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HOW DOES THE GENDER OF TEACHERS AFFECT THE EDUCATION OF
STUDENTS WITH EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIORAL DISORDERS?

A MASTER'S THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY
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BY

Bjorn Hanson

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DO WE NEED MORE MALE TEACHERS FOR AN INCREASING POPULATION
OF MALE STUDENTS WITH EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIORAL DISORDERS ?

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APPROVED

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Abstract

In the world of education there is a growing population of male students who struggle with emotional/behavioral disorders. There is also a decreasing population of male teachers in schools, and an even lower percentage of teachers who work in the field of special education. There have been various countries that have called for their government to increase the male teaching population without research to prove that this will increase male student success. Ultimately, the research shows that there is no conclusive evidence demonstrating that male teachers possess qualities different than their female colleagues that lead to success. The research does show that teachers who possess qualities that develop and maintain positive relationships lead to student success, more specifically with students that have emotional/behavioral disorders.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Reason for Topic

My name is Bjorn Hanson. I am a male special education teacher. I have wanted to be a teacher and a coach since I realized that my hopes of being a professional athlete were very slim. I wanted to be a teacher and a coach because I had some wonderful male teachers and coaches who had tremendous influence on my life. I wanted to try to have a similar impact on other young men.

I went on to graduate with a degree in Secondary Social Studies Education as well as a teaching license in this area. It was difficult trying to find a job in this content area in the Twin Cities. During my search for a full time teaching job, I worked in a high school as a special education paraprofessional. This was a new experience for me working in this demographic. I only had one educational experience with special education during one of my undergraduate courses, but I didn't take it seriously because I did not have any desire to teach or work in special education. It was difficult at first working with some male students that were emotionally and behaviorally disturbed, but I felt like I was connecting with these students in a different way than their female special education teachers were. There were some male teachers in the school, but some of the needs of these students did not always permit them to be enrolled in those particular general education courses.

I served as a special education paraprofessional for two school years when the Special Education Director at the school approached me wondering if I had ever

considered going back to get my degree and licensure in Special Education. The approach surprised me. The Director said that I was doing a tremendous job working as a paraprofessional and that with my patience and passion for students that she believed I would make a great special education teacher. Through prayer and consultation with my wife as well as others I decided to pursue a dual license in Specific Learning Disabilities and Emotional/Behavioral Disorders.

The school where I was employed as a paraprofessional hired me to teach Special Education on a variance license while I was pursuing my new licensure. It was a great opportunity to learn and influence young lives while studying more about the field of special education. I did find it interesting that I was one of six Special Education teachers at a school and I was the only male in the department. It soon became a joke among the school staff that I was a lone male in the Special Education office. It was funny to me, but it also made me wonder why there weren't more male Special Education teachers at my school.

I was also attending classes for my license at Bethel University. I noticed that my cohort was primarily female as well. I was not the only male, but in my courses with multiple cohorts, every class was mostly female. I also noticed that all but one of my professors in the Special Education Graduate Program were female. I continued to wonder why there were not more men in the Special Education teaching field. It was also puzzling because we were learning that the majority of students receiving Special

Education services were male. The schools in which I have worked in special education over the past eight years always had a majority of male students who receive services.

During my start as a Special Education teacher, I found myself working with many male students. This was partly due to the fact that there is a majority of males in special education at the school. At the start of 2015-16 school year, 67% of students receiving special education services were male. The other main reason that I was working with male students was that parents were requesting a male teacher if possible. The reasons for this gender request varied, but many of the parents wanted a strong male influence for their son. This may have been because the student's father was not in their life, at times because the parents were divorced and the students' mother wanted a male who could model how to be respectful to women and to have someone who could "relate" to what a teenage boy goes through.

It has also been interesting working as a Special Education teacher to hear the comments I get when I tell people what I do. Many ask if I enjoy it, and then ask, "isn't it really tough working with those students?" I usually respond by saying that it is not always easy, but I enjoy it and that my job presents fun and new challenges every day. I also receive comments such as, "I am so glad you are doing that, we need good men working with those students." This brings more questions to mind. Is it important for male students with E/BD to have a male teacher? Can men have a different and/or more helpful impact on students with E/BD than a female teacher? Is the student-teacher relationship important in the success of male students with E/BD?

History of Topic

Teaching in America has a unique history. Public education has not always been a priority for this nation, as many middle/lower class families struggled to make ends meet and many children had to assist with family tasks instead of attending school. Considering other needs to provide for a family with difficult circumstances, teaching, especially children outside your own family, was looked down on. Access and interest in education had an impact on who was available to educate children and what purpose the education had. Early in the nineteenth century the majority of teachers in this country were younger, white males. One of the main reasons there was a preference for this demographic was that education placed a strong value in the discipline of children. Men were thought to implement this better than women at this time (Sedlak, 2010).

Gradually, views on childrens' ability and how best to nurture them started to change. This changed educational style from a controlling outlook into a more nurturing and guiding approach. This change prompted more and more women to enter the teaching field. By 1850, the majority of teachers in America were female and the trend has continued into today. In 1850 about 4 out of 5 teachers were women. As public education progressed a few more males came back to the field of teaching. In the 1930s, the gender ratio of teachers was 70% female to 30% male.

In the United States in 2002, 17% of Elementary and Middle School teachers were males while almost 42% of Secondary School teachers were males. These numbers have remained steady in recent years. In 2013, 19% of Elementary and Middle School

teachers were males with a little over 43% of Secondary School teachers being males. That same year 23.7% of public teachers in the United States were male (US Bureau of Labor Statistics). During the 2017-18 school year 76% of the teachers in the United States were female. At the elementary level 89% of teachers were female. 64% of the teachers at the Secondary level were female compared with 36% male (National Center for Education Statistics).

According to the Minnesota Department of Education Data Reports and Analytics during the 2018-19 school year, about 26.5% of the licensed teachers in the State of Minnesota were Male (Minnesota Department of Education). According to the Census Bureau during the 2017-18 school year 86.3% of Special Education teachers in the United States were female. Statistics were unavailable about percentages of male teachers specifically licensed in Emotional/Behavioral Disorders. Literature examining male special education teachers in comparison to female special education teachers is very limited.

Emotional/Behavioral Disorders Prevalence

The prevalence of E/BD continues to increase in our world today. This includes the world outside of school as well as within school. Between the years of 1986 and 1997, the number of children in the United States receiving services for psychiatric disorders increased by almost 70% (Center for Mental Health Services, 2002). During the 2018-19 school year 5% of students in the United States received services for Emotional Disturbances in school (National Center for Education Statistics). While

many students have been identified with E/BD and can receive services from the school, there are many other students who aren't receiving services, but could or should depend on one's thoughts on the issue. Or there are students receiving services under different disability categories (Autism Spectrum Disorder, Other Health Disabilities, Specific Learning Disability, etc.) that may have some similar characteristics of students with E/BD tendencies.

