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Male educators in early childhood care and education in Johannesburg : lived experiences and policy issues.

Mackay, Ntsiki

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

This study aims to shed light on a seemingly invisible group – men working in early childhood care and education (ECCE) settings. As it appears, no research on this topic exists locally so the study hopes to contribute to ECCE literature and debate by exploring what life is like for male ECCE educators, what motivates them to do this work, what challenges they face and if they would like to see changes in the sector. It hopes to inform policy in the future by uncovering the needs of this minority. As social policies must stem from social needs, the main task is to uncover what these are for men in ECCE.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT AND RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

> "We are used to the expectation that men will take a greater part in the upbringing of their own children – as fathers. But the idea that men should play a greater part in taking care of other people's children – as a job – is less familiar." Owen (2003, p. 1)

It is this unfamiliar territory that this research aims to explore. As with the rest of the world the early childhood care and education (ECCE) workforce in South Africa is what Rolfe (2006, p. 1) calls 'a gender ghetto'. With the exception of Norway and Denmark (about 8%), men constitute 1-4% of the ECCE workforce globally (Sumison, 2005). ECCE data for Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) is limited and focuses primarily on enrolment rates. Statistics on the gender breakdown of the workforce are apparently non-existent. The major sources of workforce and educational statistics in South Africa[1] do not hold data on the gender breakdown of the ECCE workforce. This could be attributed to the largely informal nature of the sector in South Africa, where ECCE is provided primarily by private, informal institutions, NGOs and faith based organisations, thus formal data collection is limited.

The international literature on male early childhood educators identifies key issues about the importance of men's involvement in this workforce (Murray, 1996; Cameron, Moss & Owen, 1999; Cooney & Bittner, 2001; Sumison, 2005; Rolfe, 2006; Cameron, 2006). From a child development and educational perspective, male educators purportedly have a positive

[1] StatsSA, the National Research Foundation's Data Archive and the Department of Education

influence on children's learning and development. Similarly from a gender perspective, men working in traditionally female roles can challenge gender stereotypes. Various governments in the North have attempted to promote gender inclusivity and increase male participation (with limited success) and cite the reasons above for doing so, but it is primarily due to labour shortages, and thus economic necessity, that they pursue this agenda (Cameron, 2006).

The terrain in South Africa is different. The experience is one of a *skilled* labour shortage. In the past decade the ECCE sector has been earmarked as a route for women's employment and empowerment through programmes such as subsidised Learnerships and the Expanded Public Works Programme (September et al, 2006; Altman, 2008). Policy documents on ECCE either refer to practitioners as women or are gender neutral, but never explicitly to men in these roles. Much of the policy reflects the status quo rather than pioneering a progressive vision of what the ECCE sector could or should look like. Given the infancy of this sector in South Africa, and the immense task the Government post-1994 has had in transforming and delivering services, perhaps the exclusion of the discussion of increasing men in the sector is purely pragmatic. With a pre-primary enrolment rate of only 33% (Garcia, Virata & Dunkelberg, 2008, p.13), inadequate infrastructure and facilities, and an undertrained and underpaid workforce, the participation of men is low on the policy agenda. But why is there a virtual absence of the topic in the literature and debates on ECCE?

Campaigns such as Men as Partners have demonstrated the importance of focusing on men's behaviour change to compliment gender work on women's empowerment. There is also a burgeoning discourse about fatherhood in South Africa, which challenges the notion of fathers as providers and not carers (Mkhize, 2004; Richter, 2004; Richter & Morrell, 2008). Central to this research is the idea that early childhood is a crucial time to inculcate positive attitudes and behaviour on gender. Male participation in ECCE is beneficial for children, for men and for society in general. The study also assumes that there are many men who might like to pursue a career in ECCE but face various barriers, such as social stigma. Patriarchy might also hurt some men when life choices are constrained by society's norms and attitudes.

1.3 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study was to shed light on the experiences of male ECCE educators in Johannesburg, and initiate discussion on whether gender inclusivity in the ECCE sector is a relevant policy issue in South Africa.

The secondary objectives were:

- To gather accounts of the lived experiences of male ECCE educators in Johannesburg
- To explore the needs of male ECCE educators in relation to government policy

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1) What are the lived experiences of male ECCE educators in Johannesburg?

2) Is there a need to promote greater gender inclusivity in the ECCE sector in South Africa?

1.5 OVERVIEW OF THE METHODOLOGY

The research approach employed in this study was qualitative, exploratory and descriptive in nature. The aim was to investigate and capture rich descriptions of previously unexplored phenomena, free from any presuppositions or hypotheses. Due to the limited sample size the study cannot claim to offer any generalised analysis of male educators' experiences, rather the aim is to give contextualised accounts of the South African experience. Thus said a case study research design has been used in order to gain "Thickly described case studies [that] take multiple perspectives into account and attempt to understand the influences of multilevel social systems on subjects perspectives and behaviours" (Babbie and Mouton, 2011, p.281). The primary units of analysis are 6 male ECCE educators as well as 2 key informants – academics working in ECCE and gender and 'masculinities' studies. The research used non-probability sampling methods – snowballing, purposive and judgement sampling - to find participants. Data was collected through recorded face-to-face interviews (except for one recorded telephone interview) and used semi-structured interview schedules. Data was firstly analysed using a thematic content analysis method and then Mouton and Babbie's (2011) analytical strategies for case study research (see Section 3.9).

1.6 DEFINITIONS

ECCE - EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION

There are a variety of interchangeable acronyms to describe early childhood services - early childhood development (ECD), early childhood education and care (ECEC), early childhood care and development (ECCD), and early childhood care and education (ECCE). In this paper the term ECCE will be used in line with the Education for All (EFA) definition. Although in South Africa the most common blanket term is ECD this arguably covers a wide range of services whilst this paper is concerned with men working with preschool children in care and educational settings.

ECCE covers a broad range of care and educational services for preschool children that are funded and delivered either by the private, public or non-profit sector, and straddles the education, social development and health sectors. There is also variation in the age range to which early childhood relates. In South Africa early childhood is defined as 0-9 years, but for the purpose of this research the focus is on male educators working with children of *preschool* age, 0-6 years.

1.7 ORGANISATION OF THE REPORT

The report is divided into six chapters. Chapter One gives an overview of the study; an introduction to the problem and rationale for the study, the research methodology as well as an explanation of definitions. Chapter Two presents the literature review and outlines the theoretical frameworks that underpin the study. Chapter Three takes an in depth look at the research methodology including; the research questions, aims and objectives; an outline of the research approach and design; an explanation of the units of analysis and their sampling procedures; an outline of the research instrument and the pilot study; method of data collection and analysis; research limitations and ethical considerations. Chapter Four presents the results and findings of the study, first looking at the case study profiles and then discussing the results in line with findings from other studies discussed in the literature review. Chapter Five makes recommendations for future research and policy and concludes the summary.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The literature on men's involvement in ECCE covers a wide range of issues and disciplines. This review attempts to give a holistic account of the various discourses surrounding the topic. Section 2.2 and 2.3 explore the history and evolution of ECCE internationally, regionally and nationally. These sections also look at critical discourse on ECCE, culture and mainstream developmental psychology. Section 2.4 is a brief situational analysis of ECCE in South Africa, and an analysis of ECCE policy through a gender lens that reveals the invisibleness of male educators in ECCE policy and practice. Section 2.5 then hones in on the issue of men's participation in ECCE, looking at international trends and recent research on men in ECCE. The main themes emergent in the current literature are: gender and equality (Section 2.6); child development (Section 2.7); child abuse and protection (Section 2.8); male educators experiences (Section 2.9) and labour market and recruitment issues (Section 2.10). Each topic will be examined in greater depth and from a South African perspective. Section 2.11 then explains the multi-disciplinary theoretical framework guiding the study. The Chapter concludes with a summary in Section 2.12

2.2 THE EVOLUTION OF EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION

ECCE is a relatively new area of public policy and tracing its development empirically is challenging as "*we are confronted by the paucity of national data, let alone comparative, cross-national data*." (Kammerman, 2006, p.3). That said, Kammerman's (2006) historical analysis of the global evolution of ECCE points out three key eras that were crucial in the development of ECCE – the nineteenth century, the 1960s and the 1990s. Educational philosophers such as Rousseau (mid 1700s), Pestalozzi and Froebel (early 1800s) are seen as the founders of ECCE philosophy and practice, but their ideas did not enter the mainstream during their lifetimes. The rapid urbanisation and industrialisation that occurred in the North and certain parts of the colonised world in the nineteenth century led to conditions that called for protective services for neglected children and those of poor and working class mothers.

How ECCE was delivered was a far cry from how its founders had envisioned. Amongst the middle classes services were more in line with their vision. In Europe kindergartens and in Anglo-American countries nurseries enhanced early childhood development. So depending on ones position in society ECCE was either a protective, residual welfare service or an enriching educational experience.

The 1960s are identified as another significant period for ECCE, "the end of colonialism, the establishment of independent states in Africa, the dramatic increase in female labor force participation rates, the extensive developments in child and family policies in Europe and the U.S., the debate between care vs development" (Kammerman, 2006, p.3) all had a huge impact on ECCE provision. Of all these factors, arguably the biggest catalyst for a commitment to the universal expansion of ECCE services was women's entry into the workforce which rapidly increased since World War II.

Finally, historical analysis (Kammerman, 2006; Garcia, Pence & Evans, 2008) highlights the 1990s as a period of a renewed and intense focus on ECCE. The 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), The 1990 Jomtien Declaration; the 1990 Dakar framework; the joint sponsorship by UNESCO, UNICEF, UNDP, and the World Bank of the World Conference on Education for All (EFA); the launching of UNESCO's Global Monitoring Reports; the World Summit for Children; and the launching of the OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development) Thematic Review of Early Childhood Education and Care, all contributed to the reformulation of ECCE as a universal right and an essential component in a nation's development strategy. As Garcia, Pence & Evans (2008, p.2) assert, before the CRC "throughout most of the world, early childhood was largely invisible as a state-policy concern. Children, in the eyes of most states, were an appendage of their parents, or were simply embedded in the larger family". The formal adoption of the CRC made children visible and introduced the notion of them as individuals in their own right. The EFA agenda, which asserted that "Learning begins at birth" (UNESCO 1990, art. 5), also shifted attention to earlier stages of education. However, two decades later most countries are still struggling to enact these basic rights. In sum, ECCE has evolved from an educational philosophy, a child protection measure to encompass ideas about human rights and development. These are broad global trends but every country has walked a unique path in providing ECCE services to its young. We now focus our attention on how ECCE developed regionally in Africa, and locally in South Africa.

2. 3 EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION IN AFRICA

2.3.1 Indigenous Early Childhood Care and Education in Africa

ECCE as public policy and professional practice is a Western import brought in during colonialism. In pre-colonial times ECCE existed in a different form, as Prochner and Kabiru (2008, p.123) recount, "In the traditional society, education of the child was governed by family and community traditions and by social structures. Each community had its own education system to socialize children into its culture, values, and traditions. The child's education began at birth and continued through various stages and age groups, with a system of education defined for every stage". Learning was experiential and took place in the home, village or community rather than in defined institutions such as the nursery or kindergarten. As well as transmitting cultural values such as belonging, cooperation, mutual dependence, obedience, respect and social responsibility this approach to ECCE aimed to furnish the child with livelihood skills (Dembele 1999; Kilbride & Kilbride 1990; Mwamwenda 1996). Although mothers had the main responsibility of child-rearing, fathers, elders and neighbours also participated in this process.

The relevance of this to the research topic is that historically children grew up in communities and spent time with men and women, even if women were more engaged in the caring aspects of child rearing. Most children today spend their time in education or care settings run exclusively by women. Moreover, many children spend their time in female-headed households, further compounding the lack of interaction with men. Without idealising traditional societies that were often marked by oppressive practices there may be some elements that could be useful to recover. These include raising children in settings with more balanced gender and generational profiles so they can have a rich variety of experiences to draw from.

2.3.2 Early Childhood Care and Education under Colonialism and Apartheid

Colonialism brought to the majority of Africa mission schools that sought to tear apart these traditional practices. From the nineteenth century infant schools were set up in indigenous communities and "reflected and supported Western ideas concerning race, childhood, education, and religion. European missionary societies aimed to convert and "civilize" young African children through the study of Christian scripture and the adoption of a European worldview, for example, by stressing individualist as opposed to collectivist values."

(Prochner & Kabiru, 2008, p.117). ECCE provision for settler children varied over time and place, either following the rigid infant school model, the kindergarten approach or the nursery school model. Infant schools were originally developed in the nineteenth century for poor working class children in Britain and were not as play or child-centred as kindergartens that were based on Pestalozzi and Froebel's ideas and originated in mainland Europe. Later in the early twentieth century Margaret Macmillan's model of the nursery school gained prominence. Like Montessori, Macmillan's approach was more child-centred and play-oriented but focused more on health, and hygiene (ibid).

While ECCE provision for settler children was deemed essential and provided either privately or publicly, colonial and apartheid governments in the 20th century largely neglected ECCE programmes for indigenous children. The International Bureau of Education's 1961 survey of preschools in South Africa finds only four private preschools for African children not subsidised by the government. In terms of child care (as opposed to educational) institutions, it found 30 crèches in townships around Johannesburg that were mostly privately funded and were more akin to feeding programmes for children under the supervision of mostly untrained staff. Such a survey today would reflect a change in the quantity but not the quality of provision as Section 2.5 outlines.

2.3.3 Early Childhood Care and Education and Neo-Colonialism

This dire situation seemed set to be alleviated post-independence when "most independent African countries produced coordinated national development plans or frameworks" (Aidoo, 2008, p.34). These included plans for ECCE, the most well-known and successful example being the Kenyan Harambee preschools (Kabiru, 1993) that managed to remain steadfast in the midst of neo-colonialism. Other countries were not as resilient and quickly found their plans hijacked by neo-colonial agendas in the form of Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs). The adverse impact of SAPs in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) is that short-term projects were imposed and coherent national social policies abandoned. SAPs and their successors the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are also very sector focused, rather than multi-sector, which is essential for holistic child and social development. As Aidoo (2008, p.34) highlights "from the perspective of ECD, the PRSPs generally have no child focus, analysis of child poverty and deprivation, or attention to families. Early childhood care and education are generally missing, and women and gender are marginalized, except as regards girls' education. This shortcoming is serious if structural

poverty in Africa is to be addressed." In their study, Garcia, Virata, and Dunkelberg (2008, p. 14) found that **"**Analysis of national data from 47 SSA countries confirms the strong contribution of early childhood factors to success in primary school. Average primary completion rates in these countries are associated with pre-primary enrolment and with health and nutrition status early in life." However the preschool gross enrolment ratio in SSA "is extremely low, averaging 12 percent, which is far below the developing world's average of 36 percent." The only positive one can draw from this study is that "total enrolment rose in absolute numbers between 1999 and 2004." (ibid) and hopefully this is a trend that will continue.

Although it has been exposed to the forces of neoliberalism, South Africa has not been subject to SAPs like its regional counterparts, and has followed a different trajectory post-Apartheid. As Aidoo (2008, p.36) suggests "What may be necessary is an integrated framework or plan of action to ensure coordination, intersectoral priority setting, and effective implementation, and to fill notable gaps. South Africa has chosen this path. It engaged in a process to develop an integrated national strategy to increase understanding and commitment to ECD by policy and decision makers at national and local levels." The outcome of this chosen path is the National Integrated Plan for ECD, 2005–10 (NIP 2005) which will be examined in more detail below. But what is significant is whether the model of child development that this integrated plan follows is culturally appropriate.

2.3.4 Towards a Democratic and Culturally Appropriate Early Childhood Practice

The dilemma Africa faces in many areas of development is balancing the demands of being a global player while trying to hold onto, or even recover its identity. ECCE as defined by institutions such as UNICEF or the World Bank is arguably not a 'universal' model, rather a Eurocentric one, moulded on Western educational philosophies, developmental psychology and a Eurocentric concept of the child and childhood. As Pence (2011, p. 114) articulates:

> "Rather than grounding international child agendas in culture and context, as one might expect (and hope for), international development leadership accepted psychology's largely universalist understandings of child development. Such understandings were rarely challenged despite their foundation in Western populations and socio-philosophical constructs and their lack of global representation (Arnett, 2008; Kim & Park, 2006; Levine & New, 2008; Pence & Hix-Small, 2007). The universalist nature of the CRC and EFA complemented and reinforced the universalism inherent in the dominant discourse of general psychology at the time"

Indigenous child rearing practices as described above still prevail in various forms, as Callaghan (1998, p. 30) asserts, "Indigenous culture is alive and ever changing", but it has been severely undermined by colonialism. The continent has suffered harsh community and family breakdown as well as the denigration of its cultures and traditions *vis a vis* the modernisation project. One would agree with Nsamenang and Dawes (2008, p.135) that our challenge is to develop "culturally sensitive approaches in early childhood development". Callaghan (1998, p. 31) describes the current situation concluding that there are "many South Africans who head up educare organisations operating from a predominantly European worldview....this has caused a blindness and inability to see and value Africans in the African context, even though they have already successfully practised childrearing within the framework of an African culture for centuries".

Reclaiming these practices are crucial, as Smale (1998, p.3) explains, "culture determines the nature of many elements of young children's development environments. When that is accepted and understood, the need is to recognise the importance of cultural conceptualisations of childhood, and of the child development theories and practices that follow on from these in any given culture". What seems to be lacking is a deep interrogation of who we are as a diverse people, our histories and traditions and how we can take the best parts of those, such as concepts of cooperation, mutual dependence, and social responsibility and incorporate that into new, progressive practice. There are a few successful examples of culturally sensitive ECCE approaches such as the Harambee model previously mentioned and the Te Whariki approach in New Zealand, which has managed to fuse multi-cultural values and adapt diverse traditions into the twenty-first century. These are incredibly political processes. A major concern is the seemingly apolitical nature of ECCE, and of practitioners themselves. Child development is not divorced from politics, everything is connected. As Moss (2007, p.12) says:

> "But we could extend the areas opened up to politics, that are re-politicised as legitimate subjects for inclusive political dialogue and contestation: the image of the child, the good life and what we want for our children; what education can and should be; gender in the nursery and home - these and many other subjects can be the subject of democratic engagement within the early childhood institution, examples of bringing politics into the nursery. It is through contesting dominant discourses that the fourth political activity can emerge: opening up for change, through envisioning utopias and turning them into utopian action"

Moss mentions "gender in the nursery and home" as an area that needs our attention, he also speaks of utopias. One imagined utopia for ECCE is that settings become a microcosm of the society we desire, that reflect our values and provide rich and inclusive learning environments. Men in ECCE settings may help to challenge gender stereotypes and provide children with a rich learning experience as opposed to a homogenous female-staffed setting. But the notion of men doing 'women's work' is considered 'modern' and culturally inappropriate by some so the issue needs to be explored on a cultural level too. One can argue that the notion of children being raised and taught by men and women is not such a 'modern' concept and is something desirable that we should work towards.

2.4 EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA: A SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

2.4.1 Legislation, Funding and Implementation

According to the 2008 African Child-friendliness Index[2] (African Child Policy Forum, 2008), South Africa ranks seventh out of 52 African countries. This is based on a rating of its child protection legal and policy frameworks; efforts to meet basic needs, assessed in terms of budgetary allocation and achievement of outcomes; and the effort to ensure children's participation in decisions that affect their wellbeing. But on global standards such as the Human Development Reports index on child welfare we have a long way to go. The Children's Act (Act 38 of 2005) is the key legislation relating to ECCE provision in South Africa and was seen as a significant step towards realising children's constitutional rights to care and education. "During 2009 the Department of Social Development finalised the development of regulations under the Act, including national norms and standards. The Children's Act places an obligation on the state to provide partial care (crèche) and ECD programmes, among other care and protection services." (Department of Basic Education, 2010, p.6)

[2] Ranking: 1.Mauritius 2.Namibia 3.Tunisia 4.Libya 5.Morocco 6.Kenya 7.South Africa 8.Malawi 9.Algeria 10.Cape Verde (African Child Policy Forum, 2008, p.6).

