First reviewer

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| **Reviewer’s comments** | **Correction / response** | **Page number(s) where changes are located** |
| check that your citation format aligns with the journal's requirements | The in-text citations are now is APA 7 style. |  |
| Page 1: Abstract: Specify more what you mean by "broader public sphere" | I explained the intent of the phrase “broader public sphere” in this way:“… take part in the broader public sphere and apply their professional skills beyond the confines of the workplace, for example by counselling parents on issues that have only an indirect connection with the educational framework.” |  |
| Page 2: Introduction-Could you explain public/private sphere as you are seeing it? In some places there are public as well as private schools and childcare centers, so I worry that this framing may get confusing. | All the teachers included in this study work in public education and are employed on behalf of the Israel Ministry of Education.The phrases ‘private sphere’ and ‘public sphere’ refer to the educator’s life within the home and outside the home.To clarify this, I added parenthetical remarks (home life) and (professional, outside the home) several places in the article.I also added an explanation from a feminist scholar of education to clarify these concepts: Herzog (2002) explains that the existence of two separate life spheres is based on cultural assumptions. Each of the two spheres is based on different principles of social organization, which dictate what social functions take place in each. According to this view, the “public sphere” refers to the public realm of society. In contrast, the private sphere is the intimate realm of activity conducted in the private home. | p. 8 |
| In the second paragraph of the introduction there is a list of themes in the literature and it is not clear why these themes, or how they are connected. | These are the topics addressed in the article. I included this list to introduce the readers to the topics discussed in the article.Would it be better not to list them? |  |
| My sense is that it might be a good idea to narrow the literature review more to make a stronger conceptual argument. | I included a review of the literature pertaining to both of the topics that are investigated in the study and reflected in the findings: the role of the mother and the role of the teacher. In this version I shortened the literature review by deleting the second paragraph of the introduction and the section entitled *Empathy as a Women’s’ Attribute*  |  |
| Check spelling = Rudick | I verified the spelling is Ruddick and corrected it throughout. |  |
| Page 3, line 35: Instead of real mothers... maybe say: In reality, mothers... | Thank you for the suggestion, it does sound better and I changed it in the article. |  |
| Page 4, line 22: Friedrich Froebel (check spelling throughout) | The spelling has been corrected to the spelling Fröbel throughout the article |  |
| Page 4, line 26: What did you mean by "priority to the status" of mothers as educators? | Fröbel believed in integrating maternal skills into education. Therefore, women who studied in his seminary were granted the necessary certification to educate the children of others (in the public sphere, outside the home).In the article, I added “as women,” to clarify that feminine traits were a priority in the founding of Froebel’s kindergartens, even though it was done in the public sphere of life (outside the home) where, until that time, only men had worked. |  |
| Page 4: fulfill (spelling) | Spelling has been standardized for US style, as per journal requirements. |  |
| Page 5, line 10: Were all women successfully integrated? What challenges/inequities remain? | In the period discussed here (late 18th to mid-19th century) there were no such gaps in the field of early childhood education, or at least none reported. This issue is mentioned here to explain that a radical change took place at that time in the realm of feminism, in that women were integrated into the public sphere (working outside the home) based on qualities that were attributed to them as women (the same attributes that justified keeping them in the home). |  |
| Page 5/line 18: It seems that you are introducing a research question here? Or is the question more rhetorical? If so, that is confusing for me as a reader | My intention here was to summarize and emphasize the connection between the role of motherhood and the role of female educators in order to alert readers to the challenge faced by these women in terms of managing and balancing their skills and knowledge. This sentence can be deleted if it is unnecessary or confusing.  |  |
| Page 5/line 18: Your question brings up several thoughts for me: Do all early childhood educators have maternal traits? | This question is highly relevant. In another article, I quoted women who said that not all women have maternal skills. However, women cannot work in a profession dealing with preschool aged children without maternal skills. In a kindergarten or elementary school, it is not considered proper to strive to achieve goals without providing love and warmth to young children.  |  |
| Are they all women? | Since this research investigated the integration of the role of motherhood with the role of educator, I interviewed only women who are mothers. |  |
| Are they really motherly? | They all identified themselves as mothers and had children at home at the time of the study. | p. 8 |
| Do they all have a higher education? | This is detailed in the methods section: All the interviewed women hold a teaching certificate and a bachelor’s degree in education from one of the recognized colleges of education in Israel, and half of the interviewees also hold a master’s degree. |  |
