

21st

EECERA annual conference

Education from birth : research, practices
and educational policy.

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Tim Rohrmann

Does the fear of pedophilia prevent men to become childcare workers?

Presentation on the 21st. EECERA annual conference, 16.9.2011, Geneva/Switzerland

Abstract

Recent research projects on men in ECEC in Austria and Germany aimed at identifying factors which make it difficult for men to enter the field of childcare. In this context it has to be reflected that the fear of pedophilia is an important theme in the public discussion on men working in the educational system. The aim of the presented research is analyzing reasons and outcome of a general distrust against males working in ECE institutions or training for this profession.

The research projects presented here build up on several international studies on male workers in ECE. The connections between gender and care are analyzed in the framework of gender and masculinities studies.

With a range of qualitative and quantitative methods a nationwide Austrian research project investigated the views of active ECEC workers, adolescents and adults in vocational training, pupils prior to career choice, and also parents. Similar research was conducted in Germany.

The results show that many men experience negative reactions on their decision for taking up a training program or a job in ECEC. The fear of being distrusted or even accused as abuser is clearly identified as one of the factors which make it difficult for men to enter the field of child care. This is especially evident in the work with infants.

From an ethical point of view, prevention of sexual abuse is a basic necessity for ECEC institutions. But, regarding this as a problem only of male workers is not only wrong, but puts all men under spell. This has to be addressed as a question of equal rights. Moreover, preventing sexual abuse by generally restricting physical contact between men and children ("no touch policies") ignores basic knowledge about the needs of children. Recruitment strategies and training programs have to deal with the fear of pedophilia and have to counter false accusations of (all) male childcare workers as possible child abusers. For this, it is necessary to develop strategies to prevent sexual abuse in ECE institutions regardless of the gender of workers. A general distrust towards men works against the aim of developing a diverse, gender-balanced work force.

Tim Rohrmann (2011)

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Author correspondance

Dr. Tim Rohrmann

Coordination office Men in Kitas

Catholic High School of Applied Sciences, Berlin, Germany

web: <http://www.koordination-maennerinkitas.de>

email rohrmann@koordination-maennerinkitas.de

Tim Rohrmann

MALE ECE WORKERS – WANTED AND FEARED?

Does the fear of pedophilia
prevent men to become
childcare workers?

To begin with...

„And then just the role as a man in this center. This handicap, as a man, that they just ... that you will be watched so closely and well that ... I have already given a lot of thought to this.

Because the media always portrays the man as an offender with regard to children. And I didn't know how this ... in my everyday job ... how this would affect me.“

Male trainee, 23 years
(Cremers , Krabel & Calmbach 2010)

Research question

- *Which effect has the fear of pedophilia regarding efforts towards a more gender-balanced work force?*

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Research background

- Research project
„elementar – men in ECEC in Austria“
Innsbruck university (Aigner & Rohrmann 2011)
- Research project
„Male Educators in Early Childhood centers and in vocational training for ECE“
Catholic High School, Berlin, Germany;
(Cremers, Krabel & Calmbach 2010)

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Austria: elementar (2008-2010)

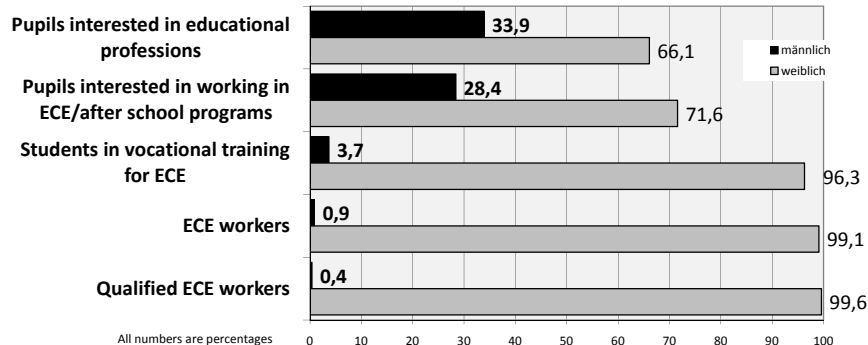
- Pupils prior to career decision
questionnaire: boys N=234, girls N=244
- Adolescents and adults in vocational training
questionnaire: males N=207, females, N=258
in-depth interviews: males N=13, females, N=8
- Men and women working in ECE
questionnaire: males N=112, females, N=154
in-depth interviews: males N=29, females N=20

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Why are there so few men?



