WHY DO MEN CHOOSE TO TEACH EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION?
A STUDY IN INTERPRETIVE INTERACTIONISM

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EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

ABSTRACT

The area of early childhood education has been viewed by society as a traditional career choice which is appropriate for females; however men who make the career choice to teach at the early childhood level are often viewed with suspicion or curiosity at the very least. There was very little literature on the topic of males and early childhood to examine. Most of the studies involved males the entire elementary program were minimal. These studies addressed these negative aspects which male early childhood teachers deal with on an everyday basis.

The amount of research conducted on male early childhood teachers who enjoy this profession was scant at best. The majority of the current literature focused on the negative aspects of this career choice and why these men were leaving the field altogether. This study sought to remedy these deficiencies by exploring five male early childhood teachers’ perceptions about their career choice. An interpretive interactionism study was developed to answer the following questions:

1. How do male teachers who teach at the early childhood level describe how they perceive themselves in this predominantly female occupation?

2. What factors influenced the participants to teach at this level?

3. What special challenges and rewards has each participant faced in his career because of his gender?
4. How does the participant describe his role as a member of a predominantly female faculty?

The five male early childhood teachers were selected using a purposeful sampling technique. The sites for the study, Walker County Schools and Hoover City Schools in central Alabama, were chosen because male teachers would be actively involved in teaching at the early childhood level of school and the sites were in a central location for the researcher. In order to provide a thick, rich description (Geertz, 1973), the researcher used three primary methods of data collection: interviews, observations, and journaling.

The study began in March 2010 and continued through February 2011. The interviews were audio-taped and transcribed verbatim. The transcripts were coded and recoded using both the traditional method of coding and the NVivo software program. Three themes and eleven subthemes were identified from the analysis of the data. These themes were developed into a narrative report that addressed the findings of the research questions.
DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to two individuals who contributed unselfishly throughout the extent of this study. These individuals sacrificed of themselves so that I could accomplish my dreams. To my parents, Luke and Olivia Jordan: your unwavering prayers and love will be forever cherished.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge several people for their assistance during my doctoral work. I would especially like to thank my advisor and committee chair, Dr. Lois Christensen, for her generous time and commitment. Throughout my doctoral work she encouraged me to independently think, question, and evaluate.

I am also very grateful for having an exceptional doctoral committee and wish to thank Dr. Charles Calhoun, Dr. Kay Emfinger, Dr. Lynn Kirkland, and Dr. Maryann Manning for their continual support and encouragement.

I extend my heartfelt thanks to the five male early childhood teachers who lent their time, experience, and emotions to this study. Without their contribution, this study would not have been possible.

Finally, I would like to thank my family. I am thankful for my parents, Luke and Olivia Jordan. My mother and father have offered a lifetime of support, encouragement, and prayer. This gift of love will always be treasured.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Background

Early childhood is arguably the most important period of development in the life of a child. Lascarides and Hinitz (2000) explained that pioneers in early childhood such as Plato, Comenius, Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Froebel, Dewey, and others agreed that it is these early years of childhood which determine much of what happens later in life. Do females make the best teachers for this critical time in a child’s life? Many assume it is naturally suited to females. Jones (2003) concluded that society in general views women as pre-disposed to nurturing and caring. However, this discussion begs the question: “Can a male perform the task of nurturing as well as retaining his masculinity in the classroom setting?” Today many young children are being raised in single parent families, often headed by a female. Their experiences at school are with female caregivers and educators. What about the men who choose to teach at this level? Why aren’t there more male teachers pursuing a career in early childhood education? Are there any obstacles to choosing this as a career path for males? Are there any rewards or considerations which factor into this decision? How do these males teaching at the early childhood level see themselves in this traditionally and predominantly female career?
Several researchers have explored the perceptions of these male teachers, as well as their families and peer groups, female colleagues, administrators, and university faculty involved with the early childhood education program. Cohen (1992) explained:

Only 12.4% of the nation’s roughly 1.2 million full-time public elementary school teachers were men. The vast share of male teachers are in the upper grades, and many trained in early childhood education move rapidly into higher-paying and higher status jobs in school administration and higher education. (p. 11)

Most men who are in the field of education gravitated toward the upper grades, i.e. middle school and high school, or simply opted for the administrative position completely. As discussed by Cooney and Bittner (2001), some of the factors that kept men from careers at the early childhood level are low paying jobs as well as the low status in the eyes of society as a whole: “Low salaries were discussed by the men at every focus group session…A theme centered around a public perception about the field of teaching as undemanding (e.g. summers off)” (p. 78). An increased number of child molestation cases have also taken their toll on men making the decision to teach in the lower grades. Men who are teaching young children often stated that they are viewed with suspicion by the public. Jones (2003) went on to state that our society views women as having the almost genetic disposition to nurture and that much of the public, including some educators, view men as incapable of filling this role.

Statement of the Problem

There is a great deficiency of research in the area of male teachers in early childhood education. Most of the studies are primarily elaborations of the reasons why men are either not choosing careers in early childhood education or why they are leaving this field altogether. Overall these sources leave the reader with a rather bleak outlook for
the future of male teachers in early childhood education. Simply, there are not enough studies which illuminate the positive aspects, contributions, and experiences of men in the field.

I have chosen to explore the self-perceptions of five male teachers currently teaching at the early childhood level. This research problem addresses the unique position of men who teach in the predominantly female field of early childhood education and explores why these men made this particular choice and how they saw themselves in this role.

Purpose of the Study

This interpretive interactionism study was to understand the self-perceptions of five male teachers in the southeast who decided to teach at the early childhood level of school. At this stage in the research “self-perceptions” will be generally defined as how these teachers viewed themselves in a predominantly female occupational setting.

Significance of the Study

Men’s perceptions of themselves as early childhood teachers are also crucial if educators want to understand the factors that often lead men to abandon the classroom. This study will provide essential information to decrease current deficiencies in the body of research by contributing to the existing base of knowledge in this area. More studies must be done to gain an insight into why men choose this career and what factors keep them in the classroom.
This study targets an audience in teacher education programs, school systems, and particular schools to provide an additional resource to encourage men who are considering a career in early childhood education. It will serve as a starting place for the aforementioned to “draft” men into the early childhood teaching ranks. Men should gain insights from the interviews of these five teachers of early childhood education and what led them to this career choice and what keeps them there. This project will also contribute to the extant knowledge on the topic and shed some light on the more positive, specific aspects of being a male early childhood teacher.

Research Questions

The central research question for this study was the following: “How do male teachers who teach at the early childhood level describe how they perceive themselves in this predominantly female occupation?” The research sub-questions included: “What factors influenced the participants to teach at this level?”; “What special challenges and rewards has each participant faced in his career because of his gender?”; “How does the participant describe his role as a member of a predominantly female faculty?”

Definitions of Terms

*Early Childhood Education:* Generally agreed to include birth through age eight.

*Primary Education:* In the U.S., this is considered equivalent with Early Childhood Education; that is preschool years through at least third grade. However, in other areas of the world the term primary education is used to denote the entire elementary education program; that is preschool through grade five.
Elementary Education: Generally assumed to include grades from kindergarten through the fifth grade.

A.C.E.I.: Association for Childhood Education International

D.A.P.: Developmentally Appropriate Practice

I.K.U.: International Kindergarten Union

N.A.N.E.: National Association for Nursery Education

N.A.E.Y.C.: National Association for the Education of Young Children

Nursery School: Considered to be schooling before the kindergarten year.

Assumptions

The assumptions of this study include:

1. The teachers chosen for this study were all male teachers currently teaching at the early childhood stage of school.

2. The early childhood stage of school is considered to range from pre-kindergarten through third grade.

3. The participant would remain involved for the duration of the study.

4. The participant was truly passionate about his choice to teach at the early childhood level and taught at this level of his own choosing.

5. The semi-structured interview would be conducted within the teacher’s classroom.

6. The participant would answer all the questions truthfully and respectively.

7. The researcher would become an advocate for these men teaching at this level.
Limitations

There are generally several limitations for any study conducted. Any of these limitations independently or combined may have prevented the findings of this study to be applied or transferred to another research setting. There are several limitations that this researcher sees for this particular study.

1. There were only five participants in this study. This limited number may or may not affect the generalizability of this study. This fact alone does not provide a great deal of diversity among the participants.

2. All of the participants were Caucasian and were middle-class. This may have an affect on their views of teaching.

3. All of the participants in this study are located within the same state in somewhat the same area of the state, albeit two different counties.

4. All of the participants teach in what may be considered middle to upper class school systems. There were no participants from what may be considered urban or lower socio-economic school systems.

5. The majority of the interviews were conducted during the school day during the teacher’s planning period. This may have decreased the amount of time that the participant could have provided further elaboration.

6. The researcher is also a male early childhood teacher and this fact may or may not skew the interpretation of the data. The researcher knows some of the participants very well. This may have biased some of the analysis of the data. The researcher also feels passionately about this subject area and has been involved with the exploration of this topic since an Ed.S. project in 2005.
Organization of the Study

The purpose of Chapter One is to provide the reader a brief background, statement of the problem, the purpose and significance of the study, and specific research questions. A section defining unfamiliar terms, along with the assumptions and limitations are included in this section. Chapter Two provides a review of literature beginning with a history of early childhood education, along with the feminization of early childhood education. Finally, a section of current research is organized by different topics related to men in early childhood education. Chapter Three focuses on the design of qualitative research, philosophical assumptions, a description of the participants and research sites. Data collection methods, data analysis and creating a sense of trustworthiness follow. Ethical considerations and researcher bias are discussed at the close of this chapter. Chapter Four is an analysis of the actual data as well as a discussion of the themes and subthemes which emerged as a result of this analysis. Finally, Chapter Five concludes with a summary of the major findings, a review of the how well the research questions were answered, implications for current practice and recommendations for future research are included.

Summary

The first chapter of this dissertation is dedicated to the basic tenets of the study. A brief background which describes the current conditions of men who are teaching at the early childhood level is followed by the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study and the significance of the study. The research questions are listed explicitly. After
this, there is a listing of terms, the assumptions, the limitations and finally the overall organization of the study.
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

…the beginning is the most important part of any work, especially in the case of a young and tender thing; for that is the time at which the character is being formed.” (Plato, *The Republic*)

Introduction

The field of early childhood education is seen today by society as primarily a female occupation. However, this “feminization” of the field has come as a result of a metamorphosis from a male dominated field for many years. Many of our foundations in the area of early childhood are directly related to men who have contributed significantly throughout the centuries. Educational leaders such as Plato, Comenius, Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Froebel, Owen, and Dewey saw the importance of the early childhood period and its relation to later development. These men studied, developed and wrote on the practice for years prior to the female leadership we see in today’s early childhood education.

Male Leaders in Early Childhood Education

Plato (427 B.C.E. – 347 B.C.E.)

Ancient Greece was a culture which placed a high value on childhood, however formal education was still seen as an opportunity for the few and privileged. Friedlander
(1958) explained Plato wrote that the content taught to young children should be selected carefully and that both boys and girls should have equal access to a quality education at a young age. Nettleship (1968) reported as an early childhood educator, Plato believed learning should be acquired through various experiences. He viewed play as an important component of the learning process. Plato saw the value in the playing of games as a way of teaching rules to very young children. Plato also believed young children at the early childhood ages could benefit from the use of manipulatives such as building blocks to facilitate learning. Plato wrote that young children should be actively involved in the construction of their own learning. Plato also believed that education should benefit the whole child. He viewed education as involving the arts, physical education and logical reasoning, as well as mathematics even for very young children.

John Comenius (1592 – 1670)

John Comenius (1956) stated that as an early childhood educator, he believed that learning should be a positive experience. He was a strong advocate that learning should be meaningful to the learner and in the learner’s own language. Comenius is credited with writing the first illustrated children’s book, *Orbis Pictus*, and it was published in 1658. The title means “the visible world in pictures.” This book would be used for the next 200 years in early childhood education and would be translated into languages around the world. The book is a collection of illustrations of common objects which are numbered and labeled for the reader. Included in this text is an alphabet where each letter corresponds to a different animal or object. This simple format was a great advancement in teaching techniques of the day.
Comenius (1957) also wrote on the topic of developmentally appropriate learning. He fought against trying to force children to learn beyond their maturity level. Even then, he realized children learned at different rates and teaching should be developed in accordance with their current level of acuity. Comenius believed that children should be exposed to the natural world at a young age and the senses were critical in the development of learning. He believed that learning should involve activity. This activity could be in the form of nursery rhymes, games, music, and simple tasks. He saw the value of play, as well as play with other children in learning. The learner would develop as a result of his or her own curiosity.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778)

Clayton (1969) explained that in contrast to his contemporaries, Rousseau believed that knowledge was already in the child and was waiting to be developed. Rousseau believed that this learning should always be relevant to the child’s experiences. Rousseau believed that children should be allowed to develop at their own rate, similar to the beliefs of Comenius discussed earlier in this section. Rousseau explained first five years would be the most critical in the subsequent development of the individual. He believed that children are instinctively good and pure and needed to be protected from negative outside influences.

Like Plato and Comenius before him, Rousseau also advocated first-hand, real experiences for the child. He saw children as learning primarily through discovery. He saw no difference in work and play. The child-centered approach in early childhood programs is in many ways a result of Rousseau’s views on how the child learns. He
believed children learn differently and children be taught according to their learning styles. Many of Rousseau’s ideas served as the foundation for later works by Dewey, Pestalozzi, and Froebel (Cranston, 1983).

Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746-1827)

Gutek (1968) stated that Pestalozzi, as an early childhood educator, stated that young children learn best by making use of manipulatives in the learning process, notably the use of common, everyday objects as learning tools to aid in the development of the whole child. He believed that much of knowledge was obtained through the senses. The idea was to move from the simple to the complex. The progression should be as natural as possible. The learning of mathematical concepts in early childhood is structured primarily from his work with object lessons. Items that are touched, counted, and measured are much more meaningful to the young child. He believed children learned by doing rather than memorizing.

Green (1968) reported that Pestalozzi was a strong advocate for educating the whole child, a term used in many early childhood curriculums today. The school should resemble the learning in the home as closely as possible. Pestalozzi also believed that the role of the teacher was critical in the learning process. The teacher should be a model for the child, much like the parents. He thought that if the teacher is sensitive to the individual development of the child, the child would be much more successful.

Friedrich Froebel (1782-1852)

Friedrich Froebel is considered to be the Father of Kindergarten. As an
early childhood educator, Froebel wrote (1902) that he began a school for small children and saw this as a place where children could learn and grow, hence the name “kindergarten”. He wanted the child to be free to fully develop. Froebel avoided the term “school” because he wanted this to be a different kind of experience for the young child. Froebel believed education should progress in an orderly and continuous pattern. A few years after starting the program, Froebel left the school and began teaching other teachers of his methods. He travelled extensively through Europe. His first class of kindergarten teachers was all men! He later became convinced that women made better teachers at this level than men. This idea was first viewed with scorn since women were seen as incapable of holding a position of employment outside of the home. This notion was soon accepted and women began to be seen as the most appropriate choice for a career in early childhood education.

Froebel (1900) believed play was an important component to learning. Froebel also held to the belief that children grow and develop as the result of first-hand experiences and discovery, not rote lessons to be learned. Frobel also believed children learn at their own pace and this pace should be considered when educational activities are developed. Nature played an important role in the learning process. Children should be exposed to the world around them in order to see the connection and unity of all things.

Froebel (1902) is well-known in early childhood circles for his “gifts”. These were materials provided from god. This god was not the God of Judeo-Christian origin, but rather a force in the universe which provided a sense of unity. These gifts were manipulatives that the children used to learn of larger truths. Some of the occupations or activities include paper cutting, drawing, weaving, pasting, paper folding, painting, and
playing with clay or sand. Many of these same items and activities are still found in kindergarten classrooms all over the world. Along with the gifts and occupations, Froebel also began to incorporate circle time into the kindergarten curriculum. This is still an important part of any kindergarten day. It is a time of sharing and building relationships with one another. Froebel believed the importance of play. He was an advocate for leaving the classroom and allowing the children to experience life beyond the walls of the classroom through fieldtrips. Music and songs were also an integral part of the curriculum.

Robert Owen (1771-1858)

One of Robert Owen’s contributions to early childhood education is that he developed the first workplace childcare/education program in the western hemisphere in 1816. Owen (1920), like his predecessors Rousseau and Pestalozzi, had a vision in which education was seen as the catalyst which would lead to an improved, enlightened society. His “experiment” for social reform began in a small town in Scotland called New Lanark. Owen created a school located on the grounds of the New Lanark Mills.

Owen (1991) explained that many natural items from the garden, fields, and woods were considered important components of the curriculum. Owen believed that these excited children’s natural curiosity. The school at New Lanark also made use of a variety of manipulatives, as well as visual aids to help children learn. An area was available area as an enclosed garden at the front of the building. Children were encouraged to be in the open air as much as possible. The playground also contained a large paved area and a sheltered area where children could play outdoors during rainy
weather. This attention to providing a specific area for the important concept of play was unprecedented. Both male and female teachers were employed to provide a balanced approach to learning.

John Dewey (1859-1952)

John Dewey is viewed by many as the “Father of the Progressive Movement” in education. His ideas regarding progressive education are still cornerstones for early childhood educators today. Dewey developed the Laboratory School in 1896 while he was at the University of Chicago as head of the Department of Philosophy and Psychology. It was here at this Laboratory School that Dewey began to explore his theories on early childhood education. Dewey (1897) explained that the curriculum could be integrated naturally into the lived experience of the child. He believed that if the subjects were relevant to the child and related to real-life that integration would result naturally. The curriculum would result from the changing needs and interests of the developing child.

The basic principles of the school according to Dewey (1914) were to use developmentally appropriate practices (D.A.P.); early school experiences to reflect the home life; cooperation among the children in the school would be a primary goal; learning would come as a result of natural problem solving; motivation would be internal; and the teacher’s role was to know the child and present appropriate problem-solving situations to the child. Children moved through the program by engaging first in tasks directly related to the home and then on to tasks generally found in the community such as manufacturing and agriculture, much like constructivist practices. The children also
studied local history, explored foreign language and took a variety of field trips; all with the focus on learning with each other and from each other.

Dewey’s ideas on education included: there should be a close relationship between the home, the school, and the community; subject matter should always be relevant to the learner; the experience of the learner must be an important consideration in the development of the curriculum; teaching should be individualized based on the needs of the learner; children learn best when the learning meets a direct need of the learner; children need contact with other people; the whole child should be developed as a result of learning; meaningful activity has more value for the learner; activity should have and meet a purpose for the learner.

Feminization of the Field of Early Childhood Education

Historically in the early days of this country the profession of teaching was considered to be almost an exclusively male profession. According to Dan Lortie (1975):

The model teacher of the colonial period was male, a schoolmaster who taught in “petty schools” where basic reading and arithmetic were learned. Less frequently, he taught in the more advanced “grammar schools” of the day. Women teachers existed, but apparently constituted a minority. They taught primarily in “dame’s schools” in which pupils studied in the teacher’s home. (p. 8)

Lortie also wrote that “Salaries earned by women teachers were consistently lower than those awarded men” (p.8). Lortie went on to state:

Thousands of schools were created as public education expanded during the nineteenth century, and it was not long before the schools were staffed primarily by women. By 1870, for example, there were 123,000 women teaching and 78,000 men; year after year thereafter, the proportion of women increased. By 1930 there were five times as many females as male teachers, and the men who did teach taught primarily in the higher grades. (p. 8)
Butts and Cremin (1953) stated that they did not find the feminization of teaching mysterious; they see the cause as economic:

…Since women could be hired for considerably less than men. Teaching was comparatively attractive to women: they had, after all, few alternatives. The major options they faced were domestic service, employment in factories, and types of work which were extensions of feminine functions in the home—such as laundering and baking. (p. 8)

According to Lortie (1975), it was after the Civil War that the country began to move toward more industrial growth. With the lure of higher salaries and the possibility of promotion, the option of teaching became less attractive to most men. It was also during this time the teaching was first acknowledged as a feminine profession, especially in the early grades. Most men in education were expected to gravitate to the upper grades or opt out of the classroom completely for administrative positions. Teaching was viewed as acceptable lifelong work for women, but for men it was often considered a stepping stone to something else.

