

WHERE HAVE ALL THE MEN GONE? A LOOK INTO  
MEN IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

by

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## ABSTRACT

### WHERE HAVE ALL THE MEN GONE? A LOOK INTO MEN IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

ELIZABETH-ANNE L. WILSON

Male teachers in Early Childhood Education (ECE) have been a subject of controversy. They are viewed by many with suspicion and thought to be lacking in the skills needed to care for young children. Some are advanced quickly into administrative positions or move to teach in the higher grades, in keeping with those views and preconceptions. However, some male teachers remain in early childhood education, in spite of all that is stacked against them. This study examined conditions and experiences that led to the retention of male teachers in ECE. An online survey of 22 questions was created on SurveyMonkey. Using the snowball effect, the link was distributed through email, Facebook, and other various connections throughout the ECE community, and the results were coded and analyzed to create a portrait of successful male teachers in Early Childhood Education and the conditions that need to be in play for them to stay in the profession.

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bettering the lives of both current and future male teachers in Early Childhood Education.

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## Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my late grandmother, Katharine Louise Mason. Her love of education, life, and family has been an inspiration to my life. If I can be even half the woman that she was, I will consider myself lucky.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|                                   |     |
|-----------------------------------|-----|
| ABSTRACT.....                     | iii |
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....             | iv  |
| DEDICATION .....                  | vii |
| CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION .....     | 1   |
| CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW..... | 3   |
| CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY .....      | 20  |
| CHAPTER 4: RESULTS.....           | 25  |
| CHAPTER 5: ANALYSIS .....         | 42  |
| CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS .....      | 48  |
| REFERENCES .....                  | 52  |
| APPENDIX A.....                   | 56  |

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

Male teachers in Early Childhood Education (ECE) have been a subject of controversy. They are viewed by many with suspicion and thought to be lacking in the skills needed to care for young children. Conversely, some view having a male teacher in the classroom is a positive contribution to the education of young children.

The reasons male teachers have kept away from early childhood education are monetary, societal attitudes and pressures, and prejudices (Fagan, 1996; Rodriguez, 1997). Men in ECE face prejudice and biases from society, coworkers, and families of the children with whom they work. These obstacles make it hard to retain men in the ECE workforce.

Out of 1,341,000 people employed in child care in 2007, 5.4% were men (Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), 2007). Out of 667,000 teachers in preschool and kindergarten, 2.7% were men in 2007 (BLS, 2007). Of 2,943,000 elementary and middle school teachers employed in 2007, 19.1% were men (BLS, 2007). Of 1,158,000 secondary school teachers in 2007, 43.1% were men (BLS, 2007). Even a brief analysis of these statistics reveals a pattern: it is predominantly women who work with small children in self-contained classrooms, and men who are more likely to work with students who are adolescents in a departmentalized setting. I began to wonder why the numbers were so different. This is the foundation behind the reason for this study.

For the purposes of this study, Early Childhood Education (ECE) will be defined as education of children under the age of five. Young children will be defined as children under the age of five.

I became interested in looking into the retention of male teachers in ECE four years ago. I have been a teacher of young children for the past seven years and during that time, have only encountered three male teachers in the area in which I live. I began to wonder why I did not encounter more. I feel that it is important for young children to be exposed to both sexes, and, more importantly, that male teachers are just as valuable for the education of young children as female teachers. I was curious as to what made male teachers continue working with young children, in spite of all the reasons why they might leave. Eventually, I decided to base my graduate research on the question: What factors would contribute to the long-term retention of a selected population of male teachers in an early childhood education setting?

The next chapters will examine the literature regarding the foundation of ECE and the role of male teachers in it. Chapter Three presents the methodology by which I collected the data, and Chapter Four provides the results of the survey. Chapter Five offers an analysis of the results. The thesis concludes in Chapter Six with an examination of the limitations of the research and implications for future research.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### *Introduction*

The phrase “male teacher in early childhood education” brings up different issues for different people. Some would see men working with young children as being negative and might ask, “What are his ulterior motives? What is wrong with him? Was he unable to find any other jobs?” Others perceive men occupying such roles as positive because they can provide positive role models for children and bridge gender roles.

This review of the literature will provide a background in the development of early childhood education, focusing on the creation of preschools and kindergartens. The role of teachers (from early childhood to secondary education) will be discussed, including the lack of men in the early childhood field. Along with retention and recruitment, the reasons teachers leave the field and steps being taken to keep them will be explored, including specifically the retention of early childhood teachers. Finally, the concepts discussed will lead to specific issues surrounding male teachers in early childhood education, culminating with the question: What factors would contribute to the long-term retention of a selected population of male teachers in an early childhood education setting?

### *Early Childhood Education*

This section will define early childhood education and those that teach it. It will examine the development of how the views of childhood have changed. Next, the development of nursery/preschools in the United States will be explored along with identifying influential leaders in the field. Finally, the changes of attitudes towards male and female teachers will be discussed.

#### *Definition of early childhood education.*

Early childhood extends from birth to age eight (Browne & Gordon, 2007). Early childhood educators are adults who teach these children in settings which are developmentally appropriate, while recognizing the importance of creating a connection between home and school (Browne & Gordon, 2007). Early childhood is a time period which many educators see as the most important for the development of children into the adults that they will become (Brenner, 1990; Deasey, 1978; Gordon & Browne, 2007; Trawick-Smith, 2000). Because children behave differently (cognitively, emotionally, and behaviorally) than adults, it is important to have a knowledge of why children act the way that they do. This will enable the adults in children's lives to better meet children's needs (Gordon & Browne, 2007; Trawick-Smith, 2000).

#### *History of early childhood education.*

Two pioneers in early child development are Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) and Johann Pestalozzi (1746–1827) (Beatty, 1995; Weber, 1984). Both called for families to let their children be free to develop as naturally as possible (Beatty,

1995; Weber, 1984). Rousseau and Pestalozzi believed children should be able to experience the materials, rather than just learning about them in school environments (Beatty, 1995; Weber, 1984). They differed, however, their view of parental roles in education. Rousseau thought that mothers had too much influence on the children and wanted children to leave the home, not for schooling however, but for education by male tutors so that the children would be unbiased by society (Beatty, 1995). Pestalozzi believed that there should not be a gap between children's home and school life, that they should go hand-in-hand with each other. He emphasized the home culture, which would bring the warm and positive interactions found in children's homes into his schools (Beatty, 1995; Brenner, 1990; Gordon & Browne, 2007; Weber, 1984)

Before the European Renaissance, children were attributed adult-like mannerisms by adults after they reached 7 years old (Trawick-Smith, 2000). Before they were 7 years-old, they were not valued at all (Trawick-Smith, 2000). As time progressed, adults discovered that children did not need to be punished in order to rid them of evil but rather needed to be nurtured (Trawick-Smith, 2000). Fredrick Froebel (1782-1852), who also later developed the idea of kindergarten, introduced the idea that the early years were a time when children were actually in a valuable developmental process, rather than the previous notion that they were fully developed at the age of 7 (Brenner, 1990). Froebel contributed the idea that children did not need to be separated from their home for learning to occur (Brenner, 1990).

School days were split with time at home with teachers and mothers working together to enhance the learning process (Brenner, 1990).

John Dewey (1859-1952) and Maria Montessori (1870-1952) both believed that the environment was a defining factor in how children develop (Beatty, 1995; Brenner, 1990; Gordon & Browne, 2007). Dewey believed that learning should be focused on children and that materials that are provided should have meaning to them, while Montessori believed that there was a correlation between what toys and activities that children were given and the time in their lives that they received the information (Beatty, 1995; Brenner, 1990; Gordon & Browne, 2007).

When the Industrial Revolution started in Europe, people began to worry about the numbers of children who were affected by the growing numbers of parents working away from home (Trawick- Smith, 2000). Schools began to develop ways to teach children, not only cognitive skills, but social skills as well. (Trawick-Smith, 2000). One person who created such schools was Robert Owen (1771-1858) who developed preschools for the children of low-income families, starting with his family's workers (Brenner, 1990). He did so with a mission: 1) older children should be given topics to be learned, 2) play was encouraged, and 3) all children were entitled to happiness which was to be fostered through education (Beatty, 1995; Brenner, 1990). However, while he encouraged play, warmth, and non-academic learning styles, his schools were formal and taught the children in large groups. The main idea behind his schools was that children need to be influenced by social relationships that will contribute to the greater good for society (Beatty, 1995).

