

A leading role in child's play [CA]^[1]

Author: Girard, Daniel

Source: Toronto Star

Format: Article

Publication Date: 24 Jul 2006

AVAILABILITY

See text below.

EXCERPTS

...

Despite research and intuition showing men have different and very important contributions to make in the child-care setting — just as they do in the raising of their own children — daycare remains women's work.

About 96 per cent of the country's daycare providers are women, according to the 2001 census.

Those in the field say as long as the pay is low and the public perception compares the job to that of a babysitter rather than a professional vital to a child's development, those ratios are unlikely to change.

Further entrenching that gender inequality is the stigma automatically attached to any man who says he wants to make his living working with preschoolers.

"Sociologically, caring for small children is still seen as a woman's job," said Sally Kotsopoulos, manager of the Early Learning Centre at Ryerson University in Toronto. "And, if you're interested in doing that, then maybe you're gay or effeminate.

"It's not considered a manly profession."

Kotsopoulos, who has been in the field for 30 years, has three men on her staff of 10. In addition to offering the children a male role model, she said they typically play differently than women — more active than supervisory and likely to take safe risks. But they don't get the job because of their gender.

"They're hired because they're good teachers," Kotsopoulos said.

Keeping them is another issue. While Ryerson and daycare centres run by municipalities and larger agencies in Toronto offer top annual salaries in the range of \$40,000 as well as benefits and pensions, those working at small, non-profit, non-unionized or private facilities often make much less with no benefits or pensions.

By contrast, elementary school teachers in Toronto start at about \$42,000 and get more vacation time.

As a result, those looking to work with young kids look past child care as a career choice, particularly men expecting to raise a family on their salary or be the biggest breadwinner in the household.

Throw in the raised eyebrows of some friends and colleagues, occasional sexism and even comments from some parents that men should not be changing their child's diaper, it's little wonder they are scarce.

"A lot of people have pre-conceived notions that will only be overcome with time and education," said Moe Sweeney, 39, who has been in child care for 18 years and now works at Ryerson.

"But even then, men will not get into the field unless salaries go up and the stigma disappears."

...

Like so many women in child care, men who've chosen the career speak of job fulfilment and just plain fun that comes with helping children learn and discover new things.

...

- reprinted from the Toronto Star

Region: Canada^[2]

Tags: staff^[3]

gender^[4]

Source URL (modified on 27 Jan 2022): <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/06/07/leading-role-childs-play-ca>

Links

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/06/07/leading-role-childs-play-ca> [2] <https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/7864> [3] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/staff> [4] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/gender>