

Ryan, Janine (2014).

A Critical Social Analysis of Men's Experiences Working in Early Childhood Education

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Abstract

The aim of this research is to evaluate the influence that social interactions within the ECE workforce have on the construction of male practitioners' professional identity. This has a strong relationship with previous research works, including Cameron, Moss & Owen in their study from 1999, and the later work of Cameron focused on men and professionalism. At ECCERA 2013 Aigner & Rohrmann (2012) the Tandem study (Holgers) and the W-INN study presented findings using video-graphed interactions, in contrary to most studies on male ECE which use interviews as methods.

The research directly focuses on male practitioners who are currently employed in ECE. It establishes their perceptions as to how their professional identity is constructed in a female dominated workforce. It explores the influences which determine this. The research will draw from a mini case study approach using a qualitative inquiry strategy. Observations of men within their practice will be recorded and through digital recordings. Personal profiles of men will be captured through an interview process. The ethical framework as outlined by the British Educational Research Association (BERA) are applied, including consent from all participants and informed consent from parents of children present during setting observations.

The findings of this research are ongoing. The research findings have implications on the current recruitment policy in ECE and also provide an opportunity to evaluate the benefits to supporting a gender balanced workforce.

Keywords

male workers, gender, professionalism, masculinities, gender system

Author

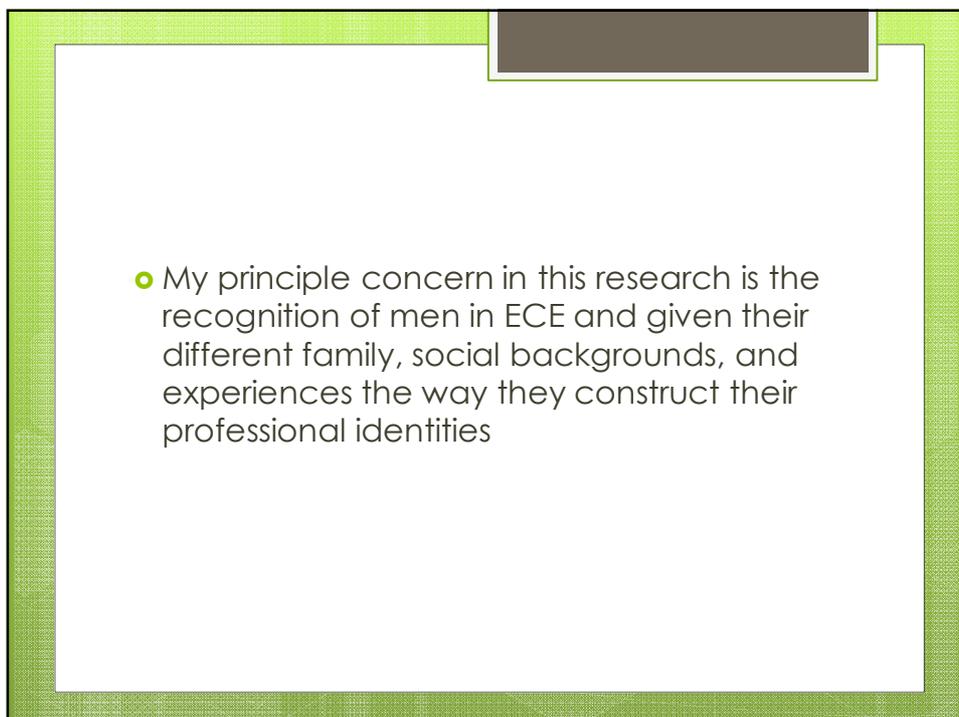
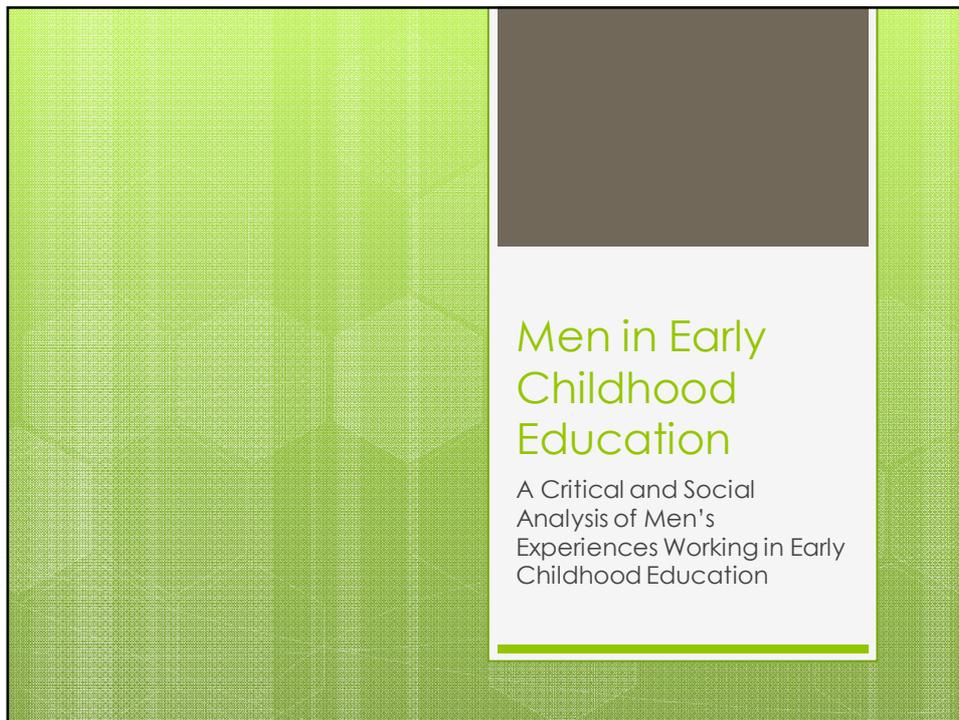
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Men in Early Childhood Education