Rachel and Margaret MacMillan brought about the first preschool in Europe (Brenner, 1990). This school was open all day and allowed children access to materials such as live animals (Brenner, 1990). Along with health, children were taught pre-academic and personal skills (Beatty, 1995; Brenner, 1990).

Eventually, programs, like Head Start in the United States, were developed to not only help the child but the family as well (Gordon & Browne, 2007; Trawick-Smith, 2000). Head Start, developed in 1964, serves all the developmental aspects of low-income families (cognitive, emotional, and behavioral), with monies coming from the government (Brenner, 1990; Gordon & Browne, 2007).

*Progression of preschools in the United States.*

During the early nineteenth century, two types of schools developed in the United States. These were Infant School and Family School (Beatty, 1995). These developed due to changes in the family life that were occurring at that time (Beatty, 1995). As a result of the industrialization that occurred, men found themselves working outside of the home while women became increasingly in charge of domestic duties (Beatty, 1995). This was different for low-income families (Beatty, 1995). Children were seen to be a drain on the family income, and because of those attitudes, two different schools of thought occurred (Beatty, 1995). Infant Schools were developed with the idea that children needed to be educated outside of the home in schools, in order for mothers to find work, while Family Schools, which took the place of the Infant Schools, put emphasis on the home life, highlighting the role of mother as teacher (Beatty, 1995; Spodek, Saracho, & Davis, 1987). These

schools only lasted a couple of years in the United States, as mothers began to work back in the home but served as stepping stones for the development of preschools in the future (Spodek, Saracho, & Davis, 1987).

In the beginning of the twentieth century, educators were aware of the lack of education of children under the age of 5 (Beatty, 1995). Thus began the private nursery school movement in the United States. As time continued, nursery or preschools began to switch from private to public as the awareness increased of the need for education for not only the children, but also their families (Beatty, 1995). The awareness peaked at the depression era, when many public preschools (or centers) were created to help stimulate the economy by creating jobs for teachers by the government (Beatty, 1995; Spodek, Saracho, & Davis, 1987). When the economy became prosperous again, government officials began closing preschools until World War II, at which time, emergency preschools opened to create places for working women to enroll their children (Beatty, 1995; Spodek, Saracho, & Davis, 1987). When the war ended, the government again withdrew, leaving centers without funding (Beatty, 1995; Spodek, Saracho, & Davis, 1987). This pattern continued until the 1960s, when a national concern for low-income families arose, and with it, came the beginning of the Head Start programs (Beatty, 1995; Spodek, Saracho, & Davis, 1987).

Currently, many different types of preschools and programs exist which provide care for children under the age of 5 throughout the United States. There are child care centers, in which children are cared for outside of home environments, and

there are child care homes, where children are cared for in a home-like environment (Spodek, Saracho, & Davis, 1987). There are half-day programs and full-day programs (Spodek, Saracho, & Davis, 1987). There are programs that feed the children, and there are programs that ask that families provide food (Spodek, Saracho, & Davis, 1987). There are programs that are run by teachers and others that are run by parents (Spodek, Saracho, & Davis, 1987). Some programs only serve infants and toddlers (children under age 3), some only serve preschool-age children (3 to 5 years of age), and some serve school age children (5 years of age and older) or combinations of the ages (Spodek, Saracho, & Davis, 1987). While preschool was developing and creating new ground in the education of children under the age of 5, kindergarten was simultaneously being introduced to the United States and revolutionizing teaching of children over the age of 5.

*Progression of kindergarten in the United States.*

The concept of kindergarten was introduced to the United States in the 1850s by German immigrants but did not really take hold until the 1870s (Beatty, 1995). It was slow to take off due to the hesitancy of advocates in the face of the failure of the Infant Schools (Beatty, 1995). Elizabeth Peabody was the first American to take an interest in the kindergarten movement, whereas previously it had been just considered to be a German-oriented system (Beatty, 1995). The first private kindergarten opened in 1860 in Boston with Peabody at the helm (Beatty, 1995). Seventeen years later, the first public kindergarten opened in St. Louis and over a

hundred years later, all states had kindergarten as a required part of their school systems (Spodek, Saracho, & Davis, 1987).

Because of the age of the children (under 7) who were to be taught in kindergarten, the main concept that was introduced (play as a teaching tool) was different from other forms of education which had previously been presented in the United States (Beatty, 1995). Kindergartens began as a place that would teach children integrity, focusing on the inner development of self but became more concerned with teaching the children academic and social skills (Beatty, 1995). Within the last twenty years, there has been a huge resurgence of teaching young children necessary academic skills (reading, writing, language, and math) (Spodek, Saracho, & Davis, 1987). The skills that were previously taught (creating relationships, encouraging sharing, and interacting with meaningful materials and activities), which focused more on the emotional and social development of children, are now considered not as important to children's future lives as are academic skills (Spodek, Saracho, & Davis, 1987).

The need for highly-trained adults to teach the young children grew as more and more schools and centers opened their doors to teach. The next section(s) will look at how that need was met, and who filled the need.

### *Teaching Population*

This section looks at the representation of teachers at each level of education. It will discuss the statistics and reasons why there is a lack of males in the early childhood education field.

*Female and male representation in schools.*

When looking at the numbers, it becomes obvious that female teachers dominate the lower grades while the relative number of male teachers begins to level out in the upper grades. Out of 1,341,000 people employed in child care in 2007, 5.4% are men (Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), 2007). Out of 667,000 teachers in preschool and kindergarten, 2.7% were men in 2007 (BLS, 2007). Of 2,943,000 elementary and middle school teachers employed in 2007, 19.1% were men (BLS, 2007). Of 1,158,000 secondary school teachers in 2007, 43.1% were men (BLS, 2007).

*Reasons for the lack of male early childhood/elementary education teachers.*

Societal attitudes are thought to be one reason for the under representation of male teachers in early childhood/elementary education (Cunningham & Watson, 2002; Gamble & Wilkins, 1997; Seifert, 1974). A common social perception is that males are thought to be not as competent with young children as females, and therefore, they (male teachers) have come to believe it and act accordingly (Cunningham & Watson, 2002; Gamble & Wilkins, 1997; Seifert, 1974). Male teachers are also thought to be not as warm and affectionate as their female counterparts (Gamble & Wilkins, 1997; Rodriquez, 1997).

Money is another factor in the under representation of male teachers in early childhood education (Gamble & Wilkins, 1997; Seifert, 1974). The chance of promotion and raises are slimmer within the early childhood field so male teachers choose to go to where the possibilities are greater (Rodriquez, 1997; Seifert, 1974).

More males than females are found in administration, and this may be because within the first few years, male teachers may begin to feel compelled to move out of the classroom and into managerial positions, due to societal pressures (Cunningham & Watson, 2002). Administrators may fall prey to outside pressures (monetary responsibilities) and promote male teachers, sometimes without the needed classroom familiarity (Seifert, 1974).

While looking at the teaching population, the absence of teachers also needs to be addressed. With teachers leaving the field for a mixture of reasons, it becomes necessary to discover ways to not only retain the experienced teachers, but to recruit new ones. The next section will address retention and recruitment issues.

### *Teacher Retention and Recruitment*

This section will examine teacher retention and recruitment. It will offer an examination of teacher recruitment as well as the reasons teachers, including early childhood teachers, leave the field and the steps being taken to retain them in the profession. Finally, it will focus on specific issues and retention surrounding male teachers in early childhood education.

#### *Reasons teachers leave the field.*

Teachers leave education (early childhood to secondary) for a variety of reasons. Aside from retirement, other reasons teachers leave K-12 (in no particular order) include money, time to prepare for class, the lack of support they receive during the first few years, and the environments in which they work (Guarino, Santibañez, & Daley, 2006; Mihans, 2008; Mishel, Allegretto, & Corcoran, 2008;

The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future & NCTAF State Partners, 2002; Viadero, 2008). The ratio of teachers leaving for retirement reasons is one-to-three (The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future & NCTAF State Partners, 2002). Within the next 10 years, around 28% of teachers who will leave the field will be leaving due to retirement (The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future & NCTAF State Partners, 2002).