Lascarides and Hinitz (2000) explained that Horace Mann, known to many as the “Father of American Public Schools,” made many major contributions to education:

Horace Mann gave us universal education through free public schools, introduced teacher training by creating normal schools and teachers’ institutes, established public libraries for schools, and discouraged corporal punishment. (p. 191)

Horace Mann also helped contribute to the feminization of early childhood education. Lascarides and Hinitz stated that he was an advocate of employing more women as teachers, especially in the early grades. He argued that women were just more naturally suited to this position of caring and nurturing. The authors go on to explain:

His principal argument was that women were better suited by nature to educate and guide young children. They possess a disposition more in harmony with young children who need kindness and not force. They lay deep foundations, by
training the children in the way they should go. His thinking is very reminiscent of Froebel’s ideas. (p. 199)

Current Research

The research which has been done over the last few years with regard to the role of men and early childhood education specifically was scarce. Most of the research which has been conducted focused on men as elementary school teachers so the topic of men and early childhood education must be assumed to be included in this research (Anliak & Beyazkurk, 2008; Cohen, 1992; Cooney & Bittner, 2001; Coulter & McNay, 1993; Gamble & Wilkins, 1997; Jones 2003; McNay, 2001; Milloy, 2003; Montecinos, 2004; Roulston & Mills, 2000; Sargent, 2004; Skelton, 1994; Skelton, 2003; Sumasion, 1999; Sumasion, 2000; Wiest 2003). These researchers have explored the perceptions of male teachers, as well as their female colleagues, supervisors, and college faculty.

Table 1 List of Research Studies

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<tr>
<td>Cooney &amp; Bittner</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Male Pre-service and Classroom Teachers, and Male Professors</td>
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<td>Male Classroom Teachers</td>
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**Social Attitudes**

Careers working with young children are still viewed today as feminine in nature. Although women have made great strides at forging into what were considered traditionally male careers, such as medicine, engineering, military, etc., men have not had the same positive results when it comes to entering traditionally female careers, such as early childhood education. Many still believe that early childhood education is a more suitable career choice for women than for men. Lynda Wiest (2003) identified the current situation of male elementary teachers by listing the statistics of the declining number of men teaching at the elementary level. She stated that, “the low number of men in elementary, particularly primary, teaching denies students and staff gender diversity in teaching faculty” (p. 62). She followed this with an in depth explanation of why and when males left elementary education. One of the obstacles she discussed was the stereotyping by the public of men who were early childhood or elementary teachers.
According to Anliak and Beyazkurk (2008) a group of pre-service Turkish male early childhood students were interviewed. These authors discussed how participants in their study were often hesitant to speak about their career choice. They thought that being an early childhood educator might be viewed as an undesirable occupation for a man. The men stated that they were aware how their peers laughed and talked about them behind their backs.

Cohen (1992) reported,

But factors beyond salary also sway men from these careers. “I think it’s status more than anything else,” says Robert Ash, assistant superintendent of elementary education for the White Bear Lake School District in suburban St. Paul, Minnesota. “When a man gets married and goes to his in-law’s family reunion, it is not a status thing to say, ‘I teach kindergarten, first grade or early childhood.’” Richard Ellenburg, kindergarten teacher at Hillcrest Elementary School in Orlando, Florida, has a different version of the same problem. When he discusses his plans to get a Ph.D. in early childhood education, “People are just flabbergasted,” he says. (p. 12)

Many male teachers discussed how society, in general viewed teaching as a career as fairly easy and undemanding. The primary reason for this was the amount of time spent away from active teaching, i.e. finishing at 3:00 P.M., longer holiday vacations, and three months of vacation time in the summer (Cooney and Bittner, 2001).

The dilemma that was facing the field of elementary, as well as early childhood education was explored by Gamble and Wilkins (1997). The authors stated that even though the status of elementary teachers had risen over past decades through such initiatives as increased pay and stronger certification processes, the area of teaching younger children remained a female domain. They added that although women have been very successful at entering more “masculine” careers, such as law and medicine, men had not had the same success at crossing over into careers that were once considered
“female,” such as elementary education. The authors go on to ask the question, “Is elementary teaching seen as low status because it is an area which has historically been dominated by females, or is there something inherently low status about working with young children?” (p. 190).

In a study by McNay (2001), the researchers focused exclusively on “George” a first grade teacher. George had left a fairly successful career as a pastor and was entering the teaching field as a second career. He felt as if this was what he was meant to do. As the author describes it:

Any mid-life career change was a major undertaking, but there was an added dimension when the move involved a man leaving a relatively prestigious and powerful position to enter a profession widely viewed as not only lower in status than his previous career, but more suited to women. (p.132)

According to Milloy (2003) just 25 percent of America’s 3 million teachers are males, and most are clustered in middle and high schools where they are more apt to be waxing knowledgeable about math and football—not (as the stereotypes go) wiping noses and nurturing. National Education Association (NEA) figures show a scant 9 percent of teachers in elementary school are male, down from 14 percent in 1986. And the gap is widening across the board; while men represented half of secondary teachers in 1986, today, they make up 35 percent.

In a study conducted by Montecinos (2004) 40 white, male pre-service teachers were asked for their insights into what teaching meant to each of them individually. The results of her study were that when asked “What does it mean to teach?” the participants followed with these responses: “To teach means (a) to be a role model, (b) to be a sport coach, (c) to appeal to reason, (d) to prepare oneself for occupations within the field of education that carry more status” (p. 3).
Sargent (2004) noted some of the assumptions that the general public has about the males who enter this field of education, for example ease of promotion, preferential treatment by male superiors, etc. These “advantages” were quickly counterbalanced with some of the hurdles that males often encountered in the workplace. “Much of what has been said about men in ECE is based on some major misconceptions that the men would very much like to remedy” (p. 177). He also explains that society needs to be wary of assumptions that are made, such as child-care came naturally to all females and it was unexplored territory for all males.

Another study provided an introduction which gave some basic background of the current situation of early childhood education. More men in this field were seen as beneficial, but men often suffered the stigma of being seen as odd or different as they sought positions at this level (Sumption, 1999).

Sumption (1999) also went on to tell the story of “James” who is the first male to enroll in an early childhood program in his city. He stated that at first he was treated as a novelty in the school. He continued that there were quite a bit of sexual references and innuendoes from his female classmates. Later, he stated that even though he is not homophobic, his community is. To counter this he began to wear a wedding ring to provide the illusion that he was married and that he was not gay.

Support from Family and Friends

Many men who choose teaching at the early childhood level often have to justify their decision to family and friends. Some males stated that they choose the field because the influence of another family member who was also a teacher in the field. Others stated
that they received little support from family members when they announced their decision to enter early childhood education and questions about their choice from members of their peer group (Cooney and Bittner, 2001).

Coulter and McNay (1993) described that males don’t always find support for their decision, even from their family and close friends. The participants shared other viewpoints as well. They thought that they had to justify their choice to teach at the elementary level. One of the most poignant remarks made by a participant was that of “Doug” who stated “Never had to justify going into teaching but…did have to justify the choice of elementary” (p. 402).

According to McNay (2001) “George” felt his call to teach was in some ways an extension of his ministry. His church family had long been a source of strength and support that he had not had at home. He hoped that he would find the same kind of strength and support in his new career with his new colleagues. Amazingly the faith community that had meant so much to George earlier seemed to disassociate with him as they tried to understand why he would make the choice to leave his position as their minister.

In an earlier study Sumsion (1999) interviewed a male early childhood worker as part of her study. “James” came from a long line of miners in his family. In fact his father, his brother, and his grand-father had all been miners. His family found it “odd” that he was not following in their footsteps. Members of his family found it even odder that he was choosing a career typically thought of as feminine. A family member remarked, “So why the hell is he doing this? Maybe there is something not quite right after all” (p. 458).
Ability to Nurture

Another barrier to the entry of men into early childhood education is the widely-held belief that women are better suited to nurturing young children than men. They presuppose that women are just “hardwired” differently.

Anliak and Beyazkurk (2008) concluded that the men in their study state that becoming an early childhood teacher would one day help them in raising their own children. They believed this was a benefit of their chosen career. They also stated that they would be in a position to advise others on child-rearing techniques.

According to Cohen (1992) “The notion that men are temporarily not suited to it (early childhood education) poses another barrier; some parents and educators think women are simply better at nurturing than men” (p. 12). Cohen went on to explain, “More male teachers in the early grades would help provide support for children from single-parent homes and would reinforce the belief that men, as well as women, can play nurturing roles” (p.12).

Cooney and Bittner (2001) stated, “The stereotype that females/mommies are the nurturers and that males don’t do this emerged as a barrier to recruiting males into the field” (p. 80). Gamble and Wilkins (1997) stated, “Perhaps the very idea of being nurturing and caring is so close to what is essentially female it is a barrier for men” (p.190).

In an earlier study Coulter and McNay (1993) stated that men are often assumed to be less able to nurture young children. Many times male educators are pushed into areas such as physical education or are seen as the disciplinarians of the school. The participants also felt a sense of resentment due to the fact that they were viewed as less
capable of nurturing than their female counterparts. Any open attempts at this were often viewed as suspicious by their colleagues and principals. Several presumptions were made on the teachers due to the fact that they were male. For example, for several of the teachers it was understood that because they were male they were be given the responsibilities of the physical education program. Several male teachers also stated that they were seen as the disciplinarians for their respective schools just because they were male and that was seen as a more male characteristic.

Sargent (2004) examined the issue of appropriateness of care. “There is an associated set of actions by significant others that tell the men their care of children may not be adequate and that their personalities may not fit well in a child-centered environment” (p. 180). He also explained that many believe that males are not emotionally, or psychologically able to spend long hours with small children.

Being a Role Model

Many males stated that being considered a role model is a title they don’t take lightly. Some men find it very fulfilling to be considered as such. Others find it uncomfortable fit for them. It is true that many children do need a positive male role model in their lives. Anliak and Beyazkurk (2008) developed a study in which the participants were male pre-service Turkish early childhood students. They included that the men would provide positive male role models for young children. They also stated that it would provide an opportunity for young children to become acquainted with male teachers before the primary and upper grades.

Cooney and Bittner (2001) explained,
That just being male was not enough. If the student was a male and a good teacher, it could be an advantage. The existence of male role models in the preschool and primary grades was considered to be huge for some children...primary schools need a balance of male and female teachers and that some children need a male teacher to be successful. (p. 81)

However Cooney and Bittner go on to caution that having a poor male role model could do significant damage in the classroom. It is good to have a male teacher but the quality of teaching is critical. Having a poor female role model could be detrimental as well.

According to Coulter and McNay (1993) several aspects of teaching, including whether or not men did have something unique to offer teaching at the primary level were studied. Since the 1950’s there has been a push in North America to lure more males into teaching at the elementary level. Outspoken advocates for this support the argument most often by stating that males were good role models at the elementary level, especially for young males in single parent homes. This article was quick to point out that the writers of this article had not found the research to support this claim. Coulter and McNay pointed out that there was just not enough evidence to support this argument. Most of the participants in this study resented the idea that they were hired due in large part to the fact that they were male and would be viewed as male role models. They voiced their opinions that they much more preferred to be employed because of their teaching capabilities.

Gamble and Wilkins (1997) noted:

At a time when more and more families are being headed by single females, it is crucial that males have a role somewhere in the lives of our young. If that role is not in the home, then more males must be recruited to teach at the elementary and preschool levels. It is important that children have positive role models of both sexes, and if males are absent in every other area of children’s lives, it is imperative that they have male figures in their classrooms. (p. 191)

Gamble and Wilkins also went on to write:
The gender composition of the teaching staff exerts a significant influence over the “well-being” of boys. It was found that primary school boys are negatively affected by a school environment characterized by a preponderance of female teachers...One way to help them see their futures as promising is to expose them to positive male role models in schools. (p.191)

According to Jones (2003), an interesting argument could be made regarding the case that if men are to be considered role models for young children, then it is important that the right man should be chosen for the job. She addressed the issue of male primary teachers in a very unique way. She began the article by giving the reader a snapshot view if you will of the current situation of primary schools in the UK. She stated that many boys were at a distinct disadvantage because of the lack of positive male role models in their lives. She stated that because of this “boys suffer from academic underachievement and a general disaffection with school” (p. 565). She underscored the fact that the push to get more male teachers at the primary level was not a uniquely current idea. The early twentieth century, along with a resurgence in the 1960’s and 1970’s, saw a dramatic discourse as to how more males could be brought into teaching at this level. One of the major contributors to this dilemma was that although the need was apparent to have a more realistic representation of society in primary schools, the idea of the ‘right kind’ of man for the job was a point of contention. “Men are a prized commodity yet there appears to be no clear consensus as to the type of skills and qualities a primary male teacher should exhibit” (p. 566). She addressed five key arenas in this study: balance or the ability of the school staff to accurately reflect the community at large; family, which involved the male teacher’s ability to be a positive role model, especially for boys from single parent families; the importance of the male teacher being a literate person, an area most closely associated with the female gender; the male ability to exert more influence
and control on other males; and finally sports, which was viewed by the participants as primarily a male conduit for bonding. Finally Jones arrived at what she deems the ‘right kind’ of man expressed by the participants. She concluded that according to the participants the ‘right kind’ of man had four characteristics: “enthusiastic about young children and hold an ‘early years philosophy’; a listener- not arrogant; a team worker with a sense of humor; macho- not a ‘wimp’!” (pp. 570-571). She explored each of these briefly and peppered them with quotes from some of the female participants. She concluded the article by stating that the roles of male and female were in a constant state of flux. It was critical that each individual who was given charge of a classroom be evaluated on his or her own merits.

Roulston (2000) purported the art and science of growing up male. She alluded to the fact that growing up male, a traditional male, is becoming more and more difficult for young boys because of the lack of appropriate role models. Boys are either exposed to entirely females or “soft” males as authority figures. This lack of role models leads to frustration, abuse, drug and alcohol dependence, suicide, etc. The call for more male teachers is not the panacea for the lack of male role models. Each teacher’s philosophy must be examined to see if the negative stereotypes are being reinforced. Roulston concluded the article with this statement:

We do not seek to suggest here that men should not engage in the teaching of what have become constructed as feminized activities. Our concerns are grounded in the ways in which those teaching areas constructed as feminine have been devalued to the extent to which those men who teach in these areas have to assert their masculinity in ways which devalue behavior and characteristics which have become associated with femininity. (p. 232)

More positive images of men in child-caring roles were needed to rectify the current situation and recruitment for early childhood education must begin earlier than
was previously assumed. Young men needed to feel that teaching young children was an acceptable career alternative (Sargent, 2004).

Skelton (2003) explained that of the pre-service teachers surveyed both males and females thought it was important to recruit males, as well as females into the primary sector of schooling. They also agreed that males have an important role to play in these early years of schooling. Over half of the males thought that the gender of the teacher was important, while most of the females felt that the gender of the teacher was not as important. Skelton also offered some unique insights into this study though. She began by discussing the current drive of western countries to get more men into the primary level of schooling. The lack thereof has led to the underachievement of boys in schools. Because of the “feminization” of our schools, especially at the primary level, teachers seemed to favor girls and the learning styles most often associated with being female.

Suspicion

Every male teacher of young children knows that he is viewed with some sense of suspicion everyday. Male educators in the field of early childhood education stated that they walk a “fine line” when it comes to appropriate behavior. For the most part they are viewed as pedophiles by the general public. Many stated that their families and friends worried about how just one accusation could ruin a career.

Cohen (1992) reported, “Most teachers of young kids say that some physical contact and expression of affection toward their pupils is a natural, and important, part of their work. But the well-publicized child-abuse cases in recent years have cast suspicion
on this kind of behavior and especially on men who seek to work with young children” (p. 12). Cohen went on to state:

Some educators say they have heard female child-care directors admit a reluctance to hire men because of the backlash from child-abuse cases. And one teacher at a New York City elementary school recalls being warned by administrators to be “extra careful” about touching students. “No one wants to take a job where they feel like they are being scrutinized extra carefully because of their gender,” notes James Clay, co-director of the School for Friends, a Quaker preschool in Washington, D.C. (p. 12)

According to Cooney and Bittner (2001):

The “touch issue” was raised by one of the males in the focus group in the first meeting…He felt uncomfortable when children spontaneously planted themselves in his lap. His discomfort was not the child’s action but with what adults passing by the classroom might think…The key to addressing the touch issue was to go slowly at the beginning of the year, using handshakes and then hugs as an option for the children. They decided that building relationships of trust with every child and every parent would go a long ways to allay the fears of everyone involved. (p. 81)

The stereotyping many men in early childhood and elementary education face was examined. It was also interesting that there was a contradiction between the idea that more men are needed at the elementary level and the reluctance of school boards to hire men for the primary grades. The participants also described being the victims of not so subtle remarks either during the interview situation or later from their colleagues at their respective schools. References to sexual orientation almost always had to be confronted. (Coulter and McNay, 1993).

Gamble and Wilkins (1997) wrote, “Many men may have been deterred because of the negative publicity which male teachers of preschool and elementary children have received. Fears of accusations of child abuse may be a serious concern for men wishing to work with young children” (p. 191).
According to McNay (2003) the issues male elementary teachers must deal with because of the fact they are male include suspicions, assumptions about being pedophiles, etc. Many men fear they won’t be seen as “masculine” if they pursue a career in early childhood (Milloy, 2003).

Sargent (2004) explained about the intense scrutiny and aura of suspicion that constantly surrounded these male teachers. These men could not wait to be reactive to situations but must in a sense be proactive to guard against any hint of impropriety. He also explained that men were under the ever-present eye of suspicion (of molestation). The men teachers often voiced frustration and even anger because of the fact that they were forced to operate under different rules than their female counterparts.

In a study by Skelton (1994) eleven male teachers were interviewed and all agreed that at the time of their pre-service training there was no discussion of what was deemed as appropriate and inappropriate behavior as far as their students were concerned. The teachers did say that this was vaguely alluded to during their interviews for their job placement. Furthermore, the teachers had little direction given to them by administrators once they were hired to teach. Most of the male teachers felt they were left on their own to develop what constituted appropriate and inappropriate behavior.

Sumsion (1999) recorded “James” thoughts as:

I love my job but the cost of being male in early childhood is enormous. There are so many aspersions cast on your sexuality and there is so much day-to-day prejudice…It’s like sitting on a time bomb which is ticking away—the accusation will come sooner or later. It’s not a case of if it’s going to happen; it’s a case of when it’s going to happen. I honestly believe that. (p. 462)
Financial Concerns

Salary is an important consideration in the choice of any career. Men who chose a career in the area of early childhood education are certainly no exception. Many times men were forced to make a decision about having a career that they loved and found very fulfilling with being able to provide for their family’s financial needs. Cohen (1992) explained, “The vast share of male teachers are in the upper grades, and many trained in early childhood education move rapidly into higher-paying and higher-status jobs in school administration and higher education” (p.11).

