

Recruiting and Retaining Male Special Education Teachers

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ABSTRACT

The percentage of male students who complete an undergraduate degree in the field of special education continues to be much lower than that of female graduates. Low status, low salaries, the perception of teaching as women's work, potential complaints of child abuse and sexual harassment, and a lack of male peer groups factor into this low percentage. Male teachers are needed to be positive role models for all children. The need for male teachers as special educators is paramount. The reasons for the gender disparity in special education are discussed based on the current literature, as is the need for possible strategies to encourage more male special educators.

developed teaching methods that take them into account. And most of our elementary and middle schools have a dearth of male teachers. This sends an early and faulty message to our boys—that education and learning are primarily for girls and women (p. 232)

Voltz (1998) stated that a critical issue facing teacher preparation programs is the lack of diverse special education teachers who match the demographics of today's multicultural schools. Male students who will enter college may not consider majoring in education due to their own experiences with the scarcity of male teachers as role models (Huskey, 1998; Klecker & Loadman, 1999; Kunjufu, 1982). Nettles and Perna (1997) reported that only 0.4% of special education teachers in the elementary grades and 2.2% at the secondary level are African American men. The persistent overrepresentation of minority students in special education (Artiles, Aguirre-Muñoz, & Abedi, 1998) is troubling and is compounded by the fact that there are so few diverse male special education teachers (Cook & Boe, 1995). The disproportionate representation of diverse students in special education (Harry, 1992), especially boys (Pollack, 1998), is a problem that may be addressed by increasing the number of male special educators, as female educators "tend to be less tolerant of behaviors that are felt to be typical of males. African-American males are especially likely to suffer the consequences of teachers' intolerance" (Grossman, 1995, p. 229)

Reasons for the lack of male special education teachers include the low status and low salaries of teachers; the per-

DURING THE PAST DECADE AN INCREASING LITERATURE regarding the emotional lives of school-age boys (Pollack, 1998; Silverstein & Rashbaum, 1994) has drawn attention to the unique challenges of growing up male. Furthermore, Grossman (1995) highlighted not only gender disparities in schools but also challenges that students from diverse backgrounds experience in schools dominated by female teachers, who do not share the same background as their male students. Pollack (1998) noted that schools are inhospitable places for boys:

Our schools generally do not have the curricula and teaching methods designed to meet boys' specific needs and interests. . . . They have not addressed boys' unique learning styles and

ception of teaching as women's work; potential complaints of child abuse and sexual harassment; and the lack of male peer groups. These issues aside, the main reason for the need to increase the number of male teachers in special education is that men can be positive role models for *all* students (Sargent, 2001).

MALE TEACHERS AS ROLE MODELS

Many families in today's society are lacking a strong male presence; many children grow up in single-parent households (Mancus, 1992; Wood & Hoag, 1993). Contact with men in schools, particularly elementary schools, is usually limited to interactions with the principal, janitor, or physical education teacher or coach. The primary reason noted in the literature to increase the number of male teachers is the fact that these men can be positive role models for all the students they teach (Basinger, 1999; Buxton, 2000; Coulter & McNay, 1995; Guyton, Saxton & Wesche, 1996; Sargent, 2001). Walling (1998) claimed that "clearly there is a need to recruit men and minorities into teaching, if for no other reason than to provide children and youth with adult models who mirror their race and sex" (p. 1), and a teacher in King's (1998) book stated that "a large number of parents have said to me that their son or daughter had been a problem and a male teacher is what the child needs" (p. 52). In addition to being positive role models, male teachers may demonstrate to boys that they, too, can aspire one day to be a teacher.

The need for male teachers as role models in schools was noted as a parental concern in the literature (Guyton et al., 1996). Male teachers are also needed in our schools to reverse the tide of disproportionate special education referrals of male students (Basinger, 1999; Kunjufu, 1982). Most special education students are boys, and, typically, female educators do not recognize boys' attributes or their unique learning styles. This intolerance by female teachers leads to yet more special education referrals of male elementary students. Perhaps if there were more male teachers in general education settings, there would be fewer referrals of boys to special education (Basinger, 1999; Grossman, 1995).

