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# **The relationship between fun and learning: an online embodied ethnography of Coaches Across Continents**

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Faculty of Wellbeing, Education and Language Studies

Thesis Submitted to The Open University for the Degree  
of Doctor of Philosophy

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## Abstract

In a time when learning is often reduced to skills acquisition and outcomes, this inquiry provides a sensory exploration of the concept of 'fun', showing that 'fun-ing'; a state of attentiveness and becoming, can spark an experiential attitude and practice, through embodied learning. This transdisciplinary, socio-cultural-material ethnography, of fun and learning, took place within an educational charity that uses the concept of 'Purposeful Play', Coaches Across Continents (CAC). It considers how CAC pivoted, during the COVID-19 pandemic, towards synchronous online learning experiences. This ethnography explores how fun is socially constructed; how it relates to online learning; and whether fun is a meaningful concept within CAC and beyond.

Findings show that fun-ing is an embodied, creative phenomenon associated with themes including vibrant embodiment and embracing contradictions. By opening possibilities of knowing, through the body, not just the mind, findings also convey participants' and researcher's sensations and feelings: by introducing the 'laughter critical incident', as an entry point for discussions on roles of fun; and a spoken poem, which strives to capture the non-verbal, felt moments.

Ultimately, this inquiry develops an innovative model for fun-ing, bringing together how types and roles of fun, embodiment, and socio-cultural-material learning interact alongside Six Principles: practical guidance to cultivate fun learning. These consider learning spaces; novel ways of relating; spontaneity; verbal and non-verbal communication; online-offline capabilities; and alternative concepts for measuring learning. The Six Principles and model, both generated from this research, show that simultaneous online and offline embodied experiences are equally important, through conceptualisations of presence, movement, and mediating artefacts. Focusing upon ways of knowing through the body, together they catalyse activities that generate qualities of experience, often associated with being well. Furthermore, they encourage the use of the imaginary (often unfamiliar), alongside material experience, which can disrupt, bracketing and transforming future educational experiences.

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I dedicate this thesis to my father. He died soon after I started my PhD, but he has followed me throughout. He remains the biggest inspiration in my life, of anyone, alive or dead, and you can read more about him here: van Noordwijk, M., Coe, R., Sinclair, F.L. et al. (2021). Climate change adaptation in and through agroforestry: four decades of research initiated by Peter Huxley. In *Mitigation and Adaptation Strategies for Global Change* 26, 18. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11027-021-09954-5>

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## **Declaration of Authorship**

I declare that this thesis has been composed solely by myself and that it has not been submitted, either in whole or in part, in any previous application for a degree. Except where otherwise acknowledged, the work presented is entirely my own.





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# Acronyms

BERA	British Educational Research Association
CAC	Coaches Across Continents
CADQAS	Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CIC	Community Impact Coach
ELT	Experiential learning theory
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
HE	Higher Education
HREC	Human Research Ethics Committee
LCI	Laughter Critical Incident
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SDL	Self-directed learning
SDP	Sports Development programme
UNESCO	United Nations Education Science and Culture organisation
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

# Chapter 1 Introduction

*'It doesn't matter that we accomplish what we set out to – it's as long as we move.'* Staff comment during a Zoom meeting 7 December 2020.

## 1.1 The backdrop

The overarching aim of this inquiry is to explore the concept of fun within the context of non-formal and embodied learning. More specifically, to focus on understanding the meanings, relationship between, and significance of 'fun' in the context of an educational charity, Coaches Across Continents (CAC). CAC aims to use sport as a mechanism for generating personal and social change, primarily with children and young people. This is understood to be achieved through movement-based games. The purposes of CAC games are to encourage collective problem solving, and the subsequent generation of context driven solutions. CAC's learning processes are anchored in creating a tailored playful environment and experience, for a specific group of individuals. The concern is with both the interpersonal learning and wellbeing of the group as a whole, as well as the intrapersonal learning and wellbeing of the individuals, including acknowledging the tensions that may arise from such a 'relational humanism' (Gergen, 2015: 149). CAC's movement-based games aim to generate personal and social constructs/barriers in the present, before exploring and encouraging the group's progression towards improved imaginary futures. The core of the CAC mission is therefore to: 'empower communities with the knowledge and skills to create their own future' (CAC Website, 2020).

This inquiry will explore and contextualise these ideas contained in CAC claims, situating, and unpacking formative concepts in their work, focusing on 'fun' within the broader conceptualisations of 'non-formal', and 'embodied and transformative learning'. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, CACs 'on field' play-based learning games were transmuted into online learning experiences. I witnessed and participated in the first iterations of Zoom training sessions, a turn to the online, and the experience of learning at these times can be more accurately described as non-formal, embodied, and transformative learning. Originally, CAC's work was situated within the context of Sport for Social Change, but increasingly the focus is more broadly on alternative and creative physical educational experiences 'outside the classroom'.

This inquiry therefore aims to explore and gain insights into the relationships between fun and learning (fun learning), with an alternative education organisation that focuses on movement and physical play-based games.

### **1.1.1 What is fun?**

An honest place to start is with the definition of 'fun' itself. The concept of fun in relation to learning is often enigmatic. And whilst the nuances of this will be picked up and further discussed in the literature review, discussion, and conclusion, I lay the groundwork here. I foreshadow my understanding of fun and recognise it to be an embodied socio-cultural phenomenon, which is an experience of body-mind-material states and the expressive interpretation of these mediating states (within specific space-times). In this regard it is 'relative, situational, voluntary and natural' (Bisson and Luckner, 1996: 6). Furthermore, as later chapters will explain, I understand fun to be an integral part of our relational experience to deeply connect and notice our aliveness with otherness: otherness being the body-minds, materials, and wider contexts that an individual (person/self) inhabits. This happens through an acute sensory awareness with and through our own bodies. In this way fun-ing (a gerund that moves between present participle and noun), a state of relational being in motion, is a more accurate term because it can be experienced, generated, and passed on in relation with other body-minds, sometimes spontaneously. Fun-ing is always situated, in a specific context, surrendering to *an undivided being with*, body – mind – materials – others that emphasises the active, intentional choice to have/make and create fun learning, as this inquiry will show.

The three research questions are:

- 1) How is fun constructed by staff and coaches at CAC?
- 2) How and why are particular online learning activities experienced as fun for staff and coaches?
- 3) Is 'fun' a significant (meaningful) concept within CAC? If so, why?

### **1.1.2 Personal motivations: progressive learning, fun, play communities and participatory International Development**

My personal interest and fascination with the concepts, or rather *experiences* of fun within learning started when I was a child. I went to a Montessori nursery (Gutek, 2004) in Nairobi, Kenya. My experiences there focused very much on movement,

including between classrooms and outdoor spaces, as well as learning in ways that were very tactile and used the manipulation of objects to understand the world around me. As an adult I have spent 20 years building a career in International Development (Unger, 2018), and much of my work within this has focused on non-formal learning i.e. designing leadership programmes for adolescent girls/youth with Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), and developing policy and advocacy to support young people's actions towards increasing their own voice, and agency within their own communities, national and International Development.

Much of this work has focused on challenging adult assumptions about the roles that young people can and should play in society. My work with young people (and with adults) has always focused on participatory approaches (Percy-Smith and Thomas, 2010), which in theory, and ideally in practice, are centred on a belief that learning - an interpretive process aimed at the understanding of reality (Säljö,1979) - is inherently intertwined with play, fun and creativity. It is important to include youth voices as part of my inquiry (with adults), because of my beliefs in the importance of youth voice and agency. Since 2016, I have become increasingly curious about play (for both children and adults). I wrote an article 'Why Play? This is serious' for Open Democracy in 2017 (Huxley, 2017) that summarises my thinking at this time. Since then, I have participated in different initiatives, most notably Counter Play (started by Matthias Poulsen from Aarhus), Professors at Play (initiated by Lisa Forbes and David Thomas at the University of Denver Colorado), the Playful University Platform (at Aarhus University in Denmark) and the Playful Learning Conference (in the UK). Therefore, because I am interested in fun, play and learning in different cultures, but also in complex and/or challenging contexts i.e., places of poverty, gross inequality, and conflicting belief systems, I was keen to work with Coaches Across Continents: an organisation that has fun as a focal point in its model of learning/change and presents itself as dynamic and forward thinking in the Sport for Social Development sector and beyond.

### ***1.1.3 Socio-cultural-material life: changing forms***

Whilst CAC's work has been be situated within the category of Sport for Social Change within International Development, Nick Gates (the founder) is keen to assert that this is the historical context for CAC's work and approach, and that increasingly, their work goes much further, aligning with alternative education, and play.

Therefore, I will briefly outline Sport for Social Change, to acknowledge CAC's historical roots, before contextualising CAC's evolving trajectory to engage with movement and mediated learning contexts; as a movement of ideas, affects, artefacts and bodies (catalysed by the shift to online learning due to the pandemic).

Sport for Social Change, in broad terms, according to Peachey et al. (2019), captures change that occurs both in and through sport. Social change is universal and therefore difficult to pin down. However, Peachey et al. (2019) demonstrate that Sport for Social Change can be considered from two perspectives. These are either initiatives and programmes that aim to achieve change in sport structures, systems, and processes, or sport-based interventions that are designed to deliver microlevel and/or macrolevel outcomes such as social inclusion, social capital, peacebuilding, conflict transformation, crime reduction, gender equity, and community development, among others (Schulenkorf et al., 2016). The work of CAC involves both.

However, the framing above provides too narrow a perspective to account for the socio-cultural-material learning worlds of CAC, during a global pandemic. Rather, if conceptions of social life and learning are viewed as changing forms of movement (Leander et al., 2010), drawing from the work on mediated learning environments by Vygotsky (1934/1978), in which processes of thinking and learning are not all contained within individual minds, but rather distributed across persons, tools (artefacts), and learning space-times. Social life, and more specifically learning within space-times then becomes the 'simultaneity of stories-so-far' (Massey, 2005: 9). Whereby 'places-in-the-making' of learning, especially due to the increased online-ness during the COVID-19 pandemic, loosens boundaries (Leander et al., 2010) even further, in some ways. For example, talking to a colleague during the pandemic often exposed their previously private home office/rooms. It is this awareness of the different and deconstructed dynamics generated by the pandemic context, into which this inquiry is situated: a place of ever-changing movements of ideas, objects, and body-minds.

I understand 'movement' in the same way as physical education theorists, Larsson and Quennerstedt, (2012) to mean the physical actions performed by human bodies for a certain purpose and in a certain situation i.e. its *performative dimension as action* and as a situated historical event. Not as a function or a sign of something

else, which splits how people move from the desire to move. Movement, as the action and object as one, is therefore also concerned with an ontological attentiveness to the 'interval' of 'the gaps between' (Massumi, 2002: 4), which transmute socio-cultural-material relations within a learning context/terrain. It is this inquisitiveness with the relationality itself, which allows a movement to become a performance of self in relation to other body-minds and materials. This is understood by communication specialists, Ucok-Sayrak and Brazelton (2021) as that 'which includes non-judgmental noticing of the ways in which one interacts with, incorporates, and becomes part of, her environment' (Ucok-Sayrak and Brazelton, 2021:7). In so doing, requiring a conscious disbanding of the 'classroom-as-container' (Leander et al., 2010) view of social spaces of learning, which emphasises stasis, structure, and conformity instead of new mobilities of practices. According to learning theorists, Leander et al. (2010), this requires an intentionally active 'mobile geographical imagination...[which is the careful noticing of] embodied enactments of desires and imaginations produced by the traffic of material culture, media culture, and stories' (p.334). This is the terrain into which this inquiry embarks.

The pandemic forced CAC to move their geographical imaginings of social spaces of learning, and to shift and encompass new media (i.e., the use of Zoom), and new ways of relating with each other through altered embodiments of ideas, objects, and bodies in relation to fun and learning. During the pandemic, CAC staff were forced to reimagine if and how movement could be used online as a learning tool; as part of their socio-culturally mediated forms of expression. There is no such thing as, 'just a game', because every game is imbued with meanings, whether intentionally educative or not, and these are continually contested and re made.

Giulianotti et al., (2019) use the concept 'Sportland' to convey the often literal and metaphorically separate world inhabited by Sport for Development Programme (SDP) officials, volunteers, researchers, and consultants, who often use their own discourses, and practices, entrenched in beliefs (or hopes), with varying degrees of critical reflection, that sport can contribute toward development and peace. However, Giulianotti et al., (2019) caution against the narrowing in/restrictive tendencies within Sport for Social Change scholarship/practice, arguing 'that 'echo chambers' may emerge, 'as SDP agencies, officials, and experts work with familiar networks,

partnerships, policies, and practices, rather than being open to alternative agencies, new voices, and innovative or disruptive types of knowledge' (p.414).

Koopmans and Doidge (2021), sports researchers, take a small step in this direction, advocating for a greater focus on 'play projects' rather than 'sports projects' in educative work with young refugees. They assert that by focusing on games that promote play and encourage fun, these in turn open up 'imaginary worlds', which in and of itself has great pedagogic benefits. Rather than many sports projects which often, based on their research, focus on subject skills outcomes alone, such as health or education goals. Therefore, 'promoting fun through play can provide the foundations for these and other outcomes to develop (p.1), but they also suggest that fun and play contributes an added value to the learning context. This work makes an explicit connection between movement, sports, fun and play, and suggests like Ronkainen et al. (2021) that the 'classroom-as-container' focus on outcomes alone is insufficient and stifling within educative experiences (as the next section will outline).

Similarly, this inquiry aims to bring alternative types of embodied/sensing ways of understanding, the relationship between fun and learning, both within Sport for Social Change contexts, but also to purposefully move more broadly to other educational and play 'lands' and geographical imaginaries. Thus, bringing educational, Sport for Social Change and play communities into each other's realms, seeking to reduce echo chambers.

#### ***1.1.4 Non-formal and embodied learning***

By adopting both International Development and Educational lenses, the work of CAC can be situated within 'non-formal' and 'embodied' learning. A more detailed overview of how learning is conceptualised in this inquiry is presented in 3.3. However, the purpose here is to contextualise CACs general learning approaches, as witnessed online, during 2020-21.

'Non-formal learning' is a construct that originated in the 1970s (Rogers, 2004) via the UNESCO Learning to Be (otherwise known as the Faure report), published in 1972 (Faure et al., 1972). This report brought about a reconceptualisation of the field of education through the discourse of 'lifelong learning', including 'alternative educational programmes' especially for excluded/marginalised groups. Nonformal

education is typically described as more focused on the present, learner centred, less structured, and responsive to localised needs, and there is an assumed non-hierarchical relationship between the learner and the nonformal educator (Ahmed and Coombs, 1974). It is also learning that goes on in a variety of settings such 'as museums, state parks, community education centres, cooperative extension, and consumer education sites' (Taylor, 2008: 81). In some International Development contexts, it refers specifically to literacy programmes (Sichula and Genis, 2019). The work of CAC can be viewed as an alternative non-formal educational project, because of the learner-centred focus, the intentions to address localised needs and the non-hierarchical relationship between learner and coaches/educators, which is created by using learning contexts and places 'outside the classroom', whether this is on a football pitch, in a community hall, or in an online gathering space.

Within non-formal learning projects in International Development, the concept of 'life skills' is very prominent (Dupuy et al., 2018), as it is within sport and physical education discourses. Sport psychologists, Ronkainen et al., (2021), have examined learning in sport with a focus on 'things' broader than sports skills. They argue that the life skills discourse has 'led to a premature narrowing of research focus to "things" that are deemed useful, positive, teachable, concrete and 'objectifiable' (Ronkainen et al., 2021: 2), at the expense of 'deeper types of learning', with the potential to shift/transform ways of being in the world. Hence, despite Faure's emancipatory aim through 'lifelong learning', 'life skills' has instead often narrowed learning experiences.

Whilst Ronkainen et al.'s (2021) research is focused on athletes; it remains relevant to this research because CAC intentionally aims to challenge so-called traditional athlete/sports-based learning processes that focus on narrow outcomes. Therefore, this study calls for a greater questioning of what learning is and should be, including what else bodily movement and physicality can teach besides narrow competencies. This calls for the exploration of a non-instrumental theory of learning with an emphasis on 'discontinuity, relational self and "becoming"' (Ronkainen et al., 2021: 1). It requires consideration of 'the subjectification function'...a 'capacity to be a relational self' (Ronkainen et al., 2021: 10). Understanding the roles of fun and learning, through a subjectification lens, demands a consideration of redefining 'values' and 'purpose', rather than just assuming these should be narrow outcomes



and skill acquisition alone. This call to go further in educational practices is echoed by many educationalists (Biesta, 2008; Passarelli and Kolb, 2011; Brown et al., 2018; Biesta, 2021).

Non-formal learning beyond International Development, and more broadly within education practices, is often conceived of as 'semi-structured', and 'without formal accreditation' (Brown et al., 2018). This conceptualisation was also evident in the 1980s, when Mocker and Spear (1982) identified four types of learning: formal, nonformal, informal, and self-directed. Their definitions are based on the level of control (by an institution or by a learner) in relation to the means (the how) and the objectives (the what) of learning.

**Formal Learning:** learners have control over neither the objectives nor the means of their learning.

**Nonformal Learning:** learners control the objectives but not the means.

**Informal Learning:** learners control the means but not the objectives.

**Self-Directed Learning:** learners control both the objectives and the means (Mocker and Spear, 1982: 4).

However, Erstad (2012), a digital literacy expert, critiques formal and informal as *not* neatly bounded in relation to learning with online technologies. Rather he argues that there is a need to go beyond traditional conceptions of formal versus informal ways of learning, because young people move fluidly between varied contexts of learning, both offline and online. This therefore suggests that the 'formal' and 'non-formal' binary is also problematic because both are often constructed under an epistemology grounded in 'formal' learning, or the classroom-as-container model, which doesn't open out to new ways of doing and being with possibilities for change. Non-formal is often incorrectly constructed as lacking/inferior (Coombs, 1975) i.e., it doesn't present a true alternative, but rather a lack/absence of, rather than a new option altogether. Whereas what it inherently offers is a theoretical and physical space to think of learning beyond classrooms. Furthermore, this thesis will show that whilst CAC operates in some sense across non-formal, (informal and self-directed) according to the above definitions, these definitions are not neatly bounded, nor entirely accurate.

Therefore, alongside non-formal learning, embodied learning provides a closer frame of reference for understanding the learning methodology of CAC. Whilst CAC in their organisational literature, and in interviews, talk of self-directed learning, this actually was less evident, as this thesis will show (according to the typology Mocker and Spear, 1982 provide above), during the shift to online Zoom trainings in 2020/21. Rather, this thesis will demonstrate how a focus on 'learning through the body' (Merriam, 2018) provides a more authentic and aligned theory of learning, whereby knowing is through bodily felt sensations and non-verbal expressions, such as: emotions (mental states), affects (the physical expression of being moved/changed emotionally); and intuition (an instinctual understanding without reasoning). This contrasts with the Cartesian dichotomy of viewing the brain/mind as an overall control hub, superior to bodily, physical experiences of being in the world (Leigh and Brown, 2021).

### **Embodied learning**

Embodied learning assumes that knowledge and understanding can be understood to be present in the body before reaching conscious awareness (Damasio, 2006); feelings and sensations are preverbal and human movement (as the performance of a relational self) is a way of making sense that cannot occur in any other way. People bring their whole body-minds, and internal sensory worlds, to a learning environment (Lawrence, 2012). The body is therefore put at the centre of learning and knowing and acknowledged as an organic tool for mediating relations with others and learning terrains (Hrach, 2021). Embodied learning is associated 'with physical, emotional, mental and spiritual experience' (Lawrence, 2012: 75). Furthermore, it is often perceived as transformative (Dirkx, 2006; Yorks et al., 2006; Lawrence, 2012), and this includes a focus on symbiotic, relational aspects of learning, both intrapersonal (within) and interpersonal (between) (Yorks, 2006). A focus on both the inter and intrapersonal is often not the case in 'classroom-as-container' models of formal learning, which focus on cognition and rationality alone.

I will discuss embodiment and embodied learning in more detail in 3.4. However, it is useful to acknowledge that there is often a 'hidden curriculum' (Giroux and Penna, 2012) of control and disciplining of the body in learning spaces e.g., classroom management, single-file lines, sitting quietly for long periods of time, or gendered

roles (Rønholt, 2010). Children often undergo a suppression of expressive and intuitive bodily knowing as they are encultured into social norms of what it means to be a 'good girl' or boy in any particular socio-cultural learning experience. Non-formal (and informal and self-directed) learning opportunities, however, can facilitate a greater permeability and scope for expressiveness between bodies, objects (artefacts) and ideas, because they are by definition less restrictive – less formal.

### **1.1.5 Online synchronous learning experiences**

*'The pandemic has forced change in educational practices—the dominant change being to make temporarily distant learning the primary way to offer learning opportunities for people of all ages'* (Fischer et al., 2020: 249).

Online synchronous learning experiences (such as through Zoom) can be constructed to be embodied and transformative learning space-times, as Chapter 6 will explain. Much has been written about the challenges with live online teaching and learning (Rapanta et al., 2020), often by those experiencing/researching it for the first time, in the context of the pandemic, (see for example, Ylirisku et al., 2021), there can be an over-emphasis on learner experiences of disengagement, boredom and confusion, especially when face to face pedagogies are simply transferred (Sujarwanto et al., 2021). In fact, the mediation of technology, materials and their social functions offer and present *different* learning capabilities and experiences, which can still generate embodied and transformative learning. Whilst I am not saying that all online synchronous learning experiences are embodied (or transformative), this inquiry shows that they can be – if carefully crafted. I therefore hope to contribute to the literature (Stanley, 2001; Garrison, Anderson and Archer, 2009; Salmon, 2011) that seeks to dispel the myth and popular assumption that online synchronous (all participants of a learning session are co-present at a specific time) experiences are inferior to face to face learning experiences and/or completely disembodied.

This inquiry situates the online synchronous learning experiences I witnessed and participated in, as embodied. This will be fully outlined in 3.4.2. but for the purposes here, online embodiment is defined through a three-prism optic of: presence, movement, and mediated artefacts. The notion of 'presence' has a rich history in online learning (Lombard and Ditton, 1997; Garrison, Anderson and Archer, 2009), and my focus is specifically on the embodied sensation of 'being here and there'

(Landri, 2013); an attentiveness to the spontaneous, unexpected aspects of experience and a 'movement toward becoming' (Coonfield and Rose, 2012: 195). This situates 'presence' as an alignment of self, text, image and audience, intertwined with the notion of 'movement' as an ontological attentiveness to 'the gaps between' (Massumi, 2002: 4), and the physical, bodily *performative dimension as action* (Larsson and Quennerstedt, 2012), a relational self. Thirdly, the notion of 'mediated artefacts' (Engeström, 1987; Macpherson, Jones and Oakes, 2006) builds on Merleau-Ponty's blind person's stick metaphor (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/2012), whereby human sensory attentiveness is understood to go far beyond the skin on our hands, to include specific artefacts/tools that become extensions of our bodily ways of knowing in a given social context. Mediated artefacts can be understood broadly as the 'tools, instruments and rules [procedures, practices that] are used as mediating devices between subject-object activities in constructing those representations' (Macpherson et al., 2006: 8) of social interaction. These three concepts draw attention to the relationality, shifts and multiplicities between bodies, objects, and ideas, as experienced both physically and online synchronously.

