A PHENOMENOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION INTO THE EXPERIENCES OF MEN COUNSELORS IN THE ELEMENTARY SETTING

by

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(Under the Direction of Jolie Ziomek-Daigle)

ABSTRACT

This paper presents discoveries of a phenomenological research study which investigated the perspectives of men counselors' identity development through their experiences in the non-traditional elementary school setting. I identified themes and sub-themes from participant stories and provided recommendations and implications for school counselors and counselor educators, as well as for future research.

INDEX WORDS: Elementary School Counseling, Gender Identity, Hegemonic Masculinity, Gottfredson's Theory of Vocational Development, Social Relations Theory, School Counseling Training Programs, Men in Education

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Continued calls exist for more men educators, especially in the elementary setting (Martino, 2008; Ashcraft & Sevier, 2006). Despite these calls, a scarcity of research exists documenting the experiences and stories of men in this field, specifically how they identify and define their masculinity while working in a non-traditional setting (Simpson, 2005; Galbrith, 1992; Carter, 2008; Lease, 2003; Dobson & Borders, 2006). The studies available examine the experiences of elementary school teachers, and only two studies directly related to men working in an elementary school setting (Dodson & Borders, 2006; Edwards, 2013).

This study seeks to add to the literature mandating more men in the elementary setting, give voice to men already in the field, and provide opportunities for discussion on societal gender expectations. To accomplish these goals, Chapter One discusses the history of the lack of men in elementary education. Various statistics provide a more complete picture of the discrepancy in the number of men and women in the elementary setting. Next, I present a statement of purpose for the study, a description of the need for this research, and an overview of the method used. Finally, the research questions and definitions of key terms were explored.

Chapter Two more broadly explored pertinent research, and Chapter Three provided the framework for the planned phenomenological research study. Chapter Four

examined discoveries from the participants' stories, and Chapter Five provided recommendations and implications for men elementary school counselors' based on study results.

Use of Gender Terms

It is important to include a note on the use of gender terms throughout the dissertation. I chose to substitute men/man for the more aesthetically pleasing male in a purposeful effort to bring awareness to the meaning of these gender terms. The term male signifies the biological characteristics of being a man, such as having xy chromosomes that one is born with (Francis & Skelton, 2001). In contrast men/man denotes both the biological and behavioral characteristics of being a man (Francis & Skelton, 2001). The behavioral characteristics of being unemotional and lacking nurturing skills are traits society considers appropriate for a masculine man to possess. The use of these terms is a social justice consideration with the goal being to bring awareness of the role and expectations put on men in society.

Statement of Problem

An uneven distribution of gender, specifically in the elementary setting, has existed for many years, and pressure still exists today for investigation into reasons behind the inequity. The majority of the prior research focused on men teachers and uncovered specific reasons for the low numbers, including masculinity issues and negative societal perception (Ashcraft & Sevier, 2006; Cooney & Bittner, 2001; Sargent, 2004). Masculinity issues are evident from stories of men entering non-traditional settings (Martino, 2008; Skelton, 2003, Wiley, 2011). These stories indicate a discrepancy between societal expectations of appropriate display of masculinity and the

traits, (i.e. caring, nurturing, believed necessary to be effective in the non-traditional setting (Cushman, 2005; Wiley, 2011). Many times men entering a non-traditional setting feel the need to reinforce masculine stereotypes to fit in where they are already the minority (Cushman, 2008; Wiley, 2011). Questions of appropriate masculinity displays can lead to negative societal perceptions (Cushman, 2008; Wiley, 2011). The negative societal perceptions can lead to people questioning the men educators' intentions in the field as well as their sexuality (Cross & Bagihole, 2002; Lease, 2003; Sargent, 2004). Ultimately, this questioning can contribute to men educators' reluctance to have physical contact with children for fear of abuse accusations, making it difficult to be effective nurturers in the job setting (Ashcraft & Sevier, 2006; Montecinos & Nielsen, 2004).

These described challenges focused solely on men teachers, with a lack of investigation into men counselors in elementary settings, a group that plays an important support role within the school setting (Edwards, 2013). School counselors are responsible for implementing comprehensive programs to address the personal, social, and academic needs of all students (ASCA, 2012). In addition, school counselors serve as leaders while advocating for the needs of students (DeVoss & Andrews, 2006; ASCA, 2012). While their importance has been documented, little has been done to investigate the impact of gender identity in men counselors (Edwards, 2013).

Background of the Problem

Participants claimed, throughout many school-based research studies, that women have the most appropriate nurturing characteristics to be effective educators of children (Montecinos & Nielsen, 2004: Sabbe & Aelterman, 2007). This viewpoint, evidenced by current statistics showing only nine percent of elementary teachers are men, can be traced

back to the middle 1800s (Martino, 2008; Runevitch, 2003). During this time society and lifestyle was changing from having an agricultural focus to an industrial focus, and this warranted an improved and larger educational workforce (Martino, 2008; Montecinos & Nielsen, 2004). Up until this point in history, most educators were men with a high turn-over rate due to the propensity of them leaving for higher paying or more prestigious jobs (Blount, 1998). As the movement towards an industrialized society created a need for an increased workforce, it became apparent more educators were needed (Blount, 1998). Prominent leaders such as Catherine Beecher and Horace Mann advocated for the stability female educators provided, and the ability to hire more teachers because of willingness to accept less pay (Blount, 1998). Although there is continued importance to investigate the teaching field, other support areas in the educational field have remained largely unexplored (Dodson & Borders, 2006; Edwards, 2013).

It is not known why school counselors, serving as support staff for teachers, lack research as to the disparity between the number of men and women in the setting (Dodson & Borders, 2006; Edwards, 2013). The counseling field in general has seen a significant decrease in the number of men in the field since the 1970s (Schweiger, Henderson, Macliskill, Clawson, & Collins, 2011; U.S. Department of Labor, 2011). Up until the 1970s, there was an equal amount of practicing men and women counselors in the field (Schweiger et al., 2011; U.S. Department of Labor, 2011). This is in contrast to the large gap that exists today within the counseling field (Schweiger, et al.; 2011; U.S. Department of Labor, 2011). For example, 70% of counselors, 71% of psychologists, and 82% of social workers are women (U.S. Department of Labor, 2011). Also, examining the post-secondary training programs shows a large gap between men and

women. For example, there are more than double the amounts of women students in counseling master's degree programs than men students (Schweiger, et al., 2011). Moreover, an even larger gap exists between the number of men and women earning degrees. Between 2010 and 2011, of the 12,942 masters level Counselor Educator and School Counseling graduate degress awarded, only 17% were men (U.S. Department of Labor, 2011). By extension, out of an American School Counselor Association membership of 29,000, three hundred or 1%, are men elementary school counselors (American School Counselor Association, 2012). Even though no data exists to represent the overall makeup of men counselors in elementary schools, the representation of Georgian counselors mirrors that of the national teacher representation at nine percent (Georgia Department of Education, 2012). These historical influences contribute to a stereotypical view of working in education, the elementary setting in particular, as "women's work" and an extension of maternal duties (Montecinos & Nielsen; Sabbe & Aeterman, 2007). These stereotypical views persist in schools today, making examination necessary.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand the perspectives of men counselors' in the elementary setting on their identity development through their experiences in a non-traditional work setting. Their stories led to a better understanding of what it means to be a man working as a counselor in a non-traditional setting. Hopefully hearing these stories will allow for more open dialogue on gender identity.

Need for Study

As previously described, the need for this study is to add to the limited research on men educators in support positions, specifically as counselors. Understanding the influences on current elementary school counselors to work in a non-traditional setting and their perspectives of gender identity development could prove beneficial. First, the men's stories and experiences could provide support to counseling programs in recruitment and education and offer guidance as they enter the non-traditional elementary school setting (Ashcraft & Sevier, 2006; Sargent, 2005). Studies indicate that men in counseling programs feel there is an overemphasis on masculinity and a tendency for the programs to create a culture of fear regarding physical contact (Ashcraft & Sevier, 2006; Sargent, 2004). Studies of men working in non-traditional settings can provide a forum to share their experiences of developing an identity while doing "women's" work, which could prove beneficial. These benefits might include counselor educator programs demonstrating how to best support men participating in the program, and updating the curriculum to fit the needs of both women and men. In addition, men counselors' stories in elementary settings may highlight effective characteristics of men elementary counselors and allow for shared learning.

Additionally, men struggling with the decision about whether to enter a non-traditional setting may find solace in the stories of successful men already immersed in the field. As more men continue to enter nurturing professions, such as at the elementary school setting, being comfortable and confident in that profession could challenge gender stereotypes. Men educators, performing their role in elementary settings with confidence and authority, can illustrate that there is no difference in care from a man versus a woman

and that appropriate behaviors are expected regardless of gender. Discussing appropriate educator behaviors, without involving gender at all, can start to work against the gender stereotypes that may be contributing to numerical disparities in men versus women educators. Once the conversation begins at the local levels, it may lead to state and national organizations examining biases against a specific gender due to stereotypes.

Currently limited research exists on men in non-traditional settings because most of it has been focused on women (Dobson & Borders, 2006; Carter, 2008; Wiley, 2011, Simpson, 2005). To date, teachers have been the sole focus of research into men in non-traditional settings, with other roles lacking (Edwards, 2013). This research will attempt to fill the gap in gender identity research on school counselors. Based on Gottfresdon's Theory of Vocational Development and several subsequent studies, having examples of men other than teachers in non-traditional positions at the elementary setting is especially important (Edwards, 2013). This importance is based on research that boys and girls are making career-related decisions in the upper elementary ages and those considered not gender-appropriate are eliminated (Gottfredson, 1981). Having more men in non-traditional settings may allow for boys and girls to consider careers not typically thought of as gender-appropriate, an area school counselors are uniquely equipped to handle.

Primary Research Question

This study investigated "The perspectives of men counselors in the elementary setting in identity development through experiences in a non-traditional setting?" More specifically 1) What are the impacts of men mentorships on men counselors in the elementary setting? 2) How do men counselors describe the non-traditional setting

impact on the development of their gender identities? 3) What are men counselors' experiences in negotiating gendered expectations in professional settings?

Overview of Methodology

Qualitative methods were chosen as the most appropriate to answer the research questions. One trademark of qualitative inquiry is that it explores the human social experience through a holistic stance within a specific context (Creswell, 2007). Also, qualitative inquiry allows for the topic chosen to be of personal interest and have connection to the researcher (Hayes & Singh, 2012). Futhermore, qualitative methods allow exploration of a topic with the ability to hear stories from voices that have typically been silenced (Ponterotto, 2005). Finally, through a social constructivist lens, qualitative methods allow the researcher to come to the research setting with the understanding that what humans know is all relative and the meanings given to social events and experiences are subjective (Creswell, 2007). In other words, each participant's stories should be heard and valued.

To examine participant experiences, I used the Social Relations Perspective in conjunction with Gottfredson's Theory of Vocational Development. Social Relations Perspective maintains that identity formation for men begins early in childhood, with the family as the first influencing factor on identity formation (Tolson, 1977; Gorski, 1998). As children grow older, other social institutions play a role in identity formation, of which the school setting is the largest. Within the school setting, men learn the societal definition of masculinity (Tolson, 1977; Gorski, 1998). This masculinity definition in

western industrialized countries bases success and accomplishment on the appropriate occupation (Francis & Skelton, 2001; Gorski, 1998).

Gottfredson's Theory of Vocational Development attempts to describe how young men and women make career choices (Gottfredson, 1981). This theory assumes that there are a series of stages that we go through during the process of deciding on a career (Gottfredson, 1981). As we are navigating through these stages, through a process of circumscription, we eliminate careers that don't fit with our developing self-concept (Gottfredson, 1981). As we get closer to beginning our work career we enter the compromise stage (Gottfredson, 1981). In the compromise stage, we may decide to give up on preferred job occupations, for those less compatible, that are considered obtainable. Gottfredson proposes that when people are forced to compromise their career choices, they will first concede those choices matching closest with their interests, followed by ones that have a high prestige level, and are last to compromise on careers considered gender atypical, i.e. man elementary school counselor (Gottfredson, 1981).

As a phenomenological researcher it is important to acknowledge and set aside my experiences and biases related to becoming a counselor in an elementary setting. To accomplish this I provided my experiences related to the stages in Gottfredson's Theory of Vocational Development. The first stage of circumscription is the orientation to size and power between the ages of 3-5 (Gottfredson, 1981). During this stage, children become aware that adults have roles in the world and eventually they will take on these roles (Gottfredson, 1981). I remember around the age of five starting to question why my dad left early in the morning and would not return until late. I soon understood that his role was to go to work at a job in order to provide for his family. Orientation to sex roles

is the second stage that occurs between the ages of six to eight (Gottfredson, 1981). During this stage, children begin to understand and recognize that certain jobs are assigned for men or women (Gottfredson, 1981). When I was around eight, I had a man teacher for second grade. Although I remember classmates questioning why we had a man teacher when women dominated the school setting, to me it was really cool and I looked up to him. Orientation to social values is the next stage in the process of circumsciption (Gottfredson, 1981). Between the ages of nine and thirteen the social environment in a child's life, (i.e. school, home) become the most important factors in career decisions (Gottfredson, 1981). For me between the ages of nine and thirteen, my home environment shaped my career path most directly. I can recall seeing my dad dread going to work and telling me to find an occupation that makes me happy. These conversations would become a reference for me as I got closer to making career choices. The final stage is the orientation to internal, unique self which begins around the age of fourteen (Gottfredson, 1981). This stage is where our personality, interests, and abilities are explored with the goal of finding career options that fit with our self image (Gottfredson, 1981). As I entered high school and college, I recall being surrounded by teachers, coaches, and family that helped me with exploration of my personality, interests, and abilities. They allowed me to recognize and be comfortable with being a man entering a helping profession.

After moving through circumsciption in the career decision process, individuals reach the compromise stage (Gottfredson, 1981). In this stage, individuals make decisions on sacrificing career roles that match up more appropriately with their self concept, in favor of ones that seem to be more accesible (Gottfredson, 1981). When

making these decisions, the gender of the career is compromised last (Gottfredson, 1981). My view of my self image matched up with a career in the helping field. Compromising gender in my career choice was appropriate in my situation. This decision was reached with the help of supportive professionals, family, and my own understanding of my self concept.

Design

This study followed a phenomenological tradition of inquiry. The purpose of phenomenology was to "discover and describe the meaning or essence of participants' lived experiences" (Hays & Singh, 2012, p. 50). Phenomenological researchers seek to discover the essence of a lived human experience by hearing the voices of several people, and then describe that experience in those people's words (Creswell, 2006; Hays & Wood, 2011; Moustakas, 1994). Phenomenology was appropriate as it allows for the questions to be addressed through interviews/focus groups and helps the researcher gain an understanding of the experiences of men elementary counselors in a non-traditional occupation.

Definitions

It is necessary to define several key terms that will be used throughout the dissertation to answer the research questions.

Non-traditional occupation

For this study a non-traditional occupation refers to a job where men or women make up 25% or less of the work population (Auger, Blackhurst, & Wahl, 2005; Dodson

& Borders, 2006; Helwig, 2004). For example, elementary school counseling is a non-traditional career for men, and electrical engineering is a non-traditional career for women (Dobson & Borders, 2006).

Gender

Femininity and masculinity are terms used to describe gender. For the purpose of this study gender refers to the social construction of differences in behavior according to sex (Francis & Skelton, 2001). In other words people "do gender" as they engage in a "complex of socially guided perceptual, interactional, and micro political activities that cast particular pursuits as expression of masculine and feminine natures" (Francis & Skelton, 2001, p.50).

Hegemonic Masculinity

The configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women (Connell, 2008, p.77). These "real men" are those that show power, authority, are emotionally detached, and competitive (Connell, 1995).

Gender Identity

According to Chen-Hayes (2001) gender identity is "...a person's internal, subjective experience of how they feel and express themselves as a 'gendered' person in terms of gender roles, attitudes, and behavior" (pp. 34-48).

Men/Man

Men/Man is used as a substitute for the more ascetically pleasing male throughout the study intentionally. This decision was made based on the work by Christopher Hansen (Hansen, 2012). Within his work he substituted men for male to bring awareness of societal expectations placed on men (Hansen, 2012). Using men/man to classify myself and participants acknowledge the we as men are identified, at least first, with expectations for certain behaviors/actions based on our identification as a man (Hansen, 2012).

