



Men in early years: a personal reflection and study  
by music practitioner John Webb

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## 1. Introduction

This investigation came about because, as a man working in early years music-making for seventeen years, I began to wonder whether my gender makes a difference in any way to what I actually do with the children I work with. Are the activities I choose to use in a session influenced by my gender? Or do I approach my delivery of them in a way which is somehow gender influenced? Even thinking about the issue can be tricky. I find myself trying not to tread on the toes of gender equality issues, trying to avoid a very black and white 'men do this and women do that' approach; which I feel leads to unhelpful stereotyping. And yet, sometimes I've had comments from fellow colleagues, such as: 'Oh it's so nice to work with a man – they bring a different energy into the room' and, 'I don't think a woman would do that!' Hence the reason for biting the bullet and attempting this study!

This study is small scale. I have not undertaken a comprehensive literature review of this topic and as such the research is limited, but I hope what I've written is interesting and may give some pointers for anyone interested in looking at the area in more detail.

## 2. Background

There seems to be relatively little written about what men bring to early years education, and what there is often takes quite a safe stance. Existing research frequently states that men provide a different kind of role model for children, but offers little exploration of how that difference is presented. For instance, the Fatherhood Institute's #MITEY (men in the early years) [website](#), which looks to recruit men into early years, suggests:

*"Recruiting more men into childcare brings many advantages:*

- *A larger pool of labour for employers*
- *A more diverse workforce*
- *Positive modelling of men as caregivers, for boys and girls*
- *More diverse careers options for men.*<sup>1</sup>

All undoubtedly true, and surely few would disagree that more men in childcare would be a good thing, but do men do anything differently for this positive role modeling to occur?

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.fatherhoodinstitute.org/2016/men-in-the-early-years-mitey/> accessed 9th April 2017

In 2010, a study by the Department for Education cited that only 2% of early years workers were men<sup>2</sup>, and there is evidence that childcare settings can be unintentionally gendered towards male workers.

*Men and women had different perceptions of the division of labour in the nurseries. All but one of the women believed that jobs were shared out equally. Men, on the other hand, knew that they were asked and expected to do practical jobs about the building, such as fixing things and changing lightbulbs. This discrepancy – between the female workers’ belief about the absence of a gender division of labour in the nursery and the men’s experience of it – says something about the gendered construction of childcare work. It may be that the women are not aware that men are doing these practical tasks, because that has traditionally been their role in domestic settings.<sup>3</sup>*

This unintentional gender difference does make the gender question relevant. If men and women have a tendency to do things differently as practitioners (and it will be tendencies rather than being cut and dried), looking at these differences, understanding them, and becoming more informed about the area as a result, can only be a good thing.

The London Early Years Foundation’s (LEYF) *Men in Childcare: Does it matter to Children? What do they say?* builds on an argument from Jensen (1998), that we should build a pedagogy which is aware of gender, not one which is gender-neutral.

*[Jensen] noted that boys and girls are different in some ways and choose different games and activities. This presents different challenges to those employed; both female and male. He asserted that daily pedagogic work must take these differences into account. He believed this can be more easily fulfilled by a mixed-gender workforce that will contain a greater diversity of masculine and feminine traits.<sup>4</sup>*

This is a helpful insight. If we are mindful of this awareness we may be able to discuss different approaches, and this in turn can enrich the learning experiences of our early years settings. The LEYF article also notes that children themselves start to differentiate gender traits at a very young age, and attempts to explore whether gender makes a difference to individual children. Do they prefer doing certain activities with a male or female member of staff?

*The children commented that play with men was more physical; that they ‘pushed the swings higher or the roundabout faster’. They were seen to play more with the boys and the younger children, and were more ‘fun’ or ‘silly’ in that they told more jokes or funny stories.<sup>5</sup>*

### 3. Study methodology and respondent information

This study had two main stages: a **questionnaire** distributed to a group of 30 male early years music practitioners (20 completed responses) and in-depth **telephone interviews** with six individuals. The call-out for volunteers was undertaken through the Facebook Early Years Music and London Early years Music Network (LEYMN) groups, a notice in the Sound Connections Early Years Newsletter, through personal recommendations by colleagues, and by contacting individuals who I knew working in the area.

