

Listening to the Voices of Boys in Dance

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**A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the University of
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Abstract

This thesis examines how child-centred research illuminates complex and intertwined social dynamics for boys in dance. Male involvement in dance has been compared to effeminacy and homosexuality (Owen and Riley, 2020b), which has marginalised male participation. In doing so, dance has been distanced from orthodox masculinity, which is framed in heterosexuality, homophobia, and anti-femininity identities. The pressure to perform within such boundaries has impacted upon gendered and sexual identities. Nonetheless, an attitudinal revolution under the guise of inclusive masculinity theory (Anderson, 2009) maintains more liberal masculine identities are emerging. My research questions therefore ask: (i) what evidence of inclusive masculinity is present in primary aged boys? (ii) how do primary age boys perform masculinities in dance? (iii) What do boys aspire for within lessons to encounter meaningful dance through PE?

These questions were answered through data from two case study schools in the West Midlands region of England. The study built on the 'write, draw, show and tell' (WDST) method (Noonan et al., 2016) and added the innovative use of 'emojis' to create the write, draw, show, tell and emoji' (WDSTE) approach. Over a four month duration, observations, focus group interviews using WDSTE, and photo-elicitation, with 18 Year Five and Six (ages 9-11) boys were deployed. The boys' visual and verbal data was thematically analysed (Braun and Clarke, 2006) giving insight into three themes, including the freestyling of masculinity, embodying inclusive masculinity and inquiry, and embodied learning in dance.

Boys resisted hegemonic ideals, instead displaying increasing normalcy of homosocial tactility with other boys (Anderson and McCormack, 2014) as a means to cope in dance. The data demonstrated desired ownership over the content and increased social connectedness through collaborative activities. My thesis illustrated that contemporary masculinity is continuing to evolve and boys are not trapped by the stigmatisation of their interest in dance or physical closeness with other boys. I argue with, and for, boys, who saw a need to vocalise for more equitable practices in dance, where they aspired to be supported meaningfully to become competent. This thesis draws attention to the interest that boys hold towards dance and the need for educational purposes of dance to be mindfully considered to support holistic growth in primary school dance.

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Glossary

- BAME – Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic
- BERA - British Educational Research Association
- DfE – Department for Education
- EAL – English as an Additional Language
- GDPR – General Data Protection Regulations
- FGI - Focus Group Interviews
- FSM – Free School Meals
- HMT – Hegemonic Masculinity Theory
- IMT – Inclusive Masculinity Theory
- OFSTED – The Office for Standards in Education
- PE – Physical Education
- PGCE – Post Graduate Certificate in Education
- PP- Pupil Premium
- SEND – Special Educational Needs and Disability
- UNCRC - United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
- WDST – Write, Draw, Show, and Tell
- WDSTE – Write, Draw, Show, Tell, and Emoji

Chapter 1 Introduction

This introductory chapter begins by sharing key features relating to the decision to research gender. I provide a context for the study, indicating the significance of this topic area, by discussing the focus and purpose of the research. This follows with insights into my professional and personal identity. The penultimate focus will outline the theoretical framework and draw attention to the chosen methodology. Finally, an overview of the content of the chapters in this thesis is provided.

Professional and personal background

Drawing on my experiences is central to this Professional Doctorate. In what follows will be a consideration of my childhood experiences of school, Physical Education (PE), and sport as a female, and as a final point I will address events that have made me stop and reflect on my career as a teacher.

As a young girl, I was surrounded by sport, with family interest and participation driving my curiosity and growing a strong affinity towards my involvement. At primary school, I was the only girl at the time to play for the football team, much to my delight, whilst also a minority amongst my peers for my participation in Irish dancing. This began a growing, yet subtle awareness of difference, culturally and in opportunities offered for girls and boys.

My interest did not waiver during secondary school, with involvement in the hockey, tennis, badminton, athletics, rounders, and football teams. What was felt in primary became more evident in secondary as the distance between boys and girls grew and so did the expectations of activities that were either available to me or that I was

expected to engage within. My Irish dancing gave way to my sporting commitments early during my secondary years and my interest in hockey turned into an activity I engaged with for 20 years before turning to rugby. On reflection, what is clear is that parental support gave me the space to venture into both what may have been typically characterised masculine and feminine terrains in terms of sporting assumptions. Yet, it was possible, and with the support of those around me, allowed me to see myself as competent across a range of activity areas, without negative stigmatisation.

Following my Masters, which took me down a Sports Science route, I had aspirations to work with young people and children, to facilitate their opportunities within PE. I was therefore drawn to a career in teaching and completed my PGCE in PE. My first teaching job, in what was then called a Sports College, highlighted that PE was a positive outlet for many learners; yet it was also a space that constrained learners, as seen from the curriculum planning side when activities were gendered. However, I was eager to reach out to all of my learners by acknowledging who they were and what they might bring to the classes. I have always been an advocate for listening to the voices of those I teach, giving them ownership in their experiences, and providing them with opportunities to empower each other. I was lucky enough to be able to have taught both boys and girls in my first school, which was something I was eager to engage with. I found that the boys I worked with enjoyed the dynamics of having a female teacher who valued their active contribution to lessons and challenged their perceptions of female PE teachers. I left this school to undertake a job in an international school in Italy. Opportunities to appreciate cultural diversity in sporting activities and perceptions of male and female students allowed me to cultivate a further understanding of, and reflection on, differences. It also was a space where rigid gendered expectations were to

become evident, especially on females and their pursuit of stereotypical masculine activities. A particular female student at the time, who held a desire and the competence to engage in football was ultimately put off this sport due to her parents' perceptions of the sport. Her parents preferred her to take up basketball as it was less of a man's sport. The experience highlighted the difficult situations students may be in and how they may be pressured by external perceptions. This was further felt as an educator when I returned to the UK to a lecturing position. During an aesthetic activities module, it was discussed with the group how they felt regarding their involvement. Key messages from some of the male students indicated an absence of experiences within this area during school years, a fear of being ridiculed, and apprehensions about losing their masculinity. This was a significant moment in my career that motivated me to critically reflect further. Therefore, all of the above experiences position me in a privileged place to approach my EdD from a perspective that aspires to hear the voices of learners, especially those that might feel uneasy in particular activities, and to understand how opportunities within PE can both liberate and restrict young people's identities.

Significance of the topic

A central feature of this thesis is to challenge the taken-for-granted messages that dance is not for *boys*. This thesis considers the intricacies of gender for young people, in which the relationship between gender, sport, PE, and dance entwine to influence the (re)negotiation of gendered identities.

Sporting activities can be associated with particular traits that align with masculinity and femininity (Metcalf, 2018). Such stereotypical assumptions and discourses about gender tend to see a reproduction of behaviours and expectations as

they tailor programmes of study to meet the supposed interests of males and females based on biological differences, permitting rigid forms of masculine and feminine identities to be performed (Gerdin, 2016). Dance is of interest in this study, given that, over the years, associations between effeminacy and homosexuality have made male involvement in dance a challenging space to negotiate and explore masculinities (Adams, 2005; Kimmel and Messner 2001; Lisahunter, 2019; Owen and Riley, 2020b; Risner, 2014; Watson, 2018). According to Paechter (2019, p. 2), an individual's gendered identity carries with it "social expectations", drawing back to the individual's sex. The investment from boys and men in dance, therefore, has impacted gendered and sexual identities, with narrow definitions of what it means to be male and to engage in dance. Over a decade ago, Risner (2010) called for researchers to acknowledge the duality of masculinity and homophobic attitudes for boys who participate in dance. It is consequently even more significant to appreciate the demands to examine the dominant discourses of boys in dance at the start of a new decade and to challenge assumptions concerned with stereotyping of activities.

Research on boys' gendered identities often tends to focus on a hegemonic version of their identities (Bartholomaeus, 2012; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005; Renold, 2007), and there has been a lack of research that explores how boy's identities have evolved, with much of the focus on older boys and men's identities (Anderson, 2009; McCormack and Anderson, 2011a; Owen and Riley, 2020a). The lack of research has been particularly evident of how boys' identities are evolving, if this is even the case, in primary school (5-11 year-olds). It is in this vein that the exploration of changing masculinities is of interest with boys to ascertain if aspects of inclusive masculinity theory (Anderson, 2009) can be used to explain the meaning-making and attitudes of boys

towards dance, with consideration of the taken-for-granted connection of dance and femininity. This newer theorisation of masculinity gives rise to possibilities of inclusive ways of being (Anderson, 2009) and therefore dance could be situated as a stage for transformations for boys and men (Christofidou, 2017; Holdsworth, 2013; Owen & Riley, 2020; Peterson & Anderson, 2012).

Aims of the research

This thesis aims to investigate, in-depth, the perspectives and experiences of Key Stage 2 boys regarding their involvement in dance through National Curriculum Physical Education (PE). It is specifically guided by the following research questions:

1. What evidence of inclusive masculinity is present in primary-aged boys?
2. How do primary-age boys perform masculinities in dance?
3. What do boys aspire for within lessons to encounter meaningful dance through PE?

Specifically, I explore how understandings of what it means to be a 'boy' influence involvement in dance through PE. Therefore, I delve into how gender and dance are intertwined to establish the boys' stories in this study, in specific socio-cultural settings during a set period, and not to make generalisations about gender in English primary schools. The research questions were developed based on reflection of the space that dance held within PE from my own experiences, and how male students negotiated those moments as learners. My interest was built around understanding the boys' identities, emotions and feelings as they intersected with dance. Exploring if boys were influenced by assumptions regarding dance, and stereotypical views regarding masculinity and femininity when engaging in activities, was a driving force behind my study.

As will be highlighted during the literature review (Chapter 2), my research questions evolved through the identification of gaps in the literature with the application

of inclusive masculinity theory with younger boys (RQ1). The emergence of Anderson's theory (2012) that discusses evolving masculine identities does so from a largely later adolescence and adult perspective. Exploring early adolescence was equally important in understanding the development of identity to add to the life phases. Furthermore, a prevalence of literature exploring the experiences of boys has been tackled from a hegemonic masculinity theoretical position, where there is limited acknowledgement of how masculinity is changing to permit greater freedom in the identities of boys and men. My research questions (RQ2 and 3) were developed to give voice to the boys. The voices were the heart of my doctorate and as an educator, those voices are a critical element to pedagogical and policy transformations. The desire to connect traditional qualitative methods (observations and focus group interviews) and more innovative participatory methods (write, draw, show, tell, emoji, and photographs) were intended to unearth a holistic appreciation of the experiences of boys in dance (RQ2 and RQ3). The importance and use of a range of methods that respectfully considered children are presented and discussed in Chapter 3. My research questions emphasise the importance of encompassing children's rights in the way that I am respectfully recognising that 'children have the right to say what they think... and have their opinions are taken into account (Article 12 of The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989).

Methodological and theoretical framework

The resilience of masculine identities has been acknowledged through inclusive masculinity theory (IMT) (Anderson, 2009). A key feature discusses how homophobia, which is defined as an apprehension of being culturally perceived as homosexual (McCormack & Anderson, 2014), is declining. When cultural homophobia is low, more

inclusive forms of behaviours exist for males, where men and boys exhibit diverse behaviours including those which would previously have aligned with femininity and homosexuality. Evolving inclusive masculine practices are demonstrated by more supportive relationships between men, evidenced in displays of 'homosocial proximity' (Anderson & McCormack, 2014; Anderson, 2012), emphasised by physical and emotional closeness. These studies suggest that men and boys are working actively to distance their working identities from homophobia and anti-femininity viewpoints more readily (Owen and Riley, 2020b). Feminised terrains can present spaces for boys and men with less stigmatisation, including cheerleading, rhythmic gymnastics, and figure skating (Adams, 2011; Anderson, 2005b, 2008; Chimot & Louveau, 2010). However, Owen and Riley (2020a) note, "little is known about how dance, a site historically defined in terms of femininity, might enable the performance of new masculinities" (p. 263).

My research considers young boys' perceptions of the possibilities of freedom in their performances of gender within dance. Not all boys accept and behave within adult-constructed boundaries and some will be comfortable with disruption and fluidity of gender expression as they navigate their identity. Therefore, there is a need for researchers to try and understand their lives to gauge possibilities of increased fluidity of gendered identities through child eyes rather than adult eyes (Cohen et al., 2013).

My passion for this thesis connects with an interpretivist lens, due to the understanding that meaning is socially constructed (Lincoln and Guba, 1986; Tuli, 2011). An interpretivist position supports diverse experiences from boys and how those experiences produced numerous forms of dance knowledge and create a multitude of social realities for boys. I use an innovative child-centred methodology to glean the data from boys in the understanding and meaning-making of their experiences of dance. The

research process comprised two main forms of data collection: observations and focus group interviews (FGIs) with a write, draw, show, tell, emoji (WDSTE) activity. The methodological work of Noonan (2017) used a child-centered approach referred to as, 'write, draw, show, tell (WDST) which offers inspiration in varied modes of communication that the boys can explore in my study. I advance the known method with the creative addition of emojis for it to become write, draw, show, tell, emoji (WDSTE). Emojis as a visual research tool can illuminate the voices of children, which as a tool has received minimal coverage in the literature (Fane et al., 2018). It is therefore of interest to use emojis to support the WDST approach in a capacity that will act as an additional visual language for the boys. In particular, locating dance as a movement form that draws upon emotions, I judge the use of emojis to facilitate a practical way of creatively connecting internal feelings that the boys may associate with dance. Therefore, incorporating multi-methods, including drawing, use of emojis, and pictures of dancers was fundamental to connecting with boys as they made sense of dance.

Chapter Summary and thesis structure

The thesis is divided into seven chapters. In Chapter 2, there is a review of the literature including an outline of gender, the subject of PE, the gendering of activities and pedagogical considerations, and meaningful learning experiences. This follows the conceptual framework for the study and an exploration of how masculinity has been theorised.

Chapter 3 describes the methodology for my research. A rationale for the study is provided, followed by a justification for the methodological approach selected. It begins

with ontological and epistemological considerations and explains how this leads to my choice of methodology and data collection methods. The multi-methods included the use of drawing, photographs, and, emojis to gather rich understandings of boys' experiences through focus group interviews.

Chapters 4, 5, and 6 detail my research findings relating to three key themes as being interconnected to the boys' experiences in dance: freestyling of masculinity, embodied inclusive masculinity, and inquiry and embodied learning in dance. Chapter 4 explores how boys negotiate their identities to imply a progressive masculine attitude, including distancing themselves from sexist ideals and the gendering of activities, instead favouring a gender-neutral perspective. Chapter 5 explores the enactment of masculinity from the boys within a space where they negotiate competence and meaningfulness. The examples of growing tactility and emotionally supportive behaviours between one another act as key indicators of coping strategies between boys. Chapter 6 addresses an important area of pedagogical consideration, which includes; lead and follow dance and owning the dance. There is a focus on the importance of meaningful learning encounters that are founded on social interactions, challenge, and fun, which the boys all think are absent.

Lastly, Chapter 7 provides a conclusion to the study. It draws together my findings concerning each of the research questions and explores methodological reflections. It follows by discussing the implications for practice and policy. The chapter culminates with recommendations for future research and a reflection of my journey as a researcher, before ending with a brief concluding statement.

This chapter has provided an introduction to my research, by setting the professional and personal backdrop to which my motivations came from concerning

working *with* boys to appreciate their lived experiences of dance in a primary school context. An outline of the significance of the study has been presented, while methodology and theoretical positioning have been explained, followed by an outline of the structure of my thesis. The next chapter will offer an in-depth outline of the intricacies of gender, discussing the experiences of boys in dance which have been researched. This will be supported by further explanation of the conceptual framework for the study.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter aims to examine existing research related to the intersection of dance and boys to situate the present study in the wider literature related to this topic. It examines the theorisation of masculinity according to Anderson (2009) and research that has utilised the theory in various settings facilitated the articulation of my research questions below, particularly in exploring boys' experiences within evolving cultures as well as studies that have considered the experiences and views of boys who have been involved in dance and considers pedagogical approaches to the teaching of dance within PE which have explored the tensions between how dance is located and what knowledge is valued.

Connell (1987; 1995) and Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) identified hegemonic masculinity theory (HMT) as one way of theorising masculinities, which offers a fundamental underpinning of gender and the position and intricacies of men in society. HMT has been perceived as arguably "the single most influential, recognized and utilized contribution to masculinity research" (Christensen and Jensen, 2014, p. 60). Nonetheless, an emergent conceptualisation of masculinity that draws upon inclusive masculinity theory (IMT) was the central framework guiding my study (Anderson, 2005b; 2009; 2014; Anderson et al., 2012). In doing so, the framework provided opportunities for discussion of the negotiations of boys' gendered identities through dance experiences that cannot be explained solely by hegemonic masculinity. The subsequent section will discuss the concept of gender and relations to the field of PE.

Gender

When gender is positioned as a social construct, it is linked to discussions regarding the gendering of sports and activities. For some children, they will “actively construct gender in specific social contexts of the classroom and the playground” (Messner, 2000, p. 766). Not always seen as passive recipients of the socialisation process, children can construct and reconstruct their identities in multiple and sophisticated manners from as young as two years old (Kane, 2006).

The interactions and presence of others mean that children take on their ‘roles’ and situate their ‘doing of gender’, meaning the social situations validate the separation of boys and girls biologically but also in how they perform by either demonstrating masculinity for a boy or femininity for a girl (West and Zimmerman, 1987). Children’s agency is often unacknowledged, perceiving children as mere recipients of the socialisation needs of adults around them (Messner, 2000). This is especially important given that bodies and behaviours cannot be separated (Paetcher, 2003) and where “children’s bodies are fundamental to their gender performances” (Paetcher, 2020, p. 4). Therefore, children’s agency and rights are key to reimagining their gendered identities.

Children in society

James and Prout (2015, p. 1) maintain that we are in a time they term to be “century of the child”, with the rights and place of a child being firmly positioned at the forefront of many institutional practices, including education. However, according to Tickle (2017), children and young people are constantly being positioned to be inspected and controlled due to their distance in attaining ‘adult’ status. Likewise, the thinking of Rousseau critiques the notion of preparing children for adulthood. Scholz (2010) claims that Rousseau was most interested in the notion that children should participate freely

and practice self-mastery to develop within childhood. This viewpoint encourages self-awareness for educators as they grapple with educating children and young people, and climates that can support the inherent desires of children, such as play and freedom.

The child as an *adult in waiting* view which has changed over the years has been problematic as the nature of childhood has evolved over time and with the conception of the socially constructed nature of children and childhood (James and Prout, 2015). This therefore must be taken into account in appreciating the construction and variability in children, even more so as a researcher to interpret the multiple realities of children (Jenks, 2004).

The changing nature of childhood prompted global commitment to protect the rights of children. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) thrust the significant of recognising children as individuals with agency that are entitled to rights to grow up being heard and respected.

Striving, therefore, to incorporate the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (1989) means to mindfully and respectfully recognise that “children have the right to say what they think... and have their opinions taken into account” (Article 12, UNRCR, 1989). Therefore, in this study, the boys’ active participation has been at the data gathering and interpretation during phase 2. In particular, the UNRCR (1989) was

Acknowledging the competence of children by providing opportunities for a range of activities, including drawing, writing, sharing, photography, and emojis, would not only be giving young people a greater sense of control in the research process, but also a choice of activities to participate in and which to decline. This is hoped to rebalance the power in favour of the participants, acknowledge the competence of children in their own right, and locate children as active contributors to research (Hunleth, 2011).

My study appreciates the 'child as a scientist' approach in experimenting and negotiating their identities in a way that seeks to understand the experiences of boys in dance. This is founded on the characteristic view that scientists and children are inquisitive in exploring their worlds, whilst acknowledging the complexity of children's thinking (Zimmerman and Klahr, 2018). However, Gopnik (1996) contends that viewing a child as a scientist may narrow the notion of integratedness, claiming that children are "less isolated" than scientists (p. 491), with social structures in their lives influencing their understandings. The intricacy, interconnectedness and competency of children's thinking are thus embraced in my study as I acknowledge the freedom and strength of boys in configuring their identities, whilst simultaneously understanding that children are "relational beings" (Horgan, 2017, p. 246).

In understanding the literature that examines physical education as a space for identity negotiation, Larsson et al. (2011) assert how "physical education seems to be a subject that is thoroughly permeated by gender" (p. 68), particularly in a way that conceives gender in a binary fashion. Likewise, there are beliefs that gender can be 'undone', especially through social connectedness that embodies a gender-neutral narrative (Darwin, 2017). Reacting to this in an appropriate theoretical and applied sense will enable researchers to show appreciation of gender fluidity and ways to enact gender (Paetcher, 2020). What follows will highlight how PE can create spaces to (re) negotiate gender.

Physical Education as a space for gender negotiations

Physical Education "is unique in that it is taught through physical activity in weekly practical lessons both indoors and outdoors, in a wide range of physical, creative and

aesthetic settings” (Office for Standards in Education, 2013, p. 4). However, PE is an educational space that has long been associated with the reproduction of feminine and masculine identities through particular activities (Connell, 2008; Paechter, 2003) and can create feelings of awkwardness, which can arise due to the nature of some activities that tend to conclude with a public performance (Markula, 2018). Public performances can often be connected with the establishment of ideas around an individual’s gendered identity (Gard, 2003) and can be directly related to how one perceives themselves in the light of others and how one is expected to behave according to normative ways of being, correlating with their sex. When some activity areas do not align fully with the supposed masculine arena of PE, there is a conflict for some in negotiating how to perform their gender during the activities. As a result, consequences for the disturbance of the gender order occur. The social setting of PE has been dominated by practices aimed at competition (Larsson & Redelius, 2008; Kirk, 2010), and the relationship between competitive sport and boys have been longstanding (Messner, 1990), something that educational sites are supporting through games-heavy PE curricula (Harris, Cale & Musson, 2012; Kirk, 2010). Consequently, PE itself has arranged to some degree the creation of feminine and masculine identities (Gerdin, 2017), and it has been suggested that teachers show a ‘masculine’ approach to the delivery of activities instead of a neutral approach (Azzarito, 2009), which has tended to value particular (masculine) identities at the expense of others (Hickey, 2008). When masculine identities are valued, boys can learn to disguise emotion, instead exemplifying strength and hardiness through sports and games. This holds consequences for dance that has previously been viewed as an activity not perceived to embody masculine practices, in turn creating a view of dance as the ‘antithesis’ of masculinity (Adams, 2005).

Dominant sporting discourse within PE has also acted to strengthen gendered patterns (Larsson et al., 2011), with a masculinised perception prevailing. Likewise, teacher-directed learning in PE acts to limit diverse learning encounters (Jones and Green, 2017). This restrains those not conforming to privileged ways of being, thereby denying opportunities within PE as a means of inclusively expressing who they are (Gerdin and Larsson, 2018). Individuals are not built to perform in a predetermined way, for example, to enjoy or dislike a particular activity. Instead, how we negotiate interest based on our identity is, in fact, a long-term social process (Paetcher, 2003), with ongoing practices that impart key messages about what is and is not acceptable based on gender. When curriculum practices place importance on performance and narrow discourses of masculinity, it ostracises those who possess other aptitudes, such as creativity and dexterity that may not be viewed to align with the normative sporting cultural notions associated with PE (Rothwell et al., 2020). The following section highlights pedagogical nuances for the position of dance in PE.

The position of dance in PE

Dance has featured in the Physical Education (PE) curriculum across numerous countries for a long time (Buck, 2006), yet can often reside on the periphery and be deemed an inconsequential part of education (Gard, 2008). Nonetheless, the inherent value of dance in England is underpinned by the Department for Education guidelines on programmes of study for this subject. The importance of dance is understood through the curriculum delivery expectations outlined for Key Stage One to Key Stage Three (ages 5-14) (DfE, 2013, p.2). Educators are encouraged to teach children at Key Stage 2 (the age on which this study is focussed), to 'perform dances using a range of movement patterns'. Such pedagogical discourse privileges the 'physical' learning domain, which emphasises

dance as performative. Through the subject content of PE, the document highlights that children in a general sense should “enjoy communicating, collaborating and competing with each other”, “develop an understanding of how to improve” and “learn how to evaluate” (DfE, 2013, p. 2). The programme of study however focuses on establishing ideas about legitimate knowledge for PE on the whole and not specifically dance. In this sense, the reference specifically to dance focuses on bodily performances, without acknowledging the aesthetic dimension of dance. In discussing the discursive position of dance in PE, Mattsson and Lundvall (2015) engage with how Swedish PE curricula have developed to frame dance since 1962. Themes that emerged from their discourse analysis highlighted three key positions that dance held within curriculum frameworks: dance as a cultural preserver, dance as bodily exercise, and dance as expression. Insight into the valued knowledge for educators to work towards with subject content appeared to marginalise ‘dance as expression’ notion over the years, with its emphasis on “embodied senses and feelings” (Mattsson & Lundvall, 2015, p. 7). In contrast, the ‘dance as bodily exercise’ held a consistent position with curricula in Sweden, positioning dance as physical exercise, with what Mattsson and Lundvall term a ‘performance code’ (2015, p.11), creating climates defined by control rather than ones embedded in freedom. It appears that the foregrounding of creating dances is not perceived as legitimately valued, both through Mattsson and Lundvall’s study and through the programmes of study available to educators in England.

In some instances, due to teacher autonomy with PE curriculum matters, there remains the choice of removing dance, if, for example, the teaching personnel do not fit with the subject-matter; in contrast, there have been calls for the provision of dance to be increased (MacLean, 2018). Perhaps choice regarding the removal of dance from the

curriculum aligns with research indicating doubts from PE teachers of the place of dance within its subject and for others, it may come down to low confidence levels to deliver this subject-matter at all (Lundvall & Meckbach, 2008; Sanderson, 1996).

Intentions of dance

Dance can offer an education based on participation in movement that connects to emotions (MacLean, 2018). As a movement concept, it is one of several activities that can provide opportunities to develop “physical, cognitive, creative, expressive and emotive capacities” (Cuellar-Moreno, 2016, p. 743). Furthermore, some dance genres can encourage children to work cooperatively, as the subject often relies on peers moving together with empathy and nearby (Robinson and Aronica, 2018). Martin et al. (2018) contend that teaching dance can be justified along three lines: to provide for freedom in movements through creative processes; to share and celebrate cultural dance, or through thematically mapping other subjects alongside dance to support cross-curriculum learning. Martin et al. (2018) encourage educators of dance to work in partnership with learners, whereby the educator assumes a facilitator role; this can be structured in a way that allows them to have some onus over the direction of learning, yet also the freedom to hand responsibility to the learners at some point also.

The multifaceted pedagogical approaches to dance can reveal a conflict of the intentions of dance in educational settings (Mattsson and Lundvall, 2015). When dance emphasises the educative experiences through expressing freely in collaboration with others it can be a “central component” to programmes of study within PE (Steinberg and Steinberg, 2016, p. 189). Yet, according to Mattsson and Larsson (2020, p. 2), dance in school PE has also been founded on ‘learning a dance, rather than learning to dance’.

When dance is taught in this way, it values the recall and remembering of dances at the expense of the learners creating dances. It is suggested that an emphasis on dance technique, whereby learners are encouraged to replicate teacher moves that embody the content, is prominent in western-based dance forms (Barr and Oliver, 2016). Dryburgh (2019, p.9) identifies that “learning through dance technique has the potential to transform the students, both in terms of their bodily capabilities and their sense of self in the world”. There is of course much to be said for developing an understanding of the technical requirements of dance, whereby balancing teacher-directed approaches with a student-centred inquiry. However, for dance to be delivered with minimal student input eradicates the aesthetic and creative benefits that can be promoted through dance, when learning encounters can scaffold meaningful experiences.

As an activity, dance has the scope to provide inclusive learning experiences if teachers can acknowledge that there is no right or wrong way to dance (Torzillo and Sorin, 2016). Putting children at the heart of dance as artists of their movements, rather than mimicking teacher movements, can have an empowering influence on children’s decision-making in dance (Sansom, 2009). Nonetheless, placing children at the centre of learning in dance has not been consistently achieved. This is due to a disparity of qualifications and experiences in teaching and pedagogical concepts for some dance specialists (Alsteen, 2019). The educational background of externally employed dance specialists, with a focus on technical proficiency (Risner & Barr, 2015), holds consequences for embedding diverse teaching approaches to support different outcomes other than performative ones.

Dance can align with child-centred approaches to learning and Chappell (2007) explores the pedagogical focus on harnessing creativity. A focus on primary school level,

her work offers much to reflect upon for educational dance. Dilemmas for teachers following a creative dance approach included cultivating a climate for learners to feel inspired and open to be able to try to create dances. This resonates with making it meaningful for children from the beginning and allowing them to feel the personal relevance. Teachers within Chappell's (2007) study recognised that when elements of creative practice were evident in learners, that this was infrequent in nature. Pedagogical tensions that related to ways of knowing in dance, with the body and through verbal enactment can be aspects educators reflect on to harness creative outputs. Likewise, understanding the nuanced social interactions and their helpfulness in becoming creative are places worthy of consideration. Collaborative creativity can be developed by a careful child-centred approach encompassing gradual stepping back from direct teaching to moment of learners owning and feeling empowered with others for the work undertaken.

Despite the opportunities to follow the inherent connection with dance and creativity, the performativity climate, evident in many school contexts, including later years in primary school settings in England (Key Stage 2) present contextual implications on the application of such teaching and learning approaches that foster creativity. For PE, this has meant striving to compete with what are deemed more academic fields, such as Literacy and Numeracy, with which pupil performances are measured according to national testing (Jones and Green, 2015). The National Curriculum testing at this point in primary school in England remains as 'high stakes' for educators (Johnson, 2013), with the testing emphasising compliance (Ball, 2013), and accountability of learner achievement firmly placed on teachers (Collins et al., 2010). There is potential for this high stakes climate to inevitably influence the teaching and learning approaches executed at this phase of learning, creating 'tension' for teachers in personalising their approaches (ibid).