One of the reasons that teachers leave is the lack of support that they feel that they receive from the administrations their school sites (The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future & NCTAF State Partners, 2002; Viadero, 2008). Most teachers want to have a voice in how procedures are carried out at their schools (The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future & NCTAF State Partners, 2002; Viadero, 2008). They also want to feel that they are supported by their supervisors in the decisions that they make in the individual classrooms and that they have opportunities for professional growth (Mihans, 2008; The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future & NCTAF State Partners, 2002; Viadero, 2008).

The lack of guidance for new teachers is another example of lack of support. Beginning teachers are given little support during the first couple of years which is the most critical time in relation to when the most teachers leave (Mihans, 2008; Guarino, Santibañez, & Daley, 2006). Mentoring not only affects new teachers but also experienced teachers (Mihans, 2008). By mentoring beginning teachers, it

allows experienced ones to grow in their skills and to learn new skills from the beginning teachers (Mihans, 2008).

The environment at school sites also plays a contributing role in reasons why teachers leave (Mihans, 2008; Viadero, 2008). Due to decreased prep time, teachers feel separated from their colleagues (Viadero, 2008). The time that would be used to prepare with other teachers and meet about student behaviors is disappearing, due to scheduling limitations (Mihans, 2008; Viadero, 2008). Teachers also need to have adequate supplies and resources to teach with, including small student-to-teacher ratios (Mihans, 2008; Viadero, 2008).

When combined with the other factors as to why teachers leave, money tends to play a large role in the decision-making process (Guarino, Santibañez, & Daley, 2006; Mihans, 2008; Mishel, Allegretto, & Corcoran, 2008). Teachers make about 14% less than others in comparable professions (Mishel, Allegretto, & Corcoran, 2008). Not only do they make less, but there is also a hierarchy of pay within the profession itself. Preschool teachers in California earn approximately \$28,660 a year which is 49% of the salary of the average California elementary school teacher and 47% of the salary of the average California middle school teacher (Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), 2007).

Within the early childhood education field, the limitation of money is the main reason why teachers leave (Barnett, 2003; Cooney & Bittner, 2001; Fagan, 1996; Rodriguez, 1997). If they are to be the main source of income for their family, then this is not the best job to take, as teachers are not paid enough (Cooney

& Bittner, 2001; Farquhar, 1997; Rodriguez, 1997). Some teachers are willing to make less money to do what they enjoy, but many others are not willing or able to make that choice (Cooney & Bittner, 2001). The younger the age of children that are being taught, the less money the teacher makes (Farquhar, 1997).

With the high turnover (20 to 40% annually) within the early childhood education field, there is virtually no consistency of teachers for groups of children (Barnett, 2003; Johnson, Pai, & Bridges, 2004). Young children thrive (cognitively, socially and emotionally) when they have reliable qualified teachers with whom they are able to form close, positive relationships (Johnson, Pai, & Bridges, 2004; Barnett, 2003). Without those responsive relationships, a variety of negative behaviors manifest, including an increase in aggression in children (Barnett, 2003).

#### *Programs to increase teacher retention and recruitment*

High-quality teachers are presented with many employment opportunities, and because of those opportunities, they can afford to be selective (Viadero, 2008). Teachers choose well-funded schools with adequate supplies and resources, rather than those schools that need quality teachers but have inadequate supplies and resources (David, 2008; The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future & NCTAF State Partners, 2002). States are offering incentives for teachers to work at impoverished schools (David, 2008; The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future & NCTAF State Partners, 2002). While most are monetary (e.g., school loan reduction, education repayment, help with moving costs, etc.), some also help prospective teachers receive their credentials easier and faster than

traditional credential programs if they consent to work in schools that are in need (David, 2008). In some instances, teachers prefer the faster credential incentive to the monetary incentives (Guarino, Santibañez, & Daley, 2006).

The issue is not only in the recruitment, but also in the retention of the teachers once the schools have hired them (David, 2008; Mihans, 2008). Teachers stay at schools that have a thorough and timely hiring process, adequate working environments, a supportive administrative staff, an accessible and knowledgeable mentor, and a well-defined curriculum that allows for independence (David, 2008; Guarino, Santibañez, & Daley, 2006; Mihans, 2008). While money is helpful, districts need to work harder at offering supports and resources for low-income schools to keep the teachers from leaving (David, 2008; Guarino, Santibañez, & Daley, 2006).

*Programs geared toward teacher retention in ECE.*

The hope is that by realizing that income is a main deterrent for retaining teachers in early childhood classrooms, that there will be a change in how much teachers of this profession are paid (Seifert, 1974). By increasing the wages to support families, there will be an attraction/retention of more teachers ( Barnett, 2003; Seifert, 1974).

Educational incentives (grants, loans, forgiveness programs) are also offered by the federal government for teachers in early education (Barnett, 2003). One program was the Child Care Provider Loan Forgiveness Demonstrative Program (American Education Services (AES), 2007; Barnett, 2003). This program helped

teachers in low-income communities who had received their Associate and/or Bachelor's of Arts in early childhood education (AES, 2007; Barnett, 2003). The longer the teacher worked (minimum of consecutive 2 years in a center/program), the higher the percentage of loan forgiveness, peaking at five years with 100% of their loans (specific ones are designated) forgiven by the federal government (AES, 2007; Barnett, 2003). However, as this program was a demonstration project, in 2002 funding ran out, and new applicants were no longer accepted (AES, 2007).

*Male-specific issues in ECE teacher retention.*

The reasons male teachers have kept away from early childhood education are monetary, societal attitudes and pressures, and prejudices (Fagan, 1996; Rodriguez, 1997). However, having male teachers in the classroom provides a variety of advantages, including but not limited to, offsetting children's perceptions of males, creating positive male role models, and showing men as warm and affectionate (Fagan, 1996).

The low salaries associated with teaching in ECE tend to be a reason why male teachers choose other professions. Society expects men to be the primary breadwinner in their families. At times, they are often judged if they do not make as much as their partners to support their families (Bittner & Cooney, 2003; Farquhar, 1997; Rodriguez, 1997; Siefert, 1974).

Misconceptions of why males teachers choose to be with young children can cause administrators to resist hiring them. There appears to be a prevalent feeling that male teachers are not dependable enough to handle the care of young children

(Fagan, 1996). Not only are the negative feelings felt by the administrators, but also by their (male teachers') co-workers (Seifert, 1974). The thought that the men came to teaching with false expectations, such as hopes of quick promotions, is also a reoccurring issue that is felt in relationships with co-workers (Seifert, 1974). Men are more likely not to be encouraged to even try to succeed in early childhood education, as opposed to being thought incapable once they have broken through the hiring barriers (Seifert, 1982). Although those in administrative (or hiring) positions are men, they are more likely to hire female teachers as opposed to male teachers, due to thoughts of incapability (Gamble & Wilkins, 1997; Seifert, 1982).

Another reason male teachers leave early childhood education is the attitude of suspicion with which they are greeted (Cooney & Bittner, 2001; Farquhar, 1997; Rodriguez, 1997; Sargent, 2002; Smedley & Pepperell, 2000). Men who teach young children fear their motives are being misinterpreted so they find themselves constantly monitoring what they say or how they touch students (Rodriguez, 1997). The negative perceptions toward men working with young children cause feelings of discomfort, insecurity, helplessness, and anger (Cooney & Bittner, 2001; Farquhar, 1997; Sargent, 2002; Smedley & Pepperell, 2000). As a result, some men have modified their physical interactions with children. They forego the typical interactions such as hugging and holding children on their laps for less physical alternatives such as high fives and handshakes (Cooney & Bittner, 2001; Sargent, 2002).

### *Conclusion*

Early childhood education started in Europe by Rousseau and Pestalozzi and eventually traveled to the United States in the mid nineteenth century. The preschools and kindergartens that developed, as a result of the popularity of early childhood education, became stepping stones to what is available today. The need for teachers grew as the population of children in care grew. Females dominated the population of early childhood and elementary teachers, and males gravitated towards the middle and secondary schools, due to societal pressures and monetary reasons. Gradually, there came a trend of teachers leaving the education field for a variety of reasons, including retirement, environmental conditions, and money. As teachers left, new ways were developed to recruit and retain them, such as loan forgiveness and accelerated credential programs.

Male teachers have been a subject of controversy. They are viewed with suspicion and thought to be lacking in the skills needed to care for young children. Some are advanced quickly into administrative positions or move to teach in the higher grades, in keeping with those views and preconceptions. However, some male teachers remain in early childhood education, in spite of all that is stacked against them. The next section will explore the methodology used to attempt to answer the question: what factors contribute to the long-term retention of a selected population of male teachers in an early childhood setting?