Nationally during the 2018-19 school year over 66% of students between the ages of 6-21 receiving Special Education services were male. In that same age category, 72% of students receiving services for Emotional Disturbances were male. (National Center for Educational Statistics). In Minnesota the access to data specifically comparing male and female students with E/BD is limited. The Minnesota Department of Education does report that during the 2019-20 school year 66.9% of students receiving Special Education services were male. They also report that during the 2018-19 school year that male students account for 85 percent of all students who experience school seclusion. More statistics from the Minnesota Department of Education state that "Male students have comprised a greater proportion of students receiving special education services and a greater proportion of students experiencing physical holding since the 2011-12 school year. Sixty-seven percent of students receiving special education services in the 2018-19 school year were males and 33 percent females, a ratio of approximately two males to every female. During the same time period, approximately 83 percent of the students experiencing physical holds were male and 17 percent were female, a ratio of 4.9 males

to every female”

(education.mn.gov/mdeprod/idcplg?IdcService=GET_FILE&dDocName=MDE032062&RevisionS, retrieved on July 17, 2020). During the 2018-19 school year it was reported that there were 1075 staff injuries and 207 student injuries related to physical holds. The data goes on to show that 45.5% of the students who experienced a physical hold qualified for Emotional/Behavioral Disorders.

Research Questions

Given the growing population of students with E/BD, with the vast majority being male, and the fact that the vast majority of the general and special education teaching staff is predominantly female, prompted the research questions for this thesis. How does the gender of teachers affect the education of students with emotional and behavioral disorders? There are many similar questions that come out of this question that this paper will explore including, Is it important for male students with E/BD to have a male teacher? Can men have a different and/or more helpful impact on students with E/BD than a female teacher? Is the student-teacher relationship important in the success of male students with E/BD if gender doesn't play a role?

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Students with Emotional/Behavioral Disorders Struggle in School

Even when students are identified and receive services, life and school are still difficult for them. Students with E/BD are likely to struggle in academic areas. Scott, Jolivette, Ennish, and Hirn (2012) point out that students with E/BD have a higher prevalence of academic deficits in reading and math. Madyun (2008) explains that students not exhibiting E/BD behaviors are likely to have test scores that are twice as high as students with E/BD symptoms. Students with E/BD also have great difficulty initiating, establishing, and maintaining relationships with their peers and adults which includes teachers. Mihalas (2009) supports this by stating that the primary characteristic of E/BD is difficulty with interpersonal relationships. Baker (2005) points out that students with E/BD are less liked in school; they are more likely to be less satisfied or feel less connected to school than other students. Depending on the student, it is difficult to tell when behaviors are a result of struggling in academics, and whether the child chooses to act out or display emotions because of that.

Measuring Success for Students with Emotional/Behavioral Disorder

With all of the personal challenges students with E/BD face, it can be difficult to measure success. Scott, Jolivette, Ennish, and Hirn (2012) define it this way, “Clearly, for many of these students success will not be defined by college admission or even graduation. Rather, the outcomes by which we judge success will more reasonably be

consistent employment, independent living, or even maintaining the conditions of parole” (2012, p. 3).

Even with that definition, success is difficult to obtain for many of these students. Students with E/BD aren't as likely to go on to graduate from high school, attend a post-secondary institution, or maintain a stable career. Students with E/BD are also more likely to fail more courses, have more absences, drop out of school, have a lower Grade Point Average, and be convicted of a crime (Scott, Jolivette, Ennish, and Hirn, 2012).

Defining “Teaching Effectiveness” for Students with Emotional/Behavioral Disorders

Scott, Jolivette, Ennish, and Hirn (2012) examined and defined variables related to “effectiveness” in teaching practices by reviewing published literature. This article mainly examines specific traits of teachers, instructional variables, and management variables when working with students with Emotional/ Behavioral Disorders (E/BD). The authors pointed out that effectiveness is difficult to define. Effectiveness for students with E/BD is related to the outcomes for each individual student, and is dependent on what they are capable of and/or what is appropriate for them as individuals. The authors also looked into teaching methods that provided the best probability for success for multiple students.

Looking at teacher variables, the authors stated that it is difficult to define exactly what an effective teacher is. The authors emphasized the importance of the teacher-student relationship to maximize the probability of success. The authors pointed

out some characteristics of effective teaching, but stated that teaching is “more as an art than a science, that is we think we know it when we see it, but we have not been able to define, measure or teach it, while this is an area of further study, effective teaching continues to be best assessed by student outcomes.” (p.4)

Scott, Jolivette, Ennish, and Hirn (2012) stated that not every strategy can work for all students, but it’s important to look at what strategy has the highest probability of success based on teacher skill set and the individual student. Effective instruction includes “teacher modeling and demonstration, facilitation of student engagement, selection and sequencing of teaching examples, consistent feedback, and formative assessment” (p.4) as effective instructional practices, but that these strategies need to be individualized to the current students that a teacher has.

The last area this study examined was management variables. The authors pointed out that managing behavior is a significant responsibility for the E/BD teacher. A teacher who is skilled in classroom management has procedures in place that promote student success. In order to have effective management the teacher must be familiar with a variety of strategies and can apply them as needed. The effectiveness of these strategies is always assessed by examining student outcomes. However, it is difficult to determine how to measure these outcomes, and how to compare them across students.

Relationships with Students with Emotional/Behavioral Disorders

When teachers are trained to work with individuals who have been identified as having E/BD, one of the first things they should learn is that relationship and trust is

critical when working with these students. Mihalas, Morse, Allsopp, and McHatton (2009) say that for students who lack close positive adult role models, teachers often become an important model of behaviors and values that lead to success, both in school and in life, and their impact can be more direct than that of parents. Teachers serve a critical role in the life of a student with E/BD. The accumulated time that a teacher spends with a student during the school years can make them the primary care workers for young people (Mihalas, Morse, Allsopp, and McHatton 2009). This isn't easy, especially as students enter middle and high school.

The structure of secondary schools makes it difficult for students to connect with individual staff members. Secondary school structure places emphasis on academic achievement, and students learn from multiple teachers. Students with EBD have less opportunity to develop relationships with individual staff members. This structure along with a greater emphasis on academics make it difficult for relationships to form. Concerns about the impact on student performance have been present in the literature for years. Kerr and Zigmond (1986) conducted a study of 244 general and special education high schools, looking at the values and expectations of teachers. Results showed that overall, teachers valued academic achievement, study skills, and positive classroom behavior instead of interpersonal and problem solving skills. This can create problems for students with E/BD. In some ways education has improved at developing relationships with a holistic approach to learning, but in some ways the focus on academic achievement continues to be a higher value for some educators.