Salary was one of the main reasons men do not consider teaching as a viable choice. The issue of low salaries was the concern these men had about their roles as the “primary breadwinner” for their households (Cooney and Bittner, 2001). They felt they would have to make sacrifices financially in order to enjoy their chosen career.

Milloy (2003) discussed issues that either prevented males from initially entering the field or leaving after only a short period of service. These were the ability to make more money in other occupations, higher status in the eyes of the public, and the opportunity to advance up the corporate ladder and have a chance to be “boss”.

Sumsion (1999) recorded the thoughts of a male early childhood worker in her study about comparing salary with fulfillment in a chosen career. “James” in her study states:

I had a good job as a maintenance officer. It paid really good money and at the end of the week it was $500 in the hand. That was years ago and I don’t even earn that now. But there had to be something more to life than getting up in the morning for the money. I needed to take something home each day “inside”. I needed to be able to make a difference to someone’s life. If I did, maybe I could make the world a better place. (p. 458)
Working with a Predominantly Female Faculty

Many men feel that because of their gender they would be more hirable than their female counterparts (Anliak and Beyazkurk, 2008). The final theme McNay (2003) addressed is that of gender issues. George struggled with the relationships among his new colleagues. It was difficult for him to connect with the few other male teachers at his school because he was a primary teacher. He felt as if he had little in common with them. He also found it difficult to establish relationships with the female primary teachers because males were not typically accepted in the situations where the female teachers bonded.

According to Sargent (2004) male teachers need to feel they have the support of their female colleagues and more importantly their superiors, male or female. Jennifer Sumsion (2000) published a study entitled “Negotiating Otherness: A Male Early Childhood Educator’s Gendering Positioning”. The study was an examination of how one male teacher in the area of early childhood education defined himself as a male in a field that is predominantly female. She referred to this act of establishing gender positioning strategies as “otherness” and she used this to explain how this teacher, “Bill”, positioned himself with his colleagues, the parents of his students, and the community at large. The question for Sumsion then became “How does this teacher define his role on a female faculty?” The author answered this by addressing ten different strategies used by “Bill” to position himself with the colleagues, parents of students, and the community. These sections were: emphasizing similarities, capitalizing on his parental status, cultivating conversational touch-points with parents, situating himself as a team member, accentuating difference, foregrounding qualities, interests, and skills traditionally
perceived as ‘masculine’, distancing himself from ‘female’ behavior, accentuating his access to professional and political power, and finally critical comment. According to Sumsion (2000), “Regardless of their gender, all early childhood teachers face the complex task of negotiating a professional identity and positioning themselves within the perceptions, expectations and demands of their work context” (p. 138).

Opportunities for Advancement

A sample of pre-service teachers agreed that primary teaching was an acceptable career for both males and females. There was also an agreement among the students that there was not an equal opportunity for advancement for both males and females. The students thought that the male teachers were often promoted at faster rate than their female counterparts (Skelton, 2003).

Sumsion (1999) explained that men often can benefit from their gender in early childhood education. It is believed that men are promoted more quickly to positions of authority. This quick promotion to administrative positions is often referred to as a “glass escalator” by those who have studied this phenomenon.

Summary

Chapter Two is dedicated to a review of literature. The literature begins with a brief description of the history of early childhood education. This follows a timeline pattern from ancient history to the present, along with a brief discussion of men who have made and are still making contributions to the area of early childhood education. The feminization of the field of early childhood education follows this section. The final
section is devoted to current studies on men and early childhood education. As stated earlier, the material specifically devoted to men and early childhood education is scant. The literature is arranged according to different areas of interest, i.e. social attitudes toward men in this field, support from family and friends, etc.
CHAPTER 3

METHODS

Introduction

Chapter Three is dedicated to a description of the methods used in this study. The chapter provided an explanation of qualitative design and the tradition of qualitative research. These sections were followed by a brief description of the philosophical assumptions of this study. A description of each participant, as well as his classroom was included in the chapter. A table is provided for demographic information on each participant. An explanation of the data collection and analysis procedures is discussed. Explanations of how different components of trustworthiness were achieved following this. Finally, ethical considerations, as well as researcher bias were reviewed briefly.

Qualitative Research Design

There are several schools of thought when it comes to conducting research. The approach to the research is dependent largely based upon the research topic and the questions being asked. Individuals who are exploring the lived experiences of another individual may seek to use a qualitative approach. Because my study explores the
experiences and self-perceptions of male teachers who teach at the early childhood level of education, I have chosen to conduct my research according to the qualitative approach.

There are as many definitions for the qualitative approach as the number of researchers who chose to use this approach. For the purpose of this study, I have chosen to include a definition by Denzin and Lincoln (1994) in their text *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. They explained:

Qualitative research is multi-method in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of meanings people bring to them. Qualitative research involves the studies use and collection of a variety of empirical materials-case study, personal experience, introspective, life story, interview, observational, historical, interactional, and visual texts-that describe routine and problematic moments and meaning in individuals’ lives. (p. 2)

Another important definition of the qualitative approach is by Ernie Stringer (2004). In his text *Action Research in Education* he stated the following:

In these circumstances, qualitative or naturalistic approaches to research provide a different set of tools to deal with the situation. These provide the means to investigate the complex ways people interact in their everyday lives and enable classroom and school practitioners to increase their understanding of the events they observe. In particular, they gain greater insight into the ways people interpret events from their own perspective.” (p. 15)

Tradition (Approach) of Qualitative Inquiry

I will use an interpretive criteria, largely influenced by Norman Denzirn in his book entitled *Interpretive Interactionism*. Denzin (2001) described this method as:

Interpretive interactionism attempts to make the meanings that circulate in the world of lived experience accessible to the reader. It endeavors to capture and represent the voices, emotions, and actions of those studied. The focus of interpretive research is on those life experiences that radically alter and shape the meanings persons give to themselves and their experiences. (p. 1)
There are many approaches to conducting qualitative research. I have concluded that my topic area can best be explored using this interpretive interactionism approach.

As mentioned in Chapter One of this study, my purpose is to understand the self-perceptions of five male early childhood teachers and their self-perceptions as to how they view themselves in a predominantly female setting. My intent for this study is to explore the lived experiences of these teachers as they all share a somewhat common set of circumstances. Each of the participants is unique in the fact that each one brings a different background and set of perspectives to the study. However, they all share a similar experience in that they are all working in a predominantly female setting. The purpose of my study is to find the “essence” described by others of their lived experiences in this particular setting.

Philosophical Assumptions

As a researcher, I am human. My way of looking at the world, i.e. paradigm, is unique unto me. My personal view of reality is reflected in who I am, who I have been, and who I will be. It is a culmination of all of my experiences: cognitive, emotional, and physical.

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985) there have been three major paradigm eras: prepositivist, positivist, and postpositivist. The authors explain the prepositivist era as the “longest and least interesting from a modern perspective.” It ranged from Aristotle (384-322 B.C.) to around the 1700’s A.D. Scientists according to Lincoln and Guba assumed the role of passive observers. During the 1700’s, a shift occurred in which scientists pursued knowledge from the stance of being active observers. This was the
beginning of the positivist era. According to Lincoln and Guba the major impact of this period was “Not in reforming ethics, religion, and politics, or even philosophy, but scientific method” (p. 19). Positivism is the paradigm most closely associated with quantitative research. Positivism, although a remarkable improvement over the previous era, still had several shortcomings that eventually led to the post-positivist era.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) described the arrival of this era as:

Perhaps the most unexpected aspect of post-positivism is that its basic tenets are virtually the reverse of those that characterized positivism—perhaps not so surprising, after all, when one contemplates that post-positivism is as much a reaction to the failings of positivism as it is a proactive set of new foundations. (p. 29)

Lincoln and Guba went on to state that for the remainder of their text the post-positivist era would be referred to as the “naturalist paradigm”, which is also referred to as “constructivism.” This paradigm is commonly held to be the philosophical foundation for qualitative research.

I consider myself to be an advocate for male teachers in the early childhood education program. As I mentioned in Chapter One, the existing literature is scant on this topic area. Most of the scholarly writing done in this area has explored why men are not choosing to enter the field or leaving the field all together. There is simply not enough support for men choosing this as a career field. It is my hope that this study will one day be used as a catalyst for young men considering the field of early childhood education or for teacher education programs to be able to benefit from the knowledge gained through these interviews to help pre-service instruction.
Research Participants

Because of time constraints, the participants were chosen using a purposeful sampling method. The participants were all currently teaching at the early childhood level of elementary school, i.e. kindergarten through third grade. They range in age from early twenties to mid forties. They are all Caucasian and hold degrees in education from the Bachelors level to that of a Ph.D. in Early Childhood Education. After receiving approval from the system superintendent to conduct the research in the system, IRB procedures were followed and approval was attained (see Appendix A). Along with the approval, an approved consent form was also obtained to be used in the interview process (see Appendix B). The gatekeeper or principal of each elementary school was contacted and permission was obtained to approach the teacher at his respective school. A letter was later sent to the participant to obtain permission for the interview. There is a sample of the letter to the gatekeeper, as well as the participant in the Appendix section of this project (see Appendices C and D). This letter explained the project, ethical considerations and included the rights of the participant before, during and after the study was completed. Along with this letter, the participant also received a copy of the actual interview questions (see Appendix E) to preview before the interview took place.

Description of the Participants

David is a teacher at Happy Valley Elementary School. He is currently teaching third grade and this is his second year to teach. He holds a Bachelors degree in elementary education from a state university. He is approximately twenty-five years old. He is married and his wife is a teacher at a private daycare center. She also holds a
Bachelors degree in early childhood education. This teacher has taken on the responsibility of his school’s daily newscast on a closed circuit television system. He is seen by many in the school as an expert in computers, as well as electronics.

Aaron is a teacher at New Town Primary School. He is currently teaching kindergarten and has taught for three years. Before completing his degree, he attempted a degree in secondary education in the area of language arts. His mother was a language arts teacher at the local middle school. He became disillusioned however and dropped out of school and went to work in a local bookstore. A few years later he went back and finished a degree in early childhood/elementary education. He now holds a Bachelors degree from a state university and he is currently pursuing a Masters degree. He is approximately thirty-three years old. He is not married.

Sam is a teacher at Smart Start Elementary School. He is currently teaching third grade and has taught at this level for six years. He holds a Bachelors degree in early childhood/elementary/special education from a state university. He chose these three areas because he thought they would give him a better opportunity at finding a teaching position. He also has his Masters degree in elementary education. He is approximately twenty-eight years old. He is married and he and his wife have recently had their first child. He is very involved with the children’s and youth department at his church and feels as if this had a huge influence on his decision to go into education. This teacher’s first career choice was to enter into the Armed Forces, the Marines in particular. His parents refused to accept this and asked him to attend one year of college first. He attended a local college, and his one year turned into a four year degree.
Charles also teaches at Smart Start Elementary School. He is currently teaching second grade and has taught for eighteen years. He holds a Ph.D. degree in early childhood education from a state university. He is approximately forty years old. He is not married. He recently served as a reading specialist for his district. After about two years, he requested to return to the classroom. He has also done some adjunct teaching at the local university.

Jeffrey teaches at Center Street Primary School. He is approximately 32 years old and is married with two small sons. This is his tenth year to teach second grade. Before his current principal, who is male, arrived, he was the only male adult in his building. He has a Bachelors degree in early childhood/elementary education from a local university. He is currently working on a Masters degree. His family means a great deal to him and they are his first priority. They also operate a local gymnastics club in which both are very active.

Table 2 Teacher Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher Name</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Approx. Age</th>
<th>Highest Degree Held</th>
<th>Grade Teaching</th>
<th>Years of Experience</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
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<td>Bachelors</td>
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<td>Aaron</td>
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<td>33</td>
<td>Bachelors</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sam</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Ph.D.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeffrey</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Bachelors</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Descriptions of the Research Settings

Because of time constraints, I chose to use purposeful sampling to limit the sites of this study to elementary schools within northern and central Alabama. All of these schools are considered exemplary schools and have received numerous recognitions.

The setting and context for this study was almost as important as the interviews collected from the participants. This study was an exploration of the self-perceptions of these five early childhood education teachers so I felt that it was important for the interviews to be conducted in the classrooms of the participants. This decision was made for two reasons. I felt that if the interview was conducted in the classrooms of the participants it would allow the participants to be more relaxed and at ease during the interviewing process. They would in essence have the “home turf” advantage. Also, by conducting the interviews in the individual classrooms, I would be able to have a glimpse inside the world, or in this case teaching environment of the individual teacher. I have long held to the belief that an individual teacher’s classroom reveals a great deal about their philosophy of teaching. Questions such as: “Is the classroom teacher-centered or child-centered?” “Is the room atmosphere relaxed enough for the children to feel comfortable or do the students conform to the teacher’s notions about how a classroom should look?” and other questions can be answered readily.

The first interview was conducted in the David’s third grade classroom at Happy Valley Elementary School. As I walked in I was struck by the science center he had developed for his students. There was a huge table along one wall of his classroom fitted with fluorescent lighting. He explained to me that his students were currently studying plant life and this center allowed them to watch the plants grow under this artificial light.
I also noticed that for this young teacher there was an extraordinary amount of children’s books in the room. The room was neat but not sterile. It was kid friendly with different centers located throughout the room for the students to engage in activities such as math and language arts. This teacher explained to me that many of the furnishings in the room had been left by the previous teacher, a female. He laughed when he told me the curtains had rainbows on them, and he had to get rid of these as quickly as possible. He said that his room needed to tell about him and that rainbow-printed curtains defeated the purpose.

The second interview was conducted in the Aaron’s classroom at New Town Primary School. This participant is currently teaching kindergarten. His room is a complete reflection of him. The first thing I noticed as I walked into the room was a huge Christmas tree in the center of the room. It was decorated with ornaments made by the kindergarteners. The room showed that his students had ownership of the room. The walls were plastered with pictures and signs made with love for their favorite teacher. It was colorful but surprisingly well-kept for a kindergarten room at the end of the day. The teacher shyly admitted that the custodian had told him it was probably the cleanest room in the building. However, the teacher admitted that he spent a lot of extra time in the room in the evenings and on the weekends in order to keep everything on track.

The third interview was conducted in Sam’s third grade classroom Smart Start Elementary School. It was during his planning period during the middle of the day. This was a typical third grade classroom with the desks clustered together into small groups. It was obvious from the colorful posters that the students were learning about weather. The room was neat to say the least but it was manageable. It was obvious that the students in this room are actively-engaged in the learning process. Along one wall under a window
filled with seedlings was a table filled with weather instruments recently made by the students.

The fourth interview was conducted in Charles’ second grade classroom, also at Smart Start Elementary School. It was an amazing classroom. The first thing I noticed when I walked in was pleasant the fragrance of the room. It did not smell like the ordinary second grade room. It almost had a “spa” feel to the room. Another feature of the room was the amount of books and children’s literature on display. Custom-built shelves lined one wall and were filled with books and soft lighting. The backs of the book shelves had been painted contrasting colors to pull you in for a closer look. Overhead colorful book jackets had been affixed to the ceiling, perhaps to offer more reading choices to the students as they lie on the floor. Framed art posters were hung around the room which gave one a sense of being in a gallery. This interview was also conducted during this teacher’s planning period in the middle of his day, but there was a very big difference in this room. It was immaculate. Small groups of desks were clustered around and in the middle was a small container of supplies used by the children at the table. All of the book bags, jackets and etc. had been stored neatly in the hall. This room can only be described as one of the most beautiful classrooms I have ever seen.

The fifth interview was conducted in Jeffrey’s second grade classroom at Center Street Primary School. The interview was conducted at the end of the day. Jeffrey had just finished his assigned bus duty for the week and entered the room with a huge sigh but an even bigger smile. The room was a typical second grade room. Desks were arranged in small groups with the teacher’s desk in the middle. His students were obviously studying about energy because the room was filled with posters about different
types of energy. Jeffrey apologized for the state of the room but explained that this particular day had been one of their “high energy” days. Reference books about energy related items filled baskets throughout the room. He explained that many of his students had been writing reports on the computers during the day to record some of what they had been learning. Jeffrey pointed me to his pride and joy in the room. Behind his desk sat a collection of photographs of his two young sons.

Data Collection

The primary type of data collection for this interpretive study was that of a semi-structured interview. The interviews were conducted from an interview protocol (see Appendix E) that has been reviewed by the faculty advisor as well as the Institution Review Board. The interview was taped on a small tape recorder and transcribed verbatim by the researcher. Notes were taken during the interview to cover any malfunction in the recording process. After the tapes were transcribed, they will be kept in a locked metal cabinet at the researcher’s school until the study concludes at which time the tapes will be destroyed. The timeframe for the collection of these interviews was June 1, 2010 through May 1, 2011.

The interviews lasted for approximately one hour with a set of prepared questions sent to the participant to preview before the actual date of the interview. There were probing questions that were used to solicit more information when needed. There was also a portion of the interview where the participant was free to comment or provide any thoughts on the topic that have not been previously addressed. Each participant was asked for a follow-up interview if needed. The names of the participants, as well as the school’s
name were masked in the final report to protect their identity. The participant will be made aware of his rights to end his participation at any time prior to, during or after the interview has taken place.

Finally along with the structured interview, field notes may be included in the data set. These notes will kept in the form of a journal where the interviewer may record specific items such as classroom organization, overall impressions of the participant, etc., i.e. data that may not have be easily recorded during the interview process.

Data Analysis.

Because of the inductive nature of qualitative research, analysis is considered ongoing throughout the data collection process according to Denzin (2001). As the interviews were conducted, they are also being evaluated for commonalities, i.e. ideas and themes that are recurring among the participants’ responses. As the themes emerge, they are identified by the researcher. This is generally done by hand in the beginning. The typed interview was tagged so that the individual sections representing themes or codes during the interview can be easily separated. The separation allows the researcher to access and compare the same codes for different participants more easily.

Giorgi (1985) also gave a brief outline on how data should be analyzed in the qualitative tradition:

The method contains four essential steps; expressed most generally, they are as follows: (1) One reads the entire description in order to get a general sense of the whole statement. (2) Once the sense of the whole has been grasped, the researcher goes back to the beginning and reads through the text once more with the specific aim of discriminating “meaning units” from within a psychological perspective and with a focus on the phenomenon being researched. (3) Once “meaning units” have been delineated, the researcher then goes through all the meaning units and expresses the psychological insight contained in them more directly. This is
especially true of the “meaning units” most revelatory of the phenomenon under consideration. (4) Finally, the researcher synthesizes all of the transformed meaning units into a consistent statement regarding the subject’s experience. (p.10)

Each of these sections was examined separately using a coding system. The coding system used for this particular study was the NVivo software program. The interviews were electronically loaded into the program. This allowed the researcher to look at the interview and identify codes within the text. As the codes were identified, they were added as nodes, tree nodes in particular.

