Constructing Gender: Contradictions in the Life of a Male Elementary Teacher

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ABSTRACT

Drawing upon observations, written communications, and monthly interviews spanning the participant's first year of teaching, this case study reveals contradictions men face as elementary teachers. Entering teaching with a "male" advantage, Brad was isolated within a "female" profession. Becoming the male role model he always wanted to be, he became constantly vigilant of his interactions with children. Celebrated for departing from the scripts of masculinity, he was simultaneously rewarded for reinforcing these scripts in his work. Although friends, teachers, and parents celebrated his career choice, he felt pushed to "move up" by "moving out" of the classroom. This study reflects the spectrum of contradictions men confront as male elementary teachers. Key words: male elementary teachers, professional identity, teachers as role models, gender, scripts of masculinity

INTRODUCTION

Upon entering the teaching profession, male elementary teachers encounter mixed messages. If they conform too strictly to the traditional scripts of masculinity they may be perceived as incompetent to work with elementary children. If, on the other hand, they are too nurturing and empathetic their masculinity may be questioned. Many of the male elementary teachers Allan (1993) interviewed expressed frustration with conflicting gender expectations. In his study of male primary teachers, Sargent (2001) found the men in his study to be highly conflicted regarding gender. Their masculinity was both a valued asset and their greatest liability. In short, they were suspect until proven innocent.

The men most often made direct reference to sexual molestation during these individual discussions of the difference between women's laps and men's laps…

Keith: I really love these kids. You know, I just don't care anymore. I mean, I know we're supposed to be kind of standoffish, but I can't be. These little folks need care and love and hugs. I even let them sit on my lap.

Paul: Why "even"?

Keith: Oh, that's the big no-no. Women's laps are places of love. Men's laps are places of danger (Sargent, 2001, p. 53).

These mixed messages are but flashpoints in a constellation of contradictions that male elementary teachers encounter when entering the classroom. Most male elementary teachers quickly discover that the characteristic that most advantages them-their gender--also isolates them. Male elementary teachers are celebrated for their departure from the scripts of masculine hegemony yet these very scripts become the standard that validates their personal and professional behavior. On the one hand they are viewed as role models but their presence is a threat to children. They are obliged to nurture their students but must maintain a physical and emotional distance. A barrage of implicit and explicit messages compels them to leave the classroom and "move up" in the field.

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to investigate the experience of Brad, a young first-year male elementary teacher, through the lens of four contradictions men face in the elementary classroom. Grounded in the professional literature (herein purposefully integrated into Brad's experiences rather than presented as a stand-alone section), this study capitalizes on the authors' interest and former research in gender studies in education. The following question provided the focus for this study: How would Brad, in his first year of teaching, negotiate the mixed messages that male elementary teachers receive?

How would Brad negotiate the contradiction of being male in a "female" world?

How would he negotiate being simultaneously perceived as a role model and a threat?

How would he disrupt scripts of masculinity while at the same time reinforce them?

How would he negotiate being pulled into the profession while simultaneously being pushed out?

As a case study form of qualitative inquiry, Brad's experiences provide an in-depth look into our educational institutions and processes (Soltis, 1990). The lens of this male elementary teacher provides insight for teacher education and professional development.

This study was conducted during Brad's first year of teaching immediately following his graduation from a small church-related liberal arts college in the Midwest. One of the authors had been a professor in his teacher education program. Brad was a traditional student who graduated in his early 20s. Following graduation, Brad obtained a teaching position in a small

rural school of 250 within a district that enrolled approximately 10,000 students. Brad was one of two male elementary classroom teachers on the staff.

Data, in the form of audio and video recordings, were collected over the course of a full year. The researchers recorded six 90-minute interviews with Brad (June, September, October, December, February, and April), two observations followed by stimulated recall sessions (September and March), and four focus group sessions. The focus groups were conducted with Brad and three other first-year teachers to provide a conversational context for the study (one in August before the school year, one in September, one in February, and one in June on the last day of the school year). Although all four first-year teachers' experiences were recorded and interpreted for various purposes, Brad's experiences were extracted from the focus group recordings to inform this study.