"Child-friendliness is a manifestation of the political will of governments to make the maximum effort to meet their obligations to respect, protect and fulfil children's rights and ensure their wellbeing." In order to rank the extent to which African governments are child-friendly, the African Child Policy Forum (a) developed a methodology for the organisation and analysis of available and relevant information; (b) collected data on various aspects of child wellbeing and on as many policy variables as possible for 52 African states; and (c) assessed their individual and relative performance at a point in time (2004-2005) and over time (i.e. between the periods 1999-2001 and 2004-2005).
(African Child Policy Forum, 2008, p.6).

Personal experience of working in ECCE in Gauteng indicates that this new legislation while commendable on paper can hinder the development process. One such example is that to access government subsidies ECCE settings must comply with new child:staff ratio regulations. The only reason centres have not been meeting these ratios is because they cannot afford to pay the required number of staff, not because of ignorance or disregard for the law. Parents already struggle to pay fees, in some communities observed unemployment stands at about 70%, putting up fees is not an option and most centres run at a loss. So it is a vicious circle and regulation is becoming more restrictive and counterproductive. There are currently very few Government initiatives to support the process of compliance which in most cases means budgets that were allocated for subsidies are unspent because very few centres are compliant, and this money cannot be reallocated to support the compliance process. Sound policy and legislation exist, but there is a lack of financial resources and the political will to allocate resources appropriately. This is echoed by studies (Budlender & Proudlock, 2009; Newman, 2007) that draw attention to the significant gap between the funds required to achieve the objects of the Children's Act and the funds actually allocated to provincial Departments of Social Development through the budget process.

If an ECCE centre is compliant the subsidies available are a paltry R9-R12 per child a day (Department of Basic Education, 2010), with most of the subsidies being paid to non-profit organisations that provide ECD services. To enact these new regulations an inter-sector national policy framework, implementation plan and monitoring and evaluation framework, the National Integrated Plan (NIP) for ECD has been adopted. The plan includes primary health care services, birth registration, child support grants, and early stimulation offered at home, in community programmes, or at ECD centres. It is driven by the Department of Social Development that coordinates the work of the two partner departments Health and Education. This team reports to the Presidency monthly through the Human Development and Security clusters.

Because ECCE falls under the auspices of several government departments, and because most services are delivered informally it is difficult to obtain reliable data on ECCE. In terms of provision "A survey by the Department of Education in 2000 showed that 57% of ECD services were in community-based sites, 30% in home-based sites and 13% in school-based sites".(Loffell, Allsopp, & Atmore, 2008, p.6). With regards to participation and general enrolment rates (GER) these vary considerably nationwide.

The following Table.1 indicates the GER for 0-4 year olds attending a care or educational institution. For children aged 5 years, the GER in 2008 was 63% (Statistics South Africa, 2008, cited in Department of Basic Education, 2010, p.7). For 6 year olds the GER in 2009 was just 50% (Department of Basic Education, 2010, p.6). In recent years most of the emphasis in ECCE has been on school-readiness and improving access to Grade R (reception year). The Education White Paper 5 (Department of Education., 2001) policy target states "all learners who enter Grade 1 should have participated in an accredited Reception year programme by 2010". Although enrolment has rapidly increased over the past decade this target was not met and has been extended to 2014.

Table 1: Percentage of 0-4 year olds attending ECCE institutions by Province, 2002-2007

Province	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Eastern Cape	9.3	14.2	12.5	17.5	18.8	18.6
Free State	6.8	11.3	11.8	20.4	20.2	21.2
Gauteng	11.9	18.8	18.3	21.7	28.4	24.0
KwaZulu-Natal	4.9	8.1	7.3	7.2	7.9	10.4
Limpopo	5.3	10.1	11.8	13.4	17.6	15.5
Mpumalanga	5.2	8.4	13.1	11.3	13.5	12.4
North West	6.7	11.1	8.9	11.8	8.3	15.6
Northern Cape	3.4	5.1	4.1	9.0	8.6	14.2
Western Cape	10.3	14.1	14.3	19.1	16.0	14.1
National	**7.5**	**12.1**	**12.0**	**14.8**	**16.6**	**16.5**

Source: *Statistics South Africa, General Household Survey, 2002-2007*

2.4.2 The Early Childhood Care and Education Workforce

With regards to the ECCE workforce Loffell et al's (2008, p.6) paper states "The most recent national survey in 2000, conducted by the Department of Education, identified 54,503 ECD workers. ECD workers are not registered or monitored and come from a range of backgrounds. The survey found that 88% of ECD workers had no training, inadequate training or unrecognised training." The NIP "includes the training of ECD practitioners (which is part of government's employment-creating Expanded Public Works Programme)." (Department of Education, 2010, p.6). However, Loffell et al (2008, p.6) have found that "ECD workers fall between the education and social service professions and it is still unclear where they will be located". The NIP does offer training "for at least two practitioners per site in 5,000 registered and subsidised sites in 2006/07, and for extending training to 5,400 unregistered sites in 2007/08." (ibid). These allocations however, only provide for 10% of the

current workforce and it is estimated that the workforce would need to be doubled to meet norms and standards set out in the Children's Act 2005. As a study by the Children's Institute (Budlender & Proudlock, 2009, p.40) states "One of the major challenges preventing rapid budget growth and service delivery expansion in Children's Act service areas is the lack of sufficient social service practitioners", which includes ECCE practitioners.

Another concern is the linking of ECCE training with the Expanded Public Works Programme, which will be discussed in Section 2.6.6. A crucial point is that linking such a vital public service with public works programmes effectively lowers the quality and standard of ECCE. As well as training, there is an urgent need to address the poor working conditions ECCE workers face. In 2000, 50% of the workforce earned less than R500 a month. They experience lack of benefits, long working hours and job insecurity due to non-profit's reliance on donor funding (Loffell et al, 2008). This results in high staff turn-over, which equates to a lower standard of care and education for children.

In sum, ECCE has not received the attention and resources it deserves in the post-Apartheid period. Government acknowledges that since 1994 "There has therefore been fragmented and uncoordinated service provision in the ECD sector, which has resulted in children's and family needs not being met efficiently." (Department of Education, 2005, p.3). General enrolment rates and targets are not a reliable measure of a countries performance in ECCE. A measure of quality, and greater attention on what and how our children are learning and developing in settings is needed. The low status of ECCE reflects the low status of women and children in South Africa (Newman, 2007). The majority of the non-profit and informal sector who deliver 87% of ECCE services feel that Government do not give enough priority to this area and more specifically it is "often overlooked entirely in the Integrated Development Plans (IDP) and budgeting at local government level" (ibid, p.54). "Better data management, budgeting processes and integration into the Integrated Development Plans (IDPs) at district level" (ibid.) are areas that need urgent attention.

2.4.3 Early Childhood Care and Education Policy under a Gender Lens

The Education White Paper 5 on Early Childhood Education (Department of Education, 2001, p.8) states that **"**Intervening in the earliest years helps to reduce the social and economic disparities and race and gender inequalities that divide our society." One such intervention could include promoting gender inclusivity in the workforce. Yet male practitioners are wholly invisible in policy and planning. Firstly, the general paucity of reliable data in ECCE in South Africa extends to data on the gender breakdown of staff; this kind of information is not collected by the relevant departments of research institutions such as StatsSA.

Secondly, an analysis of three key ECCE policy papers: 1) Education White Paper 5 on Early Childhood Education, (Department of Education, 2001); 2) the National Integrated Plan for Early Childhood Development in South Africa: 2005–2010 (Department of Education, 2005); and 3) Guidelines for ECD Services (Department of Social Development, 2006) reveals that male practitioners are not acknowledged as a marginal group that should be supported and encouraged. The Education White Paper 5 has more references to gender than the other papers but here gender relates more to learners and girls. In the NIP there is one reference to gender; ECD workers and practitioners are termed gender neutrally; and there is no discussion on gender inclusivity in the workforce.

Finally the Guidelines for ECD Services make no reference to gender and also refer to practitioners neutrally. This arguably reflects the assumption that all ECCE practitioners are female, as male participation in the workforce is totally absent from these papers. The only reference found discussing men's involvement came from a non-governmental source the Early Learning Resource Unit (ELRU) who advocates that "More attention must be paid to the role of men in the lives of young children starting from the prebirth stage of development. Men must be allowed access to jobs as ECD practitioners as illustrated in the FCM Programme[3] where men are playing vital roles." (Newman, 2007, p.54). So why are these discussions absent from Government's agenda?

It could be argued that improving legislative and policy frameworks; the coordination of service delivery; access to ECD services; inequities in provisioning; the variable quality of ECD services; and increasing human and financial resources (outlined in the NIP 2005-2010) to meet the high demand of ECCE are greater priorities. In the development of ECCE in

[3] Family and Community Motivators Programme

other countries, men's involvement only came to the fore almost a century after norms and standards were in place. But this approach is linear and sees development as a step-by-step process, whereas the process should be holistic, and a clear vision (the utopia) set ahead. It seems though that male practitioners are not part of tomorrow's vision, as they are absent from today's discourse and debate. If we look at the countries with the highest rates of well-being they are also the countries with best practices in child and family services. Scandinavian countries such as Norway and Denmark have double the rate of male participation in ECCE and have clear targets and programmes to double that rate (Haugland, 2011). While not proposing copycat development, learning from best practice, borrowing elements and localising it can be beneficial. Moreover, it is argued that creating a balanced workforce is part of the objective of 'improving the variable quality of ECD services'. Cameron et al (1999) and Rolfe (2006) support the view that this enriches children's learning experience, and that of staff. This study is an attempt to bring this issue into today's debate and hopefully into tomorrow's vision.

2.5 MEN IN EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION

2.5.1 International Trends

ECCE has been described as a 'gender ghetto' (Equal Opportunities Commission, 2003, p. 3, cited in Rolfe, 2006, p.103), a state of affairs that applies throughout the world. According to Sumison (2005, p.109) "In many Western industrialized countries, the percentage of male early childhood educators continues to hover around 1-4%." An exception is countries that generally demonstrate best practice in children's services, such as Norway and Denmark where males make up a larger proportion of the ECCE workforce. An Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) survey (2006) gives detailed figures on the gender breakdown of the ECCE workforce's of member countries but reliable and comprehensive data for regions such as Asia, Africa and Latin America are hard to come by. This does not imply that men in ECCE are not an issue in these regions as the discussion in Section 2.5.2 outlines.

There are some significant trends that have been observed by Cameron et al (1999), the first being that men are less likely to participate in jobs with the very young, the very old and those involving very intimate care. "Compared with male employment with other types of 'people' work, such as social care, nursing and teaching, men are least represented in childcare (2%),

midwifery (less than 0.5%) and as care assistants with elderly people (9%)" (Cameron, 2006, p.71). Secondly, on staffing in children's services it appears the younger the children are, the higher the gendering (ibid). Cameron (ibid) attributes these trends to "A complex mix of factors...including professional status, cultural meanings about care and the age of the cared-for persons"

2.5.2 Emergent Research Themes

We should look beyond the statistics and question why participation is so low. What are the factors at play in countries with higher rates of participation, such as Denmark? While a detailed comparative analysis is beyond the scope of this study, unpicking the 'why' is crucial to this study and previous research in other countries serves as a useful guide. In an attempt to create a holistic account of this issue in South Africa various themes were identified in the international research that guided the development of the research methodology and instrument. A much cited study is Murray's (1996) article *Men in child care and the social construction of gender*, which investigates the gendered nature of ECCE and the way in which it reproduces 'institutionalized gender inequality'. One of the most comprehensive sources is Cameron et al's (1999) book, which looks at discourse about whether men should work in ECCE, what role men model in ECCE settings, and if and how men's participation in the workforce is different than women's. It also looks at issues on recruitment, retention, professionalisation as well as child protection. Cameron's (2006) article is an extension of this work. Cooney & Bittner's (2001) study focuses more on the experiences of men in training and ECCE settings, looking at the issue from the perspective of male educators themselves. Owen's (2003) commentary also looks at male experiences, but broadens the scope to look at issues on gender equality in society, the needs of children, risk and child protection, and the labour market. Sumison's (2005) research gives an overview of the "The debate about the desirability or otherwise of recruiting more men to early childhood education" (ibid, p.110), the study focuses on three areas: 1) presumed benefits for society; 2) benefits for the early childhood profession; 3) advantages for the children. Following from that Rolfe's (2006) study explores literature and debates on men in ECCE and identifies benefits to their participation, barriers to entry and how these might be overcome. Finally a Turkish study (Anliak and Beyazkurk, 2008) on *Career perspectives of male students in early childhood education* was examined that explores the perceptions and thoughts of male students in Turkey.

One of the weaknesses in the review is the geographical focus of the literature which is limited to Europe, the US and Australia. Language limitations are the main factor, the above are the most cited on the topic in English. Literature from Latin America is not accessible, and a study on the issue in Asia is in progress, but not yet published[4]. However, the absence of this topic in research in the African region is stark. In trying to obtain a holistic account of the issue locally the key emergent themes from the literature will be analysed from a South African perspective, these are: male participation and its relation to gender equality and masculinity; the needs of children and child development; child protection; and issues on the workforce, recruitment and the labour market; and the lived experiences of men in ECCE.

2.6 MEN IN EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION: GENDER EQUALITY

2.6.1 Early Childhood Care and Education – A Gendered Occupation

As (Rolfe, 2006, p.106) points out, men's presence in ECCE settings "Brings issues of gender and gender difference to the fore**".** All of the literature on men in ECCE states that ECCE is seen as 'women's work', an extension of mothering, and is one of the most gendered occupations. On the latter point Murray (1996, p.371) articulates, "It is from the standpoint of the analytic construction of gender as a social structure in process that I make the claim that child care is a gendered occupation. Gendered occupations are those occupations that are structured on the assumption that they will be occupied predominantly by workers in a single sex category". While women have made great strides in moving into traditionally male occupations, the same cannot be said for men entering 'women's work'. This is primarily because of social attitudes on appropriate roles for men, and because of the low status and remuneration associated with this work (Murray, 1996; Cooney & Bittner, 2001; Sumison, 2005; Rolfe, 2006; Cameron, 2006**)**. We live under a system where working with children is not valued, which in turn arguably signifies that children themselves are not valued. Even as a female post-graduate I encountered views that working in a preschool was a *waste* of my skills and education. For men, societal norms generally pressure them to live up to the breadwinner and provider roles, with wealth and status being seen as a measure of a man's success. A career in ECCE might not be seen as something for a man to aspire to. The question then is why these norms and perceptions exist, and why they are so pervasive?

[4] *Voices of Men in Early Childhood Education*, SEED Institute. Member of the Asia-Pacific Regional Network for Early Childhood (ARNEC)

2.6.2 Gender, Masculinities and Hegemonic Masculinity

In gender theory the two most prevalent and contrasting perspectives are the essentialist perspective, and the constructionist perspective. The former takes a dualistic approach seeing femininity and masculinity as innate and opposing attributes of women and men. These approaches focus on the individual to the exclusion of social and cultural factors (Sabbe & Aelterman, 2007). This view is considered outdated by many scholars who prefer to see gender as a social construction, as something fluid and variable (Murray, 1996; Sumison, 2005; Rolfe, 2006; Cameron, 2006; Talbot & Quayle, 2010**)**. For Murray (1996, p.371) gender is "being constructed at all three levels: structurally, interactionally, and individually (as a continual self-assessment of one's gendered attributes). Each level is analytically separate yet practically connected." Everyone 'does gender' in their own way, influenced by a myriad of factors, and we embody and enact varying aspects of 'femininity' and 'masculinity'.

The term *masculinities* has been largely attributed to the work of Connell (1994) who developed the concepts of *hegemonic masculinity* and *emphasized femininity*. These ideas emerged twenty years ago out of various discourses on feminist accounts of patriarchy, sociological models of gender and the then nascent field of men's studies. At the heart of this process was a synthesis of various ideas and movements such as, the role of men in transforming patriarchy as partners in the women's movement; the notion that 'patriarchy hurts men too'; and the experiences and struggles of gay men challenging societal norms on sexuality and masculinity (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2006; Hearn, 2010). The theory of hegemonic masculinity provided a "critique of sex role theory; emphasised men's unequal relations to men, as well as to women; paid attention to the implications of gay scholarship and sexual hierarchies; distinguished hegemonic (legitimating patriarchy), complicit (bringing benefit without effort), subordinated (by gender-related relations, for example, gay) and marginalized (for example, class or ethnicity) masculinities; emphasised contradictions, and at times resistance(s); provided an analysis of institutional/social, interpersonal and intrapsychic aspects; and offered an exploration of transformations and social change." (Hearn, 2010, p.169).

Revisiting this concept more than a decade later Connell and Messerschmidt (2006, p. 832) explain:

> "Hegemonic masculinity was understood as the pattern of practice (i.e., things done, not just a set of role expectations or an identity) that allowed men's dominance over women to continue….It embodied the currently most

> honored way of being a man, it required all other men to position themselves in relation to it, and it ideologically legitimated the global subordination of women to men.

The concept of hegemony has been misunderstood, "reduced to a simple model of cultural control" (ibid, p.831) which is static. Rather, the intentional meaning was based on the Gramscian understanding of hegemony as a means to understand structural and historical change. To quote again at length:

> Hegemony did not mean violence, although it could be supported by force; it meant ascendancy achieved through culture, institutions, and persuasion. These concepts were abstract rather than descriptive, defined in terms of the logic of a patriarchal gender system. They assumed that gender relations were historical, so gender hierarchies were subject to change…More precisely, there could be a struggle for hegemony, and older forms of masculinity might be displaced by new ones. This was the element of optimism in an otherwise rather bleak theory. It was perhaps possible that a more humane, less oppressive, means of being a man might become hegemonic, as part of a process leading toward an abolition of gender hierarchies (ibid, p.832)

This is a powerful, holistic concept that should be understood as a dynamic force for conscientisation and social change, not just a fateful analysis of the status quo. Society has progressed in many respects and some ground has been won against patriarchy through social struggles. However ECCE remains a contested space in which hegemonic masculinity and emphasised femininity (understood as compliance to patriarchy) thrive. Yet it is also the space in which we might be best placed to challenge these ideologies. Aidoo (2008, p.33) asserts that "ECD must be seen as the starting point for children to learn and for families and communities to practice gender equality". This is echoed by Government's statement that "Intervening in the earliest years helps to reduce the social and economic disparities and race and gender inequalities that divide our society" (Department of Education, 2001, p.8). Early childhood is a period of intense socialisation and the foundation of learning and a core function of early childhood education is the transmitting of social values and practices. The values enshrined in our Constitution, one of the most gender-sensitive in the world, should be brought to life through our ECCE practice.

2.6.3 Early Childhood Care and Education – a Site for Gender Transformation?

The universal assertion echoed in the literature on men in ECCE is that a gender inclusive workforce "challenges stereotypes and demonstrates gender equality to young children" (Rolfe, 2006, p.4), can "provide an opportunity for children to grow up with a sense of equality" (Anliak and Beyazkurk, 2008, p.310), is, **"**accepted as a means of demonstrating gender equality" (Cameron, 2006, p.68) and "will benefit society as a whole by disrupting prevailing and limiting assumptions about gender roles and responsibilities." (Sumison, 2005, p.110). However, Sumison (ibid) puts forth alternative critiques (Yelland & Grieshaber, 1998; MacNaughton & Newman, 2001) that see such assertions as 'well-intentioned but naıve'. These authors believe that gender inclusivity in ECCE is merely a drop in the ocean and that traditional gender roles are deeply entrenched in broader socio-cultural, political and economic structures. Summarising this perspective she says, "until structural and societal transformation renders these entrenched suspicions obsolete, men working with young children will continue to be regarded as aberrations who have "not got their gender right" (Yelland & Grieshaber, 1998, p. 3). As such, they are unlikely to be powerful agents of gender reform. From this perspective, the presence of more men in early childhood education would do little to change existing dominant gender views" (Sumison, 2005, p.110). Such a perspective comes across as incredibly defeatist. Practice should be guided by values, not just what is thought to work but what is thought to be desirable and beneficial for society. Moreover one would argue that male educators do have the capacity to be 'powerful agents of gender reform' as some of the men encountered in this research have demonstrated. Another crucial aspect that the men encountered in this research demonstrate is the validity of masculinities theory. Each one is unique and has their own way of 'doing gender'.

