I think, wow, there's a boy teacher in the building" (F6).

Male teachers.

Male teachers were very quick to answer and spent more time discussing this question than any other group. Male teachers used more negative adjectives to describe the perceptions of themselves. They tended to answer the question based on what they thought other people's perceptions were rather than what their own perceptions. In one case the male teacher described it this way, "First, it's usually shocking," (M1).

Of particular interest was the perception the sixth grade teacher (M2) had of male primary elementary teachers. He stressed the patience it takes to teach young children. He then added he could not be a primary teacher because he is not a "touchy-feely person...it's weird". Additionally, other subjects spoke of the rarity of male primary elementary teachers and how this makes them stand out to parents and other teachers. M5 pushed this a little further by stating that because of the rarity of male primary elementary teachers, parents will have trouble accepting a male in this position.

One subject (M4) talked about how he personally does not feel any different than his female colleagues, but he does acknowledge the fact he is abnormal in the sense that he went a different way from most of his male

classmates in college. He concludes that because of this, he is probably a little more open-minded than most teachers.

Parents.

In general, the parents were not as forthcoming with answers and seemed reserved when answering. When parents were asked about what they thought of when someone mentioned a male teacher, it can best be summed up with “I don’t have a problem with that. I just requested the only male fourth grade teacher for my third grader for next year. I think he could use the male influence as far as discipline, that way it might scare him a little bit into following the rules” (PT1). Another parent further stated that “...a man being comfortable to being in that almost entirely female environment takes a lot of courage...” (PT5).

Male primary elementary teachers are perceived in a variety of ways by the various people involved in schools. While many of these descriptions differed, there were a few common points expressed by all of the participants. The main area shared by all was with the idea that male primary elementary teachers are role models. All participants made some form of statement about the need for male primary elementary teachers in today’s society. Some participants expressed the lack of father figures, while others focused on the need for positive male figures. No one expressed outrage or fear of male teachers, but a feeling of uniqueness, novelty, or oddity was shared by nearly all participants, including the male primary elementary teachers themselves.

Pressures

The second question posed to the interview subjects related to the pressures experienced by male primary elementary teachers and whether these differ from those experienced by female primary elementary teachers. Again, a variety of answers were given. This question was by far the most extensively answered by all subjects. For presentation purposes responses are broken down into the interviewee categories.

Principals.

The principals were completely unanimous in their view that male primary elementary teachers experience different pressures from that of their female counterparts. In four (P1, P2, P3, & P4) of the five interviews these pressures centered on one main aspect, that of touch. These four principals described the fear that male primary teachers, they have worked with, have experienced. The issue of touch, specifically hugs, was the root pressure described by each of the four principals (P1, P2, P3, & P4). This fear is described by P4 in the following way:

I don't think that that's first and foremost in their [female teacher] mind. I think for a female student to hug, or a female teacher to hug a student, I don't think that the first thing would be inappropriateness, but I think that if a male were to maybe hug a student, there would be a fear of that. (P4)

This is based on what P4 called a male primary elementary teacher's fear of "suspicion of inappropriate relations with students" and being "conscientious of not being alone with children and just making sure that there are witnesses and

then for with everything that they do”. P1 took this pressure and fear of being accused of inappropriate with students and stated that “the male teacher has to be more creative with that [positive affection and reinforcement]”. P3 linked this pressure of being accused of inappropriateness with students to parent assumptions of the lifestyles of male teachers. She stated parents “have questions about the lifestyles of the men teachers. I think that comes into play more than it would for a female”.

A couple of the principals (P2 and P5) referenced the pressure of working within a female dominated organization. P2 stated that within the school “there are a lot of emotions involved sometimes, and I think they [the male teachers] feel a little bit on the opposite end of the spectrum”. P5 took a slightly different direction. He stated much of the pressures come from the fact parents, students, and teachers simply are not used to seeing male primary elementary teachers and because of this are uncomfortable with it. He summed this up with the succinct statement “I think that’s just what people expect to see when they walk into a classroom, is a female teacher” (P5).

Female teachers.

The female teachers had a wide variety of answers to the question of pressures experienced by male primary elementary teachers. There was no single view of what kind of pressures were experienced. What was unified was the attitude that male primary teachers experience pressures that are different from their fellow female teachers.

One idea espoused by a couple of the subjects was the idea that male teachers experience pressure fitting in the all-female world of teachers (F2, F3, F4, & F5). The female teachers spoke of how male teachers must find their place amongst so many women. F2 spoke of “the cliqueness that you might experience” in a female dominated building. F3 stated the male teachers in her experience referred to the women they worked with as “catty” and “.one of the most unpleasant things about their job, it was working with us, women”. This sentiment of a world of divisiveness between male and female teachers was also taken up by F4,

I just think women think in a different fashion than men and women seem to be more organized and men have to try to fit that role and they're not necessarily designed that way, so I think we judge men. We want them to have their creative bulletin boards and their organized room and their perfect lesson plans and they may not just be the way that we want them. We have to accept that so I felt like it's been an adjustment and I can't imagine working with a bunch of women because as a woman, it's hard enough so I do feel bad about that. (F4)

Other female teachers spoke of male primary elementary teachers having the pressure to act in ways that were thought of as less male. F1 stated that male teachers are “thought of as perhaps...less suited to the job only because we usually think of males as being more protectors and more in charge as opposed to nurturing, caring, hugger people”. F6 also spoke about male teachers being somehow different than the female teachers. She stated students have a “deeper

respect for a male teacher". She then went on to discuss how males have to be careful that they do not come across as too harsh. F7 stated that it is hard to see or imagine a male in the role of a "caring kindergarten-type teacher".

F6 was the only female teacher to speak of the issue of touch. She stated that male teachers must have to "worry about more the touchy-feely", which is not something that women really ever think about.

A final area discussed by the female interviewees was F5's point about male primary elementary teachers constantly having the students with behavioral difficulties given to them each year. She referred to it as people feeling that the male will "fix that problem". She worried openly this situation would make male primary elementary teachers feel "dumped on" which will result in burnout for the male teacher.

Male teachers.

The male primary elementary teachers answered the question regarding pressures in a variety of ways. All of them agreed that the pressures they face are unique to male primary elementary teachers. These pressures come from a variety of sources, including themselves, female teachers, administration, parents, and students.

One important area discussed was the area of touch (M1 and M2). M1 summed up the pressure and fear by stating, "I'm a nurturing person so I like to give the hugs when they need it but you always have to make sure that you're positioned correctly and things of that nature". M2, who teaches sixth grade, discussed the "motherly" aspect of the job and how male primary elementary

teachers have to be “motherly”, but at the same time must be careful when giving physical contact, like a hug, to a student.

Another pressure discussed was regarding gender roles. M3 spoke about how female teachers have certain expectations of male primary elementary teachers. These expectations are different than what female teachers expect of other female teachers. Foremost was the area of discipline. M3 felt that there was a pressure to be more authoritative. He also felt pressure to take on traditional roles, such as talking about sports.

M5 carried this theme of gender roles forward and spoke of having difficulty every year with at least one student being fearful or nervous around him strictly because of his demeanor and mannerisms. He spoke of being requested by parents who want a strong male role model and by those who were adamant their child did not have him because he was male. These requests were both centered on the idea of male primary elementary teachers being different from female teachers in a fundamental way.

Perhaps the best way of describing the male primary elementary teachers' experience of pressures was put forth by M4:

Yes, I think there are differences. Being one of the few males, I think a lot of times with the other female employees, we get a lot of the angst towards us like the, you know you're the male perspective or you can't do, you don't understand because you're male or the reason you can deal with that kid that way is because you're a male, not because you're a good teacher or the only reason that kid responds to you is because you're a

male, not because of what you do, that any male could have been able to do it in that situation too. I think a lot of times we're called on to do things like, and it's nothing that I personally mind, like moving things a lot, the physical stuff or technology stuff. They rely on, they come to at least the men in this room. The females will come to us and ask us for help with things like that so like extra-curricular stuff that they want us do but I think a lot of times you get thrown like, any time there's a troubling male student, the first thought is, well, let's put him in the male's class because that must be what he's missing, a male influence, which I think a lot of times can be good but a lot of times it's the opposite, what that kid needs is a strong male influence and maybe that's what they have at home and maybe they react better to a nurturing female.