| To me, it seems like a privileged standpoint on mothers and teachers, to a degree, but maybe I am missing something? Maybe part of my wonderings here are because I have not been introduced to the context | You did not miss anything at all – this is precisely what the research addresses.  |  |
| Page 5/last several lines: This part seems very important for a potential argument about the neoliberal context. The sentiment reminds me a bit of Stephen Ball's (2003) description of how teachers are poised to "struggle for their souls" in neoliberalism | Thank you very much for the suggested reference. I read the article and it is indeed interesting. I included an idea from Ball (2003) that is relevant to the current article in the section on the teachers’ professional identity. |  |
| Sharon Hays' work on mothering for schooling might also be relevant for your essay. | Thank you also for the reference to Sharon Hays, which I added following the Rich (1994) reference in the section on *Development of Women's Maternal Behaviors.*  |  |
| Page 6: Top: Say more about the meaning of "professional relationship". In what context do the expectations of the kindergarten teacher being a "professional leader" occur? How widespread are they? There is a need to expand on this part more with recent literature. | Following this phrase in the article, I added statements from Sima Hadad, the former director of the Division for Pre-Primary Education at the Ministry of Education, which explain and address these questions. | p. 6 |
| Page 7/lines 10-25: Where are you placing the school within the ecologies, how does this relate to public vs private sphere? Again, it is confusing potentially because ECEC is both public and private in many places and mothers/parents get to choose their preferences, at least in some cases | As clarified above, this article refers to these spheres as presented in literature with a feminist perspective: private = inside the house, public = outside the house. It does not refer to private schools. All the interviewed women teach in public schools and kindergartens under the auspices of the Israel Ministry of Education.In response to this comment, I added in parentheses (in the home) after references to the private sphere, and (outside the home or professional) after the concept of public sphere, to clarify that it refers to their work life. |  |
| Page 7: Related to Friedman (2010), there is also literature showing mothers' over-involvement in education in ways that disadvantages poor and minority students (Brantlinger is one example). There are also critiques of the neoliberal policies that require parents to be involved in schools in ways that support professionalism but do not respond to children's and families' cultural strengths (of marginalized children and families). | I strongly agree with what you said!Thanks to your suggestion of Hays’ book, my awareness of this issue was sharpened, and I added a reference to this book following the Friedman reference, regarding mothers who are preoccupied with survival and cannot meet the expectations of the mainstream culture. I connect this situation with the current study, in which the interviewees said they try to help to these mothers and their children. |  |
| Page 7/lines 44-50: Here I feel that your questions are shifting again | The research questions do not change. I have explained the first question more precisely.In the introduction I present the questions:How do female educators experience the intersections between their roles as educators and mothers? How do each of these roles and identities impact one another?Later, the same questions are phrased slightly differently: How do female early childhood educators experience the interface between their professional and maternal roles and identities? How do these roles and identities impact each other, and why?(The second question has virtually the same wording)The purpose of the article is to present the challenge of integrating these roles and how female educators who are mothers conduct themselves in this situation. |  |
| Page 8/study context: Line 3 is redundant with info in the second paragraph. It is unclear where Kindergarten falls in the Israeli context from this paragraph | I do not understand what is redundant. This is the context:In Israel, most kindergartens are separate educational frameworks for children aged 3-6. I mention the issue of educational leadership because kindergarten teachers are the leaders of these educational institutions.The kindergarten teachers interviewed in this study all work in public kindergartens under the auspices of the Israel Ministry of Education  |  |
| Did all of the participants currently have children living in their home? | I added that at the time of the study, they all had children living in their homes. The stories they recounted could be either from the recent past or the more distant past. | p. 8 |
| Page 8/I would like more context about the schools the participants worked at and how that fit with your thinking about public/private (if it did) | It is clarified that they all work in public education. In this article, the phrase “private sphere” refers to life in the home while “public sphere” refers to life outside the home. I sometimes used the term “professional sphere” to specify the kindergarten or elementary school. | p. 8 |
| Page 8/Did your snowball participants then suggest additional participants? | Yes, in the snowball method, one participant recommended others.I clarified this in the article. |  |