For meaningful gender reform or transformation to occur, it widely recognised that a concerted effort is needed by men and women to challenge existing socio-cultural, political and economic structures (Chant, 2002). It was highlighted earlier in this section that this study is framed within an "understanding of gender as relational". For Connell and Messerschmidt (2006, p.848) "Gender is always relational", that is masculinity only exists in relation to femininity. Here lies a connection with the deeper concept of *relational* as set out in the theoretical framework, which entails interdependence, diversity and equilibrium. These are key values and concepts that need to be practiced within gender reform. The current system of patriarchy and hegemonic masculinity values individualism, homogeneity resulting in chaos and disequilibrium. Our planet is a testament to this, marred by violence, oppression

and environmental degradation. It is argued that eventually all men pay a price for male dominance and hegemony (Morrell, 1998). Seeking equilibrium entails moving from polar opposites, closer to the centre and also requires an acknowledgment and acceptance of difference and multiple ways of being and doing. There are no striking accounts of humankind actually achieving equilibrium because power struggles pervade the human condition. But does this imply that we must not strive for perfection, harmony and equilibrium? This all sounds idealistic, but again visions and goals must be set high. Men and women must be partners in the struggle against hegemony and patriarchy and must first and foremost recognise each other's mutual humanity, rather than gender difference. As Moss (2007) says in his article *Bringing Politics into the Nursery*, ECCE settings are a fertile ground for practicing gender reform.

2.6.4 'Men-Streaming' and Gender Transformation

Once can discern a process described above of moving away from polar opposites to a more balanced centre. The women's movement has been about empowering women and moving away from emphasised femininity and some women have gained much in the past century although there is still a long way to go. In terms of men's shift to the centre there is also work being done to instil "a more humane, less oppressive, means of being a man" (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2006, p. 832) this is known as 'men-streaming' gender. This came onto international agendas in the mid -1990's:

> "The [1995] Platform for Action emphasises that women share common concerns that can be addressed only by working together and in partnership with men towards the common goal of gender equality around the world." (United Nations, 1995, p.1)

Chant (2002) explains that 'male-blindness' in gender and development policy stemmed primarily from the United Nations Decade for Women (1975–1985), when the 'WID' (Women in Development) movement evolved to counter the apparently 'male bias' in development programmes. She also highlights (2002, p.270) other reasons for gender work not incorporating men such as:

> "the concern to ringfence for women the relatively small amount of resources dedicated to gender; worries about male hi-jacking of a terrain that women have had to work very hard at to stake out; lack of acknowledgement and understanding regarding men as gendered beings; the pragmatic difficulties of incorporating men in projects that have long been aimed primarily or exclusively at women; and last, but not least, an apparent lack of interest on the part of men in gender"

Recent decades have seen a growth in programmes and policies aimed at changing men's perceptions and behaviour particularly in health promotion, violence, and parenting (Hearn, 2010; Morrell and Jewkes, 2011, International Center for Research on Women & Instituto Promundo, 2011). It is also important to note women's roles in maintaining patriarchy. In their recent study on South African female undergraduate students Talbot & Quayle (2010, p.255) state, "researchers in practice tend to treat masculinity as something ''owned'' and produced only by males" however, "analyzing masculinity from women's perspectives may provide valuable insight into the contribution that women make to the construction and maintenance of counter feminist masculine ideals and identity frameworks."

2.6.5 Masculinities and Men-Streaming in South Africa

Morell's (1998, p.630) in-depth historical analysis of masculinities in South Africa states that:

> "The divided history of South Africa has left the region with a highly complex mix of gender regimes and identities. Race, class, geographical location and many other factors are constitutive of gender identities and affect the gender regimes which exist in the institutions and milieux of the country. These have to be central to any gender analysis and are helpful in showing how misleading masculine essentialism is. Masculinities not only differ, they also change over time."

The article offers various historical accounts of masculinities that mirrored the violent and oppressive regimes of colonialism and apartheid. More recent research by Morrell & Jewkes, (2011) sheds light on men across the country in care work demonstrating a less oppressive, more humane form of masculinity. As well as the trade union movement, which has been actively pro-feminist, there have been a host of initiatives[5] in the past decade aimed to change men's behaviour and transform men's attitudes and behaviours especially with regards to gender-based violence.

There has also been some engagement around fatherhood and changing perceptions and expectations about men and their care for children (Richter, 2004; Mkhize, 2004; Richter & Morell, 2008). Most notably, The Fatherhood Project (Richter, 2004, p.5), identified three factors rationalising the need for the project - "1. The very high rates of child sexual abuse, most of which is perpetrated by men; 2. The absence of men from households and low levels of father support for children's care; 3. The increased care needs of children as a result of deaths and family disruption from the AIDS epidemic." As well as work on perceptions the

[5] Such as Agisanang Domestic Abuse Prevention and Training (ADAPT), the 5 in 6 project, GETNET (Gender Education and Training Network) and Engender Health's Men as Partners (MAP) programme

project aimed to "Identify and address barriers to men's engagement with and protection of young children" (ibid, p.6). This work is vital, as Richter and Morrell (2008, p.151) say "men are an essential part of a child's world; men need to hold up half of the child's sky. If we restrict reproductive and child health care, preschool services, and other child-oriented provisions to women, men are unlikely to involve themselves in efforts to improve their children's health and well-being." So perhaps we need to 'defeminise' ECCE settings so men feel comfortable and welcome in those spaces. Male educators' presence could actually prove useful in getting fathers, and other men more involved in children's lives.

These initiatives are needed to sustain gender transformation as recent results from the International Men and Gender Equality Survey (International Center for Research on Women & Instituto Promundo, 2011, p.66) highlight that "South African men appeared more gender inequitable than those from any other IMAGES country[6]." Despite the fact that the men participating in the study had spent their formative years in the newly democratic South Africa, gender equitable values as set out in the Constitution had not filtered down into perceptions and behaviour change.

> "The men generally held patriarchal views and many had been involved in violence and crime. This did not prevent some of them from being involved with child care, but if men did not live with their children, the norm was not to regularly financially support them. Gender equity in South Africa is still a work in progress, but the evidence suggests that change in men's attitudes and practices are in many ways predicated upon broader social development, particularly improvements in education." (ibid. p.67)

An encouraging finding from this research is the correlation between men's gender-equitable attitudes and education, "the most important factor associated with gender equity was education, with incrementally more education resulting in more gender-equitable attitudes" (ibid, p.66), which demonstrates the possibility for gender transformation. But as Morrell (2002, p.391) says gender transformation "rests on an assessment of the state's role and policies" and "is not an ineluctable movement. For it to continue, men (and women) must contribute". Thus changing attitudes on what is perceived as women's work and transforming the gendered nature of ECCE is achievable but requires education and a commitment from both men and women in society, as well as the state in terms of funding, programme development and monitoring results (Haugland, 2011).

[6] Other countries in the study were Brazil, Chile, China, Mexico, India, Norway and Rwanda

A director of a successful programme in Norway working to encourage men into ECCE says "We used to say that the goal is when a male bus driver says to his colleagues that he is very pleased if his son plans to be a preschool teacher. We are not there yet, far from it. But we are moving, and in the right direction." (ibid, p.1).

2.7 MEN IN EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION: CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Discussion in the previous section focused on the benefits of a more balanced ECCE workforce to society as a whole and to men in particular, but what of the key beneficiaries – our children? Government acknowledges that early childhood is a critical developmental stage that, lays "the foundation for [children's] values and social behaviour as adults". (Department of Education, 2001, p.7; Section 1.1.2). One of the recognised role's of ECCE is to transmit society's values and its desired social behaviour to the next generation. Gender equity and equality are key values enshrined in the Constitution and as previously discussed, a gender inclusive ECCE workforce can promote gender equality or transformation in society. The following section examines to what extent, male participation in ECCE impacts on children's constructions of gender identity and stereotypes. Can we argue for more men in ECCE on the basis of the needs of the child? What is revealed is that this is the most contested area of the research topic; as such a claim is difficult to prove empirically because of the diverse range of theories and perspectives in child development research.

2.7.1 Challenging Gender Stereotypes in Early Childhood

The predominance of females in early years settings are seen as "a handicap" (Anliak and Beyazkurk, 2008, p. 310) to children's learning and development. The assumption in some of the literature (Owen, 2003; Sumison, 2005; Rolfe, 2006; Cameron, 2006) is that male participation is beneficial to children because it models gender equity and challenges gender stereotypes that ECCE is 'women's work'. However, much of the research that proposes benefits to children's development due to increased presence of male educators is admittedly inconclusive. Sumison (2005, p.110) suggests that the "paucity of empirical evidence about the impact of male early childhood educators makes it difficult to support or refute these espoused benefits or counter arguments. Despite the potency of the rhetoric, we know little about how young children perceive or respond to male teachers or what impact, if any, male teachers may have on children's constructions and enactment of gender". Similarly, Rolfe (2006, p.105) claims, "Such benefits are difficult to prove empirically because this would

involve surveying young children who are unlikely to be able to articulate such complex beliefs and views. Therefore, the debate suggests the likely benefits to children of a mixed-gender workforce, rather than providing evidence."

2.7.2 Children's Gender Construction and Acquisition

One of the 'likely benefits' proposed across the literature is that men in ECCE provide positive role models to children. Cameron (2006) explains that adult role models are assumed to transmit desirable values and ways of being and doing to children. Tobin et al (2010) describe three processes in their gender self-socialisation model that contribute to children's gender development:

> 1) **Gender identity** - the cognitive connections that a person makes between the self and a gender category. By the age of three most children will know "I am a girl/boy".
> 2) **Gender stereotyping** - people's beliefs about how the sexes differ (descriptive stereotypes) or should differ (prescriptive stereotypes). From around 3 years a child will be interacting with clues in their environment on what is gender appropriate behaviour and forming their own gender stereotypes.
> 3) **Attribute self-perception -** a person's attitudes and perception of self, which relate to self-esteem. In this model the first two constructs have a continuous interactive influence on the third.

So early childhood is seen as a critical period for forming gender stereotypes (although this is a continuous process throughout the lifecycle), and role models clearly play an important part in a child's life in this period. It should follow that if a child is "interacting with clues in their environment on what is gender appropriate behaviour" having men in non-traditional roles can help them challenge traditional gender stereotypes. This statement is problematic for two reasons. Firstly, the men themselves may be acting in ways that reinforce traditional gender binarisms and stereotypes, or following curriculums that are not gender conscious, so traditional gender messages are passed on through stories, songs, games etc. Secondly, it overstates the function role models play and assumes children are just passive receivers of information.

Lewis and Warin's study (1998, cited in Sumison, 2005) on the impact of men on young children claims that adults over emphasise the role they play in children's construction and understanding of gender roles. Their research concluded that a more balanced workforce

would be unlikely to influence children's development and their construction of gender because of other influential environmental factors. They also placed significant weight on parent-child interaction as the main contributing factor to constructions of gender. Parent-child interaction and the construction of gender is a contested topic. Some studies suggest that parent's have little impact on a child's sex role development (Lytton & Romney, 1991; Maccoby & Jacklin, 1980). On the other hand, other research suggests that parents are the primary influence in gender construction (Santrock, 1994; Kaplan, 1991). One would argue in line with a social ecological perspective that this relationship is perhaps best understood as just one contributing factor in children's gender acquisition. Children are to be best understood as engaging with their entire social environment that goes beyond the family (Bronfenbrenner, 2004)

Cameron (2006, p.75) also argues that viewing children as passive receivers of values and knowledge transmitted by role models can be problematic:

> "An alternative perspective is to see children and workers as constructing knowledge together, learning from each other (Rinaldi, 2005), in which case the role model is one of providing resources for children to make their own discoveries and identities. Here, the outcome of the role model is not to be 'like' the adult but is much less predictable."

This view of the child echoes the feminist poststructuralist approach to child development outlined in the theoretical framework (Section 2.11.3). MacNaughton (2006) states that we should move the focus from gender roles to gender relations. That entails becoming more aware of gendered power dynamics (the gendered way in which girls and boys and educators interact with each other) as well as the hierarchical and binary nature of gender relations entrenched in social institutions such as ECCE settings. Feminist poststructuralists, such as MacNaughton, are interested in the way "modernist developmental psychology has led to the dominance of child-centred pedagogies which aim to facilitate the development of the 'natural' child and how such pedagogies are fundamentally implicated in the construction and maintenance of patriarchal gender relations between children and between children and teachers." (MacNaughton, 1997, p.318). They argue against universal understandings of the child to more contextualised approaches, as well as anti-bias gender practice in ECCE. This also links back to Moss (2007) and Nsamenang and Dawes (2008) call for more democratic practices, and culturally sensitive approaches in ECCE highlighted in Section 2.3.4 .

2.7.3 Male Educators as Role Models

As the study of Cameron et al (1999, p.84) reveals "Providing 'positive role models' was seen as important to all workers in our study. But there were differences in how this was understood." This difference was down to gender, and men's position as 'the other' in the ECCE context. While most women viewed their role as being a professional, the men were more likely to see it in terms of being a male 'role model'. Within the literature there is confusion and discord on what kind of gender role models men in ECCE play (Owen, 2003; Rolfe, 2006, Sumison, 2005, Cameron, 2006). Some of the research assumes an essentialist gender perspective, that men and women have different styles of caring, playing and educating thus a balanced work-force would enhance "the quality of childcare for children" (Jensen, 1996, p. 21). Similarly Murray (1996, p.347) found that male practitioners were "often sought after as workers because of the perceived need to have male role models for children". Here 'male' refers to the traditional concept of masculinity. Another common argument is that men in ECCE provide role models for boys in particular (Ruxton, 1992; Jensen, 1996; Murray, 1996, Rolfe, Cameron, 2006).

Sumison (2005, p.111) relays the perception that "male early childhood teachers are more able than their female counterparts to identify with and respond effectively to boys because they share an essential masculinity and an understanding of boys' perspectives and experiences (see, for example, Jensen, 1996). The current gender imbalance in the early childhood education profession, therefore, is to the detriment of boys." Such a view maintains traditional gender stereotypes and ideas of masculinity as opposed to a multitude of masculinities, and overlooks the value male educators can play in the lives of girls. Another group said to benefit from a male presence is children in female-headed households (Ruxton, 1992; Jensen, 1996; Murray, 1996; Rolfe, 2006; Sumison, 2005, Cameron, 2006). Again Sumison (2005, p.111) conveys "Supposedly, their presence would help to compensate for the absence or marginality of men in many children's home lives as a consequence of single-parent family structures".

The view that male educators are good for boys follows interpretations of male educators as an embodiment of conventional or hegemonic masculinity. The idea that children from female headed households will benefit more, is also in line with Rolfe's (2006, p.4) claims that "Men are seen as representing 'masculinity' or even fatherhood". On the latter issue Cameron (2006, p.75) argues that "This interpretation of male role models is largely as a

substitute father; it is primarily using visible gender difference to approximate familial figures thought valuable for children in roughly similar ways to the use of female workers as substitute mothers." These concepts are troubling for a sector that is trying to promote ECCE as a profession as opposed to substitute parenting. Because of children's need for attachment during the early years, and the time some children spend in settings, ECCE practitioners are faced with the challenge of delicately defining their role in a child's life. ECCE practitioners are not there to take over the role of parents but do need to provide love, nurture and care as well as augmenting the development and learning of children.

In contrast to the accounts abovementioned, there is evidence that men in ECCE can provide alternative role models that challenge gender stereotypes (Ruxton, 1992; Sargent, 2005; Sumison, 2005; Cameron, 2006; Rolfe, 2006). Some men in ECCE see their role as counteracting traditional concepts of masculinity by adopting a more caring role, in a sense crossing the binary divide and adopting more traditionally 'feminine' attributes**.** As one male educator describes in (Cameron, 2006, p.75), "I'd like to think that I'm a role model that questions the way men have to be, but I don't consciously go out to do that, maybe I'm rejecting the old sort of stereotypes and role models that I had". As Owen (2003) says, "This ambivalence about what that role should be is difficult for men" how to allow multiple models of being male is not yet resolved. There should be greater recognition that there is not a single masculinity or femininity and a need for male teachers to be judged according to their ability to teach and relate to children in their care effectively, not as a role model, or a substitute father but as early years professionals.

There are a number of conclusions one draws on the benefits to children of male participation in ECCE. Firstly, we have to recognise that it is impossible to establish a 'truth' as to whether or not male educators are good for children, and that all research is essentially subjective and based on a certain value position. However, there appears to be no credible research stating that men's presence in ECCE settings is harmful to children's development. There are issues of child abuse and protection (see Section 2.8) but most research suggests that male abusers are a minority and women can also be abusers (Cameron, 2006), so we should move away from viewing men in general as a threat to children. Secondly, the position this study takes is that children's learning and development is enriched by difference and diversity. A diverse and more gender-balanced workforce provides a rich range of life experiences for children to construct their own ideas on gender. Thirdly, men in ECCE can challenge gender stereotypes

that ECCE is 'women's work', and model gender equality - it shows children that men and women can do any job they choose. However, the third point, notes that how children process this information in constructing their own gender is complex, and we should acknowledge children's agency in this process. We also should understand that despite the incredibly powerful gender discourses in society that maintain hegemonic masculinity, we can actively challenge these by giving children the right tools and offering them new 'ways of seeing' gender (Davies, 1994). Fourthly, male educators, whatever role they play, or masculinity they embody are as good for children as female educators. Educators should be judged on whether they are good teachers/carers, not on their gender. The final point is that gender awareness and sensitivity should be a vital component of ECCE curriculums, so that both male and female educators practice an anti-bias approach in their settings. Gender equality is enshrined in our Constitution and we know that ECCE is the foundation of social learning so we must act in gender aware and equitable ways if we are to transform.

2.8 MEN IN EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION: CHILD ABUSE AND PROTECTION

2.8.1 Perceptions of Men in Early Childhood Care and Education

One of the main barriers to men's entry into ECCE identified in the literature is perceptions about child abuse and abusers. These perceptions were experienced first-hand during the sampling process, two cases in particular stand out. To find participants, ECCE settings were approached directly and asked if they had any males working with them. On one occasion a principal said "I would never dream of hiring a man, can I tell you why? We have little girls here and it just wouldn't be appropriate." The second case happened when I went onto a radio talk show on a national radio station to talk about the research. The presenter's immediate reaction to the research topic was "it's quite a dodgy issue men working with young children". It was a shame that an influential media broadcaster homed straight into the negative aspects of what could be a potentially positive discussion topic. As Cameron (2006, p.69) observes "there is a long-standing cultural unease about male carers". Similarly, Sumison (2005, p.110) states that "Community unease and suspicion about men who choose to work with young children in preference to entering higher status, better paid occupations is a case in point for it reflects a deep distrust of men who flout traditional gender roles and expectations". Rolfe's study (2006, p.111) also highlights that "men working with children report being questioned on their motives, and suspected of having perverse sexual intentions". This is the prevailing perception legitimised primarily by media, as Owen (2003) argues:

> "Dominant media images of men are as dangerous to children. These are images of violent partners and fathers, sinister residential care workers and predatory strangers. These images reinforce the prejudice that men are dangerous to children – as well as to women and to each other. Associated with the concern over paedophiles is a homophobia which questions the sexuality of any man who wants to work in childcare. The message is that men who want to look after children must be gay and that gay men will abuse children."

2.8.2 Evidence of Child Abuse in Early Childhood Care and Education Settings

The international research indicates that cases of child abuse in formal ECCE settings are rare, and more likely to take place in private childminding settings, or residential care homes. (Cameron et al, 1999; Owen, 2003; Rolfe, 2006). More importantly ECCE settings are probably the safest places for children as most abuse takes place in the home and community, by abusers known to the child. A counter-argument is that they are safer spaces because they are female dominated spaces, but there is evidence of abuse involving female workers. In a US study cited in Cameron et al (1999, p.135) women made up 36% of abusers. Of the 64% that were men, only a minority were employed as educators or carers. Most abusers were ancillary workers such as cleaners, drivers and male relatives of childminders in private settings. As Owen (2003, p.4) states, "There are two clear messages from this research: (1) most men who work in childcare are not involved in abuse and (2) not all the abusers are men."

