

**A FEW GOOD MEN OR A FEW TOO MANY?
A STUDY OF MALE TEACHERS**

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January 1997

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the findings of an exploratory study of men working in kindergarten and childcare services in New Zealand. The objectives of the study were to examine why men are under-represented and to shed light on the backgrounds, experiences and work of men teachers. Of interest was whether men's participation is more problematic in the South Island than in the North Island due to the much publicised case of sex abuse at a Christchurch childcare centre. Also of interest were the perceptions of women teachers on men's participation. Twenty men (approximately one-fifth of male kindergarten and childcare teachers in the country) and 20 women teachers (female colleagues of the men) were interviewed. Interview transcripts were analysed using Q.S.R. NUD●IST 3.0, a computer program designed for the storage, coding, retrieval and exploratory analysis of text.

In most respects the backgrounds of male and female participants were similar, for example their teacher training and whether they were parents. More male than female participants were the principal income earners in their household. The majority of men entered early childhood teaching as a result of unemployment (including business bankruptcy, redundancy, and inability to find a job or a permanent job) whereas the majority of women entered because it was the kind of work they had always wanted to do or the only paid work they thought they would be good at.

The top explanations for male under-representation in kindergartens and childcare centres according to both male and female participants were: child sex abuse, wages, the feminine nature of the work, the status and prestige of working in early childhood education, the career structure, and public perception of male early childhood teachers as homosexual or not "real" men.

Male teachers had to deal with a variety of biases and sexism from a range of people because of their decision to work in early childhood education. Their families and peers were often less supportive of their decision to be an early childhood teacher in contrast to female teachers. Many male teachers experienced parental suspicion of being a child abuser, low-level sexual harassment (joking or put-downs), and feelings of social unease at meetings where large numbers of teachers or parents (always nearly all women) would be present. As members of a very small minority group male teachers experienced isolation at times from the concerns of the early childhood field and feelings of loneliness in not having much contact with other men professionally. The biases and problems associated with being men affected male participants personally, professionally, and also to some extent their interactions with children (eg. avoiding one-to-one caring situations with children).

There appears to be discrimination against men in applying for jobs, particularly in some geographical areas and kindergarten associations. Some participants spoke of bias against men and male perspectives in training courses. The fear of being accused of sexual abuse of children was greater for male participants working in childcare centres than for females and kindergarten males, and also greater for male participants who worked in the South Island as compared to the North Island.

Male participants saw themselves as playing a variety of roles, some considered they were "profeminists" and attempted not to display traditional male characteristics while others believed that they should provide a positive masculine role model. All men perceived, however, that they were non-traditionalists as through their work they showed that men can do what women typically do, that is care and teach young children.

The evidence suggests that male teachers, as men, make some unique contributions to the curriculum and to staff team dynamics. The nature of male teachers' interactions with female colleagues, parents (especially fathers) and children was perceived by both female and male participants to be beneficial. The small proportion of reported problems in male participants' interactions and behaviours mainly stemmed from stereotyped expectations of children and parents, and also from female teachers lack of experience in relating professionally with men.

Whatever one's point of view as to whether men should work with young children or participate in a women's area of employment, the evidence presented in this study indicates many positive reasons to have men working in early childhood services and little justification for their exclusion.

Dedication and Acknowledgements

This report is dedicated to the men who care about and care for young children in early childhood centres.

Thank you to the women and men who participated in this study. Thank you also to Anton Wartmann and Russell Ballanytne (Senior Head Teachers) for their support, and to my university colleagues whom I chattered with and sought advice from at various points in the research process, especially Joy Cullen.

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INTRODUCTION

Men are under-represented as a group in employment within childcare and kindergarten services (see Table 1). Within other early childhood services, such as playcentre and home-based services Ministry of Education statistics indicate that the proportion of male to female teachers is even lower.

TABLE 1. Early childhood teachers by gender in both kindergarten and childcare services between 1992 and 1996 for the week up to and including 1 July¹

Year	MEN		WOMEN		Total FTE	Male %
	No	FTE ²	No	FTE		
1992		108.3		5143.7	5252.0	2.1
1993		110.8		5864.7	5975.5	1.9
1994	117	93.4	7462	6456.9	6550.3	1.4
1995	101	87.6	7770	6796.0	6883.6	1.3
1996	123	104.0	9702	7348.3	7452.3	1.4

Why is the number of men in early childhood education so small? Also, why has the percentage of men to women in full-time equivalent positions not been over 2 percent since 1992? Is it simply that men are not interested in working with young children? Or are there discriminatory and socialisation factors and forces affecting their involvement?

Early childhood teachers work largely in a female segregated environment, and boys and girls are unlikely to experience a male teacher until primary or secondary school. Currently in New Zealand it is accepted as normal that few men are employed in early childhood services. The under-representation of men in early childhood education is not considered to be a problem in the provision of quality early childhood services, in ensuring equal employment opportunities for teachers, or in ensuring non-sexist learning environments for children. The findings presented in this report are interesting and should promote some critical discussion on the involvement of men in early childhood teaching and on their recruitment, training, and employment experiences.

¹ These figures were supplied by the Ministry of Education. Unfortunately the Ministry does not have data going back further than 1992.

² FTE is an abbreviation for "full-time equivalent position".

LITERATURE REVIEW

If you were a boy would you consider being a preschool teacher, a secondary school teacher, a carpenter, an airline pilot, or a company director? Being a preschool teacher would probably not enter your thoughts in contrast to the other occupations as there are few men employed in the early childhood education sector. Even in this decade of equal educational and employment opportunities policies and human rights it is a novelty for teenage boys to be involved in childcare. People are simply not socialised toward thinking of caring for young children as a man's activity (Levine, 1977). For example in October 1995 a major city newspaper had on its front page a picture showing two male teenagers preparing an infant for a bath. The text read:

Life took a turn for a group of sixth formers at Shirley Boys' High School yesterday when they were introduced to the world of nappies and talcum powder. None admitted to previous experience of handling little people, and some looked decidedly nervous, but after a spell at the bathtub they were on the way to becoming new men (The Press, 1995, p. 1)

This literature review identifies and discusses key arguments on the importance of men choosing early childhood teaching as a career, and overviews research findings and theoretical perspectives.

THE CONTEXT

The pattern of women dominating the early childhood teaching workforce is not peculiar to New Zealand, it occurs in many other countries, for example, Australia (Adams-Jones, 1995; Clyde, 1995), Canada (Seifert, 1988), United States (Meyerhoff, 1994) and the United Kingdom (Skelton, 1994). Researchers have shown an interest in studying male teachers' experiences as a minority group (Robinson, 1988, Shaham, 1991), male teacher effects on young children (Gold & Reis, 1982), women's perceptions of men as teachers (Clyde, 1995; Skeen, Robinson & Coleman, 1986), and socio-political perspectives on the importance of male teachers (Adams-Jones, 1995; Seifert, 1974).

While researchers have shown interest in the topic of men caring and teaching young children, the same can not be said for early childhood professionals. The early childhood profession does not recognise the difficulty of providing non-sexist learning environments for children when all the role models are women (for example see Ebbeck, 1991). According to Holmes (1996), for example, male and female teachers working cooperatively together would provide a positive role model for over three-year-old children who often self-segregate into traditional "boys" and "girls" play areas and use gender as a criteria for selecting play partners.

The fact that few men are early childhood teachers is a continuing problem for children's gender role development. Children learn the difference between masculine and feminine activities and toys at a very early age, by age 3 according to research (Huston, 1983). By age 4 to 5 children have stereotypes for careers, for example that teachers are female and firefighters are male. They also have stereotypes for personalities; for example women are gentle and men are aggressive and strong (Best et al., 1977). Research on three and four-year-old children's perceptions of teacher role shows that preschool aged children soon come to perceive of teaching as a woman's job (Summers, Stroud, Stroud & Heaston , 1991).

It is interesting that in trying to encourage non-sexist behaviour and language, men actually often get better results than women (Katz & Walsh, 1991). Perhaps this is because if a man says that it is okay to do "girl things" boys more easily put down their defences. Also if girls see a man doing "women's things" they more easily accept that it is okay to let the boys join in their "feminine" play. Social learning theory provides strong theoretical support for the importance of the male teachers' model for boys under 5 years of age. Boys are more likely to admire and copy academically oriented behaviour, for example, from male teachers and learn that such behaviour is appropriate for their gender role, whereas the female teachers' model does not have the same motivational effect (Gold & Reis, 1982).

Men should be specifically encouraged to teach younger rather than older children since the impact of male teachers on children's conceptions of gender-appropriate behaviour reduces considerably after the preschool years. By the time they reach primary school children can reject male teachers, regarding them as "odd" or "abnormal" because they do not reflect the sex-role stereotypes they have come to understand (Goodman & Kelly, 1988). Gold and Reis (1982) conclude the "evidence suggests that very young boys taught by male teachers may have somewhat greater masculine sex identification, better mathematics and spatial aptitude scores, and better school attitudes and behaviour" (p. 507).

The dearth of male early childhood teachers not only disadvantages children but also seems to be the detriment of the early childhood profession. A look at the proportion of women to men teaching in different education sectors and their wages and conditions of work presents clear evidence of a sexual division of labour. The proportion of men increases as the education function becomes further removed from the childcare role; and the wages, conditions, and status of teaching also increases.

There is possibly a belief within the early childhood field that men are not needed to raise the value attached to teaching young children and that men are a potential threat to women who dominate the profession. Cook (1983) argues the benefits of early childhood teaching as a women's domain in New Zealand: it offers employment opportunities almost exclusively for women, raises the feminist consciousness of women, and is characterised by a women's perspective on education in contrast to the patriarchal systems and structures of other sectors of education. The only negative side to early childhood being a women's area is its low status due to the traditional association of childcare with mothering. The key to raising status and wages is through women engaging in political and union activity according to Cook (1983). Similarly, in Australia Clyde (1995) notes that early childhood education administrators are not interested in promoting men's involvement and have preferred to keep early childhood teaching as a female profession.

Early childhood teachers (both kindergarten and childcare) remain the lowest paid out of all education groups. Dunn, Pole and Rouse's (1992) review of the education workforce points to kindergarten teachers' salaries being some 13 percent behind primary and secondary teachers' salaries and also that kindergarten teachers have limited opportunity for promotion. In an earlier paper it was suggested that a reason for this is that the early childhood field continues to be dominated by women, who tend to price their services lower than men, and who may not have other career options (Farquhar, 1995). Marshall (1994) further proposes the existence of gender differences in comparison standards to evaluate what women and men deserve. Women compare themselves with other women who also receive less and then perceive they are worth less, and consequently work longer and pay themselves less than males.

Rosslyn Noonan of the New Zealand Educational Institute in reference to government reluctance to introduce pay parity for primary and secondary school teachers argues that pay inequality is due to deep seated sexism:

There's a reluctance to overturn an historical abnormality based on past sexism, where women were paid less than men ... Such sexism also hurt the men in the primary teaching profession (quoted in Rivers, 1995, p. C. 8).

The position of early childhood teachers relative to teachers in other education sectors is unlikely to change until such time as there is (a) an equitable balance of men and women and (b) women stop accepting a stereotyped view of themselves and address why they tend to price their services lower than men (Adams-Jones, 1995; Clyde, 1995; David, 1990; Farquhar 1995).

EMPLOYMENT ISSUES

Given low wages and low social status why do women choose to work in early childhood education? Women more than men are the teachers of young children because teaching involves caring and "caring arises from those experiences more familiar to women, particularly that of serving as the primary caretakers of children" (McCall, 1989, p. 39). The lack of career structure in early childhood teaching and the fact that women can easily move in and out of it also seem to be two key explanations for the popularity of early childhood teaching amongst women. Beechy (1987) proposes that women devise and adopt rational strategies in coping with their employment and family/domestic situations. By choosing early childhood work women leave their options open for both employment and child-rearing, whereas they would have greater difficulty moving in and out of professions with career structures and requirements for regular up-dating of skills and knowledge.

To date in New Zealand the focus has been on equalising employment outcomes for women in the form of the Equal Pay Act 1972 and the Equal Employment Opportunity policy as part of the State Sector Act 1988. The Equal Pay Act 1972 resulted in even more women being concentrated in and confined to low paid jobs without promotional possibilities (Briar, 1994). In 1995 women's pay still only averaged 81.1 percent of men's; slightly up on 10 years ago when it averaged 78.2 percent.

