

Brandes, Holger & Fuertes, Marina (2016).

**Are men different? A comparison of German and Portuguese ECEC professionals.**

Presentation on the 26th EECERA Annual Conference, 1.9.2016, Dublin, Ireland.

**Abstract**

This paper compares results of two studies on pedagogical behavior of female and male ECEC-workers in Germany and Portugal. Both studies pursue the objective of investigating and comparing behavior of women and men towards boys and girls in Early Childhood Education.

Previous research indicates that male workers differ from female colleagues and could bring novelty to daily pedagogical practices and routines. This presentation builds up on the German "Tandem study" (Brandes et al. 2015). The Portuguese study adopted this empirical approach, using the same standardized situation.

The theoretical approach is derived from a constructivist approach to gender, developmental psychological studies on different behavior of mothers and fathers towards children (Lamb 1997, Tamis-LeMonda 2004), and research on interactional quality and standards of professional behavior in ECEC.

Both studies used a semi-experimental design. ECEC workers were videotaped in a standardized pedagogical situation with multiple materials in interaction with a child. Comparisons were carried out on several dimensions of interactive behavior and communication style. Moreover, use of materials and types of resulting products were analyzed. In both studies the involved children, children's parents and ECEC-workers gave informed consent and agreed to be videotaped.

In Portugal, findings barely indicated differences between male and female educators, whereas the German study revealed some significant gender differences. The influence of particular cultural and educational traditions on gendered behavior will be discussed. It will be discussed to what extent more men could be beneficial for relational and interactional quality in ECEC.

**Keywords**

Gender balance, male workers, interactional quality, professionalism, cross-cultural research

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## Are men different?

### A comparison of two studies on pedagogical behavior of female and male ECEC-workers in Germany and Portugal




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## The Studies



**The German „Tandem Study“ (2010 - 2014)** compares the behaviour of male and female ECE workers towards boys and girls in preschool age (3-6).

Approach: Experimental individual situation , group situation, interviews, quantitative and qualitative analyses

Sample: 106 female and male ECE-workers: 41 male/female-tandems, 12 female/female-tandems; 106 children

**The Portuguese Study (2014/15)** compares the behaviour of male and female ECE workers towards boys and girls in preschool age (3-5) and also the behaviour of fathers and mothers towards their sons and daughters.

Approach: The same experimental individual-situation, quantitative analyses

Sample: 21 ECE-workers (10 male, 11 female) and 42 children; 19 mothers and 17 fathers with one of their children;

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## Research design

### Additional:

Group situation with both professionals (videotaped)

Qualitative analysis of the experimental situation and the group situations; Interviews with the ECE-workers



### Experimental situation: adult and child with various materials and tools) (videotaped)

Assessment of the behavior of the adults through a rating process (5 dimensions, 19 items). Translation into quantitative comparable data.

Assessment of the products made in the experimental situations, and the assessment of the use of material and tools by adults and children.

### Additional:

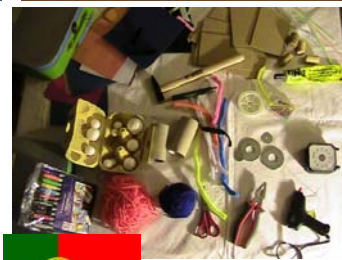
Analysis of types of communication like questions, suggestions, guidance, orders, positive and negative feedback

Comparison between fathers and mothers



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## The experimental situation



The experimental situation (20 minutes with one adult, one child, multiple material and tools) was developed for the German Study. The Portuguese Study adapted the design of the experimental situation using the same materials. Both Studies also use the same rating-scale (5 dimensions, 19 Items), developed by the German Study.

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## Rating results: Dimensions of professional pedagogical behaviour

- In all evaluated items there was no significant difference between the results of the groups of male and female ECE workers. With respect to empathy, challenges, dialogical communication, the manner of cooperation, and the content of communication, the male and the female ECE workers do behave in the same manner.
- The men do appear to be somewhat more patient with respect to decisions made by the child, but this difference is also not significant.