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

#### *Introduction*

Analysis of Early Childhood Education (ECE) literature reveals a lack of voices involving male teachers in ECE. I wanted to create an instrument that would get at the core issues faced by male teachers every day including the reasons they chose to remain in the field despite the sometimes negative working environment. This chapter describes the process of creating this instrument, the ways in which it was distributed to male teachers, and the methodology for analyzing the results.

#### *Pilot Study*

For the purposes of my pilot study, I chose to look at school-age male teachers who taught children under the age of eight, specifically kindergarten to third grade (K-3). I chose to do this because I did not want to taint my already limited population of male ECE teachers by exposing them to draft of the survey.

The draft quantitative survey was distributed to 30 men who taught K-3. Of those 30, 25 were completed and returned. I utilized the snowball effect to distribute the surveys, giving them to people who knew potential participants and then requesting those individuals to pass them on to others. The survey consisted of 31 questions: 29 informative and four demographic.

The draft qualitative survey was distributed to four participants, and three completed surveys were returned. The surveys were distributed to people who knew K-3 teachers and then returned to me once they had been filled out. This survey consisted of 18 questions: 13 informative and five demographic. I also conducted an interview with one of the men who had filled out a quantitative survey. The interview was done at the participant's house on a weekend day in the afternoon. The interview was recorded, and while I had also planned to take notes, it proved to be too distracting from listening to the answers so the note taking did not happen.

During this time, I discovered that I needed to change the survey that I was using for my pilot because some of the items were more relevant to teachers who work with children under the age of five than for those who work with children over the age of five, specifically those questions relating to diapering and toileting. As the pilot study was not to get information about the subjects but rather information about the survey which was being created, this discovery helped in the creation of the final instrument.

#### *Creation of the Instrument*

After the pilot study, adjustments were made to the survey to make it more relevant for ECE teachers. The survey was then put through an informal peer review which provided feedback. The members of the peer review were female ECE co-workers in the local community who looked over the survey and made suggestions as to wording and other questions that needed to be added. The Assistant Director at

the campus-based childcare center where I work also reviewed the survey from an administrative point of view because ultimately that would be my target audience.

Suggested changes were made, and the revised survey was reviewed by a Child Development (CD) faculty member. She had some more suggestions for changes which were made. The revised survey was submitted to my Committee Chair and approved. It was then submitted to the Institutional Review Board and approved.

The finalized survey I submitted had 21 questions: 17 informational and four demographic. I included the option of skipping a question. (See Appendix A for a copy of the survey.)

I asked the participants to self-identify their ethnicity. Four informative questions had the option of the answer “other,” so a box was included to have the participants insert a response if they chose that answer. I included a comment box on 8 of the informative questions. At the end of the survey, I included a section where participants could add other comments about their work in ECE.

#### *Distribution of Instrument*

After receiving approval of the Institutional Review Board, I created my survey using SurveyMonkey, an online survey creator. The link to the survey was provided in the cover letter.

I emailed the cover letter to my director, who then forwarded it to other directors, using the Council of California State University Children’s Centers network. I sent the cover letter to my advisor, who passed it on to those she knew in

ECE and alumni of the Humboldt State University Child Development program. I emailed the link to my Assistant Director, who posted it on her Facebook page. I also had six other people post the link on their Facebook pages.

I contacted the creator of the webpage MenTeach.org, Bryan Nelson, asking him if he could post the information on the webpage. He replied back that my information had already been sent out to a group of 90 members of his website.

#### *Extraction and Analysis of Data*

After two weeks, I closed my survey on SurveyMonkey; 29 surveys had been completed. I began by breaking down the results into two sections: demographic results and survey results. Within the survey results, I broke down the information into three sections: professional, societal, and personal impacts.

I tabulated the demographical information (questions one to four) which looked at age, length of time in the field, ages worked with, and ethnicity. I incorporated figures to help illustrate the results that were provided by the participants (questions 11, 18, 19, and 20).

With each of the questions after question five (questions one to four were demographic), I reported the percentages for the highest two answers and then compiled any comments written by the participants into themes and reported them, including at least one quote as an example of the theme stated. Comments were left on eight of the questions asked. Also, four of the questions had the “other” option available to the participants, which was utilized.

*Summary*

A 21 question survey looking at the Retention of Male Teachers in Early Childhood Education was created and widely distributed. Twenty-nine surveys were completed on Survey Monkey. The next section will look at the results of those surveys, reporting on the demographic aspects of the participants, along with the professional, personal, and societal impacts of being a male teacher in ECE.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESULTS

#### *Introduction*

After receiving 29 completed surveys, I began the process of extracting the results. I divided the questions into two sections: demographic and survey results. Within the survey result segment, I further divided the questions into three different categories: Professional Impacts (eight questions), Societal Impacts (five questions), and Personal Impacts (three questions). I divided the questions based on whether the questions dealt with the participants' professional or personal lives. The questions which fell under the social impacts dealt with how the participants' society perceived their roles as early childhood educators. Some of the data presented in this section may not add up to 100%. This is because the participants were asked to "check all that apply." The next section will offer an overview of the results of the surveys.

#### *Demographic Results*

The majority of the participants were 50 years of age or older (48%). Twenty-seven percent were 41 to 50 years of age, 14% were 31 to 40, and 10% were 20 to 30.

Of the 29 participants, 50% of them had worked in Early Childhood Education (ECE) for over 20 years, 14% between one to five years, 14% between six to ten years, 11% between 11 to 15 years, and 11% between 16 and 20 years. One participant chose to skip this question.

When asked to mark all the ages of children the participants had worked with over the years, 97% had worked with children ages four to five years old. The next highest grouping was the three to four year olds (90%).

Sixty-six percent of the participants identified themselves as “White/Caucasian.” Three percent claimed Asian and Mexican. Three percent marked “other.” One participant who marked “other,” a 50<sup>+</sup> year old man, stated: “Sorry, this simply is not a valid construct, as race is not one either. We are all mixed heritage.” There was also one participant from New Zealand who responded. All the other responders were from the U.S.A.

### *Survey Results*

The survey results are subsumed under three headings: professional impacts, personal impacts, and societal impacts.

#### *Professional impacts.*

Eighty-six percent of the participants said that the expectations that they had when they first became a teacher have been met as they continued to work.

Ninety-seven percent of the respondents reported that they had been praised for being a male working in ECE. There were a variety of comments made from men, age 50 or more who have been ECE caregivers for twenty or more years. A participant commented, “One of my early supervisors told me that I probably had gotten my job because I was a man.” Another participant said, “There’s a lot of variety in peoples’ reaction. Some recognize the importance of gender balance, but mostly we as a society and ECE as a profession have not embraced the need for men

in education of young children.” A third participant wrote: “I have been conflicted over the years, just being one-of-the-girls. But, I have consistently advocated for more men in the field, and have started & nurtured men-in-child-care committees, and workshops in California and around the county with NAEYC (National Association for the Education on Young Children).” An additional participant wrote, “It has been both positive and negative. Keep in mind, this has been over thirty five years, so I have heard a lot.” Another participant marked yes in regards to having been praised for working in ECE but wrote, “Although sometimes I think that male part is played up too much. Sometimes it should be enough to be a good caregiver period.” Another respondent summed up with his comment, “In most situations, I’ve been praised...although strangers are always a bit aghast when I tell them. They say things like, ‘A man working with young children....wow!’”