A Critical and Social Analysis of Men's Experiences

Working in Early Childhood Education



Research Aims

- Examine male EC educators own life experiences
- Provide analysis of men's experiences in their working environment
- Identify how they construct their professional identity

Personal Identity

- Personal identity is framed within a neurobiological correlation between: consciousness, a functioning mind, beliefs, a context dependent action-reaction and an embedding of this action-reaction within the wider narrative (Greenfield, 2011)

Categories of Identity

Rosenberg (1979) proposed that identity is subdivided into four categories:

- role-based identity, a social position a person holds within a larger society,
- category based identity, which provides a collective identity,
- **group membership identity with a sense of belonging to a team and**
- individual or personal identity which he described as a social classification.

Identity has a subjective component, depending on how one feels and is totally unique to the individual.

- Identity is clouded by individual memories, both semantic and episodic, and experiences that are unique to the individual. These together support the construction of a clear framework in relation to time and space and the interrelation provides an inner narrative that is crucial to the feeling of identity (Greenfield, 2011)

Professional Identity

- Clandinin and Connelly, (1999) reported that the development of personal and professional self is influenced by the lived experiences within the work spaces that teachers and educators cohabit.

Methods

- Semi- structured interviews
- Personal profiles
- Focus group

Sample

- Settings
- 10 Male EC educators

Candidate 1 Aaron

- Aged 32, married, 2 children
- Royal marines for 8 years
- Career change- Retrained in ECE
- Gained degree Early Childhood Studies and EYPS
- Entering school based initial teacher training

Experiences

- Forces family background
- Training in Royal Marines
- Influence of own children

Identity

- Authoritative, professional figure
- Practitioners and parents defer to him
- Stable role model
- Fun loving, bringing enjoyment into learning

Candidate 2 Nathan

- Aged 22, single gay man
- Level 4 Health and Social Care
- Works as an EC educator in a private day care setting, 3 years
- Foundation Degree in Early Child Development and Learning in Practice

Experiences

- Working class family
- Caring family sharing much time with 7 female cousins
- Spent much time in hospital as a child-observed male nurses in caring profession
- Enjoys drama and art

Identity

- Big Brother role
- Teacher of young children: *'I teach them basics of life and their needs and wants and stuff like that, sometimes I do say I'm a teaching practitioner at a nursery'*
- Provider of experiences: *'Like the mud and obviously when the kids come into the room from outside, they like (gasp) and I'm like, 'it's fine they'll wash'*
- Fun and a bit of a joker: *'Erm, sometimes I do joke with them, and say aww you silly sausage and stuff like that, and let's put this on, whereas a female might say ooo let's put this on otherwise we're not having so and so'*

Candidate 3 Declan

- Aged 17, Single male
- Apprentice in private day care

Experiences

- Big family
- Working class family
- Father was very involved in child care when growing up
- Mother works in a school for children with special educational needs and disability
- She is his role model

Identity

- Educator: 'just knowing that the children look up to you just knowing that your impacting on their life, and their learning, it's a good feeling knowing that you're helping them get to where they need to be'
- Treated as equals
- Big brother role model

Jason

- Aged 41, living with partner, 2 children
- Hip hop DJ
- Retrained in ECE
- Gained degree Early Childhood Studies and EYPS
- Completed PGCE
- Gained employment in Yr 1 Primary

Experiences

- Single child from working class parentage
- Own children and caring role as 'stay at home dad'
- Short courses for disaffected teenagers
- Realised own qualities that supported children's learning
- Challenging situations in teaching due to being an older man and level of training, 'Bumpy ride'

Identity

- Professional, reflective practitioner
- Strives to do the best, constantly reflecting and researching his pedagogic strategies
- Authoritative presence, others defer to him

Findings

- Setting and hierarchical structure
- Job roles within the setting
- Group dynamic
- Age of staff team
- Level of training and qualifications
- Level of confidence
- Level of understanding of organisational structure

References

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