Parents.

The parents did not have a lot to say on the topic of pressures. A few ideas were discussed, but nothing in detail.

PT1 for example stated "They (male teachers) might have been frowned upon by a lot of parents with the whole trusting them with their children" and then added in the same thought "now, it could be anybody, it's not necessarily just got to be a guy to worry about trusting them.

Whereas PT2 saw no differences in pressures experienced by male versus female teachers, PT3 thought that male teachers might not have the mothering and nurturing instincts for the younger grades. PT5 expanded this and stated that she feels parents assume male teachers are stricter and because of

this children without fathers will do better with a male teacher. This creates a pressure for male teachers to become an authoritative father figure, even when this is not something they are comfortable with.

PT4 offered a couple of interesting points. She stated the “percentage of females is greater so they [male primary elementary teachers] might feel a little intimidated by that. She also stated the smaller pay of teachers creates a pressure on the male as the traditional breadwinner of a family.

Male primary elementary teachers experience a great deal of pressures from varying directions and types. These include those pressures surrounding touch, their uniqueness, fitting in, and a pressure to be a father/role model to all. No one spoke in an overtly negative sense about pressures they have put on male teachers, but many spoke of probable pressures put on male teachers by others. Many participants spoke of the respect they have for male teachers because of how they handle the pressures placed on them.

Behavior Changes

The third question posed to the interview subjects was looking to find out if male primary elementary teachers change their behaviors once they begin teaching and if so are these changes different from female primary elementary teachers and/or are they in response to the perceptions of and pressures placed on male primary elementary teachers.

Principals.

In regards to the question about male primary elementary teachers changing their behavior at school, four of the five principals agreed that they do.

P1 was the only principal who felt male primary elementary teachers do not change in ways different than female teachers. She argued male and female teachers change in the same ways because they all are under the same rules and pressures in regards the actual job and they all came into the field for the same reason.

The other four principals felt male primary elementary teachers do change as a result of the pressures they experience which are unique to male teachers. P2 and P4 both agree that male primary elementary teachers have to be “a little more guarded in some of those touchy situations” (P2). They also state that they become “over conscientious of making sure that they’re not alone with the student” (P4). P4 discussed how she has two male teachers and one, being new, is nervous about being alone with students, but it is not at the forefront of his mind. Her other male teacher has a number of years in the school and “he’s scared of ever being accused of anything inappropriate” (P4).

P3 and P5 offer competing views of how male primary elementary teachers change. P3 takes the view of the father figure. She argues male teachers become more fatherly to students from broken homes. P5, on the other hand, argues male primary elementary teachers become more soft spoken and compassionate as the years go on.

Female teachers.

The female teachers had varying views on male primary elementary teachers and whether they changed their behaviors at schools.

F1 felt male primary elementary teachers do change their behaviors after they begin teaching. This is in response to “societal views of them” (F1). F3 stated because female teachers come in being motherly, male teachers “loosen up a bit and be a little softer towards the kids, more affection, nicer in a way”.

F4 and F5 felt because of the differences between men and women the male primary elementary teacher is forced to change to better fit into the female dominated world of schools. They also stated male primary elementary teachers are more guarded about their opinions and their personal life. “I think they’re [male primary elementary teacher] more secretive about their personal life as far as just being like with the staff members. Women just talk and they’re chatty and men just hold back and just watch the show so it’s different” (F4). F5 further states “they’re a little more hesitant to their opinion because here they are with a room full of women and they know if their opinion is not agreed upon, they’re not going to express it” (F5). F5 also adds male teachers become more patient as the year(s) go on.

Only F7 argued male primary elementary teachers become more guarded about their contact with students. She relates this to the fear of lawsuits and accusations of inappropriateness with students. On the other hand, F6 felt male teachers change their behaviors in the same ways as their female counterparts.

Male teachers.

The male teachers all felt they had changed their behaviors at school. Most of them linked this change to the pressures spoken of earlier. Only one (M1) spoke of change in a more generic global sense.

M1 made a statement about male teachers changing under the pressure of molding young minds. He stated “I’ve changed a little bit but I think I will fine tune it in better ways. You learn from your mistakes and then you make yourself a better teacher” (M1).

One of the male teachers linked the changes they experienced to the issue of touching students. M2 spoke of a fellow male teacher who is very careful about hugging. He stated this male teacher has changed from hugging to half hugs and pats on the back. He is also aware of the height difference between adults and children and always gets on their eye level to prevent the student from hugging him in an awkward location. M2 also spoke of this teacher feeling very nervous when students describe him as cute, especially as the students get older.

M3 took a different view and said male primary elementary teachers become more aware of their relationships with fellow teachers. He stated male teachers watch their words around teachers for fear of offending.

M5 looked at the view young children have of males. He felt children tended to assume males were dominant and punishing. He felt over time male teachers break this stereotype down by acting in unexpected ways. He feels students will, with time, begin to see male teachers as just the teacher.

M4 summed up the idea of change by pointing out:

I didn’t have any male elementary school teachers so my perception of male teachers are what I had in high school. The way they acted, the way they interacted with students, and you’re stuck in your norm...I came in

with those perceptions and I had to adjust them as far as...because secondary and elementary school are way different the way you approach the students.

Parents.

The parents had very little to say on the topic of behavior changes in male primary elementary teachers. P1, P2, P3, and P4 stated male teachers either do not change or their change is no more than that of any female teacher. P5 argued male primary elementary teachers are requested a lot by parents who assume they are disciplinarians, when in actuality the teacher might be someone who is timid or quiet natured. She did not link this to any particular behavior change.

Most participants agreed male primary elementary teachers change their behavior, what was disagreed upon was the extent of this change and what caused the change. A few linked the change to nothing different than natural growth and responses to pressures experienced by all teachers regardless of their gender. Most participants felt male teachers also make some sort of behavior changes to the pressures and perceptions which are unique to them. Many of the participants specifically focused in on the area of touch. Others also touched on the need for a male teacher to assimilate to the female teaching world and the perceived role as a father figure/role model.

Career Choices

The fourth question posed to participants focused on the reality of why the few male teachers who come into education, the vast majority gravitates towards

higher grade levels and if they are in primary grades they leave for administrative positions or higher grade levels.

Principals.

The principals were fairly consistent in their expressed belief of male primary elementary teachers gravitating towards higher grade levels and administration because of, what one called, the more “feminine side” (P5) of teaching. The others expanded on this to state children in the primary elementary school need more of a “mother” (P4) figure in their lives. It was also pointed out male teachers might be attracted to the more mature conversations you can have with older students. P1 had an interesting summation to this question:

Personally, I think that probably because of that physical aspect of elementary school in younger children. They're very pure and simple, and what you see is what you get. And so if they feel like giving you a hug, they are going to give you a hug and they see nothing wrong with it. Whereas I think the adults, typically the adult male might be uncomfortable with that because of what that outside perspective might be. I've hoped that I've created an atmosphere here where that's not a concern, but I would say just in general, I would think that that would probably be the biggest...and there's probably a societal stigma to primary male elementary teachers. Where I don't know if it's that because you teach high school, you're smarter or I don't know, but I think that probably has a lot to do with it as well. I can't say that coaching isn't a piece. I know our gym teacher is a male and it's difficult for him to establish his coaching

duties after school because of our elementary time frame...I know that can be an obstacle for them as well.

Female teachers.

The female teachers focused on the traditional roles of males in families to answer this question. F1 stated, "They're [males] more of the in charge, wear the suit, sit behind the desk people as opposed to being on the floor with the kid painting or whatever". F2, F3, and F7 both agreed that males feel more comfortable around older students. They stated males find older students easier to relate to. F4 and F5 both focused in on the following list "more money, more opportunities to coach, different hours, earlier hours in the day" (F4) as reasons men move into the higher grades. F2 also supported the idea that males are looking for ways to support their families because "its [elementary teaching] very conducive to family because of having summers off, goes around the kid's schedules and maybe men don't typically take that role so to aim for a higher position financially would make sense".