Chapter Summary

The lived experience of men counselors in the elementary setting is under-researched. This study partnered with six men elementary school counselors in describing their gendered professional experiences. Phenomenological research methods as described by Moustakas (1994) provide an avenue for systematically studying their experiences. The central research question attempted to understand the perspectives of men counselors in the elementary setting in identity development through experiences in a non-traditional setting? While individual and contextual differences were recognized, the central desire is to determine the shared aspects or essence of their experiences and outcomes. The researcher's personal interest in making meaning of their experiences and outcomes as men school counselors was also a critical element.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapter 2 reviews the literature related to the experiences of men counselors in the elementary setting. The review begins with an exploration of the relative absence of men elementary school teachers and briefly men elementary school counselors, in existing research. A larger sample of literature exists on men elementary school teachers as compared to men elementary school counselors providing support for the research gap stated in the study. Next, the literature review will explore how boys develop a gender identity as they mature and specifically how social institutions, such as schools and training programs, create expectations for how a "real" man should act. There was a special focus on how hegemonic masculinity, the societal expectation of behaviors a man should exhibit, influences relationships and expectations in the work setting. Next, theoretical frameworks related to identity, development, and occupational choices are discussed to provide the foundation for the study. Finally, reasons men enter non-traditional careers provided supporting stories and evidence for investigation.

Absence of Men in Elementary Education

Present day statistics reveal only nine percent of elementary teachers are men (Runevitch, 2003), a gender imbalance that historically can be traced back to the middle 1800s (Martino, 2008). During the 1800s, society was evolving from an agricultural to an industrial model, warranting an improved and larger educational workforce (Martino,

2008; Montecinos & Nielsen, 2004). Until this societal shift, men made up the majority of the educational workforce (Blount, 1998). With men as the majority, there was a high turn-over rate due to their propensity to leave for higher paying or more prestigious jobs (Blount, 1998). As a movement towards an industrialized society created a need for an increased workforce, it became apparent more educators were needed (Blount, 1998). Catherine Beecher and Horace Mann were prominent educational leaders who advocated addressing this need by hiring more women as teachers (Blount, 1998). They noted that not only would women teachers provide stability, but their willingness to accept less pay would permit more teachers to be hired, thus fulfilling the need for additional workforce (Blount, 1998). As more women were hired, a feminization of teaching occurred (Rury, 1989). This feminization of teaching contributed to a stereotypical viewpoint of teaching not being as highly regarded as the male-dominated medicine or law occupations (Rury, 1989). Thus, teaching for men became viewed as a temporary option on the path to something more prestigious, and women, in contrast, viewed it as a viable career option outside the home (Rury, 1989). This historical influence has led to a contemporary stereotypical view that working in education, and the elementary setting in particular is "woman's work" and an extension of maternal duties (Martino, 2008; Wiley, 2011). The interest in men elementary teachers provides background for investigating men elementary counselors as they work in the same setting.

Elementary School Counselors

While the experiences of men elementary teachers have received continued attention and focus as evidenced by numerous reported studies, experiences of men counselors in the elementary setting have gone largely unexplored (Edwards, 2013).

Data indicates a wide numeric disparity between men and women as with teachers, with far less research documenting the men counselors' reasons and experiences (Edwards, 2013). For example, more than twice as many women students are enrolled in counseling masters' degree programs than men (Schweiger, et al., 2011). More specifically, between 2009 and 2010, 82% of counseling graduate degrees (mental health and school) were completed by women (U.S. Department of Labor, 2011). Most significantly, the American School Counseling Association (ASCA) reported that out of a total membership of 29,000 only 300 members identified as men, or about one percent.

Although lacking in research studies compared to men teachers, two studies directly related to the experiences of men counselors in a non-traditional school environment were identified. The first study by Dodson and Borders (2006) compared 100 men in mechanical engineering (traditional career) to 100 men in elementary school counseling (nontraditional career) using a quantitative survey method. Results indicate that men elementary school counselors, in general, were not concerned with being a numerical minority or feeling the need to fulfill certain gender expectations (Dodson & Borders, 2006). One possible critique of this study is that due to the use of the quantitative research method, there is an absence of actual stories from counselors' perspectives. In contrast to the Dobson and Borders quantitative study, a second study specific to school counseling examined the stories of 12 men elementary counselors using a phenomenological method (Edwards, 2013). Results indicate the men felt certain gender expectations in the setting, leading to the need to fulfill certain perceived stereotypes to be effective in the position (Edwards, 2013).

The low research representation of men in counseling positions at the elementary level warrants further inquiry and a better understanding as to why such an underrepresentation exists. To research this underrepresentation, I investigated the experiences of men in the elementary school counseling field in one southeastern state. This southeastern state has more than 1.7 million students of which 380,000 are in the K-5 elementary grades (Georiga Dept. of Education, 2012). Within the elementary schools in this southeastern state, a total of 1514 school counselors provide support to the more than 380,000 students (Georgia Dept. of Education, 2012). Of the 1514 elementary school counselors, 1398 are identified as women and 116 as men (Georgia Dept. of Education, 2012). To begin the examination of the experiences of men in a non-traditional setting, I presented an analysis of how gender is socially constructed through the terms and labels used in society to describe men and women.

Social Construction of Gender

Sex-type is a term with a biological connotation that is often incorrectly equated with gender (Haig, 2004). Rather, gender is a social construct instead of a biological one Weber (2001), and is articulated through this quote. “The study of gender roles refers to the study of social norms that prescribe and proscribe what people should feel and how they should behave given a constellation of biologically-based characteristics that are socially attributed as correlates of maleness and femaleness” (Montecinos & Nielsen, 2004, p.4). In other words, there are certain expectations for how men and women are supposed to act in society (Connell, 1995; Kimmel, 2007). Western society has supported these gender expectations as masculinity is typically associated with someone who is aggressive, competitive, rational, and strong, while in contrast femininity is

associated with someone who is helpful, caring, tender, emotional, and passive (Francis & Skelton, 2001; Gorski, 1998). Investigating these gender labels has been identified as one of the most important constructs to improve understanding about people's decision-making and behaviors (Glasser & Smith, 2008; Lindsey, 1997; Lorber, 1996).

Hegemonic Masculinity

In light of the evidence that society creates gender roles and expectations for men and women, men who enter an occupation considered inappropriate and non-traditional, based on gender, are confronted with their nonconformance to the expectations of hegemonic masculinity, or acting as a "masculine man" (Connell, 2008; W. Martino, 2008). The term hegemonic masculinity is defined as "the configuration of gender practice, which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees the dominant position of men and subordination of women" (Connell, 1995, p.77). For example, as a man enters a work setting with younger children, he is confronted with the job responsibilities of being a caregiver and a nurturer (Connell, 2008). These job responsibilities are in direct opposition to societal messages that those are not traits a real man exhibits (Connell, 2008). This dominant position of men is reinforced at an early age by societal expectations and rules regarding masculinity and femininity (Sargent, 2001, 2005). Men that are seen as effeminate, gay, or choose to pursue non-traditional career choices, such as working with younger children, are seen as a threat to the "traditional" or hegemonic masculine man (Sargent, 2001, 2005). These gender messages are conveyed to boys starting at an early age, with schools being one of the first organizations that reinforce hegemonic masculinity or dominant position of men (Paechter, 2006).

Schools are not only one of the first, but also one of the largest organizations, that perpetuate the stereotypical gendered expectations that develop at an early age with boys (Sargent, 2001). Initially children's minds are gender neutral, meaning they are not aware there are stereotypical ways boys and girls are supposed to act (Paechter, 2006). Ultimately, young children through social interactions and experiences learn that certain gender rules and expectations are considered socially appropriate (Paechter, 2006). An example of how school cultures perpetuate gendered expectations is by influencing what is acceptable physical appearance for boys and girls (Paechter, 2006). Boys are discouraged from wearing long hair and girls short hair, which was noted in a literature review of the impact gender assumptions play in the identity development of children (Paechter, 2006). Paechter (2006) maintains that "while a variety of masculinities and femininities is possible, both within school and out, children who wish to construct themselves publicly as feminine boys or masculine girls will be marginalized in peer communities of masculinity and femininity practice" (p.130).

Gender expectations not only play a role in the physical appearance of students, but also academic achievement (Smith, 2007). Smith (2007) discovered gender expectations influence how boys view schoolwork. Boys in Smith's study considered schoolwork to be in conflict with the "manly" world of manual labor and sports (Smith, 2007). These gender assumptions are evident with boys in school, creating a culture of gender expectations that continues throughout life (Smith, 2007).

Hegemonic Masculinity Critiques

Even though hegemonic masculinity is a widely used and respected method for examining masculinity and gender identity within men, critics have identified two

problematic areas (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Demetriou, 2001; Moller, 2007). First, many feminist scholars assert that hegemonic masculinity creates an overemphasis on the relationships and experiences of men when constructing an identity, without any consideration for the impact or influence on women (Demetriou, 2001). These same scholars also argue that focusing research on male gender issues removes the focus from the continued discrimination that women face (Demetriou, 2001).

The negative and biased viewpoint of men created through this framework is a second critique of hegemonic masculinity (Moller, 2007). Using hegemonic masculinity as the framework for studying gender identity creates a narrow, negative, and biased focus on how men negotiate power and domination in the work environment (Moller, 2007). Moller (2007) suggested that researchers need to be aware of not making assumptions based on our own experiences. Assumptions are often made as a result of not understanding privilege garnered from the ability to investigate the concept of hegemonic masculinity within participants (Moller, 2007).

Gendered Expectations

Training Programs

As indicated earlier in the literature review, gender expectations begin at an early age in men's lives and are reinforced as they enter institutions such as schools (Sargent, 2001). These gender expectations continue as men progress in their education and become heightened in training programs and work settings for those that enter a non-traditional setting (DeCorse & Vogtle, 1997; Vavrus, 2009). To investigate gender identity development of men in teacher preparation programs, Vavrus (2009) had 38 teachers complete autoethographies. Each teacher reported feeling the need to act in

socially approved gender roles while in the training program, meaning men were expected to display masculine traits, and women, feminine traits (Vavrus, 2009). Similar stories were shared by 11 men teachers in training programs interviewed about their career choices and reactions of others to that choice (DeCorse & Vogtle, 1997). These reactions ranged from supportive to openly questioning the decision. In addition, the men in elementary teacher preparation programs expressed feeling a different set of standards with a higher set of expectations than the women teachers (DeCorse & Vogtle, 1997). Having an understanding of how gender is conveyed within counselor training programs may provide insights into methods that promote success in the field and those that need further examination.

Pedophilia fears

One consequence of preparation programs reinforcing gender expectations is they are teaching men to be hyperviligilant to pedophilia-type behaviors (Ashcraft & Sevier, 2006; Cushman, 2005). Interviews with men teachers from different ethnic backgrounds indicated apprehension about physical contact even before entering the field, and a continued feeling of a need to be careful once in the field (Ashcraft & Sevier, 2006). Additionally, men elementary teachers participating in a focus group reported different ways that many of their masters programs cultivated a culture of fear around sexual abuse (Cushman, 2005). For example, many of the participants indicated their programs emphasized the need of men to limit the amount of physical contact with children so as not to present the perception of being a pedophile (Cushman, 2005). These pedophilia warnings contribute to group members' paranoia of doing something inappropriate when entering the work setting (Ashcraft & Sevier, 2006; Cushman, 2005).

Several other studies suggest that training programs create a sense of fear related to child abuse for men who work in settings with younger children (Cooney & Bittner, 2001; Gosse, Parr, & Allison, 2008; Sargent, 2004). For example, men in early childhood education shared their reluctance to have physical contact or show affection, fearing the societal label it would create (Sargent, 2004). These experiences in training programs created an illusion that women had a different set of rules than men regarding the appropriateness of physical contact (Sargent, 2004). These descriptions were confirmed by interviews with men elementary teachers who shared examples of contradictions between the job requirements and society's stereotypical gender expectations (Gosse et al., 2008). According to their stories, to be effective as an elementary school teacher, men need to be able to be comfortable with showing affection towards children and unafraid of some physical contact such as hugging. The problem is when these behaviors occur; society may question their appropriateness (Cooney & Bittner, 2001; Gosse et al., 2008). These findings were confirmed by Sargent (2004) as many times men teachers were encouraged by colleagues and family members not to show affection or have physical contact, thereby creating a sense of reluctance to help a child in distress. Sargent (2004) suggested that men become so paranoid about one wrongful accusation of abuse that it may prohibit them from being effective in the job setting.

Work Setting

Continued discussion and emphasis from the school setting and training programs on gender expectations can lead to struggles when men move into the non-traditional work setting (Sargent, 2005; Wiley, 2011). When men enter a non-traditional profession,

they are confronted with the paradox of hegemonic masculinity (Sargent, 2005). This paradox asserts that men are more appropriate in a position of dominance and any man who does not subscribe to these practices threatens the ideological idea of a masculine man (Martino, 2008; Sargent, 2005; Wiley, 2011).

Two men elementary school teachers, one that self-reported as gay and the other straight, confirmed these expectations in case studies investigating gender relations in the school setting (Martino, 2008). Both teachers discussed struggles with expectations to conform to society's viewpoint of masculinity, while simultaneously maintaining their own identity (Martino, 2008). Specifically, the gay teacher indicated that it was necessary to keep his sexuality secret because of the possible negative repercussions he could experience in the school setting (Martino, 2008). In a separate qualitative dissertation examining gender identity with men in predominantly female occupations, a quote from a gay educator summarized the struggles faced:

> There are also problems in that sometimes even the elementary school level I do find myself sometimes with a child in the class who is not typical of their gender and whom I can imagine becoming either at odds with their gender and/or gay, lesbian or bi. I try to give those kids some extra support, but being in the closet myself in relation to students means that I'm kind of limited in what I can do or say in relation to that. (Carter, 2008, p.65)

Reinforcing masculine stereotypes in order to be accepted in the non-traditional setting was a recurrent theme in a qualitative dissertation examining men special education teachers and two research studies on men elementary music teachers (Roulston, 2000; Wiley, 2011). In both studies, men indicated feeling a need to distance themselves

from anything considered stereotypically feminine and participate in as many "masculine" activities as possible within the school setting (Roulston, 2000; Wiley, 2011). However, each man expressed a confidence in their abilities and skills when working with children (Wiley, 2011). Even though confidence was expressed, there also was a feeling of pressure to act and participate in "masculine" activities in the school setting (Wiley, 2011). In another qualitative study, men elementary school music teachers indicated the need to reinforce the concept of hegemonic masculinity by recommending to boys genres of music considered stereotypically virile (Roulston, 2000).

Many times, men may not be prepared for a non-traditional work setting, which Foster and Newman (2005) examined in a study with a group of men teachers and students in training programs. Based on the participants' responses, the phrase "identity bruising" summarized their experiences (Foster & Newman, 2005). Within focus groups and interviews, the men shared stories of negative reactions from friends and family about entering elementary education (Foster & Newman, 2005). Often these negative reactions included questions about their sexuality and propensity to be a pedophile (Foster & Newman, 2005). Ultimately these reactions and questions can lead to men trying to overemphasize the masculine aspects of the position (Foster & Newman, 2005).

Two studies supported men's reinforcement of hegemonic masculinity in non-traditional settings, but also offered examples of overcoming this reinforcement (Cross & Bagilhole, 2002; Lupton, 2000). Cross and Bagilhole (2002) using semi-structured interviews with British men in non-traditional occupations, discovered the men in the study faced questions regarding their gender identity and sexuality (Cross & Bagilhole,

2002). The participants' responses provide evidence of how men respond differently when confronted with these gender expectations in a non-traditional setting. (Cross & Bagilhole, 2002). For instance, six of the men shared examples of overemphasizing the masculine aspects of the job and distancing themselves from anything considered feminine (Cross & Bagilhole, 2002). In contrast, four of the men reported that working in a non-traditional setting allowed for expression of their true identity that may not be supported in other work settings (Cross & Bagilhole, 2002). These results were confirmed by Lupton (2000) with nine men who had entered or were in the process of entering a non-traditional occupation. The men's stories revealed how they confronted masculinity questions in non-traditional occupations (Lupton, 2000). For instance, some of the men would leave out certain aspects of the position considered feminine, or take it a step further, and create a new more masculine job title (Lupton, 2000). On the other hand, a second group of participants reconfigured their idea of masculinity to work effectively in a female dominated profession (Lupton, 2000). The results of this reconfiguration were the participant's self-reported higher levels of happiness and productivity in the work setting (Lupton, 2000).