Women, Maori, ethnic minority groups and persons with disabilities are designated target groups under equal employment opportunity policy (EEO). EEO was designed to prevent direct and indirect discrimination against people in the specified target groups and to reduce occupational segregation of target groups in a narrow range of occupations. After reviewing the evidence on the success of EEO Briar (1994) concludes that "despite isolated individual successes, EEO has been unable to create any overall change in long-standing patterns of structural inequality in the work force" (p. 25). A reason for this lack of success according to Briar (1994) is that "employers and managers have continued to recruit and promote 'in their own image', over and over again, except where there has been intervention from outside to force them to alter their practices" (p. 32).

There is little evidence on how well early childhood centres are meeting equal employment opportunity requirements and what their goals and desired outcomes are. Kindergartens are required by the State Sector Act 1988 to have an EEO programme. Only 12 of the 37 kindergarten associations furnished an EEO report for 1995 to the Education Review Office, and only 9 of the reports met the legislative requirements of the State Sector Act. Men are not a designated target group under EEO policy and although early childhood education has over a 98 percent female workforce the sector is not required to address male under-representation.

It seems likely in the near future that men will start to be disadvantaged in the labour market. While girls and women have been told that they can do "anything" (and everything) for the past twenty years the same has not been said to boys and men who continue to "hold very traditional views of themselves" (Callister, quoted in Stuart, 1995). A study of sex role differentiation among 6 to 7 year old children and adults indicates that boys and men see sex roles and activities as being more sex-typed than girls and women (Smithers & Smithers, 1984). According to "The Economist" (1996) men are not even trying to enter areas of women's work:

Perhaps men will begin to compete more vigorously for "women's work". Perhaps they will find jobs, and, having got them marry and look after children again. But the evidence so far is against it. At best, men will change their ways reluctantly and more slowly than the quickening pace of economic change (p. 17).

Traditional male occupations are disappearing and the jobs women dominate are growing. Between 1981 and 1991 men's employment in New Zealand declined by 8% while women's employment expanded by 15% (Stuart, 1995). In many European countries girls are now outperforming boys in their school exam results, and because jobs are increasingly "knowledge-based" women are further improving their job prospects relative to men (NZPA, 1996; The Economist, 1996).

Table 2 shows that in New Zealand more boys than girls leave secondary school without any formal qualifications and that girls are out performing boys at the higher levels of school academic attainment.

TABLE 2. Attainment by gender of secondary school leavers, 1994

Attainment	Male	Female
University Bursary	5198	5685
Entrance qualification	1887	2123
Higher School Cert	2973	3157
6th Form Certificate*	7677	7784
School Certificate*	5790	4652
No formal qualifications	5135	4000

* One or more subjects irrespective of grade awarded

Source: Ministry of Education

A key reason why boys are falling behind girls at school and why men are unable (or unwilling) to do "women's work" is argued to be a lack of appropriate male models (The Economist, 1996).

Gender divisions structure employment but they should not be regarded as a given according to O'Neill (1996). There is potential for the market to influence and change gender relations. One path to transforming gender relations argued here is to involve men in the traditional women's area of working with young children.

A WOMEN'S ISSUE

A rugged practical bloke - fixes anything, strong and tough, keeps his emotions to himself, usually scornful of women. Yet at heart a decent bloke, loyal to his mates, provides well for the wife and kids ... Few Pakeha men grow up in New Zealand without a strong sense of the Kiwi bloke they are expected to become (Phillips, 1987, back cover)

Rigid male stereotypes of the "kiwi bloke" have undergone little change in comparison to the message that girls can do anything boys can do, and this has been to the detriment of both females and males. As Hoffman and Teyber (1985) argue until there is more equal participation in the care of children by men and women, real changes in traditional sex roles will not occur. Further, change must occur in both the public sphere of employment and the private sphere of the home to address women's oppression and reconstruct gender relations (Cox & James, 1987).

There is evidence of an increased desire by men and women to share childcare responsibilities more equally, but women are still performing the majority of non-paid work in the home at the same time as increasing their participation in paid work (McDonald, 1994). Novitz (1987) argues that traditional family values of men being the main breadwinner and not participating in childcare have left women with the exhausting challenge of juggling both private and public spheres of work. Barnett and River's (1996) study of 300 couples in paid employment over four years in Boston showed that the effects of the traditional breadwinning role on men are not good - fathers who did not share childcare had more anxieties and depression than fathers who did. Not surprisingly, these men had unhappier wives or partners.

Research on mothers' and fathers' quality of child care shows that when fathers do become a main caregiver they can be just as sensitive and "motherly" as mothers (Stewart, 1990). Unfortunately though, the pressure on men not to care for children seems to be considerable. Australian research shows that when men (fathers) take on the child care role they are marginalised in society (Grbich, 1992). The tactics used to reinforce the view that men and children do not belong together include: sexual labelling, for example 'poof' or 'queer', avoidance by women and breadwinner males, and ostracism by friends (Grbich, 1992).

Meyerhoff (1994) believes that more men are not involved in the care of children because of their mental attitude - they believe they are not as good as women in this area - and that this attitude is supported by women who often step in too quickly and take over when men do attempt, for example, to change a child's nappy. The low level of fathers' involvement in the lives of their own children and the small number of men entering the early childhood profession is inter-related according to Buck (1985).

Feminist efforts have focused on improving outcomes for women in employment but policies such as equal pay and equal employment have not been entirely successful (Briar, 1994). Perhaps what is needed is recognition of what opportunities women actually have due to women's and men's socialisation and role responsibilities and strategies to transform gender relations. For example, Campbell's (1988) research suggests that women usually know persons in fewer occupations than men and this reduces their employment opportunities:

Parents who care for children at home and interact extensively with teachers or day-care providers move in circles composed predominantly of women ... heavily female networks will be less effective than more balanced or male-dominated networks in providing access to desirable jobs (p. 184).

EDUCATIONAL CONCERNS

At the preschool level girls could definitely do anything, in fact more so than the boys ... What would have once been regarded as 'tomboyish' behaviour was accepted and seen as a plus. However, with the boys there were limits ... while the little boy who dressed daily in the playgroup's tutu ostensibly did so with the warm approval of those committed to genderless utopia, it seemed at times the commitment was a little strained (Woods, 1993, p. 117).

A Ministry of Education review of literature on gender issues in early childhood and primary education shows a focus on the education of girls (Slyfield, 1993). While early childhood teachers have tried to address the portrayal of girls and women in children's puzzles, books and wall pictures, and to increase girls participation in non-feminine activities, there appears to have been little concern for challenging sexism for boys. Interestingly though despite teachers' best efforts it seems that girls still predominantly engage in feminine type activities. As suggested by research it could be because teachers, who are mainly all women, continue to spend most of their time with children in such activities (eg. collage and dramatic play) rather than in others (eg. climbing, ball games and construction). Slyfield (1993) and a number of other researchers (eg. Alloway & Cook, 1994; Ebbeck, 1984) point out that the failure to provide non-sexist learning environments for children is because early childhood teachers are reluctant to be involved or to direct play. Smith (1996) studied joint attention episodes between teachers and toddlers in New Zealand childcare centres. A low level of joint adult/child engagement in interaction was found and Smith states that simply making equipment or activities available is not enough because children need teachers to engage them and challenge their understandings.

It seems that male teachers differ significantly from female teachers in their preference and involvement in at least one type of play activity. In research by Green and Schaefer (1984) male early childhood teachers preferred physically oriented equipment and activities more than female teachers, and demographic and personality variables did not explain this. It follows therefore that in an all female-teacher early childhood centre children are likely to have less exposure to and involvement in physical play than in centres where male teachers are present. Research on how fathers and mothers play with infants indicates a gender difference in fathers' play being more physically vigorous and mothers' play more likely to involve words and toys. Infants' preference appears to be for the more physically vigorous type of play (Clarke-Stewart, 1980; Lamb, 1981).

Smith (1995) argues that Western Society limits boys' capacity for empathy and this can be seen in the belief of some mothers that boys need less affection than girls. However, like women, men need to talk about their feelings and to receive as well as give affection. Pressures to behave in stereotyped masculine ways are reported to adversely effect boy's personal development (Askew & Ross, 1988). From Biddulph's (1995) perspective the absence of interested and involved men during boys' early development and the feminist movement have led to boys not feeling valued and not knowing how to behave. Subsequently boys have higher rates of suicide, motor accidents, and violent and criminal behaviour than girls.

"GOOD" MALE TEACHERS

In the literature it is often mentioned that more "good" men are needed or that "not just any man" is acceptable to work with young children. These are references to either the type of model that a man presents to children (and to adults, for example, parents), sexuality and child abuse.

It has been argued that male teachers must be "profeminist". Profeminist teachers support feminist politics and are not interested in displaying traditional male traits and behaviours (Goodman & Kelly, 1988). In contrast is a view that male teachers must be "traditional men" strong in their masculine characteristics, including intellectual and athletic leadership qualities (Sexton, 1969). If men do not provide strong masculine role models argues Sexton (1969) they are little different to women teachers and children will not have access to a variety of good role models. Between these two extremes is a third and more common argument that male teachers should be "androgynous" and present to children a blend of masculine and feminine traits and behaviours according to what the situation requires (Cook, 1988). For example, Adams-Jones (1995, p. 14) advocates for "more good men ... who are empathetic and strong, autonomous and connected and responsible to self and family, friends and society".

Whatever one's point-of-view as to what type of man should work with children, it seems that men, by their very presence as teachers in a female domain, contradict sex-role conventions. Men must preform the same kind of work that women teachers do (Seifert, 1974). Robinson's (1988) research on 20 male childcare teachers in the United States shows that they had many of the same personal qualities and taught and cared for children in similar ways to female teachers. In contrast to male engineers working in a predominantly male field, male childcare teachers were not found to be traditional males with highly masculine personalities and values (Robinson, 1988). Shaham's (1991) research on the perceptions of five male teachers in the United States suggests that men rarely clash with their female colleagues even on non-professional matters, and that their interactions and activities with children are little different. Naish (1995) reports that six male teachers in his Dunedin study were talented, resourceful and committed to providing the highest standard of early childhood education.

King (1994) argues that social characterisations of male teachers as "feminine", "homosexual" and "pedophile" both limit the number of "good" men who enter the profession with no intention of abusing children and affect men with proven records as good teachers. He believes that gay teachers in particular self-censor their caring relationships with children because the use of touch is suspect, and that this in turn reduces their effectiveness as

teachers. Research by Hyson et al (1986) shows that when adults are attuned to sexual abuse they are more likely to disapprove of affectionate touching. Rane and Draper's (1995) research suggests the existence of stereotypical views about physical contact being more appropriate for women than men.

In the early 1990s there were two cases of sexual abuse of children by men in New Zealand childcare centres. Peter Ellis, a Christchurch City Council employee at the Civic Childcare Centre, was jailed for 10 years in 1993 and Geoffrey Scott, a Wellington Hospital childcare centre teacher, jailed for 7 years in 1994. The Peter Ellis case received considerable media publicity because of the amount of abuse that was alleged, the large number of children involved, police suspicion that women teachers at the centre were also involved in the abuse, and the high reputation for "quality" that the centre had in the Christchurch community (Brett, 1993). The Civic Centre case was in the news over a long period of time, from March 1992 when police were reported to be investigating allegations of abuse, through to February 1995 when Counsel for Peter Ellis made a bid to go the Privy Council, and more recently when ex-female employees appealed the level of compensation they had been awarded.

After the Ellis trial press reports suggested that male teachers lived in fear of abuse accusations and that some male teachers were leaving the teaching service because of this (Catherall, 1994; Evening Standard, 1994). Public belief that men could abuse young children entrusted in their care seems to be affecting men's participation in other areas of employment, for example: a New Zealand summer camp promoter did not appoint men to work with children under seven years of age, and a job scheme set up by the Hutt Mature Employment Support agency to help families with basic household tasks refused to recruit men (Alderidge, 1994; Boyd, 1994). The little publicised conviction of a Hamilton women for sexual violation of a child in 1996 raises questions about double standards in public and media attitudes towards abuse and abusers (Wellwood, 1996). Likewise the physical abuse of children by female childcare teachers received very little mention in the media.