Within the questionnaire there were three categories of questions: general information, understanding how respondents came to work in this area and their practice, and gender specific questions. **A copy of the questionnaire can be found in Appendix A with responses found in Appendix B.**

<sup>2</sup> DfE (2011), Childcare and early years providers survey: 2011

<sup>3</sup> Owen, C. (2003) p5

<sup>4</sup> O’Sullivan, J. & Chambers, S. 2012 p8

<sup>5</sup> O’Sullivan, J. & Chambers, S. 2012 p10

Respondents were between the ages of 25-65, with one respondent above the age of 75. The majority of practitioners had worked in the area of early years music for more than 11 years, and only five for less than five years, indicating a longevity in the field. Judging by these responses, one could argue that those in this field show commitment and staying power, but it's probable that the more committed practitioners are the ones more likely to respond to surveys about it, so they could be self-selecting.

For the amount of time spent working in the early years music area, there was a wide range of responses. For the majority of respondents, 0 - 40% of their work is in music and early years, perhaps showing the prevalence of part-time and portfolio careers. No one indicated they only worked in the early years music area.

By far the majority of respondents (15) work with all ages from 0-5 years, with no one stating that they only worked with one age group exclusively (0-1, 1-2, 2-3, etc.). All respondents worked with 3-4 year olds, 19 with 4-5s and 17 with 2-3s. Slightly fewer worked with the younger children (16 for 0-1s and 1-2s).

The working contexts indicated by respondents were varied. Popular responses included nursery and primary schools, children's centres, parent and toddler sessions, libraries, and drop-in sessions. There were a variety of other responses as well from individuals such as at a church; private musicianship classes; children's parties; a special school; groups of childminders and their wards; hospital wards; gamelan classes; practitioner training; a museum; events at festivals; and a privately run music school.

## 4. Questionnaire outcomes

### Professional identity

Asking practitioners to define themselves professionally produced some particularly interesting results. This was an open question, and many responded with several terms (there were 44 responses from 20 respondents). I classified responses into groups (so trumpeter and cellist became 'performer'; music tutor became music teacher; creative leader was grouped with workshop leader).

**Out of 44 terms used, only 3 referenced the term 'early years'.** Two of these were respondents working 80-99% of their time in the area, and the other was working 40-60% of their time there. But this still leaves 6 out of 20 respondents doing more than 40% of their work in the early years area who do not use the term early years in their professional identity.

This could be because there is a perceived stigma around men working in early years, or that the area is perceived as low status – both could lead to men not being inclined to use the early years label. The respondents' trajectory into this field is important to take into account. A conscious move into early years at the start of their career might lead them to use the early years term quite openly, whereas respondents with portfolio careers (e.g. performers or workshop leaders) might be less inclined to use the early years term. In a later question, a respondent who had moved on from early years work stated one of the reasons he did so was because he *"did not want to become labelled as a person who only did early years work"*.

### Progression routes

**Five came from non-musically-trained careers**, though this didn't exclude musical experience, only that this had not been pursued in terms of professional training. **For all respondents it was clear that they came to early years music-making not as their first career choice. They had developed into early years music practitioners later in their careers either as part of a career change, or when their career began to encompass this area.**

This gives rise to interesting questions about training opportunities for anyone (male or female) venturing into this area. How do performers, music teachers and workshop leaders learn about good general early years practice? If they enter this area rather unexpectedly, do they take practices from their other areas of experience with them, practices which may not be so appropriate in an early years setting?

Only one practitioner indicated that they had left the area stating “...having worked almost exclusively in early years for several years, I also did not want to become labeled as a person who only did early years work. I wanted a fresh challenge too.”

## Questions about gender

When asked whether respondents had felt there were challenges working in the early years area because they were a man, **eight people responded saying they did not face any challenges**. Five respondents mentioned the **challenge of the male vocal range**. How **other adults respond to men in an early years setting** was a challenge voiced by five respondents and three people wrote of anxiety around **feeling out of place and isolated**.

One individual spoke of the **lack of male role models** across the sector and another raised **sensitivities around mums and young babies** such as breast-feeding.

In addition, **five respondents mentioned the positive reception they had in settings**. Interestingly one respondent wrote they were appreciated by settings, but at the same time felt alienated from staff room discussions. One respondent commented: “*I get told it's wonderful that I am a man! Which is often quite frustrating when I work so hard to make sure my sessions are educational, engaging and well delivered and my feedback is just 'isn't it good you are a man'.*”

When answering the question, “*do you feel your gender plays a role in your delivery of musical activities in early years?*”, two respondents answered this question with a simple ‘no’. The majority of the rest indicated that men might provide a different kind of role model for the children. Of these, four respondents noted the difference a man might provide as opposed to a woman, without expanding on what this difference might be, whilst a further six noted that they were a different sort of male role model in comparison to the stereotypical male.