Schools should strive to become as diverse as their student population. Wood and Hoag (1993) found that "students enjoy the balance a male brings to an elementary faculty. Boys need to know men are interested in academics as well as athletics" (p. 18). This balance in children's lives is an example of the importance of male teachers as role models. The male participants in Coulter and McNay's (1993) study "found kids in that age range . . . really exciting to teach. It is in the kids' interest . . . to have male teachers. . . . If you want a society that is not sexist. . . . the [school] is one of the places where we have to [make] changes" (pp. 401-402). Guyton et al. (1996) highlighted the importance of the male role model:

The male parents are just not around in these communities. I kept thinking that as a male, it could be an advantage for me to be a role model—to give them some sense that there are males out there that can be responsible. Parents told me they wanted their children in my class because I could be a male role model. (p. 647)

Other male teachers reported being "the selected teacher for a certain child because he needs a male teacher" (King, 1998, p. 43). In addition to being a positive male role model, some male teachers are seen as a male parent by both young boys and young girls (Walling, 1998). A teacher in DeCorse and Vogtle's (1997) study stated that "a lot of kids don't have contact with their fathers. I'm filling in like a father figure, so males in elementary are important for that reason. I get called Daddy, and it's okay" (p. 42), and Rodriguez (1997) reported "sixty-five percent think that the fatherly image of men in the field is important because of the lack of good homes, and thirty-five percent think boys can relate to a male teacher" (p. 14).

Huskey (1998) found that 63% of non-education majors at a small midwestern university perceived the gender imbalance in elementary schools as primarily caused by the fact that there were few male teachers to serve as role models for male students. The challenge for teacher educators, therefore, is to explore new ways to recruit and retain male students into their programs (Klecker & Loadman, 1999). Furthermore, school administrators are seeking more male general and special education teachers (Basinger, 1999; Cohen, 2000) because of the "extreme need for males in elementary education due to single-parent homes. Both boys and girls need someone to relate to" (Wood & Hoag, 1993, p. 17). For these reasons, it is important for institutions of higher education and teacher preparation programs to recruit and retain more male preservice teachers.

COLLEGE GENDER DISCREPANCY

The discrepancy between the number of male and female students graduating with bachelor's degrees in the fields of both general and special education is apparent. The percentage of male graduates entering the teaching profession in the fields of special, elementary, middle, and secondary education has increased during the past 10 years. In 1992-1993, the percentages of male students graduating with a bachelor's degree in these fields were 7.8%, 7.8%, 19.4%, and 40.3%, respectively. The most current statistics (1999-2000) reported that 12.4% of students graduating with a bachelor's degree in the field of special education are male (U.S. Department of Education, 2000).

The demographics of college students have changed little over the past 3 decades. Table 1 shows how the enrollment

in 2- and 4-year colleges has changed for White, Black, and Hispanic male and female students during this time. Although there has been an increase in the percentage of non-White men enrolled in college, there remains a large discrepancy between White and non-White college students regardless of gender.

White, full-time teacher education faculty members primarily teach White students who choose to major in education. According to the U.S. Department of Education (2000), the percentages of White female and male full-time teacher educators were 39.8% and 44.4%, respectively, whereas the percentages of non-White female and male faculty were 6.8% and 3.1%, respectively. As Table 2 shows, elementary and secondary teachers have remained predominantly White female teachers over the past 3 decades (Walling, 1998), although the percentages of Black and Hispanic elementary and secondary students continue to increase (see Table 3).

FACTORS DETERRING MEN FROM EDUCATION

A review of the literature has identified factors that contribute to the discrepancies between men and women entering education as a career. Five factors that may individually or collectively influence men's decision not to enter educational careers were identified. The first factor, *low social status*, pertains to how a career as a teacher is regarded as less prestigious than, say, a career as an engineer (Coulter & McNay, 1993; DeCorse & Vogtle, 1997; Kimmel, 2000; Montecinos & Nielsen, 1997; Walling, 1998). Another factor, *low salary*, may dissuade men from teaching, as other professions may be more lucrative (Brookhart & Loadman, 1996; Kimmel, 2000; Wood & Hoag, 1993). A third factor is the perception that teaching is "women's work" (Johnston, McKeown, & McEwen, 1999; King, 1998; Sargent, 2001; Thornton, 1999). This is particularly true at the elementary level. A fourth factor, *potential false accusations*, relates to how male teachers are scrutinized for wanting to work with children (DeCorse & Vogtle, 1997; Guyton et al., 1996; King, 1998; Thornton, 1999). The final factor identified was *few peers* (Acker, 1983; Coulter & McNay, 1993). Schools are predominantly female work sites; therefore, male teachers have few other male colleagues to relate to.

