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Male child-care workers and their effects on boys' development

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Abstract

The team of the "Wirkungsstudie Innsbruck" explored emerging effects of male child care workers and mixed (male/female) child care staff compositions on children. This study continues research on men and gender relationships in ECEC in Austria started with the "elementar" project 2008-2010 (Aigner & Rohrmann 2012). Our research is theoretically orientated on developmental psychology of gender and on psychoanalytic object-relation theory. Based on the transference concept we assume that children transfer their experiences in family and ensuing expectations to the pre-school context.

The study used a multi-method approach. In ten ECEC centers, daily interactions between children and professionals (male/female) were videotaped. Parents and child care workers were surveyed (questionnaire) about the situation at home and in the ECEC centers. In a third approach we used a projective test (MacArthur Story Stem Battery) to reveal the inner world of the observed children. All participants were informed and declared their agreement to our study.

Apart from general results of our study this presentation will focus on the effects of male child care workers on the development of boys. Boys in general show remarkable reactions on the presence of male child care workers in the institution. In turn male workers affect daily routines and pedagogical outcomes in specific ways. Based on our findings we assume that children, especially boys, benefit from the availability of committed male child-care workers. A better gender balance in the work force leads to more diversity and thus can enrich the field of ECEC.

Keywords

gender, male workers, boys, father absence, development

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**Male child-care workers and their effects
on boys' development**

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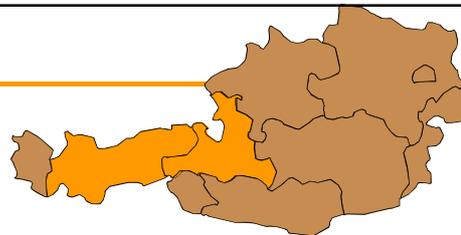
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presentation overview