Authority Figures

The expectations and stereotypes of acting as an appropriate "masculine man" are supported and reinforced by people in positions of authority in the school setting (Cushman, 2008). In one study, principals were asked questions on a survey about the necessity of men role models for young children and what behavior they should exhibit, and it was determined that men need to enjoy sports and be able to "act like a man" in the job setting (Cushman, 2008). These results support the idea that men are free to present

themselves in any type of way, but institutions, society, and relationships influence any presentation (Cushman, 2008). As a consequence, men not following specific gender stereotypes can create concern and suspicions when working with young children (Martino, 2008).

Cultural Expectations

Expectations for men in early childhood education about the way they are "supposed to act" are reinforced in popular culture (Sabbe & Aelterman, 2007). In the course of determining how teaching and gender are interrelated, Sabbe and Aelterman (2007) conducted a review examining life history narratives, surveys, television, films, and interviews. It was found that this interrelation between gender and teaching can cause men to not only reinforce hegemonic masculinity, but also to believe only women have the necessary nurturing skills to be effective with young children (Sabbe & Aelterman, 2007). Carter (2008) discovered struggles with societal perception of elementary education as a feminine profession. Study participants indicated feeling that women were the only ones with the necessary nurturing skills to be effective with young children (Carter, 2008). The men also shared examples of how working in a non-traditional occupation did not allow for expression or confirmation of their masculinity (Carter, 2008). To find this confirmation, the men would overemphasize the masculine aspects of the job leading to a reinforcement of hegemonic masculinity (Carter, 2008).

Role Strain

As previously stated, research suggests men who enter a non-traditional career based on gender are confronted with masculinity questions (Sargent, 2001, 2005). Men are not able to navigate the tensions between societal/institutional masculinity

expectations and personal ones, and may experience role strain as a possible consequence (Simpson, 2005). Role strain results from a discrepancy between a person's identity and the gender expectations of certain occupations (Simpson, 2005). Men in non-traditional job settings often have to decide between maintaining work setting masculinity expectations or their own personal gender identity (Simpson, 2005). These expectations are a result of pressure from society and peers to pursue jobs that are powerful and high paying and act in "masculine ways" (Galbraith, 1992; Simpson, 2005). Many times acting in these "masculine ways" conflicts with their need for emotional fulfillment (Galbraith, 1992; Simpson, 2005). When men experience role strain in their job setting it can lead to gender role conflict, which means their gender identity and occupational gender expectations are incompatible (Simpson, 2005). This incompatibility can contribute to decreased job performance and lowered self-esteem (Simpson, 2005).

Studies of men in non-traditional occupations support the concept of role strain as contributing to gender role conflict (Galbraith, 1992; Simpson, 2005). One study of men nurses and elementary educators found many participants indicated feeling pressured from society to act in "masculine ways," known as hegemonic masculinity (Galbraith, 1992). This feeling of pressure creates a lack of connection and happiness in the occupation and also decreased productivity (Galbraith, 1992).

A second qualitative study validated the connection between role strain, and difficulties in the work setting, while adding new conclusions (Simpson, 2005). The qualitative study using interviews of 40 men workers from four predominately female occupations: (elementary teachers, flight attendants, nurses, and librarians) found examples of role strain throughout their stories (Simpson, 2005). Role strain was evident

as the men expressed feelings of shame and self-consciousness about how friends and colleagues viewed them, particularly when sexuality questions were raised (Simpson, 2005). To compensate for this role strain, the men would leave out certain information about their job role or be sure to emphasize the more "masculine" job duties (Simpson, 2005). In contrast, men in this study with a higher reported self-concept suffered less role strain and gender role conflict (Simpson, 2005).

Social Relations Theory

Social Relations Theory in combination with Gottfredson's Theory of Vocational Development are the theoretical frameworks for my study on the experiences of men's gender identity development in a predominately female occupation. Sociologists developed Social Relations Theory as a way of formulating a definition for masculinity (Gorski, 1998). The definition identified masculinity as a set of practices that develop from men's roles and positioning within different social institutions (Tolson, 1977). Andrew Tolson, a profeminist and leading Social Relations scholar, believed a man's identity begins in early childhood and is influenced initially by the family unit (Tolson, 1977). As the child gets older, social institutions such as the school setting begin to play a larger role in identity formation (Tolson, 1977). His viewpoint is summarized as:

> My starting point is perhaps the most basic of all feminist propositions: the distinction between biology and culture. When we talk about 'masculinity,' or when we respond to the masculine 'social presence,' we draw upon certain specific forms of social knowledge. This is to say, although certain aspects of sexual behavior are obviously functions of biological sex (including genetic aptitude and physical development), by far the major part of sexuality is cultural

> encompassing personality, social behavior; and involving symbolic meanings transmitted in linguistic communication. (Tolson, 1977, p. 11-12)

Tolson (1977) maintained that although the family is a social institution that plays an important role early in life, the school setting becomes a greater influence directly based on the large amount of time spent there. Children learn as they move through the school setting that society bases one's success on achievement and status in the work setting (Tolson, 1977). To obtain this success, boys are taught that athletic ability, competition, and suppression of emotional expression are the coveted traits of a masculine man (Tolson, 1977).

One study, examining white men's identity development explored through a heuristic phenomenological framework, expanded the tenants of the Social Relations Theory (Gorski, 1998). Gorski (1998) maintained that we should not be looking at identity development as solely influenced by gender, but should also examine how cultural variables such as class, race, and sexual orientation intersect with gender to form ones identity. Men's labels such as: aggressive, oppressive, unemotional, and competitive are learned in social institutions and are not biological traits (Gorski, 1998).

As with any model of men's identity development, critics have contested and critiqued Social Relations Theory (Mac an Ghaill, 1996; Seidler, 1990). The main argument is that using a Social Relations framework allows men an excuse for dominant positions and roles and organizations (Mac an Ghaill, 1996). Further, it does not give insight into the rationale as to why men feel a need to dominate (Mac an Ghaill, 1996; Seidler, 1990).

Gottfredson's Theory of Vocational Development

Gottfredson's Theory of Vocational Development contends that a person's self-concept, in combination with environmental and social influences (such as friends and family) impact occupational choices (Gottfredson, 1981). Earlier career development theories that minimized the impact of self-concept, environmental, and social influences on career choices led to the development of Gottfredson's theory (Gottfredson, 1981). Gottfredson's (1981) theory concludes that a person's career journey begins at an early age and is influenced by interactions with important people in his/her environment. He asserted that children around the age of three began moving through a series of stages in the career decision-making process (Gottfredson, 1981). Stage one lasts from ages three to five (Gottfredson, 1981). During this time, children realize there are older and bigger children and that differences exist between men and women (Gottfredson, 1981). Around the time children begin school, they enter stage two and begin to understand the different jobs and roles men and women have in society (Gottfredson, 1981). Also, based on interactions in different environments, children realize that typically men and women have specific types of occupations in which they work (Gottfredson, 1981). As children move through school they enter stages three and four (Gottfredson, 1981). In stages three and four, peers and societal influences become more important and shape career decisions, with boundaries typically formed by the age of nine (Gottfredson, 1981). When these boundaries are formed, occupations not gender-appropriate are eliminated (Gottfredson, 1981).

Gottfredson (1981) found individuals examine certain variables in a specific order of importance: sex-type, occupational prestige, social class, the effort to enter the

occupation, and how much the occupation matches interests and abilities when considering an occupation. All these variables contribute to circumscription, or their determination of a social space of acceptable occupations (Gottfredson, 1981). Sometimes individuals find they will not be able to be successful with their first occupational choice because of the job market or education required, so they are forced to compromise (Gottfredson, 1981). Men when compromising first eliminate careers matching closest with a person's interests and abilities, followed by prestige, and then gendered occupations (Gottfredson, 1981). In other words, when men are looking at possible careers the gender type of the career is the most important factor (Gottfredson, 1981).

Several studies support Gottfredson's career choice theory and highlight the importance of examining gender identity formation (Auger et al., 2005; Dodson & Borders, 2006; Helwig, 2004). In one study, third and fourth graders from a southeastern school system were given a 30-question sex role inventory on a four point Likert scale measuring gender roles to complete (Auger et al., 2005). A questionnaire supporting this inventory was administered, asking the children what they wanted to be when they grew up (Auger et al., 2005). Occupational choices were classified as traditional or non-traditional based on the stipulations set by the Department of Labor (Auger et al., 2005). These stipulations state that if 75% or more of population in a setting are men or women, then it is considered non-traditional for one gender (Auger et al., 2005). Results, determined using a Chi Square Analysis with gender and occupational classification as the two variables, indicated men and women chose gendered traditional occupations at a much higher rate than originally thought (Auger et al., 2005).

In another study, Dodson and Borders (2006) examined career choices and gender roles of men engineers and school counselors, two traditionally divergent careers based on gender, using Gottfredson's theory as their framework. The findings supported Gottfredson's theory as engineers considered sex type the most important factor in a career decision, whereas school counselors were more concerned with prestige than sex type (Dodson & Borders, 2006). One final study confirmed Gottfredson's theories of circumscription and compromise through a longitudinal study. This study followed a sample of children for 10 years, beginning in the second grade (Helwig, 2004). In the study students, between ages six and eight, chose professions that would be considered gender appropriate. These same children also stated that occupations have different expectations based on societal gender roles at the ages indicated in Gottfredson's theory (Helwig, 2004).

The material discussed to this point has focused on the reasons some men have difficulty in predominately female occupations and how much of that may be linked to struggles with gender identity development. Next, is a summary of Chusmir's Non-Traditional Career Model. This model provides a rationale as to why men chose these nontraditional careers based on gender and what allows them to persevere in this setting (Chusmir, 1990).

Chusmir's Model of Nontraditional Career Choices

Chusmir (1990) created a model that discussed the factors that influence men to enter a non-traditional occupation. The career development model indicates three main factors play a role in career choices: personal, family, and societal influences (Chusmir, 1990). According to Chusmir, men make career choices depending on family

demographics, values, and needs (Chusmir, 1990). Men in non-traditional careers generally feel more supported and less likely to subscribe to typical gender roles and be influenced by the need to fulfill societal expectations (Chusmir, 1990). Research from various studies seem to validate this model as the support of parents and specific professionals Mulholland and Hansen (2003), Hebert (2000), Carter (2008), Wiley (2011), difficult experiences in childhood Hebert (2000), and belief in self Hebert (2000), Sargent (2004), Carter (2008), Wiley (2011) were contributing factors to men deciding to enter nontraditional careers.

Familial Support

Importance of familial support and encouragement was prevalent throughout the studies of men in predominantly non-traditional occupations (Carter, 2008; Hebert, 2000; Mulholland & Hansen, 2003; Wiley, 2011). Men who had recently graduated from elementary education programs found parental support and encouragement made the decision to enter elementary education much easier (Mulholland & Hansen, 2003). Several of the students commented on how their parents encouraged, promoted, and expressed the desire for them to enter teaching over other careers (Mulholland & Hansen, 2003). One study of gifted men entering elementary education confirmed the importance of parental support (Hebert, 2000). Students shared specific stories of how familial support helped emphasize the importance of finding a career that makes one happy (Hebert, 2000).

Both Carter (2008) and Wiley (2011) confirmed these findings. In Carter (2008), 10 elementary teachers were interviewed concerning their reasons for entering elementary education. One of the themes from the stories was the importance of support

and encouragement from family members and friends in the decision making process (Carter, 2008). In a qualitative dissertation of lived experiences of three special education teachers, the influence of family and friends was important, but two of the participants mentioned that friends questioned the decision to enter education and the sacrifices the choice would require (Wiley, 2011).

Professionals

The importance of encouragement was not limited only to family, as several studies revealed the importance of specific school professionals in career choice (Stroud, Smith, Ealy, & Hurst, 2000). In one study, male early childhood and education majors' reported counselors or teachers influenced career choices (Stroud et al., 2000). These counselors, principals, and teachers served as role models and mentors for entering the education field. The professionals recognized ability and talent when working with students, and provided encouragement to investigate working with children as a career option (Stroud et al., 2000). Gifted men in another study supported the influence of educational professionals. Specifically, the students each had men role models that encouraged them to pursue a career in elementary education (Hebert, 2000). Each man shared stories about the influence of men teachers, men in their clinical experiences, or men professors serving as role models for how to be a professional in an elementary setting (Hebert, 2000).

Life Experience

Difficult experiences of men in childhood were a second factor that influenced a decision to want to work with children (Hebert, 2000). Gifted men pursuing elementary education careers each reported a specific childhood incident that created a desire to

make a difference in children's lives (Hebert, 2000). Some of the men shared difficulties in school, such as problems related to learning disabilities, struggling to fit in with peers, and bullying experiences as influencing their decision to want to work with children (Hebert, 2000). Other students shared stories of struggles faced at home (Hebert, 2000). For example, one participant noted that the problems experienced from his parents' divorce, specifically living with an alcoholic father, contributed to him becoming more sympathetic towards children facing similar family struggles (Hebert, 2000). Both of these examples led the men to want to have a positive impact and help those students who may have experienced some of their same struggles (Hebert, 2000).

Self-Efficacy

A strong sense of self-efficacy was a final factor that influenced men's decisions to enter predominately female occupations (Carter, 2008; Hebert, 2000; Sargent, 2004; Wiley, 2011). In one study of men pursuing elementary education, all expressed a strong belief in their abilities. This self-efficacy allowed them to persevere even when faced with difficulties and questions about entering a non-traditional profession (Hebert, 2000). In semi-structured interviews of 11 men elementary teachers each one indicated a strong belief in their abilities and an expectation of being successful, thus supporting the findings by Herbert (Sargent, 2004). Additionally, two dissertations on men in elementary education supported the need for a strong sense of self (Carter, 2008; Wiley, 2011). The first dissertation was a phenomenological study investigating the reasons and experiences of three men choosing to enter elementary education (Wiley, 2011). Throughout the stories, the importance of self-confidence allowed the men to overcome the masculinity stereotypes they faced (Wiley, 2011). A second qualitative-based

dissertation examining the stories of 10 men in elementary education also found this theme of self-confidence (Carter, 2008). Each of the 10 study participants emphasized the need for self-confidence to confront possible gender related questions (Carter, 2008).

Lease (2003), using a longitudinal sample of men, examined Chusmir's Model of Nontraditional Career Choice. The study conducted an assessment with a random sample of men when first entering the college setting and then four years later (Lease, 2003). The results of career choices offer conflicting support for Chusmir's model (Lease, 2003). Men in the study characterized as having more liberal viewpoints were more likely to choose a non-traditional career, supporting Chusmir's model (Lease, 2003). In contradiction of Chusmir, Lease (2003) discovered familial support not to be as large of a factor.

Chapter Summary

Data reveal a wide gap between the number of women and men working in the educational workforce, specifically in the elementary school setting. Research also indicates that boys are being taught at an early age appropriate gender expectations through social and institutional interactions (Tolson, 1977; Gorski, 1998; Gottfredson, 1981). With this background knowledge, the literature review began with an examination of the relative absence of men in the educational workforce. The reason for this underrepresentation was highlighted with an analysis of how gender is socially constructed through the terms and labels used frequently in society. Next, this social construction of gender led to examples of gendered expectations within training programs and the workplace setting. To investigate these gendered expectations, Social Relations Theory and Gottfredson's Theory of Vocational Development were the theoretical

frameworks summarized. Finally, factors that lead men to choose a non-traditional occupation were investigated with the intention of providing insight into suggestions for recruiting more men into the elementary school counseling field.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The story of my path to becoming an elementary school counselor is one that is important to share, providing another example of what types of careers men are expected to join. My story begins at the end of college graduating with psychology degree and not being sure what my next career move would be. After much searching I finally accepted a job as a high school teacher without having any experience in the field. After a year in this setting, I decided to go back to school to obtain a master's degree in school psychology. This decision was based on the examples from society and my own life of men I knew in the psychology field. At that time I never considered the school counseling field, specifically the elementary setting, because I wasn't aware of non-traditional career options. From what I knew most men in education worked in the high school setting, were college professors, or psychologists. After spending a year in the school psychology program I realized the large amount of testing requirements for the job would not suit me. This is when I began to look at other options, and realized that school counseling in the elementary setting would allow me to form more meaningful relationships with children.

After deciding to make the switch to school counseling, questions about my identity as man working with young children began. One of my professors assumed I would be going into the high school setting when we were filling out level preferences. When I spoke up and indicated a preference to work in the elementary setting, he looked

at me in a curious manner and questioned if working with that young of an age group was really what I wanted. He then went on to speak about assumptions that people tend to make about men that work with young children. Although I did not question him about what was meant by that, I feel as if I have a better idea now based on my experiences within the field.

