ASSESSING THE IMPACT: THE VALUE OF MEN AS CAREGIVERS IN
EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION

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DEDICATION

For my mother Joan Kortman for her loving example as both a mother and an educator.
How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world.

—Anne Frank (1929-1945)
ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Assessing the Impact: The Value of Men as Caregivers in Early Care and Education
by
Kathryn J. Owen
Master of Science in Child and Family Development
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Working with young children is perceived as women’s work, and men are noticeably absent in most early childhood classrooms. The purpose of this non-experimental, mixed-methods study was to explore how men in the classroom add value to the field of Early Childhood Education (ECE). The researcher was interested in how men as caregivers and educators perceive their place in a workplace dominated by women, and how their presence enhances learning experiences for the children and families they serve. Qualitative and quantitative data collection methods were used to gather information about the beliefs of both men and women child development teachers at university-operated centers regarding their social interaction practices, and observations were conducted to study how these beliefs affected their interactions with the children in their care. Collected data was triangulated to uncover emerging themes and patterns as the researcher looked for subtle differences in the ways that men and women teachers interact with young children and facilitate their social emotional development. The hypothesized impact that men have in the social emotional development of young children when present in the classroom was not significant when compared to their women colleagues, who also practice quality care. However, unique to the results of this study as compared to previous research, was the ability of men caregivers to foster authentic and trusting relationships with very young children and their families in a diverse environment. It was concluded that they bring extra value into the classroom by providing a difference in learning experiences and modeling the act of caring. The benefit of this study to the Early Childhood community is increased awareness of the challenges and successes of men actively providing care and education in the field.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF TABLES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF FIGURES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement of the Problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefits of Father Involvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of Social Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose of the Study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical Framework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review of the Literature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clear Division of Emotional Labor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More Men Teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Teacher-Child Relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality Care-Giving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact of Men on Social Interaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 METHOD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procedures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Collection and Measures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualitative Data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quantitative Data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Interaction Practices for the Preschool Years (SIPPY) Questionnaire</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale ........................................26
Classroom Observation Form .................................................................26
Data Analysis ..........................................................................................27
Qualitative Data Analysis ........................................................................27
Quantitative Data Analysis ......................................................................28

4 RESULTS ..............................................................................................29
Qualitative Data .......................................................................................29
Quantitative Data ....................................................................................32
Research Questions ...................................................................................34
Research Question 1 ..................................................................................34
  Making an Impact on Social Development ...............................................34
  Role-Model .............................................................................................35
  Teacher Expectations ...............................................................................36
  Culture .....................................................................................................36
  Challenges ...............................................................................................37
  Low Salaries ............................................................................................39
  Nurturing ..................................................................................................40
Research Question 2 ..................................................................................40
  Nurturing ..................................................................................................40
  Relationships ...........................................................................................41
Research Question 3 ..................................................................................42
  Contribution of Men ...............................................................................42
  Contribution of Men and Women .............................................................47
Research Question 4 ..................................................................................48
  Value .......................................................................................................48
  Nurturing ..................................................................................................49

5 DISCUSSION ..........................................................................................50
The Perceptions of Men and Women Teachers .........................................50
The Beliefs of Men and Women About Social Interaction Practices in the Classroom .................................................................53
The Articulated and Enacted Practices Used by Men and Women to Promote Social Interaction ............................................................56
Difference in the Beliefs and Practices of Men and Women Teachers ........58
Implications for Practice ................................................................. 60
Limitations ...................................................................................... 61
Conclusion ...................................................................................... 61
REFERENCES .................................................................................. 63

APPENDICES
A FOCUS GROUP SITE A .................................................................. 72
B FOCUS GROUP SITE B .................................................................. 83
C QUOTES THAT EXEMPLIFY THEMES BY CLASSROOM ............. 91
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Education Degree and Years of Experience of Participants Per Classroom.............23
Table 2. Quantified Coding of Common Themes, Patterns, and Categories .......................31
Table 3. Descriptive Statistics: Teacher Ratings of Acceptability, Feasibility, and Current Use of Strategies..........................................................32
Table 4. Inferential Statistics: An Independent Sample \( t \) Test of SIPPY Results .................33
Table 5. Descriptive Statistics: ECERS and ITERS Items for Interaction ..........................33
Table 6. Observable NAEYC Accreditation Criteria for the Relationships Standard ...........34
Table 7. Quotes That Exemplify Themes by Classroom .................................................92
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Total number of adults maintaining Title V ratios and total number of children enrolled in participating classrooms. .................................................................21
Figure 2. Demographics of participating ECE teachers.................................................................22
Figure 3. Emerging themes and patterns driven by questions in transcribed data..................30
Figure 4. Examples of mounted classroom displays.................................................................45
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

BACKGROUND

Teachers enter our profession through a variety of pathways, some of which they enter quite by accident. Life experiences shape their destiny, and as men teachers navigate these pathways, they experience what Foster and Newman (2005) refer to as, “identity bruises” (p. 341) and can struggle to establish a sense of belonging in the workplace.

My son began his career path as a student in an International Business program and took advantage of the opportunity to work as a tutor in a local Head Start program to supplement his income. He found his tutoring experience to be rewarding, so he decided to complete six units in Child Development over his summer break to enable him to work his way through college as a youth counselor. Recognizing that working with children was a goodness of fit for him, his journey ultimately led him into the classroom, where he currently has a group of children with autism in his care as a credentialed special needs teacher. In his first year, he found himself surrounded by a group of women colleagues who had worked together for many years and who did not share his enthusiasm for inclusion. With his enthusiasm dampened and naïve expectations challenged, he was faced with the difficult task of building relationships and finding his place as the “token” man (Kanter, 1977, p. 6) in a women dominated workplace. It was not until circumstances changed and a second man joined the staff, that he felt he was truly able to help break down barriers, and forming a strong bond they actively pursued opportunities to create an inclusive working and learning environment.

This provoked my interest in the perceptions of men and women teachers about the role of men in an ECE setting. Typically, women struggle to enter male-dominated occupations, not the other way around. An occupational field is “gendered” when at least 85% of the workers are of the same sex (Kanter, 1977), and Sanders (2002) states that men enter a “zone of difference” (p. 45) when they are hired to work with young children in a gender-segregated workforce. Even when they enter with a patriarchal desire to make a
change, they can instead become programmed by the perceived gender rules of the working environment and find themselves “doing masculinity” (Sargent, 2004, p. 175). Ruxton’s (1992) study of the issues faced by men in the UK revealed that men who care for children frequently feel isolated and uneasy as the “token” man within a center-based program. Their lived experience within the hidden structures of acceptable classroom practice and the “rules” which are embedded in the culture of ECE defines their role, and can limit their involvement to practical jobs such as fixing things and changing light bulbs (Owen, 2003; Sargent, 2004). Not having the same opportunities to participate in the classroom as their women colleagues can discourage men from entering and/or remaining in a field where gender has strongly influenced the culture of child care. Despite feminist expectations that men play a more dominant role in the care of their children in the home, dominant feminist attitudes by administrators and staff who fear that men will take over senior positions, have in some cases deliberately perpetuated this unequal gender power struggle. Institutional discrimination will continue until women address stereotypical views, respect the need to hire men and believe that they belong (National Association for the Education of Young Children [NAEYC], 2009a).

Although there are many advantages for children when cared for by a diverse group of teachers including healthy social development (Sheppard, 2011) and improved quality of care (Torelli, 1995), in most infant, toddler, and preschool classrooms men are noticeably not present (Cooney & Bittner, 2001). In the United States, only 2% of preschool and kindergarten teachers and 5% of childcare workers are men (Eisenhauer & Pratt, 2010). The National Center for Education (NCE) percentage distribution of male elementary school teachers in public schools in 2007-2008 was 15% as compared to an 84% distribution of female teachers (Coopersmith & Gruber, 2009). Data from the United Nations Educational, Social and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) showed gender disparity in teaching within every major developed country in the world in 2005 (Johnson, 2011) and only between 1% and 4% of caregivers in early childhood education are male in most countries (Sumsion, 2005). This imbalance of gender is primarily attributed to the belief that working with children is seen as predominately a female occupation in the Western world (Rolfe, 2006).

Early research has shown that there has been a “glass ceiling” effect resulting in a lack of men working with children as they traditionally leave the classroom and are promoted
to upper level positions at a faster rate than their women colleagues (Murray, 1996), but in fact many men find teaching less financially attractive than competing opportunities due to relatively low pay (Johnson, 2011). Advancement can be an optical illusion, the logic being that becoming an administrator is the end result of becoming a teacher. Men tend to enter the profession at both an older age and at a higher education level than women, and do not necessarily begin their career teaching in the classroom. Low salaries, family responsibilities, gender perspectives, cultural biases, and other influences can also be a deterrent to attracting men who are prepared to pursue a career working with young children. According to Cooney and Bittner (2001), this results in a lack of “gender-fair” classrooms. Although the National Center for Educational Statistics in the USA does not have current data which specifically tracks the number of men who are preschool teachers or who have been promoted to administrative positions, data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS; 2002) showed that 8% of child care coordinators and 56% of principals in under school aged programs were men (Lyons, Quinn, & Sumsion, 2005). Similar data in 2003 from the Department for Education and Skills in England showed that 84% of teachers in their nursery and primary schools were women, and that 26% of the men working in the same schools were in administrative positions. This trend, which assumes that masculinity is more naturally suited to management than nurturing, results in children having less contact with men than women through to secondary school (Owen, 2003).

**STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Although the absence of men caregivers may significantly impact the health and development of young children (Evans, 1995), there continues to be very few men teachers and caregivers in ECE. This contradiction of need is fueled by confusion about society’s expectation of the role of men as caregivers, accepting that traditionally women were predominantly responsible for children as homemakers (Brown, 1995). The lack of research about the value men bring to the classroom limits understanding to promote informed advocacy in support of gender diversity in the field of early childhood education. Despite the lack of information on the value that men bring to the classroom, there exists a great deal of data on the benefits of father involvement in the lives of their children.
Benefits of Father Involvement

Social interaction begins with parents and infants with secure attachments to their mothers and fathers, are at an advantage for the acquisition of positive social skills and develop an internal working model that continues to guide success in their interpersonal behavior throughout life (Preusse, 2005). Researchers have identified the contributions which fathers make to their children’s development (Lewis & Lamb, 2003) and have found that young children (particularly boys) gravitate to men who are generally more active and less passive than women in their approach towards care-giving. When interacting with their children, fathers tend to be more involved in spontaneous and physical play and less concerned about safety, care, and routines (Carlson, 2011). In a society where we read on the front page of the local newspaper about a child fatally stabbing another child, the need for children to learn how to handle frustration and identify appropriate reactions to others through physically active and boisterous play is very real and close to home. Nature and nurture combine to define who we are as individuals (Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning ([CSEFEL], 2004). Young children gradually become aware of how their bodies work naturally through direct experience when they frolic in a pile of leaves climb a tree or tumble in fresh snow (Cornell, 1998). Social play leads to rough housing (Grandin & Johnson, 2005) which is rowdy, interactive play that flows with spontaneity (De Benedet & Cohen, 2010). Just as young animals learn very quickly how to enjoy rough housing with each other without causing harm (Flanders, Leo, Paquette, Pihl, & Seguin, 2009), children develop an awareness of how their physical responses can affect others and develop a greater internal locus of control when playing within their family unit (Lamb, 1987). Building on parenting behaviors which are already acceptable for men in our culture such as fathers playing with their children in a “roughhouse” way which enables contact in a socially acceptable manner (Evans, 1995), can facilitate acceptance of the role of males as caregivers in an early childhood setting.

Paternal play styles affect social-emotional development as young children develop a sense of empathy (Carlson, 2011) and build on language which enables them to verbally express how they are feeling. In a study of the behavior of 39 children in preschool as related to their secure infant-father attachment in infancy, children of involved fathers demonstrated less negative emotional reactions when playing with their peers, and were less
likely to seek teacher assistance when solving conflicts (Seuss, Grossman, & Sroufe, 1992). Through active play, children learn the appropriate response to the emotion they are feeling, and recognize that physical and emotional responses can be hurtful. In virtually all cultures, men tend to be more involved in stimulating rough and tumble play than women (Humphreys & Smith, 1987), and can teach children young children how to handle aggressive impulses (Rosenberg & Bradford Wilcox, 2006). However, in the classroom, enrolling children in noisy, rough and tumble play can be interpreted as negligent (Sandberg & Pramling-Samuelsson, 2005). By looking at the relationship between the beliefs and practices of men teachers, my study explored if practices are constrained or supported by the conceptualization of gender in ECE.

Despite the evidence that father involvement improves child social emotional outcomes and research notes frequently agree that there is a need for men to be involved in the lives of young children (Wardle, 2004), there is a lack of research documenting the value of having men in the early childhood setting. The role of the father in development of a child’s capacity to regulate aggression and to learn self-regulation strategies when their father is in control of play (Flanders et al., 2009), has recently resulted in a focus by the NAEYC on the importance of integrating boisterous, physical play into the preschool curriculum (Carlson, 2011). Play is an essential tool within the context of relationships for children who are deeply affected by the quality of the teaching environment within it takes place (Curtis & Carter, 2008). When teachers model social strategies and provide support during daily learning experiences in the classroom, children enjoy positive social interactions with their peers and are able to play cooperatively by talking through conflicts instead of fighting, practice friendly behaviors and solve problems in a socially competent manner.

**Development of Social Skills**

As more children in the 21st century are enrolled in childcare than in previous generations, and as most child development programs segregate children in classrooms by age, their opportunity to develop social skills through observation of older peers is less likely to occur. They have limited time to independently investigate their surrounding environment due to limited opportunity to be outdoors (Louv, 2005), passive entertainment (television and computer games) (Ginsburg, 2007), and are now more likely to learn play skills directly from
their teachers and caregivers (Leong & Bodrava, 2012). Social emotional skills emerge through relational experience in preschool under the guidance of sensitive teachers (California Department of Education [CDE], 2008). Children as young as 2 years can express empathy and experience less fear and distress as frequently as sadness and happiness when supported by the presence of an involved care-giver in the classroom (Scrimgeour, 2007). The ability to empathize with others and understand cause and effect when experiencing emotions is fundamental to the development of social skills in the classroom. We know that play is a central context for social and emotional development in early childhood (CDE, 2008) but the relationship between social interaction and play in the classroom, and the presence of a man teacher is relatively unexplored (Sandberg & Pramling-Samuelsson, 2005). Few studies address how teacher practices support or challenge classroom environments which assist children in managing their emotions (Gloeckler & Niemeyer, 2010), gaining control of their physical impulses, entering into play, and thinking through solutions to conflicts. Their knowledge and beliefs about supporting social competence sets the tone of the classroom by fostering the development of social skills which facilitates a climate of mutual respect between both staff and children. Teachers who value relationships as the center of their thinking and practice, create an embracing social emotional climate where children are seen, heard, and acknowledged for who they are (Curtis & Carter, 2008).

**Purpose of the Study**

A critical element in providing quality care for young children is to sensitively respond to their needs through consistent relationships which foster a secure base from which they continue to draw for the rest of their lives. External supports such as safe learning experiences and encouragement form the basis for the development of their self regulation skills (Groves Gillepsie & Seibel, 2006) and gives them the ability to manage powerful emotions and maintain focus and attention (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). Teachers lay the foundation for healthy social-emotional development by modeling socially acceptable skills, providing positive play experiences, facilitating carefully planned lessons, and creating supportive classroom environments (Preusse, 2005). When they respond to children in a
warm and responsive manner, they help them to understand how to participate in positive social interactions (Harms, Clifford, & Cryer, 2005).

Men who nurture children are not limited to biological fathers (Wardle, 2004). Fathers are clearly being more recognized in the 21st century as major contributors to children’s social, emotional, and cognitive development (Parke, 2004) and have been caring for children in all cultures as fathers, uncles, brothers, and grandfathers for generations (Nelson, 2004). However, child care remains linked to an image of the child that is poor, fragile, and promotes the need for a young child to be cared for by a “maternal” figure (Rinaldi, 2006). The purpose of this descriptive study is primarily to explore the value of men teachers and caregivers in early care and education programs. Research on the correlation between social competence and the positive impact of fathers when involved in their children’s lives is clear (Gadson & Ray, 2002; Parke, 1996) and has shown that, although infants and toddlers tend to seek comfort from their mother, they prefer to play with their father (Lamb, 2002). My study differs from previous studies about the influence of men in the lives of young children as the focus of the research is on men in the classroom. As the quality and nature of interactions children have with teachers can also shape their developmental outcomes (Allen & Daly, 2007), shifting the view from biological fathers to men in a fathering role, will promote the image of men as caregivers who are able to nurture children and show affection within the context of the classroom. Although mothers and fathers can differ in their parenting styles, they profoundly influence their child’s personality and social-emotional experiences through sensitive and attuned social interactions (Newton, 2008). In this study I aimed to reveal if teachers’ preferences for interaction with young children in the classroom influence them in the same way as parental preferences in the home, and if a balance of men and women teachers in the classroom is needed to truly develop the “whole child.”

In order to understand why there is a lack of men in ECE and the promotion of gender diversity, I will examine some of the issues men face when they work with young children in an attempt to break down barriers which contribute to the perceived confusion about the expectations of their role, and identify acceptable cultural patterns of social behaviors for men. To promote physical and emotional development, children need at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous active play every day (Obama, 2010) and have opportunities to make
choices about what, where and how to play in a cooperative manner with their peers. Men tend to naturally incorporate movement and facilitate fun activities which in turn promote socialization, problem solving skills, and encourage taking a risk when trying something new through trial and error. As the research sites for this study maintain staff-child ratios which are low enough to support the facilitation of engagement in activities involving risk taking and problem solving, I will be looking at the impact of men and women teachers on social interaction in toddler and preschool classrooms.