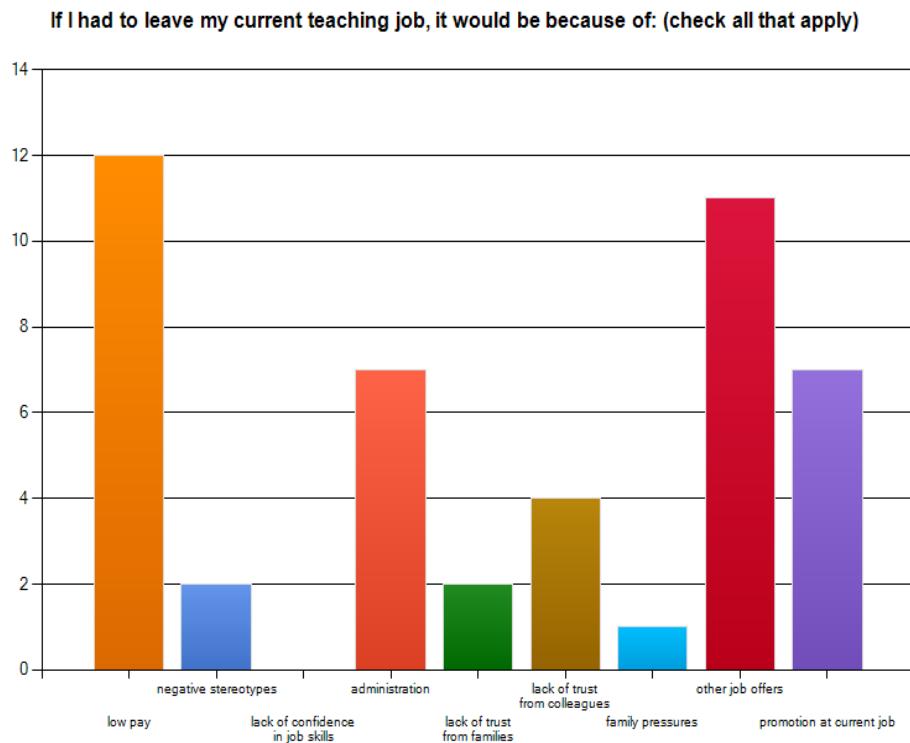
Seventy-three percent of respondents reported that they had no plans to leave the field, while 27% were considering leaving within five or more years. Retirement was the main reason why participants would leave the field. One respondent in the fifty and over age bracket who has worked in the field for twenty or more years said, “I may retire in 10 years but that won’t end my affiliation with teaching young children.” Forty-two percent of comments made by other contributors listed other job options as a reason. One male who has worked in the field for one to five years and is planning to leave the field in one to three years commented; “As much as I enjoy working with young children, my ultimate career goal is to teach Psychology and Child Development to community college students.” On the other hand, another

participant, a forty-one to fifty year old man who has worked in the field for twenty or more years and is not planning on leaving the field said, “Why would I give up the best career in the world?”

The main reasons reported by the participants which would cause them to leave their jobs were low pay (57%) and other job offers (53%). Figure 4.1 provides an overview of the reasons why the participants would chose to leave ECE.

Figure 4.1

#### *Reasons Participants Leave ECE*



Eighteen percent of the participants that wrote comments listed retirement as another reason for leaving the field. Another 18% of participants mentioned accusations as a reason for leaving the field. One participant, fifty or more years of

age and working in the field for more than twenty years, wrote, “We all fear having to abide the course of an unfounded allegation of child abuse. Our profession needs to work with family members and teachers to reduce the proliferation of no-touch policies that results from this fear.” An additional 18% of other contributors mentioned accountability and learning standards as reasons why they would leave, as summed up by the following quote,

I will leave because I can no longer in good conscience teach children in the ways that are being asked. The schools (excuse the generalization) have lost sight of the children in a rush to raise standards and hold children and teachers accountable.

In regard to the incentives that would be sufficient to keep them from leaving ECE, 62 % of participants reported that comparable pay to other similar professions, 39% cited both recognition of the importance of ECE from society and a shift in the way society views male ECE teachers, and 31% cited support from administrators. In the many comments the question inspired, 30% are summarized by one comment made by a fifty year old man who has been in the field for 20 or more years; “a fountain of youth.” Thirty percent discussed the importance of administration, legislation and policy change, as emphasized by this quote from a fifty year old man who has been in the field twenty or more years;

[There need to be] changes in the ways that policy makers view early childhood. Children need to explore, to socialize, to play, and then formal

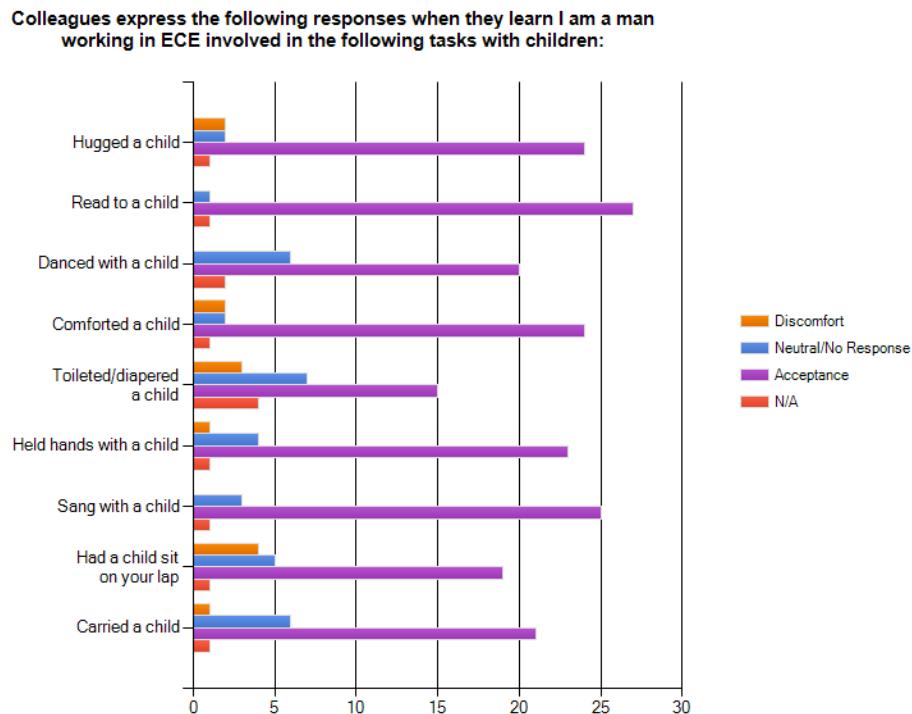
reading/writing/ mathematical instruction will become appropriate to them.

As return to those values would keep me teaching for a very long time.

One participant, a fifty or more year old male, who has worked in the field for more than twenty years, said, "To many men whine about being the only male. BUCK UP! Nothing would force me out, I love my job!"

Ninety percent of the respondents reported that their administrator was supportive of their work. Thirty-two percent reported that a parent/guardian or coworker had complained about their job performance because they are men working with small children. Figure 4.2 depicts the responses that participants have received when performing ECE tasks.

Figure 4.2

*Responses to ECE Tasks*

The majority of participants reported receiving acceptance from their colleagues in the involvement of the job-related tasks. Fifty-seven percent of the participants wrote about how hard it was to not feel judgments when a task involved direct touching of a child. One wrote, “We are mentored by parents, colleagues, and other well-meaning individuals on using caution about touching children. It can be reflected in the way we do our jobs.” Another wrote, “I was always careful to be aware of being in closed spaces with children alone.” Another spoke of secrecy, “There are some things that I do not share with colleagues in general. I would not be telling others in my building that children sit on my lap or were carried.” One other

participant said, “I would expect women to treat men the same way as they do their colleagues.”

*Societal impacts.*

Ninety-three percent of the respondents reported that they receive positive responses from people when they learn they work in ECE. Of those who reported experiencing negative responses, 50% stated that the response did not impact them, while others reported that it impacted their self-esteem (23%), job satisfaction (19%), relationships with colleagues (15%), and job performance (11%). One participant who has been in the field for over twenty years wrote, “People all have biases, and that is their issue, and it is important to not buy into their insecurities.” Another participant, who has been in the field for over twenty years, commented: “I have never really experienced folks who had discomfort with me as a male in my role as an educator.” One participant who is fifty or more years old and has worked in the field for 16 to 20 years, said:

On the rare occasion when there have been generalized expressions of mistrust, simply because I am a male, or of male teachers in general, I rationalize that parents need to do all that they can to protect their children, and that, statistically speaking, many women and children have been and are being hurt by men.

Another participant, who is over fifty and working in the field for more than twenty years, puts it a bit differently: “It was their problem, not mine.” Another fifty year old with six to ten years of experience agreed: “I have a solid sense of who I

am. Anti-male, female faculty members don't concern me that much." A fifty year old participant who has worked in the field for over twenty years puts it a bit more forcefully, "It pisses me off and inspired me to work even harder to improve the gender balance in our field." With all the comments that were collected in regards to this question, only one stood out with a troubled voice. A fifty or more year old man who has been in the field for more than twenty years, wrote, "I have always been aware of the things that I don't bring to the table in terms of my relationships with families. I often feel like people are disappointed that they have me as their child's teacher."