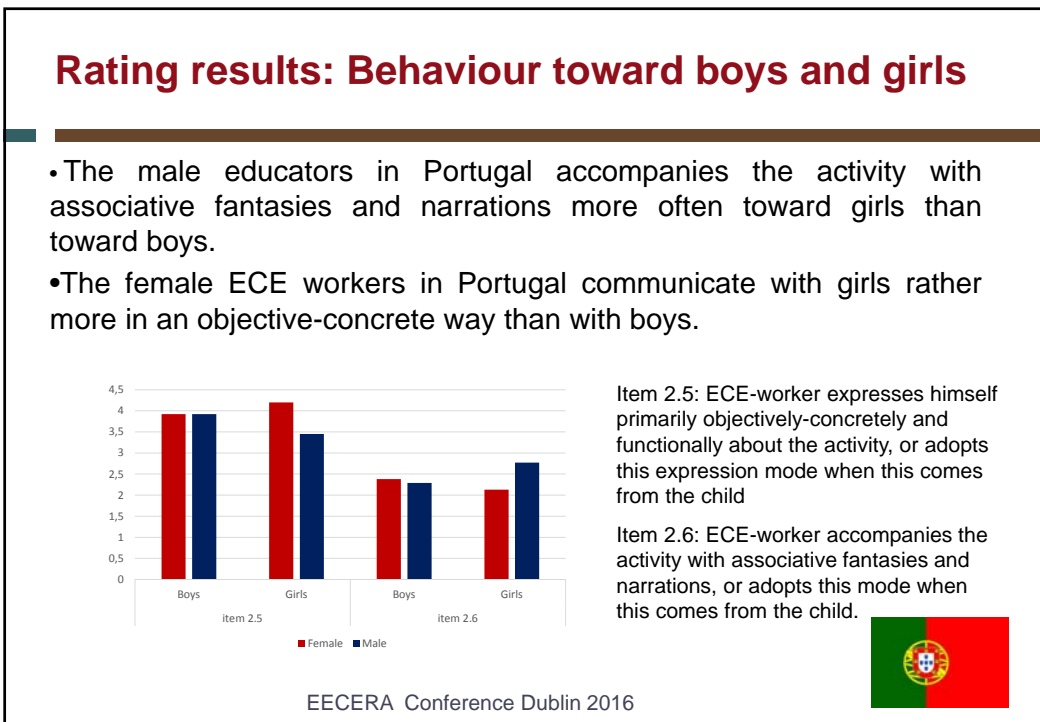
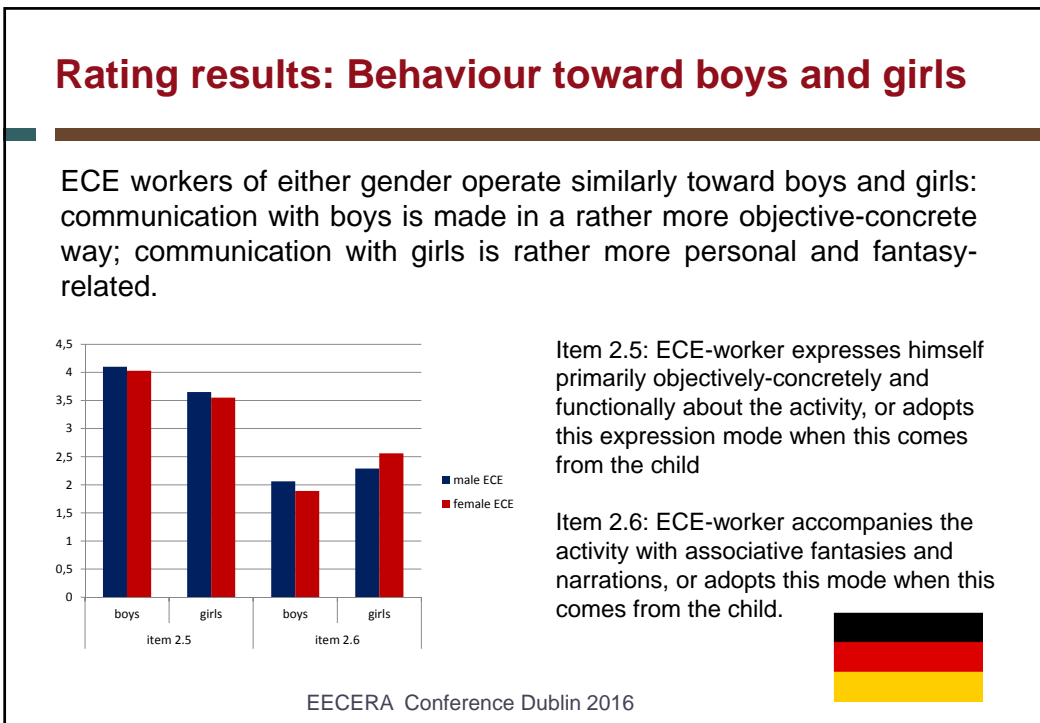
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## Rating results: Dimensions of professional pedagogical behaviour

- With respect to the five dimensions of pedagogical behavior and based on the same rating scale we also find no significant difference between the groups of male and female ECE workers in the Portuguese Study.
- The Portuguese Study includes an additional analysis of types of communication. We find here that female ECE workers asked more content-related questions, and that the male ECE workers made more suggestions, gave more guidance and orders, and also gave more positive feedback than the females.