Teachers today continue to feel the pressure of having their students achieve academic success working towards college readiness as well as achieving academic standards required by state education departments. Mihalas et. al (2009) point out that teachers are overall unprepared to meet the needs of students with EBD. They go on to argue that with the implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), which emphasizes subject disciplines over pedagogy hurts the level of relationship that an student with EBD requires. The NCLB also appeared to have limited teachers ability to collaborate with each other regarding at risk students. Instead teachers experience isolation concerning themselves with their own classes and content. This can cause a student with EBD to feel disconnected from school and teachers. They argue that schools should “create a school climate that values and emphasizes caring (p. 110).

Schoolwide Strategies

Many schools are realizing that relationships are critical and actually enhance academic success. A number of schools have implemented Positive Behavior Intervention Strategies into their school culture. “A positive pathway to target childrens’ social, emotional, and behavioral adjustment may also work by enhancing teacher well-being, for example, by implementing school wide positive behavior support strategies’ (Breeman et al. 2015, p. 99). These school wide strategies assist with all students, but it is helpful if students with E/BD don’t feel like these strategies are meant specifically for them. Madyun and Lee (2008) found that students with E/BD are more likely to struggle with peer relationships in school because they are less likely to share

physical spaces with their peers. When these strategies are implemented school-wide, it provides a more inclusive setting for students with E/BD.

Madigan, Cross, Smolkowski, and Stryker (2016), in their study arguing that there is academic achievement for all students in schools that implement PBIS, reference a governmental definition of PBIS as

a systematic approach to embed evidence-based practices and data-driven decision making to improve school climate and culture, including a range of systemic and individualized strategies to reinforce desired behaviours and diminish reoccurrence of problem behaviours, in order to achieve improved academic and social outcomes and increase learning for all students, including those with the most complex and intensive behavioural needs (p. 404).

The use of these strategies focus on the instruction of positive behaviors that replace some of the negative behaviors. This allows for increased instruction time. This implementation does require time and training to be effective.

Lewis et al. (2017) argues that the implementation of a PBIS model could drastically save taxpayer money compared to what it costs for consequences of students behavior. “Suspension is exceedingly costly for taxpayers and society, given that a single dropout costs taxpayers \$163,340 (in terms of possible incarceration and social services) and society \$527,695 (in terms of loss of productivity) (p.2-3). They go on to argue that even a 1% reduction in suspension rates could save an “estimated \$11 billion in tax revenue and \$35.7 billion in potential lost productivity”(p.3).

The other strong argument for the implementation of PBIS, in addition to the potential of saving society a significant amount of money, is that there is academic achievement for all students. Madigan, Cross, Smolkowski, and Stryker (2016) completed a study comparing 21 schools that strongly implemented a PBIS program compared to 28 schools that didn't implement a PBIS program or used a very limited form of it in Fayette County in Kentucky. The study took baseline academic achievement scores from the previous five school years before the implementation of PBIS as well as comparing results after four years of implementation. The results show schools that implemented PBIS "grew at a faster rate and ended substantially higher than for students who attended comparison schools (p.416)." They also note that there have been previous students that didn't show as much growth, but they believe the main reason is that previous students didn't have the duration of data that they examined.

Lewis et al. (2017) examined data and previous studies regarding PBIS schools and how effective they can be for students with EBD or who are at-risk of EBD. They argue that PBIS does a better job at monitoring all students to where some monitoring systems allow students to fly under the radar and possibly not receive interventions. They go on later to say "Taken as a whole, these studies demonstrate that SWPBS (PBIS) has emerging empirical evidence on the positive impact on social and academic behaviors for students with and at risk for EBD" (p.5).

At times, even though school-wide interventions are put into place and teachers are trying to make an effort to build relationships with students, students with E/BD still

struggle. “Unfortunately, students who need caring and support the most are often the ones who outwardly seem to reject it” (Mihalas et al. 2009, p. 111). Mihalas et al. goes on to state that despite seemingly rejecting their teachers, students with E/BD still want to know and be known by them. Mihalas et. al. (2009) go on to state that the major themes of importance identified by students with EBD were quality relationships, care, and respect. Whether students feel supported emotionally by educators can be a pivotal component of success in regards to social skills and academics. The authors go on to argue that educators' belief and expectations of students with EBD have great influence to assist or potentially be detrimental to student success depending on the implementation.

Individual Strategies

Even though it can be difficult and challenging to work with students with E/BD, it still needs to be done. It needs to be done to not only benefit students individually, but also the entire school environment. Although there is no single solution to the multifaceted issue of effectively educating children and adolescents with EBD, an important step that schools can take is to create a school climate that values and emphasizes caring. There are many interventions and strategies that can be implemented. Madyn and Lee (2008) point out that research shows that E/BD interventions work best when a social support component is included. Madigan, Cross, Smolkowski, and Stryker (2016) in their description of commonalities for PBIS programs show that educators should treat specific behaviors as learning opportunities using common positive language while instructing the positive behavior.

It can be difficult for teachers to know exactly what strategies to implement to show caring towards students. Different strategies work for individual students and may not work for other students. My college professor is famous for saying “no strategy works 100% of the time with an E/BD student” (Dr. S. Kaatz, personal communication, 2013). Teachers could try something one day that may work with a student, come back the next day, attempt the same strategy with a different student, and see completely different results. The same strategy may not even work on the original student on a different day, depending on many variables. Mihalas et al. explain it this way, “Given the diversity of students with EBD, the multitude of life histories and current ecologies it is no wonder that there is no one process that effectively addresses all students’ social emotional, and behavioral needs” (2009, p.115).

Instead of troubleshooting strategies, it is helpful to look at things from the perspective of the student with E/BD. Capern and Hammond (2014) looked at what students with E/BD said was important to them to build relationships with their teachers. Here is a list of 10 Behaviors exhibited by teachers that students with EBD identified as contributing to the development of positive relationships with their teachers:

1. Do not discriminate against specific students due to race, ability level, etc.
2. Be patient with me
3. Be able to take a joke
4. Listen if I have something to say
5. Give equal attention and praise amongst students

6. Treat me with respect
7. Be willing to explain things again
8. Give me a chance to explain myself
9. Tell me nicely when I make a mistake
10. Enforce rules fairly

Students with E/BD seemed to place greater significance on practices that encouraged personal relationships with their teachers such as “listening, patience, and understanding” (2014, p. 61). This coincides with other studies concerning students with E/BD.