Notable responses included:

*“I find the fathers of the children are strong disciplinary figures and rarely display their emotions. Sometimes it's a shock to the children and the fathers to see me so expressive. I'm not afraid of looking silly”*

*“What is beneficial, I think, is the ability to be a positive male presence for young boys and girls, particularly specialising in an area (music/creativity) that some people may see to be far removed from stereotypical boys' activities (football, fighting etc.)”*

*“Through my action, I try to gently give off the impression that it's OK to be a man and sing nursery rhythms or use a shaker and sing nonsense”*

Four other elements that the respondents mentioned were that **being a man helped to hook in children who might not normally have taken part**, being quite **physical**, bringing a ‘**male energy**’, and the **novelty of being a man in a female-dominated environment**.

The answers citing a different role model in comparison to a female approach did not mention anything specific. A typical answer was: “*The nurseries I attend are primarily female dominated and the presence of a male gives the children a different perspective*”. There were no further details around what men might do differently (if anything) to give children this different male perspective. Perhaps simply being a male presence is enough.

The respondents who mentioned a contrast with a 'stereotypical' male, cited the following behaviours: self-expression, singing, dancing, being silly, displaying emotions, engaging imaginatively and playfully, laughing, singing nursery rhymes, and playing a shaker.

Discussing the way gender may affect action can be highly contentious. It's possible that respondents felt more comfortable answering when comparing with a stereotypical version of maleness, rather than in terms of male/female gender differences. One respondent agreed that gender does make a difference, *"but it is hard to quantify as it is not easy to say exactly how my approach and ideas are a product of gender"*.

## Further questions arising from the questionnaire

From the analysis of the questionnaire, I identified three areas that would benefit from further exploration:

### Progression into early years

It appeared that **men entered this area either by changing career or developing their practice to encompass working with young children**. This area was not the first career choice of any respondents, and this seems to be reflected in the way respondents identified themselves professionally, by generally not using the term 'early years'. To what extent does this career trajectory have on the respondents' early years practice? What awareness are they likely to have of early years pedagogy when working in this area? Do they tend to bring approaches from other areas and apply them in an early years context? Does it matter if they do?

There may also be a danger that men are applauded for simply being a man in early years. Can men get away with less informed practice, due to lower expectation from setting staff?

One respondent mentioned being the only male at early years training events. Does this have a negative impact on male practitioners? Does gender isolation mean we don't develop gender-specific traits in our work which could be of positive benefit to children in early years settings? As noted earlier, Jensen argued for a gender pedagogy, taking account of gender, rather than a gender neutrality, so perhaps developing a greater community of male practice might be beneficial to supporting this.

### Role models and stereotypes

Respondents gave little detail around the behaviours which might characterize a male role model. Exploring this area further, alongside 'stereotypical maleness', seems important.

### Progression

A striking outcome of the questionnaire was around professional retention. But what keeps practitioners interested and committed to working in early years? What is so rewarding about this work for them that results in continued commitment, especially as working with young children is often considered to be 'women's work'<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> Owen, C. (2003) p3

## 5. Results of Interviews

### Male traits

I asked all the interviewees what they felt stereotypically male traits might be. This was because, as mentioned earlier, questionnaire respondents had been more comfortable describing their practice as being *different* from other models of 'maleness' as opposed to contrasts with a more 'feminine' approach.

This was a tricky question, and from all interviewees there was much 'umming' and 'arriving', and they required encouragement from me before some of them (not all) could venture any suggestions. This was interesting in itself: if we (culturally) feel gender differences may be important, then surely we have to be able to openly discuss and challenge the issue. One interviewee suggested we should consider 'maleness' and 'femaleness' as a venn diagram. Traits which might be characterised as 'male' or 'female' are not gender specific, both men and women have access to all of them, but individuals may find some harder to naturally access than others.

Most interesting of all, was that the two respondents who answered this question most fully were approaching retirement and had been working in the area for 30 years. They were obviously of an older generation, and might not feel quite so fettered by more recent politically correct conventions; and/or they might feel that they don't particularly need to be. They appeared to be very thoughtful, sensitive musicians who had considered these issues and had a wealth of experience to bring to their reflections.