| Page 8/line 40: Why were semi-structured interviews the most appropriate? | Because it was important to me to have a uniform direction that would help focus the interviews, I included a number of questions I consistently asked of all interviewees. I also wanted to remain open to hearing their personal stories and opinions. The semi- structured interviews enable me to remain open to the subjective views of each individual. |  |
| Page 9: The protocol for your interview does not seem to be altogether closely connected to your study as you explained it. Could you reconcile | I clarified the intention behind each question and transferred the questions themselves to an appendix. |  |
| Page 10: What was the use of memos in your work? | If this refers to the interviews, in the Results section there are references to works that explain every phenomenon I found in this study.If this refers to the literature review, the details of the items in the literature review constitute the context in which the study was written. |  |
| Page 10: Bottom: You discuss themes and then you shift to a discussion of categories. Are you seeing these as the same? | Yes |  |
| What did you then do with the category trees? | I derived the themes mentioned in the Results section from the category trees. | p. 11 |
| How did they affect what you found out related to your research questions? | The research questions are designed to explore how the interviewees experience the interface between their role in the education system and their role as mothers. The analysis indicated a number of categories that describe this interface and the challenges it poses. | p. 11 |
| What from the themes/categories do you present in the Results section? Why? | I am not sure that I understand the question.In the Results section I present the themes that are relevant to the social challenges faced by female educators in their role as mothers and as teachers. |  |
| How did they affect what you found out related to your research questions? | This is a very interesting question. Sometimes the research revealed topics that I had not asked about. These are not reflected in the research questions, but they are included in the Results section in order to accurately portray the words of the interviewees. It seemed to me that if I adhered strictly to the original research questions and did not incorporate the novel ideas that emerged from the interviewees’ answers on the topics being researched, this would constitute a bias and distortion of the results.For example:- I did not have a question about the teachers helping the mothers of the kindergarten or school students, as I did not intend to enter into a discussion of their relationship with the parents of their students in the education system (much as been written about this). However, more than half of the women told me about their desire to help mothers who were facing extreme difficulties.- I did not have a research question about the interviewees’ relationship with their own children's teachers, as I had not thought about this topic prior to the study. However, the stories I heard made me realize that this relationship poses a social challenge for mothers who are also teachers in kindergartens and elementary schools.These themes arose from the broad analysis of the categories (the category tree), which led me to recognize that this is a relevant social challenge; perhaps even more so than some of the questions I had prepared in advance. |  |
| What from the themes/categories do you present in the Results section? Why? | I present the topics that arose from the analysis of the interviews and which revealed interesting new ideas. I included those that seemed relevant to the social challenges faced by female educators in their roles as mothers and as teachers. |  |
| Page 11: Top: You have some bullet pointed phrases. These seem more like themes (phenomenological) than categories, as marked. | These are topics that came up in the study, and, as shown subsequently, are reinforced by the interviewees' quotes. I titled the categories in order to present them in a way that would be clear and interesting to read. |  |
| Page 11 (middle heading): What is the "public sphere" of the mother's life you refer to? I still am not clear on that. | As mentioned, this phrase refers to the woman’s life outside the home. Here the reference is to the professional sphere. The research covers both the personal and professional lives of the interviewed women. In the subheading, I added the word (professional) in parentheses |  |
| Page 12/line 40: You mention "a deficiency of maternal behaviours at home" for some students." How was the context ascertained, for example how do you know it was not the teachers being judgmental of the children's mothers or judging them against a different, perhaps Western, cultural standard | Thank you for clarifying this point.1. The interviewed teachers spoke about families in which the mothers are not able to give adequate warmth and love to their children, due to the difficulties they face. The teachers are aware of this and give more attention to these children (this is relevant to the welfare mothers mentioned in Hays’ work). In any case, these mothers are extremely busy and their children need care. Without delving into the concept of the good mother, this fact is clarified, thanks to your suggestion, by citing Hays in the discussion.
2. This is indeed a judgmental position arising from the views of the dominant society. However, in this study, the teachers’ awareness of the mothers’ difficulties leads the teachers to offer help (which of course may not be free from judgment).