Mihalas et al. (2009) said only a small number of studies have researched ways to improve relationships between teachers and students to support social, emotional, and academic outcomes. They later go on to reference Murray (2002) with recommended practices that teachers can use when working with adolescents with EBD including

Developing supportive relationships with students, using social skills instruction that help students learn skills for developing positive relationships with adults, learning about students’ backgrounds, interests, and lives, increasing one’s awareness of biases one has regarding students ethnicity, culture, and gender and how they can affect one’s interactions with students, modeling appropriate behavior and expecting students use appropriate behavior (2009, p. 115).

These are very general practices that can be difficult to implement at times, but simply being aware of these general practices can assist in working with students with E/BD.

Being aware of biases is immeasurably important when it comes to connecting with students. If a student feels disrespected, it will take a significantly longer time, if ever, for that student to trust an individual teacher or educational staff. Scott (2012) described that students with emotional/behavioral disorders as being especially strong willed when it comes to being disrespected. Many of these feelings or grudges can last for an extended period of time or possibly for the duration of the relationship.

Students need to feel that their teachers respect and are speaking up for them. This is good advice for teachers looking to build relationships with students. The basis of being a caring/respectful teacher of students with emotional/behavioral disorders is taking on the role of a spokesperson for them (Mihalas et al. 2009). If a teacher is aware that this is important to students, they can start to put it into action. “The demonstration of authenticity, trustworthiness, and affirmation of the dignity of students with E/BD are essential ingredients to developing relationships with them.” (2009, p. 117). These actions will build trust, which can also make up for mistakes that teachers may make in the future. Students are willing to cooperate when they feel that their teachers have made the effort to know/understand them. This is especially critical for students with E/BD. Students with E/BD often engage in behaviors that others find to be aversive, strange, or contrary to typical social norms, which can lead to rejection by peers and teachers.

As a relationship with a student with E/BD grows, teachers can start to develop different academic and behavioral strategies that can help set them up for success. When planning these strategies, it is important to have the student involved in the process.

Mihalas suggests relationships between students with E/BD and teachers are strongest when the two parties work together in the planning and decision making process relating to the students' education. These discussions will also continue to build relationships which in turn will lead to academic and social victories in the classroom. It is also important to collect data to show students visually that they are making progress. These students don't often have success in academic areas, so it is helpful to acknowledge it. It is imperative to celebrate successes of E/BD students in the area of their goals (Mihalas et al. 2009). It is also beneficial to teach students to do this themselves. "When students with E/BD experience success through learning, monitor their learning, and have a voice regarding their learning goals, such collaborative teacher-student experiences foster relationship building" (2009, p.119). It is difficult during the busyness of teaching to take the time to do this practice. It is recommended that educators have pre planned meetings with their students to develop relationships to celebrate these successes as well as assist in organization and individual educational skills. The process can relieve a lot of anxiety and fear of the unknown for the student, as well as give them something to look forward to, especially if that relationship is supportive for the student.

One difficult thing that many teachers, especially E/BD teachers, experience is the difficulty of being available for these students at any given moment. It is imperative to keep planned meeting times to maintain trust with students. It is at times challenging for students to see situations from other perspectives, and it can be a hindrance to maintain or build relationships if trusted teachers are unavailable. Students should be taught

strategies that work for them when a trusting adult is unavailable. Mihalas et al.(2009) advocated that journaling can be a positive strategy for students to maintain and later share with their teachers. Journaling is also a great way for students to monitor and reflect on their behavior and decision making. It is not supposed to be an academic activity for points, but more of an organization and communication tool for the student to have. This is a safe and effective strategy for students to implement, even later in life, when trusted individuals aren't there to support them. The hope would be that these students would be able to develop different supportive relationships with individuals after they leave school.

One of the best things that a teacher can do for students with E/BD is to build and maintain relationships with them. Capern and Hammond (2014) share that research shows that students with E/BD care more about feeling supported than having a content knowledgeable teacher. Most E/BD students want to feel heard, cared about, and understood by their teachers.

It takes special individuals to work as teachers, especially as E/BD teachers. Poplin and colleagues (2011) reported from a study of effective teachers in high need schools that the most effective teachers were “direct, strict, deeply committed, and respectful to students” (p. 43).

Impact of Gender

The main purpose of Cushman's (2010) work was to investigate whether male teachers were being prepared for their role as a teacher when it comes to gender-related

issues and learning. The author interviewed 12 male primary school teachers from three different countries (Sweden, England, and New Zealand). Cushman's study asked a variety of questions, but for the purpose of this thesis, the focus will be on Cushman's third question which was related to their opinion on the potential differences in how a male or female teacher may teach.

Cushman found that many of the male participants noted differences in teaching from their female colleagues, but there wasn't a conclusion if these differences were gender related or individual based. The interviews did identify overall differences related to male and female student behaviors and learning in the classroom that fit society's generalization of male and female students in classrooms. The qualitative study doesn't show or measure these related behaviors or achievement, but clarified the perceptions of the male teachers being interviewed and how they saw and executed their role as a male educator. Cushman points out that some of the behaviors that some of the teachers described when engaging male students could overall be more detrimental to their educational performance.

Cushman acknowledged that this study did have a small sample size and that this topic warrants more research, to improve the training of teachers in how to assist in gender-related issues and education. Cushman also questioned policies related to more gender equity.

Gender and Relationships

There are many factors that go into educational performance, but as we have already examined, relationships are a critical component to student success. Split et al. (2012) elaborate that it is more natural for boys to have more energy and be more aggressive than girls which could lead to more negative relationships with a teacher. This may be one explanation as to why girls are outperforming boys in school. Another researcher, Sternod (2011) points out that boys tend to have poorer self-regulation skills and exhibit more antisocial behavior than girls.

This lack of skills can hinder academic performance. Many argue that boys would benefit more from supportive relationships with their teachers. Split et al. express that boys are believed to be more influenced by the quality of relationships with teachers than girls because boys are more likely to have socio-behavioral and academic difficulties throughout primary school. So while boys may be more hindered by poor relationships with teachers, they are also believed to profit most from supportive relationships. However, primary school teachers consistently report poorer relationships with boys than girls. For instance, research shows that boys have more instances of conflict and less closeness with teachers during their primary school years than girls. (Sternod 2012).

Boys with Emotional/Behavioral Disorder

According to the National Center for Education Statistics during the 2018-19 school year there were 7.1 million students receiving special education which is about 14% of the population. The Minnesota Department of Education reports that about 16.6% of their public school students qualify for Special education services. Of the

national 7.1 million students receiving special education services 5% of them qualified under the disability category of Emotional Disturbance. For the state of Minnesota, over 11% of their students receiving Special Education services qualified under the primary disability category of E/BD. For all students in the United States (ages 6-21 years old) who receive services for E/BD, about 72% of them were boys during the 2018-19 school year.