These gender expectations and assumptions expressed by my professor have continued since entering the elementary school counseling field. For example, I remember an experience I had the first year as a school counselor. While attending a district meeting, I was introduced as a new counselor in the district. During one of the breaks, an older man counselor came over to me, introduced himself and then started giving me tips for "lasting" in the field. Two major themes stood out. First, he gave me examples of specific things I should do to protect myself as a man working with small children, such as not meeting with children with the door closed, and exhibiting appropriate demonstrations of masculinity. The counselor stated that I needed to make sure to "act like a man" while in the elementary setting. He maintained that if I "acted like a man" I would be setting a good example of a strong and confident man for the boys at the school. I inquired why this was so important. His answer was that people were already going to question why as a man you chose to work with young children. Not acting "masculine" enough in the setting would cause even more questions and suspicions. As I recall this conversation, it helps me understand questions I receive regarding future professional plans. Annually, I am asked questions related to gender and my job position. Specifically, the questions relate to when I am going to move into an administrative position or other "higher" level option. When I respond that I am happy as

a school counselor, the response is generally centered on “How do you deal with those young children all the time?”

These experiences help to provide context for investigation into the process of how men elementary school counselors develop an identity in a non-traditional work setting. The following material presents an overview of the steps used in this process. I began with a synopsis of the qualitative method and phenomenological inquiry utilized to answer the following research question: “The perspectives of men counselors’ in the elementary setting on identity development through experiences in a non-traditional setting?” In addition to the primary research question, there are three corresponding sub questions. These three questions are: 1) What is the impact of men mentorships on men counselors in the elementary setting? 2) How do men counselors in the elementary setting describe the settings impact on the development of their gender identities? 3) What are men counselors’ experiences in the elementary setting on negotiating gendered expectations? Following a review of the research method, I examined steps that were used to identify participants for the study, discussed data collection procedures, data analysis, and finally illustrated plans for how trustworthiness would be achieved.

Method

Qualitative

According to Yeh and Inman (2007), qualitative research is a valuable tool for gathering language data to describe the experiences of people. Also, qualitative research is most effective when attempting to hear typically silenced voices of a phenomenon in their own context (Creswell, 2007). These characteristics, when combined with a review of literature, make it clear that qualitative research is the most suitable for this study. Of

the research of men in non-traditional work settings, most has focused on men teachers (Edwards, 2013). The proposed study filled this research gap and provided a focused approach on their first-hand experiences as men in a non-traditional work setting. This approach provided a starting point to gain a deeper understanding of this marginalized group. Qualitative methods use interviews, focus groups, documents, and observations to accomplish these goals and gain a deeper understanding of the meanings people make of their experiences (Hayes & Singh, 2012; Johnson & Christensen 2012).

Constructivist Elements

Polkinghorne (2005) believed qualitative research is conducted to study the "experiential life of people and to "describe and clarify experience as it is lived and constituted in awareness" (p.138). As a researcher to accomplish these goals, specific philosophical elements need to match up with the research conducted (Creswell, 2007). These elements are the nature of reality or ontology, epistemology, axiology, and the research paradigm.

First, as a qualitative researcher, ontologically I believe that each of the participants determine the nature of reality (Gubba & Lincoln, 2008; Ponterotto, 2005). Therefore, I begin with the viewpoint that men elementary school counselors have various realties. The various realities can best be experienced by trying to understand and immerse myself in each of the participant's settings. Participants each had different ways of defining their experiences of gender identity based on the context and social setting. Personally, perspectives of gender identity development have changed based on the setting. For example, my first school setting allowed freedom of expression. I felt comfortable expressing my feelings and exhibiting appropriate displays of affection, i.e.

hugging, that are needed to be successful in a "nurturing environment." Alternatively, my current work setting at one school has expectations to exhibit certain qualities of what societally would be considered an appropriate masculine role model. Questions posed to me frequently in this setting, include "What are my future professional plans?", or "When will I be moving on to a higher level?" and, "Am I more qualified to relate to older children?"

To experience these different realities, my relationships with participants are central to understanding their "lived experiences" as men in a non-traditional work setting (Gubba & Lincoln, 2008; Hansen, 2004; Ponterrello, 2005). Epistemology is the view of how these different relationships are constructed, and needs to be aligned between proposal and research conducted (Ponterrello, 2005). To accomplish these goals, I interviewed participants in their work setting, when possible, to make them feel more comfortable, and better understand the context for their answers. Creswell (2007) explained that the qualitative researcher's epistemological orientation is needed to "lessen the distance between him and the researched" (p.17). As a phenomenological researcher, lessening the distance means that the participants are treated as co-researchers or equals in the research process (Moustakas, 1994; Ponterrello, 2005).

Axiology is concerned with the impact of the researchers' values in the process (Creswell, 2007; Ponterrello, 2005). My values as a constructivist cannot be completely separated from the process (Ponterrello, 2005). They need to be acknowledged, analyzed, and "bracketed," but not eliminated (Moustakas, 1994). For instance, I have to acknowledge my experiences related to the research topic during my nine years as an elementary school counselor. As a man, questions about my sexual identity and what is

appropriate contact with young children are two examples. These examples come with the understanding that each experience has differed depending on the context. Any stories and values I bring to the research setting need to be acknowledged, and can be used as a means for establishing rapport to aid in developing the relationships with participants. Although the stories and experiences shared above can aid in establishing rapport, other values I bring to the research setting need to be acknowledged. As a white, heterosexual, Christian, upper-class man, I bring specific assumptions, stereotypes, and viewpoints that have to be considered and bracketed. The privilege and opportunities gained from the societal roles and labels listed above need to be considered throughout the study. This process of bracketing my experiences and viewpoints is known as epoche in phenomenological research (Moustakas, 1994).

A constructivist research paradigm, one of the research paradigms most often associated with qualitative research, fits most appropriately with the goals of the study (Morrow, 2005). This paradigm proposes that people construct their own meaning of reality through lived experiences related to their social environment (Morrow, 2005). This viewpoint fits with the purpose of the study, which was to gain an understanding of the perspectives of men counselors' identity development through their experiences in the non-traditional setting. Using this view, I examined each man's story while being careful to "bracket" my experiences in the non-traditional setting. Social Relations Theory (Tolson, 1977), and Gottfredson's Theory of Vocational Development (Gottfredson, 1981) were the theoretical underpinnings used to capture the men's experiences. This theoretical foundation in combination with a phenomenological research method attempts to discover the essence of being men elementary school counselors.

Phenomenological Research Methods

Phenomenological research methods were chosen as the most appropriate approach to understand the essence of being a man in a non-traditional work setting. Phenomenology, which can be considered both a philosophy and research method, has roots dating back to Germany before World War I (Dowling, 2007; Creswell, 2003). Edward Husserl was at the forefront of this movement and considered one of the most influential leaders in the emergence of phenomenology (Moran, 2000; Dowling, 2007; McConnell-Henry, Chapman, & Francis, 2009). Husserl wanted to challenge the thinking of that time by allowing the individual the opportunity to discover what appears in consciousness (Dowling, 2007; Hayes & Singh, 2012; Tuohy, Cooney, Dowling, Murphy & Smith, 2013). In my understanding, men elementary school counselors as a research topic came into consciousness after continued questions related to gender identity. I began to wonder how often other men in non-traditional work settings had this same experience.

Until Husserl valid research was considered results replicated in a laboratory setting with controlled variables (Wertz, 2005). Instead, Husserl believed the focus of discovery or experience is on the interpretive understanding from the perspective of the individual (Tuohy, et al., 2013). In other words, phenomenological researchers gain access to a participant's world to seek an understanding of the meaning given to their experiences (Tuohy, et al., 2013). With phenomenology rooted in philosophy it is important researchers understand certain philosophical constructs (Dowling, 2012; Tuohy, et al., 2013). Lifeworld, ephoche, and intuition of essences are three constructs

seen within phenomenological research that will play an important role in my research study (Wertz, 2005). These constructs will be explained next.

Philosophical Constructs

Life World

Husserl believed that the world could only by known through people's thoughts and no existence is possible outside the mind (Dowling, 2012). Reality is said to be in the "life world" or lived experience (McConnell, Chapman, & Francis, 2009). In other words, there may be a situation shared by a group of the same people, but that situation understood differently based on each person's perspectives (Dowling, 2012; McConnell, Chapman, & Francis, 2009).

Epoche

Epoche is a second philosophical construct important to phenomenological methods, and also the first step in the transcendental phenomenological process that I follow (Moustakas, 1994). It involves acknowledging your biases and experiences related to the phenomenon in order to be completely focused on the participants' stories (Moustakas, 1994; Wertz, 2005). In other words, Wertz (2005) maintains "Epoche" is the abstention from influences that could short-circuit or bias a description" (p.168). Epoche, also known as bracketing, will be discussed more completely in the data analysis section. Furthermore, an example of my bracketing was found in stories at the beginning of the chapter. For example, I discussed the expectations I encountered as a man for me to enter the high school setting instead of the elementary one.

Intuition of Essences

Intuition of essences is a third philosophical construct central to Husserl's phenomenological methods. Examining every part of the phenomenon to determine what will be most beneficial to the researcher in understanding the essence is the first step in the transcendental phenomenological process (Wertz, 2005; Moustakas, 1994.) Wertz (2005) described "intuition of essence" as the effort to "delineate the invariant characteristics and clarify the meaning and structure of subject matter" (p.168). Husserl developed "free imagitive variation" to accomplish "intuition of essence." (Wertz, 2005; Moustakas, 1994). "Free imagititive variation" involves the researcher wanting to understand the essence of a phenomenon (Wertz, 2005; Moustakas, 1994). To gain this understanding, the researcher imaginatevly varies it in every possible way with the goal to distinguish essential features from accidental or incidental (Wertz, 2005; Moustakas, 1994). That is, what within the researcher stories helps explain the essence of being a man in a non-traditional setting, and what material is meaningless (Wertz, 2005; Moustakas, 1994).

These philosophical constructs help provide a background and structure for the procedures phenomenological research uses. Although phenomenology has different schools of thought, each following distinctive research procedures, in general the procedures have shared overarching characteristics (Dowling, 2007; Tuohy, et al., 2013). For instance, all phenomenological research attempts to describe the meaning of an individual's experience, with the goal of trying to discover the essence of the phenomenon under investigation (Hayes & Singh, 2012; Moustakas, 1994; Van Manen, 1990). According to Patton (2002), to discover this essence, phenomenology allows

researchers to “explore how participants with direct knowledge of the phenomenon make sense of experiences, how they perceive it, describe it, feel about it, judge it, remember it, make sense of it, and talk about it with others. (p.140). In other words, Van Manen (1990) described this as using experiences of the phenomenon to create an understanding or “grasp of the essence of the very nature of the thing” (p.177).

Moustakas’ phenomenological research methods, guided by Husserl’s phenomenology, will be followed in discovering the essence of being a man in a non-traditional work setting (Moustakas, 1994). Moustakas, a transcendental phenomenologist, was interested in the meaning of the phenomenon and used a systematic approach for analyzing data (Moustakas, 1994). Moustakas’ phenomenology will allow the researcher to take the critical approach of prioritizing men counselors’ in the elementary setting experiences, rather than using other historical or societal influences such as heterosexism and genderism. Heppner and Heppner (2009) cited studies that addressed these societal influences. The studies discovered that men in non-traditional careers are viewed in negative and disrespectful ways (Heppner & Heppner, 2009). Many times these men have their sexual orientation questioned leading to suspicion of them being sexual predators (Heppner & Heppner, 2009). This research highlights the connections between men’s sex-role stereotypes and social justice issues (Heppner & Heppner, 2009). Choosing a phenomenological tradition allows the researcher to better understand these experiences and advocate for change at the post-secondary training schools, as well as begin discussions of gender identity and sex-role stereotypes in K-12 educational settings.

To accomplish these stated goals of phenomenological research, Moustakas (1994) identified seven principles that were used as the guide in the search for the essence of the perspectives of men elementary school counselors' identity development in a non-traditional work setting. These include: (a) a commitment to the use of qualitative methods; (b) a primary focus on the whole experience, rather than on its parts; (c) a search for meaning over a search for rules; (d) primary use of first person accounts as main data sources; (e) insisting that accounts of experiences are a necessary part of any scientific understanding of any social phenomenon; (f) performing research that is guided by the personal interests and commitments of the researcher; and (g) the necessity of treating experiences and behavior as integrated parts of a single whole (p. 21). In addition to the principles of transcendental phenomenological research he developed specific procedures a researcher using Husserl's phenomenology would follow outlined below:

1. Discovering a topic and question rooted in autobiographical meanings and values as well as involving social meanings and significance
2. Conducting a comprehensive review of the professional and research literature.
3. Constructing a set of criteria to locate appropriate co-researchers.
4. Providing co-researchers with instructions on the nature and purpose of the investigation, and developing an agreement that includes obtaining informed consent, ensuring confidentiality and delineating the responsibilities of the primary researcher and research participants, consistent with ethical principles of research.

5. Developing a set of questions or topics to guide the interview process.

6. Conducting and reporting a lengthy person-to-person interview that focuses on a bracketed topic and question. A follow-up interview may also be needed.

7. Organizing and analyzing the data to facilitate development of individual Textual and structural descriptions, a composite textual description, a composite structural description, and a synthesis of textual and structural meanings and essences (Moustakas, 1994, p.103).

Participant Selection

Participants for the study were chosen based on purposeful and snowball sampling. Purposeful sampling is selecting participants who meet specific requirements set forth to fulfill the purpose of the research study (Johnson & Christensen, 2012; Patton, 2002). Hayes & Singh (2012) stated that purposeful sampling is "establishing criteria to obtain information rich cases of your phenomenon before you sample your population" (p.164). Participants who self-identified as men currently working as a counselor in an elementary setting, for a minimum of two years, in one southeastern state were the criteria for the study. In addition, participants provided demographic information in the form of a participant information form and participated in two telephone or face-to-face audio taped interviews (Seidman, 2006). Also, participants signed informed consent documents. The informed consent detailed the purpose of the study, expectations of both researcher and participants, and any potential risks or benefits of participation (Hayes & Singh, 2012). I used two techniques to identify participants matching the criteria. First, I submitted information about the study on the Georgia School Counselor Association

website asking for volunteers matching the criteria. As men volunteered to participate, I used the snowball sampling to identify additional members for the study.

Snowball sampling is a technique used to further recruit participants by asking each identified participant to identify one or more additional people who meet the specified characteristics of the study and may be interested in participating (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). The prospective participants were provided the contact information of the researcher by the identified participant and were asked to contact me if they had interest in being a part of the study. Snowball sampling ensured as many individuals as possible matching the selection criteria are considered for the study.

Setting

Participants for the study were practicing school counselors in one southeastern state. This southeastern state has more than 1.7 million students of which 380,000 are in the K-5 elementary grades (Georgia Department of Education, 2012). Within the elementary schools in this southeastern state a total of 1514 elementary school counselors provide support to the more than 380,000 students in K-5 (Georgia Department of Education, 2012). Of the 1514 elementary school counselors, 1398 are identified as women and 116 as men (Georgia Department of Education, 2012).

Data Collection

Data collection in the form of two semi-structured interviews with six participants, lasting 60-90 minutes, began after IRB approval was granted and participants secured. After interviews with six participants, it was determined that saturation of findings of men counselors' experiences of identity development in a non-traditional elementary school setting had occurred. The research interview is defined as a

qualitative process used to obtain in-depth information about a participant's thoughts, beliefs, knowledge, reasoning, motivations, and feelings about a topic [phenomenon] (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). This method is one of the most common ways of collecting data in qualitative research (Nunkoosing, 2005; Sandelowski, 2002).

Phenomenological-based interviewing, a form of a research interview used in qualitative research, was utilized for this study (Seidman, 2006). This type of interviewing combines questions related to participant life history, in addition to questions regarding experiences in the setting being studied. (Seidman, 2006). Specifically within the interview, the researcher followed a modified version of the phenomenological interview structure (Dolbeare and Schuman 1982, as cited in Seidman, 2006) that asks the participant to not only reconstruct the experience, but also reflect on its meaning.

The first interview examined the life history of the participant to gain an understanding of how elementary school counseling became a career option, and specifically anything related to their perspectives of gender identity development as the participant grew from a boy to a man. Examples of some of the questions that were asked in this first interview include:

1. What are the experiences or influences growing up that shaped your identity as a man?
2. Tell me about how you came to be an elementary school counselor?
3. What was the reaction of friends and family members to your decision to become an elementary school counselor?