Seventy-six percent of the respondents report that they had experienced prejudice because of their role as a male in ECE. The prejudice took several forms: concern about the interactions with the children (76%), negative stereotyping (67%), negative comments (52%), and concern about their abilities to perform their job (48%). Seventeen percent of the comments which were received in response to this question dealt with the hiring process. One participant, who has been in the field for more than twenty years, wrote,

I have a great deal of expertise, yet when I have applied for certain positions, I receive no consideration. I then look at the child care outfit and see that they have a number of centers and all the directors are women. (I apply for "Director" or higher positions).

Another participant, a fifty or more years old man who has been in the field for 16 to 20 years commented, "These has all taken the form of suggestions that I

needed to be aware of ‘how it looks,’ not suspicion of my personal activities. BTW, I’ve always been aware of how it might look, and consciously balanced that with children’s need for contact and affection.” One participant, who has worked in the field for twenty or more years talked about a different type of prejudice:

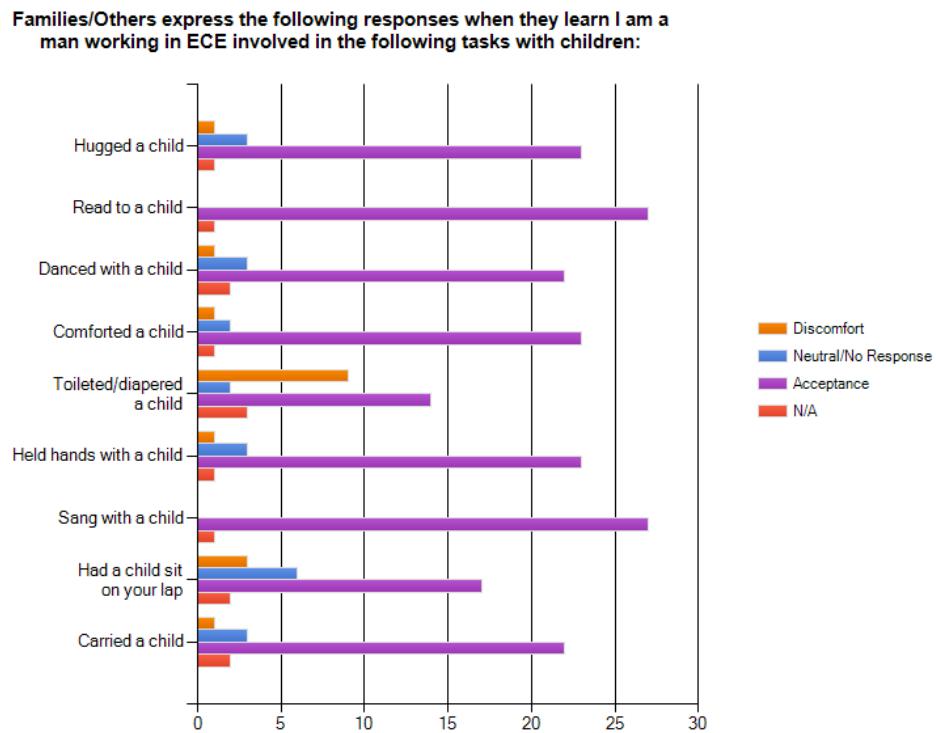
I have experienced prejudice largely in terms of placement. Children have often been placed in my class because of a perceived need for a strong male role model or because of the assumption that I will be stronger and more firm with them. I resent these assumptions.

Finally, one participant, who has been in the field for twenty or more years, wrote about specific ways he has experienced prejudice:

My actions, thoughts, and teaching style have all been questioned and maligned – what make you think you can do this – it is just because you are a man? I have also had literature sent to me by national bodies challenging the need to have men in the sector when I have spoken up on male issues.

The majority of participants received acceptance when they talked about the tasks that they did at their jobs to families/other. Three percent of participants choose to skip this question. Figure 4.3 illustrates those responses.

Figure 4.3

*Responses of Families/Others when ECE Tasks are mentioned*

One participant, a forty-one to fifty year old man who has worked in the field for eleven to fifteen years, wrote, “One father, very early in my career, expressed discomfort because of my gender. My director asked him to observe me for a short period, and he realized that I wasn’t doing anything that he wouldn’t expect a teacher to do.” A different participant, who has worked in ECE for twenty or more years, mentioned discretion in mentioning tasks to others, “Men in ECE must constantly measure how these responses appear to avoid the appearance of impropriety.” Another participant, who has also worked in ECE for twenty or more years, gets more specific, “Unless I know a family well enough to gauge their responses I would

probably not mention a child sitting on my lap or being carried.” One participant, between the ages of forty-one and fifty and who has been in the field for twenty or more years, was very positive about the responses that he received from families/others; “Our families know we have three men in our centre and expect these behaviors-we publicize the male connection here in NZ, and it is continually a reason we get enrollments.”

*Personal impacts.*

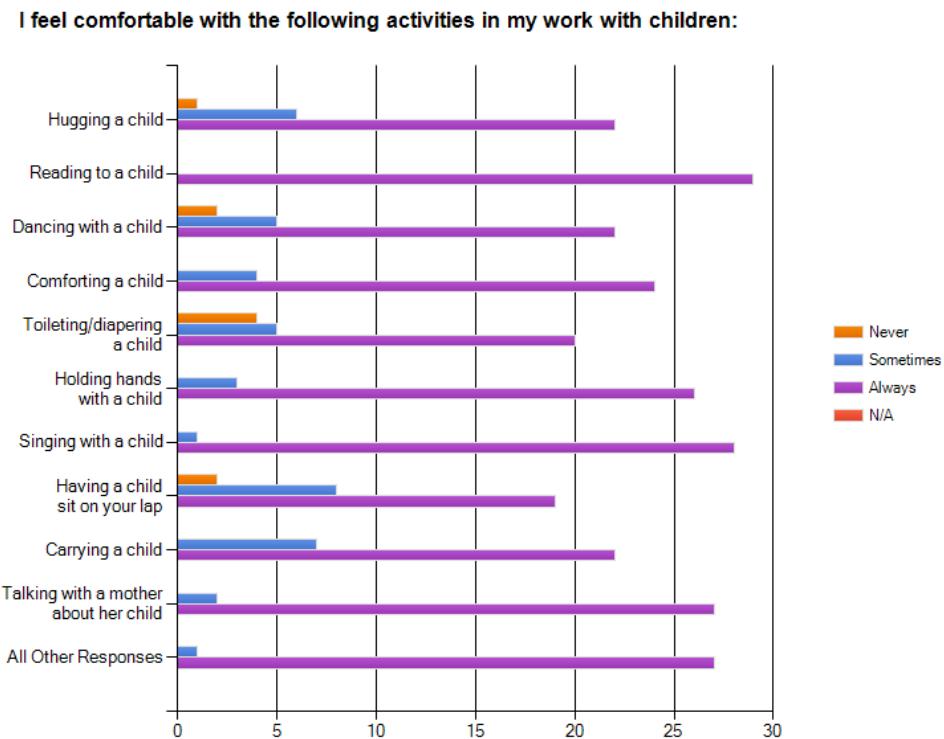
Ninety-three percent of the respondents noted that they chose to become an early childhood educator because they liked working with young children. Other reasons included they felt like they could make a difference (86%), saw themselves as nurturing caregivers (69%), liked the variety of the job day-to-day (52%), felt empowered by their abilities to help families (48%), and thought that it would be rewarding to tackle the daily challenges (38%). Thirty-five percent answered “other.” One participant, who is thirty-one to forty years old and has worked in ECE for sixteen to twenty years, wrote that he got into ECE because he wanted to “be a strong advocate for children and families.” Another participant, who is fifty or older and has worked in the field for over twenty years, commented, “I believe it can be a powerful way to improve society.” One participant, who has worked in ECE for sixteen to twenty years, wrote, “I consulted with my wife, who said, ‘You seem to be happier when you have babies to take care of.’”

After the participants told their families that they wanted to work with children, 93% said that their families were supportive. Of the nine comments that

were received, 55% of the participants mentioned that teaching was in their family make-up. Twenty-two percent of the comments were about the negative response that they received from their family, which can be summarized with one participant's comment, "They wondered what I was really doing. After a number of years, when I considered leaving the field (which I did for a very short period), my mother replied that she was glad." One other participant, a fifty or more old man who has been in the field for more than twenty years, said, "They were thrilled about me settling down. I'm not sure that they care about what my career choice was."