Such is the influence of high staked climates that it can also impact upon other subjects, such as PE in lessening its status, and can often give way to other deemed more significant areas, such as tests (Harris et al., 2012).

In a focus on testing the consequences are on teachers having to ready learners for testing through memorisation, and creating hurdles in the production of collaborative critical inquirers by minimising innovative pedagogical approaches at this stage (Walker, 2014).

For those that do encounter dance within the curriculum, it has also suffered from gender assumptions and stereotypical views (Wright, 2013), and teaching that reifies compliance and conformity, whereby a reproduction of actions is carried out in place of inquiring and experimenting with various actions (Risner, 2010). According to some researchers, dance in the west has said to be an activity area dominated by females, making the male population feel like a minority (Schmalz and Kerstetter, 2006; Garret and Wrench, 2018; Risner, 2010). Boys that participate in dance risk name-calling and abuse at the hands of their peers, with comments such as 'gay', not 'real men' and 'queer' heard if such a supposed boundary is crossed (Holdsworth, 2013; Larsson, Redelius and Fagrell, 2011). This serves to justify the unsurprising claims that boys have tended to evade dance participation, especially in adolescence when they are fundamentally striving to emphasise clarity in their identity, both sexually and gendered (Holdsworth, 2013, p. 170). When subjects are socially constructed through pedagogical practices to exemplify particular gendered behaviours, they act to divide and label individuals. In this instance, sport and the arts collide in how they are portrayed and therefore are positioned to disturb gendered behaviours for males and females. This can result in creating distance for some males from the dance as expression and art as it can be moulded to appear as

though it is not a masculine activity. As a consequence, dance has been positioned to contradict the gendered and sometimes sexual identities of boys, whilst sport has tended to endorse masculine identities for some boys (Adams, 2005). Yet Gard (2001) argued insightfully that dance can be a space to challenge how movements reproduce gender and sexual assumptions, countering stereotypical assumptions about how male and female bodies move.

Masculinity has nonetheless been pigeonholed as 'anti-femininity, homophobia, emotional restrictiveness, competitiveness, toughness, and aggressiveness' (Espelage, 2013, p. 37). Such dominant forms of masculinity construction and polarity between the genders in the view that sport and the expressive or creative movement act as opposites on a scale of masculinity do have repercussions for those that are interested in dance, especially if they are male. This provides further incentive for the exploration and understanding of boys' negotiation of who they are concerning what they do with their bodies in dance, how it is taught, and the interactions as learners that are encouraged. Seeing gender as a prescription for what activities children can take part in is to be avoided and can be accomplished by creating spaces for all to learn and engage, irrelevant of gender, without negative consequences (Robinson & Whitty, 2013; Tsoules Soriano, 2010). Part of the issue lies with the perceived notion that dance and gymnastics as sporting activities are associated with signs of femininity (Larsson et al., 2009) by a substantial section of the dominant culture (Ferdun, 1994). When this is framed within the PE curriculum, likewise it has implications for the freedom of gendered identities. This is in part due to the formation of masculine hierarchies that occur through social practices in PE (Tischler and McCaughtry, 2011), which places value on competitive and physical elements over equally important elements harnessed through other activities. The PE

curriculum thus can be seen to legitimise particular ways of being, with emphasis on outcomes such as skilled bodily performances (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). Therefore PE maintaining strong connections to sport has implications for the way children perceive the curriculum, teaching, and activities as portrayed to them, which can marginalise those seeking to embody alternative ways of being.

Physical Education as a subject bears particular masculine and feminine overtones where a hegemonic masculinity stance overrides all other identities (Larsson et al., 2014). Therefore, the utilisation of gender-neutral approaches in schooling would contest the roots of norms within activities, giving children the freedom to negotiate a plethora of identities (Metcalf and Lindsey, 2020). An approach that seeks to facilitate learners to challenge dominant practices and ways of being is a critical teaching perspective. Critical pedagogy as an approach strives to acknowledge those marginalised within education and to empower learners (Freire, 1970). The assumptions of critical theory support the idea that gender, class, and race can have significant differences in one's view of reality (Scotland, 2012; Denzin and Lincoln, 2003). Critical theory unsettles prevailing discourses that act to ostracise individuals or groups by constraining their autonomy in education (McInerney, Smyth, and Down, 2011). Critical theory is akin to feminist theory whereby there is an enthusiastic challenge of interpretations to seek change. Feminist pedagogical approaches towards dance have placed value on the teacher and learner as collaborators, with emphasis on diversifying learning through learner input and reflective thinking (Barr and Oliver, 2016). The connectivity between theory applied practice and gender as a lens for equality has seen feminist pedagogy embrace imaginative discovery as a key learning feature (Stinson, 2010). Such approaches to teaching dance have reaped benefits for children and young people by affording learning encounters that encourage respect for

each other's differences through collaborative work. Through their research with primary-aged children in dance, Steinberg and Steinberg (2016) concluded that children work diligently to protect their self-esteem in dance by choosing to create dances with familiar partners, inducing the young learners to "feel safe" (p.199). They also found that, in the role of protecting their sense of self, learners shared concerns regarding feedback from peers. In her thesis termed 'dancing around the edges', Miriam Torzillo (2015) found that children's preferences for learning encounters in dance were founded in lessons that allowed for collaborative experiences, where communicating of ideas took place and ultimately where children were challenged yet gained pleasure from their learning. In framing learning encounters that provide opportunities for learners to gain positive meaning-making from activities, the next section outlines pedagogical considerations related to feminist and critical pedagogy to support gender-neutral possibilities in dance.

Meaningful dance in PE

The work of Paulo Freire (1970), through his banking model of education, highlights a relationship between teacher and learner founded on teachers imparting information and knowledge to learners, with the latter assuming a passive role in this process. Freire's view of education contends that learner autonomy is limited, restricting possibilities for ownership, and fundamentally creating an oppressive and unjust situation. Freire comments that there is an intricate relationship between aspirations and reality for those that are oppressed. He claims that they "discover that without freedom they cannot exist authentically. Yet, although they desire authentic existence, they fear it". (p. 48). Freire views the oppressed as torn between complicity, and apathy (Pouwels, 2019), and freedom of choice, all of which educational systems should show

consideration of through teaching approaches. His notion of problem-posing learning offers considerable scope for greater learner autonomy in education, which can be a vehicle for the cultivation of “hope, love, humility, and trust” (Freire, 1970, p. 71). Correspondingly, another advocate of problem-posed learning is offered through the theoretical perspectives of engaged pedagogy (hooks, 1994). This approach offers awareness of cultivating pedagogical climates harnessing freedom and empowerment of learners. Inflexibility in pedagogical approaches can impact on learner’s emotional state and overall satisfaction from learning. To cultivate ownership and critical thinking educators should shift from seeing education as more than measures of memorisation and instead view teacher and learner as co-investigators (Mayo, 2012). hooks’ asserted that learning should liberate individuals in becoming resistant to obedience and authority. This resonates with her ideas of learners becoming active in their participation whereby teaching serves as a “catalyst that calls everyone to become more and more engaged, to become active participants in learning” (hooks, 1994, p. 11). This can manifest when educators reflect on the prevailing discourses of seeing and doing in education (Pouwels, 2019). In immersing more as a collective, both teachers and learners can become entwined in a progressive approach, where discussion and interactions hold significance (Berry, 2010). Such willingness to immerse from the teacher’s perspective carries with it a degree of vulnerability in stepping away from known methods and opening up to embracing learners’ lived experiences (ibid). Pedagogical theorising highlights the importance of teacher and learner well-being and for the increased possibilities of dialogue in this relationship and learning climate (Boys, 1999). That means that teachers must be actively involved and committed to a process of self-actualization that promotes

their well-being if they are to teach in a manner that empowers students (hooks, 1994, p. 15).

Educators can glean much from critical, feminist, and engaged pedagogy by considering factors that help sustain interest in dance by allowing self-chosen groups and well-planned opportunities for feedback in paired and smaller group settings. The possibilities of working *with* learners to empower them through dance are imaginable when teachers can create climates placing importance on creativity (Meiners & Garrett, 2015). This can also be attained when education is grounded in appreciating the learners' experiences that they bring (Freire, 1970) and when ownership is placed with the learners, giving a voice and choice to their PE experiences (Lynch et al., 2020). With dance located in the PE curriculum, it is therefore claimed that the significance of exploring such settings to further understand how learners negotiate the meaning of movement is high (Lynch and Sargeant, 2020). Beni et al. (2017) maintain that focusing on meaningfulness within PE can support involvement that is based on more intrinsic motivational attitudes that can be related to continuing lifelong involvement in sport and physical activity. After reviewing the literature on meaningfulness in PE over three decades, Beni et al. (2017) shared elements of young people's views of meaningfulness characterised by lessons where importance was placed on social interactions, challenge, fun, motor competence, personally relevant learning, and delight. From the review, Beni et al. (2017) highlight the need for learners to engage with others to develop positive connections with peers and teachers in their learning climate. The importance of modification of activities by teacher and learner so that appropriate learning encounters challenge the individual needs of learners should also take place. Lessons should provide moments of pleasure and delight, which supports the efforts of the learners. When lessons include moments of joy and are

deemed fun (Kretchmar, 2006), they can provide lasting memories for learners. The development of physical skills within lessons was a key feature from their review, where learners that are encouraged to become competent and see themselves as competent made their experiences meaningful. Lastly for a learning encounter to resonate with learners it needs to be personally relevant to who they are and the lives they lead, to create meaningfulness.

Application emphasising such features has been evident in primary school settings with Nilges' (2004) US-based research with fifth-grade learners in a creative dance unit of work. It was found through observations, semi-structured interviews, and journaling that teachers used particular strategies to promote meaning through movement. Open-ended activities harnessed creativity, engaging learners in dialogue through asking questions, and where learning tasks demonstrated modification according to each unique learner making learning meaningful. Torzillo and Sorin (2016) likewise offer findings that span across three primary schools, with a specific focus on a primary school dance. They came to conclusions that through their qualitative work children shared aspects the authors themselves did not define as meaningfulness, yet relate to Beni et al.'s (2017) features and teaching approaches that are deemed supportive of creating meaningful moments. The experiences of social connectedness through activities were viewed integrally to learning experiences in dance. The children shared that working with others allowed for the collaborative construction of knowledge. Similar to Nilges (2004), they also found that questioning opportunities with children, allowed learners to enhance their knowledge base. Specifically with dance, by educators sharing the choreographic process with children, it can be "a starting point for more effective and achievable pedagogy" (Torzillo and Sorin, 2016, p. 39)

Boys and dance

The research landscape over the past three decades has identified mixed responses from boys about dance participation. Research dating back to the 1990s highlighted how some boys displayed a disinclination towards dancing or did not admit an inclination towards dance (Kerr-Berry, 1994; Wright, 1996). All too often, however, boys have held a less than positive perception of dance than girls (Sanderson, 2001), where boys often have experienced a challenging of traditional masculine identities (McKearney and Edward, 2014) or feelings of social isolation (Williams, 2003). Additionally, girls have held stronger intentions to partake in dance as an extra-curricular option in comparison to boys (Anderson et al., 2017). When boys engage in dance, normative notions of masculinity often constrain the opportunities and satisfaction of engagement (Gard, 2008; Risner, 2009, 2014). Research also suggests that dance produces negative emotional responses from boys within dance lessons, therefore their identity has had to be negotiated and supported carefully (Gard, 2008; Risner, 2014).

In diverse experiences, boys embrace both negotiated and assumed feminised and masculinised traits to achieve in dance (Amado et al., 2016; Steinberg and Steinberg, 2016; Watson and Rodley, 2015). The research of Amado et al. (2016) explored factors that engaged students during dance classes in PE in a school context in Spain. Their findings highlighted how a direct-teaching and a more creative inquiry teaching style impacted boys' and girls' perceived competence. It was concluded that boys were able to feel more comfortable when the teaching was based on creative inquiry rather than direct-instruction, allowing them to modify the choreographed steps or actions in line with their ability. In contrast when the teaching was more direct a growing sense of incompetence was found from boys' experiences, with many feeling incompetence

stemmed from feelings of inadequacy in replicating the execution of teacher moves. The authors attributed this finding in particular to boys' desire to engage cognitively with material and to be able to generate ideas and play with them. Likewise, in the work of Watson and Rodley (2015) in their focus on a boys-only cheerdance group in the UK, they found the dynamics of an all-boy context offered a safe space for their identities, which allowed them to focus on their capabilities without comparisons to girls. Also of note, it was found that the boys were able to acknowledge some moves were deemed 'feminine', yet articulated a sense of respect for girls on the whole, and in how the moves offered breadth to their cheerdance. Steinberg and Steinberg (2016) investigated how 9-11-year-old girls and boys perceived creative dance lessons in PE in a school setting in Germany. They concluded that learners felt more secure and experienced delight when engaging in group work in dance, which eradicated feelings of awkwardness in lone work. Structuring learning encounters with others additionally supported the protection of self-esteem with learners. It is evident from the research that some boys recognise that there is nothing wrong with embracing their interest in dance whilst also identifying as male, and embracing feminised ways of moving. Although negative feelings were identified from 12-18-year-old boys' dance experiences in Williams' (2003) ethnographic research, the findings also show that in the face of destructive experiences and a lack of social support, the boys still maintained involvement in their dance study and internalised the fears and apprehensions associated with their involvement. Williams' (2003) findings also highlight the powerful policing within dance environments, foregrounded in homophobia that the boys experienced through teachers, parents, and peers' use of language about gendered bodily movements.

Particular dance genres have reproduced dominant discourses about the nature of the identities of dancers. Research conducted by Haltom and Worthen (2014) with male college dance majors in the US demonstrated how dancers viewed and performed masculinity to align with a valuing of heterosexuality within the genre of ballet. The idea that some dance genres, in particular ballet, can be socially constructed as a gender codified sport/activity (Haltom and Worthen, 2014), holding particular connotations of femininity, presents barriers to participation, experiences, and feelings of boys within graceful dance forms. The results were framed with the use of Connell's hegemonic masculinity theory and show some contestation of masculine performances. The male dancers were understood to be challenging conceptions of hegemony by representing a more progressive masculine identity, one built on the fluidity of feminine and masculine technicality in their dance. Representations of dance must be thoughtfully conceived even though diverse constructions and practices of femininity and masculinity exist across local and cultural levels (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Hoffman, 2001). However, breakdancing sits as a more gender-neutral dance genre for children and young people, especially as a site for "identity construction and a sense of belonging" (Langnes and Fasting, 2016, p. 349). While some claim that break dancing has the potential to remove gendered notions of movements within dance (Gunn, 2012), other theorists contend that breakdance frames normative notions of masculinity through the valuing of the physicality of movements over gracefulness (Holdsworth, 2013).

Gendered boundaries are not rigid constructs and can in some spaces go through reification and resistance to the normative ideals (Anderson, 2005b; Mennesson, 2009). However, instances, where defined boundaries prevail for the assumed gendered behaviour of boys and girls, can act to alienate those who traverse the boundaries

constructed with and by those around them. When individuals are positioned differently, power begins to be evidenced, with hegemonic ideals rising over others (Sensoy and DiAngelo, 2017) and existing as a key feature of the gender order (Griffin, 2018).

Perceptions of dance

Dance has been perceived as a “female world” (Mennesson, 2009, p. 174), with inferences of femininity and therefore non-masculine behaviours (Risner, 2002; 2007; 2009; Williams, 2003). The detriment of stereotyping activities and gender norms associated with activities can accentuate potential opportunities or constrictions for young people’s engagement in physical activity (Metcalf, 2018, p.682). This leads back to the notion that when dance is positioned as an art form or in creative and expressive capacities, it will tend to be observed that some boys may distance themselves from this activity, due to its inferences of femininity (Langnes, 2018), and therefore non-masculine behaviours (Risner, 2009). Such an oppressive relationship between boys and dance can be theoretically drawn back to Connell’s hegemonic masculinity theory, yet in contrast in more recent studies in Anglo-American cultures suggest there is less apprehension concerned with being perceived as homosexual or feminine (Anderson, 2009; McCormack, 2011a; McCormack, 2011b; Owen, 2014; Owen and Riley, 2020b), therefore boys could see dance favourably.

Over the years, associations between male involvements in dance have been compared to effeminacy and homosexuality (Adams, 2005; Kimmel and Messner 2001; Lisahunter, 2019; Owen and Riley, 2020b; Risner, 2014; Watson, 2018). Consequently, investment from boys and men in dance has impacted gendered and sexual identities. Ten years ago, Risner (2010, p.60) called for researchers to acknowledge the duality of

masculinity and homophobic attitudes for boys who participate in dance. It is therefore even more significant to heed the calls to examine the dominant discourses of boys in dance at the start of a new decade and to challenge assumptions concerned with stereotyping of activities. More recent findings of inclusive masculinities have given rise to possibilities of dance to be situated as a stage for transformations for boys and men (Christofidou, 2017; Holdsworth, 2013; Owen & Riley, 2020; Peterson & Anderson, 2012). Therefore, by using IMT I will attempt to uncover the intersection of young masculinities and dance. The boys in the aforementioned research which spans across a few decades sees boys negotiate the intersection of dance and gender by detaching who they are from the activity; in this vein, they remain masculine, and consequentially their gender or sexuality is refrained from being put under the spotlight by not engaging in dance. The plethora of research shows an appreciation that some boys recognise that there is nothing wrong with being a boy and liking dance, whilst internalising their fears and stigmatisation associated with their involvement, whilst embracing feminine and masculine elements.

Much of the research conducted with boys and men in dance is based on orthodox forms of masculinity. Homophobia, sexism, emotional indifference, and heterosexuality have often been synonymous with orthodox masculinity (Anderson, 2009). A diverse masculinity theory is increasingly becoming more common-place, one that holds an inclusive and progressive version of identity for boys and men and one which is further removed from the aforementioned traditional viewpoints (Anderson, 2009; 2012; 2014). The gap that remains however is to explore if this is the same for young boys who negotiate masculinity, which my study seeks to illuminate.

The next section discusses the literature that has theorised gender and masculinity specifically as complex and fluid in power relations and will provide the inception of the theoretical framework to the study.

Theorising masculinities

A particular conceptual model of gender identity known as hegemonic masculinity (1987) was first coined by Raewyn Connell in the late 1980s, which is influenced by Antonio Gramsci's thoughts on hegemony. Gramsci is most commonly associated with his ideas on cultural hegemony, where he argued how a dominant ruling class functioned to uphold the social class order in capitalist societies. The prevailing norms spread and displayed by this class ensured the policing of non-normative behaviour and therefore maintained the status quo (Hoare and Sperber, 2015). Connell's use of Gramsci's thinking extends to gender theory in an attempt to unravel complexities tied to patriarchy. The model debates men and masculinities about a *dominant* form of masculinity, often detached from other forms of masculinity that exist in a particular culture or setting to maintain gender inequality (Jewkes et al., 2015). The ambiguity within this model is around who would be characterised to fit into the practice of hegemonic masculinity and who complies with such a position (Wetherell and Edley, 1999). For Connell (2005), she contends that the combination of domination and marginalisation results in the production of a culturally valued archetype of masculinity, which within a given context some males will work closely to embody this way of being to have the status that it is afforded (Anderson, 2011). In the elevation of a masculinised status, men are seen to achieve this by demonstrating misogynistic and homophobic approaches (White and Anderson, 2017). In this vein, marginalisation stratifies men outside of an orthodox form of masculinity lower in Connell's hierarchical view of a gender order. The use of

homophobia to police men and their gendered behaviours was believed to be linked to the social attitudes towards homosexuals in the 1980s, with the dawn of AIDS as one significant marker (Clements and Field, 2014; Loftus, 2001). The relationship between such attitudes and homosexuality at this point had the effect of men distancing themselves and stigmatising those who were deemed or behaved in ways that insinuated a man to be gay or feminine (Anderson, 2009; White and Anderson, 2017). In contrast, the inception of same-sex marriages over the last twenty years across Europe has in turn led to fundamentally more liberal attitudes towards homosexuals, especially in younger people (Abou-Chadi and Finnigan, 2019).

In appreciating hegemonic masculinity for the present study with young boys, it became clear that this could present implications. Researchers contend that an application of hegemonic masculinity theory offers limited scope and critical appraisal with young boys (Renold, 2005; Renold, 2007; Bartholomaeus, 2012). Such absence of consideration of the concept of hegemonic masculinity with boys rather than men is appraised and identified by Bartholomaeus (2012) in particular, who states that, in Connell's conceptual thinking there is little mention of boys within her theory and that researchers within gender have applied hegemonic masculinity without questioning the application of adult masculinities to child masculinities. It is suggested that hegemonic masculinity as a model has not been interpreted to take into consideration the social dynamics of gender and age (Bartholomaeus, 2012), especially primary-aged children (Renold, 2007). Admittance by Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) of the necessity to address masculinities across the ages, precisely in youth and childhood has been challenged to explore the transformative nature of masculinities. This presents introspection and criticality of the utilisation of HMT as the theoretical framework for the

current study and offered clarity on the complications of applying adult conceived masculinities with boys.

In Bartholomaeus' empirical findings, she has critically appraised the concept of hegemonic masculinity and its use with young boys (Bartholomaeus, 2012; Bartholomaeus and Tarrant, 2016). Suggestions that some of the main tenets of the theory are questionable, including the notion that boys can even sustain a dominant position are debated. For Bartholomaeus (2012), boys maintain an 'outsider' position with dominant forms of masculinity, especially within education, which exemplifies the problematic nature of hegemony for boys in this context as they "occupy ambiguous social positions" (Bartholomaeus and Tarrant, 2016, p. 7). This outsider status is deemed to be about not only male adults but female adults likewise within an education setting. These findings go against the grain of the ideas behind hegemonic masculinity, in which females are subordinated and therefore the lack of access for boys to the privilege that some men hold in the conceptual thinking is not evident for boys because their status as a child overrides their sex as a male (Thorne, 1993) and the power that any form of hegemonic masculinity supposedly holds. HMT thus supports an 'adult-centric' theorising in comprehending masculinities that emphasises the implications of drawing upon this approach with young boys (Renold, 2005, p. 67).

For my study, the concept of hegemonic masculinity is only partially useful in understanding young masculinities. Consequently the scope of masculinity literature offers a consideration of the potentialities with young boys in the 21st century. In making theoretical sense of apparent changes and the fluidity of gendered behaviours from men and boys in the last decade, McCormack (2011) maintains that there are other perspectives to consider in the social construction of masculinity and the stratification of

behaviours from men. These include a consideration of how improved attitudes towards homosexuals and females have provided a vehicle for more inclusive masculinities (Anderson, 2009, 2011, 2012; McCormack & Anderson, 2014).

A discussion of the work of Eric Anderson will develop on and advance the work of Connell through inclusive masculinity theory (IMT) in the following section and thus will be used as my frame of reference throughout the study.

Inclusive masculinity theory

In building upon the theorising of masculinities reconciled by Connell (1987; 1995) and Connell and Messerschmidt (2005), the empirical research of Eric Anderson (2009) provides answers as to how the gender order transformed within contrasting cultural contexts. The transformation that Anderson and colleagues highlight is seen through a progressive change in attitudes towards homosexuality. The concept of homophobia is understood in the theory by an apprehension with, and of being perceived as, homosexual (McCormack & Anderson, 2014). Anderson (2012) discusses three phases in cultures that have an impact on the behaviours and customs of men and boys. In the first context, he highlights that when there is high homophobia that men will display orthodox masculinity. This will largely demonstrate an emotional detachment with other men due to physicality and emotionality having connections with femininity and homosexuality. Similarly, men will use homophobic discourse to police the behaviours of other men to maintain the gender order. In doing so, they will also hold sexist attitudes and demonstrate prowess through sport (Anderson, 2012). As attitudes evolve and there is a diminishing of homophobia, men are demonstrating changes to their behaviours. It is claimed that two forms of masculinity will co-exist, without domination over each other. Orthodox masculinity will reside and reluctance to contravene into feminised

activities will remain. However, orthodox masculinity will now exist alongside a more inclusive and progressive form of masculinity, without homophobic discourse as a policing tool. The more progressive form of masculinity will highlight homosocial tactility with and between men, where there is a blurring of “the lines between masculinity and femininity as advances of men’s identities became diversified” (Anderson, 2012, p. 96). The final shift is within a culture of diminished homophobia, built on the premise of homophobic discourse losing the influence, where a plethora of attributes among men will be admired, and lessened hegemony and hierarchical stratification will be evident. This will result in once outcast males now experiencing social inclusion, with less differentiation in the behaviours of males and females (Anderson, 2012).

The philosophy offers a structure in understanding aspects of gender in terms of power relations (De Boise, 2015) similar to Connell’s, yet Anderson postulates that Connell omits an appreciation of the intricacies of the dynamics of masculinity within various contexts where cultural homophobia is either low or declining. Circumstances that are predisposed to homophobia being present are: 1) a culture of opposition towards homosexuality; 2) the acceptance that within one’s social circles that homosexuality exists; and 3) the association of femininity with homosexuality (Anderson, 2014).

The work of McCormack (2012) and McCormack and Anderson (2010) investigate the possibilities of how men within the context of inclusiveness can maintain distance from homosexuality, whilst upholding the boundaries of heterosexuality through recuperative identity management strategies. Firstly, *heterosexual recuperation* denotes a strategy that is “used when boys fear their heterosexuality is under question” (McCormack and Anderson, 2011a, p. 846) and therefore acts in protection of one’s

identity, presenting their masculinity to contest homosexuality. The two other strategies of recuperation are referred to as *conquestial recuperation*, where boys' performances of masculinity demonstrate an objectification of women, commonly accompanied with boastfulness of desires and conquests of a heterosexual nature; and the further identity strategy is coined *ironic recuperation*. This is where boys' performances of masculinities radiate and dramatise aspects of desire for the same-sex or effeminacy in staking claims of being heterosexual. McCormack and Anderson (2012, p. 847) claim the latter strategy of ironic recuperation functions as a "social mechanism", enabling boys to negotiate narrow constructions of masculinity by renegotiating their performances.

This is of interest in the current study as the conceptualisation of 21st-century masculinities may extend to how the boys explore their identity in and through dance. From the plethora of research conducted by Eric Anderson, Mark McCormack, and other scholars, there have been attempts to offer breadth in the social contexts where inclusive masculinities have been investigated. Such examples include a range of sports, such as college-age cheerleaders (Anderson, 2005b), rugby players (Anderson and McGuire, 2010), footballers (Adams, 2011; Gaston, Anderson and Magrath, 2017), undergraduate degree students (Anderson et al., 2012; Anderson and White, 2017), in high school educational settings (Anderson 2008; Anderson, Adams, and Rivers 2012; Blanchard et al., 2017; McCormack, 2012) and industrial work settings (Roberts, 2013). However, there seems sparse evidence of theorising of masculinities within the sphere of dance and in primary schools, which this study hopes to answer.

In noting specific support of inclusive masculinity within school settings and across feminised activities, the theoretical foundations of IMT have been applied and offer further support in the studies by McCormack (2011, 2012) where he discovered that high

school boys were more physical with one another and did not advocate language of a homophobic nature. To this end, with reduced misogyny and positive attitudes towards homosexuals within some of the named studies; in other studies, there was found to be a more supportive mind set from males towards once deemed feminised activities or sports (Anderson and McCormack, 2014). This included in cheerleading, where assumptions may be held regarding the desire for men to assert hegemonic forms of masculinity within a highly perceived feminised setting to demonstrate power, instead, the opposite was witnessed and inclusive forms of behaviour were demonstrated (Anderson, 2005b). Such findings where “decreased sexism” (Anderson, 2009, p.9) are evident amongst males is claimed to be widespread (Roberts, 2014) in its evolution and offers an opportunity towards scrutinising power structures and discrimination towards homosexuals and females. Not only is IMT founded on changes towards homosexuals, it equally acknowledges that improved valuing of femininity is occurring. De Boise (2015) in appraising IMT does offer some glimpse of what can be hoped to be achieved by claiming men who act and behave in more inclusive forms can provide an unrestricted masculine identity that is not bound in a hierarchical relationship.

Heterosexual men can display ‘homosocial proximity’ (Anderson & McCormack, 2014; Anderson, 2012), thus being close emotionally and physically, developing ‘bromances’ (Anderson, 2014; Zorn & Gregory, 2005) with other men without being guarded about their identity. Furthermore, a growing appreciation of those qualities that are assumed to fit with females have been more readily incorporated into the lives of men and therefore a more positive association with femininity and women has been evidenced (Peterson & Anderson, 2012; Adams, 2011; Anderson & McGuire, 2010). A significant area of the theory highlights that with a decline in prejudice towards females

and homosexuals, in addition to a weakening of the dominant ideology of patriarchy, the identities of boys and men will flourish (Anderson, 2012). This espouses more fluidity in the gendered behaviours of boys and men that also comprises less stigmatisation, which within a culture of diminished hysteria will showcase more similarities than disparities in behaviour from that of girls and women (Ibid). Much of the research supports the idea that young men and boys are distancing themselves from orthodox forms of masculinity and have become detached to behaviours that may label their sexual identity (gay/straight) or gendered behaviour (masculine/feminine) (Anderson 2014).

For my study, in particular, the intersection of gender and dance using the IMT as a guiding framework offers the potential to appreciate how boys negotiate dance. With IMT, it is worth noting that although positive empirical findings in terms of the freedom shown in how some males are evolving their identities are emerging, Holdsworth (2013) makes the case that there remain some activities, dance as an example in point, where standardised gender practices continue. This is where the challenge and opportunity lie in applying the theory to much younger boys than in previous uses of the framework. My study aspires to similarly challenge the assumption that the majority of boys represent or desire to represent identities aligning with hegemonic masculinities in educational research, and where other types of masculinities are viewed as unsuccessful forms of identity for boys (Paechter, 2012).