4. During your program, what were the expectations of working in an elementary school?

5. Did the topic of being a man working with younger children even come up in the program? (yes/no). If so, what happened?

The second interview focused on the experiences as a man in non-traditional setting and any stories of gender expectations encountered while in the field. Within this second interview, the questions posed encouraged the participants to reflect on the meaning of the experiences they have discussed and provided a complete account of their perspectives of the phenomenon in question. Some examples of questions that were asked during this interview include:

1. Think about a time when you have been approached to do a task specifically because you were a man. What happened? What did you think about that?

2. Has there ever been a time when being a man has been problematic in your work? Tell me about that.

3. Has there ever been a time when you have been treated differently to your colleagues and peers because you are a man? Walk me through what happened. What was that like for you?

4. Thinking back over your career as a school counselor, are there men who have been influential in your work? If so, would you describe the role they played in your identity formation.

5. Last, how do you describe your negotiations of gender identity in a non-t traditional work environment?

Although questions for both interviews were developed in advance, I deviated from the interview protocol to allow the participants the opportunity to share his complete story of the phenomenon. Each interview was recorded on a contact summary sheet, in order to capture the basic details and observations of the contact with the research participant (Hays & Singh, 2012). Based on the contact sheet from each interview, I conducted a recursive check of the interview protocol and made slight adjustments to the protocol to allow for a more thorough interview process.

Following the completion of the interviews, I transcribed the interviews verbatim. This process allowed me to become engrossed in the data (Patton, 2002). In addition, I provided a copy of the transcription to the participant, a check for accuracy (Hayes & Singh, 2012). This member check allowed each interviewed school counselor to validate the authenticity of the transcript created and provide additional comments or feedback when warranted (Hayes & Singh, 2012). Ultimately, the member check ensured that the transcription accurately portrayed their interviews (Hayes & Singh, 2012). In addition to the interview transcripts, I maintained field notes regarding thoughts and observations pertaining to the interviews in a reflexive journal.

Data Analysis

Moustakas' transcendental phenomenological method was used to analyze data after interviews are completed and transcribed (Moustakas, 1994). This method of analysis is a systematic process that follows a specific set of steps (Moustakas, 1994). These steps include the researcher developing their own experiences with the phenomenon (epoche), identifying specific statements from the transcripts in a process known as horizontitization, clustering these statements into themes, providing textual and

structural descriptions, and finally using these descriptions to provide a complete description of the experience (Moustakas, 1994).

Epoche

Epoche is the first step in the transcendental phenomenological process (Moustakas, 1994). I acknowledged at the beginning of the study my viewpoints/judgments of the phenomenon to focus more completely on the stories of the participants (Moustakas, 1994). Moustakas (1994) believed the process is an "experience in itself, a process of setting aside predilections, prejudices, predispositions, and allowing things, events, and people to enter anew into the consciousness, and to look and see them again, as if for the first time" (p.85). My description of experiences with the phenomenon was referenced at the beginning of the chapter.

Writing about these experiences and reflecting on them is one example of how I "bracketed" or made use of "epoche." Epoche does not seek to eliminate biases, as these will always be a part of the study, but allows the opportunity for these biases to be acknowledged at the conscious level (Hayes & Singh, 2012; Moustaksas, 1994). Acknowledging biases allows the phenomenon to be experienced with an open mind (Moustakas, 1994). This open mind may allow different meanings and conclusions to be ascertained that would not have been possible without "bracketing (Moustakas, 1994).

Horizonalization

After my viewpoints had been acknowledged and data were collected through two semi-structured interviews for the six participants, horizontilization was the next step in the data analysis. Using horizontalization, I began by looking for non-overlapping, non-repetitive expressions relevant to the experience (Hayes & Singh, 2012; Moustakas,

1994). Next, I placed these expressions from the experience into a table that provided insight into experiences related to the phenomenon. Moustakas (1994) states, "we consider each of the horizons and the textual qualities that enable us to understand the experience" (p.95).

Themes

With the statements identified in the chart, I analyzed the data to determine which statements need to be deleted because of repetition or insignificance to the topic (Moustakas, 1994). In this process of reduction, I identified overarching units of meaning that contained rich textual descriptions of the participants experience (Moustakas, 1994 & Hayes & Wood, 2011). These units of meaning were then clustered into themes related to the topic. These themes were then identified in a table with supporting evidence directly from the co-researchers statements.

Textual and Structural Descriptions

Following the formation of important themes, textual and structural descriptions occurred based on each participant's experiences (Moustakas, 1994). Textual descriptions provided an outline of "what" was experienced, while structural descriptions are concerned with "how" it was experienced (Moustakas, 1994). For this study with men counselors in the elementary school setting, the textual descriptions were stories of how men described the development of their gender identities in a non-traditional setting. The structural descriptions highlighted how the roles of schools, university training programs, and important individuals combined to influence these stories of gender identity development in a non-traditional setting.

Finally, textual and structural descriptions were combined into a complete description of the phenomenon. This process known as "intuitive integration" attempted to summarize the experiences of men elementary school counselors in a non-traditional setting to find an essence of their gender identity development (Hayes & Singh, 2012).

Strategies for Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is needed to ensure that the methods and procedures in the research method are valid and reliable (Creswell, 2007; Morrow, 2005). It is also linked to constructivist research, a philosophical paradigm for my study (Morrow, 2005). Following Lincoln and Guba's (1985) guidelines of creditability transferability, dependability, and confirm ability leads to a study with strong trustworthiness. Credibility refers to the internal validity or believability of a study. Transferability correlates to external validity and describes the extent to which the findings might apply to others in similar setting. Dependability demonstrates that a study is consistent across time and researchers, and confirm ability means that the study accurately reflects participants and not interference from the researcher (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Several strategies deemed most appropriate when conducting phenomenological research were employed to strengthen the listed areas above of trustworthiness (Hayes & Singh, 2012). These strategies include the use of epoche, reflexive journals, member checking, peer debriefing, and rich, thick descriptions (Creswell, 2007).

First, through the use of epoche at the onset of the study, I clarified my position on the topic and identified any prejudices or assumptions that may influence the study (Moustakas, 1994). Additionally, I kept a series of reflexive journals throughout the process in order to continue bracketing his own assumptions and biases (Hayes & Singh,

2012). Within one day of each encounter with participants, I journaled, and kept a log of that journal. Next, through member checking, I involved the participants within the research process by verifying that meanings and themes developed from their accounts are accurately portrayed (Hayes & Singh, 2012). Clarifying responses via probes during the semi-structured interviews and having the participants review the transcripts led to establishing trustworthiness in the data. (Hayes & Singh, 2012). Last, the structural and textual descriptions provided thick and rich details directly from the stories of the participants (Creswell, 2007; Morrow, 2005). These descriptions were seen as a strategy that allows readers to make a decision regarding transferability based on shared characteristics (Creswell, 2007; Morrow, 2005). Finally, I used peer debriefing as a strategy for trustworthiness. A fellow doctoral student reviewed the research study, provided feedback and questions, and kept me aware of issues that may be affecting the research (Patton, 2002).

In addition to the steps listed above, a bracketing interview was the final method implemented to ensure trustworthiness. The bracketing interview, used many times with phenomenological researchers, involves the researcher being interviewed using the developed interview protocol of their own study (Polio, 1997; Roulston, 2010). The bracketing interview serves two main purposes. First, it allows researchers the opportunity to gain a better understanding of the material they are hoping to learn from the participants (Roulston, 2010). Second, researchers should not ask participants to do anything they are not comfortable with themselves (Roulston, 2010). Completing this interview enables them to have a better grasp of what they are asking the participants to undertake (Roulston, 2010). In this study, I had a fellow researcher interview me with

the developed protocol on my experiences as a man in a non-traditional occupation.

There were a couple of key points from this interview. First, I realized how passionate I am about this topic and hopeful that the participants' stories can bring more awareness to the topic. Second, many of my answers were similar to those the participants shared. This was evident in feeling the need to take steps to protect myself as a man working with small children.

Chapter Summary

This chapter explored the methods used for understanding the perspectives of men elementary school counselors' gender identity development in a non-traditional work setting. To answer this question, qualitative research using phenomenology inquiry was deemed most appropriate. Two semi-structured interviews with participants who self-identified as men provided the stories needed to answer the primary and three sub research questions. Following data collection, the transcripts were transcribed verbatim. Following transcription, data analysis occurred following a specific set of steps. The steps of epoche, horizontilization, theme development, textual and structural descriptions, and "intuitive integration" are based on Moustakas methods. Finally, methods of trustworthiness were explored, helping to provide reliability and validity for the study. Specifically, Creswell's (2007) recommendations for trustworthiness were used as the template.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

This chapter presents findings of the study in which the qualitative method of phenomenology was used. The purpose of this research was to understand the perspectives of men counselors in the elementary setting on their identity development by examining their experiences in a non-traditional work setting. Hence, the primary research question guiding this study was:

- What are the perspectives of men counselors in the elementary setting on identity development through experiences in a non-traditional setting?

The qualitative research included a total of six men participants. Each participant was interviewed twice face-to-face at his job setting. Three of the second interviews were completed via telephone due to unexpected scheduling conflicts for certain participants. All six participants were white, with an average of 16.8 years as a professional school counselor. Three of the participants were counselors in a rural setting and three worked in an urban setting. Table one provides a visual representation of demographic information. Following the table, descriptions of each of the six participants provides background information relevant to the primary research question. Finally, a description of the meaning of each individual participant story was presented.

Table 1 Participant Demographic Information

Age	Ethnicity	Years as counselor in elementary setting	School Setting
27	White	3	Urban
42	White	14	Rural
60	White	23	Rural
63	White	23	Rural
61	White	24	Urban
54	White	14	Urban

David

David was twenty-seven years old and had been a counselor in the elementary setting for three years. He worked in the largest school district in the state, which was the 12th largest district in the country. His home school was in an urban setting with a population of over eight hundred students where he was the only school counselor. This school was located off a busy road and in a densely populated area. He was the first participant I interviewed and someone with whom I had a previous relationship. This relationship needs to be acknowledged due to prior conversations about being a man in the elementary setting before development of the study.

Essence of David's Experiences

David's identity formation began to take shape through his early family experiences. He grew up without a father and identified his mother as an alcoholic. These experiences motivated him to help children in similar situations. His early self-identification as a helper led him to enter into the school counseling field. In spite of his idealistic motivations he struggled to find his professional identity. This struggle was the result of his difficulties in finding meaningful relationships, overcoming sexist comments, and unfair expectations to perform stereotypical roles. As a result of these

struggles and assumptions made about him, he was transitioning to a counseling position at another level the following school year after the study was performed.

Dean

Dean was forty-two years old and had been a counselor in the elementary school setting for 14 years. All 14 years of Dean's career had been spent in the same school district and school. His school district was in a rural location of a state with seven schools, two of which were elementary. Dean's school is in a sparsely populated area surrounded by trees and open fields with an enrollment of 575 students. I had no previous relationship with the participant. When I first entered the building I was surprised to find the counseling office located within the main administrative office. I discovered that the counselors within this small district had many more "administrative" jobs than other counselors in larger districts, even more so for Dean, as he was the only counselor at his school. He was friendly and mentioned how excited he was about speaking to me about my research topic, and hoped he could help.

Essence of Dean's Experiences

Much of Dean's identity development came from experiences in his childhood with his mother. Much of the time his father was working and absent for the family's day-to-day activities. With his mother as the main caregiver, much of his identity as a nurturing individual was attributed to her. His awareness of the importance of children having men role models in their lives was heightened after having an emotionally-absent father. These experiences made the education field seem like the "safe route." After spending three years as a middle school teacher, the decision to move into the counseling

setting was in part due to a feeling of wanting to make a larger impact for children in social/emotional areas.

His identity was shaped by three main factors in the elementary setting: stereotypical roles, safety, and other men in the setting. Dean's identity as a "quasi administrator" had been shaped by expectations of duties. He was consistently called upon to restrain out-of-control children or handle hostile parents. In his opinion, these duties were given to him because of his identity as a man; although not typical counselor roles, it afforded him a higher level of respect than many of his female peers, in his opinion. Next, as a man working with small children, it led him to become overly cautious when interacting with them at the school. He always had an unobstructed window in his office when working with children in a one-on-one capacity so there was never a reason for suspicion of inappropriate contact. Finally, having other men in the school setting has contributed to him being comfortable and at ease with his identity. These men have provided Dean with peers who have similar interests, and he has been able to develop a connection with them. The men also made his initial professional transition into the elementary school setting less difficult because these peer interactions helped minimize a perception that his role was outside the norm.

Brian

Brian was a 60 year old man working in an urban school district. This district was made up of 78 elementary schools and more than 165,000 students. Brian's school was one of the smaller elementary schools, with an enrollment of 568 students, in a rural part of the county, where he was the only school counselor. This school was surrounded by open fields and farm land.

Brian had been a successful counselor in the elementary setting for 23 years. He published numerous counseling workbooks and classroom guidance activities. My relationship with him could be characterized as one of mentor/mentee. Although not a close relationship, he was always willing to provide insight on how to succeed as a man in the elementary school setting. This prior relationship helped to create rapport, but also caused me anxiety. There was a heightened sense of making sure he was comfortable with and approved of the study.

Essence of Brian's Experiences

For Brian, his identity development was shaped by childhood difficulties. His father was a workaholic, his mother an alcoholic, and the two divorced early in his childhood. These family struggles, combined with his personal difficulties with Attention Deficient Disorder and Tourette's syndrome, made him the subject of constant bullying at school. These difficulties made finding his identity problematic in the late elementary/early middle school years. Finally, in the eighth grade, his identity began to take shape after forming a relationship with a peer. This identity was one where music and creativity helped foster a sense of confidence. He was able to use his different perspectives and disabilities as a source of creativity.

Ultimately, the field of music was where his career began. Although not financially successful in this setting, the experience helped him realize that he needed to be in a helping field. This realization led him to enter an elementary school counseling career. Entering this field, he quickly realized that being a man meant there were expectations to perform certain roles and duties, one of which was the expectation that he restrain out-of-control children. Although these duties were typically negative, he saw

them as an aspect of his work that allowed his confidence to grow as a man in the elementary school setting. As his confidence grew he realized there was an often an automatic connection formed with boys and their fathers because of their common men identities. This connection led him to create programs supporting the boys' needs. His success in this area was personally rewarding because he remembered his unmet needs as a child to have an adult man figure in his life with whom he could relate.

Phil

Phil was a 61 year old white man. He was the only counselor in his elementary school setting for 23 years and worked in a small district of four schools. This district was located in a suburban setting in close proximity to the largest school district in the state. The district was known for its many national and state awards and school pride; those attributes of his workplace were referenced by him throughout the interview.

The elementary school consisted of 574 students in grades Pre-Kindergarten through first grade, located off a busy street a short distance from a large city. Although I had no previous relationship with Phil, he made me feel comfortable immediately. He was easy to talk with and showed a willingness to be candid with his answers. These answers provided a unique perspective about his unusual career path which began in the university setting, and transitioned to the elementary school environment as a counselor after turning 40 years old.

Essence of Phil's Experiences

Phil's nurturing home environment was where his identity began to take shape. Lessons where his father and mother asked him to make his own decisions and form an opinion on topics helped foster his sense of independence and confidence. These traits

became particularly important as he transitioned from his first career in the university setting into becoming a counselor in an elementary school. As a counselor, his age in combination with his sense of self-confidence and independence, helped make him an effective counselor who was comfortable with his identity among predominately female colleagues.

In addition, his identity was shaped by feeling a need for cautiousness to guard against false accusations of inappropriate physical contact with students. This cautiousness manifested itself in there always being an unobstructed window through which he could be seen when meeting with students, and leaving the doors to his office unlocked. These steps were taken to never give someone an opportunity to wonder about his intentions towards the young children whom he counseled.

Elijah

Elijah was a 55 year old white man, who has been a counselor in the elementary school setting for 24 years. His career began as an elementary school teacher for nine years before he decided to obtain his master's degree in school counseling. The entirety of his school counseling career was spent in the largest school district in one southeastern state. I had a prior relationship with him, although more from a distance. He worked at the same district as I did and was well known in the school system and community. I acknowledge this relationship as I have modeled many of my professional behaviors after him.