Faller's (1998) paper raises the question of the involvement of female teachers in the victimisation of children, and highlights that in childcare centres boys may be as likely as girls to be sexually abused. She looked at the sexual abuse of 48 children in childcare centres and family day-care homes in Michigan. "Twenty-three (47.9%) of children were abused by a male, 1 (2.1%) by a female, and 24 (50%) by both males and females" (p. 286). Children who had been abused in childcare centres (n = 36) either experienced abuse from a male teacher (a single offender centre) or typically from all of the teachers, male and female (a multiple perpetrator centre). Faller noted that in one centre teachers were highly resistant to any efforts to investigate sexual abuse, and while the women teachers were not active participants in the abuse it appeared that there was collusion amongst the teachers. Some men who are pedophiles purposefully seek work in childcare centres and are more likely to victimise boys than girls, whereas in family daycare homes girls are more often the victims. In order to minimise the possibility of sexual abuse by a male perpetrator in early childhood centres Faller's findings suggest the need for careful screening of job applicants to ensure that pedophiles are not appointed as teachers

Skelton (1994) outlines how a lack of open discussion about issues involving sex and masculinity contributes to the perpetuation of child sex abuse rather than its reduction. She interviewed 11 male teachers and student teachers in English nursery schools and found that they worked in settings in which the issue of child sexual abuse and them, as men, was never directly confronted even though it was always in the background of their work and affecting

them daily. Skelton argues that initial teacher education courses must address issues of masculinity, sexuality, violence and child sex abuse.

NEW ZEALAND STUDIES

While there have been many articles published in the popular press and in professional newsletters and magazines, mostly on the importance of male teachers and the child abuse issue, there is little known systematic research on male teachers in early childhood centres in New Zealand. Some insights have been provided by the assignment project reports of at least a small number of male university and college students (Naish, 1995; Robb, 1993; Van Deursen, 1989).

Van Deursen (1989) surveyed 17 male childcare teachers throughout New Zealand, 15 of whom had jobs. In this 1989 study only one male teacher mentioned accusation of child sex abuse as a problem. Approximately half of the male teachers responded that they would recommend early childhood teaching without reservation if asked by another man. Van Deursen's overall finding was that "being a male in a traditionally female role has its share of flack" (p. 20). Unfortunately, this study does not provide much insight into the experiences and needs of male teachers due to the research method used. For example respondents appear to have given short and cryptic answers to some questions and not responded to all questions. The return rate of questionnaires was low.

The "Fab Four", so named by Robb (1993) because they were the only four male kindergarten and childcare teachers in Dunedin, were interviewed by him. He found three of the four teachers had not intended to be early childhood teachers, but later in life had decided to for a variety of reasons including a need for employment and self-discovery of the pleasure of working with children. The teachers all enjoyed working with children and were not seeking promotion. Two of the teachers were thinking about leaving to work in different areas of the education service. The teachers all viewed their role as providing an androgynous model for all children; to show both boys and girls that men can care and cuddle as well as kick balls. A major problem faced by the Fab Four was that the abuse issue was always "hanging over their heads" due to the Peter Ellis sex abuse case. Robb argues that media focus on the Peter Ellis trial turned public opinion against men working in early childhood centres and that it will deter men in future from entering the field. The Fab Four all agreed that there was not sufficient encouragement and support from training providers, administrators and leaders in the early childhood field for men to become early childhood teachers.

In 1995 Naish came to a similar conclusion as Robb (1993) that men are not trusted as teachers of young children due to the focus on sexual abuse in centres and public opinion. Naish (1995) interviewed six men (one of whom was applying for work and another was an administrator and not working in an early childhood centre). All six men agreed that more men would be involved in early childhood teaching if the status and pay were higher. Three of the six were considering leaving teaching due to their wages and working conditions. They were not encouraged at High School level nor at Teachers' College level to choose early childhood teaching as a career. Naish concludes that the patriarchal view in society remains strong; caring for children is still not considered as a suitable job for a man.

CONCLUSION

This literature review provides a background and framework within which to view the present study of men's involvement in early childhood education and care in New Zealand. The arguments and perspectives discussed in this review have informed the scope of the study - that it is necessary to be concerned with the social, professional and personal contexts of men's participation in teaching. The methodology of this study reflects the strengths of past research and was designed in order to address a range a range of questions and issues identified in the literature. There appears to be a strong rationale in the literature for not only finding out male teachers' perspectives but also female teachers' perceptions of male teachers. The interview method rather than the survey method appears to be more suitable for the purpose of this study given the more limited findings of researchers who have used the survey method. While it may have been useful to observe male teachers and to study their effects on children, there has already been quite a bit of research in this area. Not enough is known about male teachers' experiences and perceptions in the New Zealand context. This study was designed to shed some light on the topic for a better understanding of male teacher under-representation.

METHOD

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study was designed to examine why men are under-represented in early childhood teaching and to shed light on the backgrounds, perceptions, experiences and work of men in kindergartens and childcare centres. The specific questions investigated were:

1. What is the background and characteristics of male teachers, and in what ways do they differ from their female colleagues?
2. What are the over-riding reasons for low male participation in kindergarten and childcare services?
3. What are male teachers' experiences as men, and does the nature of their experience differ according to whether they work (a) in kindergarten or childcare, and (b) in the North Island or the South Island?
4. What effects does being a minority in a women's occupation have on men personally, on their practices, and on others (eg. children)?
5. How do men differ in their teaching roles and responsibilities from women, and are such differences positive or negative?
6. Does the collective evidence indicate that male under-representation is a problem or not?

SAMPLE

The sample comprised of 40 teachers, 20 men and 20 women (see Table 3). Half the teachers were kindergarten teachers and the other half childcare teachers. Half worked in the South Island and half in the North Island. For example, 5 male and 5 female childcare teachers in the South Island were sampled. Only teachers working with children in an early childhood centre on a weekly basis were sampled and not administrators or people engaged in advisory or professional development support for early childhood services.

TABLE 3. Names of participants (pseudonyms), their type of early childhood service, and whether they worked in the North or South Island of New Zealand

Men	ECE Service	Location	Women	ECE Service	Location
Alan	Kindergarten	North	Abby	Childcare	South
Brent	Childcare	North	Alice	Kindergarten	North
David	Childcare	South	Belle	Childcare	North
Denis	Kindergarten	South	Bridget	Kindergarten	South
Desmond	Childcare	North	Elle	Kindergarten	North
Dirk	Childcare	North	Hayley	Kindergarten	South
Don	Kindergarten	North	Helen	Childcare	South
Doug	Kindergarten	South	Irene	Childcare	North
Ethan	Childcare	South	Joan	Kindergarten	North
Gary	Kindergarten	North	Kim	Childcare	North
Glen	Childcare	North	Lucy	Kindergarten	South
Grant	Childcare	South	Mary	Childcare	South
Ivan	Kindergarten	South	May	Kindergarten	North
James	Kindergarten	South	Monica	Childcare	North
Len	Childcare	South	Rhonda	Kindergarten	South
Martin	Childcare	North	Roxanne	Childcare	South
Noel	Kindergarten	North	Ruth	Childcare	South
Pierre	Kindergarten	South	Sandra	Childcare	North
Richard	Childcare	South	Tammy	Kindergarten	North
Warren	Kindergarten	North	Tania	Kindergarten	South

Networking and the "snowball" technique was used to obtain the male childcare sample. The male kindergarten sample was obtained by writing to kindergarten associations, asking permission to carry out the study and for the names of any male teachers. In the South Island the sampling criteria was only just able to be met as only five male kindergarten teachers were known to be available. All male teachers approached agreed to participate.

The men were requested to discuss participation in the study with a female colleague and ask her permission to pass her name on to the researcher. An information sheet and consent form was sent to teachers. This was followed up by a telephone call to chat further about the study and to arrange a time to conduct an interview.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Focussed in-depth interviews were carried out with teachers at a time nominated by them. Most interviews were conducted in staff rooms at centres or in people's own homes. Interviews took between 1 hour and 2.5 hours, with the average interview lasting about 90 minutes. The interviews with men tended to be the longest as they had more to say on the topic of men in early childhood teaching. All interviews took place between the middle of December 1995 and the end of February 1996.

The majority of the questions asked of male and female participants were the same except for a question on problems or difficulties experienced. Women were asked: "Have there been any situations or occasions when you have wished that all the staff were women? Can you describe these please". Men were asked "Have there been any situations or occasions in your work when you have wished that you were not seen as a man, but rather as one of the staff? Can you describe these please". Questions were divided into three sections: the social-political context of men's involvement in early childhood education, personal biography, and teaching roles and relationships (see Appendix A for a copy of the interview schedule).

The interviews were tape-recorded and each was transcribed by the researcher shortly after recording. The computer files containing the transcripts were prepared into documents for analysis using Q.S.R. NUD●IST 3.0. This is a computer program designed for the storage, coding, retrieval and analysis of text, and is highly suited to qualitative analysis of data. It operates a hierarchical system of analysis and thus for this project a total of 147 nodes or categories were formed to organise the data. Data under the different nodes was able to be combined and compared to carry out exploratory analysis.

A trial interview was carried out with a male senior kindergarten teacher. In developing the interview schedule discussions were held with a variety of people (experts) not involved in the study. The study was approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee and funded by the Massey University Research Fund.

RESULTS

PARTICIPANT CHARACTERISTICS

Age

There were small differences in the age range and average age of women and men in the sample. The range in ages for women was 20 to 59 years with an average of 37.7 years. For men the range was 24 to 54 years with the average age at 35 years being a little younger than the women. There was a clear relationship between age/gender/and early childhood service. In contrast to the more even spread of ages of women working in kindergartens and childcare centres, it seems that the kindergarten service had more middle-aged men (9 out of 10 were in their 30s or 40s) while younger and older men were in the childcare service (5 men in their 20s and 3 in their 50s).

Qualifications

Participants' teaching qualifications were not surprising with all kindergarten teachers (men and women) holding a College early childhood diploma of teaching and with diversity in training qualifications amongst childcare teachers (eg. NZCA Dip. NNEB, College Childcare Certificate). In total 18 out of 20 men (90%) and 19 out of 20 (95%) women held some form of teaching or childcare qualification; included in this number are 2 childcare teachers (one male and one female) who were primary teacher trained. The College early childhood diploma of teaching is recognised by the New Zealand Qualifications Authority as worth 120 licensing points, and thus all kindergarten teachers held this number of points. The women in childcare had a higher overall level of training than their male colleagues. The total number of points held by the 10 childcare women was 1016 compared to 820 points held by the 10 childcare men. Glen had one year to go to complete his four year field-based diploma course which would then give him 120 points, bringing the total number of points for the male childcare sample up to 940.

Only a small number of participants held university qualifications. Four men held undergraduate degrees (including one who held two undergraduate degrees) and a fifth man had completed over two thirds of his degree, in contrast to only two women who held an undergraduate degree.

Family Responsibilities

Sixty percent of participants (n = 24) were parents, with slightly more men (n = 13, 65%) than women (n = 11, 55%) being parents. Thus over half of the sample of men were "family" men, with one male teacher being a single parent and at least two men having responsibility for children who were not their own through marriage or re-marriage.

The wages or salary received from employment appears to be more important or essential for men than for women. Thirteen men (65%) compared to five women (25%) were the main income earners in their household. In contrast 14 women (70%) and five men (25%) were secondary or lower household income earners. Two men (10%) and one woman (5%) had incomes of a similar level to their partners.

EMPLOYMENT BACKGROUND

Experience

The men had on average fewer years of experience working in the early childhood field than women. Men had an average of 7 years experience (range 6 months to 15 years) and women an average of 11.1 years (range 1 to 35 years). However it should be noted that men were not generally accepted into kindergarten courses at Teachers' Colleges until the early 1980s and this may partly explain why men working in kindergartens had fewer years of experience on average than women.

Childcare women teachers tended to have more years of experience (average 13.1 years) than kindergarten women (average 9.1 years). The reverse was true for men, with kindergarten men having slightly more experience (average 7.2 years) than childcare men (average 6.7 years). Hence, the turnover of men in childcare was greatest out of all four groups. While childcare women had on average more years of experience than any other group, men working in childcare centres had the least amount of experience. Childcare men had on average of 6.4 years less experience than their women co-workers.