The quote at the beginning of 1.1.5 shows that living during a global pandemic has meant for many (granted often the more privileged and fortunate in societies), digitisation has turned our body-minds towards what pedagogy and learning are and can be. In so doing, this provokes questions and reflections as to what future learning practices should be (Fischer et al., 2020). At a personal level, due to the pandemic I had to shift my methods from conceiving 'on field' participant observation to online participant observation, as 4.5.2 outlines. At an institutional and societal level there is a need to consider redefining and renegotiating roles, forms of expression, multi-channel communication and even learning and education itself, if the focus of learning is directed at changing society to be more inclusive and harmonious (Van Rossum et al., 1987). A momentary sense of confusion is for example, not necessarily a 'failing', within a learning process, but can instead be viewed as an expression of growth, as part of the change in rhythm and pattern (see 6.4.2) of a learning experience, which can facilitate a change in belief and/or practice.

## **1.2 Three main reasons why this inquiry matters**

The possibility of a relationship between fun, play(fulness), embodied learning in the broader setting of socio-cultural-material life, movement/play contexts and non-formal/Sport for Social Change, has yet to be examined. This is important to explore for three main reasons:

- 1) Fun is an undervalued and often dismissed/misunderstood concept in relation to non-formal learning, especially when compared with the plethora of research on play and learning (for both children and adults) more broadly. Whilst it is closely related to playfulness, it is not simply a synonym, and therefore there is value in examining it more closely (Fincham, 2016).
- 2) This research will go beyond instrumentalising fun and reducing it to a series of functions in relation to learning. This is important at a time when learning in Sport for Social Change and education more broadly, is being reduced to skills acquisition alone (Collins et al., 2014; Ronkainen et al., 2021). I hope to challenge an objectivist view (Peikoff, 1991) of the relationship between fun and learning.
- 3) Finally, this research endeavours to develop a model for fun, which will contribute to the knowledge and practical guidance on how non-formal embodied learning (particularly within the International Development field) can be better understood and utilised in the twenty first century, specifically in relation to the concepts of embodied learning and play(fulness).

## **1.3 Configurations of writing: shape, sounds and affects**

Having explained my motivations, the context, and reasons why this research matters, it is now useful to outline the intentions of each chapter, as well as to acknowledge the reasons why there are pockets of creative writing, including a poem in the thesis (see 5.4.1). This research is transdisciplinary (Nicolescu, 2002; Pohl, 2011), in that it involves working with complexity and diverse perspectives, integrates abstract and case-specific insights, 'and develops practical knowledge promoting 'the common good' (Pohl, 2011: 620). Transdisciplinarity is about a conversation between and beyond disciplines; a more-than-disciplinary approach. There may be educationalists, International Development practitioners, ethnographers, or

embodiment/sports specialists for whom this approach, expressed through interpretivist and creative ways may be unexpected, welcome. Finally, within this thesis I work with the concept of 'disciplined improvisation' (Sawyer, 2004), as a dynamic process involving a combination of planning and spontaneity. This honours my sense of fun itself; a phenomenon that embraces and expands contradictions.

### ***1.3.1 Intentions of each chapter***

Chapter 2 explains who CAC are. It outlines how they evolved since conception in 2008, as well as the type of organisation that CAC is. This includes an overview of their activities pre the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as how the pandemic (at the time of data gathering 2020-early 2021) re-shaped their work. It is highly likely that at the time of reading this, there are new projects, ideas, and staff/volunteers: it is a highly dynamic organisation, and for that reason, Chapter 2 focuses on CAC up until data gathering completion in February 2021. The chapter also presents some of the core ideology of CAC as it relates to fun and Purposeful Play.

Chapter 3 presents a 'disciplined improvisation' approach towards the literature review, the epistemology and ontology of the inquiry, and how the three research questions were generated. It focuses upon four key underpinning definitions: of fun, acknowledging ambiguity and moving beyond instrumentalising/restrictive classifications; of embodied and transformative learning (Lawrence, 2012) associated with socio-cultural-material theory (Vygotsky, 1934/1978); of online embodiment (Stanley, 2001; Bolander and Locher, 2020), framed through the notions of presence, movement and mediating artefacts; and of playfulness associated with metacommunication (nonverbal) (Bateson, 1972), safe spaces (Arao and Clemens, 2013) and the imaginary (Lennon, 2016).

Chapter 4 unpacks the study's epistemological underpinnings and methods. Interpretivism and social constructionism colour the research design of this ethnography. It embraces 'disciplined improvisation' as an embodied and figurative iterative-inductive stance towards ethnographic considerations throughout, especially relating to positionality; reflexivity; (field) notes; and an ethics of compassion. This was deemed vital when doing research during a global pandemic (4.5.2). The chapter then outlines approaches to qualitative quality and the data gathering methods. Ethnographic methods included a documentary review, conducting semi-structured interviews, a variety of modes of (online) participant observation in

meetings, trainings and three researcher-led reflection sessions, known as 'Pods', as well as developing a more/other than verbal method to capture a level of meta communication: 'laughter critical incidents'. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the analytic methods: notably, combining an embodied reflexive thematic analysis with a review of ethnographic (field) notes.

Chapter 5 presents the findings. Firstly, it considers understandings of fun by staff and coaches, generated through the lens of six themes each, and cross-checked with (field) notes. Secondly, it presents the relationship between fun learning in online training sessions (the roles/purposes of fun) through the 'laughter critical incidents', findings on individual's physical and online embodied experiences, and four themes relating to the purpose of fun, again, cross-checked with (field) notes. Next, the chapter draws on these findings to suggest an initial response to if/why fun may be significant (meaningful) within CAC learning processes through a poem.

Chapter 6 demonstrates what this inquiry contributes towards understanding relationships between fun and learning. For each research question it shows the patterns and fragments between the staff and coaches' constructions. It also explores the 'dark side' of fun, before showing how fun relates to learning: through catalysing inclusive relations; altering the mood of a learning experience; helping learners heal through feelings of lightness and liberation; and enabling learners to re-position, re-imagine and re-story themselves. The chapter then discusses the meaningfulness of fun within CAC online learning experiences: as holding a space for digression and spontaneity in learning experiences (the shadow role); as challenging an outcome and product focused learning/educational agenda through creating my own Six Principles; and presenting a unique Bracketing model for fun learning. This model pulls together all the learnings from this inquiry to suggest how considerations of fun can be actively sought, designed, and encouraged within online, and offline, learning experiences. Finally, it suggests learnings in relation to methods and analysis.

Chapter 7 summarises the main findings, by presenting the theoretical and methodological contributions of the thesis. It then explores provocations for learning in online spaces, especially non/unformal ones, bringing to the fore the findings that there can be meaningful embodied online learning experiences. The chapter then

touches upon provocations for the Sport for Social Change and alternative play communities to embrace the materiality of online learning experiences more fully. Finally, it concludes with learnings that challenge learning futures, going beyond the online nature of this research, to suggest that if the intention of learning experiences is to be 'reconstructive' and create being well or changing society (Van Rossum et al., 1987) then teaching practices should consider using and building in moments of fun (and can use the model suggested) to start this process. Whilst fun is not a panacea for all ills within learning, it does offer a way to develop qualities of learner experience, as yet under explored.

### **1.3.2 A sticky note on performative writing and embodying 'fun'**

*'Expression through metaphor is not only a matter of language, but a powerful way to understand the lived experience of the body'* (Stuckey, 2009: 31).

This inquiry is positioned within the discipline of social anthropology, understood in the vein that Ingold (2014) proposes as 'a forward-moving discipline dedicated to healing the rupture between imagination and real life' (p. 383). This means acknowledging that writing about human behaviour is as much a creative act, as it is a rational and scientific one. This encapsulates the possibilities and challenges, as to how a researcher, a learner, an ethnographer, a practitioner writes and re-presents ways (modalities) to communicate embodied ways of knowing. The act of writing, thinking, re-writing, in the context of this inquiry, needs therefore to also consider embodied ways of writing and communicating. A heart held assumption in this inquiry is that fun is an embodied phenomenon (a sensory unfolding with the socio-material world around us), the re-telling, packaging and communication of the phenomenon needs to convey *some* of the elements of the sensations, feelings, thoughts of both the participants and I, 'the researcher'. By challenging an objectivist (and often instrumental) view of the relationship between fun and learning, I also throughout the process, infused my own conceptualisations of *doing* a 'fun' PhD. For example, the use of cartoon imagery in One Note to help assist my reflective processes, and/or to act purely as an 'in the moment' expression of (light) fun. This attentiveness to the nuances of the creative and delightful, builds on from the work of Anjaria and Anjaria (2020). They suggest that considerations of *mazaa* (Hindi-Urdu for fun) should actively infuse descriptions of the pleasurable to keep 'us open to the possibilities of meaning in unexpected places... [not succumbing to the] desire to



sum up, reduce and synthesise - academic practices which unintentionally foreclose the irreducibility of experience' (p.239). In resonance, I use metaphors to capture some of this embodied knowing, heightening the affective performance of language.

I therefore offer a type of 'performative writing' (Pollock, 1998; Spry, 2007) that seeks 'new modes of subjectivity and even referentially' (Pollock, 1998: 76). Many other qualitative (and often embodied) researchers already acknowledge this shaping of textuality within academic writing (Molinari, 2022). This includes a playfulness and creativity with language<sup>1</sup>, holding a space for divergence (Carlson, 2021), and often trans-contextual thinking (Bloom, 2010), such as Leigh and Brown (2021); Kara et al., (2020); Pelias (2019); and Richardson (1997). As you will see and hear in 5.4.1, fun in relation to learning processes can be rebellious and subversive. The use of found poetry (Leavy, 2009) to emote and communicate this, aims to be an authentic, sensory way to do so, whereby 'poetic writing is inherently sensual, playful, and immersed in the specific moments of specific lives; the genre itself is a refusal of objectivity' (Ellingson, 2017: 185). This is grounded in a *relational* ('with') way of knowing, between writer, reader/listener, and text: encompassing an attentiveness (an aliveness and presence) with alterities to the already familiar, known, or singular.

### **1.3.3 Summary**

I have set the stage for this thesis. Firstly, by presenting my conceptualisation of fun, informed by others, and shaped by the research questions, and my personal motivations for engaging with the notion of fun. Secondly, by situating this inquiry within the context of CAC, and socio-cultural-material lived experiences. And thirdly, by positioning this inquiry as a transdisciplinary study that starts from, and goes beyond a positioning with social anthropology, International Development (Sport for Social Change and non-formal learning), and education studies, where I specifically explore embodied and online synchronous learning experiences. As the thesis will show, my position is that this research matters, primarily to offer an alternative to the

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<sup>1</sup> A note to explain how I use three types of punctuation. Firstly, parenthesis – I follow the suggestions of Hayot (2014), 'to exemplify (like this), to add asides (especially if you are switching registers), or to elaborate on an idea...opening up a breathing space for the reader and enlarging the referential sphere' (p.180). Secondly, I also use colons (:) followed by semi colons (;) to represent an opening out of connected ideas. Finally, I use 'hyphens ('-'s) to place emphasis, reminding a reader to consider the nature and type of relationship, between a string of concepts.

over instrumentalisation of learning and education that focuses on skills acquisition and outcomes alone, and instead to suggest the ways in which different types of fun can contribute towards a reconstructive endeavour to create and cultivate learning contexts, whereby qualities of being well, and trajectories towards social change are actively encouraged. I now turn towards contextualising CAC, outlining the type of organisation it is, and their core ideology, as I encountered staff and coaches January 2020-February 2021.

## Chapter 2 Coaches Across Continents

*'What's the problem we are solving? Why are we the best? And what are our impact numbers? This is the language of success.'* – CAC Chief Executive during a CAC online staff meeting 10 December 2020.

### 2.1 An evolving organisation

Coaches Across Continents is a highly dynamic organisation. It is continually evolving and adapting. I now outline its origins, scale, and activities pre the COVID-19 pandemic. I will next present some of the changes and adaptations that affected the organisation during the period of the pandemic (March 2020-February 2021) when I was data gathering. The intention here is to provide a concise overview, and not a detailed inventory of every resource and programme that CAC has ever conducted. It focuses on providing context, which is specifically relevant to understanding the organisations constructions of fun and learning.

#### 2.1.1 Concept, scale, and evolution

CAC is an educational charity first registered in 2008 in the United Kingdom and United States. The ambitions of the organisation are to challenge mainstream teacher-led learning and instructivist education more broadly. At the time of the data gathering for this research in 2020/21 CAC employed 10 full-time staff, many of whom were mobile prior to COVID-19, and travelling internationally several times a year. At the time of data gathering in 2020/21 there were no permanent offices. CAC started with on-field trainings in Tanzania in 2008, reaching 3,000 children (CAC Decade in Review, 2018). Since then, CAC has grown rapidly. The Decade in Review report (2018) states that the organisation had partnerships with 87 communities in over 29 countries, and this included a less direct uptake, via the local NGOs, community organisations' and schools' (partner organisations') own programmatic work who use CAC resources. Hence, CAC estimated to be reaching over 6 million children and young people across 6 continents through the uptake of their educational resources delivered by partner organisations (CAC Decade in Review report, 2018). Figure 1, from the CAC 2019 Annual Report shows how the scope of CAC continued to develop, notably in 2019 with its initiation of an accreditation programme for coaches.

# 2019 FACTS AND FIGURES

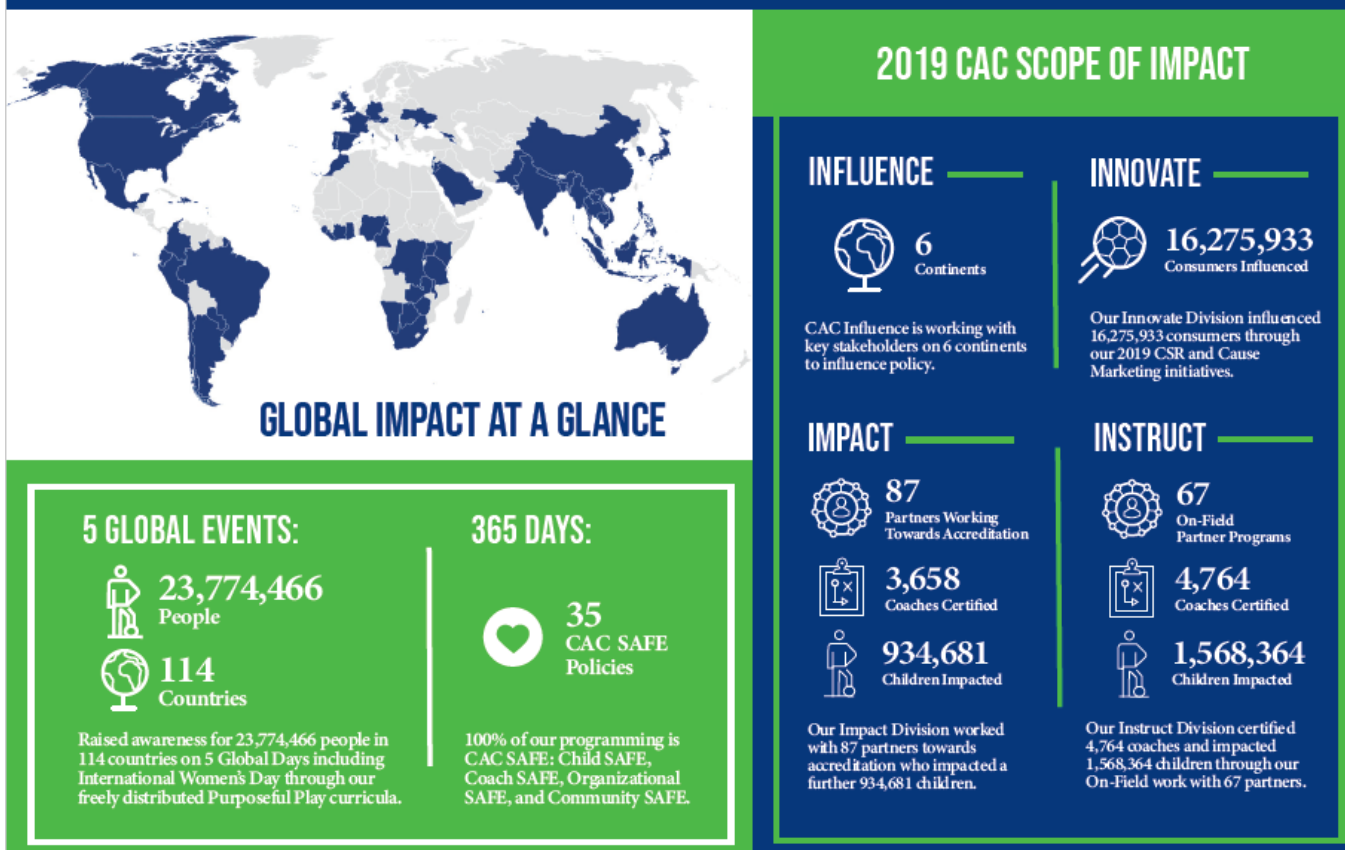


Figure 1: 2019 Facts and Figures, CAC Annual Report 2019

As part of the first phase of research, eight staff Skype interviews were conducted in order to understand initial conceptualisations of fun within the organisation (see 4.7.1). During these interviews, it became apparent that central to organisational ideology is a belief in being unique, and a leader in the Sport for Social Change community. 'Leader' and 'unique' were terms that I heard reiterated throughout both interviews and staff meetings, as well as the drive to generate 'big impact numbers'. One expression of this desire is the creation of CL17, the consultancy and corporate social purpose wing (or 'brand') launched at the end of 2021 with its own website: [www.creatinglegacies17.org](http://www.creatinglegacies17.org). CAC and CL17 management are keen to show that for a small organisation, in terms of paid staff, their outcomes are big e.g., in an article written by the Chief Strategist in February 2019, for the sportanddev.org community, CAC is described as:

Coaches Across Continents is the global leader in Purposeful Play. Governments, Corporations, Foundations, and community-based organisations in 60 countries

impact 16 million children annually using CAC's 28 year-round strategic resources to create Purposeful Play. Over the past decade CAC has educated and certified over 25,000 community leaders on six continents and been established as the Global Leader in Education Outside the Classroom, winning 26 major awards including the 2018 Beyond Sport Global Impact of the Year Award.<sup>2</sup>

The idea of CAC was conceived by the founder Nick Gates who previously had a company in the United States (1990-2002), Play Soccer, that used a 'Soccer as Education' curriculum, which promoted football skills-based educational games. He then backpacked around the world for nearly two years to 'look at how sport and play could influence the world' before briefly taking a job as a Business Executive in the English Premier League. He left this role in 2007 and spent a year in Africa, where he had the idea on 'a bus ride from Entebbe to Nairobi, of Coaches Across Continents'<sup>3</sup>. He developed it in discussion with his mother Dr Judith Gates, who is an educational advisor for the organisation, and whose PhD thesis on personal development (Gates, 2012) informed the educational philosophy of CAC.

The organisational impact of CAC is evolving through its ability to rapidly position itself in relation to diverse donors and circumstances, as the next sub-sections outline. CAC expects staff to be self-reflective and continually seek to adapt themselves to the changing circumstances they find themselves in.

### **2.1.2 A contingent organisational model**

In many ways the organisational identity of Coaches Across Continents is based upon an intentional philosophy of anti-conformity – an educational ideology (From Chance to Choice, see Appendix 1) based upon the breaking down of tradition, culture, and religious thinking in order to generate (and continually generate) new/refreshed ways of thinking, doing and being in the world. This also applies to how CAC perceive themselves as an organisation: never fixed; nor restricted to one way of defining themselves.

Hence, whilst CAC is registered as a charity (a not for profit), it is in many ways a hybrid organisation: an organisation that operates in the public and private sectors

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<sup>2</sup> Retrieved from: <https://www.sportanddev.org/en/article/news/cacs-purposeful-play-creates-education-outside-classroom> on 22 February 2022.

<sup>3</sup> From his interview in January 2020.

simultaneously, fulfilling public duties and developing commercial market activities (Johanson and Vakkuri, 2017). It is also formal (Billis, 2020), in that it has a public persona, there is a hierarchy (see 2.1.4) and structure driven by the founder; which in 2020 took the shape of 'teams' that have their own yearly targets. However, the roles are somewhat fluid, subject to adaptations, and this includes the hiring of interns or part-time staff to fulfil specific project needs. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the organisational 're-pivoting' was rapid, including some 'on field' staff being much more engaged in curriculum development than previously.

The organisation can be aligned with contingency theory in organisational studies. In particular, Morgan (2006) claims that many modern organisations operate in a dynamic manner whereby there is no best way to organise, lead or to make decisions: instead, the optimal course of action is contingent (dependent) upon the internal and external situation. A contingent leader effectively applies their own style of leadership to the right situations, and 'organisations are open systems that need careful management to satisfy and balance internal needs and to adapt to environmental circumstances' (p.44). The fluid and contingent nature of the organisation problematises the nature of meaning-making processes because they are rarely fixed. This inquiry is therefore as much about these processes, as the constructions of meanings of fun and learning.

### **2.1.3 CAC activities pre COVID – 19**

Physical movement and play-based learning are integral aspects of the learning theory of CAC. The intention behind physical movement and play based games is to generate collective solutions to the tactile/physical and intellectual problems posed. This in turn encourages a reflective process that includes how to use bodies, how to communicate, and specifically how to work as an individual within a group. Much of their 'on field' work focuses on using a series of problem-solving games inspired by soccer and played on a football pitch, but not with the intention of developing competitive football-focused skills e.g., how to score a goal. Ideally, this is all embodied and enacted in a playful way, even though the game may be based on a serious issue, such as the importance of hand washing in COVID-19 times, or

gender discrimination. The thread of the experience, however, should always be one of fun and playfulness<sup>4</sup>.

Soccer was originally chosen for three main reasons. Firstly, CAC states that it brings a combination of ‘simplicity, its existing global appreciation and its ability to transcend cultural, religious and linguistic boundaries... soccer is a universal language and most of all – it is fun’ (Gates and Suskiewicz, 2017: 423). Secondly, it is also, for all staff, an activity that is associated with enjoyment (for most parts) in their childhoods<sup>5</sup>. Thirdly, soccer provides alignment with the ‘Sport for Social Development’<sup>6</sup> sector, which broadly speaking sees sport as a ‘vehicle to educate’ (Gates and Suskiewicz, 2017), and this offers a stream of potential funding.

Between 2008-18, CAC created over 28 learning resources and curricula, each consisting of a number of educational games (CAC Decade in Review report, 2018). Each game normally consists of four parts: learning themes; guidance on how to position or organise participants; variations (also called progressions); and example discussion questions. The learning themes are focused on cognitive and/or social based capacities and skills, such as developing confidence. Guidance on how to organise participants is shown via moving avatars on an online simulated football pitch via Sports Session Planner computer software<sup>7</sup>. Finally, variations and sample discussion questions are presented that relate back to the learning theme and can include provocations such as: Was this a new skill for you? Is it important to learn new skills? How did it feel to use your voice? These questions illustrate a common feature of CAC’s games, that any single problem (or game), is always assumed to have several solutions for both learners and coaches alike, see Figure 2. It also assumes that participants know how to play a ‘normal game of street football’.

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<sup>4</sup> Based on interviews in January 2020.

<sup>5</sup> Based on interviews in January 2020.

<sup>6</sup> See 1.1.2 for an overview of this term, and Sport for Social Change uses.