This task was performed simply by highlighting the passage and moving it over to the appropriate node. Nodes such as “making the decision to teach at the early childhood level,” “love of being with children,” and “working with women” appeared often in the individual interviews. Each of these nodes contained several more specific areas, for example under “decision to teach elementary school” topics such as “when the decision was made,” “who influenced the participant to make the choice,” and “support from family and friends” were areas to further explore under this one node. One of the advantages of the NVivo program is that the individual nodes can be examined as to which particular quotes from the interviews have been assigned to that particular node. Each grouping became the foundation for the final analysis. This software program allowed the researcher to print out the entire tree or just one node at a time to examine specific quotes.

After incorporating the NVivo software program into my data analysis, I found that three main themes continued throughout all five interviews. These included the decision to teach at the early childhood level, a love of being with children, and working with women. As discussed above, the NVivo program allows you to place child nodes
under each theme much like you would do on a basic outline. Under the theme of “making the decision to teach at the early childhood level” I identified several subthemes as emergent. These include “previous career,” “influence of others,” “support from family and friends,” “job satisfaction,” “income,” and “future.” Under the theme of “love of being with children,” the subthemes of “being a role model” and “stereotyping” emerged. Finally, the last theme “working with women” led to three subthemes of “male vs. female personalities,” “being one of the gang,” and “working for female administrators.”

Hatch (2002) described data analysis in his text as:

Data analysis is a systematic search for meaning. It is a way to process qualitative data that what has been learned can be communicated to others. Analysis means organizing and interrogating data in ways that allow researchers to see patterns, identify themes, discover relationships, develop explanations, make interpretations, mount critiques, or generate theories. It often involves synthesis, evaluation, interpretation, categorization, hypothesizing, comparison, and pattern finding. (p. 148)

I also found the traditional method of coding very helpful in the data analysis process. After re-reading the transcripts carefully, I began to color code the raw data in order to identify emerging ideas which had the potential to become themes for the study. After small sections of the interview were color-coded, I cut these apart and glued these individual passages to separate index cards. Those passages which dealt with similar ideas were grouped with other passages which seemed to share compatible ideas and thoughts. After all the transcripts were processed in this way, themes and subthemes were more easily identified. This process aided the writing of Chapter Four of this study.
Trustworthiness

Because the nature of qualitative research involved the search for meaning in the participant’s world, terms such as reliability or validity were generally avoided. These were most often associated with research that is quantitative in nature. In qualitative research the researcher was more likely to use the term trustworthiness. By this, the researcher tried to develop a sense of trust and believability in his or her findings. Establishing credibility is important in all forms of research. The researcher seeks to assure his or her audience that the findings of a study are trustworthy, credible, dependable, transferable, and confirmable. The steps taken to insure these qualities are dependent on whether the research done is quantitative or qualitative. Because the nature of qualitative research involves the search for meaning in the participant’s world, terms such as reliability or validity will be generally avoided. These are most often associated with research that is quantitative in nature. In qualitative research, the researcher is more likely to use the term “trustworthiness”. By this, the researcher tries to develop a sense of trust and believability in his or her findings. Lincoln and Guba (1985) defined “trustworthiness” as: “The basic issue in relation to trustworthiness is simple: How can an inquirer persuade his or her audiences (including self) that the findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to, worth taking account of?” (p. 290). The authors go on to state that there is a component of “truth value” which must be established. They write, “How can one establish confidence in the “truth” of the findings of a particular inquiry for the subjects (respondents) with which and the context in which the inquiry was carried out?” (p. 290). There are four methods to achieving trustworthiness according to Lincoln and Guba: credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability.
Credibility

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), credibility as a component of trustworthiness may be established by two methods:

The implementation of the credibility criterion - the naturalist’s substitute for the conventionalist’s internal validity - becomes a two-fold task: first, to carry out the inquiry in such a way that the probability that the findings will be found to be credible is enhanced and, second, to demonstrate the credibility of the findings by having them approved by the constructors of the multiple realities being studied. (p. 296)

Several methods for achieving credibility are discussed in the text including: prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, peer debriefing, negative case analysis, referential adequacy, and member checking. In this study, I attempted to establish a sense of credibility be three methods: triangulation, peer debriefing, and member checking.

**Triangulation**

An important concept for any qualitative researcher in the area of trustworthiness is triangulation. This is where the researcher uses several different sources of data to verify his or her findings. If only one source of information is utilized, the research findings lack credibility and transferability. I chose to use three sources of information to support my findings and these methods enabled triangulation within the data set. These were current literature on the topic, participant interviews, and field notes kept to record information not easily attainable through the interview process.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) explained the importance of triangulation as a component of establishing credibility in their text:
Triangulation of data is crucially important in naturalistic studies. As the study unfolds and particular pieces of information come to light, steps should be taken to validate each against at least one other source (for example a second interview) and/or a second method (for example, an observation in addition to an interview). No single item of information (unless coming from an elite and unimpeachable source) should ever be given serious consideration unless it can be triangulated. (p. 283)

*Peer Debriefing*

A method that is widely used among researchers was the idea of peer review or debriefing. This is especially useful in studies where there was only one researcher looking at and making interpretations from the data. This involves allowing a trusted colleague to look at the same data and draw his or her own conclusions from the findings. This sorting of data by a fellow researcher is referred to as inter-rater reliability. It allows the researcher to be somewhat confident that his or her peer was able to come to the same conclusions with regards to the raw data. Lincoln and Guba (1985) described the use of a peer debriefer as:

The debriefer is essentially a noninvolved professional peer with whom the inquirer(s) can have a no-holds-barred conversation at periodic intervals. The purposes of the debriefing are multiple: to ask the difficult questions that the inquirer might otherwise avoid (“to keep the inquirer honest”), to explore methodological next steps with someone who has no axe to grind, and to prove a sympathetic listening point for personal catharsis. (p. 283)

I have been fortunate during this dissertation to be going through this process with a trusted colleague in my own school system. We’ve shared many long, and sometimes heated discussions about each other’s dissertation topics. These discussions gave me an opportunity to hear another’s viewpoint; someone with a new set of eyes and ears. This has been invaluable to me because of my closeness to the topic area, male early childhood teachers.
**Member Checking**

The final method used in this study to establish credibility is the use of member checking. Simply put, member checking is giving the participant an opportunity to review the data collected pertinent to him. This method allows the participant the chance to correct any misconceptions on the part of the researcher. Lincoln and Guba (1985) described member checking as:

> The provisional report (case) is taken back to the site and subjected to the scrutiny of the persons who provided information (or counterpersons). The task is to obtain confirmation that the report has captured the data as constructed by the informants, or to correct, amend, or extend it, that is, to establish the credibility of the case. (p. 236)

I incorporated member checking into two phases of my study. After the interview was completed, I allowed the transcript to be reviewed by the participant. This gave him an opportunity to make certain what was said was correct. Several of the participants added comments that were not part of the original interview session at this point. This also gave the participant an opportunity to clarify and recant some of the remarks made. I also allowed the participants to look at a rough draft of the study before it was completed. At this point, the participant is not looking so much at the actual dialogue but more at my interpretation of what has been said.

**Dependability**

Dependability is the qualitative researcher’s equivalent to the concept of reliability used by quantitative researchers. Asking if the results of a study are dependable
is very similar to asking if the results are reliable. Lincoln and Guba (1985) stated their
definition of dependability:

The naturalist sees reliability as a part of a larger set of factors that are associated
with observed changes. In order to demonstrate what may be taken as a substitute
criterion for reliability—dependability—the naturalist seeks means for taking into
account both factors of instability and factors of phenomenal or design induced
change. It can be argued that this naturalistic view is broader than the
conventional, since it accounts for everything that is normally included in the
concept of reliability plus some additional factors. (p. 299)

Transferability

The concept of transferability is defined as the notion that the results of a study
should be able to be duplicated in a similar study. It is the equivalent to the notion of
external validity in the quantitative approach to research. Transferability is difficult to
accomplish in qualitative studies. Lincoln and Guba (1985) elaborated:

A further consequence of the naturalistic posture is that findings of a particular
study cannot be applied in other contexts simply because they are held to be
“generalizable.” If there is some question whether the findings may apply even in
the same context at some other time, later time, it is surely an issue whether they
apply in other, somewhat dissimilar contexts. Indeed, transferability, far from
being established once and for all because certain methodological tenets, such as
careful control and random sampling, have been followed, must be reassessed in
each and every case in which transfer is proposed. And in order to establish
transferability, similar information must be available for both sending and
receiving contexts. That is to say, an investigator can supply only that information
about the studied site that may make possible a judgment of transferability to
some other site; the final judgment on that matter is, however, vested in the
person seeking to make the transfer, who must be in possession of similar data for
the receiving context. (pp. 216-217)

The authors go on to state that this is another reason that “thick and rich language must
be used in the descriptions provided for subsequent readers so that they understand the
context. I personally believe one reason qualitative researchers believe that transferability
is so hard to achieve is that we rely so heavily on studying the participants in their natural
environments and we rely on their perceptions of their lived experiences. It would be
difficult, if not impossible, to ever duplicate the time, place and participants exactly in
another study. Lincoln and Guba (1985) went on to state:

The establishment of transferability by the naturalist is very different from the
establishment of external validity by the conventionalist. Indeed, the former is, in
a strict sense, impossible. For while the conventionalist expects (and is expected)
to make relatively precise statements about external validity (expressed, for
example, in the form of statistical confidence limits), the naturalist can only set
out working hypotheses together with description of the time and context in which
they were found to hold...He or she can provide only the thick description
necessary to enable someone interested in making the transfer to reach a
conclusion about whether transfer can be contemplated as a possibility. (p. 316)

Confirmability

The final method of achieving a sense of trustworthiness described by Lincoln
and Guba (1985) is confirmability. This concept is similar to the notion of objectivity for
the quantitative researcher. One technique described by the authors is to conduct an
inquiry audit. An inquiry auditor examines not only the process that is the method used
for conducting the research, but also the product of the research, i.e. the final report.
Lincoln and Guba state that an audit done properly can provide an assurance of
dependability as well as confirmability. The authors provide several features of an audit
to ensure credibility including using an audit trail and the audit process. Lincoln and
Guba reported:

The definition removes the emphasis from the investigator (it is no longer his or
her objectivity that is at stake) and places it where, as it seems to the naturalist, it
ought more logically to be: on the data themselves. The issue is no longer the
investigator’s characteristics but the characteristics of the data: Are they or are
they not confirmable? The naturalist prefers this concept to that of objectivity. (p.
300)
Ethical Considerations

Hatch (2002) explained the importance of treating our participants with respect: We ask a lot when we ask individuals to participate in our qualitative studies. We usually ask for a considerable amount of time, but more important, we ask participants to reveal what goes on behind the scenes in their everyday lives. We ask them to trust us to the point that they are comfortable sharing the intimate details of their lifeworlds. We make some sort of record of these, then we leave. We ask a lot, take a lot, and if we’re not careful, give very little. (pp. 65-66)

There are several ethical issues which must be dealt with when conducting a research study. The American Psychological Association (APA) has developed guidelines for the ethical practices of conducting research. These are included in the sixth edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (2010). These guidelines include but are not limited to: discussing the limits of confidentiality, maintaining confidentiality, maintenance of records, disclosures, use of confidential information, institutional approval, informed consent, sharing data, providing participants with information about the study, reporting results, plagiarism, and several other areas.

The APA (2010) states, “Psychologists obtain from host institutions or organizations appropriate approval prior to conducting research, and they provide accurate information about their research proposals. They conduct the research in accordance with the approved research protocol” (p. 391). This process begins with gaining approval to conduct the research though the office of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) (see Appendix A). This office primarily exists for the protection of the participant. The researcher must complete a training session on various components of the IRB process. The researcher must pass an electronic test in order to request permission to conduct research. This training must be kept current and updated if the
research lasts longer than a specified period, usually one year. After the researcher obtains approval that the training has been successfully completed, the research may petition IRB for permission to conduct research. This is accomplished through the completion of several steps. The potential researcher must complete a human subjects protocol (HSP), which describes the research to be done in detail. The application also requires a completed copy of the informed consent form (see Appendix B), copies of the letters which will be sent to the gatekeeper, as well as the participant describing the type of research (see Appendices C and D), and an interview protocol which is a tentative list of the questions that the participant will be asked (see Appendix E). These documents must also be accompanied by a protocol oversight review form (PORF) which is basically an approval by the university or institution that the research is approved to be conducted through that particular institution and a checklist which has been approved by the institution. Only after IRB permission has been obtained can research begin.

I assured my participants who were gracious enough to provide data for my study that they as well as the information provided would be respected throughout the process. First of all I wanted the potential participants to understand the nature of the study and for what purposes the study would be used. Second, I also wanted each of them to know that their participation in this study was voluntary and they were free to withdraw at any time before, during or after the study. Third, I wanted them to be certain that their anonymity would be protected throughout the process through the use of pseudonyms and the masking of names of the particular schools at which they were currently employed. Finally, the data collected through the use of tapes would be maintained and secured and finally destroyed when the study is complete. Hopefully this gave them a sense of privacy
about the information collected. I also explained in the letter to the participant, as well as the signed consent form that there would be no identifiers in the final report.

Researcher Bias

I have taught as a male elementary school teacher for almost twenty years; ranging from first through fifth grade. I entered the field because of the influence of another male elementary teacher. I received support from family and friends while others questioned this decision since I had already earned a degree in business administration and was an office manager in a successful medical practice. I know the experience of working for many years as the only male teacher of the faculty. I know the rewards of working with children of this age-range and the influence that a good teacher can have but I have also experienced the stereotyping that men in this field often deal with at some point during their careers. My plans for the future are simple. I see myself teaching elementary school for the remainder of my career. I have no aspirations of going into administration for any reason. However, I would like to teach at the post-secondary level one day.

The role of the researcher is critical in any study undertaken. I feel I know the phenomenon of being a male teacher in a predominantly female setting because of first-hand experience. I explored this topic area five years ago as part of an Ed.S. project. Now I am continuing this study as my Ph.D. dissertation. However, I must attempt to examine the new data collected, i.e. interviews, observations, scholarly writing, etc., with an objective eye. Much of this occurs during the pre-coding phase of the data analysis.
Denzin (2001) referred to this as “bracketing”. In his text *Interpretive Interactionism*, he describes the idea:

In bracketing the phenomenon, the researcher holds the phenomenon up for serious inspection, taking it out of the world where it occurs. The researcher dissects the phenomenon, uncovering, defining, and analyzing it elements and essential structures. The researcher treats the phenomenon as a text or a document; that is, as an instance that is being studied. The researcher does not interpret the phenomenon in terms of the standard meanings given to it by the existing literature. Those preconceptions, which the researcher has isolated in the deconstruction phase, are suspended and put aside during bracketing. In bracketing, the researcher confronts the subject matter, as much as possible, on its own terms. (pp. 75-76)

**Summary**

Chapter Three began with an explanation of qualitative design and the tradition of qualitative research. These sections were followed by a brief description of the philosophical assumptions of this study. A description of each participant, as well as his classroom was included in the chapter. This was followed by an explanation of the data collection and analysis procedures for this dissertation. Explanations of how different components of trustworthiness were achieved followed this. Finally, ethical considerations, as well as researcher bias were reviewed briefly.
CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS OF DATA

Introduction

Chapter Four addressed the analysis of the data. The chapter was arranged according to the themes and subthemes which emerged both during and after the data collection phase of the study. Each of the themes was introduced along with the subthemes separately. The portions of the interview which corresponded to the theme or subtheme were recorded and presented verbatim for the reader.

Table 3: Themes and Subthemes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Subthemes</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Decision to teach Early Childhood Education</td>
<td>Influence of Others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support from Family and Friends</td>
<td>Previous Career</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Satisfaction</td>
<td>Income</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love of Being with Children</td>
<td>Future</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role Model</td>
<td>Male vs. Female Roles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stereotyping</td>
<td>One of the Gang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working with Women</td>
<td>Female Administrators</td>
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Themes

During this study of male early childhood education teachers, three major themes began to emerge even as the interviews were taking place. These three themes were: “Making the decision to teach young children at the early childhood level”; “A love of being with children”; and “Working with women”. Under each of these major themes there were some sub-themes which developed. Making the decision to teach young children at the early childhood level led to discussions about the influence of others in making the decision, support of the participant’s family and friends, discussion of a previous career (if applicable), job satisfaction with the choice, income issues, and finally thoughts about what the future holds for the participant. A love of being with children developed into two sub-themes: the potential for becoming a role model to children, especially boys in the school, and how the world tends to stereotype men who work with children, i.e. pedophile. Finally the last theme of working with women saw an exploration into the areas of working with female administrators, dealing with male versus female roles in the workplace, and becoming “one of the gang”.

Making the Decision to Teach Early Childhood Education

The choice of a career is one of the most important decisions we make in life. It is critical that we choose an occupation which we enjoy and can pursue for many years. However, making the choice to pursue a career which is traditionally male or female requires more personal insight into why the choice is being made. The decision is one that affects not only the individual but many times those around him. The participants in
this study provided a variety of reasons for making the choice as a male to teach in the predominantly female career field of early childhood education.

David was first exposed to elementary education while in high school. He was part of a program that sent high school students to local elementary schools to read with struggling readers. Although he recalled the thrill of reading with young children and watching them progress, he never really considered making the commitment to study elementary education in college. Like many of the male teachers interviewed for this study, he placed his love of working with children on a back burner and chose to study forensic science. Throughout his studies though, he kept remembering how much joy and personal fulfillment he experienced when he was working with children. This sense of making a positive contribution was always in the back of his mind, he explained:

I could not help but to keep remembering that when I was at (name of high school omitted) I got to work in the (name of club omitted) going to different schools to buddy read. I got to go to (name of elementary school omitted) and the one thing that always stuck out to me was that I went one day and there was a child that did not read that fast. He did not read fast but he just needed someone to read to him because he did not have anyone to read with him at home. I sat there and listened to him read…This always stuck with me the entire time.

Aaron explained that he had no plans of teaching at the early childhood level of school. He, like many of the other men in this study, had actually planned completely different careers. Although discouraged from going into teaching by his mother, he planned a career in secondary education in the area of English. Soon his love of studying literature and writing were crushed. Aaron became disillusioned with the demands placed on secondary teachers and the amount of standardized testing that was involved. He left college and found work outside the field of education. However, his love of teaching soon brought him back but this time with a different focus; elementary education:
I knew I wanted to teach. I always knew that was sort of what I wanted to do…I really don’t think I ever really thought about it. I just knew that I would always end up doing it eventually.

Sam was not unique to this study in the fact that he had already explored and decided on a completely different career path; serving in the Armed Forces. His parents however were not supportive of this decision. After much discussion, Sam agreed to one year of college before joining the Marines. He explained how this one year changed into a degree in early childhood/elementary education:

I thought elementary school, that would be fun, and I would enjoy that so that is how I stumbled into it. Then one year of college turned into two and then three, and the next thing I knew I was graduating. And the more I got into the education classes, the more I enjoyed them and just found out that this was where I needed to be. So, I kind of just stumbled into it.

Charles admitted that he did not consciously choose a career in early childhood or elementary education. He had always wanted to be a teacher as far back as he can remember:

I don’t really think I chose to go into elementary education. It is just part of who I was. When I was a little kid, I played school. And you know then I got into college and it came time to decide on a major and I thought why not do what you have a passion for, what you enjoy? I always wanted to be a school teacher.

Jeffrey admitted that he had a hard time deciding on a career path. Even though he attended a prestigious high school in the area, he did not make the most of all the opportunities afforded him at the school. Like many other men in this study, he chose a business degree thinking it would be stable and in turn make him a good provider. It was a natural inclination to teaching he found through coaching gymnastics.