Aspects which were mentioned in terms of 'stereotypically male traits' included: **adventurousness/risk-taking, playfulness, fun, physicality, robust play, bravado** and **not being overly emotional**. Other themes that emerged were the stereotypes of men being **technically minded, matter of fact, problem-solving** and **understanding how things fit together**.

How these traits might translate into a musician's early years practice was even harder for interviewees to pinpoint. One mentioned that they have gone around this issue themselves. He has told himself it would be good if his practice was *"a bit more gutsy"*, but it hasn't changed, despite this: it's about being *"just who you are"*.

One of the interviewees remarked that men are interested in *"the what of doing rather than the how of doing"* - a tendency to just get on and do the task/solve the problem, rather than considering how to solve it before acting. He said there can be an *"over focus on how you are feeling about it, rather than what you are going to do about it"*, the latter being more typically *"characterised as male"*. *"Let's not spend time analysing how awful things are. Too much time over thinking: thinking too much stops creativity. What works, rather than what do we think about it"*.

The problem of 'over-thinking' is mentioned by Claxton.

*"The brain, it turns out, is built to perform certain kinds of learning with a subtle brilliance that can easily be disturbed by thinking too much or trying too hard"*.

However, I think the interviewee takes a slightly different view. The getting stuck he mentions is one of over-thinking emotions (*"analysing how awful things are"*), which gets stuck and inhibits problem-solving actions. If we're not careful, this might play into some gender stereotypes of 'feminine emotions' and 'masculine physicality/action'. It's quite possible for *anyone* to get stuck emotionally and for this to inhibit our ability to act. However, it is also quite possible to be overly bullish in taking lots of action without any thought. Neither way is, to my mind, particularly successful - in

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<sup>7</sup> Claxton, G. (1999), p7

life, or in music workshops. Balancing these tendencies is surely the way forward, but to balance them we first have to acknowledge both are present and learn to spot them. Perhaps this would be easier if they could somehow be divorced from the masculine/feminine labels that can inhibit discussion of them?

## 6. Conclusions

If gender is an important issue to consider, and if we feel that reaching an understanding of gender pedagogy is a useful thing to do, **observing practitioners** in the field to see what they actually do, rather than just interviewing them, would be sensible. It could also be revealing to discover how one gender sees the practice of the opposite gender – are there insights one gender can bring to the other’s practice? This further research might help to reach firmer conclusions about the gender differences in the sorts of activities used, and how they are delivered.

**Some of the results in this research, it seems to me, can apply equally to female and male practitioners.** It’s quite likely that female early years musicians in this area continue working in this area for a considerable time; have portfolio careers; work in a range of early years contexts; come from a range of backgrounds; and quite possibly only enter this field as their career expands or changes direction. I would be particularly interested in how women define themselves professionally in this area. Are they more likely to use the term early years than men? A comparative study to see whether there are differences might also be illuminating, though of course we may well find less differences than anticipated.

**There is undoubtedly a need for more men to work in the early years area generally.** There are 1,230 members on the Facebook early years music group. I received about thirty messages of interest from male early years workers in total (from Facebook and elsewhere), so it’s probably fair to say the proportion of male early years music practitioners is small. How can we encourage more men to work in this area? The respondents obviously found that there is longevity in the area, that it is a highly rewarding career, makes a good addition to a portfolio career and is lots of fun. But it is something that, up to now, men only discover by accident. Is it possible to introduce this area to young musicians earlier in their training? To some extent this is happening already: young musicians, through outreach departments at music colleges, often do some early years work. So, we might find more men joining this profession in due course. Parents and toddler music classes happen all over the country, and there could be plenty of opportunities for musicians and institutions to collaborate in delivering them.

**There is real skill in working in early years that is not to be underestimated, and we should be providing good models of practice for all who venture into it, at whatever stage in their careers.** How we do this is a moot point. I entered this area when I was nearly 30 and just got on with it, learning along the way. Hopefully I’m now better at it and more informed, but both those things took a while. For men specifically, feeling isolated, for instance at training sessions, is something to consider. The ongoing training and understanding we can provide for professionals in this area is an issue beyond gender.