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.sportsessionplanner.com/>

Description

**Drogba for Fun™**

**Potential Theme/Time:** Football for Fun; 10-20 minutes

**Organization:** A normal game of street football (no boundaries, no referees, etc.) but the team can get a point if they score a goal or if a player succeeds in doing a Drogba Skill during the game. Players have to shout out "Drogba 1, 2 or 3" to get the point. The skill they shout out needs to match the skills they do.

**Variation:** If your players are very skillful you can introduce the rule that they must beat a defender in order to get a point.

**Sample Discussion Questions:** Why is it important to apply the Drogba skills to a game situation? Why does the skill you do and what you shout need to be the same?



Figure 2: An example game on Sports Session Planner

Prior to 2015, CAC games covered six thematic areas, including gender equality, conflict resolution and sexual reproductive health rights. According to the founder, Nick Gates, these were based on a ‘mixture of requests, past experience and personal observations’. Since 2015, games have been created to align with the thematic areas of the UN Sustainable Development Goals<sup>8</sup>, because they are ‘broad enough and understood to be the main areas for the world’s problems according to a globally recognised organisation’<sup>9</sup>. They are also no longer confined to football pitches, or ball-based games, although these still predominate. In May 2020, CAC also began to develop curricula aimed at supporting their community partners to address health-related issues (including mental health) with regard to the global COVID-19 pandemic, these were described by the founder ‘as much more theme-or issue-focused than some of our other games, which are just for the fun of it’. This indicates that there is an inherent push-pull in CACs work, regarding how much of their learning experiences are focused on the qualities of the learning process/experience, and how much on delivering outcomes.

<sup>8</sup> United Nations. (2015) Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development [online] <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>

<sup>9</sup> According to the CEO during an interview in March 2020.



### 2.1.4 Who is part of their initiatives?

There are four main groups that CAC works with (not including donors). And whilst terms are not used consistently, these are the four main groups:

1. **Staff and Self-Directed Learning (SDL) coaches** – full-time staff members mainly from the Global North (Collyer, 2018) with different organisational roles including curriculum design, fundraising, on-field training, and strategic direction<sup>10</sup>. Staff that conduct the on-field training are referred to as SDL coaches;
2. **Community Impact Coaches (CICs)** – community coaches from the Global South, who receive stipend funds. They normally work alongside Self-Directed Learning (SDL) coaches and are trained to deliver the on-field sessions;
3. **Community coaches, educators, teachers, youth leaders** – the CICs come from this group, and these individuals are normally the CAC staff's entry point into a local community partner organisation/group;
4. **Children and young people** – often the main group of learners with whom CICs engage with over a longer period of time, compared to SDL coaches.

Table 1 presents an overview of the function and role for each group.

Table 1: Four main groups and their roles (according to the founder, January 2020)

<b>1. Staff (SDL coaches)</b>	<p>These are all full-time staff members who have sufficient experience of delivering 'on-field' learning experiences. Since January 2020, staff members have been aligned with different 'teams': <b>Instruct, Impact, Innovate and Influence</b>. The <i>Instruct</i> individuals are responsible for delivering in-country, face-to-face, 'on-field' training with community educators associated with local partner NGOs, schools, or community groups. The <i>Impact</i> individuals are responsible for mentoring and accrediting local partner NGOs, schools, or community groups, through sharing and aligning the 28 (as of early 2020) educational resources that CAC has developed e.g., safeguarding resources. The <i>Innovate</i> team works on marketing, fundraising and corporate social responsibility initiatives. Finally,</p>
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<sup>10</sup> The North–South divide is a socio-economic and political division of Earth popularised in the late 20th century and early 21st century. Generally, definitions of the Global North include the United States, Canada, almost all the European countries, Israel, Cyprus, Japan, Singapore, South Korea, Australia, and New Zealand.

	the <i>Influence</i> team works with corporations, foundations, and governments (educational ministries) to advocate for and influence educational/sporting policy.
<b>2. Community Impact Coaches (CICs)</b>	These are a group of particularly engaged community coaches, educators, teachers, and youth leaders who use CAC educational resources in localities around the globe. The intention is that they can deliver on-field training on behalf of CAC to other community educators, children, and young people. They are paid a stipend to do so.
<b>3. Community coaches, educators, teachers, youth leaders</b>	These are the members of a community (often alongside children, below) that make up an 'on field' group of learners, depending on the context e.g., if the training is for a group of teachers and the children they work with, then they will be working with an SDL and/or CICs, all together during an on-field session. Each Instruct training is site specific.
<b>4. Children and young people</b>	These are often the main learners and recipients of on-field trainings. They do not directly engage with CAC staff except during on-field training sessions. They often come from vulnerable and disadvantaged communities that the CICs/coaches are already working with.

### **2.1.5 CAC activities during the COVID-19 pandemic (January 2020 – February 2021)**

Having outlined the nature of CAC's activities and which groups took part in these activities pre the COVID-19 pandemic, it is important to now discuss how CAC evolved specifically in relation to the pandemic in 2020 and early 2021. How would a physical movement and play-based organisation reimagine and repurpose its activities during lockdowns and travel bans? There was a series of online staff meetings, involving board members, to discuss strategies, and it was decided in the spring of 2020, that CAC (with its partner organisations) should stop delivery of in-person training of coaches and young people. Therefore, the Impact and Instruct branches substantially remoulded their work. Later in 2020 online meetings, informal sharing sessions and trainings were held online, using Zoom, WhatsApp, and Facebook Workplace predominately. Staff developed specific curriculums. For example, the Nike Foundation commissioned CAC to develop a resource for young people in relation to COVID-19 and mental health. This was shared with partner organisations and coaches to deliver either in person (where applicable and following COVID-19 guidelines), or online.

Since the data gathering carried out for this thesis, Coaches Across Continents has continued to develop its initiatives, including the launch of a consultancy brand (CL17) and Choice for Women in the autumn of 2021, described as ‘a specialised women-led organisation working within Coaches Across Continents... Choice For Women aims to equip girls and women with the tools to become global Active Citizens, achieve UN SDG 5.1, and create a more gender-equal world’ (CAC website, February 2022).

The first post-pandemic staff (SDL) and CIC coaches ‘on field’ face-to-face training, as opposed to only via CICs, was held in Zanzibar in the spring of 2022.

## **2.2 Core ideology**

I now present the main educational philosophies, relevant to situating fun and learning within CAC. These are The Four Pillars, Purposeful Play (and self-directed learning), and Fun in relation to the theory of how to achieve social change.

### **2.2.1 Four Pillars**

According to the CAC website, their educational approach is based on Four Pillars of Education Outside the Classroom (EOC) (CAC website, 2020). Education Outside the Classroom refers to play and game-based learning in ‘safe spaces’ that are perceived as ideally outside school classrooms. Such spaces, often a football pitch, CAC states, support learners ‘to discuss harmful traditional, religious, and cultural practices’ in order to ‘analyse their needs and implement strategies to choose their futures’ (CAC website, 2020). ‘Harmful practices’ can be interpreted in many different ways, and the normative conceptualisations of serious issues and how to address them (such as HIV Aids) are purposefully confronted and challenged by the very nature of a coach crafting a playful experience. This is viewed as a mechanism for opening up dialogue and possibilities<sup>11</sup>, by drawing on the Four Pillars as summarised in Figure 3. Pillar 1 in Figure 3, although not shown in this original diagram, but witnessed through discourse during ethnographic discussions, is also cognisant of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). For example, if a series of trainings are aimed at tackling gender discrimination, then any outcomes

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<sup>11</sup> Based on ethnographic discussions in May 2020.

designed in the monitoring and evaluation of the trainings are likely to align with Goal 5 of the SDGs, which is concerned with gender equality.

1. Human Rights Values	2. Chance to Choice Developmental Philosophy	3. Active Self-Directed Learning methodology	4. Theory of how to achieve social change
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Grounded in 3 UN documents:</li> <li>•UN Declaration of Human Rights</li> <li>•UN Convention on the Rights of the Child</li> <li>•UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Young people throughout the world go through seven similar stages of development, from circumstances of birth and the conformity of an unquestioned lifestyle, through deepening insight, to the recognition of potential choices.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•SDLs are independent thinkers who can define and solve problems, reason logically, engage in the projection of their own ideas and set goals and strategies to achieve them.</li> <li>• SDLs possess attitudes such as independence of mind, confidence in their own judgment, a sense of self-esteem leading to self-actualisation and the ability to cooperate and collaborate with others.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Guiding principles are: it should be bottom up, inside out and based on building community capacity.</li> <li>•Change is fostered from within by empowering local partners to question previously taken for granted cultural certainties, challenge damaging local traditions and make responsible choices for their future.</li> </ul>

Figure 3: The Four Pillars of Education outside the Classroom (CAC Website, 2020)

In addition, CAC has developed guidelines to support how coaches contextualise and adapt their on-field sessions and games. This includes the ‘80/20 Rule’, an explicit statement that foregrounds the importance of physical movement, whereby ‘at least 80% of the time your players are playing and only 20% explaining the rules and discussing the impacts of the games. Use progressions to learn through play’. The Circle of Friends report (2019) also includes an explicit statement on the significance of fun, although not defined, but rather as ‘Have fun: if you are having fun your players will follow. Find new ways to love what you do, and you will create an environment where learning is fun’ (CAC Circle of Friends report, 2019: 1). This indicates two underlying assumptions: firstly, that fun is something that can be passed onto another person i.e., is a social phenomenon; and secondly that there is a specific environment where fun can arise.

### **2.2.2 Chance to Choice and Purposeful Play**

CAC states that individuals not only make progress towards developing the skills to advance themselves, but also the skills to work with, decide and improve, a

'community issue' around them: from 'Chance to Choice' (see pillar 2 in Figure 3). Figure 4 is an outline of the Chance to Choice theory: it has its roots in a study of personal development, of children and adults (Gates, 1995). During the interviews for this study, conducted January-March 2020, the Chance to Choice theory was described by the founder and educational advisor to be much more flexible than a developmental stage model, nonlinear, and not as universal i.e., not everyone will reach the stage of choice: one individual may go back and forth through different stages, and therefore the rate of change for each individual is variable. Whilst Chance to Choice at first appears to be a psycho-social stage theory, along the lines of Erikson (1950/1995), especially stages 1-4 of Chance to Choice, CAC staff are much more likely to focus on the less age-specific stages 5-7 (in blue, not originally emphasised), which are of most relevance to the learning processes in CAC. In addition, educators (coaches) are conceived of also being in a process of learning, alongside learners, (see Appendix 1). Fun does not explicitly feature in Chance to Choice, however as Theme 6 in 5.2.1 will show, the fifth stage of 'contradictions' is especially relevant to constructions of fun within CAC.

7. **Choice**: growing in confidence, taking personal responsibility, owning your life, creating oneself, choosing a future, empower and liberate from the constraints of the past.
6. **Challenge**: gaining insights, glimpsing alternative ways of thinking, considering options, imagining a different future, open up to possibilities for new ways of living.
5. **Contradictions**: awareness of ambiguities and complexity, acceptance that no one answer is sufficient, deepening uncertainty supporting rejection of what was previously taken for granted.
  4. **Certainty of post-adolescence**: need for peer approval, for similarity, for acceptance, for the avoidance of doubt, leads to culturally created complacency.
    3. **Conflict of adolescence**: ritual rebellion, self-assertion, questioning of the taken for granted contribute to the emerging individual.
      2. **Conformity of childhood**: unquestioning acceptance, fitting in to inherited culture, unawareness of alternatives, lead to cultural acquiescence.
        1. **Chance of birth**: the inheritance of country, culture, religion, family, and traditions.

Figure 4: Seven Stages of Development (adapted from Gates and Suskiewicz, 2017)

Self-Directed Learning, the third pillar in Figure 3, since 2019 is closely aligned and often synonymous with Purposeful Play<sup>12</sup>. In essence, the two main principles of CAC's approach to games-based Purposeful Play and self-directed learning are:

- 1) To problem solve and find many potential solutions, and
- 2) To do this in a collaborative way, with other individuals, in order to confront an individual's own biases, and wider interpretations of harmful practices.<sup>13</sup>

Understanding the nature of self-directed learning will be discussed further in 3.3.

### **2.2.3 Fun and the theory of change**

Pillar 4 in Figure 3 outlines the organisational 'Theory of how to achieve social change', more commonly understood as a Theory of Change (ToC) (Weiss, 1995). Rather than focusing solely on benchmarks, or numbers reached, theories of change normally consider the conditions, mechanisms and causal linkages that are presumed to generate outcomes and impacts (Weiss, 1995). They attempt to tell a type of *story* of how change is believed to occur in a given context. They do this by linking organisational inputs and processes to intended outcomes and impacts. Theories of change can help Sport for Social Change programmes more intentionally promote developmental outcomes and facilitate continuous organisational learning and growth (Lyras and Welty Peachey, 2011; Jones et al., 2017).

The CAC organisational Theory of Change (2018), which is aimed at funders, mentions 'fun' once: CAC work on 'sport for social impact education that focuses on local issues such as: female empowerment, including gender equity; conflict prevention, including social inclusion; health and wellness, including HIV/AIDS behaviour change; child rights; vital life skills; and fun'. The ToC itself is heavily focused on promoting ownership in community partners. The absence of detailed explanations of 'fun' in the ToC, and other documents, is partly a reflection that CAC are not clear as to how funders will react, but by placing it at the end of a list of diverse areas – it is enigmatically all encompassing. As this quote suggests, 'We know we have got it [referring to 'fun']! But we can't explain it!<sup>14</sup>. Fun is hard to

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<sup>12</sup> Based on communication in March 2020 with the Chief Executive Strategist.

<sup>13</sup> Based on interviews in January 2020.

<sup>14</sup> From Nick Gates interview, in January 2020.

explain. Hence the partnership for this research, which will be a resource for CAC and others to use, especially the Principles and model in 6.4.

### 2.2.4 Summary

In summary, the educational approach of CAC is based on ‘Four Pillars of Education Outside the Classroom (CAC website, 2020). These pillars are: 1. Human rights values 2. Chance to Choice Developmental Philosophy 3. Active Self-Directed Learning methodology and 4. The theory of how to achieve social change. Education Outside the Classroom refers to the Purposeful Play and physical/movement game-based learning in ‘safe spaces’ that are perceived as ideally situated in places other than school classrooms. The intention behind CAC’s approach to games-based Purposeful Play are to find many potential solutions, to any given perceived problem, and to achieve this in a collaborative way, confronting one’s own biases, and societal practices that are deemed harmful. Fun, whilst not defined, is understood as something that can be passed onto another person i.e., a social phenomenon that can be generated in specific environments, and this is summarised in Figure 5.

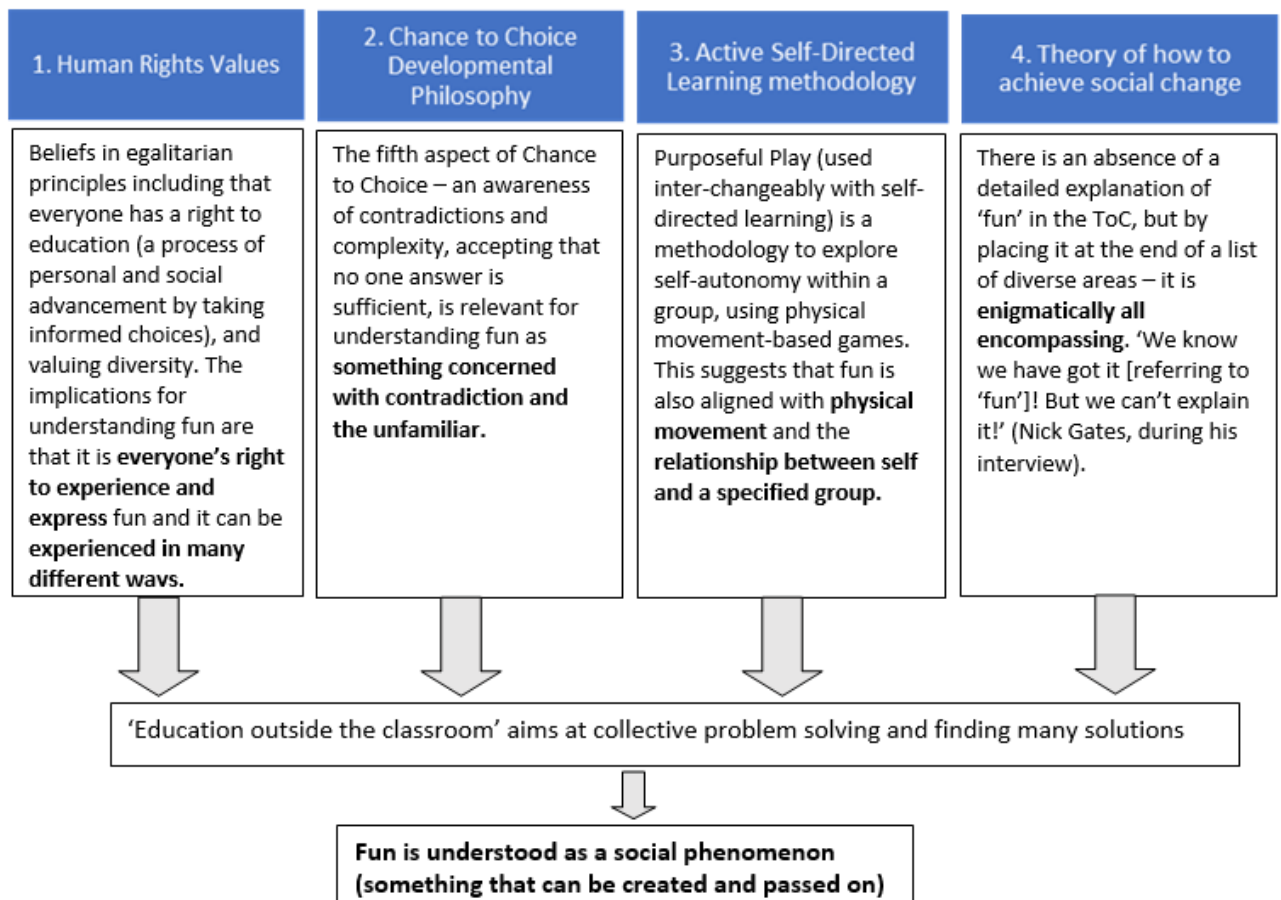


Figure 5: Situating fun in CAC ideology

## Chapter 3 Becoming an interpretive truth seeker and maker

*‘Celebrating difference rather than “correcting” for it assumes multiple perspectives and truths... consequently, the synthesiser, as an active interpretive agent, becomes an interpretive ‘truth maker’ rather than [solely] an objective “truth seeker” ’ (Weed, 2008: 17).*

### 3.1 Disciplined improvisation as literature review

This inquiry aims to explore and gain insights into the relationships between fun and learning, with an alternative education organisation that focuses on movement and physical play-based games. The quote above summarises my approach: an inquirer concerned with the careful, and considered interpretive acts of weaving together, and making, threads of truth. Part of this praxis (Freire, 1972) is informed by the methodological rendering of the inquiry through ‘disciplined improvisation’ (Sawyer, 2004), introduced in 1.3 and further developed in 4.5. Disciplined improvisation means that ways of knowing are understood as a movement between script, plan, structure, and the unscripted, unplanned, and agentic. This is true of my approach to the literature review, as this chapter will elaborate.

Having presented background information on what CAC is and does, this chapter now contextualises this information. The purpose of this review is to locate this inquiry, and not to provide a comprehensive overview of all the literature on fun and learning. It first outlines how the literature was iteratively selected and refined, including acknowledging the reasons why significant guiding concepts were chosen. It then moves onto present definitions for the concepts of fun; ‘learning’ (how to learn) within a socio-cultural-material framework; (online) ‘embodiment’; and more specifically ‘embodied (transformative) learning’; and play(fulness)’. Finally, it outlines the research gaps, and how these shaped the research questions.

The concept of ‘fun’ is inherently slippery, and therefore necessitated taking a complex transdisciplinary perspective (Pohl, 2011), drawing mainly from education studies, International Development, sports studies<sup>15</sup> and social anthropology. It is transdisciplinary, firstly because the work of CAC is complex and cuts across both

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<sup>15</sup> This included considering papers that included fun/play and learning within sports management/coaching, sports psychology, and physical education.



education and development studies, specifically Sport for Development. Secondly, the cross-cultural nature of their work, necessitates an awareness of doing research amongst different social and cultural contexts. Finally, this inquiry takes a transdisciplinary stance, because as both a researcher and a practitioner, I am interested in developing practical knowledge to promote 'the common good' (Pohl, 2011). I am interested in finding patterns, connections, and dissonance amongst multiple perspectives. This is born from a belief that meaning making is an interpretive praxis, ideally infused with a generative dose of fun and creativity.

The literature for this inquiry also draws from adult, youth, and child focused literature across the four disciplines. This is for pragmatic reasons that are twofold. Firstly, CAC had fewer opportunities for me to work directly and substantially in situ with children and young people than originally anticipated. And secondly, working during the COVID-19 pandemic meant that taking a more multi-generational approach was feasible, and enriching, for example considering definitions of learning from across 'adult learning' perspectives, or those constructed for children.

Several methods of literature review exist, each with different advantages/disadvantages (Hart, 2018). In relation to the aim of this transdisciplinary inquiry, disciplined improvisation as review aligned with the need for both method and flexibility as I now outline. This review draws from the concept of 'disciplined improvisation' introduced by Sawyer et al., (2004). They use it as a way of integrating two apparent contradictions/tensions within teaching approaches. Namely, how scripted teaching i.e., using a curriculum, and the necessity for creative teaching i.e., adapting teaching to suit student needs, can be reconciled. I use the concept, to inform an approach to literature reviewing that integrates structure and reasoning, alongside flexible and adaptive strategies. In essence, to facilitate the seeking of patterns beyond disciplinary boundaries, as advocated for by Bateson (1972).

The more 'improvisational' aspects of the review, facilitate a more flexible and adaptive strategy, and draw from a narrative and hermeneutic perspective (Greenhalgh et al., 2018). The intention at these moments, is to focus on the continual deepening of insight through a critical reflection on particular elements – in particular the key concepts. This involved a process of foregrounding tacit

knowledge (Hammersley, 2001), including making judgements about the potential audience for this thesis: there is always a level of 'mediation by the researcher in striving for credible insights' rather than data chains (p. 551). A narrative review seeks a 'plausible truth' (Greenhalgh et al., 2018) and this aligns with the interpretivist epistemological underpinnings of this research, as the quote at the start of the chapter suggests (and Chapter 4 frames in detail). Disciplined improvisation as review requires welding organisation and arrangement, with intuitive and tacit knowing (spontaneous and 'ethnographic hunches') (Pink, 2021); ways of knowing and meaning making through both body and mind.

Whilst I intentionally align with Greenhalgh et al.'s (2018) case against the 'spurious hierarchy of systematic over narrative reviews' (p.1). I acknowledge in the process of review as disciplined improvisation that there is a need for an initial, and subsequent follow-up periods, of methodical searching. Here I intentionally use the word methodical, rather than 'systematic', because of the history and connotations associated with 'systematic reviews' (Newman and Gough, 2020). Methodical searching is a useful approach to kick-start a complex inquiry focused on an enigmatic concept, before proceeding in a more hermeneutic and narrative manner. It also allows for transparency and replicability. The initial methodical searching enabled me to continually reflect upon the types of narrower terms that were part of the constructs of learning, fun and play, *within* the specific context of CAC, and to consider if/where I might draw boundaries to keep the inquiry manageable.