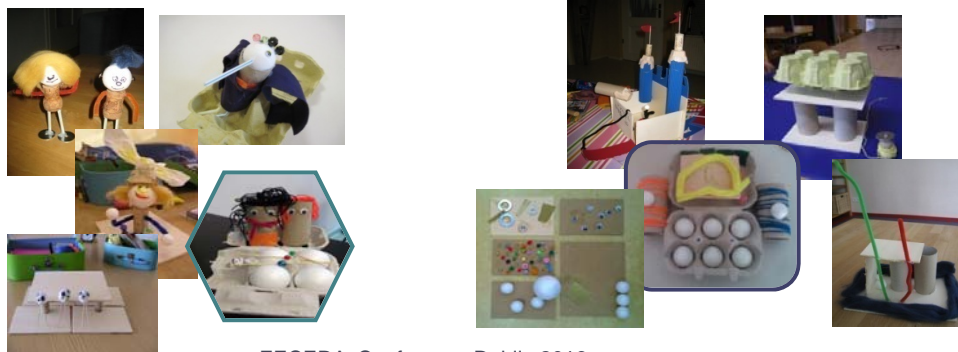


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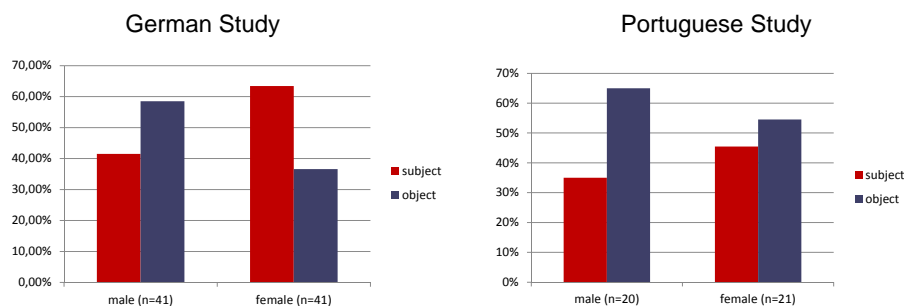
## Products made

The products made in the experimental situations can be distinguished as to whether they symbolise **subjects**, (such as humans or animals, distinguished as ‘having eyes’), or **objects** (such as cars, buildings, aeroplanes collections of material, distinguished as ‘not having eyes’).