The school where he worked part-time at the time of the study had a total of two full-time counselors and was where my career began. Upon entering the interview setting, many personal memories of my early professional experiences and relationships

came to the forefront. This school itself was made up of a very diverse population of 1250 students and was located near a busy road surrounded by neighborhoods and a park. As with David, my prior relationship impacted the interview process. It was helpful because I felt rapport had already been established between us, which enabled the interview to move forward in a seamless fashion. As a hindrance during the interview, the prior relationship created unrealistic expectations. In my mind, I expected him to answer questions in a way that would provide the most complete picture of being a man in a non-traditional setting because of his highly regarded reputation, and when he didn't provide the "perfect" answer, I experienced a sense of disappointment.

Essence of Elijah's Experiences

Elijah's home environment and school setting both played roles in his identity formation. He was exposed to the school environment at an early age growing up in a small town with two parents who were educators. He learned at a young age, from the example of his father, that it was acceptable to be a man in education. This feeling was reinforced as he moved through his own elementary school education. His school was small and he had the opportunity to try different school activities and be involved with various clubs. These experiences helped make his decision as a man to move into the education field not a peculiar one.

He started his career as a fourth grade teacher, but soon realized he wanted to play a larger role in the social/emotional aspects of children's lives. With this in mind, he transitioned into the counseling field. He believed his older age at the time of his transition helped to empower him with a sense of confidence in his identity and ability to be effective in the position. In addition to his age, Elijah shared the importance, as a

beginning counselor, of having a man advisor. This advisor modeled how to effectively work with younger children, and his comfort with his identity as a man in this environment modeled that acceptance for Elijah. He also shared the importance of protecting himself from unwanted accusations of impropriety by always having an unobstructed window in any office where he worked one-on-one with a child.

Earl

Earl is a 54 year old white man who has been a counselor in the elementary school setting for 14 years. He began his career in the corporate setting, but never felt fulfilled in that occupation. This feeling led him to seek a career change at the age of thirty-eight. This career change required him to attend school in the evening while holding a full-time job during the day. After finishing the program, he spent four years working as a school counselor in a northeastern state. He then transferred to his current school district in a southeastern state where he had been working for 10 years.

The district, the second largest in that southeastern state, was located in a large metropolitan city. The district was made up of 103 schools, 58 of which were elementary level. His school had 793 students, 60% of whom were of Asian descent. The school was a high-achieving one with a small free and/or reduced population. For the first five years, he was one of two counselors at the school, but due to a decrease in enrollment, he was the only counselor at the school for five years prior to the study.

Upper class neighborhoods in close proximity to the school were the first thing I noticed as I arrived for the interview. The outside of the school was landscaped with dogwood trees and other colorful bushes. Entering the interior of the school, the counseling suite offered a large amount of space and offices. Although I had no prior

relationship with Earl, he made me feel comfortable by expressing his interest in the research topic.

Essence of Earl's Experiences

For Earl, his identity as a nurturing man and peacemaker developed through his early family experiences. He was part of a large family where a substantial amount of conflict occurred. He seemed to always be the one to calm situations down and mediate disputes. These early experiences proved beneficial when he moved into the counseling setting at an older age.

He spent 18 years in the corporate world before becoming a counselor in the elementary setting. This position felt financially stable, but he felt something was missing. This perception continued until the birth of his daughter and her subsequent entry into public schools. Her attending school allowed him an opportunity to volunteer in that setting. His volunteer work made him realize that he felt fulfilled being in a helping role and his identity was one of a nurturer. After this realization, he went back to school and became an elementary school counselor. One man played an important role while Earl was navigating this transition. This man was his graduate school advisor, who had worked in the military setting counseling families for over 30 years. He became a symbol for Earl of someone comfortable with his role as a nurturer and able to show feeling and emotions with kids. Earl felt as if this advisor gave him permission to be who he was and not feel guilty about it, something that may have not been possible if this training had occurred under a women advisor.

Overview of the Findings

First, I interviewed the participants in their school setting. Following the initial interview, I met with the men for a second interview. Three of the six interviews in the second round were completed via telephone due to unforeseen conflicts. After all of the interviews were completed, I transcribed each. Following the transcriptions of the interviews, I sent copies to the participants for their review. Following these steps, data analysis occurred.

The first step in data analysis in the phenomenological method is horizontalization. During this step, specific statements were ascertained in the transcripts that provided evidence about the experiences of the men counselors' perspectives of their experiences of identity development in a non-traditional setting. To determine these "meaning units," I used printed copies of the transcripts to highlight all the participants' comments relative to the purpose and research questions. A total of 116 statements surfaced. To identify significant statements that matched research questions, I created a document with a summation of the highlighted sections through bulleted comments, and then I clustered them into themes. These themes created both a textual description of what was experienced and a structural description of how it was experienced. These textual and structural descriptions led to an overall essence of the participants' experiences. Following this, was a discussion of the themes and sub themes with participant quotes as support. Next, I created a composite structural and textual description of the themes. Finally, a summary or essence of experiences was presented.

Themes

Based upon two interviews each with six men counselors in the elementary setting four themes surfaced; (a) men mentorships; (b) balancing identity with sex role stereotypes, (c) privileges and; (d) responsibilities/expectations. The following section will discuss the four themes with examples from the participant interviews.

Theme 1: Men Mentorships

Several participants spoke about the importance of having men in their settings that they either trained under or were readily available to them once entering the field. David, Elijah, and Earl all shared stories of how training under a man helped in their identity formation.

Sub-theme 1.1: Men supervisors.

Participants shared stories of how men counselors already in the setting played such an important role in their identity formation. These men helped them to understand what they needed to be aware of as a man in a non-traditional setting and became role models as their identity was shaped.

David:

> I think I learned from you and John quite a bit just in terms of how to be at school, how to carry on professionally in the midst of working in a woman dominated environment and that sort of thing. Sam, he helped certainly, in terms of my development as a counselor he was phenomenal, taught me a lot while I was there, shared an office suite with him, so just everything from helping me figure out, you know in school you learn about the different theories and try to figure out where you land.

Elijah:

> I purposely picked SH and I taught 4th grade here for two years all because TH was the only male counselor. I thought if I'm going to be a male counselor, I want to be interning under another male counselor, who I respect. I think he did, he was older, probably a good ten years older than I am. He was already in a comfortable setting for him. I could see the way he would work with a kid, I could do this. That makes sense for me. You got to know you can touch these kids and because they need it. But at the same time you got to know how to touch these kids, and who to touch and who not to touch. Which I don't think female teachers think about.

Earl:

> I particularly liked when I had advisement at the graduate level, I had a male advisor who had about 30 years of counseling in the VA setting. Yet he was a father too, we connected a lot from that perspective. It was easy to talk about feelings with another man because he was in the profession. I think that was a big part of helping to shape my counselor persona. It was almost like giving me permission to be the person I was. Things might have been different if I had a female advisor. I might have been more guarded with identifying and expressing my feeling and emotions as a man in what is thought of as female profession.

Phil shared the impact of having a man elementary school counselor at a school in close proximity to his school when he first started. This man was highly regarded and someone he could turn to for support.

> I can say Larry. Larry was a very confident, happy man. When I walked into this position he was in the elementary school just down the street and I started talking to him on the phone. We traded kids all the time. Kids would move between here and Sterling Oaks. When I met him it was like okay I can do this, this works. Larry's joy about what he was doing was infectious. Larry's belief was that he can make some impact. Now we all want to make some impact and I have learned that my impact is probably a lot smaller than I wish it was. But you can say some things that help, some things that make sense. He was a good role model for me, absolutely.

Although most of the participants spoke about the impact of men advisors on the development of their identity as a man in a non-traditional setting, Dean shared how he has had to find his "own way:"

> I have known very few male counselors to be honest with you. I really think, now as a teacher I told you about last time yes, but now as a counselor, no I am going to say I found my own way. I haven't had too many influences.

Sub-theme 1.2: Other men in the school building.

Having other men in the school building in addition to men supervisors allowed them the opportunity to build relationships with someone in the setting. These men provided an understanding and support for working as a man in the elementary setting. Dean:

> One thing that has helped is when I came here to the school I am at now there are a lot of men here. It definitely has helped, just because there are men around to talk about men things. That made it easier. I don't think, no one has ever told me

this, now maybe there was. I don't think there was ever a lot of questioning, you know god why did they hire a man for this.

Elijah:

It was later in my life I think that I realized how important, for me personally, having another male or two in the building, just to connect with, say hello to, you know, do some things with.

In contrast to the other men participants, David shared how a lack of relationships formed in the elementary school setting contributed to him moving from the elementary level to middle school.

When I first started working here three years ago I was looking for friends and wanted work buddies and you know didn't care if they were guys or girls. It never happened. There is a hand full of guys at our school and we all just kind of have different interests and they are teachers so they have crazy busy schedules and that sort of thing. Over time, I just realized that there just aren't great friends for me here. There are not people in this setting I share tons of interest with that I can really carry on a conversation with. I can carry a conversation but it's more work to find things to discuss. It is hard to say to women, did you watch the game last night? No I didn't, I was watching the bachelor. You know things like that. I don't watch the bachelor so this conversation is over. That is definitely fair to say. Definitely like wanting, there's a part of me that thinks if I go to middle school or high school I will find more guys there and I'll find more camaraderie or whatever you want to call it among coworkers.

Theme 2: Balancing Identity with Sex Role Stereotypes

After completion of the second interviews with each of the participants, it became apparent that there was a struggle to balance their identities and roles as men counselors in the elementary setting with societal sex role stereotypes. The participants discussed challenges related to restraint with out-of-control boys, questions about what constitutes an appropriate display of touching for a man, and feeling the need to take additional steps to stay protected.

Sub-theme 2.1: Safety.

Several of the participants talked about how their identity as a man in a non-traditional setting caused them to be much more cautious and take precautions to protect themselves against unfounded accusations of inappropriate conduct. These precautions included making sure there was always an open or transparent window into the office where they worked.

Dean talked about the importance of this window and the necessity for it when his office was being remodeled.

> We actually remodeled this building three years ago, it was an older looking building at the time and it has been remodeled. In my old office I had a window in it where people could walk in and look. And, there were blinds in there when I started. I took the blinds out. I like the window, you know where I am leading with this, it gives you that hey nothing is going on in there. That's the number one biggest thing, not that it is a fear, I don't want there to be any misunderstanding about that. You do need privacy and so that was always, I do

remember thinking that when I started. God, you know how I do that exactly. So, I just naturally walked into an area here at this job that just had a natural window into the office, and I asked when this office was remodeled and I shifted, I asked hey can they put a window in there too and they did.

Earl also mentioned the window as being vital, but was also specific of how this was a safety problem related to being a man.

Definitely the safety thing, the first thing I realized when I went into my first job, not my internship but my first job, was that I didn't have a window in my door. And I said I will not do this job if you don't put a window on that door. I can't do my job if I don't have the degree of safety there.

Phil added some items in addition to an open window for a man working as a counselor in an elementary setting.

My office doors are never locked and that's something I say to people if they ever wonder. Anyone can walk into my office at any time, there is never anything hidden in here.

Sub-theme 2.2: Appropriate touching/fear of sexual abuse accusations.

Participants shared how as a man working with small children their identity was shaped by having to learn the proper way to touch children and fear of the consequences of one sexual abuse accusation. Both David and Elijah talked about learning the appropriate way to approach children.

David:

I had the question, how do the kids want to approach me physically. In other words I am not going to just run up to a kid at random and just hug them. That

would be just weird. What I learned to do in the beginning is return hugs. I am still in that same frame of mind after 23 years. If a kid comes to hug me I always hug them and say thank you for my hug. I appreciate that it made my day. I don't just walk over, I don't initiate.

Elijah:

Obviously you don't put yourself in a one on one situation, yes it's okay to touch them and hug them, but make sure you're doing it from the side. You got to know you can touch these kids and because they need it. But, at the same time, you got to know how to touch these kids, and who to touch and who not to touch. Which I don't think female teachers think about.

Both Elijah and Phil spoke about feeling concerns of the impact a sexual abuse allegation can have.

Elijah:

Don't put yourself in a position where there can be questions about how you touched a child. Or what you said to a child. But one accusation about that you may have sexually touched or harassed a child falsely or wrongly, your career is over.

Phil:

I don't ever want to be completely private with kids because I don't want anybody to say oh, he's a man and he could or has the opportunity to take advantage of and I mean, sexual advantage.

Theme 3: Privileges

Although many of the roles men are expected to perform in a non-traditional setting made identity formation problematic, there were themes that emerged that made being a man in this setting advantageous when compared to their female colleagues. Several men commented on having an unearned level of respect based on their gender identity both within their training program and when they entered the work setting. Next, men discussed how their identity as a man made it easier to form relationships and connections with boys and their fathers. Lastly, as a majority of the participants were older entering the elementary setting, they felt age garnered respect from faculty and parents.

Sub-theme 3.1: Respect given as a man.

Several of the men spoke of being granted a level of respect and authority based solely on their identity. This level of respect allowed them opportunities not given to their female counterparts, related to roles and responsibilities in the setting.

Brian:

> I had a friend who said you really should go into elementary; you'll get hired, being male like that. Advisors and everybody was saying go into elementary and you will be hired.

Elijah:

> I was well received, possibly even maybe treated like I was more knowledgeable than I really was because it was unusual. I really admit, I wasn't worried about getting a job partly because there were…the idea of having a man in elementary was really something that people wanted. So I knew there would be opportunities

whereas my equally, if not better skilled classmates might not have gotten a job as early because maybe they didn't have the opportunities I did as a man in the elementary setting. There were more opportunities because of that.

Dean:

The way I am set up here I have more of a heavy hand than the average counselor would be. I think part of that is being a man. I have had teachers come in before, hey just can you talk to him, they will come pick me over the principal sometimes and sometimes it is just because it is a man. I do a lot of, I am almost a quasi-administrator here.

Subtheme 3.2: Connection with boys and fathers.

A majority of the participants discussed feeling there was an automatic connection with boys in the school and their dads. They felt the boys were drawn to them, and it made forming relationships with some of the most difficult children easier.

David:

You're going to be great there, they need a man there; they need a man because so many of them don't have a father. It was just, and honestly any time, with any position it's always like, oh you're lucky you're a guy because they need a man there. The thought is that they need more male counselors or more men in schools in general. Oh you are a guy; you know the kids need a guy that will be great. That feels nice to hear because they understand the importance of a male role in a student's life, a kid's life. One teacher who had been a teacher for years commented it's so nice to have a male counselor, I feel like you are so effective with my boys. People always comment that you are good with the boys.

Dean:

They can relate to you. You talk to them more about football or something, as long as you…how you're going about helping them or being a role model for them, almost like a mentoring relationship to some degree. The only way I would see if helpful as far as being a good role model and being a good influence on the kids, especially boys.

Phil:

Walking around I got a constant comment that we have some boys in this room that need a man's help. They don't have a dad; they don't have a father figure. Oh this will be great. This kid's dad's left and you'd be a real good person for him to talk to because he's mad about his father leaving, that kind of thing

Elijah:

If you looked at my list of kids that are drawn to me I would tell you it is more male than female. But look at the environment these kids are in, they are in almost a totally female environment. They are boys, and they are drawn to us guys and that is why they need more guys. I like the fact they are drawn, it gives me an opportunity to reach them in a way that I wouldn't otherwise if I wasn't unique or wasn't like them in some way. That again just says we need to have a ton more male in elementary so we aren't looked as you know, I don't want to say different. Just a way that is normal.

Brian:

I think sometimes it helped with me specifically with calling dads. Because a lot of times a teacher would have a concern and I would talk with the kid and I would

> feel that I really need to talk to the parent about it. When it involved a boy I would try to call and say, I need to speak with Sam's father. I would say I need to tell you dad to dad. Because it I was this kid's dad, I would want to at least know about it. I think it sets up a nice working thing, sometimes when dad wants to come home and deal with the problem; it gets dealt with a little easier.

Sub-theme 3.3: Age.

Age, a subtheme of privileges, seemed to create a level of unfounded respect for the men counselors. Three of the participants spoke about how starting in the elementary counseling setting at an older age gave them a certain level of respect and contributed to their success in the field. Phil, Elijah, and Earl spoke of how coming in to the setting in their late 30s instead of early 20s helped.

Earl:

> I started school counseling when I was 38, so I was pretty well into my career and it wasn't like I was 22 and people were saying well why don't you do something else? I had done those other things.

Elijah:

> I taught for 9 years in the elementary setting – 4th and 5th grades. I definitely think the first 9 years helped me. You would be surprised how that just goes away. Part of that is age; I am not 25 or 30 anymore. There is respect with age too. So I am sure if it is necessarily being a man, or that I am an older man. That makes people be more respectful sometimes.