Low Social Status

A common reason cited for the small number of men working in general or special education classrooms is society's perception of teaching as women's work. Traditionally, careers such as architecture, economics, engineering, law, and medicine have been perceived to be high social status careers for men. Greater numbers of women have been entering these male-dominated careers. A career choice in teaching has been

TABLE 1. Percentages of Students Enrolled in College Over Three Decades by Gender and Race/Ethnicity

Race/Ethnicity	Gender	Decade		
		1980	1990	1999
White	Female	41.5	40.6	36.3
	Male	41.5	38.0	34.5
Black	Female	5.5	5.8	7.4
	Male	4.2	4.5	5.5
Hispanic	Female	2.2	2.8	4.9
	Male	2.2	2.6	3.8

(U.S. Department of Education, 2000)

TABLE 2. Percentages of Public School Teachers Over Three Decades by Gender and Race/Ethnicity

	1976	1986	1996
Gender			
Female	67.1	68.8	74.4
Male	32.9	31.2	25.6
Race			
White	90.8	89.6	90.7
Black	8.0	6.9	7.3
Other	1.2	3.4	2.0

(U.S. Department of Education, 2000)

TABLE 3. Percentages of Elementary and Secondary Students by Race/Ethnicity

Year	Race/ethnicity	%
1986	White	70.4
	Black	16.1
	Hispanic	9.9
	Other	3.7
1998	White	62.9
	Black	17.1
	Hispanic	15.0
	Other	5.0

(U.S. Department of Education, 2000)

viewed by society as a very important job; however, teaching does not hold the same social status as the aforementioned careers for men (Walling, 1998). Men are especially discouraged from entering elementary classrooms: "Men are expected to teach high school and grown-up kids because it's important" (King, 1998, p. 95). DeCorse and Vogtle (1997) interviewed male elementary teachers and reported the perceptions that their friends and parents had regarding their decision to become elementary teachers:

I told my friends that I'd be student teaching in first grade. Everyone says, "You've got to be kidding me." It was tough; I took a lot of abuse from friends. . . . My parents always thought I should try something like international business. Being a schoolteacher doesn't rank up there. I know they want me to be happy, so they'd never say anything, but the topic of "my son, the elementary school teacher" probably isn't discussed the way it would be if it were "my son, the international banker." (p. 40)

Other interviews have supported the notion of low social status for male teachers. One male teacher "never had to justify going into teaching but . . . did have to justify the choice of elementary" (Coulter & McNay, 1993, p. 402). Another male teacher shared how people responded to him at parties when they realized he was an *elementary* teacher:

[People] say, "Well, what do you do?" "I teach school." "High school?" "No, kids 10 or 11 years old." "You're kidding; really?" And that's all they say. (p. 402)

Cohen (2000) interviewed a number of male teachers working in public schools. One high school science teacher related why he chose secondary over elementary teaching:

"I relate well to young children," he said. "But there was the assumption that anybody who had serious training in science would teach high school, where they'd have the opportunity to deal with more technical details." (p. 8)

Some positions in schools may be viewed as higher than others by society. School administrators, including those of elementary schools, may be viewed as having more social status than secondary teachers, and secondary teachers are perceived to have more status than elementary and special education teachers (King, 1998). Montecinos and Nielsen (1997) questioned if an undergraduate education degree was just a means to an administrative career for men more than for women. They found that "even before they declared an education major, more men than women aspired to become school administrators" (p. 52). Male preservice teachers ad-

mitted that their gender was a factor in being promoted quickly to administration (Thomton, 2001). DeCorse and Vogtle (1997) found a perception of men in education as being on a fast track to administration, as typified in these quotes:

I wish I had a dollar for every time someone asked me when or if I was going to be principal. Don't they realize how prejudiced that is? To ask that question is to say my job isn't as important or as real as an administrator's. I resent it. (p. 42)

Thirty years later I no longer get that questionable understanding when I say I teach elementary school. What I am asked, however, is why I am still in the classroom. Why haven't I gone on to administration? (King, 1998, p. 50)

One possible reason for men in general or special education having low social status may be the correlation with low salaries. It is important to remember that the five factors identified earlier may individually or in combination affect men's decisions to choose general or special education as a career.