The majority of participants reported that they were comfortable performing all the tasks that are associated with an ECE. Some were more comfortable with the more intimate tasks than others. Figure 4.4 shows the levels of comfort for the participants with those tasks.

Figure 4.4

*Comfortableness of Participants performing ECE Tasks*

Of the eight participants who commented, 38% of those commented about society's perceptions and expectations. These are summarized by one comment made by a man who had been in the field for sixteen to twenty years, "I have a male colleague who has made a personal decision to not allow children to sit in his lap, so when I work with him I try to avoid it out of respect for him. I also try to have children sit on my knees or legs instead of directly in my lap, because of how it looks." Another 38% were about how if the teachers did not do the tasks listed, then they could not do their job. One man, who has been in the field for twenty of more years and is fifty or older, wrote, "This is my job-I don't give a shit what others think

when I hug a child, diaper a child, comfort a child. That is what I am all about, maybe it's just my age, but screw those who can't see the value in what I have to offer." Another participant, who is fifty or older, wrote, "Interacting with children has never been a problem-I've always loved their acceptance."

The last question included on the survey asked participants to add any other comments that they would like to share about their work in ECE. Twelve participants choose to write additional comments. Thirty-four percent wrote about working with children, 25% about loving the experience and 75% about helping with children's rights. One participant wrote,

I love the children and my work with them. I resent the ways that young children are being viewed as numbers rather than individuals. I will put my job on the line to protect the rights of the young children to have joyful, fulfilling experiences in their first years of schooling.

Another participant approached the issue in a different way but with the same undertones:

I usually don't think of myself as a "male" caregiver, but as a caregiver period. And although I do believe in the importance of having males in the ECE field and know of the big shortage of males in the field I'd rather be seen as fighting for quality care for all children than taking up the cause of the male caregiver.

The remaining 67% of participants discussed the inequality of being a male teacher in ECE. One participant, who is 50 or older and has worked in the field for 20 years

or more, wrote, “All of my varied jobs in this field have been in all female environments. There is a toll taken that needs to be taken into account. Men need a way to openly acknowledge that this is a real issue.”

A second participant mentioned,

It is so important that men be allowed to do the same as women but in their style. The biggest challenge I have had is about teaching style (i.e., that men can have different teaching approach and this is not wrong). The physicality of their teaching can add to a programme and children respond to this understanding. Of course like women all men are different and have differing approaches. (Quote adjusted due to grammar adjustments)

Finally, one participant summed all his comments from the survey by writing,

I think that there is a “perception” that men are persecuted, so then they are. Hogwash! Quit putting out that nonsense and lets get real-men make a difference, just like women do. Another issue that really gets me fired up is trying to promote men over women in this field, just because they are male. That is just nuts. I am the father of 6 great kids and I would take a wonderful female teacher or a mediocre male teacher any day of the week. That is what we need to promote- excellence, not gender.

### *Summary*

Twenty-nine participants completed the survey examining the retention of male teachers in Early Childhood Education. They provided many insights into the Professional Impacts, Personal Impacts, and Societal Impacts of their work with

young children. The next chapter will analyze the results that were provided by those participants.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### ANALYSIS

#### *Introduction*

The question that guided this study was: What factors would contribute to the long-term retention of a selected population of male teachers in an early childhood education setting?

By developing a quantitative survey, distributing it, and receiving 29 completed surveys, I was able to develop a better understanding as to what factors do contribute to retaining male teachers. This section is broken down into two categories: Demographic Information and Survey Information. The survey information is broken down further into three categories: Professional Impacts, Societal Impacts, and Personal Impacts. This chapter will discuss what the factors are which lead to retention and how they are important in understanding why male teachers remain in the field.

#### *Analysis*

##### *Demographic information.*

Half of the participants were aged 50 and older and had spent 20 years in the field. This demonstrates the resiliency of this particular group of participants, especially considering that they started in the field at a time when males in ECE were extremely rare.

Eighty-six percent had been in the field from 11 to over 20 years, demonstrating the longevity of these men in the profession over time and indicating that the rewards for being an early childhood educator, even at a time when social acceptance was not strong, more than compensated for any negative feedback participants received.

#### *Survey Information*

The survey results are subsumed under three headings: professional impacts, personal impacts, and societal impacts.

##### *Professional impacts.*

It seems that the fact that they were positively reinforced for being men working in a largely female-dominated profession helped them to find deep job satisfaction in ECE.

The high rate of retention in the profession suggests that they have high satisfaction in the field. Indeed, the few who planned to leave in the next five years were doing so only because they will have reached retirement age. Their comments support the finding that these men have found great satisfaction in their work in Early Childhood Education.

A small but disturbing finding was the number of men who stated they would leave the field because of accusations, including fear of unfounded allegations of child abuse. It seems that although society has progressed in terms of perceptions of men working with small children, a stigma still exists which can hinder men from remaining in the field.

While the majority of participants would like to see an increase in pay that is comparable to similar professions to help them remain in the field, some of them also mentioned a change in status and perceptions of ECE in society. It seems that the two would need to go hand-in-hand. Until society has an appreciation for the work teachers in ECE (regardless of sex) perform, the level of pay received by those in the field will not increase.

Participants felt a high acceptance by their colleagues in performing the tasks that are required when working with young children. However, as stated before, they also noted an ever-present feeling of vigilance when directly touching a young child (i.e., hugging, sitting in lap, holding hands, etc.). One participant wrote, “There are some things that I do not share with colleagues in general. I would not be telling others in my building that children sit on my lap or were carried.” This again shows that no matter how accepting their colleagues seem to be of the required job duties in which the participants engage; they also have a sense of caution which seems to be a normal part of their lives.

*Societal impacts.*

While many of the participants reported having positive feedback in regards to telling people they work with young children, some did receive negative responses. Those who received the negative feedback, stated the responses had no impact on them. This suggests the participants are very secure in their chosen profession. They seem to realize that society will not always agree with their job choice, but because their commitment to their profession is strong, the negative

feedback does not appear to bother them. The comments which were written by the participants help to support this.

A form of prejudice about which the participants wrote is seen in the placement of certain children with behavioral issues in their classrooms, under the assumption that men could handle their behaviors better. One could posit that this form of prejudice was, once again, due to societal perceptions. Men are typically thought to be able to handle children who may be more prone to acting out due to their size and stereotypes that men are tougher disciplinarians than women.

Even though most of the participants responded positively when they discussed the responses from families/others when discussing the ECE tasks, there were higher numbers of acceptance in the non-direct interactions with young children (i.e., singing, reading) than the direct interactions (i.e., hugging, carrying). This again shows how society has created a judgment on men interacting with young children, even if the interactions are required for their jobs. It makes it easy to understand how some men might be fearful of performing their job duties for fear of accusation.

#### *Personal impacts.*

The majority of participants went into ECE because they love working with young children. Not only do they love working with young children, but they also like the feeling that they are making a difference. They also see themselves as nurturers. These factors of men who go into ECE – loving working with children, feeling they make a difference, and seeing themselves as nurturers – seem to

contribute to the longevity of men in ECE, especially when they encounter negativity. The satisfaction that they receive seemingly outweighs the biases and prejudices that society has cast upon them.

The support of their families also plays a role in why men stay in the field. They have a foundation of support in their personal lives which may help them handle the lack of support they feel in their professional lives.

Most of the participants felt comfortable performing the required tasks associated with their jobs. Again, the comfort level diminished with the higher level of direct contact that was required with the task. One could posit that this was, once again, because of societal views. Men have to be constantly aware of who is watching and what those who are watching are thinking.

Men do not want to be singled out and looked at differently, just because of their sex. They want to be treated equally as women, as teachers of both sexes are doing the same thing: teaching young children. Their perception that the sex of the teacher has nothing to do with teacher quality is one that is not widely embraced in our society when it comes to ECE teachers.

### *Summary*

The contributing factors that led to the retention of male teachers in Early Childhood Education are enjoyment of working with young children, the ability to recognize and disregard the negative biases and prejudices that society has towards them, and the positive reinforcement that they received daily from their families, colleagues, and the children.

The next chapter will offer conclusions, explore the limitations of this research, and offer suggestions for future research.