F6 was the only female teacher to make a statement critical of males choosing the higher grade levels. She stated, "I think that content area is easier to adapt to sometimes than the hustle and bustle of an elementary classroom. It's just the way male brains and female brains are". This sentiment was not overtly matched by any other participant in the study.

Male teachers.

The male teachers were all consistent in their belief that males avoid teaching the younger grades because of their perceptions that it is a "touchy-

feely” (M2) “daycare provider” (M4) job. The male teachers discussed this attitude in a couple of different ways. Some focused on the neediness of primary elementary students and how this will be a major deterrent to males entering into the primary teaching ranks. The other feeling was males actually fear the idea of working with young children. “I want to say that they are mostly afraid. They’re afraid of having to deal with the younger ones” (M1). The sixth grade teacher (M2) felt, “It’s the touchy-feely. I like sixth grade because I can talk to them as a person. I enjoy that more of talking to them as a person. I know I can have discussions with him. You can talk to them more on a level than you can with little kids”.

Much of the statements were from the perspective of males having these concerns with themselves and the position, M3 took a different view. He felt that much of the reason for the gravitation to higher grades had to do with “women in general don’t see men as being as nurturing or understanding to younger students”.

Equally as prevalent, was the thought expressed by M5. He argued males do not want to be sympathetic and comforting. He felt males like the older grades because “the kids are more independent and free and easier to teach and I guess you could focus on content as opposed to actually working with the kids individually”.

Parents.

In response to the question about males gravitating towards higher grade levels, the parents were uniform in their answer this was because of the nurturing

requirements of the primary elementary teaching job. PT1 stated “maybe because of the nurturing. Women usually tend to be the nurturer”. Likewise, PT2 stated “I think maybe a male would feel more comfortable with older students because they’re at the age where they’re more responsible and not as needy”. PT3 was very clear in her statement of belief as to why males go into higher grade levels, “probably just easier. Not tying shoes, not dealing with some of the nurturing issues. I think it takes a special individual to do that”. M4 had an equally clear statement, “the pay is better. They have more authority over people and it probably helps their thinking of themselves”. PT5 had a lengthy and thoughtful answer which covered a variety of reasons:

I think partly it is society norms. Society assumes that, it’s just more appropriate just like nursing and things like that. I don’t think it’s just in schools. I also think it’s at college, I think for a college student, it’s somewhat intimidating to walk into a class and you’re the only guy in there. Also to be in staff, to be here. Even our bathrooms not even just a male bathroom because there’s so many women here. They’re just unisex. I think they gravitate towards those higher levels more because of society, but also men are not often seen as nurturing, which I don’t think that’s necessarily appropriate, but, how to put this, it’s not as masculine to be nurturing. There’s also this factor that little kids hug, little kids want to sometimes...and that can put a man in an awkward position, and to be very honest, that can be a concern, what to do. (PT5)

Nearly all participants stated in some way or another that males choose higher grade levels because they are probably more comfortable in those situations. The participants differed in why this comfort is higher in the higher grade levels. Some participants felt males are more suited for older grade levels. Some thought primary grade levels were in need of a feminine touch and males had extreme difficulty with this. Some talked of the pressures to conform and the nervousness of being accused of inappropriate contact with students as a reason males would leave the primary world. In the end all participants felt males were in some way a stranger in the primary grades.

Male Teacher Self-Perception

A final question was posed to the male teacher participants. This question asked them to speak of how they thought of their own role as a teacher.

The male teachers had a variety of different ways of viewing themselves as a teacher. One commonality between all of them was a desire to simply be a teacher who builds a foundation for the children's educational career's (M1). A variety of adjectives were presented to describe a male teacher's role, M2 provided a widely varied group of these, including, teacher, parent, policeman, detective, friend, counselor, dad, and mom. M4 spoke of taking on the expected role of technology expert.

Of all the participants in the study, M5 provided the lengthiest answer to any question. He gives a glimpse into the world of the male teacher. Letting him speak for himself will serve you, as the reader, best:

That's a hard question. I'm not exactly sure where that's supposed to go. I really feel like a lot of attention is put on me. For me, I was the only male teacher for a while and then we had another two other male teachers that come and go since then but there's definitely a lot of pressure for me to stand out amongst the rest, to be unique and to be different as opposed to just blend in. It's not typical and it's not just with students, it's from staff as well. I'm expected to take on certain roles and lead and I guess, be accepting of their jokes and things like that and be willing to do a lot of things like in the last week, I had to kiss a donkey and I had to kiss a lama and I've had to hide. I had to be in a dunking booth and so there's different expectations because you are the only male and people see that and they know you. All the kids recognize you where other, like most of the kids that are in first and second grade, they have no idea who other fourth grade teachers or fifth grade teachers are but pretty much every teacher and every kid in our school knows who I am just because I am a male and so there's some sort of status that comes with that and so you're expected to do certain things and view certain things. You also have to deal with a lot. I have a lot of parents who love me and want to be in my class but then you also have the flip side of that. I've had a few parents who are very...they don't like that idea. I've had parents...I had one parent in particular had a certified letter sent to school stating that they did not want their child in my class because they thought I was gay and then I had to deal with other issues along that line where the father is actually

badmouthing me to other parents and making comments to other parents about me and what he thought I was. Actually, he was almost...they had a restraining order put on him because they weren't going to tolerate that behavior and the administration was very supportive with all this. There's a lot more to deal with I think than people realize when it comes to being a male teacher in the elementary grades. (M5)

M3 provides the most succinct and heartfelt desire of all the male teachers statements. It also appears to be reflective of all of the participants:

A third grade teacher, trying to learn what I can from everyone here and teach them as much as I can because the gender thing does tend to come up and it's just getting past that, to look at each other as equals in a professional sense rather than you're a boy, I'm a girl. I fought with my husband so I'm mad at boys today. I know it's...I don't know but my role is essentially to educate children and the rest of it goes along with it. (M3)

Male teachers viewed their role as a teacher as first and foremost as someone who is going to teach and teach well. Second to this was the areas spoken of throughout this paper such as role model/father figure.

Student Writing/Drawing Sample Document Analysis

The student work samples did not elicit a great deal of information. Only one of the fifty students asked to participate returned the sample. This lack of participation prevented the researcher from drawing any conclusions. The student response could not factor into the findings of this study.

Summary

This chapter was a presentation of the data generated from the qualitative analysis of interviews and document analysis. A brief description of the study and a description of the participants were included. The analysis was conducted with the overall research question and the supporting questions in mind. From this analysis, common themes emerged. The researcher remained committed to accurately reporting the data throughout this process. The subjects themselves spoke on each question with thoughtfulness and thoroughness. The researcher was able to find answers to the research questions and the data suggests that males do make changes to their behavior because of the perceptions of and pressures on them. Chapter 5 will include a summary, major findings, limitations, conclusions, and recommendations.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND SUMMARY

The phenomenon of the fewness (Gilbert & Williams, 2008) of male primary elementary teachers inspired this study. The researcher sought to better understand why so few males entered into education, especially at the primary level, and once there what perceptions they deal with on a daily basis? The study was intended to allow for male primary elementary teachers to speak of their experiences, thoughts, feelings, and perspectives. Additionally, other stakeholders were given the same opportunity as male teachers in expressing their answers to the interview questions. Chapter 2 covered an extensive review of the literature where a variety of perceptions of and pressures on male primary elementary teachers emerged. Chapter 3 outlined the methodology of the study and how the data was collected and analyzed. Chapter 4 provided an avenue to present the data in a way where themes which had emerged during analysis were used to find answers to the research questions. This final chapter will contain the major findings, conclusions, recommendations, and a final summary.

Major Findings

Statement on Qualitative Research

This study centered on the main research question: How do perceptions of and pressures on male primary elementary teachers by all stakeholders affect their behavior and career choices.

This question is informed by the following sub-questions:

- 1) What are the perceptions of parents, children, teachers, and administrators of male primary elementary teachers?
- 2) What pressures are exerted on male primary elementary teachers as a result of perceptions?
- 3) What changes in behavior of male primary elementary teachers are a result of these perceptions and pressures?
- 4) What changes in career choice of male primary elementary teachers are a result of these perceptions and pressures?
- 5) How do male primary elementary teachers perceive themselves and their teaching role?