Low Salary

A number of studies have suggested that salaries affect men's decisions to enter or not to enter teaching. One issue identified was the perception of administrative positions as future opportunities to enhance their financial status (Allan, 1997). Another issue pertaining to low salary is that some men enter teaching as a second career after leaving "successful" first careers. A final issue identified was parents' concerns about their sons' financial future.

Wood and Hoag (1993) surveyed school principals and found that some "males do not seem to look at teaching as a career opportunity, because of money" (p. 17), whereas other "men consider elementary teaching to be a stepping stone to administrative positions" (p. 18). Brookhart and Loadman (1996) found that male preservice teachers were more likely than their female counterparts to plan a career move to administration within 5 years. Montecinos and Nielsen (1997) reported that only 4% of male preservice teachers, interviewed immediately prior to student teaching, would remain in the classroom as part of their long-term professional aspirations; 39% of these same men indicated that their career goal was to pursue a position in school administration. The authors wondered, "Is it possible that men, more than women, are getting the message that teaching is a doorway to other professional opportunities in education?" (p. 53)

One promising note is that many men who choose education as a field do so because they really want to teach (Allan, 1993, 1997; Freidus, 1992). DeCorse and Vogtle (1997) interviewed current students and recent graduates of a teacher

preparation program. One finding was that these men's previous concerns about financial security had been replaced with a desire for intrinsic reward and personal satisfaction. One preservice teacher said, "I'm in a corporation. I'm doing well, but I've had enough of it. I figure teaching will be much more rewarding than what I'm doing now" (p. 41). A second participant in the same study stated, "I have a good job, I'm making enough money—more money than I'd make as a teacher, but money's not a motivation. What's motivating is getting across to young kids" (p. 41). A third male student in the study described his primary motivation to choose teaching was to be an influence in children's lives, while at the same time understanding the fiscal implication of his decision. DeCorse and Vogtle (1997) found that the decision of men to become teachers was a concern to some of their parents:

My parents (teachers) both said no to teaching; they recommended the accounting program. It took me about three classes to figure out that's not what I wanted. When I finished, I immediately took a job in day care. Now my parents see this as inevitable. They look at it from the monetary perspective; you always want your kids to do better than you, not the same thing. (p. 41)

Women's Work

Beyond issues of low social status and low salary, another concern of men considering education as a career is society's perception of teaching as women's work. Men related their concerns of being thought of as a homosexual or as a child abuser for choosing to work in education (Johnston et al., 1999). Because educational roles are seen as nurturing or caring (Noddings, 1992), society often presumes general and special education fields to be mostly populated by women, and perceives that it is less natural for men to have this role (Allan, 1997; Coulter, 2003; Sargent, 2001). The perception of male teachers as homosexual, bisexual, or even transgendered (Blount, 2000) continues to be a concern among male educators and may also be a contributing factor that prevents men from entering these professions (Freidus, 1992). Male teachers in a number of studies related personal experiences that could be construed as an expectation that teachers of young children should be female (Coulter & McNay, 1993; DeCorse & Vogtle, 1997; King, 1998; Thornton, 1999).