Multiple semi-structured interviews with Brad allowed the researchers to pursue the research questions as the year progressed with more specific, open-ended, non-leading questions such as, "What has been challenging you the most? In what ways are you experiencing success in your teaching? To whom do you go for support? What are you learning about yourself as you gain experience in the classroom?" Brad's experiences were explored before, during, and after his first year of teaching. Seidman (2006) noted that "interviewing is most consistent with people's ability to make meaning through language. It affirms the importance of the individual without denigrating the possibility of community and collaboration…it is deeply satisfying to researchers who are interested in others' stories" (p. 14).

To develop a contextual and empathetic understanding of Brad's experiences, observations were also conducted early each semester in Brad's classroom. These observations provided an opportunity to personally interpret his interactions with students and colleagues. The observations were videotaped and stimulated recall sessions were conducted with him the day afterward to co-construct an understanding of Brad's early teaching experiences.

Immersion in the Data: Collecting, Comparing, and Questioning

Interpretation, by contrast, is not derived from rigorous, agreed-upon, carefully specified procedures, but from our efforts at sense making, a human activity that includes intuition, past experience, emotion—personal attributes of human researchers that can be argued endlessly but neither proved nor disproved to the satisfaction of all. Interpretation invites the examination, the 'pondering,' of data in terms of what people make of it. (Wolcott, 2001, p. 33)

Wolcott's quote came alive in this study through the reading of transcriptions and field notes, listening to audio recordings, and repeated viewing of video recordings. The researchers also related to a critical point made by Gallagher (1995). Gallagher discovered, after struggling during her initial qualitative research experiences to make her data analysis rigorous, that the procedures described in qualitative research handbooks often went against the theory behind qualitative research itself. She concluded that although "the process of data analysis is central to

conducting qualitative research…coding, managing, and displaying data should be a meaning making process, not a procedure that is to be executed with exacting proficiency" (p. 26). Gallagher found that the act of applying specific procedures made her participants' lives seem "distant and unreal" (p. 25), and prevented her from personalizing her analysis process.

Brad's experiences were closely monitored and interpreted throughout the entire process of data collection. The researchers personally transcribed all of the interviews, observations, stimulated recall sessions, and focus groups in order to hear and listen repeatedly not only to Brad's words, but to his speaking pace, volume, tone, inflections, and moments of hesitation. Additionally, the video recordings of his observations and focus group sessions provided valuable nonverbal information.

The examination of new data in comparison to former interpretations created new questions for each successive interview. This cyclical collection-comparison-question process was repeated each time data were gathered, until about two-thirds of the way through the year when the beginning of the written narrative was drafted. As Wolcott (2001) said, "The conventional wisdom is that writing reflects thinking. I am drawn to a stronger position: writing *is* thinking" (p. 22). Writing was the single activity that most shaped and solidified the interpretations during the collection and processing of the data that revealed these four key contradictions.

Findings

This article examines four contradictory messages and the related literature through the lens of Brad's experience during his first year in the elementary classroom. Interviews and observations spanning a full year establish gender as the foundation of Brad's personal and professional identity. As he entered the classroom he quickly found that the long-awaited mantel of "male role-model" could be worn only with discomfort and confusion. He felt strangely apprehensive and vulnerable. His interactions with fellow teachers, students and parents were outwardly positive, but in the quietness of his own thoughts he often found himself awkwardly bumping into his own gender. Nothing in his prior experience prepared him to appropriate gender in the construction of a professional identity.

The following sections address the four research questions by summarizing the contradictions Brad experienced as related to the professional literature.

Contradiction 1: Male in a "Female" World

Brad entered teaching with a "male" advantage, but was isolated and misunderstood within a "female" profession. The transition from "student of teaching" to "teacher of students" was daunting. Further complicating this transition were the conflicting social expectations that accompanied being young and male. Brad explained, "It's a total transition….I went through college with it not being a big deal," --*it* being one of few males in a predominantly female profession. Although his identity was secure as a teacher's son and most recently as a student

teacher, now that he was out on his own, *it* bothered him. "I guess I was so used to it, I didn't really know any other way. I guess I've always been around education, so that was kind of acceptable."

When Brad got the job, he was relieved to know there would be at least one other young male staff member in his school. His male friends entering other professions did not seem to understand the challenges of teaching nor the pressures Brad would face as a male in a "female profession":

…and he's only a year older than me, so you know, not to be biased or anything, but just having another male to talk to sometimes helps a little bit, too. I'm looking forward to that. It's nice, because a lot of my friends, besides my [education major] friends that I had at Riverside, I mean…having another teacher to talk to is great because they really don't know what's going on in the classroom, and they think it's kinda like baby…I mean, you hear, "Brad, it's just teaching." But it's a lot of work, and a lot of responsibility, so, just having that support, someone to talk to, if there's a problem. Just getting it off your chest--that's what I'm looking forward to.

