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GENDER-ATYPICAL WORK: MEN IN CHILD CARE AND EARLY EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to compare the experiences of men and women working in child care/early education fields. Men are in the minority in these occupations, so this thesis asks if men and women have different experiences at work through assessing if they have different perceptions of job growth, their relationships with supervisors, coworkers, and/or parents, and what each gender perceives the main challenges to be. If differences between men's and women's experiences are discovered, this study aims to understand if they are positive or negative for men and how they might impact job satisfaction. In-depth interviews with five men and four women were conducted and transcribed. Results show that men have higher perceptions of future job growth, but conversely experience fewer on-the-job friendships, feelings of isolation, and perceive their relationships with their charges' parents to be weaker than their female counterparts. In turn, average job satisfaction was rated slightly lower for men than women in these fields. These somewhat contradictory findings indicate that men may experience both positive and negative outcomes of being the minority gender in these occupations.

Keywords: differential treatment, gender-atypical work, job satisfaction

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Occupational segregation based on gender has led many to believe that there are some occupations deemed as "men's work" and some deemed as "women's work." In other words, occupational sex segregation refers to the phenomenon in which "most women and men work in jobs filled largely by persons of their own sex" (Okamoto & England, 1999). The issue of occupational segregation and its relationship to labor market inequality has tended to lead research to focus on women and minorities working in, and breaking into fields traditionally dominated by men; however, true equality would also mean that there are equivalent amounts of men working in fields traditionally dominated by women as well. There has been, comparatively, less research done on this (for exceptions see: Williams, 1992; 1993; 1995; Budig, 2002).

Females performing "men's work" has been a common trend for decades. There have been numerous studies on women in traditionally male-dominated occupations and how they are treated in comparison to men. A prime example is that women are said to encounter a "glass ceiling" in their occupations which prevents them from heightened mobility and decreases opportunities on the job (Morrison and White, 1987). However more recently, an increasing number of men have been entering traditionally feminine fields such as nursing, secretary work, and commercial-airline cabin crewing (Farquhar, 1997). Though men are gradually moving into gender-atypical work, their continued low representation in child care and early education is an interesting phenomenon worth learning more about. The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that men make up only 5.1% of child care employees in the United Stated, and only 3.2% of

preschool and kindergarten teachers. This low representation is a worldwide trend. In fact, Norway has the highest percentage of males working in early childhood education at a mere 9% (Peters, 2007), followed by Japan and Turkey at 6% (Taguma et al. 2012). It is undisputed that teaching is considered to be a predominantly female career choice; however, the percentages of men employed in early childhood education are shockingly low.

The aforementioned percentages indicate that men working in child care/early education would be considered "tokens" according to Rosabeth Moss Kanter's Tokenism theory (1977). In her study Men and Women of the Corporation, Kanter gave the term "tokens" to individuals who are part of an extreme numerical minority in terms of a noticeable characteristic such as sex or race, and argues that these tokens are subject to face many difficulties in the workplace that their non-token coworkers do not encounter. Three perceptual phenomena are associated with tokens: enhanced visibility in which tokens feel attention is constantly on them and thus they feel more pressure placed on their performance, polarization in which differences between tokens and dominants are exaggerated and they feel socially isolated from the majority group, and assimilation in which tokens' attributes are distorted to fit preexisting generalizations about their social type, and they feel as if they are limited to gendered roles (such as "mother" for female tokens). Kanter suggests that this theory of Tokenism is gender-neutral and thus, does not only apply to women in male-dominated fields, but men in female-dominated fields as well. This theory provides a guiding theoretical frame for this study as the first goal is to determine if men working in the female dominated fields of child care/early education receive different treatment and/or encounter different experiences on the job.

Despite the popularity of the Tokenism theory, however, some argue that it does not account for sex differences in the actual experiences of men performing work atypical to their

gender (Budig, 2002; Williams, 1992). Critical to this argument is evidence that though men may encounter some difficulties resulting from their minority status, it might also be advantageous for them. Thus, Christine Williams also examines men as tokens in her 1995 research Still a Man's World: Men who do "Women's Work" and partially rejects Kanter's (1977) theory as she concludes that when men occupy the minority status, it works in their favor. While women are said to be bound by the "glass ceiling," men working in feminine fields are believed to ride the "glass escalator" in which they receive more opportunities and quickly make their way to the top (Williams, 1992). In the "glass escalator" theory, men clearly get treated preferentially. This inconsistency between the Kanter and Williams research creates an interesting question as to what it is men actually experience in these lines of work. Moreover, particular to this thesis, an additional element to consider is the apparent cultural uneasiness surrounding men performing jobs in early education and child care. Men are not deemed to be inherent nurturers by our society and when they do work in these fields, their masculinity and/or sexual orientation might get called into question (Folbre, 2001; Williams, 1992). There is also frequent mistrust/paranoia from parents about men changing diapers and potty training for fear of sexual abuse (Neugebauer, 1994). These things might have an impact on men working in child care/early education, so they add an additional lens through which to consider this phenomenon.

The goal of the following research is to better understand men's personal experiences and what it is like for them being the minority in child care/early education-based careers. An examination and comparison of both men's and women's experiences in these fields will help answer the question: do the experiences men encounter differ from those of their female counterparts? It is not only important to discover what men experience on the job, but what they experience on the job compared to women, the dominant gender in these fields. Differential

treatment (positive or negative) from coworkers, supervisors, and/or parents could potentially affect certain aspects of their work such as job satisfaction. More specifically, the research aims to answer the research questions: how do men's perceptions of their relationships with supervisors, parents, and coworkers compare to women's perceptions of these relationships? How do perceptions of job growth and mobility compare between men and women? What are major challenges each gender perceives exist in the child care/early education fields? How is job satisfaction affected by these experiences? The thesis begins with a review of literature related to men working in child care/early education. A qualitative research study is presented including methods, data, and an analysis of the findings. Followed by a comprehensive discussion presenting conclusions, implications for workplaces, and suggestions for future research related to this topic.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Deterring Factors

A 1925 English government report on the training of early education teachers described the profession as, "a field of effort for the girl of average intellectual capacity and normal maternal instincts," but conversely, "for a man to spend his life teaching children of school age is to waste it in doing easy and not very valuable work he would not do if he was good to do anything else" (cited in Skelton, 2001, p. 122). Though this quote is almost a century old, it exemplifies a perspective on gender roles that many still hold to be true: "that because men and women are socialized differently, they are suited to different types of work," (Williams, 1993, p. 2). These traditionalists would argue that working with children requires some sort of maternal/nurturing instinct and is better suited for women while men should be working in other professions instead of "crossing over" into traditionally female jobs (Williams, 1993, p. 2). This was not always a popular perspective though. Throughout the colonial period and into the 19th century, teaching was considered a fairly respectable and stable career for men; however, industrialization coupled with economic growth is believed to be a major cause of the changing outlooks on teaching (Rury, 1989). Many new and highly paid jobs were the result of industrialization, but teaching wages stayed low relative to those new jobs. This time period was also categorized by urbanization, waves of immigration, and an increase in the population attending school. Men were taking industrial jobs over teaching jobs, so open positions began to

be filled with high numbers of women. It was advertised as "women's work" in order to meet the demand for teachers. But, what began as a so-called "marketing approach" to fill positions, has had lasting effects. Teaching became linked with nurturing and domesticity and thus more suited for women (Johnson, 2008), especially positions that involved working with younger children. After the industrialization period, male teachers became a rarity and it became socially unacceptable for men to perform work such as teaching and child care. The forties and fifties of the twentieth century were characterized by "male prohibition" in early childhood education in which education leaders at the time highly recommended that institutions implement policies restricting men to teaching only upper grades (cited in Robinson, 1981, p. 27). And later, the sixties, seventies, and early eighties were full of debates regarding the rationale for hiring men in lower grades (Robinson, 1981). There has been undisputable progress since the beginning of the twentieth century in terms of policies and views of males working with young children, but there is still undisputable occupational segregation as well, and many people still hold the traditionalist views of sex-role norms in terms of work.

Jobs revolving around care tend to be undervalued because they are associated with mothering. With this association, there is a belief that care and nurturing are not practiced skills but rather a natural component inherent to women (England et al. 2002). The opening quote was written in a government report and the recommended policies for schools resulted in formal social control, but informal social control also affects people's lives on a daily basis. When men are deciding what career path to go down, they may be preconditioned to believe that child care/early education is not an appropriate field due to socially constructed beliefs about what is/is not suitable for his gender, and the informal social control he fears he might face (Benton DeCorse & Vogtle, 1997). Though less common today than in previous decades, a popular belief

about men is that they should be the breadwinners for their families, and men continue to be apprehensive about their financial ability to support others (Gerson, 2010, p. 159). There are opportunities to grow in child care and early education fields, but the initial salaries contribute to the belief that these careers are unsuitable for men. The median annual salary for a preschool teacher is $28,570 and $20,320 for a child care employee (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015). Though the BLS reports that the typical education required is an Associate's Degree to teach preschool and a high school diploma (or equivalent) to work in child care, many still hold higher education degrees such as a Bachelor's or even Master's (as exemplified by the sample of this research) but salaries are still very low. These numbers are intimidating to both women and men, and salary is often cited as a deterrence for entering these fields (Cooney & Bittner, 2001; Johnson, 2008). Even if he believes child care/early education to be a perfectly normal career option, it is very likely that a man considering an occupation in this area will encounter some social pressures from others. Soon after a man shows interest in early childhood education, people may question his masculinity and sexual orientation, which are argued to be two main components of a man's identity (Williams, 1992), and they may also question his motives (King, 2000).

Pressure from family and friends can often make a big impact on a man's decision about his career choice. Many parents, especially fathers of the men interviewed in Benton DeCorse & Vogtle's (1997) study did not initially support their son's career choice of early childhood education, viewing it as "unchallenging or inappropriate." Though they became supportive in the long-run, this initial reaction stems from both the uneasiness people feel when gender norms are breached and from the belief that early childhood education is easy as it is understood by many to be a natural ability (Folbre, 2001). Scholars studying care work have argued that the values

associated with certain skills are affected by cultural ideas about the people expected to perform the jobs that use those skills (England, 1992; Duffy, 2011). So, because nurturing and working with children is expected to be performed by females, the skills associated with this type of work are devalued. Additionally, in these fields employees work primarily with women and children, two marginalized groups in society, which also devalues the work and lowers the associated prestige (Johnson, 2008).

