

Warin, Jo & Wilkinson, Joann (2019). **Gender diversification of the early years workforce: Recruiting, supporting and retaining male practitioners.** Paper presented on the 29th EECERA Annual Conference, 22.8.2019, Thessaloniki, Greece.

Abstract

We identify the barriers that prevent more men taking up employment in ECE and we develop a workable theoretical framework to rationalise the value of including men within ECE. Only 2% of the UK's ECE workforce are male (DfE, 2017). The inclusion of more male pedagogues in ECE can make a vital contribution to the development of a more gender egalitarian society. There has been a growing recognition that the greater involvement of men within the caring professions has the potential to transform gender relations (Connell, 1995; Brownhill, 2011; Warin and Wernersson, 2016). In England the DfE have recently asserted that "we want more men to choose to work in the early years sector" (2017 p24). The study will apply a new theory of gender flexible pedagogy (Warin and Adriany, 2015). This concept draws on Butler (1990) to emphasize how early childhood educators, both male and female, can model a flexible approach to the performance of gender, disrupting prescriptions for men to model masculinities and women to model femininities. The study draws on interviews and focus groups with ECE practitioners, managers, training providers and careers/ECE advisers. Assurance of confidentiality and informed consent was necessary for all participants. The study was approved by Lancaster University Ethics Committee. Preliminary findings indicate that leadership within ECE settings is key to successful recruitment, support and retention of male practitioners. The study will contribute new knowledge as the basis for developing a clear theoretical rationale and practical resources to create more gender-diverse, gender-sensitive approaches.


Keywords

men, gender, ECE workforce, recruitment, support


Authors

Jo Warin, Joann Wilkinson, Lancaster University, United Kingdom

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Single Sex Support Networks: Are they ever a good thing?

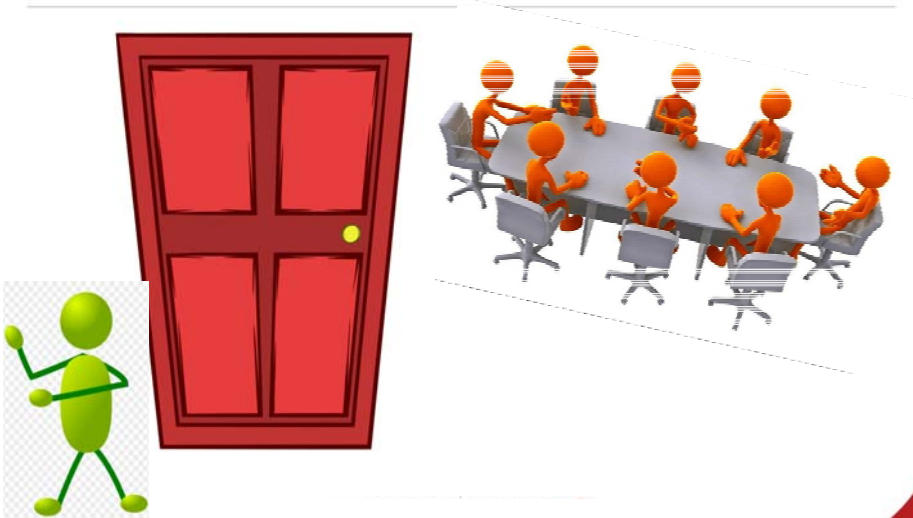


Jo Warin & Joann Wilkinson

GenderEYE
An ESRC Funded Study
Department of Educational Research

Lancaster University 

'Men only' encounters...



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A Celebration of Men in Early Learning and Childcare

One Day Conference Saturday 18th May 2019

Glasgow Royal Concert Hall 9am til 4pm **£150 + VAT**

A Conference day created to celebrate and inspire men involved in Early Learning and Childcare, or for those considering it as a possible career path.

This Conference day is delivered by men playing a leading and dynamic role in the Early Learning sector. Both keynote speakers have had impact on policy, practice and most importantly pedagogical thinking.

It is designed to inspire men already in the profession, to encourage them to share best practice and develop their strategies and approaches to sharing playful learning opportunities.




experiential play
Qualifiers in Training for Early Years Educators

As this is a Celebration of Men in Early Learning, we hope the Saturday conference will shape into an "all male" delegate attendance. To ensure equality across we are repeating the conference on the Friday, at our usual venue. www.earlyyears.org.uk who would like to access the fabulous content.

Men only spaces...



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Our question...

Are single-sex support groups ever a good thing?

If so, when and for whom are they helpful?

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Our methodology...

-  

- Case Studies**

Bristol
Bradford
Southampton
London
- 
- 

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Literature...