Of note is a considerable difference in years of experience between men working in childcare centres in the North (average 4.7 years, range 6 months to 10 years) and South Islands (average 8.7 years, range 6 years to 11.5 years). This suggests that in the North Island at least, men are continuing to take up childcare work as an occupation. In the South Island either there are fewer men wanting to take up early childhood teaching or there is a problem in men gaining employment. None of the five South Island childcare men in this study's sample had entered the early childhood field or started their pre-service training after 1990.

Job Position

Participants were asked for their job title. Teachers working in kindergartens described themselves as either teachers or head teachers. Teachers working in childcare centres described themselves as supervisors, assistant supervisors, or one of the following: teachers, workers, and preschool assistants. In terms of senior positions slightly more women (n = 7, 35%) than men (n = 5, 25%) were the teacher-in-charge at their centre (ie. childcare supervisor or kindergarten head teacher).

Remuneration

The kindergarten service has a national pay scale for teachers based on years of experience, qualifications and responsibility of position. It is possible that a gender gap may exist in wages in the kindergarten service, but to determine this is beyond the scope of the study. In the childcare service individual employers can pay teachers what they wish providing this is above the minimum wage or in accordance to the particular union agreement they are part of. The average gross hourly wage for men working in childcare centres was \$12.41 (range \$10.00 to \$20.20 an hour) and for women it was \$12.38 (range \$8.75 to \$16.68 an hour). It appears therefore that there is little real difference between the wages of men and women working in childcare centres. However there may be a gender difference in wages with the difference favouring men when data reported earlier on NZQA points, years of experience

and positions of seniority is taken into account. During his interview Glen raised the possibility that men might be paid more than women:

When the owner offered me a job she was very apologetic that she could not pay me more than the starting wage because I was a man ... It didn't actually last long because I was given two wage rises and I know the other two women who were also on starting wages weren't.

No other teachers (male or female) discussed a link between gender and wages, however they were not asked this when interviewed. An area for further research is whether employers perceive they need to pay men more.

Entry to the ECE Field

A theme that emerged from the interview data was the influence of a women's role model during the childhood years on participants' preference for working with young children. A similar number of male (n = 5, 25%) and female (n = 6, 30%) participants spoke about the positive impact of their mother's, grandmother's or sister's model on their preference towards a career that meant working with young children and women. To illustrate here are two different quotes from men:

I am probably more like my mum. I really love my mum. She was always there for me. That has rubbed off a lot. I have the capacity to care and really nurture children (Grant).

I was an only child and I spent a lot of time at home with my mother, washing dishes and that sort of thing so I had a good background in what women's work was all about (David).

There was a wide gender difference in what led participants to early childhood teaching. For men the main causes were being out-of-work including redundancy and bankruptcy (n = 15, 75% of men), having contact with another woman in the early childhood field (n = 7, 35% of men, in most cases the woman was their wife, partner or girlfriend), and developing an interest in working with children through their own parenting experience (n = 5, 25%). For women the major reason for becoming teachers was that it was the only form of paid work that they had aspired to do, wanted to do, or believed was open to them (n = 14, 70% of women). Two women (10%) became interested in early childhood teaching later in life through the experience of raising their own children. A small number of other diverse reasons were given by the female participants.

Commitment

When asked the reasons why they might leave teaching there were few gender differences in participants' responses. The only noteworthy difference is that six men (30%) would leave for higher pay in another area such as primary school teaching or if they found they could no longer support their family on what they were paid in early childhood teaching, whereas only one woman (5%) stated higher pay elsewhere as a reason for leaving.

Old age and poor health or lack of physical ability was stated by just over half the participants as a main reason for leaving teaching (n = 21, 10 men and 11 women). Six men (30%) and six women (30%) said they would leave when they found teaching no longer excited them, when they felt they could no longer contribute to the field or were tired and run down. Other varied reasons given by four men (20%) and three women (15%) included a desire to have children and leave to be a househusband or housewife, to start their own business, or if they were ever accused of child abuse. Note that some teachers gave more than one reason for leaving.

Ambitions

Female participants had fewer ambitions than male participants both within and outside the early childhood field. The majority of women (n = 16, 80%) were happy with the position they had achieved, in contrast only seven men (35%) held no further ambitions or plans to change career. Of the 16 women, 13 made comments to the effect of "I have reached where I ultimately want to be" (Bridget), or "I don't want to achieve anything I just want to be working" (Monica). One woman, Hayley, wanted to change from being a full-time head teacher to a part-time teacher because she found her position stressful. Two women, Ruth and Rhonda, ultimately wanted to train for primary teaching or child psychology respectively. Four women (20%) stated ambitions within the early childhood field, and of these women three desired to ultimately move outside of the kindergarten and childcare services into other areas such as the Education Review Office. Half of the men (n= 10, 50%) stated ambitions to go further in the early childhood field. However four of these 10 men aspired for early childhood positions which were outside of kindergarten and childcare (for example as government policy adviser, union official or College lecturer). Of the remaining three men who held no further ambitions within early childhood education and were not happy to stay in early childhood as their career, one was going back to College to train for primary teaching, one was planning to train for secondary teaching, and one wanted to work specifically with children who had AIDs.

FACTORS AFFECTING RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

All participants were shown a list of possible explanations for male under-representation in early childhood teaching and asked whether or not each explanation was relevant in terms of their experience and geographical area. Table 4 presents the data. These explanations will be discussed in the proceeding sections.

TABLE 4. The Most Relevant Explanations for Male Under-Representation

Explanation	n	%
Fear of being falsely accused of child abuse	40	100
The level of wages paid in ECE centres	37	92.5
That early childhood work is considered feminine	35	87.5
The status and prestige of ECE teaching	34	85
The career structure (lack of)	28	70
A perception that men are gay if they work in an early childhood centre	27	67.5
Management suspicion of the motives of men applying for positions	14	35
Entry to training and men's experiences during training	12	30
Men not wanting to work under or be accountable to women	10	25
Men afraid that their female colleagues might work against them	10	25
Men's competency (perceived lack of) in working with children	7	17.5

Social Context

The families and peers of male participants were often less supportive of their decision to become early childhood teachers than the families and peers of female participants. Only five men (25%) as compared to 18 women (90%) said they had the support of their family or that family members did not react negatively to their decision to work with children. For example Helen found that "a good occupation for a girl was the reaction", and David found that as he had been closely involved in the care of his own children when he "took up childcare work it formally spelled it out nothing but encouragement from people, even from my own kids". In most cases non-supportive family members were participant's mothers and fathers who showed anger or openly discouraged them. Martin's mother for example "keeps telling me to get out, she is trying to protect me from the stigma, from any sort of accusation". Desmond's father and mother thought that it was a strange decision on his part "my father was a builder and he owned his own building firm and my mother also had views that men didn't do that sort of thing". Ivan's father "had never heard of men working in that profession before and thought I'd thrown away my education. He told me what a fool I was".

No female participants received negative comments from peers about their decision to be early childhood teachers but 10 male participants (50%) had peers who questioned or made sexist remarks, for example Richard's male friends joked "oh child molester" and also regarded him as a "girl". Hayley made a comment that:

I feel that there's possibly a lot of men out there who would really like to be in early childhood but because of pressure from other men they feel they can't.

It seems early childhood teaching is not seen in society to be a suitable and wise occupation for men. Boys tend to be brought up to regard early childhood teaching as a "women's" job, for example:

My parents had very stereotypical views. It was not something that you were told about at school as a career choice ... My experience of the other guys I've met who are in early childhood is that they didn't specifically go into the area. They did other things first after leaving school ... Whereas for most women it was raised at school that early childhood was a path they could follow (Desmond).

When men begin teaching, children's parents seem to provide another barrier due to their stereotyped views and suspicions as to the motives of men who want to perform a women's job. Parental acceptance of male teachers appears to be higher in alternative life-style communities and in working (lower) class suburbs, in contrast to middle and upper class areas. In areas where there are a number of single parents anecdotal evidence from the teachers also suggests that male teachers are accepted more than in areas where the majority of families are nuclear in structure and headed by a male breadwinner.

As noted in Table 4, 27 out of 40 teachers (67.5%) agreed that there is a social perception that men working in early childhood services are gay and that this may deter men from becoming teachers. Male teachers receive a harder time from other men more than from women, particularly from their male friends/peers who regard a male teacher as not a "real man". Single men without children are more likely to be regarded as being gay/homosexual. Men who are married and have children of their own seem to find that they are more acceptable as teachers than men who are single and do not have children, as Doug explained:

Being a person who has always been in a relationship, or in an active heterosexual relationship right the way through and having children of my own has helped people find out fairly soon and to realise "oh well he can't be gay".

How do the male participants cope with such prejudice? They either (1) regard it as the problem of the person holding the stereotyped view and enjoy the challenge of proving that "real" men can work effectively with children or, (2) they see their personal sexuality as separate to their work and therefore ignore or disregard the view. Noel's story illustrates this point well:

In 1991 a family came into the kindergarten. Towards the end of the morning the child's mother came up to me and asked if she could have a word with me. She wanted to go somewhere private so we went to the kitchen. She was asking questions on behalf of her husband. They wanted to know if I was a practising homosexual, and I turned around and asked how this was relevant to the job that I was doing which could not be answered. Needless to say their child did not come to the kindergarten while I was there, but as soon as I went on a year's leave to relieve at another kindergarten the child started kindergarten which I found fascinating.

A small number of participants (n = 7, 17.5%) felt that a reason for male under-representation was competency or lack of it amongst men. Three of the seven teachers maintained that women are more naturally competent than men. For example Mary said that women have the instinct for knowing if there is something wrong with a child and are also more capable in housekeeping tasks such as "doing nice corners on the cots" when changing sheets. The remaining four teachers explained that while they believed men were less competent than women this was due to differences in socialisation. In Ethan's words:

Boys grow up with dad, doing fishing, hunting going out and getting the wood and so it gets in-built. Women are more competent with children because men don't learn how to interact with children.

Of the 33 participants (82.5%) who disagreed with the statement that women are more competent than men, the most common response was that men and women are competent in different aspects and that neither sex is superior to the other. Roxanne for example explained:

I've had to learn that men are just as good, they just look at things differently and they do things differently from women. Because it is largely women who run the show they (other women) don't see that what men do is always right.

In summary, the wider social context limits men's participation in early childhood teaching, as May concluded:

The high schools don't encourage young men to come for work experience. I can't believe that out of the two big high schools here that there wouldn't be one boy who would be interested.

No participants believed that there should be fewer men or that the proportion of men to women should remain at its current level. Several persuasive arguments for a more equitable balance of male and female teachers were identified from the interview transcripts, and these were as follows:

Professional Arguments

- To achieve equity in employment opportunities for men as well as women.
- To increase the status of early childhood teaching and to improve employment conditions.
- To enable women teachers the opportunity to work alongside men and not experience a segregated environment.

Curriculum Arguments

- For children to learn through experience and observation that men can care, cuddle and be nurturing people.
- For children to have a male figure to bond with, especially children whose home environment is female dominated or children whose father is abusive or physically or emotionally absent.
- For children to learn how to interact with a man (and not be shy or scared).
- For children to benefit from the different life experiences, interests and skills which men as opposed to women may bring to their teaching and interactions with children.

The Early Childhood Field

The lack of status or prestige of early childhood work was cited by the majority of participants (n = 34, 85%) as a key reason for there being few men in the field. An additional two participants discussed their personal concerns about the field's lack of social status and professional recognition during another part of their interview. To illustrate participants' views here are some representative comments:

If there was more value placed on caring for children then more men would be involved (Monica)

It's not very prestigious to sweep floors and wipe tables down and that sort of thing. I think we are still seen to be a mother figure really. To be here to provide children with lots of cuddles and that sort of thing (Tania)

Friends of mine who are in other occupations like computers, their occupations are considered more prestigious (Dirk).

When asked whether the small number of men working in early childhood is an issue which should be addressed by the field and if so why it remains an issue, just over half the participants (n = 21, 52.5%) cited lack of interest or apathy on the part of people and organisations within the early childhood field. They indicated that the field did not perceive the lack of male teachers to be an issue because traditionally childcare is women's work and women's responsibility:

I don't think people think about it as an issue, it is accepted that there aren't many men in early childhood and that is the way it is (Elle).