The initial scoping included searching for 'fun' and 'learning' and 'social and behaviour change', or 'Sport for Social Change' on Google Scholar. However, the former context was too broad in nature (returning thousands of resources), and the latter, Sport for Social Change was only explicitly relevant to programmes that were then halted due to the COVID-19 pandemic. I therefore chose to re-focus the research, and to re-consider the main analytical concepts, in relation to emerging research questions, but also CAC's own literature. In order to build a loose frame of reference for the inquiry, a set of movable pegs to play with, the next constructs I used were self-directed learning, fun, and play. Self-directed learning was originally chosen because this is the approach to learning that CAC's external and internal documentation refers to. Play was chosen because the CAC documentation (including annual reports, the website etc.) all demonstrate that the play of games is

central to their learning approach. However, I only focus on a discrete part of the literature on play because it is vast and ever expanding, as I discuss in 3.5.

After initial scoping in Google Scholar (to gain a broad view of the literature), I then searched in Scopus in order to refine the search (creating alerts on both databases). Scopus collects academic resources in English. I restricted searches to the Social Sciences, in order to refine the literature. The search terms I used on Scopus were: 'self-directed'; learning; fun; play; football; sports; ethnography, leisure and later included 'embodiment'/ 'embodied' and 'movement'. Different combinations were used 'self-directed AND learning AND fun AND sports OR football', 'learning AND fun AND play AND sports OR movement'. See Appendix 2 for a record of a methodical search on Scopus in November 2021. To make sure that I was aware of recent literature, I also refined searches to the last 14 years, as the notes in Appendix 2 indicate. Throughout the course of the inquiry, I pegged the literature review with three of these methodical searches.

However, the improvisational aspects of the review flowed in and around these methodical searches throughout the entirety of this iterative inquiry. I explored the literature through several other emerging approaches. These included: participating in online seminars or workshops, such as those run by Playful University Platform (at Aarhus University in Denmark); papers shared amongst RUMPUS<sup>16</sup> colleagues; meetings with my supervisors; attending online conferences such as the Ethnographic & Qualitative Research Conference (EQRC) in 2021; and writing blogposts, which facilitated conversations with other academics via Twitter. In this way my experiential process of engaging with ideas, and my emerging research framework and concepts, extended far beyond the methodical searches, and is much richer for it.

As my research design progressed, the centrality of embodiment to my methodological underpinnings, and to my emerging research question focused on learning *experiences*, became increasingly apparent. After witnessing and participating in online training sessions, I reflected that self-directed learning, defined

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<sup>16</sup> RUMPUS is a transdisciplinary research group based at the Open University, see: <https://wels.open.ac.uk/rumpus>

by Mocker and Spear (1982), as learners' control of both the objectives and the means was not an entirely accurate description of what I was witnessing and encountering. Rather, the experience of the emerging online activities (initiated by the disruption of the pandemic) suggested a broader learning approach was unfolding, which was embodied, experiential and potentially transformative. I'll discuss this further in 3.3.3. I therefore re play-worked<sup>17</sup> my frames of reference due to the pandemic. I understand play-work to be an individual's own way of finding ease and delight through body and mind with task-based activities. In this instance, play-work meant brainstorming, online, with my supervisors in a good-humoured manner: we subverted the space by wearing unusual hats, joking and at the same time discussing theoretical and practical possibilities. These discussions helped me to re-conceive of online (-offline) embodiment through a prism focused on an attentiveness with presence, movement, and mediated artefacts. Together, the two foundational concepts of embodiment and learning (within a socio-cultural-material and often non-formal context), now informed the three conceptual constructs of the inquiry: 'embodied (transformative) learning'; 'fun'; and play(fulness), see Figure 6. This re-focus on embodiment extended my literature searches, and my attentiveness within academic networks particularly from the second year to include 'movement', 'embodiment' and 'online embodiment'.

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<sup>17</sup> I use the term play-work to intentionally perceive play and work as inextricably interlinked i.e., to work should and can be a form of play, and vice versa. This is part of my understanding of the embodied nature of fun, see 5.4.1. To write or talk about fun is simply not sufficient, it has to be experienced and expressed through, with and beyond the body; 'the whole person' (Yorks, 2006).

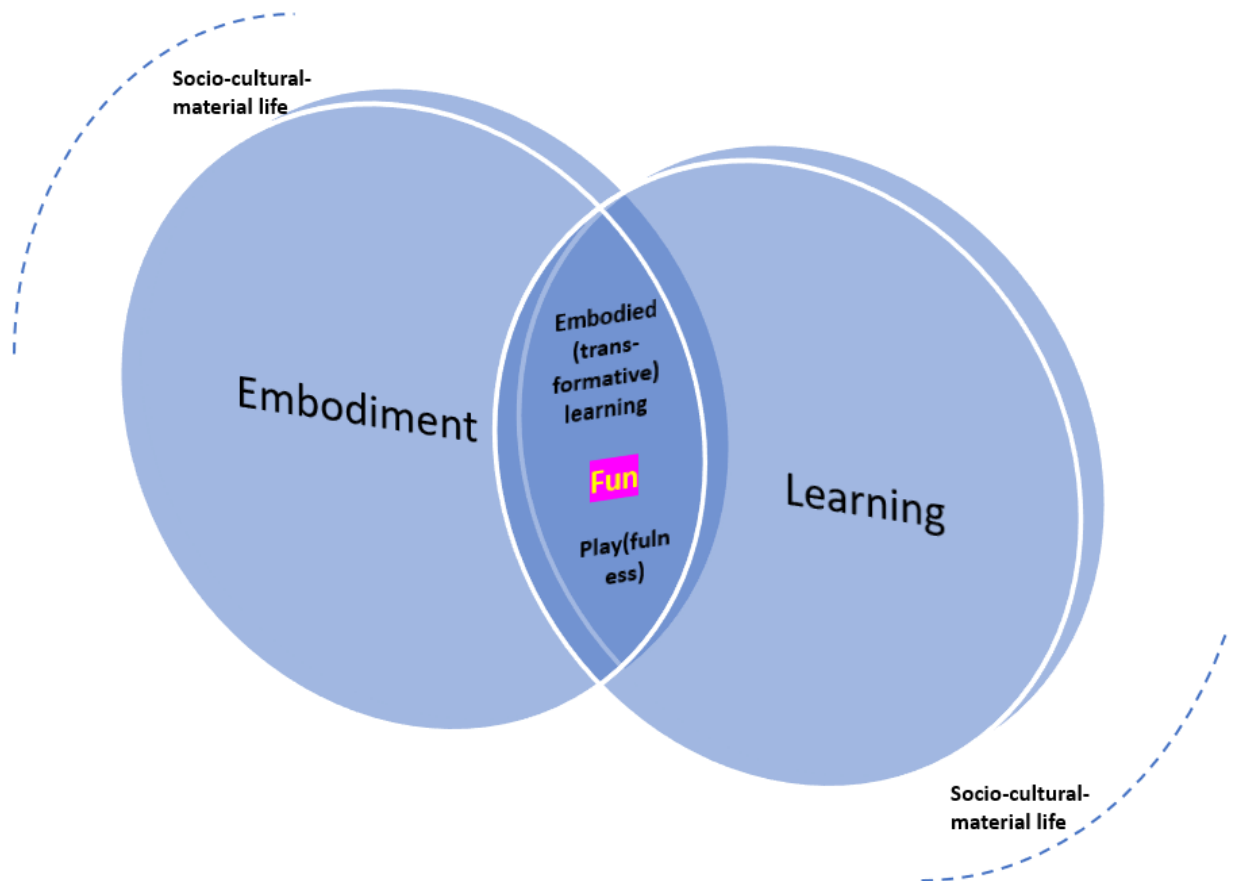


Figure 6: Conceptual frames of reference

In reading the literature searches yielded on ‘fun’, I found it was often used as a taken-for-granted concept in a title or a tagged-on remark with little explanation (such as Robertson et al., 2013). Hence, several papers were discarded. This showed how under-theorised and undervalued the concept of fun is within academia. In marked contrast, the literature on play and learning is vast, so in order to contain its scope, I refined my searching at the start by ruling out: ‘school’, ‘classroom’, ‘teacher’, ‘instruct’, ‘digital game-based learning’ and ‘learning technology’. Therefore, for the purposes of this inquiry, I do not draw upon the extensive literature relating to games and educational technology (Koster, 2005; Demkah and Bhargava, 2019; Tisza, 2021), nor game design/gamification (such as Suits, 2014; Sicart, 2022), because games and play have already been heavily theorised from within these contexts, and the focus of this inquiry is on the socio-cultural-material dimensions of fun learning instead.

In this way, this review embodies and engages with a need for elements of structure (to maintain manageability and focus on my specific context, as it changed due to the pandemic), alongside aspects of agency/generativity, which are inherent in the

interpretive ‘truth maker’ positionality of review by disciplined improvisation. This aligns with the same intention in narrative reviews to generate ‘the continual deepening of insight...obtained by critical reflection’ (Greenhalgh, et al., 2018: 3). Finally, in the praxis of this review, I included papers shared amongst colleagues, or that I came across in online workshops, which were resonant with emerging concepts, such as embodiment or creative/poetic inquiry (Penwarden and Schoone, 2021). That is why, for example, there are a few select articles that come from a source that would have originally been excluded from Google Scholar/Scopus searches i.e., Human Computer Science, but whose subject area later became of direct relevance, for example, Benford et al.’s, (2018) article on ‘Discomfort—The Dark Side of Fun’, which will be discussed in 6.2.2.

In the following sections I outline conceptualisations of fun by reviewing the literatures addressing: Sport for Social Change and physical education; sociology; considerations of ‘space’; different cultural understandings of ‘fun’; and roles of fun. I then present socio-cultural framings for learning, before defining embodiment, embodied learning, and my conceptualisation of online (-offline) learning experiences. Finally, I consider playfulness as part of an attitude of shaking off constraints, and metacommunication, as an attentiveness towards the non-verbal. I conclude with presenting how I shaped the research questions based on the literature.

### **3.2 The phenomenon of fun**

*‘This snowflake called “fun,” ...we have learned that from a universal point of view, fun is relative, situational, voluntary and natural’ (Bisson and Luckner, 1996: 6).*

Having situated the inquiry within the context of CAC, I now consider relevant definitions and conceptualisations of fun, within the parameters of my inquiry. The quote above from Bisson and Luckner (1996) is a good place to start, because it confronts us with the fact that ‘fun’ is a highly subjective and ambiguous concept. Just as a snowflake has many formations, so too does the experience of fun. My fun is not necessarily yours, and neither does it stay fixed, it depends on who, where and what is going on. This relational and subjective interpretation of fun is articulated in both sociology (Fincham, 2016) and physical education (Wellard, 2013).

The aims and intentions of CAC are broader than fun and learning within a Sport for Social Change/physical education context. The ambitions of the organisation are to challenge the notion of mainstream teacher-led learning and instructivist education more broadly, which means the literature I acknowledge must also reach more widely. Therefore, I acknowledge other attempts to classify fun within different learning environments, including within Higher Education, and specifically the work of Whitton and Langan (2019) in relation to students willingness to accept risk in 'safe spaces' for fun learning (see 3.2.2)<sup>18</sup>. Before unpacking this relevant literature, I turn to situating fun within sociology, Sport for Social Change, and physical education.

### ***3.2.1 Fun: through the lenses of sociology, Sport for Social Change, and physical education***

Fincham's findings on the sociology of fun (2016), researched for his undergraduate course at the University of Sussex, not only surfaces constructions of fun that are relevant to this inquiry, but is the first social science book to acknowledge and explore 'fun' within UK society, in essence taking fun within the academy, seriously. His research draws from 1950s literature on 'fun morality', and examines how fun operates in different social contexts, namely work, family, education, and leisure, examining fun's social functions in these UK contexts. Fincham's (2016) work is significant to this inquiry, because not only does his work present social constructions of fun, but he makes the point that fun, whilst it is multidimensional and multifunctional should be inherently viewed as intrinsic to theories and approaches related to identity and social wellbeing – a phenomenon that 'enhances life' (p.5). This lays the groundwork for my findings on fun and being-well in Chapter 6 and 7.

In particular, Fincham (2016) speaks of the 'nowness of fun...[and] temporality' (p.158) as part of the sensory subjective experiencing of fun. This is recognised as a social construct – coloured by class, gender and so on - and represented affectively. Therefore, the embodied and sensory manifestations are understood to be socially

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<sup>18</sup> Ferguson et al., (2020) and Okada and Sheehy (2020) have each surfaced different categorisations and conceptualisations of fun in relation to Higher Education. However, because these contexts are different to the context of CAC's work, I do not draw from them substantially i.e., the former relates to an academic workshop and the later to distance education.

embedded. Furthermore, 'there is no space for reflexivity about fun during fun, that's just not how we experience it or how it works (p. 158). For Fincham (2016) the 'significance often becomes apparent in retrospect' (p.156), and an understanding of fun and how it feels is as much a problem with the limitations of language as it is bound up with assumptions about 'how we experience the world in relation to moments' (p.181). This invites a consideration of the nature of fun in relation to both planned moments, reflexivity, as well as spontaneous arisings, in this inquiry.

Fun and play are both often associated (and used interchangeably) within the context of sport (Gould and Carson, 2004; Avner, Denison and Markula, 2019). There is a common belief presented in much of the youth sports and physical education literature that the essence of sport and play is enjoyment (Avner et al., 2019). Or rather that it *should be about fun*, understood blandly as enjoyment (e.g. Mastrich, 2002; Bigelow, Moroney and Hall, 2001). Sport psychology and coaching literature in particular focuses on the positive outcomes of fun (Thompson, 2003) as something necessary to improve wellbeing or performance. However, for Avner et al., (2019) it is also important to consider that 'fun' is not necessarily intrinsically positive and should therefore be problematised. I will pick up on this in 6.2.2.

There are four contextually useful viewpoints of fun in the Sport for Social Change and physical education literature. Firstly, Dismore and Bailey (2011), physical educationalists who conducted a 3 year study in the UK, including questionnaires, interviews and focus groups with both Primary aged students (aged 7-11), and Secondary students (aged 11–14). They found that the older cohort describe fun in terms of a 'learning challenge', rather than in relation to the enjoyment associated with playing games for their own sake, as younger children reported. Describing a challenge as part of fun learning is relevant to this inquiry, for some participants, however the emphasis in this inquiry is more on participants perceived level of appropriate risk taking within a 'safe space' (as 3.2.2. will speak to). What is of significance at this juncture, is that the wider context of a particular activity is deemed relevant to the experiencing of fun.

Hopple (2018), a physical education expert in the US whose research focuses on primary children (aged 9-11), notes from her findings from surveys and interviews, how subjective fun is, and that contextual factors have a bigger influence over levels



of enjoyment, compared to the type of activity. For example, that positive interactions with other people, in this instance teachers and/or parents contribute towards whether an activity is deemed as fun learning or not. Understanding the role of others and the social context for fun to arise is highly significant to this inquiry as 6.3.2 unpacks.

Koekoek et al., (2009), movement and educational researchers in the Netherlands, suggest that a lack of fun can have negative effects on participation and the meaningfulness of an experience. Their constructivist research including draw and write exercises, focuses on how children (aged 11-13) perceive how they learn tasks or skills in physical education classes. One student they interviewed said: 'When I do not have fun, then I do not feel like participating' (p. 321). This construction of fun, as always associated with sustaining engagement during learning activities, is made more complex in this inquiry, through the use of the analytical concepts of online embodiment, including *presencing*, which can necessitate moments of apparent but necessary disengagement as 3.4.3 and 6.3.1 speak to.

Finally, Quennerstedt's (2013) work, a Swedish sport scientist who takes a socio-cultural approach, and whom reviewed physical education lessons on YouTube in 27 countries, suggests that for fun to be considered as part of a meaningful experience, it does *not* necessarily have to be an unstructured or undisciplined approach, facilitated by the teacher/coach. This is relevant to this inquiry, because it suggests that some structure/curriculum is fun, and therefore how CAC manage this will be significant. Furthermore, that coaches have a significant role in facilitating fun spaces is attuned with this inquiry as 6.2.1 shows. Therefore, 'fun' in a sports context (with young people) is associated by researchers with challenge, context, participation (often used synonymously with engagement), and a structured experience highlighting the role of coaches. The literature foregrounds these elements as useful aspects to look for in relation to CACs work.

This review shows that there is no tightly formed definition of fun within the sociological, physical education, or Sport for Social Change literature. It is a problematic concept, and this inquiry aims to generate a model and definition of fun, coming from the context of CAC. Hence for the purpose of this inquiry, the multifaceted theorised statements about fun that are especially relevant for the play-

based learning context of CAC are those of Avner et al., (2019), who explore the role of coaches in facilitating fun learning in greater depth than those identified earlier.

As physical education researchers interested specifically in sports coaching, Avner et al., (2019) take a Foucauldian perspective to their research. Their methodology focused on interviewing ten varsity coaches at a Canadian university about their understandings of the role of fun in their everyday coaching practices. They postulate that a) a lack of conceptual clarity does not diminish the significance of fun to coaches; b) fun should not be assumed to have one meaning within a group as a whole; c) the production of coaching knowledge i.e. how fun serves the purposes of coaches is of central significance: 'all coaching knowledges and "truths" [should] be re-politicised and, thus, opened up for critical scrutiny and examination' (p. 58); and d), they present a framework of areas as to how fun can be conceptualised as a way of creating 'docile bodies'. These include through reinforcing discipline; giving athletes choice and ownership; and naturalising competitiveness in order to make a 'successful' athlete. Avner et al., (2019) call for further research, 'to involve working closely with coach educators... to devise and integrate less disciplinary training and coaching practices related to fun within coaching curricula and coaching practices' (p.59). These are the rhetorical aims of CAC, as well as one of the intentions of this inquiry.

Frameworks to measure fun have also been proposed. For example, Tisza and Markopoulos (2021a) from the Department of Industrial Design at Eindhoven University of Technology, have produced a rigorous and systematic way to define and measure fun in relation to learning sciences, educational technology and child-computer interaction with adolescents (Tisza et al., 2021a). The FunQ (Tisza et al., 2021a), a psychometric measurement tool, based on a positivist epistemology uses an extensive quantitative questionnaire to unpack the attitudes of Dutch adolescents, showing that fun 'has a positive and significant effect on learning' (Tisza, 2021b: 391). The FunQ assesses fun experiences through proposing six dimensions to measure 'fun' by. These are: autonomy, challenge, delight (the experience of positive emotions), immersion (as a loss of sense of time and space), social barriers, and stress: all themes relevant to this inquiry (Tisza et al., 2021a), and which this research particularly extends in relation to 'immersion', in Chapter 6.

The Fun Integration Theory (Visek et al., 2015, 2018), developed by US sport psychologists, is based on research using concept mapping. This begins with qualitative, structured group data collection, and then applies quantitative analytic tools to produce multiple visual maps (FUN maps) displaying a specific group's (in this case 9–16-year-olds, parents, and coaches) conceptualisations of a phenomenon (fun). Their findings show that out of 11 dimensions of fun, there are two that are particularly significant ('the youth sport ethos') to this inquiry. These are: 'Positive Team Dynamics' (social fundamental), which includes supporting teammates and getting help, and 'Positive Coaching' (external fundamental). This includes good listening, showing encouragement and joking. Both the FunQ and the Fun Integration Theory studies emphasise the importance of social dynamics in understanding the nature of fun learning experiences, yet neither do this from an ethnographic/phenomenological perspective. This inquiry will fill that gap.

In contrast, this inquiry focuses on the qualities of a learning experience as ways of becoming through fun-ing (as 6.4.3 will elaborate). The focus in this inquiry will be on presenting a model for fun that suggests ways to acknowledge, foster and celebrate 'types of fun' concerned with being (as attentiveness) and becoming. And dare I say, for funs own sake, to go beyond causality with particular constructed learning skills.

### **3.2.2 Safe spaces of fun: processes of circulation**

An embodied expression of fun in relation to learning, necessitates a consideration of *where* this can take 'place'. Fun is therefore related to time and transition, but also spaces. In CAC documents and discourse, the notion of 'a safe space' is highly prevalent. I take my construct of space from the more than representational workings of Thrift (2008) who considers 'space' as

an emphasis on the unremitting materiality of a world where there are no pre-existing objects. Rather, all kinds of hybrids are being continually recast by processes of circulation within and between particular spaces. The world is made up of all kinds of things brought into relation with one another by this universe of spaces through a continuous and largely involuntary process of encounter (p.139).

In this relational sense, like Massey's definition of places as 'a constellation of processes rather than a thing' (Massey, 2005: 141), places are understood as highly open (not bounded), material, transitional, and power infused: they are not simply

something we pass through, but socially, politically, and materially constructed, deconstructed, and reconstructed (Anderson, 2008) and therefore are not neutral social vacuums. Spaces are culturally complex ‘flows of sociality’ (Massey, 1994), whereby ‘space is not static, nor time spaceless... spatiality and temporality are different from each other, but neither can be conceptualised as the absence of the other’ (p.79). They interact with each other. This is relevant to thinking and sensing how fun is constructed and experienced in particular ‘space/times’ (Massey, 1994), because the focus on the conceptualisation of space-time<sup>19</sup> as movement, materiality and power dynamics situates fun (as experienced online, and offline) as culturally complex and highly dynamic. But it also opens up thinking about space and time as non-linear, and as a key part of a sensory experience, in which *felt time* can be experienced in a different way to the passing of clock time, see 6.4.3.

Within this dynamic context at CAC, the notion of ‘safe space’ arises. It is a phrase often used in International Development and/or social justice learning environments (Arao and Clemens, 2013). Holley and Steiner (2005), for example describe safe space as an ‘environment in which students are willing and able to participate and honestly struggle with challenging issues’ (p. 49). It is often believed that to create such spaces, ‘participants need some basic discussion guidelines in order to develop trust and safety’ (Hardiman, Jackson, and Griffin, 2007: 54). The notion ‘safe space’ can seem rather ambiguous, and warrants further inquiry, because understandings of safety, and for whom, in a learning environment are likely to be highly subjective. Arao and Clemens (2013) point out that:

the word safe is defined in the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary as “free from harm or risk . . . affording safety or security from danger, risk, or difficulty . . . unlikely to produce controversy or contradiction” (Safe, 2010). We argue that authentic learning about social justice often requires the very qualities of risk, difficulty, and controversy that are defined as incompatible with safety (p.139).

These education and social justice advocates, influenced by Boostrom’s (1998) critique of the idea of safe space, and his assertion that *bravery* is needed because ‘learning necessarily involves not merely risk, but the pain of giving up a former

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<sup>19</sup> I prefer a hyphen here, to stress considering how they interact.

condition in favour of a new way of seeing things' (p. 399). Arao and Clemens (2013) refer to 'brave spaces' instead, in order 'to emphasise the need for courage rather than the illusion of safety' (p.141) and encourage their students to reflect on the term and how they might construct it in the process. Thus, seeking to avert the conflation of safety with comfort, and this resonates with CAC's Chance to Choice Theory, especially the stages concerned with contradiction, challenge, and choice (introduced in 2.2.2).

However, in relation to fun and games in higher education in the UK, Whitton and Langan (2019) show that for students, an acceptance of risk and failure is already understood as part of a 'safe learning space'. They conclude that

the creation of safe learning spaces was a factor highlighted by many students. This encompassed three areas in particular: feeling comfortable with others; an acceptance of risk and failure; and a sense of playfulness and humour with both peers and academics (p.1007).