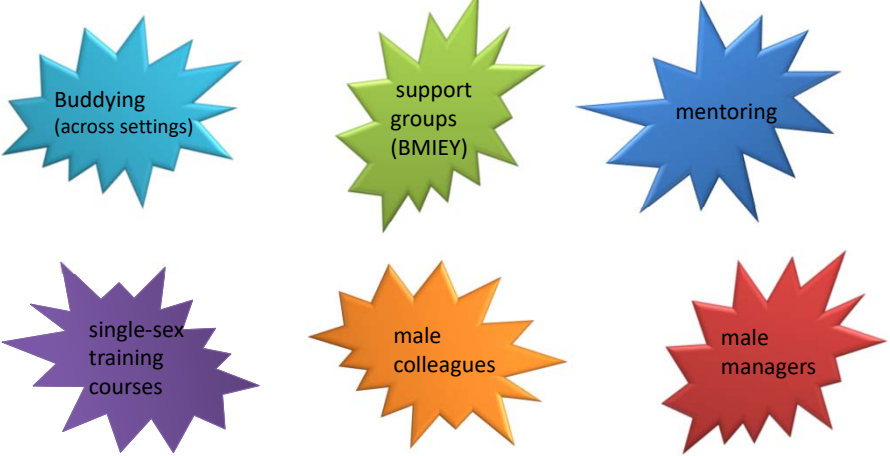
Collage of book covers including:
- *Men and the Classroom*
- *Men, Masculinities and Teaching in Early Childhood Education*
- *men teaching children*
- *Men in Early Childhood Education and Care*
- *Men in Early Years Settings*

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Single-sex support....



- Budding (across settings)
- support groups (BMIEY)
- mentoring
- single-sex training courses
- male colleagues
- male managers

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Theoretical starting point..

Single sex-support...

- Based on biological essentialism?
- Gender as located in the body?
- Gender as fixed and constant?

Single sex-support as 're-gendering' (Martino and Rezai Rashti 2012)

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Male Support Networks

Interview with nursery manager

I think men need a space that is not populated by women...to talk from a male perspective from early years that in a way isn't infiltrated by women....just in the same way that I think conscious raising and 'Take back the night' should be attended by women and not men. However, there is a paradox in there as well. I'm totally aware of that but for me it's part of a journey ...I'm not sure that it's ready to involve women because of the inequalities that there are for both men and women for different reasons.

(H2/S1/Int7)

Male colleagues

Focus group with male practitioners

So I think my training was quite good because they brought Tim in to help me out with a few bits and I think bringing in a male worker, so kind of in my head, oh there's actually more male workers here. Because when I first started at (name of setting) I don't think Ben had started at that time so in my head it was, ahh, I'll be the only male in the organisation. So when they brought Tim in, he showed me how to do this, this and this and, in my head it was, oh great I'm not the only one here.

(H4/FG2)

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Male support groups

Interview with male practitioner

At this place, everyone's really supportive and I know that one of the owners is a big advocate for getting more male practitioners in..We have a little group at (name of setting) where the males from the other (name of organisation) meet up with (name of proprietor) in a men's group every few months to have a chat about things we can do to promote males working in childcare more. They've been really supportive here and yeh, it's a really good team.

(H2/S1/Int1)

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Buddying/Mentoring

Focus group with male practitioners

Whilst I was doing my degree, a manager at a private day nursery mentioned she had a male student from (name of college) who was carrying out his apprenticeship in her nursery. She had no other male practitioners and asked if he could come one day a week to my nursery just to work with me. So four days a week in his own nursery employed by them, but one day she would pay out for him to come and work with me..., just to give him that little bit of a boost and show him how I do my work....he found that really helpful in terms of gaining confidence. You know the interactions he was having with children were absolutely amazing but he was just shy to do it in front of other people.. I did not have to do much, I just needed to reinforce it to him that you know, he is doing a really great job.

(H1/FG1)

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Male support groups

Interview with male practitioner

Participant: *...funnily enough I went to (name of support group) and I didn't like it. So the first time I went I thought, oh I'm not sure about this, everyone's telling all these horror stories. I don't experience this, I feel like I'm wasting someone's time and space to be here, I've got a lovely time. And of course, then I had that incident in the park and I thought, oh my God.. that completely changed my outlook on it so whenever it comes available I always go.*

Interviewer: *Would you talk about it in that setting if there were further incidents?*

Participant: *Absolutely, yeh if I was experiencing that then that would be a massive support. I mean it's the same as anyone that's experienced difficult times in their life, they have discussion groups and that's kind of what it is..*

(H3/S1/Int4)

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Male support networks

Focus group with male practitioners

When we started the Men in Early Years Conference, we made our own network, and I think it's important to build on that network and create like a big shout. So those people are aware that there, someone there that you can speak to. I mean if you are being challenged coming into the sector as a male.

(H1/FG1)

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Male colleagues

Interview with male practitioner

I think it's good that there are other men in the setting...it's good to see other men working with children I guess because before when I first started it was just me, I was the only man and then the Deputy joined and then another staff member joined in pre-school and it was good to see I wasn't just the only man working in childcare.

(H3/S1/Int1)

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Giving Support to Other Men

Interview with male practitioner

Participant: *I think I've supported {men} because when Tom started he was fairly new to childcare but the Deputy Manager who is a man, he supported me when I was in Pre-school.*

Interviewer: *How did he support you?*

Participant: *I don't know, we just communicated well and if I had a problem I would go to him and tell him or if I was stuck with something.*

(H3/S1/Int1)

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Returning to our question...

Are single-sex support groups ever a good thing?

- Yes, sometimes.

If so, when and for whom are they helpful?

- Status as different becomes hypervisible
- For those starting out
- Time limited

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Single-Sex Support....

Re-gendering or De-gendering?



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