Although Anderson (2009) has advanced the masculinity landscape, critics of his work claim the notions of declining homophobia which the theory is underpinned by is not as accurate as implied. For example, De Boise (2015) maintains that “homophobia is still prevalent” (p. 331) and therefore suggested the notion of declining homophobia is contentious. While De Boise’s (2015) critical line of inquiry may have some relevance, it

could be inferred that such an over-simplification of his point lacks the depth to understanding attitudes towards homosexuals across different settings and age cohorts which may counter this criticism. Dean (2014) advocates that within social institutions, such as in sport (Bridges, 2014; Cashmore & Cleland, 2012) and education settings (McCormack and Anderson, 2010; McCormack, 2011; McCormack, 2012; McCormack and Anderson, 2014), there is an enhanced representation and embracing of homosexuals. Similarly, there is a claim that global shifting attitudes towards homosexuality have been occurring at pace due to media portrayal of the gay population, and that young people are positioned at the centre of more open-minded thinking (Ayoub & Garretson, 2017). Consequently, it is important to acknowledge the critical comment of De Boise; yet it is equally significant to highlight that IMT is built on the shifting undercurrents of behaviours of male peer groups cultures and an ongoing premise of acceptance for diversity in those behaviours (Gaston et al., 2018). In furthering this point, Anderson & McCormack (2018) contend that there is no evidence of empirical research to suggest that homophobia is increasing in both the United States and the United Kingdom.

In attempting to scrutinise the work of Anderson, a closer look at the sample use of mainly middle-class white university-aged men (O'Neil, 2015) presents bias and a misrepresentation of the potential decline in homophobic attitudes, where the intersection of class has predominantly been underexplored, limiting the generalisability according to Huuki & Sunnari (2015). Despite this acknowledgment of sample focus, the theory has framed research that has more recently attempted to look at the intersectionality of class and gender, especially through the work of McCormack (2014), with positive findings refuting dominant discourses of working-class teenage masculinities assumed to be embedded in orthodox forms of masculinity. Adding to the once

associated dilemma of whether IMT was capable of addressing the intricacies of the power dynamics imbued in gender and the continuation of inequality prevalent in many settings (Martino 2011; O'Neill 2015; De Boise 2015) has been gaining momentum to contest this argument.

Inclusive masculinity theory and school settings

Whilst tenets of IMT have been demonstrated in a range of settings and international contexts as outlined in the previous section, some researchers (Ingram & Waller 2014; Simpson 2014) challenge the findings from these studies and propose that such empirical findings of IMT are over-generalized. This appraisal of the application of inclusive masculinity theory extends to similar criticism of Connell's hegemonic masculinity theory in that it is in the main adult-focused. However, since 2014, research utilising inclusive masculinity theory has included ethnographic research on 16-18-year-old working-class boys in a sixth-form college in the south of England (McCormack, 2014). Findings demonstrated that the majority of boys symbolised inclusive masculine identities, yet there were also findings to suggest differences between middle-class and working-class boys in the degree of progressiveness in their identities. Building on the application of inclusive masculinity theory, Blanchard et al. (2017) investigated working-class 16 to 19 year-olds in the northeast of England in an ethnographic study in a college setting. Their findings summarised that the boys were able to demonstrate suggestions of existing within a culture of diminishing homophobia. This was characterised through the adoption of attitudes that were not homophobic and with an increasing tendency to relate with other boys in more tactile and emotional forms. Blanchard et al. (2017, p. 22) go as far as to claim that "inclusive masculinities had established social dominance in this

setting”, by way of recognising such inclusive behaviours. A year later, Campbell et al. (2018) explored how adolescent males, aged 16–17 years old, defined and experienced their masculine identities within the context of physical education (PE). In this Scottish school PE setting, the researchers found that the nature of the PE environment revealed that boys negotiated an orthodox form of masculinity, built on strength and pain tolerance. Aspects of inclusive masculinities were evident however the masculinised climate of PE made the negotiations of more fluid forms of identity for boys more precarious. This was despite a valuing of more progressive forms of identity, built on kindness and being nice, which contributed to a higher perceived status (Campbell et al., 2018), and are importantly distinct from orthodox forms of masculinity in this context. A significant finding from this study attends to the climate that teachers can become attuned to show consideration of diverse masculine identities. According to this study, permitting PE climates that can value inclusive masculinities will support the well-being of boys. In the use of inclusive masculinity theory with younger boys, Stewart et al.’s (2020) ethnographic investigation of 12-16-year-old boys in a Scottish school setting explored how boys across two age ranges (12-13 year-olds and 15-16 year-olds) experienced PE and negotiated their masculine identities. Their findings point to different enactments of masculinity, with younger boys displaying more inclusive masculinities than the older boys, with the older boys demonstrating an embodiment of masculinities that valued rugby bodies marked by rugby as a key feature of their curriculum. The shift in one school from inclusive masculinities to more exclusive masculinities carries with it concerns for educators in PE. The notion of creating a curriculum that can provide a breadth of activities, emphasising a multitude of educative values through “pupil-centred pedagogies

that develop problem-solving and decision-making” (Steward et al., 2020), may allow for more freedom in the expressions of identity from boys in PE.

Chapter summary

The research has highlighted negative associations with dance for some boys and men, both as they negotiate who they are and as they interact with how dance is delivered, acting as barriers to sustained involvement and enjoyment. Findings also indicate that boys will reside within dance climates despite negative consequences from others to maintain involvement, supporting an interest in dance as an activity that carries meaningfulness, especially when wider support is received.

To my knowledge, inclusive masculinity theory has not been applied with boys within primary school contexts and it is therefore viewed as a time to explore the identities of boys from a different perspective, one that can take so much from children and young people that are developing more gender fluidity than previous generations (Paechter, 2020).

The research reviewed has employed qualitative methodologies to explore the experiences of boys and men in dance and other fields, including PE. The significance of understanding the experiences of others is paramount to gaining insight into aspects of their worlds and lived experiences. Therefore, the next chapter will provide an in-depth account of the ontological, epistemological, and methodological decisions regarding the use of child-centred approaches in my study.

The review of literature helped re-establish the rationale for research questions which I revisited and consequently, the following will frame the data collection by asking:

RQ 1. What evidence of inclusive masculinity is present in primary-aged boys?

RQ2. How do primary age-boys perform masculinities in dance?

RQ3. What do boys aspire for within lessons to encounter meaningful dance through PE?

Chapter 3 Research Methodology

Introduction

This chapter aims to critically reflect on methodological choices made to address the research questions in the study. Firstly, the research paradigm and concepts of ontology and epistemology are explored and research positionality is discussed. Subsequently, I provide a rationale for the research design and methodology. Following this, a description of the research processes and methods employed is discussed. Analytical methods used to interpret data are then outlined. Finally, the ethical considerations relevant to the study are considered.

Research paradigm

I take the idea of reality to be viewed in multiple forms and for knowledge to be constructed by the holder of that social reality. Denzin & Lincoln (2003, p. 305) argue that “we are all constructivists if we believe the mind is active in the construction of knowledge!”. So when formulating understandings of a given experience, we do so by sensitively factoring in the bigger picture, with which the experience coincided. My ontological position acknowledges the position of children in the world and the rights they have to be heard, and for the information to serve their best interests. Children are capable knowers, generate meaningful dialogue, and the views they hold are to take on board.

My positionality and paradigm within which my research sits offer a window into how ontological, epistemological, and methodological concepts tie together and influence my study. Koro-Ljunberg et al. (2009) assert that “efforts should be made to make the research process, epistemologies, values, methodological decision points, and argumentative logic open, accessible, and visible for audiences” (p.687). The interpretivist paradigm, with core foundations built on comprehending “the subjective world of human

experience” (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007, p. 21) fits with my researcher position which is driven by appreciating multiple insights into the ways boys’ negotiated dance. An understanding that interpretivist researchers bring their subjectivities to the field of research (Cousin, 2010) is something that is both embraced and reflected upon mindfully throughout my methodology. In doing so, I referred to what Lincoln and Guba (1990) discuss as “conscious reflexivity” (p. 54) and the importance of self-awareness as a researcher with participants and within the research site. Later in this chapter, I engage self-examination when researching with children.

Using child-centred methods offered a choice, and ultimately a voice, deeming this suitable in discovering boys’ lived experiences and how they obtained knowledge and ultimately became knowing within dance. Employing the particular visual methods embraced a broader conception of communication for young people, which Fane et al. (2018) claim “may also facilitate their ability to choose and decide how they want to be heard” (p.360). It, therefore, was an important process of the selection of multiple methods to connect with boys to further break down comprehension of their social realities and identities (Smith & Sparkes, 2008), as well as supporting young people’s “inclusion, participation and empowerment” in research (Fitzgerald et al., 2020, p. 3). In this respect, my ontological and epistemological positions intertwine to view the children as active in the construction of knowledge, especially in their use of my methods, in deciding what and how to share particular subjective and contextually bound experiences with me. Importantly, my position relates to that of interpretivism, maintaining that there will be a multiplicity in understandings from the boys, whereby they attach subjective meanings to the experiences in dance, which tie to their social and affective contexts. This position will be explored in the following section.

Study design and research strategy

In light of an interpretivist research position, a qualitative approach was the best fit for my study intentions. As a qualitative researcher, there are expectations of efforts to understand and make sense of an individual's actions, words, and practices (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). The key to the possibilities with qualitative research is in its flexibility in the design process, where multiple or singular methods can be utilised to explore the perspectives of others. This was significant to cater for boys to be able to freely share their experiences and demonstrate their unique perspective as to avoid feelings of being judged (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006) and where autonomy was afforded in the investigatory process for the participants (Scotland, 2012).

According to Denzin & Lincoln (2005), multiple methodologies and disciplines form qualitative research. A particular strength of qualitative methods remains in the capacity to bring together comprehensive interpretations of boys' experiences, whilst acknowledging emerging knowledge as an interactional product located in specific contexts, constructed with and by those around us (Denzin et al., 2017). Therefore, the use of qualitative research in my study was justification in itself for the intentions to be embedded in interpretivism rather than positivism to gain a deeper, more meaningful understanding of what boys thought and felt about their experiences in dance. The careful consideration of a qualitative path for my study gave rise to the acknowledgement that in exploring children's perspectives, my approach could not take on "adultist methodologies" (MacKenzie et al., 2018, p.61) and instead privileged child-focused approaches. Adopting qualitative participatory methods was, therefore, deemed most appropriate for my study, in particular with an instrumental collective case study research strategy at the centre, as discussed in the following section.

Case study research

A case study research strategy utilising a multi-method research design was adopted for my research methodology. A case study afforded flexibility in the use and interpretation of methods used to gain in-depth data, particularly important when researching with children to gain a holistic examination of their experiences.

Stake (1995) viewed case study researchers as interpreters of situations or as constructors of knowledge through their research. Using a range of methods to piece together boys' multiple stories and understandings of their experiences built on Stake's (1995) perspective which aligned with my epistemic position to interpretivist thinking. I also reflected on the subjectivity of interpretation that emerged as I saw and listened to the multi-layered nature of meaning from boys' constructions. According to Stake (2005) there are three types of case study: the intrinsic, the instrumental and the multiple or collective. The intrinsic case study is chosen due to inherent interests, for example, PE curricula. Furthermore, the researcher aims to get an in-depth understanding of that case. The instrumental case study offers a setting to comprehend other areas within the case. The collective case study is similar to the instrumental case study yet offers more scope in the amount of cases to investigate the area of interest. In this sense, efforts to compare and contrast cases can be afforded (Suryani, 2013). My thesis is a collective instrumental case study because the purpose is on the understandings of the intersection of masculinity and dance provided within the case study primary school settings, also since it is aimed that such understandings between two diverse cases can support enhanced theorisation (Stake, 2005).

Guided by Stake's (1995; 2005) key features of qualitative research consisting of: holistic, empirical, interpretive, and emphatic, allowed for a comprehensive picture of

boys' experiences through the observations and the focus group interview activities. The way boys embodied and experienced dance as a subject-matter, in addition to how they talked about it was critical to a holistic view. For the empirical characteristic Stake mentions, my study's observational grounding of what boys were exposed to and responses to this rested on my observations in the field. For the elements of interpretive and emphatic, Stake claimed a degree of reliance on the researcher's awareness and appreciation of the context in making interpretations and that in doing so approaching the study to give voice to cultural nuances of boys. Therefore, given the relevance of characteristics outlined by Stake, using a case study enhanced possibilities to deconstruct and reconstruct the intersection of boys and dance in my study, where the hope was that the case study would be open to interpretation and reinterpretation (Lincoln and Guba, 1990).

Although a collective instrumental case study approach was deemed most appropriate, an ethnographic approach was also considered. Both seek rich understandings and hold similar philosophical approaches, yet Gobo and Marciniak (2011) claim ethnography to be different from other approaches due to the researcher taking a more active role in scrutinising the setting. This was not paramount to my study, with intentions to hold a passive role within observations, distancing myself and any potential influences on their behaviour during dance. Likewise, my choice of observations was not an opportunity to create social rapport with participants, as is so often the case in ethnographic approaches (Suranyi, 2013; Tickle, 2017). Instead, it was acknowledged that I would be a familiar face to facilitate phase two in the focus group interviews, of not being a stranger asking questions. My approach acknowledges that I was both an insider and outsider, and was important in aligning with my collective instrumental case study.

According to the DfE (2015), 15.2% of teachers in primary schools are male, which could suggest I was not a gendered outsider during phase one, which consisted of the observations. Nonetheless, during phase two, both the closeness due to the focus group interview nature may have heightened my outsider status, while the methods were hoped to give me insider access amongst the boys, and I thereby acknowledge the complex nature of the unavoidable influence I could have on the direction of the research.

An understanding of the status of researchers in the field has been linked to an insider/outsider position. Gair (2012) speaks of 'insiderness' and 'outsiderness' as the extent that a researcher is immersed in or out of the researched group. My position was that of an insider-outsider, with Milligan (2016) claiming that a researcher is never fixed within an insider or outsider position, but there is fluidity according to the situation the researcher resides within and whom they engage with. While, Hellawell (2007, p. 487) claims it preferable for a researcher to "be both inside and outside the perceptions of the 'researched'".

Decisions to use observations and participatory approaches in two primary schools were founded on the notion of these being empowering methodological approaches for me, both as an outsider to gain an insider appreciation of the landscape of dance lessons, and to develop an insider role through the focus group interviews by valuing the voices of the boys' stories. Reflecting on whether the boys acted differently during my presence, I share three approaches I took to explore this. Firstly, utilising McCormack's (2014) reflections on his presence whilst researching in a high school setting, I adopted the following with which I could gain insight into my presence in the two case study schools. During observations, informal conversations were had with

teachers of the classes about my outsider presence and whether the teacher believed that there was a change in behaviour from the class. The teachers across settings informed me of no noticeable behavioural difference from their experiences with the pupils. Secondly, to ascertain that boys were not just responding to statements or tasks during the focus group interviews to meet my needs as a female researcher, statements that may seem provocative were used to comprehend contestation or acceptance of perspectives. The example used included asking boys what they would say to a boy after overhearing that 'dance was not for boys'. The boys vehemently challenged the idea of hearing this and how they would take a stand against such a comment. Thirdly, to distance me from dance as my area in the eyes of boys, I spoke frequently about my sporting involvement in rugby. The idea was to highlight a keenness for team sports, often associated with being of interest to boys (Metcalfe and Lindsey, 2020), and to disassociate me from dance personally and the need for them to please me through their answers. It was reflected that the 'inbetween' researcher status was negotiated mindfully through the holistic approach in closely observing the boy's embodied approach to dance and by gaining further insight through the range of methods deployed for a meaningful sharing experience to take place. Nonetheless, it was appreciated that I remained an outsider importantly; as an adult undertaking research with children, which presented the potential for power imbalances, which is discussed later in this chapter.

Despite this, the case study presented an opportunity to use a broad range of methods to bring together a multitude of data sources, giving me access the sharing of emotions and thoughts, which added richness to the complexity of the research (Morgan et al., 2017). In line with this, my study drew upon specific environments as a 'case'. This included two schools, where the exploration of gender within each 'case' ensued, but

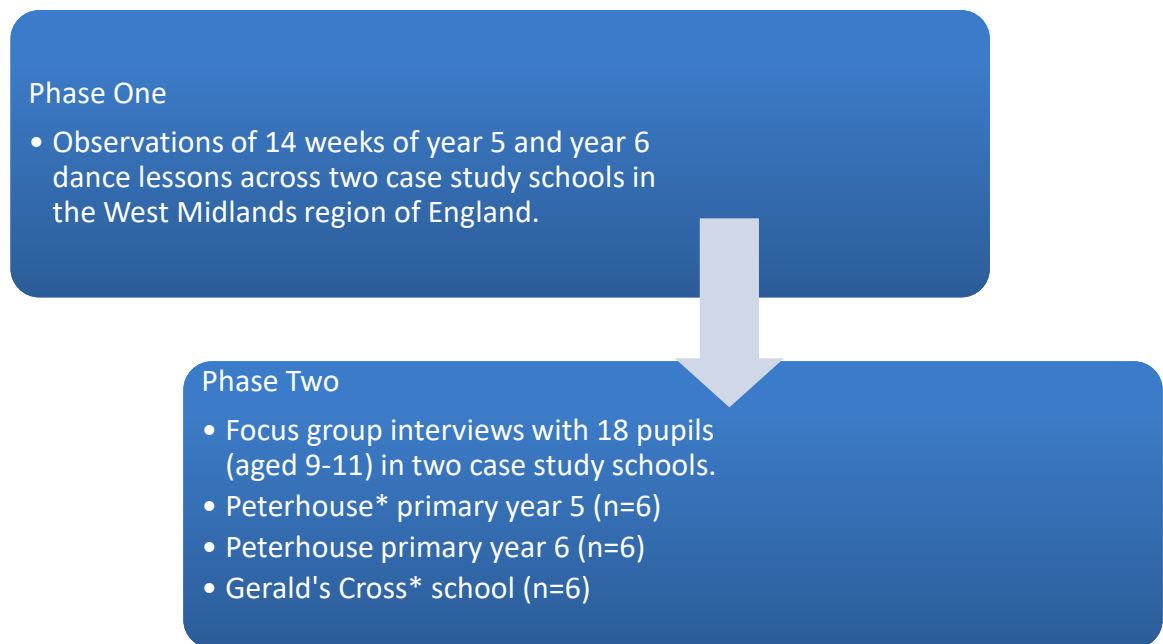
there were sub-cases that were concerned with individuals, particularly the primary aged-boys.

The next section will provide direction about the research process and discuss the various phases of the study, in line with the research methodology detailed within this section.

The research process

The research included two phases that took place over four months. Within the two phases, triangulation was achieved by employing multiple methods (Denzin, 2012). Triangulation is claimed to “add depth to the data that are collected” (Fusch et al., 2018, p. 19), and it added richness through the chosen methods that will be explained subsequently.

The first phase involved non-participant observations of units of work in dance at two case study schools within the West Midlands region of England (Figure 1). The second phase involved focus group interviews with pupils who volunteered from the lessons in the two case study schools. Observations of lessons created opportunities to witness how boys responded to dance, their peers, and their teacher. The focus group interviews (FGIs) followed the observations providing a degree of credibility and representation in the opportunity to give voice to boys. Previous research has also identified the use of observations, interviews, and visual methods as supportive in deciphering understanding of learners’ experiences in PE and dance (Bond & Stinson 2000, 2007; Giguere 2006, 2011; Lai Keun & Hunt 2006; Larsson et al., 2011; Tischler & McCaughtry, 2011).



* Pseudonyms

Figure 1 Phases of the research

Sites of data collection

Two schools in the West Midlands of England represented the primary sites of data collection. The schools as cases were selected on account of email responses regarding voluntary involvement in the study. This encompassed purposive sampling of schools, due to particular requirements outlined below. In total, 20 primary schools in the West Midlands region were invited to participate, with three responses received. One school responded after data collection had already begun in the two case study schools and had already taught dance in the academic year by this time, so was not used but thanked for their response. A combination of factors was required for the school setting: this included mixed-gender schools and those that were primary schools. In terms of observation requirements, it was decided to select schools that scheduled dance lessons that spanned a unit of work, which was the duration of a half-term (7 weeks) for the class.

After searching and identification of schools appropriate to be considered cases within my study, their agreed involvement was sought. Initially, contact was made with the school through known contacts or from the school website directly to the Head teacher. Staff in senior leadership positions responded and demonstrated interest from two schools to be involved. Following this, a detailed letter was sent to each senior leader inviting them to participate and described what would be involved (see Appendix A). All senior leaders provided consent for their schools to be involved, meaning that two case study schools (and a pilot school) were secured as research sites. Particular information related to the schools is provided in Table 1.

Table 1 School demographic information for the 2018/2019 academic year (Department for Education, 2019)

| School demographic | Case study school 1 – Peterhouse primary | Case study school 2 – Gerald’s Cross School |
|--------------------|--|---|
| Type | Multi-Academy Trust (state) | Independent boarding school (private) |
| Age range | 3-11 | 2-19 |
| Gender | Mixed | Mixed |
| Size | 225 | 360 |
| Locality | Urban | Rural |

Case study schools

Peterhouse primary (a pseudonym assigned by the researcher) is a small co-educational multi-academy trust primary school. It is a one-form entry school with 225 pupils on roll at the time of research. Rated by Ofsted as “Good” at the time of data collection, according to the Ofsted assessment framework (Ofsted, 2019), having been previously rated in 2014 as “Requires Improvement”, and serves a very diverse catchment area. In the most recent Ofsted report, the school is identified as having many disadvantaged pupils above the national average. Further breakdown of student ratios can be found in Table 2, which indicates that this school can be considered a working-

class school with lower socioeconomic status, suggesting the presence of a diverse yet classed cohort of learners. On account of this, the study can add to the gaps identified in the application of inclusive masculinity across the intersection of class (O'Neil, 2015), to add greater representation to the samples used.

Gerald's Cross school (a pseudonym assigned by the researcher) is a co-educational all-through small day and independent boarding school. It has 360 pupils on roll at the time of research. The school is regularly inspected as part of the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI, 2020) and has ensured independent school regulations are consistently met to a high standard. Day pupils come from a range of professional and business backgrounds, mostly from white British families within a 20-mile radius of the school. Boarding pupils come from a variety of overseas countries, with the majority from China and Hong Kong. The school's identity is distinctly different from Peterhouse primary and is reflected in the socioeconomic status of learners, with the school being fee-paying. Using publicly available data showed that a more middle-class identity was assumed by pupils at Gerald's Cross. Further information on the provision relating to Pupil Premium (PP) and Free School Meals (FSM) can be found in Table 2. Such data has been claimed to act as an indicator of socio-economic demographics (David et al., 2001; Whigham et al., 2020).

Table 2 Information about participating schools (based on descriptors/figures for the 2018/2019 academic year)

| Pupil characteristics | Peterhouse primary (%) | Gerald's Cross primary % |
|---|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Gender | Girls 46: Boys 54 | Girls 48: Boys 52 |
| BAME (Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic) | 47 | 52.6 |
| SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disability) | 20 | 18.97 |
| EAL (English as an Additional Language) | 45 | 11.28 |
| FSM (Free School Meals) | 26.1 | 0 |
| PP (Pupil Premium) | 36 | 0 |

The two case study schools delivered dance within the PE curriculum. At each of the schools, a different female dance specialist was employed. Both owned their own dance company externally and were employed to deliver curricular dance lessons once a week to each year group.

The opportunity to have a breadth of voices was of particular interest, as this enhances the opportunity to form a broad view of potential findings to similar primary years' contexts, however, it is wholly recognised that this is a small-scale study where lessons can be gleaned for future application. In the next section, an outline of the sample and participants specifically for the observations will be addressed.

Sample and participants

The sample for the observations comprised primary school children in year 5 (aged 9-10 years old) and a year 6 (aged 10-11 years old), across two schools within the West Midlands region of England. In one school, a year 5 and 6 class were observed, while only year 5 was observed in the other case study school. The selection and scheduling of classes for the study were undertaken in conjunction with the participating schools, on account of each having dance lessons timetabled at varying times in the school year. It

was stipulated on my behalf that a preference for Key Stage 2 lessons be observed and through communication, this was presented as an opportunity in both of the case study schools.

104 pupils were observed across two case study schools, with a much smaller cohort at Gerald's Cross of 15 pupils being observed from one year 5 class while at Peterhouse primary, the opportunity to observe dance across three classes of 89 pupils in total, however, data from one observation of a year 4 class was not included in the data in my thesis, instead focussing on the duration with the year 5 and 6 class. All observed classes were mixed-sex classes. Characteristics of the pupil populations varied between the two schools (see Table 2). The sampling method was based on purposive sampling, so that access to a sample representative of the population in question could be achieved. Gratton & Jones (2014) identify that purposive sampling aligns with a desire for specific characteristics to have been met. The sample of two case study schools was a suitable fit with purposive sampling due to the schools being willing to participate, providing access and, meeting the requirements of having primary-aged pupils experiencing dance in curriculum time.

An outline of the phases and methods deployed will be addressed in the next section, highlighting the pilot to the main study data collection.

Phase one

Observing social contexts has much potential, such as seeing actions and behaviours in what would be deemed a 'natural' context (Harding, 2019). The rationale for using observations stems from desires to connect research phases coherently, to paint a fuller picture of what boys would be doing in classes, with what they said they had done

and what they felt about their experience, rather than rely solely on what they said they had done (Caldwell & Atwal, 2005; Walshe et al., 2012).

Observational methods focused on more of an unstructured format, whereby Bryman (2012) proposed that the objective is to extract as much as possible regarding the actions of participants to build a story of the context. Recounting of stories through observations can reveal behaviours that the participants may not be aware of. Gratton & Jones (2014, p. 205) claim that opportunities to capture 'true' behaviours can be achieved through observations. However, my position is one that accepts that truth in observable behaviours is more intricate and less attainable due to multifaceted negotiations of behaviours with expectations from those around us. I understood that what was observed may be 'false' in the representation (the act) and in the narrating (appreciation of what was seen). Observations used in this study were not guided by predefined tools or templates (Lincoln & Guba, 1986) and instead focused on what was occurring as it occurred in the lessons, with a focus on boys in educational contexts. To capture stories as they were happening through observations, Brancati (2018) notes that there can be active and passive observations, which directly links to the amount of interaction a researcher has with participants. As mentioned earlier, my passive role in observations included limiting interaction and engagement with boys with intentions of gaining a more holistic understanding of the context to minimise 'contaminating' the field study and thus allow for undertaking of notes.

According to Gratton & Jones (2014), field notes should include three elements: firstly, a descriptive characterisation of the context and participants, with an attempt to capture behaviours witnessed in context. Secondly, the depth of experience to add thickness to data is required. Thirdly, an account of experiences observed should be

reflected, so that again, researchers can add insights and information to build a picture. Observations were recorded initially as handwritten detailed field notes, noting and capturing actions and behaviours that were seen without interpretation. This allowed for moments of complete observation of boys in context and then moments to gather words to articulate scenes being observed.

Over the seven lessons in each school, a distant role was assumed but teachers did engage with me on several occasions. Therefore, a “fly on the wall” status or passive observations I had wanted to assume did not always materialise. This may have influenced those being observed and may have changed behaviour as a result. Attempts were always made to sit on the periphery to undertake field notes as is true to more passive or what can be referred to as naturalistic observations, without any intention to interfere with research contexts. Exploration and use of focus groups with visual methods will be detailed in the following section.

Phase two

Focus group interviews (FGIs) were used with boys in phase two to connect observations in phase one with an attempt to unearth feelings regarding their experiences. This age group (9-11 years) was chosen for two reasons related to the FGI involvement; the claim of an enhanced sense of gender identity and similarly because at this age there is also recognition that children become more able to reason through pragmatic thinking (DelGiudice, 2018). These were important in decisions to focus on this age range theoretically and methodologically. It was intended that conversations through multi-methods around who they were as boys and how they negotiated experiences in dance would take place. During middle childhood, it is believed that the child, according to the work of Jean Piaget, uses logic to solve problems tied to their own direct

experience (Tyler, 2020). This is a further justification for the focus on this age range as through the multi-methods as it was hoped to uncover how boys may wish their dance experiences ought to be, based on current experiences.

Focus group interviews have been defined as a means of organising a discussion amongst a group of people, which is overseen by a researcher who can either guide or direct as they wish, in a structured, semi-structured, or unstructured manner (Krueger and Casey, 2014). Boateng (2012) explores the value of focus group interviews and highlights how the method is at risk of the effect of 'groupthink' (p.54). Groupthink can be defined as a psychological concept that occurs when the path of thoughts between group members show congruence rather than contrasting thoughts (ibid). Equally significant to note is that children when among peers tend to be more open and authentic during group discussions (Horner, 2000) and as a research climate provides a safe space for children to communicate (Adler, et al., 2019). The value behind using focus group interviews was to illuminate insights of boys and this method of group interviewing has been used vastly in qualitative approaches to offer richer and deeper comprehensions of the social dynamics and practices (Boateng, 2012; Dowling, 2014; Nyumba et al., 2018). The uses of focus groups within methods have grown in popularity and are used frequently with young people (Fitzgerald et al., 2020; Gibson, 2012; Ní Chroinín et al., 2019; Noonan et al., 2016; Noonan et al., 2017; Parker et al., 2018). Specifically, multiple approaches within the FGI promoted a personalised storytelling opportunity for boys, without having to be constrained by a rigid set of questions (Adler et al., 2019).