I added in the article a sentence explaining that this is a position that stems from the Western perspective held by most women who studied the field of education, and the belief that warmth and attention are an integral part of a mother-child relationship. It emerged in this study that the teachers offer assistance to mothers in need. Their judgment does not stem from a negative attitude, although it should not be ignored that such judgement may exist in the teachers’ perception of the situations. |  |
| Page 13, Line 26: Recruiting does not seem to make sense, consider a different word choice, maybe using, or drawing upon? | The word ‘using’ does sound better so I changed it – thanks for the suggestions. |  |
| Page 14: Top: There is a statement that mother-teachers use their maternal behaviors instrumentally, as professional tools in the classroom. I was wondering about how emotion stuck to these "choices" or "tools"? Are you seeing the caring at school as a kind of fabrication, explain that part more please. | Thank you for the suggestion to clarify this point. It is important that I convey the idea that professional tools and emotions are integrated. That is, the teachers have emotions, but in the classrooms, they try to appropriately direct their emotions out of a sense of professionalism (their emotions are filtered by their professional skills). Early education teachers must choose when to express their emotions, as well as with which children they should express their emotions more strongly. An example is presented in the article regarding teachers giving additional maternal warmth to children they feel they are lacking this type of attention at home. They also may act with particular sensitivity to children who are in special education programs. It is important to note that I do not think that expressions of caring in school are a fabrication. The teachers’ caring is very real and important!One finding that emerged in this study is that the teachers’ professional skills enable them to recognize which children need more warmth and which ones need a firmer approach. The teachers must determine in which situations it is beneficial to express warm caring emotions and in which situations to act in a different way. This is their specialty! |  |
| Page 17/lines 25-27: I wondered how the structures of the school system influence the "desire to be an influential and consistent figure" in ways that caused them to forego (spelling) extended maternity and sick days. What cultivates the attitude? Are the teachers afraid they might use their sick days and not have them for a truer emergency? Is it more difficult to prepare for a substitute than actually teach? Is the managerialism of the school so strong that they no longer struggle or grapple between supporting their own and other people's children? | Thank you - it is very important that these issues are clear:1. This refers to kindergarten teachers who also function as the principals of the small educational institutions in which they work, because in Israel, kindergartens are a distinct branch of the educational system. Therefore, the teachers feel strongly committed to the children and responsible for the children's development and progress in terms of the goals set by the Ministry of Education. Even if outsiders do not agree with this perspective, it is the teachers’ belief. These examples were included in the article to convey the extent to which kindergarten teachers feel responsible for their students. It seems that their desire to persevere in their professional work rather than take days off comes from the fact that another caregiver (such as a grandmother) can care for their own sick children at home, (as noted in the article), whereas they are solely responsible for their students’ educational development.
2. Teachers have enough vacation days a year. This is not a matter of lacking days off, nor a problem in finding replacements; it comes from a feeling of professional responsibility.
3. To clarify: The teachers are not giving up maternity leave, but rather deciding not to extend the leave; they may consider extending it, but their sense of professional responsibility overrides this personal desire.
 |  |
| Page 23, bottom: states "blatantly crossed professional boundaries"--I would like contextualization with more about what would normally be expected of a teacher in such circumstances. | In these circumstances, the teacher must report the issue of concern to their supervisor and to the welfare services. These families usually receive an appropriate response from the welfare services, and it is assumed that the welfare department should address such issues. The teacher is only expected to report the issue to the proper authorities and to provide support to the child. This is explained in this summary of this subject: Within the confines of her professional role, she should be referring mothers to welfare agencies and continue to offer support to their children at the preschool. However, she chose to provide them with assistance out of a desire to ‘rescue’ or to ‘help the mother grow’.However, since this was not adequately clear, I will elaborate further: a teacher may feel that from her experience and that of her colleagues (including my own) a disaster may occur before the welfare services are able to offer a response to the situation. Therefore, in cases that seem extreme and dangerous, there are teachers who prefer to take risks in terms of the legality of their actions in order to help their students’ mothers and try to prevent disaster. |  |

Second Reviewer

Thank you very much for these comments that enable further clarification of the study.