Feelings of misperception are not only limited to the parents of men working with young children. Researchers also discovered that peers and friends of men working in early childhood education expressed high levels of confusion as well. Though not as blunt in their commentary, peers often sent subtle messages expressing misunderstanding towards their male friend's career choice (Benton DeCorse & Vogtle, 1997). Even if they might know for a while that they have a desire to work with children, men often resist this inclination at first (Williams, 1992). Rather, they explore other occupations and attempt to find a different career path deemed socially acceptable for their gender. Thus, many men do not enter the field until years after they've entered adulthood (Williams, 1992). Consistent with this notion, Benton DeCorse & Vogtle (1997) discovered through their in-depth interviews that all but one of the eleven male teachers they interviewed had tried a different career path first, even though they knew they enjoyed working with children.

These social pressures from others frequently lead to internal psychological pressures for a man deciding what field to enter. Research suggests that men with monetarily-determined career goals (Kimmel & Messner, 1995) have psychological reservations about choosing a profession which society believes to be dominated by females (Brabeck & Weisgerber, 1989; Williams, 1992). Thus, a man might believe that simply because a field is largely female-based

that he will not have the ability to be financially successful. Similarly, Gaskell and Willinsky (1995) also discovered some psychological roots behind why males avoid teaching. Their findings suggest that adolescents develop self-limiting occupational stereotypes and have negative attitudes towards occupations dominated by the opposite gender (Gaskell and Willinsky, 1995). This is true for both males and females in their development of attitudes towards certain occupations. So, even before men are on the job market, as adolescents they already begin to limit themselves to what they think they should be doing based off of the repercussions they believe they will face if they cross into a gender-atypical occupation.

These types of pressures create some concerns in a lot of men as they may risk being judged, questioned, and/or misperceived by others. As Mills (et al., 2004, p. 360) puts it, "Men who want to teach young children risk being positioned as deviant, abnormal, or lacking. That is, they are at risk of being seen as gay, 'effeminate' or a pedophile." To further support this idea, in an interview-based study, male primary teachers admitted that they were concerned about being perceived as gay and actually developed defense mechanisms, so to speak, to counteract false perceptions, such as displaying photos of their wives in their classrooms or on their desks (King, 2000). These social and psychological pressures and concerns are interconnected and contribute to the occupational segregation that penetrates the child care and early education fields.

Benefits Men Bring to the Fields

Although society predisposes us to believe that certain jobs are for men while others are for women, leading to occupational segregation, researchers recently have argued that men should pursue careers in early childhood education, and gender diversity adds certain benefits to

the field (see MCCormick, 1994; Cameron, 2001; Martino, 2008; Sumsion, 1999; Folbre, 2001 and Lyons et al., 2003). One of these main arguments stems from changing family dynamics in Western societies. Families have been shifting away from the traditional, nuclear model, and we now see more single-parent households, blended families, and non-traditional living arrangements today than ever before (Gerson, 2010). Because of this, many believe that more male role models are needed in young children's lives (McCormick, 1994). Absent fathers are not uncommon today, so there is a belief that men should take a more active role in children's lives as there is an increasing need for male figures (Cameron, 2001). Particular emphasis is given to young boys needing more male role models. Having a male care giver or teacher at a young age might lead to young boys developing an interest in learning and/or working in education one day (Martino, 2008; Sumsion, 1999).

In trying to understand whether young children prefer to have a male or female teacher, research suggests children do not seem to have a preference or even give notice to the fact that male teachers are currently atypical (Sumsion, 2005). In a case study conducted to investigate children's perceptions of male teachers, it appears that young children do not seem to think about male teachers as being different at all (Sumsion, 2005). The children involved in the research just seemed to think of their teacher Bill, as just that, a teacher rather than a *male* teacher. The children did not seem to question or judge his gender, so why do adults?

If more men were to join the field, it might benefit society as a whole. Occupational segregation based on gender of the early childhood education field has made it appear as a low-status career and one that only women should occupy (England et al., 2002). Some argue that adding more men to the field will continue to disrupt gender norms which can be seen as progressive (Cameron & Moss, 1998). Illustrating this idea, in a study comparing attitudes of

male students working for academic credit in a day care and men who decisively chose child care as a career, the men who made the decision to work with the children had a very progressive outlook on gender roles (Robinson & Canaday, 1977). Those men did not consider their sole purpose to be providing a masculine image for the children, but instead saw their work as an opportunity to help destroy stereotypes and give the children a new perspective on what men can and cannot do, and to allow children to view men in a more nurturing role.

Schools are powerful institutions as they are partly responsible for transferring culture and values to future generations (Johnson, 2008). This comes from the lessons they teach, of course, but also from the way they are structured. If children are predominantly and constantly seeing female teachers in classrooms and perhaps more men in administrative roles, that is what they learn to be normal. If they are not exposed to men in their schools and day cares, it sends a message that those places are no place for men (Johnson, 2008), thus reinforcing the socially constructed beliefs mentioned above. As more men enter these fields, they slowly break down this traditionalist perspective. Lyons et al. (2003) indicated that if more men enter child care and early education fields, it could potentially raise the status of those occupations for both the men and women who work in them. Additionally, entire societies benefit from well-raised children; even those individuals not directly involved in child care (by providing it or paying for it) receive benefits (Folbre, 2001). So, if child care/early education can be enhanced through the addition of males, not only will those fields benefit, but society as a whole.

Industries and businesses all around the world would argue that having a diverse workforce makes for better business. Research indicates that heterogeneous groups of employees generally outperform homogenous groups through enhanced problem-solving, innovation, and creative solution building (Hubbard, 2006). Child care and early education are no exception and

the addition of more males to these professions will surely increase the diversity. Horm-Wingerd and Hyson (2000) argue that a move to a diverse teaching pool makes for a more culturally sensitive environment for children and that as our population grows increasingly diverse, our teacher pool needs to be more representative. Similarly, founder of menteach.org, a platform for male teaching professionals, Bryan Nelson firmly believes that the teaching staff in schools and child care centers should be representative of the children and families they serve. He states, "My perspective is that recruiting more male teachers is not about men versus women – it is about offering children a diverse group of adults to whom they can relate and respond," (cited in Johnson, 2008). Diverse workforces have become a hot trend in businesses, but diversity can enhance all organizations. As mentioned above, men may be able to bring in new perspectives and enhance the representativeness in their organizations.

Businesses are not the only parties who understand the benefits of increased diversity throughout industries, but governments are recognizing this need as well. Many governments around the world are researching how they can enhance diversity in workforces and decrease occupational segregation in specific fields. One such report highlights a strategic plan to get men more involved in education. The report from Queensland, Australia mentions that the educational system is, "…committed to providing students with diverse learning experiences. To achieve this, we recognize that it is necessary to create and sustain a diverse workforce…This strategy has been developed…to create a diverse workforce by increasing the number of males engaged in the delivery of educational services," (cited in Mills et al., 2004). Recruitment and staffing of male teachers is difficult due to the deterring factors previously discussed, which is why reports like this provide recommendations on how to attract, recruit, and retain male staff members. Some of the common strategies recommended include the creation of scholarship programs for

males interested in the field, the establishment of mentoring programs in which a current male teacher would mentor a prospective one, having males promote early education and child care at career fairs, and for organizations to create staffing targets and goals to work towards (Mills et al., 2004). Occupational segregation is a global issue which is why governments around the world are attempting to intervene and propose solutions, and why businesses around the world are pursuing and implementing more diverse workforces.

On the Job Experiences

Research exploring what men experience while on the job is inconclusive as some concludes that they do very well and encounter frequent advantages as the minority in child care/early education (Williams, 1992; Budig, 2002), while other research has concluded that they encounter frequent difficulties (Kanter, 1977; Allan, 1993; Cooney & Bittner, 2001). Through focus groups of males in or entering the field, Cooney & Bittner (2001) discovered six main emergent issues that men face in the field: low salaries, family and other influences on their choice to enter the field, teaching beyond the basics (how to incorporate moral development as well as curriculum), improving preservice education, recruitment of males into the field, and most frequently discussed were the disadvantages of being a man in a female-dominated field. The main disadvantages were feelings of isolation and the "touch issue" (Cooney & Bittner, 2001, p. 81) in which men want to incorporate touch in their nurturing practices, but do not want it to be misconstrued as inappropriate. The feelings of isolation are also described by Allan (1993) in which he found men working in elementary education felt marginalized at work. The men in the study believed those feelings were the result of their female colleagues resenting them

for being privileged during the hiring process. In another focus group study, the male primary

teachers that participated expressed that gender differences in their schools were emphasized in

the staff room. That is where they felt the most uncomfortable with being a man in a female-

dominated profession (Cushman, 2005). Contrary to the results discovered in these studies, the

men in a different study felt a high level of comfort in their jobs and that relationships with

female coworkers did not seem to pose any issues (DeCorse & Vogtle, 1997). This is more

consistent with Williams (1992) who argued that it is rarely an issue for men to be accepted into

female-dominated fields.

Despite whether or not they are liked by their coworkers, many men face the "touch

issue" which Cooney and Bittner (2001) discovered was one of the biggest challenges they

faced. The ways in which men working with children are portrayed in the news and through

media seems to be troublesome for men entering the field. Occasionally, media idolizes male

caregivers as great role models and representative of progress for our society. However, cases of

child abuse and sexual harassment are frequently in the spotlight. Cases like these have created a

difficult situation for male care givers and teachers to navigate. They want to be nurturing and

helpful to the children; however, it is difficult to know how affectionate to be towards a child

because society has different expectations for men and women using affectionate behavior. Even

though research and statistics can show that the actual accusation and conviction rates of men in

sexual abuse cases are very low (Skelton, 2001), these cases do still exist and create paranoia in

many parents as well as a role complexity within the male caregivers and teachers. When it

comes to physically touching children as part of nurturing, Sargent (2000) provided three options

in his research: option one is to reject the expectation of nurturing and simply teach the subject

matter instead, option two is to follow their intuition and allow themselves to become close to

the students, and the third option is to acknowledge the fact that they cannot have all of the same

nurturing behaviors as their female colleagues, but to use touch in some situations.

Another exposed challenge with being a man in child care/early education is that men are

often supposed to be the enforcer of disciplinary action while at work (Sargent, 2000), a role

which many dislike. In his study to determine if the disadvantages men encountered as

elementary teachers would cause them to leave the field, Cognard-Black (2004) found no

evidence that showed men suffered from disadvantages that would cause them to quit, and that

there is no evidence suggesting that men leave elementary teaching any more so than females.

What he did conclude, however, and consistent with Williams (1992) is that men experience

rapid advancement in these careers.