Cameron et al (1999) discern two distinct responses to this issue, what they call the 'risk discourse' and the 'equality discourse'. With the former, which is particularly dominant in the US and previously the UK, men are seen as a risk and should either not be encouraged into ECCE, or extra measures should be taken in settings where they are present. These measures primarily focus on policies and procedures on touch and intimate care, with some going so far as to not allow men to work with children not capable of speaking out about abuse. But does removing men, remove risk, or actually perpetuate negative perceptions of men? As a respondent in Murray's (1996, p.383) study states "In San Francisco the men Early Childhood Education teachers can't have a child on their lap, the women can, but the men can't. I'm thinking, what kind of a message does this send to the children?" Two possible messages it sends to children are that they should act differently around men, and that men are potentially more dangerous than women.

The equality discourse favoured particularly in Scandinavian countries "rejects this view of men and argues that men's caring work can help to address, and reduce, wider problems of violence if it is conducted in a 'gender conscious' environment, where assumptions about gender behaviour are continually debated and unpicked as a staff group and joint decisions about ways forward are translated into policies." (Cameron et al, 1999 p.139). These are also countries with higher rates of male participation and lower rates of child abuse. However, as Owen (2003) observes, the discourse has become polarised into questions on whether we should have more or fewer men in ECCE - "That is, however, the wrong question. Instead, the real question is: what strategies can we devise to involve men in childcare in ways that will maximise the safety of children, and indeed women?'(Owen, 2003, p. 4). As Chandler and Dennis (1994, p.44 cited in Cameron et al, 1999) assert, "the power of abuse lies in secrecy". Assertive, open and ongoing dialogue between children, parents and staff is paramount, alongside safety measures that protect children from either sexes, as well as the staff themselves from potential misallegations. In the UK there has been a gradual shift from the *risk* to the *equality* discourse. Whilst there were grave concerns in the 1990s about encouraging men into the profession Cameron (2006, p.72) remarks that "This question mark has all but disappeared". She also reports a simultaneous shift in policy and public opinion on the issue, to a more positive equality discourse. This trend has not, however, had significant bearings on the number of men entering the profession.

2.8.3 Early Childhood Care and Education and Child Abuse in South Africa

Despite a robust constitutional, legislative and civic environment to safeguard children's rights, child abuse in South Africa is extremely high. South Africa's status as a highly patriarchal society, its violent history, gross levels of inequality and unemployment, and high levels of substance abuse are seen as major factors contributing to the high prevalence of child abuse. Richter and Dawes' (2008, p.87) review of child abuse in South Africa notes that, "While parents and teachers are the most common perpetrators of physical abuse, a large proportion of cases of child sexual abuse involve teenagers and young adults, many of whom live in the household with the child or nearby, and are known to the child". With regards to physical abuse the research highlights the problem of definition and different cultural understandings of what constitutes 'discipline' versus abuse, with corporal punishment still accepted across all of society. According to the national social attitudes survey in 2005 (cited in Richter and Dawes, 2008, p.86). "57% of the surveyed adults with children had smacked their children in the past year" Banning corporal punishment in the home was

rejected by the South African Law Commission due to the challenges of monitoring this in domestic spaces as well as the anticipated reactions of certain cultural and religious groups. In 1997 the Abolition of Corporal Punishment Act was passed, yet a cross-national study in 2000 (Tleane, 2002, p.6) found that 76% of schools still practised it and this was reported by the learners and educators surveyed.

In terms of sexual violence most crimes occur at home and in the community but there is a worrying incidence of sexual abuse in schools. Girls are more vulnerable, although boys also experience abuse, primarily carried out by male educators and learners (Children's Institute, 2003). While physical and sexual abuse in South African schools is well documented (Prinsloo, 2005) there is little data on the issue in ECCE settings. One can only make assumption. Firstly, in formal institutions with better trained staff, formal procedures and monitoring it is likely that less abuse takes place. Interestingly all of the male participants in this study worked in formal institutions. In informal settings occasional smacking, as opposed to beating, is generally condoned and accepted by educators and parents as a form of discipline. These settings are generally based in poorer communities where the incidence of sexual abuse tends to be higher. Here women act as gatekeepers out of fear of child abuse occurring. Although media reports show abuse and neglect in informal ECCE settings, there is little indication of sexual abuse. These are probable assumptions and it is troubling that we have such little evidence of children's daily experiences in ECCE settings.

As Richter and Dawes (2008, p.85) sums up "Despite several laws protecting the rights of children, high levels of violence persist in the domestic environment, the educational system and the community. Child abuse is seen to occur within this 'culture of violence' (Loffell, 2004)". This culture of violence is systemic not pathological and requires a systemic remedy. If inequalities persist and past wounds are not dealt with it is improbable that the situation will change drastically. Current ECCE policy does include comprehensive child protection measures but as argued earlier the human and financial resources to enact them are limited. As well as protective legislation and enforcement, we need to follow aspects of the 'equality discourse' on child protection (Cameron et al, 1999) and make space for continuous "open discussion and engagement with child protection issues, including ensuring that children are free to speak up" (UNICEF, 2006, cited in Richter & Dawes, 2008, p.90). Child abuse is a serious problem in this country, and men are the primary abusers, but they are still a minority of men. The terrible actions of a few should not cloud our vision.

2.9 MALE EDUCATORS EXPERIENCES IN EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION

Whilst fear of allegations of child abuse is a prominent theme in the research there are other issues emergent in the literature on men's experiences. Research by Murray (1996), Cameron et al (1999), Sumison (2000; 2005), Cameron (2006), and Anliak and Beyazkurk (2008) focuses specifically on the experiences of male practitioners or students of ECCE. Rolfe's (2006) paper also gives insights gathered from secondary research. From this literature the following issues are highlighted: Reactions, perceptions and support; low pay; perceptions around child abuse and sexuality; gender dynamics between male practitioners and children; gender dynamics between male practitioners and female worker; and feelings of marginalisation and 'otherness'.

2.9.1 Reactions, perceptions and support

It is difficult to draw generalisations on the type of reactions men in ECCE get from their immediate communities on their chosen profession. Thurtle and Jennings study (1998, cited in Rolfe, 2006) found that men were *often unsupported* by family and friends. Owen (2003) found that while women were wholeheartedly supported in their career choice, support to the men was *mixed*. Cooney and Bittner's (2001) study also found *varied reactions*, whilst Rolfe (2006, p.110) claims "Whilst the small number of studies which include the perspective of male childcare workers generally report very positive experiences of working in the sector (see above), they also reveal negative experiences. Many of these stem from the attitudes of others that childcare is not a man's job". Rolfe (ibid) also reveals that "Men also reported teasing from friends", which is echoed in Anliak and Beyazkurk's (2008) that male students were ridiculed by friends and fellow students, and often misrepresented their actual job title or field of study to avoid negative reactions.

2.9.2 Low pay

Low pay is another recurring theme in the literature (Cooney & Bittner, 2001; Sumison, 2005; Cameron, 2006; Rolfe, 2006). As Cooney & Bittner (2001, p.82) state "The males in our study felt conflicted about their family role as breadwinner and choosing a profession with a low salary". This was an issue that seemingly deterred other men from entering the profession (Cameron, 2006; Rolfe, 2006).

2.9.3 Perceptions around child abuse and sexuality

All of the literature on men in ECCE claims that fear of sexual abuse allegations is one of the main deterrents for men entering the profession, and that men working with children are continuously viewed with suspicion and their motives questioned. Murray's (1996) study analyses the negative conflation of issues around gender, sexuality and child abuse that men working with children have to endure. She claims (ibid, p.381) that "Men's actions become suspect because they are choosing to do something that women do". For men who flout traditional masculine roles their sexuality is immediately called into question, doing a 'feminine' job presumably means you are more 'feminine' e.g. Gay. As Murray (ibid) says:

> "Gay is a sexualized identity. When a man admits to being, is discovered to be, or is suspected of being gay, his gay identity may come to define everything else. He is, then, seen as someone who is guided by sexual practices, thoughts, and feelings in all else he undertakes. Within the child care setting, anything having to do with adult sexuality is strictly off-limits. So, when a person's identity as a gay person is discovered or even suspected (as may be the case with straight men doing "women's work") that person's competence as a teacher/caregiver gets called into question. To the extent that being gay is viewed as a perversion, it is linked with other perversions, such as child sexual abuse."

Interestingly the issue of sexual abuse or sexuality did not arise in Cooney and Bittner (2001) or Anliak and Beyazkurk's (2008) studies on male students. However Murray (1996) and Owen (2003) document the unease men in their studies felt about the "different written and unwritten rules regarding their physical access to children" (Murray, 1996, p.378). Here physical access refers to activities requiring intimate care such as nappy changing, toileting and first aid, as well as general intimate contact such as hugging and sitting on laps. Owen's (2003, p.6) study revealed "One man reported that, in a previous nursery, he was told not to cuddle the children, as that was not 'expected' of a man. He said: 'The other carers, it wasn't a problem, they'd all cuddle and that sort of thing … I kicked up quite a stink about it … and in the end they changed the whole ruling and they said they didn't want anybody to cuddle the children.' Other participants in the same study reported men avoiding touching altogether for fear of their actions being misinterpreted.

2.9.4 Gender dynamics between male practitioners and children

The third theme in the literature is the complex issue of the gender roles men are seen to play within ECCE settings. This issue has been discussed in Section 2.7.2 but from the literature focusing specifically on men's experiences the following is notable. Murray (1996, p. 373) found that "the men workers I studied likened their relationships with the children under their care to fathers' relationships with children". This finding was also prevalent in Anliak and Beyazkurk's (2008) study. This kind of practice or attitude is of concern to some researchers who feel that these kinds of relationships reinforce rather than disrupt gender stereotypes (Cunningham, 1999, cited in Cooney and Bittner, 2001, p. 81). They feel that strategies to "address more aggressively the issues of diversity and gender equity embedded in teaching" (ibid) should be pursued.

As Cameron (2006) found, this linkage between ECCE, motherhood and fatherhood was something that some male practitioners found confusing as they tried to "negotiate their position within this predominant ideology" (Cameron, 2006, p.74). Rolfe (2006, p.106) also found that men "negotiate their way through this maze and establish their own role and 'masculine' identity". Sumison's (2000, p. 135) in depth research on one male ECCE practitioner revealed his positioning of himself as a "caring father and 'ordinary' heterosexual male (who coincidentally happens to be part of a team of early childhood educators) and a third, and less conventional, construct of androgynous childcare worker". Sumison, (ibid) feels that positioning is "characterised by fluidity rather than fixed states" and her case study shows that we flit between each of our various constructs of ourselves (e.g. father/ heterosexual male/ androgynous childcare worker) depending on the situation. However, she questions "how he reconciles his apparent adherence to essentialist sex role theories with the notion of androgyny which posits that on a deep (an often unconscious) level we are neither male or female but in reality, possess the qualities of both" (ibid).

Cooney and Bittner's (2001) research cites another American study with 40 male ECCE practitioners that reveal once again the contradictory nature of men's gender positioning in their work with children. Montecinos and Nielson (1999, cited in Cooney and Bittner, 2001, p.81) found "that the males tended to negate the role of gender in their teaching while at the same time justifying presence in the classroom as providing a male role". The issue of gender identity and roles is one of the most complex areas of the topic, however contextual studies like Sumison (2000), as opposed to generalised studies, can be more useful in revealing the complex and contradictory nature of gender dynamics.

2.9.5 Gender dynamics between male and female practitioners

The final theme relates to gender in the workplace; the sexual division of labour in ECCE settings; how gender affects working relationships between male and female staff; and feelings that arise from men's positioning as the other in their workplace and in training settings. The issue of male practitioners negating gender differences in their relationship with other staff is also ubiquitous in the research. Cameron (2006, p. 75) states that "Despite the assertions of workers about sameness and 'equality', it appeared that in practice underlying gender divisions existed in childcare work." In her study male workers reported 'no difference' and the equal sharing of tasks yet other information they provided contradicted this. In most of the literature men were found to be delegated the more 'male' jobs, physical activities linked to sports or fixing things in their settings, whilst women would be more likely to be allocated traditionally female tasks such as those involving intimate care.

In terms of how gender affects working relationships between male and female staff there is evidence of men feeling excluded, undermined and judged unable to do certain tasks by female colleagues (Owen, 2003). Cameron (2006, p.74) highlights that "Although male workers were widely welcomed, their experience was often one of marginalisation within childcare centres, similar to the position of 'otherness' reported elsewhere". Another example is that some male workers felt unable to connect socially with women i.e. in staffroom conversations, and on the other end of the scale feeling purposively excluded and marginalised (ibid). This feeling of marginalisation was also felt during training courses, perhaps more acutely as men were in a larger minority than when working as 'the only one' in an ECCE setting. Rolfe (2006, p.111) says that men reported being " treated differently while on training courses...could draw unwelcome attention, or being questioned on their motives for working with children".

These themes highlight the complex issues male educators have to steer their way through in their working lives. Yet we should be careful not to over state their position as a marginalised minority without agency. Much of the literature reveals that men are as much responsible for maintaining stereotypes in their working practices and can enjoy greater opportunity than their female colleagues by virtue of their 'token' presence and their positioning as the dominant gender in society.

2.10 MEN IN EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION: LABOUR MARKET ISSUES

2.10.1 Occupational Segregation in Early Childhood Care and Education

The following section is concerned with the nature of the ECCE workforce, labour market trends in ECCE and recruitment strategies. Such a discussion requires an understanding of occupational segregation and why certain occupations remain 'gender ghettos'. According to Newman et al (2011, p.3) "Gender segregation is a pervasive and widely documented form of social inequality and labour market rigidity in which women and men are expected to work in culturally defined occupational roles dominated by their gender" and is "one of the most profound and enduring dimensions of labour market inequality, compared with segregation by race or class". The "two deeply rooted ideological tenets" (ibid.) that uphold it are gender essentialism and male primacy. The former sees gender as a natural, innate difference, rather than socially constructed, and deems certain occupations more suitable to one gender based on perceived gender traits, i.e. women are more caring, men are more technically oriented. Male primacy is the assumption that men are "naturally dominant and more status-worthy than women. An example of male primacy is illustrated in a study that was recently conducted in Soweto, where male respondents stated they did not participate in HIV/AIDS caregiving activities, even when they felt they should, because of the fear that they would lose respect among their peers if they did so" (ibid.).

Research done by Newman et al (2011) points to such gender assumptions as the main barriers to men entering traditionally female roles and states that "It thus seems advisable to target feminine as well as masculine stereotypes for change." This is a view echoed in much of the literature on men in ECCE (Murray, 1996; Cameron et al, 1999; Sumison, 2005; Rolfe 2006). While there are debates about low pay and status and the lack of professionalisation in ECCE, gender essentialism and male primacy are seen as the main factors. For example in Denmark where ECCE 'pedagogues' are trained to university level and receive double the pay of British counterparts, there is still a high level of gender segregation. Even though Denmark has one the highest rates of male participation in ECCE, it is still low (Moss, 2001). An OECD report on ECD claims:

> "Some few countries take the challenge seriously, convinced of the benefits that a male presence can bring to young children and to the working environment.... However, the issue is not even discussed in most countries, and gendering is so pervasive as to have become "invisible" (Moss, 2001). Few countries have set targets for the recruitment of men into ECEC or

> sought to rethink this work in ways that would make gendering less pervasive." (OECD, 2006, p.170).

Advocates of greater gender inclusivity suggest the need to develop "a critical mass of males" in the ECCE workforce (Sumison, 2000, p.138 citing Farquhar, 1997 and Chilwinack, 1997). They believe that males should make up at least 12% of the ECCE workforce if occupational gender segregation is to be challenged. Sumison (2000) counters this by suggesting we focus more on attaining a "critical *mix*" (ibid, p.139) – a male workforce made up of diverse masculinities, but leaning towards gender conscious practitioners that actively challenge gender stereotypes and provide "sustainable images of masculinity" (ibid).

2.10.2 Early Childhood Care and Education Workforce Trends in South Africa

In South Africa the issue is certainly invisible, and it would currently be impossible to set targets as we do not even know how many women, let alone men are in the sector. As Altman (2008, p. 125) states "At present representative information on the ECD sector is not available. At best, there is anecdotal and case study information. It is therefore difficult to say precisely how many people work in the ECD sector" Moreover she states:

> "While the statistics are weak on the ECD sector, it is probable that the majority of workers are women. Here the author is not proposing a value judgement, since the ECD services could just as well be provided by men. However, there is a weak distinction made between domestic responsibilities often delivered by women, and market-based care services. Early childhood development services traverse the boundaries of paid and unpaid work. It is seen to be in the domain of women's domestic responsibilities as a natural outcome of having a child." (ibid, p.127)

In the same article Altman (2008) outlines the challenges of linking ECD service delivery to the EPWP, which is "aimed at creating opportunities for the most marginalised, and therefore pay below-market wages so as to not attract people away from market-based jobs." (ibid, p.121). Government is faced with a two-pronged challenge of filling the huge service delivery gap in ECD, as well as tackling high unemployment that women suffer the most from. ECD has thus been ring-fenced as a route to tackling women's unemployment - "These opportunities tend to have a gender bias....so are well suited at addressing women's unemployment." (ibid, p.120). The concern with this policy approach is firstly, an issue of quality - that the training delivered in the EPWP is of a low standard. Secondly, a point not mentioned in the article is that explicitly targeting women in learnership and training programmes maintains the notion that ECCE is 'women's work'. Even though there is the acknowledgement that "ECD services could just as well be provided by men" (ibid, p.127)

there is no policy or programme in place that gives men encouragement or access to this kind of work. Some might argue that it is right to take an equity approach and target women exclusively as they are more marginalised in the labour market. However, this study takes the position that such a view is short-sighted and encouraging men in ECCE is not anti-feminist, far from it. Part of the feminist agenda is breaking down patriarchal gender stereotypes that men in ECCE certainly does. Looking at international trends we know that even with the best resources and an enabling environment, men are unlikely to suddenly enter the profession in droves and put women out of work. But their increased presence can have positive impacts on the quality of ECCE. A concern with the ECD/EPWP approach is that it is primarily driven by the need to meet employment and gross enrolment targets rather than by a desire to improve the quality of ECD.

2.11 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS UNDERPINNING THE STUDY

> "All existence is a participatory process. To see the relationships which are the basis of life is to see the whole picture. Nothing can really be understood without its context and its relatedness to other things."
> (Kumar, 2002, p.178)

2.11.1 Attempting a Multi-Disciplinary Approach

This study adopts a holistic approach to understanding the issues of men working in ECCE. It is like a jigsaw puzzle that only makes sense when all the pieces are put together. The researcher has approached the study as a process, similar to a child in play of repeatedly taking things apart and putting them back together to understand them better. However, a jigsaw puzzle is a static image and the research topic (like any social issue) is not static, but dynamic. The theoretical framework underpinning the study comprises distinct but related frameworks in an attempt to create a coherent multi-disciplinary framework. As Davies (1994, p.35) asserts:

> "The point that we might constructively and legitimately think and speak from multiple positions within multiple discourses, not being *identified* with or bound by one is extraordinarily liberating and empowering...While consistency and total coherence are pleasurable and satisfying, they involve a large degree of selective perception and ignorance: we need to live with contradictory discourses because we live in a profoundly contradictory world with multiple and contradictory positions and discourses which go to make up that world".

Firstly the framework is informed by the researcher's worldview, what Kumar (2002) calls a *relational philosophy*, based on interconnectedness, between people, the environment, and the cosmos, found in nearly all indigenous philosophies in the global South. In many parts of Africa relational philosophy is expressed as *ubuntu*, in Eastern philosophies as *inter-being,* and similar concepts exist in aboriginal philosophies in Australasia and the Americas. Relational philosophy is the opposite of what Kumar (ibid) would call *separational philosophy,* which incorporates Cartesian dualism, Judaeo-Christian religion, Newtonian physics, Darwinian biology and Freudian psychology. It is ideas such as these that have influenced much of modern 'development' and that legitimise the current social order, one in which people are becoming increasingly atomised and divided, and have a growing disregard for the environment that sustains all existence.

Flowing from a relational understanding of the world is the '*new paradigm thinking'* school of thought, which emerged in recent decades from the physical and biological sciences (Capra, 1975, 1997). These ideas have gradually permeated into the social sciences and more specifically and pertinently to this study, social development theory and practice (Ife & Tesoriero, 2006). This school of thought questions linear modes of reasoning, reductionist and mechanistic world views and asks that we examine the whole system. A central concept in this perspective is *holism,* which deems all phenomena, physical or social, as part of a complex web of interconnected relationships that must be viewed in its entirety to be fully understood. Capra (1975) also says that these kinds of ideas have been articulated in indigenous philosophies for centuries.

