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**Positioning Male Educators in ECE Classrooms: Preliminary Research Findings on Effective Strategies for Recruiting, Mentoring and Retaining Men in ECE.**

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***Abstract***

Positioning Male Educators in ECE Classrooms: Preliminary Research Findings on Effective Strategies for Recruiting, Mentoring and Retaining Men in ECE. The lack of male educators in general and the dearth of Black and Latino males in particular seem quite visible in early childhood education (ECE) settings across the United States (Johnson et al., 2010; Eisenhauer & Pratt, 2010; Nelson & Shikwambi, 2010; Cooney & Bittner, 2001), and this phenomenon deserves sustained scholarly attention.

A more gender-balanced workforce would promote professional opportunities for both men and women, and it would also further enhance the capacity of early childhood settings to create meaningful experiences for children, where “both women and men are expected to fulfill a full range of adult roles and responsibilities” (Janairo et al, 2010).

This place-based study uses focus groups, interviews, surveys, and place-based observations to collect and compare data on male educators who work in ECE settings as well as those who teach in the upper elementary and secondary grades (N=25). The undervaluation of early childhood education as a profession, as well as the low salary scale, is connected with this gender inequality issue (Drudy, 2008).

*Main finding.* Male teachers will join and stay in the ECE field if they are being valued and appreciated. They want their voices to be heard in decision-making about children. Men in the ECE workforce prefer to be part of a movement, and high level supports and institutional commitment will attract and keep them in the field.

***Keywords***

Early Childhood Education (ECE), Male educators, Recruitment, Retention, Mentoring

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# Positioning Male Educators in ECE Classrooms

27<sup>th</sup> EECERA Conference  
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2017



## Research Team

### Researchers:

- Jean-Yves Plaisir (PI)
- Kirsten Cole
- Meghan Fitzgerald-Raimundo
- Mindi Reich-Shapiro

### Research Assistants:

- Joyce Bi
- Jason Tan de Bibiana
- Tina Sigantoria



## Study Goals

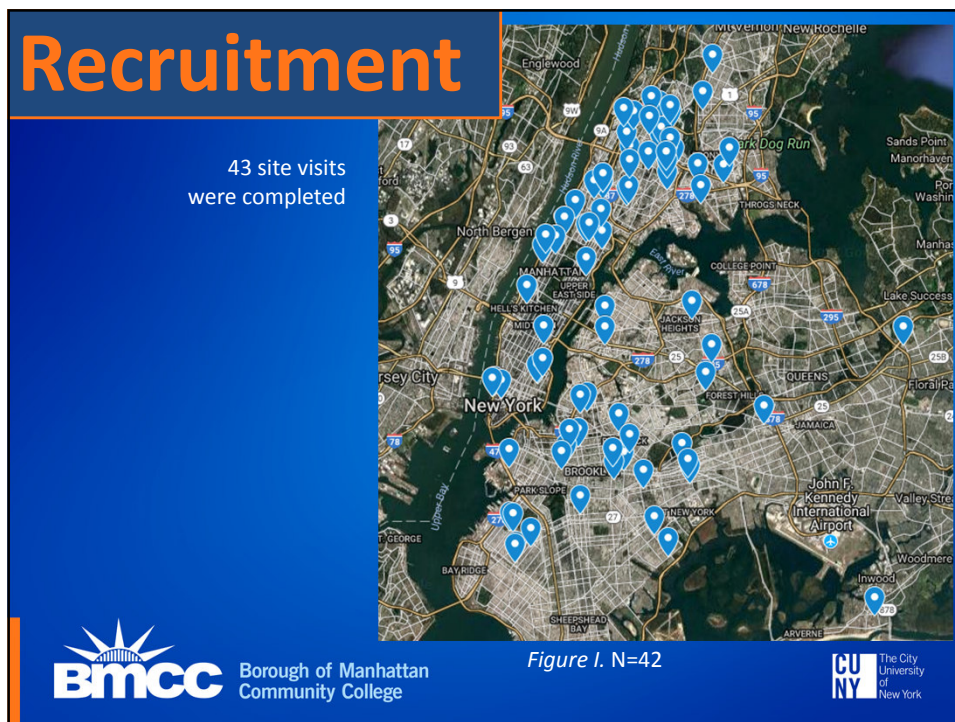
- Examine intrinsic and extrinsic factors impacting men's decisions to teach young children
- Uncover effective strategies for recruitment, retention, mentoring, and professional development of men in ECE (Pk-2<sup>nd</sup> grade)
- Inform public policy about the ECE/UPK workforce and the wider academic community



## A Note on Gender

While this study focuses on the experiences of male early childhood educators, we recognize that the binary notion of gender has recently become contested and expanded upon. Throughout our work, we will be using the term “male educators,” and we wish to clarify that we welcome the participation of cis- and transgendered men in our study. Because the focus of this study is on self-described/self-identified male educators, we have not yet recruited participants who do not identify by the dichotomous terms of “male” or “female,” though we recognize that these binary categories do not adequately encompass all people's experiences of gender.