During the analysis of the collected interview and document analysis data, the researcher gathered the themes of touch, nurturer, role model/father figure, fitting in, amazing teachers, and weird. These themes go to the heart of the main research question.

Explanation of Generalizations

The major findings of this qualitative research study can be generalized into the following areas (a) Male primary elementary teachers are perceived as and pressured to be role models to students. (b) Male primary elementary teachers do not positively touch students and fear the consequences of being accused of doing so. (c) Male primary elementary teachers are perceived as different and are treated differently from their female counterparts. (e) Males leave the primary grade levels or avoid them altogether because of these pressures and perceptions.

These findings seem to work in a circular path, perceptions lead to pressures, which lead to behavior changes, which lead to a desire to leave the primary level, which results in less male teachers at the primary level. This causes the oddity of male primary elementary teachers to increase resulting in reinforcement of negative perceptions. In order to better understand these generalizations let's look at each one individually.

The Role Model.

The first generalization surrounding male primary elementary teachers is that they are perceived as and pressured to be role models to students. This generalization is the most talked about by the participants in the study and seems to be the most desired aspect of the male primary elementary teacher. Unfortunately, this generalization ignores the basic skills of a teacher and the needs of the students.

The role model is an appealing idea for many. Sometimes it took on the guise of the father figure. On the surface this perception carries with it a positive connotation. Who could argue with the idea that children, especially boys, without fathers in the home need a strong male role model in their lives?

Parents in the study stated they desired to have a male teacher for their child. Whenever they made this statement, they stated they had a child who needed someone firm and therefore the male teacher would be the logical choice. For the male teacher, this fact of parental desire to have their child in their classroom provides a great deal of stress. The male teachers feel the

awesome responsibility this entails, but rightly point out, what if they are not what the child needs.

Female teachers and principals likewise argued male primary elementary teachers fulfill the need for father figures in the lives of fatherless children. Many of the participants spoke about the sad fact of many of their children living in fatherless homes. There was an acceptance by all involved that this societal phenomena of the modern day is directly linked to behavior issues and disconnectedness on the part of students, especially male students. The answer to this, based on the interviews, is the male primary elementary teacher.

The male primary elementary teacher deals with a great deal of stress when it comes to this father figure perception. Now, they not only have to be great teachers who move their students academically forward, they must now become the father to all children in the school who are in need of fathers. The male teachers in this study accepted this fact, but it was clear they did so with some uncertainty.

Another aspect of this perception lies in the area of discipline. According to the study, male primary elementary teachers are assumed to be tough disciplinarians and equipped to handle all of the toughest students. This perception, like the father figure and role model ideals, ignores a basic fact. It does not allow for the individual personalities of the male teachers. It ignores their individual skills and weaknesses. Instead, it assumes because of the fact of their gender, they must be tougher than their female counterparts.

What is particularly interesting about this aspect of the role model is the female teachers and the principals feel bad for the male teacher and how they seemingly get loaded with behavior problems. While at the same time principals routinely place students in male teachers' classrooms because they are perceived to be able to handle the student. One female teacher openly worried this simple fact would lead to male teacher burnout (F5). On the flip side, male teachers reported (M4) they are often discounted in their abilities because of their gender. If they are able to handle a tough student, female teachers discount this, not as skill, but rather a simple truth of their gender.

The role modeling perception is pervasive in all groups interviewed. It can be said that stakeholders within the educational community see male primary elementary teachers as a positive force in the lives of children. This assumption is not based in the skills of the teacher, but rather the gender of the teacher. Because of the fact of the growing number of children being raised in a fatherless environment, males, by their gender, automatically become the answer to what the child needs. This ignores everything about the actual qualities of the male teacher and ignores the actual needs of any particular child. One of the male primary participants stated, "maybe they react better to a nurturing female" (M4).

In listening to the male primary teachers and others talk about this perception it becomes obvious it is more of a negative perception and expectation. Teachers, of both genders, have many things they are responsible for and feel stress because of those responsibilities. Public expectations of teachers are incredibly high and with high stakes testing, the demand for high

scores is as equally high. For males, there is the added stress of being something more to kids other than a good teacher. Males are expected to accept situation. Therefore many have accepted it and have attempted to become the father to all or the strict disciplinarian. The result of which can be burnout. Also, males contemplating becoming a teacher might decide it is not worth the stress.

What can educational professionals gain from this generalization? First, principals need to stop placing students in male teacher classrooms strictly on the premise that they have a behavior issue and the male teacher can easily handle it. Secondly, female teachers and principals must begin to think of male teachers as teachers first with their own unique strengths and weaknesses that have nothing to do with their gender. It must be realized male teachers might not be the right fit for a student, not because of a gender issue, but because of the skill set and personality of the individual teacher. The stress of being the disciplinarian and father figure to all is making male primary elementary teachers more stressed and is influencing them to move to higher grade levels or administration where this pressure is not as prevalent.

The Fear of Accusation.

In the interviews, parents spoke positively about male teachers and expressed a desire for more. The literature spoke of great fears and outrage being held by parents regarding males in the primary world. This generalization is a series of perceptions. School personnel have the perception that male teachers have a reason to fear being accused of something. Male primary elementary teachers fear being accused of some sort of misconduct and inappropriate touch

with a student. Female teachers and principals fear for male teachers and these accusations. Additionally, female teachers do not share these same fears.

Another generalization which grew out of the data is that male primary elementary teachers do not positively touch students and fear being accused of doing so.

Touch is a major aspect of the primary teacher's day. Students routinely need hugs or pats on the back. They also need help with fine motor activities such as the zipping of pants. Female teachers rarely worry over the consequences of a hallway hug or assistance with dressing. It is not uncommon for a female teacher to fearlessly walk into a bathroom to find out if someone needs help. The reality in a male primary elementary teacher's world is they fear being put into one of these situations.

The perception of male primary elementary teachers somehow being sexual predators is not spoken of directly, but it is evident in the conversations with the various stakeholders. Female teachers and principals spoke at length of the challenge male teachers face over this issue. Principals spoke of having to reassure parents that their child's teacher was not a molester, but instead, was a good teacher. Female teachers stated they rarely, if ever, gave it a second thought to giving a student a hug, but they have seen male teachers go out of their way to avoid it.

Teachers come into contact with students in a variety of ways all of the time. In the primary grades, hugs are a major aspect of the day. Male teachers are continually on the lookout and try to come up with ways to lessen the hugs or

to turn them into other forms of touch. The male teachers spoke of elaborate ways in which they lessen the amount and instances of touch in their world. They also spoke of making sure what touch does occur, is always in a place where others can view it.

This fear of accusation is present in everything the male primary elementary teacher does. There is basis for this fear as one of the participants (M5) spoke of a father who was so upset over his child having a male teacher it came to the point where the school had to acquire a restraining order against the father. This fear on the part of the male teacher comes from a variety of areas. First, people suspect the sexuality of male primary teachers. In other industries homosexuals are an equal part of the work force and not thought about, while for some reason, in education, especially primary education, homosexuality is looked on with suspicion. Secondly, people question the motives of a male who becomes a primary elementary teacher; they never question the motives of a female who becomes a primary elementary teacher. Thirdly, the low number of male primary elementary teachers creates a certain level of oddity about the presence of males in elementary schools.

With all of this in mind, fear of accusation is a tremendous weight on the shoulders of male primary elementary teachers. It is also a significant deterrent (M2) to males becoming primary elementary teachers. What does this mean to educators? First, principals must create environments where males are free to pursue the same levels of touch as their female counterparts. This is done through the education of parents and staff on the importance of things like hugs

is to elementary students. Second, principals and teachers must be willing to stand up to stereotypes and protect the names and reputations of their male colleagues. Third, hiring more male teachers would help dilute the oddity aspect, which is a driving force behind many of the perceptions surrounding male teachers. The more male teachers the less odd they are and the more used to them parents become.

Treated Differently.

Male primary elementary teachers are perceived as different and are treated differently than their female colleagues. This was an interesting generalization which arose from the interviews. Teachers, principals, and parents think of and treat males in ways which are different from female teachers. In many cases male primary elementary teachers have beneficial assumptions made about them and are treated in beneficial ways. However, there are times the reverse is true.