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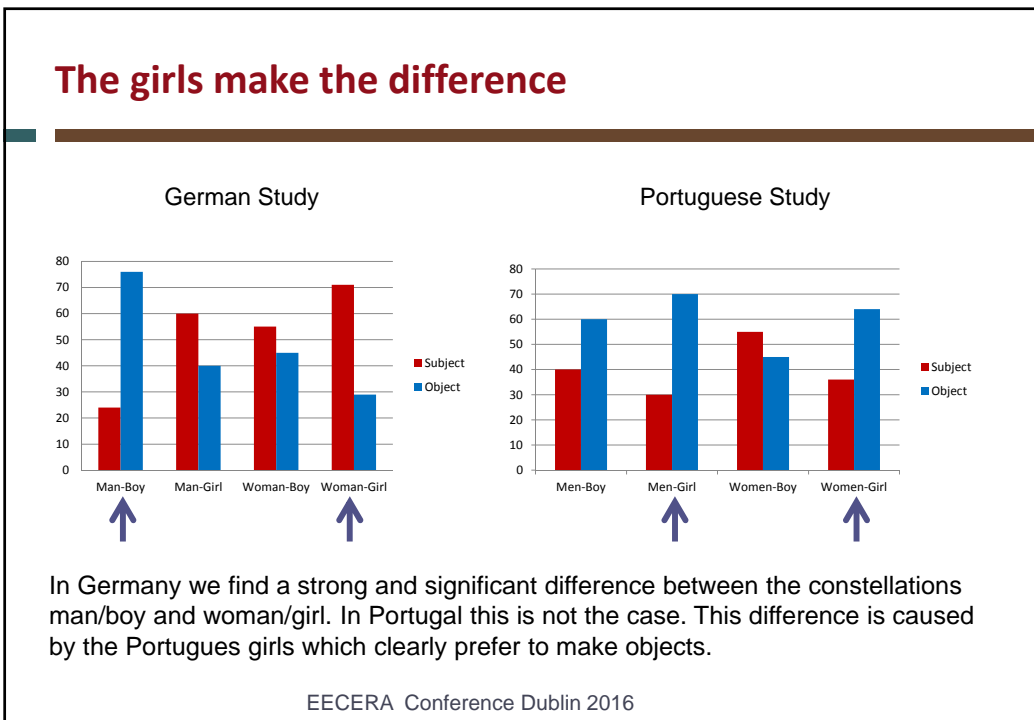
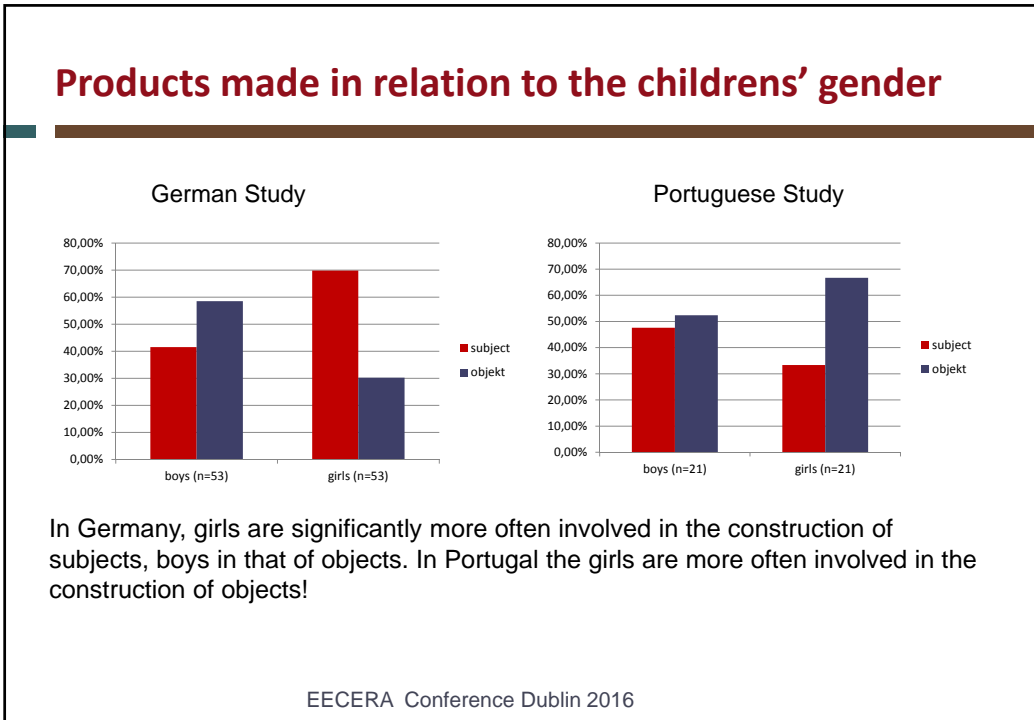
## Products made in relation to the gender of the ECE-workers



In Germany, female ECE-workers are involved significantly more often in the construction of subjects and male workers in that of objects.

In Portugal the male ECE-workers also are involved more often in the construction of objects, whereby for the female we find almost a balance between their involvement in the construction of subjects and objects.

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## Use of materials/tools

- In the German study we find that male ECE workers use significantly more washers than the females, while the female ECE workers prefer pearls or beads, pipe-cleaners and scissors. We also find that boys use nails, hammers or a hot glue gun significantly more often, whereas the girls prefer coloured pencils, pearls or beads, pipe-cleaners, felt wool and coloured paper.
- In the Portuguese study the male ECE workers use more tools than the females (nails, hammers or a hot glue). Like in the German study, we also find that boys use nails, hammers or a hot glue gun significantly more often, whereas the girls prefer coloured pencils, pearls or beads, pipe-cleaners, felt wool and coloured paper.



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## Summary



- Both studies find no significant differences in the pedagogical behaviour of male and female ECE workers when comparing their professional standards. Male workers show the same professional level in their behaviour towards children as the female workers.
- Both studies also find that ECE workers of either gender behave differently towards boys and girls. *But why do Portuguese female ECE workers communicate rather in an objective-concrete way with girls?*
- The outcome of the two studies differ mostly regarding the relation of gender and the products made in the experimental situation. This difference seems to be caused by the children! *But why do German girls prefer subjects and Portuguese girls prefer objects?*

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**Thank you for your attention.**

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