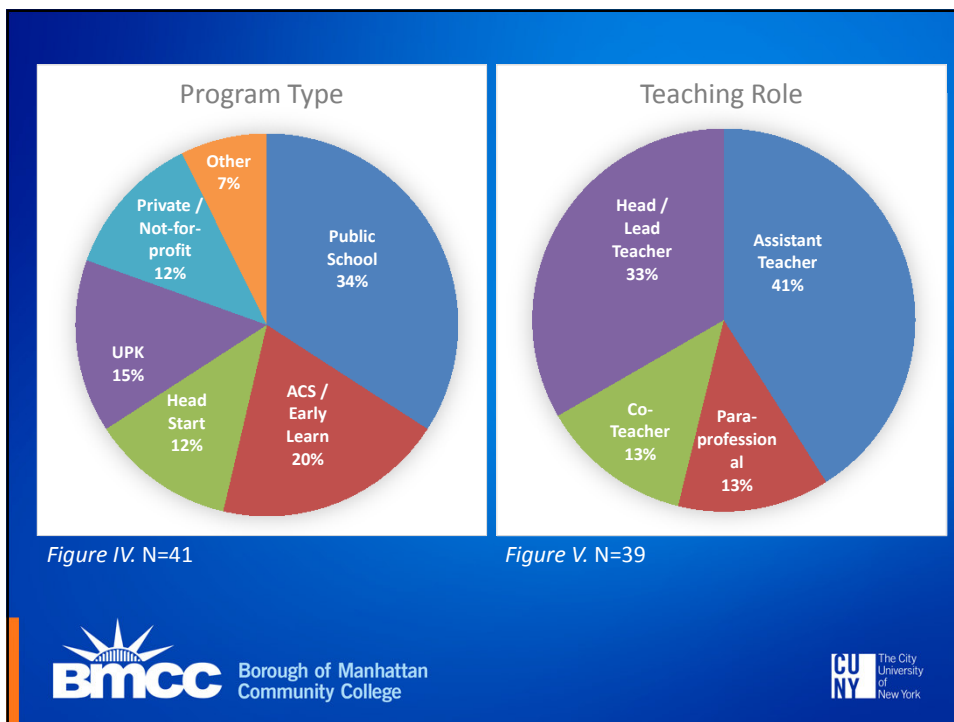
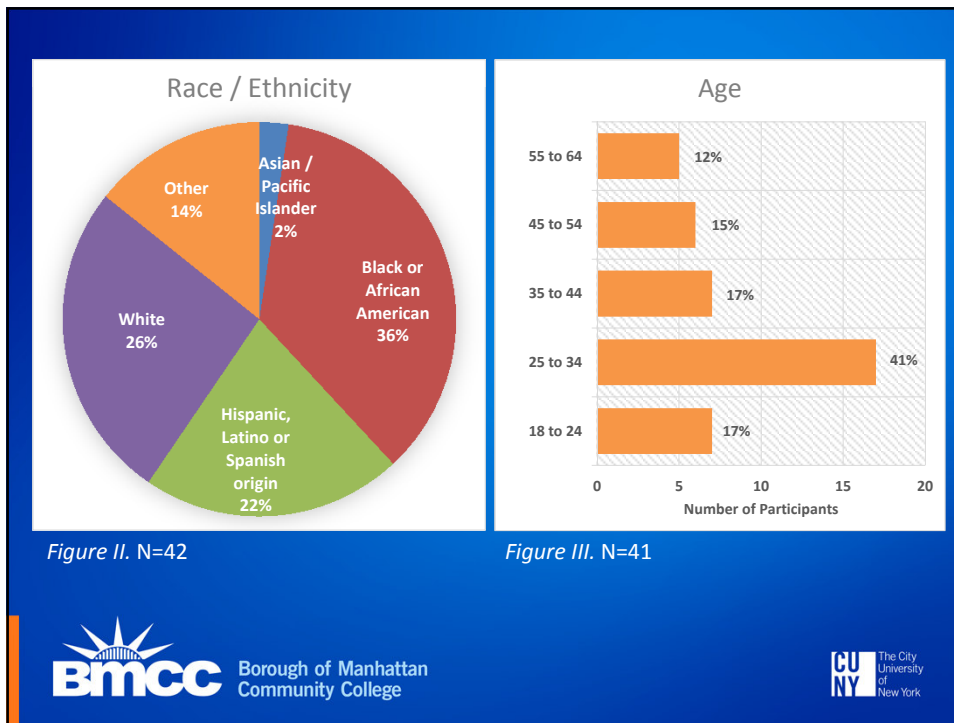