Focus group interview sample

The selection of participants (boys) was carried out by providing all pupils in observed classes an opportunity to become voluntarily involved in interviews. To take part, the boys that volunteered needed to have been present during their unit of work on dance which I had observed. In this sense, I was demonstrating what Harding (2019) claims is intentionally subjective as participants were the suitable fit for my research and intentions by having been present in the delivery of dance for a unit of work. Research intentions and methods were outlined during an informal class talk which included an opportunity for boys to ask questions about the study. Informed consent and assent forms (see Appendix B) were provided to all boys across the classes. Eighteen boys (n=18) returned their completed parental informed consent and assent forms for the main study. Although a small sample was achieved, this can provide a depth of detail about boys' experiences (Percy et al., 2015).

Piloting the focus group interviews

There were six (n=6) pupils selected to be part of the pilot study, which was a separate school to the main sites of data collection. Before the onset of focus groups, parental consent forms to partake in the study were returned. The pilot study was conducted during March 2018, with one focus group conducted. The focus group was carried out in a room away from the pupils' normal classroom and was approximately 60 minutes.

The methods were modified through informal dialogue with supervisory team members and on reflection of experiences during the pilot study. The flow diagram below highlights the staged process (Figure 2).

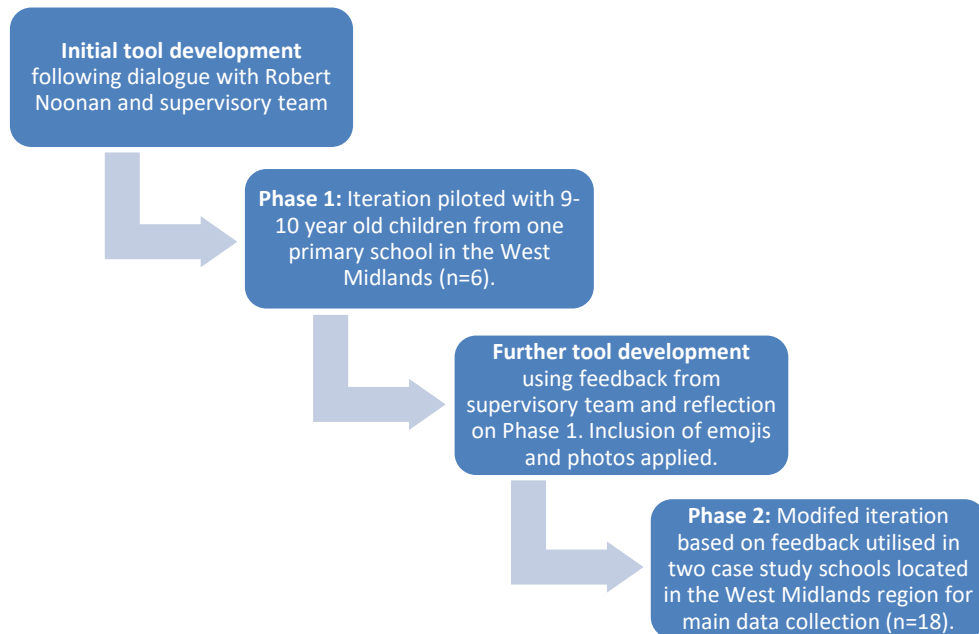


Figure 2 Write, Draw, Show and Tell tool development to include Emoji flow diagram

Once face-to-face with boys, intentions were introduced and a participant information sheet was provided for further understanding. The focus group interview schedule involved a write, draw, show, tell (WDST) activity approach (Noonan et al., 2016). A mobile device voice recorder was used to capture the discussion. Conducting the pilot study focus groups was fruitful as it permitted more familiarity with participatory approaches, the focus group schedule, and the implications of such methods. The reasoned move behind a pilot study was to prove to be significant towards appreciating study downfalls (Van Teijlingen and Hundley, 2001), to gauge practicability of the proposed methods with young boys for the main study (Thabane et al., 2010) and to lessen the possibility of failure (Fraser et al., 2018).

In assessing the feasibility of the WDST methods with children, it allowed playing with methods to make them accessible to boys and to allow for richer data on feelings the boys held regarding dance. There was a need to encourage more discussion, in

particular, some trepidation was evident as the boys were asked to explain how dance made them feel. The use of emojis and visual images was deemed an organic place to step towards, given their use across child-focussed research (Azzarito and Kirk, 2013; Gallo et al., 2017). Consequently, this promoted the creative and unique inclusion of emojis to the WDST approach. Modification from WDST to WDSTE was made to improve the holistic response from boys.

Write, Draw, Show, Tell (Emoji) design

Drawing upon the methodological work of Noonan et al. (2016: 2017) in which they utilised a child-centred approach referred to as 'write, draw, show, and tell' (WDST), this offered inspiration to the development of my unique approach. The inclusion of WDST as a participatory approach was vital for my study given that I wished for a deeper connection to the very essence of boys, as they were experts in terms of lived experiences I wanted to capture. Participatory methods work to allow children to be at the core of the collection of data (Hayball and Pawlowskic, 2018), and by using innovative approaches it can support children to be fully involved in research (Fitzgerald et al., 2020). Placing boys at the centre by using creative methods was achieved through phase two with the focus group interviews acting as a platform for discussion, but also as a place for choice in the activities involved in the WDSTE for the children to explore. Other modes of communication included an opportunity to stimulate thinking through the use of photographs (see Appendix G-Q). On account of such a variety and choice of methods, it was believed that this can support children to share their feelings and thoughts based on the notion that for some children, verbal communication may not be the preferred mode of communication (Noonan et al., 2016). To only ask questions could present a problem evidenced through Morgan et al.'s (2002) study utilising focus groups to collect data in

which children gave short responses. Similarly, Flanagan et al. (2015) claim that focus group interviews are not always a suitable vehicle to elicit information. It is with this in mind that the use of broader methodological choices for children in research contexts can bring them closer to having control of how they voice their feelings. According to Noonan et al. (2016), offering choice, can promote a setting where the involved children communicate with a greater degree of candidness. My study recognised the significance of WDST and in doing so adopts the framework used by Noonan (2017) for practicability for use by other researchers, whilst also developing the framework to incorporate the use of emojis (Table 1.3).

The write, draw, show, tell (WDST) method encompasses a range of qualitative methods to capture a perspective. The writing and drawing elements include participants engaging in said activity, with guidance and access to drawing materials. From a systematic review of children and young people involved in research, Flanagan et al. (2015) discussed how methodological approaches encompassing drawing elements can be a worthwhile and enjoyable experience for children in research contexts. They also outline how engaging children in conversation about drawings is as significant as what is drawn (ibid). Despite the child-centred nature of drawings, Einarsdottir et al. (2009) contend that such an activity does not always equate to meaningful or enjoyable experiences for children. Therefore, supporting activities of this nature, my role was to use guiding statements and engage in dialogue about what was being written or drawn by boys, omitting statements based on drawing ability and including encouraging statements (Noonan et al., 2016). Interaction between researcher and participants can add credibility to the analysis of drawings, especially because the boys could have “greater control over

their expression” (Noonan, 2017, p.110) in explaining their interpretation and meaning behind their drawings.

The ‘show and tell’ included writing down responses on post-it notes and sharing them (if comfortable) with the group; a verbal articulation of responses often can engage other members to add, dispute, or agree with what is being said which can add richness to the data. The researcher becomes involved in the ‘telling’ section by guiding open-ended questions, allowing for discussions based on written or drawn material. The researcher strives to replicate common language used by the children, which can indicate an interest in what the children have already alluded to thereby elevating the importance of the child’s voice (Noonan et al., 2016, p.3). Working with children as participants allow them to be active participants, in contrast, to focus group interviews and one-to-one interviews alone, where the children may be perceived as objects (Hunleth, 2011) or passively involved (Hill, 2005).

Table 3 Framework for practicability for WDSTE (Adapted from Fane et al. 2018 and Noonan, 2017)

| | |
|--------------------|--|
| Philosophy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rights-based research - voice and choice of children • Children as scientists |
| Consent and Assent | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detailed information letter to gatekeepers. • Informal conversations with children including an outline of focus group interview intentions and processes. • Details of activities used in focus groups described (write, draw, show, tell, emoji, photograph use) • Ensure written parental consent and child assent (can be verbal). |
| Research climate | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The familiar environment in school, yet away from class and teachers. • Roundtable seating arrangements with materials laid out for each participating child (paper, post-it notes, emoji reactions) • Children set ground rules for sharing information. • Researcher on a first-name basis with children. • Photographs are placed on the wall around the room. |
| Show | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group ice-breaker activity in roundtable fashion promoting that every unique voice be heard. • Children place responses (drawn, written, or emoji selection) on the center of the table to be shared with peers and researcher. • Prompt to gauge meaning. |
| Write and draw | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post-it notes and paper for written or drawn choices. • Use of familiar language to work with children to hear their version of written or drawn material. • The child's story provides a form of analysis of the material. • Supportive comments in choices made by children rather than feedback on drawings or written points made. |
| Tell | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open-ended questions to engage children in sharing information. • Shared contribution and turn-taking. • Active and patient listening (awareness of what is being communicated without judgment) • Acknowledge the messages conveyed. |
| Emoji | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Six Facebook reaction emojis in color represented on paper for handling and hand-picking their choice. • Engage children in an informal conversation about emojis to gauge familiarity. • Add context by questioning children to assign emojis to experiences and photographs of dancers. • "Check back" mechanism of inquiring with children as to meaning attached to the chosen emoji. |

Using emojis offered an additional mode of expression to discover meaning and for the promotion of active engagement. Integrating emojis led to the evolution of the write, draw, show, tell, emoji (WDSTE) approach (Table 3). The plethora of potential

activities within my focus group interviews provided choice through innovative and pictorial methods, which have been used by others to effect (Chroinín et al., 2019; Mannay, 2016; O’Sullivan and MacPhail, 2010; Renold et al., 2017), to developmentally enrich research processes and outcomes with children (Liebenberg et al., 2014; Tilley and Taylor, 2018). In collaboration with children, they were afforded the freedom to express thoughts through images, in writing or by speaking and showing and, that this makes the research process one of enjoyment, where children’s voices are represented and where they work with methods that give them “immediate pleasure” (Hill, 2005, p.80). This extends to using emoji and photographs (see Appendix D-Q) as a further opportunity to broaden how children articulate their feelings and thoughts, which will be discussed in the next section.

Emoji inclusion

Emoji as a visual research tool to illuminate the voices of children has received minimal coverage in the literature (Fane et al., 2018). Emojis are graphic symbols, visual, and digitalised images that signify a facial expression, feeling, or word (Tian et al., 2018). It is acknowledged that an increase in children using technology is occurring in the 21st Century as exposure to digital media intensifies (Abidin and Gn, 2018). Children are now frequently engaged in digital media and use devices more frequently as they move through childhood (Fane, 2017; Alshenqeeti, 2016). Importantly, using emoji in-class-based activities has also provided evidence that supports learners’ improved understanding of what learning has been undertaken (Brody and Caldwell, 2019).

I tapped into visual methods with which they may be using, due to emojis’ possibilities to indicate emotional attitudes (Tian, 2018). Fane et al. (2018, p.359) claim this blend of technological characteristics in methodology with children presents a

“fruitful avenue”. The choice of emojis was taken fundamentally to lessen the ambiguity surrounding talk of emotions evident in the pilot study with boys. Using emojis within the methods can be said to illuminate a more coherent understanding of meanings (Thompson and Filik, 2016), and help promote a child’s capacity to express and understand emotion further (Fane, 2017; Fane et al., 2018). Given the discussion of masculinity literature in Chapter 2, the incorporation of emojis is further justified based on the assumptions that boys and men have to disguise emotions, seem emotionally indifferent or detach from emotions based on the links to femininity (Anderson, 2009; 2012). My intentions were to create a psychologically safe climate for emotion sharing through emojis.

Methodological inclusion of this visual method was adopted from Facebook’s 2016 introduction of the ‘reactions’ to comments options in the use of emojis. The reaction emojis include a thumbs-up, a yay smiling emoji, love heart, an angered emoji face, a wow emoji face, a sad emoji face, and a laughing emoji face (See Figure 3). According to product design director for Facebook, Geoff Teehan, the six reactions are founded on key ideologies including a universal understanding of emojis that allows interconnectedness between people and therefore communicative fluidity and founded on authenticity inasmuch as what emojis offered were representative of real-life expressions and feelings (Prada et al., 2018). The use of emojis in a range of ways, including the pictures during the study and questions related to their experiences was planned for in conjunction with other methods. The impetus behind the methods within a participatory approach was that it would create a research setting for boys to feel more at ease (Tilly and Taylor, 2018). Creating a climate that would encourage light-heartedness and an ability to connect with other boys through a shared expression of

emoji was sought in the planning stages (MacKenzie et al., 2018; Hsieh and Tseng, 2017). In creating a research climate conducive to sharing information, an additional method of photo-elicitation was incorporated following the pilot study. The following section will outline the use of photo-elicitation in focus group interviews.



Figure 3 Reaction Emoji (Facebook, 2016)

Visual Images – Photo Elicitation

The use of emojis and inclusion of photographs, specifically granted a degree of flexibility in the communicative mode (Tay-Lim and Lim, 2013), allowing participants choice in how they shared thoughts and feelings. The particular use of photographs within focus group interviews was originally undertaken by a photographer and researcher named John Collier (1957). He was able to appreciate how, when photos were used within interviews, they supported more detailed responses through an amplified memory capacity from participants (Epstein et al., 2006) and activation of new lines of inquiry (Liamputtong & Fernandes, 2015). The inclusion of photos continues to add to the plethora of methods, whereby reliance on verbal communication was not valued over other communicative modes. Further justification related to boys’ hesitancy with recalling dance experiences in the pilot study, therefore was used as an impetus to stimulate various thinking and memories of dance in a multitude of forms.

As a methodological tool, photo-elicitation is established on “inserting a photograph into a research interview” (Harper, 2002, p.13). In my study, a range of photographs of male dancers was incorporated into focus group interviews (see Appendix G-Q). I chose images to capture a range of dance genres and ethnicities of dancers for

boys to view. It is acknowledged that my subjectivities will have been bound in the context of the chosen pictures and the implications of this lie in taking decision-making away from boys in selecting images of how they saw male dancers.

During the FGIs, photographic prompts acted to support and extend the discussion and were used in conjunction with emojis to unravel the boys' feelings towards an array of male dancers, genres, and their dance lessons/teacher. Utilising the emojis and photographs had been influenced from the pilot study that was discussed earlier but also based on recognising that one's position as a female researcher may impact the willingness of the boys to discuss emotions and feelings (Sallee and Harris, 2011). For instance, the boys may have been influenced to comment in a way that represented the assumed wishes of me as the researcher. To minimise such effects, it was reiterated to the boys that there were no right or wrong answers and, importantly, that I was interested in their views because they were the experts of their lived experiences of dance.

An objective of my study was to hear and understand experiences and perceptions of dance from boys' points of view as representatively as possible. The focus group interview schedule was activity-based and an outline of statement questions was formulated to provide some structure for the boys that participated (See Appendix C). The statements were a means to stimulate discussion amongst the boys, and questions were created to allow for exploration of how the boys had experienced or reflected upon their dance lessons. The next section explores what focus groups entailed to ensure children were central to the process but also that interviewing would add to explanations provided by boys (Hennink et al., 2010).

Conducting Focus Groups with WDSTE

All focus group interviews (FGI) were conducted in school rooms on the school premises. The rooms provided a quiet environment for the boys to share their thoughts and feelings. Focus group interviews occurred during the school day and were organised in cooperation with senior members of staff at each school. The focus groups ranged from 50 to 75 minutes in length. Groups of six boys were involved in each of the three focus groups. One focus group interview was undertaken at Gerald's Cross school and two at Peterhouse primary. The reason for this was that only one class at the former school was having dance at the time of contact and this year 5 group was small, with only 6 boys. In total, in-depth focus group interviews, with over 200 minutes of audio recordings were conducted with 18 pupils ranging from Years 5 to 6; focus group interviewee details can be viewed in table 4. All interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. The nature of the study was outlined at commencement and participants were given a further opportunity to apply their assent by having the decision to withdraw their involvement at any given point, including before and during the focus groups. A semi-structured focus group guide (see Appendix C) based on statements or open-ended questions to prompt either written, drawn, or verbalised responses was used in each focus group interview. I organised my interview schedule into segments: 1) ice-breakers getting to know what the boys were interested in and what constituted their identities; 2) questions about general feelings towards dance and experiences they had with dance; 3) experiences with school dance lessons and how this connects with their own identities and representations; and 4) the impact of teaching and content of dance for boys. The interview guide, drawings, emojis, and photographs were comprehensively used for generating further questions within focus group interviews, participants influenced the direction of the conversation

and I limited my guidance in the discussion by stepping back on numerous occasions to promote fluidity with conversations. Boys' clarifications were sought through the drawings and connectivity between emojis and photographs, to add credibility to the analysis (Noonan et al., 2016). The importance of involving boys in the analysis was to frame interpretation through their eyes, rather than that of my adult view which would have been unrepresentative on its own (Tilley and Taylor, 2018).

Table 4 Focus group interviewees

| Pseudonym | School | Age |
|-----------|---------------------|-------------|
| Ted | Peterhouse primary | 9 -10 years |
| Dean | Peterhouse primary | 9 -10 years |
| Kane | Peterhouse primary | 9 -10 years |
| Ged | Peterhouse primary | 9 -10 years |
| Neal | Peterhouse primary | 9 -10 years |
| Lee | Peterhouse primary | 9 -10 years |
| Pete | Peterhouse primary | 10-11 years |
| Raan | Peterhouse primary | 10-11 years |
| Pat | Peterhouse primary | 10-11 years |
| Daten | Peterhouse primary | 10-11 years |
| Tag | Peterhouse primary | 10-11 years |
| Dale | Peterhouse primary | 10-11 years |
| Alan | Gerald Cross school | 9 -10 years |
| Lenka | Gerald Cross school | 9 -10 years |
| Eden | Gerald Cross school | 9 -10 years |
| Gerard | Gerald Cross school | 9 -10 years |
| Tre | Gerald Cross school | 9 -10 years |
| Kalen | Gerald Cross school | 9 -10 years |

The methods and semi-structured nature of focus group interviews allowed for flow in conversation and for debate to emerge at times amongst boys. The WDSTE was fundamental in giving boys a platform to discuss shared and diverse experiences of dance. The rationale behind this innovative method was largely due to researching with children and acknowledging that power relations would exist between me the researcher and the participants, but that knowledge would be co-constructed. Therefore, focus groups provided an opportunity to set a nonthreatening environment with boys' peers around them to offer support and grow conservation by placing power with them. Previous studies with children have also used similar approaches of focus groups to observe how children negotiate discussions of gender with peers as they dynamically engage with this style of extracting data (Bragg et al., 2018; Bartholomaeus, 2012; Renold, 2001). In the main, the voices of boys needed to be heard together, as they can be sometimes lost or go unnoticed.

Rebalancing the power

In considering power relations, the following outline attempts to dismantle adult-led approaches through the personalisation and choice within the methods. Familiarity with visual tools, for example drawings, was an alternative mode for communicating and another attempt to diminish adult-led perceived activities within focus group interviews (Hilppö et al., 2017). Similarly, the range of emojis gave more control to the boys as their understanding and application of which emoji to use was entirely of their own choosing (MacKenzie et al., 2018). Flexibility within the use of emojis was to allow boys to interpret the emojis in a different way than what was presented, or to add their own emoji, if an emotion was not covered. Further awareness of context and participants encompassed placing greater power with boys, who were viewed as the experts. Conveying this information at the beginning of all focus groups was vital to be transparent about the status of the boys through my eyes, about their knowledge and experiences that were to be shared. Additionally, intentions of offering clarity as to the focus group boundaries about inclusivity in hearing everyone's voice and that there were no right or wrong answers were important. Equally important was to not take over and control particular activities that the children enjoyed and saw as their 'own time', as this could have influenced the working relationship between the boys and the researcher. A relaxed attitude to allow the conversation to flow in the FGIs was utilised for two reasons; firstly to remove teacher status from my role as a researcher, and secondly to allow the boys to control and direct the conversation, even if it did go away from the research focus. Using multi-methods allowed the power to be, to some extent at least, rebalanced in the boys' favour through this process of hearing their voices. It also encouraged a more comfortable situation where they were not being policed by the interview schedule *per*

se. Becoming comfortable with my 'insider/outsider' status had the potential to impact upon social relationships (Gallagher, 2008) positively to allow the boys to feel like they could open up about their experiences. Equally, the inclusion of visual methods supports findings elsewhere (Fane et al., 2018; MacKenzie et al., 2018), that a repositioning of power can occur through emoji use between those researched and the researcher. The emojis created a space for the boys to drive their interpretation of emojis as emotions, and for some, they were provided with a space to recreate new emojis by drawing and sharing their narrative. Ultimately, the boys controlled what was critical for me to know and thus power resided with their important role of imparting information, lessening my adult voice in the research. Overall, the participatory methods were an integral feature in upholding the notions behind rights-based participatory research, in promoting fairness through choice of activities to convey their stories, and encompassed steps towards a “democratising processes of knowledge production” (Davidson, 2017, p. 230).

The following section offers insight into processes of data analysis following data collection.

Data Analysis

Each of the methods used to collect data was independently analysed, followed by a more holistic view of the data by bringing the data together to contextualise the findings. The following section will outline how the multi-methods approach, including the observations and focus group interview activities, were managed following data collection.

The observational field notes combined with the focus group interview transcriptions created 110 pages of data. The focus group interviews and accompanying

activities were therefore triangulated with observations from the fieldwork to make thick descriptions of the boys' experiences and feelings regarding dance (Denzin, 2012).

Thematic analysis was undertaken to scaffold the interpretation of the data as it can provide a framework for the identification of patterns in qualitative data (Braun and Clarke, 2013). Braun and Clark (2006, p. 86) propose that "thematic analysis involves the searching across a data set – be that several interviews or focus groups, or a range of texts – to find repeated patterns of meanings". This applies to the current study as multiple methods were used and therefore the searching and deciphering across the data sets allowed for the transference of patterns. While the thematic analysis does not represent a complete research design, it does offer a process of data analysis that is flexible and compatible with many approaches to qualitative research and multi-methods in particular generic qualitative analysis (Percy et al., 2015). Thematic analysis of focus group interview activity data and observational field notes was chosen to ensure that I remained mindful of the child-centred principles guiding my thesis, mainly in the stories that the boys shared, visually and verbally, through multiple methods. An analytical approach that was hybrid in nature used both inductive and deductive coding to generate codes and the overarching themes (Fereday & Muir- Cochrane, 2006).

In line with Braun & Clarke's (2006) six phases, an outline of analytical undertaking in each phase is provided. Initially, I read the transcripts several times in the process of immersing myself fully in the data and becoming familiar with the dialogue, pictures, emoji use, and drawings. I made notes on the peculiarities of the data and became mindful of the narrative generated, with coding and analysis undertaken manually. Working through the second phase continued with the inductive coding of sections of the raw data. This involved cutting and pasting raw data extracts or citing page numbers

where data was aligning or misaligning across schools into tabular form. This brought me closer to the data by simultaneously managing the coding and collection of coded data. The initial codes were abstracted in the diagrammatic hand-written form to demonstrate an appreciation of efforts to make sense of coding (Nowell et al., 2017) (See Appendix D and E). Once this was achieved for the observational field notes and three focus group interview transcripts, the next phase 'searching' for themes was initiated in the identification of pattern-based analysis. Continued engagement with the data involved making sense of links between codes, and this led to a foundation of a multiplicity of masculinities which included: support/desire to feel supported, positive attitudes to females, closeness, limited voice/choice, having fun, interest in learning, aspirations to play and create (Appendix D and E). To achieve coherency within, a more deductive approach was later embedded as I related to inclusive masculinity and my research questions, as this was deemed significant and complementary for framing the data. In actively searching for meaningfulness in the data, codes were clustered together where theme connectivity was reflected upon to paint a comprehensive picture. Moving between my data and Anderson's work became both more interpretive and theoretical, assisting to paint a bigger picture of the analysis. Once there was an initial idea of themes, a reviewing of the purpose and meaning of themes organically commenced in line with phase four's reviewing potential themes. Considerations of the quality and breadth of raw data to highlight the themes were undertaken. Refining of codes and categories were therefore based on fluidity in gendered performances and attitudes, experiential intimacy as a coping strategy, fragmented relationships with girls, and the role of the teacher in enabling/restraining meaningful opportunities for learners. Codes and categories were cross-referenced to the research questions, compared across schools, and linked to the

verbal and visual data of the boys. Through significant revisiting of the codes, tables, and transcribed notes the themes were generated to reflect the voices and stories of the boys, and relating to this through framing of inclusive masculinity theory. Phase five, the defining of themes according to Braun and Clarke (2006) is recognising the importance of the theme in the overall study and how a theme can make sense and be of value. An inductive and deductive analysis of each theme throughout the process was undertaken to appreciate the core meaning. The final stage involved structuring the data to clarify the story of the overarching theme. This was accompanied by literature to substantiate or challenge claims made from the interpretations of my study. Appendix F highlights an example of a thematic table with raw data within the theme “inquiry and embodied learning”.

Through thematic analysis, it was identified that the boys demonstrated support for the inclusive theorising of young masculinities, with evidence of positive social attitudes towards girls and women, displays of emotional and physical support between boys as a coping strategy in dance, and a longing for ownership through their dance lessons. Of interest to this study was the duality between data collection methods in observing followed by a closer examination of those feelings in the focus group interviews (FGIs). In the focus group interviews, boys articulated that they rejected gendered notions of activities and saw dance as much an activity and space for them, as it was for girls. This was further supported by the preference for a dance climate providing more choice and allowing for more creative opportunities to build their ideas through dance.

The boys’ experiences and relationship with dance were one of diversity across age groups and socioeconomic statuses. A picture of homogeneity across the case study schools was found in particular for aspirations of how they wished to learn in dance,

whilst some contrasts were evident in the degree of embodied inclusive masculinity they exhibited across schools. Through multiple methods and thematic analysis, such comparisons and contrasts were possible to elicit. The use of qualitative methods permitted the collation of holistic interpretations of the boys' stories, whilst being mindful of the interpretation of knowledge as an interactional product located in the specific school contexts and as being constructed with and by the boys involved in the research. Before the themes are discussed, the ethical considerations are given due diligence in the next section.

Ethical considerations

My study was planned and conducted in line with the guidelines of the University of Wolverhampton Ethics Approvals (Faculty of Health, Education, and Well-Being) Committee. Ethical approval was obtained in January 2018. The research aligned with published guidance for educational research by the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2018), and I worked diligently and professionally with the framework provided. Following guidance for responsibilities to participants outlined by BERA ethical guidelines, I will outline steps related to informed consent, transparency, right to withdraw, harm arising from participation in research, privacy, and data storage and disclosure.

BERA (2018, p.9) guidelines state researchers "should do everything they can to ensure that all potential participants understand, as well as they can, what is involved in a study". Subsequently adhering to these guidelines, all participants and parents were provided with an information letter outlining my research, the procedures which boys would be involved in, and parents provided their informed consent through a signed approach, whilst boys provided their assent to research through the same approach. It is

acknowledged that children can provide assent in different forms, including verbally, with a tick or an audio confirmation (Dockett et al., 2012), yet it was deemed that for the age range of the participants a signature was developmentally appropriate. Furthermore, boys were provided with face-to-face communication to understand my research in more depth and a child-friendly manner, whilst providing opportunities for questions about involvement. This was a crucial part of the lead into my study as it was fundamental to acknowledge the rights of the children in their participation. On account of this, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989) supports a child's autonomy in communicating their views without constraint especially where it concerns them. In this instance, the informed decision to be involved in research was firmly placed *with* the boys, respectful of their autonomy in this process, even though parental consent had been provided. It is important to emphasise that although attempts to provide clarity on the research at the beginning of my study, the same information was shared at the onset of the FGIs for all, with a reminder of rights that would be upheld should they wish to change their minds about their involvement. This ensured more "egalitarian dynamics" (Gálvez, 2018, p. 19) between me as the researcher and those researched (boys), as it provided a sense of the importance of considering their rights.

At all junctures of research, I was committed to ensuring a transparent approach was consistently applied for boys to be fully aware of processes and my presence with or around them in classes. This connected with my desire to ensure boys did not experience harm during my research. An outline of what would be covered during focus group interviews was addressed at the commencement of this phase of the research, whilst reminding the boys that if they at all felt unhappy or uncomfortable that they could return to their classroom without any repercussions (BERA, 2018). The outline included

putting the boys at ease in terms of content focus, which related to how they felt about dance and their own identity with dance experiences. Of the 18 boys that volunteered for the FGIs, none of them at the point of being debriefed decided to withdraw their participation or declined to continue after having been informed of the nature of the research.

Privacy principles within research pertain to the boys' confidentiality and anonymity within research processes (BERA, 2018). The two case study schools' identities were anonymised to protect any disclosure specifically relating to either school. From the FGI transcription boys involved were allocated pseudonyms to reduce potential identification in a similar vein. The multiple data forms were stored securely throughout the research phases, with sole access from me as a lead researcher, thereby only being able to access documentation through password-protected files. Such measures were to align with the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR, 2018), whereby participants were informed through the information sheet and in-person of intended uses of their data, whom it might be available to, and their rights with such data. In the subsequent section, an overview of the methodology chapter is provided before discussing the themes that were generated from my data.