Williams (1992) argues that there are structural advantages for men in female-dominated

professions. Many agree with the idea that more men could benefit early education, but the

demand for male teachers is far greater than the supply. So long as demand exceeds supply, men

might appear to be more marketable and landing a job appears to come with more ease. Thus,

men are given more opportunities; from the moment they interview, they step on the "glass

escalator" (Williams, 1992). Data from the Department of Education and Skills in the UK report

that one out of four male primary teachers is likely to become head teacher, but only one out of

every thirteen female primary teachers (Skelton, 2002, p.85). Male interviewees in DeCorse &

Vogtle (1997) acknowledge this phenomenon. One man reported, "If an administrator sees your

name and 80 females, your name is going to stick out. A lot of administrators want to interview

males for their positions. I can't whine that my gender didn't help me get interviews. Everyone

wants to have males in their building." In a separate study, in reply to a comment that men fear

promotional opportunities in early childhood education, a female participant proclaimed, "lack of

promotional opportunities shouldn't deter men from teaching, they are usually promoted within five minutes of becoming a teacher," (Lingard et al., 2002). So not only are men recognizing the potential opportunities, but women are taking notice as well. Furthermore, in a Panel Study of Income Dynamics, and using sex composition as a linear effect, Maume (1999) discovered that as the percentage of women in the occupation increases, men have greater chances of being promoted. With all of this taken into consideration, research supports claims that men working in child care/early education are disadvantaged in some areas while advantaged in others. Hopefully, this thesis can help shed some light on to this phenomenon through an exploration of men's experiences as compared to those of women in the field.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Sample and Data

For the purpose of this study, qualitative, primary data has been conducted and analyzed by the principal investigator. This exploratory research utilized the method of in-depth interviews. The study meets both Penn State's and the national criteria for ethically approved research based on its approval from the Pennsylvania State University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). The sample was intentionally composed of a combination of both men and women currently working or who have recently worked in either early education or child care. These fields are considered female-dominated and so the in-depth interviews were conducted with the intent to better understand participants,' but especially men's, perceptions of on the job experiences and various relationships at work. Through interviewing both men and women, a comparison can be made between genders to see if their perceptions are similar or different. The justification for this sample arises from the fact that most research about gender disparities in the workplace focuses on women in traditionally male-dominated occupations. Here, that is reversed in order to learn about what men experience when they are the minority. Though very few men are currently working in child care and early education, there are increasing numbers of males entering feminine fields (nursing, child care, early education, secretarial work) (Farquhar, 1997), so the information discovered in this study could be very beneficial.

The sample consists of nine participants, five men and four women, who currently work

in the fields of early education and/or child care services, or who have worked full-time in one of these fields within the last six months. The interviewees represent a non-probability convenience sample from the states of Pennsylvania and Maryland. Initially, participants were only sought out from the central Pennsylvania area. The directors of child care centers and preschools in Central Pennsylvania were contacted and asked for permission to hang up a recruitment flyer in their centers. They were also asked to send an electronic version of the flyer out to the employees via email. The flyer displayed a brief description of the study as well as the contact information of the investigator. Those interested in participating were asked to contact the researcher via email. However, not enough interest was obtained through the use of this method alone, so the researcher obtained modification approval through the Institutional Review Board to begin using her network for recruitment as well. The researcher sent out emails to individuals in her network whom she knew to work in early education and/or child care. The email gave a brief description of the study and requested the participation of the recipient. The researcher is originally from Maryland, which is why the sample was extended from just Pennsylvania to include Maryland as well. Once an interview concluded, participants were asked if they knew anyone who would be interested in participating as well. The addition of this snowball method was especially helpful in finding male participants.

Most interviews were conducted in-person, but when that was not possible, a few of the interviews were completed over the phone. All interviews were completed solely by the primary investigator. In compliance with the Institutional Review Board's requirements, consent by the participants was obtained prior to the start of each interview so that their responses could be used for research purposes. The consent document informed the participants of the purpose of the study and included the various risks which could occur through participation. These items were

also explained by the researcher. Participants were informed that their participation was completely voluntary. They could stop participating at any time and if they wished to skip any question asked during the interview, they could do so by simply saying "pass."

The interview questions were written by the researcher and aim to understand how men and women perceive their work in traditionally feminine fields. An interview guide was followed for each individual interview. The guide begins with basic questions such as demographic information and job title and then leads into more complex, experience-based questions. The interview questions can be found in the Appendix. Though each interview addresses all of the questions listed on the guide, the process of responsive interviewing was also used. Each interview was recorded and then later transcribed verbatim for the purpose of coding and analyzing.

Strengths and Limitations

The major strength of this method is the in-depth responses that were received from the sample. In-depth interviews commonly seek "deep information and knowledge – usually deeper information and knowledge than is sought in surveys, informal interviewing, or focus groups," (Gubrium and Holstein, 2001). Interviews allow participants to elaborate on their answers as well as add in pertinent stories. In a study which aims to understand experiences, it is critical that the participants are able to reveal information through longer responses than would be received in a survey. This sample provides first-hand experiences and detailed descriptions about their time performing "women's work." Thus, the stories and feelings that this sample communicated will be very valuable towards this research topic. Additionally, the responsive interviewing

technique allows for slight adaptations to the questions based on previous answers from the respondent which allows for more dynamic communication with the participants (Rubin & Rubin, 2004).

But there are of course some limitations to this sample as well. First, all of the respondents are local to the states of Pennsylvania or Maryland, and from a non-probability based sample. This means that the findings cannot be generalized to the larger population; however, the main points discovered may be very useful to future research and studies that can be more easily generalized. An additional limitation may be that due to the recent scandal about child molestation in Central Pennsylvania, results may show some bias about how male teachers and caregivers perceive parents to feel towards/about them, but this externality is not expected to have a significant influence on the findings.

Measures

In order to analyze the responses of the interviewees, an open-coding process was used to discover themes in the answers to the interview questions. This process involved isolating a piece of the interview response, rereading it, and discovering the main points. Though this process is unstructured, it provided the leeway to repeatedly analyze the content in order to see what results can be concluded (Warren and Karner, 2005). Through analyzing and comparing the perceptions of each interviewee, the obtained results help us better understand what it is like for men and women working in child care and early education. Each individual interviewed had their own unique perceptions which developed as the result of, "experiences in specific social contexts, and the analytic job is to find out how and why these perceptions emerge and what

consequences they have," (Gerson & Damaske, ND). So, understanding these perceptions and uncovering main themes has enabled the researcher to create variables and draw conclusions.

Variables

The primary independent variable assessed in this study was gender, but other items such as education level were assessed as well. Differences between men and women are the focal point of this research and thus gender was used as an independent variable in order to compare the effects of it on various dependent variables. Participants were labeled as either "man" or "woman." There are more dependent variables in this study in order to assess what aspects of working in child care/early education gender has an effect on. The following addresses these dependent variables and how they were coded by the principle investigator.

Job satisfaction was one of the quantitative responses given by each participant and an important dependent variable for this research. After each individual was asked about how satisfied they were with their job, they were asked as a follow-up question to provide a numerical number, 1-10, to represent their satisfaction. A one indicates very poor satisfaction and a ten indicates extreme satisfaction with the current position of the respondent. Some of the respondents who designated a score of ten described their work with responses such as: "*I love it!*" and "*Surely, I do not dread going to work*!" None of the participants rated their work lower than a seven. Typically, these individuals liked their work but also addressed some of the challenges and stresses associated with it which brought their overall satisfaction down.

Career aspirations were categorized into four groups: "Calling," "Trial to Career," "Education-based," and "Unexpected." This variable aims to understand how each participant got started in a career in child care/early education, and was addressed in question eight of the

interview guide. "Calling" was used to represent the participants who explained that they knew a career in this field was something they wanted to pursue for a long time, such as, "*Well, I've known since I was probably in elementary school that I wanted to work with young children.*" "Trial to Career" was designated to participants who volunteered at an institution with young children in order to see if it would be something of interest to them. "Education-based" grouped together those participants who knew they wanted to pursue a career in education, but did not expect to be working in an early childhood setting. Below is a prime example of this type of initial aspiration as told by a male kindergarten teacher:

"...you know, straight out of high school I didn't know I wanted to go that route. I thought I could see myself teaching PE or teaching history. Once I started working at the day care center, I started to realize that I really enjoyed the teaching day-to-day. Especially with the primary ages and teaching all sorts of subjects. So I figured that was the way for me."

The last category, "Unexpected," represented participants who did not expect to be working in the field and came from a different background.

The next set of dependent variables revolves around job growth. Experienced Job Growth was either a Yes (Y) or No (N) representing if the participants had experienced upward mobility in their current role or not. Perceived Opportunities for Growth was operationalized as "High," "Moderate," and "Low." Participants were categorized based on the amount of growth opportunities they believed were present in their current role. Those with "High" perceptions believed there are many opportunities for vertical mobility, while those with "Low" perceptions did not believe many opportunities existed for upward growth within their organizations. These variables were addressed in questions fifteen and fourteen respectively. The interviewees also discussed their professional development opportunities as

a different type of growth. Professional Development Opportunities were also operationalized

as "High," "Moderate," and "Low." Similarly, those represented by "High" indicated that

they perceived multiple opportunities to grow as a professional existed. For example, Nicole,

a pseudonym, mentioned, "*We as a center, really focus on that professional development*

piece. So we're continuing to take trainings and learn." She brought up goal setting and

mentoring as two of the major opportunities to grow as a professional. Conversely, those

represented by "Low" indicated that very few professional development opportunities existed

in their current organization.

As another growth-related component, Future in Field was operationalized by

"Predicted Mobility," "Same role," or "Not in field." Those classified under "Predicted

Mobility" believed they would experience a vertical move within five years. Some expressed

that they believed in five years that they would still be in the "Same Role." There were also

some interviewees classified under "Not in Field" that did not expect to remain in the field in

five years and rather expected to pursue careers outside of educational institutions.