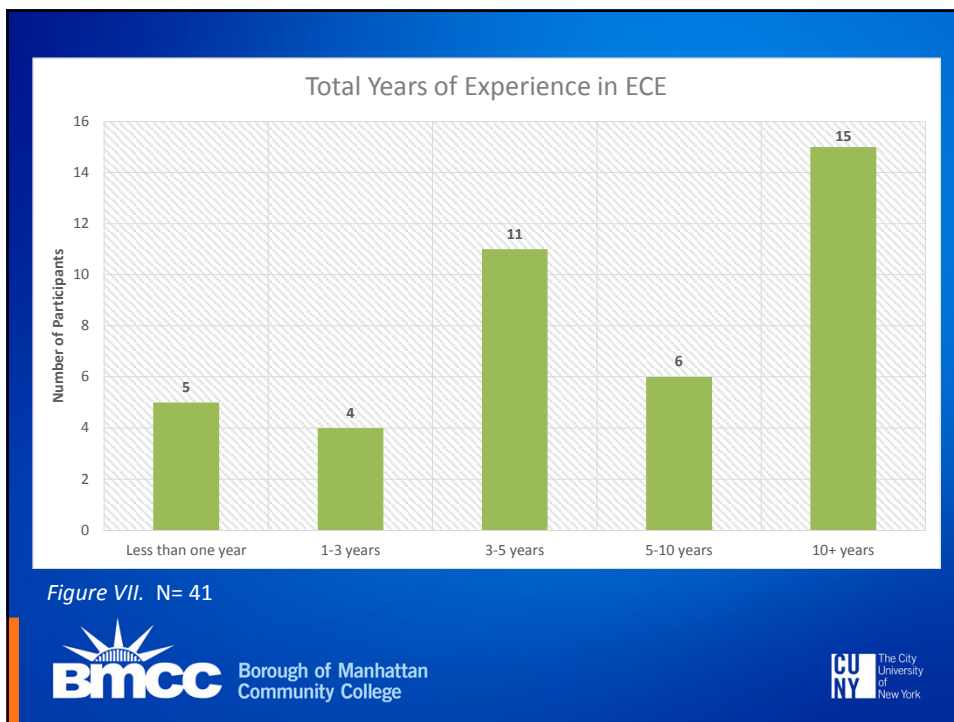
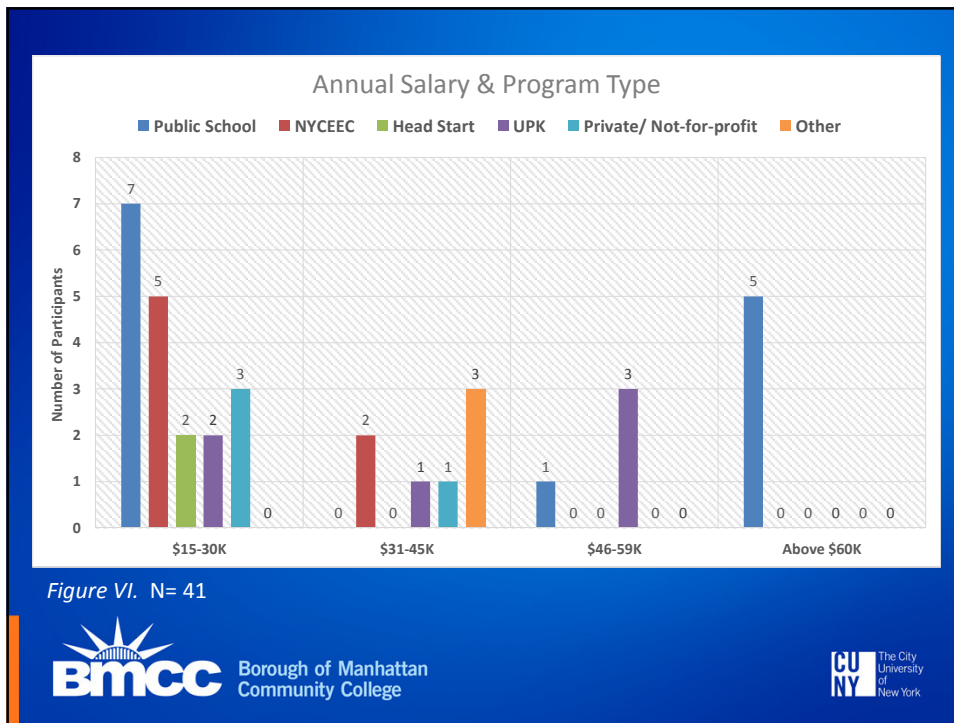
# Demographic and Professional Characteristics of Study Participants

