

Intrinsic and Extrinsic Factors Impacting Male Educators in ECE Settings

Jean Yves Plaisir (PI), Kirsten Cole (co-PI), and Mindi Reich-Shapiro (co-PI)
Teacher Education Department, Borough of Manhattan Community College, CUNY

INTRODUCTION

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2016) reports that less than 3% of all preschool and kindergarten teachers are self-identified men. Thus, young children in early childhood education (ECE) settings are systematically deprived of the opportunity to experience a healthy range of gender role models. Increasing the participation of male educators from differing backgrounds into the ECE workforce would enhance the quality of experiences for young children and challenge gender stereotypes, while also creating conditions for greater equity and inclusion in the ECE profession. The purpose of our study is to provide actionable policy and practice recommendations to increase the participation of men in the early childhood workforce.

METHODS

Our research focuses on examining factors that influence men's decisions to pursue a career in early childhood education. Participants in our research included New York State licensed lead teachers, less-credentialed paraprofessionals and assistant teachers, family advocates, and administrators who supervise male educators at early childhood sites.

RESEARCH PROTOCOLS

A variety of qualitative instruments were used to capture a broad range of information, including a questionnaire, individual interviews, focus groups and classroom observations. Questionnaires were completed by 46 ECE participants and 19 CESE participants. Interviews were conducted with 14 male and female administrators and with 14 self-identified male educators at a variety of publicly- and privately-funded ECE sites throughout NYC.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- What are the external and internal factors that influence men's decisions to work with young children?
- How are male educators recruited, retained, and supported in early learning settings in New York City?
- How do male educators perceive their experiences within the field of early childhood education?

FINDINGS

- Male educators expand developmentally appropriate practice with children in physical play, exploration, decision-making, risk-taking, discipline and expectations.
- Men in ECE show *explicit* and *intentional* efforts to dismantle gender bias and inequality in the workforce.
- ECE men model a non-traditional perspective of gender roles with respect to the care of young children.
- Male educators are strong links in the school's relationships with children, families, and communities.
- ECE men challenge gender stereotypes and resist monolithic notions of masculinity.

POLICY AND PRACTICE IMPLICATIONS

Recruitment:

- Create a recruitment pipeline through intentional outreach (i.e., HS internships, community service, volunteer programs).
- Expand and sustain recruitment efforts on men contemplating career change, especially fathers.
- Upscale outreach through existing programs (i.e., NYC Men Teach and Teaching Fellows) to include ECE field.

Retention and professionalization

- Provide targeted and intentional mentoring and professional development experiences for male educators.
- Create affinity/support groups of male early childhood educators.
- Design teacher education curricula that are more inclusive of male educators.
- Achieve pay equity across ECE sites.
- Achieve pay equity for ECE field v. elementary/secondary education

Gender representation and equality:

- Develop outreach materials that include images of men working in the ECE field.
- Include images of men in nurturing roles within early learning settings.
- Connect the study's findings to social programs and social justice issues (i.e., Brothers' keepers; fatherhood initiative).