The field provides a significant source of employment for women and therefore may not want to acknowledge men's under-representation as a recruitment and employment problem, as Ivan explained:

The profession will just meander along the way it is - always a female profession because no one with sufficient authority wants to do anything about it. In most professions women are discriminated against and early childhood is one of the few that they actually dominate and I think they would like to quietly keep it that way. They make no effort to let you fit in. You are a fish out of water!

According to Don men should be a target group for equal employment opportunity policies and the early childhood field is being unfair in not recognising that men face significant barriers:

At one of the meetings we had with the Ministry of Education somebody came to talk to us. When I brought up that men are the minority in this industry and that surely we should be written into the policy they said, "No you can't do that! EEO policy must be for these people - disabilities, women, Pacific Islanders and Maoris, and not men". Yet women are the majority ... within the administration as well. The parents who run the kindergartens are mainly women. I can see the point of view of EEO - it works out there but doesn't work in early childhood education.

Two further reasons for the field not identifying male under-representation as an issue are not wanting to be seen to be supporting men's involvement after the sex abuse cases in the early 1990s, and being too engrossed with professional development initiatives such as the introduction of a national curriculum and a code of ethics to do anything about the under-representation of men.

In the light of the field's apathy 5 men suggested that male teachers should become pro-active in challenging the traditional female-dominated nature of the field. To do this one male participant suggested that men should strive for top positions in order to be heard. But, there are simply more administrative and policy positions than there are men in the early childhood field. The very small number of men working in the field combined with both the strength of feminism in society and the recognition and respect shown by male participants in this study that early childhood is a uniquely women's area makes it unlikely that men would and could initiate a movement for change.

Does the early childhood field welcome men in it? Not necessarily said just over half the participants (n = 21, 52.5%). These participants explained that men were not always welcomed and accepted by some, but not necessarily all, women in the field. Women who are lesbian or feminist with anti-male views can resist men teachers, as the following sample of comments suggest:

A number of women who have had bad experiences of men and have been quite damaged in their relationships with men are suspicious and antagonistic towards men, and I can quite understand their feelings. It affects their relationship with me as a teacher (Doug)

A lot of women see it as a female domain. Because of their orientation and beliefs in bringing children up they see little use for men apart from fertilising eggs basically. There are some women ... who are biased against men It's like a coloured person walking into an all-white club. You are going to be discriminated against because women if they have their own personal agenda will work together to exclude men. (Glen)

According to participants some women in the field do not think the profession needs men to help bring about changes in the economic and social status of their work, for example:

There is a fraction of women teachers who don't want men. They say they can do the job fine without men. I've found this in the union, particularly with the stronger women who say that we don't need men in early childhood (Don)

Only one participant, Belle, admitted to personally holding this view. Her view was "we have got enough strong women, women know where we should be going. We shouldn't have to have men at the top to be able to do it".

Two teachers from different kindergartens, Bridget and Denis, suggested that women teachers would be more accepting of men if they had support and knew what to expect and how to react. They indicated that women teachers have little experience in working alongside men and consequently they can be resistant to the idea until they have experienced working with men.

Employment

When asked for their point of view as to whether men are discriminated against in employment and promotion most participants stated that men are discriminated against (n = 27, 67.5%), either definitely (n = 15, 37.5%) or only in certain circumstances such as which particular employer or kindergarten association they applied to or worked for (n = 12, 30%).

In contrast a small number of participants (1 male and 4 female, 12.5%) believed men were positively discriminated for, in other words they believed that men held an advantage over women in employment and promotion. The one male teacher who believed this, Alan, explained that his sex was an advantage as he had always obtained the jobs he wanted. The four female participants who contended that men were advantaged all worked in the kindergarten service.

Low wages was cited by the majority of teachers (n = 37, 92.5%) as a key explanation for a dearth of men in the early childhood sector. Many participants, both male and female, described early childhood work as providing a good second income, but an insufficient one for a teacher who was a major wage earner. Participants considered low wages to be a major disincentive for several reasons. Men are more likely than women to be the main income earner in their household. Men who wish to provide for their family would find it extremely difficult on an early childhood teacher's wages unless they were mortgage free or not the breadwinner. Men who are used to being high wage earners would not likely consider early childhood teaching as a career. Further, men in other occupations with less training can earn more than early childhood teachers (for example, computer technicians and plumbers).

The view is still pushed for women that if you don't do well at school you can look after kids. If men don't do well at school they go into a trade and still earn more than the women (Desmond).

Along with wages the career structure was considered to be a key explanation for the few men in early childhood education (cited by 28 teachers, 70%). The comments of male and female teachers, and of kindergarten and childcare teachers were similar. Their comments took the form of complaints and observations, for example that early childhood teachers now undergo the same length of training as primary school teachers and yet have fewer opportunities for career advancement. Also mentioned was the limited number of senior positions available for teachers, particularly within the kindergarten service. Only twelve participants (30%) did not think that the career structure deterred men from entering the early childhood field. Neither Monica nor Dirk had thought about what their service's career structure was and therefore felt that it was irrelevant. Len and Tammy felt that men entered early childhood as a vocation rather than as a career. The remaining eight participants believed that the career structure in their particular early childhood service was all right and provided sufficient challenge.

Only 10 teachers (n = 25%) agreed that men might not enter teaching because they did not want to be accountable to women, and only 10 teachers agreed that men would worry about women working against them to protect their own positions. As to whether women teachers would regard and treat men as a threat to their own positions, common responses were "there are so few of them anyway" (Helen). The male participants generally did not support the notion of women working against them to protect their own positions and viewed their work as non-competitive. For example Don said "I work with my senior staff. I don't work under them ... You have to see yourself at least as an equal, as a professional". The men also did not see themselves as a threat to women's power base in the early childhood sector. As Doug said "in financial terms and in terms of power I'm not interested in having a higher position". Pierre mentioned that there "is not a long career prospect in promotions anyway" within the early childhood field; and this may help explain the greater number of men to women who held ambitions outside of their early childhood service (as reported earlier). Five male teachers stated that they preferred working with women, they liked the way women worked

and found they related to them better than they did to other men. For example Desmond commented, "Females have a better temperament when they are angry. I prefer to be under women. My previous boss in plumbing was really quite abusive".

Training

Difficulty for men in gaining entry to training and, if accepted, then their experiences during training was an explanation for male under-representation according to 12 participants (n = 30%). An additional three participants referred to problems for men in the lecturing and content of courses (discussed during a different part of their interview). In regards to acceptance for training it seems that this was a substantial problem for male teachers who applied for formal training at a Teachers' College (now called College of Education) 13 or more years ago (Don, Ivan and Noel). More recently, Elle mentioned that she knew of a man who should have been accepted for training but was not, due she believed to the prominence of the Ellis abuse case in the media at the time.

The various difficulties reported by men during their training were to do with their training being female oriented, with women lecturers teaching feminine values and with feminine expectations for student learning and behaviour. For example, Ivan indicated that he would not have completed training if there was not another man also doing the course with him because of the way the training was set up "at College it is all female lecturers. I found the training was very female oriented. It is very difficult to be a male in that environment". Although Desmond did not speak about his training experience during his interview his female colleague Irene did:

I know there were times when Desmond felt uncomfortable about his NZCA training. There were things like group hugs and talking about women problems and they never tackled the men's side of it. There were days when he would come back from his training and say that he felt uncomfortable about something that had happened.

Denis outlined a personal problem men can face in being a minority within a predominantly female intake of students, and this problem may not be recognised by course directors and lecturers:

There were five of us when I went in and three men separated during the course. Now I'm not saying the course was the cause of that but there's 90 trainees and 85 of them are women, so you get to know and meet a lot of women

Men's Experiences

The evidence suggests a problem of men feeling alienated and not necessarily part of their field's concerns and activities because it is dominated and defined by women. For example Doug said "there are a lot of issues which are perceived to be early childhood issues which are actually women's issues, to which I don't feel necessarily connected to personally". This was echoed by Ruth who said "often when they (teachers) are standing up for more pay it is like we are the women in this area and we are underpaid because we are women".

Not surprisingly 14 out of the 20 male participants (70%) told of negative sexist experiences and situations. Male teachers can be excluded on purpose from social conversations by colleagues. For example Dirk reported "at times a female staff member has turned to me and said, Oh you wouldn't understand you're a male". Male participants reported feeling "out of place" at staff socials, parent meetings and in-service training courses or other large meetings of early childhood teachers. Ivan's story of his experience at a kindergarten association staff meeting suggests just how out of place it is possible to feel as a man:

We had a woman come in as guest speaker, I think it was from rape crisis. We had a few lesbian teachers in the Association and it turned into an anti-male meeting. They were going to castrate all rapists and blah blah blah The window was open behind me. I was seriously thinking of getting out of it. A couple of women apologised to me afterwards because they realised they had got a bit carried away (Ivan)

At an otherwise all female gathering men usually do not appreciate their presence being noticed if this means that "staff hook you about being a male" (Noel). Being singled out for attention is sexist according to Don:

When I go to meetings I am the only man in the meeting. I often get singled out. They often say, "good afternoon ladies ... and 'oh' gentlemen" ... I find that quite disturbing, that I may be being treated differently because I am a male ... I don't want the others to feel that I am getting special attention and I don't want special attention anyway.

Seven men mentioned sexist joking and commenting from female colleagues as something they disliked, which as Doug said "in a reverse situation some women would see it as harassment". However, for these men they considered it to be a necessary part (perhaps evil) of being a minority in a predominantly female situation. Two men, Desmond and Glen did not welcome acceptance from their female colleagues as an "honorary female". As Glen explained "I have to get used to being in a female environment and they should get used to a male being in their environment. They shouldn't make anyone an honorary anything". Some male teachers reported embarrassment or displeasure and some female teachers reported feeling disgruntled on occasions when visitors to their centre approached the male teacher first assuming him to be person in charge or the "boss".

Personal Effects on Men

Given the range of social pressures it is interesting to look at the effects of these on male teachers. Eight of the 20 men (40%) consciously tried not to display traditional masculinity either by playing down their maleness and trying to fit in and be like their female colleagues, or by showing themselves to be enlightened sensitive and caring men. For example Brent's rationalisation was:

I consider myself to be privileged to work in a female profession ... I play down my maleness because I am an early childhood worker, first and foremost. I never get into my set of thinking. I have deliberately never done that; especially being a minority. I've resented people saying that I've got the job because I'm a man. I haven't pushed myself forward. I've been to meetings which are all dominated by men and I've attended all female meetings. I've seen that they do run in different ways. I've gained experience in how women run a meeting.

And Desmond's explanation was:

I am masculine but I am not everybody's picture of a male childcare worker. I am interested in a lot of sport. I am more enlightened than most guys. The average male wouldn't be here, wouldn't be doing this. Up until I met my partner and I got into childcare I was the typical average kiwi bloke. It's given me a view of what women firefighters have gone through in going into a male area.

Men may also have to work harder than women (8 men reported that they had to work harder and this was also perceived by 1 women), as Martin explained "men have to work harder we are semi-having to justify ourselves being in early childhood". There is an expectation that men should be able to demonstrate their competency in traditional female household type work:

Alan does not cook I discovered the other day. So now he is going to learn to make pikelets with the children (Elle)

They pick on you like "Len doesn't like doing the dishes". It's not true. I then have to prove that I do the dishes. They can get away with not doing the dishes (Len)

A common problem was the loneliness and isolation that men felt in not having other men in their workplace. For David, for example, this meant that whenever he saw another man at a training workshop he always headed to him to have a chat.

Only two male teachers spoke about feeling good about being in a minority. Pierre admitted to getting an ego boost out of people noticing him and commenting about it being different to see a male teacher. Doug felt "a certain amount of prestige in a reverse sort of a way. I'm one of few. Yes you can say I am one of the few (men) brave enough to do it and carry on with it".

Some participants commented that in the 1990s being a male early childhood teacher was not considered wonderful or exciting because of the publicised childcare abuse cases. It is no wonder then the male participants generally found it difficult to either feel proud of their position or that they were ground breakers for future generations of men to work in the area.

When I first went to an early childhood conference in 1978 I got job offers from all over the country. A man in childcare was seen to be wonderful. They said it was more natural or that men were needed in childcare for children with solo parents who never see a man (Len).

Before the abuse cases came up things were different, it was exciting. People would ring up or come around and look and say "wow you've got a male staff member, how wonderful! Then after the abuse cases I hear new parents say "oh, you've got a male staff member" in a disapproving tone (Irene).