Chapter summary

This chapter outlined my paradigmatic position and highlighted the connectivity with the research process. Methodological justifications were detailed in highlighting my research design. The collective instrumental case study used was described, providing an understanding of my intentions to produce rich and detailed accounts of boys' multiple experiences in dance.

Phases of the research identified the management and design of methods appropriate to the research intentions and setting. Using a child-centred approach was vital for my study, as I sought to promote a more balanced dimension to the research setting. The method of analysis employed was thematic analysis, with which adherence to a six-phase approach recommended by Braun and Clarke (2006) was clarified. Ethical considerations were subsequently embedded to highlight the thoroughness and professional approach taken throughout the research.

The next chapter details the themes which were inductively and deductively thematically analysed, highlighting how child-centred approaches promoted an appreciation of the boys' experiences in dance through their interaction with others and with the taught content.

Chapter 4 'Freestyling' of Masculinity

The versatility and freedom in which the boys were writing, drawing, showing, telling, and feeling about dance related to negotiating and presenting a fluid masculine identity. This identity was founded on a progressive and open identity that the boys displayed giving credence to the recognition of a 'freestyling' or multiplicity in the behaviours and attitudes exhibited through my research with them.

The boys were also asked what dance they liked and to draw themselves dancing in a space they were comfortable in. This provided the boys with a choice in methods that would support an articulation suitable to each individual. The boys across the two case study schools articulated verbally or in written form that demonstrated they built their identities according to various activities they liked or participated in or personas and ways of being that can be identified in Table 5.



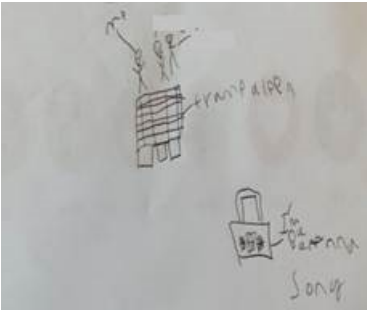
Table 5 List of what it means to be a boy from the two case study schools.




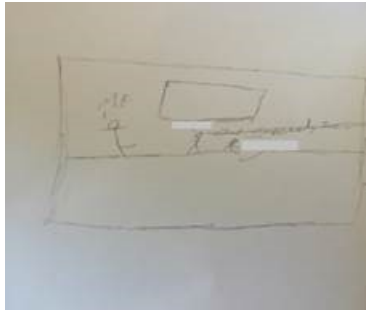
| School | What does it mean to be a boy responses |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Gerald's Cross school FGI 1 | Joking around, laughing, playing, not very elegant, having fun, not flexible, being sporty, comedy, playing rugby, cricket. |
| Peterhouse primary FGI 1 and 2 | Liking football, playing cricket, watching action movies, playing video games, watching football, rap, and singing, happy when dancing, playing Xbox, ps4, maths, comedy, ninjas, telling jokes, metal detecting, astronomy, reading, biking, scooter, boxing, fitness, fun times. |



A wide-ranging sense of what it meant to be a boy was identified in the responses, with humour, 'play' in a plethora of forms, physical activity, and sport as key features across the two schools. Equally integral to the boys' sense of self about their identity was each other and the friendships that had formed during their primary experiences. This was evident through a drawing activity that was used as a vehicle for the boys to communicate a space they felt comfortable dancing in. It can be observed from Table 6

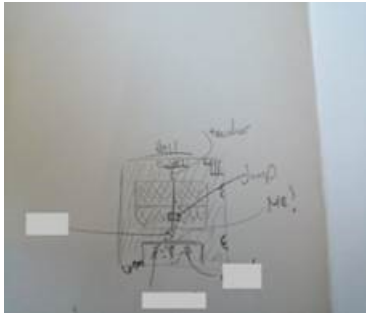
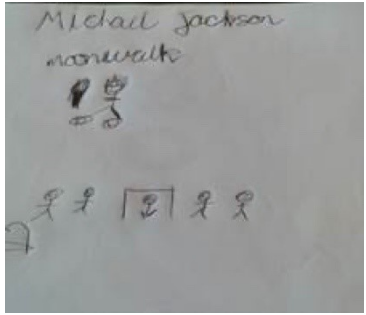
what the boy's drawings depicted (note 11 out of the 18 boys chose to draw). From eight of the 11 drawings boys provided evidence of what was deemed as a safe space for them, which was being surrounded by friends encompassing social interaction, mastering new moves signifying a will to challenge themselves, and performing diverse dance genres, with greater inclination towards breakdance and freestyle.

Table 6 What the boys drew during the focus group interviews

| Child | Drawing | What boys say their drawings represent | Researcher interpretations |
|-------|---|---|---|
| Raan |  | <i>I've drawn breakdancing. I would like to do it because I think it's really important; I don't know how on earth they do it.</i> | Solo performer attempting a challenging head spin position identified as a skill from breakdances. |
| Dale |  | <i>I've drawn three dancers, Punjabi dance, we've got slow, slow sign and then freestyle. I like Punjabi as it has lots of movements and it looks fun. It's fast as well.</i> | Three performers, each dancing differently, with smiling faces. Each performer although in the same stance, is doing diverse genres. Three figures drawn together resembled togetherness. |
| Alan |  | <i>Me, Eden, and Gerrard are trampoline bouncing, jumping and doing cool dance poses on the trampoline.</i> | Social interaction is a key marker in this drawing as is taking on challenging actions on the equipment of a trampoline. |

| Child | Drawing | What boys say their drawings represent | Researcher interpretations |
|-------|---|--|---|
| Ged |  | <p><i>For me I'm drawing...I think I got Rach just standing there doing a pose, Andy is doing a backflip, and we're doing breakdancing together'.</i></p> | <p>Working with friends is key to this drawing, but with teacher presence and praise. Each person is dancing differently, but with breakdancing emerging as a clear interest.</p> |
| Neal |  | <p><i>Just me, I'm doing a head spin, I don't really like showing off to other people.</i></p> | <p>Solo performer attempting a challenging position from breakdancing. Marked by a complete absence of others, yet is performative as in on-the-stage execution.</p> |
| Pat |  | <p><i>That's me freestyling and flossing. I like it because it's kind of easy, kind of hard, it's like fortnight.</i></p> | <p>A solo performer doing diverse dance actions, marked by a content smile drawn onto the face.</p> |
| Dean |  | <p><i>I've drawn Year 2 friends, and the big friends who aren't over you, they're kind... they'd not see you all the time. You can just sit down with them and talk, and they won't make unnecessary jokes and things. So, I've done it as Ted or Ged, because you can sit down with Ged and Ted and just talk, and they won't</i></p> | <p>Symbolic of social interaction and collaborative dancing on stage.</p> |

| Child | Drawing | What boys say their drawings represent | Researcher interpretations |
|-------|---|---|--|
| | | <p><i>make jokes. But if you dance with others, they may laugh at you.</i></p> | |
| Pete |  | <p><i>This is from a dance, that person's going to be a bit bigger; it's just like a bad drawing! [Laughs] But there's a dance that we did where we were in lines and the person that was next to us, they dropped on the floor, and you had to help them up. It's dance where you're constantly supporting each other to do different moves.</i></p> | <p>Indicators of physical and social support and interaction through dance.</p> |
| Lee |  | <p>Lee: <i>Me and my four friends, we are waiting, the songs not on yet.</i></p> <p>Interviewer: <i>Is it important for you to dance with your friends?</i></p> <p>Lee: <i>Yeah, because if you don't know who you're with, you're not prepared for them, and I know my friends will help me.</i></p> | <p>The group of dancers signify working with and performing with others. Smiles are assumed synonymous with working with others.</p> |

| Child | Drawing | What boys say their drawings represent | Researcher interpretations |
|-------|---|---|---|
| Ted |  | <p><i>I've drawn our school hall, I've got me in the middle of the stage, and then I've got two friends beside me, and one friend in front of me. Dean is to the left, my brother's to the right, and my friend is in front of me. There's a box in the middle for us to jump over, and one will go first, it will be like a gym and jump over. But I'm okay performing plays in front of people, but I'm not okay doing dancing or singing in front of people.</i></p> | <p>Dancing with others (social interaction) a key indicator. Distance between performers and teacher in how they wish to enact moves, as indicated by desire to use equipment and challenge themselves by inclusion of jumps.</p> |
| Tre |  | <p><i>I've drawn Michael Jackson moonwalking because I am good at that and do it in our dance. I am in the middle doing that in our class.</i></p> | <p>A marker of a famous male dancer being recognised and enactment of his moves. Using said moves to showcase competence by dancing surrounded by others.</p> |

Eight of the pictures in Table 6 included the boys' friends involved in their dance experience, therefore signifying the desires for social interaction, and to move with other boys with whom they wanted to share their experiences during dance. Five of the boys drew explicit links with an interest in breakdance/freestyle, whilst 14 of the boys spoke candidly about freestyle and breakdance as desired genres they wished to try to discover,

be challenged by, and ultimately become competent with the associated moves in the focus group interviews. From the pictures there was an overall indication that social interaction, support, diverse dance genres and challenge were key features which are explored across chapters 4-6.

The thoughts shared about what made boys who they were, linked their identity to sport, which accounts for gendered trends towards activity and sporting choices (Sport England, 2018) that may link to masculine practices. It also reflects identity and perceptions of competence. Kalen at Gerald's Cross school discussed the notion of becoming a professional footballer and how his mother would support him because as he commented, 'I'm good at football'. Interest in football was supported by a liking of the sport and how it allowed the boys to play with others. Thoughts towards football and dance are highlighted in the below focus group discussion of perceptions of football providing more for them physically and in terms of:

Interviewer: What else have you written?

Kane: Football.

Interviewer: Again, why is that so important to you?

Kane: Because I play a lot of football at home, I play for a football team.

Interviewer: Does it help to identify who you are, like does football give you something that say for example dance couldn't?

Kane: Sort of.

Interviewer: What does it give you that dance doesn't?

Kane: In my opinion, I think football gives you leg strength instead of dance.

Interviewer: Do you have that, do you think you've got strength in your legs?

[Non-verbal response: shaking head and smiling]

Interviewer: Right, let's listen to some of the others then. Ted?

Ted: A lot of the boys don't like dance, but they like football, they feel like that's more enjoyable.

(Focus group interview 1, Year 5 Peterhouse Primary)

The way boys attribute sport and being sporty as identifying features of their sense of self, could be seen as a way to clarify a more orthodox masculine identity, where sport

is used to maintain masculinity (Adams, 2005; Anderson, 2012). The encompassing of team sports and contact sports that the boys aligned with as they shared what it means to be a boy highlight how closely interconnected sport is with male identity (Metcalf and Lindsey, 2020). Across the FGIs sport, including football is seen to take prominence in what boys can relate to, which extends to the historical undertones that sport holds in radiating a masculine embodiment. This embodiment has often been demonstrated through physical components of fitness such as power and strength (Dunning, 1986), in addition to the skill-related component where manipulation of objects is required, such as kicking, throwing, and catching, where boys also have tended to perform at higher levels than girls (Barnett et al., 2010). This reverberates in the above conversation, as dance is not viewed as something that can enhance physicality that football can.

My findings suggest that boys still wish to access elements of orthodox masculinity, with strong beliefs towards sports, where they can contest against others to gain superiority (Connell, 2007), and demonstrate physical strength and a competitive athletic mind set (Anderson, 2011a) aligning with hegemonic masculine identities. Football was certainly a feature of what made the boys who they were, as 14 of the boys engaged in this as an activity that featured in their PE lessons and outside of school, as many attended football clubs.

Dale shared insight of moving from a potential masculinity denying activity (dance) to a more masculinity confirming activity (football):

Interviewer: OK, alright then, what did you say Dale about being a boy or what do you, what makes 'you' you?

Dale: Like, say a boy could do dance, like boys did dancing first, like I did ballerina first

Interviewer: You used to do ballet?

Dale: Yeah
Interviewer: So do you still do it?
Dale: No
Interviewer: Why did you stop?
Dale: I just did, I had to do more things, I had to do football, I started doing football
Interviewer: Which one did you prefer?
Dale: Both
Interviewer: What did you like about ballet?
Dale: It was fun, really fun.
Interviewer: What was fun?
Dale: You used to do spins
Interviewer: What skills did that require?
Dale: You had to jump high. I used to do it in my room.

(Focus group interview 2, Year 6 Peterhouse Primary)

For Dale, it was shared in the FGI and observed in classed that he had an enthusiasm towards dance. How Dale felt towards many genres of dance indicated productive learning experiences and a feel-good factor was something that he openly spoke about with the group. He was afforded the opportunity by his parents to pursue dance in the first instance, for him to be able to grow an appreciation. What is of note though at this juncture is that there was some indication that gender norms were more fluid perhaps at an earlier age for Dale, but a perception that there may be repercussions for continued participation for this boy. According to Shen et al. (2003), girls and boys are in tune with the external expectations of what sport and activity choices they make. For some young boys, a socially constructed pressure to conform to masculinised behaviours and activities can be demonstrated by pressure towards directing their involvement in traditional team sports (Metcalf and Lindsey, 2020, p.547). It is not uncommon for boys to be involved in football, as there are several empirical findings to substantiate the amalgamation of this sport with masculinity within school contexts (Bhana and Mayeza, 2016; Keddie, 2005; Metcalfe and Lindsey, 2020; Paechter & Clark, 2007). Nonetheless, in

the reproduction of the gendering of sports, it can be said to manifest in constraining the choices available to boys, in this instance through what might be deemed more suitable given the sex that they are and the expectations that are juxtaposed to this (Azzarito & Solomon, 2009; Plaza et al., 2017). On account of this, Dale, who had taken so much joy from dance, left a feeling in the FGI of being coerced into broader yet more 'suitable' activities for a boy, which can enable an established gendered identity.

Whilst acknowledging some traditionalistic hegemonic ideals, the boys also demonstrated fluidity and distanced themselves from what may also be conceived as hegemonic forms of being. Consequently, what distanced the boys from hegemonic theorising of masculinity is based on the discussions around the subordination of women and anti-femininity viewpoints (Connell, 1987; 2005). A key feature through conversation with the boys was that even though some of the boys constructed a particular assumed masculine identity, this did not fit with Anderson's (2010b) ideas of orthodox masculinity or Connell's hegemonic masculinity. An example in case, the boys during focus group interviews which were held around the time of the 2019 Women's Football World Cup, used this sporting event to talk about the sport of football. As alluded to previously, football has often been assumed as synonymous with masculine identity, with its emphasis on competitiveness and team affiliation (Connell, 2007; Metcalfe and Lindsey, 2020; Murphy et al., 2014). However, the boys shared insight that highlighted the boys' revered women in their accomplishments:

Interviewer: Were you disappointed when they (England Women) lost?

Raan and Pete: Yeah

Interviewer: They lost to the USA didn't they?

Raan: Yeah, they lost to the USA

Dale: Well, we got further than the men

All: Yeah we did

Pat: But the weird thing is, they (TV) still only talk about the men's thing

(Focus group interview 2, Year 6 Peterhouse Primary)

The boys appear not to see sport as something that is situated in a gendered fashion and instead take a more inclusive view. The boys used the term 'we' to position males in cooperation rather than opposition to females and also appreciated the endeavours of the women's team in comparison to the men's national team. Their conversation acknowledges some inherent undertones of inequality in media coverage, despite the women's team's success. This further provides evidence that the boys engaged in more dynamic ways of seeing females' involvement in sport, in this instance football and their surprise at a potential lack of media representation is something that is at odds with the more important notion of the women's sporting accomplishments. Although in the literature masculinity has been synonymous with engagement in team and contact sports, including football, the boys in my study shared nuances of football being an equitable sport, viewing both sexes as being capable of competing and engaging. The nature of this inclusive conversation corresponded similarly with the second case study school during the FGIs:

Interviewer: Right guys, next one. What I want to know is something that you can either draw or write on your little notepad, what it means to be a boy, three things.

Kalen: If you're a boy, and you're a girl, the only differences are parents. Because if you say males are better than females then that's sexist.

Alan: If you say boys are better than girls at fighting that would be sexist.

Eden: Or, we're better in football or sports.

Alan: Being true, they [the women's football national team] are doing better than us, than we did in the world cup. Actually, they're probably better than us.

(Focus group interview 1 Gerald's Cross school)

The boys were actively involved in respecting the achievements of females, were in agreement with the success of the women's team, and did not use this as an opportunity to discuss power, but instead through their dialogue promoted a rebalancing of power. This example supports the findings of more openly embracing the accomplishments of women in the working lives of boys. The boys also recognised equality between the sexes in challenging binary gender injustice and the gendering of sports and activities. For many young people, openly opposing sexist discourse is seen as a great threat (Renold et al., 2017). Nonetheless, the boys at both schools stood firmly against sexism and contested sex differences as being a barrier to sport participation, refuting stereotypical ideology, supporting, and building on findings elsewhere (Bragg et al., 2018). The power of the boys' dialogue highlights the "social unacceptability" (Anderson, 2012, p. 98) of attitudes relating to subordination of others, which in turn leads to less control over gender boundaries (Anderson, 2012).

The boys strived to dismantle taken-for-granted ideas about boys and girls and the activities they engage within to support a more inclusive climate for all. In examples of where activities were discussed, in particular when asked who dance was for, the boys rejected notions of traditional gendered activities/sports:

Dale: Dance is for everyone, not just girls
Raan: Everyone is equal and they can like what they want
Tag: I would say that we can do dance to our own music
Raan: There are some people out there that are really good at dance and sometimes they're boys.

(Focus group interview 1, Year 6 Peterhouse primary)

Although not explicit, gender comes into the conversation interestingly in the above example. Dale in his words is attempting to 'undo gender' by insisting dance can be

accessed by all. His inference 'not just girls' carries with it openness towards dance rather than distinguishing between boys and girls, based on activities. Similarly, Raan and Tag in the above example attempt to deconstruct the gendering of dance and challenge the beliefs about who can become competent. The insight of the boys to identify and act upon gendered justices within their focus group interviews illuminated a lens of gender-inclusive spaces that they both held and aspired to. The views above not only support the boys' use of the heart emoji signifying love for dance but also provided evidence of the boys at schools being inclusive. Eden who participates in a breakdance class outside of school, gained respectful appreciation from peers, with boys' demonstrating verbal support for what their peer was engaged within:

Gerard: Like don't judge people.

Alan: Don't judge people by their gender.

Kalen: You can't be sexist because some people were born to do what they want, like Eden

(Focus group interview 1 Gerald's Cross school)

Moreover, when the boys were posed with a scenario involving hearing a boy in the playground say that dance was not for boys, there was a clear response from Ged as to what he would say in return:

Ged: I'd say that's not the truth because look at Billy Elliott, he did really well with his career and ballet, and he's the main person that proves that it's not just girls who are good at dance. Boys can be good at it; they just need to push for that achievement.

(Focus group interview 2, Year 5 Peterhouse primary)

This was resonated in a similar scenario at Gerald's Cross school:

Interviewer: Think of your best friend, they come to you and say, 'Do you know what, I really love dance', what's the first thing you're going to say to them?

Tre: Give it a go.

Kalen: You should try dance because you're more active, and you're basically doing exercise as well, but it's more fun when you can dance with others.

(Focus group interview, Year 5 Gerald's Cross school)

The boys demonstrated inclusiveness of other boys who did well at dance either in or out of school, in addition to those who aspired to dance more or through media range of representations of boys and men that danced. This is demonstrated by the scenarios above in how supportive they would be for other boys to want to explore dance.

Likewise, across the schools, the boys were able to draw upon famous male dancers to share in the focus groups. Dale at Peterhouse primary spoke about having watched *Strictly Come Dancing* and how it makes him "want to dance". Additionally, Ted and Lee discussed knowing and liking the group "Diversity", from "Britain's Got Talent", and Ted, in particular, sharing his desire to "do the moves of a front-flip one day". Whilst Tre at Gerald's Cross school referenced the dancing of Michael Jackson and how Tre liked the "moonwalk". Boys are seeing male dancers more freely through televised performances which can support avenues for those interested. According to Owen and Riley (2020a) the evolution of masculine practices, where boys can identify males dancing through media representations, can create spaces for dance to be located more comfortably alongside masculinity.

My findings build on the work of Stewart et al. (2020), as they investigated masculine identities with 12-13-year-old boys and 15-16-year-old boys in a PE setting. Concerning the former age group, they found the younger boys to display caring and understanding behaviours that elevated their popularity. Support between boys and subsequent engagement in dance can give freedom to boys who dance to move more

fluidly between assumed gender norms. In this sense, support from peers gives rise to a 'freestyling', or more inclusive forms of masculinities (Campbell et al., 2018; Gard, 2006; Owen & Riley, 2020b; Peterson & Anderson, 2012). A more compassionate approach from boys as found in the evidence in the focus groups towards once deemed feminised activities or sports (Anderson and McCormack, 2014) have the potential to widen the boundaries for boys to engage in dance.

The boys appeared content to occupy positions that were pro-female, striving for equality, and supportive of boys negotiating different dance genres, and shared interest and wonder in learning opportunities in dance, without negative connotations amongst the group. For example, when the boys were asked what dance they would like to try, responses ranged from "ballroom dancing", "breakdance", "ballet", "freestyle", and "bhangra". The range of responses reflects and challenges features of orthodox masculinity, by indicating a willingness to explore assumed feminised and masculinised dance forms, thereby encouraging a more inclusive masculine display. Criticisms of Connell's theorising of masculinities have claimed that identity for men and boys is narrow and restrictive, whilst acknowledging a limited insight into the fluidity and inconsistent landscape of boys' identities (Martínez-García and Rodríguez-Menéndez, 2020). The boys suggest a readiness to sway between discourses that place some dance genres closer to femininity and masculinity, without trepidation. Their interests and identification as boys with masculinised activities draw them back to this 'freestyling' of masculinities that embraces acceptance irrelevant of sex and gender and connotations that may reside with both. The sentiment of acceptance was echoed by all of the boys across the schools. Accordingly, the boys in this study engaged in an identity that was

supportive rather than restrictive and one which was built on freedom of expression within gender terms.

The impression that boys continued to give was that dance was a neutral terrain; however, it was imbued with connotations that did link to ways of being that did not align with some of their beliefs about how they could move. It will be discussed in chapters five and six how the boys gravitated towards particular ways of moving when it came to dancing, where they wanted to be more competent, and what they distanced themselves from according to what their bodies could not do. There was a plethora of dialogue about the desire to engage in breakdancing and how the use of pictures within the FGIs stimulated memories from the boys and affective responses about the desire to become competent within this genre. This was emphasised when the boys were asked what dance they would prefer to engage within:

Interviewer: So, what do we think then, guys, what type of dance would you like to do?

Dean: I'd quite like to do breakdancing because when we went to the new high school I'm going to, we did breakdance with the teacher and it was really enjoyable.

Interviewer: Why was it so enjoyable?

Ted: Well, because I think that was the first time we'd actually experienced the different types of dance, because I don't think we do a type of dance there, its just create moves and then we do that, we don't really learn.

Interviewer: What is it about breakdance that looks so much fun?

Kane: You get to spin on your head.

Interviewer: Why would you like to do that? What do you need to do that though?

Kane: You need to have skill.

Lee: Balance and you get to learn more moves than your normal dancing.

(Focus group interview 1, Year 5 Peterhouse Primary)

There is further evidence of aspirations to engage with breakdancing from the boys (Figures 4 and 5). Ged, who after choosing to draw his ideal environment to dance within, highlighted: 'for me I'm drawing...I think I got Rach just standing there doing a pose, Andy is doing a backflip, and we're doing breakdancing together'.

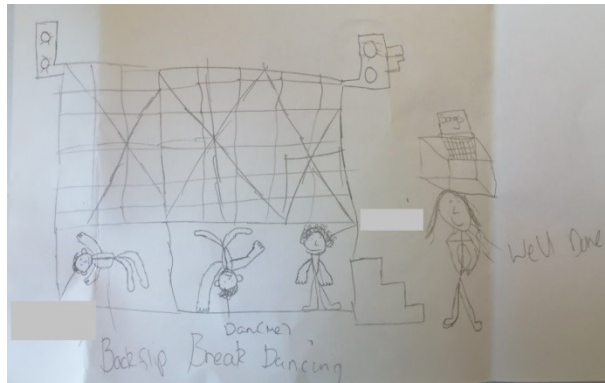


Figure 4 Ged's drawing during FGI 1

Similarly, in the second FGI at Peterhouse primary, Raan talked about his drawing commenting that: 'I've drawn breakdancing, I would like to do it. I would like to do it because I think it's really important; I don't know how on earth they do it'

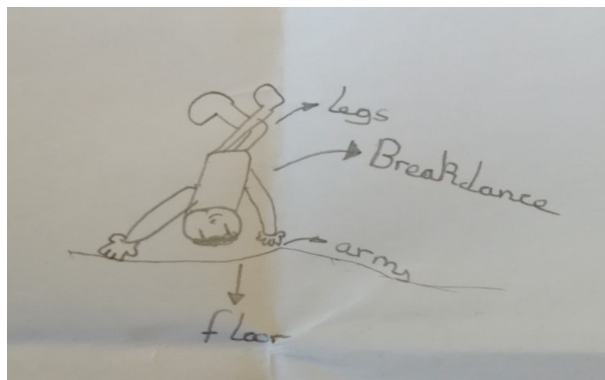


Figure 5 Raan's drawing during FGI 2

This ideal climate of dancing for Ged and Raan was something that was reflected on during the observations as not being part of their experience. This will be discussed in detail in chapter six, however, to add context to the drawing and what was observed during dance, the following field notes from Peterhouse primary capture an essence of why Ged and Raan, in particular, may be enthusiastically leaning towards such climate:

The teacher is showing technical moves for the whole class to copy individually. She adds elements with footwork and arm actions. I notice some boys struggling to follow and memorise. These boys are positioned at the back of the hall, using hiding techniques during the lesson. They go unnoticed, disengage and they do not follow what the teacher is doing.

(Observation field note 1, Year 6 Peterhouse primary)

The feeling from this observation, as well as others, was that some of the boys were disinterested in the moves, the limited input they had on the moves, and the isolated nature of dance as they currently experienced it. Ged, in attempting to capture a climate he would like to experience, demonstrated how he wanted to work collaboratively, but both Ged and Raan were using breakdancing as a vehicle to showcase moves that related to their identities. It was evident that aspirations to 'learn' were key messages the boys were imparting. In the drawings, each individual is performing a different movement, uncharacteristic of what was occurring during the lessons, as all were required to perform the same movements at the same time. This builds on their desire to master new, challenging, and alternative ways of moving. This is supported through the following examples:

Interviewer: What is it about breakdance that looks so much fun?

Kane: You get to spin on your head and you learn new skills.

Lee: You get to learn more moves than your normal dancing.

(Focus group interview 1, Year 5 Peterhouse primary)

The boys not only spoke about breakdance, but during the lessons were observed on occasions to be performing aspects of freestyle and breakdance during pauses:

After some teacher explanations, three of the boys in the class carry on dancing in more of a freestyle manner, very different to what the teacher was teaching, they spin and shuffle feet quickly, and stopping once the teacher restarts the next section.

(Observation field note 4, Peterhouse primary Year 6)

The freedom in that moment to be themselves was evident through how they moved, which reified their inherent desire to move in a way that was personally relevant.

This was homogenous across the school settings during pauses in the lesson:

When not focussed on teacher-led parts of the lesson Kalen does a cartwheel and some breakdance moves on the floor as he waits.

(Observation field note 3, Gerald's Cross school)

When asked to choose emojis with the pictures of dancers, the boys across the schools shared different interests in who they used the 'love' emoji most frequently with. At Gerald's Cross school, the three dancers to whom the boys attached the 'love' emoji most represented an interest in breakdance, but also other genres (Appendix O, P, and Q). While the two dancers that typified breakdance or freestyle persona (Appendix J and O) received the 'love' emoji most commonly at Peterhouse primary. By expressing an interest in breakdance, Gunn (2016) claims that breakdance can break the rules of dance, whereby there can be a shift in the expected social actions and behaviours of appropriate gendered activities. In this sense, the entrenched masculine natures that breakdance have long-held ensure dominance in male engagement (Blagojevic, 2009). Therefore, although as mentioned in previous chapters, dance has been positioned as a female activity (Risner, 2009) and an activity that males have approached with trepidation in fear of being perceived as effeminate (Risner, 2007). For the boys in this study, breakdance

provides a safety net for them to collectively explore this genre with a more contemporary fluid masculine identity. The very elements of breakdance on a larger scale do resonate with aspects of femininity, including connection to artistic expression and creativity (Langnes, 2018, p. 2). Ultimately, the boys' enthusiasm of embracing the holistic space that breakdance encompasses suggests the valuing of mastering skills and freedom within which the boys can challenge identities to carve out inclusive forms of masculinity.

The continued draw towards breakdance was strong for many of the boys across both schools, but mainly at Peterhouse primary. This is indicated in the following extract and pictures that supported the flow of conversation:

Interviewer: So, why do you prefer these pictures?

Ted: I put I) D) H). The reason for I) and D) is because I'd like to learn breakdancing. H) I'd like to learn how he does that as well.

Ted: I) and D) look like they're doing breakdancing, and H) looks as those do breakdancing as well.

Kane: I put H), because they could show me new tricks

Neal: D) and H) because I like to learn how to do with D), because they've got style.

(Focus group interview 1, Year 5 Peterhouse Primary)



Figure 6 Picture D used in the focus group interviews



Figure 7 Picture H used in the focus group interviews



Figure 8 Picture I used in the focus group interviews

The stronger affiliation, as previously mentioned, was evident at Peterhouse primary, with more reference in the FGI dialogue, through the drawings and associated emojis.