The underachievement in many areas for males in school and the lack of male teachers naturally poses the question: would more male teachers help in improving male student performance? Sternod pointed out, “The “gender gap” that supposedly exists at all levels of schooling between overachieving female students and underperforming males, and the perceived need for more male teachers to serve as role models in the United States has been steady and constant” (2011, p. 268).

Multiple western countries have examined this question in hopes of improving male student performance. Skelton stated, “The relatively low number of male teachers in primary schools has become increasingly seen by governments across the western world as a matter of real concern” (2003, p. 195). With the apparent absence of male role models, governments from England, Australia, and the USA have pushed for more male teachers to assist with behavior in hopes for better academic achievement among male students. These initiatives have hopes of forming healthy/appropriate masculinity and to assist with a more positive attitude toward school. Skelton describes the United

Kingdom's hopes to change the narrative that being unengaged in academic activities is more popular.

Feminization of Education

A theory related to the push for more male teachers in education has to do with the "Feminization of Education." The definition of the concept of "Feminization of Education/Teaching" varies depending on the source, but it generally has to do with the lack of male teachers in schools, leading schools to value characteristics that are typically associated with females. Majzub and Rais (2010) explained feminization of teaching is specifically referring to the disproportionate amount of male teachings in schools which leads to a school/classroom culture more traditionally to that of female personalities.

Some argue that this concept leads to the overrepresentation of boys in special education, especially overrepresented under the label of E/BD. Many in the general public and policy makers believe that providing more male teachers could potentially improve the educational system through improving the performance of young males. Skelton described her view this way, "An essentialist line of reasoning would be: boys do not do well at school because there are too many women teachers who do not understand the particular needs of boys and whom boys cannot relate to, therefore the answer is to increase the number of men primary teachers" (2012, p. 2-3). Skelton went on to explain this line of thinking referencing the Department for Education and Employment, in that legislators believe that simply having more male educators would limit or possibly reverse feminised cultures of elementary schools.

The idea that having more male staff members in education is better seems to be a view of the general public and even school administration. Cushman found that “35% of principals admitted that, all things being equal between a male and female applicant, they would be more likely to appoint the man. Principals stated that pressure from parents and the community to provide boys from sole-parent families with male role models contributed to a favoring of male job applicants” (2007 p. 87).

We again come back to the question: do males really help increase the performance of boys? Cushman (2010) points out that the public believes that overall men act and educate differently than their female counterparts. Another belief of the public is that this presumed style of education will automatically improve male student engagement and performance in the classroom. These are often assumed, but haven't been proven.

Boys typically learn in more engaging ways as referenced earlier. Many people make assumptions that a male might be better to teach in this type of matter. Majzub and Rais (2010) argue that male students perform better during kinesthetic learning activities which may be executed better by a male educator. When thinking about the overrepresentation of males receiving E/BD services, could male teachers assist in teaching appropriate behaviors or processing emotions? It is difficult to say which style may benefit the needs of each individual boy that struggles with characteristics of E/BD. It is a traditional view that male teachers often have a more disciplinarian style of

teaching and female teachers are more nurturing by nature. A more disciplinary style may assist in redirecting behaviors that come up in the classroom.

As far as emotions go, there are stereotypes that female teachers are more nurturing/mothering which can be beneficial for students demonstrating emotional difficulties. One study found that boys reported a preference for male teachers, while girls preferred the involvement of female teachers (Martin and Marsh, 2005).

Impact of Teacher Gender

Martin and Marsh (2005) investigated student motivation and engagement, and how teacher gender played a role compared to student gender. They studied 964 Australian students from 8th and 10th grade, having them complete a “Student Motivation and Engagement Scale” which also included items related to subject enjoyment and teacher- student relationship. The study looked at 16 variables related to motivation, engagement, and educational outcomes.

The results of the survey showed that girls scored higher in the areas of self-efficacy, mastery orientation, valuing subject, planning, study management, persistence, anxiety, failure avoidance, uncertain control, self-handicapping, disengagement, educational aspirations, enjoyment of the subject, class participation, and teacher-student relationship. The only category that boys scored higher was academic resilience. Overall boys rated their relationships with male and female teachers close to equal. Girls rated their relationships with female teachers better than their relationships with male teachers. The study found that overall motivation for boys and girls wasn't

impacted by teacher gender. The authors concluded that it was pedagogy of the instructor and not the gender that determined student success and motivation.

The authors discussed that their findings contradict society's assumptions that male teachers can create more engagement/motivation for male students. The authors said that research should be done at different levels of education, not just grades 8 and 10. The authors also noted that it may be possible that "boys prefer male teachers when dealing with emotional and personal issues just as girls may prefer female teachers on this count"(p. 332).

Student Motivation

In public education and society we are often reminded that motivation is a key factor in student success. Teachers often say that a student is capable, but simply unmotivated. There is also the scenario where students may have some difficulties for a variety of reasons and give up easily at the first roadblock they come to. A warm teacher-student relationship increases motivation. Student achievement is higher when interactions between a student and a teacher are more positive than negative (Hughes, Luo, Kwok, & Lloyd, 2008).

This emotional security that a student displays allows them to excel in several areas. It can improve their cooperation and conduct in the classroom. "Students who experience an accepting and warm relationship with their teachers will be more capable and motivated to comply with classroom rules and teacher expectations" (Hughes, Luo, Kwok, & Lloyd, 2008, p. 3). This allows the teacher to maintain high expectations

academically and behaviorally in the classroom to allow the student or whole class to improve drastically.

Students who are motivated and engaged in the classroom typically do not have as many conduct problems. This allows the teacher and the rest of the class to function more efficiently. It provides the class opportunities to move on to additional content or the ability to teach the material in a variety of ways and thus allows students to improve academic achievement.

Teacher-child relationships that display warmth and closeness can have positive effects on cooperation, participation, engagement, emotional security, motivation, and confidence which leads to better student achievement. Contrastingly, students who experience conflictual or negative relationships with their teachers would have reverse effects. Hughes et al. explains that “a negative teacher-student relationship to elicit negative emotions in children that interfere with attention and self-regulation. However, supportive relationships may create positive moods that promote effective problem-solving, regulation, and positive interactions (2008, p. 6).

Negative/conflictual relationships make it much more difficult for students to achieve academically. This problem is even worse when students have a disability. This disability could be an emotional/behavioral disorder and a specific learning disability in the area of content being taught. You could make the argument that students who have negative relationships are more likely to develop emotional/behavioral disorders.