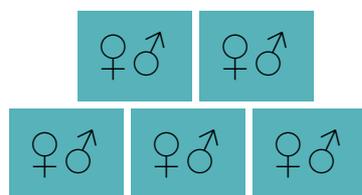


- > sample & methodology
- > main findings
- > case-studies
- > conclusions

sample and methodology

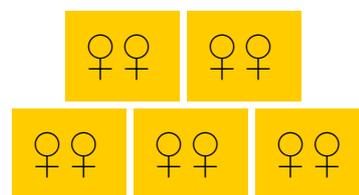


10 ECEC's from Tirol and Salzburg in Austria

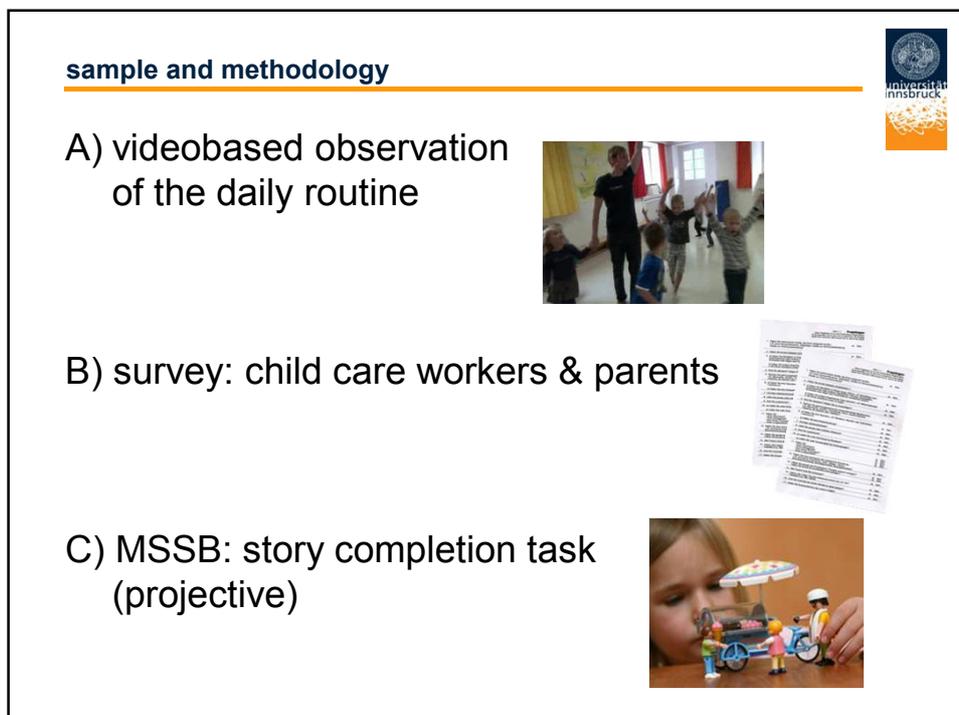
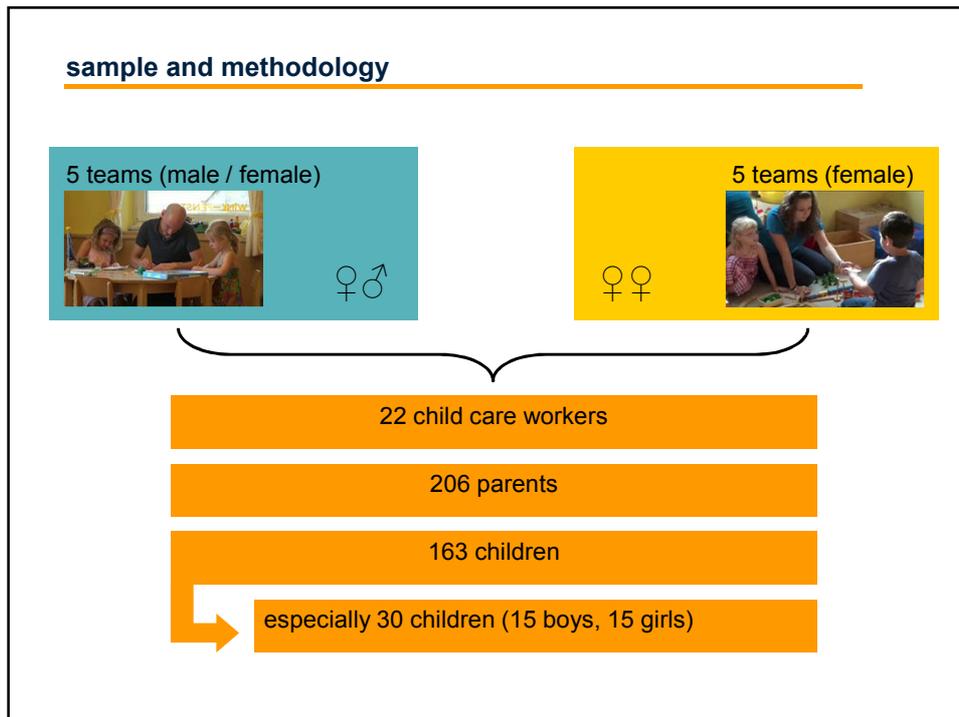


5 mixed child care worker teams

vs.



