

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION: A HERMENEUTIC PHENOMENOLOGY STUDY OF
MALE STAFF RETENTION

by

Justine Louise Flint

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

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Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative hermeneutic phenomenology study was to describe the lived experiences of male early childhood teachers in the northeast region of the United States (US). The theory guiding this study was Victor Vroom's expectancy theory of motivation. Vroom's theory explains the behavioral process of why individuals choose one behavior over another or one career over another. The central research question in this study addressed the male early childhood teachers' experiences working in the early childhood education (ECE) career field and motivation to remain in the ECE career field. This study highlighted ECE challenges and goals from the male perspective. Participants were male, current or previous ECE teachers, and at least 18 years old. Data collection included interviewing 10 to 15 male early childhood education teachers, collecting protocol writings and photo narratives. Participants had the option to meet in-person for interview or via Microsoft Teams meetings. The setting included Delaware and surrounding school districts outside of Delaware. The setting expanded to include Delaware Play Start programs, Delaware Early Learning Schools, and ECE advocates that promote male involvement in early childhood education. This study included writing in a reflective journal and member check sessions promoting trustworthiness. Selective data generated themes, and thoughtful journal notes supported identifying the essence of being a male early childhood teacher. The results may promote male educator retention and recruitment within the early childhood education career field. Two theme resulted from selective coding: retention motivation and expectancy motivation.

Keywords: expectancy, instrumentality, motivation, retention valence.

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List of Abbreviations

Center for Childcare Workforce (CCW)

Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS)

Corrective Action Plan (CAP)

Early Childhood Education (ECE)

Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC)

Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scales (ECERS)

Early Learning Foundations (ELF)

Expectancy (E)

Family Child Care Home (FCCH)

Infant/Toddler Environmental Rating Scale (ITERS)

Motivational Force (MF)

National Broadcasting Company (NBC)

Outcomes (O)

Performance (P)

Public Service Motivation (PSM)

Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS)

School-Age Care Environmental Rating Scale (SACERS)

Self-determination theory (SDT)

Situated expectancy value theory (SEVT)

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)

Title 13A Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR)

Training for Early Care and Education I (TECEI)

Training for Early Care and Education II (TECEII)

United States (US)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

For years, male early childhood teachers have occupied a small percentage in the early childhood education (ECE) career field (Sak, 2018; Shpancer et al., 2019). The purpose of this qualitative hermeneutic phenomenology study was to present the lived experiences of male early childhood teachers in the northeast region of the United States (US). Retaining male early childhood education teachers is a problem. In 2022 gender roles were increasingly changing. However, male early childhood educators hold a tiny percentage of employment in the early childhood education and care (ECEC) career field. According to Sak (2018), job burnout and job dissatisfaction are more prevalent among male ECE teachers. Job dissatisfaction factors may include low wages, low professional status, and social stigma (Shpancer et al., 2019). Social stigma may have viewed male ECEC educators as soft/ non- manly or the exact opposite of a predator (Hedlin et al., 2018; Shpancer et al., 2019). According to Sollars (2018), ECEC struggles to voice itself in education. High ECEC employment turnover affects the stability of the ECEC setting. This qualitative hermeneutic phenomenology study presented the lived experience of 10 male early childhood teachers and described the essence of being a male early childhood teacher. The empirical research gathered during this study is essential to the ECEC field because data may provide strategies to retain male ECE teachers. In this study, male early childhood teachers agreed to participate in semi-structured interviews providing insight into the male ECE teacher's motivation to remain in the field. Also, semi-structured interviews addressed study questions grounded in the expectancy theory of motivation. According to Al-Jedaia and Mehrez (2020), when deciding to act, an individual selects the option with the most significant motivational force (MF); hence, entering the ECE career field possesses greater motivational

power than choosing another career field. This chapter details background literature discussing historical, social, and theoretical bases low retention of male ECE teachers.

Background

There is a lack of male early childhood educators in the early childhood education career field. In Austria and New Zealand, Koch and Farquhar's (2017) study indicates low male representation in the ECE field. Countries with common male ECE teacher representation include Germany, Norway, London, and Sweden. Between 2017 and 2019, ECE male teacher representation dropped (Delaware Department of Labor Statistics, 2020). This lack of a male model may suggest discrimination, low wages, and lack of support by family (Farquhar, 1997). Despite the efforts of programs such as NYC Men Teach, a program aimed at recruiting and encouraging men of color to the ECE career field (Cole et al., 2019). Classrooms with male teachers provide positive male role models and promote an environment that makes academic success acceptable for boys and young men (Manus, 1992).

On the other hand, studies such as Polanen et al. (2017) suggest that female and male ECE teachers provide the same quality of care to children in their care. The results from this study may benefit children in care and provide ECE administrators with a tool to motive retention of male staff in the ECE career field. Through this inquiry, a deep rich description of the male early childhood teachers' occupational lived experiences provided insight into what it means to be a male early childhood education teacher. Most research regarding male ECE staff investigates how the children are affected. In this research, I analyzed the lived experience of the male ECE professional and their motivation to remain in the ECE career field.

According to Sollars (2018), ECE was not considered a professional career field based on minimum qualifications and low wages. Delaware Administrative Code, Title 9, Division 100

Chapter 101, also known as Delacare Requirements. Delacare Requirements (2021) state that a person with a high school diploma or equivalent and completed Training for Early Care and Education (TECE) one and two courses may qualify as an ECE administrator. According to the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics (2019), the average teacher in Delaware earned about \$64,910. At the same time, an ECEC teacher may make as much as \$18,000 - \$47,000 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019). According to research, nationally, there has been a shortage of male ECE teachers (Shpancer et al., 2019). Delaware has a lack of male ECE teachers.

On the other hand, research has shown that ECE staff remain in the field because it is their passion or a calling, regardless of the low wages (McDonald et al., 2018). Another motivation of some ECE staff, they believe they are making a difference for children, families, and society (McDonald et al., 2018). Hence the intrinsic rewards (passion or calling) outweigh extrinsic rewards (wages) (Schunk, 2016). Another factor of ECE staff retention includes leadership and management practices (McDonald et al., 2018).

Historical Context

The Childcare Workforce (CCW) was established in 1978 as the Childcare Employee Project. CCW was known as the National Center for the Early Childhood Workforce from 1994 – 1997. CCW (1988) conducted a study of staff compensation, turnover, and quality of childcare. The CCW (1988) study suggests that an average ECE hourly wage was \$5.35 for classroom teaching staff. Turnover reported in 1997 also varied by job title; slightly more than a quarter of teachers left their jobs in the previous year, compared to 39 percent of the typically lower-paid teaching assistants.

In 1985, a national accrediting program launched by the National Association of Education of the Young Child (NAEYC) identified quality childcare centers. Early childhood

education (ECE) has been associated with low wages since 1997 and continues to present. ECE workers in 1997 were recipients of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) (CCW, 1998; OSE, 2019). From 1997 to 1998, childcare centers reported that 27 percent of teachers and 39 percent of assistant teachers left their jobs (CCW, 1998). CCW (1998) results indicated that 14 percent of the staff have remained at the centers for the past ten years, and only 32 percent of staff remained employed for five years or more.

According to Bassok et al (2020), preschool workers' low wages and lack of benefits play a role in high turnover rate. Kim et al. (2020) results indicated that Head Start has a 36 percent turnover rate halfway through the school year. ECE turnover affects children, parents, and teachers (Jeon & Wells, 2018). Between 2017 and 2019, ECEC employment in Delaware dropped approximately 11.8% (Delaware Department of Labor Statistics, 2020). Traditionally, ECE has been a female-dominated profession. The number of male ECE educators in Delaware is low combined with job burnout, and job dissatisfaction leads to low male ECE retention in the ECE career field. Lee and Quek (2018) conducted a study investigating teacher satisfaction and positive relationships and how the two topics relate to ECE teachers remaining on the job, which supported the importance or value the individual places on positive relationships in the workplace.

Other studies have provided results indicating that ECE staff lack job security (Ponnock et al., 2018). Job security is an essential characteristic of job satisfaction. Job security is especially critical to men because they usually are the breadwinner of the family (Shpancer et al., 2019). Job security is an example of instrumentality level of motivation. Based on Al-Jedaia and Mehrez (2020) study, which suggests employees' felt that their efforts did not match the reward

of job security. The lack of job security leads to low instrumentality. Low instrumentality may lead to the absence of motivation to remain in the ECE career environment.

On the other hand, the lack of job security may increase motivation (MF) to seek employment outside of ECE. To further look at the expectancy theory of motivation, the expectancy element includes an individual's perceived control (Al-Jedaia & Mehrez, 2020). Perceived control in this study was defined as believing that one has some degree of control over the expected outcome and if the individual thinks the desired result is beyond their ability leading to low motivation. Valence, the third element of the expectancy theory of motivation, characterizes the extent of value an individual place on outcomes or rewards (Al-Jedaia & Mehrez 2020). Stable employment is a positive motivator for individuals who place a high value on job security.

Social Context

Gender roles may be changing in 2022. Stereotype roles for male early childhood education (ECE) teachers include disciplinarian, sports coordinator, and other physical tasks (Brownhill & Oates, 2017). Some male ECE teachers may not want to assume the role of disciplinarian or other male-identified functions. As a result, the male ECE teacher may feel discriminated against, leading to job dissatisfaction. High ECE teacher employment turnover may result in child-to-staff ratio non-compliance.

Mills et al. (2004) reported that one student participant, single mother raised, disclosed that male teachers provided him with a surrogate father figure. Xu and Waniganayake's (2018) study suggests that men are less judgmental and more playful than female teachers. Based on their results, employing a more diverse education staff will deliver a well-rounded ECE experience and education. Studies suggests that a positive preschool experience which includes

quality programming and a supportive relationship among education staff and children leads to successful student outcomes (Karoly, 2016; Marcos et al., 2020; Williford et al., 2017). Huber and Traxi's (2018) study suggest that boys more frequently seek out and connect with male educators.

Theoretical Context

Bronfenbrenner's ecological system theory founded in 1979, suggests that children's environment affects their social and learning development (An & Blanchard, 2020). The environmental system theory involves five systems. The first system is the microsystem; this level includes the child's immediate surroundings, including parents, siblings, and neighborhood (An & Blanchard, 2020). The direct interaction during the microsystem impacts the child's development most. The second system is the mesosystem; this level includes environments that directly affect the child outside the family, including the childcare setting. The third system is the exosystem; this level doesn't include the child but affects their experience in immediate settings, such as the parents' workplace. The fourth system is the macrosystem; this level is not a specific environment but consists of cultural values, laws, and morals that impact a child's life. The fifth level is chronosystem; this is the notion that environmental changes occur over time. For example, based on Bronfenbrenner's ecological system, men in the ECE classroom would provide children with a positive male role model and dismiss unspoken gender stereotypes (An & Blanchard, 2020).

The sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978) suggests that children learn from adults and more skilled peers about culture, language, and play. This theory shines a light on the importance of social interactions with adults and young children. These encounters are a means for young children to learn to behave and think. According to this theory, adults assist with the zone of

proximal development. The “zone of proximal development” is explained as providing the child with a task or activity that the child cannot do alone but only with help from an adult (McLeod, 2018). The zone of proximal development supports the importance of adult interaction and support during learning.

Piaget, a Swiss psychologist is known for his work on child development. Kurt (2020) summarized Piaget’s cognitive-developmental stage theory in three points:

1. Children are not small adults.
2. Children have different cognitive abilities which develop over time.
3. All children go through the same stages at their own pace.

The sensorimotor stage includes infants to children two years old. In this stage, infants learn and solve problems using their five senses hear, see, smell, taste, and touch (Kurt, 2020). The preoperational includes children ages two to seven years old. Children in this stage use symbols to represent their earlier sensorimotor discoveries. Development of language and make-believe play takes place. Children pretend to be doctors, firemen, and teachers during this stage. Male teachers in the early childhood classroom provide an example of a teacher that is not female. The remaining stages are concrete operational (including children ages seven years old to 11 years old) and formal active stage (including children 11 years old to adulthood) (Kurt, 2020).

Value theory may lend insight into the motive to remain in the ECEC career field. This theory is considered a sociocultural theory. In sociology, value theory consists of personal values acceptable to the community. One may also view theory through an economic lens in which value equals goods and services (Barsky, 2017). Culture plays a significant part in establishing values (Barsky, 2017). ECEC teachers who value working with early education may continue

working in the ECEC career field regardless of the low wages. However, according to Barsky (2017), values may change over time, leading to employment resignation.

Problem Statement

The problem is the low retention rate of male early childhood teachers and assistant teachers in the early childhood education (ECE) career field. The early childhood education career field continues to be a female-dominated career field on the East Coast of the United States (Toth, 2016). The lack of male ECE educators continues in other parts of the world, such as Sweden and Turkey (Sak, 2018; Shpancer et al., 2019; Warin, 2019). According to Sak (2018), women worldwide have dominated the ECEC career field. In the United States, 1.2 % of the ECEC workers are men (U.S. Bureau of Labor, 2020), and job satisfaction is a high predictor of employment turnover (Hedlin et al., 2018; Jeon & Wells, 2018). According to state laws (Delaware Administrative Code, 2014, 2017, 2019; Maryland Code, 2014, New Jersey Code, 2014, 2017), a well-staffed ECE program promotes positive child outcomes and reinforces safety requirements. ECE staff turnover is a problem (Admad., 2018).

In this study, the lived experiences of male ECE teachers assisted in analyzing motives to remain in the ECE career environment. According to Haslip and Gullo (2017), ECE teacher employment turnover creates two potential concerns: non-compliance with staff/child ratio and disruption of students' routine. Each ECE classroom must follow childcare state regulations regarding the child-to-staff balance (Delaware Administrative Code, 2014, 2017, 2019; Maryland Code, 2014, New Jersey Code, 2014, 2017). According to Delaware Administrative Code (2014, 2017, 2019), the minimum number of staff is two in a class of 17 preschool-age (three to five (not yet attending kindergarten) years old) children. New Jersey Code (2014, 2017) states, children 18 months to two and half years old require one staff to every six children,

children two and half years old to four years old require one team to every ten children, and children four years old require one staff to every 12 children. Maryland Code (2015) states, children two years old require one team to every six children, and children three years old to four years old require one staff to every ten children. Delaware regulations and requirements suggest that lack of staff creates a safety issue for children in care (Delaware Administrative Code, 2014, 2017, 2019). According to Hanafin (2016), staffing was one of the top three non-compliances of childcare facilities in the Republic of Ireland from January 2012 to May 2013. Delaware, Maryland, and New Jersey childcare regulations require compliance with child/staff ratios. The state ECE licensing department may issue a corrective action plan (CAP) if facilities are found non-compliant. The CAP provides the facility with instructions or requirements to comply. The CAP will include a due date to come into compliance. In Delaware, child/staff ratio non-compliances are considered severe offenses because child/staff ratio non-compliance creates a safety issue.

For several years, turnover in the ECE career environment has been an issue (Jeon & Wells, 2018; Pek-Green & Wallace, 2017; McKinlay et al., 2018). Some limitations of the current research include focusing only on Head Start programs that serve children ages three years old to five years old. Another rule of recent ECE research includes female-only participants. There is a gap in the literature regarding male ECE motivation to remain in the career field in Delaware. This study described what motivates male ECE staff to stay in Delaware's ECEC career field.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative hermeneutic phenomenology was to describe the lived experiences of male early childhood teachers in the northeast region of the United States (US).

Motivation defines why we do what we do at this stage in the research. For example, motivation is the driving force behind every decision we make. The theory guiding this study was Victor Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory of motivation which suggests a behavioral process to explain one's choices. This theory emphasizes the belief that effort will result in desired goal (expectancy), performance will affect the reward (instrumentality), and the level of value placed on rewards and outcomes determines motivational force (valence) (Wigfield et al., 2021). According to Kumar et al. (2018) explanation of motivational force: $\text{expectancy} \times \text{instrumentality} \times \text{valence} = \text{motivational force}$. Expectancy and instrumentality are attitudes (cognitions), but valence is grounded in an individual's value system (Al-Jedaia & Mehrez, 2020). During this study, data was collected, analyzed, and reported. This study identified male ECE teachers' goals, rewards, and values that promote motivation to remain in the ECE career environment. The information gathered from this study provided insight regarding retaining male staff in the ECE career field.

Significance of the Study

This study is essential to the ECE career environment because male teachers and assistant teachers offer a unique experience to the classroom, and retention of ECE educators promotes stability in an early childhood setting. This study added the already vast body of ECE work by providing the male ECE teachers' perspective. The male ECE teachers' perspective provided insight regarding male ECE recruitment and retention in the ECE career field. Stability is essential to child outcomes, the educational experience, and building trust with families the program serves (Karoly, 2016; Perlman et al., 2017). Consistent academic staff is vital to any ECE program; the program cannot operate without education staff. Building a positive relationship with the child, parent, and educational team supports the child's educational

experience (Singh & Zhang, 2018). According to Souers and Hall (2016), a healthy relationship is essential to feel safe.

Data from the U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics indicate that the percentage of males among U. S. ECE teachers dropped from 2.5 in 2016 to 1.2 in 2020 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020). Increased work responsibilities and more strict state regulations created a more stressful work environment (Corr et al., 2017). Childcare regulations in Delaware were revised in 2019 and again in 2020. The childcare regulations in Delaware were to increase the health, safety, and wellbeing of children in care (Delaware Department of Education, Office of Child Care Licensing, Delaware Child Care Licensing Regulation, 2020). Interviews conducted during this study provided insight into the low retention of male educational staff and perhaps offer a strategy to retain academic staff in Delaware.

Empirical

Male teachers add a masculine spin on teaching. Gold and Reis (1982) suggested that when an ECE educator is a man, young boys have higher math and spatial aptitude score, greater masculine sex identification, and better school attitudes and behavior. Helbig (2012) suggests the exact opposite; boys do not benefit in math based on having a male instructor. In support of Gold and Reis (1982), young boys relate to and see themselves when a male teacher teaches them. The male students are more likely to have a positive attitude about school and be open-minded with expressing kindness (Mancus, 1992). Additionally, the increase of ECE male educators' presence empirically provides young boys with in-person role models, and cognitive benefits vary.

Practical

Empirical evidence of this study provided ECE practitioners with tools to improve male recruitment and retention in the ECE career field. According to Heikkila (2016), negative

experiences, unacceptable masculinity in preschool settings, and consistent recruitment of women promote low retention of male ECE teachers. The Fatherhood Institute in London has implemented a campaign to attract more men into the ECE field through the Men in the Early Years (Mitey) program. The “Mitey report” suggested that increasing wages, reshaping the ECE culture, and upgrading the professional status of ECE education may lead to increased male educators (The Fatherhood Institute, 2017).

Theoretical

In theory, male educators are to be a representation of men. Brownhill and Oates’s (2017) study found that some parents expected male teachers to act a certain way, masculine. Ecological system theory suggests that children learn from their environment. According to ecological theory placing a positive male role model in the classroom as an educator creates a unique learning environment different from the typical female-taught classroom (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Studies suggest that male educators implement different teaching styles compared to female educators. In this study, the male educator’s perspective of being an early childhood educator supported the expectancy theory of motivation identifying career expectations, rewards, and the value of remaining in early childhood education.

Research Questions

This qualitative hermeneutic phenomenology study described the lived experiences of male early childhood educators who are motivated to remain in the early childhood education field. This study includes three sub questions that analyze expectancy theory variables. Based on the expectancy theory of motivation, three elements of motivation are:

Expectancy (effort [E] will result in achieving desired performance [P] goals).

Instrumentality (the belief that a reward/outcome [O] will be given if performance

[P] satisfies expectation that are usually set by supervisors). Valence is the value an individual places on the rewards of an outcome, which is based on their needs, goals, values, and sources of motivation (Al-Jedaia & Mehrez, 2020).

Central Research Question

What are the lived experiences that negatively or positively impact the job experiences of male early childhood teachers in the northeastern region of the United States?

Motivation determines career choices and decisions. The expectancy theory of motivation used to guide this study highlights expectancy, instrumentality, and valence of each participants' lived experience. Phenomenological studies describe the ordinary meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). A hermeneutic phenomenology aims to present the essence of a phenomenon (van Manen, 2017). Currently, there is not much research focused on motivating men to remain in the ECE career field. However, previous research focused on the effects of male educators on children and how to recruit male staff, not the meaning essences of being a male ECE professional.

Sub-Question One

How do occupational and personal challenges impact the job instrumentality of male ECE teachers in the ECE career field?

The list of occupational and personal challenges associated with working in the ECE career field includes low wages and social status (Xu & Waniganayake, 2018). When the man is the head of the household, a low wage may determine if the family will have enough funds to eat and survive. Not providing for one's family may lead to a personal challenge. In addition, the low social status may negatively affect the male sense of pride (Manganelli et al., 2018). This question will provide an opportunity for participants to share their challenges and experiences.

With this information, the expectancy theory of motivation illuminated the essence of the difficulties encountered by the participants' lived experiences.

Sub-Question Two

What are the benefits for male ECE teachers that remain in the ECE field?

An individual measures their employee fulfillment by content, discontent, or lack of content with their job. Job fulfillment may include benefits such as wages (bonuses and raises), the certainty of permanent employment, working conditions, interpersonal relationships at the workplace, benefits, and training supporting professional and personal development (Strenitzerova & Achimsky, 2019). This question highlighted the value the participants placed on being an ECE teacher. This question also focused the benefits of being a male ECE teacher. The expectancy theory of motivation describes valence as the expected satisfaction placed on a particular outcome (Al-Jedaia & Mehrez, 2020).

Sub-Question Three

How do individual expected goals play a part in employee retention in the current program?

Goals and organizational commitment play a part in retaining staff. The individual or the organization may set employment goals. Potipiroon and Ford (2017) define organizational commitment as the psychological attachment employees have with their workplace. This question reflected the element of expectancy; for example, employment goals led to improved performance and desired outcomes (Wigfield et al., 2021).

Definitions

1. *Early Childhood Education (ECE)* – A childcare educational setting for children ages infant to five years old (not enrolled in kindergarten) (Delaware Regulations, 2015, 2017, 2019, 2021).
2. *Early Childhood Educator* – One who works in a childcare setting with children ages infant to five years old (Delaware Regulations, 2015, 2017, 2019, and 2021)
3. *Expectancy* – The belief that one’s effort will result in achieving the desired performance goal (Kumar & Prabhakar, 2018)
4. *Instrumentality* – The belief that one will receive a reward if their performance meets satisfaction (Kumar & Prabhakar, 2018)
5. *Motivation* – The process of instigating and sustaining goal-directed activities (Schunk, 2016).
6. *Self-efficacy* – The belief that one has the skills and ability to execute the assigned task (Aus et al., 2017).
7. *Valence* – The value one places on the rewards of an outcome, based on their needs, goals, values, and sources of motivation (Kumar & Prabhakar, 2018)

Summary

The purpose of this qualitative hermeneutic phenomenology was to describe the lived experiences of male early childhood teachers in the northeast region of the United States (US). The problem is the low retention rate of male early childhood teachers in the early childhood education (ECE) career field. Male representation in the ECE career field continues to be low compared to female teachers working in the ECE field. Historically ECE wages are low (CCW, 1988). Socially, male ECE teachers deal with low social status and possible gender

discrimination. Theoretically, motivation and environmental influences develop the male ECE teachers' employment experience. In this study, research questions highlighted motivation elements such as challenges, benefits, and participants' goals associated with the ECE male teachers' lived experience. Lastly, improved academic staff retention will benefit children enrolled in the program and ensure that state childcare laws are satisfied.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

Motivation influences decision making such as career choices. Behaviorists support the theory that motivation explains why people behave as they do (Schunk, 2016). Management studies incorporate extensive research to understand and predict career choice, employment retention, and employee motivation. The lack of male early childhood education (ECE) teachers is a phenomenon that has been an issue for years. This study provided a detailed description of the lived experience of 10 male ECE teachers. The literature review opened with the theoretical framework to introduce and support the theory implemented during this study. The theory implemented in this study was the expectancy theory of motivation. Next, a historical summary of motivation theory was presented. The historical description introduced drives x habits theory, expectancy x valance, and the Greek philosophy Hedonism. Also, in this study, the updated expectancy of motivation theories were included in this literature review. Additionally, this literature review covered related literature highlighting classic and contemporary theories of motivation. Also, ECE employee retention and commitment were addressed. Related literature included research discussing job satisfaction, low wages, gender bias, social status, suspicions, quality ECE programs characteristics, and professionalism. Delaware, Maryland, and New Jersey state childcare regulations provide state qualifications for ECE staff and childcare center requirements. In addition, the literature review included criticism of the expectancy theory of motivation. Finally, this literature review concluded how this study fills a gap in current literature.

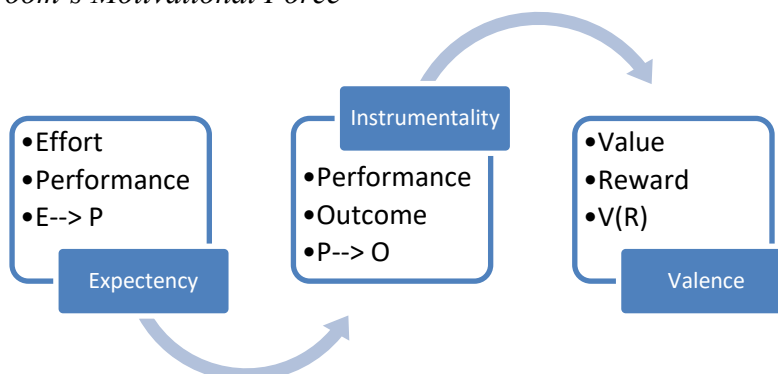
Theoretical Framework

Behaviorists have been interested in motivation for years. In 1911, Thorndike conducted one of the first experimental motivation studies involving animals (Mitchell, 2017). Behaviorism is a theory that humans and animals can be conditioned to act (Schunk, 2016). Behavioral studies lead to the discovery of several aspects of why people do what they do. A brief history includes the two lines of investigation: one, the study of drive x habits theory of motivation, and two, the expectancy x valence theory of motivation (Mitchell, 2017). Drives are considered energizers and producers of behavior to satisfy basic human needs (Mitchell, 2017). Habits describe behavior that occurs without thought (Mitchell, 2017). According to Kumar (2018), both theories originated from the Greek philosophy of Hedonism. Hedonism theory explains that people desire to increase pleasure and decrease pain, hence the motivation to act (pleasure) or not to act (pain) (Kumar, 2018). Drive x habits have been explored and updated over time to be defined as a combination of drives, habits, and incentives (Mitchell, 2017).

The expectancy theory of motivation drove this study. The expectancy theory of motivation was developed in 1964 by Canadian professor of psychology Victor H. Vroom. Vroom studied people's motivation behind decision-making, hence, how and why they choose their actions (Lloyd & Mertens, 2018; Park & Kim, 2017). As seen in Figure 1, Vroom's motivational force (MF) is calculated by expectancy times instrumentality times value (See Figure 1). Based on MF calculation, this theory shares insight into one's motivation toward goals. For example, if a male early childhood education (ECE) staff's goal is a wage increase, the effort may include enrolling in college and studying early childhood development. The staff's performance includes completing required college courses. The outcome of his performance is a college degree in ECE. Lastly, he places value on the completed ECE degree at his discretion. If

the male ECE teacher does not receive a wage increase after completing a college degree, the male staff is more likely not to value his degree and not remain in the ECE career field.

Figure 1.
Calculation of Vroom's Motivational Force



Note: This figure demonstrates motivational force. According to this theory, if staff applies quality effort, then the desired performance is achieved. If the desired performance is achieved, then the desired outcome will also be achieved. Based on the value an individual places on the outcome will determine the value of the reward.

The expectancy theory was remodeled by Porter and Lawler in 1968, providing a more complex model including satisfaction and productivity (Mitchell, 2017). According to Lloyd and Mertens (2018) modification of the expectancy theory included sections such as ability and problem-solving. Two criticisms surrounding the expectancy theory of motivation include vagueness of how people develop their probability of outcomes and unclear how people learn what behavior is appropriate for each circumstance (Mitchell, 2017).

Rewards are also included in the explanation of the expectancy theory of motivation. Rewards are objects, events, or situations that attain favorable motivational properties from the internal brain process (Sidi, 2016, p.63). Human beings seek immediate rewards to satisfy primary needs such as food as young children. However, as children become adults, human beings may pursue complex and long-term rewards, for example, a successful career (Luciana et al., 2018). Study participants had free choice to leave or remain in the ECE career field,

suggesting that remaining in the ECE career field is valued. According to Cappa et al. (2001) and Funminiyi (2018), positive rewards and incentives enhance free choice and performance.

Expectancy (effort equals performance ($E = P$)), explained as an individual's past experiences, self-efficacy, and the perceived difficulty of the performance standard or goal (Wigfield et al., 2021). Self-efficacy is the belief in one's ability to perform a particular behavior successfully. According to Wigfield et al. (2021), the individual will assess whether they have the required skills or knowledge to achieve their goals. Goal difficulty occurs when goals are set too high, or performance expectations are complicated. Wigfield et al. (2021) suggest that goal difficulty leads to low expectancy; therefore, individuals believe their desired results are unattainable. According to Wigfield et al. (2021), perceived control believes that an individual must feel some control over the expected outcome. Hence, expectancy and motivation are low when individuals consider the result is beyond their ability to influence. The expectancy theory of motivation is based on individual effort, individual performance, rewards/outcomes, and personal goals (Wigfield et al., 2021).

Instrumentality (equal performance outcome ($P = O$)) is when the reward may present itself in the form of a pay increase, promotion, recognition, or sense of accomplishment (Wigfield et al., 2021). Instrumentality is low when the reward is the same for all performances given. Al-Jedaia and Mehrez, (2020) suggest that the following factors are associated with instrumentality for outcomes: trust, control, and policies. For example, an individual must trust the people who will decide who gets what product, based on performance, control of how the decision is made, and policies understanding the correlation between performance and outcomes. According to Aus et al. (2017), believing that ability or lack of capacity can have positive and negative consequences.

Valence is different from expectancy and instrumentality because expectancy and instrumentality are considered actual satisfaction levels (Al-Jedaia & Mehrez, 2020). Valence is the expected satisfaction placed on a particular outcome (Al-Jedaia & Mehrez, 2020). Positive valence suggests the individual must prefer attaining the result not to achieve the outcome (Wigfield et al., 2021). Beliefs about one's ability play a vital role in various motivation theories (Wigfield et al., 2021). In 1954, Atkins proposed the expectancy-value theory of motivation (Ozyilmaz et al., 2018). This theory suggests that expectancies and values influence beliefs about specific tasks. One's self-efficacy, perceived task difficulty, personal goals, and previous affective experience play a role in influencing thoughts (Wigfield et al., 2021). Task value and ability belief may assist in understanding why ECE staff remain in the ECE career environment. Studies have defined ability beliefs are the individual's perception of his or her current competence at a given task, and expectancies are the individual's perception of his or her future competence at a given job (Eccles et al., 1983).

The expectancy theory of motivation will guide this study as participants share their lived experiences as male ECE educators and expectations in the ECE career field. This theory suggests rewards and outcomes are motivators (Eccles et al., 1983). Motivation to remain in the ECE career field or to leave the field shall be identified through analyzing data. The expectancy theory of motivation is complex enough to allow for several strategies to minimize the lack of male ECE teachers in the ECE career field.

Related Literature

Motivation is the driving force behind everything humans do to achieve desired outcomes, goals, and rewards (Al-Jedaia & Mehrez, 2020). Expectancy theory is a process theory of motivation. Motivation is a function of individuals' perception of their environment

and their expectations based on their perceptions. The theory guiding this study is Victor H. Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory of motivation. This theory contains three variables or elements: expectancy (effort), instrumentality (reward for satisfactory performance), and valence (valued placed on a reward or outcome) (Al-Jedaia & Mehrez, 2020). According to Kumar (2018) Vroom explains motivational force as $\text{expectancy} \times \text{instrumentality} \times \text{valence} = \text{motivational force}$. Expectancy and instrumentality are attitudes (cognitions), but valence is grounded in an individual's value system (Al-Jedaia & Mehrez, 2020).

Motivation

Understanding motivation is vital to understanding the expectancy theory implemented in this study. Motivation can be extrinsic or intrinsic and positive or negative (Sidi, 2016).

Expectancy theory models that do not include extrinsic and intrinsic rewards usually focus on extrinsic rewards (Lloyd & Mertens, 2018). Extrinsic motivation conveys engaging in a task to attain the desired outcome, such as a reward (Schunk, 2016). Intrinsic motivation is described as engaging in a task for no apparent reward except for the activity itself; in this motivation, the activity is the means and the end (Cappa et al., 2019; Schunk, 2016). Lloyd and Mertens (2018) suggests a more direct connection between social context, performance and rewards...It is because of this connection and the strong (performance-outcome) connections it causes those intrinsic rewards can be such significant motivators. Staff with simple job duties are motivated more by intrinsic than extrinsic motivators (Purta et al., 2017). An example of positive motivation is receiving a reward due to increased productivity (Cappa et al., 2019).

On the other hand, negative motivation may implement a fear tactic to avoid an undesirable outcome (Cappa et al., 2019). For example, showing up late to work may result in the employee losing the opportunity to work overtime. The loss of the overtime opportunity may

be a negative motivator. The expectancy theory places value on the opportunity to work overtime. To some employees, overtime is an opportunity to earn extra money and is highly valued.

Work Motivation

Work motivation is a set of forces that originates within and beyond an individual's being to initiate work-related behavior and determine its form, direction, intensity, and duration. Male college students choose ECE as a career path based on internal and external motivational forces. Continuing research leads to updating and refining theories of motivation (Tokie, 2018). Classic theories of motivation include, Theory X and Y which expand into a more contemporary theory such as expectancy theory of motivation (Soleas, 2021). Douglas McGregor's Theory X and Y can be explained as Theory X suggests that people will work for money rather than security; however, Theory Y suggests that personal goals may be aligned with organizational goals leading to employee's own need for fulfillment resulting in motivation (Soleas, 2021). The expectancy theory of motivation guided by this study has similar attributes to McGregor's theory.

Effective teamwork and supportive leadership influence motivation in the work environment. Motivated people enjoy their jobs and commit to staying with the same employer (Khan & Wajidi, 2019). Motivation in the workplace may take on one or more of the following motivational styles. An aesthetic style, describes someone who places importance on maintaining balance in the workplace. The economic style expresses the importance of rewards and is very competitive. In addition, the individualistic style focuses on standing out and displaying independence. The political style seeks power, influence, and being in control. Collaborating and supporting others characterize the altruistic style of workplace motivation. The regulatory style

places high importance on structure and establishing order. Finally, the theoretical style focuses on continuous learning. Finding the right employer that meets the motivational style is essential to remaining with an employer.

Motivational factors change over time. Motivational factors that inspire millennials are different from motivational factors that inspire the older generations, such as baby boomers. Millennials and the older generation share the same regard for amotivation and intrinsic motivation (Mahmoud et al., 2020). Amotivation or avolition is losing the motivation to initiate or persist in completing goals. Intrinsic motivation occurs when performing a task provides inner satisfaction. However, baby boomers and millennials differ in their opinion regarding extrinsic regulation and introjected regulation motivation. Extrinsic regulation motivation focuses on receiving a reward based on performance. Introjected regulation occurs when an individual performs a task to enhance self-esteem (Mahmoud et al., 2020). Baby boomers are motivated by supportive managers and a relaxed, stress-free job. Generation Xers draw their motivation from flexible work hours and competitive salaries. At the same time, millennials find their motivation in jobs with competitive salaries and career opportunities.

Policy Supporting ECE

The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) comprises 38 countries. It is an international organization that works to build better policies that foster prosperity, equality, opportunity, and promote the well-being of people. In 2019, the OECD published a report outlining eight policy measures to improve the ECE workforce, attract talented ECE teachers and retain quality ECE teachers. The policy measures include:

1. Engage in efforts to promote the status of ECE jobs;
2. Improve remuneration for ECE staff;

3. Implement strategies to boost ECE staff qualifications;
4. Increase emphasis on practical experience in pre-service ECE training;
5. Provide alternative pathways into ECE;
6. Expand efforts to encourage men to enter the ECE career field;
7. Increase efforts to improve working conditions; and
8. Strengthen policies to encourage in-service training and professional development.

The shortage of ECE staff, male and female, is worldwide (Jacob & Abiola, 2021). Therefore, throughout this study, status, salaries, qualifications, and recruiting male ECE teachers are examined to support of the OECD.

Treating educational policies as a one size fits all is a mistake because education for the high school student is different from the ECE student's education. The end goal is for all students to receive high-quality education and care. ECE policies are the most lenient regarding staff qualifications. However, the early years are essential to cognitive development. ECE policy reform is more likely to happen when stakeholders can see cost-effective bottom line (Madani, 2019).

Retention

Motivation to encourage employee retention is essential in any organization. When ECE staff resign, the childcare facility is in a tight spot if substitutes are not available. In addition, according to state regulations in Delaware (2020), Maryland (2020), and New Jersey (2017), a childcare center must comply with the child-to-staff ratio requirements. Ganta's motivation techniques which include three techniques of employee motivation: job enlargement (expanding current tasks, eliminates boredom on the job); job enrichment (gives employees more control of their employment future); and job rotation (cross training). Employee retention techniques are

essential, but employee commitment is also essential. Commitment is defined as a mindset that can take different forms and binds an individual to a course of action relevant to a particular target (Mwesigwa et al., 2020). Based on the definition, commitment can motivate an individual toward or away from a situation.

Commitment

Three themes characterize commitment: 1. Affective attachment to the organization (affective commitment), 2. Obligation to remain (normative commitment), and 3. Perceived cost to leaving (continuance commitment) (Ahmad, 2018). The themes of commitment have been described as components because it is possible an employee can experience all components simultaneously. Each component of commitment may affect an employee differently, and the level of commitment may change during employment. Like motivation, commitment can have a positive or negative effect on staff retention. Employee commitment has a direct influence on employee performance (Sharma et al., 2016). A commitment is a force that binds an individual to a course of action that is relevant to a particular target (Mwesigwa et al., 2020).

ECE teachers, male and female, remain in the ECE career field because they believe they are making a difference with the children in their classroom. ECE staff disclosed that working with young children provides an intrinsic reward; in other words, they are motivated by within (McDonald et al., 2018). ECE teachers have an inherent satisfaction to encourage others to succeed. Male ECE teachers believe ECE teaching is a way of influencing children's lives and help them in developing their potential (Tokie, 2018). Public service motivation (PSM) would also explain such a calling on one's life. PSM is a theory that supports intrinsic motivation. Someone is public service motivated because they believe that they are genuinely helping others

(Breugh et al., 2018). ECE teachers have an emotional investment and commitment to their jobs. Relationships established between ECE teachers and students and the relationship between ECE teachers and the families they serve are factors in the emotional tie that promotes retention in the field. According to Lei et al. (2018), there is a direct correlation between positive and negative academic emotions and teachers' relationship with students.

Organizational commitment suggests that individuals remain at a job because they are committed. According to Potipiroon and Ford's (2017) high levels of intrinsic motivation result in high levels of organizational commitment. Intrinsic motivation is the desire to engage in an activity for no apparent reward except task engagement itself (Schunk, 2026, p378). Individuals attach an internal reward or value to remaining in the ECE career field. Three factors that foster employee motivation and organizational commitment are employee relationships (co-activity and mutual respect) in the workplace, authentic promises from employers, and quality communication. Co-activity refers to extrinsic motivation as it requires organizational structures and processes that enable employees to participate in developing value propositions (Liewendahl & Heinonen, 2020). Commitment is a decision. Decision making theories combines research and knowledge from economics, psychology, strategic studies, and mathematics and explore factors that affect people's choices and behaviors (Barsky, 2017, p.78). Teachers' decisions to continue employment or resign are impacted by personal fulfillment, practical considerations, and the option to change. Updating educational policies, school leadership strategies, and promoting positive and supporting staff relationships increase the retention of education staff (Goldberg & Atkins, 2020).

Low Male Representation

Studies have shown that male early childhood education (ECE) teachers continue to be under-represented in the ECE career field globally (Heikkilä, 2016; Xu, 2020, Warin, 2019). In Austria and New Zealand, studies suggested that men were dealing with a glass door in the ECE career field (Koch & Farquhar, 2017). The glass door that affects men is like the glass ceiling that affects women and minorities. The glass ceiling or door is an unofficial barrier to advancement in a profession. In the same study, it was suggested that men face six glass doors (Koch & Farquhar 2017). The following statements identify six glass doors that men face. Society is more likely to support women's advancement than men. The time for men's advancement into ECE has not yet fully arrived in people's minds. Fear men might 'take over' holds back change. There is subtle discrimination in staff recruitment. Positive images of men in ECE are increasing but are not enough and may still contain bias. Scarcity or unwillingness to dedicate resources and time limits possibilities for action and change.

The lack of male representation in the ECE career field has drawn attention from countries like Germany, Norway, London, and Sweden, to encourage and recruit men to become ECEC teachers (Heikkilä, 2016; Jo, 2018; Sak et al., 2019). Recruitment in Germany, Norway, and London includes government support. Support from government legislators has made a difference in changing recruitment styles (Heikkilä, 2016). Norway's recruitment efforts included a government action plan for men in ECEC for 2001 – 2003, then for 2004 – 2007 and for 2008 -2010 (Jo, 2018). Recruitment in Germany also included government support leading to the *More Men in KITAS* report (Emilsen et al., 2020). London officials explored the following: reshaping the culture gender, increasing career advice and training, adapting the curriculum, and widening recruitment (Davies, 2017). On the other hand, Boyd and Newman (2019) a study suggested that without legislative changes within areas such as work conditions, wage increases,

and status upgrades, qualified ECE staff prefer to work in primary schools. Mantyjarvi and Puroila (2019) study suggested that leadership varied between types of childcare centers, and parents' views of legislation change also varied. Supportive legislation is key to change. One study suggests that legislators can interpret and lead in curriculum and educational qualifications (Ahtiainen, et al., 2021).

Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction or the lack of satisfaction may have been a factor in the unbalanced ratio of women to men in the early childhood education (ECE) career field. Herzberg's two-factor theory is often used as a managerial tool (Ganta, 2014). The theory suggests that the opposite of satisfaction may be dissatisfaction or no job satisfaction (Kumar & Prabhakar, 2018). For example, dissatisfaction may lead to the employee resigning; however, no job satisfaction may lead to the employee remaining on the job performing at a minimal level. However, according to Andrade et al. (2019), men and women are at similar satisfaction levels in other career fields. In one study of 923 ECE workers, female and male, only 41% were willing to stay at their job for five years or more (Tayama et al., 2018). Job satisfaction is a factor in low male employment in ECE (Park & Kim, 2017). According to Jeon and Wells (2018), job satisfaction is negatively linked to low staff retention and burnout. According to Peele and Wolf (2021), anxiety and depression were decisive factors of negative motivation, deterring employment retention of ECE teachers. Job burnout is a form of occupational stress that causes physical and mental strain on employees leading to resignations (Park & Lee, 2017). A study conducted in Karachi revealed that out of 127 ECE teachers, 34.43% were suffering from severe job stress (Shahid & Nauman, 2019, p262). State regulations are updated regularly to ensure children are receiving the most effective and safe learning experience. Delaware regulations were updated in 2017, 2019, and

again in 2021 (The State of Delaware, 2021). State regulation updates require ECE staff to learn new regulations, hence increasing stress.

For some men, the work of getting and maintaining an ECE position does not equal the return, outcome, or rewards. According to Tokie (2018) male ECE teachers believe the public understands the importance of the ECE profession, but the public does not appreciate the work the ECE teacher is performing. ECE teachers, male and female, want to feel appreciated and supported as educators not babysitter or nannies (Campoli, 2017). State childcare regulations continue to receive updates regarding staff qualifications and education readiness (Delaware Regulations 2020; Maryland Regulations, 2020; New Jersey Manual of Requirements 2017). As childcare regulations require new staff qualifications, ECE staff are required to eventually satisfy the qualification leading to more training or formal education. When adults are required to complete courses for work, four criteria must be present. One, the skills learned must be relevant to their employment and used immediately. Two, adults must have some say in the course work. Three, the instructor must provide the material in chunks. And four, mutual respect between adult student and instructor must exist.

Low Wages

Low wages are negative motivators. According to the Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Employment Status Survey, in 2017, childcare workers' hourly rate was \$10.72, which was the lowest hourly rate for educators (See Figure 2). Men that value high wages lack the motivation to remain in the ECE career field because of the low wages. According to the expectancy theory of motivation, motivation determines behavior based on expectancy, instrumentality, and valence (Al-Jedaia & Mehrez 2020; Kumar, 2018). Sahin and Sak (2016) study implemented Tahta's Job Satisfaction Survey and Personal Information Form, resulting in

male preschool teachers ranking low wages, physical conditions, co-worker status, and organizational climate as low satisfaction rates working in ECE. Akter and Husain (2016) study supported the notion that compensation (wages) affects job performance. Studies have shown that college education majors typically are interested in securing employment with an elementary school, not an ECE setting, caring for children zero to three years old. College students deem ECE an unsatisfactory career path, low status, and poor work conditions (Boyd & Newman, 2019; McKinlay et al, 2018). A study in China shared results that some men with four-year education degrees into ECE as a steppingstone to their career a plan to move into primary school teaching science or promoting into administrative positions (Yang & McNair, 2020). Young men entering college with knowledge of financial income associated with the majors offered at college are more likely to select majors connected to the higher-paying wages (Finger et al, 2020). According to Whitebrook (2014), low wages are predictors of employee turnover. On the other hand, according to Magnusson and Nermo (2017) study, men receive higher wages than women in private and public sectors.

Table 1

Median Hourly Wages by Occupation, 2017

<u>Titles</u>	<u>All Settings</u>	<u>Schools Only</u>	<u>Other</u>
Childcare Employees	\$10.72		
Preschool Teachers	\$13.94	\$26.88	
Preschool Center Directors	\$22.54		
Kindergarten Teachers		\$31.29	
Elem. Teachers		\$32.98	
Home Providers			\$10.35

Note: All teacher estimates exclude special education teachers. Hourly wages for preschool teachers in schools only, kindergarten teachers, and elementary school teachers were calculated by dividing the annual salary by 40 hours per week, ten months per year, to consider standard school schedules. All other occupations assume 40 hours per week, 12 months per year (Occupational Employment Status Survey, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Department of Labor, 2017).

Positive Asset

Male ECE staff are a positive asset to a childcare center, preschool, or kindergarten classroom (Ahmad et al, 2017; Warin, 2019). Rohrmann (2019) suggests that each students' experience is not just different but enriched by having a male ECE teacher instead of a female ECE teacher in the classroom. Egalite and Kisida's (2017) study suggests that when students see themselves in their educators, such of similar sex or race, they are more likely to view education more positively. Men provide a positive example of masculinity in the ECE classroom (Rohrmann et al, 2021; Yang & McNair, 2020). Men remain in the ECE career field because of positive relationships with colleagues, they believe they are making a difference and support from family and friends (Rohrman, Warin, & Emilsen, 2021). Min et al (2021) suggest that personal values, morals, and beliefs must match the nature of the work to have positive outcomes and work satisfaction. Increasing the workforce pool to include more men may provoke heterogeneity within the field, leading to innovative work production (Thorpe et al., 2018).

Traditionally, children are born to both a mother and a father. To suggest that a child is better off without one of their parents is the underpinning theory suggested by the unbalance of men in the ECE career field (Yagan Guder & Ata, 2018). From the very beginning, gender stereotypes are imposed on us. For example, the hospital will give a new mother a pink blanket for a girl or a blue blanket for a boy before they leave the hospital. Customarily, society has dictated gender appropriateness (Guder & Ata, 2018). According to Lee et al (2020), reframing stereotypes as a challenge, not a threat, is one way to reshape the mindset. Guder and Ata (2018,

p1643) study suggest that as fathers spend more time with their children, the child's perception of gender roles becomes equal. This study supported the positive aspect of men in the ECE career field. Current studies suggest that families accept male ECE teachers if their child is learning and well taken care of (Brownhill & Oates, 2017). According to Tokie (2018) male ECE teachers embrace the idea of taking on the image of a father figure for children in the ECE classroom. Studies have supported the importance of children having their fathers present (Cano et al, 2018; Jessee & Adamson, 2018). On the other hand, Topchyan and Woehler (2021) study suggests that cognitive and social engagement between male teacher and students is lower than those of female teachers.

Gender

Traditional gender roles contribute to the lack of male representation in the ECE career field. For example, in China, male educators believe that men can teach if the subjects are physical education and science (Yang & McNair, 2020). According to Walker et al. (2019), gender inequality in favor of males is highest in underdeveloped countries. The ECE career field may be one of the few occupations the woman dominates. In some cases, both men and women feed into the stereotype of women's work in the ECE field. For example, female teachers will step back so male teachers can do physical activities (Xu, 2020). Being physically active and playing sports is associated with masculinity in most countries (Hedlin et al., 2018; Xu & Waniganayake, 2018). Male teachers are expected to exhibit masculinity all the time (Woodson & Bristol, 2020). In the United Kingdom, a study exposed imposed gender roles; for example, female ECE teachers were to be loving, caring, and passionate towards their jobs and the children in care (Brownhill & Oates, 2017). Brownhill and Oates (2017), study also exposed male ECE teachers'-imposed gender roles to acting as a male role model for the male children in

their classrooms and assuming the burden of being a male role model. On the other hand, gender roles are becoming less restrained (Andrade et al., 2019).

Currently, women are breaking the invisible *glass ceiling* in sports. Sarah Thomas is the first female referee on the 2021 Super Bowl (Novak, 2021) and politics with Vice President, Kamala Harris being the first female vice president of the United States of America (NBC, 2021). With women making so many gender-bending acceptable career moves, it seems injudicious that ECE continues to be considered women's work. Studies have suggested that race, gender, and ethnic stereotyping strain employee's desires (Orupabo, 2018). One study suggested that if more men move into the ECE career field and assume leadership roles such as lead teachers, administrators, or directors, it will be detrimental to women progressing in the ECE field (Xu & Waniganayake, 2018). Sharif et al. (2019) study suggest that college-educated women choose careers that focus on charity and work to contribute to society. That same study suggests that men seek competitive and entrepreneurial careers in nature (Sharif et al., 2019).

Some believe that there is no difference in the educational experience children receive regardless of the gender of the teacher in the classroom (Besnard & Letarte, 2017). Xu (2020) study suggests that in Scotland, most of the ECE teachers, both male, and female, believed that gender did not make a difference in the educational experience as all teachers assumed the same responsibilities. Most children have two parents, a mother, and a father. A mother's usual role is caretaker and nurturer, whereas the father is the breadwinner and teacher of "man up." Man up, meaning one can handle whatever comes their way. In short, be tough. Studies show that children in ECE centers with male and female ECE teachers present less internalized behavior after one year compared with children in centers with only female ECE teachers (Besnard & Letarte, 2017). The children in Besnard and Letarte (2017) study appeared to be less timid, less

anxious, and less withdrawn. A study investigating the mothers' and female preschool teachers' perceptions of male preschool workers, based on the mothers' responses to the survey, suggested that the top three agreed on ideology (See Figure 3). Female ECE teachers appear to be welcoming and supportive of male ECE teachers. Research from other countries reports inconsistent attitudes and reactions of female ECE teachers towards male colleagues (Rohrman, 2019). According to the Ahmad et al (2017) study, mothers of preschool children believe one, children gain different experiences when there are male teachers, two, acceptance of male ECE teachers in preschool classrooms, and three, male preschool teachers offer children a more well-rounded ECE experience. However, in the same study, female ECE teacher participates agree to the same ideology except the ranking of one and two changes places (Ahmad et al., 2017).

Table 2

Top Three Ideology Mothers' and Female Preschool Teachers' Perceptions About Male Teachers

Mothers	Female ECE Teachers
Children gain different experiences when there are male and female teachers in preschools	I accept the idea that a male teaches my children at preschool
I accept the idea that a male teaches my children at preschool.	Children gain different experiences when there are male and female teachers in preschools
Male preschool teachers offer children a more well-rounded educational experience	Male preschool teacher offer children a more well-rounded education experience.

To decrease the gender imbalance in the early childhood education career field, recruiting men to ECE has occurred in countries such as Germany, Norway, London, and Sweden

(Heikkilä, 2016; Jo, 2018; Sak et al., 2019). It is essential to balance men from multiple racial backgrounds represented in the classroom to provide a positive role model for little boys of all races. Currently, black males make up 2% of the K-12 educators (Bryan & Williams, 2017). Other studies such as Woodson and Bristol (2020), suggest that black men are best suited to understand children who share the same unique racial background. Currently, in the United States, it is essential to provide positive images and role models for children of color. US society has depicted people of color to monsters in the dark. People of color have been placed at the mercy of racism and have lost lives by murder or wrongful incarceration. Men of color working in the education field have dealt with colleagues who viewed them as incompetent or underqualified, working with heightened boundaries, fake friendships, and hostile work environments (Bristol & Goings, 2018).

Dealing with Suspicion

Male teachers of young children are continuously under the magnifying glass of suspicion, the concern for children's safety. In South Africa, males are considered sexually aggressive and express power over women and children (Moosa & Bhana, 2019). The safety and well-being of the children are important and should never be compromised. Brownhill and Oates (2017) study revealed that not all men are positive male role models. Dealing with continuous scrutiny and lack of support may discourage continued employment in the ECE career field. Male ECE teachers shared that they felt vulnerable when every a case of sexual abuse against a child was reported in the media (Johnson et al, 2021). Insufficient collective affiliation may lead to male ECE teachers resigning. According to Burch (2018) review of Tinto's 1975 experiment, insufficient collective affiliation is one factors that promotes withdrawal from college. Male ECE teachers must be aware of their surroundings and be able to adjust to avoid attracting hostile or

suspicious attention. For example, in a previous study, a participant shared that during diaper changing, he would call for a co-worker if a child cried (Hedlin et al., 2018). According to Xu and Waniganayake (2018) some childcare directors and female staff believe that there are some ECE responsibilities that men should not do because men are not experienced in caring. Male ECE teachers deal with the many societal genders imposes (Rohrman, 2016). In Reich-Shapiro et al (2020) study, male ECE participants suggested that ECE employers provide a safe place to discuss biases about male ECE teachers and develop skills to mentor and support men working in the ECE field.

Professionalism and Leadership

Professionalism and leadership is essential to any educational program. Ward (2018) recognizes three dimensions of ECE professionalism: strong communication skills, curriculum knowledge, and knowledge of the children and families in your classroom. Ward's professional dimensions are also addressed in the Delaware Early Learning Foundation (ELF). The ELF is a tool used in Delaware to evaluate childcare programs against childcare best practices. The ELF consists of manuals for infant/ toddlers, preschool, and school-age students. In support of Ward, Veisson and Kabaday (2018) study identified characteristics of a professional teacher. The study resulted in the following teacher characteristics as important (in this order): experience, good communication and interaction with children, effective pedagogical knowledge, and strong problem solver. The Bair (2016) research suggests that teachers' job depends on their ability to motivate students and the administrator's assessment of the teacher's ability to harness students' cooperation and produce results. Recruiting college degreed ECE teachers to work in an ECE program that do not include public or private kindergarten is a challenge. The challenge includes wages. ECE programs cannot compete with the wages of the degreed certified teacher working

with K-12 students. ECE teachers who have completed a two-year degree have the option of working as a paraprofessional (teacher's aides or one-on-one) in public schools. Employment in ECE programs requires the bare minimum. For example, Delaware and Maryland require no formal or informal training to operate a Family Child Care Home (FCCH) (Delaware Dept. of Education Regulations, 2021). A FCCH is a private home where a licensee lives and provides licensed childcare (Delaware Dept. of Education Regulation, 2021). The licensee or the family provider is responsible for the total program, including providing childcare and managing the administrative aspects of a FCCH. In Delaware, the Office of Child Care Licensing, a department within the Delaware Department of Education, is responsible for monitoring FCCHs. The minimal qualifications and the low wages reflect the poor regard in which ECE has been held (Sollars, 2018). States such as Delaware, Maryland, and New Jersey require childcare practitioners to complete annual training / continued education credit (CEUs) hours (Maryland Code, 2014, 2020; New Jersey Code, 2017; Delaware Code, 2021). Somani (2021) suggests that better returns (good jobs) are the product of higher education. Education may be linked to professionalism. Professionalism reflects skills (performing a task well), competence (knowing how to perform the task well), and appropriate wages. States such as Delaware, Maryland, and New Jersey require childcare practitioners to complete annual training / continued education credit (CEUs) hours (Maryland Code, 2014, 2020; New Jersey Code, 2017; Delaware Code, 2021). ECE Teacher education requirements have been less rigorous but have increased in the last decade. Data from the most recent cohort of Head Start Family and Child Experience Survey (FACES) found that less than half of Head Start teachers had a bachelor's degree and slightly more than half had training in early childhood education (as cited in Coley et al, 2016).

Participating in evaluations and work environment decisions promotes a sense of belonging, but most childcare centers do not invoke a work-family-like atmosphere (McDonald et al, 2018). Organizational culture, also known as corporate culture, is different everywhere. There are three levels of corporate culture: physical (visible), values, and beliefs (Walker & Soule, 2017). Physical includes visible environment such as the layout of the office and dress code. Values include knowing the difference between “right” and “wrong” in the corporation. Beliefs include the beliefs of the organization and employees. In addition to corporate culture levels, there are four types of organizational cultures (Walker & Soule, 2017). The four cultures include power, role, achievement, and support. The power culture usually has one leader, like most childcare facilities. The role culture does everything by the book. The achievement culture encourages staff to carry out task as a group. The support culture has the feel of a community.

Leadership is the process of influencing other to act, support, and agree. Leaders can motivate others to follow them. Non-supportive leadership adds to the list of factors influencing ECE staff to depart from the career field (Conley & You, 2016). Lack of leadership would include expecting staff to work long unscheduled hours, not providing time to plan curriculum, and not supporting time to complete required training (McKinlay et al, 2018). “A good leader models the way by being the example, inspires a shared vision, challenges the process, enable staff to act, and encourages the heart.” (Kouzes & Posner, 2017, p. 12). A health care study of coaching, mentoring, and abusive supervision affects the learning of staff. Koopman et al (2021) suggest that coaching and mentoring promoted talent and a positive attitude toward the job, but abusive supervision had the exact opposite effect on staff. Studies have shown a positive association between ethical leadership and employee motivation as well as emotional leadership

and employee motivation (Ouakouak et al, 2020). Mutual respect between staff and administration promotes a healthy supportive work environment (Campoli, 2017).

Benchmarks and Outcomes

The benchmarks of quality ECE care are also vital to parents and the children that attend care. Quality childcare education is essential. Parents trust that they are leaving their infants and young children in the care of well-trained and qualified teachers (practitioners). Nearly all states in the US have implemented or are developing quality rating and improvement systems (QRIS) to track the quality of early childhood education programs and provide information to parents, practitioners, and policymakers (Coley, Votruba-Drzal, Collins, & Cook 2016). There are several self-assessment tools available for childcare programs, for example, the Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale (ECERS) to evaluate preschoolers' environment, Infant /Toddler Environmental Rating Scale (ITERS) to evaluate infants and toddler's environment, School Age Care Environmental Rating Scale (SACERS) to evaluate school-age care environment, and many more. In addition, the self-assessment tools provide sections of evaluation such as teacher qualifications, curriculum, and equipment (inside and outside).

According to Karoly (2016), in 1984, the Perry Preschool Project estimated return to society was nearly \$4 for every dollar spent on the preschool program. The Perry Preschool, two-year cost, was \$9,289 per child in 1981, offset by the \$33,058 per child in benefits to society (future benefits were discounted). The benefits include positive outcomes such as school readiness, use of special education, rates of grade repetition, the likelihood of high school graduation, employment rates, and earnings (Karoly, 2016).

There are numerous tools to evaluate ECE programs. For example, the ECERS, ITERS, and SACERS cover evaluating the classroom, curriculum, ECE teacher's qualifications, and

safety. Williford et al (2017) discussed that the CLASS, which is an observational instrument that measures classroom quality across ten dimensions using a seven-point scale. Various state regulations include limiting child-to-staff ratio, outlining the hours between meals, kitchen, and restroom requirements. Delaware Stars for early success is Delaware's Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS), administered by the Delaware Department of Education (DDOE). Maryland EXCELS is a quality rating and improvement system that awards ratings from one to five to childcare and early education programs based on nationally recognized standards and best practices. Meeting compliance to the state regulations is the baseline (bare minimum). A childcare license does not equate to quality. Most state regulations aim to create a safe environment for children in care. Characteristics of a quality ECE program include low child to practitioner ratio, a print rich classroom, college educated teacher, healthy meals, clean environment, school readiness curriculum, creative teachable moments, positive relations (parents, teachers, and children). An early childhood classroom is a place where children can learn increasingly complex behavior, emotion, and cognitive control, mainly when the quality of teacher-child interactions is high (Vandenbrouche et al., 2018).

Children enrolled in the classroom are most affected by the teacher in the classroom. High-quality preschool programs affect children's outcomes. High-quality outcomes include school readiness, use of special education, rates of grade repetition, likelihood of high school graduation, employment rates and earnings (Károly, 2016; Hunkin, 2018). ECE teachers with positive self-confidence in themselves and their students believed they influenced students, however, on the other hand, more reserved ECE teachers believed they had very little influence on the students (Aus et al, 2017). According to Babakr et al. (2019) Piaget's theory viewed children are blank slates that want to learn; one study interviewed seven male and four female

ECE teachers asking if they believe children treated or responded to them differently because of their gender. The results to Xu and Waniganayake (2018) recorded those two female staff denied any different treatment based on gender; the remaining ECE teachers suggested that male teachers are more popular and attractive to students because of the lack of male presence and male teachers have different teaching style. Therefore, a qualified ECE teacher in the classroom may promote quality instruction for children in the classroom. Based on social cognitive theory, classroom climate is partly determined by teachers' beliefs in their instructional efficacy (as cited in Aus et al, 2017). The social cognitive theory emphasizes the role of the social environment in learning (Schunk, 2016). In addition, social cognitive theory addresses reciprocal interactions among persons, behaviors, and environments; inactive and vicarious learning (i.e., how learning occurs), the distinction between learning and performance; and the role of self-regulation (Schunk, 2016; Alimohammadi et al. 2020). If children are placed in a quality childcare environment with a quality ECE teachers, learning will occur.

State Regulations

Childcare regulations vary from state to state, and updates to the regulations are continuous (Delaware Regulations 2020; Maryland Regulations, 2020; New Jersey Manual of Requirements 2017). Changes in Delaware regulations may have influenced the lack of interest in ECE. In 2017, Delaware childcare centers did not require administrators to possess an associate degree. However, the current regulations require at least an associate degree and twelve months experience working with children unless the employee was in the position prior to January 1, 2007 (Delaware Regulations, 2017, 2020). Administrators in New Jersey must possess at least a bachelor's degree and one year of managerial or supervisory experience (New Jersey Manual of Requirements, 2017). Maryland childcare regulations, Title 13A Code of Maryland

Regulations (COMAR), have been updated from 2014 to 2020, which include qualification for the position of director of a preschool that serves 40 or more children if they possess a least an associate degree with a minimum of 15 semester hours of approved course work in early childhood education (COMAR, 2020). Change may be good, but change is usually greeted with resistance (Barsky, 2017). Brownhill and Oats (2017) participants disclosed that status and qualification changes were some of the most complex parts of the job. Andragogy is the method and practice of teaching the adult learners. Knowles (2020) identified six assumptions and seven principles of andragogy as it relates to motivation. Knowles assumptions include the following:

1. Adults need to know the reason for learning something.
2. Experience (including error) provides the basis for learning activities.
3. Adults need to be responsible for their education decisions, involved in the planning and evaluation of their instruction.
4. Adults are most interested in learning subjects having immediate relevance to their work and or personal lives.
5. Adult learning is problem-centered rather than content-oriented.
6. Adults respond better to internal versus external motivators.

According to Knowles (2020), adult learning is based on comprehension, organization, and synthesis of knowledge. The seven principles of adult learning are:

1. Adults must want to learn.
2. Adults learn by doing.
3. Adult learning focuses on problem-solving.
4. Adults learn what they feel they need to learn.
5. Adults' experience affects learning.

6. Adults learn better in a casual situation.
7. Adults want guidance and equal partnership in the learning process.

Social Status

A reoccurring topic associated with low male ECE employment is social status. Studies in China have shown that male ECE teachers' social status varies from low to high based on whom they talk to; for example, men employed as ECE administrators have a higher social status than male ECE teachers (Xu & Waniganayake, 2018). Male ECE teachers in China are viewed as "abnormal," "girly or feminized" (Xu & Waniganayake, 2018, p 529). Demirkasimoglu and Taskin (2019) study provided negative feedback from male college students towards male college students enrolled in the ECE track. Gonzalez-Roma et al (2018) suggest that social status provides access to interpersonal relationships and employment networking opportunities. Conley and You (2016, p17) the study suggested that male, young and uncertified teachers were more likely to have an intention to leave as compared to female, older, and certified teachers. In agreement with Conley and You, Troselj and Lenac (2017) suggests that men who decide to enter the ECE career field later in life stick with it.

Contribution To Low Male ECE Employment

One theory that provides some explanation for the lack of male ECE teachers is the motivation crowding theory. The theory suggests that external rewards may promote performance through extrinsic motivators such as pay increase; however, such extrinsic rewards can crowd out employees' intrinsic motivation for working, leading to lower performance (Cappa et al., 2019). For example, if employees perceive those wages are the controlling motivator of employment, their intrinsic motivation is crowded out. The employee's perception of value is the motivation behind their choice of career and employment retention. Mikkelsen et al

(2017) suggest that employees' intrinsic motivation depends on the employees' need for self-determination.

COVID-19 Challenges

Along with the world, the ECE career field was at standstill during the COVID-19 pandemic. The United States was in a state of emergency requiring citizens to stay inside. Educational institutions provided children and staff with laptops to work from home ECE teachers faced maintaining a child's attention and encouraging children to attend class while sitting at home. Teachers felt that meeting with their students via Zoom was socially worldwide; however academically, in-person instruction provided the best educational results (Timmons et al., 2021). Studies suggests that pandemic-related anxiety will have an adverse effect on student academic performance (Adedoyin & Soykan, 2020).

Staying motivated is another challenge ECE teachers faced during the COVID-19 pandemic. During the pandemic, enthusiasm and the obligation to teach influenced ECE teacher motivation (Aliyyah et al., 2020; Engin, 2020). The lack of face-to-face instruction decreased the ECE teacher's encouragement, reducing students' academic performance. According to Alea et al. (2020), female teachers were more ready to accommodate students with distance learning.

Criticism Of The Expectancy Theory

Criticisms of the expectancy theory of motivation include some studies claiming that the theory is unrealistic in calculating benefit to performance (Locke & Latham, 2019; Rainey et al., 2021). According to Locke and Latham (2019), the theory lacks empirical evidence to support the theory's three elements (expectancy, instrumentality, and valence). Two criticisms surrounding the expectancy of motivation include vagueness of how people develop their probability of outcomes and unclear how people learn what behavior is appropriate for each

circumstance (Mitchell, 2017). Motivational force (MF) may be increased/decreased by one element of the expectancy theory of motivation. Motivation is more subjective than objective and can never be expressed in a concrete form (Al-Jedaia & Mehrez, 2020). According to Al-Jedaia & Mehrez, (2020), four variables affect expectancy theory of motivation: individual's effort, individual's performance, organizational rewards/ work outcomes, and personal goal. A variable is a concept or characteristic that involves variation (McMillan, 2021). There are two types of variables: the independent variable which may cause or lead to variation in another variable and the dependent variable which vary depending on or under the influence of another variable (Cohen et al, 2018, p35). Lloyd and Mertens (2018) suggests that the expectancy theory of motivation neglected to include a social lens. Humans are social beings and desire a sense of belonging. Therefore, multiplying expectancy x instrumentality x valence is sometimes not enough to influence a decision.

Address Gaps in Literature

Male ECE teachers continue to represent a low number of teachers in the ECE career field (Heikkilä, 2016; Xu, 2020; Warin, 2019). Current studies of this phenomena include identifying extrinsic motivators such as wages and other tangible rewards (Sahin & Sak, 2016); exploring the effect male ECE teachers have on students (Ahmad et al, 2017; Rohrmann, 2019 Warren, 2019), and society's view of male ECE teachers (Woodson & Bristol, 2020). Although research has analyzed traits of ECE job satisfaction or lack of job satisfaction (Andrade et al, 2019), gender roles in the ECE career field (Brownhill & Oates, 2017), and the experience children receive with a male ECE teacher (Besnard & Letarte, 2017). According to McDonald et al (2018), ECE staff, men and women disclosed that working with young children provides an intrinsic reward. This study was specific to male ECE teachers. This study described what it

means to be a male ECE teacher. This study added to the body of literature recruiting and retaining insight into intrinsic rewards for male ECE teachers by focusing on the working lived experiences of male ECE teachers.

Summary

In this study, the argument supported why it is important to understand the motivation to retain male early childhood education teachers. The theoretical framework has been presented with an explanation of the expectancy theory of motivation. According to Kumar (2018) motivational force is $\text{expectancy} \times \text{instrumentality} \times \text{valence} = \text{motivational force}$. A thorough synthesis of related literature has been included in this chapter to discuss why men stay in or leave the ECE field. For this study, the focus is on male ECE teachers' retention. Many factors deter men from remaining in the ECE career field; however, the issues of low wages, low social status, and continuous changing state regulations that vary from state to state are mentioned numerous times in the literature.

Currently, the literature suggests that factors that promote a lack of male ECE educator retention include low wages, suspicion of child abuse, and low job satisfaction (Hedlin et al., 2018; Moosa & Bhana, 2019; Park & Kim, 2017; Sahin & Sak, 2016). Studies have suggested that men remain in the ECE career field because they believe they are making a difference. Men remain in the ECE career field because of positive relationships with colleagues and support from family and friends (Rohrman, Warin, & Emilsen, 2021). The gap in literature and discussion of this study seeks to describe male ECE educators' experience.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

The purpose of this qualitative hermeneutic phenomenology was to describe the lived experience of male early childhood educators in the northeast region of the United States (US). Data analyzed in this study included photo narratives, protocol writings, and semi-structured interviews of 10 male ECE teachers. This study presented the procedures, research design, and analysis techniques required to satisfy the qualitative research method. Sample size and participant criteria identified the guidelines of this study. Throughout this study, phenomenological reflection demonstrated that data was thoroughly analyzed. Phenomenological reflections required that all previous study topic notions be set aside (Creswell & Guetterman 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2018). A review of written and verbal communications throughout this study ensured ethical behavior. From the beginning to the end of this study, ethical behavior demanded participant safety and respect (Cohen et al, 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Research Design

The purpose of this qualitative hermeneutic phenomenology was to describe the lived experience of male early childhood educators in the northeast region of the United States (US). In this qualitative study, the research design was hermeneutic phenomenology. According to Creswell and Poth (2018) and Yin (2018), qualitative studies focus on a single concept or idea. According to McMillan (2021), qualitative research emphasizes natural settings, understanding verbal narratives, and flexible design. On the other hand, a quantitative research design is inappropriate for this study. Quantitative design studies focus on numbers, statistics, comparing groups, and identifying the degree of relation (Creswell, 2018; Miron, 2021; Zahavi, 2018). The

qualitative method seizes the reality of the participants' lived experiences. The research questions discussed in this study are exploratory, not to solve a problem but to describe an experience (Cohen et al., 2018). Qualitative studies are best suited to explain or understand concepts and phenomena when little to no research is available (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Phenomenology reflection of a lived experience is always retrospective (van Manen, 2017).

Two gentlemen founded hermeneutic phenomenology (van Manen, 2017). Edmund Husserl is the founder of phenomenology and his protégé Martin Heidegger expanded the work to include hermeneutics (Miron, 2021; Smythe & Spence, 2020; van Mane, 1997; Zahavi, 2018). Husserl introduced the world to pure phenomenology in 1931 (Miron, 2021; Zahavi, 2018). In 1962, Heidegger expanded phenomenology to incorporate “being in time” hermeneutics (Smythe & Spence, 2020). According to Husserl phenomenological research, should be a purely descriptive process. Whereas Heidegger believed phenomenology interprets what it is to exist in the world (Nigar, 2020). Phenomenology focuses on ontology, and hermeneutics focuses on epistemology (Hawes, 1977). Ontology is a branch of metaphysics dealing with the nature of being. Epistemology is a branch of philosophy concerned with knowledge.

This study displayed characteristics of a qualitative design. Each participant provided their perspectives regarding their experience and why they remain in the ECE career environment. A phenomenon can be any experience. A phenomenology study seeks to understand the essence of what is going on. Like all qualitative research, phenomenological studies are rich and descriptive (Creswell, 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Miron, 2021; van Manen, 2017; Zahavi, 2018). Phenomenological researchers question how one experiences the world and the essence of being "in" the world intentionality (van Manen, 2017). Examples of phenomenology research include, "what does it mean to be in love;" "what does it mean to be

loved," "what about the relationship makes you want to be in love." Qualitative studies use a wide range of empirical materials to get a better understanding of the participants lived experience. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2017) two materials used in qualitative studies include personal experience and interviews. According to van Manen (2017), hermeneutic phenomenology research requires empirical and reflective activities. Hermeneutics describes how individuals interpret their experience within the phenomenon (van Manen, 2017).

In this study, a qualitative research design functioned to analyze the lived experiences of male ECE teachers. The qualitative method seized the reality of the participants' lived experiences. The research questions discussed in this study are exploratory, not to solve a problem but to describe an experience (Cohen et al., 2018). Qualitative studies are best suited to explain or understand concepts and phenomena when little to no research is available (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Phenomenology reflection of a lived experience is always retrospective (van Manen, 2017).

Phenomenology research was the best approach for this study because male ECE educators described the common phenomenon of their lived experience in the ECE career field during this study. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), researchers focus on what all the participants have in common as they experience a phenomenon. The goal was to identify the experience and interpret the universal essence of the experience (Creswell & Poth, 2018; van Manen, 2017). In this study, 10 male participants described what they encountered as a male ECE teacher. In addition, the participants shared how they experienced employment in the ECE career field. van Manen (2017) describes hermeneutics as the study theory and practice of interpreting the human world and the essence of being. He further explains hermeneutic phenomenology as, descriptive (providing the participant's point of view) and interpretive (the

researcher's understanding of the collected data). The chosen design type is hermeneutic instead of transcendental because transcendental focuses on a more philosophical approach such as intrinsic structures of consciousness (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In this case, the qualitative questions inquired about what it is like to be a male ECE teacher. According to Lincoln (2021) qualitative questions will not solve a problem, but may provide vital insight into a phenomena. This study focused on the lived experience of male ECE teachers, teacher assistants and what it means to be a male ECE teacher. According to van Manen (2017), six research activities take place during a hermeneutic phenomenology study:

1. Commit to the project of making sense of a specific aspect of human existence.
2. The researcher actively explores lived experience in all its modalities and aspects.
3. The researcher continuously reflects on collected data.
4. Be prepared to write and re-write throughout the study.
5. Maintain a solid and oriented relation (meaning the researcher will not settle for superficialities and falsities) with the study.
6. Balance the research context so that the significance of the study is not lost.

(p. 6)

Research Questions

The focus of this study was to describe the lived experience of male early childhood teachers in Delaware. The lack of male early childhood educators has created a gender disparity in the early childhood education and care (ECEC) career field (Toth, 2016). Studies have shown that male early childhood education (ECE) teachers are underrepresented globally in the ECE

career field (Heikkilä, 2016; Xu, 2020). The expectancy theory of motivation is the theory implemented in this study.

Central Research Question

What are the lived experiences that negatively or positively impact the job experiences of male early childhood teachers in the northeastern region of the United States?

Sub-Question One

How do occupational and personal challenges impact the job instrumentality of male ECE teachers in the ECE career field?

Sub-Question Two

What are the benefits for male ECE teachers that remain in the ECE career field?

Sub-Question Three

How do individual expected goals play a part in employee retention in the current programs?

Setting and Participants

The setting in this study included early childhood education (ECE) facilities such as ECE learning schools, Play Start programs, and school districts that operate ECE programs in the northeastern region of the United States. In addition to recruiting participants who work in the ECE programs, recruiting participants through organizations that support male ECE teacher employment expanded the study setting and participant recruitment. The male ECE teachers' and teacher assistants' experience varied based on the three programs and school districts included in this study. The variations of experiences encouraged a complete description of the male ECE teachers' employment experience.

Setting

In this study, the setting included Delaware and neighboring states' school districts in the northeastern region of the United States. Early childhood organizations consist of Delaware Play Start programs, Delaware Early Learning Schools, and ECE advocate organizations that promote male involvement in early childhood education. All locations were issued pseudonyms.

Participants who reside or work in Delaware were encouraged to meet face-to-face at a location of their choice or by Microsoft Teams meeting depending on COVID-19 restrictions and availability. Meeting with participants in their choice of location ensured they were physically and emotionally comfortable during the interview. Head Start programs and the Lab School implements a professional bureaucratic organizational structure. According to Foss et al. (2021), professional bureaucracy organizational structure includes training, job specialization, objective, and knowledgeable staff. Discussion regarding this study did not occur during hours staff was engaged with children. This study was not an employment requirement nor included in any job description; therefore, this study did not interfere with the workday of DOE employees.

Organizations that support men in ECE careers welcomed the opportunity to participate in this study. Snowball sampling included organizations that support males working in ECE careers. Determining organization leadership included asking questions during the initial contact. The websites have plenty of resources and contact information. This study included organizations based in the northeastern region of the United States.

Participants

Participants in this study included male early childhood teachers and teacher assistants who work or have worked in the early childhood education (ECE) career field. Participant demographics include males at least 18 years old and who worked at least three years in the ECE career field. Therefore, participant race varied and was noted in this study. For this study,

recruitment of at least 10 to 15 male ECE teachers and teacher assistants residing in the northeastern region of the United States supported providing a vivid picture of the male ECE lived experience. An adequate sample required saturation, which occurs when gathering new data no longer sparks new insights or reveals new properties (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This study presented no health or loss of employment risk to participants. The participants' interviews were anonymous. The participant may discontinue involvement in the study at any time without any consequence, harmful or otherwise.

Researcher Positionality

The motivation behind conducting this study included providing a resource for ECE organizations. In addition, this study sought to understand the essence of being a male early childhood teacher. Based on previous studies, ECE staff receive low wages, low social and professional status, lack good professional development opportunities, and lack adequate employment benefits (Baker, 2017; Pek-Greer & Wallace, 2017; Pratika & Zhang, 2018). Therefore, during this research, a methodological assumption was in place. The procedures of qualitative research, or its methodology, are characterized as inductive, emerging, and shaped by the researcher's experience in collecting and analyzing the data (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Interpretive Framework

Constructivism was the interpretive framework implemented in this study as the researcher has two goals (Creswell & Poth, 2018). One goal was to seek to understand the world in which we live. Another goal was to ensure the research includes the interpretive framework of social constructivism. In this study, the researcher sought to understand the influence and motivation of the ECE world. Therefore, accurately interpreting the participants' constructions of meaning in their accounts was essential in this study to support the research design and

framework.

Philosophical Assumptions

Understanding philosophical assumptions are critical because they outline the direction of the research goals, outcomes, researcher's scope of training, and researcher's decisions (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Philosophical assumptions dictate how to view a problem and evaluate the problem. The researcher's training and experience also influenced philosophical assumptions by using previously gained knowledge to understand a phenomenon. Decisions such as choosing research methodology are made based on the researcher's philosophical assumptions. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), assumptions can and usually change over time. For example, as experience and training increase, an assumption changes to reflect gained knowledge.

Ontological Assumption

The ontological assumption focuses on the nature of reality (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Qualitative research accepts multiple realities. The researcher's realities included world view and spiritual view. In the world view, things and events represent face value. However, in the spiritual realm, all things and events promote the kingdom of God. This study relied on the participants to share their reality. Multiple realities are possible as participant shared their lived experiences as a male ECE teachers or assistant teachers. Additionally, multiple data sources increased the chances of recording multiple views of reality.

Epistemological Assumption

The epistemological assumption focuses on knowledge. In the study, the researcher gained knowledge through interviews with the participants. As the researcher, getting information from the source, such as the participants, provided the most valuable information. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), subjective evidence is obtained from participants as the

researcher gains knowledge through an empathic understanding of the participant's lived experience. Participants' direct quotes and writing samples collected in this study supported the accuracy of the description of the male ECE teachers and assistant teachers' lived experiences.

Axiological Assumption

The axiological assumption focuses on the researcher sharing their values and bias in the study. As the researcher, I am biased in favor of quality ECE programs. Over the years, the ECE community and I developed a positive professional relationship. I have observed staff (past and present) interactions with children and parents, and I conclude the staff has been professional and supportive. This study sought to describe the male lived experience as an ECE teacher, and my bias did not alter their perspective. The positive rapport I have with the ECE community provides a smooth transition from DOE employee to the researcher. Currently, I am not a licensing specialist and do not hold any authority over the staff or the owners.

Researcher's Role

In this qualitative hermeneutic phenomenology study, analyzed data identified themes explained through the expectancy theory of motivation. As a human instrument in this study, I interviewed and assumed all data collection responsibilities. (Pessoa et al., 2019). I am conscious of my biases and open-minded to results. The upside of acting as a human instrument in this study allowed me to take note of non-verbal communication and adapt during interviews (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). The downside of acting as a human instrument included continuous self-bias monitoring (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). Journal reflections included addressing bias. Within two hours after each semi-structured interview, I wrote my thoughts in my researcher's journal. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), to accurately become a human instrument, I partnered with participants, being flexible, and be willing to change with the developments of the

study. I am familiar with early childhood education career fields in my State. For five years, I taught adult ECE courses. Other career choices include family childcare home provider for four years and director at Head Start for three years. In addition to working as a licensing specialist for 15 years. As a licensing specialist, I conducted compliance inspections of numerous Head Start programs and childcare facilities. During my career in ECE, I built a positive rapport with the ECE community. I am sympathetic to those who work in the ECE career field. I have worked with and attended classes with some of the current ECE staff employed in Delaware. Both of my children attended local ECE programs. In fact, from 2006 to 2018, I served as the licensing specialist for the programs my children attended. My sons no longer attend this facility. Currently, I work for the Department of Education in the Nutrition workgroup as a Field Agent.

Procedures

The childcare facilities and male ECE support organizations contacted included Delaware Play Start programs, Delaware Lab School, Willow Branch Team, and MBAEC. The method used to contact childcare facilities and male ECE teacher support groups included phone and email. During the phone conversation, the purpose of this study and the researcher's contact information was shared. Organizations that promote men working in the ECE career field were contacted by phone or email depending on the information provided on each website. The first attempt to contact an organization was by phone call followed by an email. In addition, collected data in this study required the triangulation technique, using multiple (at least three) data sources, such as interviews, protocol writings, and photo narratives (Pek-Greer & Wallace, 2017). The triangulation technique supported building credibility and attempted to provide an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017; Creswell & Poth, 2018). The sources of data collection included semi-structured interviews, protocol writings, and photo

narratives.

Open-ended questions supported bringing to light the essence of being a male ECE teacher. All recorded and transcribed interviews provided data to identify code themes (Cohen et al., 2018). The recording equipment used during interviews was Microsoft Teams. Prior to turning on the recorder, participants were made aware that the interview was being recorded. During the participant interviews, the researcher provides instructions to complete the protocol writing and the photo narrative. Protocol writing was the second source of data collected. Protocol writings provided lived experience descriptions of phenomena written by the participants (van Manen, 2017). By asking participants to write down their lived experience, their exact feelings regarding the phenomenon increases the dependability of this qualitative study. The final method of data collection was a photo narrative. Photo narratives allowed the participants to provide a visual aid (picture) into their lived experience (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; van Manen, 2017).

Permissions

It was necessary to obtain approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) (Appendix A) of Liberty University before conducting any portion of participant selection and data collection. Once IRB approval was obtained, Play Start programs, Lab School, and advocacy programs in the northeast region of the US were contacted by phone, email, and LinkedIn to gain their support for this study to help provide validity to potential participants. Interested potential participants received recruitment letters (See Appendix B) and an informed consent form (See Appendix C) by email. The recruitment letter and informed consent form outlines the scope of the study and researcher contact information was provided to staff during the initial meeting.

Permission to conduct a study on location requires granted permission from the

organization's leadership. Permission is essential when conducting research. A Permission Request letter (See Appendix D) explained the study and provided the researcher's contact information. A Permission Request letter was provided to each site that hosts in-person participant interviews. Additionally, sites that hosted in-person participant interviews were provided a Research Copy Request Letter (See Appendix E). Participant participation was voluntary. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, facilities and participants preferred virtual contact instead of in-person. Microsoft Teams meetings are an option to satisfy the needs of participants. A recruitment letter outlining the scope of the study and researcher contact information provided to staff during the initial meeting. The recruitment letter was provided researcher contact information to the participants. Participants provided the researcher's name and contact information of other male ECE teachers interested in participating in this study.

Recruitment Plan

Snowball and purposive samples assisted with building a participant selection pool in this study. Characteristics of a purposive sample include choosing participants based on the study's objectives (Cohen et al., 2018). In this study the objective was to describe the lived experiences of male ECE teachers and teacher assistants. In addition, the snowball sampling method lead to identifying participants. Male early childhood teachers and teacher assistants make a small percentage of the early childhood workforce. Snowball sampling is helpful for hard-to-reach or hard-to-identify populations. Each participant provided the researcher with someone else's name and contact information who has experienced the same phenomenon (Cohen et al., 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2018). Implementing snowball sampling was the best choice for this study because of the low number of male ECE educators. Recruitment for this study required locating at least 10 to 15 male ECE teachers residing in the northeastern region of the United States.

Data Collection Plan

This qualitative hermeneutic phenomenology study analyzed the lived experience of male early childhood educators in the northeast region of the United State. The data collected, analyzed, and coded identified theme outcomes. “A theme can be an outcome of coding, categorization, or analytic reflection, but a theme itself is not something that is coded.” (Saldana, 2016, p. 15) Coding occurs in a cycle, which requires analyzing data in at least three phases (Saldana, 2016). After the interview was transcribed and the submitted protocol writings and photo narratives were reviewed for common statements; the coding phases began. The three phases in this study included underlining with blue ink statements that address the central research questions. Next, highlighting and color-coding statements or phrases addressed the professional and personal challenges associated with being a male ECE teacher. A second highlight color identified the benefits of remaining in the ECE career field. According to van Manen (2017), coding assists in creating links leading to theory and phenomenon. The highlighting colors assisted with identifying themes and categories shared across participant interviews. Lastly, isolated thematic statements were used to create a chart of incidental and essential themes.

During this research, I implemented selective or highlighting coding. The selective approach requires listening and reading the information several times. Coding began by identifying the phrases that seemed essential and revealing the phenomenon and shared experiences (Miron, 2021; van Manen, 2017). This approach required highlighting important statements and phrases to identify themes (van Manen, 2017). Interviews were recorded, transcribed, and read several times to ensure clarity and preciseness of participants’ shared lived experience.

Individual Interviews Data Collection Approach

According to McMillan (2021), interviews are essential data in a phenomenology study because the participants interpret of their lived experiences. van Manen (2017) suggests that in hermeneutic phenomenological human science, interviews may serve as resource for understanding a phenomenon and creating a position rapport with participants as they share the meaning of their lived experiences. Snowball sampling provided male participants who have worked in the ECE career field. The semi-structured interview was through Microsoft Teams. The semi-structured interviews included twenty-one questions that allow the participant to elaborate and tell their story. According to Guillen (2019), hermeneutic phenomenological human science, an interview allows the participants to share their stories as the interviewer gathers the information. Before the proposal defense, two co-workers who have completed doctoral degrees reviewed the interview questions. After IRB approval, participant recruiting for this study began. Recruitment included contacting the Department of Education and male educator support groups by phone and email. The interviews were tape-recorded, transcribed, and read numerous times (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Individual Interview Questions

1. Please introduce yourself to me. CRQ
2. Please share experiences that led to becoming an ECE teacher. (When did you know ECE was what you wanted to do?) CRQ
3. What has been your ECE experience, beginning with your education to now? CRQ
4. Describe your experience becoming an ECE teacher. CRQ
5. Describe the reaction you received from family and friends when you shared your career choice. SQ1

6. What were your feelings towards your family and friends' reactions to your choice of career? SQ1
7. Describe how students and parents receive you when they first meet you. Provide at least two examples. SQ1
8. Why do you continue employment with your current employer? SQ2
9. What inspires you on your job? Why? SQ3
10. What are the top three reasons you remain in the ECE career field? SQ2
11. Describe the goals you have for your career. SQ3
12. What are you doing to make your goal a reality? SQ3
13. Describe the level of support your current employer provides to help you achieve your ECE career goals. SQ3
14. What are some of the incentives to promote male ECE teacher retention? (Past or present) SQ2
15. What has been your experience regarding being recruited to the ECE field? CRQ
16. Describe methods or programs in place that promote recruiting male ECE teachers. CRS
17. Describe any negative stereotyping you have encountered as a male ECE teacher. SQ1
18. How did you handle the negative experience? SQ1
19. What policy changes you would like to see in the ECE career field? SQ3
20. What other information would you like to share? CRQ
21. Who else do you know that would be interested in participating in this study? CRQ

Questions one through four are simply introduction questions to build a rapport with the participant. The design of these questions promoted a relaxed interview session. The interview questions list open-ended questions that promoted a relaxed interview environment, get to know

the participant, and understand the participants' perspective of motivations to continue employment in the ECE career field (Eccles, 2000). In addition, questions one through four provided background information.

Questions five through seven lead participants to discuss their professional and personal motivations to remain or leave the ECE career environment (Eccles, 2000; Sahin & Sak, 2015). Questions five and six asked the participant to share their preserved reaction to the people close to them and how their responses affected them. Question seven asked participants to describe how students and parents receive them during their first encounter.

Questions eight through ten explored why the participants decided to leave or remain in the ECE career field. All three questions allowed for open discussion to explore the participants' motivation to remain with the current employer and in the ECE career field. Questions eight through ten may shed light on motivation force (MF). MF is the level of value placed on rewards and outcomes (valence) (Wigfield et al., 2021). According to Fuster Guillen (2019), focusing on experiences that stand out will assist in creating a deep rich description of participants' lived experiences.

Questions eleven and twelve provided the participant the opportunity to share their goals within the ECE career field. Valence is the value an individual places on the rewards of an outcome, based on their needs, goals, values, and sources of motivation (Al-Jedaia & Mehrez, 2020). Therefore, questions eleven and twelve supported the expectancy theory of motivation.

Questions 13 -16 allowed participants to discuss the employers' influence on the participants' decision to stay or go. This discussion lead to the value placed on workplace employee retention benefits. According to Vroom's expectancy theory, the participant

determines the value of rewards or outcomes. The value can have a positive or a negative motivational force.

Questions 17 and 18 provided the participant an opportunity to share negative lived experiences as a male ECE teacher. These questions provided insight into male ECE teacher employee turnover and included the participants' positive and negative lived experiences.

Question 19 opened the discussion of policy change. Studies have shown that when staff participates in making decisions about employment conditions, wages, and benefits, the participants' level of job satisfaction is high (Bellmann & Hubler, 2020). In addition, Islam et al. (2018) staff want jobs that incorporate meaningful work and empowerment.

Questions 20 and 21 are wrap-up questions. Question 19 allowed participants to share whatever they feel is essential or missing to ensure a deep rich description of their lived experience is recorded accurately during this study. This question allowed for both the participant and researcher to ask follow-up questions. Question 20 provided information to a new participant.

Individual Interview Data Analysis Plan

Participant interviews were transcribed (word for word) and read several times. After transcription, interviews went through three phases of coding. Selective (highlighting) approach is implemented to identified words and phrases that address the research question and sub questions (van Manen, 2017). In this research, the first phase of coding included using blue ink to underline statements that address the central research question. The second phase of coding, a yellow highlighter, identified statements that address occupational and personal challenges. A pink highlighter recognized statements regarding the benefits of remaining in the ECE career field. A green highlighter identified statements that address how expected goals play a part in

male ECE teacher retention. Finally, isolating thematic statements were used to create a chart of incidental and essential themes.

Protocol Writing Data Collection Approach

The most straightforward data collection procedure includes asking the participants to write their experiences in a letter or essay (Fuster Guillen, 2019). Protocol writing is the generation of original texts on which the researcher can work (van Manen, 2017). Writing allows internal reflection of past and present life experiences (Fuster Guillen, 2019). Participants provided a brief essay detailing a (not to exceed three paragraphs) direct account of a negative professional experience they have lived during their employment as an ECE teacher. This negative experience may include a parent assuming their sexual preference or an administrator expecting the participant to take out the trash. The protocol writing allowed the participant to express their feelings and ensure the accuracy of their reported experience. This exercise allowed the participant to reflect on the event, the handling of the event, and how they felt. The summary included a beginning, an outcome, lesson learned, and identifying any actions that promote avoiding such an event. According to van Manen (2017), a protocol writing should explain:

1. Describe the experience as you live(d) through it.
2. Describe the experience using feelings, emotion, and mood.
3. Be specific.
4. Use an example to make the event more vivid to the reader.
5. Make a note of how the body felt and any taste, touch, smell, sound, visual during this event.
6. Avoid trying to beautify the event by using fancy phrases or flowery terminology. (p.64)

Protocol Writing Data Analysis Plan

In this research, the first phase of coding included using blue ink to underline statements that address the central research question. The second phase of coding, a yellow highlighter, identified statements that address occupational and personal challenges. Third phase of coding, a purple highlighter, identified word or phrases that express feelings of how the negative event effected the participants. Finally, the effect of the negative event was recorded in a chart grouping similar feelings and events. Participants had three days from the date of their interview to submit the protocol writing. After three days, participants received protocol writing instructions requesting completion and submission within 48 hours.

Photo Narrative Data Collection Approach

Photo narratives visually represent the artist's lived experience (van Manen, 2017). In this study, participants create a collage using three photos to illustrate their lived experience as a male ECE teacher. Participants wrote a brief description (not to exceed three paragraphs) explaining why they selected the three photos. This exercise provided insight into the participants' motivation to work in the ECE career field (Flick, 2019). The photo narratives offered the participants two avenues to express their lived experiences. First, the participants told their story with text and showed their story with pictures (Mannay, 2016). Second, the photo narratives provided a more vivid account of the lived experience and assisted participants in articulating their lived experience (Harper, 2002). Rose's (2016) study indicated that the benefits of using photos include providing information, reflection, and empowering the participants. In addition, photo narratives added a visual element to support the participant's lived experience as well as provided a medium for reflection (Greenier & Moodie, 2021). Photo narratives allowed participants to determine how others view them, affording a sense of empowerment and

accuracy in conveying their experience and identity (Greenier & Moodie, 2021).

Photo Narrative Data Analysis Plan

In this research, the first phase of coding included using blue ink to underline statements that address the central research question. The second phase of coding, a yellow highlighter, identified statements that address occupational and personal challenges. Third phase of coding, an orange highlighter, identified emotions and feelings toward being a male ECE teacher or male ECE teacher assistant. The fourth phase of coding, phrases that identified satisfaction through extrinsic motivation are underline in red. Phrases that identified satisfaction through intrinsic motivation are underlined in black. Finally, identified motivation was recorded in a chart. Participants had three days from the date of their interview to submit the photo narrative. After three days, participants received photo narrative instructions requesting completion and submission within 48 hours.

Data Synthesis

Each data source was included in the themes chart. The chart used participants' direct quotes regarding personal and professional challenges, benefits of being a male ECE teacher or assistant teacher, and career goals. The expectancy theory of motivation was applied to the chart, looking at the information through the following lens: expectancy, instrumentality, and valence. Identifying extrinsic and intrinsic motivation added to this study.

Trustworthiness

McMillan (2021) suggested that the primary criterion for evaluating qualitative studies is the credibility of a qualitative study. Two co-workers reviewed the interview questions to build a firm creditable, and dependable study. Member check sessions assisted in building trust between researcher and participants. Member check session allowed participants to review

findings and discuss sections of this manuscript. Interviews, protocol writings, and photo narratives will be collected, and a researcher's journal written, ensuring the triangulation method (Rababah & Alrub 2018). Triangulation required at least three data collection methods to create a strong foundation for the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). According to McMillan (2021), credibility is the extent to which the data, data analysis, and conclusions are believable and trustworthy. Dependability parallel's reliability, which means consistency in the researcher's recording and observation (Flick, 2019). Finally, transferability refers to being able to duplicate a study in a different site or location. Through the participants' interviews, protocol writings, photo narrative, and researcher's journal documentation, this study proved to be credible, dependable, and transferable.

Journaling (memoing) or researcher reflection is another type of data collection method used in qualitative research (Creswell & Poth, 2018)). During this study, journaling allowed reflection of interview conversations and notes jotted down as the data was analyzed. Interviews were the primary data source for this study. After each interview, I preserved my thoughts, feelings, and questions in the researcher's journal. According to van Manen (2017), journaling offers the following benefits: insight to discerning patterns of in progress and reflecting on previous reflections. The researcher's journal is written in the first person. Reflective writing acknowledges the subjective nature of the researcher's interaction and interpretation of the data, providing steps taken during the study (Smith, 2021). By providing the researcher's thoughts and decisions during this study, transparency of the process lead to trustworthiness and creditability. According to Fergusson et al. (2019), reflective practice includes researcher's self-awareness, critical thinking, and reflection. In this study, Gibbs model of reflective practice directed the

researcher's journal. Gibbs model implements six stages discussing description, feelings, evaluation, analysis, conclusion, and action (Adeani, et al (2020)).

Credibility

According to McMillan (2021), credibility is the extent to which the data, data analysis, and conclusion are believable and trustworthy. The credibility of this study depended on the participants' perspective and how the researcher interprets the gathered data. This hermeneutic phenomenology study included 10 participant interviews. Verbatim transcribed interviews ensured each participant's perspective was appropriately represented (Rababah & Alrub, 2018). A printed copy of the transcribed transcript was analyzed using the selective or highlighting approach to identify themes. Direct quotes were applied to this research to establish credibility. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), quotes done correctly in a study illustrate the participants' lived experiences.

Transferability

Transferability refers to the extent to which findings transfer to other settings or groups (McMillan, 2021). As this study developed, a more detailed description of the setting and participants provided a transparent description of the process (Fuster Guillen, 2019). It is possible to conduct this study in other childcare centers. Each step of this research provided an outline for facilities to duplicate this study. This study may be used in other states to identify what motivates ECE staff to continue in the career environment. The findings may resemble circumstances of other ECE staff in other states; however, the essences of participants' stories and experiences are not transferable.

Dependability

Dependability refers to the stability of data over time (McMillan, 2021). Ensuring participants' perspective is appropriately expressed requires reading each transcript multiple times. Member checking was included in this study to ensure Participant's voice is expressed accurately and to aid in establishing dependability. In addition, this technique includes providing participants an opportunity to review the study results, themes, and interview descriptions for accuracy (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Also, through peer debriefing, members of the dissertation team, reviewed the data and the study to secure dependability.

Confirmability

According to McMillan (2021), reliability is ensuring that the reported data duplicates the Participant's words. Dependability and reliability are similar in meaning. According to Yin (2018), researchers need to provide detailed descriptions of procedures in their studies and document as many steps of the procedures as possible. A reflexive journal documented thoughts after each interview with participants. Throughout this study, data triangulation promoted dependability and confirmability.

According to van Manen (2017), the most straightforward way to get a participants' lived experience is to ask them to write the lived experience on paper. In this study, participants had two opportunities to write down their thoughts, feelings, and live experience: a protocol writing and photo narrative. The protocol writing and photo narrative is an open-ended tool for collecting dependable data.

Ethical Considerations

Study data was locked in a file cabinet in a locked room. Microsoft Teams interviews were secured electronically and labeled with the Participant's number stored on a locked computer in a locked room. The researcher has the only key to the locked room holding the data

and study documentation. Scanned photo narratives and protocol writings were saved to a flash drive. Flash drive and research documents secured on file for three years. After three years, destroying data includes shredding documents and melting the flash drive. Participants' pseudonyms names were randomly assigned. Data identification was based on the order in which they completed the informed consent form. A number represents each participant maintaining confidentiality. Each participant's semi-structured interview transcript, protocol writing, and photo narrative have the same number. For example, all of participant #1's collected data will be number "#1." The actual locations, businesses, and organizations (on-line and otherwise) have a pseudonym. Participants were volunteers, at any time a participant could have requested termination of participation without consequences. Each participant was provided an informed consent document and completed if they chose to participate in this study. All procedures in this study were in accordance with ethical standards and approved by the IRB.

According to the Belmont Report (1979), the following must be in place to conduct research using human participants: respect for persons, beneficence, and justice. Respect for persons refers to treating participants as autonomous agents, and those with diminished autonomy are entitled to be protected. Beneficence is treating participants ethically, which includes respecting their decisions, protecting them from harm, and making efforts to secure their well-being (Belmont Report, 1979). Justice and receiving benefits from the research can be explained in using the following statements: all participants receive equal treatment.

Summary

Male representation in the ECE career field continues to be low compared to female representation working in the ECE field. Historically ECE wages are low (CCW, 1988). Socially, male ECE teachers deal with low social status and possible gender discrimination. This

study allowed participants to share their recent experience regarding employee commitment, wages, social status, and possible gender discrimination. The literature in this study outlined why male ECE teachers resign and why they remain in the ECE field. Participants for this study included 10 ECE male teachers from the eastern sections of the United States. Participants' semi-structured interview sessions, protocol writings, and photo narratives completion established a deep rich descriptive record of the male ECE educators' lived experience. Participation in this study were voluntary. The design allowed for the triangulation of data. Data analysis consisted of transcribing, coding, identifying themes, and continuous reading and re-reading data. Trustworthiness was established by enlisting co-workers, colleagues, and dissertation committee to proofread and provide guidance. Also, conducting member checks ensured participants' true essences of their lived experience are captured and vividly executed in print. All participants and businesses received a pseudonym to ensure complete autonomy.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this qualitative hermeneutic phenomenological study is to describe the lived experiences of male early childhood teachers in the northeast region of the United States. Early childhood education (ECE) learning schools, Play Start programs, male ECE advocacy organizations, and school districts that operate ECE programs in the northeastern region of the United States were contacted through phone and email to select ten participants for this study. ECE facilities and participants were assigned pseudonyms to maintain confidentiality. Each participant was interviewed individually, submitted a photo narrative, and protocol writing for this study. A brief description of each Participant's lived ECE experience, the central research question, as well as the three sub-questions are shared in this chapter.

Participants

The participant selection of 10 male early childhood education teachers for this study was determined by contacting ECE programs and male ECE advocacy organizations and providing each administrator with a participant recruitment letter (See Appendix B). Participant demographics include males at least 18 years old and who worked at least three years in the ECE career field (see Table 3). The administrators distributed the recruitment letters to male staff and posted them on advocacy websites. Participants expressed interest in participating in this study through email and were provided the participant consent form (See Appendix C) to complete. Participants were assigned pseudonyms based on the order in which the consent forms were completed and returned. The pseudonyms do not correspond with the participant's interview order. Thirty potential participants expressed interest, but only seventeen completed and returned

participant consent forms. Two did not confirm interview appointments, three were “no shows,” one canceled, and one did not meet the participant requirements.

Table 3

Teacher Demographics

Participants	Years in ECE	Education/Training	State
Oliver	5	High School	Delaware
Arthur	40+	BS Psychology	Delaware
Thomas	4	BS Education	New York
Frank	7	BS Education	Maryland
Leo	5	BA History	Maryland
Jack			
Sam	4	BS English	New York
Michael			
Remy			
Aaron			West Virginia
Charles	5	BS Social Science	West Virginia
Joe	2		
Noah	3	BS Education	New Jersey
John			
Edward	5	BS Education	New York
Tim	6	BS Education	New York
Lucas			

Note. Empty spaces in this table represent an incomplete participant process.

This study focused on male ECE teachers. Nine of the ten participants in this study completed bachelor’s degrees. All of the participants reside in the northeastern region of the United States. The states include Delaware, with two participants; Maryland, with two participants; New Jersey, with one participant; New York, with four participants; and West Virginia, with one participant. Four participants discussed their race during their interviews. Those three participants identified themselves as African American, and one participant as Caucasian.

Oliver

Oliver is a 24-year-old male that has worked in the ECE career field since he graduated high school. Oliver's father and siblings work in the ECE field, influencing his career choice. On a whim, Oliver enrolled in the ECE career pathway to complete his high school schedule. Enrolling in ECE provided his first exposure to the ECE career path, in which he studied for three years. During that time, Oliver completed projects that included spending time with young children. In 2017, Oliver secured his first ECE employment and remains with the same employer.

When asked, "How do you feel about your career choice?" Oliver replied, "It just felt natural. Kids always love me. I just treat kids like kids. I don't do anything special. The children that need a little more attention just gravitate to me." Oliver's career goals consist of being a better teacher at work and in life overall.

When asked, "Why do you continue employment with your current employer?" Oliver replied, "To impact the children. I help them deal with stress. I help them relax and enjoy life as they learn. It is not just about school; I want them to learn to love life and understand the joy of their life."

My first impression of Oliver was, "Oliver seemed to enjoy his job." He provoked an engaging conversation about his teaching experience. He smiled throughout the interview as he discussed providing a safe, educational environment for the children in his care. His smiling indicated that he enjoys his job and talking about it. As I reflected in my journal on this interview, it was evident that Oliver is genuine in being a good teacher and seeking self-improvement.

Arthur

Arthur is a retired male with 40-plus years of experience in the ECE field. In 1972, Arthur was a University of Delaware (UD) psychology student. He did his senior year practicum in UD's Lab School. During his practicum, Arthur fell in love with ECE. He stated, "Seeing how those children grow, develop, and learn was fascinating." Arthur completed his bachelor's degree in psychology and continued his education by completing a master's degree in child development. Arthur has held several ECE positions, including curriculum coordinator, ECE consultant, director, teacher, trainer (regional and state level), and national ECE organization associate executive director. Arthur said he enjoyed getting on the floor with the children in his care. Arthur shared a funny story during our interview:

While working as a director in one of the Play Start programs, I went into the classroom and sat on the carpet with all African American boys. One little boy looked around and asked me, "Who's dad are you?" I replied, "I am not anyone's father." The same little boy asked, "Are you one of the teachers?" I replied, "No, I am not a teacher." Finally, the same little guy said, "Well, ok, he is one of us."

Arthur laughed and continued, "I am only 5'3, and the little guy had decided I could fit in only three categories."

When asked, "How do you feel about your career choice?" Arthur replied, "A perfect 'ending' to a full career, allowing me to impart all I had learned about promoting children's development and learning, supporting families, and providing professional development to EC professionals. Certainly a life well-lived!" Arthur has achieved his career goals.

The conversation with Arthur included a summary of his ECE employment. After receiving his Master's degree, in 1974, Arthur got a job as the director/lead teacher in a full day childcare program. He left childcare program to work in a Play Start program. Arthur worked as

a Play Start center director in New Castle, Delaware. Then, moved to Chester, Pennsylvania to become a Play Start education coordinator. Arthur returned to Delaware to assume the position of Play Start director in Wilmington. Later, he became the Play Start state training officer for Delaware.

Currently, Arthur has over 30 years experience consulting, advising, and being an advocate for the ECE field. Arthur moved on to the National Association for Education of the Young Child (NAEYC). He was the Associate Executive Director for Professional Development; was there for 13 years. His last two years of full-time employment were with Zero to Three as the Director of Training & Technical Assistance for the Offices of Head Start & ChildCare's National Center on Early Childhood Development, Teaching, and Learning. As I reflect on Arthur's interview he has had an amazing career and influenced many children and families.

Thomas

Thomas has worked in the ECE career field for four years and with the same employer. Prior to working with his current employer, Thomas worked with his previous employer for three years. However, he has always wanted to teach. He has been at the top of his class since he was an elementary school student. He has always wanted to share his knowledge. Classmates would seek him out for tutoring. Thomas stated that going to college and teaching part-time was stressful. Thomas completed a bachelor's degree in education and is currently working on a master's degree.

When asked, "How do you feel about your career choice?" Thomas replied, "Seeing my children do well academically is a big reward. Now, I am a full-time teacher. My students are the best in the school. I am proud of myself." Thomas's career goals consist of becoming a nationally known ECE advisor.

During reflection, I realized that Thomas enjoyed his work and worked hard to become a teacher. Thomas worked a busy schedule in school while working as an ECE teacher. He said that he sometimes worked until six o'clock in the evening and participated in an online course. Thomas's experience is an example of the expectancy theory of motivation, in which he identified a goal of becoming an ECE teacher. His effort and performance resulted in his desired outcome. The outcome that Thomas valued.

Frank

For seven years, Frank has worked for the same employer. He is working on a master's degree. He started his career in the infant room. Then, six months later, he asked the administrator to move him to the preschool classroom. Frank had a tough time in the beginning of his career. Frank shared, "I am an African American man and some of the parents were not comfortable with me at first."

Frank grew up with many children around him. Frank shared his childhood home with thirteen siblings. His inspiration to become a teacher started with his grandmother. He loved the way she cared for him and his siblings. He wanted to provide the same care and guidance to children.

When asked, "How do you feel about your career choice?" Frank replied, "I love to see the children happy. I love when the children come back to say thank you." Frank's career goals are building a preschool and providing a positive educational experience to the children in his care.

The researcher's journal notes emphasize that Frank valued his grandmother's love and influence on his life. I could hear his voice giggling as he talked about the stories his grandmother shared with him and the other children. Frank shared that he and his siblings host a

yearly memorial for his grandmother. The positive early years of childhood lead to seeking a career in ECE.

Leo

Leo has been in the ECE field for five years and has worked with the same employer. In college, he studied the history of education, providing a professional teaching knowledge. In addition, he minored in business administration. After graduating with a Bachelor's degree, he continued studying child development.

When asked, "How do you feel about your career choice?" Leo replied, "I am delighted. I love children. The experience has been great." Leo's career goals consist of obtaining a leadership role, increasing his professional knowledge, and establishing a school.

His family and friends supported Leo when he shared his career choice. Leo believed that outside of his family and friends, some people believe ECE teaching is women's work and do not trust men in the ECE field. In support of Orupabo (2018), some believe teaching young children is women's work. Trust was addressed earlier in this study, Hedlin et al. (2018); some males will not change a child's diaper without a female present.

Sam

Sam has been in the ECE field for four years and with the same employer. He has a Bachelor's degree in English. He has always enjoyed spending time with children. The children in his neighborhood know him as a friendly person, he listens to them.

With mixed emotions from his family, Sam chose to become an ECE teacher. Seven stated, "Some family members were happy and surprised. On the other hand, they felt I should have chosen a different career." Although Sam has a strong personality, he is not bothered by the

lack of support. Sam stated, “This was my decision. This is a personal decision I made for myself.

When asked, “How do you feel about your career choice?” Sam replied, “Teaching young children is what I wanted to do and I feel good about my choice.” Sam’s career goals are to keep doing his job to the best of his ability, make children happy, and please his employer by obeying the school’s rules.

Charles

Charles has been in the ECEE field for five years and has a social science bachelor’s degree. He shared that when parents from his neighborhood see him as the teacher in their child’s classroom, they are comfortable with leaving their child at school. Charles feels that caring for young children is not easy. However, he believes he has a lot to offer. He works to ensure the child is comfortable in his classroom.

When asked, “How do you feel about your career choice?” He replied, “The smile on kids’ faces. Knowing you are training the new generation. It is a good feeling. When we were young, we loved school.” Charles’s goals are to be the best and offer his best.

In the researcher’s journal notes, I stated that Charles provided me with the most honest responses. He enjoys his job as an ECE teacher but also acknowledges that the job is not easy. Charles stated, “I have had a good experience working with children. However, this career is not something that everyone can do. Dealing with children requires patience and knowledge of child development.” When asked, “What were your feeling towards your family and friends’ response to your career choice?” Charles replied, “It is not about them; this was my choice.”

Noah

Noah has been in the ECE field for three years and with the same employer for one year and eight months. Noah has an education bachelor's degree. He is comfortable with children. In addition, he found that teaching provided a steady income for his family. Noah is the second male teacher at the preschool where he works. So the parents were not surprised to see a male ECE teacher.

When asked, "How do you feel about your career choice?" He replied, "I was the first teacher in my family. Teaching young children is my passion." Noah's career goals are to create a positive environment for male teachers and set high academic standards for students.

In support of Brownhill and Oates (2017), not all men are positive role models; Noah shared, "I know seeing a male teacher would worry me. I wonder if he can withstand the pressure of dealing with young children." As I reflected on this interview, I wondered if Noah's comment was a double standard. As a male working in the field, he is concerned about seeing a male teacher.

Edward

Edward has been in the ECE field for five years and has a bachelor's degree. When Edward enrolled in college, he wanted to be an engineer. However, he realized that teachers teach engineers. At that moment, his career choice changed. Education played a big part in Edward's life. His mother was a teacher, and he admired her. Edwards wanted people to admire him like he admired his mother. He shared, "Becoming a teacher was the easiest way to get people to look up to him and admire him."

Edward stated, "At first I thought teaching young children was easy. But when I got my first job, I was like, wow, this is tiring. Teaching is something that keeps you moving." He has

had a great experience, and the children see him as a father figure. His employer is pleased with the work Edward is doing.

When asked, “How do you feel about your career choice?” He replied, “For the first time, I feel like I am loved by everyone. I am treated so nicely.” Edward’s goals are to teach his students life lessons and to build future leaders.

The takeaway from the data collected from Edward suggests that he is focused on high academics, goal setting, and goal achieving. When asked, “Describe the goals you have for your career.” Edward replied, “I want my students to learn and understand life skills, not just classroom theories. I build up my students. As a result, I want my students to be future leaders. I want my students to say, “Edward was my teacher.”

Tim

Tim has been in the ECE field for six years and has a bachelor’s degree. He loves teaching and believes that every person is a teacher. He believes he has a beautiful connection with his students. He shared that one of his students was in an accident, and the entire school was there to support the student. Tim said it felt good to support the student and the family in that situation.

When asked, “How do you feel about your career choice?” He replied, “I feel good. It has been a good six years. I give God all the glory.” Tim’s goal is to open a school and compete academically at a national level.

Tim collected data reflects his passion for being an ECE teacher. When asked, “What policy changes would you like to see in the ECE career field?” He replied, “I would like schools to implement teacher/student counseling days to get to know one another better. A counseling program would promote building a positive relationship and help the students in the long run.”

Results

This qualitative hermeneutic phenomenological study explored the lived experiences of ten male ECE teachers residing in the northeastern United States. This study focused on describing what all of the participants had in common as they experienced the phenomenon of being a male ECE teacher. The qualitative hermeneutic phenomenological study approach was appropriate to understand the lived experiences of each participant. Each participant provided their point of view in reviewing the data collected from individual interviews, photo narratives, and protocol writings. Journaling provided the researcher's interpretation of the collected data. Through email, all participants participated in a member check session. Member check sessions allowed participants to review findings and discuss sections of this manuscript (Rababah & Alrub, 2018). Feedback from the participants included comments of approval and appreciation. Data analysis generated commonalities and themes from the participants' responses based on their lived experiences. After working with ten participants, a saturation of data occurred. Saturation is when gathering new data no longer results in new themes (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Two themes resulted from selective coding: retention motivation and expectancy motivation (see Table 4). All of the participants articulated student success, creating a positive impact on children, and continued teacher education as valued motivations to remain in the ECE field. Results identified that recognition and a positive work environment promote employee retention and embody the expectancy theory of motivation. Ten participants provided their perspectives on the male experience in the ECE career field, which included occupational and personal challenges, benefits of remaining in the ECE field, and career goals.

Table 4

Codes and Themes

Codes	Occurrence	Theme/Sub-Themes		
		Retention Motivation		Expectancy Motivation
		Administrative Support	Intrinsic Motivation	
Administrative Communication	2	X		
Supportive Leadership	7	X		
Work Environment	4	X	X	X
Direct Supervisor	3	X		
Positive Impact on Children	10		X	X
Successful Students	10		X	X
I enjoy working with children	5		X	
My Passion/Calling	8		X	
I do my best	6			X
I want recognition	2	X	X	X
I plan to open my own school	3			X
Prove myself	8			X
Continue Education	10	X		X

Note. The participants expressed wanting their students to be successful academically, socially, and in life.

Interviews

Interviews were scheduled based on participant availability. Poor internet connection and timing issues resulted in the rescheduling of three interviews. Each interview was recorded through online meetings. The length of the interview was typically 30 to 45 minutes. One interview ran a little over an hour. Participants shared their experiences as male ECE teachers.

Photo Narrative and Protocol Writing

All ten participants submitted a photo narrative and protocol writing. The due date of the photo narrative and the protocol writing was three days after each participant's interview. Each participant received instructions on completing the photo narrative and protocol writing before

the close of each interview. At that time, the participants could ask questions. The photo narrative required participants to create a collage using three photos to illustrate their lived experiences as male ECE teachers. Participants were instructed not to include photos of themselves or children in their classrooms. In addition, participants were to write a brief description (not to exceed three paragraphs) explaining why they selected the three photos. The protocol writing required participants to provide a brief essay detailing a (not to exceed three paragraphs) direct account of a negative professional experience they lived during employment as an ECE teacher.

Participants provided photo narratives that shared the importance of each child's background. Photos included photos of families, children, staff groups, a classroom, a bull's eye and motivational quotes. The task required the participants to illustrate what their job meant to them. Frank's illustration explains that each child is different. (See Appendix F) Leo provided an illustration and explanation that indicated he is close to his family, friends, and students (See Appendix G). Edward explained staying on target with his photo narrative. (See appendix H) Tim shared inspirational photos and supporting narratives. (See appendix I).

The protocol writing was a challenge for the participants. Most participants provided summaries that discussed challenges the students dealt with instead of their changes as male ECE teachers. For example, Tim provided the following protocol writing (prior to receiving clarification):

An enriching and stimulating home environment fosters healthy growth and brain development by providing a child with love, emotional support, and opportunities for learning and exploration. However, in families with only one

parent, there are often fewer economic and emotional resources which is a negative experience I have experienced.

Moreover, in cases where a child lacks self-confidence due to crises and troubles from home, he/she will not be able to focus on learning, and also, when children from more affluent families tend to ridicule the poor ones, these are some heartbreaking negative experience I face while grooming my student.

The participants were knowledgeable of child development. However, this research is the study of the male ECE teachers' lived experiences, not a study of the children in their classrooms. Through email, examples and guidance provided clarity in completing the protocol writings. The following protocol writing described their challenges. Arthur shared two negative experiences during his career.

My first full-time employment in the field, following graduate school, was as a director / lead teacher in a for-profit childcare center. This was during one of our country's recessions, and enrollment was decreasing as parents were finding other childcare arrangements that were free (e.g., kith & kin care) or less costly. The owner of the center was distraught, of course, and was looking for the source of the lower enrollment and seeking solutions. I was in her office alone one day to do payroll, and prominently laying on the desk was a folder labeled "Personnel Problems." Hmm, I thought to myself: Is it me? Sure enough, there was one sheet of paper in the folder, with the words: "If 'the cat is out of the bag,' grounds for immediate dismissal."

I was dumbfounded, actually. The center owner knew I was gay when she hired me, didn't seem to have an issue with it. We often socialized together, with

her preschool child. After many years of being in the closet—and as a ‘good Catholic boy,’ Italian American—feeling bad and sinful about being gay—I was now proudly out of the closet (discretely, with a small number of friends and my boss, not yet out to family). This was a blow. The year was 1972, just three years after the ‘Stonewall Riots’ which began the gay civil rights movement on a large scale. (There were many gay civil rights activities prior to 1969, but Stonewall became a national phenomenon.)

My reaction was to not confront her, but rather seek other employment. As much as I loved my position—especially teaching in a multi-age environment—I didn’t know how to deal with the ‘cat is out of the bag’ issue. I applied for a position as a Play Start center director, was hired, and began work immediately after my 2-week notice period. I vowed to go back into the closet, professionally.

My team at the Play Start Center was phenomenal. I was close with the secretary, social services aide, and nurse—we shared an office (our center was in a wing of an elementary school—the office was one of the classrooms). During that time I had my first boyfriend. The secretary began to guess that I was gay & had a new love. We talked about it. I started taking the boyfriend to staff and family events—no one even raised an eyebrow.

A couple of years later I had applied for a position in a university lab school as a toddler teacher. I wasn’t even offered an interview, which surprised me. I heard from a friend who knew members of the search committee that my “morality was questioned.” Another blow! So, back in the closet professionally.

Thomas share a negative experience through his protocol writing.

The negative side is too numerous, but to mention a few, I will start by saying that a person's skin does not identify him, but many things do, and the capacity of what he can do. Cause ever since I started my teaching career, I have seen parents help in promoting Racism a lot, thereby undermining the capacity of a teacher.

Theme 1: Retention Motivation

Employment retention is essential for any organization to function smoothly. State mandates require all childcare programs to ensure appropriate child-to-staff ratios. Based on the data analyzed in this research, administrative support and intrinsic motivation are vital in retaining male ECE teaching staff. Administrative support and intrinsic motivation secure male ECE teaching staff's commitment to working in the ECE field.

Administrative Support

According to McDonald et al., 2018; most childcare centers do not display a work-family-like atmosphere. On the other hand, this research indicates that childcare centers in the northeastern United States promote a family-like environment, value the employees' input regarding the program, and welcome cross-training. Four of the participants felt the work environment was great. Two participants felt the communication of leadership was open and respectful. Three participants stated positive remarks about the administrator. Oliver stated, "Play Start makes the environment like a family." Thomas stated, "The administrator, she is a great woman. The employer promotes a comfortable environment." Sam stated, "The communication level with the employer has been great."

Intrinsic Motivation

Motivation is the driving force behind everything humans do to achieve desired outcomes, goals, and rewards (Al-Jedaia & Mehrez, 2020). Intrinsic motivation occurs when

performing a task provides inner satisfaction. This research suggests that male ECE teachers remain in the field because of intrinsic motivators; they enjoy teaching and want the best for the children in their care. When asked, “What are the top three reasons you remain in the ECE field?” Oliver replied, “The main reason is for the kids. It is a great feeling to see growth in the children from the beginning to the end of the year. The impact feels good.” Arthur replied, “Knowing I was making a difference, to be in someone else’s world, and to develop a national reputation and recognition.” Frank replied, “Passion, love for children, and steady employment.”

Theme 2: Expectancy Motivation (Expectancy Theory of Motivation)

Motivational Force (MF) calculation explains the expectancy theory of motivation. MF suggests that expectancy (effort equals performance) times instrumentality (performance equals outcome) times valence (value place of reward). Motivation explains why humans choose one thing over another.

Expectancy

Expectancy is explained as effort equals performance. Combined with past experiences, self-efficacy and perceived difficulty of a goal determine expectancy (Wigfield et al., 2021). For example, the goal is to get to work early. So make an effort to go to bed early, which may result in (equals) waking up and getting to work early. Charles stated, “I want to offer my best. I want to be the best. The more you give out, the more you can achieve your goals.” Noah states, “Some families were not completely comfortable when they saw that I was their young child’s teacher. I knew I could do the job well. My goal was to gain the confidence of the parents. I worked hard to provide their children with a good learning and caring environment. The children were delighted; the parents eventually came around.”

Instrumentality

Instrumentality is when the reward may present itself as a pay increase, promotion, recognition, or sense of accomplishment (Wigfield et al., 2021). In short, performance equals the desired outcome. Thomas stated, “My employer has the children present their teachers’ monthly rewards for best teacher, cleanest classroom, the best relationship with students, most caring teacher, best attendance; I have won twice. We also do raffles.” Tim stated, “We have teacher competitions. The winners receive a paid day off.”

Valence

Valence is the value placed on an outcome (Al-Jedaia & Mehrez, 2020). For example, receiving a set of new blue pens as a reward will not motivate someone who prefers to write with black pens. Therefore, the valence of the reward is low. In this study, the participants placed high valence on becoming a leader in the ECE field. Participants provided the following answers when asked to describe the goals they have for their careers. Leo stated, “Long term, I want to establish a school, gain more professional knowledge, and obtain a leadership role. I continue to complete education courses to make my goal a reality.” Tim stated, “I want to have a school of my own. I want a school that can compete at a national level. I am saving money to make this goal a reality.”

Outlier Data and Findings

“I can’t breathe” were the last words spoken by Eric Garner (July 17, 2014) and George Floyd (May 25, 2020) (Roberts et al., 2022). America’s racism vividly showed itself as Garner and Floyd’s brutal attack appeared in social media and television. Racism is a challenging topic to discuss. During this study, participants mentioned their experiences and thoughts regarding race.

Outlier Finding – Experiences of Racism

During this study, two participants shared experiences of underlying racism. In essence, racism functions to separate people, usually based on race, ethnicity, religion, nationality, sexual orientation, or physical characteristics such as skin color (Arneback & Jamte, 2022). For example, Thomas shared, “I have been the victim of racial slurs. Students have called me a black monkey. The parents have promoted racism by undermining me as a teacher.” Frank shared, “I am a black American. Some parents were reserved. I had a rough start.”

On the other hand, Arthur did not have the same experience. Arthur stated, “I am a five foot three white male, I’m pretty non-threatening.” The contrast between Thomas and Frank compared to Arthur’s statements is very different. Thomas and Frank were dealing with an additional challenge, whereas Arthur did not encounter the same challenge.

Research Question Responses

The purpose of this study was to understand the lived experience of male ECE teachers in the northeast United States. There was one central question and three sub-questions which directed this study. When all participant interviews were completed, all participants provided a photo narrative and a protocol writing to conclude this study. Participants answered the central question and sub-questions through interviews, photo narratives, and protocol writings, resulting in themes.

Central Research Question

What are the lived experiences that negatively and positively impact the job experience of male ECE teachers in the northeastern region of the United States? This study included ten male ECE teachers that reside in Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, and West Virginia. Nine out of ten of the participants completed bachelor’s degree programs. One of the

participants is retired. The participants' ages range from 24 to 60 plus years old. Race was not requested. However, three participants provided their race.

Each participant describes their ECE experience as a good experience. Interactions with children, parents and supportive administrators promoted lived experiences that positively impacted the participants' job experience. For example, Arthur shared, "I worked with caring staff and parents. I conducted home visits and got to know the families." Edward shared, "Children see me as a father figure, and my employer was amazed at how well I work with children." Finally, Tim shared, "The children are always happy to see me."

On the other hand, the negative experiences that impacted the participants' lived experiences as male ECE teachers were limited. Male ECE teachers must handle behavior issues, janitorial services, and other stereotypical roles. Participants' protocol writings provide their challenging lived experiences from their perspectives. Oliver shared his most troubling experience.

I came into the ECE field as a 17-year-old teacher's aide. The classroom that he was placed in did not have a teacher hired. Three children in the classroom had behavioral issues. Two of the three children were a set of twin boys. The children were challenging. I would say experiencing that at the beginning of my career helped me build a supportive and positive attitude toward children with behavioral issues. I know I have to find the best in every situation and remember that we do not know what that child is dealing with at home. Therefore, I show no judgment. I treat all my students the same and provide equal love and care to them.

Leo shared his experience.

The administrator instructed that all the male teachers perform janitorial services in various classes. The administrator created a cleaning schedule for all male staff. I was devastated. However, I had to perform the services because it was a mandatory service. There was a day I was very sick, and it was my turn to clean up classes. I felt disgusted and irritated carrying out my function. I was left feeling sad because it was a management decision.

Charles shared his experience.

In the beginning, teaching was difficult. School leadership expected me to be a firm disciplinarian because I am a male. Fifty percent of my classroom included children with behavior issues. As a result, I had a hard time maintaining order in the classroom. For months, the stress of the disorder in the classroom caused me to have daily headaches.

Sub-Question One

How do occupational and personal challenges impact the job instrumentality of male ECE teachers in the ECE career field? In this study, instrumentality is performance equals the desired outcome. According to the responses, the participants provided occupational and personal challenges that motivated them to do their best. Occupational and personal challenges impact the job instrumentality by motivating the participants to do their best in their jobs. However, in Arthur's situation, he pursued new employment. This study required participants to describe a challenging situation that they encountered and how they handled the situation. In his protocol writing, Arthur provided examples of occupational challenges that had a negative impact on his job instrumentality. Leo stated, "Male teachers are not considered as a man in the ECE profession. Because some people feel that teaching is for the female folks. I handled that

talk by staying calm and spending time with positive friends.” Sam stated, “Some parents doubted my competence. They did not think I could provide quality care to their child. I decided to prove them wrong by doing my job to the best of my ability.” Noah stated, “I had to deal with female teachers expressing that teaching in ECE field is not for males. I proved them wrong. The parents came to my defense.”

Personal challenges impacting male ECE teachers’ job instrumentality include dealing with friends and family that may not support the participant in teaching ECE. A few of the participants did not have immediate family support. However, the participants eventually received support from their families to follow their career choice. Arthur stated, “My family just decided I was a psychologist. Some of them could not understand why I got into the ECE field. Nevertheless, they were proud of my career.” Thomas stated, “My mother wanted me to become a lawyer. I had difficult conversations with her. I tried teaching law to children. However, my passion is for younger children. She eventually gave me her blessing.” Tim stated, “My father disagreed with my career choice. He discriminated against my choice.”

Sub-Question Two

What are the benefits for male ECE teachers that remain in the ECE career field? Nine of the ten participants continue to work in the ECE field. The Participants shared that the benefits for male ECE teachers to remain in the ECE field include positively impacting children and supporting children’s overall success. Arthur has retired and stated, “I stayed in the field so long because I knew I was making a difference in a child’s world.” This study suggests that most male ECE teachers remain in the field for intrinsic reasons, which results in a high motivational force. Oliver stated, “I stay in the field for the children and their families. The population we serve requires services that recreate a sense of urgency, an urge to help and be helpful.” Frank stated,

“I have been with the same employer for seven years. I respect their mission. The employer provides good benefits and a good salary.”

Sub-Question Three

How do individual expected goals play a part in employee retention in the current programs? Individual expected goals play a part in employee retention when administrators support the education staff's goals of increasing their education and promoting teachers to leadership roles. In this study, participants shared that their employers are supportive, and their career goals promote themselves in the ECE field. Participants responded to the following question: When asked to describe the goals you have for your career and what are you doing to make those dreams a reality? Thomas stated, “I want to be a profound educator. I want to be known worldwide for my work in the ECE field. I am currently working on a master's degree to reach my dream. Charles stated, “I want to offer the best and be the best. To make my dream a reality, I believe the more you give out, the more you can achieve your goal.” Noah stated, “I want to create a positive environment for male teachers. To make that goal a reality, I promote the better side of the career, and I set high standards.”

Summary

This study consisted of ten participants aged 24-60 plus who worked as male ECE teachers and resided in the northeastern United States. These participants were selected by contacting ECE facilities such as Play Start programs, ECE schools, northeastern United States school districts and organizations supporting male ECE teachers. Pseudonyms were used to protect the participant's identities. Data from each participant included a semi-structured interview and submission of a photo narrative and protocol writing. This process allowed an in-depth look into the participants' lived experiences as male ECE teachers. The results of this

study demonstrated that male ECE teachers remain in the field because the motivational force is high intrinsic rewards.

Data analysis resulted in two themes for this study. The themes identified include retention motivation and the expectancy theory of motivation. These themes presented themselves in answering the central question and sub-questions. The participants' perspectives formed the outcome of this study. Each participant shared that their ECE teaching experience was good and that they remain in the field for the children. The expectancy theory of motivation guided this study. The data indicated that the participants' work ethic cultivated the belief that positive effort leads to quality performance resulting in desired outcomes. The value of the outcome depends on the participants' needs and preferences.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

The purpose of this qualitative hermeneutic phenomenological study is to describe the lived experience of male early childhood teachers in the northeastern region of the United States. Ten participants provided their perspectives on the male experience in the ECE career field. Two main themes and four interpretations support this study. First, theoretical and empirical implications explore the expectancy theory of motivation and related literature. Three limitations provided potential weaknesses of this study. Then, delimitation outlined boundaries associated with this study. Finally, a recommendation for future research brings this chapter to a conclusion.

Discussion

This study of male ECE teachers lived experience added to the empirical and theoretical literature. Two themes emerged, including retention motivation and the expectancy theory of motivation. Empirical literature supports that young boys relate to and see themselves when the teacher in the classroom is a male teacher (Gold & Reis, 1982). This study focuses on the male teachers' lived experience. Empirical results of this study suggest that male teachers enjoy their work and accept the responsibility of being seen as father figures. The theoretical results of this study suggest the ideology of the expectancy theory of motivation. Three limitations exist in this study. Delimitations of this study include the number of years a participant must be in the ECE field. Recommendations for future research could include changing demographics such as race and location.

Interpretation of Findings

Individual semi-structured interviews, photo narratives, and protocol writings provided data for detailed analysis that resulted in two emerging themes and five subthemes. This research

was guided by Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory of motivation, which discusses how and why people make choose their actions. Table 4 identifies the themes and subthemes that emerged from the data analysis. According to the participants' perspective shared in this study, administrative support and intrinsic motivation promote retention motivation. Expectancy is the second theme, which directly complements the theory that guided this research. The expectancy theory of motivation guides this study and is evident in the participants' interviews, photo narratives, and protocol writings.

Summary of Thematic Findings

The research focus of this study is to describe the lived experience of male ECE teachers in the northeastern United States. The data collected included semi-structured interviews, photo narratives, and protocol writings. Analyzing this data included isolating thematic statements. Themes identified through implementing the selective approach also demonstrated elements of the guiding theory. The selective approach required reading and highlighting statements that seemed essential to the phenomenon or the experience described (van Manen, 2017). The selective approach to coding the data identified phrases that seemed essential and revealed a shared phenomenon. Two themes emerged, retention motivation and expectancy (expectancy theory of motivation), two subthemes, and six interpretations. In addition to the data triangulation, the researcher wrote a reflexive journal after each interview.

Interpretation #1 Background Influences. Four of the ten participants had someone in their family that influenced their decision to become an ECE teacher. Family support perpetuated the participants' interest in ECE. Oliver shared, "My father is the transportation supervisor at a Play Start program, so when a position became available, I applied." Frank shared, "I always wanted to be like my granny in how she cared for children. I consult with my granny regarding

my career and life in general.” Edward shared, “My mother is a teacher, and education always played a huge part in my childhood.” Charles shared, “My uncle would always bring his children by our house, and I enjoyed teaching and caring for them.” Family support is important when making career choices, however, without family support, the job seeker must have a high sense of self-efficacy to know they can perform their chosen job (Vautero et al., 2021)

Those participants that did not have immediate family support continued to follow their passion. Arthur’s family expected him to become a psychologist. Nevertheless, he has had a remarkable career. Thomas’s family wanted him to become a lawyer, but his passion is teaching young children. Finally, Tim’s father did not support of his career, but Tim believed ECE was his calling. The participant’s commitment to their employers, the children they teach, and to their passion is a force that binds them to continue their journey as ECE educators (Mwesigwa et al., 2020)

Interpretation #2 Job Satisfaction. The participants in this study acknowledged job satisfaction with their current employer. Eight of the participants remain with the same employer for three or more years. One participant is retired. They choose this career and remain in this career for the children. Unsatisfactory employment characteristics include low wages, low status, lack of administrative support, and poor work conditions (Boyd & Newman, 2019; McKinlay et al., 2018). Participants in this study share their appreciation for their administrator and the work environment. Three of the participants mentioned during their interviews that the salary was good. Two participants mentioned low status during thier interviews.

Interpretation #3 Positive Asset. The participants in this study are a positive asset to their place of employment. Repeated in each interview the phrase, “I want to do my best or be my best.” Rohrmann (2019) suggests that male teachers enrich each student’s experience. These

participants possess a drive to be their best multiplied with a positive male presence. As a result, their employer, as well as the students, are receiving a quality encounter. Male ECE teachers are a positive asset to a childcare center, preschool, or kindergarten classroom (Ahmad et al, 2017; Warin, 2019).

Interpretation #4 Suspicion. Not all parents are open to leaving their young child with a male teacher. Male teachers know the unspoken stigma that hovers over their career choice. Arthur shared, “In the 80s, I recommended men get away from ECE. There was a child sex scandal that occurred in 1985 in Manhattan Beach, California (The New York Times, 1985). It was terrible. Preschool staff and the owner were found guilty of child sexual abuse. I recommended leaving the field at that time because once accused; your career was over. It did not matter if you were exonerated.” Such situations place a strain on male recruitment in the ECE field.

Interpretation #5 Motivation. Behaviorism is a theory that humans and animals can be conditioned to act (Schunk, 2016). Discovering the conditions that result in action uncovers the motivation behind the action. Participants shared their experiences that indicated intrinsic motivators encourage them to remain in the ECE field. All of the participants mentioned during their interview that being a positive impact on children, promoting successful students, and continuing teacher education are the top three reasons they remain in the ECE field. Their goals of providing quality care and education to their students outweigh their negative experiences.

Interpretation #6 Discrimination. In 1964 President Lyndon Johnson signed Title VII Civil Right Act (Civil Rights Act, 1964). This Act prohibited discrimination in public places, which made employment discrimination illegal. Employers could not legally deny a potential employee based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. Although discrimination is

illegal, Arthur shared two situations that inappropriately acknowledged his sexuality and negatively impacted his experience. In *Bostock v. Clayton County, Georgia* (2020), the United States Supreme Court ruled that discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity violates Title VII of the Civil Rights Act.

Other discussions of discrimination during this study included that male participants were assigned janitorial and discipline duties. Leo and Sam shared that they were assigned janitorial duties in their buildings, but none of the female teachers were assigned a cleaning day. Oliver and Charles shared that they were giving children with behavior concerns because their administrators expected them to be disciplinarians. Male teachers are expected to exhibit masculinity at all times (Woodson & Bristol, 2020). Discrimination is not fair to anyone involved.

Implications for Practice

The focus of this study was to describe the lived experience of male ECE teachers in the northeastern United States. Ten participants provide their perspectives on the male experience in the ECE career field. Their experience included occupational and personal challenges, benefits of remaining in the ECE field, and professional goals. The data suggest that intrinsic motivation and administrative support encourage male ECE teacher retention. Therefore practices should replicate those motivators.

Implications for Practice

All male ECE teachers will benefit from the practical implication of this study. The practice of creating a supportive work environment motivates employee retention. Approachable administrators add a healthy work environment. All participants stated they enjoyed their

administrator, co-workers, and the work environment. Frank shared, “I have been with the same employer for seven years. My employer respects me. My ideas are valued.”

Theoretical and Empirical Implications

The focus of this study was the lived experience of male early childhood education educators. Ten participants took part in this study describing their lived experiences that negatively or positively impacted their employment experiences in ECE in the northeastern United States. The data indicated that the participants in this study remain in the ECE field because they place a high value on ensuring their students’ educational success. This study aligned with the expectancy of motivation and the calculation of motivational force. The empirical result of this study provided insight into retaining and recruiting the staff.

The expectancy theory of motivation is the theoretical framework for this study. This theory suggests that rewards and outcomes are motivators (Eccles et al., 1983). The expectancy theory is composed of three elements. Expectancy (effort equals performance), an individual must believe their effort will result in desired performance. Instrumentality (desired performance equals outcome/reward), an individual must be confident in their performance to ensure the desired reward. Valence differs from expectancy and instrumentality because they are considered satisfaction levels (Al-Jedaia & Mehrez, 2020). Valence is the value placed on the outcome (Al-Jedaia & Mehrez, 2020). Each participants’ reward or goal was to become an ECE teacher and provide a safe, educational learning environment for students. They studied child development in high school and college. The participants continue to enroll in child development courses on their own or mandated by their employers. Expectancy and instrumentality are present. The participant place a high value on educating and caring for children. They also place high value on doing their best by providing quality care and education to their students.

The implications of this study focused on male ECE teachers. In addition to the research of Sharma et al. (2016), this study did provide validity, reiterating that employee commitment directly influences employee performance. Also, this study supports public service motivation (PSM). PSM is a theory that supports intrinsic motivation, which suggests that someone is motivated by public service because they believe they are genuinely helping others (Breugh et al., 2018). In addition, this study supports Potipiroon and Ford (2017), supporting high levels of intrinsic motivation and resulting in high levels of organizational commitment.

The phenomenon of low male teachers in the ECE field is connected to suspicion and low social status. This study supports that some people agree with Xu and Waniganayake (2018) male ECE teachers are of low social status and less than men. However, the participants in this study did not let negative comments or beliefs interfere with their career choice. Also, this study supported Mikkelsen et al (2017) suggesting that self-determination is connected to intrinsic motivation. This study provides insight into positive professional male ECE teachers.

Limitations and Delimitations

There were three limitations to this study. The first limitation was a tiny participant pool. Male ECE teachers are under-represented in the ECE field (Sak, 2018; Shpancer et al., 2019; Warin, 2019; U.S. Bureau of Labor, 2020). Also, potential participants were hesitant to participate in this study. For example, three participants did not attend their scheduled interviews, one canceled his interview, and three potential participants completed the informed consent form but did not continue the process. The second limitation included technology failures resulting in the rescheduling of two interviews. Lastly, the time frame was a limitation. As the world began to open up after COVID-19, childcare facilities were not allowing strangers into their facilities. Therefore, conducted interviews were through Teams.

Delimitations of this study include the participant requirements, the qualitative design, and the approach. Participant requirements included work in the ECE field for at least three years to show commitment to the field and male teachers only to address the gap in the literature. Qualitative studies emphasize natural settings and understanding verbal narratives and are flexible by design (McMillan, 2021). The phenomenology approach is best for this study because participants shared their lived experiences. Finally, the hermeneutic style is best for this study because it focuses on what it is like to be a male ECE teacher, not the philosophical approach of the transcendental style.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study provided an in-depth perspective into the lived experiences of ten male ECE teachers; however, additional research may include altering the participant pool. Future research should focus on a specific race of male ECE teachers. Race was not a requirement for this study. However, it would be interesting to know the percentage of males by race that works in the ECE field. A quantitative study is best for reporting percentages in statistics. Quantitative design studies focus on numbers, statistics, comparing groups, and identifying the degree of relation (Creswell, 2018; Miron, 2021; Zahavi, 2018). Additional research could take place in a different region of the United States and add to this study. Another research may include male ECE teachers that have been in the field four or more years.

Conclusion

The purpose of this qualitative hermeneutic phenomenology study was to describe the lived experience of male early childhood education teachers in the northeastern United States. For years male teachers have been the minority in early childhood education (Sak, 2018; Shpanceer et al., 2019). This study provides insight into what motivates males to choose early

childhood education and remain in the field. The expectancy theory of motivation guides this study. One central and three sub-questions prompted responses from the participants in this study.

Ten participants were engaged in this study. Participants reside in five states in the northeastern United States. Participants' years of employment in ECE varied. They shared their lived experience, including why ECE is their choice, why they remain in ECE, and their future goals.

Data triangulation included a semi-structured interview, photo narrative, and protocol writing. Two themes emerged, expectancy motivation and retention motivation. The participants in this study remain in ECE to provide quality care and education to their students. They want to see their student excel at school and in life. This study suggests that male ECE teachers are not solely motivated by extrinsic motivators such as salary. Instead, the participants in this study are motivated by their "calling."

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Appendix A

IRB Application / Approval Letter

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY.

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

August 19, 2022

Justine Flint
Jose Puga

Re: IRB Exemption - IRB-FY22-23-88 Early Childhood Education: A Hermeneutic Phenomenology Study of Male Staff Retention

Dear Justine Flint, Jose Puga,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under the following exemption category, which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:104(d):

Category 2.(iii). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met:

The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects can readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and an IRB conducts a limited IRB review to make the determination required by §46.111(a)(7).

Your stamped consent form(s) and final versions of your study documents can be found under the Attachments tab within the Submission Details section of your study on Cayuse IRB. Your stamped consent form(s) should be copied and used to gain the consent of your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information electronically, the contents of the attached consent document(s) should be made available

without alteration.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

If you have any questions about this exemption or need assistance in determining whether possible modifications to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP

Administrative Chair of Institutional Research

Research Ethics Office

Appendix B

Recruitment Letter

Dear Creative Kids Inc. Staff:

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree. The purpose of my research is to describe the male early childhood educators' (ECE) experience within the early childhood career field. I am writing to invite eligible participants to join my study.

Participants must be male ECE teacher or assistant teacher who has worked in the ECE career field for at least three years, and reside in the northeast region of the United States. Participants, if willing, will be asked to participate in an audio- and video-recorded interview (30-45 minutes), complete a protocol writing (provide a three paragraph of a negative professional experience they have lived during their employment as an ECE teacher and the resolution), and a photo narrative (create a collage using three pictures that illustrate their lived experience of a male ECE teacher and explain why they selected those pictures). The time line to complete the protocol writing and photo narrative is three (3) days form the time of the interview. Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but the information will remain confidential.

To participate, please contact me.

A consent document is attached to this email. The consent document contains additional information about my research. Please sign the consent document and return it to me via email at least three days prior to the interview.

Sincerely,

Justine Flint
Graduate Student

Appendix C

Title of the Project: Early Childhood Education: A Hermeneutic Phenomenology Study of Male Staff Retention

Principal Investigator: Justine Flint, Graduate Student, Liberty University

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. In order to participate, you must be a male early childhood education (ECE) teacher or assistant teacher who has worked in the ECE career field for at least three years and reside in the northeast region of the United States. Taking part in this research project is voluntary. Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research project.

What is the study about and why is it being done?

The purpose of the study is to understand the motivation to remain in the early childhood career field. To identify the elements of motivation.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do one of the following things:

1. Participate in an audio- and video-recorded scheduled structured interview (30 – 45 minutes). Interviews can be in person or online.
2. Complete a photo narrative (create a collage using three pictures that illustrate their lived experience of a male ECE teacher and explain why they selected those pictures). The photo narrative is due three (3) days after the date of the interview. For example, if the interview is June 15th then the photo narrative is due June 18th. The due date will be assigned prior to the close of the interview.
3. Complete a protocol writing (provide a three paragraph of a negative professional experience they have lived during their employment as an ECE teacher and the resolution). The protocol writing is due three (3) days after the date of the interview. For example, if the interview is June 15th then the protocol writing is due June 18th. The due date will be assigned prior to the close of the interview.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study. Benefits to society include providing insight into promoting male ECE retention and recruitment.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

How will personal information be protected?

The records of this study will be kept private. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

- Participant responses will be kept confidential through the use of codes.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.
- Interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.

How will you be compensated for being part of the study?

Participants will not be compensated for participating in this study

Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you, will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study is Justine Flint. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at cell phone / jemail@liberty.edu. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, at jaemail@liberty.edu.

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu

Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subjects research will be conducted in an ethical manner as defined and required by federal regulations. The topic covered and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

The researcher has my permission to audio-record and video-record me as part of my participation in this study.

Printed Subject Name

Appendix D
Permission Request Letter

June , 2022

First Name Last Name, Owner
Creative Kids, Inc.
10 Creative Lane
Clayton, DE 19909

Dear Ms. Murphy:

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree. The title of my research project is “Early childhood education: A hermeneutic phenomenology study of male staff retention.”

I am writing to request your permission to contact your staff to invite them to participant and conduct my research at Creative Kids, Inc.

Participants will be asked to participate in an audio- and video recorded interview (30-45 minutes), complete a protocol writing (provide a three paragraph of a negative professional experience they have lived during their employment as an ECE teacher and the resolution) and photo narrative (create a collage using three pictures that illustrate their lived experience of a male ECE teacher and explain why they selected those pictures). Participants will have three (3) days from the time of the interview to return the photo narrative and the protocol writing via email. Deadline will be discussed prior to the close of the interview. Participants will be presented with informed consent information prior to participating. Taking part in this study is completely voluntary, and participants are welcome to discontinue participation at any time.

Thank you for considering my request. If you choose to grant permission, please provide a signed statement on official letterhead indicating your approval. A permission letter document is attached for your convenience.

Sincerely,

Sincerely,

Justine Flint
Graduate Student

Appendix E

Research Copy Request Letter

Justine Flint
Graduate Student
Liberty University

Dear Ms. Flint:

After careful review of your research proposal entitled [Early childhood education: A hermeneutic phenomenology study of male staff retention], We have decided to grant you permission to conduct your study at Creative Kids, Inc./staff and invite them to participate in your study.

Check the following boxes, as applicable:

[I/We are requesting a copy of the results upon study completion and/or publication.]

Sincerely,

Sample Name, Title
Creative Kids, Inc.

Appendix F

Frank's Photo Narrative

Photo was removed to comply with copyright.

The Classroom reminds me to take into consideration each child's background. No two children are alike and their individuality plays a part in how they learn. It can all be from a different set of environment.

Appendix G

Leo's Photo Narrative

Photos were removed to comply with copyright.

Hello, I am sending my photo narrative. It comprises of family, friends, and children. I am attached to them.

Appendix H

Edward's Photo Narrative

Photo was removed to comply with copyright

The photo reminds me always that every child may have the same or different goal, of which this plays a part in their learning.

Appendix I

Tim's Photo Narrative

Photos were removed to comply with copyright

PHOTO 1- I choose the “picture because I enjoy teaching young children and also I enjoy being a good influence on young children.

PHOTO 2- I choose the “work hard dream big never give up” because it gives me the joy to continue to teach in the ECE field and the hope to try my best in giving every child the mindset that they should keep on trying harder until their different goals are accomplished.

PHOTO 3- I choose” you can make it” I try my best to motivate.