I started coaching gymnastics, and I had never coached gymnastics or anything. It was one of the first experiences I had with working with kids. That is where I guess I found something that I was really, really good at. Not so much the coaching aspect, but relating to the kids, being somebody that they can just talk to
and listen to. That is where I was like, “I like this kid thing.” But that was my first kind of run in with kids and I had a talent. I could relate to them.

Influence of Others.

Several of the participants admitted that it was not only a single experience but also the influence of some other person in their lives who led them to make the choice to teach elementary school. Many times this person was a former teacher, a spouse, or some other significant person.

David admitted that he made the decision to teach at the elementary level but there were the examples set by other teachers in his family:

I already had my uncle, who teaches in fifth grade here. He was already an elementary school teacher and my aunt that passed away taught high school math. She had little kids of her own at the time and she enjoyed teaching them math just as much as she did her high school kids.

Like many other participants in this study Aaron was influenced by several of his family members. His mother, try as she may to dissuade him from education as a career path, only managed to help change his focus from secondary to early childhood/elementary education. However, a teacher in his family made him consider the choice of early childhood/elementary education as a career option.

So I said “Well, OK. I’ll do elementary.” Uh, my aunt, my great aunt was an elementary teacher at (name of school omitted) for a long time, uh, and I remember I just loved all the fun things she did, you know. That was sort of back when you got to have a little bit more fun in elementary. So I said, “Yeah well, I’ll …you know, I’ll try it and see.” And I loved it. So it was the right fit. Right, there are a lot of teachers in my family.

Oddly enough Sam was not influenced by any male teacher in elementary school. He actually believed that men were not allowed to be a teacher at this level. He explained
that he did not have a male teacher until his middle school experience and most of these were coaches.

All through elementary school I didn’t know guys were allowed to teach. The elementary school I went to had an entire female faculty. We didn’t even have male custodians…Yeah, I just assumed that they didn’t do that. And even when I was in the 6th grade there were only male coaches or PE teachers. So I, you know, I had a misconception there. So it wasn’t until later that I was like “Oh yeah, they just didn’t happen to be there. There is just not many.” And the more I thought about that… as I was picking a major that was another thing that led me to elementary, easier to get a job.

Charles admitted that his mother did have something to do with his career choice. Although she had been a teacher, she still was a powerful role model for this young man. He also spoke about a male student teacher when he was in kindergarten. This seemed to send a powerful message to him that men could be successful in early childhood education. He also enjoyed a good relationship with his teachers during his elementary years. This positive experience no doubt reinforced his decision to pursue early childhood/elementary education as a career goal.

My mother was a teacher, but my mother only taught for three years. My mother celebrated all things about education and learning. I loved preschool, kindergarten. I loved my kindergarten teacher. I remember we had a student teacher who was a man and he wore clogs and I remember thinking that was so intense and I remember he brought hollowed out Easter eggs for us to decorate for Easter and he spray painted those eggs the avocado seventies green. And he let us roll them in glitter and sequins and I just thought I had died and gone to heaven.

Jeffrey stated that it was his wife who first noticed his talent for working with students. She encouraged him to go back to school and pursue a teaching degree

Well, my wife had seen me working with the kids. She had seen me coach. She had seen me teach, well coach. She had seen me at the meets and the kind of response I was getting and she wasn’t the only one who told me this. Real innocently, being around kids, having fun with kids, building relationships with kids, gaining kids trust, trusting in them. It’s a different experience from anything I had done in the past.
Support from Family and Friends.

David explained that his family was very supportive of his decision to pursue a career in elementary education. They saw this decision as an opportunity to have a steady source of income and to remain close to home. His wife, who was also pursuing a career in forensic science made a change to early childhood education at the same time as he did. Finally, when it came to support from his peers, this teacher said that many of his friends didn’t understand him when he made this decision. They suggested that if he wanted to teach, maybe he could go into coaching, which seemed more appropriate for a young guy just out of high school. However, David’s best friend in high school was supportive because he too was choosing a career in a traditionally female field, nursing.

Actually my family was the complete opposite. They were like “You have always been better with children, you have more patience with little children than you do with older kids.” They were all for it. They knew that this would probably be best for me… I have never gotten any flack for it. It has always been “That’s probably what you need to do.” I had so many people who were teachers in my family and it just made since to me.

Aaron said that when he explained to his family and friends about his decision to begin teaching at the elementary school level They were supportive for the most part. Although some friends found the decision surprising initially, Aaron found a support group within the male students in the early childhood/elementary program at the university he attended. He explained that as male teachers, they remain very close and supportive of each other’s careers.

At first they you know...”What have you lost your mind?” or “Why would you want to do that?” You know? But now, where I went to school, uh, (name of university omitted) there was actually there was a group of us we called it the “Old Farts” because we were all over thirty at the time or getting close to thirty, uh, when we were back in school and there was actually 6 guys. You know that was pretty inspirational and we got to be really close friends. You know now my friends, several of them are teachers and, um, not many of them are elementary,
most of them are secondary. But um, they’re like “You really like it so I guess you’re gonna stick with it. You know, it must be a good fit.”

Sam admitted that he received support from his family and friends, especially in his local church. He had always been involved with children’s and youth ministries so the transition to a career in teaching seemed obvious to those who knew him well.

I did a lot of youth work at the church leading junior high ministries and assisting with the children’s ministries at our church and so I did a lot of teaching in that respect. So people always said “Oh, you’d make a good teacher” so I thought, “Ok, I’ll do that route.”

Jeffrey explained that most of his support came from his then girlfriend and now, his wife. She saw in him something that he had not been able to see in himself. She knew in the back of her mind that this young man had the makings of an outstanding teacher because of the care and dedication he had exhibited coaching gymnastics. He had a lot to say about his decision to teach at the early childhood/elementary level of school.

He actually thought he might find himself having to justify his decision but found support from friends and family.

I came home one day and talked to my girlfriend and she said, “You need to go back to (name of university omitted), look at the education department because you need to be a teacher.” I finally took her advice, went to (name of university omitted) and entered the education department and loved the curriculum. As I went back to my ten year reunion, not that I was a popular guy, but I was friends with just about everyone, and when they asked what I was doing, “Well I’m a teacher. I teach 1st grade.” And some of them were like “I can really see that. That is really good for you.” But I have gotten a lot more positive feedback than negative. I always get positive feedback. “Oh, they must love you.” I always get really good, positive feedback; which is something I never thought I’d get. When I went to talk to my then, soon to be father-in-law, about my plan for our lives together, he stopped me after I said, “You may not like this but I’m going to go ahead and pursue teaching.” He said, “It’s one of the most admirable jobs that you can do. They don’t get paid enough. They don’t get enough recognition.” So it was totally opposite of my thinking of what he would think. And it’s been something that I try to get better at every day.
Previous Career

Of the five men interviewed for this study, four of the participants actively sought another career field before considering early childhood education. Many times men, because of a sense of duty for being the major wage earner for the household, put a love of working with children on the backburner, so to speak and opt for a more lucrative career.

Even though David was right out of college and this was his first job, he placed the choice of working with children in the back of his mind and chose a career that was perhaps more “respected” in male circles, a forensic scientist. However, as explained earlier, the enjoyment he received from an earlier experience of working with children never left him and eventually emerged as a deciding factor in his career choice.

After dropping out of the secondary program in English, Aaron had worked in a business management position for about five years with a national retail company before teaching. He did not have a degree in business. He was in somewhat of a supervisory position but found that role to be unfulfilling. When he reached some level of stability, he decided to complete his degree at a local university in early childhood/elementary education. Even while out of school, Aaron felt as it was inevitable that he would return to the field of education one day.

I actually worked at (name of retailer omitted) in loss prevention for 5 years in between when I dropped out of (name of university omitted) and went back to school and I worked with about 50 women and about 5 guys there. So I you know, I am kind of used to working with women and I enjoy it.
Sam was one of the few participants who did not have a previous career. However, he had given serious consideration to joining the Armed Forces after graduating high school.

Jeffrey admitted that he struggled trying to find his niche as a young man. He found employment in the construction industry making countertops. However, he stated that this was unfulfilling and that something was missing. Later he tried a business venture with a friend and this too left him feeling unfulfilled.

I was building countertops and working at a countertop shop. I had taken a hiatus from the gym and wanted to help a guy start a business ‘cause I was studying business and thought I could get in on the ground floor or something. Well, I did that for about six to eight months and there was something missing.

Job Satisfaction

The men in this study all admitted to loving what they do. They knew they made the right decision about deciding to work in early childhood education. This was evident in their comments, as well as the expressions on their faces as they talked about working with children.

David explained the routine of his classroom. His most memorable comment in the whole interview: “I don’t have to teach; I get to teach.” I believe that this profound statement by this young teacher said a great deal about the choice he has made to teach early childhood education:

I have to do an entertainment show. It has to be the full dog and pony show. The circus has to be over here at all times because with this many different abilities, maybe disabilities that we have today, and the many different things kids can tune in to for fun and everything. If it’s not flashy, the presentation, it’s going to be much easier to forget. I like to do that. I get to perform every day. That’s what the most important thing to me. I can have fun teaching them and they think that it is hilarious and then they end up remembering it because they thought it was funny. That’s what I like best.
Aaron discussed how much satisfaction he finds in his new career as a classroom teacher. He especially enjoyed working with the kindergarten age student. He viewed his role as an advocate for his students and someone who facilitated learning through many various learning experiences. It is obvious that he loved his school and the community in which it is located.

Right, right. This is where it’s really fun, and this is where you can get really close to the kids; where you can make that connection and actually help the children. So much more, I think, than you could in a counselor’s office or something like that ‘cause we’re with them seven hours a day. We really see what they are going through.

Charles explained that he is very satisfied with his decision to become an early childhood/elementary teacher. “It’s like a calling. I just knew I wanted to have a job that I would be happy doing. So anyway, that’s my story and I’m sticking to it.”

Jeffrey had a lot to say about his decision to teach at the early childhood/elementary level of school. During a particularly difficult year, he actually contemplated giving up teaching and moving on to something else. However, it was during this time that he came to the realization that teaching was exactly where he was meant to be and make the greatest difference.

Because there was a time, two years ago, my first year of teaching 2nd grade, I was throwing my hands up in the air here. I was done with it here and I was going somewhere else. But I had some people keep telling me, “Stick with it, stick with it here. We need you. We love you.” But in the back of my mind “I don’t want to go anywhere else. I want to stay here. I want to leave a legacy here.” I am talking about the emotion. If you really get into these kids heads and try to make their life better. I don’t check in and check out. These kids get under your skin in a good way and they make you better for it. I guess that was 6 years into things, that I really knew “Hey, this is what I am supposed to be doing.” So that’s when I knew I can’t do anything else, excuse me, I won’t do anything else. To me, being with these kids is kind of like being alive.
Income

David stated that his parents for the most part were very supportive of his decision to go into teaching. His family saw this move as a steady income. His father currently works for a local coal mining company and his mother is a pharmacist. They told him that with a career in education he might not always get what he wanted immediately. There would not be a great deal of extra money for a future family. However, the career was thought to offer a steady and dependable salary:

They were always on board for it. I mean, they told me that I needed to make sure that this was my decision because there would not be a lot of money. There are some wants that you have that you have to put on hold.

Sam admitted that making money was not high on list of priorities at the time. He explained that focusing on his growing family was what was most important to him at this time.

Money is not the issue right now. My wife and I have decided that we are not going to live very extravagantly at all. My wife just quit her job and we are going to have just my paycheck.

Jeffrey stated that he worried about his ability to a good provider for his family if he chose teaching as a career path. Having a successful wife in the world of business seemed to place even more pressure on him to at least be able to provide an equal contribution to the family income. He also feared telling his future father-in-law of his decision to teach.

And I said, “Well, teachers don’t make anything. I want to help support. I don’t want to be someone who just…” and at that time my ideology about teaching was that… there was no money in it, not that I was money driven, but she was going to make a lot of money and I wanted to try and keep up.
Future

When I asked David about the future and if he had any designs on making a transition into administration, he answered with a definitive “No!” He went on to explain that he knew a Masters degree was in his future, however the degree would be in elementary education rather than educational leadership, the degree required to become a principal. He talked about how he could appreciate the position of those who take on a leadership position but how much he would miss the interactions with the children in a classroom setting.

I just don’t see how they do it. If I’m not in the classroom every day, I don’t see how I would make it. I couldn’t handle not having the one-on-one interaction or having children with me or at least my children with me.

Aaron stated that he has decided to get a few years of experience before going back to school to earn his Masters degree. He enjoys being in the classroom for now but has considered other options for the future. He admitted that he has been encouraged to get his degree in education leadership; however, his desire was to remain in the classroom.

But, I’m happy right now where I am. I want to stay here for a while at least, Um, I don’t think that I would want to do media or counseling, and I am not sure about administration. That wouldn’t interest me very much. Um, I wouldn’t want to spend that much time on discipline and dealing with problems and things like that because the fun to me is working with children. The teaching is the fun.

Sam did not see himself leaving the classroom for a position in administration at the present time. He answered bluntly that he had no plans to transition to the position of school principal. He stated that he enjoyed teaching his students. He explained that he has other responsibilities such as those at his church.
I like the teaching. I am going to try to stay in the classroom. In five years, I really want to be in the classroom and be a classroom teacher with my daughter in the same building.

Charles admitted that he has no plans of leaving his classroom any time soon. Although he had a successful career as a reading specialist for his school system and had worked as an adjunct professor for a local university, his heart remained in the classroom and he planned to continue there as long as possible.

I enjoy doing what I do very much and I plan to stay at it as long as I possibly can. So I plan to do it as long as I can and as long as I am good at it, and take it from there. I have done that once (working in administration at the central office level). I was our school’s reading specialist. I did the reading specialist job for two years and halfway through the second year I went to the superintendent who at that time was in charge of personnel and I said, “I am done. I have done my best. I want to be back in the classroom.” I have done that as well (teaching at the university level.) It just was not a good match for me. I did it several times. I taught several courses. I am glad to have that on my resume. It looks good. It takes up lines, but what I do best, what I do well, what I am the most comfortable doing, what I like doing is being in the classroom.

Jeffrey stated that he hoped to be in the classroom for a long time. He realized that he could make more money if he went into administration but he also realized money was not the most important thing in his life.

It’s funny because when I do talk to people, whenever I was talking to people about what I was going to do, going into education and get my degree, getting ready to start teaching. They were like, “How long will it be before you get into administration?” And at the time then it was something I had never really thought about, but it’s always out there. I have absolutely no desire to be in (name of principal omitted) shoes each and every day.

Love of Being with Children

A common theme which surfaced in this study was the reason that the participants selected a career in early childhood education was a love of being with or working with children. There was also a strong sense of a being in a position to help children.
However, within this theme there arose two somewhat polarized sub-themes. The participants discussed that while a love of being with or working with children does have its rewards, such as being a positive role model, it also has some drawbacks in the way the public sometimes stereotypes men who work with young children as pedophiles.

*Role model*

As mentioned earlier, David worked as a reading mentor as part of a high school club’s service project. This experience had a profound effect on his decision to pursue a career in early childhood education. He saw himself as someone who was in a position to help children who were identified as struggling readers. He found a great deal of joy and fulfillment through this opportunity. David stated that he also enjoyed being a positive male role model for his students. He was enthusiastic about presenting a positive image of someone who was excited about learning.

There are more single parent families and there isn’t maybe a good male role model around or at least maybe a role model who is maybe as education-oriented as we are and I like having that role… I would hope that I would do well for these children…

Aaron related that he often identified with his students who were being raised for whatever reason by a single parent. He enjoyed being in a position to encourage these children. Aaron was often seen by others in his school as playing the role of being an authoritarian figure in his school and has had several opportunities to talk with children who are going through similar experiences.

You know, (name of principal omitted) has told me some of the parents themselves have told him that they have requested for their child to be in my room, um, not necessarily because of my reputation of being a disciplinarian or anything, I don’t think that is one of my prime strengths, but they want their son or daughter to have a father figure. They are single moms that want a stable male...
figure in their child’s life and you know that seems like a rather large responsibility to put on someone as well as their teacher. You know, but a lot of people are doing that you know more and more every year I have them…It’s a lot to lay at someone’s door.

Sam discusses that the reason he initially chose to teach at the early childhood level was because that was where he felt most needed and could make the greatest contribution. He also explained that he enjoyed the thought of being a role model and having so much influence in the lives of his third grade students and his school as a whole. He went on to explain that his reputation as a role model has reached outside his classroom to his own family, as well as his community.

I am more comfortable with that because I look at our population and we have a lot of students from a single parent family and they are looking to me as a role model. That is something I knew going into it. A guy who goes into education is going to have to step up and do that so that is one of the things I do try to do for a lot of our students with behavior issues. Yeah, that’s the way it is. Luckily, in this school since we have so many males, that gets spread around. But, I kind of view that as part of the job description. Positive male role model and I think that is important. While yes, it is a lot of added responsibility, who else is going to do it?

Charles admitted that he sees himself perhaps a little differently than other teachers see themselves. He sees his position as a teacher at his school in a purely professional manner. He never deviated from this. Fortunately this suited his personality and often worked to his advantage.

I get back to this. “I am your child’s teacher. I am not their father and I don’t want to be and I don’t claim to be.” That is not my area. And a lot of people think I am cold hearted and if that is what it needs to be called then I am.

Jeffrey admitted to the fact that he sees himself as a role model. He also goes to explain that this role was inevitable if you are a male early childhood/elementary teacher. He accepted this and took this role quite seriously.

I try to be their parent while they are here. Not overbearing, but you know it’s not all about A, B, C’s. I think our role as men in education is more important now
than ever because of the breakdown of the American family and the amount of kids who go home and see a female each and every day, but don’t see a male. I am the only guy that some of these kids see. I am comfortable being a role model. I don’t have a choice. These kids look up to us. We are role models whether we know it or not. The boys look up to the male teachers. They act like us. Walking down the hallway kids are like “I want to get you next year. I want to be in your room.” I had that much more I guess insight into what I was, into the type of influence I could have. That’s powerful and that’s why we do what we do. I love it. So that’s why I am here. It is why we do what we do and hopefully I am here for a lot longer. I want to leave a legacy. I want people to know this was a great school.

Stereotyping

Even though David was a young teacher, he was well aware of the negative stereotypes of men who worked with young children. He stated that his undergraduate coursework at a state university included several established male teachers in the area of elementary education who warned the male pre-service teachers about how easily accusations could be made and how devastating the results of this could be.

You don’t want…you don’t want to come across like that. You don’t want that to be what’s said about you and then, especially because being, in our fields that those are the kids that you want to help, the ones who want to come up there and want to thank you at the end of the day like, it’s just been a long day and then they are like, you know, “I love you”, and they give you a hug on the way out and you would hate for someone to say, and try to make it into something bad. I mean that has just always been a bother for me. Yeah, I’ve heard that stereotype a lot…Aaron also admitted that he was well-aware of the fine line which men who worked with young children walked. He explained that at first he was very hesitant about any physical contact with a child. As time has gone by however he has gained more confidence. If there was ever a questionable situation which arose, he usually managed to get help from a female colleague. Several teachers at his school have placed their own children in his classroom. This has helped to build his reputation as a trusted individual within his school and community.
When I first started the parents were like you know, “A man teaching kindergarten?”, but they would say that and they were a little bit hesitant and I understand that…Uh, well, I understood it. You know it definitely, it kind of, it bothers you because it questions my character …I think I watch myself more carefully. You know there is always that white elephant in the room when you’re talking about a male in any elementary school and um I think we all have that terrible fear that one day someone is going to say that you did this or you did that you know. I try to never be in the room alone with a child. Um, ‘cause even though you know you can be as innocent as you can be but that one accusation and you’re ruined. Your career is over and that’s a concern definitely…It’s just gonna take a lot more men in this field in elementary education before that changes. I believe, because it’s always gonna be easy to single out someone who is a minority, and we are definitely a minority in education.