The teacher-child relationship is significant for both genders of students, but it seems to have a different impact for each gender. As most educators would guess, boys have more difficulty with having a quality relationship with their teachers. Stipek and Miles (2008) indicate that studies show that girls tend to be more social overall compared to boys, as well as having less negative interactions with their teachers. According to the Minnesota Department of Education, during the 2018-19 school year, male students accounted for over 70% of the disciplinary actions.

Being that boys typically have more conflictual/negative teacher-child relationships seems to affect their school performance. One study found that low warmth was associated with lower academic performance for boys, but not for girls (Split, Hughes, Wu, Kwok, 2012). They also found that when conflict persisted over time it led to significantly worse achievement. These studies seem to suggest that teacher-child relationships are particularly critical for boys' academic success. Stipek and Miles (2008) concluded that, because relationships appear to play a critical role for a student's performance, teachers need to go above and beyond to instill positive relationships with male students who are prone to more behaviors.

Regardless of gender, it is clear that there are a lot of factors that impact learning. Schools across the world continuously adjust to new theories of education, including styles and techniques. Techniques must be combined with building positive relationships with students. Split et al. explained that, "It is crucially important not only to focus intervention efforts on children's academic abilities but also to attend to the teacher-child

relationship as a key social context in which teaching and learning occurs” (2012, p. 1192).

Men may be Better

Majzub and Rais (2010) did a study in Malaysia looking into the underachievement of boys as it relates to teacher gender. The goals of the study were to examine the potential importance of role modeling as teachers, the effectiveness of male teachers vs female teachers in the education of boys, the use of matching teaching style for specific gender of students, co-education vs single gender education, perceptions of increasing male teacher recruitment, and preference of teacher gender. This was a qualitative study which interviewed 40 secondary school teachers with more than five years of teaching experience. The researchers used a protocol called the “Perception towards Male Teachers Protocol” to gather findings.

The study found that the majority of responders agreed that there is an importance of role modeling in teaching and learning, and most respondents agreed that male teachers can assist in modeling behavior for male students. There were mixed results regarding whether male teachers were more or less effective as teachers; some believed they can be more effective for male students and some believed that they can even be less effective. The majority of the respondents reported that they didn’t change their teaching styles specifically for gender, but that they taught to the general qualities and interests of their students. The majority of the teachers interviewed believe that co-education is

overall better for students compared to single gender education in looking at the students' overall development.

The majority of the respondents welcomed the idea of recruiting more males in university teaching education programs, but some disagreed with the fairness of some of the recruiting strategies. The interviewees were split regarding the question identifying whether they would want their own children taught by a male or female teacher. Answers varied, often referencing generalizations of males or females, while some were neutral, referencing personal qualities and pedagogy of the teacher. The authors concluded that more research is needed to understand boys' underachievement in schools. The authors also indicated the need for professional development to help teachers understand unique gender differences among students in learning.

Previous government initiatives have been based on ideas and assumptions that increasing the number of male teachers in school would be beneficial, especially when it comes to working with boys. It was this assumption that led the author to this thesis content. Cushman stated, "The first assumption is that men teachers behave and teach differently from their female colleagues. The second is that men teachers' position as role models increases the engagement and subsequent academic achievement of students, particularly boys." (2010, p. 1211).

Majzub and Rais point out, "Boys tend to benefit from more active learning experiences more effectively conducted by male teachers" (2010, p. 686). This thesis author believes "more effectively" are the key words in this statement. Effective

classroom management, relationships, and teaching depend a lot on the individual teacher and individual students. Positive and conflictual relationships between students and teachers are based on many different variables.

Men Are Not Better

The main purpose of the study by Jak, Koomen, Spilt (2012) was to investigate the relationships between teachers and students, to see if there were differences between the relationships for male and female teachers with male and female students. This study took place in the Netherlands, and the Student-Teacher Relationship Scale was employed to measure teacher perceptions of their relationships with individual students. It has been demonstrated that boys tend to struggle more in school and that often have poorer relationships with their teachers than girls. There is also a disproportionate number of female teachers compared to male teachers, especially in primary schools. This study examined whether it would be beneficial to have more male teachers in primary schools and if their relationships with male students would be better than those of female teachers, possibly enhancing the education of the male students. A questionnaire was given to teachers in the Netherlands to examine their relationships with male and female students.

The results indicated that female teachers had better relationships with both male and female students overall. While female teachers did have better relationships with female students than male students, male teachers also had better relationships with female students than male students. The researchers discussed that these results could be

due to the fact that the description of a “good student” has more stereotypical female qualities than male qualities. The results indicated that there may be a problem with expectations of male students in school. This could also be linked to why there aren’t more male teachers in schools. Split et al. stated, “The findings challenge society’s presumption that male teachers have better relationships with boys than women teachers” (2012, p. 365).

Difficult to Measure and Prove. It is difficult to measure whether student achievement is specifically related to a teacher’s gender. Studies attempting to examine this relationship are generally based on teacher reports of different components of relationship with students, as well as student reports regarding their relationships with teachers. Most studies were intended to address assumptions that gender matching students with teachers could improve student performance, especially male student performance. Sternod (2011) discussed that there is a lot of research indicating that the gender of the teacher has minimal influence on motivation or engagement in the classroom for students.

Female Teachers have Better Relationships

Based on limited research and studies, there is evidence that female teachers are overall more effective in regards to relationships. Female teachers have reported more positive relationships with students, both male and female. When focusing on the aspect of relational closeness, female teachers reported more closeness with students (both boys and girls) than male teachers. Female teachers also reported more closeness with girls

than boys, indicated by a positive correlation between student gender and student-level closeness, but this gender difference was not found for male teachers (Split et al. 2011, p.). Male teachers are stereotypically seen more as disciplinarians when compared to nurturing female teachers, so one may assume that there would be less student behaviors in a male teacher classroom. Additionally, students of female teachers had significantly better grades in language and history.

Gender Matching Education is Not Beneficial for Boys

It has been suggested that using gender matching in education would assist in improving male student achievement. Overall, studies examining relationship scales filled out by students and teachers don't seem to support this conclusion. Cushman (2010) pointed out that others have argued traditional masculinities exhibited by male educators could assist more energetic male students, but she argues that some of these masculinities in combination with a male educator can hurt the overall performance of male students. Sternod (2011) showed that qualities that make a "good student" may be more typical for girls. Intriguingly, the most conflictual relationships in this study were found between boys and male teachers. He also found that female teachers reported more closeness with girls than boys, but this gender difference was not found for male teachers. Martin and Marsh (2010) stated that male students overall rate teachers equally based on gender, but female students rate female educators higher in terms of relationship than male educators.