Another holistic approach that stems from systems and new paradigm thinking is the *social ecological perspective* in social development. Ife and Tesoriero (2006) outline three key concepts within this perspective – s*ustainability*, *diversity* and *equilibrium.* The latter two are particularly significant to the multi-disciplinary framework. Diversity refers to embracing difference and accepting multiple truths, while equilibrium denotes moving away from binary, dualistic thinking, towards an understanding of 'unity in diversity'. These are all general, overarching theories that although distinct, compliment rather than contradict each other. Moving onto the study's central topics - gender and child development - one is faced with a rather daunting and complex array of competing and contradictory theories.

2.11.2 The Gender Framework

Gender issues are at the heart of the research topic so in terms of a theoretical position this study borrows the framework of the International Men and Gender Equality Survey - IMAGES (International Center for Research on Women & Instituto Promundo, 2011, p.14). This is framed within an "understanding of gender as relational and structural, and within the field of "masculinities," which seeks to understand how men are socialized, how men's roles are socially constructed (in constant interaction with women's roles)...This concept of masculinities also enjoins us to examine the diversity of men, the pressures they may perceive to adhere to specific versions of manhood". The research focuses on the experiences of male educators, investigating their personal experiences within their community and society. It also attempts to reveal ways in which male educators 'do gender' so the IMAGES framework fits in with the research methodology.

2.11.3 A Child Development Framework

One of the underlying research questions is whether there is a need to promote greater gender inclusivity in the ECCE sector in South Africa. The study looks at this in terms of the needs of society, male educators and children. How male participation in the ECCE workforce effects children is crucial to the discussion. Is it something we should argue for on the basis of children's developmental and educational needs? This requires a framework in which to understand how preschool children become gendered. This process has been challenging, and one of great personal learning and growth. In the research proposal phase the child development framework was aligned with the social ecological perspective. This included Bronfenbrenner's (1975, p. 439) ecological systems theory of human development which "focuses attention on development as a function of interaction between the developing organism and the enduring environments or contexts in which it lives out its life". Bronfenbrenner's child development theory (1979, 2004) greatly influenced sex-role socialisation theory, which at the time was my understanding of how children constructed gender.

The work of feminist poststructuralists MacNaughton (2006) and Davies (1994) in the field of child development and education is prominent in some of the literature on men in ECCE (notably Murray, 1996; Cameron et al 1999; Sumison, 2005, Cameron, 2006). These studies appear to frame their understandings of gender and children's gender constructions around feminist poststructuralist understandings of gender which have become ascendant in research

on early childhood since the mid-1990s. This approach struck a chord, specifically because it is relational and socio-political in its explanation of children's gender construction. Not only does it go deeper in understanding the role of the child in constructing gender, but it is also aligned with the gender framework above. Both MacNaughton (2006, 2007) and Davies (1994) ground their theory in feminist poststructuralist thought. While I do not prescribe, or feel comfortable attaching the label feminist poststructuralist to myself (or any label for that matter) there is a resonance in how these theorists understand child development and education.

As Davies (1994, p.1) says "poststructuralist theory has opened up exciting new ways of analysing the processes whereby we become gendered. Through an analysis of discursive practices...we can discover why it is that the dualistic gender order is so intractable and yet also how we might begin to dismantle it". Central to feminist poststructuralism is the transcending of binarisms[7], such that they attempt to fuse two key 'feminisms' – the dominant liberal feminism, and less dominant radical feminism. The former focuses on giving women access to "male ways of being, or at least the choices males would make" (ibid, p.2) while radical feminism is about valorising femininity so it is not seen as inferior to masculinity. Poststructuralist feminists attempt to bring these together into some equilibrium, to promote "the valorising work made relevant by radical feminism and to notice and address the exclusions that liberal feminist discourse make visible" (ibid) thus moving beyond a dualistic gender order. They also seek to disrupt and deconstruct the binarisms central to the preservation of the male/female dualism, through which we structure knowledge of ourselves and the social world. In terms of our gender and how that relates to our being they acknowledge, the "fragmented, multi-faceted and contradictory nature of our experiences" and enable us "to see the diversity and richness of being a person" (ibid, p.3) .... "Being a person, rather than being a woman or a man involves both sides of the binary" (ibid, p.10). Furthermore she claims, "In some cases ways of being that disrupt the binarism are understood as transgressive rather than as a multiplicity to be celebrated." (ibid, p.10). This echoes the literature on male educators experiences in which men who choose to do 'women's work' are stigmatised and seen as people who have "not got their gender right" (Yelland & Grieshaber, 1998, p. 3). This is the feminist post-structuralism take on gender in general.

[7] Such as: male/female; knowledge/ignorance; good/bad; hard/soft; reason/emotions; order/chaos; control/letting be; objective/subjective; secular/holy; linear/cyclical; permanence/evolution; public/private; independent/dependent; individual/social; isolated/interconnected; dualistic/whole;) (Wilshire, 1989, p.95-96 cited in Davies, 1994, p.10)

On child development specifically, MacNaughton (2006) maps out 'the theoretical terrain' as follows. Children's construction or 'acquisition' of gender in the child development field has traditionally been classified into biological, psychological, socialisation, or social constructionist perspectives. Psychological theories centre on internal development and learning processes, while sociological theories focus on social contexts and social processes. "Within child development theory, however, the conceptual distinctions between these two disciplines have become blurred because there has been extensive borrowing from both into what might be called 'sex-role socialisation theory'" (MacNaughton, 2006, p.19). This theory relies on the notion that 'cultural transmitters' (i.e. family, educators, peers, the media etc) are key agents in the socialisation process. Children are socialised in terms of appropriate behaviour through observation, and imitation of these 'transmitters'. This is what Davies (1988) calls an 'osmosis theory of gendering'. Feminist poststructuralists however, argue that children are not passive receivers of information, "but are actively involved in the construction of their own gender" (MacNaughton, 2006, p.20.). Also, "theories of social learning are simplistic and flawed because they are silent on the ability of individuals to resist attempts at 'resocialisation' and on the capacity of individuals to transform dominant practices and meanings". (ibid.). They also emphasise "the complexity of gender identity formation, which can adopt paths according to context and experience. Moreover, gender identity intersects with and is affected by identities according to race, class and culture." (ibid.). So contextualised explanations of gendering in the early years are favoured over universal explanations. Finally, she states (ibid.):

> "Within this conceptual framework, gender is *relational.* Thus, for example, 'ways of being' among girls are, at least in part, related to and defined by the ways girls learn to act towards boys.... Does this mean that, if you shift the boundaries of acceptable behaviour for one gender, you can disrupt ideas not only about that gender, but also about the other gender? For this reason, feminist poststructuralists argue that we must focus on gender relations rather than gender roles."

This last point highlights the dynamic nature of this framework, as a means to understanding gender in children's lives and perhaps also to finding ways to alter unequal gender relations.

2.12 SUMMARY

The literature review has attempted to unpack the various issues surrounding the research topic. It is by no means exhaustive but an initial attempt at understanding the issue from a South African perspective. Tracing the history of ECCE globally and locally and understanding where we are now gives a contextual backdrop in which to understand the sector in which male educators are operating in today. The review also looked at issues around gender equality in South African society broadly, as well as the ECCE sector specifically. We are faced with findings that suggest South Africa is one of the most gender inequitable or patriarchal societies, yet we have a Constitution that is considered the most gender sensitive. These paradoxical conditions call for a remedy and it argued that ECCE is a fertile ground for instilling gender equitable practices.

As well as benefits to society the review examined whether gender inclusivity in the sector carried any benefits for children themselves. Here the research proved controversial, pointing to the lack of research and sound research methods that incorporate children. What the research does show is that there are no obvious threats to children of having more men in ECCE. Moreover, teachers should be judged on their ability to teach not on their gender, and perceived attributes. If sound policies and procedures around child protection are institutionalised and implemented perhaps fears around child abuse will diminish. The research also found that there is a worrying lack of data on the incidences of abuse in ECCE settings and we know little about the experiences of children in those spaces. Monitoring of this situation is a crucial objective for ECCE, whether there are men or not.

Finally the review looked at how the current Government is tackling the urgent service delivery gap in childcare services. More well trained workers are urgently needed in the sector but the approach of using public works programmes to address this gap is of concern, especially from a gender perspective as it so explicitly targets women in those jobs. Men are a missing link and although women's unemployment is a serious issue that needs attention, men should not be marginalised in a sector that could benefit from their presence. The themes raised here have been used as a guide to focus discussion during the data collection phase, in order to discover whether South African male educators have similar experiences.

Because of the broad range of issues surrounding the topic and the fact that this is an exploratory study the framework needed to be holistic and multi-disciplinary.

The various theories making up the framework are linked by their understanding of social phenomena as *relational*. Section 2.11 has tracked the historical evolution of this concept, from indigenous knowledge, to new paradigm and systems thinking, to social ecological perspectives and then ideas on structural and post-structural notions of gender and child development.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The following chapter outlines the study's research methodology. The research approach taken is qualitative, exploratory and descriptive and the research design is a case study model. The first aim was to investigate and capture rich descriptions of six male educator's views and experiences as well as the opinions of two key informants working in ECCE and gender studies. Secondary to that is to create an initial body of knowledge on the research topic. Sections 3.2 and 3.3 outline the research questions, aims and objectives. Following that is a description of the research approach and design in Section 3.4. The units of analysis and the sampling methods used to locate them are outlined in Section 3.5 and 3.6, followed by details of the research tool and the pilot study in Sections 3.7 and 3.8. Sections 3.9 and 3.10 look at the data collection and analysis process, followed by discussion of the study's trustworthiness, limitations and ethical considerations in Sections 3.11-3.13. The chapter concludes with a summary in Section 3.14.

3.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1) What are the lived experiences of male ECCE educators in Johannesburg?

2) Is there a need to promote greater gender inclusivity in the ECCE sector in South Africa?

3.3 PRIMARY AIM AND SECONDARY OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The primary aim of the study was to shed light on the experiences of male ECCE educators in Johannesburg, and initiate discussion on whether gender inclusivity in the ECCE sector is a relevant policy issue in South Africa.

The secondary objectives were:

- To gather accounts of the lived experiences of male ECCE educators in Johannesburg
- To explore the needs of male ECCE educators in relation to government policy
- To create an initial body of knowledge on this topic which could prove relevant in the further investigation and promotion of gender inclusivity in the South African ECCE workforce

3.4 RESEARCH APPROACH AND DESIGN

The research approach employed in this study was qualitative, exploratory and descriptive in nature. It is qualitative in that it is inductive and subjective as opposed to deductive and objective. Exploratory in the sense that the aim is to investigate and capture previously unexplored phenomena, with no hypotheses or presuppositions. Finally it is descriptive because the aim is to capture rich descriptions of the phenomena from the perspective of the units of analysis. The international literature on men in ECCE offers insights on male educators experiences elsewhere through which we can draw generalisations and hypotheses, however, the aim is to give a contextualised account of the South African experience. Moreover the limited scope and sample size of this study cannot claim to offer any generalised analysis.

With this is mind the most appropriate research design was a case study. As Babbie and Mouton (2011, p.281) explain, "The case study is an intensive investigation of a single unit". Following their schema on case study design the following is important 1) *conceptualisation*; 2) *contextual detail*; 3) *multiple sources of data*; 4) *analytical strategies*. Firstly with regards to *conceptualisation* there is a clear link between the multi-disciplinarily framework and the research design which is holistic and ecological as they claim (ibid), "Thickly described case studies take multiple perspectives into account and attempt to understand the influences of multilevel social systems on subjects perspectives and behaviours". Secondly, related to this is *contextual detail*. Babbie and Mouton (ibid) claim that "to understand and interpret case studies researchers describe the context in detail." The context refers to the ecology or environment in which the unit of analysis is embedded. Thirdly, *multiple sources of data* can enhance the reliability of a case study. The areas of concern in this study are the experiences of men in ECCE and discourse and policy around their involvement, thus two sources of data – male educators and expert key informants – have been used. There is a need for future research to include other sources such as parents, female educators and government officials but their inclusion were deemed over and above the objectives of this study. With regards to *analytical strategies* two processes are important: the organisation of the findings and the appropriateness of generalisations (ibid, p.283). These are discussed in greater depth in Section 3.9.

3.5 UNIT OF ANALYSIS

3.5.1 Participants - Male Educators

The primary unit of analysis are male educators. These are defined in this study as adult men who work directly with children in ECCE settings as a job either paid or voluntarily.

3.5.2 Key Informants

To add another dimension to the study in-depth views on the research topic from another group of stakeholders were seen as necessary. These stakeholders are experienced academics working in the field of ECCE and gender/masculinity studies.

3.6 SAMPLING PROCEDURES

3.6.1 Participants - Male Educators

The relative absence of male educators within the ECCE sector made it challenging to gain a large sample group, or to randomly select participants. As Bless, Higson-Smith and Kagee (2008, p. 101) explain "when the necessary population lists are not available non-probability sampling remains a possibility for the researcher. Also non-probability sampling is almost always cheaper, faster and quite adequate for homogenous populations". As there is no data available on this population group non-probability sampling was necessary.

Two methods of non-probability sampling were used - purposive sampling and snowballing. The former is useful when the target group is predefined, in this case men who work with children in ECCE settings. A list of institutions where male practitioners might be working or training was complied. These institutions were then contacted to see if participants meeting the criteria were present. The second method was snowballing which was ultimately more successful than purposive sampling. Strydom & Delport (in De Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delport, 2005, p.330) describe this method as being "directed at the identification of hard-to-reach individuals. In snowball sampling the researcher collects data on the few members of the target population he can locate, then seeks information from those individuals that enables him to locate other members of that population". Interestingly, in this study the male educators contacted did not know of other male educators. Here snowballing did not happen within the sample group itself but through the researchers network - colleagues, other researchers working in similar fields and friends particularly those who had young children.

For the purpose of ensuring trustworthiness of the data, the sample group consisted of two participants in the pilot study, and six participants in the main study. This was deemed an adequate number to ensure validity and avoid saturation.

The purposive sampling process began with the compiling of lists of registered preschools from the Provincial Department of Basic Education and the Independent Schools Association of Southern Africa (ISASA). As Table 2 indicates 5 potential participants were found from the Dept of Basic Education list from a total of 652 preschools. Table 3 shows the number of potential participants found working in private settings from the ISASA list - 3 participants out of 89 preschools. Then a list, albeit not exhaustive, of ECCE training institutions (WITS University, ASHA and the Gauteng ECD Institute) was compiled and the institutions were contacted to see if they had male practitioners enrolled or had so in the past two years. Both WITS and ASHA had none enrolled, but the Gauteng Provincial ECD Institute had 3 enrolled (see table 4). Despite Bless, Higson-Smith and Kagee's (2008) assertion above, this process was quite time-consuming and costly. Nevertheless the results from the phone-around serve as a quasi-survey and demonstrate the scarcity of men in this sector.

Table 2 – Results of sampling of Dept. of Basic Education preschools list

No. of preschools	Status
5	Yes. Male staff member present
294	No. Male staff member not present
148	Contact details not listed
139	Tel. number not working
13	Incorrect number
26	No answer
652	

Table 3 - Results of sampling of ISASA preschool list

No. of preschools	Status
3	Yes. Male staff member present
80	No. Male staff member not present
6	Tel. number not working/no answer
89	

Table 4 - Male educators enrolled through the Gauteng Provincial Early Childhood Development Institute

District	Males enrolled
D1 - Gauteng North	Non-enrolled
D2 - Gauteng West	Yes. 1 enrolled
D3 - Tshwane North	Non-enrolled
D4 - Tshwane South	Non-enrolled
D5- Gauteng East	Yes. 2 enrolled
D6 – Erkhuleni North	Non-enrolled
D7 - Sidibeng East	Non-enrolled
D8 - Sidibeng West	Non-enrolled
D9 - Johannesburg East	Non-enrolled
D10 - Johannesburg North	Non-enrolled
D11 – Johannesburg South	Non-enrolled
D12 - Johannesburg West	Non-enrolled
D14 - Johannesburg Central	Non-enrolled
D15 - Tshwane West	Non-enrolled
D16 - Erkhuleni South	Non-enrolled

Through snowballing three participants were identified before the formal sampling process began, and a further two once the study officially began. Combined with the 11 male educators found through purposive sampling the total potential participants totalled 16. Once potential participants were identified they were invited them to take part in the research and given a participant information sheet (Appendix A) via email or in person. However not all were willing to participate, see table 5 for details.

Table 5
Reasons for non-participation of potential participants

Sampling method	Potential participants	Actual participants	Reasons for non-participation
DoE list	5	0	2 – didn't return calls 1 – Too busy 2 – Declined to participate
ISASA list	3	2	1 – Employee at a preschool linked to a corporation, permitted from taking part in research.
Gauteng ECD Institute list	3	1	1 – Didn't return calls 1 – Declined to participate
Snowballing	5	5	n/a
	16	**8**	

3.6.2 Key Informants

This group also required non-probability sampling, in this case judgement sampling, which entails the researcher using sound judgement, with a clear criteria and rationale to carefully select participants. The criteria set was for informants with in-depth knowledge and experience in early childhood and gender studies in South Africa, who could add depth and a different perspective to the study. I approached Key Informant 1, an academic with over 30 years experience in ECCE working in a tertiary institution in Gauteng. Key Informant 2 also works at a tertiary institution in the Western Cape and is a widely published researcher in gender and masculinity studies. I emailed them an invitation and they responded positively and agreed to take part.

3.7 RESEARCH TOOL

For both the male educators and key informants semi-structured interview schedules were used (see Appendix B). The male educators' schedules consisted of ten identical questions. The first five questions related to their experiences:- 1) why and how they got into ECCE; 2) their work, role and responsibilities; 3) their experience as a male ECCE educator; 4) if they felt gender affected their job in any way; 5) reactions they got from family/colleagues/friends/wider community. They were then asked broader questions relating to their views on:- 6) why they are so few male educators in ECCE; 7) gender inclusivity in ECCE and gender equity in society; 8) the benefits of gender inclusivity to children's development and education; 9) whether it was a policy issue; 10) what interventions they would propose. Both key informants were asked questions 6-10. Key Informant 1 was asked an additional question about the Expanded Public Works Programme and ECCE.

The schedules consisted of "*a range of open-ended, unbiased questions*" (De Vos, Strydom, Fouché & Delport, 2005, p. 296). For the male educators the initial questions were designed so as to let the participant share their experiences, and tell their life story, and then broader issues were raised formulated from topics in the literature review. On hindsight one weakness identified is the structuring of the questions. It might have been better to start with the broader social issues and then hone in on personal experiences. This might have allowed for a gradual building of rapport, rather than diving straight into personal issues these would be covered later in the interview.

3.8 PILOTING OF THE RESEARCH TOOL

The research tool was piloted on two participants identified from the ISASA list and through snowballing. The piloting stage was crucial as it allows for "*refinement of the research tool, and it will be vital to ask the participants to feedback after the pilot interview*" (De Vos, Strydom, Fouché & Delport, 2005, p. 209). The pilot interviews were useful in identifying weaknesses in the interview schedule. The first issue it raised was that perhaps due to initial nevers the interviews were slightly rushed. After listening to the recordings it appeared that for some questions there was not enough deeper probing. One limitation throughout the study is that the majority of participants and I did not share the same mother tongue so it was sometimes difficult talking about concepts such as *gender* and *policy,* that they might not have related to in an academic sense. Questions relating to the participants personal experience flowed better. To get around this issue framing statements were put together to introduce the concepts to the participants if they had difficulty understanding or relating to the topic.

The pilot phase also brought to light how personal some of the questions could be, particularly questions around how other people perceived their work, and the reactions from family and parents of children they worked with. These questions could be insinuating that their work was abnormal, or by posing the question I was replicating negative attitudes that abound around men in ECCE. With this in mind I had to start the interview by making the participant feel at ease and know that I was supportive of the work they do. Initially I wanted to talk a bit about issues around child protection and abuse but felt that area was too sensitive and people might take offense. It was also felt that it would be better to let the topic emerge itself, which could be a gauge of whether that was an important issue for the participants. It only came up in one interview with a participant making a direct reference to perceptions around child abuse.