Relationships were of particular interest, and three types of relationships were

assessed and used as dependent variables: relationships with supervisors, parents, and

coworkers. Question sixteen aims to address relationships, but interviewees frequently alluded

to relationships with the mentioned parties throughout the interview, and those comments

were taken into consideration when grouping participants as well. Supervisor Relationship

was coded as "Very Good," "Good," and "Average." Those participants that fell under "Very

Good" expressed getting along really well with, trusting in, being able to learn from, and

having a high comfort level with their supervisor. One participant knew his supervisor from a

previous job and explained that they have a really great relationship because she trusts him

and gives him a lot of autonomy. Another explained, "*I would say my relationship with him is great…I feel like I have a lot to learn from him!*" "Good" relationships were characterized by getting along with the supervisor, but encountering occasional differences. And "Average" relationships were ones in which the participant and his/her supervisor got along for the most part, but it was not very trusting. One such example comes from Zachary, a pseudonym, who explained he really liked his supervisor's personality, but working with her was difficult:

"*I got along really well with her…but to be honest, she wasn't very good at her job…I mean, I would ask her for stuff and kind of knew in the back of my mind she wouldn't do it or that would take her awhile to do it.*"

So, it was difficult for Zachary to trust his supervisor despite liking her as a person.

Parents are very important in a young child's life and usually very interested in who is helping care for their children. The Parental Relationship was operationalized by "Very Good," "Good," and "Varies." "Very Good" was used to classify the participants that took a lot of pride in how close their relationships were with parents and families, and felt that the parents enjoyed them as a person and trusted them to care for and/or teach their child. Participants classified as "Good" are those which had some really close relationships with some parents and overall got along well with most of the families of their students. And "Varies" is used to classify the interviewees that explained that each relationship is different. They couldn't say that they were all negative or positive and that it varies from parent to parent. A male assistant teacher described it as follows:

"*How would I describe it?... It varies parent to parent. Some come in and they don't want to talk to you, they just grab their kids and go. And some come in and they want to hear all about the day and everything that happened, so it really varies parent to parent.*"- *Mark*

The last type of relationship assessed was that of the respondent and his/her coworkers. The codes are "Very Good," "Good," and "Average." Falling under the "Very Good" category meant that the respondent believed his/her relationships with coworkers to be very strong; they worked very well together and are friends outside of work as well. An example of this classification provided by a female infant/toddler teacher is as follows:

"...we do things outside of our classroom to keep ourselves friends...Things that we do together that keep us grounded while we're at work. Things get stressful, but then we can goof off about it!" – Abby

So, she thought that the outside friendships enhanced their performance at work as well. "Good" was used to classify those that got along well with coworkers, but those relationships were usually just work related. And "Average" was used to classify those that have overall good work-based relationships with most, but that don't interact much with their coworkers.

Follow-up questions (18 and 18a) to how participants viewed their relationships with coworkers involved asking about their perceived similarities and differences to their coworkers. The interviewees mentioned various work-related similarities/differences as well as personal traits that were similar/different, so two categories of perceived similarities arose from the qualitative data: Perceived Similarities (Work Related) and Perceived Similarities (Personal). Both of which are coded as "High," "Moderate," and "Low." Respondents were classified as "High" in Perceived Similarities (Work Related) if they believed that there were a lot of similarities to coworkers in terms of their on-the-job skill sets and interest/passion for the field. They were classified "High" in Perceived Similarities (Personal) if they perceived many similarities to exist between them and their coworkers in terms of things like demographics, background, and personal interests. "Moderate" was used to describe fewer

perceptions related to the sub-categories, but still a noteworthy amount. "Low" was used to categorize those who perceived very few similarities to coworkers in either a work-related or personal context. To illustrate these variables, one respondent replied:

"I would say we all have a common interest in what's best for our kids and families and genuinely like working with the kids. But, outside of work, we are all very, very different people." – Robert

This respondent was categorized as "Moderate" in Perceived Similarities (Work Related) and "Low" in Perceived Similarities (Personal).

An additional dependent variable of particular interest is Biggest Challenges, which highlights what each respondent believed to be important issues faced upon entrance into the field. This was another variable which was assessed using question twenty-two but that many brought up throughout different parts of the interview. The main themes that arose from responses were categorized into six groups: "Wages", "Hours/Workload," "Undervalued," "Balancing," "Preparedness," and "Coworker Friendships."

The first two are basic institutional issues, but the remaining four are not as intuitive and can be better understood through explanations and examples.

"Undervalued" is used to explain the challenge of child care/early education being a "*thankless*" job at times and that it is more important than what other people perceive it as. As one respondent put it, referring to her position in an infant/toddler room, "*I think it's an ignored part of the education system. I think there's not enough value placed on it.*" Next, "Balancing" refers to the challenge of having to balance different personalities and differing beliefs, and being careful about what you do and don't say around children. A respondent that really values her faith put it this way:

"I think we struggle with trying to make everyone happy. And that can be, really, almost impossible. I will even say that a huge part of who I am and what I value is my faith. And that is something when being in a diverse group can be tricky to balance. Because you feel like when working with children and families, you have to sort of, fit into this mold as a teacher or as an educator… And that as teachers, sometimes we feel that the things we value shouldn't overstep anything else. You know, that selfishness that you kind of pull back in. But then at the same time, you feel like you're not giving a hundred percent because you're pulling back a bit."

She was referring to the fact that she sometimes felt herself wanting to quote the scripture of Christianity, but didn't want to overstep any boundaries. So she would try to figure out a way to teach the lesson she wanted to teach without explicitly quoting the Bible such as "Treat others the way you want to be treated" instead of "Do unto others…"

Next, "Preparedness" is the fifth main challenge brought up by the interviewees and refers to the extent that people entering the field are prepared to perform the work and that many times, it is not what was expected prior to beginning. And "Coworker Friendships" refers to difficulties making close friends at work. All of these challenges will be explained in more detail in the findings section. Taking all of these variables into consideration, this research attempts to understand more about how gender may influence work in child care/early education

Chapter 4

Findings

After interviews were assessed and appropriate codes were designated, an analysis of the different variables illustrates some interesting findings.

Joining the Field

Results indicate that men were more likely to fall under the "Education-based" category of career aspirations meaning that they had thought they would be doing work in the general field of education, but did not predict working with early childhood ages. When asked why he wanted to work in child care, Robert responded:

"Umm, well originally I did not. You know, when I went to college, that's what the major was – Early Childhood and Elementary Ed. I had pictured myself teaching older elementary school…But in college, I started working with early childhood and that's sort of where the spark developed with working with the younger kids…"

A different male respondent, Luke, explained that he wanted to teach physical education in secondary schools but, "*…once I got into field experiences, that's when I found out I liked elementary and primary more…the kids enjoy phys. ed. more. They are more fun.*"

Unlike the men, none of whom had always wanted to work in this field, women frequently expressed knowing early on that they wanted to pursue this type of work, so more women were categorized under "Calling." Rachel was one who knew for a while it is what she

wanted do. She explained, "*well I always knew I liked working with kids, especially the younger kids, learning and seeing how they develop*." Two participants decided to give the work a chance through volunteering before committing to it. For example, Nicole mentioned, "*I had previously volunteered at where I work now, and it was a really positive environment*."

Interestingly, one female respondent said she did not expect to be in the field at all as she went to college for microbiology. Now a preschool teacher to three year olds she said:

"I stopped working and I was off for years. And then, when my youngest went to preschool, they really needed an aid. So, I became an aid there. I knew the woman that was the teacher and she begged me…And then, she was living a half hour away and her son was going to Kindergarten, so she couldn't continue to teach. And I was like 'don't wanna do it, not my thing.' And, they really didn't get around to hiring someone so I actually became the teacher." – Kim

She said she fell into the work because she was unemployed after various research jobs when she started having children. The general trend which can be seen is that men more frequently wanted to work in the education field more broadly and then ended up with younger kids after discovering they enjoyed it, while more women predicted a career for themselves in these areas. Zero men indicated it was a calling while 80% fell under the education-based aspirations. Figure 1 illustrates the results.

Figure 1: Gender and Career Aspiration
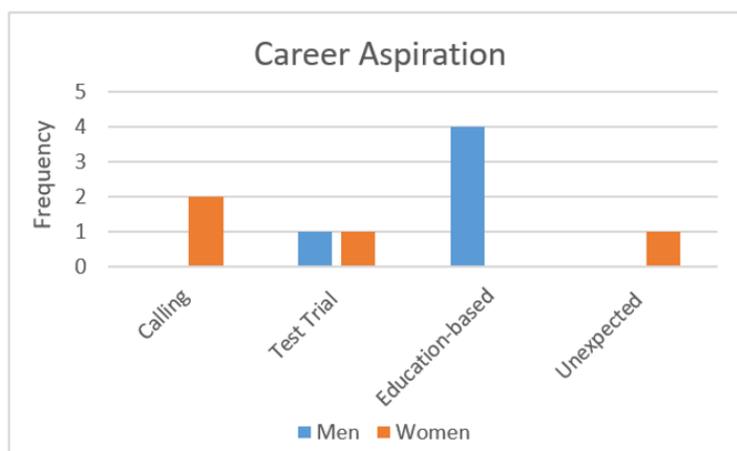
These results may partially support those of Williams (1992) and Benton DeCorse & Vogtle (1997) in that the men may be more likely to pursue a different field than early childhood before realizing it is what they want to do. This may be related to the idea that working with young children seems socially unacceptable to some people, so the gentlemen interviewed intended to work with older children before deciding to work with younger ones.

Zachary, a male interviewee, who recently left his position as a Multi-Site Child Care Director for the YMCA, provided a response as to why he does not believe there were more males working in the field and he said, "*You know, I'm not sure. Because it is a really great time. I really enjoyed working with the kids and playing with the kids. I thought it was a great gig.*" So if he believed it to be a great job, I was curious as to why he recently left to pursue a different job. He explained that he had a young daughter and the new job paid better and allowed him to better support his family. He did not mention anything about feeling like it was unacceptable for him to be working with children or that he felt misperceived by society.

However, a different respondent, Kim did add to the argument found in England et al. (2002) that working with children requires some sort of a nurturing instinct and that nurturing is not a practiced skill but one inherent to women. She stated:

"I just think that the kids are much more happy with women. Women, in general, are much more nurturing. Little kids tend to be more afraid of men, especially men they don't know. So…"

There were no males working in the facility she taught at and her beliefs could perhaps be related to her age (55, the oldest interviewee) and/or that she worked for a church-operated preschool which are generally more conservative. But regardless of why she feels this way, what is important is that she does hold those beliefs, and opinions like hers may contribute to the low numbers of men working in the field. Although she was the only interviewee in the sample to mention beliefs like this, she is not the only person in the population who feels this way and thus illustrates that traditionalist views of sex-role norms in terms of work are still very much alive.