## CHAPTER SIX

### CONCLUSION

Male teachers in Early Childhood Education have faced many obstacles that impact their longevity in the field. Along with facing societal pressures, they also constantly deal with prejudices against males working in what is commonly believed to be a predominantly female work environment. This study was designed to draw out the reasons why men choose to continue working with children under the age of 5, in spite of all of those biases, pressures, and prejudices. The outcome of the study demonstrated that men continue in ECE because of their enjoyment of working with young children; the ability to recognize and disregard the negative biases and prejudices that society has towards them; and the positive reinforcement that they received daily from their families, colleagues, and the children. This next section will discuss the limitations of the research and implications for future research.

#### *Limitations of Research*

A few limitations became apparent during this study. A main limitation was the population size of the pool of potential participants from which I had to draw. As only 5.4% of preschool teachers are male, this created a challenge to devise the best way to reach that population (Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), 2007). By utilizing the contacts I had by working in ECE, I was able to reach 29 participants. Additionally, the time constraint of needing to complete the thesis presented another limitation that may have impacted the number of participants I was able to reach. I

had only allotted three weeks to gather my research. If I had extended it by one or two more weeks, I might have been able to gather more participants.

By distributing the survey online via SurveyMonkey, I was not able to probe and ask deeper questions of the participants on some of their responses. Being able to conduct in-depth interviews may have helped to further clarify the reasons why men choose to remain in the field. If I were to do this again, I would pursue either interviewing or a focus group in order to draw out more information and ask question to help get deeper into the research.

The survey instrument itself was also a limitation. I realized that while I had included comment sections on most of the questions, I should have included it with question 16 (my administrator is supportive of my work with children). In question 17 (to your knowledge, has a parent/guardian or coworker ever complained about your job performance because you are a man working with small children), I should have added not only a comment section but a follow-up question to probe deeper into the answer.

#### *Implications for Future Research*

This study was only able to examine the experiences of 29 participants, many of whom were over the age of 50 and had worked in the field for 20 years or longer. Further research should be done to look at those teachers who are just entering or have been teaching for five years or fewer as well as those under the age of 30 in order to ascertain how long they think that they will stay. It would also be useful to

determine how they are coping with the different pressures and biases that are occurring against them, and what coping skills they are using.

Another area that could be examined is the experiences of men who left the field in order to determine the reasons they left, incentives that might have made them stay, coping skills that could have facilitated their staying, the kinds of experiences they had with negative perceptions, and the impact those experiences had on their desire to remain in ECE.

Administrators and co-workers of male teachers would be another interesting way to approach this study. By interviewing them, it would enable the researcher to gain a better understanding of how male teachers are perceived by others to determine if their colleagues treat them differently than women, if they are aware of their differential treatment, whether it impacts their classroom practices, and how they perceive families' reactions.

A longitudinal study, which would follow a group of male teachers over time, would also be another way to gather data. This would be a different way to look at this issue as some members would leave, and others would stay, providing the researcher with a variety of data to analyze.

Male teachers in Early Childhood Education face many prejudices and pressures. This has been a reoccurring theme over the years. It is up to society as a whole to help change this perception. There also needs to be recognition of those dedicated men, along with their female colleagues, who have stayed in this field, in

s spite of the many determents that they face daily. These are the teachers who help to reinforce the notion that the sex of the teacher is not the basis of the difference between a good teacher and a bad one. The difference should be based on the quality of teaching.

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## APPENDIX A

My age is:

20-30       31-40       41-50       50+

I have worked in Early Childhood Education (ECE) for:

1-5 years     6-10 years     11-15 years     16-20 years     20+ years

I have worked with the following ages of children: (mark all that apply)

Birth to 12 months     12-24 months     2-3 years     3-4 years     4-5 years

My ethnicity is: \_\_\_\_\_

The expectations that I had when I first became a teacher have been met as I continue to work in this field.     Yes     No

I chose to become an ECE because (check all that apply):

- I liked working with young children
- I saw myself as a nurturing caregiver
- I felt like I could make difference
- I liked the variety of the job day-to-day
- I thought it would be rewarding to tackle the daily challenges
- I felt empowered by my ability to help families

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

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Comment:

When I told my family that I wanted to work with children, they were supportive of my choice.     Yes     No

Comment:

When I tell people I work in ECE, I receive

Negative Response     Neutral/No response     Positive Response

In my career, I have been praised because I am a male working in ECE.    Yes\_\_\_\_\_

No\_\_\_\_\_

Comment:

I am considering leaving the field within:

- 6 months-1 year
- 1-3 years
- 3-5 years
- 5+ years

I have no plans to leave the field.

Comment:

If I had to leave my current teaching job, it would be because of: (check all that apply)

- low pay
- negative stereotypes
- lack of confidence in job skills
- administration
- lack of trust from families
- lack of trust from colleagues
- family pressures
- other job offers
- promotion at current job

Comment:

What would be sufficient incentive to keep you from leaving ECE? (Check all that apply)

- Recognition to the importance of ECE from society
- A shift in the way society views male ECE teachers
- Comparable pay to other similar professions
- Support groups for male teachers
- Support from administrator
- Increased support from coworkers and administration
- Increased support from family and/or peers
- Other

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Comment:

If people have expressed discomfort with your role as an ECE teacher, how has the impacted you? (choose all that apply)

- Didn't impact me at all
- Impacted my self-esteem
- Impacted my job satisfaction
- Impacted my relationships outside of work
- Impacted my job performance
- Impacted my relationships with children
- Impacted my relationships with colleagues
- Impacted my relationships with families
- Other:

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Comment:

I have remained in the profession as an ECE because (check all that apply):

- I like working with young children
  - I see myself as a nurturing caregiver
  - I feel like I could make difference
  - I like the variety of the job day-to-day
  - I find tackling the daily challenges rewarding
  - I feel empowered with my ability to help families
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_
- 

Comment:

Over the course of my career, I have experienced prejudice because of my role as a man working in ECE. Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_

Comment:

What form did the prejudice take? (mark all that apply)

- Negative stereotyping
- Negative comments
- Concern about my abilities to perform my job
- Concern about my interactions with children
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Comment:

My administrator is supportive of my work with children. \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_ No

To your knowledge, has a parent/guardian or coworker ever complained about your job

performance because you are man working with small children? Yes \_\_\_\_ No

\_\_\_\_\_

I feel comfortable with the following activities in my work with children:

|                                       | Never | Sometimes | Always | N/A |
|---------------------------------------|-------|-----------|--------|-----|
| Hugging a child                       |       |           |        |     |
| Reading to a child                    |       |           |        |     |
| Dancing with a child                  |       |           |        |     |
| Comforting a child                    |       |           |        |     |
| Toileting/diapering a child           |       |           |        |     |
| Holding hands with a child            |       |           |        |     |
| Singing with a child                  |       |           |        |     |
| Having a child sit on your lap        |       |           |        |     |
| Carrying a child                      |       |           |        |     |
| Talking with a mother about her child |       |           |        |     |
| Talking to a father about his child   |       |           |        |     |

Comment:

Colleagues express the following responses when they learn I am a man working in ECE involved in the following tasks with children:

|                             | Discomfort | Neutral/No Response | Acceptance | N/A |
|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------|------------|-----|
| Hugged a child              |            |                     |            |     |
| Read to a child             |            |                     |            |     |
| Danced with a child         |            |                     |            |     |
| Comforted a child           |            |                     |            |     |
| Toileted/diapered a child   |            |                     |            |     |
| Held hands with a child     |            |                     |            |     |
| Sang with a child           |            |                     |            |     |
| Had a child sit on your lap |            |                     |            |     |
| Carried a child             |            |                     |            |     |

Comment:

Families/Others express the following responses when they learn I am a man working in ECE involved in the following tasks with children:

|                             | Discomfort | Neutral/No Response | Acceptance | N/A |
|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------|------------|-----|
| Hugged a child              |            |                     |            |     |
| Read to a child             |            |                     |            |     |
| Danced with a child         |            |                     |            |     |
| Comforted a child           |            |                     |            |     |
| Toileted/diapered a child   |            |                     |            |     |
| Held hands with a child     |            |                     |            |     |
| Sang with a child           |            |                     |            |     |
| Had a child sit on your lap |            |                     |            |     |
| Carried a child             |            |                     |            |     |

Comment:

Please add any other comments you would like to share about your work in Early Childhood Education.

Thank you for your time in participating in this survey! The results will be available on Humboldt State University's Digital Scholar in December, 2011.