3.9 METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

The primary method of data collection was face to face interviews as this is the most suitable method for gaining rich descriptions and life experiences. It was also crucial that the interview took place at the participant's workplace, in their ECCE setting so as to gain a description of their 'ecology' or 'environment'. One of the key informants was based in Cape Town so a recorded phone interview was necessary. This was not such a hindrance as the nature of the interview was more about policy and theory as opposed to personal experiences. Such a method would not have been suitable for interviewing the male educators as face-to-face interaction, and seeing the person in their setting etc. was vital to the study.

As De Vos *et al* (2005, p. 209) explain, interviews are "*a useful way of getting large amounts of data quickly and are an especially effective way of obtaining data in depth*." There are limitations in this process, particularly building rapport and gaining the trust of participants. Language barriers were also a concern and limitation as six out of eight of the participant's mother tongue was not English. Employing a translator was considered but it was felt this would detach the participant from the researcher. The risk of losing some of the meaning during translation and the cost of hiring a translator and transcribing into English was also a major barrier. In some cases, particularly around questions concerning policy, language was a barrier. Some participants weren't as able as others to be very descriptive or in depth but one got a general sense of their feeling on the issue. Facial expressions, tone and body language also served as huge and important signifiers.

All the interviews were recorded with the permission of the participants (see Appendix C). This allowed for better focus during the interviews as less time was spent writing notes. Having a recording of the interview is also more efficient during data analysis as De Vos et al (2005, p. 298) state, "It also allows for collection of a much fuller record which will be very useful when analysing the data." None of the participants had an issue with being recorded or showed signs of being uncomfortable at the presence of a recorder, it didn't seem to make them any less forthcoming. Having a recording and a full transcript allowed for a thorough analysis of the data and to select proper quotes. However, on one occasion the recorder had not been set and the first three minutes of the interview were unrecorded. Fortunately this was noticed early on and important data that emerged later in the interview was recorded.

Field notes were also used as a secondary method of data collection. These were useful for capturing rich descriptions of settings, and noting thoughts, and things that have been heard and observed during the interview. However it was important not to confuse observation notes with interpretative notes, as the latter would then become part of the data analysis section. At times I ended up in conversation mode, showing agreement and reflecting on my own experiences. As a novice researcher I was unsure if this was putting too much of myself into the interview but I felt it helped build rapport with the participant and allow them to open up more about their own experiences.

3.10 DATA ANALYSIS

The first step of the data analysis process was to code the data using thematic analysis methods. This involved finding recurring themes in the responses and grouping them together. After each interview the recordings were transcribed and the various answers were pasted side by side in an excel spreadsheet which allowed for easy analysis. As every interview for the male educators included the same 8 questions this was relatively easy to organise and to recognise themes. However, on the whole the data revealed a wider range of distinct responses from the male educators, than commonalties. This finding is probably due to the small sample size as well as the diversity of the sample group in terms of their backgrounds and life experiences.

Having followed Babbie and Mouton's (2011) case study research design their schema on *analytical strategies* also influenced the second stage of the data analysis phase. Here they highlight two important processes: the *organisation of the findings* and the *appropriateness of*

generalisations. With regards to the former they advocate that "the discussion of the categories of the findings is separate from the presentation of the findings" (ibid, p.283). The findings from the male educators interviews are presented as mini-biographies (Section 4.2.1) which give a brief life history and some contextual background. Each participants responses are then organised in themes relating to the questions posed (Section 4.3.1), with some raw data (verbatim quotes) included. Section 4.5 then discusses these responses in relation to the literature and previous research findings, with generalisations highlighted were appropriate. Babbie and Mouton's (ibid) state that "the generalizability of case study findings is demonstrated through showing the linkages between findings and previous knowledge". The rationale for presenting findings as such was to allow the reader in Section 4.2 and 4.3 to draw their own analysis or conclusion from the data before discussing and going into the researcher's interpretation. A similar approach was followed with the key informant's findings although the contextual background was limited to where they work and their work experience etc.

3.11 TRUSTWORTHINESS

In qualitative research reliability and validity are conceptualised differently. Lincoln and Guba (1985, cited in De Vos, 2005, p.346) outline 4 areas of assessment. 1) *Credibility*: Realtes to internal validity - "the goal is to demonstrate that the inquiry was conducted in such a manner as to ensure that the subject was accurately identified and described. The use of tape recordings and a member or validity check strengthen the credibility of this study. 2) *Transferability:* Relates to "external validity or generalisability." (ibid.). With this research there was a two-fold aim, to generate contextual understandings of a human experience and contribute a body of knowledge on a phenomenon that corresponds to existing theory. So whilst there are commonalities and generalisations that can be drawn from comparing these findings with other similar research the aim was not to develop a generalisable theory but to understand the phenomenon contextually.

The member check helps establish the truthfulness of the researchers' interpretation of the participants' views. The researcher "must return to the participant with an analysed or interpreted summary of the interview to confirm that it accurately represents their experience or view" (Hycner, 1999, p.154). Once the participants 'life stories' were collated they checked and validated by the participants.

3.12 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The following limitations were identified:

- Due to the small numbers of men in the ECCE workforce and the absence of data on their exact numbers in Johannesburg it was challenging to meet the sample group target of 8 participants (including the 2 in the pilot study). This small size might be seen to affect the credibility of the study. However the aim was to gather contextualised not generalised data.

- This study could have been enhanced by including multiple sources of data to explore the issue from other stakeholders perspectives e.g. parents, female educators and government policy makers. This was beyond the scope of the research but should be taken into account for future research.

- If time was not such a constraint a follow up interview with each of the male practitioners would have been useful to clarify issues, probe deeper and gain richer data.

- The paucity of local literature on the topic made it difficult to check the validity and reliability of the research against other findings.

- Language barriers were at times an issue. As the researcher's mother tongue is English this might have affected interaction with some participants (see Section 3.8)

3.13 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Throughout the research process the principles of ethical research were adhered to. These included ensuring that the research was designed in a way to ensure *non-maleficence*, and *beneficence* of the participants. As the research deals with identifying the needs and desires of male ECCE educators the researcher will have to stay truthful to these needs and desires to ensure their views are accurately portrayed and hopefully contribute to a better understanding of the issue. Additionally, principles such as *justice* and *respect for the participant's human rights and dignity* will be taken into account. In terms of *fidelity*, the researcher ensured that all agreements and promises were kept, especially those linked to the participant's *autonomy*, *anonymity* and *confidentiality* (Bless, Higson-Smith and Kagee, 2008, pp 141-143).

All participants received and signed an informed consent form (Appendix D) which outlined the purpose of the research; the procedures of the research; the risk and benefits of the research; the voluntary nature of their participation; their right to stop the research at any time and the procedures used to protect confidentiality (Groenewald, 2004, p.10).

3.14 SUMMARY

It is hoped that the chosen research methodology clearly relates to the overarching aims and objectives of the study, the multi-disciplinary framework and the literature review. As Fouché (in De Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delport, 2005, p. 272, citing Babbie, 2000) states "case study researchers, in contrast to grounded theorists, seek to enter the field with a knowledge of the relevant literature before conducting the field research". The literature review and framework heavily influenced the selection of the case study research design as well as the topics raised in the interview schedule. This was seen as enhancing the transferability (generalisability) of the study as some comparison, obviously not scientific, could be made against other literature. Having said that, in keeping with a holistic approach contextualisation was equally as important as generalisability. A case study design allowed for in-depth, contextual investigation of the units of analyses which meets the first and second objectives: 1) to gather accounts of the lived experiences of male ECCE educators in Johannesburg; 2) to explore the needs of male ECCE educators in relation to government policy. Given more time and resources this research could be enhanced by adding other sources of data (e.g. parents, female educators, government officials) and methods of data collection (e.g. a focus group).

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS AND FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The following chapter is split in four parts. Following a case study design the profiles of the participants[8] (Section 4.2) are presented separately to the results from their interviews (Section 4.3). This is followed by interview results of the key informants (Section 4.4). These results are then discussed together in Section 4.5, starting with the experiences of the male educators and then the broader social issues surrounding gender inclusivity in ECCE.

4.2 PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

4.2.1 Participant Profiles

Adam is in his late thirties, married with children and has been in education for 13 years. He trained in music and originally taught at tertiary level, working his way down to high school, and primary level before coming to nursery just over a year ago. He claims to enjoy working at early childhood level more because children are more eager to learn and there is a greater sense of reward. He works at a private school catering for 0-9 year olds in an affluent part of Randburg, Johannesburg. His work focuses on the 3-9 years cohort and he is responsible for the music programme as well as physical education, extracurricular activities such as drama, life skills and the spiritual programme with the Foundation phase children. He also tutors private music lessons.

Andile is in his early twenties and grew up in Soweto, he currently lives in a suburb in east Johannesburg. He has been working for one year as an assistant director (the Montessori term for teacher) at a Montessori nursery school which caters for children of employees of a large national retail company. The nursery is based in Crown Mines a light industrial area in central Johannesburg and caters for up to 200 children from 1-6 years. Andile teaches 2-4 year olds. Previously he worked as a volunteer teaching Grade R at a government-run primary school in Orange Farm. Prior to that, after leaving school he volunteered at a crèche in his area. He has completed his Montessori Certificate and is working towards the Diploma. His passion for ECCE extends beyond his day job. He helps out at a local crèche fundraising

[8] All participants - male educators and key informants - have been given pseudonyms

for materials and assisting staff with programming. He is currently also setting up a weekend kids club in his area and would one day like to run his own Montessori school and work with Government to incorporate more child-centred approaches like Montessori into the national curriculum.

Jared is in his early twenties and lives in Edenvale, east Johannesburg, where he also went to school. He knew he wanted a career in coaching from an early age as he loved sports. After high school he started coaching children as he always liked children, and wanted to work with them. He currently works as a personal trainer at a gym and as a sports coach for a company that provides extracurricular sports programmes in private schools. He works with children aged 2-8 years developing gross motor, fine motor skills and ball skills. He also works with children with physical and mental disabilities, which he finds a particularly rewarding element of his work.

Richard is in his late twenties, Zimbabwean and works as a resident sports coach at a private nursery school in Carlswald, a very affluent suburb on the outskirts of Johannesburg. The school is set on large grounds and caters for about 200 children. Richard moved to South Africa in 2008 and is originally from Harare. He went to a private boarding school in Masvingo, and started coaching sports during his O Levels. He previously coached sports at primary level but wanted more of a challenge and says he prefers working in the early years. He is currently studying business management and is also a partner in a sports coaching franchise from the UK called Early Kickers that we started here in South Africa with a friend.

Simon is in his mid-thirties, Zimbabwean and a single parent to a 12 year old son. He works as an assistant nursery teacher at a nursery school in Parktown North, an affluent inner-city suburb. The nursery has one class of 25 children between the ages of 3-5 years. Simon says he came from 'a very low class family', raised primarily by his mother as his father worked in the mines in Johannesburg and he saw him once a year, less at times. He completed his schooling but says he had to really apply himself to his studies as conditions at home were hard. Upon arrival in Johannesburg in 2001 he got a job as a gardener at the nursery school. Over time he wanted to get more involved working with the children. In 2007 Simon enrolled at a childcare college and graduated top of his class in 2010. He hopes to continue his studies soon and qualify as a nursery teacher.

Sizwe is in his early forties and comes from Soweto although he attended high school in the North West province. He has worked in ECCE for 15 years and has a long history of volunteering and community work in early childhood. He started out as a volunteer at an ECD resource centre in Soweto. In 2007 he trained as a Grade R teacher and now works at a government primary school in Mohlakeng township, Randfontein. As well as teaching he assists with admin and IT, runs all the extracurricular activities and is facilitator of the Soul Buddyz programme, which is part of the youth HIV/AIDS programme LoveLife. He is also teaches Sunday school at his church.

4.3 INTERVIEW RESULTS – MALE EDUCATORS

The following results are organised in themes that follow the structure of the interview schedule. These themes were based on topics emerging from the literature review. They begin with issues relating to personal experiences then expand to encompass broader social issues such as the general lack of men and policy related issues.

4.3.1 Motivation for entry into early childhood care and education

Richard and **Jared** are both sports coaches and knew from their mid-teens that they wanted a career in sports education. Richard started working in primary schools but realised that he had to start working with children younger to develop sporting talent so he applied for his current job in a preschool. Jared's work sees him visiting a variety of schools teaching sports so he doesn't actually work full-time in an ECCE setting. He also works as a personal trainer in a gym. For **Sizwe**, working with children was a semi-conscious decision. He started working at an ECD resource centre in Soweto from the age of 18 and has always worked in the early years. **Andile** explains his entry into ECCE as "*a calling"*. He hadn't planned to enter the profession but after graduating from high school he was invited by a local woman to volunteer at a crèche. Shortly after that he knew this is what he was meant to do with his life. For **Simon** it was also an unconscious decision. When he arrived in Johannesburg from Zimbabwe he did not have any particular job in mind. He needed work and got a job as a gardener at a nursery. From there he says "*I edged myself into working with children"* and went onto study childcare. **Adam's** entry into ECCE came after many years of teaching at higher, secondary and primary level, he says: "*Um, so I wouldn't say that teaching is necessarily what I always wanted to do. I was kind of guided there by just experience, and I suppose as you get older you discover more what you're good at and where you're gifted*."

4.3.2 Job satisfaction and reward

Half the respondents **Richard, Jared** and **Adam** clearly stated that seeing progression in the children's learning and development was the most rewarding aspect of their job. As **Jared** says: "*being able to see a child show great progression through the year*", similarly **Adam** responded: "*you see results in the children quite quickly*". For **Simon** the best part was playing games and sports with the children, for **Sizwe** it was "*teaching these young ones in the class*", and for **Andile** being, "*Surrounded by kids. That's it, mmm, you know there's never a dull moment when you're surrounded by kids, there's never a dull moment. So what I like about my job is to see every, like a kid smiling for me it completes me*".

4.3.3 The significance of gender in the workplace

The question posed here was 'Do you feel that your gender affects your job in any way?' For **Jared** and **Richard**, the two participants working as sports coaches, the response was a firm no. "*No. Not at all. Its equal, straight out*" said Richard. **Sizwe** also didn't feel it affected it at work although he was sometimes made to feel aware of his difference during training but it didn't make him feel uncomfortable: "*No, no, no. It never affect, actually. Most of the time when you go to workshops like last year when I was doing my level 5 I was the only male, out of I think there were 2000 women*". Likewise, **Simon** felt gender was not an issue in the workplace but raised feeling slightly out of place and isolated during his training. However being 'the only one' meant he got more attention, support and encouragement and gradually he got used to it. **Adam** also didn't feel like it affected the way he performed his job, although he mentioned "*Not really, it does now and then, you crave a males company to talk about the latest sports results and things like that cos there's no-one else to talk to*."

For **Andile** his gender, and being a minority in a female-dominated space had had some affect. He expressed initially feeling out of place during his training: "*I'd be surrounded by close to 80 or 90 females in one room and I'm the only male and I would get the spotlight*". Then in his first teaching position in Grade R at a Government school he says he got a lot of surprised reactions from staff and parents, "*like my first day they were like 'Hau, there's a man',*". He also felt he got 'special treatment' from colleagues because of his gender and felt slightly undermined when they wanted to help, whilst female teachers weren't given the same offers of assistance. In his current role at a Montessori preschool he feels he is now treated equally although he says, "*When I first got here when a child makes a poo on themselves they*

would say "No, we'll change him, or we'll change her", so I told them guys this is what I do, you know, why not?".

4.3.4 Reactions from family, friends and community

Both **Richard** and **Jared** who are sports coaches reported that their friends and family were very supportive of their choice. For **Simon** it wasn't an issue with friends although his response about family reactions infers some lack of support, although he didn't want to go into it further, he says: "*I didn't consult anyone, so er I had to do it, cos that's what I wanted to do".* **Sizwe** also had support from family and friends but parents and people in the community questioned his choice. Of the latter group he says: "*Ja, some people they're taking it in the other way round, you know. They say „a male 42 years teaching children this age how do you cope, why, why do you choose this?" they don't understand that that is in me you know. Cos of even in church I'm teaching Sunday school. I, that's where I want to be actually"*. With parents the reactions were two-fold. He claims: "*people they thought that a male cannot teach children and there's some parents when they come to school here maybe they've got problem when they come to school"*. On the other hand "*Some other parents when they hear that „Oh, your teacher it's a male" and then they call me or they write me a letter. So they will tell me, „my child did 1, 2, 3, 4 yesterday". So as a man, because other children they do things because of, they don't have the male figures, you know, so when they come in, when I speak to them they.ja*". Sizwe feels that some parents were pleased their children had a male presence in their lives.

Adam also reported some initial negativity from parents, "*Yep, as far as friends and family go I've never had an issue with that, they've never....Parents, yes. There have been a few who raised concerns that there's a male on the property but I think over time they've seen the difference and seen that ok this guy is alright and trustworthy and you know reliable and dependable*".

Andile also has a very supportive immediate family but of his extended family and community he says:

> "*Cos for me I'm a Zulu speaking guy and I was bought up by a Zulu father but he didn't grow up in the rural community whereby it was strict you know. Cos most, like Zulus are too hard-headed I can say that. They don't believe that I should be doing this job cos when I go back home in Natal and they ask me guys from there, where do I work, when I tell them, "Hayi, are you for real, no, no, no, no, man you need*

a hiding" you know, as a joke, "You need a hiding, you can't be doing females work". Then I ask them who said this is a female environment here, you know. And what would come up is that we're too modern these days, in the olden days you'd never find a man taking care of kids and all that you know, so it's a very tough question hey, it is."

Andile's friends also reacted in seemingly traditional, reactionary ways: "*And my friends were like 'Dude, are you for real', I'm like, 'Ja, why', 'Do you, now tell me, do you change a nappy where you're working?', you know. They're like 'No man, this is not a man's job' you know. I got that a lot you know especially from my friends like, 'You're one weird guy'*. As for reactions of the parents he claims, "*here in this space I'm being appreciated. They'd be like 'If he leaves here they'll be trouble cos he's the only male and the kids love him so much', you know, the parents love me to bits. They're like 'Oh a male, there's something different, we've never seen this before', and they're very supportive*."

4.3.5 Relationships with learners and role models

For Simon, Jared and Sizwe, their relationship was clearly that of a father figure. As **Simon** relates "*Er you know when it comes to this part of the story just be a father, you know er, just be father, be firm, as well as being gentle*". **Jared** claims**, "***I'm basically like a role model, some kids call me Dad [laughs] its quite funny...No some actually say Dad and some slip up umm, they always ask me questions about things, and they talk to me, always hug me, it's like a good relationship with them you know.....I think maybe a father figure with them and then they just take to you, younger kids just take to guys much better, they just take to us much better than women, I don't know why*." **Sizwe** also responds similarly, "*So so, some of them is good to have a male teacher because you know these nowadays you got children without fathers because of young children, young girls, they have children and their fathers go other way so I'm a male figure to them, I'm a role model to them because of they don't have fathers in their homes, you know*."

For **Adam** the distinction of his role as a professional, rather than a father figure was very important. "*I'm able to maintain discipline and they understand that I'm the teacher and they're the students and so that's clear.... I am very relaxed with the kids and sometimes you know cos they are very immature they can tend to treat you more as an uncle or family but you know you've got to put the boundary back in place*". He also stated that "*I give them something that the female teachers cant*". For **Richard** his role was also clearly defined and professional. "*Well the relationship we have is, everybody knows me, they all know me,*

sports coach, this is what we do, as long as they're with me it has to do with something with sports. It has to be a physical activity.... They, they get used to me, they get attached to you, they know if, cos its different from academics hey, they're pushed to do stuff in class, there its free roam, but they do it at their pace, I don't force anyone to do anything". **Andile** described his relationship as providing a "*male figure*", though not a father figure, but he also states, "*I would say there's no boys and girls since I'm with the kids it's like we're all equal, you know. So the role that I'm playing in their lives you know I'm teaching them to be confident you know. And like if you don't want to do anything that you don't want to do you can't be forced to do that here*".