This demonstrates that assumptions about safe spaces can be made and understood in different ways. Therefore, in relation to understanding fun and learning, concepts of safety are likely to be significant, especially with regard to group dynamics and a sense of belonging/otherwise. The literature also points to a consideration of whether the phenomenon is conflated with comfort alone, or not (see 6.2).

### ***3.2.3 A glimpse into different cultures***

This inquiry problematises researching one neatly bounded cultural group, largely because of the online nature of this study, but also because CAC's work occurs in different countries and locales. However, the main organisational influencers and voices come from British and American cultures, and from within these, their own cultural micro constructions.

Much of the literature presented in this chapter takes a Global North perspective. This is not for want of looking for alternative definitions. However, the literature search (due to my limitations) has been in English mainly within the disciplines of social anthropology, Sport for Social Change and (physical) education. There is a lack of academic literature in this review on fun from beyond Global North academic publications. This is not to say it does not exist, but rather to point out that due to my

situatedness as a Western researcher, I am acknowledging the structural and unequal opportunities that there are historically, and that continue to exist.

A notable recent exception brings a further depth/alterity to researching and sensing fun. Anjaria and Anjaria (2020), ethnographers of South Asia, generate new ways to describe and theorise *mazaa*, a Hindi-Urdu word that can mean fun, pleasure, and play. Methodologically, they suggest that 'thinking about, writing about and, indeed, dwelling in *mazaa* might allow scholars to develop a different relationship with the texts and people we write about' (p.233). It is a call I share, to try to ward off the conditioning and mainstream (positivist) assumptions to reify and focus only on reducing and limiting what an (embodied) researcher is and does. For Anjaria and Anjaria (2020)

description keeps us open to the possibilities of meaning in unexpected places; it holds off the scholar's desire to sum up, reduce and synthesise - academic practices which unintentionally foreclose the irreducibility of experience, subsuming it instead to a theoretical frame likely established in advance... spending time describing the sensory and *mazaa* inducing aspects of cultural forms, conveying the complex tastes of street food, the sexual frisson of the nightclub, the minute bodily movements of a dance step (p.239).

It is ultimately about allowing space and attentiveness towards an 'experience and expression of pleasure [that] has the potential to expand the space of the political beyond those who explicitly think of themselves as activists or critics' (p.239). This means that the traditional researcher positionality of being somehow distant and dispassionate towards what attracts/lures us into an event should be pushed aside.

Furthermore, Anjaria and Anjaria (2020) note that that being critical means more than revealing at a distance; it means the *dwelling* (describing and presenting sensory experiences on their own terms) within the specificities of their space-times. Otherwise, the distanced type of witnessing is reinforcing a researcher elitism and replicating the power dynamic we so often hope to challenge. Hence, their theoretical contribution is that studying fun is intrinsically social and political, even if it doesn't appear to be. There will always be a 'latent' element that the inquirer and reader may not at first have comprehended:

We need a richer vocabulary than we currently have for writing about the worlds of pleasure around us. Thinking with *mazaa* helps us write in new ways about how enjoyment is expressed, felt, imagined, spoken about, and experimented with. *Mazaa* also allows us to highlight new worlds, social configurations and political possibilities that are emergent, whose outcomes we cannot yet know... *mazaa* can challenge the status quo, but at other times, its implications remain latent, unknown, or indeterminate (Anjaria et al., 2020: 234).

This call for a richer vocabulary is highly pertinent to this inquiry. Because not only is the lived experience of the sensory, the sensual, the sheer delight and struggle of human experience relevant to understandings of fun, but it also speaks to fun learning as deeply intertwined with the (critical) possibility 'of an elsewhere' (Massey, 2005), or an 'alterity of the present' (Pink, Akama and Fergusson, 2017). Anjaria et al.'s (2020) work aligning *mazaa* as an engagement with 'the unfamiliar' of human experience is highly resonant with this inquiry, as Chapters 5 and 6 will show.

### **3.2.4 Purposes (roles) of fun**

Having considered how others have engaged with fun in relation to sport, physical education, sociology, social-safe spaces, and non-Western perspectives, it is also relevant to consider the pedagogical benefits of fun in relation to learning. Little has been written in relation to the disadvantages, however I will pick up on this in 6.2.2. In relation to adventure education, Bisson and Luckner (1996), suggest that there are four main beneficial roles/purposes of fun in relation to learning. These are: intrinsic motivation; suspension of social reality; stress reduction; and relaxed alertness. Intrinsic motivation encourages learners to participate in activities of which they may have little or no experience and promotes the desire to continue or repeat the participation. Indeed, a

suspension of social reality removes social barriers, opening learners to new experiences and allowing them to explore different ways of experiencing the world. Stress reduction removes barriers to learning; the fears and perceived threats that can block progress. Relaxed alertness, a state that combines low threat with high challenge (Ferguson et al., 2020: 2).

This enables learners to 'feel safe to take risks, be creative, make mistakes, and most importantly, keep trying' (Bisson and Luckner, 1996: 11). These roles of fun are relevant to the context of this research, because a central way of understanding a

relationship (connection) between fun and learning is to consider how it may influence a learning process; this, as 5.3 will show, is key to my second research question.

### **3.3 Learning: a socio-cultural-material way?**

In this section I define learning and specifically socio-cultural-material ways of learning. I provide an overview of the roots of socio-cultural (and material) theory, focusing on the 'general genetic law of cultural development' (Vygotsky, 1934/1978) and more modern conceptualisations of 'experiential learning'. Finally, I spotlight current educational research that calls for a move away from a narrow focus on 'outcome' or 'skills based' learning values alone.

#### **3.3.1 Defining learning**

Learning can be understood in at least six different ways according to the work of Säljö (1979), an educational psychologist whose research is grounded in a socio-cultural perspective on human learning and development. Säljö identified five different conceptualisations of learning among Swedish students. Van Rossum and Taylor (1987) later built on this work and added the sixth category. The six conceptualisations of learning are:

- 1) Learning as the increase of knowledge
- 2) Learning as memorising
- 3) Learning as the acquisition of facts, procedures, etc., which can be retained and/or utilised in practice
- 4) Learning as the abstraction of meaning
- 5) Learning as an interpretive process aimed at the understanding of reality
- 6) Learning as a conscious process, fuelled by personal interests, and directed at obtaining harmony and happiness or changing society.

The first three are described as 'reproductive' conceptions of learning, and the remaining as 'reconstructive' conceptions of learning by Van Rossum and Taylor (1987). I will use this framework to situate and consider CAC conceptualisations of learning, and how embodiment relates to it.

Van Rossum and Taylor (1987) perceive a distinction between 'reproductive' conceptions and 'reconstructive' conceptions. Indeed, Sfard (1998) takes a similar



distinction further, stating that neither the 'acquisition metaphor', which is more aligned with teacher-centred instructivist approaches, nor the 'participation metaphor' of learning that is more aligned to humanist approaches, is sufficient alone. An overemphasis on either can lead to theoretical distortions and to practices that may exclude one learner over another. Sfard (1998) advocates for a merger of 'seemingly conflicting metaphors' (Sfard, 1998: 9) of learning. How these two learning metaphors and the Van Rossum and Taylor (1987) framework present themselves in the work of CAC will be discussed in Chapter 6.

However, the framework does not capture some of the 'messier' aspects of learning, the aspects that I like to think of as 'getting under the skin' of. There is a risk and an unpredictability to learning (how to learn) that Boostrom (1998) suggests is worthy of attention. Indeed, whilst learning processes often have elements of risk, associated with them, they can also catalyse a deep transformation of beliefs and behaviours, and this can mean a rupture/letting go of an old sense of self (Boostrom, 1998). This theoretical stance has roots in Piagetian assimilation versus accommodation theory; whereby the former is adding to existing information structures (schemas), and the latter, is altering one's existing structures of ideas and view of the world (Piaget, 1957). Both theorists assert that learning is not always pleasurable and felt experiences of discomfort (or in Piaget's words 'disequilibrium'), can be attributed to moments within learning. Uncomfortable experiences can occur at points throughout any of the six conceptualisations. The point here is to acknowledge that they may serve a purpose beyond simply 'being uncomfortable'; they may indicate opportunities for a shift, a movement (physically, cognitively and/or relationally) towards a new/altered perspective by a learner.

### ***3.3.2 Socio-cultural-material foundations: mediational and experiential***

This inquiry contributes towards socio-cultural-material perspectives on learning that assume that processes of thinking, sensing, and learning are not contained within individual minds, but rather are distributed and negotiated across persons, tools (artefacts), and learning environments. This perspective, historically inspired by the work of Lev Vygotsky (Vygotsky, 1934/1978; Minick, 1987; Marginson and Dang, 2017) continues to inspire many others (e.g., Passarelli and Kolb, 2011; Kucirkova,

Sheehy and Messer, 2015; Holzman, 2019), and can be described as ‘mediational’ approaches to learning, because the common focus of these approaches is on the tools/artefacts (e.g., language, material tools, other persons) used in the process of learning (Leander et al., 2010). Such a perspective is highly relevant to the approach of CAC, because mediating artefacts (identified in 3.2.2), such as the use of Zoom ‘breakout rooms’ and physical movement-based ice breaker games, were all evident during the online training sessions I participated in, which will be discussed in Chapter 6.

Vygotsky’s (1934/1963) ‘general genetic law of cultural development’ focuses on a learner’s relationality (to other person’s and tools) within a contextually specific environment. In particular he explains the distinction between interpersonal and intrapersonal aspects of learning. As Passarelli and Kolb (2011) suggest, the theory puts forward that

learning occurs first between people in an environment of social exchange and then within an individual as he or she makes sense of the interaction. The first exchange is laden with sociocultural artefacts whose meanings are the products of our human history. These artefacts, such as language and number systems, provide tools for learning and are simultaneously reproduced through the social process (p.21).

This is an *interrelational* process between people (and tools/artefacts). The other, secondary (later) level of Vygotsky’s theory is that the individual then has agency in making sense of perceptions about the environment, as ‘intrapsychic functions’ (Vygotsky, 1934/1963: 31). Therefore, learning is social (in terms of human interaction), whereby thought and language originate as relations between human individuals, and then within an individual (as *intra* psychological). This is situated, and takes place in a specific sociocultural context that interacts with ‘cognitive artefacts’ (Norman, 1993), mental tools of representation. Together, these provide a useful starting point from which to build my analytical framework to also include online embodiment (presence, movement, and mediating artefacts).

In general, sociocultural approaches to learning are also experiential approaches to learning, because social learning relationships occur in the ‘zone of proximal development’ (Vygotsky, 1934/1978). The ‘zone of proximal development’

emphasises the added value that adult/peers bring to a learning experience and is defined by Vygotsky (1934/1978) as the

distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers (p. 86).

The work of Passarelli and Kolb (2011) builds on from Vygotsky's findings and they define Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) as a way of developing social learning relationships as correlations between one or more individuals, so that a

connection is constituted by an interaction or series of interactions that build toward a deeper relationship [evolving] as learning interactions increase in quality and frequency. Each interaction carries with it a sentiment, or emotional charge, that sets the tone for learning (Passarelli and Kolb, 2011: 21).

In relation to CAC, this view of a sentiment/tone, a charge for fun learning will be highly applicable (see 6.2.1 and 6.3.3), and is relevant to the next section, which discusses purposes of learning beyond outcomes, alone.

### **3.3.3 Going beyond 'outcomes' and 'life skills acquisition'**

This inquiry is concerned with the relationships between fun and learning, and therefore, a consideration of what the *purposes* of learning itself, may be, is relevant. In this regard, Olssen (2006), a political theorist who specialises in education policy, questions neoliberal discourses of 'lifelong learning' (and most forms of learning that emphasise continual adaptive 'outcomes') as reductionist conceptualisations of learning, which frame learning as

information...to be continuously relearned, readjusted and restructured to meet the needs of the consumer in the service information industry. Learning in this sense is an ongoing permanent addition of competencies [qualifications] and skills adapted continuously to real external needs (p.222).

He warns that people who talk of learning in this way are in danger of focusing on deficit/lack, and if positioned through this lens, then an individual learner becomes somebody who continually requires extra competencies and skills. Ultimately, the purpose of learning is narrowed and instrumentalised to 'become merely a tool in the fetishisation of certificates' (p.351). This call serves as a reminder, that fun learning

may offer an alternative, broader perspective in relation to how fun and learning intersect with 'learning outcomes'. Indeed, this literature helped shape my second research question, which is concerned with the relations and purposes of fun learning in specific online activities.

A narrowing and instrumentalisation of the intentions/roles of learning is also evident within non-formal learning projects in International Development, including within sport and educational initiatives through the concept of 'life skills' (Dupuy et al., 2018). Ronkainen et al. (2021), sport psychologists, have examined learning in sport, especially attributes that are broader than sports skills. They argue that the 'life skills discourse has led to a premature narrowing of research focus to "things" that are deemed useful, positive, teachable, concrete and objectifiable' (Ronkainen et al., 2021: 2), at the expense of 'deeper types of learning, with the potential to shift or even transform athletes' ways of being in the world' (Ronkainen et al., 2020: 2). This aligns with Piaget's (1957) accommodation theory, whereby a learning individual is shifting, transforming, and altering their view of the world, as well as subsequent behaviours. This is a central aspect of the model I present in 6.4.3.

Whilst Ronkainen et al.'s (2021) research is focused on athletes, it remains relevant to this study because CAC intentionally aims to challenge and transform so-called traditional athlete/sports-based learning processes that focus on linear processes, competition, and narrow outcomes. This is grounded in a call by many educationalists (Biesta, 2008; Passarelli and Kolb, 2012; Brown et al., 2020), who advocate that learning and education should align more closely with the development of the 'whole person' (Yorks et al., 2006), including with social and civic responsibilities, rather than focusing simply on the skills and knowledge needed to adapt to a continually changing job market. In addition, this inquiry's ambition to be of use to both academics and practitioners, necessitates the development of tools that can be applied alongside this lens that seeks more than skills acquisition from learning processes.

In this regard, both guiding principles and a model will be presented in 6.4, going beyond narrow skill-focused 'outcomes' as the only/main purposes of learning, and instead encouraging alternatives. This is significant for this inquiry, because not only is this thesis concerned with exploring what type of learning is occurring, but it calls

for conceptualising a more than instrumental model of learning, with an emphasis on 'discontinuity, relational self and becoming' (Ronkainen et al., 2021: 1). Furthermore, their research also challenges assumptions that sport is inherently good. This has implications for researching CAC, and how meanings of fun learning in the context of physical movement may be 'opened out' or ignored and assumed as intrinsically beneficial. Any question of 'outcomes', (or functions), such as the relationship between fun and learning must be positioned very carefully, so as not to fall into the trap of instrumentalising competencies alone, but rather to think through 'the subjectification function'...a 'capacity to be a relational self' (Ronkainen et al., 2021: 10), an explicit self-development that is an 'openness to the otherness of others'. Understanding roles of fun learning through a lens of experiential and sensory values, rather than skills acquisition alone, will be central to this inquiry.

### **3.4 Rethinking (and sensing) embodiment and movement**

*'We do not have bodies; we are bodies... the lived body is the felt body where we make connections to the multiple sensations around and within us...Western culture has forgotten we have hips...we came from the belly and hips' (Snowber, 2012: 55). Our meaning making, engagement and knowing with the world is not simply 'from the neck up' (ibid).*

#### **3.4.1 Defining embodiment**

Having discussed the phenomenon of fun, socio-cultural-material learning, and the need to go beyond outcomes, I now turn to understanding embodiment, embodied learning and how I conceptualise online embodied experiences. As the quote above implores, embodied inquiry frames that 'knowledge is created from, by, within our bodies and minds' (Leigh and Brown, 2021: 3). Neither is privileged, rather they are seen as inseparable. The assumptions are that by accessing the sensorium of 'data information and stories that bodies, store, hold and tell, it is possible to reach deeper, emotional, and authentic truths about lived experiences than more conventional means' (p.2). This means that human communication is understood as *more than* verbal, and specifically: human understanding is embodied; language alone is insufficient and inexact; and communication and human understanding are metaphorical (Leigh and Brown, 2021). Indeed, Lawrence (2012) advocates that

the most primal way of accessing knowledge is through the body, as our earliest forms of knowing are preverbal...knowledge is present in the body before it reaches our conscious awareness...[there is] hidden knowledge' (Lawrence, 2012: 7).

This means that making meaning (knowledge) of the world around cannot simply 'just be told or read about; it must be experienced' (Snowber, 2012: 55).

Embodiment therefore is concerned with the ways in which bodily sensations, thoughts and feelings relate both within an individual, but also with others and the world around. Ingold (2000), a social anthropologist who focuses on understanding human-environment relations asks us to consider

the human being not as a composite entity made up of separable but complementary parts, such as body, mind, and culture, but rather as a singular locus of creative growth within a continually unfolding field of relationships (Ingold, 2000: 4-5).

In this way being human (body-mind), is part of being *with* and *of* our environments. Part of Ingold's (2000) conceptualisation of embodiment is that of the 'individual and the undivided', which like all embodied inquirers, rejects Cartesian dualism (Leigh and Brown, 2021). Descartes' philosophy, constructed in the Western Enlightenment period, separates the mind from the rest of the body, assuming that the brain and cognition are superior to other ways of knowing. This belief is still prevalent in much social science thinking and educational practice today (Leigh and Brown, 2021).

In contrast, embodied inquiry seeks to recognise the many felt qualities and inter and intra actions within a body, amongst a group of bodies, and with a specific context/environment. It is a relational epistemology that acknowledges multi-sensory capabilities. The body encounters its surroundings and the material elements (living/non-living) in any given specific space-times, and therefore is always contextually 'emplaced' (Pink, 2011: 347). Emplacement acknowledges that the performing body-mind is part of a geography of other body-minds and artefacts, in motion, enabling us to see each in relation and representation to the other. Shapiro (1999) reminds us that the

body is not to be understood as an abstract object, it is not other. It is real. It is by definition an I, with that which is more than the mind and more than the physical body. It is not a dualistic split or even multiple splits. It is the presence of all that we know, housed in stories of meaning (p. 25).

For phenomenological theorists such as Merleau-Ponty, the blind person's stick ceases to be an external object for them to use, and instead becomes an 'area of sensitivity' (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/2012), an extension of their attentiveness of

perception to the materials/spaces beyond a singular corporeal body. Embodied experience therefore extends not only beyond the mind, the heart, the gut, and the physical skin of a body, but ultimately it challenges the perception of reality, as something that goes beyond a corporeal body/singular self.

As physical beings who experience the world with and through (extending out from) our 'whole person' bodies/beings (Ingold, 2000; Yorks et al., 2006; Meyer, 2012; Pang, 2021) this means that

in a sense, all reality is virtual. It is constructed through our whole body sensorium, as an integrated process of perception, cognition and emotion, so that reality is not 'out there' it is what we take to be 'out there' (Ijsselsteijn and Riva, 2003: 245).

What we take to be 'out there', is a choice (often an expression of freedom), of where and how we intentionally focus (tune in) our subjective sensorial capabilities (Bohr, 1922/1976; Forrester, 2014). This means trying to disband preconceived assumptions about what and how our bodies play-work, and moving away from a perspective whereby 'life appears to be lived upon the outer surface of the world rather than from an experiential centre within it' (Ingold, 2000: 215). The distinction between the observer and the observed becomes somewhat arbitrary, so that 'the world of information processing – is not limited by the skin' (Bateson, 1972: 429). This disbanding of the often-arbitrary distinction between observer and observed, invites less conventional ways of bodily attentiveness, such as 'feelings' into the inquiry. As Ingold (2000) reminds us,

whether I speak, swear, shout, cry or sing, I do so with feeling, but feeling – as the tactile metaphor implies – is a mode of active and responsive engagement in and of the world, it is not a passive, interior reaction... to external disturbance (p4).

In this way, being 'in touch' with the world has a whole other generative layer of integrated sensory information that is not confined to the sense of physical touch alone. This hyper awareness/attentiveness encouraged by Ingold (2000) is very relevant to this inquiry, which seeks ways of knowing with and through the body, including both internal feelings and outward expressions, as the development of my methods in the next chapter illustrate.

Learning therefore must include an experiential and sensory quality, alongside cognitive development. There is a growing, and varied, cluster of work focused on

'embodied cognition' (Lakoff, 2012; Shapiro and Stolz, 2019), and most proponents emphasise the idea that the body/the body's interactions with the environment contribute to cognition (mental processes), so that essentially the brain is not viewed as *the* control centre of thought and perception, rather the body working as a whole - with gut, heart, physiological receptors and so on is. Embodied cognition research often draws from the biological, psychological, and/or cultural contexts of linguistics/artificial intelligence. As an emerging field of study, there are many ways to interpret it.

My approach to embodied cognition particularly draws from educationalists, such as Hrach (2021). Hrach (2021) focuses on the interrelatedness of body and brain, and of body and environment in relation to learning environments. Hrach (2021) states that, according to the neuroscience of Damasio (1996), who explores the physiology of our somatic systems, our bodies are in a constant state of sensory inquiry, and that our physical and emotional states directly influence perception and cognition. In fact, we cannot separate feelings/sensations from 'rational thought', because all thinking comes from an affective state, reflecting 'your body's ecosystem' (Hrach, 2021: 15). She goes on to show that if an environment confirms to expectations, the brain is more likely to go into autopilot (Hrach, 2021), and therefore she suggests that sitting is less productive than physically moving in relation to learning. Retention and pleasure 'increase when we encounter something novel' (p. 35). This finding, that movement and novelty increase learning retention and pleasurable experience is highly relevant to the Purposeful Play (introduced in 2.2.2) and games-based learning of CAC. My approach to embodied cognition therefore focuses on educational theorists concerned with movement, and especially Hrach's (2021) work, which resonates with the socio-cultural-material underpinnings of this inquiry.

### **3.4.2 Embodied learning: being in felt encounter with self and others**

*'A shift in the embodied experience as adults co-create the space in which it is safe to participate with their whole selves and become aware of and engage their whole bodies as well as their emotions, intuition, humour, environment, and each other' (Meyer, 2012: 29).*

Having grounded this inquiry amongst broader conceptualisations of embodiment, I now turn to the type of learning that I witnessed, specifically during the online learning activities I participated in and that will be described in Chapter 4. In



reviewing learning theory literature (Merriam, 2001; Illeris, 2018) 'embodied (transformative) learning' seemed the most relevant for four main reasons:

- 1) The body is perceived as the foundational, mediational starting place from where learning happens (Lawrence, 2012). This means that physical sensations, movements, and somatic ways of knowing are prioritised, and this was evident during the online training sessions; conveyed by one coach who stated, 'we don't just want to be sitting still and talking the whole time'.
- 2) The focus on emotional and affective ways of learning, of creating a 'safe space' to acknowledge felt experience with others was equally prioritised and observed.
- 3) Much of the emerging field of embodied learning literature aligns with other relevant concepts such as self-directed/self-authored, transformative and experiential learning (Lawrence, 2012). I witnessed these, as Chapter 6 will discuss.
- 4) Ultimately my second research question considers 'how and why particular learning activities are experienced as fun for staff and coaches' and having defined lived experience as embodied experience in 3.4.1, it makes logical sense to consider embodied learning.