Additionally, Phil spoke about the positive impact of age in his identity development, and added how his appearance added to his credibility.

> Yea, I started as a school counselor at the age of 36. I had already had 10 years of professional life. I don't know if it was older or whether I had experience I could draw from. Which might mean older? I didn't feel like I was walking in as a 22 year old recent graduate. Which helped a lot. I will say at that age I also had some grey hair. And this is going to sound odd. I thought that it gave me a little creditability with younger parents. The young parents would look at me and say he is old enough to know something.

Earl also spoke about how age helped in formation of his identity in the setting. He discussed his preparation and the impact of his parent role.

> Being that I was 37, I was already married and had worked for 14 years and had a child. I think people were envious of the fact that I could make a bold career change like that because I was making fairly good salary in my position and at the cusp of moving up, it wasn't what I wanted. But again, wasn't anything that I considered until I was a parent. I would say being a parent shaped my career decision more than anything. And I don't know had I taken this job as a 26 year old right out of grad school, right out of undergrad, would I be the same kind of counselor and would I even still be in the field today. But I think being gray and old and stuff…people view me a little bit differently. Had gotten to grad school right out of under grad before being married or being a parent, would I be the same counselor I am. It is certainly hypothetical but I just feel like being a father

> prepared me well for this. Probably just the experience of age comes not so much confidence but comfort level with who you are.

Earl:

> I do feel the success I feel being a parent, the confidence it gives me I can do something well. It sort of translates to work. I realize, when you are younger you are so all consumed by your career, when you get older you experience more stability in your life, so the degree of importance you place on it, while it is important it is something I can let go of. It doesn't consume my attention. I suppose because I guess I do think that is part of why parents accepted me because they knew I was a parent and I was older.

In contrast to the other participants, David entered the elementary school setting as his first career at a young age. He spoke about the difficulties with finding meaningful relationships, and as a result struggling to feel comfortable as a man in the setting.

> You feel like you can't really just be a guy and talk about things you want to talk about, you got to let them talk and let them say what they want to say and then by the time that's over the conversation. Then you have to go on to the next class or whatever it is. Really I just kind of listen and keep a low profile and go on home and live life sort of thing. When I first started working here 3 years ago I was looking for friends and wanted work buddies and you know didn't care if they were guys or girls. You know it never happened. There is a hand full of guys at our school and we all just kind of have different interests and they are teachers so they have crazy busy schedules and that sort of thing. Over time I just realized that there just aren't great friends for me here. People I share tons of interest with

that I can really carry on a conversation with, I can carry a conversation but it's more of work.

Because of these difficulties, David decided to move to the middle-school setting because of a constant struggle to find his identity and form any meaningful relationships.

David:

That is definitely fair to say. Definitely like wanting, there's a part of me that thinks if I go to middle school or high school I will find more guys there and I'll find more camaraderie or whatever you want to call it among co-workers.

Sub-theme 3.4: Self Confidence

A level of spoken and unspoken confidence was evident throughout the stories of the men counselors. Participants discussed not being concerned about what others thought, demonstrating confidence in their abilities.

Phil:

I never viewed myself as one who was not on the beaten path; I never viewed myself as being on a non-traditional path. I just viewed myself as a person who was doing what I enjoyed. It didn't matter to me. I was doing what I wanted to do. I'm an army of one.

Earl:

I do feel the success I feel being a parent, the confidence it gives me I can do something well. It sort of translates to work.

Dean spoke of his sense of confidence in his identity through an example of his office layout.

> We did it and got around to my school, about nine counselors in the county and leading them on a tour of the school and we got to my office. And the first thing get to my office, somebody laughed and said I like the pictures, the funny thing was I did not have anything on the wall. And they kind of laughed, they know me so well. It looks like a man's office. That was the comment though. That is just the way it is. I am not a fake person; I am not going to pretend to be somebody I am not. I am going to help them in the way I help them.

Theme 4: Responsibilities/Expectations

As a man working in the elementary setting many of the participants spoke about roles and responsibilities they were expected to perform that were not in the job description of a professional school counselor. These roles included being called into situations with dangerous students and being asked to move large and/or heavy items.

Subtheme 4.1: Restraint with boys.

Several of the participants shared experiences where they were called into situations to restrain or control a child, typically a boy, who had become a danger to himself or others. This role expectation made it difficult to complete all job requirements and moved them from a nurturing role to one of disciplinarian.

Elijah shared how he was expected to be the person available for handling an out-of-control child solely because he is a man.

> If I was the only male in the building and there was restraint needed or an upset parent, there was an expectation of me to come and deal with that issue not because I was the counselor but because I was another male. It sort of was, I don't know if we mentioned it last time, my wife calls it press the man button. With the self-contained EBD unit at the school, almost every day I was in restraining a child who was a self-contained EBD kid. And that I don't believe that would have been the case had I been a female counselor. I felt you were taken advantage of because I really wasn't able to do the things I wanted to because I was literally out every day to pull this child out of a vehicle with the parent watching, usually helping. Basically wrestling the child into the building probably 3 to 5 days a week. And in that role it was like just call Elijah.

David shared how many times he was called into a situation with expectations he would solve the problem because of his identity as a man.

> You know hands off don't touch a kid, don't do anything, basically they called me in, but all I could do is sit in the room just like any women would be able to do. It was, let's see what David can do because he is a guy. It felt like a lose/lose situation. There is nothing I can do to make the kid to stop, but I am being called into the situation to get the kid to stop. So there is nothing, no way I could win in that situation. That student, partially because of his emotion and partly because of his disability needed time to just decompress and release.

David also shared expectations of how being a man meant dealing with the most challenging children.

> Usually a boy gets violent and freaks out. The first thing they think of is call David. We need to get a male down there. And when those kids would freak out, they would freak out and stop everything. So they would always call me to come running down. That got to be a concern. I think it was the bigger physical, you know he'll listen to a man. there was…several…self-contained EBD classes and those kids would frequently go crazy. I mean throwing chairs, freaking out, cursing, anything like that. And it was always, "Go get David." If you're male, you're going to be the one called down to go down there.

Subtheme 4.2: Physical labor.

Some of the participants spoke about being asked to move heavy, larger items based on their identity. Typically these requests didn't seem to be problematic as they considered them part of their role in the setting.

Phil:

> I guess I get asked to carry things, heavier things the smaller women can't carry. I guess if I was a 6 foot tall female maybe they would ask her to do it because she is big and strong. But they ask me because I'll do it.

Earl:

If something is a physical task they will come to me as the man, they need a heavy box lifted or go check out the men's bathroom. It has never been an issue for me. We are in the helping profession so I am just happy someone wants my help.

Composite Descriptions of Participant Experiences

The themes that emerged during data analysis formed composite structural and textual descriptions, as well as a composite essence, as characterized by Moustakas (1994) methodological framework. To provide a thorough description of participant experiences, these descriptions follow below. The Structural Descriptions examined factors contributing to the decision to enter a non-traditional setting. The Textual Description examined experiences once in the setting.

Composite Structural Descriptions: How was it Experienced?

The purpose of the first set of interviews was to gain an understanding of how contributing factors within participants lives contributed to their perspectives of identity development. These contributing factors examined included; (a) home setting; (b) school setting; and (c) training program. For each participant, both their home environment and important men mentors played roles in their identity development, leading to them becoming a counselor in the elementary school setting. The home environment provided experiences that allowed them to begin to understand their identity as a man. Many times, these childhood experiences were negative or challenging, and included absentee fathers and family members addicted to drugs and alcohol. These difficult experiences allowed participants to develop skills as nurturers, problems solvers, and peacemakers to cope with their difficult situations. The development of these traits helped shape their

identity and eventually led them to a setting where a difference could be made with children experiencing similar problems.

Men advisors were a second context for identity development. Each participant had some type of men role model or influence before entering the elementary school counseling setting. For most of the participants, this meant a man elementary school counselor advisor during their masters' program, practicum, or internship. These relationships created a model for how to be effective as a man counselor in the elementary setting. This was done by giving the participants permission to be comfortable showing emotion and having a nurturing identity. In addition to having men advisors, participants shared how having other men in the setting gave them someone to connect with who shared similar interests.

Composite Textual Description: What was Experienced?

Structurally, the first interviews with participants showed how their experiences in their families growing up, and then later men advisors, shaped their identities to allow school counseling to be a viable option. The second interviews with each participant attempted to understand, through their stories in the setting, of their perspectives of identity development. The stories revealed their identity development was impacted by two main factors. First, overcoming and understanding gender stereotypes of expected roles in the setting. The men counselors who were able to show comfort with these expectations and roles, such as taking steps to protect themselves, spoke about being much more comfortable with their identity as a man in a non-traditional setting. Much of this comfort seemed to be from the level of confidence participants exuded. This confidence seemed to develop as a result of the experiences five of the six participants

had in previous careers before entering the school counseling setting. These previous careers led to participants entering the counseling profession at older ages. These older ages gave them a sense of understanding about who they were as men and not a need to focus on the opinions others may have of them.

A majority of the men spoke about being unsure if they would have done as effective of a job as a school counselor if they had entered the setting at a young age. Typically these feelings were related to the stereotypes they had to overcome in the setting. These feelings support Gottfredson's (1981) Theory of Occupational Development that gender type of the career is the most important factor when selecting a career. These participants were only able to overcome the gender stereotypes with entering a non-traditional career after they had aged and were comfortable with their identity. As the participants aged and entered the non-traditional setting, many mentioned not viewing themselves as a minority, they were an "army of one," and that being a man in this setting was not to be viewed as a "big deal." This also supports Gottfredson's (1981) Theory of Occupational Development in that these men have less constricted ideas of their gender and gender related characteristics of a non-traditional occupation. These less constricted ideas of gender make them more open to choosing a non-traditional career, in contrast to those men with more strongly-held, traditional, gender-related beliefs (Gottfredson, 1981).

Composite Essence: A Summary of the Experience

As a man counselor in the elementary setting the perspective of identity development was complex for me to study. For each participant, their family environment was where their identity was initially influenced, thus supporting both

Social Relations Theory Tolson, (1977) and Gottfredson's (1981) Theory of Vocational Development. These theories stated that a child's identity development is initially influenced by their home setting, and other factors play a larger role as the child ages (Gottfredson, 1981; Tolson, 1977). For many participants, this early home environment consisted of absent or emotionally unavailable fathers. These experiences helped create a place where the helper identity could flourish.

Although participants talked about their identities as nurturers and helpers, five of the six men entered the school counseling profession as second careers. Being older when entering the school counseling setting allowed them to be more comfortable and understanding of their identity. Many participants discussed how they were unsure if they could have been successful in the role as an elementary counselor at a younger age. This uncertainty was attributed to not being sure of the ability to navigate and overcome gender role expectations and stereotypes. Being an older man, for them, meant they were self-assured and not focused on the gender type of the occupation. In fact, one participant who had entered the setting at a young age spoke about difficulties in navigating the gender stereotypes and was planning to leave the elementary setting at the end of the year.

The examples provided an essence for being a man counselor in the elementary setting. This essence was one where family upbringing and experiences played a significant role in their decision to enter the elementary school counseling setting, although at an older age. Once working in the school setting, their older age and identity as a man gave participants a certain level of confidence and comfort. This confidence and comfort was needed to overcome gender stereotypes and responsibilities bestowed

upon them as a man in a non-traditional work setting. These examples include taking steps to stay safe, such as always meeting children in front of an open window and being careful with how they touched children to protect against sexual abuse accusations. Finally, making sure they were performing the roles of a counselor, not that of an administrator. Many times men counselors were asked to restrain out of control children and take on a disciplinarian role, which is in conflict with their nurturing/caring giving role as a counselor. These roles and responsibilities were given to the men as a sign of respect based their identity. Overall, this essence seemed to support Gottfredson's (1981) Theory of Vocational Development, stating in general men struggle in a non-traditional career if the gender type of the occupation is significant to them and they hold traditional gender viewpoints.

Chapter Summary

The purpose of this study was to investigate how men counselors in the elementary school setting perceived their identity development through their experiences in a non-traditional setting. The study was conducted to understand the contributions of variables such as family environment, school setting, and training programs when combined with everyday experiences in the non-traditional setting. The goal was an understanding or essence of men's perceptions of identity development as a counselor in the elementary setting.

Through data analysis, four themes and subsequent sub-themes were identified. The first theme revealed that men mentors that were readily available once in the school setting helped them understand the expectations for a man in a non-traditional setting. Second, the men shared stories of balancing their identity with sex role stereotypes in the

setting. A majority of the men felt the need to take steps to protect themselves from sexual abuse accusations. This included not meeting with a student behind a locked door or closed window. Additionally, it meant they felt the need to be careful with how they touched children in public locations. Next, a majority of the participants had certain expectations and roles they were expected to perform in the setting. These roles typically involved restraining uncontrollable children, making the role of a counselor difficult to effectively maintain. Many times these roles were given to the men counselors based solely on their identity, and they were granted a level of respect that may have not been earned. To conclude, there was a composite structural description of how being a man in a non-traditional setting was experienced, as well as a composite textual description of what was experienced. Finally, a composite essence was provided of men counselors' perspectives of their identity development based on their experiences in a non-traditional work setting.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Each of the preceding chapters provided an outline of the study. Chapter One gave a general overview of the study. Chapter Two reviewed literature relevant to the primary research question: What are the perspectives of men counselors in the elementary setting on identity development through experiences in a non-traditional setting? Chapter Three focused on the method and theoretical framework that guided data collection and analysis. Chapter Four presented the findings and subsequent themes. This chapter provides a general overview of the study, a discussion of findings and relevance to the literature reviewed in Chapter Two, implications and recommendations for both practicing school counselors and training programs, future research recommendations, and limitations for the study.

Overview of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the experiences of being a man in a non-traditional work setting. Using the qualitative approach of phenomenology, guided by a constructivist framework, two semi-structured interviews allowed the participants the opportunity to share their experiences. The primary research question that guided the study was: What are the perspectives of men counselors' in the elementary setting in identity development through experiences in a non-traditional setting? As previously stated in Chapter One, three subsidiary research questions supported the primary research question.

RQ1: What is the impact of men mentorships on men counselors in the elementary setting?

RQ2: How do men counselors in the elementary setting describe the settings impact on the development of their gender identities?

RQ3: What are men counselors' in the elementary setting experiences in negotiating gendered expectations in professional settings?

Six participants, who were all professional school counselors in the elementary setting for a minimum of two years, completed two in-depth semi-structured interviews for the purpose of this study. Four themes and nine related subthemes emerged as described in Chapter Four.

The first theme that emerged from the stories of these counselors was the role men mentors played in their identity formation. A second theme was the struggle to balance their identity with sex role stereotypes in the school-counseling field. Privileges were a third theme that surfaced. Finally, men counselors spoke about the responsibilities and expectations given as men in the non-traditional setting.

Table 5.1 Themes Identified Data Analysis

Theme/Sub Theme	Description
Theme 1	Men Mentors
Sub-Theme 1.1	Men Supervisors
Sub-Theme 1.2	Other Men in the Building
Theme 2	Balancing Identity with Sex Role Stereotypes
Sub-Theme 2.1	Safety
Sub-Theme 2.2	Appropriate touching/ Fear of Sexual Abuse Accusations
Theme 3	Privileges
Sub-Theme 3.1	Respect Given as a Man
Sub-Theme 3.2	Connection with Boys and Fathers
Sub-Theme 3.3	Self Confidence
Theme 4	Responsibilities/Expectations
Sub-Theme 4.1	Restraint
Sub-Theme 4.2	Physical Labor

Discussion of Findings

Four themes were identified across participant experiences regarding men counselors in the elementary setting perspectives of their identity development in a non-traditional setting. In some cases the findings from this study supported the literature identified in Chapter Two, while in other areas it raised additional questions not addressed by the literature. In order to provide a framework for this section, the research questions presented earlier outlined this discussion.

What is the Impact of Men Mentorships on Men Counselors in the Elementary Setting?

Once the men entered the non-traditional setting the majority of participants discussed the importance of other men in their identity development. These men were either supervisors or other men in the building. First, a majority of the men shared how men elementary counselors within their district played important roles. The participants

discussed the importance of having these men to be able to talk to, and ask questions when needed. These men served as mentors, as they had experience in the setting, and were able to provide support when needed. Also, several men discussed the importance of having other men at the school they worked at. The participants were able to form relationships with these men and it gave them someone to talk with about topics important to them.