In relation to gender, men possibly do act differently with young children compared to women though it appeared to be very difficult for men to define this. Sometimes this difference might be more obvious, such as using more physical play, and sometimes it might be much more subtle and nuanced: focusing on the *‘what of doing rather than the how of doing’*. These tendencies are available for all to access, both male and female. However, our awareness and understanding of the benefits of them might be greater if there was a better gender balance and openness to discuss these factors.

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Many thanks to Susan Young for early conversations around this subject.

## Appendix A - Questionnaire sent to male early years practitioners

### General information

- Age
- Number of years working in early years music
- Proportion of time you spend working with music and early years children
- Age group of early years children you work with
- Context of early years children you work with (e.g. School, parent and toddler group, etc.)

### Respondents' practice and trajectory into the area/out of this area of work

- How would you define yourself professionally?
- Briefly describe the sorts of early years music work you do (e.g. interactive workshops, performances, rhyme time session, school music class, etc.) and the type of content in these sessions.
- Please briefly describe how you came to work as an early years music practitioner. If you no longer work as an early years music practitioner, please also describe why you left this area.

### Gender specific responses

- Have there been any challenges for you as a man working in the early years sector? If so, what were they?
- Do you feel your gender plays a role in your delivery of musical activities in early years? Please explain.

## Appendix B - Narrative questionnaire responses

Please briefly describe how you came to work as an early years music practitioner. If you no longer work as an early years music practitioner, please also describe why you left this area.	Have there been any challenges for you as a man working in the early years sector? If so, what were they?	Do you feel your gender plays a role in your delivery of musical activities in early years? Please explain
I took my son to a class and applied from there.	Not really. Most of the parents and children respond very well to the classes.	I suppose it may do, but it is difficult to know as I have no basis for comparison having never taught a class with anyone else of either sex.
Simply, I was asked and I said yes and it suited all concerned!	The heartbreak of recovering each time I spend a couple of days in Children's hospices.	No, actually.
An opportunity presented itself with Music For Little People and I was able at the time to combine this work with my full time job in Finance.	Personally I do find it difficult to make / create the initial opening but once through the door and delivering the classes I'm well received.	A definite yes, the children enjoy me going into the nurseries and love the sessions. The nurseries I attend are primarily female dominated and the presence of a male gives the children a different perspective.
I've worked in libraries all my life, but studied music at university. It was when I got my current job, that I had full creative freedom. My childhood music is the perfect meeting point of my library and music skills. My friend introduced me to Kodály and I was hooked. I'm a passionate advocate of the philosophy and approach, as I see the power it has on families every day.	None. In fact, I get told it's wonderful that I am a man! Which is often quite frustrating when I work so hard to make sure my sessions are educational, engaging and well delivered and my feedback is just 'isn't it good you are a man'	I don't think so.
While researching teaching kids harmony for a panto, I came across the Kodaly approach and became fascinated with teaching younger children musicianship.	Vocal range, always singing in a higher pitch.	Yes, I enjoy things that are quite physical and this is something I try to balance out in classes. I feel that sometimes my gender helps "hook" a class in - they tend not to expect a male to be singing and moving to music. A special school commented quite a lot on the difference in participation compared to a previous tutor and they tended think this was due to gender.
I graduated from Trinity music college in 2015. After a few years doing a retail management job to pay the bills I decided to take the plunge and become freelance. First experience with EYFS level music was with Mini Mozart - Applied for the job on UK Music Jobs board and found I had the skills and personality to work well in this industry.	Not really. I suppose one aspect I have found a little tricky is the pitch of my voice. When singing, a male voice is naturally lower, and I believe children can relate to a higher, more feminine pitch.	Although the industry generally expects a female to do this job, (I'm not going to get booked for a Princess themed birthday party!) I do find that being male can work to my advantage as well. Nursery settings are predominantly female, so I have found some nurseries want a male role model to come to the setting each week so the children get more diversity.