Researchers have also looked into areas of conflict between students and teachers. Split et al. (2011) pointed out that both female and male teachers reported less conflict with girls than boys, and both male and female teachers reported more conflictual relationships with boys than with girls. Additionally, female teachers also reported fewer close relationships with boys. Based on their research, it is suggested that gender matching may only be beneficial for female students, possibly because female teachers and female students are both socialized to cultivate nurturing relationships. Cushman (2010) summarized the current research regarding gender matching for male students concluding that there is very little evidence that a shortage of male teachers is related to any deficits in academic outcomes.

Assumptions of Feminization of Education

Christine Skelton (2012) from the University of Birmingham in the United Kingdom wrote an Education Review examining research conducted in the area of male teaching shortages in primary education, and how shortages relate to male student underachievement. She also examined assumptions of male and female teachers in primary education. Her review included an historical look at the male teaching population in primary education including the more recent theory about the feminization of education. Skelton broke this down into multiple aspects. She looked at statistical feminisation which refers to the number of women teachers compared to men, cultural feminisation which refers to the educational environment bias towards females, and backlash feminisation which is “where there is a criticism of the feminist movement

itself and accusations that it has created today's inequalities in education and schooling"(p.9).

When examining the decreasing number of male teachers, she found that there haven't been many male teachers for some time, and that the decreasing numbers have been occurring for over one hundred years. The reasons for this vary, but overall she argued that there were cultural connotations that teaching wasn't valuable work for men to pursue, and teaching wasn't considered to be a place where men could prove their "manliness". Although this trend has been happening for an extended period of time, it is only due to male student's recent lack of achievement that this issue has caught the attention of society and policy makers.

Skelton went on to explore some other assumptions and concerns related to the "feminisation of education" movement. She looked at the assumption that 'feminisation' of primary teaching is damaging the profession, and unpacked the lack of data to prove that the notion of "feminisation of education" is actually detrimental. She argued that it is difficult to demonstrate that femininity is inferior to masculinity, so this theory is only based on assumption. The second concern regarding the "feminisation of education" that she examined was that it is harmful to young male students. Skelton pointed out that there is a cultural fear that more and more boys will be dependent on maternal care and there may be a "sissification of boys" in society, which can lead to perceived difficulties when dealing with conflicts outside of school. Skelton pointed out that this assumes that female teachers generally don't understand boys, and are incapable of bonding and being

a role model for boys . It also assumes that male teachers understand boys much better, are able to bond and create relationships, and are willing and able to be a role model for male students in a way that will automatically lead to higher academic achievement.

Finally, Skelton points out the oversimplification of solutions involving targeted recruitment of just male teachers. She explained that there exists a cultural perception of an appropriate amount of masculinity desired in teaching candidates, but that it is difficult or even impossible to measure the amount of masculinity/femininity for teaching candidates. Candidates' masculinity/femininity varies drastically, and there are many other factors that would define an ideal candidate. Aside from the issue of measuring, there isn't any data to prove the appropriate amount of masculinity or that specific qualities or experiences lead to male student achievement. She argues that current thinking about this topic is based entirely on societal assumptions.

Pedagogy/Relationship Driven

As we have explored in earlier sections, there seems to be very little measurable difference between male and female teachers. In fact, published literature seems to show that female teachers may have a slight advantage when it comes to positive relationships with students, which can lead to achievement. Again, this is very difficult to measure, especially at the secondary level where a student has multiple teachers that contribute to their development. One study of student performance as it related to the gender of the teacher found that “teacher gender had no effect whatsoever on the achievement, attitude, or behavior of pupils” (Driessen, 2007, p. 183). So if the limited research shows that

there is little to no difference, what should administrators be looking for when they hire new teachers?

Teddy Roosevelt is credited with a well known quote, “they don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care.” The literature suggests that when administrators are looking for new teachers, they need to be looking for candidates that have the capability to connect with students and use those connections to assist and challenge students to succeed academically and personally. Cushman stated, “Despite the widespread view that boys need male teachers for a variety of reasons, various studies show that students preference of who should teach them has little to do with gender and much to do with sound pedagogical practices and the formation of relationships conducive to effective learning” (2010, p. 1212).

Awareness of personal biases

When thinking about establishing and maintaining relationships with students, it is very important that teachers understand their own attitudes and experiences, as well as how that comes across to other people. We all have different views in regards to gender, race, ethnicity, etc. It is very important to know what our views are and how we practice them in the classroom. Cushman (2010) shows that educators need to be self-aware of their behavioral habits as well as teaching style before there can be any expectation of change. If teachers aren’t willing to be adaptable to student needs, then it is highly unlikely that they will create a relationship conducive to student learning, especially with students that have difficulty forming relationships in the first place.

It is very important that the teacher take the lead in understanding multiple viewpoints. This again comes back to having the ability to connect with students, establish relationships, and maintain those relationships intentionally and strategically with student achievement in mind. This required teaching that is centered around how students learn based on their culture, and not turning students off by teaching based on one's own culture. Cushman explained,

Although policies direct schools to promote gender equity, this state of affairs is unlikely to happen unless teachers are equipped to draw on sound research-based knowledge that enables them to critically reflect on their own gender-related philosophies and strategies and their potential effects (2010, p. 1218).

One of the areas where a teacher should examine their personal views would be in their expectations of each child. Skelton and colleagues (2007) suggested that teachers need to reflect on whether they apply the same expectations to all students and if they respond to boys' and girls' behaviors in a consistent way. Teachers must be able to meet the needs of all students, in a way that respects their individual differences.

Reflection of student population/society

Another consideration when reviewing teaching candidates with great potential should be the demographics of the student population as well as the demographics of the community. Cushman states "that increasing the diversity of the teaching profession to better reflect student and community diversity is undeniably an important equity goal" (2007, p.80). This goal is important to help develop relationships with students of

differing experiences and worldviews. If the teaching population and other school staff provide demographics similar to society and student population, there is a greater chance that a student will have the opportunity to connect. This has played a part in initiatives to increase male teachers in different countries. Sweden's policy for more male educators to more accurately reflect and represent society (Cushman 2010).

Cushman (2010) reminds us that we can't hire male teachers just for the sake of evening the demographics. "Increasing the number of male teachers has the potential to compound current issues around gender and achievement unless the term 'best candidate' is reserved for those men who are prepared to work for social justice and who have the skills and motivation to challenge gender-related issues and deconstruct stereotypes" (2010, p. 1218). Again, administrators need to strive to find candidates that have a great ability to connect with students as well as challenge them to be successful in all areas of student development.

Striving to have a diversified school staff is a great goal to have and Driessen explained further that this should be applied to school administration as well.

There may still be emancipatory motives to pursue a more generally balanced distribution of male and female personnel. This should, however, apply to all functions and not just to teaching or educational support personnel, but also to headteachers and management personnel. That is, a call for both more men in teaching and more women in management should perhaps be made (2007, p. 200).