Thornton (1999) summarized male teachers' views that elementary schools are a natural place of employment for women: "It became clear from discussions [with male preservice teachers] that where women working with children was viewed as a natural extension of the mothering role, men opting for primary teaching may be perceived as unnatural, odd" (p. 46). This view is consistent with the stereotype of gender roles in schools (Freidus, 1992; Sargent, 2002). The role of women is one of being a nurturing and caring teacher,

and men in schools are needed for structure and discipline (King, 1998):

All were concerned about their colleagues' narrow definitions of what it means to be a man or a woman. For example, each man found that the (male) principal or a (female) teacher in the school would say something like, "Oh, good, we've got a man on staff to do the phys. ed." (Coulter & McNay, 1993, p. 407)

In addition to a misidentification of gender roles, another concern of some male teachers, especially at the elementary level, was their unease with being perceived as homosexual because they displayed nurturing characteristics (Allan, 1993; King, 1998). These perceptions are captured by the following quotes:

People look at a male first-grade teacher as being a little bit . . . *different*. You know what I mean. Family acquaintances might see this as strange. (Allan, 1993, p. 123)

I had a teacher say to me, "Why are you going into high school? You've taught at [a community college]?" I said, "No, I'm going into [elementary]". "You're going to teach little kids?" I said, "Yes." She said, "Are you queer?" (Coulter & McNay, 1993, p. 403)

One of the first realizations that men in elementary education were not the norm came when I said I was going into education and the assumption was that I would be teaching high school chemistry or algebra. When I said, "No, elementary school," the reply was, "oh, P. E." When it was finally understood that I wanted to teach reading to small children, the reply was, "Oh?" (King, 1998, p. 50)

People think you're gay because you're in [primary] education. (King, 1998, p. 107)

Indeed, men who teach young children are often assumed to be gay, and some men may resist the call to primary teaching for fear of that perception, in itself a telling comment about ideas of masculinity in our society. Widespread homophobia, compounded by the related irrational fear that homosexuality is linked with pedophilia, mitigates against an easy acceptance of male primary teachers. (Coulter & McNay, 1995, p. 415)

Had I not been married and had begun teaching there would be questions. That's the mentality. . . . When I started teaching, I carefully placed a picture of my wife on my desk. What difference does it make? When I was single and interning, the par-

ents came to check me out. I think what they're afraid of is that I'm gay . . . [and] that if someone is gay they're a child molester. (King, 1998, p. 111)

Potential False Accusations

In addition to low status, low salaries, and the perception of teaching as women's work, other factors have been identified as discouraging men from working with young children. Some men are concerned about unfounded accusations of child abuse or sexual harassment.

Preservice male teachers have expressed several concerns about physical contact with children (Johnston et al., 1999; King, 1998). Three preservice male teachers in Thornton's (1999) study reported their personal concerns regarding the topic of physical contact with young children:

How a male teacher deals with a girl crying is different to how a female teacher would deal with it and I want to see how . . . I need to be able to see how to deal with that in the proper recognized way. . . . people think, don't they. People always assume a lot, that scares me a little bit. (Alan, Year 2)

Fear of being accused of abuse. (Roy, Year 4)

Afraid of being called a dirty old man. (Kez, Year 1) (p. 46)

Coulter and McNay (1993) noted additional anxieties of men regarding how to show appropriate physical concern and affection. One male teacher asked, "Why is it . . . the women teachers are hugging the boys and girls but I have been told I have to be really careful about that?" (p. 404). Male teachers in DeCorse and Vogtle's (1997) study also shared their discomfort with physical contact with their students. Two powerful quotes represent this theme:

I don't touch the children as much as is humanly possible in a setting where I am alone and in control of 25 kids. I'll tiptoe around it until I learn how to adjust my teaching to fit the parameters, without feeling like I'm selling myself out, or I'm selling the kids short. I won't say I never touch the children, it's a natural thing. I have to fight that naturalness. I extremely resent it. I don't like being guilty until I'm proven innocent. I don't like my integrity being challenged by other people who don't even know me, and I don't like the fact that the children are the ones who are eventually hurt the most by this.

I never give hugs, regardless of who it is. A lot of times, you can't help it; kids will come up and

wrap themselves around you, and you can't do anything about it. You kind of let them do it, then you kind of push them away. . . . I don't like that you have to push them away. It is a conflict. (p. 43)

Although these male teachers reported that they struggle with issues of physical affection, other male teachers with more classroom experience have become more relaxed about physical contact with children over time. One male teacher in a study by Guyton et al. (1996) said, "At first, I was really concerned about touching kids at all; I mean, hypersensitive, because I was a man. I'm not going to get so freaked out about stuff like that" (p. 649).