Men's Positive Impact

Arguments as to why more men should join the field frequently highlight that men provide role models for the children. Though no one explicitly used the term "role model" many of the men did believe that the kids really enjoyed having them as a teacher or seeing them day-to-day. Two prime examples of this are seen below:

"I don't want to sound like I'm bragging, but, I don't know of any kid that didn't want me to walk through the door. Like, I really liked being that presence and all of the kids really liked me." –Mark

"I would say most of the kids liked me, or even loved me. There would be times when I

would see them in public and they would just freak out!" – Zachary

Although Sumsion (2005) discovered that children didn't pay much attention to the gender of

their male teacher, the above quotes might illustrate that kids do feel some excitement towards

having a male teacher. Perhaps this was because the children were used to seeing females in their

schools, so having a man teach did make it appear exciting to the kids. Or it might be because

men seemed to believe that they had higher levels of interaction with the kids than their female

counterparts. Each respondent was asked to describe some of their strengths regarding work.

While only one female respondent mentioned her level of interaction as a strength, 60% of male

respondents mentioned it. As Mark explained during his interview:

"I would be out there running around with the kids outside. But other teachers would just

sort of stand there talking to each other while watching the kids but they wouldn't interact

too much. You know, I'm one who just sort of jumps right in and run around and play with

them… so I guess the level of interaction would be my answer for that question."

Additionally, Zachary mentioned that he would sometimes go against policy at the YMCA in

order to provide kids with what he believed to be a better experience through higher levels of

interaction.

"The kids would have about 45 minutes of homework time. Which is supposed to be quiet,

but the kids were crazy. 'Cause that's the thing, and I understood this, that the kids, they

don't want to do more school work. They were just at school. They want to have a good

time. And that's why I would sometimes shorten homework time and take the kids outside

or through a fun activity."

Though the program might not have appreciated this if it had known, he sounded confident about his actions because he thought that more interaction would give the kids a better experience. He mentioned that the children really appreciated this and many of them really liked/loved him.

Another strength that was commonly heard during interviews was being able to bring a new perspective into the workplace. This was also mentioned more frequently by men than women. Diverse perspectives can help enhance the education of young children. Diversity, as mentioned earlier, is a goal set by many organizations today with the hopes that diverse employees will bring diverse perspectives and ideas on things. Samuel, a kindergarten teacher provided the below comment regarding his unique perspective:

> *"I feel like I can bring a different perspective on things. I think I kind of have a different mindset when it comes to technology in the classroom for example. Sometimes it's a little scary I think with kindergarten to try different things of technology, but I've kind of just been going with it and trying different things. And I kind of report back to them and say 'hey! This actually worked.' And they are willing to try it…and so I feel like I've got a lot to offer when it comes to that."*

Another man, Robert, mentioned that diverse perspectives can benefit organizations and he believed that he brought new perspectives to his center as exemplified by the following quote: *"And, I do think I'm a bit different because my philosophies are different in how I handle day-to-day situations, education philosophy and all that stuff."* So the men more frequently spoke about how bringing in a new perspective was one of their key strengths.

Women showed some differences in what they believed to be their main strengths and they had more answers than did the men. Relationships with parents and calmness were two of the most frequent strengths given by women. Figure 2 illustrates the results about men and

women's strengths on the job. Women seemed to mention a wider array of strengths, but men were more consistent with what they perceived. It is interesting to discover what the interviewees felt they could contribute to the field.

**Figure 2: Gender and Perceived Strengths**
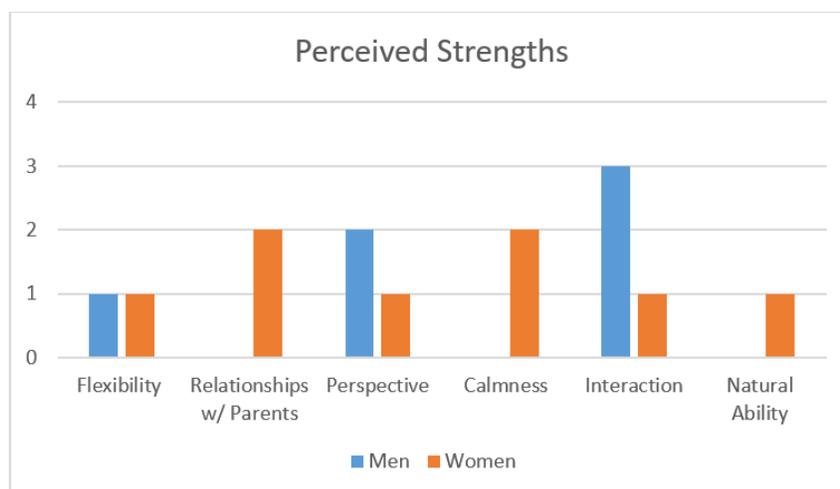
On the Job Experiences

Growth

Results indicate that in terms of experienced job promotions, women and men were relatively equal in whether or not they had actually grew vertically in their current organization at the time of the interview. There was one woman who had risen in rank and one male who had risen in rank so, 25% of the women sampled and 20% of men had actually received a promotion since the start of their job. Interestingly though, men in the sample had much higher perceptions for growth opportunities than the women expressed. As Figure 3 displays, 80% of men perceived there to be high opportunities for growth as compared to only 25% of women, and the

female respondent who believed there to be high opportunities happened to be the only woman to have already received a promotion.

Figure 3: Gender and Perceived Growth Opportunities
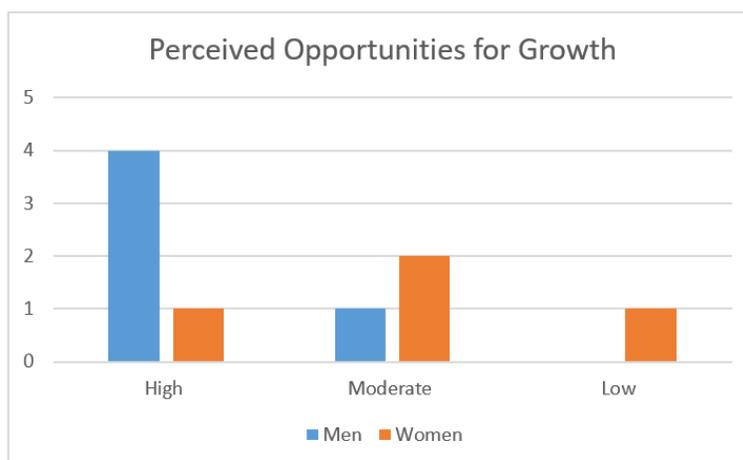
Based on this, men believed that there were more opportunities for vertical mobility and promotions within their organizations than women perceived there to be. Rachel, a female infant/toddler teacher had low perceptions of growth opportunities and described her role as "*stagnant.*" She expressed:

> "*I wish there were more opportunities for growth. Like, I can grow my portfolio and my development, but I'm still sort of stuck in my one classroom. I wish there were more opportunities to grow upwards instead of laterally.*"

However, some of the men who had high perceptions of growth opportunities stated things like:

> "*Absolutely, yeah. I was only there for a short time, but certain people that were there longer than me were either head teachers that hadn't been before, or one was actually in the office now after being a teacher.*" – Mark

So even though he had not experienced vertical mobility during his tenure at the child care center, Mark still believed there to be various opportunities to grow. One of the other male

interviewees, Robert, actually laughed when asked about his perceptions of growth opportunities as he mentioned that he would be interviewing for a supervisor role soon. He remarked, "*I actually just got a call today to interview for a supervisor position this week! So, there is definitely room to grow up. I interview Thursday morning*." There could be some structural and institutional differences which affect each respondent's perceptions, but it is a very interesting trend.

Relatedly, not only did more men have higher perceptions of opportunities for growth, but men also predicted vertical mobility at a higher rate than women. Seventy-five percent of women predicted that in five years, they would still be in their same role, while only one woman predicted being at a higher level in five years. Men had interesting predictions for their futures. One believed he would be in the same role. Luke, the physical education teacher is the one who predicated this for himself as he explained that there are ways to move up in the administration route if he wanted to, but that he wanted to continue being the physical education teacher for a while. Two men predicted a promotion. One of whom was Robert who was interviewing for a supervisory role already, and the other was Samuel who explained:

"I see myself in five years hopefully finishing up my Master's degree and looking for the next step…I don't know what that's going to be yet. I don't know, administration, maybe a reading specialist, or a math interventionist, or whatever, maybe just a master teacher. I don't know, but definitely taking that next step and trying to figure that out."

Samuel wasn't positive as to what he wanted to do next, but definitely predicted being at higher level than his current kindergarten teacher role. The last two men actually said in five years, they do not expect to be working in child care and/or early education, meaning than 40% of the sampled men expected to exit the field. Mark had recently left the field to continue

his education because he changed his degree. He no longer wanted to be in the education field

and rather wanted to pursue a career in a hospital setting. And Zachary had recently left and

picked up a different job which paid more money. Figure 4 puts these trends in a visual

format.

**Figure 4: Gender and Future in Field**
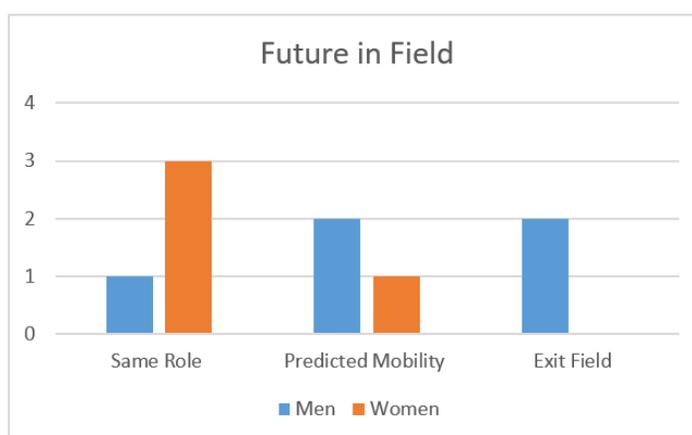
The results indicating that men not only have higher perceptions of growth

opportunities, but also predict higher rates of mobility than females, relate back to William's

(1992) "glass escalator" theory. Although it did not appear that men were provided more

opportunities in this small sample at the time of interviewing, their perceptions indicate that

they expect these opportunities in the future. This is also interesting because the men were

slightly less educated than the women on average, yet still had higher perceptions for growth

opportunities.

Relationships

Understanding how men and women interact with and develop relationships with

different parties in the workplace was another goal of this study. Figure 5 highlights all of the

key relationships touched on during interviews: the relationship between the interviewee and

his/her supervisor, the relationships between the interviewee and his/her coworkers, and the relationships between the interviewee and the parents of the children in his/her classroom.