In seeking to understand the beliefs of men and women child development teachers about promoting social interaction, their perceptions of the expectations of their role as caregivers, and identifying how the presence of men may add value to the learning environment, I will ask the following four questions:

1. What are the perceptions of men and women teachers about the role of men teachers in an ECE setting?
2. What are the beliefs of men and women about social interaction practices in the classroom?
3. What are the articulated and enacted practices used by men and women teachers to promote social interaction in the classroom?
4. Do beliefs and practices about social interaction differ for men and women teachers in an ECE setting?
CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

A fundamental issue within the practice of early childhood education is the reality of the live experience of men who are not free to fully participate in the role of nurturer. This study will use the broad framework of critical theory to explore the historical, cultural, and ideological structures that create social conditions. Acker’s (1990) theory of gendered organizations argues that organizational structure is not gender neutral, and that gender identity is influenced by organizational processes and pressures which fail to address gender differences for the token working group. The traditional representation of women in the role of care-giving has created and reinforced the concept that caring for children is women’s work, despite research which shows that there is a positive social impact on young children when fathers are also actively involved in their lives.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In addition to this study’s broad focus on critical theory, Vygotsky, Cole, John-Steiner, Scribner, and Souberman’s (1978) socio-cultural theory of development and Bowlby’s (1998) theory of attachment will be used to support the focus on the importance of relationships that is critical to any examination of early care and education. Vygotsky et al.’s socio-cultural theory posits that learning is a social process and the fundamental role of social interaction in development and learning. Children, who have the opportunity to try out experiences for themselves and practice newly acquired skills with the assistance and guidance of a more competent member of their culture, learn within their social context and think about what they are doing and why (Grisham-Brown, 2009). This knowledge forms the means for internalizing shared experiences in order to independently draw on their understanding of how to actively control negative emotions which is an important part of socialization (Bronson, 2000).
Bowlby (1998) described attachment as a close connection between a child and caregiver which serves a regulatory function, and is vital to healthy brain development and social emotional competency (Preuss, 2005). Children who are attached to their caregivers feel safe and competent and are attracted to comfortably exploring how things work in their world (Newton, 2008). When they get their needs met and have a secure base from which to explore, they have the capacity to enjoy interacting with others and are able to focus on learning how to integrate their emotions when playing. As the teacher-child relationship is an extension of the primary parent-child relationship (Edwards & Raikes, 2002), providing a balance between men and women caregivers broadens their life experiences and introduces different levels of security. It gives children a chance to work out alternative possibilities about their world and experience relationships which work toward developing resiliency in life.

**REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

Although there is strong emphasis on inclusivity, diversity and anti-bias training in early childhood education initiatives, and according to research, 97% of NAEYC members believe that it is important for men to work with young children (Nelson, 2004), the ECE community continues to appear to be oblivious to the absence of men in childcare; and men continue to be undervalued in the classroom (NAEYC, 2009a). Change to this trend is not possible without an understanding of why early childhood has become as gendered as it is, and the implementation of social changes which support men who have been positioned as tokens and represent a minority group within the field of ECE (Sargent, 2004).

**Clear Division of Emotional Labor**

The first of Acker’s (1992) four processes of gendered social organization is the presence of symbols, images, and forms of consciousness that create and justify gender divisions. The image of childcare as women’s work has promoted ECE as a gendered occupation influencing how the meaning and identity of teachers have been patterned (Murray, 1996). In the case of ECE, the most prevalent images are “mother-teacher” (Sugg, 1978, p. iii) and “homosexual-pedophile” (Reskin, 1991, p. 103). A third, the “Male-Role
Model”1 (Sargent, 2001, p. 117), also deserves attention. These overlapping social constructions are artifacts of the gendered structure of early childhood education which simultaneously reinforce that structure. The image of teaching and childcare as women’s work is powerfully supported by the use of “mother” and “mothering” as metaphors for, respectively, the job positions and what is believed to be the appropriate job functions within the field. In a recent study on gender roles and infant/toddler care for men and women professors on the tenure track (Rhoads & Rhoads, 2012), it was concluded that women professors enjoyed care-giving more than their spouses. Although men professors had the freedom to take post-birth parental leave and believed in sharing infant care equally, they were performing significantly less child care roles in the home than their spouses. This difference in parental preferences might help explain why gender differences continue to persist, regardless of social forces and the implementation of policies which support equality.

The image of women as more than just mothers when nurturing children represents love and protection and is honorable, but intimacy with children for men conjures up an image which represents danger (Sargent, 2004). Despite the reality that 90% of reported cases of child maltreatment in the United States occur in the home, and a higher percentage of women are reported as perpetrators than men (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services [USDHHS], 2010) men students, child caregivers and teachers continue to feel that, if they choose to enter a field dominated by women, they become suspect (Murray, 1996), and fear being accused of child abuse by parents or administrators (Anliak & Sahin Beyazkurk, 2008; Wardle, 2011). This negative perception of their motives for choosing to work with young children can cause them to experience a higher level of fear, anxiety, and frustrations than their women colleagues and to constantly remain conscious of their gender. In order to survive, they become conditioned to transforming themselves in accordance with the expectations and assumptions of the community of people with which they are working and, like most workers who find themselves positioned as token outsiders, feel that they are scrutinized more closely than their women colleagues which in turn places limitations on how they can care for children (Sargent, 2004). Although best practice in quality care

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1Although direct quotations contain a mixture of terms, in an effort to emphasize a cultural approach to this study, participants are referred to by gender, as opposed to biology.
includes hugging and/or holding children (Wishard, Shivers, Howes, & Ritchie, 2003) and being available to respond to the emotional needs of children is of paramount concern in ECE (Sargent, 2004), men are less likely to participate in physical interaction and nurturing roles when in the classroom and avoid participating in diapering and napping routines (Hansen & Mulholland, 2005). By conforming socially, their lack of participation in these roles may actually strengthen traditional gender stereotypes (Lyons et al., 2005) and consequently, the dynamics of their tokenism are reinforced (Kanter, 1977).

Beginning men teachers experience confusion about how to balance how they would naturally provide care for children with the limitations imposed on them due to child protection issues and the issue of “touch,” even though withholding touch from young children can be as harmful to their development as both physical and sexual abuse (Carlson, 2006). Raising awareness about this fundamental issue can influence their career choice based on their ability to succeed in the classroom (Hansen & Mulholland, 2005), and allay fears by providing guidance and support on how to create nurturing environments which promote appropriate touch in order to scaffold their ability to build relationships of trust with each child and parent at the beginning of the school year (Cooney & Bittner, 2001).

Gender equality requires engaging students and beginning teachers in debate and critical reflection on gender-related matters in order to prepare them for their role as agents of change in the classroom (Cushman, 2010). This form of preparation would ensure that young children are exposed to nurturing caregivers who are not constrained by strong and aggressive stereotypes popularized by the media (Daitsman, 2011). Involving male teachers increases the quality of ECE by providing opportunity for children to grow up with a sense of equality (Cameron, 2001).

**More Men Teachers**

Recruitment campaigns in Europe have made some headway in improving the proportion of men students by including training which equips graduates with a unique body of knowledge about occupational identity to assist them in their work with children and young adults (Cameron, 2006). The Council of the European Union (2011) recently included a goal to increase the percentage of men child-care workers to 20% of their early childhood education and care work force by 2015 in order to provide a wider experience for children.
and break down gender-stereotyped perceptions. This is an important initiative to provide their children with the best start for the world of tomorrow. In Australia concern that many boys are growing up without fathers in the home, and the recognition that it is important for children to have both men and women teachers as role models at school, has set in motion the Victorian Government targeting teacher recruitment programs in order to attract men back into the classroom (Rayner, 2011). The number of men employed in child care has increased in Europe, particularly the Scandinavian countries, where they have initiated and taken responsibility for proactive recruitment strategies (Owen, 2003). Results from this research study will provide data which may support advocacy to promote awareness of what changes are crucial in the USA in order to recruit and retain men child development teachers to provide better representation of real life, and enable children to experience interaction with men when they are not present in the family unit.

**The Teacher-Child Relationship**

The teacher-child relationship is a critical element of quality care, and as many children in child care spend more time with their teachers than with their own parents, the teachers’ role in validating emotions by encouraging them to verbalize their sad and angry feelings has increased. Teachers help children to understand how to regulate and understand their experiences by explaining the causes and consequences of emotion (Ahn, 2005); and in their role as care-giver, they make a significant contribution to positive outcomes in their social development and ongoing success when they enter school. In a study of 1 man and 11 women ECE teachers’ responses to children’s emotional expressions (Ahn & Stifter, 2006), it was found that preschool teachers provided more physical comfort and distraction to girls in their care, but the boys who tended to be more prone to crying and expressing anger were provided with more constructive ways to express negative emotion through verbal mediation and the writing process. Research shows that boys become aware of sex-role expectations earlier than girls and adopt them more strongly (Fling & Manosevitz, 1972). In a study on patterns of touching between preschool children and men and women teachers (Perdue & Marantz Connor, 1978), social interactions involving touch were primarily received by children from teachers of their own sex. As early childhood classrooms are staffed predominately by women teachers, this study supports the implication above that girls
receive more physical comfort and nurturing touch than boys. Nurturing touch through physical contact from caregivers is necessary for all children to thrive and feel loved and secure, and is essential to high-quality care (Carlson, 2006).

**Quality Care-Giving**

Effective teaching enhances children’s learning activities by including practices which involve positive social interaction for all children with their teachers, attachment security and participation in creative play activities (Howes & Smith, 1995). The NAEYC promotes specific developmentally appropriate practices for adults to adhere to when working with young children (NAEYC, 2006). An NAEYC accredited program is described as a place that provides a safe and nurturing environment where children grow and learn through cooperative work and play experiences which foster all areas of child development, including cognitive, emotional, language, physical and social. Primarily, programs promote positive and meaningful relationships for all children and their families. Relationships between teachers, children, and their peers are important to create a harmonious classroom climate, manage challenging behaviors and ultimately support the ability for young children to regulate their own emotions and behavior (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997; NAEYC, 2006). The global quality measure, the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS; Harms & Clifford, 1980), expects quality child care to indirectly influence security and cognitive activities through its influence on teacher positive interaction and play activities (Howes & Smith, 1995). In 1995, the Cost, Quality, and Child Outcomes in Childcare Centers study found that children in quality classrooms had more advanced social skills than children in lower quality programs and were more likely to have warm and open relationships with their teachers. Quality care is distinguished by the number of children cared for by each adult, a safe and stimulating environment, and nurturing interactions between caregivers and children (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). Classrooms staffed by teachers who engage children in positive social interaction and creative play activities significantly enhance their emotional security and cognitive activity (Howes & Smith, 1995). A nurturing classroom where teachers and children make meaning of experiences together, work with multiple perspectives, and negotiate differences, is where the environment, routines, and social interactions all come together to scaffold children’s ability to be successful as learners (Curtis & Carter, 2008).
Their ability to develop positive social interactions can be predicted by articulated classroom practices (Wishard et al., 2003).

Classroom practices are the strategies that teachers intend to and actually do use to enhance children’s development and become their natural way of doing things. They are rooted in ethnicity, community, and social class (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000) and the combination of ethnicity, practices, and quality significantly impacts learning outcomes and peer play competency in child care settings (Wishard et al., 2003). Practices in the classroom evolve into the routine way in which teachers organize their classroom environment to achieve their goals and result in purposeful responses when interacting with children. They maximize and promote positive social interactions in the classroom by including attention to the planning of group composition, classroom activities and materials (CSEFEL, 2004). There is limited research on the importance of socialization opportunities for young children’s emotional development in child care (Ahn & Stifter, 2006), and the enacted classroom practices of men and women teachers has yet to be explored.

Rolfe (2006) suggests that recruiting more men in ECE would improve work place practices and the quality of care for children. Their presence in the classroom can support social development by providing positive experiences which affect how young children view themselves in the world (Sheppard, 2011) and model how men can successfully participate in a nurturing role. A strong, confident, and diverse workforce results in positive learning outcomes for all children (Zigler, Gilliam, & Barnett, 2011). Young children benefit from meaningful relationships when the classroom environment values and supports both men and women as caregivers. Diversity provides gender balance of role models for both girls and boys at a stage in their development when they are developing both their self image and self worth (Squires & Bricker, 2007) and need physical play and other brain stimulation that men provide for both girls and boys as they grow and learn (Wardle, 2011). Fagot (1981) concluded that men and women teachers differ in their interactions with girls and boys. Men teachers gave more positive comments to boys and girls and were more likely to give physical affection and engage children in physical play.

Men can contribute to a well rounded environment (Sumsion, 1999) and are becoming recognized worldwide as important for children’s growth and conceptions about gender (Nordberg, 2002). In order to foster children’s critical thinking about bias and nurture
their self-identity, society globally needs to encourage men to continue to provide nurturing roles within their cultural context for young children (Daitsman, 2011). When men are active team members in an ECE program, it validates their role as competent caregivers and creates a welcoming environment where other men are attracted to work at the center. When men are present, fathers and family members feel comfortable participating in volunteer activities with their children (Levine, Murphy, Wilson, 1993).

**Impact of Men on Social Interaction**

The involvement of men in the lives of children can take many forms and recruiting men as caregivers of young children can positively impact their emotional competence and learning experiences through social interaction including play. Play has a vital role in how children learn and make sense of their surrounding world (Sandberg & Samuelsson, 2003) and is a way in which young children learn about the cultural norms and values of their society (Rettig, 1995). Men can bring active movement and rough and tumble play to the way in which they interact with their own children and the way in which they promote a fun and energizing classroom climate (Lamb, 2010). Rough and tumble play can support emotional self regulation and cognitive development by providing opportunity for children to take physical risks and experiment with materials both indoors and outdoors (Sheppard, 2011). Vigorous exercise play which begins with support from a parent, often the father, benefits motor training and may improve a child’s encoding and decoding emotional skills (Pellegrini & Smith, 1998). Children learn to deal with aggressive impulses and physical contact without losing control of their emotions (Rosenberg & Bradford Wilcox, 2006). Play influences cognitive, social-emotional, and physical behaviors and promotes healthy brain development. According to Tannock’s (2007) study of the perceptions of 11 educators on play, children who engaged in rough and tumble play learn how to make judgments about their physical abilities, how to respond to others, and how their playmates respond to them. However, they acknowledged that they lacked knowledge about how to effectively facilitate opportunities to guide and manage rough and tumble play in their early childhood programs, even though the NAEYC now recognizes it as an acceptable form of play for preschoolers. In a quality program, opportunity for play is included in lesson planning and valued as a
natural way for young children to engage in reciprocal social interactions and learn how to deal with each other (Day, 1994).

In a study on observations of children’s task activities and social interactions in relation to teacher perceptions in a university-affiliated preschool (which promoted a child-centered approach), teachers believed that they were providing developmentally appropriate experiences for the 4-year-olds in their care (Winsler & Carlton, 2003). However, although there was a ratio of three to eight children per teacher, observations over the course of a semester revealed not one instance of one-on-one teacher-child interaction. It was concluded that teachers were leaving too much up to chance by assuming that children without much teacher interaction would participate in focused learning activities more than was actually the case. It was suggested that they needed to critically examine the amount of structure, interaction, and scaffolding they were providing in the classroom. This conclusion was consistent with other studies which supported revisiting the “hands-off” child-centered approach in order to promote a more socially interactive role on the part of the teacher (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997).

Children are generally left to their own devices when interacting with their peers, and their teachers are more likely to support the cognitive aspects of play than the social aspects of it (File, 1994). A Swedish study of teachers’ attitudes toward children’s play (Sandberg & Pramling-Samuelsson, 2005) found that men preschool teachers contribute with more playfulness than women and accentuate physical development. Ten men and 10 women teachers were asked about their own play experiences and their perspectives on play in the classroom. The perspective of women was to avoid participating in the actual play experience of children, whereas in contrast, the men invited children to play with them as willing participants. However, the men adjusted to traditional gender culture, and it was concluded that as play challenges the competence of teachers; men adapt themselves to the cultural norm of a work setting. If the program is dominated by women, they are more likely to promote calm, quiet play which results in a minimum of mess as opposed to physical play (Wardle, 2004).

In conclusion, it is important to note that men will vary in how they perform their masculinity, and it is not always clear even to them what they are meant to be as role models in the classroom (Owen, 2003). Whilst men teachers bring different perspectives into the
classroom, how they perceive their role can and should be investigated. In Anliak and Sahin Beyazurk’s (2008) study in Turkey, it was pointed out that men and women can exhibit equal competence in the field of ECE, and that being a man is in itself not what is important. What is important is to be a “good teacher” (p. 317). Every teacher brings their uniqueness and passion to the field, and whether a man or woman, they aspire to well-managed and creative classrooms where they help the ideas and actions of young children change and grow as they learn. Teaching is a profession, and is not based on gender (Friedman, 2010).

Professionalism involves a common body of knowledge (Cameron, 2006), and as early childhood educators have striven for quality child care and education for all children in the USA, teachers have been in the process of attaining knowledge and qualifications which meet state and federal requirements. The way has been paved for both men and women to participate in and contribute to the field as professionals, not babysitters; however, gender resistance continues to question if caring for children is indeed a profession. The attitude that caring for children is something women naturally do so why pay them for it, continues to place a lid on the progression of higher salaries.

Exploring the factors which contribute to how men participate in the classroom and collecting data which supports the value men can add to the field of child development will in turn promote opportunity for initiatives to promote the recruitment of men into the field of ECE. As Sargent (2002) noted, it is by validating acceptance, providing support, and making significant changes to the culture of teaching, that men will feel recognized and with help will enter and remain in the field of early childhood education.
CHAPTER 3

METHOD

An exploratory mixed methods approach has been proposed as a powerful research design that blends the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative methods (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004) and the use of this design added to the richness of the study. Qualitative data was collected to identify and categorize emerging themes related to the following research questions.