5 female child care worker teams



main findings



-> educational style

keywords: permissive, less willing to punish, bend the rules, take more risk

-> group dynamics

keywords: more mobility, smoother transitions

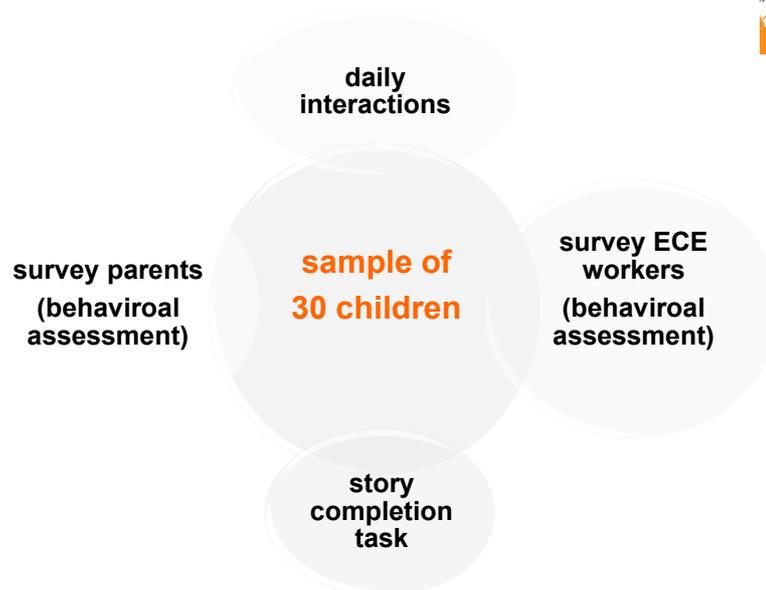
-> dyads

keywords: positive contact behavior towards male child care workers, physical contact, affective sharing, closeness

-> childrens behaviour

keywords: extraverted, dynamic, externalizing behavior, rough and tumble play

case studies



case-studies



Manuel

case-studies



Rater 1: "Always stays in touch with the male caregiver.,,"

Rater 2: "Very affectionate. Constantly at the male child care worker.
Motoric quite active (running, jumping ...)."

Rater 3: "The child is fixated on the male child care worker and need a lot
of attention and affection. Unconfident; Sucks his thumb for a long
time.,,"

Rater 4: "The child adhere to the male child care worker. It seems
unconfident; Sucking his thumb and struggle again and again for
the attention of the male child care worker, to which it is
completely focused. It is not afraid to push other children away
actively (shove away, etc.) to have the male child care worker for
himself. It is noticeable that the child speaks very little with the
other children ...

case-studies



attachment behaviour	
secure base	distinctly
exploration	distinctly
physical contact	distinctly
negative communication signs	not apparent
communication need	some
exclusive attention	distinctly
social- and play behaviour	
agitated/focused	rather fluktuativ
moved/still	occupying rather much space
alone/cooperative	most of the time alone
introvert/extrovert	rather extrovert

case-studies



Sebastian

case-studies



Rater 1: "The boy is physically quite active and very brisk. Although he is very agitated, he is mostly focused on the paper plane. He likes to sit close by the male child care worker (also on his lap, etc.)."

Rater 2: "Huge need for physical closeness (to the male caregiver). Focused on paper planes.,,"

Rater 3: "The child is playing for a very long time with paper planes - therefore he is remarkable. He looks for contact to the male professional and seems to enjoy the closeness - and the body contact (sits between the legs of the male child caregiver). However, he seems not unconfident or introverted, but occupies a lot of space ..."

case-studies



attachment behaviour	
secure base	some
exploration	some
physical contact	distinctly
negative communication signs	not apparent
communication need	some
exclusive attention	not apparent
social- and play behaviour	
agitated/focused	balanced level
moving/still	occupying rather much space
alone/cooperative	rather cooperative
introvert/extrovert	very extrovert

case-studies



„Leading role, looking for attention, grumbles and complains, tells fantasy stories, angry outbursts, easily distractible, lying or cheating, unconfident, always on the move, push boundaries, defending himself, defiant, screaming, sucking thumb, nervous movements.“

conclusions



- > ... male child care worker tend to be more permissive, bend the rules, are less willing to punish and take more risk. At best male child care worker can affect and progress group dynamics in facilitating more social mobility within the group and smoother transitions between the units!
- > ... boys show more often positive contact-behavior towards male child-care workers in comparison to female staff. Especially the dimensions “enjoying physical contact”, “affective sharing” and “closeness” are shown more frequent in man-boy dyads!
- > ... boys in mixed gender staffs are more extraverted and tend to be more dynamic!
- > ... especially boys with a lack of father presence, like in the case of Manuel and Sebastian, dedicated male child care worker, can offer a relationship, which is obviously important for them!



W-INN research project

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