From interest to qualified professional: proportion of males and females at different stages of educational and job biography

(Aigner & Rohrmann 2011, 339).

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Germany: National survey (2010)

- 40 semi-structured interviews
 - provider officers, managers of early childhood centres, male and female educators, male and female trainees
- Representative survey (based on telephone interviews):
 - provider officers (N=100), managers of early childhood centres (N=600) and parents of children (N=1000)

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Germany: programs for more men in ECE

Programs supported by the Ministry of family affairs, senior citizens, women and youth:

- Coordination office men in Kitas (2010-2014?)
(Catholic High school, Berlin)
- ESF-program „More men in Kitas“ (2011-2013)
16 regional projects funded with 13,5 million €
- Programs for job shifters (in preparation)

<http://www.koordination-maennerinkitas.de>

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Literature review

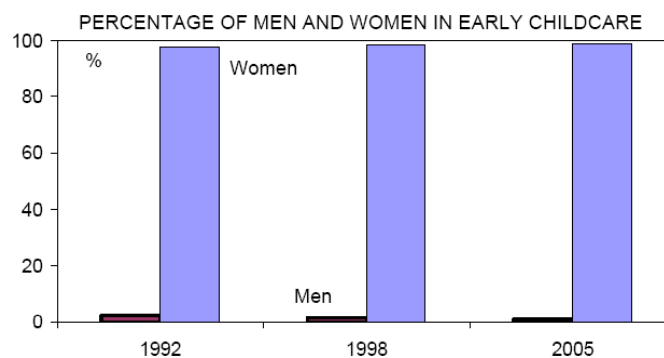
- Distrust and fear of pedophilia: a common theme in research on men in ECE
- Few research and no data about sexual abuse in ECE institutions
- Decline of proportion of male workers after cases of sexual abuse
- Consequences in practice: avoidance of touch in adult-child-relations
- Differences between countries – fewer problems in the Nordic countries

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New Zealand: Decline of male workers after cases of sexual abuse in 1993



Farquhar, Sarah; Cablk, Lance; Buckingham, Adam; Butler, David & Ballantyne, Russell (2006). Men at work. Sexism in Early Childhood education. Porirua, New Zealand: Child Forum Research Network.

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Results from recent research

- Attitudes of adolescents
- Experiences of young men in vocational training
- Experiences of male workers
- Comparison of groups
- Parent's views

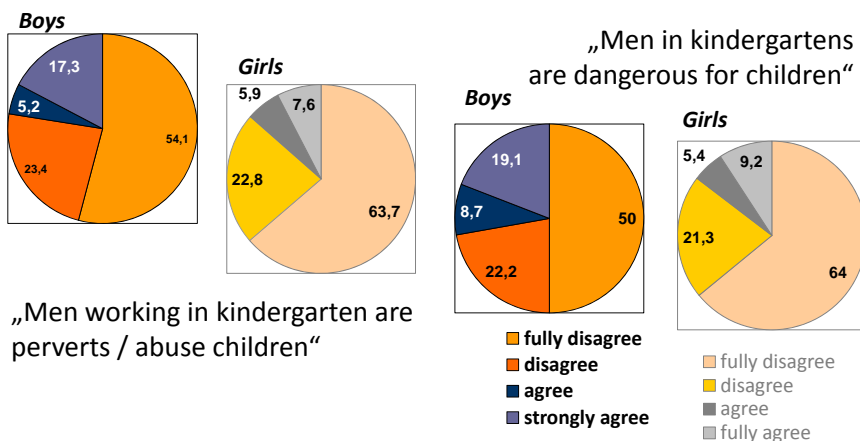
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Attitudes of adolescents