It is important to have a diversified school staff not only in the area of gender, but also in other areas of demographics that reflect student population and the community.

Ultimately, the primary goal should be what is best for student success.

Cushman (2010) discussed previous research that indicates that students overall want to learn curriculum in relevant ways by a caring and competent teacher. This demonstrates that recruitment of teachers should overall be related to skills and capacity for relationship instead of the gender of the educator.

CHAPTER III: DISCUSSION AND SUMMARY

In education we know that positive teacher/student relationships have a significant impact on student success. Positive relationships that exhibit warmth and closeness can lead to more engagement and motivation for student learning which can increase student achievement. We also have learned that relationships that exhibit levels of conflict can be significantly detrimental for student achievement. Relationships are critical in all areas of life, but they are extremely important for developing students. Given that relationships are so critical to student success, the increasing number of students being diagnosed with Emotional/Behavioral Disorders creates specific challenges, making it much more difficult for these students to establish and maintain relationships with peers and teachers. These difficulties greatly hinder opportunities for these students to be successful (Mihalas et. al, 2009).

Of the students who are diagnosed with Emotional/Behavior Disorders, a vast majority of the students are male. Conversely, the majority of special education teachers who work with students with Emotional/Behavioral Disorders are female (Minnesota Department of Education, 2019). There exist assumptions among the general public and within governments that there should be more male teachers, so that underperforming male students can have an opportunity for more role models to assist in their achievement (Cushman, 2010).

Currently published literature suggests that there is very little difference in regards to relationships with students based on teacher gender. There are studies that

show that female teachers rated their relationships with male students higher than their male counterparts did. Students also rated their teachers very similar and frequently preferred female teachers (Split et al, 2011). Students overall expressed that they wanted a teacher they could connect with, and who could make learning fun. Administrators should ultimately seek and hire teachers that show the ability to connect with students, and who have knowledge in their content areas to assist with student success. These teachers should be aware of their own cultural background, as well as the cultural perspectives of their students, and need to be adaptable in teaching their curriculum in ways that promote student achievement (Cushman 2010).

If administrators have access to multiple candidates who demonstrate the ability to connect with students as well as vast knowledge in their particular content area, then administrators should strive to hire a staff that mirror the demographics of the student population and the surrounding communities. If the demographics are similar, it gives students the opportunity to connect with a staff member which can lead to potentially higher achievement. Having similar school staff demographics to community demographics can also assist broadening the perspective of students which lead to achievement in and beyond school (Cushman, 2010).

Limitations of the Research

The original research question was related to how a male teacher influences male students with emotional/behavioral disorders. My research started by looking at the

number of male students receiving special education services compared to female students. This information was looked at nationally as well as in the state of Minnesota. This information was easily located and continually gets updated. Some of the prevalent research out there is limited in either the amount of students or teachers that were able to participate in each study. It is also a difficult question to fully quantify. Many of the studies included interviews or questionnaires which have merit, but can't provide concrete evidence to the original question.

The next area of research was looking into teacher gender comparisons in different levels/areas of education showing that there are a limited number of male teachers, especially in the areas of Special Education as well as primary schools. There were multiple studies talking about the lack of male teachers in education including potential reasons/history behind these facts. These studies were however, conflicting especially with the theory of the "feminisation" education as well as the potential impacts that it has on students (Skelton, 2012). There were also articles discussing strategies to increase the amount of males in education as well as the pros and cons behind these strategies. This area was difficult to research overall with the studies coming from multiple countries and less from the United States. It is great to have research from multiple countries, but it is difficult when there are different models of education as well as the possibility that gender (and gender roles) may be viewed differently in each society (Cushman, 2010).

Another area that I felt was important to research was information about strategies for working with students receiving services for emotional/behavioral disorders to assist in examining if male or female teachers generally demonstrated some of these strategies more frequently or less frequently. The amount of research on this topic specific to gender is limited. One of the reasons that it is limited is due to many strategies aren't gender specific.

The last area of research that I looked into was related to the relationship that male and female teachers had with students with results coming from students as well as teachers. This may be the only viable way to measure relationships with questionnaires/interviews with the subjects, but this adds to the potential for human emotion and human error to alter results even if the format may be "standardized".

Implications for Future Research

Existing literature related to teacher gender and the potential influence of working with students with emotional/behavioral disorders is very limited, especially in the United States. It would be helpful if future research would look into comparison of male and female special education teachers, as well as effective relationship and teaching strategies for working with male students who struggle with emotional/behavioral disorders. It would also be helpful to examine success based not only on working towards their Individualized Education Plan goals, but also their measured academic success throughout their academic career. This research could also continue with some of these

students into adulthood as we look at the success rate of potential employment, citizenship, and interpersonal relationship success, as well as daily living skills. Results of these suggested studies would help clarify the qualities and practices of teachers working with male students with emotional/behavioral disorders. It is particularly important as mental health diagnoses in the United States continue to increase.

Implications for Professional Application

Overall, this research can remind educators of how to work with students struggling with emotional/behavioral disorders. This research points to the most important aspect of teaching as striving to improve relationships with students to improve their success. This research also demonstrates that it is important to look at and define success for each student based on their individual circumstances, as well as looking at their improvements personally and academically. The research also shows that teachers need more training in working with students with disabilities, as well as strategies to assist male and female students to grow in their academic success. Many teachers felt under trained in gender specific strategies in schools (Mihalas et.al, 2009).

This thesis assists administration during their hiring process. Literature shows that it is important to look at potential teachers regarding their ability to develop and maintain relationships with students, in addition to demographic, background, and knowledge of their content areas. It will also assist administration (general and special education) when assigning students to specific classes and caseloads, by thinking about

the relationship component and attempting to match specific students with teachers that can assist them in their growth.

Overall this research has reaffirmed to me how important my individual relationships are with students with EBD and that it doesn't as much have to do with my gender as much as it has to do with the amount of care and respect that I demonstrate to my students. This level of care and respect does require me to be aware of my own personal experiences and/or biases I may bring into the classroom. This research has reaffirmed how detrimental it can be for a student's success academically as well as socially/emotionally. This research will also encourage me to examine more practices/strategies that go along with implementing a PBIS program in schools. I think that this research would lead to more conversations/recommendations to administrators at the implementation of this program in my school/district.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the published literature ultimately does not suggest that there is any difference in predicted success for male students with emotional/behavioral disorders based on teacher gender. The research for this specific topic is somewhat limited. Research does show that relational skills are essential for assisting students with emotional/behavioral struggles and that teachers should continue seeking professional development to work with this growing student population, as well as strategies for working with male and female students specifically. Administrators should seek teachers

that have the ability to develop and maintain relationships with students based on the individualized demographics, backgrounds, and needs of their students.

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