Brad's teacher education program did not structure purposeful discourse about the tension he would face as a man in a largely female profession. Skelton (1994) noted the need for open discussion in teacher education and in schools about how male teachers can effectively interact physically with children. Sargent (2001) also reflected on the importance of discourse about these gender-based struggles. "Teachers generally have few opportunities to exchange ideas regarding their teaching, and men teachers, in particular, are especially isolated from others" (p. 147). Nielsen (2006) contended that teacher education programs should structure opportunities to deconstruct gender issues, because "an awareness of gender discourse can better prepare men for the contradictions and conflicts they may face as they manage their masculinity in an occupation built upon the assumption that workers will draw from discourses of femininity" (p. 5).

For example, in Brad's new position planning instruction was fraught with obstacles. In college, team planning was a structured expectation in many of the courses he took. However, in his school, team planning was not the norm. His teammates were both experienced female teachers who needed to arrive right before school or leave immediately afterward. There were two disconnects—they had little time for planning and little in common with Brad. He expressed, "…the vibes just aren't there that I should feel for planning. They're both great ladies; I really respect them and like them, but to sit down and do that work, it's not there."

At a staff development session, Brad felt torn between conversing with his female teammates and paying attention to the content of the meeting. "Honestly, I don't want to rag on my team, but they were talking about ornaments and stuff the entire time, and I was trying to listen to them, but I have no idea what I'm doing, so I kind of want to listen, too." Brad imagined being on the same team as the second grade teacher – the only other male who taught in a general elementary classroom. "If I were on the same team as Dave, it would be a whole different

story….It would be awesome, how well we would plan together; it would be perfect….If I was with Dave, I would feel more comfortable sharing my ideas."

To add to his professional isolation, Brad felt socially removed from the staff. He felt out of place as the only male who attended the school's holiday dinner, where instead of mingling with the women on staff, he sat at the bar with a male friend who just happened to be there that evening. He admitted, "I felt so out of place. Jesse [another male teacher] wasn't there because he had a game; no Mark, no Dave; no guys were there."

Brad sought out the friendship and support of the other three men on the staff -- Jesse (the P.E. teacher), Mark (the music teacher), and Dave (a classroom teacher) -- and took every opportunity to socialize with them during the school day. He even sacrificed his planning time to maintain contact with them.

Jesse--the physical education teacher--I've gotten to know him really well. A lot of the teachers, during their specialists of physical education, art, or music, they like to go back and work. It's kinda like your prep period, but it's kinda like my kind of time to talk to a teacher, too. So I'm in the gym for 15 minutes talking to him while the kids are warming up or stretching. And the music teacher, too. I'll talk to him for a few minutes before he has to get going… [the art teacher] is really nice, but I don't really connect to her. I say hi to her. It's kinda like a guy thing, almost.

Although Brad felt tension in his early teaching related to his gender, he outwardly dismissed it. "Maybe being male is different; I don't know. I haven't figured it out yet. I probably will never figure it out, either."

Contradiction 2: A Role Model and a Threat

Brad realized that being a male elementary teacher automatically associated him with role modeling. Teachers, school officials, and parents reinforced this notion as well. Brad was hired after his very first teaching interview recognizing that his gender was a significant factor in the hiring decision. He admitted, "They said, 'Well, we really don't look at anybody without their reading endorsement, but since we knew you, and you're a male, and you're a nice guy, we're gonna give you a shot at an interview.'"

School administrators in a study by Riddell and Tett (2006) noted that "in some primary schools there are no men at all" (p. 51). Riddell and Tett reported that in the 2002-2003 school year 88% of U.S. elementary teachers were female. Their data also indicated that male primary teachers' minority status gave them career advantages "on the grounds that they would provide a role model for the male pupils" (p. 78).