FEW PEERS

A final issue cited in the literature is the lack of male peer groups in teaching professions. Male teachers have related their experiences in working in a predominantly female work environment (Allan, 1997; King, 1998). These men have gotten the sense from female teachers that elementary school buildings are socially acceptable places for women to exert power and influence. Acker (1983) suggested that this might be "one of the few arenas in which they exert any power, even at the expense of further reinforcing stereotypes about women's spheres" (p. 134). The fact that female teachers still dominate classrooms (U.S. Department of Education, 2000) creates a cultural challenge for male teachers:

I was told by a female teacher who had been teaching 13 years that men can't teach primary. . . . She said men are not willing to run up and wipe a dirty nose . . . or lace a boot . . . or locate a lost mitt. She said, "You just won't make it there."

I really think some of them [female teachers] think this has been just a flash in the pan—that the old boy [the principal] made a mistake last year. It really hurts because I don't want to move. (Coulter & McNay, 1993, p. 405)

STRATEGIES TO RECRUIT AND RETAIN MALE TEACHERS

The challenges of low social status, low salary, perceptions of teaching as women's work, potential complaints of child abuse and sexual harassment, and lack of male peer groups are contributing factors to the low percentages of men in these fields. Male teachers serve as positive role models for young children. Possible solutions for both the recruitment and the retention of male students in teacher preparation programs have been reported.

Recruitment

Strategies for recruiting men and minorities into teaching have been around since 1957 (Walling, 1998). These strategies include increasing salaries for teachers and publicly recognizing outstanding teachers; however, they do not address the specific issue of potential complaints of child abuse and sexual harassment.

Teacher preparation programs in special education should use their male instructors to be a strong presence in introductory elective courses. The presence of a male educator at such a formative time in an undergraduate's early decision-making process is recommended (Huskey, 1998). The experiences of a male professor who taught in a female-dominated profession could serve as an inspiration, a resource, and a reality check for young men with the desire to enter special education as a career.

Galbraith (1992) suggested recruiting strategies that focus on informing men who are potential teachers of what other men who are currently employed as educators find rewarding and important in their careers. Introductory education courses are also an excellent opportunity for diverse male guest speakers to share their stories if the instructor is female. Male teachers can be invited to classrooms to share their perspectives on teaching, and they could also discuss the challenges they have faced. This may provide male undergraduate students with an opportunity to consider special education as a major and career choice. Career changers moving from a high salary position to a teacher's salary may find this to be a stressful situation (Freidus, 1992). It has been suggested that stipends or grants need to be available for these individuals, especially if we are sincere in our attempts to recruit and retain male teachers.

Students who have not decided on a major have an undeclared advisor. These advisors should be careful not to dissuade or misinform men about careers in general and special education. The use of male academic advisors, once the student has declared education as a major, has been an effective strategy (Rice & Goessling, 2000). Effective recruitment strategies for college admissions officers are to use male recruiters at college fairs and high school visits. Potential male educators should be enticed to the field of general and special education as early as their sophomore year in high school. Huskey (1998) suggested that male teachers "should be featured at recruitment events, conventions, and preservice teacher workshops" (p. 70).

Several colleges and universities hold annual major fairs prior to course registration periods to entice undeclared students into particular majors. Teacher preparation programs in special education should use this opportunity to creatively develop advertisements, posters, handouts, and flyers that are specifically designed to catch the attention of undeclared male students. Neugebauer (1994) listed ways to recruit and retain men by advertising in areas where men congregate, such as male dorms, sports complexes, and so on. Neuge-

bauer cited the success of advertisements that included words such as *recreation, activities, and leadership*.

Another innovative approach for recruiting men to general and special education was cited in *Time* magazine: "At three historically black colleges in South Carolina—Claflin, Benedict, and Morris—male freshmen that commit to teaching for four years in the state receive full scholarships. . . . The model was developed by researchers at Clemson University" ("Education special report," 2001, p. 80). The University of South Florida received a federal grant targeted at male Blacks, which "combined intense recruiting with scholarships incentives to draw eighteen young men into the program, . . . with one year scholarships that cover tuition, housing, and books, plus a \$400 monthly stipend" (Basinger, 1999, pp. A12–A13). Clemson University has developed a similar program to increase the number of diverse male teachers at the elementary level (Henry, 2001).