<p>I started working as a nursery practitioner and was known for my musical abilities outside of the nursery setting. As a result I was encouraged to play guitar and drums for the children as these instruments were available to play in the church next door to the setting. At first I was entertaining the children but as I grew in my knowledge about child development I began to learn the benefits music has on a child's development and then encouraged them to play. I have since been told many of the children I did this with have gone on to play drums and other musical instruments at primary school. I went to university to study music production and specialised in sound installation and noise. When returning to the nursery setting I was encouraged to develop a programme for the children that linked directly was the EYFS. Each session highlights the areas of the EYFS it touches upon for all the different age groups. This helps staff look for specific observations in these areas and educates them in the benefits of music. I have trial run several of these sessions and so far is seen to work well. The programme officially start this coming Friday.</p>	<p>Some parents are sometimes a bit unsure of me on first appearance but I have a friendly and upfront approach and have many good relationships with parents. I have never felt restricted in my role and I remain a firm believer that men are huge role models in the life of a small child.</p>	<p>It could be said the stereotypical British male does not engage a lot in musical activity and possibly may shy away from performing unless they are present at a football game or under the influence of alcohol. For many of the children to hear me sing and dance and express myself in ways they may not have seen in their own parents gives them the courage and confidence to express themselves freely. I work in a deprived area with a large number of Bulgarian families. I find the fathers of the children are strong disciplinary figures and rarely display their emotions. Sometimes it's a shock to the children and the fathers to see me so expressive. Im not afraid of looking silly, I encourage other staff to express themselves regularly and feel I have a very positive influence on all the children, staff students and parents that see and hear my work.</p>
<p>When I was starting out as a workshop leader I had the opportunity to train on Wigmore Hall's chamber Tots project. I also deputied for experienced EY practitioner Alison Blunt, running music and movement sessions in Anne Taylor Children's Centre, Hackney.</p>	<p>Not particularly, I think, other than the (surmountable) challenges around vocal register. More broadly, in my experience, EY settings tend to be mostly staffed my women although I can't say I've ever found that to be a problem.</p>	<p>I wouldn't necessarily say that there's anything INTRINSIC about maleness that is particularly beneficial in this field. What is beneficial, I think, is the ability to be a positive male presence for young boys and girls, particularly specialising in an area (music/creativity) that some people may see to be far removed from stereotypical boys activities (football, fighting etc.)</p>
<p>Studied Music Workshop skills at Goldsmiths college with Phil Mullen in the mid-90s. When I moved to Sheffield I got involved in a local arts project at the Burton St Centre and from there was asked to do a one-off workshop in a Children's' Centre. This went well and word spread. Before I knew it and with no real plan and no advertising I ended up earning the bulk of my income through Early Years work.</p>	<p>None really.</p>	<p>I think that many of the settings that I work in see it as a bonus that I am a man. Positive male role models are few and far between in EY settings.</p>
<p>We had a baby and were bemused that there were no musicians working in 'baby music' classes locally. Lots of experience previously in workshop leading with opera companies and other bodies.</p>	<p>Sometimes with parents, particularly of our youngest babies, I don't want to engage with mums in quite as much depth as my wife will.</p>	<p>Yes. People often comment that they are very happy to have a male role model in a female dominated world.</p>
<p>I had done a substantial amount of work working with people living with dementia. As part of my study I became very interest in attachment theory which in turn led me to EY musicking.</p>	<p>I suspect some children (and even carers) do not get to spend that much time around men and I feel I am viewed as a threat. I can find it quite isolating to be in a room of 30+ females and I can feel quite invisible. There is a lack of visible practitioners on whom to model one's practice. At training events I am often a lone male and again.</p>	<p>Sometimes I find pitches of songs uncomfortable.</p>
<p>Through Community music and social inclusion work.</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>Sometimes the novelty is an advantage and sometimes it enables me to engage children that might not have engaged in an all-female environment.</p>
<p>I got a job as trainee tutor for CME, I was encouraged to work with all types of client group.</p>	<p>Not really, though I was anxious as to how I might be perceived ("why does that man want to hang around with children?") I've never encountered any problems.</p>	<p>Yes, I think it's extremely important to channel - what I consider - my masculinity into EY contexts. There's a considerable number of children that don't have men in their lives that engage imaginatively and playfully with them.</p>

