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**Research Interest & Proposed Collaborative Project**

**Research interest:** I am interested in pursuing research opportunities that will bring together scholars, practitioners, and policymakers to explore, evaluate, and improve the participation of men in the early childhood education (ECE) workforce. My research thus far has intertwined the issues of diversity, gender balance, equity, and inclusion to increase understanding about the wellbeing and livelihoods of women and men who work in the sector. In 2015, the Institute of Medicine and National Research Council published a report, *Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth Through Age Eight: A Unifying Foundation*, which highlights the importance of teacher wellbeing and the implications it has for children, as well as the systems change that is necessary to best care for this often overlooked and under-supported workforce. My goal is to expand on previous research that builds upon that framework.

To date, I have completed and published the results of a study (Plaisir, Cole, & Reich-Shapiro, 2019) that was funded by the Foundation for Child Development and facilitated by the New York City Early Childhood Education Network, which brought together some 25 scholars from both public and private higher education institutions as well as policymakers from city agencies to collect and analyze data so as to make actionable recommendations for improving learning experiences for young children while also supporting the ECE workforce in New York State. BMCC was the only community college participating in this large-scale research project, and my study was the only focusing on men's participation in the ECE workforce.

Through this experience, I have identified the need for further research that creates synergy with other stakeholders toward exploring pathways for recruiting, developing, and supporting male educators in the ECE workforce during and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic. The current pandemic has highlighted the importance of teacher emotional wellbeing and exacerbated stressors that teachers experience, this topic is relevant to men's experiences in ECE. I would like to conduct timely research on how the novel coronavirus impact men's interest in ECE, their career trajectories, and their work with young children.

**BMCC Three-Generational STEAM Project:** The primary goal of the proposed project is to provide preschool-aged children with unique opportunities to learn from and form positive bonds with undergraduate math and science majors who will serve as program mentors under the supervision of college professors and state certified early childhood professionals at Borough of Manhattan Community College (BMCC). Mentoring is an effective method for guiding and supporting young children from both single-parent and two-parent homes (National Mentoring Center, 2018). While the primary focus of the project is to link preschool children with undergraduate college students who will fulfill mentoring roles in the STEAM areas (e.g., Science, Technology, Education, Arts, and Math), the administrators will utilize a three-generation approach (Aspen Institute Ascend Network, 2017) BMCC faculty and licensed ECE professionals to provide supports and opportunities for parents in the project, including workshops on parenting, tools and activities for increasing the participation of fathers or male figures in the care and education of young children. BMCC students serving as mentors in the program will benefit from opportunities to expand their knowledge and apply skills in the STEAM areas while also exploring the early childhood and elementary education fields as possible career options.

**Proposed budget:** The initial ask for the proposed project is \$250-300K during its pilot year to impact 20 preschoolers (ages 3 to 5 years old), 10 BMCC students, 5 BMCC faculty, 5 early childhood professionals, and an unspecified number of parents/guardians joining program activities. Funding will be sought for a period of 3 years. In-kind contributions will include the BMCC Early Childhood Center's classrooms, playgrounds, computer labs, gym, and library. A description of the full program will be provided upon request.