Bearing in mind the use of data to gauge an insight into the socioeconomic statuses of the schools, Peterhouse primary was assumed to have held more of working-class status. This was based on the pupil premium (PP) and free school meals (FSM) data outlined in the previous chapter and in line with David et al. (2001), who claimed that using such data can be an indicator of an individual's or family's economic and social position. The connection that the boys from Peterhouse primary had with breakdance resembles an attempt for them to create a part of their identity which aligned with dance. Showing an awareness of the challenge that comes with breakdance moves, a zest for engaging in this through their ideal dance climate, and admiring photographs of dancers who look to be performing breakdance moves, all led to the growing curiosity of the boys. Such curiosity is built on the premise that the boys are being asked to conform within

dance in its current form. It, therefore, draws connections to studies in Europe that have identified that youth are drawn to the free-spiritedness of breakdance (Petracovschi et al., 2011), see it as a place for negotiating a sense of belonging (Langnes and Fasting, 2017, p. 349) and of conveying manhood (Blagojević, 2010). This would seem to support the case that with the boys at Peterhouse primary, given how some of the boys are attempting to find a place within dance. It can be said to be an attempt from the white boys in particular, at Peterhouse primary, of distancing from middle-class whiteness (Brayton, 2005).

Chapter summary

Evidence suggests boys endeavoured to support an alternative, more inclusive identity. This was showcased as support for women's sporting achievements and in how they approached the gendering of sport and activities. Whilst the boys did still strive to maintain some elements of orthodox masculine identity simultaneously, this arose in the guise of interest in the often male-dominated dance genre of breakdance, built on physicality. Yet, they also engaged in a freestyling of masculinity that does not reside in one way of doing gender, as they demonstrated equitable attitudes that contested norms that perpetuate gender inequalities. The plethora of data implies boys are residing in a culture of diminishing homophobia (Anderson, 2012). No notion of being better or competing with others was evident, but there was a clear emphasis on the aspirations held towards learning and it is further evidence that no signs of a hierarchical structure amongst the boys in both schools. Any form of domination of particular ways of being for the boys was not observable or voiced during moments together. Instead, patterns in the data suggest acceptance for diversity and equitable opportunities for boys and girls, which supports Anderson's (2012) notion that during cultures of diminishing

homophobia, gendered behaviours between boys and girls will demonstrate fewer differences.

In the continuation of doing and undoing gender, the following theme will encompass a discussion to highlight the ways the boys embodied particular forms of masculinity through their actions during the observations, which were supported in the FGIs.

Chapter 5 Embodied Inclusive Masculinity

An opportunity provided by the supportive nature of the boys with each other and in cooperation with girls/women is that it can provide a platform for a more emotionally-supportive environment between boys, where previously some behaviours would have reaped negative consequences (Anderson, 2010b). It is important to note that during the observations and in the focus group interviews that no homophobic discourse was heard from the boys. Previous research has demonstrated that homophobia has been used to ostracise other boys (Mac an Ghail, 1994; McGuffey and Rich, 1999; Renold, 2003), while for some boys they quickly grasp the pressures of having to distance themselves from homosexuality (Pollack, 1999) or behaviours deemed feminine (Anderson, 2005b; Anderson and Magrath, 2019). However, through the observations a closeness between the boys, especially evident at Gerald's Cross school during the dance lessons was palpable, which is highlighted in the following field notes:

Eden signals a thumbs-up to Gerard who is behind him as he demonstrates with others some of the dance material learnt. This is followed by another pupil, Tre, who moves forwards to touch Gerard, patting him on the back, cupping his cheeks, and putting his arms around him.

(Observation field note 1, Year 5 Gerald's Cross school)

The moment above captured a sense of pride from some of the boys to a peer, which was demonstrated in praising (thumbs up) and a physical closeness (patting, cupping, and embracing) between the boys. This reinforces Anderson's (2010b) articulation through inclusive masculinity theory, by acknowledging when more support is felt between men, and in this instance between boys, will provide a space for emotions to be shared unapologetically. Similar findings were also found in Stewart et al's (2020) study where younger boys in secondary education placed value on learning and the

delight through accomplishing. The example above identified the importance of acknowledgement from other boys when mastery had been achieved, and that this occurred without stigmatisation. Further evidence at Gerald's Cross of the embodied closeness is provided in the following field note:

When Tre's group perform their moves Liam celebrates with Gerard by pulling him close and hugging him. The teacher explains the order and the boys all come together after completing their first section, Gerard moves to Kalen and Eden who all hug as a group.

(Observation field note 4, Year 5 Gerald's Cross school)

Although culturally determined, this evidence suggests that in Gerald's Cross school there remains an inclusive cultural reference point for boys as they construct their identities. The boys embodied freedom in having close relationships with their same-sex peers and such acts authorised a more impassioned culture in their performances of masculinity and femininity. The boys in my study did not use recuperation strategies to counter or protect their identities after tactile moments with other boys. This builds on the findings of McCormack (2011a; 2011b) and McCormack and Anderson (2010) in the limited heterosexual recuperation evident with older boys in high school settings. The regularity of physical touch and tactility between boys functioned to "distance it from orthodox forms of heterosexual boundary management" (McCormack and Anderson, 2010, p. 852). This was shown likewise in moments when the lesson was yet to begin, when the pace slowed down or was paused, highlighting what McCormack and Anderson (2010) claimed was a standardised practice especially in the absence of homophobic shaming. Evidence of the physical closeness is shown in the following field notes:

Tre and Gerard physically play around with each other, putting Tre's hands-on Gerard's head before the teacher interjects to move them on. This follows with the boys still waiting around on the teacher, whilst doing so the boys engage in holding, pushing, and hugging one another.

(Observation field note 5, Year 5 Gerald's Cross school)

There was a clear 'bromance' in Gerald's Cross school between Tre and Gerard, who repeatedly supported each other during dance lessons and acknowledged achievements through their interactions. Interestingly, through the FGIs, it was established that Tre considered he was a 'sporty' boy when asked to write or talk about what being a boy meant to them and also from his peer's perspective of Tre. Tre was involved in rugby outside of school and during the FGI he elaborated on his affiliation with the sport:

Interviewer: So, do we like sports, guys?

All: [Mixture yes/no]

Tre: I'm a big sports fan. I play all kinds of sports.

Interviewer: Do you, what's your favourite?

Tre: Rugby, I play for a rugby club, Castle Rugby Club, and I got Sportsman of the Year... for my rugby club under 11's.

Interviewer: That's really good.

Tre: I mostly watch a lot of rugby, and the Rugby World Cup is coming up. My parents are from South Africa so I support South Africa, I mostly know all the players from the team.

Tre: Yeah, I would like to play for South African rugby, that's my goal.

(Focus group interview 1 Gerald's Cross school)

'Sporty' boy Tre constructed and acted his identity in inclusive forms by being valued by the other boys in the class for his comprehensive 'ability' in PE/Sport, including rugby, high jump, dance, and through the associations he had with his male-peers in creating friendships. Furthermore, Eden who is the only boy who dances outside of school time and who receives support for his participation in dance from his peers is also able to access an esteemed masculine identity. The two boys showcase how no hierarchical system is in place for varying masculine identities, building on the work of

Anderson (2012) in the characterisation of valuing male closeness. Some of the literature terms same-sex friendships as a bromance and have identified that contemporary research has found sporting males to be progressively physically close with other same-sex peers (Scoats, 2017). The developing nature of 'bromances' has been found in studies concerning adolescent boys (Anderson, 2014; Zorn & Gregory, 2005) and is apparent in Gerald's Cross school, whereby boys did not appear to be protecting their identities and were not concerned with being observed in such close moments. The idea of friendship founded on intimacy is a way of conceiving bromances (Robinson, Anderson and White, 2018) and the capturing of aspects of bromances in this study can be understood in the following field notes:

Tre and Eden engage in a play fight which is a lot of physical contact, later they hold each other in an embrace and other boys see this. Gerard and Kalen copy their actions and hold each other's shoulders. During a mini pause in the lesson Tre cups Eden's face and talks to him during a mini-pause. Moments later he gently pats Eden on the bum to ready him for the dance.

(Observation field note 7, Year 5 Gerald's Cross school)

There were no negative consequences from same-sex peers during moments of physical closeness or when physicality was used as a vehicle for emotional support in the lessons. This extract provides further support that the boys negotiated their identities within dance in this context in more inclusive forms by being providers and recipients of emotional and physical support for each other (Anderson, 2010b; Magrath et al. 2015; Peterson and Anderson 2012). Sport in particular has been influential in highlighting this social and cultural shift for men (Anderson, 2014). Witnessing Tre as a chief instigator of emotional connectedness with others, and knowing through conversations of his keenness with rugby, builds on previous findings that suggest such wide-ranging and less

restricted identities in men are being exhibited in rugby as an example in point (Anderson and McGuire, 2010; Murray and White, 2015). The cultural shift in rugby has been evidenced as an attitudinal transformation towards homosexuals (White and Anderson, 2017), which gives way to more liberal approaches from the men and boys that engage in this sport. In this sense, Tre's exposure within a rugby context has not been a vehicle to pronounce an orthodox form of masculinity and may reside as progressive evidence of his attitude towards physical closeness with other boys. As the identified 'sporty' boy, Tre can be said to have demonstrated playful warmth for other boys, as he exhibited a more contemporary form of masculinity, this extends to other boys imitating acts of closeness. Behaviours such as Tre's have been found elsewhere with male athletes, especially in the tactility insinuating closeness with others (Scoats, 2017; White and Anderson, 2017).

Physical tactility was especially observed regularly within the dance lessons at Gerald's Cross school due to the feelings shared concerning performing in dance. During the focus group interviews, boys shared through emojis, and written form how they specifically felt before their school dance lessons, which involved copying the teachers (see chapter six) actions:

Alan: Worry about embarrassing themselves, worried to mess up, so would feel angry and ashamed.

Lenka: Nerves for dance and sport are different. Dance seems to make me more nervous when performing.

(Focus group interview 1 Gerald's Cross school)

Across the schools some boys also chose an emoji to reflect their feelings, which talked of a negative connotation to dance. At both schools the boys spurred on by the emoji inclusion talked openly about feelings without stigmatisation. At Gerald's Cross

school, Tre used the term: “worry”. For Gerard, he spoke about “having no love for dance so wouldn’t use the heart emoji”. For some of the boys, they signified a mixed response; Alan communicated that he had modified his emojis and had concluded that “sad had turned into worry”, and “wow was changed into oh no”, whilst Eden, the only boy who danced outside of school, indicated that he “loved dancing”, therefore chose the heart emoji. In contrast at Peterhouse primary, when Kane was asked what emoji he felt before his dance lessons he responded, “miserable” and Lee confirmed that, “sometimes I’m sad about it”. On reflection there was an inclusive culture for sharing emotions and displaying closeness through actions, such moments supported the careful negotiation of dancing for boys.

To contrast the findings with embodied inclusive masculinities, it became clear through the closeness exhibited at Gerald’s Cross school was not aligned with the boys’ behaviours in Peterhouse primary. The boys at Peterhouse primary remained supportive of their peers, as evidenced in the following field notes:

As the class recap on last week’s learning, Ged and Lee remember some of the steps and give each other a discreet high five, they are pleased with each other.

(Observation field note 3, Year 6 Peterhouse primary)

However, the closeness was limited to supportive behaviours, but not hugging or embracing, and to the degree that was shown in Gerald’s Cross. In moments where there were demonstrations of same-sex touch, it seemed in a manner that was subdued, exemplified by the ‘discreetness’ of the high five. Nonetheless, behaviours like this were evident in both classes at Peterhouse, with ‘thumbs up’ for recognition to others and ‘pats on the back’ from friends in the lessons. The findings across the two school settings can be likened to the findings of McCormack (2014) in his ethnographic work with 16-19-

year-old boys who largely came from areas of socioeconomic deprivation and of McCormack and Anderson's (2010) ethnography with middle-class college students at a sixth-form. It was found that there were minimal forms of homosocial tactility between boys in the working-class espousing school in comparison to the middle-class espousing school, but there remained no evidence of the policing of behaviour across both schools, irrelevant of the degree of physical and emotional closeness displayed. Emotional closeness was however evident in the focus group interviews with boys at Peterhouse primary, signifying a building of productive or healthy masculinities by the absence of any policing or regulation of emotion sharing. This is highlighted in three of the boys' drawings and supporting explanations:

Pete: This is from a dance, that person's going to be a bit bigger; it's just like a bad drawing! [Laughs] But there's a dance that we did where we were in lines and the person that was next to us they dropped on the floor, and you had to help them up. It's dance where you're constantly supporting each other to do different moves.

Interviewer: Ah, and you liked that interaction with other people during dance.

Pete: Yeah, I like that, it makes it feel better.

(Focus Group Interview 2, Year 6 Peterhouse primary)



Figure 9 Pete's drawing during FGI 2

Likewise, the drawings of Dean (Figure 10) and Lee (Figure 11) indicate the importance of being with familiar peers amid vulnerabilities in dance:

Dean: I've drawn Year 2 friends, and the big friends who aren't over you, they're kind... they'd not see you all the time. You can just sit down with them and talk, and they won't make unnecessary jokes and things. So, I've done it as Ted or Ged, because you can sit down with Ged and Ted and just talk, and they won't make jokes. But if you dance with others they may laugh at you.

Interviewer: Are you worried others might say something about your dancing?

Dean: Yeah, I mean I know they don't mean it, but sometimes they can say some things and it's like...it wouldn't necessarily hurt me, but I'd rather not hear.

(Focus Group Interview 1, Year 5 Peterhouse primary)

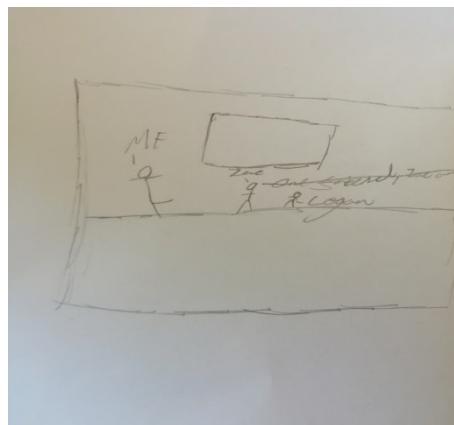


Figure 10 Dean's drawing during FGI 1

Interviewer: Shall we start having a look at yours Lee, what's in your picture?

Lee: Me and my four friends, we are waiting, the songs not on yet

Interviewer: Is it important for you to dance with your friends?

Lee: Yeah, because if you don't know who you're with, you're not prepared for them and I know my friends will help me.

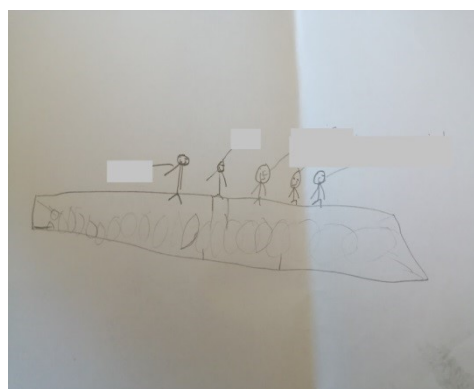


Figure 11 Lee's drawing during FGI 1

Despite a marked difference in behaviours of physical closeness between the boys at the case study schools, there is alignment with inclusive masculinity theorising and distancing from orthodox masculinity. In particular through the emotional freedom that all boys displayed in sharing feelings across the focus group interviews, the caring and open vulnerabilities, and in the normalcy of physical tactility for the boys at Gerald's Cross school.

The differences in physical closeness can be likened to the findings of McCormack (2014) in that the working-class boys' displays were less prominent. This may be due to an inability to gain entry to forms of cultural and social capital that perhaps the middle-class boys were able to access. My findings build on the work of McCormack by highlighting the difference across the two settings for younger boys, in reifying the absence of homophobic discourse across youth cultures based on class identities, and importantly establishing that inclusive masculinity was the dominating identity residing amongst boys across the schools.

Interpreting the negative feelings indicated by the boys, I viewed how significant it was for the boys to be able to develop healthy masculine behaviours to encompass emotionality between same-sex friends as coping strategies to some of the negative feelings associated with dance lessons. Inclusive and tactile (whether open or discreet) behaviour allowed the boys to feel supported in their dance setting, where they had to carefully negotiate their involvement, competence, and identity as boys in the "traditionally female domain of dance" (Garrett & Wrench, 2018, p. 98). My findings highlight that vulnerability, physical closeness and supportive attitudes are key features

of emotional solidarity in their participation and achievements in dance. This was evident through the following focus group interview:

Interviewer: Can you think about your class and which boys do well in dance?

All: Kane (in agreement)

Interviewer: Kane from year 5?

All: Yeah

Interviewer: How is he good?

Pete: He can do the moves that the teacher does really well

Pat: He is really fast with his moves

Tag: He just makes it look good

(Focus group interview 2, Year 5 Peterhouse primary)

I build on this body of evidence that suggests there are an ever-increasing ability and desire from some boys to want to form and reform relationships based on companionable intimacy and supportive relationships with other boys, in and through their experiences in dance, where some discomfort remains in how they are asked to learn movements.

Chapter summary

Given the well-discussed nature of dance and dominant discourses linked to masculine identity and homophobia (Kimmel and Messner, 2001) and that homophobia is a feature key to the appreciation of inclusive masculinity theory, it is of interest to emphasise the embodying of inclusive masculinities interpreted from my study. In the complete absence of homophobic discourse with the boys, in an activity that Risner (2009, p. 57) claims to “question dominant notions of masculinity”, the behaviours and beliefs of boys illuminate the progressive nature of embodying closeness and caring attitudes towards each other where vulnerability, emotions and pride in achievements were not policed. This was significantly accepted given the absence of heterosexual recuperation evident amongst the boys during tactile moments. Inclusive masculinity can

account for the cultural shift we are seeing in this context, with diminished homophobia acting in a manner that is permitting more freedom in the identities of the boys and constructing contemporary masculinities that embody so much more than previous narrow definitions of masculinity, especially in dance. There was no evidence during the observations or focus group interviews of the boys policing the behaviours of one another, specifically in terms of their extra-curricular commitments to dance (Eden and Dale), or the boys' desires to become competent and to explore dance genres that related to who they were. My findings support boys being open to opportunities to support each other emotionally and to progress with a collective feeling of what will afford them the most supportive setting to enjoy and strive within dance.

The next chapter focuses on how the boys made sense of their experiences as learners with dance content and from the teaching approaches. I highlight the boys' discussions about suitable learning climates they strived to be competent in and to ultimately experience meaningful dance.

Chapter 6 Inquiry and Embodied based Learning in Dance

The following theme focuses on the intricacies of dance pedagogy and the influence on the boys. Two areas are covered including; the teacher's pedagogical approaches across both schools and how boys felt regarding that, and boys' aspirations for alternative ways of working in dance.

Pedagogical approaches – lead and follow dance

This theme sheds a light on the boys' feelings towards dance in its current form and their recommendations for how dance learning encounters can be transformed. A significant point of departure will be presented in the emotions that the boys were able to convey through emojis specifically or through their innovative twist on an emoji, whereby they created, spoke of, and drew a unique feeling linked to dance in their school (see Table 7).

Table 7 List of emojis/emotions the boys felt before their dance lessons in school

| Child | Emoji/Feelings |
|--------|-----------------------|
| Ted | Anxious* and nervous* |
| Dale | Sad and like |
| Ged | Like and sad |
| Pat | Sad and yay |
| Tag | Angry and like |
| Daten | Sad and excited* |
| Dean | Wow and angry |
| Neal | I'm ok with it* |
| Kane | Miserable* and sad |
| Pete | Wow and angry |
| Raan | Sad and angry |
| Lee | Like and sad |
| Alan | Wow and oh no* |
| Eden | Love and worry* |
| Gerard | Wow and yay |
| Tre | Yay and like |
| Kalen | Love and embarrassed* |
| Lenka | Angry and sad |

* Students created their emoji/feeling different from the Facebook reactions presented.

16 out of the 18 boys' responses demonstrated negative feelings associated with dance, with these boys sharing uncertainties highlighted by feeling 'embarrassed', 'worried', and with the use of the 'sad' or 'angry' emoji (see Figure 12, 13, and Table 7). According to hooks (1994), teaching approaches that demonstrate narrow conceptions of teacher and learner roles can influence the emotional response from learners and thus the enjoyment gained in said learning climate. This is evidenced as some of the boys drew their understanding of a unique emotion that was not an emoji offered, towards dance. The examples highlight how the drawings depicted negative emotions through facial expressions.

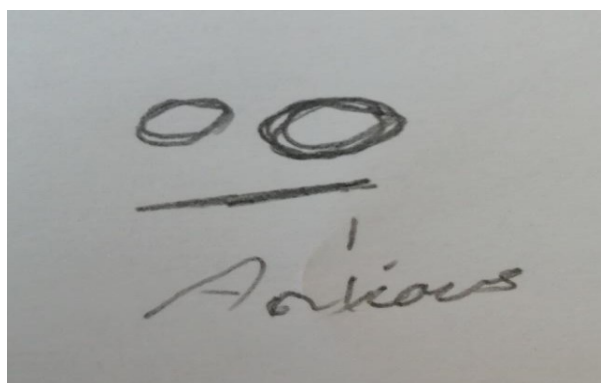


Figure 12 Ted's emotions felt before dance lessons

The narrative that followed the drawing by Ted highlighted negative feelings associated with the way dance was presented to the boys and how with other possibilities of how dance could be presented, he would feel differently. Ted responded that he felt, 'anxious and miserable' and the following extract from the FGIs is when Ted talks through why he has drawn this particular emotion in Figure 12:

Ted: Because I wonder what we're going to do, and whether... kind of sad because, if we were doing the things that we spoke about earlier [creating], then I might be a bit more enthusiastic about it. But when there are other things that you could do, you're a bit miserable and a bit sad and don't enjoy it.

(Focus group interview 1, Year 5 Peterhouse primary).

Likewise, Ged shares his concern for being observed more openly in dance lessons, which makes him feel uncomfortable.



Figure 13 Ged's version of an emoji related to how he felt before dance lessons

The narrative to support Ged's drawing accounts for what he perceived boys collectively to feel towards dance.

Interviewer: If an emoji doesn't suggest how you feel, then feel free to draw another emotion you feel just before your dance lesson.

Ged: I don't know how to draw it.

Interviewer: Would you like to explain it instead?

Ged: Yeah, it's like [sighs], like a sigh. It's like you've got normal PE, then you've got dance, I think a lot of the boys... I'm not saying all the boys, I'm saying quite a lot of the boys like PE more than dance. But then you've got gym, because gym is like hard-core, and I think most of the boys like that as well.

(Focus group interview 1, Year 5 Peterhouse primary).

In the example from Ged, he is attempting to distance himself and some of the other boys from dance. It was unsurprising that, as the FGIs evolved across the schools, it was highlighted that the way they felt about dance in school was a reflection of experiences of how it was taught. To give context to how lessons were delivered, observational field notes across both schools highlighted similarities in the experiences:

All pupils are being told what to do and when to do it. The teacher is at the centre and has choreographed the dance already. She is getting the class to replicate her techniques and actions to the dance.

(Observation field note 1, Year 5 Gerald's Cross school).

Similarly, in the first observation at Peterhouse primary, it was noted that the 'teacher tells and the pupils' copy'. Whilst scanning around to the pupils, it was apparent that 'most pupils have serious facial expressions, look zoned out or disinterested. For the duration of the lessons observed, it was clear that a lead-and-follow style was being employed by the teachers as they moved through the content. Power resided with the teacher, with the knowledge being transmitted to the class as passive receivers, with expectations of repeating actions. This resonates with Freire's (1970) view of the banking model of education which narrows the scope of learning to store the information being imparted by the teacher. Clegg et al. (2019) claim dictatorial ways of teaching can impact the team, or in this class, the class's mood, which seemed uninspired. Both educators across the schools held a commanding position. According to Lynch et al. (2020), to provide more socially just experiences for learners, teachers should consider shifting away from such a position to a role that encompasses facilitating the learners within more inclusive spaces. In what follows, it is important to value that the boys, in general, did not want to distance themselves from dance, but what was interpreted was that they wanted to distance themselves from the pedagogical approaches that dance was taught through. Highlighting their possible discomfort with dance is provided in the following field note:

At the beginning of the lesson the teacher says “boys, don’t hide at the back”, however, five out of the six boys position themselves at the back of the room, with one boy, Kalen remaining at the front amongst the girls.

(Observation field note 1, Gerald’s Cross school)

The positioning of the boys does not get challenged despite the teacher’s request and they remain there for the majority of the lesson. Their willingness to hide was interpreted as their discomfort with dance and the following of actions.

In highlighting how the boys connected emojis to the pictures of dancers, Dean initiates a conversation about a particular dancer (Appendix G), by stating “he seems to have quite typical dancing, well not typical but traditional”. Ged follows the flow of this conversation by attaching the ‘sad’ emoji to the same dancer and he followed this by commenting “I’ve put sad because it is like dancing that you do in class with our teacher. Stuff like that...”. Similarly, Ted agreed with Ged on the said dancer (Appendix G), attaching the ‘sad’ and ‘angry’ emoji due to the association with their dance lessons, and Ted remarked, “Yes, quite boring it looks, so I put made me sad, and I put made me angry”. The feelings the boys held show a link to how dance was taught and thereby felt. To contextualise the style of teaching and data to support the relationship between learners, subject-matter, and teacher, I will be unpicking some of the pedagogical practices observed and the impact felt by the boys.

Dance teaching, as it was observed, had worked to place value on passivity in the learning process. Gard (2006) would claim this to be a mechanical way of being when a dance is delivered in a way that focuses on skill or technique alone. In valuing recall of technique in lessons, it worked to exclude some boys, particularly from accomplishing and subsequently becoming competent in and through movement in dance. The data

included so far shows that boys wanted an active embodied learning experience. In this sense, although physically moving and following teacher commands, boys' limited input constrained their overall learning experiences.

According to Stinson (2005), the ways of teaching mentioned already are examples in case of ways in which dance training specialists conduct their sessions. Therefore it is unsurprising to see the style of teaching given that this is perceived as a customary approach to dance pedagogy, especially in that learners copy from a more proficient other, the teacher (Melchior, 2011). Throughout the lessons, the boys were following instructions and reminded to stay silent or focused. The following field notes support this:

The class are listening to the teacher explain what to do with their bodies, it is a vast amount of technical information at which the class show restlessness, swinging arms, bouncing on the spot, some boys are eye rolling to each other and yawning.

(Observation field note 1, Peterhouse primary Year 5)

Reflecting on this, it seemed that an autocratic approach was being adopted, with all learners lined up facing the teacher and following them, which appeared to have an impact on the motivation amongst learners. The following indicates a risky moment within the same lesson that one boy finds himself in:

The teacher comments that there only two-minutes left of the lesson and one boy shouts 'yes!' The teacher reacts to this by saying he can do a solo next week. Some of the class laugh; he looks embarrassed and looks down at the floor. The teacher says she is joking with him.

(Observation field note 1, Peterhouse primary Year 5)

Such critical moments can make experiences meaningless for learners and as a consequence, through the FGIs, the boys shared a conviction for alternative ways for them to negotiate dance as a subject-matter. This was through more creative and collaborative means. This contrasts the findings of Amado et al., (2015) who found that secondary-aged students' experiences of direct instruction in dance led to more feelings of competence and thus higher motivation towards dance, largely due to having a frame of reference and less social exposure. This was not evident in the current study and it was felt by boys that the direct instruction style restricted them. The research by Amado et al. (2015) focuses on the participants at the later stage of secondary education, which differs from the participants in my study, who are at the later stage of primary education. During adolescence, a process of deliberation for the young individual is shaped by events and interactions around them in solidifying their understanding of who they are and who they will become (Thorne and McLean, 2002). This prominent time in a young person's life could impact responses to particular activities, particularly given that they may be assumed unsuitable in establishing their gendered identity. Their research reflected a heightened feeling towards how learners were perceived by others under a creative teaching approach. Amado et al. (2015) also comment that there was a feeling participants would be "ridiculed by their companions" (p. 133). In activities like dance, this could be in part due to boys holding an image of inferiority concerning competence in comparison to girls (Lyu & Gill, 2011; Shen et al., 2003), which ties back to how the teacher defined competence.

This may reflect how masculinities and femininities become more narrowly defined at this stage of schooling and how gendered trends contribute to precarious spaces for young people (Metcalfe and Lindsey, 2020). When dance as an activity is

presented in this way, without choreographed steps, it can be said to contest the masculine-coded subject of PE, as further strengthens the links with feminine values (Mattsson, 2017, p. 7).

Nevertheless, this intensified feeling held by the participants and gendered ways of seeing dance was not held by the participants in my study, who displayed enthusiasm for an opportunity to showcase their creative works. In my study, a sense of autonomy was not considered by the teacher, which is evidenced through the boys' comments and eagerness to move towards expressing their individuality and collaboration with others in dance.

The notion that boys and young men are displaying broader actions and emotional displays that have been conventionally associated with femininity draws support from IMT further (Scoats, 2017). The boys in my study demonstrated expanding repertoires to their behaviours. This can work to increase opportunities for young boys to challenge socially constructed norms of assumed behaviour and actions within particular activities like dance. It is therefore critical that PE teachers be aware of and place importance on designing lessons for diverse forms of masculinity (Stewart et al., 2020), especially where a challenging of dominant discourse may reside, such as in dance. Discussion regarding creative learning encounters will be discussed in the following subheading.