1. What are the perceptions of men and women teachers about the role of men teachers in an ECE setting?
2. What are the beliefs of men and women about social interaction practices in the classroom?
3. What are the articulated and enacted practices used by men and women teachers to promote social interaction in the classroom?
4. Do beliefs and practices about social interaction differ for men and women teachers in an ECE setting?

Collecting, analyzing and “mixing” both qualitative and quantitative data helped to provide a better understanding of how men and women articulate and enact practices to promote social interaction in the classroom (Cresswell, 2012). Quantitative data was used to enhance the validity of the qualitative results and identify the participants’ beliefs about social competence and their use of strategies to promote children’s social competence in early childhood classrooms. Quantitative data was gathered using a variety of methods which included a questionnaire and observational methods of classroom quality.

PARTICIPANTS

Participants were recruited from two child development centers located on university campuses in San Diego, CA. These sites were chosen because each has men child development teachers currently working and caring for children in either toddler or preschool classrooms. Site A is accredited by the NAEYC and attracts researchers and students from around the globe who rely on the provision of high quality care and education for their children to allow them to focus on their projects of study during the working day. This
results in a unique blend of culture and ethnicity within each classroom. Enrolled are approximately 210 children of faculty, staff, and students with an occasional child from the surrounding community. The children served are between 3 months and 6 years of age and are grouped by age into five separate levels ranging from one to three classrooms at each level. On average there are between 12 and 30 children per classroom who are enrolled for as much as 6-8 hours per day for 5 days a week. The center’s curriculum is based on Piaget’s theory of learning, and offers an open classroom format where children have opportunities to initiate their own activities through purposeful play and take personal responsibility for completing tasks (Atherton, 2011). Adjoining the center is a small part-time program with capacity for 24 children in a mixed age setting inspired by the Reggio Emilia Approach. This approach is a unique body of theory and practice about working with children and their families which began in Reggio Emilia, a city in Northern Italy. It evolved from a cultural, historical, and political context, and schools in Reggio Emilia are places of connection between older and younger citizens within their community, driven by curiosity and the desire to open up new perspectives (Rinaldi, 2006). The curriculum is hands-on, child driven learning in which children are initiators of their own discovery, parents are collaborators, and teachers are facilitators. This collaboration bridges family, school, and community to create an awareness of global inclusivity by understanding the impact of culture on families. Both centers located at Site A share a common philosophy based on best practices in the field, evidenced by the fact that the main site is accredited by the NAEYC.

Enrolled at Site B are approximately 200 children of faculty, staff, and students with an occasional child from the surrounding community. The children served range in age from 6 months to 5 years old and are grouped by age into five separate levels with two classrooms at each level. On average there are 20 children per classroom who are enrolled from one day per week to as much as 6-8 hours per day for 4-5 days per week. The center is a laboratory site for students from the university’s Child and Family Development Department and is currently part of a study in continuity of care. This means that each child bonds with and is cared for by one teacher as their consistent primary care-giver from the time of enrollment until they are 5 years old. Similar to Site A, center staff embrace much of the Reggio Approach as it relates to the environment, relationships, and the art of teaching, and the children spend some part of their day in structured activities facilitated by the teacher, and
another part of their day free to choose self selected, hands-on activities. The center is currently going through the NAEYC accreditation process.

Both sites maintain Title V adult/child ratios and encourage open-ended activities both inside and outside, providing ample opportunity to observe social interaction between children and care-giving staff. Under Title V, there are between two and six adults working in each classroom identified in this study, although only two teachers in each classroom actually participated in the research. This being the case, it is interesting to note the low representation of men caregivers as compared to the high representation of boys enrolled at each site. Figure 1 represents the gender of both teaching staff and children in the participating classrooms.

![Bar chart showing gender distribution](chart.png)

**Figure 1. Total number of adults maintaining Title V ratios and total number of children enrolled in participating classrooms.**

**PROCEDURES**

Participants were the teachers currently providing care and education for the children at each site in the identified focus classrooms. Purposefully selected men child development teachers were the special population and focus of this project, and classrooms where they were working were selected accordingly, along with an equivalent classroom serving children within the same age range where men were not present. The role of the teachers includes maintaining a healthy and safe environment for the children and facilitating ongoing
developmentally appropriate learning experiences. At Site A, one man and one woman teacher in one toddler and two preschool classrooms, and two women teachers in the adjoining toddler and preschool classrooms were invited to participate. At Site B, one man and one woman teacher in one toddler classroom, and two women teachers in the adjoining toddler classroom were invited to participate in the study. All 16 participants hold teacher permits with the California Department of Teacher Credentialing, and have experience and education in ECE.

During the recruitment process, I explained procedures in place to ensure anonymity and confidentiality of records to the Site Supervisors at each site, and special emphasis was placed on the voluntary nature of teacher participation and their assurance of continued employment, should they decline to be a participant and/or withdraw their consent during the course of the research study. The primary research activities did not expose them to any additional risk beyond that which they would normally encounter in their typical activities. Figure 2 presents demographic information on the teachers that participated in this study, while Table 1 presents information on their educational backgrounds and experience in the field.

![Demographics](image)

**Figure 2.** Demographics of participating ECE teachers.
Table 1. Education Degree and Years of Experience of Participants Per Classroom

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Site A</th>
<th></th>
<th>Site B</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Toddler Classroom 1</td>
<td>Toddler Classroom 2</td>
<td>Toddler Classroom 1</td>
<td>Toddler Classroom 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Man(^a)</td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>10 years</td>
<td>Woman(^a)</td>
<td>Associate’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>Associate’s</td>
<td>18 years</td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>Associate’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Preschool Classroom 1</td>
<td>Preschool Classroom 2</td>
<td>Preschool Classroom 3</td>
<td>Preschool Classroom 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Man(^a)</td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>14 years</td>
<td>Woman(^a)</td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>23 years</td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Preschool Classroom 3</td>
<td>Preschool Classroom 4</td>
<td>Woman(^a)</td>
<td>Associate’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Man(^a)</td>
<td>Associate’s</td>
<td>15 years</td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>Associate’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>Some college</td>
<td>7 years</td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>9 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Toddler Classroom 1</td>
<td>Toddler Classroom 2</td>
<td>Toddler Classroom 1</td>
<td>Toddler Classroom 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Man(^a)</td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>8 years</td>
<td>Woman(^a)</td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>Some college</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>8 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\)Denotes Lead teacher.

**DATA COLLECTION AND MEASURES**

My study used both qualitative and quantitative measures to answer the four research questions. Bringing together these two methods from different paradigms in an integrated way provided a more comprehensive study beyond the limitations of a single study approach, and capitalized on the strength of each (Spratt, Walker, & Robinson, 2004). Through this mixed method design, I collected data sequentially through the implementation of measurable tools, focus groups, and document analysis in order to get the full context of gender differences in the classroom.

**Qualitative Data**

Sargent (2001) highlighted the benefits of using focus groups in qualitative research to enlighten a study about men teachers. In this study they provided an opportunity for both the men and women participants to share their perceptions and beliefs about their role in ECE from the reality of their standpoint. To ensure that the participants were comfortable, a focus group was held at each research site in a familiar conference room with food provided. As I am the Director of Site A (see Appendix A), the discussion was led by Dr. Garrity (Child and Family Development Department), to avoid conflict of interest and ensure that the participants felt free to share information without being influenced in any way, and at Site B (see Appendix B), the discussion was led by myself. Sessions lasted approximately
90 minutes, and participants were able to respond honestly within a nonhierarchica... framework without risk, based on an ethic of caring which brought the interviewer into their world (Patton, 1990). Each successive question was grounded in the previous response, as the interviewer keenly listened and invited the participants to teach her about their lived experiences. The sessions were audio taped and responses were transcribed. Having both men and women participants together could have limited the frankness of responses; however, a consistent theme throughout both focus groups was that participants viewed one another as a family and their familiarity with each other appeared to enhance rather than limit responses.

The following interview questions were used to facilitate open ended themes for discussion and reflection in both focus groups in order to document the perceptions of men and women in their roles as caregivers, and their socially interactive practices in their natural setting. As a person-centered, ethnographic study, data was continually examined for emerging themes to identify patterns and/or recurrences of particular phenomena.

Focus group questions:
1. How do you perceive your place in ECE?
2. How do you perceive expectations that the organization has for men teachers?
3. What do you think is the value that men bring to the school community?
4. What challenges do you think men face in ECE?
5. What advice do you have for men entering this profession?

Quantitative Data

Quality child care fosters the development of social and emotional skills to enhance children’s success both when they enter Kindergarten and for the rest of their lives, and this focus was integrated throughout my study. In order to measure the beliefs and practices of teachers about social interaction and their articulated practices about what they do in the classroom, the following three tools were used to measure the dependent variable of this study. These tools used concepts parallel to the qualitative themes related to social interaction.
SOCIAL INTERACTION PRACTICES FOR THE PRESCHOOL YEARS (SIPPY) QUESTIONNAIRE

Research linking the knowledge, beliefs, and actual practices of teachers related to social and emotional learning is not readily accessible (Kemple, Kyoung Kim, Ellis, & Han, 2008). To measure the beliefs of teachers about social interaction practices, the participants were asked to individually complete the Social Interaction Practices for the Preschool Years (SIPPY) questionnaire (Kemple, 2004). Kemple et al. (2008) found the SIPPY to be a promising useful tool, given that there is a shortage of tools available for assessing teacher’s beliefs about strategies to support social emotional development in the early childhood classroom. The SIPPY is a tool designed to assess teachers’ judgments of the acceptability and feasibility, as well as their current use, of literature-supported strategies for promoting the development of young children’s social competence in early childhood classrooms. It has adequate internal consistency, as indicated by Cronbach’s alpha, for each of the three features within each of the three strategy categories, and takes about 20 minutes to complete.

The three categories included in the SIPPY are: Environmental Strategies, Natural Activity Strategies, and Intensive Strategies. Environmental strategies include the intentionality of classroom design and routines that facilitate a positive emotional climate. Natural activity strategies include the practices that are integrated naturally into the learning environment and Intensive Strategies include direct instruction and intervention in order to influence behavior and teach specific social behaviors (Kemple et al., 2008). The 30-item scale was created based on a scale called the Social Interaction Program and Features Questionnaire (SIPFQ; Odom, McConnell, & Chandler, 1993), which was developed to help assess teachers’ judgments of the acceptability, feasibility, and their current use of intervention strategies for promoting social interaction skills of young children with disabilities. At Site A, I walked the participants through the process and was available for questions while they completed the tools. At Site B, I introduced the tool and the teachers completed them during a time at their own convenience. Participants were instructed to assign a rating to the feasibility, acceptability, and current use for each specified teaching strategy.
**EARLY CHILDHOOD ENVIRONMENTAL RATING SCALE**

To measure teacher-child interactions, statistical data was collected from the Interaction subscale of the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS) or the Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale (ITERS). The scale was completed by student aides trained by the Center Site Supervisor in how to rate each section at Site A, and by supervising staff at Site B as part of the annual contract requirement for all California State funded centers.

The ECERS (Harms & Clifford, 1980) and the ITERS (Harms & Clifford, 1990) were designed as self assessment tools to measure classroom and global quality in center-based programs (Sakai, Whitebook, Wishard, & Howes, 2003). These tools are used across the USA in child development research (Helburn, 1995) as an instrument for program improvement and have demonstrated good predictive validity for over 15 years (Peisner-Feinberg & Burchinal, 1997). When it was revised in 2005, the internal consistency of the scale at the subscale and total score levels indicated that the scale can be considered to form reasonable levels of internal agreement at the three levels of scoring-indicators, items, and total score as meaningful representation of the environment. This scale comprehensively assesses the overall day-to-day quality of care provided for children, and items are rated on 7-point scales with a 3 indicating barely adequate quality, 5 indicating good quality, and a 7 indicating excellent quality. The revised measure improves upon the original by delineating proactive teacher behaviors and including indicators and examples of appropriate practices (Sakai et al., 2003). Statistical data was collected from the following Interaction subscale in the ECERS: Section 29, supervision of gross motor activities; 30, general supervision of children; 31, discipline; 32, staff-child interactions; and 33, interactions among children; and from the equivalent subscale in the ITERS: 25, supervision of play and learning; 26, peer interaction; 27, staff-child interaction; 28, discipline.

**CLASSROOM OBSERVATION FORM**

The Classroom Observation Forms (NAEYC, 2006) were designed as an Assessment Tool for Early Childhood Program Accreditation to provide the most direct evidence of program quality and encompass all observable criteria for all standards across all age groups. The Observable Accreditation Criteria for the Relationships Standard Form sections 1.A to
1. F form which measures relationship standards on each focus classroom in the following areas were used as part of this research project: 1A, building positive relationships among teachers and families; 1B, building positive relationships between teachers and children; 1C, helping children make friends; 1D, creating a predictable, consistent, and harmonious classroom; 1E, addressing challenging behaviors; and 1F, promoting self regulation. Each criterion is rated as either being met or not met.

A student trained by the Site Supervisor in the completion of observation tools used in the accreditation process completed a National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) classroom observation form, which measures relationship standards on each focus classroom at Site A and I completed this tool at Site B. Using the classroom observation tool, adults and children were observed as they engaged in typical activities, which included nurturing routines, structured (e.g., circle time) and unstructured (e.g., free play time) activities. Observation focused on how children interact with their men and women caregivers, during daily routines.

**DATA ANALYSIS**

One of the key differences between qualitative and quantitative methodology is the search for the underlying beliefs of the focus group involved in the study (Sargent, 2001). In order to understand the value of men as caregivers more fully, I began with the focus group discussions, and sequentially utilized a quantitative approach by retrieving scores from three administered measurable tools, the ECERS for preschool, the ITERS for infants and toddlers, and the SIPPY, along with the NAEYC Observation tool. I then compared these results to integrate the analysis and test the theory that difference in gender impacts the classroom.

**Qualitative Data Analysis**

The centrality and process of transcription in qualitative research affects how participants are understood, the information shared and the conclusions drawn by the researcher (Polland, 2002). Using the transcription process allowed me to attempt to bring alive what was said (Bailey, 2008) and gain insight into each teacher’s beliefs about the role of men teachers and the challenges they face in an ECE setting. Data retrieved from the focus group discussions was analyzed using qualitative methodology proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994) with a focus on coding meaningful segments to uncover emerging codes.
and patterns that were transcribed with the date and coded by subject. As a person-centered, ethnographic study, data was continually examined for emerging themes to identify patterns and/or recurrences of particular phenomena.

**Quantitative Data Analysis**

Collecting and analyzing numerical data from each of the above observation tools enabled me to measure the quality of adult involvement through social interactions and articulated practices, based on a snapshot of each classroom during the moment of time they were being used. Descriptive statistics were used to obtain the mean and standard deviations of ratings. Results from the ECERS/ITERS and NAEYC classroom observation form were separated by classrooms where men were present and where they were not. They were then compared across the toddler and preschool classrooms in order to generalize about the quality of social interactions taking place in each. Specifically, data from the observations provided information about how men and women interacted with children in the classroom in order to generate a hypothesis about the impact of men caregivers on social interaction.

Scores from the SIPPY were separated by gender, so that the beliefs of men teachers could be compared with the beliefs of women teachers. Statistical data presented for this tool included the range, mean and standard deviation of ratings of the overall scale and subscales.
CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The purpose of this chapter is to present the results from this mixed methods exploratory study. Qualitative data will be presented first under each section, followed by the results of the quantitative data. The chapter will conclude with the presentation of the results and how they relate to each of my four research questions. Qualitative and quantitative data will be triangulated in order to provide a rich and nuanced understanding of the value men bring to the ECE setting.

QUALITATIVE DATA

Transcripts from the focus groups discussions were transcribed from the audio-tapes, providing a source of data which then was summarized, and organized systematically in order to reduce the amount of data by coding it thematically. Through my lens which was informed by review of the literature, I carefully read through each line of transcribed data to locate descriptive words and identify meaningful phrases from which I was able to create a master list of the themes reflected by each group. As the questions were open-ended the discussion flowed in way that meant that these themes were threaded throughout the discussions; e.g., being an effective teacher regardless of gender which was endorsed by all of the participants. A pattern emerged where issues were raised and repeated in more than one category depending on the context. Figure 3 illustrates the process used to identify themes as they emerged. The large circles represent the intent of the focus questions, and the smaller circles reflect the integration of ideas in the transcribed data.

This integration of ideas is a feature of working with young children, but the resulting overlapping of data meant that coding was complicated; e.g.: the belief that “hugging” is important relates to both nurturing and relationships, the belief that they were part of a “family” relates to both relationships and the culture of the centers, and making an impact on the social development of children included being a positive role model in the classroom. I revised the coding to see what themes were validated and appeared to be the most important.
By taking these common ideas and recording how many people responded to each one, I was able to break down the data into the following themes and categories (see Table 2).

These themes were expected given the theoretical framework, which reflected the presence of the gendered image of the man teacher as a male-role model and the challenges men face as “tokens” in an ECE setting. They also reflect Vygotsky et al.’s (1978) theory of social development and Bowlby’s (1998) theory of attachment in regard to the importance placed by the teachers on learning through social experiences and forming meaningful and responsive relationships when working with young children. What was unexpected was the women’s perception that the men were in tune with the children in their care and “run” with their ideas more readily than they did. It was also surprising to hear the conviction of the men participants to overcome their challenges in order to provide nurturing care, which
Table 2. Quantified Coding of Common Themes, Patterns, and Categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Pattern</th>
<th>Total Number of Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>Cultural diversity 14, sense of family 9, sense of community 7, valued as equals 3, feeling comfortable 3, welcoming environment 2, having support 1, and acceptance 1</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making an Impact</td>
<td>Being an effective teacher 16, developing social skills 6, having an impact 6, being a role model 5, and imprinting 1</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td>Touching/hugging 15, building relationships 6, nurturing 3, caring 3, and continuity of care 3</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenges</td>
<td>Stereotypes/stigma 8, abuse/accusation 6, low salaries 6, changing diapers 4, having something to prove 4, and feeling uncomfortable 1</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contribution of Men</td>
<td>Curriculum activities 10, providing a balance 4, having fun 3, in tune with children 3, and making a contribution 1</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

supported my hypothesis that men positively impact social interaction when present in the classroom. Another item of interest was the fact that the reference to low salaries was a raised as a challenge in the field by women, not men at both sites.