Figure 5: Gender and Relationships
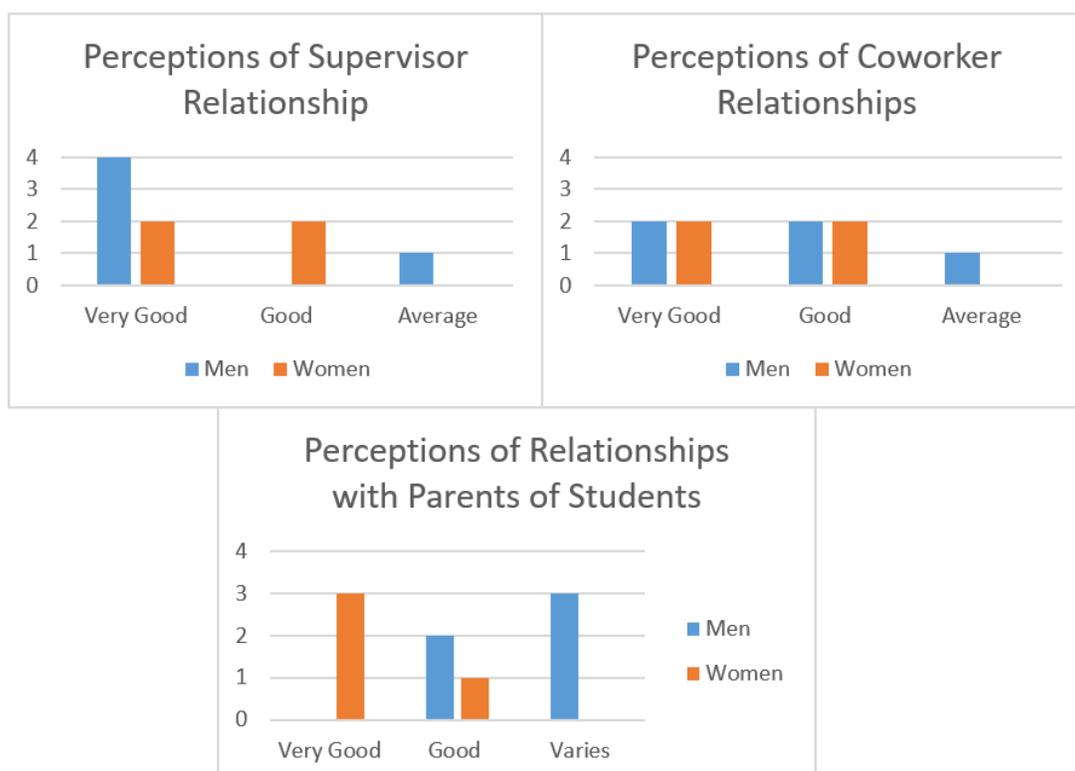
Taking first into account the relationships between the interviewees and their supervisors, results indicate overall very good relationships for both men and women, but slightly better for men. Eighty percent of men were classified as having "Very Good" relationships with their supervisors while only 50% of female interviewees were. Thus, most of the respondents indicated having a high comfort level with, getting along very well with, and trusting in their supervisors. Only one male, Zachary was categorized as having an "Average" relationship with his supervisor, not because he didn't like her as a person, but because he did not trust her as his superior. And two women had "Good" relationships rather than "Very Good" because although they got along with their supervisors for the most part, they did encounter some differences

which they had to work through. For example, Nicole had some hesitation when trying to articulate her relationship with her supervisor:

"Ummm good. I mean… working with someone on a day-to-day basis, you get to know each other in ways…So, we get along well, but you know, we are different and we have different personalities."

Those who had "Very Good" relationships with their supervisors were more inclined to respond the question with much less hesitation and more positively. Such a response came from Mark as he responded:

"Very good. Our owner, she was very people-friendly, but she also was tough and knew how to take care of things…but she's always been open to suggestions and is very communicative. We got along very well."

Supervisor gender did not seem to play a role. All females interviewed had female supervisors and three males had female supervisors. But two of them had very good relationships with their supervisor of the opposite gender and only Zachary had an average relationship.

Next, results indicate that women had overall better relationships with the parents of their students than men had. It appears as though men were less inclined to give a single answer regarding relationships with parents and more likely to recount both good and bad experiences during the interview. Women on the other hand took more pride in their close relationships with parents and families. Abby expressed:

"Wonderful. Yes. We pride ourselves on our relationships with families. Currently half of our classroom, so eight of our sixteen children, are actually siblings of kids we've already had. So, families have had second children, and have requested our classroom. So that shows us that they appreciate us and we appreciate them."

As previously mentioned, the women were more likely to name these relationships as a strength that they possess. Conversely, men mentioned it being difficult to give a general answer because it changed depending on the parents. Zachary even mentioned that parent interaction was his least favorite part about his job when there were issues that came up, and that some interactions were good while others were almost inexistent. He recounted:

"Dealing with parents was probably my least favorite thing. Um, you don't really see as much when you're an aid and a teacher, but when you're the director you get all the emails and the parents come and complain to you about every little thing… There were some parents who were just in and out real quick. I would say 'hey' to them but that was the extent of it. And some parents would come in and talk to me for twenty minutes, so it was just dependent on the parent."

This may be because some parents might feel more skeptical towards having males caring for and educating their young children. Kindergarten teacher, Samuel explained that he now believes his relationships with parents are overall very positive, but he initially sensed some uncertainty. He explained:

"With me being a new teacher, plus a male kindergarten teacher… you know. It was just very different for this town for them to have a male in the primary grades. So you know, I was very understanding of that stuff and I always encourage them to come in and email and talk that way. So, they definitely wanted to get to know me, but now that it's the second half of the year, I feel that they're more comfortable with things. They're not as … I don't know how to say it… but they definitely kind of stepped back and relaxed about it."

So he seemed to have perceived the parents as being on edge when he first started in his role, but through their various interactions in and out of school, they began to feel more

comfortable with him and their relationship grew into a more positive one. It is difficult to say with certainty why women perceived better relationships with parents, but could be related to skepticism of male teachers. The bottom line though is that men's perceptions of relationships with parents were weaker than those perceived by women.

Lastly, the interviewees were asked about how they perceived their relationships with coworkers to be. Most of the sample had expressed perceiving "Very Good" or "Good" relationships with their coworkers. The male who had "Average" perceptions of his relationships was Luke, the physical education teacher. He explained that his situation was a bit different due to the nature of his profession. When thinking about his relationships with coworkers he described:

"Umm… I've had no problems. Sometimes, I would say I'm secluded because I'm different. Like, I'm the phys. ed. teacher. So I'm away from most of the classrooms. So I don't have as much interaction. Most of the interaction I have is at lunchtime in the faculty room. But, it's pretty much all positive."

He did not have any close relationships to coworkers, but expressed having mostly positive interactions with the other faculty members.

Equal numbers of male and female interviewees perceived "Very Good" and "Good" coworker relationships. Those with "Good" relationships got along well with their coworkers on the job and enjoyed working with them, but work was at the core of their relationships. They were able to enjoy themselves at work with their coworkers, but the friendships did not extend beyond the workplace. For example, Robert described his relationships as follows:

"I really get along with all my coworkers. I'm the one that really likes to joke around (laughs) and make everybody laugh. I try not to take everything too serious all the time.

But I'm also the one they know they can come to if they need help with something. You

know, I spent a lot of time helping staff do things that I've done before at a lot of my jobs

that we are just starting to do here for the first time. So I sit with them, and we figure it

out, so I know they can trust me as well."

He has a nice relationship with his coworkers characterized by trust, but the interviewees with

"Very Good" perceptions had friendship at the core of their relationships as well as

professionalism. For example, Samuel enthusiastically expressed how he perceived his

relationship with coworkers to be:

"Great! I have a really fantastic team. They are helpful. I mean, we've had so much

happen in my family recently with the baby coming and my wife and I moving at the same

time, so they have been super helpful… we plan together, we eat lunch together, and

they're super supportive. If I need anything I can email or text them, and they help me out.

I feel like we help each other out all the time because we are friends."

He also expressed that lunchtime was one of his favorite parts of the day when he got to

interact with and be around his coworkers. So, as Samuel exemplifies, it is possible for men

working in child care/early education to have great relationships with their coworkers.

Zachary was also one who had "Very Good" relationships with coworkers and considered a

lot of them to be his friends, but he said this actually created some challenges for him because

a lot of them were his subordinates and it became difficult to discipline them if they were

displaying poor performance. He explained:

"Yeah, and the problem with that is I was friends with them, which is not good, but that's

just how it was. Like the aids at my schools, I just became very friendly with which is good

in front of the kids because we were never like fighting or anything. But, at the same time,

it was hard to explain to them when they did do something wrong."

So while he liked to interact with these individuals, it created a tricky situation to navigate

sometimes.

One important dynamic that became evident in the coding process related to coworker

relationships was perceived similarities to coworkers. Both work-related and personal

similarities were discussed during the interviews, but of more interest to this research is the

perceived personal similarities. Below, Figure 6 summarizes gender differences between

perceived personal similarities to coworkers.

Figure 6: Gender and Perceived Similarities to Coworkers
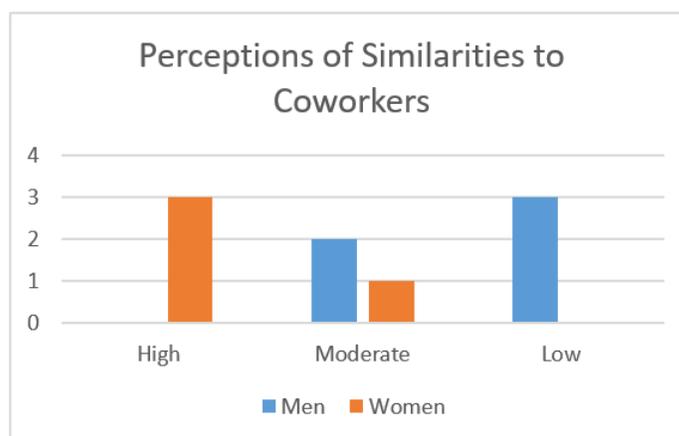
Results indicate men have low-moderate perceptions while women have moderate-

high perceptions. Most of the similarities mentioned by men were of a work-related nature

such as a passion for the kids. Every single man interviewed first pointed out their gender

difference before discussing other similarities and differences. When asked what similarities

and differences they had to their coworkers, the similar responses by males are listed below:

"(laughs) well I'm a guy! But other than that… hmm…" – Mark

"Umm… not a whole lot. 'Cause, there's not many male teachers, obviously." – Luke

"Oh, well I mean the obvious one is that I'm the only male on my team. I think there's maybe only four male teachers in the school. Which is actually kind of high for a lot of elementary schools. So that's a big difference!" – Samuel

"Um, probably not a whole lot! (laughs) Being in a field where you're the only guy can be hard sometimes." – Robert

"I was the only guy. And there weren't many guys working for the Y in general. You know, you don't see many guys working with kids. Um, there were a couple, but it was mostly women." – Zachary

It is interesting that they all spoke about being the only man, or one of a couple men, because they think this difference is very noticeable. A few of them even chuckled when they responded as if they thought it was funny because of the obviousness of that trait. This can be associated with Kanter's (1977) phenomena of visibility and polarization. The men seemed to feel that their gender was exaggerated and occasionally this difference created difficulties for them. Women, on the other hand, seemed to recognize the homophily of their organizations. They tended to talk about their similarities in terms of gender, age, interests outside of work, such as book clubs, and personality.