4.3.6 The benefits of male educators to children in early childhood

While **Simon** and **Andile** had no thoughts on this issue, **Neo** thought that a male presence provided male role models, guidance and compensated for the lack of men in children's lives. **Jared** felt children listened and behaved better with male teachers and so it improved the quality of learning, "*They just listen more....and they don't listen to female coaches that often and when the guys come in there, puts his foot down, they listen and they respect and they do well.*".

For **Adam** this was an emotive topic:

> *"For me I think it, I think particularly for the boys it's a sense of identity. Yeah I believe firmly that as children we find our identity in our fathers. And we relate to our fathers, whether we're boys or girls, we find something in our father that helps us identify who we are, and so for a little boy he's asking, 'Am I good enough?'. And er, that's something that I'm very aware of is how I talk to the boys particularly, you know. Cos you get kids from all kinds of backgrounds coming here, that might be coming from broken homes themselves, or single parents you know, you you've got, you don't know where these kids are at and er, being able to instil some kind of identity in them."*

Adam also perceives an essential difference in the way men teach and relate to children compared with female educators that echo Jared's statements: "*I've seen the difference that male teachers make in primary level, at primary level. With the guys that I've taught with there's a completely different dynamic in the classroom when the kids are with a male teacher as opposed to a female teacher there's more of a respect for authority, they don't tend to back chat as much, the discipline is improved, erm and they're able to, I think relate to a male teacher differently I know that when I was...*" Finally, **Richard** seemed to view the benefits in

terms of diversity rather than essential differences in the way men and women teach. "*I think it just strikes a balance. It's, they know ok fine, there's the female teachers at the school and there's also male teachers at the school. So, it's actually just like a balance*."

4.3.7 The absence of men in early childhood care and education

For Sizwe and Andile the perception of ECCE as a gendered occupation, as 'women's work' was the key reason for the lack of men. "*I believe that some males they believe this job is for women... like a friend of my dad's the nephew wants to come in this profession but he's not certain if, how his friends are gonna take it or his girlfriend. I don't know but I believe that they believe this job is for women only*." says **Andile**. In the same vein **Sizwe** say, "*They think it's a women's job to look after children. Some people they thought that we are looking after the children, they don't know that we are teaching them, and we are not even teaching them, we are developing them, you know we are developing them*."

For **Adam** the issue which comes up a lot in the literature was one of low pay and status. *"I think first of all it's a financial issue. Er, there's not huge scope for promotion for male staff in the lower grades. Er, because I think as much as we might recognise that it's a calling and that's what your good at we're forced to go into careers were we're earning more because you've got families to take care of. I think if education was more of a priority in our country and they placed more value on teachers and paid them more I think you'd find the opposite. I think you'd find a lot more males in teaching*." Another reason for him was that "*for some men it's difficult to work in a female dominated environment."*

Richard viewed the absence of men in terms of the qualities needed for the job, which he felt not all men have: **"***I think it's an issue of patience. Ja obviously it's an issue of patience, tolerance, cos your working with...this, this is a very dynamic group hey. One day they are very clingly, one day they are you know it's very dynamic, you don't expect the same thing behaviour every day, the behaviour pattern changes. Umm, your lesson plan will not go as to, you will never go as you plan. You have to be able to be flexible, you know you have to be able to initiate some certain actions you know just to get their interest back these people have very short [attention], it's very short. So you gotta be...versatile*"

Simon's response was slightly ambiguous **"***my question is, are we given also that chance, or are we giving ourselves that chance."* Here I felt that he was saying that 1) social conditions do not allow men to perform caring roles, and 2) men do not allow themselves to take up

these kinds of roles because they feel pressured by societal norms. He also raised the issue of child abuse: "*It's like through the abuse of women and children it makes it more difficult for us as men to be you know visible especially in the child care industry. Because I mean that is the main concern, but it's not been done by all the men you know what I mean its 3 out of 10 men who does that thing and then it spoils the whole gender. So if we can try to stick like that then maybe we can win the battle*". This issue was purposely left out of the interview schedule in order to see if it emerged as an issue, or was part of the experience of being a male educator. It is interesting that Simon was the only participant to raise the issue.

My conversation with **Jared** on the issue deserves to be presented in full as it reveals a lot of the assumptions out there about men in ECCE. Jared viewed himself as a sports coach, not an early years professional even though he works exclusively with children aged 2-8 years. The concept of men working in ECCE was alien to him.

Ntsiki:	Um, again you kind of answered it for me but I wanna go a little bit deeper into that, why you think there's so few men in this profession in, I mean most of the people I've been working with the guys actually work in nurseries as teachers so...
Jared:	haven't seen that.
Ntsiki:	Ja, no I mean out of 500 creches that I surveyed I've found 12
Jared:	Are they gay?
Ntsiki:	No, that's always the assumption, it is always the assumption. Two guys were married, some had kids.
Jared:	Do they own the schools or what?
Ntsiki:	No. No, ja, you see
Jared:	Ja, I've never seen that
Ntsiki:	But so I'm interested in those kind of perceptions of like, you know, why it's been ok, some women have moved into certain jobs, you know we've crossed gender, I can, as a woman I can do any job I wanna do...
Jared:	Ja, true, true,
Ntsiki:	But for a guy to cross into those professions suddenly it's like...
Jed:	Yes, It's hectic. Well you see with me it's ok because it's an extra mural, it's a coaching programme so that's fine, but the nursery school, full-time teacher, same kids, all day everyday that's like, err a special kind of person, a very special kind of person.

4.3.8 Policy and possible interventions

Whilst all of the participants felt more men should be encouraged into the profession they were equally split - firmly agree, don't know, and disagree - on whether government should be involved in this process. **Sizwe** says **"***Ja, I think what the Government should do, they can make a open days in school monthly actually*." **Adam** responded "*I think it does absolutely. From my perspective purely because of what male staff bring to the equation, and what they can do for child development, it's undervalued, entirely. So having more men at this age, who are grounded, who are good fathers, who are good husbands, and are setting that example and are teaching that to their children, the children they are working with, it can only have a positive spin-off. So absolutely I think it's something that should be looked at. If I had my, my way, I would change the salary structures of teachers*."

Whilst Both Jared and Andile agreed it should be encouraged they had no views on whether government should be involved. **Jared** claims "*I think encouraged, cos males are...we've got qualities that, you know what, what I see in nursery schools with female teachers is they, I'm not being ugly or anything but they, most of them are lazy, they don't watch the kids they sit and have tea-time and they just talk to each other while the kids play for most of the day, I see that wherever I go, and we guys are not like that they wanna work, and they're hard workers they'll do well*." **Andile** felt that, "*You know what I believe, I believe maybe I can change some mans take on this job you know*." He felt it important that he encouraged other men who were interested in the work and acted as a sort of champion for male educators.

Simon also saw the duty to encourage men resting with men themselves, not Government, at least not initially: "*It's like as men we need to stand up, you know what I mean. We need to be more like, er I'm not saying men are not standing up enough but we need to do more....Er, for men to be like more involved I don't think it's a Government thing. It should come from men in particular. It's not like, it's not only happening in one country ja, the world in general. So if we can stand up as men and say listen this is what we doing, put something on the table, I think the Government can take it from there*."

For **Richard** the issue rests solely with men themselves**: "***I don't think it's an issue really, actually it's a choice. It comes down to choice whether you feel comfortable, what is it that you're looking for? For me it's a choice cos, you know this is not the only work I am in. People have choices, when they go and enrol in college there is choice, you're given, do you want to take the early childhood development, most of them won't take it, they'll just leave it,*

they're like agh, no we'll, let's let the ladies take that, I'd rather take matriculants, or the senior primary, or...It's it's a choice, it's a choice. I studied for senior primary but it was a choice for me to come lower. Cos, sports it, it starts low, you see that's where I wanted to start, I wanted to start there, it's more challenging".

4.4 INTERVIEW RESULTS - KEY INFORMANTS

Key Informant 1 is an ECCE practitioner with over 30 years experience and is currently based at a university in Gauteng. During her extensive career in early childhood she has only come across *two* male practitioners. Historically, until the late 1990's, the university's policy permitted men to train in the Foundation Phase, and they were only allowed to enter at Senior Primary level.

Key Informant 2 is based at a university in the Western Cape. He has an academic background in Education although his research focus is around gender. He has published an extensive body of work on fatherhood, masculinity, and most recently men in care work

4.4.1 The absence of men in early childhood care and education

With regards to why there are so few men in the profession both informants mentioned the low status of ECCE in relation to primary, secondary and tertiary education as the chief factor. They also both stated the perception of men as dangerous to children and negative perceptions around men working with children being gay or paedophiles. Key Informant 2 added a further point on the domination of women in the caring professions and their unwillingness to have men in those spaces. Finally Key Informant 1 raised the issue of "*the perception of men as not caring"* which relates to Key Informant 2's view that:

> *"It's a complicated phenomenon that goes ultimately to questions of motherhood and fatherhood, with early childhood work, is often associated with mothering, and that so long as fathering is defined primarily as provider and disciplinarian and stuff like that it's not, it's going to be hard to get young men into early childhood"*

4.4.2 Gender inclusivity and gender equity

For Key Informant 2 men in ECCE is a positive phenomena that should be encouraged and could in principle have a positive impact on gender equity in society. However, he raised

concerns about the intractable nature of occupational segregation stating - "*you need to have much more fluidity in the world of work such that men and women can equally move into you know, women into the boardrooms but men into the nurseries*". In terms of how to do this Key Informant 2 felt that understandings of masculinity amongst men and institutionally (e.g ECCE settings, hospitals, school etc) needed to be problematised and transformed so that "*they're two things that need to happen, men need to feel it's ok to do that work, and institutions need to welcome them*".

Key Informant 1 took a different view on gender inclusivity and equity. She felt that women were still undermined in the profession and this was perhaps a greater issue for her. She didn't mention the issue of transforming understandings of masculinity and gender stereotypes. Although she felt men were to be encouraged into the profession her response suggested a more traditional, essentialist understanding of gender.

> *"I don't know about the gender equity story cos I still think, because I still think, generally in South Africa women are probably the less privileged. And I think it not, not when you come to the mundane teaching jobs but when you get the more management and when you get higher up. So I'm not sure about...but I do think there's a place for men and I think they lend another influence and I think they come with another perspective and I think they can view things differently and often a lot more, or less emotively, you know, and I think they provide a balance."*

4.4.3 The benefits of male educators to children in early childhood

Key Informant 1 felt that the absence of men in ECCE is "*a huge disservice to children*". She had also perceived over the years a "*feminisation"* of ECCE and the curriculum, which she felt was not adequately geared to the learning and developmental needs of boys in particular. This is because of the increasing focus on formal academic learning, to the neglect of physical movement and play. Here she feels men could play an important role as she feels they are more "*adventurous*" and "*physically active*" and could bring balance to the curriculum.

> *"I think despite whatever arguments we have, I think we do have certain obvious differences between men and women, and not only physical I really think the way we perceive, the things we want, what we do, ja. And I honestly think that for many children and particularly boys I think the lack of a male presence is actually harmful. You know we're wanting these children to sit down, keep quiet, to colour, and it's so important I don't know why it's so important to colour in between the lines and to do all these perceived good things and I really don't believe it's what young children*

necessarily want, especially young boys. Young boys don't like putting things on a piece of paper, they don't want to draw a flower. They want to kick a ball they want to play with nuts and bolts, they want to climb trees, and somehow, and I don't say women can't do it but...those activities are becoming less frequent."

Key Informant 1 did also mention that girls were also victims of 'feminisation' saying "*I think we're doing children, and also girls disservice".* She also says " *I do believe children should have positive role models both female and male, and, and I think girls need to know about men and what men do and boys need good role models".*

In contrast Key Informant 2 felt that this issue was a huge debate and rather inconclusive. He felt that the argument about "*education in the recent period that it has become too feminised and that men, that boys are suffering because there's an absence of male role models*" was unprogressive and perhaps misplaced. He asks "*does it make any difference you know if you have more male teachers?....Erm, the evidence is not terribly persuasive, it may well*". He goes further to say:

"You know my own view is that yeah it's obviously a factor, but it shouldn't be regarded in isolation of you know other factors. So for example, to have an incredibly caring and attentive and well skilled teacher regardless of gender is obviously to the benefit of a child. Yeah so bringing a male in who is not particularly skilled, who is not particularly caring, you know is not going to help a child. On the other hand, bringing in a male who is those things possibly will. So it's, how does one hold the balance between the importance of gender as against the importance of other non-gender factors."

4.4.4 Men in early childhood and child abuse

Key Informant 1 had mentioned fears around paedophilia in the first question as one reason for the absence of men in ECCE. She went further on the topic saying that regulation had gone too far in other countries, specifically prohibitive policies on physical contact amongst children and workers in general. Her view is that:

"Children need to be touched, and not meaning...they need contact, they need a hug, they need a smile, they need, I mean to me that's what children need, so I think you know we overreact. Here you know , one doesn't know here, I think our legislation and our, even what legislation we've got it's so poorly implemented, you know so to me I think we've got far bigger problems then say having male caregivers

because I mean I think the female caregivers are equally abusive, personally, in many of the early learning facilities."

4.4.5 Policy and possible interventions

Both informants felt the need for stakeholder institutions (e.g. training institutions and ECCE settings) and to a lesser extent Government to be engaged in encouraging more men into ECCE. However, their approaches differed somewhat. In general Key Informant 2 was apprehensive and felt that:

> *"It's always difficult to make firm statements about these things in the light of policy, wanting in a rather heavy handed way, trying to make systemic rulings about prescriptions when in fact this stuff plays out in ways that are very very individualised and at least quite classroom specific. So it's you know, globally I'd say ja, it could be brilliant for early childhood education to have a cohort of dedicated caring young male teachers you know but would I elevate that into a policy commitment, well, with hesitation."*

Here he felt that if policy became law, the law could result in stringent quota systems and other "*gender insensitive mechanisms*". Having said that he felt that quota systems to increase the number of men in training institutions could be useful, as a procedure not enshrined in law. Other measures included advertising campaigns and career guidance in schools. Linked to this is also more discussion around men and caring in life skills classes which he felt could help put "*the seed in the mind of boys at school that this is something that they might be interested in*."

For Key Informant 1, four factors were crucial in encouraging men into the sector. First, is the need to raise the status of ECCE in general, secondly linked to this is the issue of tackling negative assumptions and stereotypes about men in ECCE. Third, is the need to allocate funds for training bursaries and incentives for men in particular. And fourth and finally, the implementation of controls – "*certain controls need to be put in place, but I don't think controls need to be put in because men are there, I think we need to put controls into nursery schools and crèches because children can't talk if they're not being properly or adequately looked after*." In general Key Informant 1 was unconvinced about Governments role in the process, and refers to the linking of the EPWP with ECCE which she felt was devaluing the sector and not always attracting suitable candidates for the profession.

> *"I still do not believe there is tremendous political will to make it happen because if there was they would be doing things, I believe, a lot differently. Because it wouldn't be to give people employment it would be what is necessary for the children of our country and I really don't believe we're addressing that adequately, and quite honestly I don't believe they're doing anything for men."*

4.4.6 Transforming ECCE practice

Key Informant 1 mentions above the need to tackle negative assumptions and stereotypes about men in ECCE. This is work she is doing through training ECCE practitioners on gender issues in ECD. In particular she runs a module which focuses on "*male teachers, and the importance of male teachers and whether they should or should not be part of an ECD sector*." She says, "*I think it's quite an issue because most of the students initially just say absolutely not, it's not for men, and these are young girls hey, I mean the majority of the students are what between say 20 and 25 and a few maybe in their 30s and for them they don't even think about it, and it's quite nice when they start exploring it and debating it, you do get some attitude change*."

For Key Informant 2 transforming ECCE practice is fundamental to positively transforming society in general, not just on gender issues:

> *"I think we are trying to reproduce in early childhood development, apart from instilling stuff your basically trying to make up for societies deficits... you know we live in a terribly troubled society so you don't want to be replicating the kind of dysfunctionality of South African society you want to be creating a new vision."*

He also makes an interesting point regarding culture, tradition and its role in changing attitudes around fatherhood and men's caring role:

> *"the argument about culture can be used to say in a negative way, that this is not in our culture to do a, b, c, you know which I think is very unhelpful. On the other hand we can say that culture's constantly changing, tradition is constantly being reworked and we can productively mine the past, the anthropological literature, the historical literature, to take good examples of practices of care amongst men in South Africa. And I think we ought to do that, because it is inspirational and it is a resource and we need every resource we can mobilise to try and do this work successfully because it's obviously critical."*

4.5 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The following discussion will look firstly at the responses of male educators about their personal experiences of working in ECCE. The second section will look at responses from both the male educators and the key informants on policy issues and topics arising from the literature review. The aim of this research was to uncover the views and experiences of male ECCE practitioners and to present the findings in a manner that stays true to their views and experiences. Analysing the findings through a particular prescriptive theoretical lens has been avoided in order to follow a holistic and multi-disciplinary approach.

4.5.1 Male educators' profiles

The first thing these findings highlight is that there is no stereotypical 'male educator'. As Morrell's (1998) study on masculinity shows, the participants came from diverse backgrounds in terms of age, class, educational background, nationality, race and so on. They also demonstrated that there is not one type of masculinity, most of the men displayed very traditional essentialist attitudes but at times contradicted those by revealing what are considered more 'feminine' or gender neutral attitudes. This reflects findings of studies on male educators internationally (Murray, 1996; Cameron et al, 1999; Sumison, 2000; Cooney and Bittner, 2001, Owen, 2003). In particular Sumison's (2000) indepth case study highlighted the multiple constructs one person can simultaneously hold in terms of their role or views on gender roles and relationships.

4.5.2 Motivation for entry into early childhood care and education

Although the paths into ECCE varied greatly between participants they all deemed their work as vocational. Two participants explicitly referred to their work as a calling, or of realising they were gifted in that area. This diversity of motivation is reflected in Owen's (2003) study which details how men got into ECCE. Similarly, Owen (ibid, p. 4) says "None of the men grew up with the idea of wanting to work with children." This is possibly because it was never presented as an option when they were very young. With the exception of Jared and Richard (both of whom are sports coaches i.e. traditionally accepted 'male' jobs) who knew from a young age that they wanted to work with young children, most of the men in this study fell into ECCE by chance. Rolfe (2006, p.116) says that "Evidence that some men working in the sector discovered by accident that they liked working with children, after spending years in jobs they disliked, suggests there are other men who would find they enjoy the work, if barriers to their participation could be overcome". Breaking these barriers should include

presenting this kind of work as a viable option to boys from an early age and reformulating ECCE as a respected profession to aspire to.

4.5.3 Job satisfaction and reward

All of the participants showed a great passion for their job, and described experiencing high levels of reward and job satisfaction. This echoes Rolfe's (2006) findings, "Despite issues of low pay and status, childcare workers, including men, enjoy high levels of job satisfaction. This is important because dissatisfied workers cannot deliver the quality care that parents increasingly expect". Similarly, Cooney and Bittner (2001) found that many men were happy to sacrifice income over job satisfaction. Added to low pay and status is the barrage of negative attitudes and assumptions that the participants in this study had to deal. Nevertheless they made no compromises or submissions to such pressures. As Simon and Sizwe respectively stated "*that's what I wanted to do*." and "*that's where I want to be actually*". One gained a lot of respect for their passion and determination.

4.5.4 The significance of gender in the workplace

With respect to gender being an issue in their daily working lives and the effect it had on relationships with colleagues the general, initial response was that gender was not an issue and they all felt respected and treated equally. However there were a few marked responses. Andile had experienced been undermined in his previous workplace similar to the way Owen (2003, p.4) describes **"**Two men reported that they felt their women colleagues were needlessly overprotective. They would 'jump in before a possible problem could occur', or would assume that they couldn't do some things with the children properly." One wonders whether Andile's similar experiences were down to his gender or relative inexperience as a newly qualified teacher. That said he also experienced female colleagues not letting him change nappies in his current role but he says he quickly overcame that and proved he could and should do it as that was in his job description. In terms of rapport he was the most comfortable of all the respondents talking about his gender and the most aware of his difference but not bound by it.