Owning the dance

Through the observations and focus group interviews, boys shared views of alternative ways to encounter dance subject-matter, specifically to provide greater relatedness for the class. They saw themselves as potential artists and creators given the chance. In the FGIs across the schools, boys frequently communicated preferences to

experience learning in dance through a creative capacity with other boys and girls. An example is presented below of when boys were asked what they would like to share with their teacher:

- Interviewer: What five things you would tell your dance teacher, to make dance better?
- Neal: I've only written one thing. It's like a question, 'Can we create our own dance?'
- Ted: Do different types of dance, make all our dances, and listen to the children's opinions before you make a dance and pick the song.
- Dean: What I've done, most of my other questions are, 'Could we do our dance', and 'could we choose our own songs',
- Dean: But what I've done is, could we dance in groups so it's like teach us some dance moves for maybe 15 minutes, and then we could go off in our groups, and we could create dances, or just dance around.

(Focus group interview 1, Year 5 Peterhouse primary).

Creativity is a holistic and cooperative process, bringing people and ideas together (Łuczniak, 2015), whereby movement with others can provide inherent delight (Himberg et al., 2018). The extract from the focus group interview above builds upon the work of Steinberg and Steinberg (2016) in their research of primary aged children's experiences in dance. They found learners wanted to make decisions regarding their movement concepts; yet for my study, boys were not afforded this learning experience. Having input is an important process for children and young people, as it can empower and motivate. Mattsson and Larsson (2020) found that, as learners selected their music to move to, it galvanised them to connect emotions with movement in their dance. This was readily missing in the observations and during moments of hearing boys' interpretations of their experiences. The extract above echoes the relationship of wanting to work collaboratively with peers and make decisions regarding the direction of their dance. Taking note of the aspired learning processes which appreciate each other's input can have significant

impacts on learners (Torzillo and Sorin, 2016). In a moment where Dean offers recommendations to the teacher by stating, “we could be talking with each other and practising dance moves”, he highlights preferences for taking charge away from the teacher. The recognition of speaking and working with others emphasised by Dean in this instance continues to highlight a need to be active decision-makers from their perspective. Deans’ (2016) research with much younger children in dance than in the current study showed awareness of the aptitudes and value of reciprocal working environments. Peer teaching as a tool to deploy with learners can allow for the created feelings of togetherness (Barr and Oliver, 2016). The capabilities of children in supporting one another and creating positive outcomes are possible, between and across sexes. The boys aspired for this on numerous occasions and can extend to more meaningful experiences when greater consideration is given to social interactions (Beni et al., 2017).

The importance of the ‘collective’ was evident across schools. At Gerald’s Cross school, Alan spoke about working with others in dance and the importance of friendships by saying, “I need to be able to trust them, and also I like it when we’ve got a lot in common”. By physically and emotionally supporting one another through the creation of dances can elevate more positive-socio effects between boys and girls. Steinberg and Steinberg (2016) highlighted that in group work when learners collaborate with familiar partners, in particular, it can assist in the process of decision making. Working reciprocally is likewise underlined by Deans (2016), who claims it can promote the necessary skills of listening to, sharing ideas and feelings mutually. Working with others, which was frequently suggested by boys could go some way to creating positive experiences in dance that offer what Steinberg and Steinberg (2016) imply is a safe space to be

imaginative and gain enjoyment from the process. However, what was observed gives insight into what was happening in dance lessons and how boys felt:

The class is asked to find a space to stand in and are distanced from one another. They look around to each other, waiting, standing unfirmly. They bring their focus on the teacher at the front when told to do so as the recalling of dance actions begins. The teacher asks questions to the class at varying points but there is no opportunity to discuss.

(Observation field note 6, Peterhouse primary Year 6)

For the boys, there was limited opportunity to integrate with their peers in the learning process and therefore their views of the teaching and subject-matter presented a conflict for them:

Interviewer: So Pete, let's have a look at your emojis you feel before dance?
Pete: I put wow and angry, I don't really like dance, I can't do it, it's really hard and I only like it when we can think of our own dance.

(Focus group interview 2, Year 6 Peterhouse primary)

When for example, "children become passive receivers of information and are mostly required to keep still" (Garrett and Wrench, 2018, p. 98), this can distance the relationship further, especially when the boys share their motivation to be active learners, taking ownership over their dance material and movements. This represents strong aspirations for more socially just ways of learning, which creates distance to the ideas of Freire's banking model of education (1970) and closer to what he defined as problem-based learning. This could also arise in the form of learners working in collaboration with teachers to co-construct their dance content, providing them with a platform to be heard and have options with their learning that can support feelings of empowerment (Lynch et al., 2020). Instead, the limited voice of the boys' was evidenced at Peterhouse primary: when asked what would make dance more meaningful, Tag

commented, “make it more fun, children pick a song and they get a say in the dance”. Boys wanted to explore and become the experts of their dances; however, in the lessons, the teachers were the experts and the boys were positioned as unknowing, thus diminishing the holistic learning experience, which was controlled by the teacher. This was further demonstrated across the FGIs at Peterhouse primary in the below extract:

Interviewer: What does Dale say? Which emojis do you feel before dance lessons?

Dale: The like and sad emojis

Interviewer: Why is that?

Dale: I like it but I’m sad because the teacher always tells us what to do and I like to do it myself, to create and have freedom.

(Focus group interview 2, Year 6 Peterhouse primary).

Although creative opportunities were absent for boys in the observed dance lessons, there was a consistent reaction across schools to this. Boys’ motivation to be heard and to work collaboratively with one another as they negotiated dance in personally relevant ways sent as the significant message they wanted to share with their teacher. More diverse styles and methods, where learners can inquire and have input in decision-making with the subject-matter, may see a greater degree of autonomy in learning experiences, which would support inclusive masculine identities (Stewart et al., 2020). The teaching worked to highlight that skilfulness was related to individually memorising and recalling the required techniques and actions. Therefore, dance instilled that there was a right and a wrong way of ‘doing’ within lessons, emphasised by the teacher telling the children what to do, when to move and how to move while the children conformed. The follow and lead approach, which maintained power with the teacher worked to restrict the freedom of the boys, limit the social connectedness with others, and impacted the overall meaningfulness of their experiences as learners. Viewing

dance also through a technical lens inhibits the emotional growth of moving with thoughts and feelings and the cognitive growth of expressing in diverse ways through the body, which can have an undeniable impact on the holistic growth of a child's development (Leandro et al., 2018). Further evidence of the recommendations of the boys is highlighted in the discussion that follows:

- Interviewer: Why would talking with each other be so important in your dance lesson?
- Dean: Well, because in dance, I think if you are talking with people in dance, I think it would boost your confidence a bit because we all know we're not great at this, or we are great at this, and then if you're doing it in your groups it could be really fun to see everybody experimenting with different dances. I think it would be really enjoyable.
- Interviewer: Is that important for you to work with other people?
- Dean: Yeah, the social aspect of it would make it more enjoyable.
- Interviewer: Anyone else want to share what they would like in their dance lessons?
- Ged: To create our dance, create our song. Smaller amount of people in a group. Listen to people's points of view. I had one in my head... and we can go off in our little friend groups, into different parts, on different mats, then we can create our own dance. Then we'll showcase it to the people in the class, and they will vote for which one is best. So, we'll work on that dance for that song.

(Focus group interview 1, Year 5 Peterhouse primary).

Opportunities for learners to have control over the dance material can provide a sense of creative agency. The boys voiced important messages regarding the delivery of dance which encompassed a need for more creative outlets, in doing so they understood the significance of working with others to achieve this. The learning experiences that were much-desired highlight how educators of dance should be mindful of balancing the decision-making opportunities between teachers and learners. In this sense, teachers should discover a range of methods of teaching in dance and be encouraged to regard this as a "learning partnership" (Martin et al., 2018). This can be enhanced by coming

together to value the skills of sharing, listening, and appreciating difference to support inclusive masculinities (Stewart et al., 2020).

Sansom (2009, p. 170) articulates a vision for dance being “born from children with the opportunity to explore and experiment, to share and develop ideas in the company of receptive and attentive adults. Such an experience mirrors what could happen in an empowering curriculum when children bring their bodies and energy, their minds and their spirits into a place and space that enables them to create dance”. The following shares insight into an observation at one of the schools:

The teacher asks the whole class who can remember the next section of the dance, Kalen raises his hand enthusiastically, but the teacher chooses a girl to recap. Kalen moans to Alan, whilst Eden tells the girl she has forgotten some parts. Kalen shows he is disappointed not to have been chosen.

(Observation field note 7, Gerald’s Cross school)

Much later in the same lesson there is another attempt to be heard from one of the boys:

Kalen tries to assist as the teacher cannot remember the order of the actions. He is not listened to and he turns away towards Tre.

(Observation field note 7, Gerald’s Cross school)

Stepping back as a teacher can give responsibility and empower learners to find solutions to the set tasks with appropriate scaffolding by the teacher. Additionally, building on the boys’ inherent wishes for group work to be heard is of critical importance. Teachers of dance should consider diverse grouping strategies to support meaningful experiences of learners (Beni et al., 2017). Many skills can be harnessed through planned group interactions, whereby learners can develop ideas and learn to interact in positive

manners to reach team goals. It was important to observe and listen to the experiences of the boys, if they aligned with the use of different data collection methods and if they aligned with their espousing identities in dance. Working with and not against boys can develop the motivation to engage and embrace dance further. The interest is there, especially with this study; however, capturing their imaginations was restricted by the areas discussed. Acknowledging and being mindful that boys, as girls, can also, bring ideas to the table and are not entirely unknowing in their expectations and wishes with how they would like to learn. Diversifying the teaching of dance can provide development across learning domains and tap into the identities of inclusive thinking boys.

Chapter summary

My findings disrupt the *boys don't dance* discourse, yet the teaching climate acts as a source of oppression for learners in reproducing socially unjust dynamics between teacher and learners. The active expression from the boys challenges those very social relations, signifying the possibilities for educators and the cultures within schools in co-constructing transformative and inclusive learning climates for young people from an array of backgrounds (McKinney, 2014). My findings resonate with Freire's (1970/2005) view of the need for applied action and reflection in critical pedagogical approaches that can work to empower learners in schools and in their personal lives (McInerney, 2009). All too often curricula can be distanced from the essence of young people, making it personally irrelevant to them (Iverson et al., 2018). Engaging with pupils in curriculum transformation, especially in dance and PE, can break down the social division of class and gender, making the perspectives of learners visible.

Dance educators are in an important position to support the evolving nature of identities, especially given young boys in my study displayed inclusive masculine identities. It is important to acknowledge that if given the right circumstances boys can negotiate and (re) negotiate social norms. This can encompass seeing boys in capacities where they can support their emotional intelligence through the discovery of a broad range of movement concepts in dance. By providing the platform for emotional connections through inquiries of their bodies, working ways with others, and sharing of thoughts can go some way to connect boys closer to a safer and inclusive dance world. Anderson and Magrath (2019) suggest that the evolution of inclusive masculinity theory has permitted “the intellectual space for men to develop profound emotional bonds with male friends and the social dynamics to express their feelings” (p.260). My study should provide a space for educators to consider what Peterson and Anderson (2012, p. 13) refer to as “imaginative experimentations with gender” in the field of dance. Pedagogical approaches that can piece the jigsaw of physical and emotional worlds through dance are critical for the changing narrative of boys’ masculinities, one that is founded on collaborative inquiry and embodied inclusive experiences for boys (and girls).

Chapter 7 Conclusion

Introduction

This final chapter will present a concise account of the study findings and how the study has answered the research questions. An appreciation of the strengths will detail key features worthy of comment, while the study limitations will give insight into significant learnings from the journey. The chapter will follow with explanations of the original contribution the study makes and recommendations for future research. Final reflections and concluding remarks will be presented to bring the chapter to a close.

Overview of key findings

This study set out to explore how Key Stage 2 boys, who had experienced dance through PE, negotiated their lessons and what they voiced regarding their feelings towards dance. The interest in this area of investigation was related to literature representing a significant disinterest and distancing associated between boys and dance, based on narrow constructions of masculinity and gendering of activities. Following a critical review of the literature, three main research questions were formulated to guide the data collection and analysis. Using a multi-methods, qualitative approach, the study built on the 'write, draw, show, tell' (WDST) method (Noonan et al., 2016) and adopted the innovative use of 'emojis' to create the write, draw, show, tell, emoji' (WDSTE) approach. Throughout chapters 4-6, the data generated through the study were analysed, reported, and discussed thematically, to address the following research questions:

- (i) What evidence of inclusive masculinity is present in primary-aged boys?
- (ii) How do primary-age boys perform masculinities in dance?
- (iii) What do boys aspire for within lessons to encounter meaningful dance through PE?

The main findings related to the research questions will now be outlined subsequently, in a manner that highlights connectivity between themes addressed within the thesis.

Research question i): What evidence of inclusive masculinity is present in primary-aged boys?

Throughout chapters 4-6, this research question has been explored and, in doing so, provided an appreciation of how boys performed a multiplicity in the gender dimension exhibited through observations and focus group interviews. The main findings related to this were that boys in the main demonstrated a distancing from orthodox masculinity, whilst highlighting progressive identities that aligned with inclusive masculinity theorisations (Anderson, 2010b). In chapter 4, my findings point to a revering of female achievements and pro-femininity attitudes. This was embodied by a distinct awareness of the competence of female athletes that were shared openly by the boys.

The boys faced ideas related to the gendering of activities and sexist ideals with disapproval. In particular, the boys challenged dominant discourses of dance as a female terrain, instead actively viewing dance as a gender-neutral space for all. Dance through PE for these boys centred on a belief of sameness rather than difference, which permitted boys and girls access to become competent. The findings build on framing the relationship between boys and masculinity, in a way that highlights fluidity in the performances to negotiate particular spaces, such as dance. A key characteristic demonstrated by the boys was enthusiasm to demonstrate expertise in dance. This was specifically related to an interest in breakdance, where aspects of creative artistic intent are the foundations within this genre, which are likened to femininity (Langnes, 2018, p. 2). Collaborative creative opportunities were not observed as being contentious for the boys and in fact, was something highly sought after.

The entire absence of homophobic discourse and heterosexual recuperation evident in both school settings positioned boys as being able to freely engage in tactile physicality and openly supportive attitudes without negative consequences on their masculine identity. The data across chapters 4-6 demonstrates the boys are residing in a culture of diminishing homophobia (Anderson, 2012). This is founded on the existence of bromances evident, especially within the more middle-class espousing school, where physical closeness was a tool for emotional solidarity in the boys' engagement and triumphs in dance lessons. The contrast of limited same-sex closeness at the more working-class espousing school does not negate the notion of inclusive masculine identities for these boys. The findings can concur with McCormack (2014) in that the boys may not have equal access to particular youth cultures that highlight the normalcy of same-sex touch. Nonetheless, this can be significant for dance educators to work with when boys display inclinations to be close with other boys, which can be a vehicle to encourage boys to move together, as it often was felt that much comfort was gleaned from their close social and physical relationships.

The perspectives of boys demonstrated an identity founded on open-mindedness, with the freedom to enact various elements of inclusive masculinity, without consequences. This was particularly evidenced through the nonexistence of a hierarchical system in place for boys, with no demonstrations of inequality amongst the boys based on their interests, behaviours, or opinions. There was evidence of diversity in opinions and social relationships were varied but not defined by their sporting interests. Different boys across the school settings achieved recognition from their peers for their interests, for some with their competency in dance, whilst for others their interest outside of school in dance which was seen as of equal standing to boys' competencies in team games, such

as rugby and football. The findings go some way to indicate that the boys in these two school contexts do not view gender as hierarchical when it comes to opportunities available within activities, including dance. Fundamentally, my findings support work that contends oppositional thinking towards misogyny and the subordination of others to regulate masculine behaviours (Anderson, 2012; McCormack, 2011b). Instead, the primary-aged boys maintained tenets of inclusive masculinity which permitted a multiplicity in the demonstrated identities.

Research question ii): How do primary age boys perform masculinities in dance?

In chapter 5, the boys' displays of closeness played out as physical tactility and emotional support further links to features of inclusive masculinity. Data suggests that the boys are residing in a culture of diminishing homophobia (Anderson, 2012). This is signalled through demonstrations of strong bonds and platonic yet affectionate relationships between boys, building on this finding elsewhere, in what is called a bromance (Anderson, 2014; Robinson et al., 2018). These particular observations in dance lessons at Gerald's Cross school permitted boys to engage in male-to-male interactions whereby boys did not give the impression to be protecting their identities and were not concerned with being observed in such close moments. It encouraged more boys to imitate this during other moments. The inclusive and tactile behaviour allowed the boys to feel supported in their dance setting, where they had to carefully negotiate the discomfort of this environment, as well as their competence, and identity as boys. This was resonated through the drawings from the boys from both schools, as they illustrated working with peers of the same sex and accompanying narrations supported a feeling safe discourse when working with known others. It was understood that the boys viewed learning as a key feature within their lessons, and where several moments of physical

closeness and supportive friendships were observed following pride in achievements. This was deemed to be a vital element of emotional solidarity in their participation through dance lessons, building on work elsewhere that has highlighted boys placing significance on mastery within PE, espousing moments of pride in learning (Stewart et al., 2020). The caring attitudes displayed by boys towards other boys echoed with an inclusive theorising of young masculinities, especially in being providers and recipients of emotional and physical support for each other (Peterson and Anderson, 2012).

In addressing the gendering of spaces, educators must acknowledge more progressive and supportive masculine identities. In doing so, educators must acknowledge that this tension is connected to notions of how pedagogical practices and privileging narrow conceptions of competence, influence children's gender identities. It is crucial to inspire the male imagination through the stories they can share of their embodied inclusive masculinities and support a closeness with other boys (and girls), to harness meaningful experiences. The importance to attract boys to dance by providing meaningful experiences can be achieved through giving freedom and choice in how they choose to move, who they choose to move with, and with what music they desire to move to. Boys will dance if educators show they are interested in whom they are rather than practices that signify difference, and if conceptions of competence offer broader entry points for boys to access where their individuality can be accounted for. Diverse interpretations of competence would support an evolving mind set about the ideal dancer and offer routes for boys to access dance.

Research question iii): What do boys aspire for within lessons to encounter meaningful dance through PE?

In answering this research question, it became clear that the boys struggled to connect to dance lessons due to the teacher-centred nature, restrictions on how skilfulness was defined, and limitations on the social interaction possibilities. The pedagogical approach influenced the mood of the boys, as evidenced from observations and voiced by the boys in the focus group interviews, particularly with its emphasis on learner passivity, by imitating and following teacher movements. Likewise, a privileging of technical performance outcomes restricted the boys in achieving in other areas of dance. The current delivery of dance they were experiencing induced many negative emotions selected through the use of emojis and in the creative addition of drawing their emojis. The feelings displayed by the boys suggested that dance was not providing them with meaningful experiences.

Instead, the boys favoured, and were enthusiastic about, sharing how dance could be more meaningful for them through more student-centred teaching, whereby collaborative inquiry opportunities and embodied learning encounters could take place. A clear message of social interaction possibilities within lessons was an aspiration from the boys where meaningfulness meant having fun, connecting with others by learning new challenging movements, and collaboratively creating dances together. When learners can inquire and have input in decision-making with the subject-matter, we may see a greater degree of autonomy in learning experiences, which would support inclusive masculine identities found in school settings (Stewart et al., 2020). It would appear that, in the eyes of the boys, teaching approaches that challenged them to proactively think rather than follow would lead to more positive outcomes, related to meaningful experiences (Beni et

al., 2017). The boys shared the need to inquire and personalise learning that challenges and offers diversity to their dance experiences was loud and clear. It seemed logical that given the array of interests across a class that learners will feel listened to and that their learning interests will be better served if the teacher can become entwined in a teacher-learner collaborative process with the dance unit of work.

On account of this, educators need to challenge the basis of assumptions and perceptions about performing the movement in a new way, observing other's dance, and structuring competence in the eyes of learners. The benefits that can be gleaned from dance are inevitably dictated by the approach teachers take, and it was demonstrated that the content was placed solely with the teacher, creating distance between the learners. When teachers can bring the content closer to the knowledge of the learners, it can in turn enhance the learner's interest and develop an inquisitiveness to explore concepts (Amado et al., 2016). The boys were insightful in their discussions about ways of working, which have the potential to promote not only the physical domain, but the cognitive domain, through enhanced criticality of work by engaging in dialogue with peers and, equally in the social domain, which opens up communication channels between peers (Gard, 2008; Gerdin, 2016; Risner, 2007).

The multiple data sources highlighted how the practices of dance teachers remain to be shaped by their external roles as dance coaches, conflicting with the nature of educational dance. The dance pedagogy and practice as it was observed reinforces a privileging of what the body can closely match from the teacher's actions. The maintenance of this privileging works to complicate NCPE policy documentation regarding the delivery of dance as well as the nature of providing a holistic experience within PE,

and dance for children. I argue that change is necessary within this subject-matter, where consideration of the unit outcomes of dance are aligned with more educative processes and outcomes, instead of technical training processes and outcomes. It may be fruitful, for example, for educators of dance to balance a teacher-centred approach with a learner-centred approach, where technique can be harnessed through scaffolding learning moments to inquire and solve movement concepts through meaningful encounters that provide opportunities for decision-making through social interaction and challenge.

My data challenges educators who teach in the areas of dance to adjust their teaching approaches and valuing of particular aspects within dance to show mindfulness of more inclusive masculine identities. Identities built on boys' aspirations to learn with others, to learn challenging movements, and to feel competent to dance demonstrate the inherent desire to feel connected and to take risks. My thesis informs how boys are negotiating gendered identities and signifies that orthodox masculinity does not predominate in this example through the case study schools. Schools are critical spaces in the negotiation of identity and the formation of social relationships. Consequently, supporting a boy's inclusive gendered identity has significance for meaningful experiences in PE and relationship building with same-sex and opposite-sex peers. In that sense, the potential that dance holds for liberating boys further is great, especially when the focus is on the process of learning, with a focus on the collaborative inquiry and embodied experience of moving together to nurture the more progressive identities, as found in this study.

Methodological reflections

Methodologically, the study demonstrated how the WDSTE approach can unearth the voices of boys through the innovative choice of methods on offer across the case study schools. The children's immediate familiarity with emojis upon seeing them in the focus group interviews, and their eagerness to work with emojis to describe how dance or dancers made them feel was also a key addition to the approach, whereby an overall positive response was found. The use of emojis as a visual research tool in my thesis illuminated the voices of children and added to the sparse coverage of emoji use with children in the literature (Fane et al., 2018). It was therefore deemed suitable to use emojis to support the WDST approach in a capacity that acted as a further visual language for the boys. In particular, locating dance as a movement form that draws upon emotions, I judged that emojis supported a practical way of creatively connecting internal feelings that the boys associated with dance. Recognising the significance of child-centered approaches also led to the development of a framework for practicability (Chapter 3), adapted from the invaluable work of Fane et al. (2018) and Noonan (2017). The intentions of this framework are for other researchers who intend to work with young people and children to elicit meaning and emotion from experiences.

Reflections on the methods used brought about considerations related to how emoji use enabled efficient use of time, how bias was present and managed, and ambiguity in the interpretation of emojis and photographs selected. Finally, the importance of power negotiations as a result of the emoji inclusion will be reflected upon. Firstly, the decision to use emojis supported a familiar avenue of pictorial representation of emotions for all children across the case study schools. Similar to the work of MacKenzie et al. (2018) and Fane et al. (2018), the emoji as a tool did not require a

detailed introduction with the boys. All of the boys voiced their ideas in the use of emojis, representing an inclusive opportunity. Using emojis within a focus group interview, with other tools of eliciting information served to encourage and spark responses between the boys, whilst also providing some independence in how they used the emojis. Equally, for those boys that did not feel competent at drawing, they found solace in the innovative approach of emoji selection. My use of such tools concurs with MacKenzie et al. (2018) in that they required very little instruction during the interviews to set this occurrence up, which elevated the position of the boys as taking the lead in establishing meaning, whilst reducing my adult voice. Time in this essence was used effectively to 'play' with emojis as a valuable method for unearthing feelings.

The use of photographs and emojis that were researcher selected may have limited the scope of emotions explored with boys in my research. It would be vital to let the boys take photographs in dance or select dance images for them to drive any discussion rather than the use of researcher chosen images that may have represented some bias in their eyes. However, what naturally occurred within the focus group interviews was that the boys asked if they could draw new emojis based on feelings that were not covered by the emojis presented to them. This permitted the boys opportunities to interpret and expand on their stories and associated feelings. It would be prudent for future researchers to be mindful of not narrowing the selection of emojis and by providing choice to the diversity of emojis available to participants. This is so that what is meaningful with any research context can become clearer, which also supports greater choice and autonomy for the young people and children in the research setting.

The engagement from the boys within my research suggested that the specific use of emojis can be a vehicle to rearrange power in research settings with children. As has been found across several studies (Fane, 2017; Fane et al., 2018; MacKenzie et al., 2018), and in my study, emojis can alter the power dynamics as it provides opportunities for young people and children to drive the direction of the data collection and specifically what the researcher must know. Therefore, the boys, in particular, were able to exercise control through their participation, especially with the emojis.

Implications for practice and policy

Given that my thesis is a professional doctorate that aims to improve practice, one of the case study schools has asked for an insight into my findings. As a mark of my appreciation to them for granting me access into their school and for conducting research, I plan to discuss with senior leaders how dance is currently being taught, collaborating with them to consider greater reflection on the findings which relate to their students and identify how the practice might be developed. I will firstly support staff to reflect on the role of a dance teacher, encouraging them to reflect on the intentions of dance and how they see it positioned both within PE and in the school on the whole to support children's learning. I will facilitate teachers to recognise strategies to encompass more meaningful experiences that support children's needs, for example, planned opportunities for social interaction with peers with guided open-ended tasks for them to inquire and solve, to create movements that relate to them. Additionally, I will drive a discussion on the importance of learner-centred teaching approaches, whilst sharing my conclusions about the potential benefits of seeing dance as something that can be negotiated and renegotiated by the children. My conclusions relating to how boys make sense of their gendered identities through same-sex interactions have important

implications for their conceptions of competence, confidence, and support. I will work with teachers to help them to recognise ways to facilitate aspirations and address gender inequality through critical reflection on their pedagogical approaches.

It is acknowledged that a great deal of support is needed to initiate, promote, and guide change for teachers of dance. One such avenue can be through continuing professional development (CPD) conducted with teachers to encourage them to develop experiential understanding and appreciate learning processes that are concerned with creative possibilities. Such CPD has been undertaken that has highlighted how teacher approaches can evolve when they can gain much enjoyment as learners themselves and were found to use the learning to proactively engage within their settings (Martin et al., 2018).

My recommendations for practice contradict traditional assumptions about dance, boys in dance, and the teaching of dance. Implementing ideas from my thesis may be uncomfortable terrain for some and others will see the opportunities worth pursuing. By acknowledging how pedagogues negotiate their subject-matter with particular learners and challenge assumptions and approaches, especially for those teaching dance, would seem to be a productive and socially just way for educators to stimulate and inspire a challenging of the status quo. It may be fruitful to offer collaborative inquiry opportunities through a curriculum that offers diversity and moves away from a games-based curriculum. In particular developing a curriculum that places value on the holistic educative experiences of boys and girls, instead of a performative focus may reach out to individuals that aspire to or maintain inclusive identities. In addition, curriculum planning should be viewed as a co-constructing opportunity to make learners visible by

democratically engaging young people in the process. Through the inclusive methods used in my study, teachers could build partnerships and trust with learners by habitually listening to the voices of learners to make their experiences personally relevant and meaningful beyond the classroom. My methods in particular have provided freedom in the use of them by boys, especially with the emojis. Understanding the emotions of young people in relation to pedagogical actions is fundamental in connecting the ways in which they find meaning and therefore invest themselves. The methods' inclusive nature has allowed me to reach out to a range of young boys as they have shared their stories. Teachers are positioned to consider the equity and diversity of their approaches for learners and in how they work towards a more inclusive climate. My methods have tapped into the vulnerabilities of boys in dance, with which they have been open-minded and grappled with in the focus group interviews. Boys have had the courage to share their desire to access the emotional and expressive dimensions of movement within PE and this is crucial for educators of PE to acknowledge and challenge as they move forward.

I hope that physical educators will find inspiration from my thesis and reflect on why boys may (not) dance. My aim is for educators to unravel those moments of discomfort they see with their students and explore the consequences of their pedagogical decisions. In doing so, such reflection and action should embrace failure as any worthwhile endeavour (Brown, 2015) and for greater clarification of the nature of PE, and how pedagogical practices are enacted to support educational intentions.

Recommendations for policy relate to pedagogical consideration, and the way dance is positioned in PE within the broader educational context. Policy initiatives introduced an attempt to promote high-quality PE in primary schools. The PE and Sport

Premium has focused on the standard deployment of coaches to teach PE (Garratt and Kumar, 2019), this has continued to undermine the importance of educative intentions at the expense of regarding sport and performance as key features (Blair and Capel 2011; Griggs 2010; Smith, 2015). My study further highlights a disparity in the approaches of both dance specialists with their performative approach, built on technical ability. Greater alignment with policy documentation is needed and will intend to support more educative and meaningful experiences for learners. However, the uncertainty over the purpose of dance within the primary PE curriculum emphasised in this study advocates transparency for teachers and pupils is needed so that a learning partnership can be attained to cultivate meaningful climates for learners.

Recommendations for future research

It is essential, in concluding this thesis, to recognise that there is a multitude of ways in which further research avenues could develop and shape this study. The study explored boys' experiences of dance within two schools (state and independent) within the West Midlands region of England. Whilst the two schools were contrasting (as outlined in chapter 3) and the findings relatively homogeneous, it is not to be assumed that such findings are representative of boys, dance specialists, and primary schools more broadly. On account of this, further research in diverse school settings would be fruitful, to explore how dance is presented and delivered as a learning experience in those settings and how boys feel about those experiences. Additionally, this study researched with boys aged 9-11 years old, and therefore it would be worthwhile to research differing age groups, to explore if and how their experiences of dance contrast. A longitudinal study would be especially valuable in exploring how boys' experiences and feelings of dance evolve, for example from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3, and how the transition of

primary to secondary may influence masculine identities. Likewise, how gender influences those experiences and how the PE curriculum facilitates or hinders inclusive masculinities.