There are adult learning theorists, such as Yorks et al., (2006) and Meyer (2012), who grapple at a more micro level with explicating the ways in which physical sensations, movement and bodily awareness provide a 'hidden layer' of somatic knowing (of body-mind perception). In particular the work of Yorks et al., (2006) considering a 'whole person' approach to learning is useful when exploring the relationship between fun, learning, and embodied knowing. This is because Yorks (2002) frames 'whole person learning' as recognition that (phenomenological) 'experience' is a verb i.e., a particular instance or a particular process and a state of being 'in felt encounter' (p.184), and *not* a noun; something to be catalogued and objectified. Yorks et al., (2002) develops Heron's (1992) framing of feeling as 'the capacity of the psyche to participate in wider unities of being...This is the domain of empathy, indwelling, participation, presence, resonance, and such like' (p. 16). In this way 'whole person learning' includes the felt encounter and foregrounds affect (emotive impact), without throwing out cognitive aspects of learning. Alongside these individual, intrapersonal learning processes, exist interpersonal processes,

conceived of as 'learning-within relationship' which is engagement with the whole-person knowing of others; an

empathic knowing...characterised by the paradox of difference whereby pathways through experiential/expressive forms such as dance, storytelling bridge differences by affording glimpses into the other's world of felt experience, thus creating pathways for empathic connection (p.187).

This felt encounter is also described by embodied educationalist, dancer and poet, Snowber (2012), when she refers to dance: '[Physical] movement has the capacity to touch us physically and emotionally at our roots, provoking the deepest emotions, from love to fear to joy to abandon' (Snowber, 2012: 56)<sup>20</sup>. Other psychological theorists, such as Lafrance (1983), point to the social nature of humour and laughter, and note that these experiences of felt encounter are highly variable, and do not necessarily always convey pleasurable states of being. In the context of CAC's work, these reflections provoke consideration on how *inter* and *intra* embodied expressions of fun and learning may support or hinder an individual's social learning capabilities and preferences within a group (see 3.6 for the final research questions).

Embodied learning thus moves away from the dualism created by some constructivist models, of a neatly divided and static subject-object relationality within learning (Buber, 1923/1970). Biesta (2020) de-centres the 'self' in education and learning, by using the term 'subjectification' (Biesta, 2020). Introduced in 3.3 through Ronkainen et al.'s, (2021) sports focused research, Biesta also explores this concept. Subjectification places the learner into a dynamic co-creating frame of reference, rather than one where individuals are subjects (or objects) in isolation: it aligns with an embodied epistemology, because subjectification is concerned with 'how I exist as the subject of my own life, not as the object of what other people want from me' (p.93). Subjectification is concerned with a continual negotiation between the world, particular contexts with others, and the self: a longing to try to live one's life in the world, without perceiving the individual self in the centre of it. By

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<sup>20</sup> Heron (1998) defines emotion as 'the intense, localised affect that arises from the fulfilment or the frustration of individual needs and interests' (p. 16). I too ascribe to this definition.

considering the socio-cultural-material encounters in the world Biesta (2020) explores the nature of an encounter as often:

an interruption of the flow of intentions and initiatives, which means that education for subjectification has an *interruptive quality* [italics added]. Meeting the real and meeting one's desires in relation to what is real, is not a "quick fix" but actually requires time. That is why education as subjectification needs to work with the principle of "suspension" — of slowing down, of giving time...[for students to] meet themselves in relation to the world, and "work through" (p.98).

This aligns with the notion of *felt time* I introduced in 3.2.2 and will be further elaborated in 6.4.3. But also, Ingold's concept of the 'individual and the undivided' (Ingold, 2000), presented in 3.4.1. The sense of a suspension/pause as part of socio-cultural-material relationality is likely to be at the beating heart of how fun and learning coexist. The socio-cultural-material and embodied learning approaches outlined, which together acknowledge a situated body-mind way of knowing, will be explored further in the discussion chapter. They provide a useful framework from which to explore what fun and learning processes enable/do in CAC space-times: a context in motion that I will show is a collision of ideas, bodies, objects, and spaces.

### **3.4.3 Online embodied experiences: presence, movement, and mediating artefacts**

Having established that lived experiences are embodied and relational, there is a particular framing of *online* embodied experiences that I will now elaborate. Stanley (2001) asserts that

to understand people, one needs to understand them when they are in dialogue with one another. Not to test them in isolation, but to study their interrelatedness as they perform social life (p.77).

In this regard, a social space is constructed and performed as a 'real space': the space that is on the other side of the screen therefore 'constitutes the embodied practice of social talk' (p.81). Or as Farman (2015) suggests, 'the bodies in a space produce that space' (p.114). This inquiry takes this concept of performed bodily spaces further to also consider non-verbal/non-representational bodily articulations as well (see Bateson's theory of meta-communication in 3.5.1).

An appropriate and contextual place to start, when considering the performance of bodily spaces online, is with conceptualising synchronous videoconferencing (such as through Zoom). I understand this as a mediated type of social space and life. It is not artificial, rather it is an increasingly important part of social praxis, which encounters embodiment through technology. But this does not diminish the authenticity of lived experiences with and through 'whole person' bodies; rather it transmutes them and can make embodied experiences more complex. An individual has several different ways of experiencing their own body, in different types of social/personal spaces, often simultaneously. In some ways, as the discussion chapter will present, technology can enhance understandings of ways of knowing through the body (embodiment), if carefully crafted.

This research focuses on the online social inter-actions of the mediated experience, specifically how it enables the coaches/staff or constrains them with their embodied experiences of fun. My understanding of online embodiment specifically draws from literature that focuses on aspects of 'presence' (Coonfield and Rose, 2012), 'movement' (Ucok-Sayrak and Brazelton, 2021) and 'mediating artefacts' (Engeström, 1987). I will now outline each of these and explain their relevance.

The theoretical concept of 'presence' is relevant because it encourages a reflection upon how the performative and embodied experience of fun may be negotiated through online video conferencing media. I'll discuss the functionality and social uses of Zoom, focusing on the use of 'break out' rooms (Durkin, 2022) in Chapter 4, as these were widely used during the online training sessions that I participated in. For now, I focus on defining 'presence', as part of an online embodied learning experience. In educational technology literature, the concept of 'presence' is fairly common. I therefore became aware of it when considering how to frame embodiment online, through colleagues, but also on social media, as many peers were discussing the nature of shifting work and social life online, and as face-to-face interactions became heavily restricted during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Lombard and Ditton (1997) suggest that virtual reality, including video conferencing software, provides 'an illusion that a mediated experience is not mediated, a perception defined here as presence' (p.1). This assumes that in the absence of technology, everyone has a similar and constant homogenous experience

throughout their lives (Heeter, 2003), which is simply untrue. For the purposes of this inquiry, Lombard and Ditton (1997) also propose six ways of conceiving of presence, and their concept of 'social richness', similarly conceived of as 'social presence' by Garrison, Anderson and Archer (2009), whereby the medium appears sociable, warm, sensitive, personal or immediate is most relevant to this research. Building on from this, I will define 'presence' more specifically as the embodied sensation of a hyper being/consciousness of the present now, or 'being-here-now' (Coonfield and Rose, 2012); an *attentiveness to the spontaneous, unexpected* aspects of experience and a 'movement toward becoming' (Coonfield and Rose, 2012: 195). This situates 'presence' as an alignment of self, text, image, and audience. It is therefore understood as a sensitivity, a sensory attunement to being alive, in the specificity of any given moment, whereby a person's relational body-heart-mind is highly alert to 'the spatial arrangement of social and material entities through which certain ways of participating are made available' (Gumbrecht, 2004: 138).

Hence the 'being-here-now' (Coonfield and Rose, 2012) is continually negotiated with the 'being there now'. So that, according to communication theorists Ucok-Sayrak and Brazelton (2021), presence becomes a movement, a performance of self, that is 'nomadic' (Landri, 2013). Landri (2013), an educational theorist, proposes that performing an online presence is in fact a 'recognition of being 'here and there' (p.246), which necessitates different performances of presence that can challenge patterns of authority in learning environments. This is highly relevant for this inquiry, which is concerned with understanding experiences of fun, because it opens up the possibility of considering that the 'whole person' encounters both personal, and social online mediating space(s). As well as material elements in *both* their own physical space, and the online mediating space(s). This is a crucial aspect of the Bracketing model in 6.4.3 and 6.4.4.

Bringing in the notion of *presencing* as a movement, a performance of self, 'which includes non-judgmental noticing of the ways in which one interacts with, incorporates, and becomes part of, her environment' (Ucok-Sayrak and Brazelton, 2021: 7) opens the way to considering presence as part of a spectrum that includes particular types of 'absence'. Ucok-Sayrak and Brazelton (2021) state in their exploration of performative writing in online spaces, that this is one way to render absence present. Proposing that moments of apparent dis-engagement and

reflection in online learning spaces may actually be meaningful, provides a useful caution against over simplifying *presencing* as a static notion, which in relation to online videoconferencing is highly significant. As Ellingson (2017) encourages,

one goal of doing embodiment, then, is to attempt to capture (or at least acknowledge) flux as it happens, in moments of transition and change (Leander, Phillips and Taylor, 2010). Try to show process not just outcomes, change happening, not just changed accomplished (p.76).

One way of acknowledging process in online learning environments is to consider material, mediating, and digital artefacts. Material artefacts are understood as tools or objects 'made due to human manipulation' (Woodward, 2020). Mediating artefacts (Engeström, 1987; Macpherson et al., 2006) align with Merleau-Ponty's blind person's stick metaphor, and can be understood broadly as 'tools, instruments and rules [procedures, practices that] are used as mediating devices between subject-object activities in constructing those representations' (Macpherson et al., 2006: 8) of social interaction. Consequently, mediating artefacts are central to both the representation of past learning and the construction of new meanings' (Engeström, 1987) as part of socio-cultural spaces. Mediating artefacts, as well as being made from the material or physical world (such as a book), can also be digital artefacts (Akemu and Abdelnour, 2020) including electronic learning tools such as PowerPoint presentations, programs, video/audio files and images.

For the purposes of this inquiry, I focus on the relationality of mediating roles (Conole, 2009). This means I consider the social functions and implications, and the ordering/ways in which digital artefacts interact (Faulkner and Runde, 2009). But I consider the relationality of both online mediated artefacts *and* those offline. Specifically, I focus upon how physical and pixelated bodies interact and appear to change and subvert online i.e., via ice breaker games such as charades. As well as how online pixelated bodies are acutely mediated and moved/frozen i.e., via break out rooms in Zoom and screenshots; and how mediated artefacts in a person's physical space (such as a mug, ball, or notebook) contribute to the movement or *presencing* of an online learning experience. In each of these instances of embodied *presencing* (a movement toward becoming in the present moment) the online experience is always negotiated between an individual's physical space (and artefacts) and the use of the technology. It is the inter-play and movement between

these constructed realities that influences the experiences of fun in relation to specific learning activities.

Hrach (2021), the educationalist I introduced in relation to embodied cognition, concerned with physical movement and learning spaces, informs us that an embodied approach to learning (as lived experience) includes ‘moving around, handling things, sensing the position of our bodies in space, and sensing motion internally: these are the ways that our bodies work to understand the world’ (p. 127). Drawing from psychologist Claxton (2015), Hrach (2021) states that the waves of interoceptive messages from body organs, sensory impressions, and predictions ‘based on prior experiences all contribute to the rising, existing and fading of knowing...so the fading edge [where confirmation and surprise arise] is where learning happens’ (p.128). Ultimately, not only does the way we use our bodies change the way we think, but using bodily movements helps create our social relationships: ‘the body offers an affordance to promote positive social interactions’ (p.141), and one way is through mimicry. In the context of researching fun, as a social and relational phenomenon, this is relevant because the Purposeful Play methodology of CAC is grounded in problem solving through social interactions.

### **3.5 Play(fulness)**

The final concept to create my analytical framework, which in the context of CAC is highly relevant is ‘play’, because the organisation’s educational methodology is explicitly based on Purposeful Play. Play is sometimes conflated within CAC, and more broadly in Western societies with ‘fun’, and as something ‘natural’ and by implication universal (Hughes, 2009). Both concepts are used, for example, on the CAC website interchangeably (CAC website, 2020). For the purposes of this inquiry however, fun and play are treated as separate, but permeable, and highly entangled.

Having said that, the notable historian and play theorist, Huizinga (1938/2014), whose definition I mostly align with, first postulated in 1938 that play is an activity that is fully absorbing, includes elements of uncertainty, and involves a sense of illusion or exaggeration. He argues that play must exist outside of ordinary life, and only for its own sake. That is, even though absorbed by the activity, the player is always conscious of the fact that the ‘play is not real’, and that its consequences will not affect their lives outside the play. This idea ‘that play is not real’, nor has further

consequences, is problematised by CAC's play and game-based learning, in this inquiry. Whilst Gordon and Esbjörn-Hargens (2007), note that Huizinga's views were modified, Huizinga's starting point was that the significance of 'play' is that it is intrinsically motivated, illusory/exaggerating and occurs in a space distinct from 'reality'. However, in the context of CAC's online learning spaces, this distinction is far less clear, as Chapter 6 unpacks. For now, it is useful to think and sense the possibility of a 'setting aside' (Gordon and Esbjörn-Hargens, 2007), which the playing of learning games may enable a larger, more expansive state of being with fun, specifically in terms of embodied (body-mind) expressions of meta-communication and imagination.

### ***3.5.1 Multiple frames, meta-communication, and laughter***

According to play worker, Gordon, and psychologist, Esbjörn-Hargens (2007) they offer a more dynamic understanding of play (compared to Huizinga) that reconnects play with reality. They describe play as a setting aside (an engagement with imagination), coupled with an attitude of playfulness (a shaking off of the constraints of social norms), and in doing so, this enables a 'bracketing of experience' – a shift from 'reality' to a new 'play specific space-time' with its own rules of procedure (p.201). This 'play-specific space-time', or 'imagined community' (Holston and Appadurai, 1996), can 'then become reality itself when the attitude of playfulness is infused into everyday life' (Gordon and Esbjörn-Hargens, 2007: 200-201). Therefore, whilst at first a shift may seem like a suspension of reality (Biesta, 2020), and a setting aside (Husserl, 1933/1973), the work of Gordon and Esbjörn-Hargens (2007) suggests that there is a further re-engagement with reality through playfulness. In the case of CAC, an embodied attitude of playfulness and fun will provide a useful lens to consider the work of CAC's online (-offline) embodied games, as a form of bracketed experience(s).

Furthermore, a player (learner) must hold at least two contextual frames at once: the frame of the player (body and mind) and that of the playscape (the social relations and environment). Anthropologists of play, such as Hamayon (2016), note that there is a crucial ambiguity between fiction and reality at the heart of play as a phenomenon. Indeed, many theorists and practitioners build upon the work of Bateson (1972) in this regard. A seminal systems-thinker, Bateson (1972) developed the term 'metacommunication' to describe the underlying messages in what



individuals say and do via all the nonverbal/indirect cues (tone of voice, body language, gestures, facial expression, etc.) that suggest how a piece of information is meant to be interpreted. These carry meanings that either enhance or disallow what is said in words e.g., a dismissive tone of voice might convey irony. For Bateson (1972), acts of playfulness are meta messages – a form of communication about communication; a setting up of multiple frames, including that ‘this is play’, from which the player often sees themselves as both an active protagonist and a witness: meaning that ‘these actions in which we now engage do not [always] denote what those actions for which they stand would denote’ (p.180) in normal life. This is relevant to the context of CAC because it opens up other layers (frames) of meaning making beyond the verbal (rhetoric) to potentially discover new ‘possibilities for thinking’ (Gordon and Esbjörn-Hargens, 2007) or an ‘openness to an elsewhere’ (Massumi, 2002) through sensory intentionality. In particular, considering how fun is constructed between the player and playscape, but also how play and fun may be constructed in different personal, physical, and shared online spaces at once, warrants further inquiry.

Laughter, as a type of embodied meta communication can be understood in many different ways, depending on the context. Anthropologist Hamayon (2016) suggests that it can be used as a form of self-defence, as a non-verbal communication tool to create social distance from others. Or it can be a form of political (power) subversion (Bakhtin 1963/1984). Nugent (2021), building on the work of Bakhtin (1963/1984), a notable philosopher, states that laughter ‘can conceal as much detail about a person’s temperament as it reveals. Bakhtin felt that carnival laughter was ambivalent. ‘It asserts and denies’, he claims, ‘it buries and revives’ (1984, 12)’. Laughter possesses two contradictory necessities; ‘I become myself’, Bakhtin stated ‘only by revealing myself to another, through another and with another’s help’ (Todorov, 1986: 96). While there is a need to connect with another (the centripetal force) there is a simultaneous need to separate from the other (the centrifugal force)’ (p574). For Nugent (2021) laughter ‘liberates’ (Bakhtin,1963/1984: 94), it is ‘capable of communicating information in such a way that amounts to a revelatory experience’ (Nugent, 2021: 574). Laughter is therefore a nonverbal way of knowing and expressing from the body, often social and transgressive, which I will develop to use as a method (see 4.7.4).

### **3.5.2 Valuing imagination and futuremaking as integral to learning processes**

*The imagination 'creates images, but above all it creates a world which opens anew with each image... [and] reaches beyond what is given; it magnifies and deepens'* (Smith, 1984: p.xlviii).

An embodied attitude of playfulness – a shaking off of constraints – is closely interwoven with body-mind imagination. The American sociologist C. Wright Mills coined the term 'sociological imagination' in 1959, in relation to the ability for an individual to reflexively generate a distancing from their everyday world (Mills, 1959/2000). I am concerned with imagination as a generative and playful aspect of learning processes, that can find a way to *distance and then re-engage* a learner within or beyond their known social space-times. In other words,

unify a manifold of sensory intuitions in such a way that we can experience of them...the temporal present is held together with the past and with future possibilities. A parallel process happens with space...its past and its future possibilities are alive in our perception of it. This capacity, the making of the absent present...sets us in relation to something other than ourselves (Lennon, 2015: 21).

In so doing, this indicates that embodied 'imaging can transcend reality, and this notion of transcendence, in various manifestations, is ultimately educative' (Magrini, 2000: 75). Embodied learning and imaging are therefore often concerned with 'reconstructive' (Van Rossum and Taylor, 1987) learning types/intentions, and transformation, however small, or large a perception necessitates.

The notable philosopher of education, Magrini (2017), interpretes the French philosopher, Bachelard's notion of the 'creative imagination' as a highly intentionally disruptive, and crucial aspect of transformative learning processes. Magrini (2017) states that:

if we are authentically attuned to the unfolding of phenomena, [then this] is bound up with the sense of uncertainty that accompanies moments of disruption to our long familiar thought patterns, because it represents the potential shattering of our current view of things (p.771).

This link between embodied learning, creative imagination and disruption – a shifting of whole person body-mind patterns is useful to consider, because the anthropologist, Willis (2000) also associates fun with imagination, and its ability to shift and disrupt through embodied processes. I will discuss in Chapter 6 how Willis (2000) considers imagination and fun as active and intentional modes of attentiveness and ‘being in the world’, but suffice to say here, that the relation between fun and imagination allows for, and opens up, possibilities for transformation – a shattering of our current view of things.

Imagining therefore is a quality of expansive attentiveness, as Ingold (2000) believes, it is an intentional activity carrying forward the possibilities of change, by its very doing. Otherwise every intentional activity of planning ‘would be prefixed by a prior intention in the form of a plan, we would at once be led into the absurdity of an infinite regress’ (Ingold, 2000: 312-13). The intention therefore is to seek/make a change in feeling, thought and/or action.

Heath (2008), a philosopher of education states that

“radical” imagination can bring into experience what is not just novel within experience but novel to the world of experience; it can actually create new experiences or *phantasia* not represented in any prior experience (p.117).

This ability within learning to consider a sensory alterity; ‘the faculty of forming images which go beyond reality, which sing reality’ (Bachelard,1994:15) is of interest in relation to fun, because of the possibility ‘of an elsewhere’ (Massey, 2005). Imagination is therefore an intrinsic part of inhabiting our creative learning capabilities.

Furthermore, there is also a connection between imagination and ‘futuremaking’ according to digital educationalists, Erstad and Silseth's (2019) concept of ‘futuremaking’ as drawing from past, present and future. This is highly significant in the context of fun learning precisely because it opens up possibilities of embodied experiences: as imagined and enacted learning realities; continuously being made and remade. This re-making is the learning praxis itself, and it is here that fun catalyses elements of the learning experience (see 6.3.5). Futuremaking is grounded in the ‘alterity of the present’ (Salazar et al., 2017), as a purposeful departure from ‘just the known, to consider the uncertainty of the sensory and emotional possibilities

of what could or should happen next...rather than a distant eventuality' (p. 133). It is not only the way we use our physical (corporeal) bodies, or our on screen mediated bodies (sometimes pixelated), but also our imagined, felt experiential unfolding's/transitions to an elsewhere, that are equally significant. The involvement of the 'whole person' (or body-mind-material-social) in the process of embodied futuremaking is directly connected to a role of fun (see 6.3.5).

### **3.6 Summary: shaping the research questions**

The research questions were iterated throughout the research process, most notably during the first literature search, after my first substantive write-up of the generated findings chapter and during the subsequent literature searches in the second and third years. These provided an opportunity to re-shape and mould further. In this way I treated, as Eakin and Mykhalovskiy (2003) suggest, 'the question as a compass rather than an anchor' (p.190), because this aligns with my research paradigm - of disciplined improvisation (see 4.5).

I now summarise the analytical framework for this review, outlining the four main conceptualisations, how they relate, and explaining the gaps in the literature. Identifying these gaps, informed how my research questions were generated. The four main conceptual areas are: types of fun (as an intentionally ambiguous concept that is relative, situational, voluntary, and natural); learning (using a perspective that is both socio-cultural-material and embodied); embodiment (focused on presence, movement, and mediating artefacts); and play(fulness), as a form of nonverbal shaking off of constraints, and stepping aside into imaginative futuremaking.

Firstly, fun – I understand this as a highly subjective, relational, and ambiguous notion (Bisson and Luckner, 1996), which as a phenomenon is transitory and temporal. Fun also takes shape in specific places, which are social 'spaces of flow' constructed and performed as 'real space' (Massey, 1994). In the sports/physical education context, with youth, it is associated by researchers with challenge, participation and a structured experience that foregrounds the role of coaches. I am most interested in contributing to the conceptualisation of fun as *mazaa* (Anjaria and Anjaria, 2020); as an openness to the ways in which the sensuous and pleasurable are sought out in our lives, in order to challenge perceived injustice, but also to create learning opportunities. Embracing the sensory attentiveness of fun is central

to this inquiry; it provides a useful entry point into understanding the learning processes of CAC, which are heavily focused on movement, imagination, and futuremaking. Finally, the literature shows that there are understandings of 'fun' from a physical education/coaching perspective, that often instrumentalise and focus narrowly on skills – particularly life skills (Ronkainen et al., 2021). There is a gap, therefore, in going beyond narrow roles that confine fun's purposes to the development of learning skills alone.

I understand there to be six main conceptualisations of learning (Van Rossum and Taylor, 1987). The first three are 'reproductive' conceptions of learning (with similarities to the 'acquisition metaphor' (Sfard, 1998), and the remaining are 'reconstructive' conceptions (the 'participatory' metaphor). At a macro level, the conceptualisation of socio-cultural-material learning (Vygotsky, 1934/1978) as thinking, and knowing not contained within individual minds, but rather as distributed and negotiated across persons, tools (artefacts), and learning environments focuses the learning experience upon different interactive elements of learning. Therefore, there is a gap, and a need to tweezer out, how fun relates to learning processes specifically within socio-cultural-material contexts.