In order to take the results to a higher level of analysis, I separated the transcribed data by theme according to what comments came from the men and the women who worked with them in the focus classrooms, and what comments came from the women who worked together in the control classrooms where no men were present (see Appendix C, Table 7).

I expected the most relevant observations about men in the classroom to come from the women who they were directly working with. In fact, it was the women in the control classrooms who shared the most information about their observations of the contribution that men make to the field. They were also empathic to the challenges that men face; e.g., the perception of parents when they change diapers and the risk of accusation based on their personal experiences whilst working at previous childcare sites.
QUANTITATIVE DATA

Data from the measures and tools described in this chapter provided a more detailed view of the enacted and articulated practices used by men and women to promote social interaction in the classroom, and supported my generated hypothesis that it is an important component of quality care and education.

The first tool administered was the SIPPY, and the range, mean, and standard deviations of ratings for the overall scale and subscales from the teacher ratings of their beliefs about the acceptability, feasibility and current use of strategies for promoting the development of social competence are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics: Teacher Ratings of Acceptability, Feasibility, and Current Use of Strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Men (n = 4)</th>
<th>Women (n = 12)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Min</td>
<td>Max</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall Scale</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptability</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feasibility</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current Use</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental Strategies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptability</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feasibility</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current Use</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural Activity Strategies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptability</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feasibility</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current Use</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intensive Strategies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptability</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feasibility</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current Use</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Possible scores range from 10 to 50 for each subscale and from 30 to 150 for the overall scales.

Based on descriptive statistics, there appeared to be a variance between men and women in the area of feasibility, which would infer that men are more willing to take risks and try out new ideas than women. Although this made sense from a theoretical viewpoint,
an independent sample $t$ test indicated there were no statistically significant differences between men and women (see Table 4). This could be because of the small sample size and because the two groups for comparison were not equally balanced.

Table 4. Inferential Statistics: An Independent Sample $t$ Test of SIPPY Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feasibility</th>
<th>$t$</th>
<th>$df$</th>
<th>Sig. (2-Tailed)</th>
<th>Mean Difference</th>
<th>$SE$ Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances assumed</td>
<td>-.709</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>.490</td>
<td>-7.00000</td>
<td>9.87783</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances not assumed</td>
<td>-.714</td>
<td>5.241</td>
<td>.506</td>
<td>-7.00000</td>
<td>9.80414</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The ECERS and ITERS classroom environmental rating scales are observational instruments routinely used to determine classroom quality based on the evidence of “best practices.” Higher scores are desirable, as reflected in the scores presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Descriptive Statistics: ECERS and ITERS Items for Interaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Measure</th>
<th>Pre-K Men</th>
<th>Pre-K Women</th>
<th>Toddler Men</th>
<th>Toddler Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supervision of Gross Motor Activities</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Supervision of Children</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discipline</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff-Child Interactions</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interactions Among Children</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Possible scores range from 1 to 7.

The NAEYC observation tool measuring teacher interaction in the classroom assists child development programs in reaching a high standard of quality but is typically used in practice but not in research. The results presented in Table 6 show no difference between classrooms from a methodological standpoint.
Table 6. Observable NAEYC Accreditation Criteria for the Relationships Standard

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Measure</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Building Positive Relationships Among Teachers</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and Families</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building Positive Relationships Between Teachers</td>
<td>9.6667</td>
<td>0.57735</td>
<td>9.6667</td>
<td>0.57735</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and Children</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helping Children Make Friends</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating a Predictable, Consistent, and</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harmonious Classroom</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addressing Challenging Behaviors</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoting Self-Regulation</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Possible scores range from 1 to 10.

**RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

Both the qualitative and quantitative data was analyzed in order to answer the four research questions and identify the value of men as caregivers in ECE.

**Research Question 1**

Research question 1: What are the perception and beliefs of men and women teachers about the role of men teachers in an ECE setting?

**MAKING AN IMPACT ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT**

All of the teachers who were invited to participate in the study participated in the focus group held at their site. This added to the spirit of the research and resulted in animated and passionate discussion about their perceptions and beliefs. The common goal echoed by both the men and women teachers at the beginning of each session was their desire to make an impression on children by providing learning experiences in order to prepare the children for life out in the real world. For men at both sites, this goal was primarily based on their own experience with teachers as they matured and the impact that they had on their lives and social competency. Specifically, the men saw their role as an opportunity to create a better future, and taking care of children and promoting social competency was an integral piece of this process. The following quotes typify this conclusion:
Site B:
Teaching them how to be with each other, work with other children and use their words, not fight, [because] We all want our children to grow up to be members of the world that are really social and taking care of each other and productive.

Site A:
All of us want to make an impact. If you get into careers [as men] where everyone goes, what impact are you going to make if you know what I mean? But if you are in a career where you know you are needed and you can make an impact, it builds you up so much.

Making an impact included strong emphasis by all participants on behaving in a certain way, being a leader, and being an example for the children as facilitators of their learning. They saw themselves as teachers first, as part of a larger community working together with families. At Site A, women teachers felt that all teachers make an imprint on children’s lives, but as not all children have a man involved in their life as noted by a woman teacher:

When they see male teachers they just want to hang around them.
The same women teachers also believed it makes a difference when the children have a man show interest in them and see them as important.

They don’t get what they are looking at, but when they are looking they know that there is a difference.

**ROLE-MODEL**

All of the men teachers wanted to be a positive model as a man. This was summarized at Site B as,

You gotta be yourself and be truthful to the children. [My goal is to] . . . be a positive influence on any child I am around. That idea right there takes you a long way. [And reinforced with] “I definitely want to portray a positive model you know as a male, and I think that is a main factor—as long as I’m doing something positive for children, everything is ok!

The women teachers at Site A saw the interaction between men and children as “something magical” that happens and brings a balance to the classroom. Their belief that a balance between men and women at Site A was reflected in the following quote:

One thing we are always trying to teach them is that when you grow up you can be anything, and they need to see that men can be preschool teachers too, and men can be nurturing.
At Site B, staff saw developing children’s social skills, forming relationships, and mentoring students as their primary role, regardless of gender. It was the man teacher, however, who raised reflection as an important part of mindfulness when modeling learning for children:

You have to reflect on how did you do, how did that go, how can I do it better, why do I feel that way?

**TEACHER EXPECTATIONS**

The consensus at both sites was for everyone to do their job as best they can to meet the needs of the classroom. The men did not feel that there was any different expectation of them than of any of the other teachers.

Site B:

That is my expectation too—to be the best teacher I can and never stop learning. Each staff member, regardless of gender, felt valued as equals. This was summarized by Dr. Garrity during the discussion at Site A:

That’s really the key . . . because I’m thinking that according to the literature that guys feel their role is different and that they have to do a lot of the manual stuff just because they are men. But here you feel like you are teachers first.

Being a teacher first was well captured in the following statement from a Site A man:

I don’t feel like a man who happens to be a teacher, I feel like a teacher who happens to be a man.

**CULTURE**

However, the women teachers acknowledged that men may enter another workplace feeling that they had to prove themselves and exceed the expectations more than women need to. They likened a man walking into a child development center to a woman walking onto a construction site. One of the woman teachers at Site A described it as,

A man coming in you have something to prove and you need to outwork, outshine, prove something more than a women coming in and being like, I’m already accepted.

It was felt that there was not the same stigma when men worked with preschoolers, as when men worked with toddlers, which was considered to still be unchartered territory. The fact that two of the men participating in this study (one from each site) worked with very young children and “started out with toddlers.” was considered to be “very cool” as they were not only where they wanted to be, but they were seen as doing a great job.
CHALLENGES

However, the role of diapering was reiterated as an issue by one of the woman teachers at Site A.

Always having in the parents’ mind that it is a man changing the diapers and they can’t get over that and it’s sad but it is a barrier, it still happens.

Both men and women acknowledged that the issue of sexual abuse was always a concern for men, and this was exemplified by a man at Site A:

When you get that from a parent you feel that, and it’s uncomfortable and you have to prove yourself the other way and be careful. Like if a little girl comes over and jumps in my lap, it’s always in the back of my mind.

This was an issue that the women teachers did not have to worry about, although one of the men teachers shared that in actual fact according to federal studies, women were actually more likely to abuse children than men which was a fact that shocked them. The men talked about how although this was always in the back of their mind, they felt that it was less of a concern in the environment they currently were working in, and were able to be “touchy” as they didn’t feel that everyone was looking at them in this light. One of the woman teachers shared a story resulting from a parent accusation against a man teacher at her previous place of employment, and the unfortunate consequent events that evolved. Although disturbing, men and women felt that it was these stories that get told, and that it was important to tell a different story, of “... men that are successful” in the field. One woman expressed that if an incident like that should occur, she would hope that their administration would be there for them. Unfortunately, they all recognized that if other entities became involved in an accusation it could be taken out of the hands of the administration.

This is going to be an ongoing issue where people are going to come into ECE and they are going to stigmatize against them at the forefront, but breaking down those boundaries and getting the information out there [is important].

Getting the story out there and showing acceptance of men was important to everybody regardless of gender. At Site A where the number of men employed had more than doubled over the past 5 years, they felt that as more men came in, their presence became, “second nature” to them. One man teacher stated that,

The advice he would like to give men is not to be deterred by all of the things we just talked about, because I think it is so important for it to be way more balanced than it is now, and to not be afraid to go into teaching.
At Site B, another stated that,

Sometimes I think that they get the idea that males are not affectionate, but I try and be as affectionate as possible with my children as I really care about them and it’s nice for the children to get to know that, hey, this guy is affectionate and it’s a reflection on males in society. [If] the relationship is not that far that we want to introduce hugging you put yourself on the line cause they might get scared, but if you are building that relationship it’s one extra step that you take. But if they say no then that’s fine too. You’ve got to let them know that there is no pressure here. If you feel like that then that’s fine too.

It was agreed that men need both support and conviction to survive in a gendered field. Site B,

It’s a lot of mental difference being in a female world you know. You work with females all the time. And when I went through college all my colleagues were 99% females, so that might be intimidating for some people especially if they don’t hang around females. My family was particularly run by females.

Another at Site A shared that,

I was told that I was in the wrong class on the first day of the semester—“I think you want the next one,” and I’m like, “No I don’t!”

Despite the perception that child care is women’s work, the men shared that they did not feel that the women were asking what they were doing at their sites and valued the fact that they could bring something different to the table. At Site A, this level of comfort was attributed to the value which their college placed on diversity, and that it said something about the community, that it not only attracted man teachers, but that it retained women teachers for a long period of time. One woman teacher shared that as member of a minority group; she saw the diversity of both the staff and families at the center and campus as meaningful.

I think being so diverse is a huge asset that gets overlooked if you aren’t a minority, but if you a minority you see it as a plus . . . . When I came here from a Hispanic background, it was great that I had people here that shared the same culture and the same background as I did, and I’m sure parents see it the same way and for their children. They are excited about having that, and that we introduce it to them, and vice versa we are excited about embracing their culture.

This was an interesting perspective given that 43% of the staff at Site A share their Hispanic heritage.

Women saw having men as being part of the appreciation for diversity. At Site A, they also saw the prestige of being associated with a university, the leadership of the center, and the family like atmosphere as other variables that made it possible for the men to feel
comfortable being there. The fact that the teachers were all primary caregivers to a particular group of children as an extension of the home or functioned as a mixed age group at Site A, were seen as contributing factors which promoted caring and impacted the culture of the center. These factors combined with the practice of continuity of care were validated by the man at Site B also.

We are humans, we have emotions, and they [the children] have emotions, and it is our job to put it all together . . . . I think more than anything, it is our continuity of care that has impacted our culture. Raising the infants is so different than when they are toddlers . . . raising them is different. We think they are our kids. I mean they are not biologically ours, but it feels that way.

At Site A, the women felt like it had taken years to get to where they were at and attributed this to finding the support that men needed from both their women coworkers and the administration. One man teacher shared that his previous place of employment, they boasted about having him a man on staff when they gave parent tours, but at this center he did not feel like the “token” man. In summary, the men at Site A kept referring to their current place of employment as a unique environment where they felt safe. They noted this could be because of the reputation of the center, and that because the wait list was so long, parents were less likely to question men being present as they were so grateful when if their child was accepted. Childcare is also a recruitment tool and for international families their childcare placement is secured before they even arrive. Reassurance for parents of quality care was attributed to the credibility of the university and the fact that they along with the teaching staff as employees of the university shared the same scrutiny of background checks, received the same training, and were part of the same work ethic.

**Low Salaries**

At both sites, threaded through the discussion was the “huge” issue of low salaries for both sexes and the perception that they were not recognized financially as professionals. At Site B, it was felt that although men students were enthusiastic about their work in childcare, it was unlikely that they would stay in the field because of the pay.

I think that is probably a big thing as males think, well they do, have to support the family [and in our society], the man has to be the provider.

One women teacher stated that, “We don’t make a lot of money,” and shared that her friends and family would ask why she would want to work in childcare because, “You don’t make
any money.” At Site A they joked about the fact that the men had stayed at the center because the “wages went up” and that they did what they did “for the money!” One man teacher shared that his wife was the principal “bread winner” in their relationship and that there was no way in this field that he could catch up to her. He worked on computers on the side and could have pursued technology as a career but felt that preschool was important and where he could best make an impact.

**NURTURING**

I’m going to take care of kids because I believe it’s important . . . . I might be big and strong, but I’m sensitive and very caring, so that is what I have to offer.

Their passion for what they chose to do was their motivation, not the money. Dr. Garrity acknowledged the passion the men had for their work during the discussion at Site A,

You have all articulated yourselves really well. I got my degree in economics but then I thought “Oh no,” I want to be a teacher. Your passion for children has really come through.

At Site B, The toddler teacher stated that,

You have to follow your heart.

His passion for the importance of his role in providing continuity of care came through as a commitment to being “true” to himself and the children. As he shared, “They know if you don’t care.”

**Research Question 2**

Research question 2: What are the beliefs of men and women about social interaction practices in the classroom?

**NURTURING**

All participants believed that nurturing was a vital component when caring for and interacting with children in the classroom. This was nicely explained by the man teacher at Site B.

When you touch each other and they touch you, and they touch their friends, it really brings them closer to becoming a family . . . and it has helped them so much to be more comfortable around other people and adult males . . . . Hugging is part of being a family, touching is part of being a family, if you don’t do that [in the classroom] then you are not following our belief.
All teachers, men and women, felt that nurturing was an integral part of their role as primary caregivers, but that there was definitely a stereotype about what a man is, and what a man can do and what a man can’t do. At Site B, they had experienced times when parents were uncomfortable about men teachers changing diapers, and at Site A they recognized that some cultures don’t believe that males should be caring for young children. However, they believed that children need to know how men respond to situations, solve problems, and that they can change diapers and be nurturing. At Site A, their experience with parents who were nervous about their presence at first, was that when they had opportunity to observe them in action, shared that they loved having the balance of a man in the classroom. This is true to my experience as a Director. Once parents have experienced the balance of having both men and women care for their child, they become advocates for including men candidates when invited to be part of the hiring process when recruiting new staff.

It was generally felt that as the field of ECE has evolved along with knowledge about the science of brain development and attachment, it has embraced the need for nurturing to be part of the learning process over the past 10 years. Site B men and women shared that as students they were advised not to hug or touch children and noted that now it is part of their culture e.g.:

Let’s give her a hug because she got hurt . . . . [Children can] get the female side always [but they] don’t always get the other side.

**Relationships**

A common theme throughout each focus group session was their integral belief that relationships matter when providing quality care and “are the key to everything,” including bonding with children and letting them know that they are important. Attachment theory tells us that the positive effects of forming these bonds are long term, and their comments related to nurturing and relationships reflected their strong understanding of the importance of early infant attachment. They spoke about being responsive to their needs as a fundamental practice which contributes to secure relationships in later life and provided a strong foundation for them to draw from when transitioning to Kindergarten.

Site B:

You can catch up on your paperwork, but you can’t catch up on what you missed. You can’t take those 15 minutes back. You have to be in the moment cause that
is why you are there . . . As soon as you clock in you are on their time . . . that’s where the bond starts.

This belief was supported by the quantitative results from the NAEYC observation tool, as both men and women teachers fully met criteria for “Building Positive Relationships Between Teachers and Children” and “Staff-Child Interactions” in the ECERS/ITERS measurements. Scores were similar for the “Current Use” of strategies in the SIPPY tool.

The women teachers at Site A shared that having a man teacher in the classroom attracted dads to come in and had observed that dads seemed more comfortable talking with a man teacher and would often talk with them about sports and items of common interest, just as moms talk about where they went shopping on the weekend with their friends with women teachers. Their perception of their classrooms at each site was that they were one big family. This sense of family is what draws parents into the school community, and contributes to a safe and secure environment.

Ratings of acceptability and current use of strategies in the subscale section on Environmental Strategies and in the subscale section of Natural Activity Strategies in the SIPPY tool correlated with their dialogue about both the importance of building on relationships by utilizing strategies which emphasize positive social interaction with their peers and providing opportunity to rehearse their social skills. In comparing the mean, the current use of strategies was slightly higher for men than women in the overall scores, but not significantly different.

**Research Question 3**

Research question 3: What are the articulated and enacted practices men and women use to promote social interaction in the classroom?