A generic description of teachers yielded three main adjectives: compassionate, caring, and nurturing. These adjectives were similar to the information gained in the review of literature. The assumption the researcher gained was the female teacher was the norm and the adjectives used to describe a generic elementary teacher were implying a female in that role. The researcher believes this because when the subjects were asked, what do they think about when someone mentions a male primary elementary teacher, the responses were different, they were things like organized, fair, tough, disciplinarian, role

model, father figure, and unusual. When compared, it is obvious that males are thought of as different from the regular primary elementary teacher.

Male primary elementary teachers do enjoy the benefits of these different assumptions. They are in great demand by parents. Parents like the idea of having a male teacher, especially if they perceive their child is in need of a father figure or a strong positive male influence. Additionally, male primary elementary teachers are well known by all children in the building. They have a certain level of celebrity amongst the students. Finally, principals, and other teachers, routinely express the quality of the male teacher and the importance this teacher has in the building. These benefits can make the life of a male primary elementary teacher, at times, easier. However, the negatives outweigh any of these positives.

On the negative side, male primary elementary teachers have many assumptions made about them which are negative. As a result they are often treated in a negative way. Many of these assumptions have already been spoken of. The father figure/role model ideal, while positive sounding, carries with it significant pressures to be something, that perhaps, the teacher is not or forces them to behave in such a way which goes against their personality. Another negative is male teachers are assumed to be strong authoritative disciplinarians. As a result, they receive many of the worst behaved students on a yearly basis. This is a difficult challenge for the male primary elementary teacher to deal with.

Another, but more subtle, set of negative assumptions is male teachers are discounted as skilled educational practitioners. Instead, the assumption by

those interviewed was males are good with difficult students because of their maleness. They are able to hold students attention because they have a deep voice. They are loved and respected by parents and students because of their uniqueness. While there are possible truths behind these attitudes, they, by themselves, discount any skills on the part of the teacher. From the female teachers these attitudes were shaped by the idea of an inherent difference between men and women. At times, the female teachers stated these innate differences are what give the male teachers an edge, but then they also state in time male teachers overcome those differences and can work effectively in the primary elementary world.

This reality of male primary elementary teachers being thought of as different and being treated differently, with different expectations, creates a great deal of stress for the male primary teachers. In many cases they have to live up to the assumptions placed on them as male teachers but also have to live the expectations on teachers in general. As will be shown in the next generalization discussion, this stress is a major block against more males joining the ranks of primary teachers and it encourages teachers to leave for less stressful environments. To combat this, a few basic things need to be done. Leaders need to create environments where teachers are discussed and praised based on their actual skills as a teacher rather than gender differences. Additionally, leaders need to live by example and not treat their male teachers differently than their female teachers.

The Disappearing Male.

The final generalization to discuss is really a result of the other generalizations. It can be summed up as males leave the primary grade levels or avoid them altogether because of these pressures and perceptions. Male primary elementary teachers exist in a world of incredible stress and contradiction. As shown in previous portions of this paper, male primary elementary teachers are forced to be perfect role models, examples of disciplinarians, live within the elementary world without being able to positively touch students, and are completely discounted by others. This has created a situation where males avoid the primary grades or flee them once they experience them. As more males have left the primary grades, the uniqueness and oddity of a male teaching in the role increases. This lessening number of males makes them seem more mysterious and thus feeds into many of the perceptions of individuals. What can leaders do to help reverse this generalization? In addition to the suggestions made earlier, leaders need to hire quality male teachers for the primary grades to increase their numbers.

Conclusions

The male primary elementary teacher is an endangered species (Gilbert & Williams, 2008). This study has looked at various reasons why this is true. What was found is male primary elementary teachers are pressured to be role models/father figures to students, are deeply afraid of being accused of inappropriate behavior with students, are treated differently than their female colleagues, and because of the incredible stress on them as a result of the other

generalizations, males avoid the primary elementary world at all costs or leave it quickly.

The impact of the generalizations regarding male primary elementary teachers is what provides an answer to the primary research question. The perceptions and pressures of male primary elementary teachers create situations of extreme stress and contradiction which leads to situations where male teachers leave the primary grades or avoid going to them in the first place. Those who remain, make changes to their behavior in order to fit into the primary world. Some of these changes, such as those surrounding the issue of touch, are defensive in nature and serve to protect the male teacher from accusation.

This study was not about deciding whether male primary elementary teachers are good for education or bad for education. Instead, it was aimed at finding out if perceptions, whether they are true or not, have an impact on males in the field and steer males away from the primary grades. Because of this, we have very few males left in the primary grades. Again this study is not designed to determine what effects this will have on students and schools. Instead, this study offers all stakeholders information on ways they can help prevent male primary elementary teachers from experiencing stresses and pressures which create negative working environments for them and expectations which differ from expectations of female teachers and are on top of those expectations which teachers, in general, have on them. What does this mean to teachers, parents, and administrators?

Teachers, parents, and administrators must seriously look at their perceptions to determine what impact these may be having on the male teachers within their building or potential teachers who happen to be male. Additionally, these stakeholders need to recognize their perceptions create pressures on male primary elementary teachers. These pressures, while they might have positive intentions, can create situations of severe stress on their male teachers. Male primary teachers themselves must recognize how they are responding to these perceptions and pressures. They need to advocate for themselves and be willing to speak about their feelings regarding these perceptions.

Administrators have an important role in responding to the generalizations regarding male primary elementary teachers. They have the ability to set and shape culture within their buildings. Administrators need to be aware of how they assign students to classrooms and not assume male teachers should have the entire fatherless and/or difficult to control students. Administrators should ensure, through their actions and words, that male teachers are treated as individuals and with the same basic expectations as the female teachers. Administrators should vigorously defend the reputations of their male teachers. Finally, administrators should look and hire quality male teachers to, first and foremost, fill open positions with a quality individual, and secondly to help decrease the uniqueness of male teachers and thus reshape the perceptions of the male teacher within their school community.

Acknowledging Limitations

It is acknowledged that there are limitations to this study. Pointing out these limitations does not delegitimize the study, but rather makes the study more transparent to the reader (Booth, et al., 2003). The first limitation deals with the numbers of individuals interviewed. Anytime more information can be collected it will help increase the generalizability of the study. What would have been ideal would have been to be able to interview more male primary elementary teachers. Their perspectives would have made for more viewpoints to be discovered. However, the very nature of the problem studied is there are hardly any male primary elementary teachers. These five individuals represented the voice of the male primary teacher in Eastern Missouri; therefore their voice in this study is particularly loud.

A second limitation rested in the fact that only one student responded. This created a situation where no major conclusions can be drawn from the student voice. If more students had responded, then their voices could have been added to the data and ultimately they could have influenced the findings.

A third limitation deals with the nature of qualitative research. The subjects, especially the parents, seemed hesitant to say anything negative. They were extremely worried that they were answering the questions correctly. Fortunately, the information gained was from honest answers to the questions and good findings could be drawn.

Implications for Future Practice

This study leads to the following recommendations, especially for school leaders: (a) perform a self-analysis of your perceptions surrounding male primary elementary teachers and whether they are different than your perceptions of female teachers, (b) ask yourself if you are exerting pressures on male primary elementary teachers which are different, and possibly in addition to what is placed on all other teachers, (c) make every effort to not place students in a male primary teacher's classroom strictly because of the teacher's gender, (d) you should vigorously defend the reputations of your male primary elementary teachers, and (e) every effort should be made to hire quality male teachers in the primary grades.

Performance of a self-analysis is good for any leader to do for a variety of issues, but in this case, the self-analysis will allow the leader to look at their own perceptions and see how they affect the lives of the male teachers in their buildings. By reading this study the building leader has an understanding of the common perceptions of male teachers. Leaders can use these to help monitor themselves and those around them. Leaders should keep in mind there are other perceptions regarding male primary elementary teachers which were not discussed and/or discovered in this study. Vigilance is required of leaders when it comes to how they perceive their teachers.