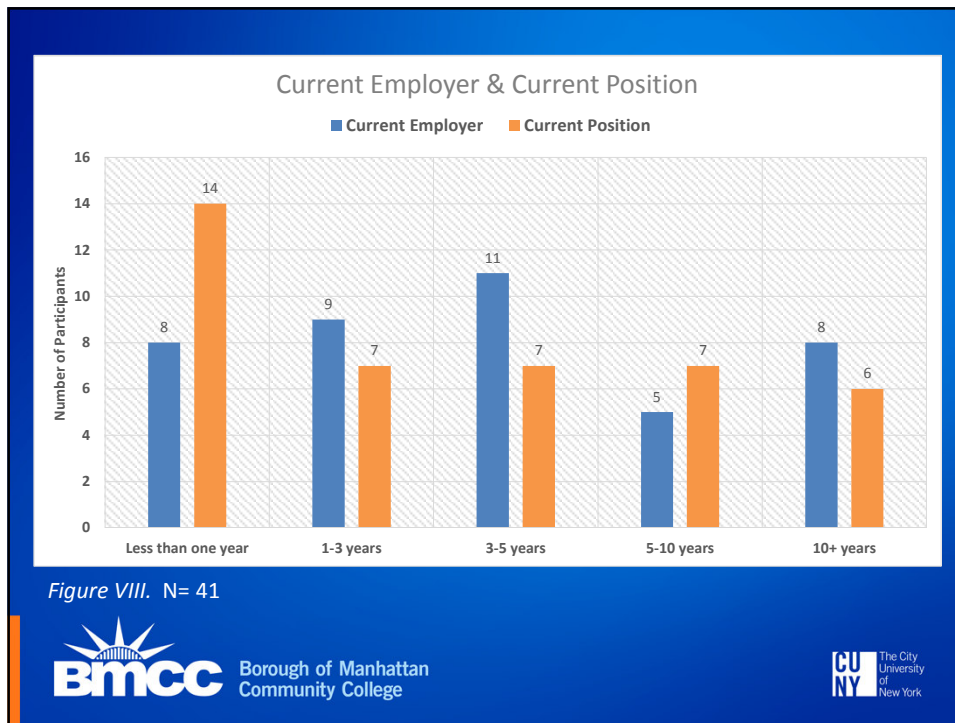
**Bmcc** Borough of Manhattan Community College

**CUNY** The City University of New York

This slide features a solid blue background with the title 'Demographic and Professional Characteristics of Study Participants' centered in white text. At the bottom left is the logo for Borough of Manhattan Community College (Bmcc), and at the bottom right is the logo for The City University of New York (CUNY).







# Recurring Themes and Emerging Patterns

**Bmcc** Borough of Manhattan Community College

**CUNY** The City University of New York

## Recurring Themes

- Identity/Connection
- Mentoring
- Professional Development
- Decision Making

## Identity/Connection

*"I play a positive role to children and our families in our community. I am a male figure in an area [where] there are not too many of us and I can see that I am a great influence."*

- Connection to children
- Connection to families
- Connection to community



## Mentoring

*"The teachers at my school are all women. I was the only male. They loved me and welcomed me with friendship, support and professionalism."*

- Collaborative and welcoming environment
- Intentional support and guidance
- Support and encouragement to remain in ECE

## Professional Development

*"I attended a workshop on working with boys in early childhood settings and something that was affirmed as important was the need for ample physical movement and freedom within the classroom."*

- Which PD activities have had an impact on male educators' work with young children?
- Which PD opportunities would they like to experience?