It would be practical to consider the meaning behind teachers' pedagogical choices in dance at the primary level. Working in collaboration with teachers that deliver dance in primary schools in the future to support the educative experiences of learners in dance would be insightful. This could arise in the form of action research or with the use of dance interventions as a means of CPD for teachers. It would be hoped that, by working with PE teachers or dance specialists to identify what the findings of the study meant to meaningful teaching and learning experiences, they would be able to act on these and enhance their pedagogical practice in this regard. Importantly, in line with hearing the voice of boys that the study sought to work towards, it would be crucial to hear and listen to what all pupils (including girls) say on this matter, to continue to evolve the understanding of inclusive masculinity, but to also act upon this understanding. Research that engages with boys' and girls' gendered voices together with the WDSTE approach in dance may provide insight into the similarities or differences in feelings associated with the pedagogical choices presented to them, how competence is perceived and how the learning process can empower inclusive identities. To respond to those voices, it would be paramount for PE teachers to be involved in the process and see it as collaboration with learners.

Further research ideas lie in using an ethnographic case study approach which would promote richer insights into the boys' gendered identities by observing and engaging with them in multiple spaces in their school, for example, the playground and when working with male teachers. Although I did immerse myself in both school settings,

this only took place within a unit of work consisting of seven lessons, over four months. The reason this was over four months was due to changes to the scheduled dance lessons. Therefore, there is scope for researching with boys over a longer duration to capture the depth of their identities.

As a central feature of this study, it would be crucial to uphold the impetus to hear the voices of children and young people and that this should serve as a vehicle to understanding such scholarship, and in moving the field of gendered experiences of PE forward. Through the WDSTE children and young people should be encouraged to voice their feelings in ways that can support our understandings of who they are.

Original contribution

This study makes an original contribution to three main sources of literature: to the frame of knowledge that is concerned with the social study of gender in dance; to innovative methodological approaches to researching with children; and to the sociology of gender more widely, specifically of boys in feminised activities. Further, this study can be useful to primary schools, primary school teachers, PE specialists, and dance specialists as it provides understandings of boys' experiences as learners in dance, the apprehensions, and pleasure they can gain from dancing, and the challenges they face from feeling included and in becoming competent. Lastly, this study built on the importance of hearing children's voices in research by adapting the creative *write, draw, show, tell* (WDST) approach (Noonan et al., 2016) to an equally innovative yet contemporary *write, draw, show, tell, emoji* (WDSTE) approach that can resonate with the lives of children in sharing their feelings and thoughts in research. The findings from the study are also significant concerning the ongoing research around inclusive masculinities,

especially building on the work conducted in school PE settings in the UK most recently by Stewart et al. (2020) and Campbell et al. (2018). This study has, however, attempted to add to a gap in the application of inclusive masculinity in primary schools which is evident throughout my findings in this thesis.

Reflection

The doctoral research journey has provided me with the most insightful learning about myself, qualitative research, the importance of the role of supervisors and has expanded my knowledge and passion for working mindfully with children to hear their stories. Firstly, I have continued to become more mindful of the resilience needed in all situations, to be kind, and to consider that each step is of great achievement. My knowledge has developed within qualitative research methodologies, including observational methods, focus group interviewing, and multi-method approaches of write, draw, show, tell, emoji, and photo-elicitation. The role of supervision at this level has reinforced the scaffolding of learning opportunities and nurturing of the all-important affective states that supervisees experience on the journey. The breadth of expertise overall has supported a deep critical reflection on my assumptions held at the commencement of my doctoral journey about boys and dance, and throughout the past two years. This has allowed me to appreciate the need for educators to support evolving identities for boys. For all of the processes on the journey, I am grateful and take all that has been learnt mindfully into my next steps.

Chapter summary

Contrary to my initial assumptions in commencing this thesis, the findings paint an optimistic picture of the progressive attitudes of boys towards dance, yet a rather negative picture of how teaching restricts the inclusive identities of boys. The positive

interpretation of boys' views towards dance in viewing it as a space they wish to become competent in and strive to work in learner-centred ways this research has found is personally fascinating and makes me aspire to pursue and challenge *with* boys the taken-for-granted messages of the gendering of activities and identities. In applying a personal analysis, growing up as a girl, I was fortunate not to be constrained by activities that were deemed unsuitable given my sex and therefore often ventured into inclusive identities as a female in what may be perceived as masculine terrains. This reflexive approach permits me to contemplate further research by making the stories of young people and children visible, and by striving towards more equitable practices where learners are not constrained in the future.

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Appendices

APPENDIX A – Letter to head teachers of schools



Institute of Sport and Human Science
University of Wolverhampton
Gorway Road
Walsall WS1 3BD

27th February, 2019

Dear Head teacher,

I am contacting you about the possibility of gaining access to your school in order to undertake research for my doctorate, if this is feasible.

I am a Senior Lecturer in Physical Education at the University of Wolverhampton and I am interested in educational aspects related to boys and their negotiation, attitudes and meaning-making of their gender through some elements of Physical Education, in particular, dance. Similarly, I am enthusiastic about hearing the voices of boys through child-centred methodologies, which are age-appropriate.

The research purpose is to engage Key Stage 2 boys in sharing their experiences of dance within their primary PE lessons. Focus group interviews and non-participant observations of the dance lessons will be the main tools to gather data. In the focus group interviews, the conversations will be important to capture, therefore audio devices to record what is said will be used in order to transcribe, but will only be accessible by the main researcher. Boys would be selected randomly and consent from parents and assent from the children would be sought to ensure ethical obligations are met.

The research will explore how boys feel and think about dance as a subject-matter within Physical Education. Feelings and thoughts will be developed and understood through a particular type of methodology known as 'Write, Draw, Show and Tell' (Noonan et al. 2016). This method encompasses a range of qualitative devices to capture a perspective. The writing and drawing element of the methodology includes participants engaging in said activity, with access to drawing materials. My role is to engage in dialogue about what is being written or drawn by the child, omitting value laden statements and including encouraging statements. The showing and telling includes writing down responses and sharing them within the group; a verbal articulation of their responses. I would become involved in the 'telling' section by guiding open-ended questions, allowing for discussions based on written or drawn material. My aim is to replicate common language used by the children, which can indicate an interest in what the children have already alluded to thereby elevating the importance of the child's voice

All data will be treated as strictly confidential and in line with the code of conduct of the British Educational Research Association (BERA) <https://www.bera.ac.uk/researchers-resources/publications/ethical-guidelines-for-educational-research-2011>. Data will be stored on the researcher's personal computer and eventually destroyed in accordance with the Data Protection Act, 1998 and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (2018). All information will be published without names, with a code created by the researcher. The only people with access to the data will be the primary researcher and supervisory team. Data may be published in academic journals and presented at educational conferences. Throughout dissemination of the study participants' entitlement to privacy and rights to confidentiality and anonymity are guaranteed. Participants will be free to withdraw from participating in this research and withdraw use of their data at any time without any negative pressure or consequences.

If you agree to the research to be carried out in your school, please could you kindly respond to me by email and if you have any additional questions or you would like me to come in to discuss this research, I would be more than happy. [\[e-mail address redacted\]](#)

Yours faithfully,

Helen Keane

Helen Keane BSc (Hons), PGCE, MSc. *FHEA*
Senior Lecturer in Physical Education
University of Wolverhampton

APPENDIX B – Information letter for participants, and consent and assent forms



PARTICIPANT INFORMATION LEAFLET AND CONSENT AND ASSENT FORMS

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT: Boys in dance: listening to gendered voices in primary schools.

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Helen Keane

ADDRESS: Institute of Human Sciences, Office WD202, Gorway Road, Walsall, WS1 3BD

CONTACT NUMBER: [telephone number redacted]

You are being invited to take part in a research project. Please take some time to read the information presented here, which will explain the details of this project. Please ask the study investigator any questions about any part of this project that you do not fully understand. It is very important that you are happy that you clearly understand what this research entails and how you could be involved. Also, your participation is entirely voluntary and you are free to decline to participate. If you say no, this will not affect you negatively in any way whatsoever. You are also free to withdraw from the study at any point, even if you do agree to take part. This study has been approved by the University of Wolverhampton Ethics Committee.

What is this research study all about?

The study will take place in your primary school, with 4-6 other boys from your class. You will be asked questions related to dance and observations of you during dance will be undertaken.

Why have you been invited to participate?

You have been invited to participate in order to hear your voice and to understand what you think and how you feel about dance.



Faculty of Education, Health and Well Being

Parental Consent Form

Dear Parent/Guardian,

I am a Senior Lecturer in Physical Education at the University of Wolverhampton and below I detail a study that will take place at your child's school. Please read the information provided and indicate if you wish for your child to be available for this opportunity.

Boys in dance: listening to gendered voices in primary schools.

Objective: The study will investigate the views of boys in Key Stage 2 from their understanding and experiences in dance. The research will be concerned with the perspectives of boys through a child-centred research approach.

Data collection: The study will explore how boys feel and think about dance. Feelings and thoughts will be developed and understood through a particular type of methodology known as 'Write, Draw, Show and Tell' (Noonan et al. 2016). It is child-centred way of getting information from children and one that suits their developmental age. The writing and drawing element of the methodology includes children engaging in said activity, with access to drawing materials. The showing and telling includes writing down responses and sharing them within the group (if they choose). I will be using guiding open-ended questions, allowing for discussions based on written or drawn material. There are no physical risks involved in this study and the possible social and psychological risks are minimal.

Confidentiality: Ethical approval from the University of Wolverhampton Education Ethics Committee has been approved. All notes on your child will be strictly confidential and in line with the code of conduct of the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2018). Data will be stored in a locked cabinet at the University of Wolverhampton and eventually destroyed. All field notes will be recorded without names; a code will be created to record the data. The only people with access to the data will be me and my supervisors.

Data protection: Data will be recorded using an audio device and stored on the researcher's personal computer and eventually destroyed in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998) and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR, 2018). All information will be published without names, with a code created by the researcher. Data may be published in academic journals and presented at educational conferences. Your child's entitlement to privacy and rights to confidentiality and anonymity are guaranteed. Your child is free to withdraw from participating in this research and withdraw use of their data at any time without any negative pressure or consequences.

Please place a cross in the box to confirm if you are allowing your child to take part in the study.

1. I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study and I consent for my **child to take part.**

Name of parent: _____

Name of child: _____

Signature of parent: _____

Date: _____

If you require further information, please contact the supervising researcher: Helen Keane (University of Wolverhampton) **Telephone:** [telephone number redacted] (9am-5pm), or email [\[e-mail address redacted\]](#)



Child Assent Form

Dear pupil,

My name is Helen and I work at the University of Wolverhampton. I am doing a study to listen to your views from your experiences with dance. You have been invited to help me to understand how you feel and what you think about what you do in dance.

For the study you will be asked to take part in a small group discussion with 4-6 other boys from your class. You will have the option of writing down, drawing, showing or telling how you feel or think. I will be there to ask questions and will record the conversation on an audio device placed in the centre of the room. I will keep all your answers private, and will not show them to (your teacher or parent(s)/guardian). Only people from the University of Wolverhampton working on the study will see them.

There are not likely to be any problems when you take part in this study, but you might feel good or bad emotions that link to how you feel about dance. You also might be upset if other boys from your class see your answers, but I will try to keep other boys from seeing what you write or draw, if you choose. A benefit from taking part in the study is that you get to share your personal story of how your experiences of dance have made you think and feel.

If you decide to take part and then have a change of mind, this is not a problem and you are allowed to leave without any problems. You do not have to be in this study if you do not want to be. If you decide to stop after we begin, that is fine too. Your parents know about the study too.

If you decide you want to be in this study, please fill in your name and sign below.

Sign this form only if you:

- have understood what you will be doing for this study,
- have had all your questions answered,
- have talked to your parent(s)/legal guardian about this study, and
- agree to take part in this research

I, _____ (name), want to be involved in this study.

(Sign your name here)

(Date)

Researcher explaining study

Signature

Printed Name

Date

If you require further information, please speak with **Helen** to ask any questions you may have.

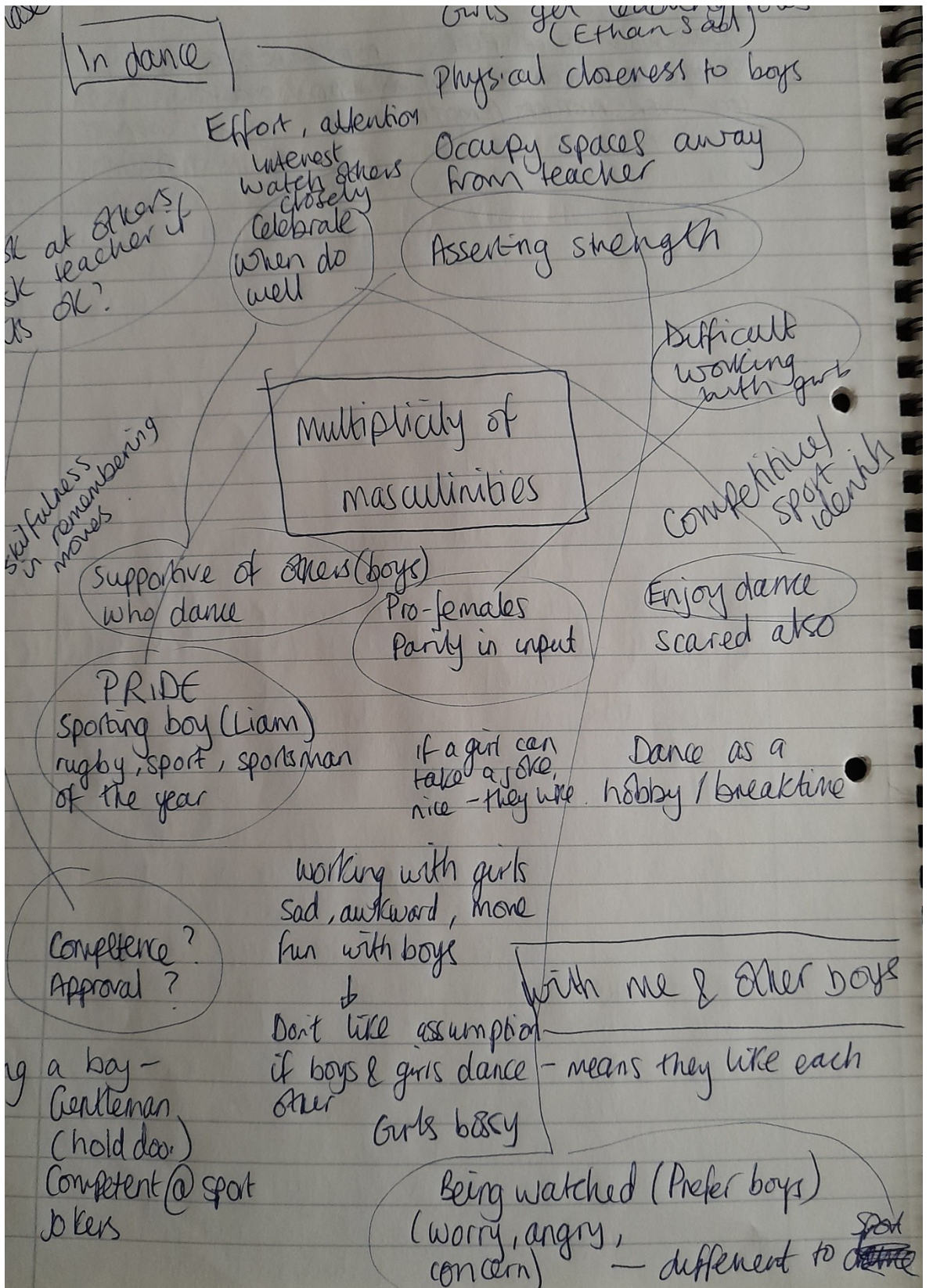
APPENDIX C – Focus Group Interview Schedule

| Question | Rationale | Statement | Activity |
|---|--|---|--|
| Ice breaker - how they generally feel towards dance? | Motivated to know how they feel about dance and whether they attribute positive or negative key words. | What 3 words used to describe how you feel about dance? What emojis relate to how you feel about dance? | Showing and/or telling Post it notes, emojis |
| What does it mean to be a boy? | Wish to know how they identify as boys | What does it mean to be a boy? 3 things. | Write, draw, show, tell |
| What dance do you like to participate in? | Eager to know what movements they would like to engage with | What dance would you like to try? | Write, draw, show, tell |
| Who is dance for? | Wish to know their perception of if this activity is assumed better for certain people. | Who do you see as a dancer? | Write, draw, show, tell |
| How do you feel when you dance/do not dance? | Interested in perceptions of dance and how they assign emotions to this activity area. | Pick 3 emojis about how you feel when you dance/do not dance | Showing and/or telling Post it notes Emojis |
| Which boys do well in dance? Who might not do well in dance? Why? | Interested in if particular boys are deemed to be good/not so good at dance and what traits they may have. | Name some boys in your class that do well in dance/do not do well in dance? | Write and show/tell |
| When are you are most/least comfortable dancing? | What makes boys feel at home to dance? | Write when you are comfortable and uncomfortable dancing? | Showing and/or telling Post it notes Emojis |
| Who in your family would be happy/unhappy to be seen dancing? | Key socialisation agents in a child's life may have an impact on which they deem should be doing certain activities. | 3 people that dance in your family (draw/write) | Writing, showing, drawing or telling. Post it notes |
| What do you think/feel when you know you have a dance lesson? | Initial thoughts regarding dance as a subject | First word/emoji you think/feel of when you know you have dance lesson. | Writing Post it notes Sharing emojis |
| External influences on perceptions of those who dance. | Boys' perception of males on TV and elsewhere to be engaged in this activity. | Draw or write the name of a famous dancer from television or movies. | Drawing Flip chart paper |

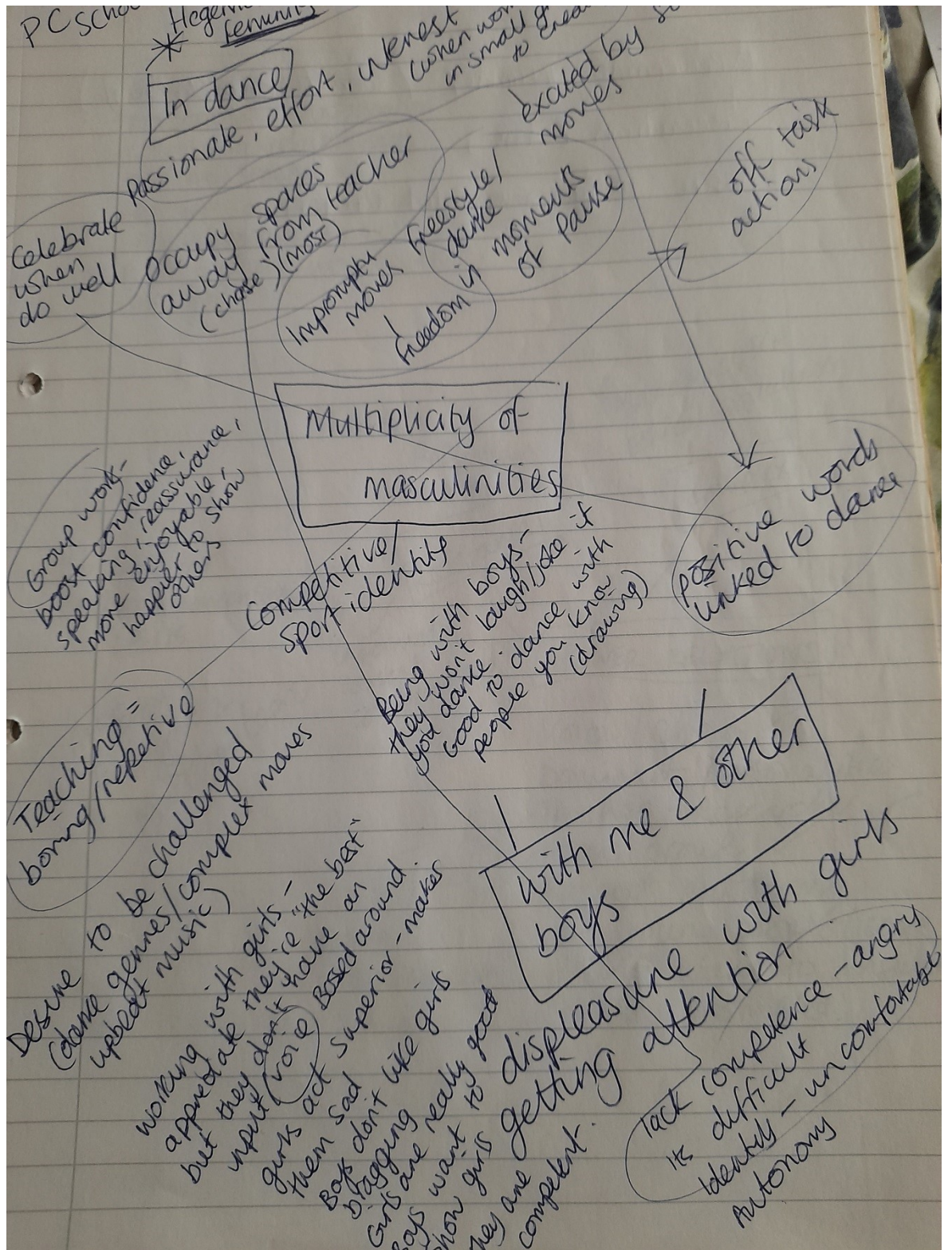
| Question | Rationale | Statement | Activity |
|--|---|---|--|
| Who do they think engages in dance? | Interested in the foundations of their understanding of who may undertake this activity. | Draw people dancing in your lesson | Drawing Flip chart paper |
| How would they like to dance? Do boys change their behaviour in dance? | Boys' movements and what they do with their body can draw them into or repel them away from activities. | What is your ideal dance climate/lesson? | Writing, drawing, showing and telling Post it notes |
| Who would they be comfortable or uncomfortable dancing with? | Interested in who boys consider to be compatible with in dance | Who do you like dancing with? | Drawing, writing, showing, telling Flip chart paper, emojis |
| How do you feel dancing in front of females/girls/boys? | Does the idea repel or unnerve them? Are they aware of normative ways of seeing male and females? | 3 emotions when dancing to an audience of girls/boys? | Drawing, writing, telling, showing, emojis |
| How do you feel if you have to dance with boys or girls? Who would you choose to dance with? Why? What do you think of girls and boys that dance together? | The idea of dancing with the same or opposite sex. | Who you prefer to dance with and why? | Drawing, write, show and tell, emojis |
| Are they accepting of friends that dance? Do you think boys like boys who dance? Why? Do you think girls like boys who dance? Why? | Peer acceptance is an important part of middle childhood. | If your best friend said their favourite activity was dance, what 3 things would you say to them? If your best friend said their least favourite activity was dance, what 3 things would you say to them (opposite constructs) | Writing, showing and telling. Post it notes and sharing verbally. |

| Question | Rationale | Statement | Activity |
|--|--|--|--|
| Are boys comfortable expressing what they do within dance to male figures in their lives? | Dance can be taught by females and be perceived as a female activity. Reluctance or particular vocab may be highlighted here to remove themselves from the activity. | Write 3 words if you had to describe what you do in dance to someone else, it could be your brother, uncle or your father. | Writing, sharing Post it notes |
| What do boys need to tell their PE teachers about dance? | Inside information from boys' about how they can feel comfortable dancing in school. | 5 things you want to tell your PE teacher about dance | Writing, telling and showing. Post it notes and sharing verbally. |
| Who do you prefer being taught by (male or female) and why? | Does the sex of the teacher influence the boys? | Who would you like to teach you in dance? | Writing, drawing, showing, telling |
| Are they influenced by the images of dancers and their perceived style? *Use of photographs* | Does the dance style influence their choice? | Who do you want to dance with? | Writing, drawing, showing, telling, photographs |
| How do they feel about the range of dancers from the photographs? | How do emotions link to the photographs of dancers? | Place an emotions next to each of the dancers | Writing, drawing, showing, telling, use of emojis, photographs |
| What would make dance meaningful? | Moving the experiences of boys forward, how can educators tap into their thinking and feeling? | What would make dance even more enjoyable? | Draw, show, tell or write. |

APPENDIX D – Mind Map of initial coding for Gerald's Cross school



APPENDIX E – Mind Map of initial coding for Peterhouse primary



APPENDIX F - Example thematic analysis table for “inquiry and embodied learning” theme across the three FGIs:

| | | |
|---------------------------------|---|---|
| <p>Gerald’s Cross School</p> | <p>Implications with dance as ‘recall’</p> <p>Feelings towards dance teaching</p> <p>Aspirations for meaningful dance climates</p> | <p>Challenge with dance is they forget the moves (p.6) Dance requires more thought about the moves and being in time with others (p.32)</p> <p>EMOJIS Feelings towards having dance next Worrying (p.12) Worry (p.13) yay – related to tiredness which is perceived as bad Yay/love Love dancing (p.13) Dance is like having break but being active with teacher support Worry/wow/oh no – worries about embarrassing/messing up – angry, depressed, ashamed (p.15)</p> <p>More practice Concentration, at your own pace, no one watching = no pressure, different genres (p.31) Choose our own parts (p.32) Be more creative, put ideas together (p.32) Pick own song (p.33) and teach each other, more time to practice Take on leadership roles (p.33)</p> |
| <p>Peterhouse primary FGI 1</p> | <p>Disinterest towards school dance</p> <p>Aspirations for meaningful dance climates</p> | <p>Dance can be boring (p.1) Dance is boring because its repetitive (p.2) Dance is static, holding moves (p.2) No learning in dance (p.3) Dance is too fast, can’t keep up, pace is teacher led (p.3) Image C made one angry, this dance they are used to, repetitive, boring (p.13)</p> <p>EMOJIS Feelings towards dance mixed (p.15), some don’t enjoy dance, some are anxious and nervous, based on what they do within the lesson (p.16) Images go from traditional dancers like we do in our lessons, referring to image A. Aa represents what they do with their teacher and made one feel sad. Sad and angry for A. Repetition of moves and showing other people is seen as showing off (p.12) and would get angry</p> <p>Dance would be less boring with different dance styles (p.2)</p> |

| | | |
|---------------------------------|---|---|
| | <p>Desire to feel supported to 'learn'</p> | <p>Dance would be better if they chose own music (p.2) Would like more variety in dance (slow, sharp, elegant) (p.3) Like the social aspects in activities, meeting other people (p.9) and it would be satisfying to achieve a goal together. Make dance better by creating own dances, have voiced hear, pick music (p.21) Could we breakdance Dance in groups Want a mix of teacher led and student led (p.21) Talking with and practicing with others Boost confidence and make it more enjoyable to experiment (p.21) Show others what they've created and vote for the best (p.21)</p> <p>Would like to hang out with image F as he's not showing off, could learn from their culture and religion and image E would be fun and more learning from them, if you fell you'd laugh and get back up (p.13) would be supportive and offer help(p.14) Images B, E and H could show new tricks and have a laugh (p.14) D, H and B would like to learn from them (p.14) Images I, H and D they would like to learn the moves from which breakdancing and to know how to do it (p.14) Like to learn from some of the images (p.14) D, H and B would like to learn from them (p.14) Images I, K and G wants to be friends with. G looks flexible and want to challenge the moves the others are doing (p.15) EMOJIS Image I makes one angry as it appears showing off (p.11) linked to that he may struggle and dit others show off you might give up, (p. 12) and would help others if they saw them struggling.</p> |
| <p>Peterhouse primary FGI 2</p> | <p>Negative feelings towards dance lessons</p> | <p>Mixed emotions towards dance (not interesting or challenging) (p.1 -2) Remembering the dances is a challenge (p.2) In dance lessons its repetitive (p.22) have to recall from memory which is difficult</p> |
| | <p>Interest in competency in dance</p> | <p>Had fun with ballet and enjoyed learning skills/practiced in his room (p.6) Interested in how they do difficult moves in breakdance (p.9) A desire to be competent (p.7) Drawing Freestyling/flossing – easy, fun, hard, fast, slow</p> |

| | | |
|--|--------------------------------|---|
| | | <p>Breakdancing – tricks, would like to do it (p.9) Different dance, Punjabi – like it, lots of moves and fun, fast freestyle on the floor – Emojis Picture A – angry – difficult moves that they could not do/doesn't like clothes (p.11 and 13), challenging moves as requires a lot of strength Picture K – love (p.14) – freestyle, how he's moving</p> |
| | <p>Choice and voice</p> | <p>Competitions (p.21) Girls and boys songs Want to have fun with others (p.15) Children pick a song and have a say (p.22) Create new dances Perform a range of boys and girls songs</p> <p>Feelings before dance – EMOJIS Nice to spend time with someone, interaction (p.9)</p> <p>Wow and angry is related to competence and the level of challenge in dance, also a dislike – only preference for when they can create their own dances and have some autonomy (p.15) Sad and angry – related to competence and feelings of discomfort (p.15) Sad and yay – dislike the actual dance and warm up Like and sad – we don't have any choice, we do what teacher tells us, wants to work with own ideas, new dance forms (freestyle to give more freedom Angry and like – doesn't like doing the dance but likes the warm up (p.16) See girls and boys have different music</p> |

APPENDIX G



APPENDIX H



APPENDIX I



APPENDIX J



APPENDIX K



APPENDIX L



APPENDIX M



APPENDIX N



APPENDIX O



APPENDIX P



APPENDIX Q