**CONTRIBUTION OF MEN**

Qualitative data was used to gather information about articulated practices used to promote social interaction. The women teachers who worked with men teachers at Site A enjoyed the fact that they brought a different perspective into the classroom, and promoted a variety of learning experiences for the children. One especially was glad because,

They have the energy to play with them that children need, and I think that it is good that they are here as the children get a different experience from them than they do from me.
Others stated that they were more likely to be risk takers and brought with them more physical activities for the children, more science, music, woodworking activities, and provided more opportunity to play games.

I think that they feed off the child’s ideas more, and are a little more attentive to them than we are . . . We tend to get “really regimented” (in themes and our cookie cutter stuff etc.) and comfortable in our own shoes, whereas the men may have those ideas but they kind of tune in a bit more to what the children want to do.

Whilst analyzing the lesson plans for each classroom over a 2-week period I discovered a difference in the way in which men and women described their planned activities. At first glance consistent with quality care and education standards, all lesson planning included indoor and outdoor activities which consistently addressed all areas of the curriculum, Cognitive, Social/Emotional, Language, Fine Motor, and Gross Motor development using an integrated approach. These activities provided ample opportunity for children to gain awareness of self and others. However, the lesson plans prepared by the participating men in the study reflected use of action verbs which made their planned activities sound both fun and inviting. At Site A, for example, as opposed to the “Running Games” planned by a woman preschool teacher, the man preschool teacher was planning, “Running and Jumping in the Sand Box.” The men teachers used, “Ramps and Pathways,” “Slurry Chutes,” and “Snapping” and/or “Building Block Towers, Sandcastles or Houses” to describe their intentionality of the activity, and children enrolled in their classrooms were “Strolling with Strollers,” “Pulling Wagons,” participating in a “Dinosaur March,” “Making Snake Hats,” and “Sawing with Wood,” having “Wet Sand Fun,” going on “Nature Walks,” and “Weeding in the Garden.” In both preschool classrooms at Site A where men were present the children were exposed to woodwork, and had participated in useful long-term projects with a purpose such as making a picket fence to go around the garden and a table to hold their water bottles. In contrast, when planning for large motor activities, women generally named them specifically, e.g., basketball, soccer, dance, bikes, and their art as “coloring and cutting,” “collage with letters,” “yarn and beads” for preschoolers and “splatter art” and play sculptures” for toddlers. In the block area they were using “colored blocks and people” or “farm animals with barns.”

Although this was the case, it was difficult to code the lesson plans as they varied in both style and age-group. The lesson plans at Site A are separated by focus activities to
promote skill development which aligns with the Desired Results Developmental Profile for Children and Families (CDE, 2010). Desired Results is a system by which educators can document the progress made by children and their families in achieving desired results, and was established to improve quality in care and education by the California Department of Education. At Site B, lessons are framed as a “Planned Possibility” and I was not able to get examples of completed lesson plans until after the fact. In the toddler classrooms at Site B, while the children were making orange juice with their women teachers and then finding things to do with apples, children in the adjoining classroom where a man was present were using clay, water, paint brushes, and spoons. They were also singing through the amplifier with a microphone and marching with drums. All of the lesson plans were designed to encourage the development of social skills through participation by the children in developmentally appropriate and integrated learning opportunities; however, the lesson plans in their varied formats did not specify these skills in a way that could be consistently coded. Without consistency of presentation and completion, it was not possible to draw real conclusions and pursue this further as document analysis as part of this study. Providing participants in a further study with a consistent format could be a valuable resource in identifying differences between men and women teachers when planning learning activities.

However, as part of this study at Site A, I observed that some of these activities produced group art which was then mounted as a classroom display. The “Dinosaur March,” for example, resulted in a reproduction of the toddlers’ feet and shoe prints in white paint, and was bordered by a collage of natural collected materials. In contrast, in the adjoining classroom where a man was not present, the mounted classroom display was as described by one of the woman toddler teachers in the focus group discussion at Site A, a primary example of a “cookie cutter” activity. Both displays included photographs of the children that they could relate to, but the photographs attached to the “Dinosaur March” also fulfilled the purpose of reflecting the process involved in the activity (see Figure 4). Likewise, I then observed the same pattern in the preschool classrooms. Where a man was present, the art work displayed was a group project which included a set of four photographs which explained the process to create a group painting using tempera paint on recycled boxes, and in contrast, the classroom where no men were present had mounted a display in their science area made from recycled materials, with emphasis on the product, not the process involved in
The activity. This difference in the enacted practice between men and women was reflected in the focus discussion at Site A by one of the women teachers when describing the men she works with, in the following statement:

For certain they take those individual ideas and run with it, and base their curriculum a lot of times on what the children like to do, like B and his woodwork. I’d be like, I don’t know about those nails, and sometimes we don’t tune into that really and we do our “cookie cutter” stuff.

Process promotes child centered, open ended explorative activities. “Cookie cutter” projects are product-based activities which focus on a specific finished result, and do not necessarily lend themselves to experimentation with materials. In contrast, group projects which promote child centered, open ended explorative activities focus on the process rather
than the product. The Reggio Approach promotes a process of being permanently challenged (Rinaldi, 2006), believing that ultimately there is no distinction between the process and the final result, as the project is an ongoing process of looking, thinking, and reflecting and should not be limited by immediate results. Photographs illustrating these differences are shown in Figure 4. However, it is important to note that these differences in approach could be as a direct result of the training and education which the teachers working in each classroom have received rather than gender differences.

Classic “token” behavior is when a minority group feels under scrutiny is to go “one better” than their colleagues, as they strive to fit into their social situation. In an attempt to prove themselves as real teachers regardless of gender, men tend to go to more conferences and pursue alternative models of success by emphasizing the process over the product when teaching (Sargent, 2001). They practice creative activities which compensate for their feeling of inadequacy and inability to be able to get as close to the children as their women peers (Sargent, 2005), busy themselves by highlighting their technical competence to show their worth as a teacher, and go to great lengths to prove that they too belong in the classroom. It is interesting to note that in the focus discussion at Site A, one of the women shared:

> Sometimes I feel like, not here, but men in other places might have to go into a workplace already needing to prove themselves of what they need to do and exceed the expectations already more than a female would at that center.

However, being in tune with the children and placing emphasis on the process of learning rather than the product itself is a best practice in quality care and although the observed focus of men by the women could be classic “token” behavior, the men did not see themselves as having to compensate in any way as teachers when in the classroom. By focusing on the process of learning, it could be that the men are facilitating social experiences through group projects which in turn promote child centered, open ended explorative activities. It is interesting to note that in the overall scale of the SIPPY, men appeared to respond with a higher mean score than women in the area of feasibility, indicating theoretically that men are willing to take risks and implement new approaches into their curriculum.
At both sites, it was the men who expressed enthusiasm about how much “fun” they have every day, and how rewarding it was for them to introduce children to new experiences such as the first time a young child touches shaving cream.

Site B,

You get to be the one to see that—that’s hard to beat! What a great responsibility and thing to get to do, and to not wait to get to work to see what they do today, and what their growth is. We have a good time.

Site A,

I’m so excited about coming to work, it’s like what’s the day going to bring. They had a desire to share this excitement.

When people ask what I do I get an initial reaction, but then they are like, that is so cool, and they show interest and learn more, and it’s fun to share that.

**CONTRIBUTION OF MEN AND WOMEN**

Quantitative data from the classroom observation tools also provided information on enacted practices. Scores from the Infant Toddler and Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (Harms et al., 2005) consistently showed that there was no variance in teaching and social interaction practices between men and women, as evidenced by all classrooms scoring in the “Excellent” range on the subscales reflecting a high level of Staff-Child Interaction. Site A is Accredited and Site B is currently going through the process. As both research sites aspire to NAEYC Accreditation standards and believe in quality of care and education, these results were not surprising. However, it was interesting to note that the classroom score for the subscale, General Supervision of Children dropped to “Good” where men were present, implying that staff are providing sufficient supervision to protect children’s safety, but may be less concerned about rules and more likely than their women colleagues to encourage them to play and explore as risk takers within a safe environment.

Scores from the NAEYC (2006) observation tool of Accreditation Criteria for Relationships Standard on a scale of 1 to 10, likewise consistently fully met all standards reflecting high care, showing a high level of commitment to building on positive relationships with children, staff, peer interaction, and the development of self-regulation skills. As teachers who value quality of care they were consistently responsive to children’s needs, modeling socially acceptable skills and providing opportunity for positive play experiences, regardless of gender.
**Research Question 4**

Research question 4: Do beliefs and practices about social interaction differ for men and women teachers in an ECE setting?

**VALUE**

As shared in the above results, overall scores for all measures did not support the notion that women are better as caregivers than men, and no major differences emerged in the way in which men and women teachers maintained a high level of quality care for young children in their classrooms. However, data did illustrate that men approach their role when in the classroom from a different perspective than women.

Summarized by three women at Site A:

Men and women are different, and they bring balance in a field mostly dominated by women. They bring their character and masculinity which is something that the children do not see a lot.

They bring more physical activities for the children . . . and science in my experience . . . and they play games.

The men felt that they brought what they were able to do best to the classroom, as exemplified by the following quote:

Site A man,

Our society says that men need to be in this field or that, and that women are this and men are that, but the way I see it we both have the same traits, . . . but when you are out there teaching . . . my perspective is that I am very good at technology so that is basically my niche, and I love woodworking, so I feel that I have certain things I can offer to the school that maybe other schools don’t have.

This complimentary balance was referred to by teachers at both sites when talking about working as a team. At Site A, one of the woman participants who had worked with a man as her Lead teacher in preschool for 3 years summarized this balance between genders by stating the following,

It doesn’t matter who is handling the tools, or who is providing dress-up, it’s about what we can do for the children if this is what they want to learn . . . . One thing I like about working with M is that when a new idea comes up [and we ask ourselves], how do we approach it, we just break it down into what it is and ask [each other] what do you want to do? Right now he’s building a race track but previously I built a composter.

She described this as a partnership,
Right now, if two things come up at the same time we ask, which one do you want, and both of us are really neutral about it.

Meeting the needs of children in a toddler classroom as partners was described at Site B by the man lead teacher as a “dance.”

The camaraderie amongst the staff is huge because we all love taking care of those kids . . . . There’s nothing fun about a room full of crying children, but the trick is to fulfill their needs so that they are not crying. It’s a challenge, and your perspective of what’s happening. It’s like a dance; you’ve got to pay attention to it.

**Nurturing**

In the toddler classrooms, the men were not restricted by stereotypes in regard to showing affection. In fact, at Site B the toddler teacher shared that,

Personally I am a hugger. If you are in my room I hug a lot. It’s funny cause in my family life, I am not a hugger, but here I am. It’s for a purpose. I try and be as affectionate as possible with my children as I really care about them and it’s nice for the children to get to know that, hey this guy is affectionate and it’s a reflection on males in society.

This attention to responding to the needs of a child to ensure that they are held, soothed, feel safe and protected, reinforces the conviction of the men in this study to apply the science of brain development and the effects of attachment to their work. Dr. Garrity summarized this conviction at Site A with a “wow.” “You are really standing up for your conviction, and you are doing what you want!”
CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

By looking at the differences in the way that men and women interact with young children, the purpose of this study was to explore the value of the presence of men in the field of ECE.

THE PERCEPTIONS OF MEN AND WOMEN TEACHERS

All of the teachers, both men and women, involved in my study shared a desire to challenge the traditional view that caring for children is “women’s work,” and despite the fact that men have the patriarchal power to change the environment, they recognized that in accordance with Acker’s (1990) theory of gendered organizations, the gender rules of ECE as an occupation continued to restrict men from being themselves and promote images that create gender divisions. Motivated by a shared vision for social change, they felt that it was important to be able to tell their stories to place a positive spin on men as caregivers, as opposed to the misgivings people have when men choose to work with young children. Although they stated that they felt safe in the work place, they kept referring to their working environment as being one that was unique to their experience. Both men and women provided examples of situations where men as caregivers in the classroom are not always free to socially interact and touch children, resulting in a heightened awareness for the men of their own gender and the shared observation that men have to try harder than women to be accepted as caregivers.

Appropriate ECE practice incorporates cultural and developmental diversity, and NAEYC (2009b) emphasizes that accredited programs are responsible for creating a welcoming environment that respects diversity and preserves the cultural identity of children. The NAEYC position statement on linguistic and cultural diversity states that 44% of all children in the USA are members of “minority groups” and that by 2060, the proportion will rise to 62%. This increase in the diversity of children and their families has resulted in the promotion of a focus on diversity in the field, but has failed to foster gender equity in the
classroom. In the focus classrooms participating in my study, there was a major difference between the representation of men and the amount of boys enrolled in each of the classrooms (see Figure 1).

Participating men and women consistently believed that their role in developing relationships and making a connection with children and their families was fundamental to creating a culture of acceptance and enabled parents to feel comfortable when interacting with both genders. Commitment to embracing culture was an integral theme at Site A, where all staff participated in anti-bias training as part of their teaching role on a university campus which values diversity and both men and women teachers who identified themselves as part of a minority group felt a sense of belonging at their work site. Despite the fact that the men felt a sense of belonging, they were conscious of the fact that they were functioning in a, “female dominated world,” and faced isolation in the field of ECE from the time they entered into their training in college. This involved what the Lead teacher at Site B described as a “lot of mental difference” as the rules of society affect men and women differently, and the men struggled with being valued as a teacher rather than as a man. It was concluded at Site A that parents who were uneasy at first about having a man care for their child, grew to value his involvement in their lives through observation and positive experience.

At both sites, all participants saw gender balance as an important feature of diversity, and the women at Site A felt that it was important that children see that men can be nurturers too and have the ability to emotionally support toddlers and hug them. This belief was contrary to research which shows that men in ECE are not able to freely perform caring duties such as diapering children (Hansen & Mulholland, 2005). Sensitively responding to the needs of young children by functioning as their secure base is an important component of quality care (NAEYC, 2006) and the men and women teachers demonstrated understanding from ongoing research, that consistent and predictable social interaction between professional caregivers and infants and toddlers is directly associated with higher social-emotional outcomes (Elicker, Fortner-Wood, & Noppe, 1999). Both qualitative and quantitative results showed that men teachers can practice strategies which research has shown significantly predict attachment security (Tran & Weinraub, 2006), when operating in a culturally inclusive environment.
Although as professionals they valued quality of practice, all of the participants in my study did not feel that their role as teachers was fully recognized by our society as an important one in the lives of young children. Both men and women teachers unanimously expressed disappointment about their salaries, which infer a lack of value by society in general being placed on the importance of their role in providing quality of care for young children, despite research which supports the theory of attachment and shows that providing nurturing and secure relationships are critical to healthy brain development up to 3 years of age (Bowlby, 1998). Howes, James, and Ritchie (2003) concluded that Bachelor degrees and reflective supervision are important elements which can be linked to effective teachers. However, in the field of ECE, achieving the goal of attaining a higher degree does not generally translate into a higher salary level of earning. Despite this disappointment, it was evident that the men in this study were not just going through the motions day by day of caring for children, but were genuinely excited about their choice of career and felt a sense of fulfillment in their roles. This is most likely attributed to the fact that they had come into childcare as a career via alternative pathways to their women colleagues, and really wanted to be where they were at—having made a conscious decision to work with and be an example for young children. In contrast, the women at Site B entered the field as students in child and family development at the campus where their site is situated. At each site, it came through very strongly, that men and women teachers saw themselves as part of a “family.” As teachers who work in Reggio-inspired programs are generally interested in meaningful life experiences through the cross-cultural and multi-world perspectives of early education (Parnell, 2011) and promote a family friendly approach (Biddle, 2012), it was not surprising that both men and women felt a sense of belonging in a family-like atmosphere in their workplace. Being a family reflects a small component of gender order within the larger gender order of the rules that pervade across society in general. At both sites men and women felt that they shared duties and responsibilities equally, and at Site A they even joked about how being a man did not excuse a teacher from doing housekeeping duties like everyone else. It is not uncommon for the “token” at an occupational site to avoid drawing attention to him- or herself by entering into personal friction with others, preferring to keep the working arrangement structural. However, in this case, there was a sense of partnership as men and women shared a rhythm when working
together to initiate social play and learning experiences, and participants openly acknowledged that this takes place more effectively because of their gender differences. At Site B they described this complimentary interaction in the classroom as a “dance,” and illustrated that it is possible for men and women to positively interact with children in the classroom and share their individual interests and experiences. At Site A, this was described as an opportunity to discuss how they would approach a new idea and who would run with it (e.g., she built a composter and he built a race track with the children).

The collective identity of the men teachers in this study had, and could continue to evolve over time, if they continue to be bold and break down the cultural transmission of gender roles in our society by performing the same duties as their women colleagues in the classroom (Watson & Woods, 2011) and forming attachments with the children in their care. These men are what Freire (2005) describes as sincere cultural workers, who both individually and collectively strive to make a difference in the lives of children, their families and the whole school community. The statement by one of them that “You have to follow your heart” summed up their passion for what they do and why they do it.

THE BELIEFS OF MEN AND WOMEN ABOUT SOCIAL INTERACTION PRACTICES IN THE CLASSROOM

In support of the social-emotional development of young children the men felt that the power of touch was extremely important as part of the attachment bonding process. At Site B, for example, the man teacher working with toddlers shared that he was not a hugger at home, but he practiced hugging in the classroom for a purpose. Being in tune with the emotional needs of the toddlers in his care included showing them warmth, and hugging them because he believed it was essential to quality care. Caring for infants and toddlers is associated with the image of mothering (Sugg, 1978) where women have the unique biological opportunity to bond with their infant by breast feeding and traditionally are the ones who stay at home and change diapers, but in my study I was able to hear about how men interact with young children in the classroom and were able to take on take on a nurturing role. Fathers bond with their infants through caring social interaction and play and at Site A, one of the men teachers shared how he found a passion for working with young children when he fell in love with the development of his own children. He counseled his colleagues to not be deterred by or afraid of showing affection to the children and respond to their
emotional needs, as he felt it was time for ECE to be much more gender balanced. The women agreed that breaking down barriers which create gender differences, and providing children with the opportunity to bond with both men and women as caregivers was important.