Embodiment is concerned with the ways in which bodily sensations, thoughts and feelings relate both within an individual, but also *with* others and the surrounding world. It is a relational ontology, which focuses on how the human body encounters its surroundings and the material elements (living/non-living) in a given specific space-time (Pink, 2011). 'Online embodiment' is understood through the notions of: 'presence', as an attentiveness to the spontaneous, unexpected aspects of experience and a 'movement toward becoming', (Coonfield and Rose, 2012); 'movement', as the performance of a relational self in motion – *presencing* (Ucok-Sayrak and Brazelton, 2021), here and there (Landri, 2013), across space-times (Massey, 1994); and 'mediating artefacts', as 'tools, instruments and rules' between and through persons and materials (Engstrom, 1987 and Macpherson et al., 2006).

Fun (in the context of this inquiry) is intertwined with embodied learning. Embodied learning, through a phenomenological perspective (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/2012), perceives the whole sensory body, as the foundational, mediational starting place from where sensory engagement within, around and beyond the body, informs

learning processes (Lawrence, 2012). At a micro level: it focuses on the ways in which a bodily awareness, of physical sensations, emotional feelings, and movement provide a somatic knowing (Lawrence, 2012). Embodied learning involves intrapersonal and interpersonal learning processes. The 'intrapersonal' refers to a 'whole person' (Yorks et al.,2006; Meyer, 2012), which recognises 'experience' as a verb i.e., a particular instance/process and a *state of being 'in felt encounter'* (p.184). An integral part of sensory ways of knowing is with 'feeling'. This is more than a combination of emotional and physical sensations: it is a 'mode of active and responsive engagement in the world' (Ingold, 2000: 411), and a capacity 'to participate in *wider unities of being*...this is the domain of empathy, indwelling, participation, presence, resonance' (Heron: 1992: 16). There is a gap in the literature on sensuous experiencing of fun, in the context of embodied learning, as a way of being in active engagement/felt encounter with other body-minds-materials, and in developing capacities towards empathic connection with others. This inquiry will contribute in this regard.

Play and fun are often used interchangeably in the literature, to the detriment of conceptualisations of fun. The literature on play, and playfulness in particular, as the non-verbal 'attitude of shaking off constraints (Gordon and Esbjörn-Hargens, 2007), provides a useful theoretical steppingstone with regard to opening up the relationship between fun and embodied learning, and specifically the roles fun may have in provoking a 'bracketing of experience' – a shift from 'reality' to a new 'play specific space-time' (Gordon and Esbjörn-Hargens, 2007), or 'imagined community' (Holston and Appadurai, 1996). By considering beyond (the more-than) verbal in meaning making processes, embodied learning supports the concept of play(fulness). Playfulness aligns with embodied learning as a way to consider fun through multiple frames of knowing, opening out new possibilities of being in felt encounter. Here, imagination and futuremaking (Erstad and Silseth, 2019) provoke a curiosity with something other than ourselves, and a social space for attentiveness/disruption. Such a consideration of how fun relates to play(fulness) and embodied learning is non-existent in the literature.

In conclusion, no research was found that combines the four analytical constructs: fun, learning (socio-cultural-material and embodied), embodiment (specifically online-offline considerations of presence, movement, and mediated artefacts), and

play(fulness) in the context of non-formal education and Sport for Social Change. This research will fill that gap.

These points helped to shape the following three research questions. These are:

- 1) How is fun constructed by staff and coaches at CAC?
- 2) How and why are particular online learning activities experienced as fun for staff and coaches?
- 3) Is 'fun' a significant (meaningful) concept within CAC? If so, why?

In order to understand what fun does, and why it may be significant, it will be important to first understand what fun means (is) for key staff and coaches. In this way, the research questions build on one another, as will the methodology. In Chapter 4, I outline the methods as they relate to each question and explain why certain methods were chosen in order to answer the above research question.

# Chapter 4 Methodology and Methods: an online embodied ethnography

*'Only by participating with others can ethnographers better understand lived, sensed, experienced, and emotional worlds'* (Watson and Till, 2018: 130).

## 4.1 Introduction

This chapter first locates this inquiry within the epistemological foundations of interpretivism, specifically social constructionism and ethnography (as the quote above attests to). It briefly presents fundamental ethnographic considerations that have informed the research design. These are: my positionality, as researcher; relational and creative approaches to reflexivity; and the significance of using hybrid types of ethnographic notes. It then outlines the research design, including the adoption of a phased approach as an enactment of 'disciplined improvisation' (Sawyer, 2004). As well as informing the process of adapting methods during a global pandemic, developing an evolving compassionate ethics, and a framework for thinking about qualitative quality.

The chapter will elaborate upon the methods used to generate data to answer each specific research question. These are: documentary review; different types of participant observation within a variety of online spaces; and semi-structured interviews, including an innovative sensory method; the 'laughter critical incident'. These methods were chosen because of the nature of the research questions: question 1 focuses on constructions (staff and coaches' meanings) of fun and therefore documentary review, interviews, and participant observation all facilitate ways of understanding a response to this question, because they allow for an exploration of meaning-making. Similarly, for question two, which considers how and why particular learning activities are experienced as fun, (focusing on reasons as to why fun may have certain roles in relation to staff and coaches specific learning experiences), participant observation and semi-structured interviews again can provide insights. Question 3 considers whether fun is 'significant' (meaningful) in relation to specific learning activities, drawing from the findings from question 1 and 2, and using poetic inquiry as method. The section thus shows how the methods address the research questions, and how they align with the epistemological foundations of this inquiry. Limitations are discussed in 7.3.



## 4.2 Ways of knowing: interpretivism and social constructionism

This research is grounded in an interpretivist philosophical approach (Schwandt, 1994). This means that the world of lived reality and its context-specific meanings are the general focus of inquiry, which are constructed by individuals who act as social agents within societies and cultures. The interpretivist researcher provides a construction of other people's constructions of meaning (Schwandt, 1994).

Therefore, the intention is not to provide a 'universal truth'. For social constructionists, 'knowledge and truth are created, and not discovered by mind' (Schwandt, 1994: 234). The social constructionist endeavour is not seeking 'validity', but rather credibility and trustworthiness (Merriam and Grenier, 2019) from deliberate and considered theoretical and methodological standpoints. In this instance, the research seeks to find out what meanings exist, as well as how they are created via language (Schwandt, 1994), places, embodied actions and inter-actions (Thrift, 2008), beyond people alone (often referred to as 'symbolic interpretivism'), to include material objects/artefacts (Pink, 2012), and their experiences of being in specific environments more broadly.

This epistemology was chosen because it provides an alternative paradigm within which to view fun and learning within a Non-formal, Sports for Social Development and Alternative Education context. As identified in the literature review, studies tend to focus on positivist (sports psychology), or constructivist accounts of why fun may be significant in a physical activity learning context (Visek et al., 2015). Such studies lean towards overly instrumentalising and/or reducing learning experiences into skills acquisition alone (Biesta, 2008; Ronkainen et al., 2021). By shifting the paradigm lens, from what's happening within the minds of individuals, I as a social constructionist instead focus upon what is happening *between* people as they join together to create meaning in and through realities (Gergen, 2012; Burr, 2015). By foregrounding the *social dynamics* of the lived experiences, this inquiry can provide a greater understanding of how the relationality and roles of fun (purposes) can be understood. However, I do not overstretch/or claim that these findings are universal: there is no assumption here of a grand theory of fun. As Chapter 5 advocates, roles and purposes are highly likely to be dependent upon specific contexts. Similarly, this

research does not look for trends across large data sets, but rather focuses on the depth and shades of meaning that so often get overlooked. I seek to acknowledge them, just as fun itself is so often dismissed altogether (Shultz, 2019).

### **4.3 A multi-faceted ethnography**

There are several methods that align with a social constructionist approach<sup>21</sup> as well as research questions that ask, 'how, what and/or why?' I acknowledge 'methods' to be the procedures, tools, and techniques of an inquiry. Methodology to be the justifications for the methods i.e., a theoretical framework for how an inquiry should proceed. Epistemology modifies methodology and justifies the knowledge produced: it is a particular theory of knowing or way of knowing (Carter and Little, 2007). I also understand that these are disputed terms, and that Bateson (1972) discouraged inquiries to be bounded by static frameworks (see Steps to an Ecology of Mind). The challenge is to use frameworks as a relational compass, and not an anchor.

As a methodology encompassing multiple data collection (body-mind) methods (Gaggiotti et al., 2017), ethnography provides the best fit, because it develops a full description and analysis of our relationship with others' practices and thus provides a social interpretation of a specific group of people's everyday life. Ethnography therefore aligns with social constructionist approaches, through an attentiveness to interpretive processes (Atkinson, 1990; Charmaz and Mitchell, 2012), and by 'an intent to be open to everything unknown; a suspension of disbelief' (Charmaz and Mitchell, 2012: 2). Ethnography can be a non-linear epistemology (Gille, 2001; O'Reilly, 2004), and is often more than simply a method (Gille, 2001; Ingold, 2008); it bleeds into methodological and epistemic ways of knowing.

Ethnography provides a socio-cultural-material interpretation that 're-creates for the reader the shared beliefs, practice, artefacts, folk knowledge and behaviours of some group of people' (LeCompte and Preissle, 1993: 2-3). It interweaves with

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<sup>21</sup> Two examples are grounded theory (Charmaz, 2008), or critical discourse analysis (Rogers, 2011). The latter approach intentionally focuses on language and discourse only. Therefore, critical discourse analysis was not appropriate. Neither was a grounded theory approach because it intentionally seeks to generate a 'theory' (a system of ideas created from data), often aimed at a more academic audience, rather than principles for practice and a model for fun learning, which is intended to be relevant for both academics and practitioners alike.

social constructionism through 'an approach to the social and cultural that enables the understanding of experience and creativity' (Willis, 2000: 327), because it is neither subjective nor objective. 'It is interpretive, mediating two worlds through a third' (Agar, 1986: 19). It is a cluster of methods, whereby a research project always acknowledges the un-certainties of any given research process, and never seeks to present the researcher from an omnipresent place of 'god-like' all knowing (Richardson, 1997). The assumption in ethnography is that all research is coloured, and not necessarily weakened, by the proclivities (biases) of any given researcher, and that these should be made explicit throughout (see 4.4).

Ethnography is, furthermore, well suited to this study as it allows for diversity, 'pattern and fragmentation' (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2014) in understanding a particular group's meaning-making processes: such ways of knowing are celebrated through an interpretivist epistemology. Ethnography also aligns with research questions focused on how, what and/or why – as in this inquiry (O'Reilly, 2004). This ethnography is multifaceted and can be read from three main perspectives: organisational; sensory and embodied; and online. Each of these types of ethnography is outlined below, and each provides a different flavour of play-working, whereby play and work are understood as interdependent ways of being within an ethnography.

#### **4.3.1 Organisational ethnography**

This inquiry is situated within the context of an organisation and therefore a relevant sub field to acknowledge is organisational ethnography (Gaggiotti, Kostera and Krzyworzeka, 2017). According to Eberle and Maeder (2011), organisational ethnography is a 'multi method approach (observation, interviewing, document analysis, examination of the use of artefacts) whose pivotal feature is participant or non-participant observation of actions and practices' in organisational settings (Eberle and Maeder, 2011: 122). A useful way of conceptualising organisational ethnographies is to consider whether the focus is on ethnographies of organisations i.e., the kind of organisation that is being observed, and this often draws from organisational studies/theory, or to focus more on ethnography in organisations i.e., a focus on the practices. In this case, the research questions steer the emphasis to the latter.

This ethnography also takes an engaged (or critical) perspective (May, 1997) that strives to broaden and unpack knowledge about ‘fun’ as experienced by different social agents within the bracketed ‘play specific space-times’ of CAC. This is because a key purpose is to inform and influence the wider practice of non-formal learning within International Development and beyond. Building upon the work of Ghorashi and Wels (2009) this research seeks to move beyond complicity by ‘taking a more active responsibility for contributing to a more just world’ (Ghorashi et al., 2009: 247). This inquiry will contribute toward building the literature on non-formal learning, understanding it as something more than skill acquisition.

I achieved this in two ways. Firstly, through my temporality as a researcher that was paradoxically both a part of<sup>22</sup>, and apart from<sup>23</sup>, the organisation. This gave me ‘room to manoeuvre’ (Ghorashi et al., 2009). Secondly, by creating new researcher-led online spaces for reflection throughout the research process, called ‘Pods’, in order to provoke deeper understandings of fun and its relation to embodied learning - all in a space set aside from everyday experiences (see 4.8.3). The aim is to ultimately contribute to a broader understanding of education beyond a ‘capitalist production logic’ (Ronkainen et al., 2021: 4).

### **4.3.2 Sensory/embodied ethnography**

Another relevant sub-field of ethnography, which this inquiry relates to, is sensory ethnography. This focuses a researcher’s attention on exploring how people and objects co-exist, and mutually constitute within the material world (Pink, 2011). This means that ethnographers’ bodies ‘intra-act’ (Ellingson (2017) with participants’ bodies in specific places. Hopwood (2013) describes this as a ‘bodily and material conversation’ with the field, and with the other. It resists and refutes Cartesian mind/body dualism (Kay, 2009); instead, ways of knowing and experiencing are understood to be developed through the intra-actions, and relationality of defined sensory experiences of lived bodies (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/2012), not only through cerebral/cognitive ways of knowing through eyes and mind. Perception comes from the *symbiotic relationship* of body-mind-world (Pang, 2021). This episteme

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<sup>22</sup> I was referred to as the ‘fun researcher’ on Twitter in August 2021.

<sup>23</sup> By being affiliated with a university.

foregrounds the significance of bodily knowledge and recognises its 'emplacement': the ways in which bodily knowledge is co-created not only in specific bodies, but bodies in specific places, amongst specific materials (Pink, 2012).

For Field-Springer (2020), embodied ethnography (with applied sensibilities) focuses attention on the intersubjective nature of sense-making, both amongst participants, but also as the ethnographer in relation with participants. This in turn enables ethnographers to reflect upon the body-mind patterning of meanings-in-context, within everyday life (Coffey, 1999). It often involves a process of relearning a body language by the ethnographer, beyond verbalisation alone. An embodied reflexive ethnography therefore acknowledges that each field experience can: change how we (ethnographers and readers) perceive and inter-act in the world; approach our own and others' ways of engaging with more-than verbal experiences; and bring curiosity to how we re-make worlds with our own use of words and images.

An embodied reflexive approach means that as ethnographers and practitioners, it's important to continually consider 'extra discursive' experiences' (Field-Springer, 2020), or tacit knowledge in the worlds into which we enter. This includes the embodiment of participants and how they interact, but also how as a researcher my body-mind engages with the participants and the inquiry as an artefact. As the next section will unpack, this has implications in online synchronous contexts.

### **4.3.3 Online (and offline) ethnography**

Doing (sensory) ethnography online problematises the 'being there' of traditional ethnographic methods, in which physical (corporeal) interaction is privileged (Hine, 2000; Huxley, 2020). Digital educationalists such as Landri (2013) encourage researchers to 'consider presence beyond physical co-presence' (p.242), because whilst ethnographic research is an 'experiential way of knowing' it is always mediated by the screens, software and technology we use. In the context of technologised (online) learning, ethnography involves new ways of being present; and more specifically a greater diversity and extension of what it means to be embodied (Stanley, 2001). For Stanley (2001) embodiment with online spaces should focus on an interrelatedness: 'to understand people, one needs to understand them when they are in dialogue with one another. Not to test them in isolation, but to study their interrelatedness as they perform social life' (Stanley, 2001: 77).

Landri (2013) also argues that the online ethnographers' presence becomes complexly embodied, in the sense that the human body, as a perceiving thing intricately intertwined and mutually 'engaged' with consciousness and the world, is *also* distributed and mobile in online synchronous contexts. Therefore 'new situated conditions that [arise] may expand the *sense of being* there from the "here and now" to the "here and there" (p.250). This conceptualisation of embodiment as mutually online *and* offline lays the ground for possibilities for new ways of knowing and knowledge to be generated in relation to contemporary learning processes and environments. This has significant implications for how fun and learning may be perceived, sensed, and experienced in online contexts (see 6.3.1).

In summary, to look for integration, relation, and pattern across these three types of ethnography (sensory, online, and organisational) means to consider whole-person bodies, a distributed and negotiated sense of bodies (here and there), online and in personal physical spaces, within the culture(s) of an organisational setting. The possibility of tension arises across these trajectories, and how to focus or balance between the micro of bodily sensation and expression, through to the social space of organisational discourse and inter-intra-action. Yet this is the demand of a relational inquiry asking *how and why* questions.

## **4.4 Ethnographic considerations**

There are specific considerations that concern my approach to each of these types of ethnography, which required intentionality and forethought. As Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) state, much of the focus of ethnographies is on 'seeking to understand the meanings that are generated in, and that generate, social action' (p.16). In relation to ways of knowing (epistemology) and the ontological kinds of things under reflection within ethnography, I chose to focus on the following: positionality; creative and relational reflexivity; and constructing (field) notes. These are all crucial elements of online, sensory, and/or organisational ethnographies. They are not mutually exclusive, nor are they fixed and complete; rather they are crafted reflections, iterated upon.

### **4.4.1 Positionality: being an 'alongsider'**

A key feature of many ethnographies is their explicit recognition of the positionality or reflexive stance (Neyland, 2008), and this ethnography is no different. The American

sociologist Wright Mills first coined the term ‘sociological imagination’ in 1959, which he understood as an ability for an individual to reflexively generate a distancing from their everyday world (Wright Mills, 1959/2000); another form of bracketing (see 3.5.1). Reflexivity is an ongoing iterative process, which in the context of qualitative research means more than simply a single contemplation or reflection on how a researcher brings their own biases, assumptions and lived experiences into the research praxis. Rather, the praxis of this research aims to provide credibility to the research via a transparency of reasoning, and an authenticity (that includes researcher vulnerability) of (re) construction and (re)interpretation, which at certain junctures were opened up to/invitations made with participants via the researcher-led online reflection spaces outlined in 4.8.3.

The overall approach to participant observation or observant participation (Moeran, 2014), adopted for this research, can best be summarised as being an ‘alongsider’; an inquirer (as an interpretive truth seeker and maker) who is both part of, and a part from the setting, striving to actively engage with this potential conflict. It is this friction created by the ‘insider-outsider’ binary in ethnography that requires actively moving along the spectrum it presents, according to purpose (Wickens and Crossley, 2016). This is described via their shipping metaphor, whereby an inquirer is perceived as:

a research vessel observing the data ship from afar ...the researcher [at points] climbs on board and joins the crew, better to appreciate the subtleties of the navigation...the researcher also brings an alternative perspective, one that has been influenced by other contexts that have been witnessed on the journey (Wickens and Crossley, 2016: 226).

I interpret this shipping metaphor as an articulation (Carlson, 2021) to conjure up the sense of movement, and change that encapsulates an inquiry based in relational ontologies. Section 4.8 outlines the online nature of participant observation.

#### **4.4.2 Creative and relational reflexivity**

Another key consideration within an ethnographer’s craft is ‘reflexivity’, and this is not a neutral, nor even a constant concept. How I perceived it six months ago is different to how I perceive it at this time of (re)writing, based on my evolving lived experiences. The psychologist, Gemignani (2017), exposes the inherent assumptions that sit behind ‘reflexivity’ and its uses. He provides a reminder to

constantly question and unpick how we (as ethnographers) *construct* our own approaches towards the praxis of reflexivity.

First, the concept of reflexivity 'assumes that researchers are unavoidably present and influential in the inquiry' (Gemignani, 2017:185), because it considers the ways in which inquirers and 'their subjectivities affect what is and can be designed, gathered, interpreted, analysed, and reported in an investigation' (p.185). There is often a bias towards a researcher's 'inherent goodness', so that biases can remain unchallenged. Gemignani also considers three different types of (relational) reflexivity: personal reflections on the influence of the researcher's identities and positions on the inquiry; analyses of the mutual relations between participants (or data) and researchers and how they affect the research; and critical considerations on assumptions, expectations, and boundaries of the researcher's specific discipline. All can be useful. Whilst this inquiry considers all, the first is particularly prescient in relation to my third research question: 'Is fun a significant concept within CAC? If so, why?' This will include a consideration of how my positionality and researcher-practitioner identities cast a particular light upon the response. However, other aspects of reflexivity may surface, and as a creative qualitative researcher (Pelias, 2019) this acknowledges my evolving nature.

In relational, narrative, and discursive ontologies, in which the acts of telling and representing contribute to the very existence of the study under consideration (Gemignani, 2017), it is inherently important for a creative reflexive approach to:

avoid reducing its content or the objects of inquiry to fixed, self-contained, and coherent entities, which have definite and mostly tidy boundaries located in space (with centers and boundaries), time (with specific moments of departure and ending, such as methodological steps), relation (with predefined roles and scripts), and historical development (Gemignani, 2017: 190).

A relational reflexivity must be critical (and this includes a vulnerability), nor assume a stable reality of the researcher's subjectivity: this runs the risk of essentialising and fixing positions, which during a global pandemic was not my experience (see 4.5.2 for researching during a pandemic). The actions or performance of knowing something - the writing, the thinking, the discussing all contribute different textures and colours to the existence of this research artefact (Gergen, 2015; Kara, 2020).



Secondly, I perceive reflexivity as a creative (and performative) intentional endeavour. My main expression of bringing a sensory, embodied (and hopefully fun crafting) to this is through the articulations of writing, and reading poetry as outlined in 1.3.2. Poetry will help to provide a response to Research Question 3, which considers whether fun is significant in this context and, if so, why? Considering fun from an embodied perspective calls for a form of communication and representation that strives to reach beyond linguistic representationalism i.e., where language is perceived as a complete tool of transference for depicting reality (Gemignani, 2017). By extension, poetry seeks to find a way to both deconstruct rules of language and communicate the non-verbal aspects of human experience (Richardson, 1997; Gumbrecht, 2004; Pelias, 2019). Poetry embodies language by taking place 'in the border realm, where inner and outer, actual and possible, experienced and imaginable, heard and silent, meet' (Hirshfield, 2015: 12).

#### **4.4.3 (Field) notes**

Before getting to the re-construction and presentation of data analysis, a consideration of how to record human experience is worthwhile. Several ethnographers have noted the challenges of recording 'human experience' in the pages of field notebooks (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw, 2011; Pacheco-Vega, 2019). Historically, a core part of an anthropologist's/ethnographer's identity, and a place for capturing data is a physical tangible notebook(s) (Atkinson, 1990). The main two types of data normally captured are 1) descriptive information and 2) reflective notes. According to Chiseri-Strater and Sunstein (1997), this list summarises the types of data that can be included in fieldnotes:

- Date, time, and place of observation
- Specific facts, numbers, details of what happens at the site
- Sensory impressions: sights, sounds, textures, smells, taste
- Personal responses to the fact of recording fieldnotes
- Specific words, phrases, summaries of conversations, and insider language
- Questions about people or behaviours at the site for future investigation

They also suggest keeping types of notes separate. In particular:

- Jottings
- Description of everything that can be remembered
- Analysis
- Reflection

Whilst these sorts of ‘how to’ references on (field) notes can be useful, they should always be re-constructed and interpreted depending on the specificity of a given context, the research questions, and the proclivities/capabilities of a researcher.