The women were more likely to have "Very Good" relationships related to perceived similarities, while the men were more likely to say they had good relationships with their coworkers, but perceived very few similarities. So what was discovered is that men are still able to have good relationships with female coworkers without having high perceptions of similarities to them. However, when understanding whether or not perceived similarities had an effect on job satisfaction, there does appear to be a correlation. Increasing satisfaction is

associated with increasing perceptions of similarities to coworkers. Figure 7 illustrates this. Those categorized as "Low" perceived very few similarities and had lower average job satisfaction (7.33) than those who perceived more similarities. Average job satisfaction of the participants who perceived a moderate amount of similarities was 8.67, and 9.33 for those who perceived a high degree of similarities.

Figure 7: Perceived Similarities to Coworkers and Job Satisfaction
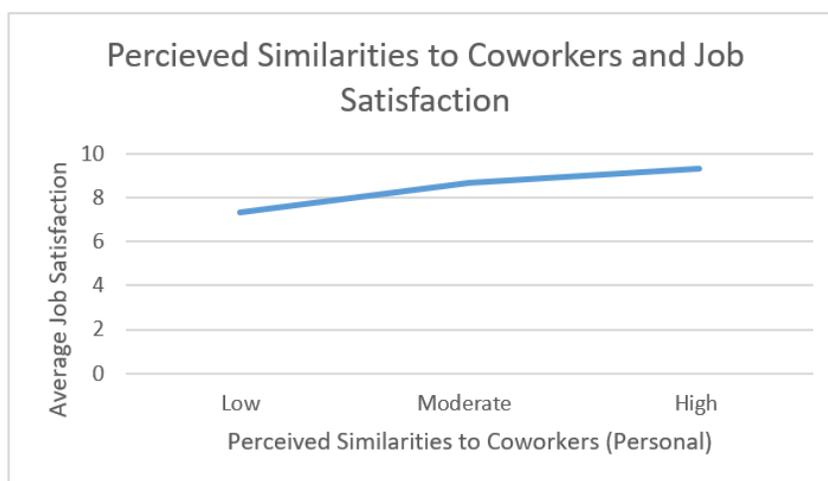
Some men expressed that you can have good, or even very good relationships with coworkers, but at the end of the day, being the only man, or one of a few, can be a challenge. For example, Mark explained that even having one male coworker was better than his last job in which he was the only man. He said:

"I was one of two guys there so we kind of… the two of us were closer more than anything else... But I mean it was nice because at the last day care I was the only guy, besides our owner."

Having good relationships and forming friendships are two separate matters though, so even though two of the male interviewees said that they had friendships at work, it was cited as one of the largest issues men face upon entrance to the field.

Challenges Faced

Respondents were asked what they believe to be some of the biggest challenges people face when they begin working in child/care and early education. The results indicate that men and women had some similar and some different perceptions regarding what they believed the biggest challenges to be. Figure 8 below illustrates the most frequently cited issues and the percentage of men, women, and total respondents that mentioned each issue during their interview.

Figure 8: Gender and Biggest Challenges
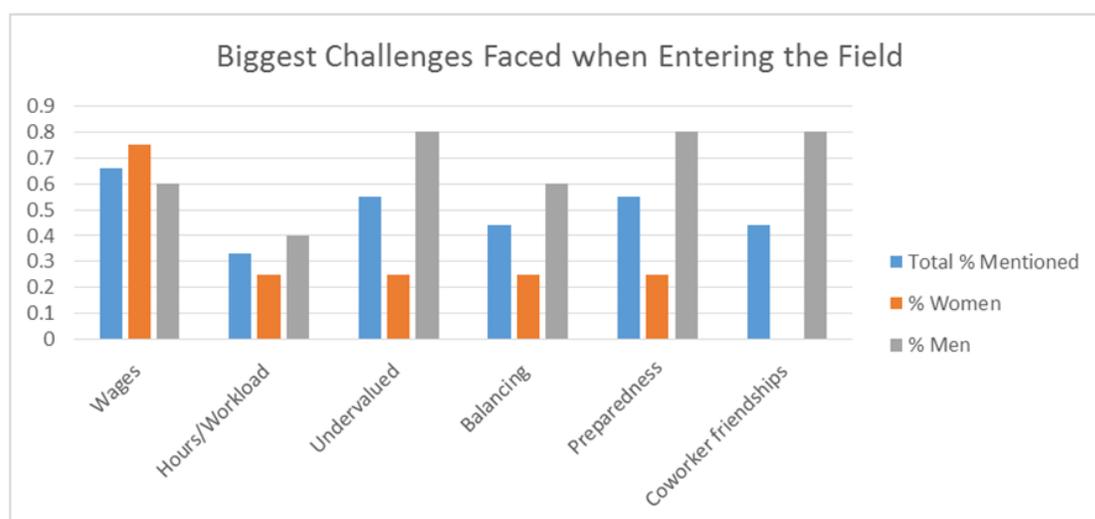
Due to the low salaries of child care and early education occupations, wages were expected to be mentioned as a major challenge from both genders. While it was a major issue given by many men and women, a higher percentage of women discussed this challenge. Relatedly, wages generally reflect the value of an occupation and many respondents also felt that their work was undervalued. Eighty percent of men believed that their work is

undervalued and felt this was a challenge associated with it. Robert, for example, said that he

takes his work very seriously but he does not believe most people do. He mentioned that

many people think of it as simple babysitting while he believes he is helping to prepare

children for life. He had the below comments to make about others' perceptions of early

childhood education:

> *"...the child care field is looked down on...it's not respected as much as it could be or*
>
> *should be. By government, by families, by local people. You know what I mean? It's just*
>
> *not a part of the discussion. You know, when you're talking about the education field, early*
>
> *childhood just isn't one people are talking about...And I mean without it, people wouldn't*
>
> *be able to work and people wouldn't be able to do their jobs. So that gets frustrating just*
>
> *because when people talk about the education field, it's just not what they're referring to."*

Perhaps the value placed on these careers might be more frustrating to men more so than

women because of the expectation to be a breadwinner in the eyes of society.

The largest difference between men's and women's perceptions about challenges on

the job was coworker friendships. Even though two members of the male sample said they

had friends at work, it does not mean that it is not an issue others face upon entering the field.

For example, Mark, who had good relationships with his coworkers, expressed that being a

man didn't really affect many things, but as he put it, *"it doesn't really add too much to it. It's*

just in terms of close relationships and friendships and stuff it's sort of ummm..." So, for him

being the minority gender made building friendships more difficult at work, related again to

Kanter's (1977) polarization phenomenon. However, he also mentioned that other than

friendships, things wouldn't be much different if he were a woman. Some of the other men in

the sample also explained that not much would be different if they were of the opposite

gender. However, Samuel mentioned classroom management, in terms of disciplining children, might be more difficult, and Zachary mentioned that he would do more crafts. Their statements are below:

"I've been told that management is easier for guys, like classroom management, and behavior management specifically… You know they normally have a very strong female presence at home, and then coming to school, the majority of teachers are going to be female. And so, that presence kind of continues. So, it's the male presence at school, apparently that can help straighten out behavior issues. (laughs) but I don't know. That's just what I've been told. So I would assume that would change." – Samuel

"I think it's possible. I'm not trying to assume, but I think I would have been more craft and activity oriented. Not just like hey let's go outside, or hey let's go to the gym!" – Zachary

These statements can be associated with Kanter's (1977) phenomenon of assimilation because they both have to do with gendered roles and perceptions. The roles of the discipliner cited in Sargent (2000), or the non-artistic "dude" are generalizations about males. So, they thought that these roles might change if they were female, but could not say with certainty.

In terms of all of the issues described by the sample, men had a higher percentage discussing almost every one of them except for wages. This could contribute to the average satisfaction scores of men and women. Men had an average job satisfaction rating of 8, while for women it was a 9. It was surprising to discover that no man had reported the "touch issue" that was present in Cooney & Bittner's (2001) study. In fact, Mark responded to a question regarding his comfort level performing all of the responsibilities of his job. He remarked:

"The first time you help a child use the bathroom or change a diaper, you're going to feel

a little uncomfortable. But you get more comfortable with things like that over time, so yes

by now I feel comfortable performing any responsibilities in my job."

It might not have been brought up because the men in the study taught older ages, on average

than females. Mark was an assistant teacher. He worked mostly with kindergarteners but filled

in where he needed to. So, when he worked with infants and toddlers, he was working with

the lowest age group out of all male respondents, but that was rare for him. Despite this rarity,

he still felt comfortable working with children of all ages. Although the "touch issue" was not

in the spotlight, the issues discussed provide some interesting insights as to some difficulties

each gender faces within their position.

Chapter 5

Discussion

Conclusions

These findings build off of previous research to illustrate some important differences between what men and women experience in terms of perceived growth, relationships, and challenges faced in the fields of child care and/or early education. I find that males have more positive perceptions about future job growth and predict vertical mobility more than females. This relates to Williams' (1992) "glass elevator" theory. Although percentages of men and women who had actually experienced job promotions at the time of interviews were similar, perceptions of predicted job growth were higher for men, and more men felt that there were more opportunities to grow and advance in their careers than women believed there to be. Perceiving more opportunities to grow may have influenced each gender's predictions for future growth. Women perceived there to be fewer opportunities to grow and many expected to be in the same role in five years, while more men perceived there to be more opportunities to grow and predicted more vertical growth in their future.