Like the other participants in this study, Sam explained stereotyping of male teachers at the early childhood level was definitely a concern for him. However, he did mention that many stereotypes were there for some reason of another. He explained that men who took the time and effort to work with small children must be very special people. He scrutinized his words and actions very closely on a daily basis.

You know when you are a guy, one accusation can end your career. And all it has to be is an accusation because that stigma would be with you and that is just the way that is. So know that I am very cautious. When I first got the job here, there were all kinds of rumors around the neighborhood and the swimming pool and they were asking about my persuasion, and they were trying to check me out. The problem with stereotypes is there is a reason it is a stereotype because at one point in history or currently, it is more often true than not. And so if it’s a stereotype it’s because it has happened so much that it is something to worry about. So instead of saying “Oh, you shouldn’t be so stereotypical.” Well there is a reason it is a stereotype. Because more often than not, it is right. Is it fair? No. Those are the stereotypes, if that means I have to conduct myself in a more careful manner, I’m gonna have to do that. I can complain about it until I am blue in the face, but it’s still going to be that way so just accept it and move on.

Charles admitted that stereotyping of men who work with young children does occur. He also explained that he doesn’t feel as if parents watch him more closely because of his gender. Charles also stated that any good parent should be concerned
about their child’s teacher regardless of the gender of that teacher. He explained that as a male teacher he does guard his actions perhaps more closely than his female counterparts.

I do take special precautions and you watch yourself a little. I always have every year, every step of my career. I am a very cut and dry person, I am very black and white, there is not any gray area in my life and you know. I do not touch them and they do not touch me. Period. Beginning, middle, and end of story. I am their teacher. I am not their father. I am not their uncle. I am not their friend. I am not their big brother. I am not any of those things. I am their teacher and we have got stuff to do while we are here. I do get frustrated when men in my profession do stupid things because it makes us all look bad, but that can be said for any profession. I think that a parent would ask regardless of if it was a male or female teacher because parents always, well not all parents, but I think many parents have a sincere interest in having the best teacher to meet the needs of their child. You know I have worked hard to earn the reputation that precedes me and I am very proud of it.

Jeffrey admitted that he has worried about the stereotyping of male teachers who work with young children. He was conscious of his actions in the classroom and how these might be interpreted by others. However, he was also aware that children need to be shown outward signs of affection. He noted the importance of hugs in his classroom.

When I first started, when I first started teaching that was what I always worried about. You know someone thinking that my affection or gesture or something was something other than what it was. My track record here speaks for itself. I have never had a problem with a child. I have never been accused of anything. It’s not something that I worry about because I don’t think anyone is out to get me, but I could be totally wrong. I give my kids a hug each and every day. It could be a side hug. It could be big hug depending on who it is. If I got all over somebody one day then before they leave they need to know the slate is clean. They can try again tomorrow. I love you very much. Give them a big hug.

Maybe that’s wrong. I don’t know, but they are little emotional beings and when they
leave here they need to know that everything is alright and that when they come back in
tomorrow I’m going to love them as much as I did.

**Working with Women**

Male early childhood teachers shared a unique position of working in a
predominantly female setting. They shared their day with other teachers who are women
and more than likely a principal who is a woman. These men struggled with a variety of
issues which included building and maintaining a working relationship with a female
superior, i.e. principal; dealing with male versus female issues in the workplace in
general; and trying to carve out a niche and become accepted as one of the gang.

**Female Administrators**

After the interview with David, I felt that he was somewhat uneasy with the
notion of talking about working for female administrators. This teacher is not yet tenured
and he was reluctant to comment in this area.

Aaron had only taught three years at the time of the interview. His principal as a
student teacher and his principal now were both men. He has never worked with a female
administrator. He felt as though he could handle most situations that arose and diffuse
any situation that might escalate into a more serious condition. Interestingly, he did not
feel this way because of his gender. Aaron believed that any teacher, male or female,
should be able to manage most occurrences within his or her own classroom without
relying on additional support from the administration. He spoke of his classroom as his
“territory” and took great pride in being able to control it on a daily basis with few exceptions.

Sam has only had two principals during his six years of teaching. Both of these principals were female. So he had no basis for comparing female administrators with male administrators. However, he was aware of the variation even within female administrators. Sam also mentioned that he had the experience of being mistaken for the principal because he was male. This experience is common among male teachers with female administrators.

Before his current principal began, Jeffrey had a female principal. He admitted that his relationship with her was not as good as the relationship he shared now with his male principal.

Male vs. Female Roles

David began his career at his current school as a long-term sub. He recalled that he was always made to feel welcome by the entire faculty. The friendly atmosphere was still apparent even in his second year of teaching. There had been no animosity toward him as a male teacher in a predominantly female faculty. He went on to include that even in his undergraduate program there were only about three males in the a program of about seventy females. He said they got along fine with each other. It never seemed unusual to him to be in a minority position.

These women have always been very accepting of me, especially here at (name of school omitted). When I was a sub here I always felt like I was very welcome here. I get along fairly well…these people are just so easy to get along with. I mean, they don’t treat me any differently.
Aaron explained that he realized the unique role he played as part of his faculty. He and his colleagues often worked together on aspects of the curriculum which each considers to be a strength. Like other men in this study, Aaron admitted that what he lacked in artistic ability was made up for in his computer skills.

I think probably I could let things slide a little bit more than I do, as far as bulletin boards and things like that. But I think they would probably let me get by with it, and they would probably do it for me if I asked them to, but I really don’t. The one thing that I do get by with is field trips. I cannot stand to do field trips and they do that…We sort of just divide and conquer. You know I tend to write all the letters and the notes and things like that. They put all the computer work off on me for some reason. You know any kind of registering we have to do on STI (computer program for staff development), professional development, that’s all on me.

Sam alluded to the fact that he enjoyed working with women more than working with men. He stated that he enjoys his unique position. He explained that his unique position allows for interesting working relationships with his female peers. He saw his personality as different than his female peers and tried to compensate for that by maintaining close communication with the parents of his students.

Whenever we take the sexual harassment PowerPoint video for professional development, there are jokes about that for the next three weeks. But in the typical workplace it is usually the male perpetrating on the female and so we turn it around here and make it funny. I also start my conferences, all my parent conferences and “Meet the Teacher”, any time I meet with a parent for the first time I let them know that I have a rough personality, and if it offends your child, you need to let me know. If you don’t talk to me, we can’t fix it. So I do have one or two phone calls every year. So I just really try to stay up on that parent communication to head off any problems more so I guess than a female teacher would have to because they will probably get the benefit of the doubt more than I would. I mean there is a double standard.

When it came to male versus female issues and personalities, Charles admitted that he made a deliberate choice to keep his private life private. He did not consider his colleagues as close friends. When he left school, he left school and all that it entails. He
had worked hard to keep his personal life and private life separate. He stated that he does not feel the need to create a “surrogate family” in his school.

You know, now that I am older there are conversations I just chose to not participate in. I frankly do not care about everyone’s children. You know, there are a lot of things I just don’t care about. You know other friends of mine who are in other professional worlds, you know they would never discuss with their working peers the things that are discussed in an elementary school. There are a whole generation of principals who must have been taught that in principal school that your school is your family. I just disagree with that notion. I do connect, but I connect in a way that is controlled by me and that I am comfortable with.

Jeffrey was the only male teacher in his school. He was also the only male in the school until his current principal came to the school. He felt as a male the female teachers could count on him if they ever had a problem with discipline. He stated that he was careful not to overstep his boundaries but he always kept his eyes and ears open.

I would be the presence if there was a problem or something not everywhere but if I walking down the hallways and there was a problem somewhere, I would go and I would try to handle it. If there was a problem, a discipline problem, something that I could hear or catch wind of, I would go down and I would try, if it was wanted, if it was needed, if it was called upon, I would go down and do it.

One of the Gang

When it came to working with a predominantly female faculty, David claimed that he enjoyed it for the most part. The female teachers didn’t treat him any differently than any of the other colleagues. He stated that he didn’t have a male teacher until he went to high school in the ninth grade. Most of his male teachers were usually coaches. All of his elementary teachers as well as middle school teachers had been female.

Although Aaron has been at his current school only three years, he considered his fellow kindergarten teachers as friends and colleagues. Like several other men in this study, he admitted that he was reluctant to become involved with the daily “drama” that
goes on in the normal workplace. However, this separation was of his choosing. He had never been made to feel isolated within the faculty.

Um, they all feel pretty comfortable just you know talking to me about you know whatever. And um...Um, I guess I’m just really lucky because the three ladies that I work with are just fantastic. We all have, um sort of the same sense of humor. I love humor and they do to. And I really think that to teach elementary, you really have to...especially in early childhood and the things we have to do, you know if you didn’t... you’d run out. But they were very helpful when I first started. You know it’s kind of odd we’d get along as well as we do. But, uh you know we just have a great time. So that um I’ve never felt isolated at all in any way....

Sam stated that he had become accepted among his peers to the point of becoming one of the gang. He said that this statement he usually proffered by one of his female counterparts when he was being introduced to someone new or unfamiliar with his faculty. Although this teacher had more male colleagues at his school than any of the others in this study, his time with them was limited.

Like at lunch, we sit at our team tables, and there is not another guy on the team so I am with my colleagues there. Very rarely do we really have a chance to come together. But I personally don’t care. I got used to it in college. But you know, everyone stops seeing you as a guy really and you hear all kinds of stuff going on in their lives that you don’t really care about.

Charles stated that the faculty at his school had welcomed him and made him feel like he is part of the team. He has never experienced the feeling of isolation that many male teachers in elementary education had experienced. Surprisingly enough, there were nine male teachers in this school. However, their contact with each other was somewhat limited. He admitted that throughout his life he had always felt more comfortable around women so his current situation worked out very well.

Our school is large and in my situation, our kindergarten, first and second grade classes are downstairs. Third, fourth, and fifth grade are upstairs. So most of the other men are upstairs in one capacity or another and then our male PE teacher is in the gym. So in a lot of ways I do sort of feel like I am the only male even
though I am not. And I truly I relate better to women. My friends have all been female throughout the years regardless of the age or the stage. It’s not a problem for me.

Summary

Chapter Four addressed the analysis of the data of the study. The chapter was arranged according to the themes and subthemes which emerged both during and after the data collection phase of the study. Each of the themes was introduced along with the subthemes separately. The portions of the interview which corresponded to the theme or subtheme were recorded and presented verbatim for the reader.
CHAPTER FIVE
FINDINGS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The true test of any work of research is to ask the questions “What are the implications of this body of work to me as a reader?” as well as “How can I use this newly gained information in my current situation?” Many times research has been conducted that in and of itself is admirable but whether or not is has value to the reader is the determinant of merit.

Major Findings

It is not an easy choice for a man to decide to become a teacher in today’s world. The decision becomes even more difficult for a man to commit to a career in early childhood education, which for many years has been considered the domain of women. Many men face challenges from the onset. These challenges often include such areas as: outside influences; support or lack thereof, from family and friends; a previous career that has in no way prepared them for this transition; satisfaction from the job itself; the level
of income traditionally associated with a career in teaching; and what decisions can and should be made about the future.

It is interesting to note that of the five individuals interviewed for this study, only one of them chose teaching at the early childhood level as a first career choice. Although David made the decision to change his major while in college, the other four participants were either involved in or considering careers in the areas of secondary education, the military, construction, or coaching in gymnastics. Aaron was in college majoring in secondary education in the area of English before leaving and working for a while at a local retailer. Sam had made plans to join the Marines, but a last minute intervention by his parents made him take an obligatory year of college. Jeffrey was involved in construction but also coaching a gymnastics team. These four did not view working with young children as a primary career choice. They generally came into the field of education only after exploring other career options.

Many teachers state that it was the positive influence of a teacher or some significant person in their lives at a young age which led them into choosing teaching as a career. This study holds true to form. David and Aaron stated that there were several teachers in their family which led them to a decision to teach young children. Sam had been active working with children in his church and people in the church often made the remark that he had a gift of working with children. Charles admitted that he had always remembered wanting to be a teacher. He reminisces about a mother who was a former teacher and also an early experience with a male kindergarten teacher. For Jeffrey, it was his wife who saw qualities in him that led her to see the potential in him to be a great teacher.
Men who make the choice to teach in an area which is traditionally female often seek the support of their families and friends. These participants were no exception to this. Positive support makes the decision and transition easier, while negative attitudes towards teaching young children, generally from peers, often make the participant question his decision. David stated that his family was much more supportive of his decision to teach elementary school than his choice of career in forensics. They saw teaching as an opportunity for him to stay close to home. He also found an unusual source of support through a friend who was at the time entering the field of nursing, another traditionally female career. Aaron explained that he formed a bond with his male peers while a pre-service teacher. These friendships continue to this day. Sam and Charles stated that their families and friends were generally supportive of their decision to teach at the early childhood level. Jeffrey mentioned that his wife and father-in-law were sources of support for him in the early days. He also explained that many of his friends see his choice to teach early childhood as fitting his personality.

Many men come into teaching as a second career choice. Even if they consider teaching initially, they seem to choose another career. David originally planned to study forensics but decided to change his major while still in college to elementary education. Aaron dropped out of college while in the secondary education program because he became frustrated with the idea of teaching one subject only. Sam decided to seek a teaching certificate after learning that his parents would not allow his first career choice; joining the military. Charles was the only participant who chose teaching at the early childhood/elementary level as his first choice. Jeffrey had completed two years of business school before changing his major over to early childhood/elementary education.
Job satisfaction or the desire to help others was often stated as one of the major reasons that men chose to go into elementary education. The participants interviewed for this study were generally happy with the choice they have made. One memorable comment by David, a second year teacher, was “I don’t have to teach; I get to teach.” Aaron finds tremendous satisfaction from being a male kindergarten teacher. Sam admitted that he found his teaching career much less stressful than his planned career in the military but still wondered what his life would have been like. Charles stated that he enjoyed his position as a professional educator. Finally Jeffrey stated that he found creating a sense of trust in his second grade students very rewarding. He realized that teaching is what he was meant to do all along.

Income has always been a primary issue for anyone choosing a career in teaching. For most of the teachers in this study, income played an important role when it came to making the decision to choose elementary education as a career. David’s family saw his choice of teaching as a position which offered a steady and reliable income. His family warned him though that he would have to be careful when it came to spending. Aaron and Sam both explained that they had made the decision that being happy in their chosen profession was much more important than making more money. Jeffrey also stated that the time teaching allowed him to spend with his young family was more important than trying to maintain a different lifestyle.

Many men eventually move from the classroom to positions in administration for a variety of reasons. However, the men in this particular study had made the choice to remain in their classrooms in the future. Most of them came into teaching as a second career and have found a sense of fulfillment in this choice. They each commented that
they see themselves furthering their education in the future but rather than seeking a certificate for administration, they would prefer an advanced degree in curriculum and instruction. David and Jeffrey both spoke of the respect for those in administration; however, they had made a conscious choice to remain in his classroom. Charles emphatically stated that he has already been involved with a district position as well as teaching as an adjunct professor at a local university and stated that he knew his place was in the classroom with his second graders. Sam and Jeffrey have both contemplated transitioning into administration but neither of them had any definite plans for this in the near future.

Teachers who work with young children often claim that the reason they chose the profession is because of their love of being with and helping children. There are two facets of this that are perhaps unique to male teachers who make this choice. Many times the male early childhood teacher is seen as a role model for children, especially those children who are living without the influence of a male in their lives; or these men are stereotyped as something of a negative influence for children, i.e. the man is considered a pedophile. Each participant in this study admitted that some consideration has been given to this situation.

The idea of being a role model to young children became the most polarized topic of this study and one that took this researcher completely by surprise. David explained that an earlier experience helping a struggling reader had a profound effect on his life as a teenager. The memory of this experience stayed with him through college and helped him make the decision to enter early childhood education. He also stated that he enjoyed serving as a positive male role model for his current students. Aaron, Sam, and Jeffrey
related that they realized they would be seen as a role model for young children from the
time they chose early childhood education as a career. They had come to appreciate the
role they played as a positive influence in their school. Only Charles does not easily
accept his position as a role model within his school. Charles explained that he felt like
his role in the school was to be a professional educator. He chose not to be seen as a
father, brother, or uncle figure to his students. He maintained a highly professional
relationship with his students, as well as the parents of his students.

David admitted that he was prepared during his pre-service training that some
may look upon him and not appreciate his willingness to teach young children. The
public may stereotype him as a pedophile. Aaron spoke of the different boundaries of
male and female teachers in the early childhood program especially at the kindergarten
level. He explained that working at the early childhood level was a little more “hands-on”
and somewhat parental, than working in the upper grades. Because of this, he was
constantly aware of his interaction with his students. There was definitely a double
standard at work and male teachers of young children must constantly guard themselves
against any accusation which can ruin a successful career. Sam saw the issue of
stereotyping as also an area of great concern. Although he taught third grade, he was
aware of the boundaries he must observe with his children. He stated that he tries to avoid
any physical contact, other than maybe a “high-five” with any of his students unless he
knew the parents of the student very well. This trust continued to have a positive effect
on his work. Again Charles was the outlier in this discussion. He explained very
specifically that under no circumstances did he ever touch his students or did he ever let
them touch him. He was adamant about maintaining his “own space”. He did not even
give a congratulatory pat on the back or a “high-five” at the end of the day. He admitted that he was somewhat of a “germaphobe” when it came to other people in general. Jeffrey, on the other hand had no problem with physical contact. He gladly gave each of his students a big “bear hug” at the end of each day to show them that they were loved and valued. He saw this outward affection as an effort to build trust among his students.

When men choose an occupation which is in a predominantly female field, there are several issues which arise and must be dealt with. Men in the area of early childhood education are certainly no different. Many times the male teacher may find himself working under the supervision of a female administrator. His relationship with her is usually different than the relationship his female coworkers have with a female principal. The male teacher will also be required to deal with issues regarding male and female personalities in general. Finally, the male teacher may somehow become accepted as a member of the faculty, i.e. a team player. This is generally to his benefit.

David was reluctant to discuss working under the supervision of a female administrator. At the time of his interview, he was a second-year, non-tenured teacher who had worked the entire time for the same female principal. Aaron explained that he had never worked with a female principal. Both his pre-service and three years of teaching had been under the supervision of male principals. Sam, on the other hand had worked under the supervision of two female principals and never a male principal. He did however explain that both of his female principals’ management styles were very different. He felt he has had a good experience with both. He went on to state that this isn’t a matter of being a male/female issue but just having good classroom management skills. Charles stated that the gender of the administrator or teacher should not matter. It
was a matter of how capable and skillfully each handled the position. Finally Jeffrey had
worked with a female and a male principal. He admitted that he has a better relationship
with his male principal than he did with his female principal.