Allan (1993) found the male elementary teachers he interviewed to be highly conscious of their male advantage. "Many men felt they were given a hiring preference because of the public's

demands for more male role models, but were at a loss to identify exactly what this work consisted of" (p. 122). Allan's participants perceived "an important need for increased involvement of adult men in the lives of children, owing to the increasing number of single-parent families, or families in which fathers have limited interaction with their children" (p. 115). Martino & Kehler (2006) supported the recruitment and retention of male elementary teachers, but cautioned schools and society to avoid "essentialist arguments about the need for male role models in schools as a panacea for addressing boys' diverse educational and social problems" (p. 125).

Sargent (2001) noted that the concept of "role model" came up in every interview with his 39 male participants. However, while they consistently supported the concept, none of these men could provide a good definition for "role model." The inability to define "role model" (Thornton, 1999) is problematic primarily because it perpetuates traditional stereotypes about men and women that do not advance a more complex understanding of gender.

Accordingly, Brad saw himself as a role model for elementary students but he could not define the term nor articulate specific practices or methods that activated this role. Instead he defaulted to his gender as the basis for being a "role model." From his days as a high school mentor into his first year of teaching, being a role model meant being himself.

…just being a role model in the school system for the younger kids, you know, we were always interacting with the little kids, which was great, so I felt like I had a really positive influence over kids…and I think I've been building a rapport with kids--I think I was just born to do that, honestly.

While the male coaches and student teachers from his past provided the symbol of "male role model" they provided no substantive definition. "I looked up to them so much, just being a role model and having that male influence. I thought they were the greatest guys in the world." He admired the adult males from his past and sought to replicate their behavior in his own practice. However, he lacked any conscious or analytical definition which would guide his work with children.

While Brad welcomed the positive reinforcement he received for being a male role model he also recognized a corresponding dark side to that image. He was aware that his maleness could be perceived as a threat to children (Sargent, 2001). His use of the terms "always" and "never" captured his constant vigilance.

So I never really give hugs; I always give a high five or a handshake….if a little elementary kid would come up and give me a hug, I would probably do that, but if a fifth grade girl would come up and hug me, I would never do that. It's always a handshake or a high five…as much as kids want to be hugged, I would never do that at all.

Brad was constantly aware of his physical proximity to children, particularly girls.

…I always feel bad when you hear in the paper about a sexual abuse case because it puts a bad rap on guy elementary teachers. But it could happen in the case where it was a woman, too. I don't want to be looked at like that; that's kind of a bad rap right there. I always have a heads up on the situation. I'm well aware of what's going to happen. For example, when we went on a field trip and the parents were there, I felt like, you're a male around my daughter and I don't want them to think I'm a predator or anything like that. So I always keep my distance.

For example, Brad was leery of being found in his classroom alone with a female student. One day he tried to convince a girl who wanted to stay inside for recess to go outside instead.

What if someone walked in? I was at my computer and she was standing at her desk. She didn't get her homework done, so she said, "I'll stay in and get it done." And that was her responsibility. So I said, "It's alright, you can go outside." And she said, "No, I'll stay in and get it done." I guess you always hear about bad things that happen. I would never want to be in that situation where someone would think that.

His vision of himself as a role model was compromised by a corresponding set of negative social contradictions that imposed on him a threatening cloud of suspicion due to his gender. When Sargent (2001) talked one-on-one with the men in his study about gender-based tension, they accepted it as the way things were. However, when this topic came up in focus groups, the men in his study expressed anger and frustration with how society limited the quality of their interactions with children based solely upon gender. Male teachers often express concern that others could suspect them of child abuse. While these thoughts constantly run in the background, rarely is the topic addressed directly either as an accusation or as a point of professional conversation on the institutional level (Skelton, 1994).

Contradiction 3: Disrupting While Reinforcing Scripts of Masculinity

Brad was celebrated for departing from the scripts of masculinity, but he was also rewarded for reinforcing these same scripts in his work. Because our society limits the extent to which males should touch or nurture young children, male elementary teachers compensate by acting as the male role model, a role that simultaneously provides distance and connection (Allan, 1993; DeCorse, 1997; Gerson, 1993; Riddell & Tett, 2006; Sargent, 2001). Specifically, "men are being forced to 'do teaching' by doing a kind of safe form of hegemonic masculinity (Martino & Kehler, 2006; Roulston & Mills, 2000), albeit one that is closely monitored, through the use of compensatory activities" (Sargent, p. 154). Allan (1993) corroborated these conclusions.