Prejudices against male ECE workers among adolescent pupils



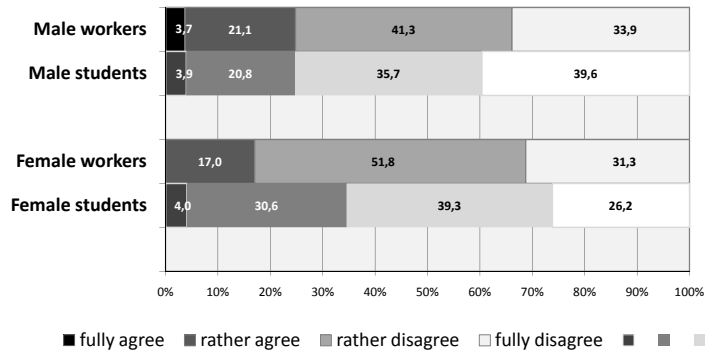
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Distrust against men (1)

„Males basically experience distrust“



General distrust against men in ECE
(Aigner & Rohrmann 2011, 353)

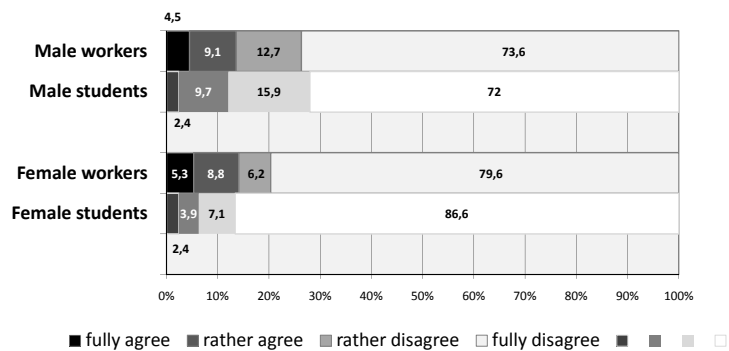
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Distrust against men (2)

„I have already experienced accusations as abuser“
„In my practice, males have been accused as abusers“



Personal experience of accusations as „abuser“
(Aigner & Rohrmann 2011, 353)

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Parents' views (Austria)

- The vast majority (89,5%) of parents wants more male ECE workers
- Parents think that men shall take charge of all activities in kindergarten as women do – including comforting, sitting on the lap, washing and toilet visits.

(Aigner & Rohrmann 2011)

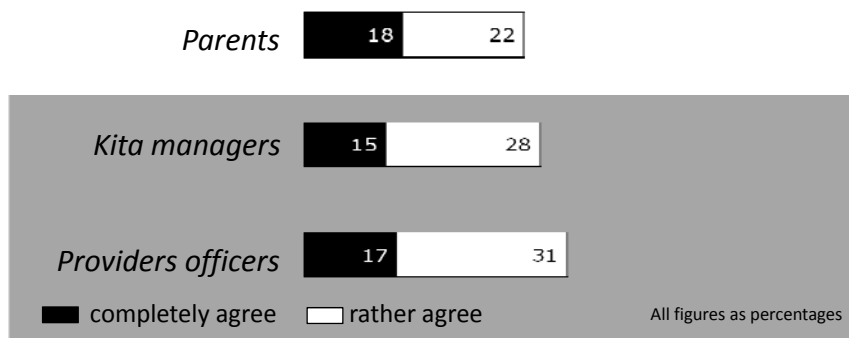
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Parents' views (Germany)

"Even if this does injustice to many men, I have already considered the risk of possible child abuse by male educators"



(Cremers, Krabel & Calmbach 2010)

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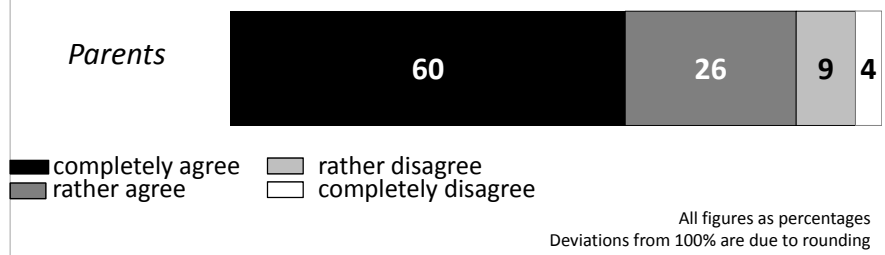
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Parents' views (Germany)

Conclusion: Reasoned approval of male ECE educators

"I would entrust my child in the Kita to a male educator without any misgivings."