However, in the process of finding out how men educators perceive their place in a workplace which is dominated by women, qualitative results confirmed that being more careful in a nurturing role was always lurking in the back of their mind, and they felt that they had to behave in a certain way as an example for the children. As tokens, they were aware that they stand out in the classroom, and that any action of physical contact can be misconstrued in accordance with the prevalent image which portrays men who seek to work with young children as homosexual or pedophiles (Reskin, 1991). This same challenge was verified in a casual conversation I had with a man colleague at a recent conference I attended, who shared that children seem to instantly gravitate towards him when he entered a classroom. As a result, he felt he had an even greater responsibility than his women colleagues to work on fostering meaningful and playful relationships with the children when in the classroom. Primarily, he was caught in the classic gender bind of displaying enough warmth to meet the needs of the children, but at the same time conscious of the need to display enough “masculinity” to act as a role model for “fatherless” children.

This challenge for men was validated by the women teachers at Site A, who observed that children gravitate towards a man when he enters the classroom and “hang” around him. The ability for men to develop skills which recognize safe boundaries when interacting with children featured in the discussion at Site B, when the Lead teacher talked about knowing when it was appropriate to introduce hugging when building on a relationship with a young child. He demonstrated the ability to touch a child in order to meet the needs of the child as opposed to his own needs and was able to provide comfort and support through physical contact in an appropriate manner. The preschool Lead teacher at Site A also shared about the need to be prepared for spontaneous affection such as knowing how to respond when a little girl jumps in his lap. Placing the needs of the children first should be a fundamental practice in the ECE classroom that overrides concerns about men’s motives for choosing child care as an occupation; however, the image of the homosexual-pedophile (Reskin, 1991) persists. Although the men did not discuss the strategies they use in order to avoid the risk of
accusation for inappropriate touch, women teachers expressed the need for the administration to be there for them should an accusation occur. Having procedures in place to protect both men and women teachers from the risk of accusation are essential to creating a safe and inclusive working environment. Fear of accusation forces teachers to interact with children in open areas, or alert another teacher as to where they are and what they are doing (Farquhar, Cablk, Buckingham, Butler, & Ballantyne, 2006).

The desire of the men and women to create a better world in the future was consistent with Howes et al. (2003), who found that teachers believed that children are a class of people who deserve attention and it was their role to teach them life skills and prepare them for school by providing an environment for play and discovery and giving them a head start on social skills (particularly oral language skills). The women saw the social piece of their role as teachers so that the children could move on and be prepared for school as important, but the men especially felt that they had both the power and the responsibility to shape a child’s entire future. More specifically, they aimed to give the children experiences which gave them the words and the ability to socially interact with each other in a positive way. They talked about teaching children specific skills such as how not to fight and believed that in doing so they were providing the foundation for children to build on their social skills.

Men and women teachers who practice quality care and education plan for constructive learning experiences in small and large group activities which promote the ability for children to learn to listen, focus and have the ability to self regulate through small and large group activities. Quantitative results from the SIPPY showed that the men and women participating in my study were intentional in their social interactions with children and the children made meaning from learning experiences through direct and indirect interaction with their peers and in collaboration with their teachers as a guide (Vygotsky et al., 1978). Although men were observed as being more attuned with the children’s interest, learning through a social process occurred regardless of whether the activity was initiated by the children or driven by the intent of the teacher. Mounted art displays reflected a difference in the emphasis of men and women on the process of learning as opposed to the end product (see Figure 4); however, as there are men and women working together in the focus classrooms where men were present in my study, these results do not actually show
where the directionality of enacted practice is coming from when producing creative art
displays, and therefore I am not able to totally attribute these findings to men in general.

**THE ARTICULATED AND ENACTED PRACTICES USED BY MEN AND WOMEN TO PROMOTE SOCIAL INTERACTION**

Quantitative results confirmed the commitment of both the men and women teachers
to implement best practices in quality care and education. In the process of finding out
about the enacted and articulated practices of men and women teachers in the classroom to
promote social interaction, qualitative results at Site A inferred that men place greater
emphasis on following the lead of the children and base their curriculum on what children
like to do, whereas women tend to be more regimented in their approach and stay within
themes. This came through as a possible example of the difference between men and women
in regard to risk-taking and keeping the children safe, when one teacher described how the
children like to do woodwork with their preschool teacher who was a man, but she herself
wasn’t sure about using nails with children. The men were interested in and part of the
learning process which could be identified as classic “token” behavior; however, it could also
be as a result of their ability to consistently reflect and build on their classroom practice as
described by the man teacher at Site B. In accordance with Vygotsky et al.’s (1978) socio-
cultural theory, they facilitated the development of social skills as part of an ongoing learning
process, and expressed more than once that they were also learning from and with the
children; as together they explored their world. At Site B in the toddler classroom this was
achieved through an emergent curriculum by building on planned activities and letting them
go in the direction that the children took them (e.g., when introducing a toddler to shaving
cream in the sensory table). At Site A the mounted art display in the preschool Reggio-
inspired classroom reflected the pleasure of inquiry which was fostered by promoting a
creative activity with no prescribed ending to what the children could discover. This
suggests that it is the purity of intent behind the practice which is what matters to men, and
men were observed by the women at Site A as being more attentive to children by “feeding”
off their ideas. However, as both sites are influenced by the Reggio Approach, projects
become an ongoing process of looking, thinking, and reflecting (Rinaldi, 2006), and the
ability of the men in my study to be observed as able to run with the children’s ideas and
challenge them may be linked to their education level and years of experience rather than gender.

Olds (2001) described children as miracles, and believed that this belief transforms the way in which teachers and administrators design for children’s care. The men at both sites in my study openly expressed the “joy” they experience when children make a discovery for the first time, and designed group activities outdoors with intentionality such as discovering shaving cream in sensory table in the toddler classroom or designing flying rockets in preschool. Both experience and relationships matter for young children, and these men teachers emphasized the importance of “being in the moment.” Being fully present is what nurtures strong relationships between children and their teachers (Biddle, 2012). They understood the need to make a connection with each child and provide stability in order to foster their confidence in accordance with Bowlby’s (1998) theory of attachment.

Interestingly, other than one reference to building a composter at Site A, none of the women referred to specific learning activities during the focus discussions, and it was the men only that emphasized more than once that in the process of learning they have “Fun!”

As the classrooms where men were present scored “good” rather than “excellent” under “Supervision of Play and Learning,” quantitative results from the ECERS/ITERS measurement indicated that the children in those classrooms were not as quite as closely supervised while in free play. This may demonstrate that the men in accordance with their expressed beliefs, fostered children’s ability to feel confident as learners and were able to play freely in their environment without being directly supervised, in the knowledge that they could come back to their secure base any time they needed to (Bowlby 1998). However, again as both men and women there are men and women working together in these classrooms, these results do not actually show where the directionality of enacted practice is coming from. Therefore I am not able to totally attribute these findings to men in general, but research has shown that men tend to be less concerned about safety and routines than women as discussed in the literature review (Carlson, 2011) and promote active play. The observation by the women that men play more games, are more likely to be “risk takers” and bring with them more physical activities along with the fun shared by the men in doing so, correlates with research which has found that men initiate active play which fosters the development of self-regulation skills and contributes to children’s healthy physical
development. It could also correlate with the difference in the mean scores on the SIPPY as men scored higher in the area of feasibility, indicating that adapting to new strategies was more feasible for them than for their women colleagues.

**DIFFERENCE IN THE BELIEFS AND PRACTICES OF MEN AND WOMEN TEACHERS**

In alignment with the National Research Council Report on early childhood pedagogy (Bowman, Donovan, & Burns, 2000), Howes et al. (2003) defined effective teaching as teachers who are actively involved and engaged with children, and who organize classroom activities that support and challenge their learning during both child and teacher-initiated activities. Quantitative data showed consistency in practice of quality care and effective teaching by men and women throughout my study. All focus classrooms scored in the “good” to “excellent” range on the ECERS/ITERS measurements for Interaction and results from the NAEYC tool evidenced the provision of high quality services in line with best practices in the field. Results from the SIPPY showed that the beliefs of men and women about the characteristics of social interaction were not that different between genders, but there was a subtle difference in their approach to implementing social practices. These findings were supported by the qualitative data, in that all of the teachers in these classrooms spoke about their desire to be the most effective teacher possible, regardless of gender. In accordance with Anliak and Sahin Beyazkurk’s study (2008) which pointed out “that being a male teacher is not important, rather it is an important thing to be a ‘good’ teacher” (p. 317) each person saw themselves as an individual in his or her own right, who added value to the learning experiences of the children in his or her care. As men and women they brought their strengths and interests into the classroom, and their unique capacities and enthusiasms enriched and enlivened their interactions with the children. This laid the foundation for what research describes as authentic relationships resulting in effective teaching and learning (Hohmann, Weikart, & Epstein, 2008). In concurrence with discussions with teachers on emotional development (Ahn, 2005), the teachers felt a sense of responsibility to make significant contribution to positive outcomes in the social development of young children, by ensuring they have the emotional foundation to be successful when they enter school.

Perhaps the most unique result from my study is the evidence of the ability of men teachers to work with toddlers, show affection, and feel safe enough in their working
environment to be able foster the importance of touch without fearing that they will be accused of being a pedophile or child molester. At Site A, the Lead preschool teacher stated that he was impressed by the fact that his colleague had chosen to be with toddlers because that was where he wanted to be and because he “does a really good job.” Being part of their lived experience enabled me to feel their passion and understand their conviction to work with young children. They complete the developmental profiles (CDE, 2010) and portfolios for their assigned group of children and sit with them at meal times where food is served family style. This practice of primary caregiving establishes an environment in which reciprocal trusting relationships develop between teachers, children, and their families (Theilheimer, 2006) and is referred to as a “relationship dance,” which is an important element for successful infant development (Edwards & Raikes, 2002). At Site B, the teachers who are primary caregivers continue to move with the children as they age. The center has successfully implemented this practice of continuity of care for all children aged 0-3, and last year were able to continue this practice of keeping children and teachers together over into preschool. Continuity of care promotes strong attachments with children which provide a secure base, from which they can play, explore, and interact with the adults in their classroom (Theilheimer, 2006). It is not common practice in the USA; however, it is standard practice in most European countries (Lally & Signer, 2003) and as previously discussed, in accordance with Bowlby’s (1998) theory of attachment fostering trusting relationships between teachers and young children is critical to their healthy brain development and social outcomes. This adds to the family atmosphere that the teachers frequently referred to, and was felt to be an important component that had impacted the culture of their center.

The lived experience of these men when working with toddlers as primary caregivers at both sites was relatively unrestricted by gender bias. This finding is contrary to previous research which generally focuses on men working with preschoolers and in early elementary school, indicating that the field of ECE is so gendered that the assumption has been that women only care for very young children.
IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

Qualitative research results are applicable to practice, as they provide opportunity to promote further focus on how men and women respond to the process of learning initiated by the children as opposed to following a theme. Quantitative results showed that both men and women in my study fostered social interaction and facilitated a positive emotional classroom climate regardless of the focus of the activity itself and the desired end product by integrating a variety of learning experiences through both individual and group activities. The aspects of learning that men and women support in the classroom could warrant further research in the differences between the practice of men and women when designing, planning, and facilitating learning experiences. Further research would also show whether the learning activities men and women focus on fit within basic stereotypes (e.g., only men like woodwork), and if when “feeding” of the children’s ideas they were in tune with boys or girls.

The ability for men to be able to work with toddlers without fear when socially and physically interacting with them in a nurturing role may not be unique to the results of this study. Locating other men teachers who practice continuity of care and who care for very young children would provide opportunity to enlighten ways in which men in the ECE classroom can have a successful experience and impact the lives of young children in a positive way. There is research about how men elementary school teachers use alternative techniques when nurturing to those that they would use with their own children such as ‘high fives’ in lieu of hugging (Sargent, 2001), but little is known about what is involved for men when they adjust to their role as “token” primary caregivers of young children which was described by one of the men participating in my study as involving a “lot of mental difference.” He also stated that he practiced “hugging” in the classroom for a purpose.

Further research about the strategies which men use when caring for infants and toddlers would further understanding about how men can be supported in the field of ECE. The more we know about their challenges in the classroom and their ability to form reciprocal relationships, the more we can create and implement solid policies and procedures to protect both men and women from association with sexual abuse.

Given the qualitative and quantitative results, ECE programs can be receptive of men as caregivers who bring a balance of gender and perspective into the classroom. Attracting
men to the program at Site A was described as a work in progress, but it was felt that it was made possible because “the world is changing. People are more accepting of diversity and everything is being embraced.” The women in my study expressed the value of being able to work together with men in the classroom in order to provide children with a balanced team approach towards care and education. It would be interesting to conduct further study of how they accomplish this within the concept of working as a “family,” and to observe if duties and responsibilities are indeed shared equally.

LIMITATIONS

My study had limitations, as it was conducted on university sites at non-profit center-based programs operating under the same Title 22 regulations which maintain health and safety practices, uphold NAEYC Accreditation standards and include practice of Title 5 regulations for education in California. Title 5 maintains tighter adult/child ratios than Title 2, and teachers who work in Title 5 centers hold one of six levels of child development teaching permits with the California Commission in Teacher Credentialing, as opposed to the minimum requirement of 12 units in child development. The above results may not reflect the general experience of men and women working in for profit corporate centers operating under Title 22 requirements only.

It is important to note that qualitative results about process vs. product and quantitative results pertaining to the supervision of play and learning cannot be directly attributed to the men themselves in this study, as women teachers also work in the classrooms where they were present.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, both the men and women at these sites believe in quality caregiving and education for young children, and the impact that they have in the social emotional development of young children when present in the classroom did not significantly differ. However, their enacted and articulated practices were different because they approached their role from a different perspective, providing a gender balance fundamental to the development of young children. Men were less restricted when following the lead of the children, but more intentional when providing emotional support. They were observed as playing more games by their women colleagues, and openly expressed their joy in what they do and the fun
they have in the process of learning along with the children. As educators, they bring extra value into the classroom by providing a difference in social learning experiences and modeling the act of caring. Men are a necessary curriculum tool (Farquhar et al., 2006) which children have the right to during such an important time in their development (Rinaldi, 2006). When they are not present in the classroom, young children lose out on the valuable contribution which men can make in their lives, and men lose out on a fulfilling career (Jamieson, 2002) and the joy of sharing in a child’s first discovery.

Prompted by a census report from the U.S. Census Bureau, an article entitled “The Year of the Dad” was recently featured in the Huffington Post (Belkin, 2012) about the increase of fathers as caregivers due to the current economic recession. Of the 12.2 million children in the USA under the age of 5 years whose mothers are in the paid workforce, 32% are cared for by their fathers on a regular basis, and the number of single fathers raising children rose to 2.79 million in 2012. The more fathers as caregivers become the “norm,” the more men will be perceived as such and freer to take on that role (Belkin, 2012).

This study showed that it is possible for men and women to successfully work together and positively impact the lives of young children in a culturally inclusive environment. I hope that these results will be used in support of advocacy to promote awareness of the changes crucial to the need to recruit and retain men ECE teachers to provide better representation of real life in the classroom, and enable young children to experience trusting relationships with both men and women, especially when men are not present in the family unit.
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APPENDIX A

FOCUS GROUP SITE A
1. How do you perceive your place in ECE?