Herbert and Stroud (2000) through studies with men in early childhood education confirmed the importance of men role models on their identity development. Each study found it important to have other men in their program and as faculty (Herbert, 2000; Stroud, 2000). It became even more important to have a man role model once entering the work setting (Herbert, 2000; Stroud, 2000). The beginning men educators used the men in the field as a support system and would model behaviors after them (Herbert, 2000; Stroud, 2000).

How Do Men Counselors Describe the Settings Impact on the Development of Their Gender Identities?

Although there were gender stereotypes men had to overcome, there were also privileges given based on their gender identity. These privileges were in the form of respect, connection with boys and fathers, age, and self-confidence. Upon entering the setting the men were given respect by teachers and parents based on expectations of their effectiveness. This respect was conveyed through teachers and administrators coming to them to solve problems with boys and ultimately become a role model for them. The feeling was as a man they would have an easier time forming relationships and connections with boys than a women colleague.

Age.

Next, a majority of the participants came into the setting at an older age. This privilege allowed them opportunities to bring previous job and life experiences into the setting that younger men right out of graduate school might not be afforded. Participants shared how their older age contributed to their higher level of self-confidence, thus giving them the ability to overcome sex role stereotypes faced in the setting.

One study with men entering the nursing field as a second career seems to dispute my findings on the importance of age and self-confidence (Gransee, 2005). The men shared how as an older man entering a non-traditional setting they had to overcome gender stereotypes (Gransee, 2005). Sexual orientation questions were their biggest concern (Gransee, 2005). The men noted how they lacked self-confidence because of nursing being a traditionally women's role, and if you were a man in that setting you must be gay (Gransee, 2005).

What Are Men Counselors' Experiences in the Elementary Setting on Negotiating Gendered Expectations?

The third research question explored how men perceived their identity development in the elementary school setting. Their stories showed the importance of having self-confidence entering that setting. This confidence allowed them to contend with anxiety about sexual abuse accusations, while also providing support for Gottfredson's Theory of Occupation Development (Gottfredson, 1981).

Chusmir's Non-Traditional Career Model explored factors that contributed to a man's identity development in the non-traditional work setting (Chusmir, 1990). This model proposed that personal influences such as a man's background, attitudes, values,

and intrinsic needs combine to form the foundation for a non-traditional career choice. In addition, Chusmir proposed that a strong sense of self-efficacy would allow men to persevere and overcome difficulties faced when entering a non-traditional setting (Chusmir, 1990). Several prior studies validated this model. In studies with men in elementary education, a connection was revealed between belief in one's self and that person's level of comfort in a non-traditional work setting (Carter 2008; Sargent, 2004; & Wiley, 2011). This sense of self-efficacy allowed participants in each of the three studies to overcome masculinity stereotypes they faced and confront gender-related questions. Participants in my study shared similar observations. For example, they noted their older age allowed them to have a better sense of having confidence in their identity, while also not being as concerned with the perceptions of others about the appropriateness of their career choice. Job satisfaction was a sufficient reason for them to do it.

Hegemonic Masculinity.

Much of the literature indicates that men entering a non-traditional setting have to overcome the paradox of hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 2008; Sargent, 2001; 2005). Hegemonic masculinity provides a framework of expectations for men's behaviors based on societal expectations (Connell, 2008; W. Martino, 2008). These societal beliefs view "appropriate" masculinity in men as requiring someone to be aggressive, competitive, rational, and strong (Connell, 2008; W. Martino, 2008). In contrast, a man who is helpful, caring, tender, emotional, and passive is exhibiting traits typically associated with femininity (Gorski, 1998; Francis & Skeleton, 2001). When a man enters a non-traditional setting with younger children, he is confronted with the expectations of being a caregiver and nurturer (R. Connell, 2008). These job responsibilities are in direct

opposition to societal messages that these traits are not those real men exhibit. In general, participant stories challenged hegemonic masculinity. The participants discussed not viewing themselves as the minority gender and this label "never crossed their mind." They did not feel pressured to act in certain ways because their previous experiences, age, and self-confidence helped them overcome societal expectations about masculinity. Similar to the concept of hegemonic masculinity, Foster and Newman (2001) developed a term "identity bruising" for the expectations to perform stereotypical roles in the school setting, such as being a disciplinarian and restraining children with behavioral disorders. This term represented the feeling of unpreparedness of men entering a non-traditional setting (Foster & Newman, 2001). Furthermore, to counteract this uneasiness and fit in, men would often overemphasize masculine aspects of the position (Foster & Newman, 2001). Just as with hegemonic masculinity, participant stories failed to support these ideas. However, the older ages of the participants may have instilled a sense of confidence in their identity development that would not have been possible at a younger age.

Sexual Abuse accusations.

Although participant stories displayed confidence about their minority status in the professional setting, one area influenced by societal norms and corroborated through literature was trepidation about sexual abuse accusations. Participants shared stories of steps taken to protect themselves from accusations of sexual impropriety. These steps included ensuring there was always a window where they could easily be viewed when working one-on-one with a child, and intentionality about touching them in an "acceptable" way. Literature on early childhood men educators and sexual abuse

supports findings from this study. Cooney, Bittner, & Goose (2008) found men elementary school teachers were concerned about showing affection or having any physical contact with small children because of the perceived perception it created. Sargent (2004) expanded on these conclusions and found that when men become concerned about one wrongful accusation of abuse ruining their careers they have a difficult time fulfilling the necessary job requirements as an elementary school counselor working with small children (Sargent, 2004).

Gottfredson's Theory of Vocational Development contends that gender (masculinity/femininity) is the last factor to be sacrificed in a person's career choice was supported through participant stories in this study (Gottfredson, 1981). Five of the six participants chose school counseling as a second career at an older age, while simultaneously questioning the ability to have been effective in the same position at a younger age. This concern was attributed to an uncertainty about navigating gender roles and stereotypes, which at a younger age led them to choose more traditional careers. As the men became older, they spoke about having less constricted ideas about their own gender and gender-related characteristics of non-traditional occupations. These conclusions support previous research by Dobson and Borders (2005). They conducted research with 100 men in mechanical engineering, a traditional job setting, and 100 men in elementary school counseling, a non-traditional setting (Dobson & Borders, 2005). Men elementary school counselors were not as concerned with being a numerical minority or needing to fulfill certain gender expectations (Dobson & Borders, 2005). In contrast, the men in mechanical engineering held more traditional gender attitudes and beliefs and were not willing to sacrifice sex role stereotypes (Dobson & Borders, 2005).

The previous section of this chapter delineated how men describe their perspectives of gender identity development in the non-traditional work setting. Both Chusmir's (1990) Non-Traditional Career Model and Gottfredson's (1980) Theory of Vocational Development provided context for the perspectives of how men viewed their identity development. Participant stories confirmed that personal influences, such as their family background and level of self-efficacy, impacted their ability to be comfortable and effective in the non-traditional work setting. Participants showed a lack of concern over constricted ideas regarding their gender and gender-related characteristics of non-traditional occupations. In short, they felt secure and unfazed by the societal need to fulfill certain gender expectations through selection of their work setting.

Implications and Recommendations

As this study progressed, I took time to not only hear what participants said, but also to reflect on the meaning of their experiences. The goal was to use these experiences to benefit men already in the field and those contemplating entering. These meanings I organized into implications and recommendations for counselor educator programs, and the school-counseling field.

Implications and Recommendations for Counselor Education Programs

Counselor Education programs need to examine recruitment practices and strategies to address the sex disparities that exist among graduate students in elementary school counseling programs. Since most of the men in this study entered the school counseling profession at an older age, they were able to reflect on the reasons for not entering the setting at a younger age. Several commented they were unaware of non-traditional career

options or felt this decision would not be accepted by society because of gender role expectations. This finding supports the hegemonic masculinity research conclusion that society considers certain careers to be more appropriate for men, and working in one such as school counseling, that involves nurturing, would indicate they are "gay" or "effeminate." Discussions about gender roles and working in non-traditional work settings needs to be a topic broached at an earlier age so that children may consider these settings as career options. Such discussions could encourage younger men to enter non-traditional professions, instead of effectively selecting an older cohort for entry into those settings.

Program curriculum.

Based on the findings of the study, counselor educator programs should review and address shortcomings in program curriculum as it relates to gender. Several participants shared the observation that their programs only briefly addressed the topic of being a man in a non-traditional setting. Their stories indicated men would face both challenges and unearned privileges as they enter the setting. The challenges include being expected to perform stereotypical "masculine" duties such as restraining out-of-control children. Other challenges include feeling a need to protect themselves from sexual abuse accusations. These challenges are areas that can be addressed in the training programs through information on advocating for their role as a professional school counselor.

Privileges.

In contrast, men entering the non-traditional setting will garner certain privileges. Participant stories provided examples of being treated as more of an expert than was warranted or earned. Men discussed how they were given certain roles or asked for

advice about certain students because of their identity as a man. Men entering this setting need to be aware of how much power they will be given and to make sure they are taking this responsibility seriously. If not understood or taken seriously this "expert" status may lead to sexism, an example of a social justice issue. Knowing these examples of the challenges and privileges men elementary school counselors are facing will allow programs to be more proactive about topics addressed in their training program. Part of being proactive may include having more of a social justice emphasis interwoven throughout the program for all students.

Men mentors.

One theme throughout participant stories was the importance of the participants having had men advisors during their development as a professional school counselor. These advisors provided men the opportunity to discuss their personal and emotional concerns and process their educational and professional experiences with someone who was better equipped to understand their viewpoints. A recommendation to training programs would be to give men the opportunity, when available, to train under other men professional school counselors during the practicum and internship experience.

Implications and Recommendations for K-12 School Counseling Programs

Comprehensive school counseling departments may need to consider the impact of gender on student achievement, career, and college access/graduation as they offer programming and services to youth. Specifically, there needs to be an opportunity for children at a younger age to explore different careers. As stated earlier, a majority of the participants discussed how they were not aware of non-traditional careers growing up and were not exposed to them, leading them to begin in a traditional field. It also supports

Gottfredson's Theory of Vocational Development that many times children by the age of 10 are eliminating non-traditional careers, as they are not fitting with their identity (Gottfredson, 1981).

Career lessons.

Starting at the elementary level there needs to be comprehensive career lessons. During these lessons students should have the opportunity to take various career assessments, such as the Myers Briggs, or other interest inventories. These career assessments provide an opportunity for discussions around gender exploration and non-traditional career options. It may allow children, especially boys, to more easily understand at an early age that their strengths may be in nurturing fields such as nursing, education, or school counseling. In addition, there needs to be an intentionality to include examples of both men and women working in non-traditional work settings when planning career day activities in schools.

Role models to boys.

Next, it became apparent through participant stories that men counselors felt as if their identity as a man allowed them an easier time forming connections and relationships with boys and their fathers. There is a continued push for more men to be involved with younger children to serve as role models and mentors. A study such as this with stories and experiences of men in the setting can be beneficial. These stories may highlight characteristics of men who will be effective in a non-traditional setting, and in turn provide tips and recommendations for keeping them in the field. One of these tips being the importance of schools working to protect the roles of the counselor. This means being purposeful about allowing men to perform counseling jobs, than ones that would be

considered more administrative. Finally, hearing the stories of men in non-traditional settings may allow for more conversations about gender, gender identity, and gender in the workplace. If these conversations are taking place, men in these roles may hear less of when are you leaving for a "higher level," or do you really think as a man you can handle small children?

Limitations

Although measures were instituted to ensure the dependability and trustworthiness of the findings, limitations were present. First, the researcher background and experiences as a white heterosexual Christian man needs to both acknowledged and considered in research collection and interpretation. Next, lack of diversity in participant demographics warrants discussion. All participants were white men who identified as straight. It would be beneficial to recruit a more diverse population to allow researchers to determine what impact variables such as sexual identity and race, in combination with gender, have on identity formation. Last, all participants interviewed were from the surrounding counties of one large southeastern city. Future studies should attempt to recruit participants from different geographical areas to determine what impact their location has on their experiences.

Future Research

There is a substantial amount of research on the experiences of men teachers in the elementary setting (Edwards, 2013). In contrast, other non-traditional settings for men, such as nursing or elementary school counseling, are lacking in research (Edwards, 2013). Further research needs to continue to investigate perceptions of identity

development through experiences in non-traditional settings. Based on themes discovered through my study this additional research may take on various forms.

First, men from different races and sexual identities need to have the opportunity to share their experiences and explain how their stories may differ from a white man's experience in this setting. In this study, all participants were white and straight, creating a lack of diversity in race, sexual orientation, and ethnicity. This lack of diversity makes it difficult to generalize that all men in the elementary setting have the same experiences, because there are sub-groups that are not represented. For example, there is a small sample of research from the teaching field that indicates that men who self-identify as gay face even more struggles and discrimination than straight men (Carter, 2008; Martino, 2008). This example of an intersection of "isms", where men may face discrimination in the setting not only based on gender, but also ethnicity, sexual orientation, and race, is an area that needs further consideration.

Next, my study was with a group of counselors from one geographical area in one state. There needs to be additional research to determine if findings would be different based on geographical location. For example, are there certain regions of the United States that men feel more comfortable in non-traditional settings?

Finally, a survey could be developed to give to men in non-traditional settings to determine the factors that contribute to a positive identity development, and those factors that hinder development. For example, based on findings from my study it would be helpful to see if other counselors or men in non-traditional settings feel older age and higher level of self efficacy contribute to positive identity development. In contrast, do

factors, such as expectations to perform stereotypical roles based on gender, contribute to a lower level of positive identity development?

Chapter Summary

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of men counselors in the elementary school setting. Specifically, what are their perspectives on gender identity development working in a non-traditional setting? Six practicing professional school counselors participated in the phenomenological study by completing two semi-structured interviews each. Data analysis uncovered four themes and subsequent subthemes. The themes conveyed how men mentors in the setting helped shape their identity in the setting, and how there was both sex role stereotypes to overcome, in addition to privileges to be aware of upon entering the setting.

The participant stories could provide helpful information to improve educational programs for both counselors and elementary school students. Counselor educator programs can be more intentional about preparing men entering the elementary setting for difficulties faced and privileges given based on gender identity. This may mean making sure men are being supported in the setting and allowed an opportunity to process their experiences. The discrepancy between the percentage of men and women in such programs could be a starting point for a discussion of gender in both counselor training and the elementary school setting.

Social Relations Theory, a component of this study, maintained that the school setting is an important area for childhood gender identity development (Tolson, 1977). Research in the present study refuted this idea. Only one participant in the study briefly discussed the impact of the school setting on his gender identity development. With this

in mind, schools need to examine curriculum specific to the topic of gender identity. Children should be provided opportunities to explore and process their gender identity at the different schooling levels. However, as career programming continues to be important in curriculum, there needs to be increased emphasis on a discussion and exploration of non-traditional careers for both boys and girls.

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Appendix A

Interview chart and questions

Interview One: Cross Aligning Major Research Questions and Interview Questions

Research question	Interview questions
How do men counselors in the elementary setting describe the development of their gender identities?	1. Can you tell me the process for how you came into your current job setting? 2. What are the experiences or influences growing up that shaped your identity as a man? 3. What influence do you think your family background had on your career choice? What was the reaction of friends and family members to your decision to become a counselor in the elementary setting?
What are men counselors' in the elementary setting experiences and perceptions with respect to the roles of social institutions in the development of their gender identities?	1. Tell me about any experiences related to gender in the school setting growing up 2. Tell me about your experiences being a man in the school counselor-training program. 3. During your program, what were the expectations of working in an elementary school? Did you have experience in a practicum or internship with small children before your current position? 4. Did the topic of being a man working with younger children ever come up in your program? (yes/no). If so, what happened? Is there anything else you would like to share that we have not already discussed today?

Interview Two: Cross Aligning Major Research Questions and Interview Questions

Major Research Questions	Interview Questions
What are men counselors' in the elementary setting experiences in negotiating gendered expectations in professional settings?	1. Describe a typical day as an counselor in the elementary setting
	2. Think of a time when you have been approached to do a task specifically because you were a man. What happened? What did you think about that?
	3. Has there ever been a time when being a man has been problematic in your work? Tell me about that.
	4. Has there ever been a time when you have been treated differently to your colleagues and peers because you are a man? Walk me through what happened. What was that like for you? 5. Thinking back over your career as a school counselor- are there men who have been influential in your work? If so, would you describe the role they played in your identity formation
	6. How do you describe your negotiations of gender identity in a feminized environment?