

It's About Relationship! Recruitment and Retention of Male Students

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Rationale and Background Literature

- School counseling training programs and the profession is shifting toward becoming a female dominated field
- Investigations regarding non-traditional career choices primarily focus attention on women's career choices and influential variables
 - Scarcity of research/literature about men in non-traditional careers
 - Counseling profession has placed little or no value on researching and identifying recruitment and retention strategies to increase the number of male school counselors.
 - Studies involving men who have made career choices to become school counselors would be valuable to the counseling profession

Males in School Counseling

- Counselors can positively influence the aspirations, achievements, goals, and educational plans of students
- Male school counselors extend this influence for male students
 - Serving as positive role models for male students and exemplifying success in higher education.
 - More likely to identify and understand the barriers/obstacle encountered by male students in relation to academic/social success.
- Increasing the number of male school counselors is critical in-order to better serve schools and improve the academic and social success of students.

Purpose

- Purpose of qualitative study was to explore the unique experiences and special needs of male students in school counseling programs
 - Enhance understanding of male student experience
 - Improve recruitment and retention of qualified male candidates.

Research Question

- This study explores the phenomenon of male pursuit of school counseling careers through three primary research questions:
 - What factors influence men to consider and choose the non-traditional career of school counseling?
 - What sources of support or discouragement do male school counseling candidates receive?
 - What is the experience like for men in female dominated training programs?

Methods and Design

- Purposive sampling provided the strategy for selecting participants in this multiple case study.
- A total of 6 master's level students participated
- IRB approval for study was completed at all 3 institutions.

Sampling Procedures

- Identification of participants by training programs was protected initially by assigning each individual an ID number
- Research team members contacted each of the possible participants by phone, informing them of the nature of the research and determining their interest in participation.
- If the student indicated interest, the research team member completed the *Participants Screening Inventory* based upon their interaction with the student.
- Formal screening 4 dimensions
 - Willingness to commit to the entire research process
 - Availability for researcher access
 - Ability to engage in vivid and rich communication
 - Representativeness of diversity through age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, economic culture, ablism, etc.
- The research teams then reviewed all of the possible participants and selected two individuals from each institution to participate.
- Each of the final participants completed the approved consent form.

Data Collection and Analysis

- Archival data (student admission essays) and semi-structured interviews
- Equipment utilized: computers & telephone compatible audio-recording equipment
- Confidentiality
 - Team members interviewed two participants from each of the other training programs
 - No faculty interviewed participants from their own respective training programs.
 - Participants chose a pseudo name at the beginning of the interview, and from this point in the process researchers did not use the unique ID number in an effort to help buffer identities of participant interview responses for faculty.
 - Each team member transcribed the interviews she completed and disseminated the transcriptions to all three researchers.
- Each research team member independently open coded all six of the interview transcripts
- The three primary research questions provided the context for axial coding of the open code units
- Each researcher then accessed all data sources and utilized the axial coding to complete selective coding of both the interview transcripts and the essays

Trustworthiness

- Peer debriefing
- Member check
- Triangulation
- Audit trail

Results

Recruitment-Related Insights

- Influencing Factors
 - Relationships with others (family, past students, colleagues)
 - Self Understanding as gained through reflection and other informal processes
- Messages of Support and Discouragement
 - All six reported receiving some messages of support
 - Support came from those with intimate knowledge of candidate
 - Three candidates reported receiving messages of discouragement
- Most discouragement came from those (professional acquaintances and society) without intimate knowledge of participants
 - society (job prestige, job security, and financial security)
 - social acquaintances that outlined societal drawbacks

Retention-Related Insights

- The minority related experience
 - All mentioned lack of males as a surprise and three revealed surprise particularly because of their personal experience with male School Counselors
- Self Understanding as gained through reflection and other informal processes
 - Learned ability to become more expressive articulated as a strength
 - Surprise at ability to personally “get in touch with feelings”
- Relational Factors that Strengthened Retention
 - Relationships with Faculty
 - Availability
 - Mutual Respect
- Relationships with Peers
 - Appropriate Sharing
- Relational Factors that Weakened Retention
 - Gender and cultural differences (age)
 - Different professional backgrounds
 - Competition
 - Inappropriate boundaries

Conclusion/Discussion