Advice to a Young Male Considering ECE Teaching

Participants were divided about whether a teenage male would be wise to take up early childhood teaching. On the one hand, six participants (15%) believed that a young male should definitely not enter early childhood teaching for reasons of low pay, lack of opportunity for promotion, and the child abuse issue. A further 18 participants (45%) thought

that it was vital that a teenager first be informed of what he might be getting himself in for and, only then, if he still wanted to be an early childhood teacher would they support him in doing so. The problems which participants would inform a teenager about were: the stressful nature of working with young children, the risk of being falsely accused of child abuse, working in a mostly all female occupation, little career opportunity, low social status and financial reward. On the other hand, 16 participants (40%) believed that if a teenager really wanted to become a teacher then he should go for it and experience the rewards of working with young children. For example Grant's advice was "go after it. Do it. Be proud of it. It is a gift. Not everyone can work with children".

CHILD ABUSE

Management Suspicion

Although only 14 participants (35%) rated management suspicion of the motives of men who wish to work in early childhood education as an explanation for male under-representation in the field, as many as 22 participants (55%) discussed their knowledge and, or personal experience of employer negative attitudes towards male job applicants. There appears to be a single reason for employers favouring women applicants over men, and that is a belief that men are more likely to abuse children than women. For example, at Irene's childcare centre when they were looking to employ a long-term reliever the best applicant for a position was a male, but because they already employed one male teacher a committee member refused to permit the employment of a second male because she did not like the idea that "two males could end up in the bathroom with children". Glen offered a solution to reduce the risk employers may believe they face in employing a man. He mentioned that in the United Kingdom applicants for all early childhood positions are first screened by the police.

Personal Fears

Ongoing fear of being accused of sexual abuse of children was greatest amongst childcare men (n = 8). It was also greater for men in the South Island (n = 9) compared to men in the North Island (n = 5). In total 14 men (70% of men) and 9 women (45% of women) feared an allegation of sexual abuse. The child abuse issue is therefore affecting women as well as men, but more men than women are worried about it. For example Desmond referred to an incident where he felt the finger would be pointed at him first rather than a female colleague:

There was a staff member who accidentally scraped a child's penis with her fingernail and what if that child had told his parents? If there was any suspicion people would instinctively think of me more than the female staff. I have to be more careful than the other staff.

Three main problems were reported by the male participants. First was social fear and hysteria surrounding child abuse and men working with young children. For example, parents calling to enrol their child and being put off by seeing or a hearing a male teacher. Second, was the pressure of knowing other male teachers who left the field due to public reaction towards male teachers during and after the Peter Ellis trial. Third, was the feeling amongst some kindergarten participants (including some women) that they did not have management support. Some participants spoke of Associations supporting parents first and not believing and supporting teachers should an accusation of abuse be made.

To cope with the pressures surrounding the child abuse issue male participants employed either one of the following two strategies. Fourteen out of the 20 men rationalised (at the intellectual level) that it is simply paranoia (affecting them at the emotional level). In other words they treated it as a fear within themselves and they accepted that they could be accused but got on with their work regardless. Six men denied the possibility of accusation because, as they stated, precautions had been taken in their centres and they were confident that an allegation against them would be very unlikely.

The participants' fear of a sexual abuse allegation was far greater than their fear of either an emotional or physical abuse allegation. Only three men (15% of men) and one woman (5% of women) felt that they could possibly be accused of emotionally abusing children. The examples given by the participants all involved the possibility of parents misinterpreting what they might say to children or the context in which they said it. Five men (25% of all men) and two women (10% of all women) believed they could potentially be accused of physical abuse. The five men worried about being in situations where they might have to physically restrain a misbehaving or violent child. Desmond also worried that he could accidentally hurt a child because of his size and strength.

If a child falls off something and I reach out to grab him, I might grab a bit harder than other staff. I've turned around quickly and sometimes sent a couple of kids bowling. I even caught a parent once in the face with my elbow when I turned quickly.

The two women, both from childcare centres, worried about situations when they might have to smack a child and how this may be interpreted by an observer (for example, when a baby is holding its breath).

Personal Experiences

During their interviews 11 out of 20 men (55%) recounted actual experiences of being treated as a child abuser or feeling that they were regarded as one. Their stories are individual and can not easily be summarised. Here is a sample of the range of experiences, in the participant's own words:

I had a situation in my first year of teaching where I had a lady who said under no circumstances was I to change her daughter if she wet herself. I thought "oh god I wish I wasn't a male" (Ivan)

We had a childcare worker, who was a parent reliever, say that I shouldn't be involved in changing children's pants. For about a week I felt guilty about it. I had been working for seven or eight years at that stage and I had never had any problems, never any interest in child abuse (Bent)

On my first day in my first job there was a lot of difficulty in the kindergarten and some parents left because I was appointed there. No one had met me. It was partly because they weren't sure after the Civic situation (Denis)

There has been a case of suspected abuse at this centre. I remember when I was first informed about it, I went home and all those paranoid thoughts flashed through my mind - what am I doing here? What are the media going to do with me? I was soon put at ease when the staff had a meeting. The whole incident ended when it was discovered that it was an innocent child playing between two children ... Being a male at the time of the Christchurch Civic Creche incident made me feel very vulnerable and my mind took off in all directions (David)

I have been assaulted because I am a male early childhood worker. An acquaintance of one of my ex-flatmates, her brother came back to Wellington from Australia just as the hospital creche case was going to court and he got a little bee in his bonnet. I had never met him. He came around to the door with a name tag on his shirt and said he was doing a survey and asked what I did. I said "childcare worker", and he just burst into the house and started beating me up. He was saying "I know what you are doing" (Martin)

Effects on Practices and on Children

All men reported that the abuse issue influenced their behaviour and what they did with children in some way. For example, Martin reported that he did not spend time talking with children during nappy changing, unlike his female colleagues, because he felt that if he took too long it would look suspicious. Kim reported also that Martin preferred to be in group rather than individual situations and that this meant that he did little in the way of quiet times and sitting down and interacting individually with children. "It is safer to be in open space and do the obvious things", said Kim. Grant spoke about the difficulty of forming close relationships with children, because he had a girl who told her mother that she loved him and the mother reacted negatively to this. Len said that he could no longer take a small number of children for a special walk alone as another adult had to be with him as part of the centre's abuse prevention policy.

The fear of possible accusation of sexual abuse seems to have influenced, but not stopped, male participants' natural showing of affection towards children. As reported above more men than women worried about being accused of sexual abuse, however it seems that providing a caring role model for children was nevertheless still important for the male participants. Hayley, for example, summarised the dilemma for men in the following way:

Doug I know feels difficult about cuddling a child, which is really sad. He still does cuddle them but he's very aware of what the outcome could be, whereas I'll just pick up a kid without worrying.

In response to a scenario of what they would do if a girl tripped and was crying but not physically hurt, 14 men (70%) and 13 women (65%) talked about cuddling or physically comforting the crying girl in some way (ie. picking her up, sitting her on their knee, or bending down and putting their arm around her). Most of these participants, however, spoke about how they needed to be careful when holding children or showing affection. Alice's explanation for example was:

I would walk over and put my arm around her but not cuddle her. I would not cuddle her because of the sexual abuse thing, in case a parent sees and it gets blown out of all proportion.

In response to a scenario of what they would do if a boy was crying and did not want to play due to the death of his pet at home, only four women (20%) and one man (5%) said they would give the boy a cuddle or show some form of physical affection. Lucy, for example, would "read him a story and give him some body contact because he probably just needs comforting". The majority of both male and female participants ($n = 35$, 87.5%) explained that they would show the boy understanding and provide words of comfort, and many also mentioned reading books about the topic of death to the boy.

It seems that the participants, both male and female, may not respond to boys with affection as much as they respond to girls. For example, Kim said that for the crying girl she would "... go up and make a nice big fuss and give cuddles and say how it must feel", whereas for the crying boy she would "try to acknowledge his right to be upset and talk about that ... and then try to divert him to something else". It would be interesting to carry out this study again and swap the boy and girl in each scenario around to test whether teachers are less affectionate in their response to boys, or whether their decision to provide affection is influenced by the situation rather than the child's sex.

In regards to changing children's clothes, 13 men (65%) would not change a child's pooey pants and instead they would ask their female colleague or call the child's parents to do this. If a child wet her pants 15 men (75%) would ask a female colleague to change the girl or give a dry pair of pants to the girl and ask the girl to change herself. Two men, Glen and Ethan, were not permitted by their employers to change children and both men were happy with this because they felt it reduced the possibility of being accused of sexual abuse. A third man, Denis, chose not to change children's pants or clothes for his own protection. For the other male participants changing children's nappies or clothes was felt to be a necessary part of their job. For example Doug explained:

During the hysteria after the Civic Creche case for a while I didn't change children at all. I said that I didn't feel comfortable about doing it. On the other hand I felt really bad about opting out of one of the nastier jobs.

Female participants considered the risk of being accused of sexual abuse was lower for them and they often assumed responsibility for changing children, as Ivan discussed:

Even for boys I am not doing as much changing as I used to do. It's something that the female teachers often just volunteer to do the changing. I think they realise the situation now.

Since male participants felt constrained in forming close relationships with children and in individual situations with them, it follows that this in turn limits children's opportunities to engage in meaningful interaction with their male teachers. Further there is an issue of what children learn through observation that men in early childhood centres can not be trusted in the same way as women. In Len's words, "dressing and undressing never used to be a problem but now we are teaching children that it is a problem when a man teacher is there". Also of concern is children's right to privacy and physical and emotional comfort. For their own protection four participants from different kindergartens stated that if they changed a child's pants they did this in a public area, usually in the main playroom area. As Tania mentioned this is unfortunate for children who may be embarrassed or upset. If children pooh their pants another seven participants from five kindergartens phone parents to come to the centre and change their own child, unless it is near the end of the session and they know parents will be arriving shortly in any case.

PRACTICES AND RELATIONSHIPS WITH COLLEAGUES, PARENTS AND CHILDREN

Challenging Sexism

Participants were not asked specifically about the impact a male teacher may have on sexism in the centre, however the theme emerged from data analysis. There is a possibility that men simply through being male or through their special efforts may elicit increased awareness of sexism in their female colleagues. Kim suggested that "just the presence of a male helps us (women) to realise our sexism". Noel described how, as a male, he is in a unique position to identify sexism in his kindergarten:

I noticed how the dramatic play area was getting so female dominated in the end we threw most of it out and spread the rest through out the whole kindergarten ... It was getting so sexist that it had to be dealt with and no one else had ever noticed it.

Five male participants (25%) felt they provided a role model for fathers that it was "okay" for men to be involved in children's care and to have "male" interactions and expectations for children (eg. talking about rugby players with children). Glen, for example was pleased that "the fathers appreciate having me to talk to because I think the same way they do about their children's behaviour". Alan mentioned that he talked with the children

"about things that fathers might talk about like "did you see Jonah Lomu score that try". They (fathers) see this and know they can too. Whereas otherwise fathers feel that there are certain things they can't talk about".

Len, David and Brent expressed concern about violence in society and believed that through their involvement boys in particular learn alternative caring behaviours. According to Brent "unless you have a gentle, caring male role model the images of males on the media or violence in the home are followed by children". In addition to providing a caring model to children David was very concerned to help boys address their negative feelings and behaviours. David explained, "When conflicts involve boys I like to be there to ask them to use their voice, express what they are feeling and not to use their fists".

Male teachers clearly challenge traditional stereotypes in children by showing that men can be effective early childhood teachers. While male teachers are providing a non-traditional role model female teachers are not necessarily doing the same. On one typically masculine task of changing an electrical fuse just under half the women (n = 9, 45%) compared with the majority of men (n = 17, 85%) said they would look at or attempt to fix a fuse if it blew when the children were present. Of the 11 women who would not personally see to a blown fuse, four mentioned that they would ask their male colleague to attend to it. Of the three men who would not change a fuse, Ivan said he would ask his female colleagues if they knew how to do it before he did it, Alan did not know how to change a fuse and indicated that he would leave it to his female supervisor, and Warren would call an electrician.