They must assert--and especially model--'being a real man' in ways that are personally sustainable, that have integrity, and that are also acceptable to those who evaluate them on this important job criterion and control their careers. At the same time they feel pressure to conform to stereotypically feminine qualities to establish the sensitive, caring relationships necessary to

effectively teach children. For these men, gender is highly problematized, and they must negotiate the meaning of masculinity every day. (p. 114)

Brad and another male teacher coached fourth graders in after-school sports. In their role as coaches, they were able to nurture students following the scripts of masculinity (Connell, 1995; Roulston & Mills, 2000). Riddell & Tett (2006) noted that sports-related activities are common compensatory activities, allowing men to contribute to their school and relate to other male elementary teachers. Sargent (2001) explained that as men purposefully distance themselves from children, **"**they participate in the reproduction of the myth of stoic, distant men. This means they are participating in their own marginalization" (p. 68)**.** Brad limited physical contact with his students to high fives and handshakes, always aware of others' perceptions.

Brad also assumed that the women on his teaching team would manage any of his female students' personal problems. Consistent with Sargent (2001), he even called the female teachers "mother figures." As a male, Brad could not follow the normative social script dictating the nurture of elementary students as a mother figure (Biklen, 1995).

Sometimes I feel like they need a female in this situation. Not that I'm not a loving, caring guy—I do—I care about every kid in my class. I'd do anything for them…almost like being a Mom figure; they would know how to handle certain situations….Sometimes students need that mother figure in their life so they can show that affection, which I really can't. I try to listen to your problems, and I can tell you this, but it's totally different coming from a male.

While Brad could not be a mother figure because of his gender, his young age limited his ability to assume a fatherly role. To mediate these deficits, Brad chose "brother figure," the most closely associated role given his age and gender. The third week of school Brad reflected,

I feel like an older brother….it's different how they act toward me than they would toward an older male. I still feel like I'm really young….And as a brother figure, I honestly feel like the students are like my younger brothers or sisters, and that's how I look out for them. Hopefully that works, but sometimes I honestly feel like they need someone more mature to handle situations.

The role of "brother" was a compromise position, mediating the conflicting pressures Brad experienced as a young male elementary teacher.

Brad was conflicted. He wanted to be a teacher, but he also found himself pulled toward the safe havens within the profession that were most closely associated with masculinity. He did not envision being an elementary teacher for a lifetime. He found himself drawn away from the nurture of young children and toward stereotypically male teaching positions. "Maybe I'd like middle school where I could teach one specific area. Probably social studies. It's kind of a typical role. He's a guy, coach, social studies teacher." This position would allow Brad to "be a guy" while doing what he *really* wanted to do—teach children.

Contradiction 4: Pulled In and Pushed Out

Brad was celebrated for being in the elementary classroom but felt pushed to "move up" in the profession and "move out" of the classroom. While men are explicitly celebrated for becoming elementary teachers, society implicitly compels them to move into other careers (Allan, 1993; DeCorse, 1997; Gerson, 1993; Sargent, 2001). Brad's perceptions supported this phenomenon.

Well, you don't really see too many male elementary teachers staying in it too long, really. They're always in administration or something else. I don't know if that's just part of the social norm…when I go to a math meeting and there's an older gentleman teaching fifth grade, I'm surprised he's not a principal or something like that, because you're so accustomed to seeing that.

Allan (1993) offered an explanation for the dilemma that often results in career changes for male elementary teachers.

The man who is too 'masculine' would be suspected of being an incompetent and insensitive teacher, while the man who is nurturing and empathic would be stereotyped as feminine and 'unnatural.' Thus, paradoxically, an initial hiring advantage to men carries with it certain disadvantages, insofar as it places men in an untenable situation. (p. 126)

This quandary leads to the "revolving door" (Allan, 1993) where male teachers are channeled into more male-dominated positions within the field. Riddell and Tett (2006) documented gender-based tension as one reason men leave elementary teaching. "Issues around the protection of children become conflated with ideas about masculinity, leading to mistrust of men as classroom teachers" (p. 78). By mid-year, Brad had enough teaching experience to know he related well to children, but already felt pressure to "move up."

I mean, I want to teach for a while, but I don't know if I should. Maybe I should venture out after I get experience, you know, try to work my way up in the education system. I thought maybe about being an athletic director, or a counselor, but you're still working with kids, too.