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| **Reviewer’s comments** | **Correction / response** | **Page number(s) where changes are located** |
| At present, the introductory paragraphs simply summarize parts of the article, so do not draw in the reader. A stronger introduction paragraph is needed – one which clearly establishes the topic of the manuscript and the problem that it addresses. A concluding statement about the aim of the present research will then progress logically to the literature review. | I added questions at the opening of the introduction that might arouse readers’ curiosity.Perhaps I need to add an intriguing summary statement? |  |
| The last sentence of the second section (starting ‘Maternal behavior, whether inborn …) is redundant and can be removed. | I deleted this, as suggested. |  |
| The author refers to ‘Probel’ – please correct to either Froebel or (less often used) - Fröbel. | The name has been corrected to Fröbel throughout the article. |  |
| I am not convinced that the section on empathy is central to establishing the argument for the present research. | The section on empathy was originally included to substantiate the statement made by several surveyed teachers that in some cases they understand the perspective of their children’s teachers before they understand the perspective of their own children (this may be temporary, but on first hearing about the situation, they tend to side with the teachers). I followed this suggestion and deleted this entire section.However, I am not sure this is the right move given that the interviewees' identification with their children's teachers is discussed in the Results section. Perhaps this section should be shortened rather than deleted? Or the discussion should relate only to identification with the teachers? |  |
| The literature review needs to conclude with a clear statement about the research on the topic to date, and how the present research is going to address particular gaps. | I added an additional summary of what has been previously written on the two topics of motherhood and the development of the profession of early childhood education, along with the reasons for presenting these two topics. |  |
| Why is the present research significant? How will it add to the current knowledge base? What impact might the findings have? These all need to be more firmly established | I added an explanation of how this research is significant, what it contributes to the field, and the important implications of this research.  |  |
| Please check the tense of your reported method as there are inconsistencies. APA 7 advises that methods should be reported in the past tense. | The methods section has been put in the past tense as per APA 7 style |  |
| Please add a section on the ethical considerations related to recruitment and the conducting of the interviews | I explained in a section on ethics how I preserved the anonymity of the interviewees, how the interviews were conducted according to their convenience, and how I ensured that their words were accurately conveyed.  |  |
| I would suggest that a short paragraph is needed to describe the information sought by the interview (e.g., Interview questions sought to gain the interviewee’s insights, experience and opinion about X, Y and Z). The sample questions can then be placed as an appendix. | I added a description of the type of information sought in the interviews. The interview questions were moved to an appendix. |  |
| Analysis – was trustworthiness of the analytic themes established? | Yes. I am part of a group of four researchers who read each other’s research and offered corresponding critiques (one did research on motherhood among lesbians, one compared the diets of women and men, a third on personal relations in the Orthodox Jewish sector, and myself). |  |
| - in theme 2, as above, please check for consistency of tense – report in the past tense (tense inconsistency also occurs in other themes) | The tense has been standardized for APA 7 style |  |
| There is also some content in this theme (first paragraph) of which is unclear as to whether it is reporting research findings, or whether it is a more general statement. If the former, it needs to be phrased as a finding. If the latter, it needs to be supported by literature or removed. | I added a sentence explaining that issues arose in the interviews.Maybe this is referring to something else?Maybe something needs to be deleted? |  |
| Similarly, in the last paragraph of this theme, a summary statement is provided which generalises the findings. This should be rephrased to avoid the generalisation and instead, present the points as the perspectives of these particular educators. | I added the phrase “presented in this study” to clarify that this refers to the female educators who were interviewed for the present study. |  |
| p.23 – the statement ‘Irit clearly and blatantly crossed professional boundaries’ presents as a negative judgement and should either be rephrased or removed | I deleted the judgmental sentence and replaced it with a statement that more clearly states the intended meaning. |  |
| The final paragraph of the finding section would be better placed in the discussion | I have added a sentence that summarizes the last section of the Results section and moved this paragraph to the Discussion.I'm a bit undecided if this is the right way to end the Results section. |  |
| The discussion presents a useful summary of the findings and locates these within relevant literature. Again though, please check that the correct tense is used when reporting findings vs discussing the implications of these findings. | The tense has been standardized for APA 7 style |  |
| A section is needed on limitations and directions for future researchThe discussion also would benefit from a section on the implications of this work for relevant stakeholders and the broader social-cultural-political implications of the findings | Thanks, this is indeed very important!I added sections on: the limitations of the study, directions for future research, and the contribution and implications of the current study.  |  |

Third reviewer

Thank you very much for your encouraging comments and the suggestions that that helped me focus and sharpen the article.