Knowing how they are pressuring their male teachers and how others are pressuring male teachers is a second recommendation for school leaders in their future practice. This goes back to the self-analysis mentioned earlier. Leaders

who better understand what unwritten and unspoken expectations they have of their male teachers will help make sure they are not creating situations of unnecessary stress for their male teachers. As before, the pressures discussed in this study will give leaders something to start with, but they are not an exhaustive list of pressures. Leaders must realize that each school setting is unique and there will be expectations and pressures unique to that setting.

Leaders typically control the final placement of students within classrooms. As a result, they wield a great deal of power over what kind of students each teacher is going to receive. This leads to the third recommendation for future practice. Leaders should avoid using the teacher's gender as a reason for placing a student within the teacher's classroom. For example a difficult young male student might be placed with a male teacher strictly because of the teacher's gender. Instead, students should be placed with teachers based on things like personality matches and teaching styles. This will help prevent the male primary elementary teacher from being overloaded with troublesome students. The benefits of this are twofold. First, the teacher will be less stressed and less likely to become burned out. Second, teachers who are looking at primary school as a career choice will see they will be treated fairly when it comes to student assignments.

The last two recommendations are linked. First, leaders must vigorously defend the reputations of their male teachers. At times when rumors or comments are made by other stakeholders regarding the male primary teacher, the leader should without hesitation speak to the quality and skills of that

particular teacher. Additionally, the leader should refrain from taking part in these discussions. When male teachers feel defended then they will feel less stressed and more supported in their position within the school. This promotes the male teacher staying in the field and makes the career choice more attractive for males. Linked to this is the necessity for the leader to hire more male teachers. What is key to this is that the school leader hires quality first and gender second. This ensures everyone knows the leader only hires individuals who are of top quality.

Recommendations for Further Study

There are several avenues for further study regarding this topic. First, an expanded qualitative study could be conducted. This study could look at male teachers at all levels and explore the various ways in which they interact with students, fellow staff members, parents, and school leaders. Again, perceptions and pressures could be looked at, but now the focus would be on the male teacher alone.

A second possible study would be a qualitative study which follows a few male teachers from the time they begin a college teaching program through their first few years of teaching. This would be a long term study and would require a great deal of time, planning, and cooperative subjects.

A third possible study would be a quantitative study. Large surveys of male teachers and other stakeholders could also be sent out and collected. These surveys could also look at perceptions and pressures. A quantitative study could look at the quality of male teachers. Researcher could look at assessment

data and determine whether male teachers perform better than female teachers on state assessments.

Summary

This study sought to better understand the perceptions of and pressures on male primary elementary teachers and how these affect behavior changes and career choices. What was sought through this study was a way for stakeholders to speak about this topic and explain their thoughts and feelings about male primary elementary teachers. The review of literature gave the researcher information to synthesize, and ultimately inform, the methodology used in this study. Questioning guides were developed based on the research questions which were developed with the review of literature kept in mind. These questions looked at perceptions, pressures, behavior changes, and career choices. A great deal of information was gained from the interview transcripts.

This information was analyzed and ultimately the common themes of touch, nurturer, role model/father figure, fitting in, amazing teachers, and weird were developed. These themes were utilized during analysis and ultimately, in chapter 4, helped the researcher develop the generalizations and answers to the research questions. Chapter 5 gave the researcher the opportunity to present the major findings, limitations, conclusions, and recommendations. This study was intended to give leaders and other stakeholders a better understanding of the impact of perceptions and pressures on male primary elementary teachers. This information is not exhaustive in nature, but can give leaders a better idea of what impact their perceptions and pressures have on male teachers. It is also hoped

that the leaders understand that they can shape the perceptions of others in the building. Ultimately, the numbers of male primary elementary teachers will only increase when they see perceptions and pressures changing.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL- Principal

The perceptions and pressures experienced by male primary elementary teachers and how these affect their behaviors and career choices

Participant: _____ Date of Interview: _____

1. Please state your name, gender, age, your position, years of experience, etc...
2. In your opinion, what qualities make for a good Kindergarten-third grade primary elementary teacher?
3. What do you think of when someone mentions a male primary elementary teacher?
4. Please describe the pressures, as you see them, male primary elementary teachers experience. Do these differ from pressures female primary elementary teachers experience? If so, how?
5. Do think male primary teachers change their behaviors at school after they have started teaching? If yes, please explain how and why?
6. Why do you think males, when they choose to teach, gravitate towards the higher grade levels? Administration?
7. Is there anything else you want to mention about male primary elementary teachers?

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL- Parents

The perceptions and pressures experienced by male primary elementary teachers and how these affect their behaviors and career choices

Participant: _____ Date of Interview: _____

1. Please tell me a little about yourself.
2. In your opinion, what qualities make for a good Kindergarten-third grade primary elementary teacher?
3. What do you think of when someone mentions a male primary elementary teacher?
4. Please describe the pressures, as you see them, male primary elementary teachers experience. Do these differ from pressures female primary elementary teachers experience? If so, how?
5. Do think male primary teachers change their behaviors at school after they have started teaching? If yes, please explain how and why?
6. Why do you think males, when they choose to teach, gravitate towards the higher grade levels? Administration?
7. Is there anything else you want to mention about male primary elementary teachers?

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL- Female Primary Elementary Teacher

The perceptions and pressures experienced by male primary elementary teachers and how these affect their behaviors and career choices

Participant: _____ Date of Interview: _____

1. Please state your name, gender, age, your position, years of experience, etc...
2. In your opinion, what qualities make for a good Kindergarten-third grade primary elementary teacher?
3. What do you think of when someone mentions a male primary elementary teacher?
4. Please describe the pressures, as you see them, male primary elementary teachers experience. Do these differ from pressures female primary elementary teachers experience? If so, how?
5. Do think male primary teachers change their behaviors at school after they have started teaching? If yes, please explain how and why?
6. Why do you think males, when they choose to teach, gravitate towards the higher grade levels? Administration?
7. Is there anything else you want to mention about male primary elementary teachers?

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL- Male Primary Elementary Teacher

The perceptions and pressures experienced by male primary elementary teachers and how these affect their behaviors and career choices

Participant: _____ Date of Interview: _____

1. Please state your name, gender, age, your position, years of experience, etc...
2. In your opinion, what qualities make for a good Kindergarten-third grade primary elementary teacher?
3. What do you think of when someone mentions a male primary elementary teacher?
4. Please describe the pressures, as you see them, male primary elementary teachers experience. Do these differ from pressures female primary elementary teachers experience? If so, how?
5. Do think male primary teachers change their behaviors at school after they have started teaching? If yes, please explain how and why?
6. Why do you think males, when they choose to teach, gravitate towards the higher grade levels? Administration?
7. What do you see as your role in teaching?
8. Is there anything else you want to mention about male primary elementary teachers?

APPENDIX E

APPENDIX F

Request for Participation

Month Day, 2011

Participant Name

Participant Address

Dear Superintendent,

I am a doctoral student at the University of Missouri and I am conducting research for my doctoral dissertation. It will be a qualitative study on the perceptions surrounding male primary elementary teachers, the pressures they have and how those perceptions and pressures influence their behaviors and career decisions.

I am informing you of my intention of contacting principals, teachers (both female and male), parents, and primary elementary students in your school district. I will be conducting interviews with interested individuals to ask them about their perceptions and experiences with/of or as a male primary elementary teacher. I will not be interviewing students, but instead, I will ask, with parent permission, that they provide a writing sample regarding what they think makes a good teacher.

I will keep all names and identifying information confidential and will share all results with those involved, and I will share the results of the study with you. If you do not wish me to contact individuals in your school district, please let me know by phone or email.

Thank you for your time and consideration

Darin Siefert

Festus Elementary Principal

Doctoral Student, University of Missouri

314-471-4859 (cell)

Dsiefert@yahoo.com

APPENDIX G

Request for Participation

Month Day, 2011

Participant Name

Participant Address

Dear Principal,

I am a doctoral student at the University of Missouri and I am conducting research for my doctoral dissertation. It will be a qualitative study on the perceptions surrounding male primary elementary teachers, the pressures they have and how those perceptions and pressures influence their behaviors and career decisions. I am asking you to participate.