Although Brad loved teaching, he reluctantly planned to move to another role within the field of education. At parent-teacher conferences in December, Brad sensed that the fathers were wondering why he was a teacher. "I kind of felt at [parent] teacher conferences that some of the dads, although they enjoyed their kids having me for a teacher…were thinking, 'You're a teacher?' I kind of get that feeling. I don't know why." He added, "Because honestly, if you think about it, who can really teach? Who has the patience to be with kids, and just cares so much…not too many people can do it, I don't think." Brad contended that a teacher's ability to care for and teach children—regardless of the teacher's gender—should be the definitive criteria. Yet he knew this was not the case (Nielsen & Montecinos, 1995).

CONCLUSION

Brad's first year of teaching illuminated the complexities and contradictions male elementary teachers face as they enter the profession. Brad easily secured a job but soon felt alone and out of place on a female-dominated staff. Finally becoming the male role model he always wanted to be, he found himself constantly vigilant of his interactions with children. Although applauded for his desire to work with young children, Brad was conscious of his boundaries and felt constrained to nurture them through socially-sanctioned masculine roles and activities that placed distance between him and his students. His career choice was clearly celebrated by friends, other teachers, and parents. But simultaneously these allies and supporters sent subtle messages projecting on him a career that would cut short his tenure in the classroom. Following the traditional scripts of masculinity, he would move up in the profession and move out of the classroom. This path would distance him from nurturing students while diminishing his proximity to children.

Implications for Teacher Education

Brad's experience offers three important implications for teacher education programs. First, such programs should construct elementary teaching explicitly through a prism of gender. The challenges Brad faced as the lonely male on a mostly-female elementary staff need to be part of the discourse of teacher preparation.

Through critical reading and discussion, coursework in the teacher education program should purposefully and explicitly help to deconstruct gender as a primary characteristic defining teacher roles (Allan, 1993; DeCorse, 1997; Nielsen, 2006; Riddell & Tett, 2006; Sargent, 2001).

Second, teacher education programs should challenge the assumption that men will by virtue of gender provide a value-added element to the classroom (Martino & Kehler, 2006). The male-as-role-model is a predominant theme in the discourse of teacher education but a clear definition of what constitutes the male role model remains elusive and undefined (Sargent, 2001).

Third, teacher education programs should directly address the impact of gender on the teacher's role. Such programs should prompt purposeful discussion that extends beyond constructing men as celebrated heroes in a field dominated by women. In turn, programs should address the problems males will encounter when finding themselves working in close proximity to children. For men, the classroom will become the stage on which the contradictions of elementary teaching will be played out. Both men and women in teacher education programs need to engage the unwarranted suspicions men are faced with and the disproportionate adulation they receive within the teacher education program and the profession (Skelton, 1994).

Implications for Professional Development

It is important to assess what a case study of one teacher's experience can do and what it cannot do. Brad's experience provides a lens through which the professional literature can be examined. As such, his experience suggests three implications for professional development programs. First, as pre-service teachers graduate and are inducted into the profession, gender study needs to be a regular part of their professional development. For both male and female members of the school's staff, professional development should prompt teachers to reflect on gender as a social construct. Professional development should help to unpack the influence of gender in shaping the classroom environment and its diverse social and academic functions (Elliott & Schiff, 2001).

Second, professional development should work to disrupt the hegemonic scripts of masculinity (Martino & Kehler, 2006; Roulston & Mills, 2000) that require men to demonstrate their safeness and their straightness through traditionally-identified roles and attributes such as leading sports activities, lifting heavy articles, and technological expertise (Sargent, 2001). In short, men should not be shackled by social images limiting them to coaching, moving cartons, and fixing computers. Both the discourse and the practice of professional development should engage multiple masculinities (Collinson & Hearn, 2001).

Third, induction and professional development should find a place for images of men as career teachers, disrupting the assumptions that men will not stay in the classroom but rather move on to a "better" position (Allan, 1993). Masculine hegemony should be disrupted in the practice of elementary teaching thereby suppressing the social and institutional structures that work to replicate it (Connell, 1995).

In summary, Brad's experiences are consistent with a growing body of literature that problematizes gender and teaching. His experience reflects the tension men encounter and the resulting contradictions they face. Teacher education programs should purposefully and proactively poise men for the spectrum of contradictions they will face as male elementary teachers. Professional development programs should support male teachers through ongoing and open reflection with other men and women about the implications of gender and its impact on their professional practice.

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