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| **Reviewer’s comments** | **Correction / response** | **Page number(s) where changes are located** |
| p.2 The second paragraph in the introduction is overwhelming. Instead of listing so many topics of lit review, sum it up briefly and broadly, and add it to the end of the first paragraph. | In the introduction of the literature review, I shortened the list of topics addressed. I added two sentences to the first paragraph delineating the set of issues that will be covered in the literature review (so readers will understand why I am presenting theories about motherhood and the teaching profession.) |  |
| p.2/3 If you are going to address this, and I can’t yet determine if it salient to your manuscript, you cannot neglect that part of the emphasis on childcare as a female role comes from basic biological capacity to feed babies prior to wide availability of infant formula | Thank you for pointing out the need to clarify this. A feminist perspective recognizes women’s unique ability to breastfeed, but also notes that parental responsibilities can be shared (as with milk substitutes).I added a statement from Rich (1995) that explains how society exploits women’s ability to give birth so that childcare is entrusted to women even past this stage.  |  |
| Also, I’d move the stand alone sentence into the paragraph. In general, these stand-alone sentences as a new paragraph are distracting.The lit review seems scattered. | I deleted this sentence so that it would not be distracting.I will delete all the sentences that conclude each section to tighten the literature review (even so I have to be shorter). |  |
| Setting the societal/country context would be important for this work and this journal, as this varies so greatly from country to country. There are statements or assumptions I bristled at because they would come across as bias or anti-feminist in my home culture, but that may not be the case in your context and that is important to help the reader understand. | I included some statements that reflect an anti-feminist stance to show readers how society directs women into maternal roles even beyond the early stages of childbirth and breastfeeding. Mothers feel responsible for childcare because society has instilled this belief in women by educating them to believe this is their role. However, the teaching profession developed from a feminist perspective (the “spiritual motherhood” school of thought) that raised maternal skills to a professional level. In this way, women received appropriate training that helped them leave the confines of their own homes and to educate the children of others.The section entitled *Development of Women’s Maternal Behaviours* explains my intended meaning on this issue. Also, the second paragraph of the section *Maternal Ambivalence* explains the reality experienced by mothers (as opposed to what they are told should happen) and how a different view of reality can be constructed in which imperfection is part of the mother-child relationship.The section *Development of the Early Childhood Education Profession* explains how the feminist “spiritual motherhood” movement integrated the skills attributed to motherhood into the public sphere and elevated them to a more powerful position in society. The second paragraph of the section *Professional Identity Among Teachers and Early Childhood Educators* discusses early childhood educators as educational leaders.I need to think about how and where to add in the discussion a sentence that clarifies that there are statements describing an anti-feminist perception of the role of mothers, alongside feminist behaviors in their professional roles and their roles as mothers. The anti-feminist perception of motherhood creates remorse. |  |
| Upon reading the interview questions (p.9), my earlier confusion continues. It is unclear if the authors are setting out to understand how being a mother impacts their classroom practices, or how their training and own classroom realities align, or the challenges and strengths of being both mother and teacher in terms of own capacity, stress, etc. Maybe it is all of these things, but it’s not clear to this point. | First, your words show that you understood exactly what I mean! Female educators who are mothers face multiple challenges and confusing situations as they integrate these two roles. This is why the article is entitled **Social Challenges Facing Women as Educators and Mothers.** In other words, there are challenges in their profession that require female educators to exhibit flexibility in using specifically maternal skills in their work. There are also challenges in their home lives arising from the responsibility they feel towards their students in the educational system. Second, I moved the interview questions to the appendix, and noted in the methodology section the intention behind each question, so that the messages would be clearer.Finally, the Results section provides details about how these roles are integrated and affect each other.After the final translation and editing, the updated page numbers will be added indicating where each of these issues is addressed. |  |
| Finally, make a strong and clear case for the importance of this work. What do you add to the literature that is novel or innovative? What are the practice, policy, or research implications of your work? | Thank you. This is indeed very important. I added at the end of the article the unique contribution this study makes to the literature on early childhood education, the questions raised by this research that may be addressed in future research, and the practical implications of the findings of this study.  |  |