Your involvement will require you to set aside time (approximately 15 minutes) for an interview where you will be asked about your perceptions of and experiences with male primary elementary teachers. You will be provided a transcript of the interview and will have the opportunity to change or clarify any statements made during the interview. I may also need to conduct follow up contacts in order to ask clarifying questions. I will share the results of the study with you.

Additionally, this letter is informing you that I may be contacting teachers and parents in your building for interviews and I might, with parent permission, ask primary students for a writing sample of what they think makes a good primary elementary teacher.

If you wish to participate, please sign and return the informed consent form attached to this letter. I will, upon receipt of the informed consent form, contact you to schedule the interview with you when it is most convenient for you. I can, if you wish, provide the interview questions in advance.

Thank you for your time and consideration

Darin Siefert

Festus Elementary Principal

Doctoral Student, University of Missouri

314-471-4859 (cell)

Dsiefert@yahoo.com

APPENDIX H

Request for Participation

Month Day, 2011

Participant Name

Participant Address

Dear Female Teacher,

I am a doctoral student at the University of Missouri and I am conducting research for my doctoral dissertation. It will be a qualitative study on the perceptions surrounding male primary elementary teachers, the pressures they have and how those perceptions and pressures influence their behaviors and career decisions. I am asking you to participate.

Your involvement will require you to set aside time (approximately 15 minutes) for an interview where you will be asked about your perceptions of and experiences with male primary elementary teachers. You will be provided a transcript of the interview and will have the opportunity to change or clarify any statements made during the interview. I may also need to conduct follow up contacts in order to ask clarifying questions. I will share the results of the study with you.

Additionally, this letter is informing you that I may be asking parents in your classroom for interviews and I might, with parent permission, ask primary students for a writing sample of what they think makes a good primary elementary teacher.

If you wish to participate, please sign and return the informed consent form attached to this letter. I will, upon receipt of the informed consent form, contact you to schedule the interview with you when it is most convenient for you. I can, if you wish, provide the interview questions in advance.

Thank you for your time and consideration

Darin Siefert

Festus Elementary Principal

Doctoral Student, University of Missouri

314-471-4859 (cell)

Dsiefert@yahoo.com

APPENDIX I

Request for Participation

Month Day, 2011

Participant Name

Participant Address

Dear Male Teacher,

I am a doctoral student at the University of Missouri and I am conducting research for my doctoral dissertation. It will be a qualitative study on the perceptions surrounding male primary elementary teachers, the pressures they have and how those perceptions and pressures influence their behaviors and career decisions. I am asking you to participate.

Your involvement will require you to set aside time (approximately 15 minutes) for an interview where you will be asked about your perceptions of and experiences as a male primary elementary teacher. You will be provided a transcript of the interview and will have the opportunity to change or clarify any statements made during the interview. I may also need to conduct follow up contacts in order to ask clarifying questions. I will share the results of the study with you.

Additionally, this letter is informing you that I may be asking parents in your classroom for interviews and I might, with parent permission, ask primary students for a writing sample of what they think makes a good primary elementary teacher.

If you wish to participate, please sign and return the informed consent form attached to this letter. I will, upon receipt of the informed consent form, contact you to schedule the interview with you when it is most convenient for you. I can, if you wish, provide the interview questions in advance.

Thank you for your time and consideration

Darin Siefert

Festus Elementary Principal

Doctoral Student, University of Missouri

314-471-4859 (cell)

Dsiefert@yahoo.com

APPENDIX J

Request for Participation

Month Day, 2011

Participant Name

Participant Address

Dear Parent,

I am a doctoral student at the University of Missouri and I am conducting research for my doctoral dissertation. It will be a qualitative study on the perceptions surrounding male primary elementary teachers, the pressures they have and how those perceptions and pressures influence their behaviors and career decisions. I am asking you to participate.

Your involvement will require you to set aside time (approximately 15 minutes) for an interview where you will be asked about your perceptions of and experiences with male primary elementary teachers. You will be provided a transcript of the interview and will have the opportunity to change or clarify any statements made during the interview. I may also need to conduct follow up contacts in order to ask clarifying questions. I will share the results of the study with you.

Additionally, this letter is asking you for permission to have your child provide a writing sample of what they think makes a good primary elementary teacher (see attached writing sample sheet).

If you wish to participate, please sign and return the informed consent form attached to this letter. I will, upon receipt of the informed consent form, contact you to schedule the interview with you when it is most convenient for you. I can, if you wish, provide the interview questions in advance.

Thank you for your time and consideration

Darin Siefert

Festus Elementary Principal

Doctoral Student, University of Missouri

314-471-4859 (cell)

Dsiefert@yahoo.com

APPENDIX K

Request for Participation

Month Day, 2011

Participant Name

Participant Address

Dear Parent,

I am a doctoral student at the University of Missouri and I am conducting research for my doctoral dissertation. It will be a qualitative study on the perceptions surrounding male primary elementary teachers, the pressures they have and how those perceptions and pressures influence their behaviors and career decisions. I am asking for your permission to have your child participate.

Your child's involvement will require them to set aside time (approximately 15 minutes) for a written response to a writing prompt (see attached). Your child will also be asked to draw a picture with the prompt. You will be provided with a copy of your child's writing prompt. You can also withdraw your child's participation at any time.

If you wish your child to participate, please sign and return the informed consent form attached to this letter. I will, upon receipt of the informed consent form, contact you to schedule the writing prompt completion with you when it is most convenient for you and your child

Thank you for your time and consideration

Darin Siefert

Festus Elementary Principal

Doctoral Student, University of Missouri

314-471-4859 (cell)

Dsiefert@yahoo.com

APPENDIX L

University of Missouri Informed Consent Letter for Teacher Participation

Title: The perceptions and pressures experienced by male primary elementary teachers and how these affect their behaviors and career choices.

Researcher: Darin Siefert, Doctoral Student **Campus IRB Project Number:** 1190257

Purpose: This study involves research. The purpose of this study is to investigate the perceptions held by parents, children, teachers (both male and female), and administrators of male primary elementary teachers and how these perceptions lead to pressures which impact the behaviors and career choices of male primary elementary teachers.

Information: Teacher participants will be contacted by letter asking for their participation in the study. Participants will be asked for an interview at a time which is convenient to them. Interview questions will be available in advance if desired. The interview will last about fifteen minutes. The interview will be recorded with a digital audio recorder and transcribed. This transcription and the writing samples will be analyzed and coded for themes which will be used to answer the research question: How do perceptions of and pressures on male primary elementary teachers by all stakeholders affect their behavior and career choices?

Risks and Benefits: There are no anticipated risks for any participant. Participants will receive a copy of the study. The study will help principals, teachers, and parents better understand how their perceptions affect current male teachers and how they help or hinder males in choosing primary education as a career.

Confidentiality: You have a right to privacy in your responses, and this right will not be violated. Pseudonyms will be used throughout the study. Audio recordings will be kept on the researchers password protected computer.

Voluntary participation: Your involvement in the research is completely voluntary. Refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which the subject is otherwise entitled. The subject may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which the subject is otherwise entitled.

Informed consent: My signature below indicates that I have read the above information. I agree to participate in this study and have received a copy of this form.

Participant: _____ **Date:** _____

Researcher: _____ **(Darin Siefert) Date:** _____

Contact: If you have any questions regarding this study or the procedures you may contact:

Darin Siefert, Researcher
1807 Iron Mountain Drive, Festus, MO 63028
314-471-4859 (cell)
dsiefert@yahoo.com or

Dr. Ruth Ann Roberts, Dissertation Committee
Chairperson
Educational Leadership and Counseling
One University Plaza MS 5550
Southeast Missouri State University
Cape Girardeau, MO 63701
573-651-2426
Raroberts@semo.edu

Contacting: If you wish to speak with someone regarding the rights of the research participant, contact,

University of Missouri Campus Institutional Review Board (IRB)
483 McReynolds, University of Missouri, Columbia, Missouri 65211
573-882-9585 (phone)
573-884-0663 (fax)
<https://irb.missouri.edu>

Campus IRB Approved Date, April 26, 2011
Project Expiration Date, April 26, 2012
Project Number 1190257

APPENDIX M

University of Missouri Informed Consent Letter for Principal Participation

Title: The perceptions and pressures experienced by male primary elementary teachers and how these affect their behaviors and career choices.