<p>Interest and need. Surestart needed folks and I was asked to lead training sessions in libraries in Derbyshire and realised that so much rhythm and rhyme was generally uncreative and that if we encourage creativity and listening and an understanding of noise-making from an early age (e.g. in the womb) then so many other aspects of our lives (and education in particular) are more easy.</p>	<p>Not especially challenges as a man, generally positive surprise and support.</p>	<p>Yes - women are seen as carers and that is seen as what early years need, and yet so many young kids do not have male role-models and need them.</p>
<p>I did a Music in Healthcare Apprenticeship which brought me to making music with EY children 1 to 1. Also doing mother and baby gamelan groups for a while. I no longer do this only because I'm doing other things. Would like to go back.</p>	<p>No barriers as such. I have sometimes felt a bit out of place, usually on training days. Sometime also when working very close to mother and babies I can feel a pang of awkwardness, this usually passes as I remember I am here to do a job. Musically my low voice register means perhaps I don't always sing in the register at children.</p>	<p>Yes for sure! I like being a man in this area. Being open with my voice, singing, laughing, and being silly when the moment is right. I feel I do have a responsibility to model a positive male role model who WILL sing and play music I am often in close contact with fathers and their children. I feel I must strike the balance between being true to my Early Years practice - being open and comfortable with my musicality, whilst not making fathers uncomfortable. Through my action, I try to gently give off the impression that it's OK to be a man and sing nursery rhythms or use a shaker and sing nonsense :-)</p>
<p>I trained as a primary teacher and worked as a musician. I was asked to do sessions at a nursery school and it went well. I started recording songs for the early years and doing training based around the recordings.</p>	<p>I don't think so.</p>	<p>Yes but it is hard to quantify as it is not easy to say exactly how my approach and ideas are a product of gender. It is an interesting question and I would be happy to discuss it.</p>
<p>Through Orff Approach based training</p>	<p>Not specifically because of gender. More often a male presence is welcomed as a rarity. Getting funding for the work is far more of a challenge and the main limiting factor.</p>	<p>Yes. Mainly as a male role model and also by bringing a 'male energy' into the session.</p>
<p>I was invited to develop a programme of early years work for Wigmore Hall early in my career (Chamber Tots in the Community.) I was excited to explore the creativity that might be possible, and to work through both structured sessions and play. I left leading early years work after 'burn out', having worked almost exclusively in early years for several years. I also did not want to become labelled as a person who only did early years work. I wanted a fresh challenge too. I also reached a point when I couldn't stand crawling around on the floor all the time - I had a back injury that was exacerbated by this.</p>	<p>I was usually massively outnumbered by women when working in early years settings, which did make me feel self-conscious. A few times, staff did question why I as a man wanted to work in early years.</p>	<p>Only in that I think that children are sometimes excited by a visiting male figure working with them. Coming in as a workshop leader is very different from being a member of full time staff at a setting though, so the 'novelty' aspect could also be attributed to this.</p>
<p>I don't really make hard distinctions about the groups I work with in this way. I work with a huge range of people sometimes defined by age but more often defined by location, interest or other factors. I have always worked in this way, it is only recently that it seems to have become a "thing".</p>	<p>I'm often the only one. Not sure that this is a "challenge" though? In these environments there aren't many men. What is more telling rather than gender is that people behave differently when they find out that I am 1: a parent and 2: have a child with a disability (even though he is 23!). I do think (and this is probably more from the perspective being a parent) that there are far too few men working with very young children.</p>	<p>Not sure about this BUT I do think that "as a man" (aaaaaargh I hate that kind of phrase as I would rather be thought of as a human being) I might be one of the few people who children encounter in these environments who is male. I do feel then that I am sometimes modelling behaviours that wouldn't normally be considered to be "male".</p>
<p>I worked in early years generally 1986-93 (as it was easy to get into without extensive training). When I left I was asked to come back to do music sessions. When youth music funding started up in 2001 I jumped on the opportunity for early years funding, and EY was my dominant focus for several years.</p>	<p>Often the opposite, that settings appreciate all the more having a man involved. Often feel alienated from staff/staff room discussions. The need to think through whether there are any particular issues when working with mums and very young babies, e.g. being around breast feeding</p>	<p>As above - I'm sure that because most staff are female children are all the more keen to engage with me. But I don't think I work in a 'male' way, in any sense that I can think of.</p>

<p>Following a successful 28 year career in Army music including 17 years as a music director I decided to leave the military partly for family reasons. While running one of the army music schools (Army Junior School of Music [Pirbright]) I was shown some basic books by the cello professor. These were the Colourstrings books. On leaving the military I contact this professor and went to observe some classes. I then trained with Colourstrings, the British Kodaly Academy and Trinity College of Music as an early years music specialist and founded my own organisation in January 1994.</p>	<p>Just the normal challenges of setting up and running a business in this field.</p>	<p>I feel that having a male delivering early years music is a great roll model (provided it's done well) and helps to avoid the concept that music is predominantly for women or is a "Sissy" activity (8 yeas as a Bandmaster in the Parachute Regiment is certainly not "Sissy")</p>
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