N- Teacher, facilitator of learning. M – Role model, being a leader, an example for kids, behaving a certain way, bringing community together, being learners together, and collaborative approach. R- We make an impression, we actually leave imprints on them, and they are learning while they are here so we want to teach them so they can go out, biggest piece is social piece so they can move on. This is a great group of guys that we work with. Tricky question as men and women are different and they bring balance in a field mostly dominated by women, bring in their character and masculinity which is something that the children do not see a lot. So when the children come in they automatically head for these guys when they come in. I have a couple of boys and a parent who comes in who is a military officer in his uniform and the children just stop and look. They don’t get what they are looking at but when they are looking they know that there is a difference and they are looking at honor, valor, strength, they are looking at something that is different to their normal women teachers that they see and they relate to that as little boys. SL- Some of the children don’t have the male figure, so when they see male teachers they just want to hang around them. Something magical, I don’t have my dad. Not that they don’t get close to us, but when they need that father figure they will tend to even the girls not just the boys. R- You don’t see so much of that here. LW- I am always glad that they come as most of them are younger than me and they have the energy to play with them that the children need, and I think OK, good they are here and they get a different experience from them than they do from me. M- I think that it is important too because it breaks the gender stereotypes and kids see that women aren’t just teachers, and people can be anything. P- that is one thing that we are always trying to teach them, when you grow up you can be anything and they need to see that men can be preschool teachers too and men can be nurturing. R- We have the cream of the crop. S- Phenomenal that you have so many males working here. When Kathryn first told me about that I thought you must be doing something right, what is going on? M- And to feel comfortable here. S- What do you think makes you feel so comfortable here. M- Mostly my coworkers. They are very accepting. I don’t feel like they ask what are you doing here. I feel like they think that we are bringing something different. They don’t treat us differently as teachers and value us as equals. L- This is my first year here and I have only
ever worked with one other man. It is definitely perceived differently here than it was at my other place. I would give tours at the school and when parents saw a man in the bathroom changing diapers they took their kid and walked right out. They were like absolutely not, I’m not having a male change my child’s diaper. S- Why do you think it’s different here? L- I think the diverse community that we have here. They are from all different backgrounds, and different countries, and I don’t think that it is so taboo in other places. This would be the first place I’ve seen so many men. S- Do you think because it is on a college campus? L- Maybe. LS- I think we worked our way to this you know. It was years when there was only one then two. LW- If they lasted. S- And what do you think is the difference that made these guys last? B- That’s a good question. LS- Maybe they found the support that they needed from not only co-workers but administration. L- And also the wages went up! M- It’s the money really (laughter) what kids? S- When I started 17 years ago, there were no males, and then slowly little by little, D was hired and he stayed. Then B, G (LW- what about over 20 years?) S- That says something about the community too that the women teachers stay here as well. So long have all of you been here? N- about a year and a half. S- So how did you get here? N- I was at another center and found UCSD so came to work here. S- Do you think that your role is different here than the other center? N- The other center tended to boast about it, but I felt like a teacher there just like I do here. I don’t feel like a man who happens to be a teacher, I feel like a teacher who happens to be a man. S- That’s interesting that you use the word boast because there is a lot in the literature about the token male. ‘Oh yes we’re diverse we have a male’. N- There were a few tours where they touted the fact that they had a man on staff. S- And how did that make you feel? N- I was like really? S- Cause you just saw yourself as a teacher right? N- Yeah, teacher first. S- And how did you come here? M – 4 years this summer (from around). I actually trained as an elementary school teacher at UCSD and then I moved to the East Coast. I had a CA teaching credential but I had to change it all over and I didn’t have a great student experience and shortly after I got married and had my own kids. I fell in love with the development of my own kids, and it made me want to change focus to the younger ones. I found passion in that, so my wife and I ran a daycare for 6 years in our house. I learnt. I moved here and as I trained at UCSD I knew it was the place to be, my perception of it anyway. Ever since I’ve felt very welcome. S- What about you? B- 5 years now. Basically what everyone else is
saying is my story. Our society says that men need to be in this field or that and women are this and men are that, but the way I see it we both have the same traits. When you are out there teaching you offer similar traits to the kids and my perspective is that I am very good at technology so that is basically my niche and I love woodworking, so I feel like I have certain things I can offer to the school that maybe other schools don’t have. So if I would get into a computer firm and do the whole computer thing, how much impact am I really making? Do you see what I mean, as when you change the life of a young child, cause I still remember some of my teachers and what they said and with these kids what we are doing is actually imprinting important things so when they grow up as adults in society they are going to respond to I remember when Ms. L or Mr. B taught me and somehow unconsciously realize wow I had a male teacher or a female teacher. I think preschool, I never went to preschool when I was a kid, my mom kept me at home, and I was a handful (that’s another story). But anyways, preschool is very important and I feel here I can make an impact and technology it’s what makes an impact more than what I already do. I would do it for the money and that is where our society, Oh, you got to be the male and the provider, this and that, and in my agenda, it’s not the way. My wife makes way more money than I do and is getting her master’s degree from USD so no way I can catch up to that so the other way around. She is the bread winner and I am the care giver, always being very nurturing, with my nieces and nephews. I might be big and strong but I’m very sensitive and very caring so that’s what I have to offer. S- So think about how powerful that is for the kids to see someone like you who is big and strong and does woodworking but then has this wonderful nurturing side and really decided to I’m not going to do technology and make a million dollars, I’m going to take care of kids because I believe it’s important. Wow.

2. What are the expectations that your organization has for men teachers?
So what do you think are the expectations of the organization for men teachers? M- The same. I don’t feel extra pressure and we are valued as equals for the most part. N- I don’t get the sense that whatever traditions are here are because of the guys (not here). S- That’s really key, not here because I’m thinking that according to the literature that guys feel their role is different, they have to do a lot of the manual stuff, just because they are men. But here you feel like you are teachers first. N- That’s my excuse for not doing manual stuff! L- He thinks he doesn’t have to sweep and mop and I’m like oh no. D- Sometimes I feel like,
not here, but men in other places might have to go into a workplace already needing to prove themselves of what they need to do and exceed the expectations already more than a female would at that center. Like as a man coming in you have something to prove and you need to outwork, outshine, prove something more than a women just coming in and being like I’m already accepted. I don’t have people looking over me. I think men and I’m just trying to step into their issues. S- They are a minority (right) and this is the one place as a white male that you really are in the minority. C- Not like a construction site/or like a woman going into a construction site). D- Right it’s a female dominated work field and then you are coming in there thinking that I am going to have to prove myself. M- When I first came here I did feel a bit of that. First I was new, and you are aware that you are one of four out of 30, so there is an awareness of that but it was immediate that I felt accepted. S- Is that because generally speaking there are more of you? B- At this location? I would say not really, because when I started I felt like a family atmosphere. Everyone was very including of your abilities and help, so I never felt that way here. P- Can I add about the environment, I am relatively new and I agree with the family environment when there are 50 employees you don’t know what is expected by each individual of you and I kind of felt that when I came in and I think well I’m not a man but this environment is very welcoming and very accepting. R- I think its part of the diversity of the community that we are part of. S- I know, even when I walked in I saw a diversity festival going on and I think that is a really good point that it is in the culture of the university and my personal opinion is that K has something to do with it with her leadership style.

3. What do you think is the value men bring to the school community?

How do you think that the parents see the value, do you think they see the value? M- I think they do. Just in speaking with parents, a lot of them have a meeting at the end when they are leaving after their stay and they say I love that there is a man with a balance and I get a lot of comments like that. I think that a lot of parents do. Some might feel uncomfortable I’m not sure, but the ones that value it see it a lot more. L- We had a parent who said at first she wasn’t sure and was really was kind of like, well I don’t know about this but over time she changed her mind from being around him and watching what he does with the kids it changed her opinion on having males in the classroom. M- I think for N because he works
with the 2 year olds whereas B and I are preschool and there is a stigma you know. When I first came here there was a lead position open and I was going to apply for it but I was told, that is the 2 year old room and I was kind of encouraged not to do that, and I was kind of thrown back a little bit by that. I had kind of forgotten about that so when N came along I thought that was the coolest thing as it was actually where N wanted to be, because I actually prefer preschool. It impressed me because that is where he wanted to be, and he does a really good job. P- And why not because there are male teachers in every other field and every other age group so why not here and in the 2 year olds, who need a male role model too, they need to know how men respond to situations and how men solve problems and they need to see that too. S- And that men can change diapers and be nurturing and all that kind of stuff.

4. What challenges do you think men face in ECE?

What are the challenges? LW- The diapering, always having in parents mind that it is a man changing the diapers and they can’t get over that and its sad but it is a barrier, it still happens. M- When you get that from a parent you feel that and it’s uncomfortable and you have to prove yourself the other way and be careful. Like if a little girl comes over and jumps in my lap, it’s always in the back of my mind. S- And that’s something I never have to worry about. M- Absolutely. B- I took a class at college about sexual abuse with young children and all that and they have actually found that the majority of women do it more than men. So this whole thing of men you know abusing and whatever, no actual studies (Federal government) and found out is more women that abuse. I was like shocked. S- So interesting cause that’s the truth and that is the data, but the perception is something that’s completely different and it’s always in the back of your mind. I know when I used to hire men I would have to tell them don’t kiss the kids, don’t hug the kids cause that is what my boss wanted, and said that I can’t make those words come out of my mouth. I couldn’t say it but they said to me but you are a woman and you won’t ever be accused, and I thought they are probably right. M- That’s another really good example of this place because I am very touchy and I do that, I don’t really feel that here. You do that and it is in the back of your mind, but in this environment it’s much less than in other places and I don’t feel that everyone is looking at me. S- So it’s interesting you keep referring to this as being in this environment that is unique - diversity, feeling of family. L- I think it has something to do with their parents
being older, I do notice that, they are not younger and this is their first child. R- And there is longevity, we tend to stay here. L- Not a lot of turnover. L- Parents ask how many years have you been here. S- Maybe too it’s your reputation in the community. It’s a good school; the teachers have been there a long time. L- And we have a huge waiting list too. People are waiting for that call to get their child in. (that’s so true) It’s like, I got in you know. I felt that way for my kids when I wanted them to go to a bilingual school, and there was like 600 applicants and my child was number 35 and we didn’t get in and so the year after we got in I was so excited that school can’t do anything wrong to me, we are in and we got a spot. I hear E talking about how the children aren’t even born yet and their parents are calling. It’s prestigious. D- I think being affiliated with UCSD is a big part of our reputation and our credibility, because we have those same principles of community and work ethic as do the people/staff that are employed on campus do. We follow all those same principles, we go through the same training, we go through the same background check and everything so they are aware of that and what we go through training and employment so I think this sits well with them. S- And they probably think that this is UCSD so they must know what they are doing. SL- Not to brag about but we are international and a lot of parents come from other countries and they are already set up to come here and have their children at UCSD. We have parents from Italy, Korea, China, they come for a period of time and they know where to take their children sometimes just for a couple of months and then they leave. LW- They use our center to draw them in, don’t worry we have this service and it makes it easier for them to come here, I think. D- Us being so diverse too. I think that is a huge asset that gets overlooked if you aren’t a minority but if you are a minority you see it as a plus. When I came here coming from an Hispanic background it was great that I had people here that shared the same culture and the same background as I did, and I’m sure parents probably see it in the same way and for their children and if not they are excited about having that and that we introduce it to them and vice versa we are excited about embracing their culture. If it’s Chinese New Year, we don’t know anything about it and they bring in their stuff and help us with those ideas. S- So it’s almost as if you see the men as been part of the diversity as opposed to being binary male and female. R- Right, it’s just another element. P- I see N as a teacher and we are all one unit and we all work together to work with the families.

5. **What advice do you have for men entering this profession?**
P- Find a good center. I have worked at other centers with other men that were not as welcome by the other female teachers, families, and in a nutshell it was a nightmare and I had to leave the center. It was a huge problem as nobody could accept the 2 men that were there. S- Nobody meaning the staff or the parents? P- Staff, parents everybody always had an issue. Mr. so and so this and that. Every day it was something. M- Were they good teachers? P- One of them wasn’t and it is unfortunate cause I feel so strongly that these children do need to have male role models and I thought it was really unfortunate that he was setting a horrible example and he is telling the community at large, maybe they are going to think that men shouldn’t be here and was he cut out for it. It’s sad. S- But it really comes down to was he a good teacher? It doesn’t have to do with the gender. P- Right but my advice would still be to find a good center where you are accepted as a teacher and you are not a token man. S- Some of the worst experiences I have had as an administrator have to do with men being accused. I remember one Friday night late being on the phone because of an accusation and it is sad because I recall those times more than I recall the good teaching, which is unfortunate. P- One of the teachers was a good teacher, but he did not escape any accusations and he would say it’s just this.. Well the parents don’t want you to do that anymore. He would say are you serious? LS- That has happened her too. P- Parents are freaking out because a girl wants to hold his hand on the playground. They are just kids and the girl wants to chat with you. They do it to the female teachers too and they did it in front of them. He was showing compassion to the child and doing all the things that we do. L- I had a really horrific experience with that. A computer class that came into our center and I would ask all kinds of questions and had some concerns too. Do the parents give you a hard time for being male? Yes, I’m really careful, I don’t hug the children you know he had all these rules that he had that he had that he wouldn’t do. He was actually accused of molesting one of the kids in our center, and the little girl told her parents that he had stuck his hand down the back of her pants. The mom wasn’t to upset at first she was just kind of its odd because the class was down inside a classroom where there were other children and teachers, he was never alone with the kids and he was always with somebody. It turned into this humongous thing, and the man actually went to jail (shocked responses). I had to go to court and testify. They had an investigator come out and I said I just don’t see how this could happen. It’s not possible, he was never alone, he was always in the classroom with other kids
and people murder people and they don’t get 25 years in jail. All she said was that (not that it is OK) but that he stuck his hands sown her pants. Maybe he was tucking in her shirt, I have no idea but he is still in jail. S- Unfortunately those are the kind of stories that get told and that’s why it’s so important to tell a different story, of men that are a successful story.

LW- I think the men also want o know from K and I’m sure she will be there for them, Are you there for me if it happens and will you look out for me? S- Unfortunately, sometimes it gets taken right out of your hands e.g.: Licensing gets involved.

Anything else? I’ve heard loud and strong it’s this place, this community, the prestige, lots of variables that make you guys feel comfortable working here. What was your background in school? N- Child Development. S- I love it when I get male students. N- I was told that I was in the wrong class once on the first day of class. I think you want the next one and I’m like no I don’t. S- You have all articulated yourselves really well too. I got my degree in economics but then I thought, oh no I want to be a teacher. Your passion for children has really come through. SL- I noticed that when M was in my classroom the male parents used to direct all the questions to M and they felt comfortable talking with him and after they talked about their child they started talking about sports or something like that. They would get so involved I would think well ok; do you want me to bring some coffee or something? Even mothers but mainly the fathers. S- That’s a really good point. In ECE it’s much feminized and you don’t see many dads’s walking in just to talk to and you are right they can talk about sports etc. P- We do the same thing when a mom walks up to us we talk about shopping this w/end with my girlfriends S- Finding that common ground and building relationships

What do you think in terms of the curriculum, what do you guys add? R- I think they bring more physical activities for the children. LW- and science in my experience and SL- and music, they play games. D- I think they feed off the child’s ideas more and are more attentive to them a little more than we are. We kind of run away. Maybe I’m stereotyping or a little off the handle with this but I can see myself going with a theme like oh it’s St Patrick’s Day or Valentine’s Day. Getting really regimented and comfortable in our own shoes where as the men may have those ideas but they kind of tune in a little bit more to what would they like to do. What ideas can I get from them? I know M does, but they are all very clever and for certain they take those individual ideas and run with it and base their
curriculum a lot of times on what the children like to do like B with his woodwork. I’d be like I don’t know about those nails and sometimes we don’t tune into that really and we do our cookie cutter stuff. R- More risk takers. P- One thing that I like about working with M is that when a new idea comes up and how do we approach it. We just break it down into what it is and ask what do you want to do? Right now he’s building a race track but previously I built a composter. It doesn’t matter who is handling the tools or who is providing dress up its what can we do for the children if this is what they want to learn (as good teachers). Right now if 2 things come up at the same time we ask which one do you want and both of us are really neutral about it. We have been working together for about 3 years. M- The advice that I would like to give men is to not be deterred by all of the things we just talked about, because I think it is so important for it to be way more balanced than it is now, and to not be afraid to go into teaching for those reasons. It’s not enough reason not to do it. S- Men are so not present in K- 2nd grade and in EC and toddler’s that’s like unchartered territory and as I’m hearing what you say I’m like wow you are really standing up for your convictions and you doing what you want, and it’s hard to do that. D- I think that this is a really good topic that K chose to do, and it’s really relevant to our social dynamic and how we are changing and the world is changing and times are changing. People are a lot more acceptive of diversity and everything is being embraced. This is going to be an ongoing issue where people are going to come into EC and they are going to stigmatize against men at the forefront, but breaking down those boundaries and getting the information out there. Like look at this happy ending or look at this study that was conducted at…. as these get into the forefront they will get out there and men will be able to, I mean that would be great study to of how many men start coming into the workforce. S- I have had 4 guys in my class. More than I have ever had before. You bring up a good point. Getting the story out there is important and getting accepted. D- It’s doubled here in the last 5 years. But now it’s like second nature to us as we see more men coming in.

6. What was the reaction of friends and family to your career choice?

S- Reactions from your friends? N- I get oohs and aahs and people think it’s cute. B- They want to know more, they are curious like really? You teach preschool, no way. My wife works at … and it is mainly her coworkers. She is studying to be … and she has encountered
a lot of different stereotypes that we are talking about in the foster care network and all that and some of the people invite her to different dinners and things and I tag along with my wife and they ask what I do. Do you paint, color in books with kids, they have no idea it’s a career and think it’s just fun (which you are right). Once I break it down and tell them about the development milestones and tell them what type of person are you? Are you greedy/selfish? It’s because you missed that step in ECE where you didn’t know how to share with people so you kept that stage. I tell them that and they get a kick off of it. S- I’m sure people don’t know about Measure 31. B- Seriously. Then they start asking me about their own kids. LW- They ask for advice. SL- I’m going to start charging you. P- That means you’re accepted, because they treat us the same way. They don’t have to get over the initial shock with us in the same way. M- I get the same initial reaction but then they are like oh that’s so cool, and they show interest and they want to learn more and it’s so fun to share that. B- All of us want to make an impact. If get into careers where everyone goes, what real impact are you going to make do you know what I mean? But if you are in a career where you know you are needed you can make an impact it builds you up so much. I fix computer up left and right on the side when I’m not working but it’s not like I’m going to fix a computers I’m so excited, but like coming to worth it’s like what’s the day going to bring, what’s the theme, what am I going to do with the kids, science? They are into rockets and stuff what am I going to do and then you do research and you start learning about other things that other male teachers do and other female teachers do and you kind of form your own teaching philosophy with the kids and I do the flying rockets you know and the kids love it and they see the thing fly up and whoa so we bring as male teachers different themes like St Patrick’s day for example. I was thinking of plants and nature, something totally different. LW- I really enjoy working in the classroom where there is a male and I’ve been lucky to work in 3 classrooms with a male figure in there.
APPENDIX B

FOCUS GROUP SITE B
1. How do you perceive your place in ECE?

The field has really changed. I was going to work with older children but now focused on younger ones – V

It’s definitely about the children and that is where my focus is. Training/mentoring teachers is important – S

Working with children especially social skills. Teaching them how to be with each other, work with other children and use their words, not fight. A big primary goal of mine. I feel I owe it to my staff to have the chance to learn so I let them be part of what we do in preparation for when they go out into the real world. When I grew up I had some teachers that really helped me, so I feel like I want to give back, pus I enjoy it – D

Still learning. Important to build relationships cause then you can get more out of being in the classroom – S

2. What are the expectations that your organization has for men teachers?

I don’t think that there is anything more or any different expectation of me than of any other teacher. Some Inherent things happen in the classroom. Children are definitely attracted to us because they don’t see us very often. But as far as specific expectations I think they just expect me to do my job as best as I can and that is my expectation too – to be the best teacher I can and never stop learning and get complacent. Need to watch for burnout, pace yourself.