Researcher: Darin Siefert, Doctoral Student **Campus IRB Project Number:** 1190257

Purpose: This study involves research. The purpose of this study is to investigate the perceptions held by parents, children, teachers (both male and female), and administrators of male primary elementary teachers and how these perceptions lead to pressures which impact the behaviors and career choices of male primary elementary teachers.

Information: Principal participants will be contacted by letter asking for their participation in the study. Participants will be asked for an interview at a time which is convenient to them. Interview questions will be available in advance if desired. The interview will last about fifteen minutes. The interview will be recorded with a digital audio recorder and transcribed. This transcription and the writing samples will be analyzed and coded for themes which will be used to answer the research question: How do perceptions of and pressures on male primary elementary teachers by all stakeholders affect their behavior and career choices?

Risks and Benefits: There are no anticipated risks for any participant. Participants will receive a copy of the study. The study will help principals, teachers, and parents better understand how their perceptions affect current male teachers and how they help or hinder males in choosing primary education as a career.

Confidentiality: You have a right to privacy in your responses, and this right will not be violated. Pseudonyms will be used throughout the study. Audio recordings will be kept on the researchers password protected computer.

Voluntary participation: Your involvement in the research is completely voluntary. Participants also have the right to withdraw from the study at any time.

Informed consent: My signature below indicates that I have read the above information. I agree to participate in this study and have received a copy of this form.

Participant: _____ **Date:** _____

Researcher: _____ **(Darin Siefert) Date:** _____

Contact: If you have any questions regarding this study or the procedures you may contact:

Darin Siefert, Researcher
1807 Iron Mountain Drive, Festus, MO 63028
314-471-4859 (cell)
dsiefert@yahoo.com

Dr. Ruth Ann Roberts, Dissertation Committee
Chairperson
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One University Plaza MS 5550
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573-651-2426
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or

Contacting: If you wish to speak with someone regarding the rights of the research participant, contact,

University of Missouri Campus Institutional Review Board (IRB)
483 McReynolds, University of Missouri, Columbia, Missouri 65211
573-882-9585 (phone)
573-884-0663 (fax)
<https://irb.missouri.edu>

Campus IRB Approved Date, April 26, 2011
Project Expiration Date, April 26, 2012
Project Number 1190257

APPENDIX N

University of Missouri Informed Consent Letter for Parent Participation

Title: The perceptions and pressures experienced by male primary elementary teachers and how these affect their behaviors and career choices.

Researcher: Darin Siefert, Doctoral Student **Campus IRB Project Number:** 1190257

Purpose: This study involves research. The purpose of this study is to investigate the perceptions held by parents, children, teachers (both male and female), and administrators of male primary elementary teachers and how these perceptions lead to pressures which impact the behaviors and career choices of male primary elementary teachers.

Information: Parent participants will be contacted by letter asking for their participation in the study. Participants will be asked for an interview at a time which is convenient to them. Interview questions will be available in advance if desired. The interview will last about fifteen minutes. The interview will be recorded with a digital audio recorder and transcribed. This transcription will be analyzed and coded for themes which will be used to answer the research question: How do perceptions of and pressures on male primary elementary teachers by all stakeholders affect their behavior and career choices?

Risks and Benefits: There are no anticipated risks for any participant. Participants will receive a copy of the study. The study will help principals, teachers, and parents better understand how their perceptions affect current male teachers and how they help or hinder males in choosing primary education as a career.

Confidentiality: You have a right to privacy in your responses, and this right will not be violated. Pseudonyms will be used throughout the study. Audio recordings will be kept on the researchers password protected computer.

Voluntary participation: Your involvement in the research is completely voluntary. Refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which the subject is otherwise entitled. The subject may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which the subject is otherwise entitled.

Informed consent: My signature below indicates that I have read the above information. I agree to participate in this study and have received a copy of this form.

Participant: _____ **Date:** _____

Researcher: _____ **(Darin Siefert) Date:** _____

Contact: If you have any questions regarding this study or the procedures you may contact:

Darin Siefert, Researcher
1807 Iron Mountain Drive, Festus, MO 63028
314-471-4859 (cell)
dsiefert@yahoo.com

or

Dr. Ruth Ann Roberts, Dissertation Committee
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One University Plaza MS 5550
Southeast Missouri State University
Cape Girardeau, MO 63701
573-651-2426
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Contacting: If you wish to speak with someone regarding the rights of the research participant, contact,

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Campus IRB Approved Date, April 26, 2011

Project Expiration Date, April 26, 2012

Project Number 1190257

APPENDIX O

Child Participation Script

Hi, my name is Darin Siefert and I'm a principal of a nearby elementary school. I am also a student. I am trying to learn more about teachers and what people think of them. I need your help; I want to know what kids think about teachers. I am asking that you give me a little time. I have a writing prompt for you to answer. All I need is for you to describe, in your opinion, the perfect teacher. You can also draw a picture. By writing you will help give me information I can use to find out more about teachers.

Participating in this project is voluntary. If you do not want to participate, you do not have to. If you do not want to participate, please say so now. Otherwise, here is the writing prompt. Take your time, do your best, and turn it in when you are finished.

I want to participate in this study. (sign below)

Print your name and write the date on the line above.

Campus IRB Approved Date, April 26, 2011
Project Expiration Date, April 26, 2012
Project Number 1190257

APPENDIX P

University of Missouri Informed Consent Letter for Parent Permission for their Child's Participation

Title: The perceptions and pressures experienced by male primary elementary teachers and how these affect their behaviors and career choices.

Researcher: Darin Siefert, Doctoral Student **Campus IRB Project Number:** 1190257

Purpose: This study involves research. The purpose of this study is to investigate the perceptions held by parents, children, teachers (both male and female), and administrators of male primary elementary teachers and how these perceptions lead to pressures which impact the behaviors and career choices of male primary elementary teachers.

Information: Student participants will be asked to respond to a writing/picture prompt which asks them to "describe the perfect teacher". This writing sample will be analyzed and coded for themes which will be used to answer the research question: How do perceptions of and pressures on male primary elementary teachers by all stakeholders affect their behavior and career choices?

Risks and Benefits: There are no anticipated risks for any participant. Parents of the student participants will receive a copy of the study. The study will help principals, teachers, and parents better understand how their perceptions affect current male teachers and how they help or hinder males in choosing primary education as a career.

Confidentiality: You have a right to privacy in your responses, and this right will not be violated. Pseudonyms will be used throughout the study. Audio recordings will be kept on the researchers password protected computer.

Voluntary participation: Your child's involvement in the research is completely voluntary. Refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which the subject is otherwise entitled. The subject may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which the subject is otherwise entitled.

Informed consent: My signature below indicates that I have read the above information. I agree to allow my child to participate in this study and I have received a copy of this form.

Participant: _____ **Date:** _____

Researcher: _____ **(Darin Siefert) Date:** _____

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Contacting: If you wish to speak with someone regarding the rights of the research participant, contact,
University of Missouri Campus Institutional Review Board (IRB)
483 McReynolds, University of Missouri, Columbia, Missouri 65211
573-882-9585 (phone)
573-884-0663 (fax)
<https://irb.missouri.edu>

Campus IRB Approved Date: June 6, 2011

Expiration Date: April 26, 2012

VITA

Darin Siefert was born in 1975 in Murphysboro, IL. He was raised in this small town and graduated from Murphysboro High School in 1993. He continued his education at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale and graduated in 1997 with a Bachelor of Science in History. He began teaching in Missouri and taught both Middle School and High School Social Studies. He finished his Master's Degree in Educational Administration from Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville and quickly moved into the principalship at Festus Elementary School. He finished his academic studies with a doctorate in Education from the University of Missouri. He lives in Festus with his wife and son.

He enjoys reading, cooking, sampling microbrews, and most importantly spending time with his family. He plans on continuing his career in education by learning more about the role of principal and increasing his effectiveness at it. Ultimately he sees himself moving into a district level position. Until that time, he will continue to learn and lead students and teachers in a positive direction.