(Cremers, Krabel & Calmbach 2010)

Consequences for practice (1)

- „No touch policy“ (USA) – especially regarding male workers
- „Hands off approach“ (New Zealand: Physical Contact Code of Practice, 1998)
- Germany and Austria:
 - mostly individual „solutions“ – men avoid close physical contact
 - „keep the door open“
 - sometimes men are not allowed to change nappies or to help children (girls) on the toilet

Discussion (1)

The public discourse arises

1. from single reported cases, as there is no reliable data available,
2. from a general distrust against men and stereotypes about male sexuality

The discourse promotes and reinforces

gender-related stereotypes on
infant-child-relations and sexuality:

women are seen as “caring”, men as “dangerous”.

Discussion (2)

- The fear of being accused as abuser hinders male adolescents and young males who are interested or have already stepped into vocational training – this is especially relevant in peer groups of male adolescents
- It also disturbs everyday work of male ECE workers, especially in relations to infants
- The discourse is relevant for gender relations and gender pedagogy in gender-mixed teams

Discussion (3)

- The problem is most relevant for male adolescents and their peer groups → in the period of vocational orientation;
- It is also important when males make their first experiences in ECE institutions as trainees or freshly educated workers;
- It is less relevant for experienced male workers, and in gender-mixed teams which have worked together for a long time.

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Consequences for practice: Netherlands

“Face it and deal with it” (Woltring, 2011):

- More men in Early Childcare and Education
- Keep the “wrong men” out

“Keeping the wrong men out by prohibiting all men in this field does wrong to all good men, deprives children from contact with men (...) and it places the full burden on women in a time when roles are happily changing.” (Woltring, 2011)

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Consequences for practice: Netherlands

12-point policy program (Woltring, 2011):

developing the quality of professional work by e.g.

- Supervision during professional education:
reflection of motives for interest in work with children
- Screening of ECE applicants by capable staff
- Always two professionals working together
- No exclusion of men from changing nappies, washing etc.
- Transparent working culture
- “Use your intuition, develop it and act on it”
- Regular counseling, coaching and/or supervision on the job
- Complaints and remarks of parents shall be taken seriously
- Employees have to be protected

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Consequences for practice: Germany

Information and work material for teachers, trainers and institutions should include the following topics:

- Sexual development and sexuality in early childhood
- Importance of physical presence and close contact for adult-child-relations in ECE
- Prevention of sexual abuse I: institutional structures
- Prevention of sexual abuse II: parents
- Prevention of sexual abuse III: children
- Standards for intervention in cases of sexual abuse
- “General distrust” against men in ECE
- Methods for confronting gender stereotypes

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Questions for further research

- Collection of reliable data on sexual abuse in ECE institutions
- Research on the variability of physical contact in adult-child-relations in ECE and its importance for children's development
- Research on consequences of "general distrust" on behavior of male ECE workers
- Gender sensitive analysis of concepts for prevention of sexual abuse, and further development of such concepts.

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Forschung und Praxis im Dialog. Opladen: Budrich UniPress.
- Woltring, Lauk (2011). 'Get the good guys in and the wrong guys out.'
Prevention of abuse embedded in good quality management.
see <http://www.laukwoltring.nl/>

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Links

Coordination office Men in Kitas
Catholic High School of Applied Sciences, Berlin, Germany
web: <http://www.koordination-maennerinkitas.de>

elementar research project
Innsbruck University, Faculty of Education, Austria
web: <http://www.uibk.ac.at/ezwi/elementar>

KoME – Research network Knowledge on Men in ECE
email rohrmann@koordination-maennerinkitas.de

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Dr. Tim Rohrmann
Koordinationsstelle
„Männer in Kitas“

rohrmann@koordination-maennerinkitas.de
www.koordination-maennerinkitas.de

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Träger:



Thank you for your attention.