## Decision Making

*"I am empowered to make curricular decisions that impact my particular class of children. I craft lessons. Nothing is scripted."*

- How do male educators describe their experiences with decision making about curriculum and teaching and learning in the classroom?
- How do they describe their experiences with decision making at the program level?

## Emerging Patterns

- Identity/Connection
- Professional Development
- Professional Trajectory
- Decision Making

## Identity/Connection

*"They like the fact that I'm a man doing this. They are very encouraging."*

- Multidimensional pride and support from colleagues, friends, family and community
- A desire that their voices are heard in the decision making process

## Professional Development

*"Helping to define my teaching personality"*

*"Comparing experiences"*

*"Gaining insight"*

- Are there PD opportunities that specifically address the needs and concerns of male educators?

# Professional Trajectory

*"A chance to go to school."*

- What factors would encourage men's decisions to remain in the field of ECE?
- What professional development opportunities are available to meet these needs?



# Decision Making

- Patterns of collaboration
- Promoting democratic values in decision making processes



## Implications for Policy and Practice



*"My only concern is my tone of voice, since I am a male and have come from a strict upbringing, but I have change[d] over time thanks to support by other staff members."*

- What would it look like to design PD experiences that allow male and female educators to reflect on how their gendered identities shape their teaching practice?
- What are the implications for children when teachers are able to reflect on these issues?



*"I would like a lot more about inquiry-based teaching and also working with children in crisis. I feel--especially as a male teacher--that I am needed to play an important role for boys who are struggling both in and out of school. It just seems that there are so many such children. I use my instincts, of course, but I would like a lot more formal and informal experiences to develop my understandings, sensitivities and skills in reaching and supporting and transforming the lives of children in crisis."*

- How can male educators' concerns be incorporated into the design of curriculum for PD workshops?
- What policies and practices could ensure that more PD workshops are led by male trainers?

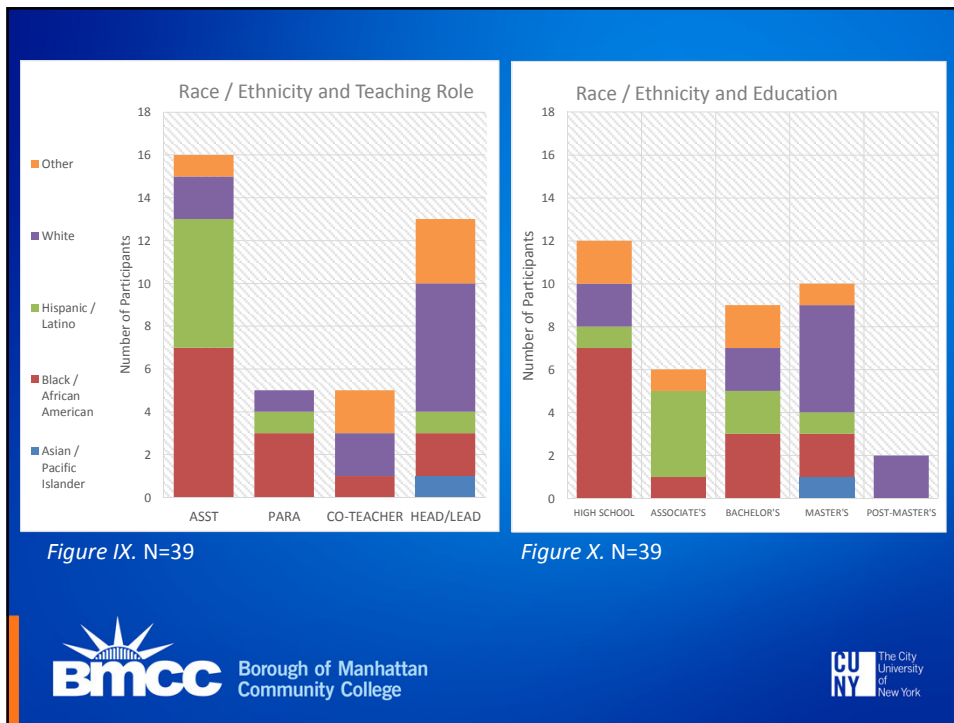


*"I hope to remain in the teaching field and finally receive my degree."*

*"I want to get a Masters in Special Education because I think it will positively impact my work with children."*

- If opportunities for further education and career advancement are factors that will keep men in the field of ECE, then how do we support those needs?
- How can existing programs (e.g. NYC Teaching Fellows, NYC Men Teach, The UFT's Career Training Program for Paraprofessionals) be refined or expanded to advance coursework and credentialing for men in ECE?





THANK YOU!