In terms of physical strength there was not a clear gender difference in response to a scenario of what to do if a box was too heavy to lift alone. Kim was the only woman who admitted that she might ask her male colleague (Martin) before asking her female colleagues. What is interesting is that two men, Glen and Warren, would not ask a woman for help to lift a heavy box. Both said they would ask another man to help: Warren a male parent and Glen a man

from the mower shop across the road from his centre. Noel and Alan stated that they were usually relied on to shift heavy objects as this was expected of them as men. Dirk reported some additional sex role expectations:

I get to climb up ladders a lot more, hanging hooks up. It is an expectation that I should do this and that I know how to fix things. I wonder who would have done it before because I tend to get those sorts of jobs.

Staff Dynamics

An argument for male early childhood teachers is the largely positive influence on women teachers of having at least one man on the staff. Twenty participants (10 men and 10 women, 50%) described advantages, namely:

- Greater decisiveness in decision-making
- Less inter-personal conflict amongst members of the staffing team
- The availability of a different (male) perspective on various issues and problems
- Greater variety of topics for conversation between teachers, and
- More fun and vibrancy in staff dynamics.

Participants suggested that men on the whole tended to:

- Gossip less than women or not participate in gossip
- Be less likely to back stab colleagues
- Not be as bitchy, catty or petty
- Be less likely to hold grudges against colleagues (forgive and make up more quickly)
- Be more honest and direct in expressing views, and
- Treat difficult situations more lightly, which helps for situations to be dealt with calmly and effectively.

While the presence of men can be really positive for women teachers 11 participants (27.5% including 2 men) reported difficulties and minor irritations, for example, men's body odour, whether the staff toilet seat should be left up or down, disagreement over the level of tidiness needed in the centre, and doing a fair share of cleaning and tidying up. There were some specific concerns expressed by two of these 11 participants. Ruth felt that she could not disagree or argue with a male teacher at her centre because his responses were aggressive towards her at times, however she felt that she could have frank discussions with the second male at her centre (who participated in this study). Mary felt that her male colleague (who was the supervisor of her centre) tried to exert too much dominance over the women staff and that this dominance was contrary to how she believed women worked and preferred to work together.

Impact on Parents

A man on the staff has definite advantages for parents and parent-centre relationships according to 28 participants (70%). Only three participants (7.5%) mentioned problems or potential problems in men's relationships and work with parents. The problems mentioned were to do with relationships with mothers, such as how mothers may interpret a personal compliment given by a male teacher and how mothers may regard it to be inappropriate for a

man to give suggestions on the care of their children. From participants' comments about the positive impact a male in contrast to a female teacher has on parents, the main differences were in regards to relationships with fathers and father involvement in the centre. The positive differences included:

1. Male teachers are more likely to be seen by parents as a friend or partner in their child's education rather than as a "teacher". (In other words, male teachers are in a non-traditional role, and this helps reduce the gap between professional and parent).
2. Male teachers are more likely to approach fathers for a chat and go out of their way to greet them and make them feel welcome as men (eg. a handshake).
3. Male teachers allow fathers the opportunity to talk with another man about their child and their caregiving practices.
4. The presence of a male teacher benefits fathers who find it difficult to relate with women or who feel self-conscious in a female environment.
5. Male teachers provide support and friendship for fathers who are single parents and often lonely in this minority role.

Impact on Children

In terms of benefits for children the reasons for male involvement outweigh the reasons for non-involvement. Nine of the 40 participants (22.5%) mentioned problems or difficulties, mostly minor, in men interacting and working with children.

Most of the reported problems for children associated with having male teachers were to do with children initially being shy or scared of a teacher who is male, in Ethan's words:

There's been times when a child who has not had much contact with men before or they have been abused by their father and they have come into the preschool and been more stand offish to me than they are to female staff. So I don't say to them "gid-day, how are you?" or the kid will freak out. I wait until they actually come in with a smile on their face and say "there's Ethan" and they start talking with me.

A problem of children transferring any difficulties they may have with their father to a male teacher, is not likely to change, but this could also be true of children having difficulties with their mother and transferring these to a female teacher. One man (Desmond) spoke of his height as possibly being physically intimidating to some children, but he was aware of this and knew to get down to their level. One woman (Ruth) felt that men were not as responsive to children's physical care needs as women because they were often involved more in playing with the children than women were. This, however, could also be seen to be an argument for more of a balance of male and female teachers to meet the full range of children's needs.

The positive differences male teachers make for children provide strong arguments for improving the balance of men to women working in early childhood centres. Participants placed most emphasis on the advantages of a male teacher for handling and reducing children's negative behaviour, and also being more likely to relate with children in a more fun way often than female teachers:

Men are less stuffy and rigid with children than women are. For example, if Richard is telling a story he will tell it in a way that is slightly different, slightly off-beat ... he has more fun with the children (Roxanne)

The children tend to listen more to Gary. He is probably a bit louder and deeper than us, but not much. I have said to particular children to jump off the table and not be standing there and they will see Gary come in the door and they will jump off the table (Tammy)

At the kindergarten we've had a lot of behaviour problems and we really relied on Ivan in last straw situations ... They (children) knew they couldn't overstep the mark with him. I think a lot of the children ... they are used to their mothers at home and they listened more to Ivan (Tania)

Children were reported to like physical interaction and playing with a male teacher in a way that is not always encouraged by a female teacher, for example:

It's more physical interaction and contact with the children. Like they give me a good tap to say they have arrived. I can be standing there and they walk up behind me and bump into and whack into me. It's just their way of saying "good morning" or "hi" (Warren)

I do more physical activities with the children, running and playing rugby or soccer. The kids thoroughly enjoy kicking a proper ball instead of the plastic things. During my first year of training I visited a centre where one day the kids were bored out of their trees and they didn't want to be doing puzzles and all the rest of it. I was out in the garden. Virtually all the kids started chasing after me. We ran around and then sat down and I said "right I'm going to be a lion now". The staff looked at me as if I was stupid, but that was what the kids wanted (Glen)

Male teachers tend to get more involved in children's play activities, working alongside rather than supervising children. For example Elle said:

He is really good in the family play. He gets dressed up. He's really active and vital. The kids get such a kick out of playing with him and they will hang around him for company.

Participants reported that men are more likely to give children greater latitude for more active or boisterous behaviour. Male teachers also often provide more physical activities partly because children expect this of them (it seems due to their own social conditioning) and partly because of men's own personal interests (eg. in sports, carpentry, construction, gardening and technology). For example:

We do play more games, chasing games and kicking the ball because I am a bit of sports nut (Desmond)

The other day a child came up to me with a rugby ball, now I don't really play sports. I thought it was ironic that I was standing in the playground teaching this child how to throw a rugby ball. I did wonder at the time was it because I was male? (Dirk)

I get all the mechanical stuff out for putting hooks up and maintenance things like that. I get a crowd around me "what are you doing?", "Got to drill a hole here to put this here" (Martin)

Perhaps the major benefit of male teachers is, in Warren's words, that "boys find that they can do things in the kindergarten that they probably wouldn't do otherwise, they can be more caring".

Men through their involvement with children as teachers may be helping to promote social change in the roles of men and women, as Tammy noted:

The really positive thing is the boys who say when I grow up I want to be a kindergarten teacher just like Gary. You get the girls saying that but not the boys. So the boys are thinking its all right, Gary is doing that.

SUMMARY

The backgrounds of men and women in this study differ in respect to how they came to be working in early childhood education, their household income earning status, and their ambitions. It seems that there are a range of factors influencing men's involvement in early childhood education and various levels and forms of discrimination operating against men. All male participants expressed a very strong desire to be early childhood teachers, however for a few an accumulation of pressures meant that they were in the process of changing or intending to change career at the time of being interviewed. Without doubt, the child abuse issue is a major one, affecting both male and female teachers but especially childcare male teachers, and kindergarten and childcare male teachers in the South Island. The Peter Ellis Christchurch sex abuse case was referred to often by the participants in their interviews, and it appears that this has had a major impact on teachers and on the recruitment and retention of men. There are numerous benefits for children, parents (particularly fathers), and staff in having a male teacher or colleague.

Given this study's findings the under-representation of men is a problem since men can make different and positive contributions as teachers. Men are not only under-represented they also experience discrimination.

DISCUSSION

A central premise of the literature review was that bringing men into early childhood education could potentially facilitate social acceptance of men in the child care role and thereby help to transform gender relations. This premise receives support from the study's findings that:

- a) Female teachers who have worked with a male teacher appreciate men's contributions and capability, for example male teachers bring into the centre another perspective or way of looking at problems and issues.
- b) Female teachers can become more aware of their own sexism and sexism in the centre environment through having a teacher male on the staff (Skeen, Robinson & Coleman, 1986).
- c) Male teachers tend not to be interested in power and promotion and enter the field knowing they will be working with women as part of a team (Robinson, 1988).

- d) Male teachers demonstrate to children's fathers that men can be involved in child care and show by example how to interact and behave with children (Meyerhoff, 1994).
- e) Parents' biases against men working with young children can be effectively challenged through the example and effort of male teachers.
- f) Through contact with and observation of male teachers boys and girls see that men are as capable as women in the child care role (Adams-Jones, 1995; Clyde, 1995; Robb, 1993).
- g) In becoming early childhood teachers men break with traditional role expectations and this can up-turn the stereotypes held by their own families (in most cases their parents) and peers (usually their male "mates").
- h) Male teachers are just as likely as female teachers to be family men with children of their own. They are more likely to be the main breadwinner in their family than female teachers. It is not correct to label or stereotype all male teachers as pedophiles, gays, or "girls".

In short, the findings indicate that the under-representation of men in early childhood education is a problem because of the contributions that male teachers can make. The problem of under-representation is not helped by instances of direct and indirect discrimination against male teachers, as told by the participants in this study.

Some employers, including some kindergarten associations, were reported to be biased against employing men. Low level sexual harassment aimed at men seems to be going unchecked in the early childhood field. The stories of some participants about experiences during training suggest that the early childhood field does not recognise or want to recognise that men may differ in their needs and perspectives from women. Men do not seem to be encouraged or openly supported to choose early childhood teaching as a career, either by the teaching profession or the wider community (Naish, 1995). There appears to be a case for the inclusion of men as a target group in policies for equal employment opportunity within the early childhood education sector and equal educational opportunity within teacher training institutions and organisations. This study lends support to Clyde's (1995) claim that the early childhood field has yet to practice what it preaches: to support human diversity and equity among people.

The fact that female participants with experience of working with men were supportive of the idea of men in early childhood teaching shows that the problem is a wider one and is not only an issue for the early childhood field. Other studies have shown women, namely female students and administrators, who have not worked with men hold biased views in regards to men's capability and suitability (Clyde, 1995; Gordon & Draper, 1982; Skeen, Robinson & Coleman, 1986). More men in the early childhood field would help influence female teacher perceptions about the capability of male teachers and also the perceptions of male and female parents. More male teachers would also reduce loneliness which was a source of dissatisfaction for some male participants (Robinson, Skeen & Coleman, 1984).

A key finding of the study is that if there was a positive public image of men as early childhood teachers before 1990 (as reported by some participants) it does not exist now. The sex abuses cases this decade and the resulting media publicity, particularly surrounding the Civic Centre case, have damaged men's involvement in the care and education of young

children (Robb, 1993). Unless something is done to improve the image of men in early childhood teaching it is unlikely that male teachers will ever hold more than the 2 percent of full-time equivalent positions in kindergartens and childcare centres which they previously held up to 1992. Further, in 1992 the childcare service had a much higher proportion of male to female teachers than the kindergarten service but this is not the case now. This study found that men working in childcare centres are having more difficulty than men in kindergartens over the abuse issue. The media publicity surrounding the Civic Centre case seems to be the most likely explanation for the drop in the participation of men in childcare centres (from 2.5% of full-time equivalent positions in 1992 to 1.4% in 1995 and still only 1.5% in 1996).

More male childcare participants and more male South Island participants worried that they could be falsely accused of sexually abusing children. While a number of female participants were also worried, it was more of an issue for men. However, in the early childhood centre setting Faller (1998) suggests that women, along with men, can be involved in child sex abuse. The turnover of childcare men was much higher than other groups, with childcare men having an average of 6.4 years less experience than their female colleagues in childcare. None of the male participants working in the South Island had entered the early childhood field after 1990. This suggests that men in the South Island may be more reluctant than men in the North Island to become or to remain as early childhood teachers. It also seems to suggest that early childhood centre employers in the South Island, particularly within childcare, are possibly more biased against men now.