With the sport coaches, Jared and Richard, 'difference' was presumably not an issue because their roles were typically male and didn't cross into female domains of carework. As Cameron (2006, p. 75) observes despite "assertions of workers about sameness and 'equality', it appeared that in practice underlying gender divisions existed in childcare work". One got a

sense from all the participants except Andile that they negated gender differences and overstated the 'sameness' amongst men and women in the workplace. Andile and Simon described that their gender became more marked in training situations, but their experiences were not of marginalisation but of being a novelty, which actually seemed to benefit them. This follows research on male's presence as the 'token' being at times an advantage (Sumison, 2005; Cameron, 2006; Rolfe, 2006)

Adam was the only respondent to remark on the lack of male company, which he says he 'craved' at times, and felt unable to connect with his female colleagues in the same way he had done with male colleagues in previous work in higher education. This is reflected in Cameron's (2006, p.74) research "Such practices were vividly reported in comments male workers made about staffroom conversations, where, as one male worker said, 'sometimes I simply can't grasp what they are talking about'. A female worker confirmed this marginalisation of male workers in staffroom conversations when she said, 'you do get less personal with a man sitting there'. For Adam a female-dominated environment was seen as a deterrent to other men entering the profession, but something he had learnt to put up with.

Overall, these findings are a mixed bag but on the whole positive as none of the men reported feeling purposely marginalised or discriminated against because of gender. They negotiated their difference in the workplace in unique ways. One positive factor one might draw from this is the importance of supportive and inclusive working environments. All the settings they worked in were run by women who on the whole did not act as gatekeepers but recognised and valued the contribution men can play in their settings. As most of the literature suggests a lot of power lies in this groups hands if we are to see a greater presence of men in ECCE settings.

4.5.5 Reactions of family, friends and community

The findings regarding the reactions of family, friends and community reiterates the passion and commitment this group of men have. In the face of ridicule, doubt and criticism they persevere. As most of the research indicates support from family and friends varied in each context (Thurtle & Jennings, 1998, cited in Rolfe, 2006; Cooney and Bittner, 2001; Owen, 2003; Rolfe, 2006; Anliak and Beyazkurk, 2008). Andile and Sizwe's comments on traditional and cultural views on 'women's work' show that the main challenge as Newman et al (2011) and Morell and Jewkes (2011) suggest is transforming prevailing stereotypes on

occupational segregation. There is also work to be done in following the 'equality discourse' approach to risk and child protection (Cameron et al, 1999) within settings amongst practitioners and parents to discuss assumptions around safety, child abuse and protection.

4.5.6 Relationships with learners and role models

This topic was one of the most interesting and complex issues. Half of the participants described their role as a father figure which correlates with findings across all the research. Whereas women in Cameron's (2006) study identified themselves as professionals as opposed to mother figures, most men's identity as a man was linked to being a father. Some of the participants in this study also saw themselves as compensating for the lack of men in their students lives. However, Adam was unique in clearly defining his relationship and role with the children as a professional educator. Andile's response was also interesting in that he saw himself as a 'male figure' although he displayed a gender neutral and conscious attitude towards his relationship with boys and girls and described his role as - "*So the role that I'm playing in their lives you know I'm teaching them to be confident you know*". This response was aligned with Sumison's (2000) case study findings.

The conceptualisation of male practitioner's as father figures is seen as polemic by some. As Cameron (2006, p. 76) states "Working with inclusivity could benefit from a discursive approach to understanding the roles given to and adopted by male workers in early childhood services, for example, through making explicit and problematising the relationship between men as fathers or men as playmates with men as practitioners." There is much emphasis in the literature on all ECCE practitioners adhering to professionalism - mothering and fathering are not seen as professional. However, one is still undecided as to whether this is such a negative conceptualisation. Attachment is a crucial emotional need for children in their early years and ECCE settings need to provide security, love and care and guidance as much as they do education. If one borrows understandings of fatherhood as articulated by Mkhize (2008) and Richter and Morrell (2008), fatherhood (and parenting in general) is seen traditionally as a collective responsibility, not limited to biological relationships. In most African societies, female and male elders are referred to as 'Mama' or 'Baba'. Perhaps some of the respondents conceptualisations of themselves as father figures is culturally appropriate and should not be viewed as somehow devaluing the role of an ECCE professional, but as an important aspect of their role.

4.6 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS - POLICY ISSUES AND RESEARCH THEMES

4.6.1 The absence of men in early childhood care and education

On the issue of why there are so few men in the profession both the male practitioners and key informants reflected themes in the literature. The most recurring response that is found in all of the literature was that ECCE is considered 'women's work'. Findings also echoed research about issues of low pay, status and fears around child abuse (Murray, 1996; Cameron et al, 1999; Cooney & Bittner, 2001; Sumison, 2005; Cameron, 2006; Rolfe, 2006). One unique response from Key Informant 2 was on the role of women as gatekeepers and their unwillingness to have men in those spaces. Richard's response about qualities was also noteworthy. He felt that not all men were suited to the job, that they might not be patient, tolerant, versatile or adaptable enough. Yet he didn't identify these as necessarily 'female' attributes. His remark on men bringing balance to settings also signified a more neutral, anti-essential view on gender, although he contradicted this on other issues.

4.6.2 Gender inclusivity and gender equity

Whilst both informants viewed gender inclusivity as positive and something to be encouraged their rationale was quite different. For Key Informant 1 the positive aspect of men's inclusion is that it brings difference and balance to the workplace. But this view is based on the idea that men are essentially different to women, thus have a different teaching style. This is echoed in studies by Jensen (1996) who claims that men can enhance the quality of ECCE through their different styles of teaching and caring. Although this is considered quite a dated view by anti-essentialists such as Christie (1998, cited in Rolfe, 2006), Rolfe (2006, p.105) takes a balanced view saying "given different upbringing and social roles, it is highly probable that men will bring different skills to the work, reflecting their own gendered upbringing and culture". Cameron (2006) also supports the view that the quality of ECCE settings are enhanced by the difference and diversity of a gender balanced team, however her understanding of gender is not essentialist and embraces the possibility that not all women are caring and not all men enjoy physical activity. The issue is that a balanced workforce is more representative of the real world outside preschool walls.

Key Informant 1's views on gender equity stem from his research on men in carework in South Africa which highlights the importance of encouraging men into caring roles and breaking down stereotypes. Whilst he was positive about the need for more men in ECCE he raised concerns about the challenges of doing this. He felt that more men would not enter the

profession unless understandings of masculinity amongst men and institutionally were transformed. This follows arguments from Yelland & Grieshaber (1998) and MacNaughton & Newman (2001) on the intractable power of patriarchy and hegemonic masculinity. He also felt that simply having more men was not enough unless their own understandings of gender were transformed which echoes Sumison's (2000, p.138) view of "a *critical mix* of men of diverse masculinities, including profeminist men who are actively committed to gender reform", as opposed to just a 'critical mass' of 12%. It's therefore a case of quality over quantity.

4.6.3 The benefits of male educators to children in early childhood

The responses from male educators and Key Informant 1 revealed some very traditional attitudes on gender. Richard was the only participant who felt that the benefit was that it demonstrated balance and diversity in the workforce. The other respondents clearly felt their gender brought a different style of teaching and caring to the settings revealing an essentialist understating of gender. Moreover, Key Informant 1 thought that men could help counter the over 'feminisation' of ECCE settings.

Jared and Adam's comments about maintaining discipline and children responding better to men were very generalising and revealed an element of superiority towards male teachers versus female akin to 'male primacy' attitudes discussed in Newman et al (2011). This highlights the point that having men in ECCE doesn't necessarily entail a progressive transformation in gender relations. Male educators can reinforce rather than disrupt gender stereotypes which is of concern to some researchers (Cunningham, 1999, cited in Cooney and Bittner, 2001; Sumison, 2005; Cameron, 2006).

Key Informant 2 was the only respondent to echo views in the literature that it is difficult to measure men's impact on children's learning and development (Sumison, 2005; Cameron, 2006; Rolfe, 2006). He felt we need to judge the teacher not the gender when assessing men's role in ECCE. Similarly Sumison's (2000) theory of the 'critical mix', claims that rather than focus on quotas we should be concerned about the quality of the practitioner and the way in which they enact gender in the classroom.

4.6.4 Men in early childhood, child abuse and sexuality

Although child abuse is one of the most prominent themes in the international literature (Murray, 1996; Cameron, 1999; Owen, 2003; Sumison, 2005; Cameron, 2006; Rolfe, 2006). it was only mentioned by three respondents (Simon and both key informants) as a possible reason why men do not enter the profession. Observations during the study of people working in ECCE and conversation with colleagues and peers on the topic reveal that paedophilia and homosexuality is one of the first things that spring to mind when people think of a man working in a nursery.

Simon was the only male practitioner to raise the issue. It was purposefully left out of the interview schedule initially because it was felt to be a sensitive topic and the motivations for talking about it might be misinterpreted. On reflection it was a useful strategy to see if it was something that was close to the experience of being a male educator. However, there are a myriad possible reasons why it was absent from the discussions. Perhaps the participants were not comfortable talking about those issues, there was not enough rapport etc. It would be interesting to go back perhaps in a focus group setting and probe the issue.

"Open discussion and engagement with child protection issues" (UNICEF, 2006, cited in Richter & Dawes, 2008, p.90) are central to what Cameron (2006) distinguishes as the 'equality discourse' approach. At the other end is the 'risk discourse' – restricting men's access to children - which Key Informant 1 raised major concerns about, favouring the former approach. As she said children need contact and "*overreacting"* has negative impacts on the relationships between practitioners and children and so the quality of ECCE.

The concept of men not being able to touch children in their care, alongside the conceptualisation of men in ECCE embodying a father figure is fascinating and perplexing. Murray (1996) encapsulates this as:

> "Similarly, perceiving men as fathers (and fathers who cannot cuddle, kiss, or comfort, at that) reifies the perception that there is very little that men have to offer children. Restricting men workers' access to children (by comparison to the access of women workers) implies that men's desire for access to children is pathological. In these and other ways, the organization of child care and the accountability of persons to sex category systematically push men away from nurturing responsibilities and bind these responsibilities to women workers."

There is definitely a need to discuss further the conceptualisations of father figures as well as deconstruct notions of men as threats to children.

Finally on issues of sexuality and homophobia, although this was a recurring theme in the literature it was only mentioned by both key informants as a perception that explains the lack of men in the profession, and by only one male educator. Whilst Jared's response "*are they gay*?" is a common perception described in the literature it came as a shock during the interview. It immediately highlighted his positioning as a sports coach doing a 'man's job', and his disbelief that there were actually men out there doing 'women's work' was surprising. As he says "*Well you see with me it's ok because it's an extra mural, it's a coaching programme so that's fine, but the nursery school, full-time teacher, same kids, all day everyday that's like, err a special kind of person, a very special kind of person.*" Jared's case proves the point that male's presence doesn't necessarily disrupt stereotypes but can reinforce them (Cunningham, 1999, cited in Cooney and Bittner, 2001; Sumison, 2000, 2005; Cameron, 2006; Rolfe, 2006).

4.6.5 Policy, possible interventions and transforming ECCE practice

Finally on the way forward, there was consensus that more men should be encouraged into the profession, but amongst the male practitioner a lack of consensus on who's role that was to lead that process, and few ideas on how to enact that process. What was most interesting is that some felt the issue rested with men themselves. For them it was an issue of behaviour change and up to men to encourage each other and promote that kind of work. Richard's response was noteworthy for it perhaps overstated the issue of choice. He claimed men *have* choice but perhaps his position as someone who had access to a quality education, possibly a more privileged position in society and a positive support network meant that choice was more available to him. Adam's response - "*If I had my, my way, I would change the salary structures of teachers*" - stood out as he was the only one that felt low pay was the major issue to be addressed in order to attract more men. He also felt strongly that it was Government's responsibility to enact this.

For the key informants the way forward was clearer although they seemed sceptical on Government's willingness or capacity to follow such an agenda. For them more of the responsibility lay with training institutions to attract men through providing incentives, bursaries and setting targets on the number of men enrolled. They also highlighted the

importance of '*planting the seed'* in boys from an early age through life skills and career guidance programmes. Lastly, guidelines on child protection needed to be in place to protect everyone – children, staff and parents – in ECCE settings.

However these targeted responses might be ineffectual if social attitudes are not challenged. Key Informant 1 reported working with her female students on gender issues in ECCE, through which she had seen positive changes. More of this work is needed within the profession, which is strikingly gender unaware and quite apolitical on certain issues. As Talbot & Quayle's (2010, p.255) research found women were as responsible in "the construction and maintenance of counter feminist masculine ideals and identity frameworks." What is needed is all round gender conscientisation, of men and women taking equal ownership of the process.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 CONCLUSION

The aim of this study was to shed light on the experiences of male ECCE educators and initiate discussion on whether gender inclusivity in the ECCE sector is a relevant policy issue in South Africa. This was addressed by gathering accounts of male ECCE educators' views and experiences and the opinions of key informants and exploring the issue in relation to government policy.

In terms of the first objective - to gather accounts of the lived experiences of male ECCE educators in Johannesburg – 6 male ECCE educators were interviewed using a case study research design. These case studies yielded contextualised accounts of their experiences, exploring their motivation for entering the profession; the reactions and support, or lack thereof, they had received from their families, friends and communities; as well as their views on gender and how it affected their relationships with the children and adults they worked with. The study provides an initial account of these experiences although further research is needed to gain a more representative sample and to explore certain issues in more depth.

With regards to the second objective - to explore the needs of male ECCE educators in relation to government policy - male educators as well as two key informants were questioned on the broader social issues relating to the relative absence of men in the sector; on whether this relative absence was considered an issue and ways in which it could be tackled. The overall findings suggest that there is a need for existing and potential male educators to be encouraged, supported and made visible in the sector. The issue of whose role this was to provide support was split and brought to life Davies (1994, p.35) assertion about the "multiple and contradictory positions and discourses which go to make up that world". Amongst the men there was recognition of the need for themselves to champion ECCE as a viable, rewarding career for other men. Whilst the literature at times refers to male educators as a marginalised minority – a status which can infer victimhood – none of the men saw themselves in this light. The word that best describes them is probably pioneers, as they navigate uncertain terrain with passion and commitment. They recognised their agency and responsibility to promote the work they do. Some of the men did recognise wider social structures that prohibited greater male involvement (such as social stigma and salaries).

Within this understanding they saw Government as instrumental in bringing about change, but the burden did not fall squarely on Government's shoulders, it was to be shared. For the key informants, both working in higher education, training institutions were highlighted as key agents of change in attracting more men into ECCE, as well as in continuing the discussion on gender inclusivity and anti-bias ECCE.

The final objective was to create an initial body of knowledge on this topic which could prove relevant in the further investigation and promotion of gender inclusivity in the South African ECCE workforce. The study can claim to have provided such an account, but this has been an exploratory study and is by no means exhaustive. By aiming to be a holistic and multi-disciplinary study in some areas depth over breadth has been sacrificed. However for an initial account it was felt the scope needed to be as broad as possible. There are also other stakeholders whose voices need to be heard, namely, female educators, parents, government officials and children themselves, although previous research with this group has proved difficult and inconclusive. The research aimed to adhere to themes emergent in the international literature so that cross-comparisons could be made. In this respect most of the findings have been consistent with international research which adds credibility to the study.

5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

In terms of recommendations the study finds that there is a greater need for further research on the topic as mentioned above, as well as action on the ground and in policy making circles. That action first and foremost should be around *attitude change* focusing on ECCE settings, schools and tertiary institutions to sensitise and conscientise practitioners, children and youth on gender issues and career choices. Secondly, *institutional change* within the sector is vital to make ECCE spaces welcoming and more 'male-friendly' for male educators as well as fathers, and to break down assumptions around men as being uncaring or threats to children. Thirdly, is the possibility of *strengthening or building networks.* As suggested by some of the participants transformation rests with men and male educators themselves. It was noted during the sampling process that none of the participants knew of other male educators. Building a network of male educators could be one way of generating ideas on how to promote this type of work through activities such as mentoring young men, campaigning and simply making men visible in the sector.

Lastly is the need for greater *gender inclusivity in ECCE policy.* The two major challenges Government currently faces in ECCE service delivery are infrastructure and human resource development. Gender inclusive practice falls under the human resource development agenda. Elevating gender inclusivity to a legislative issue is arguably not the right approach. However changing the language of policy from being gender neutral to actively gender inclusive is the first step. More critically is Government support for programmes around aforementioned attitude and institutional change, and network building. We cannot excuse the issue by claiming the sector faces more urgent problems. A holistic policy approach views gender inclusivity as an essential piece of the puzzle. There needs to be greater acknowledgement by both men and women that children need men in their lives and it is just as much men's as women's responsibility to care and educate our future generations.

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7. LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Percentage of 0-4 year olds attending ECCE institutions by Province, 2002-2007

Table 2: Results of sampling of Dept. of Basic Education preschools list

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Table 5: Reasons for non-participation of potential participants

8. ANNEXURES

8.1 APPENDIX A - PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Good day,

My name is Ntsiki Mackay and I am a Master student registered for the degree MA in Social Development at the University of the Witwatersrand. As part of the requirements for the degree, I am conducting research on male educators in early childhood care and education. It is hoped that this information will contribute to a better understanding of the experiences of male educators, the perceptions various people have of them, and the policy issues around their involvement in early childhood education.

I therefore wish to invite you to participate in my study. Your participation is entirely voluntary and refusal to participate will not be held against you in any way. If you agree to take part, I shall arrange to interview you at a time and place that is suitable for you. The interview will last approximately one hour. You may withdraw from the study at any time and you may also refuse to answer any questions that you feel uncomfortable with answering.

With your permission, the interview will be tape-recorded. No one other than my supervisor will have access to the tapes. The tapes and interview schedules will be kept for two years following any publications or for six years if no publications emanate from the study. Please be assured that your name and personal details will be kept confidential and no identifying information will be included in the final research report.

Please feel free to ask any questions regarding the study. I shall answer them to the best of my ability. I may be contacted on 082 518 7661. Should you wish to receive a summary of the results of the study, an abstract will be made available on request.

Thank you for taking the time to consider participating in the study.

Yours sincerely,

Ntsiki Mackay

8.2 APPENDIX B - SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULES

MALE EDUCATORS	
Q1.	Can you explain why and how you became an ECCE educator?
Q2.	Can you describe your work - your role and responsibilities
Q3.	Can you share with me your experience as a male ECCE educator
Q4.	Do you feel that your gender affects your job in any way? If so, in which ways?
Q5.	Tell me about the kind of reception/reaction you get from family/colleagues/ friends/peers/strangers about your chosen profession
Q6.	What effect do you think male ECCE educators have on children?
Q7.	Why do you think there are so few men in this profession?
Q8.	Why do you think some people argue for more men in the ECCE workforce?
Q9.	Do you think the lack of men in ECCE is an issue that needs Government intervention?
Q10.	If so, what kind of interventions would you propose?
KEY INFORMANT 1	
Q1.	Why do you think there are so few male early childhood educators?
Q2.	One of the arguments is that more men in early childhood education enhances or promotes greater gender equity in society, what do you think about that statement?
Q3.	Another argument is that more men in ECCE has benefits to children and their development and education, can you talk a bit about your views on this?
Q4.	I wonder what you know about the Expanded Public Works Programme and the issue of ECCE being ring fenced as a route to tackling women's unemployment, and what you think about such a policy?
Q5.	Do you think it should be a policy issue?
Q6.	If so, what kind of interventions would you propose?
KEY INFORMANT 2	
Q1.	Why do you think there are so few male early childhood educators/practitioners?
Q2.	One of the arguments is that more men in early childhood education enhances or promotes greater gender equity in society, what do you think about that statement?
Q3.	Another argument is that more men in ECCE has benefits to children and their development and education, can you talk a bit about your views on this?
Q4.	Do you think it should be a policy issue?
Q5.	If so, what kind of interventions would you propose?

8.3 APPENDIX C - CONSENT FORM FOR AUDIO-TAPING OF THE INTERVIEW

I hereby consent to tape-recording of the interview. I understand that my confidentiality will be maintained at all times and that the tapes will be destroyed two years after any publication arising from the study or six years after completion of the study if there are no publications.

Name of participant: _____

Date: _____

Signature: _____

8.4 APPENDIX D - CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE STUDY

I hereby consent to participate in the research project mentioned above. The purpose and procedures of the study have been explained to me. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may refuse to answer any particular items or withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences. I understand that my responses will be kept confidential.

Name of participant:_____

Date: _____

Signature: _____

8.5 APPENDIX E – ETHICS CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE