

Chapter Thirteen

Exploring the Intersections of Social Identity, Popular Culture, and Men in Early Childhood Education

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Recently comedic actor Eddie Murphy welcomed his ninth child into the world. On this joyous occasion he told reporters that he doesn't plan on changing any of his daughter's diapers. While this may not come as a surprise to many, given traditional cultural expectations of fatherhood, it was a shocking admission coming from the man who starred in *Daddy Day Care*.¹ Eddie Murphy took on the role of Charlie Hinton, marketing executive turned home child care provider. In the film, Charlie chastises his buddy for not being willing to change his son's diaper. This film is not the first to rely heavily on the "fish out of water/man in a woman's world" scenario (i.e., *Mr. Mom*,² *Three Men and a Baby*,³ etc.) for comedic effect. But it is the first film to showcase the world of child care. It is also the first film to explore the issue of men in early childhood education, a topic of interest to those seeing equity and quality in early childhood care and education.

According to the 2016 US Bureau of Labor Statistics, men make up only 4.5 percent of child care workers and only 2.4 percent of preschool and kindergarten teachers.⁴ For several years, many teacher education programs and school districts have formally and aggressively attempted to recruit male teachers for younger children, with limited success. Societal biases regarding gender and the teaching of young children, along with low prestige and low pay have played a large role in keeping men out of the field.⁵ This paper will examine discourses found in *Daddy Day Care* and juxtapose these discourses within the literature and the lived experiences of men teaching and caring for

young children. Very often these experiences, coupled with the challenges that accompany all early childhood education teachers differ from the humorous images portrayed in Hollywood movies.

Throughout this chapter, we include reports from the field using participant/observer personal ethnography.⁶ These self-reports are recorded here by Josh Thompson, a sixty-one-year-old father of four adult children, grandfather of seven grandchildren all under eight years old, husband of one, married for thirty-five years.

PUBLIC PEDAGOGY

In our teaching early childhood education courses, it never ceases to amaze us at the number of references to this film that are made by students. Just recently while teaching an undergraduate course, one author overheard a young student talking to group, "Developmentally appropriate practice is just like when the dads in *Daddy Day Care* turned their teaching around and starting asking the kids what they wanted to do." Later that same week while teaching a different class about early child care program models, a student explained to the class that a "home child care center is what they had in *Daddy Day Care*." Similar looks of recognition came across students' faces as they shared what Oprah Winfrey has called an "aha moment."⁷

What amazes us about this is that *Daddy Day Care* came out in 2003. This movie is thirteen years old, which means that many of our students were around six or seven years old at that time. Yet, for whatever reason, it has had a huge impact on them and a generation. This is important because we view the film as public pedagogy. Informed by the work of Antonio Gramsci and Stuart Hall, we posit that cultural studies, including popular culture, can be a powerful site for educational research. Furthermore, we can utilize films like *Daddy Day Care* to examine public discourse, as well as to study the impact of broader social forces that are circulating. Along the same lines, Shane Gunster has argued that we cannot effectively teach critical pedagogy unless we first take into account the cultural knowledge that students bring with them prior to entering our classroom.⁸

Daddy Day Care is the only mainstream film that exists and focuses solely on the topic of child care. While this film is a comedy and was not intended to educate the public on the issues surrounding the care and education of young children, it very well may be the general public's only exposure to the topic. Jeanne Brady stated, "We must become more attentive to the various pedagogical sites (both in and out of schools) in which the politics of remembering and forgetting produce different narratives of a national past, present and future."⁹ Along the same lines, Wright and Saldin argued that popular culture "can bring about learning that is far more powerful,

lasting, and lifelong than learning in formal educational settings and other traditionally researched areas of teaching and learning. It must also be a site for ever-expanding educational research into that learning."¹⁰ While we understand that this film trades on gross generalizations about men for laughs, we do believe that these "generalizations" are important to examine, as they are based on cultural stereotypes and gender norms that have long been passed on from generation to generation. These discourses about men in early childhood education and child care will be explored in this chapter.

In *Daddy Day Care*, Charlie Hinton (Murphy) is a laid-off, high-paid advertising executive who has little time for his four-year-old son. When he loses his job he is forced to remove his son from a pretentious (i.e., they learn German so they can better interpret Freud, sit at desks in straight lines, and prep for their SATs) and high-cost (\$28,000 USD per year) preschool. Hinton's wife returns to the workforce as a high-paid lawyer and the couple searches their city for reasonably priced child care options. What they run into is nothing new to American parents who face similar challenges. The affordably priced options are either scary (think chain smoker in a run-down trailer park cliché) or there is a waiting list that one needed to get on prior to the child's conception. These issues, known together as the "child care tri-lemma"¹¹ identify the three largest challenges that exist for parents in the United States: finding quality, affordability, and accessibility of child care. Charlie Hinton decided that he will take care of his son, and in doing so figures that if he can watch other children he may be able to bring in enough extra money to keep his family financially afloat. He convinces his best friend who has also been let go from the marketing firm to join him, and *Daddy Day Care* is launched.

Thompson's reasons to teach young children came out of a loving, nurturing home environment where caregiver was modelled as the right thing to do, regardless of gender.¹² His decision to pursue a career in teaching resided in two simple life choices:

1. JOY! He decided early on in life to pursue joy and happiness as a model for optimal success. These motives were not hedonistic, egotistical, or self-serving, but instead aligned with a sense of community, service to others, and a quest for others to also find their joy, passion, and happiness.
2. As a left-handed, creative tempered being, he sought out non-conformity as the default option. He always tried the other option, tested the limits, and desired risk and novelty.

He started working with young children regularly and professionally at eight-teen years old. He cared for a three-year-old niece for five months when her parents worked, and added three other young children to the daily routine.

Later, he taught music a few days a week in what is now a NAEYC accredited center for toddlers and young children. His first full-time teaching position was in a Montessori elementary classroom. After five years, he moved up to teaching three- to six-year olds, where he stayed for fourteen years. All four of his own children went through his three- to six-year-old classroom. Philosophically and theologically, he embraces the Platonic tripartite definition of being: "I am a spirit being. I have a soul. I occupy a body. The spirit part of me is essential, my true self, my identity. It is immortal. And it is gender-neutral" (see Galatians 3:28, "there is neither male nor female").¹³

METHODOLOGY

The authors watched the movie *Daddy Day Care* several times, then downloaded the script and unitized it in order to analyze the data. Unitizing, as defined by Lincoln and Guba¹⁴ is the smallest part of information about something that can stand alone. This not only facilitated analysis but also assisted in the organization of large amounts of data into sizable chunks. Each chunk of data was read and, using a pencil, a bracket was drawn around each section to indicate that it was a unit. The units were numbered and then cut out and placed on index cards. Each index card was coded in order to make referencing the original interview transcript possible. All units were coded, and the emerging themes were compared with each other looking for discursive themes categories. This process is referred to as "constant comparison."¹⁵

Memos were recorded in a journal after the transcription, coding, and unitizing of interviews during the analytical phase. The memos within the journal included a) reaction(s) to a particular interview or piece of data, b) a thought regarding the data's relation to the theoretical lens, c) a shift or problem with the methodology, d) emphasis or thoughts on particular data that directly answered specific research questions.

After the index cards were created, they were checked and re-checked. New and emerging themes were compared to the existing ones. When no new themes emerged, it was assumed that the data had met the saturation point and the themes were identified as patterns, categories.¹⁶ These themes pertaining to men in early childhood, were further broken down into subcategories, which allowed for deeper analysis. The following themes were identified: low prestige/social status in early childhood; low pay for the work; low expectations/ requirements; questionable motives/only pedophiles want to work with young children; gender bias/early childhood education is "women's work"; and gender bias/males are more fun and less competent. Once these themes were identified, the authors compared the themes with existing literature on the subject to look for similarities and contradictions.

Low Prestige

"But is this really how you want to spend the rest of your life? As a businessman, you'd have money, power, respect? You going to throw that all away to baby-sit a bunch of four-year-olds?"¹⁷ This quote comes straight from *Daddy Day Care* but according to many men in the field of Early Childhood Education and Care, it could have come from a number of their friends and family members.¹⁸ While we give lip service to the idea that children are our future and the most important investment we can make, in reality public perception of the role of caregiver and early childhood educator does not match this sentiment. Caregivers in the field of early childhood education are often referred to as "day care workers" and thought of as "babysitters." The following scene from the movie highlights public perceptions around child care workers. Charlie and Phil run into their old boss who had let them go, who also is the father of Crispin, a child in their home child care center.

FORMER BOSS: How do you know my kid?

CRISPIN'S MOM: They're his day care teachers, what do you think?

FORMER BOSS: Day care? That's what it is? Oh, my God. You're wiping boogers for a living. Losers.¹⁹

Women wanting to break through the glass ceiling into traditionally male careers do so in the pursuit of higher status and pay. Men who are interested in traditionally female careers tend to do so at the expense of personal prestige and pay. Women wanting to be physicians are rewarded with both higher social status and a bigger pay check. Men in nursing settle for less pay and prestige. For example, although Charlie Hinton is beginning to enjoy his new position as child care provider, he still feels pangs of loss at the power and prestige he has given up. The following scene takes place as his wife drives away in his sports car (he is left with the family mini-van) and he is left at home.

SON: Remember when you used to work all the time?

CHARLIE: Yeah, back when I had a real job.

SON: Do you miss work?

CHARLIE: I guess. I suppose so. I miss it. But don't get me wrong. It's not like I don't like hanging out with you guys. It's just that Daddy used to be a big shot down at work. I had my own office and a big, pretty view. Remember that big, pretty view Daddy had? A lot of cool things about that job . . . I had people working underneath me . . . and, just between you and me, the pay wasn't that bad either.²⁰

In his field notes, Thompson reminds us that teaching is a noble and honorable profession. Teaching young children is equally valid and prestigious as teaching older children, or adults, or so he would hope and believe.

But he recognized ways he managed other people's misconceptions of his work; for example, instead of saying caregiver or day care worker, he turned the phrase, "I'm a Montessori teacher" as a term of power and prestige. Being a child of the 1960s, he was acutely aware of his position of power as a white, middle-class, educated male in the mid-twentieth century. He had choices. He had options. He intentionally activated his Privilege Card, not as a power trip over others, but instead, in his heart, he was exercising his options flagrantly as a method of modelling agency and authority for others to do so likewise.

Low Pay

Pay and prestige certainly go hand in hand in the United States. Low pay has also been listed as one of the reasons that men are less likely to go into early childhood education. According to Moss, the younger the child, the more gendered the field. And in the United States, the younger the child, the lower the salary. This is certainly the case when we look at certified teachers versus child care workers.²¹

Child care workers are not only reported as making on average \$3 less than janitors, only half of child care workers report having medical benefits. A recent study from the University of California found that 46 percent of child care workers qualify and utilize government assistance programs such as food stamps or Medicaid.²² While the issue of low pay was explored in the movie, Charlie ultimately decides to leave his high-paying, highly prestigious job for a career in early childhood. Charlie made a decision in spite of the low pay. This is consistent with what the research that says about low pay not being the sole reason that men aren't in early childhood education. If low pay were the only reason men didn't enter the field, then there would be more men in early childhood education in countries with higher pay. This has not been the case in Denmark, Finland, and New Zealand, where child care is still viewed as women's work.²³ Many men can be found working in low-pay jobs (fast food, temporary positions, or general labor positions); more men tend to enter them because they are socially accepted.

Table 13.1. Salary Comparison among Practitioners in the Early Childhood Education Field

Occupation	Average Yearly Salary	Hourly Rate
Child Care Worker	\$20,320 per year	\$9.77
Preschool Teacher	\$28,570 per year	\$13.57
Elementary School Teacher	\$53,627 per year	N/A

Thompson's field notes reflect this as well. The man who preceded him in his first full-time elementary classroom left education to become an insurance salesman. Thompson always felt so sad for him, and used his story as a cautionary tale to make this job work for him and his family. Soon after his first child was born, he mentioned to his dad how he could see how it would be possible to give up his own dreams and aspirations to take care of his family obligations. He remembers driving in a car at the time, and his father asked him to stop, his hand on the dashboard; his father said, "The best thing you bring to your family is your passion. Never quit doing what you love."

Another example was one incident that came from working with a group of five-year-old kindergartners. Thompson was sitting in a small group, three or four children and himself. They were discussing work and the jobs done by their parents. Most children mentioned fathers, but some of the mothers of children at the table were also employed outside the home. Suddenly, one child picked up his head and asked, "Do you have a job, Mr. Thompson?"

Low Expectations/Requirements

"You seem smart, talented, highly ambitious. What on earth are you doing running a day care center?"²⁴ Those words come from Miss Harridan, the snooty prep school headmistress in the film. She is trying to convince Charlie to give up his child care center because he has poached some of her clients. Miss Harridan is verbalizing this perception that child care is for people who have limited options. Professionals wouldn't waste their time with young children. In reality, this is simply incorrect. Many men who enter early childhood education have been previously successful in fields such as banking, business, law enforcement, and the armed forces.²⁵

However, we have an educational system that privileges the teaching of older children and undervalues working with young children. Professionals in the field have argued that in order to gain respect, one must simply push for higher caregiver qualifications and that this will also impact quality for children. These discourses centered around the need to professionalize the early childhood work force.²⁶ Yet, in reality without a shift in public perception and increased government funding for child care, this perception will not change. Simply creating higher educational qualifications will not change perception. We offer this sad fact as proof: early childhood education is the college major that leads to the lowest pay over a lifetime.²⁷ It's almost as if people do not see teachers of young children as real teachers.

Over and over in the film, the term "real job" is used to differentiate between child care and the "real world." One of the most prolific lines of the movie is also one of the most telling. Charlie has decided to quit his "real job" after being rehired and he is giving a speech to the children, explaining that he is reopening his home child care business: "Any boob can run a day-

care center but it takes a family to raise kids."²⁸ Certainly from the movie, it appears as if "any boob" can run a home child care center.

As Thompson's field notes remind us that in spite of this belief, it is intellectually challenging to do child care work well. Many aspects of early education are intuitive. Many attributes, attitudes, and skills can be picked up along the way, without formal training or education. Parenting, and thereby early child care education, is ubiquitous; every child has a mother and a father, and two sets of grandparents, at least biologically. Montessori training, particularly, alerted him to the tremendous intelligence, focus, and study of young children that is required of competent, relevant teachers of young children. It was membership in the Teacher Research Network in the early 1990s that prompted him eventually to seek doctoral studies.

Only Pedophiles Want to Work with Young Children

Beyond limited pay and status, men wanting to break into a traditionally female workforce also face questions about their own sexuality and their ability to do the job adequately.²⁹ In the movie *Daddy Day Care*, Charlie and Phil encounter a parent who voices a common opinion that appears throughout the literature.

CHARLIE: We are two loving, caring parents. We run a day care center.

PARENT: You're a couple of sickos!³⁰

A couple of lines that lead up to a funny scene in a movie, and yet a couple of lines that lead to an unfortunate reality many males in early childhood experience. Numerous studies have found the theme of males being perceived as pedophiles for entering early childhood, a field determined as "woman's work."³¹ Take for instance, on his blog, Sam Strange wrote the following in his review of the movie:

Daddy Day Care imagines a fantasy world in which this problem need not be so severe. It also imagines a fantasy world in which men are as responsible and loving as women. And then it imagines a fantasy world in which men do not rape children. That pretty much takes us down the checklist, ladies.³²

Charlie and Phil face parents who are resistant to let them care for their children because they are seen as potential sexual predators. In actuality, it is much more likely for a young child to be abused at home. In 90 percent of child abuse, the adult who commits the crime is the parent, relative, or neighbor.³³ It is understandable that parents are protective of their children, but making gross over-generalizations about all men doesn't protect children.

What does it mean to be a man? What are the expectations of men? The term masculinity and its associated expectations can be characterized differ-

ently based on numerous factors: social setting, community, workplace, family values, and so on.³⁴ Sumsion³⁵ offers that an individual's decision of what determines masculinity is based on his own particular journey in life through these circumstances. Jane Kenway implies these various factors, "offer a range of ways of being male, but separately and together privilege some as superior."³⁶

Applying this principle, we get an idea of how the definition of masculinity would be perceived differently in our society based on age or sexual orientation.³⁷ Academic literature is rife with examples of this. R. W. Connell describes this phenomenon as hegemonic masculinity, or the idyllic form of masculinity in a particular society.³⁸ Tyson Smith and Michael Kimmel further argue "this hegemonic definition becomes the standard against which all other masculinities are to be measured and evaluated."³⁹ Kenway proposes specific characteristics of what this looks like in our culture: "Hegemonic masculinity is associated with the hard, the dry and the strong . . . physical strength, instrumental skills, public knowledge, discipline reason, objectivity, rationality and competition."⁴⁰ Therefore, we are measuring men who choose to go into early childhood against the qualities of masculinity that are popular in our culture and that come almost exclusively from forces of media.

Due to the inundation of social media on cultural perspectives, the term and visual image of masculinity has been predetermined as how society views "masculine." William Hewitt implies that males in the United States are "products of society's assumptions about what it means to 'be a man.'"⁴¹ We see images on television, photos on social media pages, and magazines that are used to guide our definition of masculinity in an almost invisible manner. As a result, the identity we have attached to men is one of power, force, and sexual predators. Charlie Owen argues that the media sends a message that men are dangerous to children, providing images of them as "predatory strangers."⁴² These representations of what it means to be a man go almost "unnoticed" by the average individual. They are simply seen as a form of entertainment at the time and then easily forgotten. The reality? These images are shaping our definitions, viewpoints, and the very assumptions of what it takes to be a "man." Jennifer Sumsion submits three assumptions reflecting popular culture views on masculinity that relate directly back to the characterization of males in early childhood being pedophiles: perceptions of males as non-discriminating playboys and sexual adventurers, as sexual predators and competitors, and as potential abusers of sexual power.⁴³

Because of these assumptions, all based in a sexual connotation, it appears almost obvious why our culture deemed early childhood as "woman's work."⁴⁴ Our society deems it acceptable for women to show affection physically to young students, and yet unacceptable for men to do so because of the possibility of sexual abuse.⁴⁵ "James," a former early childhood teacher,

discussed his own personal experience after a career of being placed under the microscope for showing affection to his students: "Before, it would be nothing for children to come up to me and there would be all this warmth and empathy. But now I just feel like holding them all at arm's length and saying, 'Don't come near me. Don't touch me. Just stay away from me.'"⁴⁶

Another teacher discussed his biggest fear of being seen as a child abuser. His recourse was to team up with a female teacher as much as possible to combat this potential stereotype.⁴⁷ In another situation, a teacher discussed his discomfort of children coming to him and sitting in his lap. This teacher stated that it was not the action of the children that made him uncomfortable, but what adults passing his classroom might think.⁴⁸

In the movie we saw this same scene played out when the "dads" were having a discussion with a prospective parent.

PEGGY: "Wait. Don't you believe in equality amongst the sexes? Can't men do everything women can do?"

CHARLIE: "No, we can't. It's unnatural. Little bit eeky."⁴⁹

Again, we see this "unnatural" connotation that men caring for children is uncomfortable and strange.

Connections between homosexuality and pedophilia are almost congruent in the fear-based idea of an early childhood male instructor being a sexual predator. "Associated with the concern over pedophiles is a homophobia which questions the sexuality of any man who wants to work in child care"⁵⁰ implying that all homosexual men abuse children. This premise of males in early childhood being homosexual is one found across this literature.⁵¹ With the ongoing argument of early childhood being "women's work" the connotation of a man in this field is that he is feminine, and ultimately gay. "James" decided to start wearing a wedding ring as a symbol that he was not gay.⁵²

Based on views seen on television and social media, there is the assumption of males being strong forces, obsessed with power, who are the lead financial contributor of the family. This hegemonic masculinity mentality could influence the viewpoint of males being pedophiles, for lack of any "good" reason to choose early childhood. Discussing a former early childhood educator, Sumsion discussed how the choice to move into this field "violated his community's expectations of masculinity which, in relation to work, emphasized providing financially for dependents through manual labor or mechanical or technical competence, in short by having a 'man's' job."⁵³ Therefore, by selecting a career with low pay, one that is not deemed a man's job, it causes suspicions among our culture as to motivation behind selecting the career.⁵⁴ Low pay, no social clout, so why wouldn't they be pedophiles?

Thompson commented on these notions in his field notes. While the presumption of pedophilia was never foisted upon him directly, he was aware of these false notions within the culture. His protection against false accusation was a robust safety procedure; he generally taught as a part of a team. He always provided for two-deep leadership. Whenever either child care provider needed to assist a child alone in the bathroom or walking out of the classroom, the procedure was rigorous: tell the other exactly when you left and when you returned, maintain line-of-sight with others, and communicate with parents in a detailed, timely manner. In a proactive stance against potential homophobic reactions to a man working with young children, he often quickly identified himself as a heterosexual, monogamous parent with a quip something like, "My children are in my class." Even with these precautions, one parent told Thompson how the parent was uncomfortable initially with the idea of a man caring for his son in the three- to six-year-old classroom, but "then I met Josh."⁵⁵ That parent withdrew from prejudice on the basis of informed personal opinion.

Perhaps equally as shocking is that these viewpoints/assumptions are held not only by those outside the discipline of education, but by the very individuals working in the field. In a study of twenty-four female pre-service early childhood educators, one individual reported that it would depend on her own child's gender if a male preschool teacher would be acceptable.⁵⁶ If she had a son, yes. If she had a daughter, no. Another reported that it is the role of a preschool teacher to be a caregiver and men were incapable of this role.⁵⁷ Our society's view of hegemonic masculinity has also penetrated the very males working in the field of early childhood. Referring back to "James," he discussed his own feelings of anxiousness associating with other men in the field that could potentially be pedophiles stating, "I know that I am all right but I can't know for sure about them."⁵⁸ Another male in the field stated, "God, do they [other adults] all think I'm a pervert because I'm bouncing this little girl on my knee?"⁵⁹

Thus literature and the media unfairly labels all males in early childhood as sinister and operating with an alternative motive of abuse toward children. Perhaps until our own culture shifts its definition of masculinity and what it takes to "be a man" will this ever change.

Early Childhood Education Is "Women's Work"

In a culture driven by equality, it is interesting the gap that still exists in regards to child care. This gap is noted not only in respects to fewer male teachers in early childhood, but in family units at home regarding man parenting. In the movie *Daddy Day Care*, a mother displays shock that a fellow mom is leaving her son with the "daddies." She responds, "You have trouble

with them being guys? Are you from the Dark Ages? Aren't you for gender equality and all that jazz?⁶⁰

Consider one man's view after having to get his children ready for school and nursery by himself. "I just don't think it's any job for a man. I adore my children, but I like them most when my wife is there to do all the fiddly stuff and I can just do any catching, cuddling and heavy lifting that may be required. . . . One-way ticket to the 1950s please."⁶¹ Is it deemed unnatural for men to care for young children because of the 1950s? Because it has always been that way? Possibly. There are also many other theories presented.

- Women are created to be caregivers, more so than males.
- Women typically earn less than men and are more apt to stay home if child care becomes too expensive.
- Women tend to feel guiltier than men in regards to leaving their children to go to work.
- Cultural expectations from family for the mother to discontinue working after having a baby.
- Society expectation for men to be the sole provider for their family.⁶²

For example, after switching to part-time work to share child care with his wife, Gideon Burrows found that it was not that men could not do childcare, but that they did not want to. "The truth is that men don't really want to do child care, and are successfully using convenient excuses to avoid it."⁶³ With some, or all of these components being true, it is easy to see how this idea of it being unnatural for men to be in early childhood has developed. . . . because men typically do not have this type of parenting responsibility with their own children.

Parents see it unnatural for males to be early childhood teachers because they automatically assume their child's teacher will be female.⁶⁴ What Peeters refers to as "gender mechanism"⁶⁵ provides the understanding on how this assumption was brought to fruition. Gender mechanism acknowledges the understanding of how gender affects child care and its constructs. First, early childhood teachers pass along their own cultural construction of gender identity in their role of being male or female.⁶⁶ Secondly, according to Cameron et al., gender impacts the "historical and pedagogical understandings of why child care exists, how it is conducted and organized, and what is gender appropriate."⁶⁷ These understandings have progressed and changed over time⁶⁸ resulting in early childhood being deemed more mother's work solely based on the "concept of care" being a maternal role.⁶⁹

In the early childhood environment, teachers are called upon to exhibit what is considered maternal roles (nurture, care, encourage, etc.) that are traditionally labeled characteristics found in females rather than males. Bar-

nard et al.⁷⁰ refereed to the gender stereotype that woman can create a more nurturing environment than their male counterparts. In relation to early child care female teachers, "Women workers were referred to as providing a 'maternal role,' 'more in-depth caring and nurturing.'"⁷¹ One pre-professional early childhood education student offered the perspective that children themselves think of their female teachers as mothers and that they long for the care of their mothers when they are at school.⁷²

This reference to the maternal role in early childhood has been a detriment to encouraging males in both parenting and early childhood. "Men do not feel like pitting themselves again the woman-mother version of care in early childhood education and care."⁷³ Cameron et al. hold that we need to separate child care from "mothering" before we can adequately create a gender neutral culture in early childhood.⁷⁴

Until that culture emerges, many parents do not feel comfortable relying on males to emulate this nurturing environment defined by our culture for their child. This theme also creates an interesting juxtaposition from the last. Parents deem males incapable of nurturing or imitating those characteristics provided by women, therefore making them incapable of being successful early childhood teachers. And yet, we spent pages discussing nurturing men being labeled as pedophiles. Is there a magic line where males could be nurturing and/or "mothering" enough and yet not nurturing enough to be considered a pedophile?

In contrast with our heroes from *Daddy Day Care* who accidentally stumbled into their engaging relations with young children, Fred Rogers intentionally created a public pedagogy phenomenon through innovating in early education on a number of fronts. Primarily he is known for pioneering the use of television as a mass media tool to engage young children in meaningful, purposeful activities in the daily PBS television show *Mister Rogers Neighborhood* (1968–2001). His success in communicating and connecting across the airwaves originated in his view of the child as competent, intelligent, and a worthy communicative partner. Even though the "communication" was one-way, children felt heard, as if their social and emotional state was acknowledged and valued. Despite his success connecting with young children, his effeminate style and demeanor became a derogatory view of masculinity. His style was considered "coddling" or "baby talk" by some and not valued as engaging and relational for the young child.

However popular digital combat has become, a much older type of American manhood continues to be highly valued—represented by a 143-pound minister who displays tenderness, nurturing, and the human desire for connection and cooperation. Appearing on made-for-analog programs, Fred Rogers offers none of the excitement and adrenaline-producing action that digital combat creates. Calming, and relaxing his viewers, he is generally considered to be America's favorite surrogate father.⁷⁵

A corollary to the notion that early education is women's work is the view of women as "gatekeepers" to their children, either their own or their students. This is often equated with the "mother bear" syndrome of protection and isolation from threats to her progeny. Men sometimes report being permitted or allowed into care for their own children, or to establish rapport with a class of children in their care. At other times, they are shut out, expected to be incompetent or uninterested in learning how to care for children.

Once again, Thompson's field notes reflect this notion in his experience.⁷⁶ He explains that mentoring has long been established as an ideal entry into a profession. His first true teaching mentor was Mrs. Betty Martin, Director of the weekday school for three-, four-, and five-year-olds where he taught music. Only in retrospect, many decades hence, can he look back and see her caring hand guide him through the profession he has enjoyed and in which he has seen much success.

Betty mentored him on three levels. First, Betty welcomed him as a new music teacher, with specific needs to manage materials, equipment, schedules, content knowledge, and skill development of the children and their teachers, balanced with public output such as putting on a pretty good program for Mothers' Day and other holidays. Next, Betty welcomed him into the early childhood profession with high expectations for classroom management, parent/teacher interactions, ongoing professional development, and collegial responsibilities toward other teachers. These high expectations came with many forms of scaffolding, modelling, supervision, and just the right amount of confidence where she would leave him to work his own way out of a corner. Finally, the ultimate gift, Betty helped him identify how to navigate the female-dominated field of early childhood education as male. She alerted him to this closed notion of teaching young children as woman's work and provided tools to engage families in ways that turned the conversation to be about the child, and not about the gender of the teacher.

Males Are More Fun and Less Competent

As the daddies begin their initial kick off of *Daddy Day Care*, it appears the individuals concerned with their ability to successfully work with children is founded. There is constant turmoil with kids running around as if completely unsupervised and in total control, instead of their providers running the show. In these first few days of *Daddy Day Care*, we watch a common theme unfold on the screen that is expressed in our own cultural views: Men are just less capable of taking care of the needs of children. A scene in the movie shows Miss Harridan, the snooty headmistress of a prep school, confronting Charlie about her concern for his lack of experience with taking care of children. In a condescending tone, she proclaims that any dummy can be a parent but watching other people's children is a calling.

The media is full of examples that "dumb down" the abilities of fathers. Think of popular television shows within the last few decades: *The Flintstones*, *The Simpsons*, *Everybody Loves Raymond*, *Family Guy*, *Married with Children*, or *Mad Men*. The depictions are of fathers presented as clueless, inept, crazy, or just plain stupid. For example, there is a scene in *Daddy Day Care* when Phil refuses to help change his son who has taken a bowel movement after being constipated for over a week. A few years ago, a similar television commercial for Huggies Diapers alludes to this same thing claiming, "To prove Huggies can handle just about anything, we put them to the toughest test imaginable: dads, alone with their babies, in one house, for five days."⁷⁷

Thompson's field notes⁷⁸ express similar thoughts coming from his own life, not professional experience. He recalls that while his own father probably never changed a diaper, his older brothers were proactive with all manner of care, dressing, cooking, and changing diapers. He explains that he probably changed a diaper of a niece or nephew when he was twelve or so. One working procedure in his home is "*Atari*," which is Japanese for "I found it"; whoever finds the soiled diaper changes it.

Constant representation in the media of men being completely incapable of handling children has trickled into the world of education by making the assumption that men in those positions will act the same way. This interpenetration is also detrimental in the future of men going into early childhood education. Campbell states,

Negative general portrayals of fathers/husbands/men in TV commercials and sitcoms contributes to a decrease in men wanting to assume those roles in society, and creates the impression among others that men need not assume such roles anyway, that such simply aren't important (as interviewed by Peterson).⁷⁹

This theme also stretches to include the impression that men are more fun than competent. In media, television, and movies there is an impression of "fun" covering up each facet of their alleged incompetence in being a child care provider. In an online live chat session sponsored by the Illinois Early Learning Project, Dr. Brent McBride responded to a question from a session participant based on movies portraying the stereotype of men being "fun" and not competent:

[Nancy ALJ]: Do you think television shows or films that portray men caring for children in a "cute" way, such as *Kindergarten Cop* or *Three Men and a Cradle*, encourage the idea that it's funny to have men involved with babies and young children?

[Brent McBride]: . . . I get irritated when I see these shows because they just reinforce negative stereotypes. Men are just as capable of providing competent

parenting as women if given the support and resources to do so. We can do more than just play.⁸⁰

Liss and Schiffrin⁸¹ mentioned *Daddy Day Care* as one of many examples where media portrays fathers as being inept when first controlling children. After an unsuccessful attempt to discuss the “mission statement” with the children in *Daddy Day Care*, disaster ensues. The children are served a lunch full of snack cakes and donuts, which leads to kids jumping on the piano, calling 911, bouncing on the couch, watching an inappropriate television show, drinking bubbles, hanging on the curtains, running with glass, tearing up pillows, and one of the dads getting stabbed with a pair of scissors. This same theme can be seen in other movies, such as *Kindergarten Cop*, *Three Men and a Baby*, *Game Plan*, and *Mr. Mom*. After a set of disastrous events, the men begin to “figure it out” and the movie changes from calamity to what appears to be a lot of “fun.” The films villain and competitor, Miss Harridan, expresses concern when this shift happens, exclaiming, “They’re selling fun. I can’t compete with fun.”⁸² Harridan is quick to acknowledge the difference in students’ reactions to different learning opportunities in *Daddy Day Care* that appear to be based on fun (football games, puppet shows, singing, etc.). This phenomenon is one found in the literature as well. Roberts and Moseley discuss that fathers tend to be more playful and based on humor, which turns out to be very beneficial for children.⁸³ Fathers interacting in the form of play can lead to a child learning “emotional self-control” and understanding how to build and maintain relationships.⁸⁴

In the field of early childhood, Owen gives this notion of “play” as means of trepidation for males.

Men, it was said, were more likely to play football, to do things outside and to “muck about.” They “let the kids get on with it” and “are not inhibited by risk.” . . . Parents reflect the observation that men in the home do the “fun” child care and women do the routine nurturing: the women are described as providing the essential care while the men are “helping.”⁸⁵

Wardle believes when male early childhood instructors precipitate this quality as fathers playing with their children into the classroom, it goes against the very nature of how early childhood programs operate with, “quiet, sedentary activities that create a minimum of mess.”⁸⁶ If this culture continues in the early childhood classroom of “an insistence on quiet, no rough-and-tumble play, restrictive outdoor play rules, no messy activities, no indoor gross-motor activities, etc.”⁸⁷ Wardle believes we will continue to see a decline in the number of males seeking jobs in the field.

CONCLUSION

A look at popular movies lead to the confirmation in the theme of men appearing to be incompetent, but fun. In the literature it was discovered that while the theme of men being fun was substantiated, it was not in any way related back to their capabilities or a theme of ineffectiveness. Interesting to note, that while not being judged by capabilities, men do feel a concern about the topic of “play” or “fun” when going into early childhood because of a fear they will not be able to interact with children in this way that is natural for them.

Public pedagogy works both ways—it originates within social norms and customs extant in culture. It also informs culture by articulating what is otherwise inarticulate. The view that men are not normally the primary caregivers of young children, especially in a professional mode, is here contradicted with success and innovation. The lack of progress or shift in cultural norms over the years since the release of *Daddy Day Care* reflects on the intransigent nature of the concept. One factor in this intransience is the very nature of power; men possess cultural power, valence, and value. To surrender that power to become a caregiver also surrenders power to change societal views on men in the lives of young children.

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Chapter Fourteen

Loyal Opposition

Conservative Student Resistance to Jazz Culture in the 1920s

Jacob Hardesty

Hoagy Carmichael, every bit the campus *bon vivant*, once quipped, with characteristic overstatement, "The postwar world came in with of bad booze, flappers with bare legs, jangled morals, and wild weed. Such sentiments were quite common on college campuses in the Nicely summing up the general feeling of jazz-drenched campus life Ohio State student rhetorically asked, "'Are we as bad as we're pa 'We are.'" Indeed, the extant literature on young people in the 1920s generally included such sentiments in recreating the attitudes of young people throughout the decade. Scholarship on young people and 1920s culture has emphasized the enthusiasm and excitement young people pressed for this new force in popular culture. As the standard interpretation goes, young people, particularly those on college campuses, embraced freedoms in dress, dance, and decorum that jazz allowed.¹

While such expressions most certainly represent the majority of graduates on campus, it would be a gross overstatement to argue such represent a totality of Jazz Age college students. Indeed, solely focus on jazz aficionados neglects an often vibrant back and forth between students about trends in popular culture. This paper addresses that imbalance by highlighting the conservative student response to jazz culture in the 1920s. I argue undergraduate jazz culture opponents largely fell into three groups: female students who disapproved of sexualized jazz and black students who did not want to be associated with the scandalous genre, and aesthetic conservatives who thumbed their noses at jazz's "aesthetic."