An area for further research is employer attitudes towards male applicants for positions and the extent to which employment practices and policies are discriminatory. Just over half of this study's participants mentioned either their personal experience or knowledge of employer suspicion and negative attitudes towards male job applicants. According to Chisholm (1995) early childhood centres could be reluctant to employ men because they see this as a financial risk, for example the Christchurch City Council has been faced with considerable costs after the Civic Centre case.

Some participants reported policies and expectations for male teachers which could be regarded as discriminatory. For example, Hancock (1996) cites a case in Norwich where a male teacher's claim of sex discrimination was upheld. He had complained about his centre's policy requiring all nappy changing and toileting of children to be done only by female staff. It is understandable though that in this two study two male participants were actually pleased that their employer did not allow them to be involved in toileting and changing children's clothes as they perceived this as protection from child abuse allegations.

Probably it is the children who inadvertently miss out most because of the child abuse issue. If children see that male teachers do not carry out particular tasks or that a female teacher always has to be present when they, for example, supervise children sleeping then this conveys hidden negative messages to children about gender roles (Hancock, 1996). Of concern for children's physical and emotional well-being are practices in some centres, mostly kindergartens, where teachers change children's pants in full view of others in the centre and leave children in soiled pants until such time as their parents arrive to change them. Another concern is that male teachers seem to be avoiding caregiving routines and spending time with children in individual situations. Smith's (1996) research has pointed to caregiving routines being a key situation where joint attention between children and teachers commonly occurs. Fear of sex abuse allegations seems to be having an adverse effect on the occurrence of warm reciprocal interactions between male teachers and children, and hence also opportunities for extending children's intellectual development.

The level of wages, low social status and prestige, and small career structure within early childhood services are factors which are inter-related and seem to have a more significant effect on men's entry and retention in the early childhood field than on women's. This finding supports the general literature on differences in men's and women's participation in paid employment (Briar, 1994; Novitz, 1987). More male than female participants were the breadwinners in their family. Female participants tended to view early childhood teaching as a vocation or something that they had always wanted to do, in contrast to male participants who mostly regarded it as a career. For men for whom money become a problem, for example due to increasing family size, the wages received from early childhood teaching were not perceived to be enough. One male participant had already decided to retrain for primary school teaching and was excited by the career structure that primary teaching held for him. Another male participant was looking at secondary teaching. More male than female participants reported that if they left the early childhood field it would be for more money. The poorer employment conditions in the early childhood field compared with other sectors of education deter men from becoming and remaining teacher, and impact mostly on women as they make up over 98% of the early childhood force (Dunn et al, 1992).

The economy emerged as another possible factor influencing men's participation in early childhood teaching. This is surprising as the role of the economy has generally not been noted in other research studies. Three quarters of the male participants found their way into the early childhood field because they were out of work or unable to find permanent employment. Half of these male participants started training or gained a position in an early childhood centre between 1989 and 1991 at the height of the economic slump. Had the men not been out of work they would have been unlikely to consider early childhood teaching or to have been open to the suggestion of trying it. The recent and continual improvement in the New Zealand economy may explain why the proportion of men to women in kindergarten and childcare services has not returned to at least 1992 levels after the negative media publicity on child sex abuse in childcare centres. The men in this study reached the decision to enter teaching on average later than the women. Freidus (1992) suggests that in recruiting male teachers it could be useful to look to men who are in careers in other areas but who in mid-life may be looking for ways to make a meaningful contribution to society.

A balance of men and women in teaching may not in itself provide a complete solution to changing the gender biases that children learn socially, because early childhood centres are located in a social context, and it is within society that gender biases exist (Seifert, 1974; 1988). Some male participants found that children expected them to behave in "masculine" ways, such as kicking a ball, because they were men and this is what men are thought to be good at. Female teachers need to be providing a more androgynous model, for example, showing they are as capable as men in changing a light fuse or in more physical activities with children such as climbing and running.

Robinson (1988) reported that male teachers down play their masculine behaviours, and are concerned to show gentleness, warmth and sensitivity. Only 40 percent of the men in this study consciously tried not to show their masculinity and could be described as "profeminist" (Goodman & Kelly, 1988). Other male participants valued the display of masculine traits and behaviours, but equally wanted to show or prove that they could do what women do and just as well as women. They worked in similar ways as their female colleagues (Seifert, 1974). It seems that male teachers largely compliment and add to rather than take over or change the practices and philosophical basis of early childhood centre programmes.

Of note is the finding that male teachers are more often involved in children's play activities and have friendlier or less formal relations with children than female teachers. According to socio-cultural theory on children's learning these are two ingredients for successful scaffolding of children's developing understanding and knowledge base (Fleer, 1992). There is a possibility that male teachers may be more effective partners in children's learning than female teachers but observational evidence is needed to confirm this. It could be that male teachers simply have more "fun" with the children as a female participant claimed, and therefore they may not be any more effective than their female colleagues who by their own admission tend to stand back more from children's activities.

Given (a) the fact that men make up a very tiny proportion of the kindergarten and childcare teacher workforce, (b) this study's findings on the positive contributions of male teachers and yet the biases and difficulties they face in contrast to female teachers, and (c) the pervasive effects of the child abuse issue and the social belief that it is not safe and appropriate for men to work with young children - the question remains: What is to be done? Here are some suggestions on what could be done based on past research and participants' comments in this study:

1. Make early childhood teaching a more attractive career option for boys and men, for example by:
 - Actively promoting early childhood teaching as a rewarding and appropriate career for boys at high school level and for men considering a change of career.
 - Improving the employment conditions, including wage equity between primary and early childhood teaching.
2. Change public perception of men's involvement in early childhood work, for example by:
 - Publicising the positive benefits of men being involved in young children's care and education.
 - Including statements in advertisements for early childhood teachers that applications from men are welcome.

3. Recognise men's perspectives and needs in the early childhood field, for example by:
 - Supporting men during their training and in the field as teachers (eg. place male students in the same class group, include men's issues along with women's issues in courses, organise opportunities for male teachers to meet).
 - Ensuring male teacher representation on selection and appointment committees, centre management committees (if these have teacher representation), and key early childhood education committees (eg. teacher groups and Education Ministry advisory committees).

A word of caution. This study was designed as an exploratory study to identify broad issues and problems. The study is not intended to be representative of the experiences and views of all male early childhood teachers. Participants were drawn from kindergarten and childcare services only and selection was not random due to the difficulty of locating male teachers. The study is also not intended to represent the views and perceptions of all female early childhood teachers, as only women who worked with a male participant were sampled.

CONCLUSION

The evidence indicates the importance of addressing the lack of male early childhood teachers. Of particular concern is the biases and difficulties which male teachers face because of their sex, and how these can impact on their work and on children. The under-representation of men is a problem which negatively effects the ability of early childhood services to provide "quality" programmes and on the working conditions and status of teaching in the early childhood sector. Bringing more men into early childhood teaching has the potential to assist in transforming gender relations as boys and men, girls and women, learn and see that men can care for children and work successfully in a traditionally female domain.

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APPENDIX A - INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Name: _____ Centre: _____

BACKGROUND DETAILS

What is your age please: _____

Would you describe yourself as: Pakeha/Maori/Samoan/Chinese/_? _____

Sex: Male / Female

Are you the main (largest) income earner in your household? Yes/No _____

Are you a parent? Yes/No

Your teaching qualification(s) : _____

No. of NZQA points: _____

Any university courses/degrees completed: _____

No of years and months you have worked in the EC field ____ yrs ____ mths

How long have you worked at this centre/kindergarten? ____ yrs ____ mths

What hours do you on average work a week? _____

Wage **before** tax weekly ____ or fortnightly ____ or monthly ____ or yearly ____

No. of other men employed at your centre/kindergarten: _____

No. of other women employed at your centre/kindergarten: _____

Age range of children at the centre/kindergarten: __ yrs __ mths to __ yrs __ mths

Your job title / position: _____

What activities are you not involved in at your centre - those which are the responsibility of other staff? (eg. administration, cleaning, nappy changing)

CHECK TAPE-RECORDER IS RUNNING

SOCIAL POLITICAL CONTEXT

1. Some people say that men are not discriminated against in entering the early childhood profession and in gaining promotion, while others say that men are discriminated against. What is your point of view on this?
2. Is the small number of men working in early childhood an issue which the field needs to address? Or is it not really an issue?
 - *If it needs to be addressed then* (a) why is it an issue, and (b) why do you think it has not been fully addressed yet by the profession?
 - *If it isn't an issue then* what are the key issues in the early childhood field which should be addressed?
3. From my readings about men working in early childhood overseas, I have compiled a range of reasons as to why few men participate in early childhood work. Here is the list of possible reasons. Can you tell me how relevant each of the reasons are as explanations for the low presence of men in early childhood work in your city/or rural area? (*Give page to interviewee. Encourage them to explain why they think a point is relevant or not*).
4. What might be some further reasons for the low presence of men in EC?
5. What advice would you give to a teenage boy thinking about EC as a career?

PERSONAL BIOGRAPHY

6. What were you doing before you started working in the early childhood field?
7. What caused you to enter the early childhood field? (eg. was there anything or anyone in your upbringing that gave you an affinity for working with young children?)
8. What position do you ultimately hope to achieve (a) In early childhood? (b) In another area of education, (c) Out of the education system.
9. How long do you imagine you will continue working in EC?
10. Why might you decide to leave the EC field?
11. Have you worked in another centre or setting with young children previous to your current job? *If yes, Why did you leave?*
12. What were the reactions of people who knew you, to your decision to work with very young children (eg. reactions of family members, relatives, friends)?
13. How would you describe yourself - as strongly masculine? Strongly feminine? A person who has both masculine and feminine traits? Or in some other way?

TEACHING ROLES AND RELATIONSHIPS

- 14 What differences does having a man on the staff make to staff relations?
- 15 What differences does having a man on the staff make to mothers or fathers involvement in the centre/kindergarten, and also to staff relationships with parents?
- 16 What differences does having a man on the staff make to children?
- 17 *Female interviewee:* Have there been any situations or occasions when you have wished that all the staff were women? Can you describe these please?
- or
- Male interviewee:* Have there been any situations or occasions in your work when you have wished that you were not seen as a man, but rather as one of the staff? Can you describe these please? (eg. parents' preconceptions, sexist innuendos by other staff, child being scared of him because he is a man etc)
- 18 Tell me some more about what it is like to be a man (or woman) working in the working in the early childhood field? (eg. social expectations, behaviour, roles, issues, problems)
- 19 Are you afraid of being accused of one or more of the following forms of child abuse:
- Sexual abuse
 - Emotional abuse
 - Physical abuse
- 20 I'll now read some scenarios for you to say what you would probably do in each
- a. A young girl trips over and cries loudly but does not appear to have hurt herself. What would you do?
 - b. A young boy is crying, his pet died in the weekend and he clearly is not interested in being distracted into joining a play activity. What would you do?
 - c. A child standing at the water-play has wet her pants. What would you do?
 - d. A box you want shifted is too heavy and you are scared you might hurt your back if you tried to lift it . What would you do?
 - e. You are reading a story to two children when you smell a poohey smell. It is possibly the little boy on the right of you, but you can't be 100% sure. What would you do?
 - f. The lights go out - it appears the fuse has blown. What would you do?

😊😊 **Thank you so much** for putting this time aside to talk with me. Is there anything you would like to add which we haven't talked about?

FOR QUESTION 3

How relevant are each of the following reasons as explanations for there being few men working in early childhood centres in your geographical area? Please discuss the relevancy or otherwise of each of the points below.

- a. The level of wages early childhood staff are paid
- b. The career structure in the early childhood sector
- c. As boys, men learn that early childhood work is feminine and therefore few consider it as an acceptable career
- d. Men fear that they are likely to be accused of child abuse because they are men
- e. Managers or committees appointing staff are suspicious of the motives of male applicants
- f. The financial costs or risks to centres (or kindergarten associations) of employing a male staff member
- g. Men are less likely to be accepted for early childhood training courses
- h. Once accepted into training, more men than women do not complete their course
- i. Women are naturally more competent with young children than men
- j. In general, men tend to prefer more prestigious or higher status professions than early childhood work
- k. Most men don't like working under women, and they know they would likely work under women in taking up early childhood work.
- l. Men worry that women might work against them to protect their own positions
- m. The social perception that men who work in EC centres must be gay

Any further reasons?