When it came to male and female relationships within the school environment,
David stated that he was always made to feel welcome from his first day at the school. He
did not experience any of the animosity that some men experience from their female
peers. He had always been in the minority, even since his pre-service days at the
university level. Aaron explained that his relationship with his female kindergarten
colleagues was one of trust. He was younger than the others and the female teachers had
taken him somewhat under their wing and guided him during these first few important
years. Sam admitted that although there were nine male teachers at his elementary school,
they rarely saw each other. They were required to sit by grade level at lunch and he found
friendships and support among his female third grade teachers. Charles did not see his
school environment as an extension of his family. He stated that he comes in and does his
job and goes. He rarely, if ever discussed personal information with his female
counterparts. He did an excellent job of separating his school life from his private life. He
did admit that throughout his life he had always had more female friends than male
friends so this type of work environment suited him perfectly. Jeffrey admitted that
before his current male principal arrived he was the only male in the building. He tried to
convey to the staff that he could be called on if ever the need arose. He realized that this
position of being the “alpha male” in the building had to be given up when the male
principal arrived. He was still seen though as someone who can be called on to help with
any discipline problems in the building.
Being “one of the gang” on a faculty that is predominantly female can be difficult to achieve. The men in this study all felt as if they had assumed a place on the “team” at the time of this interview. David, again a second-year teacher, felt that his coworkers had welcomed him from the beginning. He stated that his elementary and middle school teachers had all been female so he was quite used to being around a predominantly female faculty. Aaron stated that his colleagues’ sense of humor helped him to feel like one of the gang rather quickly. Also the fact that several of the teachers at his school placed their own children in his kindergarten class helped to establish him in the school community. Sam explained that he had completed his student teaching at the school where he is currently teaching. He felt as if the female staff had reached out to him and did a good job of welcoming him as a part of the faculty. Charles again stated that it was irrelevant to him as to whether he was considered one of the gang or not. He was at the school to do his job and he took pride in his reputation as an effective teacher. Jeffrey also explained that the teachers on the faculty at his school had made him feel like an integral part of the faculty.

Addressing the Research Questions

At the onset of this study a central research question developed as a result of selecting a research topic, identifying a research problem, and stating a purpose for the project. The central research question for this particular study was “How do male early childhood teachers describe what it means to teach in a predominantly female setting?” Several other questions developed as a result of this central question. These are often referred to as sub-questions.
These sub-questions for this study included:

- When did the participant first decide to pursue a career in elementary education and who or what influenced him?

- How does the participant describe his role as a member of a predominantly female faculty?

- What challenges or rewards has the participant experienced related to teaching?

- How does the participant feel about the stereotypes regarding men who work with children?

- Where does the participant see himself in the future?”

An essential component of the discussion section of a study is to relate how well the data gathered throughout the data collection process actually answered the central question, as well as the sub questions. Then, a comparison can also be made to the existing literature on that specific topic. When it comes to the central question of “How do male early childhood teachers describe what it means to teach in a predominantly female setting?” the participants in this study were very aware of their unique position as a male teacher in an early childhood school program. For the most part, the consensus was that they enjoyed their place in the predominantly female faculty. The participants felt as if they had a great deal to offer their respective students and schools. Each of the participants agreed that he was happy with the choice he made to teach at the early childhood level.

Bruce Carrington (2002) addressed several issues relevant to this exploration of issues surrounding male teachers who have decided to teach at the primary level. He
stated that men were needed are needed in the area of elementary education because it was still viewed as a female occupation and was generally unappealing to most men as a career option.

Cohen (1992) stated there are several barriers which prevent men from choosing early childhood or elementary education as a career path. Some of these she included were “stereotypical assumptions, coupled with low salaries, a perceived lack of status, and fears stirred by highly publicized sex-abuse cases involving male teachers” (p. 11). Cohen went on to discuss that the results of the research do not show that boys do better academically with a male teacher. However her study showed that male students typically do less well in a school with predominantly female teachers. Cohen concluded this study with a comparison of different teaching styles of male and female teachers. She stated, “Male preschool teachers offered more positive feedback, and they were physically more affectionate and active with both boys and girls than female teachers were” (p. 12).

Gamble and Wilkins (1997) looked at the dilemma which is facing the field of elementary education. The authors stated that even though the status of elementary teachers had risen over past decades through such initiatives as increased pay and stronger certification processes, the area of teaching younger children remained a female domain. They added that although women have been very successful at entering more “masculine” careers, such as law and medicine, men have not had the same success at crossing over into careers that were once considered “female,” such as elementary education. They went on to state that the reason more men aren’t choosing elementary education as a career were low salary (which happened to be the number one response), low status in the eyes of the general public, the fact that the career was still seen as more
suitable for women, men were looked on with suspicion who chose to teach children at this age, etc.

Milloy (2003) provided some interesting statistics on the current employment of males in the area of elementary education:

Just twenty-five percent of America’s three million teachers are men, and most are clustered in middle and high schools where they are more apt to be waxing knowledgeable about math and football—not (as the stereotypes go) wiping noses and nurturing. NEA figures show a scant 9 percent of teachers in elementary school are male, down from 14 percent in 1986. (p. 23)

She also discussed issues which either prevented men from initially entering the field or leaving after only a short period of service. These included: ability to make more money in other occupations, higher status in the eyes of the public, and the opportunity to advance up the corporate ladder.

Jennifer Sumsion (2000) examined how one male teacher in the area of elementary education defines himself as a male in a field that is predominantly female. She referred to this act of establishing gender positioning strategies as “otherness” and she used this to explain how this teacher, “Bill,” positioned himself with his colleagues, the parents of his students, and the community at large. More men in this field were seen as beneficial, but men often suffer the stigma of being seen as odd or different as they sought positions at this level.

When asked about when the participant first decided to pursue a career in early childhood education and who or what influenced him surprisingly enough; only one of the participants admitted they had wanted to be a teacher since childhood. Charles explained that he had always thought of being a teacher, but the other four participants really did not consider a career in teaching until later in life. All four of these teachers
were in what seemed to be successful careers. All four of the participants mentioned that they had the support of spouses, families, and friends when they revealed their decision. This was contrary to some of the articles which concluded that many people questioned why a man would choose to work with young children as a career path.

When asked how does the participant describes his role as a member of a predominantly female faculty, all of the participants in this study commented that they were always made to feel welcome and part of the faculty by their female counterparts. There was not one single incident described in this study where the participant was made to feel insulted or isolated. In fact, Aaron stated that his faculty went out of their way to make sure he was included in any social function which occurred outside of school. He, however, usually declined their offers describing himself as a “loner” by his own choosing. Several authors, though, describe situations where male teachers were ostracized by members of a female faculty.

Cooney and Bittner (2001) stated that many male teachers, working in predominantly female settings, list feelings of isolation and loneliness beginning with their days in their pre-service programs at the university level. Many times these experiences carried on into the actual teaching experience. Some of the participants in this study also commented that they felt as if they had no one to talk to among the staff.

Jones (2003) took the unique approach of incorporating interviews with the female teachers at the school where the male teacher is employed. It was apparent in this study that the female educators think that more men were needed at the primary level, but it was important that it be the “right kind” of man for the job. She addressed five key arenas in this study:
Balance or the ability of the school staff to accurately reflect the community at large; family, which involves the male teacher’s ability to be a positive role model, especially for boys from single parent families; the importance of the male teacher being a literate person, an area most closely associated with the female gender; the male ability to exert more influence and control on other males; and finally sports, which is viewed by the participants as primarily a male conduit for bonding. (p. 568)

Finally Jones arrived at what she deemed the ‘right kind’ of man expressed by the participants. She explained that according to the participants the ‘right kind’ of man had four characteristics: “enthusiastic about young children and hold an ‘early-years philosophy’; a listener- not arrogant; a team worker with a sense of humor; macho- not a ‘wimp’!” She concludes the article by stating that the roles of male and female were in a constant state of flux. It was critical that each individual who was given charge of a classroom be evaluated on his or her own merits.

Skelton (2003) conducted a survey with both male and female teachers about issues regarding male teachers in elementary education.

Almost the entire sample agrees that primary teaching is an acceptable career for both males and females. There is also an agreement among the students that there is not an equal opportunity for advancement for both males and females. The students think that the male teachers are often promoted at faster rate than their female counterparts. Both males and females think it is important to recruit males, as well as females into the primary sector of schooling. They also agree that males have an important role to play in these early years of schooling. Over half of the males think that the gender of the teacher is important, while most of the females feel that the gender of the teacher is not as important. Within the male subgroup, the upper primary males believe that the gender of the teacher is an important factor, while the lower primary male teachers think the gender of the teacher is irrelevant. More of the males in the upper level think that increasing the number of males at the primary level would “enhance the status of this sector of education.” (p. 92)

Sumsion (2000) discussed the topic of how a male teacher defined his role on a female faculty. The author answered this by addressing ten different strategies used by “Bill” to position himself with the colleagues, parents of students, and the community.
These sections included: “Emphasizing similarities, capitalizing on his parental status, cultivating conversational touch-points with parents, situating himself as a team member, critical comment, accentuating difference, foregrounding qualities, interests, and skills traditionally perceived as ‘masculine’, distancing himself from ‘female’ behavior, accentuating his access to professional and political power, and finally critical comment” (pp. 133-137).

When asked about the rewards and challenges that the participants had faced as a result of being an early childhood teacher, the participants primarily centered around the reward of being considered a role model by the students, parents, faculty, administration, and the community as a whole. Most of the participants in this study agreed that they were seen as a role model in their respective schools and for the most part they felt somewhat comfortable in that role. They realized the tremendous responsibility that goes along with being a positive role model and they take this responsibility very seriously.

The challenge most notably discussed in the literature was that of income. Many of the men in these articles felt guilty that their families would have to make sacrifices based on their choice to teach. They often saw themselves as the breadwinner for their family and were forced to depend on their spouses either preparing to teach or during their teaching careers.

Cooney & Bittner (2001) discussed how many of the male teachers saw themselves as role models or teachers of moral development. On the subject of recruiting more males into the field, placing more males in the earlier grades was discussed to give male students someone to identify with at their school.
Jones (2003) addressed the issue of male primary teachers in a very unique way. She began the article by giving the reader a snapshot view of the current situation of primary schools in the UK. She stated that many boys were at a distinct disadvantage because of the lack of positive male role models in their lives. She also stated that because of this “boys suffer from academic underachievement and a general disaffection with school” (p. 572).

Roulston & Mills (2000) discussed the art and science of growing up male. They alluded to the fact that growing up male, a traditional male, was becoming more and more difficult for young boys because of the lack of appropriate role models. Boys were either exposed to entirely females or “soft” males as authority figures. This lack of role models led to frustration, abuse, drug and alcohol dependence, suicide, etc.

Cooney & Bittner (2001) examined some of the challenges that men who chose a career in teaching at the elementary level may face. They explained under the issue of low salaries, many male teachers discussed how society in general viewed teaching as a career that was fairly easy and undemanding. The primary reason for this was the amount of time spent away from active teaching, i.e. finishing at 3:00 P.M., longer holiday vacations, and three months of vacation time in the summer. Another area of interest related to the low salaries was the concern these men had about their roles as the “primary breadwinner” for their households. They felt they would have to make sacrifices financially in order to enjoy their chosen career.

Carrington (2002) discussed the fact that the public in general is very cautious about men who teach at the elementary level because of several recent cases publicized
by the media. The public, again in general, saw men who want to work with young children as having some type of moral flaw in their character.

Cooney and Bittner (2001) claimed that more than one-third of the teacher respondents to a survey regarding current recruiting policies state that they were aware of the public’s unending suspicion of men who taught young children. The “touch issue” was also a point of contention on the survey. More seasoned teachers recommended that new teachers begin slowly at the beginning of the year with simple handshakes or “high-fives.” Then a sense of trust can be built up among students and their families as the school year progresses.

Sargent (2004) explored several challenges male teachers must face simply because of their gender. The specific areas addressed in this study were: “Suspicion of molestation; appropriateness of care; personality, i.e. whether or not male teachers are emotionally or psychologically able to spend long hours with small children; visibility; lack of motivation; or passing through to a position of greater responsibility” (pp. 178-184). The men teachers often voiced frustration and even anger because of the fact that they were forced to operate under different rules than their female counterparts. Sargent went on to provide five recommendations for more equitable treatment of men in the area of elementary education. These included the use of more positive images of men providing child care. The image typically seen was that of a female. Second, recruitment of men to the field of elementary education must begin as early as possible. Elementary education needs to be seen by young boys as an acceptable and appropriate career choice. Third, he stated that the pre-service programs at the university level needed to be more sensitive to the issues of males in the field of elementary education. These institutions
need to be aware of the stereotypes typically held by the public that women are more suitable to teach at the elementary level. Women were not necessarily better equipped to perform better at the lower level of schooling simply because of gender. Fourth, the schools and institutions themselves must do more to put male teacher candidates and teachers at ease. Male teachers were already operating under the assumption that they were under suspicion simply because of their choice to teach at the elementary level. These male teachers must be made to feel that they have the support from their female coworkers as well as their administrators so that they can reach their full potential in the classroom. Finally, the media needs to be more sensitive and provide more positive images of males in care-giving roles. An emphasis should be placed on making teaching at the lower levels an acceptable career for both males as well as females.

Skelton (2003) conducted a study in which upper elementary and lower elementary males were interviewed separately. Generally speaking the upper primary males also thought that men make better secondary teachers than the lower primary males. These men also thought that women made better lower primary teachers because of this level’s association with mothering skills. This study made it apparent to the reader that stereotyping may even exist among male elementary teachers themselves. Sumsion (2000) claimed that although more men in the field of elementary education would certainly be beneficial to the students as a whole; male teachers claimed that they were made to feel different or odd as they sought teaching positions at this level.

Several studies have been conducted where men are seen as using a teaching position, especially at the early childhood or elementary level, as a stepping stone to a position of higher authority, i.e. principal or administrator. Several of the participants in
this study admitted that they had been “encouraged” to become administrators. Many times this encouragement came from within their own school, for example coworkers. However the men in this study all admitted their love for teaching and their fondness for the classroom. They each stated that they enjoyed what they do and would not want the responsibilities or pressures that would come with a position as an administrator. They each stated that they have no immediate plans in the future of leaving their classrooms for many years to come.

When Carrington (2002) interviewed both male and female teachers, nearly one third felt as though teaching at the elementary level did not provide the same opportunity for advancement for both male as well as female teachers. It became obvious during the study that a larger percentage of male teachers were eventually moved into position of more authority, i.e. headmaster, principal, administrator.

Implications for Current Practice

In the Introduction of this study I mentioned that there were two potential audiences to which I hoped this study might be of benefit: the existing literature and teacher education programs. As I mentioned in Chapter I, the existing literature on men in early childhood education is scant at best. The studies being done certainly paint a bleak picture of men who have chosen to teach young children. The limited literature on men in the early childhood program tended to focus on the reasons why men are not considering careers in early childhood education or why they are choosing to leave this important area of education. There simply were not enough thorough studies which explore the self-perceptions and positive experiences of men who teach at the early
childhood level. More studies must be done to gain an insight into why men choose this career and what factors keep them in the classroom. Hopefully this study will add the existing literature by exploring why and how these men made the decision to teach at the early childhood level, how they view themselves, especially when it comes to the idea of being cast as a role model or worse, stereotyped as a pedophile, and finally, how these men interact with the women that they work with, i.e. how they build and maintain a relationship with a female administrator, how they deal with male and female issues on a daily basis in the school, and how they establish a place for themselves on a faculty which is predominantly female, i.e. becoming “one of the gang.” By contributing to the existing literature, I hope this study adds to the resources available to future researchers in this area of study. The more related studies that are conducted, the better image we will have of men who choose to teach at the early childhood level of school.

This study may also be of benefit to teacher education programs at the university level. It might be used as a tool to recruit male teacher candidates who are considering a career in early childhood education. These men may be able to read and learn from these five teachers about how they made the decision to teach early childhood education and some of the rewards and challenges of their decision. Teacher education programs might also be able to examine some of the issues addressed by the men in this study, such as support from family and friends, stereotyping, and working with a predominantly female faculty. These teacher education programs may be able to use some of this information to prepare pre-service male teachers for the experience of teaching.
Recommendations for Future Research

There are several questions which have been raised as a result of this study. At this time there exists a definite need for more research to be conducted in the area of male early childhood and elementary school teachers. Certainly no one would argue that the data collected from five participants is limited. Additional research should be performed with many more participants before this study realizes any degree of credibility. Male early childhood teachers in different areas of the country could be compared and contrasted to see if they share similar experiences to the five participants in this study. Also, it may be interesting to examine the experiences of male early childhood teachers who work with young children in other countries, for example the Asian cultures. Another area for potential research might be the exploration and comparison of men who work with very young children, i.e. pre-kindergarten through first grade with men who are working with older children, i.e. second and third grade. Still another area which might merit further discussion is the relationship of male early childhood teachers who have male principals with those who have female principals. As seen from this list, the different paths of research from this one topic are numerous.

Perhaps instead of looking outward at the how the participants were selected, future researchers may benefit from looking at the study itself. Would the information gathered be more credible and trustworthy if better tools were used, i.e. the interview protocol? Would the interview have yielded more data if the interview had contained more open-ended questions? Would a period of observation of the teacher interacting with his students yield better data? Would a journal kept by the participant have been helpful as another source of data? What about the possibility of interviewing those female
coworkers and administration who work on a daily basis with the participant? Would their insights have been valuable to this study? In hindsight there are many aspects of this study which may be altered by future researchers to provide additional data to this study. Hopefully this study might serve as a springboard to create dialogue about the important topic of why men choose to teach at the early childhood level.

Conclusion

As this study draws to an end, I still have many questions. I have come to the realization that this is not the end of this study, but it is an area that I will continue to explore for the remainder of my professional career. It is a topic that I have become passionate about and would like to attempt publication some day in the future. There is one area which merits further discussion: the idea that men want to be seen as more nurturing, which has been historically viewed as a uniquely feminine characteristic, while at the same time men want to be recognized for their “masculine” contributions to the early childhood setting.

Of the five participants in this study, four viewed nurturing young children as an important component of their role in educating young children. Many of the men discussed earlier in this chapter, i.e. Plato, Rousseau, Pestalozzi, and Froebel, all saw the importance in the nurturing aspect. David, Aaron, Sam, and Jeffrey all spoke eloquently on their views of this important topic. Most men choose early childhood because they feel they can make a difference in the life of a child. They make valiant efforts each day to prove to children, parents, and colleagues that men can be nurturers of young children. Jeffrey elaborated that he hugged each child at the end of the day regardless of the type of
day they had. He said that this proved to the child that they were still loved and tomorrow is going to be a new day and a new start. These men attempt to make the world understand that this characteristic is not uniquely feminine.

The other side of this same coin is that men while desiring to exhibit a more nurturing characteristic, also believe that a male presence in the early childhood program brings something uniquely masculine to the program which is absent in programs which are conducted by only female educators. The men in this study were no different. These men saw themselves as making unique contributions the early childhood program. In my discussions with these men topics such as sportsmanship, acting appropriately around girls, what it means to show respect continued to come up. Sam spoke about talking with his third grade boys on the playground about ideas like what it means to grow up and be a man.