Teacher preparation programs in special education are not limited to recruiting male students at the undergraduate levels. Many college graduates who may not have considered a career in education because of the factors previously identified may experience job dissatisfaction and contemplate a career change. To recruit these men, it is suggested that information regarding teacher preparation programs be disseminated in "newspaper articles, letters to community centers, school districts, messages from principals in the affected school districts, letters to churches, the involvement of community organizations, and general orientations" in various diverse communities (Shade, Boe, Garner, & New, 1998, p. 265).

Boe, Cook, Bobbit, and Terhanian (1998) found that the shortage of fully certified special education teachers is almost double the shortage of general education teachers. Paraeducators are one population that has demonstrated an interest in working with students with disabilities. Although the majority of paraeducators are female, men also work in this capacity (Pickett, 1999). Special education teacher preparation programs should focus on recruiting this "captive audience" to become certified special education teachers (Haberman, 1988; Haselkorn & Fideler, 1996).

Haberman (1988) noted that 2-year colleges "have proven to be the most successful institutions for helping Hispanics and Blacks to make successful transitions from high school to higher education" (p. 41). This suggests that teacher preparation programs at 4-year colleges and universities should strengthen their ties to these 2-year programs to better attract diverse male students who may not have previously considered a career as a special education teacher. Rodriguez (1997) surveyed male teachers and asked what could be done to encourage men to enter the teaching profession; 45% of the respondents suggested offering more money as a way to entice men into the profession.

Increased teacher salaries would serve as both a recruiting and a retention tool. The discrepancy between the starting salaries reported by recent special education graduates (e.g.,

\$29,000) and the starting salaries reported by their classmates who graduate with degrees in computer science (e.g., \$50,000) might discourage male underclassmen from pursuing a career in special education. Both male and female preservice teachers have expressed concerns about their future salaries. As these future teachers neared graduation, a greater percentage of the male students reported low salaries as a serious concern (Montecinos & Nielsen, 1997). This concern may affect men's decision to continue teaching.

During their first 5 years of teaching, male teachers reported less satisfaction with their salary than female teachers (Klecker & Loadman, 1999). Huskey (1998) surveyed 60 preservice teachers (10 of whom were male) and found that low salaries contributed to the imbalance between male and female teachers. Huskey further surveyed non-education undergraduates and discovered that 48% of the respondents perceived that low salaries contributed to the discouragement of men to enter the profession.

Retention

Once schools begin to increase the percentage of male teachers, retention strategies are extremely important. Using the aforementioned recruitment strategies may assist in attracting men to a teaching career; however, keeping them in the profession is another issue.

Ingersoll's (2001) study on teacher turnover and shortages found that "male teachers are less likely to depart than are female teachers, and minority teachers are also less likely to depart than are White teachers" (p. 518). This suggests that male teachers are less likely to leave the profession of teaching.

We have tried strategies to retain those men who enter college as special education majors. The results of our efforts have more than doubled the percentage of male preservice special education teachers, from 3%–5% to 7%–9%, over the course of 4 years. Two specific strategies that were tried include the assignment of male students to male education advisors, and ensuring that more than one male student is enrolled in a section of a required education course. We are unable to attribute retention success to these strategies; however, due to previous low retention rates, the education department has made a conscious effort to continually seek ways of supporting male students in their pursuit of an education degree. In addition to these strategies, the administration has supported dinner meetings among male students and male faculty to informally provide support and guidance to male education majors, as reported by Thornton (1999).

Teacher preparation programs should identify male special education teachers and use them as cooperating teachers for both practicum and student teaching placements (Montecinos & Nielsen, 1997). Furthermore, new teachers should be assigned such male veteran teachers as mentors (Klecker & Loadman, 1999). Providing these men the opportunity to work with preservice teachers may help deter them from considering a career change.