In her research regarding tokens in the workplace, Kanter (1977) provided three phenomena said to be experienced by tokens. Based on the responses provided by the interviewees, I find partial support that these exist for male tokens in these fields. The responses regarding coworker relationships helped me draw some conclusions. In terms of enhanced visibility, men frequently expressed that their gender was quite an obvious difference. It became

very clear in large group settings more so than individual classroom settings, but this difference also led to feelings of isolation (polarization) on occasion. Men were able to have good working relationships with coworkers, yet their perceived differences made it more difficult to develop close friendships in the workplace, which was associated with lower levels of job satisfaction for men. Additionally, there are some responses consistent with the assimilation phenomenon in that some of the men were associated with gendered norms such as an enforcer of discipline (Sargent, 2000), or more sporty than crafty, such as when Zachary felt that he should take his students outside instead of doing a craft and mentioned this would probably change if he were a woman.

In terms of relationships with parents, females perceived much better relationships with parents and families than the males perceived. Men were more likely to consider relationships on a case-by-case basis rather than say that they were all good. There appeared to be some evidence of skepticism from parents for one male participant, but he was able to build those relationships allowing the parents of his students to feel more comfortable. But overall, women had stronger relationships with parents on average than men had.

I find some gender differences in the challenges each perceived to be present in the fields. As mentioned above, men felt that developing friendships in the workplace was a difficult issue encountered, while no women had this perception. A higher percentage of men also felt as though the fields were undervalued. Consistent with the research of England (2002) and Duffy (2011), they believed their work was looked down on and devalued. Not knowing what to expect (preparedness) was also a main issue described by more men than women which may be related to why more men in the sample expected to change careers in the future. Wages were a big issue for both genders, but slightly more so for females. The "touch issue" discussed in the research of Cooney and Bittner (2001), did not appear to be an issue the respondents faced and they rather

felt very comfortable performing all of the responsibilities of their jobs, including diaper changing.

Additionally, more women had predicted and pursued a career in early childhood education while more men seemed to fall into the career after either volunteering, or pursuing a career in education, but ending up working with younger children. This might be the result of men feeling the pressures of what is socially acceptable for them to do in their careers. The traditionalist views of sex-role norms for work are still very much alive and even discussed by one of the female respondents. It is possible that these traditional views and socially constructed beliefs are why more men did not always see themselves working in an early childhood setting.

There were many variables assessed in this research all providing some interesting insights in their own way. Taken together, these results imply that men experience some positives (like predicted mobility) and some negatives (like feelings of isolation) compared to women working in child care and early education. Though their overall satisfaction was slightly lower on average, and despite some of the negative components discussed, men still seemed to be enthusiastic about their work and felt passionate about it in most cases.

Limitations and Future Research

The interview technique allowed for some very interesting perspectives to be shared by participants, however the sample used for this research does have limitations. Firstly, the sample size is very small, all White/Caucasian, and all participants come from the same geographic area. Thus, it is not realistic to think that these findings are generalizable to a larger population. Additionally, everyone interviewed had different situational circumstances and institutional

differences that could have contributed to some of the findings. Not everyone held the same job title or worked in the same center, so a direct comparison with control variables was not plausible. This was an exploratory study involving some small changes to methods throughout the duration. Based on these limitations, future research related to this topic could benefit from a larger sample size and use of control variables such as age-group taught.

Additionally, this research focused on experiences as told by the respondents. Their perceptions are very important to understand, but future research on this topic might also benefit from understanding how supervisors and parents feel about men working in early childhood settings. This would be interesting to compare how the men perceive things as compared to how supervisors and parents actually feel.

Implications

Occupational segregation persists today and is still very prevalent in the realm of early childhood-based careers. Organizations can respond by recognizing both the positives and negatives men are perceiving on the job and try to enhance their experiences as the minority gender. Based on the findings of this research, it would benefit child care centers and schools to provide more training on how to develop and grow relationships with parents. This would not only help men, but the parents would probably appreciate it as well. Additionally, men might feel less isolated at work if there was some sort of mentorship program in place. Providing a male mentor to a male teacher would not only allow them to grow their skillsets and learn, but it would also provide a person to whom they can relate to more. If it is not possible to pair two

males together, even providing a female mentor would potentially allow for the development of a close friendship at work and increase satisfaction.

In terms of opportunities for growth, organizations can recognize that women do not perceive many opportunities for vertical mobility. Though they recognize and appreciate the professional development opportunities, it might be beneficial to create new opportunities and advertise them to both men and women so that they are seeing them regularly. Creating new roles such as a project-lead or other roles in which responsibilities are expanded, and perhaps paired with a slight pay increase or bonus, might increase perceptions of growth opportunities.

Recruiting and staffing efforts could also be altered with the goal of attracting and retaining more men in the fields. A more diverse workforce would be more representative of the children in each institution and employees could benefit from more diverse perspectives as well. Organizations could host team-building activities in which the employees learn more about each other. This could enhance overall performance and benefit not only the men, but the women as well. The overall image of the fields should also be also considered and the value could potentially be enhanced through the help of media and progressive pay increases.

Appendix

Interview Script

First of all, I would like to thank you for your participation in my research and your willingness to be interviewed. I am going to ask you a variety of questions, but if there are any questions you wish not to answer, please just say "pass" and I will move on to the next question.

The first few questions are just going to gather some basic information about you.

1. What is your age?

2. Are you married, single, separated, divorced, living with someone, or other?

3. Do you have children?

    a. If yes, how many?

    b. What are the ages of your children?

    c. Do they live with you?

4. What is your race?

    The next set of questions will focus on your professional background.

5. What is the highest grade or year you completed in school?

6. If college, where did you attend college and what was your major?

7. What previous positions have you held prior to starting with this organization?

8. What made you want to work in the child care/early education field?

    The following questions will gather information about your current role.

9. How long have you been working for this organization?

10. What is your position title?

11. What, if anything, do you like most about this job?

12. Are there any things about working in this type of occupation that you dislike?

13. Could you please walk me through a typical day at work for you? So, what happens once you walk through the doors at work? If you wouldn't mind going through all the steps of the day, that would be great.

14. Would you say there are opportunities for growth in this position or not?

15. Have you been promoted since your start with this organization?

16. How would you describe your relationship with the following parties:

    a. Supervisor?

    b. Parents?

    c. Coworkers?

17. How many coworkers do you have?

18. What do you have in common with these coworkers?

    a. What do you think makes you different from them?

19. How would you describe your satisfaction with this job?

20. Could you describe some of your strengths and weaknesses in terms of this job?

21. Where do you see yourself in 5 years? How about 10 years?

22. What are some of the issues people face when entering your field?

23. What advice would you give to someone about to enter your profession?

24. Would anything be different about your job if you:

    a. Obtained a higher level of education?

    b. Were older?

    c. Were of the opposite gender?

    d. Had kids of your own / or did not have kids of your own?

25. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about your position or this organization? That concludes the interview. Thank you again for your cooperation.

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Education

The *Pennsylvania State University*: University Park, PA
- Master of Science in Human Resources and Employment Relations
- Bachelor of Science in Labor and Employment Relations
- Bachelor of Arts in Sociology
- Minor: Spanish

Education Abroad: Ronda, Spain – Summer Spanish Program focused on conversation, history, and literature

Honors and Awards

- *Schreyer Honors College*
- *Paterno Fellow*: An academic excellence and leadership program for students in the College of the Liberal Arts at Penn State
- *Student Marshal*: 2017 Commencement Ceremony for the School of Labor and Employment Relations
- *Ronald Filippelli and Sandra Stelts Award:* high academic achievement and exemplary School and overall citizenship
- *Dilip and Bharati Shah Award*: highest junior GPA in the school of Labor and Employment Relations
- *James M. Elliott Award* for displaying excellence in the HR/LER field
- *Enrichment Award* from the College of the Liberal Arts

Work Experience

Graduate Teacher's Assistant for Intro to Labor & Employment Relations: Penn State University
(August 2016 – Present)
- Grade exams and assignments for the 250 students enrolled in the course
- Manage the online class portal, Canvas, to ensure grades are entered and assignments are uploaded
- Hold weekly office hours and meet with students to assist in the learning of difficult material and to ensure students are having a pleasant learning experience
- Proctor exams to help prevent academic dishonesty
- Meet regularly with the Professor in order to communicate any concerns and discuss lesson plans

Lead Supervisor at Penn State Intramural Sports: State College, PA
(Fall 2012-Present)
- Supervise 100+ intramural sports teams across a variety of sports/activities
- Recruit and train 50+ officials per semester and assign them to positions based on their skillsets
- Ensure the compliance of Intramural policies by using appropriate consequences when necessary
- Mediate any conflicts that arise between participating teams

People Advisory Services Intern at EY: Philadelphia, PA (New Services Team)
(June-August 2016)
- Assisted in the management of various project teams as they developed new service offerings
- Participated in working sessions to further develop service offerings
- Designed materials for and helped restructure the Stage Gate process for offering teams
- Researched various industries to discover how a new service could be sold in that industry
- Managed the "Ideas Accelerator" which was a way for EY employees to submit ideas for new services
- Participated in a Leadership Conference involving team building and skill development

Research Assistant in the School of Labor and Employment Relations: Penn State University
(September 2015-May 2016)
- Assisted a Penn State faculty member in her research about informal social networks
- Conducted a literature review, analyzed qualitative data, and assisted in the written report

Human Resources Intern at Schoolwires/Blackboard: State College, PA
(January 2015-May 2015)
- Prepared acquisition materials and collaborated with the Blackboard Headquarters HR team as they acquired Schoolwires
- Read incoming resumes and compared candidate qualifications to those required by the open position
- Spearheaded the "Schoolio" employee recognition program
- Created new employee files and ensured all of the required paperwork was complete and correct
- Managed and edited the "Hub" intranet so that all information was updated and appealing
- Scheduled interviews with potential candidates and department leaders

Community Service Involvement
- The Penn State IFC/Panhellenic Dance Marathon (commonly referred to as THON) - THON is the largest student-run philanthropy in the world that raises money to combat pediatric cancer.
  - *Family Relations Chair* of Apollo Benefitting THON (August 2013 – May 2014)
    - Organized events with my organization's "THON families" and developed relationships with them
    - Assisted in the planning and facilitation of weekly meetings of more than 150 members
  - *Special Events Committee Member* (September 2015 – February 2016)
    - Assisted in the planning and organization of events leading up to THON including a 5K and hair donation event.
- *Tides Volunteer* – Tides is a no-cost support program for families coping with the death of someone special to them.

Professional Memberships
- Society for Human Resource Management

Skills
- Proficient in Microsoft Suite, SPSS and STATA
- Conversational in basic Spanish