So this debate begs the question can male teachers do both? Can they retain their masculinity and bring masculine characteristics into the classroom, which were missing, while at the same time reveal a nurturing characteristic? Many of studies reviewed for this study, (Carrington, 2002; Cooney & Bittner, 2001; Jones, 2003) say implicitly, “No.” The two seem to cancel out each other in the process and neither is achieved fully. They argue that these men teachers are the fault in themselves. They argue that by subscribing to the notion that ideas such as sportsmanship and fair play are masculine characteristics the male teachers are perpetuating the myth there are certain “male” and “female” characteristics which will never be accepted by the other. These writers also claim that by striving to be accepted as a nurturer often negates being viewed as a strong male presence
in the early childhood classroom. A nurturing male is often seen as soft or effeminate by others, i.e. parents, colleagues, society in general.

I refuse to accept the widely held notion that the two negate each other and cannot exist simultaneously. I believe that male teachers can be seen in the early childhood program as strong and completely masculine while at the same time seen as nurturing and caring individuals. Jeffrey in this study is an outstanding example of this. Throughout the course of this study I never met a young man more athletic than him. He spoke during the interview of the importance of working out and keeping fit. He tried to convey this importance to his second grade students both male and female. He talked of showing good sportsmanship and respect for each other, again to both boys and girls. Yet at the same time he spoke of making sure each of his students knew how much he cared for them personally. He remarked that each child has a story and it was his job to know the story. He told me that he wanted to leave a legacy at his school as someone who truly cared for his students the way a father cares for his own children. I could tell be the end of the interview that this young man was making a remarkable contribution to the lives of his students. He inspired me to want to be better as a classroom teacher.
References


Appendix A

Form 4: IRB Approval Form
Identification and Certification of Research
Projects Involving Human Subjects

UAB's Institutional Review Boards for Human Use (IRBs) have an approved Federalwide Assurance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP). The Assurance number is FWA00005960 and it expires on October 26, 2016. The UAB IRBs are also in compliance with 21 CFR Parts 50 and 56 and ICH GCP Guidelines.

Principal Investigator: JORDAN, JAMES CURTIS
Co-Investigator(s): 
Protocol Number: X100310017
Protocol Title: Why Do Men Choose To Teach Elementary School? A Phenomenological Study

The IRB reviewed and approved the above named project on 3/19/10. The review was conducted in accordance with UAB's Assurance of Compliance approved by the Department of Health and Human Services. This Project will be subject to Annual continuing review as provided in that Assurance.

This project received EXPEDITED review.

Approval Date: 3/19/10
Date IRB Approval Issued: 3/19/10

Marilyn Doss, M.A.
Vice Chair of the Institutional Review Board for Human Use (IRB)

Investigators please note:

The IRB approved consent form used in the study must contain the IRB approval date and expiration date.

IRB approval is given for one year unless otherwise noted. For projects subject to annual review research activities may not continue past the one year anniversary of the IRB approval date.

Any modifications in the study methodology, protocol and/or consent form must be submitted for review and approval to the IRB prior to implementation.

Adverse Events and/or unanticipated risks to subjects or others at UAB or other participating institutions must be reported promptly to the IRB.
Project Revision/Amendment Form

(Please type: In MS Word, highlight the shaded, underlined box and replace with your text; double-click checkboxes to check/uncheck.)

- Federal regulations require IRB approval before implementing proposed changes.
- Change means any change, in content or form, to the protocol, consent form, or any supportive materials (such as the Investigator's Brochure, questionnaires, surveys, advertisements, etc.).
- Complete this form and attach the changed research documents.

Today's Date: Sept. 8, 2010

1. Contact Information
   Principal Investigator's Name: James Curtis Jordan BlazerID: cjordan
   E-mail: cjordan@jasper.k12.al.us
   Contact Person's Name: James Curtis Jordan BlazerID: cjordan E-mail: cjordan@jasper.k12.al.us
   Telephone: (205) 697-3261 Fax:
   Campus Address: 16878 Highway 5 Nauvoo, AL 35578

2. Protocol Identification
   Protocol Title: Why Do Men Choose to Teach in Early Childhood Education? A Study of Interpretive Interactionism
   IRB Protocol Number: X100130017
   Current Status of Project (check only one):
   - Currently in Progress (Number of participants entered: 10)
   - Study has not yet begun (No participants entered)
   - Closed to participant enrollment (remains active)—
     Number of participants on therapy/intervention:
     Number of participants in long-term follow-up only:
     Total number of participants enrolled:

   This submission changes the status of this study in the following manner (check all that apply):
   - Protocol Revision
   - Protocol Amendment
   - Study Closed to participant entry
   - Study Closure
   - Other, (specify) ______________
   - Revised Consent Form
   - Addendum (new) consent form
   - Enrollment temporarily suspended by sponsor
   - Change in protocol personnel

3. Reason for change
   Briefly describe, and explain the reason for, the change. If normal, healthy controls are included, describe in detail how this change will affect those participants.
   Include a copy of the protocol and any other documents affected by this change (e.g., consent form, questionnaire) with all the changes highlighted.

   The study outlined for this investigation, IRB Protocol X100310017, focused on five male elementary teachers located within one school system. This project was part of my classroom requirements for EPR 696, Qualitative Research: Inquiry and Analysis. The supervising teacher was Dr. Natalia Ivankova. This classroom project was a pilot study done in preparation for the dissertation to be completed later. I would like to have this study amended in order to study five additional male teachers in several school systems as part of my Ph.D. dissertation. Dr. Lois Christensen is the chairperson of my Ph.D. committee. She will now be the supervisor of this dissertation project. Since my Ph.D. will be in the area of early childhood, my committee has asked that I focus more attention on the early childhood years of schooling, i.e. pre-kindergarten through third grade. Normally, these years are considered part of the elementary program in many systems. I am simply refining the focus.

4. Does this change revise or add a genetic or storage of samples component?
   - Yes  □ No □

   If yes, please see the Guidebook to assist you in revising or preparing your submission, or call the IRB office at 934-3789.
5. Does the change affect subject participation (e.g., procedures, risks, costs, location of services, etc.)?
   ☐ Yes ☐ No
   If yes, Fiscal Approval Process (FAP)-designated units complete a FAP submission and send to fap@uab.edu. For more on the UAB FAP, see www.uab.edu/ohr.

6. Does the change affect the consent document(s)?
   ☐ Yes ☐ No
   If yes, briefly discuss the changes.
   There are a few changes that will need to be made to the informed consent document. The sponsor will no longer be the Department of Human Studies but rather the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. Under Explanation of Procedures, the first sentence about participating in a pilot study will be replaced with participation in a study for the completion of a Ph.D. program. The purpose will also be refined to only men who teach at the early childhood level of school (pre-kindergarten through the third grade). The next item to be changed will be the date of the study. It will be changed from March through May of 2010 to June through December of 2010. Finally, the last sentence will be replaced in order to inform the possible participant that the information will be used to fulfill the requirements of a Ph.D. study on why men choose to teach at the early childhood level of education. I am including a copy of the revised Informed Consent Document.
   Include the revised consent document with the changes highlighted.
   Will any participants need to be reconsented as a result of the changes? ☐ Yes ☐ No
   If yes, when will participants be reconsented?

Signature of Principal Investigator: J. Curtis Jordan Date: 9-11-10

APPROVED
Marilyn Doss, M.A.
Vice Chair - IRB
Form 4: IRB Approval Form
Identification and Certification of Research
Projects Involving Human Subjects

UAB's Institutional Review Boards for Human Use (IRBs) have an approved Federalwide Assurance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP). The Assurance number is FWA00005960 and it expires on September 29, 2013. The UAB IRBs are also in compliance with 21 CFR Parts 50 and 56.

Principal Investigator: JORDAN, JAMES CURTIS
Co-Investigator(s):
Protocol Number: X100310017
Protocol Title: Why Do Men Choose to Teach in Early Childhood Education? A Study of Interpretive Interactionism

The IRB reviewed and approved the above named project on 2-1-11. The review was conducted in accordance with UAB's Assurance of Compliance approved by the Department of Health and Human Services. This Project will be subject to Annual continuing review as provided in that Assurance.

This project received EXPEDITED review.
IRB Approval Date: 2-1-11
Date IRB Approval Issued: 2-1-11

Marilyn Doss, M.A.
Vice Chair of the Institutional Review Board for Human Use (IRB)

Investigators please note:

The IRB approved consent form used in the study must contain the IRB approval date and expiration date.

IRB approval is given for one year unless otherwise noted. For projects subject to annual review research activities may not continue past the one year anniversary of the IRB approval date.

Any modifications in the study methodology, protocol and/or consent form must be submitted for review and approval to the IRB prior to implementation.

Adverse Events and/or unanticipated risks to subjects or others at UAB or other participating institutions must be reported promptly to the IRB.
Appendix B

Informed Consent Document

TITLE OF RESEARCH: Why Do Men Choose to Teach Elementary School? A Phenomenological Study

IRB PROTOCOL: X100310007

INVESTIGATOR: J. Curtis Jordan

SPONSOR: The University of Alabama at Birmingham
Department of Human Studies

Explanation of Procedures

You are being asked to participate in a pilot study. The purpose of this qualitative phenomenology study is to explore the self-perceptions of male elementary school teachers. There will be five participants in the study. You are invited to take part in one (60 minute) face to face audio-recorded interview. This audio taping will allow me the opportunity to review the interview and later transcribe this interview for my records. You may be asked to clarify statements made in the interview in a follow-up interview that may last up to 60 minutes. The time frame for this project is March 2010 through May 2010. Prior to conducting the interview with you, I will provide you with an outline of questions I want to ask in order to give you time to think about your responses. Throughout the interview you might also be asked some clarifying questions to elicit additional details and examples from your responses. I will take all precautions to ensure your confidentiality. You will have the option to withdraw from the study at any time should you choose to do so. The data from this research will be used in partial fulfillment on the investigator's doctoral level course, EPR 696, Qualitative Research Methods.

Risks and Discomforts

The risks and discomforts involved in this study are no greater than the risks and discomforts of day to day living.

Benefits

You may not benefit directly from taking part in this study. However, this study may help us better understand the role of male elementary teachers in the professional development of teachers.

Alternatives

Your alternative is not to participate in this study.

UAB-IRB
Consent Form Approval 3/10
Expiration Date 3/11

Page 1 of 3
Version Date 03/11/10

Participant’s Initials ______
Confidentiality

Information obtained about you for this study will be kept private to the extent allowed by law. Data will be stored in a locked metal cabinet in the investigator’s school office and audio tapes will be destroyed three years after the completion of the project. Electronic data will be stored on password protected computers. The data from this research will be used in partial fulfillment of the doctoral level course, EPR 696-Qualitative Research Methods. Research information that identifies you may be shared with the UAB Institutional Review Board (IRB) and others who are responsible for ensuring compliance with laws and regulations related to research, including the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP). The results of this research may be published for scientific purposes; however, your identity will not be given out.

Refusal or Withdrawal without Penalty

Your taking part in this study is your choice. There will be no penalty if you decide not to be in the study. If you decide not to be in the study, you will not lose any benefits you are otherwise owed. You are free to withdraw from this research study at any time. Your choice to leave the study will not affect your relationship with this institution.

Cost of Participation

There will be no cost to you from taking part in this study.

Payment for Participation in Research

You will receive a $25.00 gift card to a local restaurant after the completion of your interview.

Questions

If you have any questions, concerns, or complaints about the research, please contact Curtis Jordan. He will be glad to answer any of your questions. His phone number is (205) 697-5261. He may also be reached by calling (205) 384-6461.

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, or concerns or complaints about the research, you may contact Ms. Sheila Moore. Ms. Moore is the Director of the Office of the Institutional Review Board for Human Use (OIRB) at the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB). Ms. Moore may be reached at (205) 934-3789 or 1-800-822-8816. If calling the toll-free number, press the option for "all other calls" or for an operator/attendant and ask for extension 4-3789. Regular hours for the Office of IRB are 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. CT, Monday through Friday. You may also call this number in the event the research staff cannot be reached or you wish to talk with someone else.
Legal Rights

You are not waiving any of your legal rights by signing this informed consent.

Signatures

Your signature below indicates that you agree to participate in this study. You will receive a copy of this signed document.

Signature of Participant  Date

Signature of Investigator  Date

Signature of Witness  Date
Informed Consent Document

TITLE OF RESEARCH: Why Do Men Choose to Teach in Early Childhood Education? A Study of Interpretive Interactionism
IRB PROTOCOL: X100310017
INVESTIGATOR: J. Curtis Jordan
SPONSOR: The University of Alabama at Birmingham Department of Curriculum and Instruction

Explanation of Procedures

You are being asked to participate in an interview which is part of a Ph.D. dissertation. The purpose of this qualitative interpretive interactionism is to explore the self-perceptions of male early childhood school teachers. There will be ten participants in the study. You are invited to take part in one (60 minute) face to face audio-recorded interview. This audio taping will allow me the opportunity to review the interview and later transcribe this interview for my records. You may be asked to clarify statements made in the interview in a follow-up interview that may last up to 60 minutes. The time frame for this project is September 2010 through December 2010. Prior to conducting the interview with you, I will provide you with an outline of questions I want to ask in order to give you time to think about your responses. Throughout the interview you might also be asked some clarifying questions to elicit additional details and examples from your responses. I will take all precautions to ensure your confidentiality. You will have the option to withdraw from the study at any time should you choose to do so. The data from this research will be used in partial fulfillment of the investigator’s doctoral dissertation in the area of early childhood.

Risks and Discomforts

The risks and discomforts involved in this study are no greater than the risks and discomforts of day to day living.

Benefits

You may not benefit directly from taking part in this study. However this study may help us better understand the role of male early childhood teachers in the professional development of teachers.

Alternatives

Your alternative is not to participate in this study.

Consent Form Approval 9-24-10
Expiration Date 3-19-11

Page 1 of 3
Version Date 03/11/10
Participant’s Initials ____
Confidentiality

Information obtained about you for this study will be kept private to the extent allowed by law. Data will be stored in a locked metal cabinet in the investigator’s school office and audio tapes will be destroyed three years after the completion of the project. Electronic data will be stored on password protected computers. The data from this research will be used in partial fulfillment of the researcher’s doctoral dissertation. Research information that identifies you may be shared with the UAB Institutional Review Board (IRB) and others who are responsible for ensuring compliance with laws and regulations related to research, including the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP). The results of this research may be published for scientific purposes; however, your identity will not be given out.

Refusal or Withdrawal without Penalty

Your taking part in this study is your choice. There will be no penalty if you decide not to be in the study. If you decide not to be in the study, you will not lose any benefits you are otherwise owed. You are free to withdraw from this research study at any time. Your choice to leave the study will not affect your relationship with this institution.

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Participant’s Initials _____
Legal Rights

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Signatures

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Signature of Participant</th>
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<td>Signature of Investigator</td>
<td>Date</td>
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<td>Signature of Witness</td>
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</table>

Participant’s Initials ___
Appendix C

Sample Letter to Gatekeeper

Date:
Dear ___________________,

My name is Curtis Jordan and I am a fifth grade teacher at [school name redacted] Elementary School in [location redacted]. I am also a student at the University of Alabama in Birmingham pursuing a Ph.D. in Early Childhood Education. I am completing a dissertation on men who teach at the early childhood level of schooling.

Being a male elementary teacher, I have always been intrigued by the men who choose this field as a career path. I understand that you have a male teacher, _________________, as part of your current faculty. I would like to have your permission to send a letter to this individual and possibly arrange a one hour interview with him at your school. This interview will consist of the interview protocol that you see attached to this letter. A follow-up of interview of sixty minutes may be requested. As you can see there are some specific questions that I would like to ask and then there are some more open-ended questions where the teacher can respond more freely. These questions will be sent to the teacher prior to the interview. I will be using pseudonyms for the teacher, as well as masking the name of your school in my final report. The interview will be taped and then will be transcribed verbatim. The teacher will be given a chance to review a summary of the content before it is used in the final report if he so chooses. The tapes will be kept in my classroom in a locked metal cabinet and destroyed at the conclusion of this study. The teacher may decide to end his involvement with the project at any time before, during or after the interview for any reason and without question.

I appreciate any help you can give me with this study. As you know it is important to have male teachers in our elementary schools to serve as role models for young children. The current number of male elementary teachers in our schools today is quite small. I hope that this research somehow contributes to the extant literature and may one day be of benefit to young men considering entering the field of elementary education. Please consider this request and let me know if I have your permission to approach your teachers. You can reach me at my school during the day at [phone number redacted] or my email address at [email address redacted]. You may also reach me at home during the evening at [phone number redacted]. Once again thank you for your time and consideration.

With regards I am,

J. Curtis Jordan, cjordan@[Email redacted]
[Name of school redacted]. [Phone redacted]
[Address redacted]
[Location redacted]
Appendix D

Sample Letter to Participant

Date

Dear __________________________,

My name is Curtis Jordan and I am a fifth grade teacher at [school name redacted] Elementary School in [location redacted]. I am also a student at the University of Alabama in Birmingham completing a Ph.D. in Early Childhood Education. I am completing a dissertation on men who teach at the early childhood level of schooling. Being a male teacher in a predominantly female setting myself, I have always been interested in men who choose to teach at the elementary level. My Ph.D. dissertation involves interviewing male elementary teachers and asking them for their perceptions about their career choice. I first contacted your principal and your principal has given me permission to contact you.

I would like to come to your school one afternoon and interview you for this study. The interview will last for about one hour and I will be asking you the questions you see attached to this letter. A follow-up of interview of sixty minutes may be requested. As you can see, some of the questions are fairly structured and others are more open ended to give you a chance to respond more freely. I will be recording this interview and transcribing it verbatim for the study. I will give you the opportunity to review a summary of our conversation before the final report is written. Your name will be substituted using a pseudonym. Your school’s name will be masked so there are no identifiers in the final report. The tape will be kept in a locked metal filing cabinet and destroyed when the final report is complete. You may withdraw from this study anytime before, during, or after our interview with no questions asked.

I hope you will grant me this interview. You can reach me at my school during the day at [phone number redacted] or my email address at [email address redacted]. You may also reach me at home during the evening at [phone number redacted]. I am enclosing a copy of the consent form for you to examine. This consent form describes some of the major aspects of the study such as explanation of procedures, risks and discomforts, confidentiality, and benefits to you among other topics. We can discuss this further should you decide to participate. As you may know, there is not a great deal of literature on the topic of male elementary teachers. Perhaps this study will in some way add to the existing literature or be beneficial to career education programs assisting young men who are considering teaching at the elementary level. I hope to hear from you soon.

With regards I am,

J. Curtis Jordan, cjordan@[Email redacted]
[Name of school redacted]. [Phone redacted]
[Address redacted]
[Location redacted]
Appendix E

Interview Protocol

Time of Interview: ____________________________
Date: _______________________________________
Place: _______________________________________
Interviewer: _________________________________
Interviewee: ________________________________

Introduction:
I want to thank you for taking the time to talk to me today. I will be recording and transcribing what we say today. I may ask you to review the transcript to verify if I recorded correctly what you say.
What I am interested in finding out in this study are your feelings about being a male elementary school teacher. You’ve had a chance to review the questions and give them thought. I would like to know your thoughts, so feel free to discuss your views. I may ask some additional questions that you have not reviewed as we go along in order to clarify for me what you mean. Are you ready to start?

• “When did you first decide to pursue a career in elementary education?”
• “What influenced you to want to teach at the elementary level?”
• “How would you describe your role as a member of a predominantly female faculty?”
• “What special challenges have you faced in this career because of your gender?”
• “How do feel about the stereotypes about men who teach at this level?”
• “What are the rewards for teaching students at this level?”
• “How do you feel about your decision to teach at the elementary level?”
• “Is there anything else you would like to share about this topic?”