Barely feeling the pangs of maybe helping other male teachers. I didn’t feel that before because I was just a teacher in my mind and I still am, but maybe I have something to offer other male teachers from a male point of view. I don’t know yet – D

Do you think that is because we have lost so many at the center? – S Maybe, I don’t know. But I think that I would like to as we have had males for one semester, and then they leave and right now we have 4 or 5 in the cottage so maybe I could help them along their way. A lot of it is a mental difference being a male in a female world you know. You work with females all the time. And when I went through college all my colleagues were 99% females so that might be intimidating for some people especially if you don’t hang around females, my family was particularly run by females – D

One of my lab students is doing great and is really enthusiastic about it. I think he would like to work in childcare but he probably won’t stay in child care because of the pay – S
I think that is probably a big thing as males think, well they do, have to support the family. We don’t make a lot of money - D

3. **What do you think is the value men bring to the school community?**

I think especially now, not a lot of children have a male role model in their life. There is a lot of single mom’s and dad’s who are not around, so for those children to have a male teacher makes a big difference in their life, a male that shows interest in them. I also think that culturally, not everybody, but a lot of men work outside of the home and women are more likely to care for the children even though they might be working also. At least, that is how it was for me growing up. My dad did not give a lot of attention to me as a child. That was more considered my mom’s job, so I think that it makes a big difference to the children when a man shows interest in them and sees them as important – S

Definitely that is true with they’re not being so many males in the field, but I have come across many times in classrooms where mom’s or dad’s have told me about their little girls who are scared of males, wary of men and its mainly because they don’t get a lot of exposure to other males. Personally I am hugger. If you are in my room I hug a lot, but it’s funny cause in my family/personal life I am not a hugger, but here I am. It’s for a purpose. I feel that hugging breaks down so many barriers. When you touch each other, and they touch you and they touch their friends, it really brings them closer to being a family, and when you see our guys when it’s goodbye time, there’s hugging going around, you know, and I’ve had mom’s tell me that since they have been here, the hugging thing has started outside their life at home and in public, and it has helped them so much to be more comfortable around other people and adult males. Especially because they see someone who is affectionate. Sometime I think they get the idea that males are not affectionate but I try and be as affectionate as possible with my children as I really care about them and it’s nice for the children to get to know that, hey this guy is affectionate and it’s a reflection on males in society. It’s like a model and if they didn’t have that with what they see with family and relatives etc. I definitely want to portray a positive model you know as a male, and I think that is the main factor – as long as I am doing something positive for children everything is going ok.

There’s the quote, I don’t know who said it, “That no amount of kindness is ever wasted on a
child, no matter how small” and I believe that. If you can even be a little bit kind to a child it’s worth it – D

It’s not an easy thing because you are putting yourself out there and some children don’t want a hug, especially when they first meet you. Some cultures and some families don’t like that either it’s not part of their belief. To a large degree for my children in my classroom and Steffany’s classroom since I know them very well, it’s no problem but you know sometimes you know, let’s not do that. The relationship is not that far that we want to introduce hugging and you put yourself on the line cause they might get scared, but if you are building that relationship it’s one extra step that you take. But if they say no then that’s fine too. You’ve got to let them know that there is no pressure here. If you feel like that then that’s fine too – D

I remember when I first started, I think that in general, the hugging, touching thing has changed in childcare over the last 10 years because when I first started as a student, we were instructed not to approach or to suggest or to physically touch anyone unless it came from them, then it was Ok to hug back and I think that has changed because now it’s so a part of our culture, especially here in our cottage. “Do you need a hug”, or “Let’s give Jessie a hug because she got hurt” or always encouraging hugging and I think that it is really good for them – S A lot of that has to do with primary care and our continuity of care. Our infant room is being a family and hugging is part of being a family, touching is part of being a family if you don’t do that then you are not following our belief. Our belief is that our cottage is a family, we are all part of one big family and we treat each other like that and hugging is part of being a family and to create that whole family atmosphere, that’s where the hugging needs to be - D We are not outsiders on top of you, we are therewith them. We are living the life with them and they are teaching us and we are teaching them. It’s nota hierarchy here, we are the adults and we are the teachers but actually we are living their lives with them instead of we are the teachers so follow me. Personally they teach me as much as I teach them – D

Is it the impact of Reggio? I think more than anything it is our continuity of care that has impacted our culture here cause I/T care is so different than preschool – S Raising the infants is so different than when they are toddlers and we are inheriting children that come into your
classroom. Raising them is different. We think that they are our kids. I mean they are not biologically ours but it feels that way – D

4. What challenges do you think men face in ECE?

Well there is definitely a stereotype about what a man is, what a man can do and what a man can’t do – D
The money – S Oh, that’s a huge one! – D A challenge for you too right?
Some cultures don’t believe that males should be caring for children. I have had that a couple of times as a lab student and here – D We had a family that was worried about you changing their diapers and they didn’t want you to be with their children. They did enroll in my class, and Melissa did say that we can’t guarantee that there won’t be contact but it is less likely. You have to respect other people’s culture too, but at the same time we don’t want to give them this false hope either – S
Waitlist – 40 people for our cottage.

5. What advice do you have for men entering this profession?

A lot of it has to do with you personally. Me myself in my personal life I am myself if that makes any sense. In the classroom I am myself too. You got to be yourself; you can’t be something that you are not. I know some guys, like I talk with my brother and there is no way in the world that he could take care of children, but there is a lot of men and females too that say hey, no way – but if that’s the truth then that’s the truth. You got to be yourself and you got to be truthful to the children. They know if you are not truthful, they know if you don’t care, they know if you are not telling them the truth, and that you got to pay attention to them and all that stuff. I think that I would say the idea that I just wanted to be a positive role model to a child. That one little idea is all I wanted to be when I started. Just to be a positive influence to any child that I was around. With that idea that right there takes you a long way cause we all want our children to grow up to be members of the world that are really social and taking care of each other and productive and stuff like that, and this is the way you have a chance to create a better future I think. I’m kind off hopeful that like a branch of the old hippies you know that we were going to change the world, and I tried to do it different ways when I was younger which did not work out so well, but I believe this is the
This is doing my part, which is why you got to do your best and be you. I definitely think that I am changing the world one child at a time. That is the goal. – D

I promote primary care and continuity of care. I think that relationships – any program that values relationships as much as we do, you know, relationships are the key to everything. It’s the key to teaching other students, it’s the key to teaching children, and it’s the key to teaching adults. It’s key to life, and you got to be truthful so I would find a center that values them for one and values the curriculum and is a program that they believe in. Our job is more social teaching than academic teaching. There is going to be a lot of years for them to learn their numbers and all that stuff, but if they can’t get along with each other who cares if they know their multiple times tables – D If they can’t get along with each other how are they going to go into the public school system the way it is set up right now – S

You have to follow your heart. The part of childcare that gets left behind or not thought about is reflection. I do so much reflection. You have to reflect on how did you do, how did that go, how can I do it better, why do I feel that way. Some days I feel wow, I wasn’t a very good teacher today, but you have to be honest with yourself and reflect on why is that? Why did you feel that way? Some days I feel man I was a great teacher, so why was that? analyze that and reflect on why you felt that way. Wow my children are motivated when I do this, but they are not motivated when I do that. Like I say they teach me a lot. Sometimes you have to be a patient person to be with children, and they tell you that/show you that straight away. I’m pulling my hair out and running behind time, and Susie’s spitting over there etc. so how do I react to that? Do I go crazy and start throwing Johnny over the fence, well know, but sometimes you feel that way. We are humans, we have emotions and they have emotions and it is our job to put it all together – D

Relationships and quality is important. As soon as you clock in, you are on their time, and you don’t think about anything else, and then especially at the beginning when they are infants or you are meeting them for the first time, when a child asks for your help, everything needs to like go, and you need to attend to that child, cause that’s where the bond starts. They know I cried cause I needed food and he or she gave attention to me instead of I have to do my sheets here etc. The beginning of the relationship is so important. You pay attention to them – they are the important one. Let them know, so any little minute thing they are asking of you try to give it to them. You can catch up on your paper work or whatever, but
you can’t catch up on what you missed, you can’t take those 15 minutes back. You have to be there in that moment, especially as they are infants. They don’t have ulterior motives they only ask when they need something. It’s your job to provide at that moment cause that’s why you are there – D

I started out with toddlers. This is my second time with toddlers, but the difference is day and night cause of the continuity of care. So much easier, so much more trust, you have higher expectations. My favorite is infants. Lucky most parents don’t seem to have a problem with that and some think it’s great to have a male role model in their children’s lives. You raise them, kiss them, hug them, hold them – all that stuff. It makes the world a little bit better I think. You got to get the female side always, but you don’t always get the other side – D

6. What was the reaction of friends and family to your career choice?

Most people think its cool, and they think that’s great. I remember when I first started going to college my friends didn’t think I would do it – I would never finish and never be a teacher, but now say it must be really fun - but it’s hard work also that I don’t think they see that – D I’ve been through a big bunch of things and this was a big life change. I was 40 before I decided to get into the business. I had lost my job and was looking for a place to go and felt lost. The calling came to me to care for kids.

I got a different reaction – S When I tell my family etc. they say why do you want to do that, you don’t make any money? I get that a lot. What I get from other people that I meet is, wow that takes a lot of patience. That’s probably the most common response. When I tell them they go – oh no, I can’t do that – V

But at the same time – how much fun do we have! – D I mean we have such a good time, and the commodore amongst the staff is huge because we all love taking care of those kids. Feeding them, putting them to sleep, and watching them learn how to crawl. With a 1-3 ratio – how do you take 3 kids with 2 arms?? You take 2 and we’ll shuffle. To think that you are responsible to introduce the infants to their first experience with water or shaving cream, or touch paint. You get to be the one to see that – that’s hard to beat. What a great responsibility and thing to get to do, and to not wait to get to work to see what they do today and what their growth is. There’s nothing fun about a room full of crying children but the
trick is to fulfill their needs so they are not crying. It’s a challenge and your perspective of what’s happening. It's like a dance, you got to pay attention and do it.

It’s a worthwhile thing to do, but it’s scary right now in CA because of the budget. They are taking away money from education and I’m scared of what is going to happen to the profession, especially when we were making so much headway. There is so much science backing up what we feel about how to take care of children, that budget wise we are not getting the money. Worrying about money is not good for people. How to keep your center open and how to cut corners isn’t good. If I don’t feel happy then it’s reflected in my work. You try not to let it but it does. Not paying attention to these people that are our future. Why are there not more people in Sacramento? There were blue skies ahead and now it’s slipping away each year.
APPENDIX C

QUOTES THAT EXEMPLIFY THEMES BY CLASSROOM
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<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>Acceptance, valued as equals, diversity, support, welcoming, sense of community and family.</td>
<td>M- “My coworkers are very accepting. I don’t feel like they ask what you are doing here. I feel like they think that we are bringing something different. They don’t treat us differently as teachers and value us as equals”.</td>
<td>W- “I think it’s part of the diversity of the community that we are part of”. W- “I think that this is a really good topic...it’s really relevant to our social dynamic and how we are changing and the world is changing and times are changing. People are a lot more exceptive of diversity and everything is being embraced...It’s like second nature to us as we see more men coming in”.</td>
<td>M- “Our belief is that our cottage is like a family, we are all part of one big family and we treat each other like that. We think that they are our kids. I mean they are not biologically ours but it feels that way”.</td>
<td>W- “I think more than anything it is our continuity of care that has impacted our culture here”.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Making an Impact</td>
<td>Role model</td>
<td>M- “Role model, being a leader, an example for kids, behaving in a certain way, bringing community together, being learners together, and collaborative approach”</td>
<td>W- “They don’t get what they are looking at but when they are looking they know there is a difference and they are looking at honor, valor, strength, they are looking at something that is different to their normal women teachers that they see and they relate to that as little boys”.</td>
<td>Making an Impact</td>
<td>Role Model</td>
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| Making an Impact        | Imprinting, social skills | M-“So if I would get into a computer firm and do the whole computer thing, how much impact am I really making? I still remember some of my teachers and what they said, and with these kids what we are doing is actually imprinting important things so when they grow up as adults in society they are going to respond to ‘I remember when Ms. L or Mr. B taught me and somehow unconsciously realize, wow I had a male or a female teacher’.” | W- “We make an impression, we actually leave imprints on them, and they are learning while they are here so we want to teach them so they can go out, biggest piece is social piece so they can move on”. | M- “We all want our children to grow up to be members of the world that are really social and taking care of each other and productive and stuff like that, and this is a way you have a chance to create a better future I think. Our job is more social teaching than academic teaching”. | W- “It’s definitely about the children and that is where my focus is. If they can’t get along with each other how are they going to go into the public school system the way it is set up right now”.
|                         |                        | M/W                    | W/W                      | M/W                    | W/W                      |

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<tr>
<td>Making an Impact</td>
<td>Being an effective teacher</td>
<td>M- “Teacher first”. “I don’t feel like a man who happens to be a teacher, I feel like a teacher who happens to be a man”</td>
<td>W- “But here you feel like you are teachers first”.</td>
<td>M- “I don’t think there is anything more or any different expectation of me than any other teacher. Children are definitely attracted to us because they don’t see us very often. But as far as specific expectations, I think they just expect me to do my job as best I can, and that is my expectation too- to be the best teacher I can and never stop learning and get complacent”.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td>W- “We are all one unit, and we all work together to work with the families”.</td>
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<td>M- “Building that relationship”.</td>
<td>W- “Relationships are the key to everything. It’s the key to teaching other students, it’s the key to teaching children, and it’s the key to teaching adults.</td>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td>Nurturing, caring, touch, hugging, continuity of care</td>
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<td>W- “That is one thing that we are always trying to teach them, when you grow up you can be anything, and they need to see that men can be preschool teachers too, and men can be nurturing. They need to know how men respond to situations and how men solve problem and they need to see that too”. M- “I may be big and strong, but I’m very sensitive and very caring, so that’s what I have to offer”.</td>
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<td>M- “A lot has to do with primary care and our continuity of care. Our infant room is being a family and hugging is being part of being a family, touching is part of being a family if you don’t do that then you are not following our belief”. “It’s our job to provide at that moment because that is why you are there”. “You raise them kiss them, hug them, hold them – all that stuff. It makes the world a little bit better I think. You get the female side always, but you don’t always get the other side”.</td>
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<td>W- “I think that in general the whole hugging, touching thing has changed in childcare over the past 10 years because when I first started as a student, we were instructed not to approach or to suggest, or to physically touch anyone unless it came from them, then it was ok to hug back and I think that has changed because it is so much a part of our culture especially here in our cottage. ‘Do you need a hug or let’s give Jessie a hug because she got hurt’ or always encouraging hugging and I think that is really good for them”.</td>
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| Challenges                     | Abuse, stereotypes, stigma, changing diapers, something to prove         | W- “The diapering, always having in a parents mind that it is a man changing the diapers and they can’t get over that and its sad, but it is a barrier, it still happens”. M- “When you get that from a parent you feel that, and it’s uncomfortable and you have to prove yourself the other way and be careful. Like if a little girl comes over and jumps in my lap. It’s always in the back of my mind”. M- “I was told that I was in the wrong class once on the first day of class. “I think you want the next one’ and I’m like, no I don’t”. | W- This is going to be an ongoing issue where people are going to come into EC and they are going to stigmatize against en at the forefront, but breaking down those boundaries and getting the information out there. Like look at this happy ending or look at this study that was conducted at...as these get into the forefront they will get out there and men will be able to, I mean that would be great study of how many men start coming into the workforce”. W- It’s a female dominated and then you are coming in there thinking that I am Going to have to prove myself (like a women going into a construction site”. | M- “There is definitely a stereotype about what a man is, what a man can do and what a man can’t do”. “Some cultures don’t believe that males should be caring for children”. | W- “We had a family that was worried about you changing their diapers and they didn’t want you to be with their children. They did enroll in my class, and M did say that we can’t guarantee that there won’t be contact but it is less likely. You have to respect other people’s cultures too, but at the same time we don’t want to give them false hope either”.

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<td>Low Salaries</td>
<td>M- “It’s the money really (laughter) - what kids?” M- “You got to be the male and the provider, this and that, and in my agenda it’s not the way”.</td>
<td>W- Maybe these guys lasted because, “they found the support that they needed from not only co-workers but administrators and also, the wages went up”.</td>
<td>M- “I think it’s probably a big thing as males think, well they do, have to support the family. We don’t make a lot of money”.</td>
<td>W- “One of my lab students is doing great and is really enthusiastic about it. I think he would like to work in childcare but he probably won’t stay in child care because of the pay”.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Contribution of Men</td>
<td>Fun, in tune with children, curriculum activities and providing balance</td>
<td>W- “One thing I like about working with M is that when new ideas come up and how do we approach it. We just break it down into what it is and ask what do you want to do”? M- “I’m so excited, but coming to work it’s like, what’s the day going to bring, what’s the theme, what am I going to do with the kids. Science? We bring as male teachers different themes”.</td>
<td>W- “They bring more physical activities for the children”. W- “And science in my experience”. W- “And music, they play games”. W- “I think they feed off the child’s ideas more and are more attentive to them a little more than we are”. W- “More risk takers”.</td>
<td>M- “How much fun do we have? To think that you are responsible to introduce the infants to their first experience with water or shaving cream, or touch paint. You got to be the one to see that – it’s hard to beat. What a great responsibility and thing to get to do and to not wait to get to work to see what they do today and what their growth is”.</td>
<td>W- “I think it makes a big difference to the children when a man shows interest in them and sees them as important”.</td>
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