DISCUSSION

It is the responsibility of teacher educators to provide preservice special education teachers with a balanced educational experience. This includes having both male and female education professors; being exposed to diverse classmates (male and female), who bring into the classroom various ideas, perspectives, and strategies for instruction; and working with racially and culturally diverse cooperating teachers, field supervisors, and mentors. Failure to recruit and retain male preservice teachers is detrimental to teacher preparation programs specifically and to society in general. Schools need more male teachers, especially male special education teachers. The lack of a male presence in schools has a debilitating effect on academic and social performance for today's male students (Pollack, 1998).

The challenge for teacher educators is not just to recruit male students into special education undergraduate and graduate programs, but also to retain them in the special education program and to support them through graduation and in their first teaching positions. This is important because, often, once male teachers have instructional positions, they remain in them. Ingersoll's (2001) study on teacher turnover and shortages found that "male teachers are less likely to depart than are female teachers, and minority teachers are also less likely to leave the profession of teaching" (p. 518). This suggests that male teachers are less likely to leave the teaching profession.

There are many factors related to the lack of men in special education teaching positions in today's schools. Many of these factors are societal and cannot be readily changed by teacher educators. However, specific strategies can and have been used in undergraduate and graduate programs, both small and large, to retain future male special educators.

Implications for Practice

How can teacher educators encourage male students to remain in special education teacher preparation programs? What strategies might effectively retain male preservice special educators? The following suggestions are a combination of strategies described in the literature and successful strategies we have used during the past 3 years in our efforts to recruit and retain male students.

Create Opportunities to Gather Male Preservice Teachers Together. The male academic advisor can host social gatherings of all male special education students in various locations on and off campus (e.g., pizza parties, lunches, bagel breakfasts) to encourage male bonding during the special education induction process.

Match Students With Male Academic Advisors. Careful matching of male students with a male education professor for academic advising can help establish a meaningful relationship over the duration of the preservice teacher's pro-

gram. Furthermore, the advisor may be able to facilitate the creation of male cohorts.

Create Small Cohort Groups of Male Students in Teacher Education Courses. It is very difficult to be the sole man in a classroom of 24 women, even though this may mirror actual faculty ratios in elementary school buildings. This sense of difference often contributes to a low participation rate in class by male students. By creating small cohorts of two, three, or four male students and placing them in teacher education courses together, the male students will feel less isolated and more eager to participate in class. Likewise, the professor will be more aware of male special educators and use examples and case studies with both male and female teachers carefully.

Match Male Student Teachers With Cooperating Male Teachers. Field placements must meet high standards, and teachers selected to be cooperating teachers must be highly qualified in special education, experienced, and eager to mentor a student teacher. In the quest for male teachers, these standards should not be lowered. However, by carefully expanding the search for male special education cooperating teachers, male student teachers could have a role model that lasts a lifetime.

Future Directions

Future research in this field should examine the effect that male teachers have on the academic achievement of male and female students. Motivating factors to recruit and retain men in both teacher preparation programs and long-term teaching careers should be researched and identified. What makes successful male teachers remain dedicated, energetic, committed teachers? How do they find colleagues in a female-dominated world? What is the importance of mentoring by a man for a male teacher? Veteran male teachers should also be surveyed and interviewed to identify various supports that made it easier for them to remain a special educator. Additional questions for these veterans might include the following: Why do they stay? Do they receive support from a professional organization? Do they have other friends that are teachers? Are there teachers in their families? Did they have an influential male teacher in their elementary or secondary experience? In-depth longitudinal research is needed to examine boys' aspirations to become teachers; this type of study could compare boys who had several male teachers with boys who had none.

Summary

Five factors have been identified in the literature that contribute to the current low number of male special education teachers. These factors include low social status, low salary, perception of teaching as "women's work," potential complaints of child abuse and sexual harassment, and lack of male peer groups. Male teachers are needed in the area of

special education to be positive role models for all students. Strategies to recruit and retain male special education teachers have been identified, including social gatherings, having a male advisor, being in a cohort with other men, and having a male cooperating teacher. Through future research and suggested strategies for teacher educators, more male students might be recruited into and remain in special education pre-service programs. Through additional research and concentrated effort, tomorrow's boys and girls may benefit from learning from both male and female special educators. ■

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