I decided to collect notes in a ‘hybrid’ manner: hybrid in the sense that I collected four hard-copy notebooks worth of preparatory data between October 2019 and February 2021, as well as an initial synthesis of 14 sets of summary notes (every 4-5 weeks), in OneNote over the same period. The preliminary handwritten notes, taken during a period of participant-observation, such as an online meeting, focused on the key quotes/insider language, sensory impressions, and descriptive elements, whereas the OneNote typed notes allowed me to synthesise, further reflect and organise ideas in a way I could not do in a hard-copy notebook. Ultimately, this made the final sifting of notes (as part of the ethnographic analysis, to check themes in response to questions 1 and 2) more manageable. There is no singular, ‘natural’, way to write about what one observes (Emerson et. al., 2011).

#### **4.4.4 Doing a ‘fun’ PhD**

As mentioned in 1.3.2, I understand a PhD *on* fun should strive to be a PhD that *is* often fun. This is informed by my belief in embodied ways of knowing. I see them as (ideally) inherently one and the same, in a similar way that an organisation researching women’s rights should embody or ‘walk the talk’ on women’s rights, making sure there is no gender pay gap and that women are in positions of authority. To not seek out opportunities to embody the phenomenon of fun in the praxis of doing a PhD, fundamentally de-legitimises the practitioner-researcher dynamic I discussed in Chapter 1. It also dishonours the *authenticity* of a PhD that seeks to understand lived experiences, as of body-mind-material, and not simply ‘from the neck up’ (as a singularly cognitive endeavour).

There were several ways in which I sought out different types of fun as body-mind experiences, although granted many of them focused on subjective ways of bringing

lightness and release. For the purposes here, I'll outline one example connected to (field) notes. As mentioned, the experience of doing and being during writing and synthesising notes, was both a *physical and online experience*; a continual engagement with biros/pencils and paper, as well as with creating and uploading Word documents, including images and colour. The hard-copy book provided a prop, – a crutch for my researcher identity, especially whilst doing (online) interviews. However, my handwriting is messy. I therefore found the re-construction and further iteration of ideas, whilst typing, a very useful part of my embodied praxis of research.

In terms of process, I wrote by hand any hard-copy notes during/immediately after events, and because I audio/video recorded several of these I did not always need to write extensive descriptions. Rather I focused on key utterances as they related to my research questions, sensations, and inter-actions with the research process, as well as early reflections or 'ethnographic hunches' (Pink, 2021). I also made notes from external events/lectures/workshops, providing a contextualisation for my research project. Whilst I used rigour and structure i.e., date and event to start all notes, I also allowed creative, playful improvisations to arise. These were possibilities for alterity, such as the use of a whiteboard three months into the project. This enabled me to work with the temporality of the embodied performativity of my research, such as noticing special terms as they arose in readings.

#### **4.5 The research design: disciplined improvisation**

An ethnography is an iterative and largely inductive endeavour (O'Reilly, 2004; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). This means it evolves in design as the study progresses, and 'examines social life as it unfolds' (O'Reilly, 2004: 28). In order to live and breathe this praxis, I chose to do two things: firstly, take an iterative-inductive phased approach, and secondly think and respond to my research choices in a way that acknowledges the inter-action between structure and agency. Here, the theory of 'disciplined improvisation' resonates well, and is outlined overleaf. Together, the imagery of these two words means that the design, collection, analysis, and writing are not discrete entities or linear in praxis, but rather conversational.

### **4.5.1 An iterative-inductive phased approach**

In the spring of 2021, I wrote some reflections in my notebook regarding the relationality between the discipline and improvisation within the process of data gathering for an ethnographer. It applies across all the porous stages of a research project. Here are some of my thoughts in motion:

How much can/should an ethnographer prepare and plan research when the circumstances keep changing? To what extent is ethnography inherently improvisational? Doing ethnography during a pandemic has forced these issues to be confronted. COVID-19 has opened up the debate around the nature of planning and improvisation. Ethnography needs to focus on what you will do *WHEN* things change (a focus on values), not *IF* (a focus on activities). Ethnographers researching during the pandemic are forced to continually think and act upon what is likely to change, suggesting there should still be a degree of planning/‘risk management’. However, the empirical (experiential) space for an ethnographer to ‘follow their nose’ is heightened.

The educationalist, Sawyer, remarks that ‘creative teaching is disciplined improvisation because it always occurs within broad structures and frameworks’, (Sawyer, 2004: 13) and ‘disciplined improvisation is a dynamic process involving a combination of planning and improvisation’ (Sawyer, 2004: 16). The same can be said for ethnography – it too is a disciplined improvisation, and this is especially true when researching during a pandemic. Not only is the apparent paradox brought to the empirical (experiential) foreground, whilst researching during a global pandemic, but there is a dance, an ebb and flow, between both. ‘Improvisation in music is understood as performance, moving between scripted and unscripted sections. The participants have to collaborate, use humour and be honest and truthful’ (Holdhus et al., 2016: 6). There is still a need for planning, structure, and discipline, for example in this inquiry, the use of workplans, alongside the uninhibited adaptability required to make the ‘best of things’ when circumstances unfold beyond a researcher’s control.

It was intentional to take an iterative-inductive phased approach to data gathering, because with such a fast-paced organisation I needed structural moments to pause, reassess and adapt. The overall phases outlined in Figure 7, are not mutually exclusive, but are, in Neyland's terms (2008), ‘an approximate strategy’ (p.12), designed to guide, but not restrict, the inquiry. Phase 1 started with a document

review, and Phase 3 ended with the staff reflection space (both shown by a dark blue outline). Otherwise, the types of data collection for each phase were interwoven.

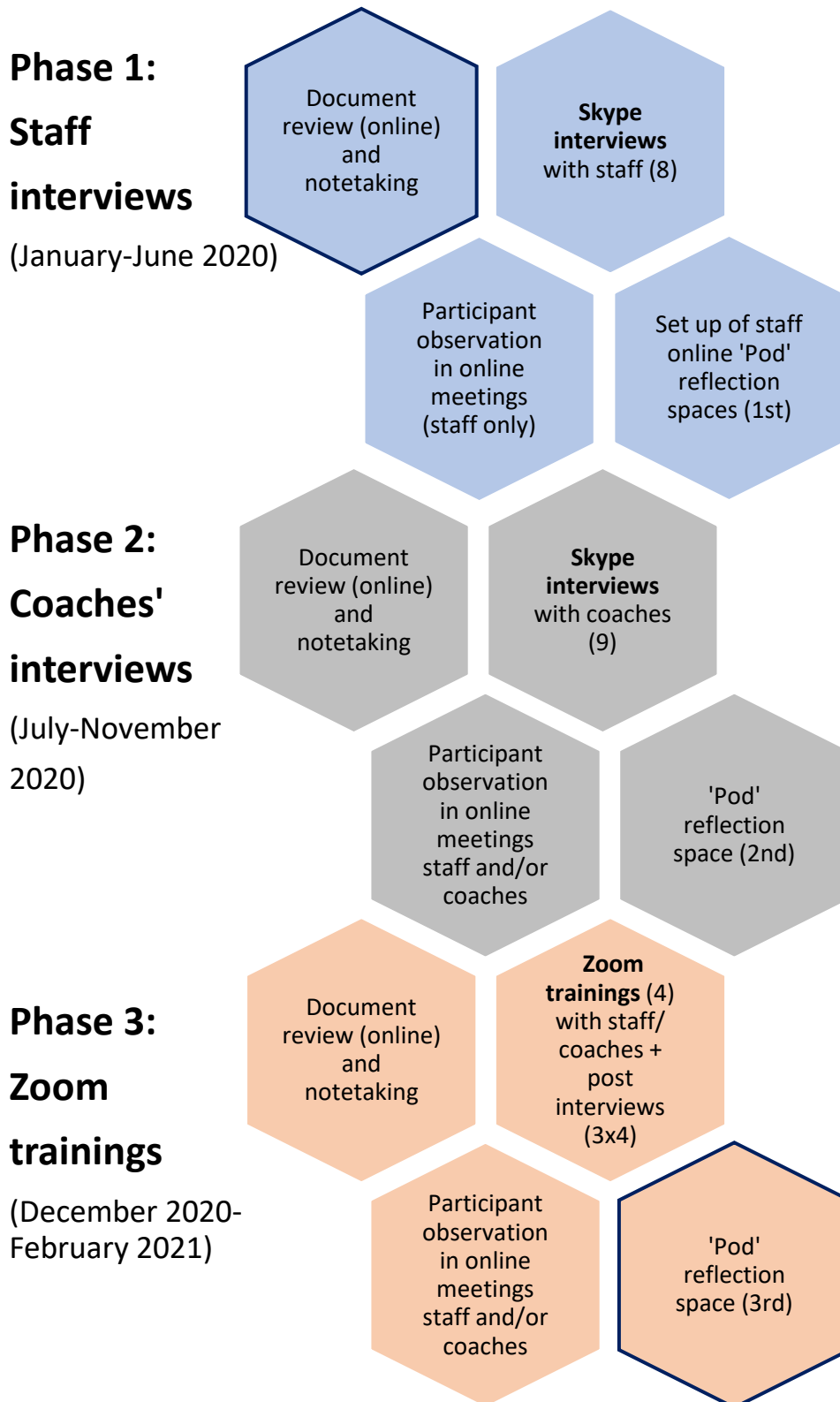


Figure 7: The Three Data Collection Phases of this inquiry

### **4.5.2 Adapting methods due to researching during a global pandemic**

Shifting methods from an 'on-field' participant observation approach that would have literally involved running around on a football pitch, to methods using online participation observation (see 4.8) necessitated a rigorous improvisational adaptability, as well as a reflexive engagement with my own assumptions towards a fully online ethnography. I originally planned a hybrid (half online, half 'on the field') approach, and this blog post ['One \(dis\)placed ethnographer's movements during the pandemic: Is the on-line world a lesser ethnographic world?'](#) (Huxley, 2020) outlines my journey transforming my 'lesser than' biases towards accepting and embracing an online methodology. Essentially, this was a realisation that 'an armchair' anthropologist (Howlett, 2021) within the context of a global pandemic, where participants were often engaged from their chairs, was actually an *authentic experience*, and not an 'ivory tower' (distanced) approach.

I initially started by considering how gestures might provide an entry point into considering a more than verbal method, in an online Zoom context. However, after reviewing the literature and piloting an observation of different bodily gestures of five colleagues during an online meeting, I realised that to focus on gestures below the neck and without sound, would not be credible, because of camera placements and individuals' body positions, which as a researcher I had no control over throughout. Hence, I significantly refined my method, which is outlined in 4.7.4.

### **4.5.3 Qualitative quality and positionality as a pracademic**

When thinking about methods, I considered what makes a qualitative study, of value – of quality? I hesitate to use the word 'rigour' alone, because as many researchers have noted (Sandelowski, 1993; Rolfe, 2006; Tracy, 2010), it is often laden with positivist biases. Rigour contributes towards validity, another term that needs to be reconceptualised, to avert the tendency towards 'reification, commodification, and reduction of validity to a set of procedures' (Sandelowski, 1993: 2). The provocation (and resistance to the dominance of positivist epistemologies) in qualitative relational studies is a continuous engagement with a need to *both* expand/check a broader horizon (a literature review is a good example of this, as is thematic analysis), as well as a need to focus in, and chip away at core theory, methods, and analysis.

To assist with this endeavour, I refer to the language and framework offered by Tracy (2010) and her Eight 'Big Tent' Criteria for Excellence in Qualitative Research, see Table 2. I understand all eight criteria as contributing towards validity and use this framework as a guide. I discuss the tensions between procedural and relational ethics further in 4.5.6.

Table 2: Tracy's Eight 'Big Tent' Criteria for Excellence in Qualitative Research (2010 p. 840)

<b>Criteria for quality (end goal)</b>	<b>Various means, practices, and methods through which to achieve</b>
<b>1. Worthy topic</b>	The topic of the research is: relevant; timely; significant; and interesting
<b>2. Rich rigour</b>	The study uses sufficient, abundant, appropriate, and complex: theoretical constructs; data and time in the field; sample(s); context(s); and data collection and analysis processes
<b>3. Sincerity</b>	The study is characterised by self-reflexivity – subjective values, biases, and inclination of the researcher(s); transparency about the methods and challenges
<b>4. Credibility</b>	The research is marked by thick description, concrete detail, tacit knowledge, and showing rather than telling; triangulation/crystallisation; multivocality; member reflections
<b>5. Resonance</b>	The research influences, affects or moves particular readers throughout by aesthetic, evocative representation, naturalistic generalisations, transferable findings
<b>6. Significant contribution</b>	The research provides a significant contribution – conceptually, practically, morally, methodologically, heuristically
<b>7. Ethical</b>	The research considers procedural ethics, situational and culturally specific, relational ethics and exiting ethics
<b>8. Meaningful coherence</b>	The study achieved what it purports to be about, uses methods that fit its goals and meaningfully interconnects literature, research questions, findings, and interpretations with each other.

Tracy (2010) defines rich rigour in a way that encompasses the acknowledgement of context throughout all porous – research – stages, and rather than 'impact' uses the language of 'resonance' defined as an aesthetic, evocative representation, or alignment with a reader. This language and conceptualisation inform this study: the

'authority' as inquirer/writer is not about how objective/God-like 'I', the researcher can be. Rather the endeavour is how attentive I can be to the authentic essence of the relationality with my participants, our shared experiences, and the kind of researcher I am. As a truth-seeker and maker, an interpretivist inquirer, 'the objective researcher' in search of the truth is an enigma and a myth. There are (partial) truths to be represented. However, this is not to throw out the need for a discipline of criticality, clarity, and coherence throughout the inquiry, as indicated under Tracy's (2010) eighth criterion. This inquiry therefore builds upon these eight qualitative criteria.

Credibility in the research, as well as the above, is also created by an active awareness of how my own 'biases' may influence the research. These include: a tendency towards humanist learning approaches via early childhood experiences of Montessori education; my own belief in the significance of fun and play, as well as a belief in participatory practices stemming from International Development practices (Huxley/ DFID, 2010). These colour the interpretive processes, and these 'biases' are not necessarily a limitation, but rather, can be viewed as 'a resource' (Braun and Clarke, 2020b).

I acknowledge my own identity as both a researcher and practitioner, a 'pracademic' (Posner, 2009). An academic is often perceived as being 'critical, cautious and relatively slow' (Stevens et al., 2013: 1074), and a development practitioner as action oriented and demanding quick answers (Stevens et al., 2013). My experience is that the distinction between the roles is not clear cut. The term 'pracademic' acknowledges this, and espouses an approach concerned with both curiosity, questioning, an interest in theoretical stances and a focus on process, action, and a consideration of how knowledge can be used and generated.

My approach to criticality, and knowledge making, aligns with that espoused by Anjaria and Anjaria (2020). Dwelling in *mazaa*, being intentionally curious about the felt expressions of fun, is part of a generative analytical and knowledge making endeavour, which rejects the positivist myth of critical distance or 'looking at things that sway people, without being swayed' (p.236). That perspective implies meaning can only be found in a space apart from acts, rather than in the acts themselves. I



seek to 'allow space for all the forms of life and politics that animate the worlds we live in' (p. 241).

I agree with the need (Cummings et al., 2021) for a decolonisation of knowledge, challenging dominant Western paradigms that assume a universality of European visions and practices of modernity. These paradigms still dominate both academia and international development practice, a domination that is both ethically questionable and highly reductionist. I seek a more expansive, nuanced, and fundamental notion of criticality and knowledge making. I am concerned with dissolving the 'strange binary between the pre-critical public easily swayed... and academics who are not' (Anjaria and Anjaria, 2020: 236) in order to open up other ways of knowing and reveal other shades of human experience.

Spaaij (2009) emphasises there is 'a danger that social development through sport is imposed on disadvantaged communities in a top-down manner, lacking community engagement and shared ownership' (p. 1109). CAC discourses and practices are explicitly concerned with ensuring that their approach to knowledge production is not 'top down'. They use the phrase 'the West is not Best' – a direct acknowledgement that Western paradigms are not universal, can be harmful, and other paradigms should be acknowledged/prioritised.

CAC explicitly considers the impact of its work from diverse socio-cultural perspectives (Spaaij, 2009 and 2013). This was evident during my observations of the Lebanese online trainings. Arabic translation was essential to the delivery of these sessions. Participants not only helped to shape the sessions, but were also encouraged to provide feedback, which was absorbed throughout, ensuring the learning environment and issues of inclusion for diverse needs/requests from different participants were considered. In such ways CAC actively sought to challenge Western and colonial paradigms.

Nevertheless, internal power differentials and contradictions were evident, especially between staff (predominantly from the Global North) and coaches (predominantly from the Global South). For example, during a staff discussion on who could/should do monitoring processes, several staff acknowledged a need to expand coaches' roles. Others expressed concern that the skills required for monitoring processes might be 'too much' for some of the coaches. They did not acknowledge either that

the monitoring process came from a Western paradigm or that they had already been privileged to receive skills training, whereas the coaches had not.

A small number of staff sometimes used the term 'local' in a universalistic manner, reinforcing an imbalance of power. For example: 'What would be the local way of saying/doing this?' The term 'local' used in this way collapses diverse systemic power differentials related to an individual's lived experience in relation to others in their group/community. Fernando (2003) shows that 'local' and 'Indigenous knowledge' are terms that are highly relative, negotiated and shifting. A deeper consideration of how the constructs of 'local' or 'Indigenous knowledge' are understood and used within CAC would be useful.

Knowledge was often generated by central staff rather than coaches. However, as a reflective learning organisation, alternative perspectives are openly encouraged by the Four Pillars that represent the organisation's core values. For example, a two-way form of knowledge production was evident during a meeting involving staff and Asian coaches, after which the coaches' suggestions were incorporated into online curriculum design. It was refreshing that power differentials were openly discussed in staff meetings, but the organisation could go further to openly discuss roles and potential inequities between staff and coaches.

#### ***4.5.4 Data gathering summary: methods and analytical approaches***

At this juncture, I present all the data collection methods used in this inquiry, as they relate to each research question. It includes the 'nuts and bolts' i.e., the who, what, where, what kind, and how many of the inquiry. But before that, I acknowledge the meta method; the writing itself. As Richardson (2000) states, 'language is a constitutive force, creating a particular view of reality and of Self' (p.925). Language is not to be ignored within embodied methodologies, but rather understood as one type of engaging with the world. Spoken word, is of itself an embodied enactment. With this in body-mind, the question of validity is best understood through a metaphor, a relational construct of language that seeks qualities of convergence, and here I build from Richardson's crystallisation metaphor, whereby:

Crystals grow, change, alter ...are prisms that reflect externalities and refract within themselves, creating different colours, patterns, and arrays, casting off in different directions...without losing structure, [this metaphor] deconstructs the traditional idea

of "validity" (we feel how there is no single truth, we see how texts validate themselves), and crystallisation provides us with a deepened, complex, thoroughly partial, understanding' (p.934).

I understand crystallisation as the process of bringing together different data sources (as molecules) and analysing them in diverse ways (as the reflective casting off in different directions), in order to make a credible set of findings. These findings are organised into a coherent ethnographic structure, Chapter 5 (a crystal). In this way, there is both a reduced, coming together interpretation of findings, searching for alignment. But at the same time, there is an attentiveness towards acknowledging a multiplicity of interpretations (a refraction within), of different perspectives, open to contradictions.

To answer each research question there are main (primary) methods of data collection and data sources (see Table 3). These were the first data sets that I analysed, which I subsequently reflected alongside other data sources (or 'angles of approach'). The combination of methods of data collection and analysis produce a complex data tapestry from which to craft responses to the questions and build up the meta method of writing the ethnography, as an artefact itself. The why and how of each of the methods outlined in Table 3, will be explored further from 4.6, but before that, I turn to explaining an overview of the table.

Table 3: Summary overview of all methods and analytical approaches

Research Questions	Methods	Data sources	Analytical approaches
<b>How is fun constructed by staff and coaches at Coaches Across Continents?</b>	Main (primary)  Semi-structured Skype interviews with staff  Semi-structured Skype interviews with coaches	Main (primary)  Eight transcripts plus Skype video/audio recordings  Nine transcripts plus Skype video/audio recordings (one coach was later added due to the opportunity to participate in the online Beirut training)	Ethnographic analysis using 'crystallisation'  Primary approach (angle):  Reflexive Thematic Analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2012) of eight transcripts using Quirkos and index cards (taking an embodied approach)  Reflexive Thematic Analysis of nine transcripts using Quirkos and index cards (embodied)
	Document review (online)	Some internal documents e.g., training manuals, and external facing annual reports (25)	Secondary approach:  Field note searching - this involved looking for text/ideas that both align and contradict the thematic analysis candidate themes generated; first in (field) notes, and then summary notes and/or recordings.
	Observation participation in online meetings (staff and/or coaches)	'(Field) notes' in four notebooks (4)  Summary notes in OneNote (12)	Internal document searching – this focused on seeking the term 'fun'.
	Participant observation in three Skype 'Pod' reflection spaces with staff	Video/audio recordings (47)	
<b>How and why are particular learning activities experienced as</b>	Main (primary)  Participant observation in four Zoom training sessions (on the Beirut blast)	Main (primary)  Four transcripts plus audio recordings	Primary approach:  An embodied reflexive Thematic Analysis of 16 transcripts using Quirkos and index cards (Braun and Clarke inspired)

<b>fun for staff and coaches?</b>	One staff and two coaches post-online-training interviews on Skype including reflecting on 'laughter critical incidents'	Twelve transcripts (three individuals x four sessions), plus Skype video/audio recordings	
	Participant observation in Zoom trainings (4) and post interviews (12)	'(field) notes' in one notebook (1) Summary notes in OneNote (2) Video/audio recordings (16)	Secondary approach: Field note searching (as above; looking for alignment or contradiction).
	One staff and two coaches post-online-training interviews (same as for the main approach)	Twelve transcripts (three individuals x four sessions)	Third approach: Comparative tables showing if and when laughter critical incidents were confirmed in relation to an experience of 'fun', and showing physical and online experiences of embodiment
<b>Is 'fun' a significant concept within CAC? If so, why?</b>	Semi structured interviews	Analysis from RQ1 and RQ2, including laughter critical incidents Responses to question on does fun matter?	Fourth approach: Poetic inquiry through a found poem. This conveys the multi-vocal and affective response to this answer. The poem draws from data (codes, transcript excerpts) from RQ1 and RQ2, because its significance (meaningfulness) is based on what fun is and does.
	Participant observation in online training sessions (4)		
	Post online training interviews (12) including reflecting on 'laughter critical incidents'	Absence of explicit mention of fun in documents (focus on Purposeful Play)	
	Participant observation in online 'Pod' reflection spaces with staff	Online meetings and 'banter'	
	Document review (online)	Interest to understand fun in the 'Pod' sessions	
	Participant observation in online meetings (staff and/or coaches)		

\* The coloured blocks in the table indicate the main (primary) sources for analysis per question. A different colour representing each different question. The subsequent data source(s) and method(s) of analysis enabled a breadth and richness to the inquiry.

I interviewed all staff members (7), including the founder, plus the educational advisor. The intention was to match the staff interviews with the same number of coaches, largely selected by the founder (this ended up being 9 coaches, see 4.7.1). There were four online training sessions (4.8.4). I did post-interviews (12) with the staff and two coaches I observed during these trainings; we discussed a novel method I created, the 'laughter critical incident', as an embodied entry point into discussions on roles of fun within the learning experience (4.7.4). To create social spaces to reflect on the research with staff, as part of an inclusive design, and to maintain visibility during the research, I created researcher-led 'Pod'<sup>24</sup> reflection spaces for staff. I arranged three over the 14 months' data collection period, because I did not want to create a burden (especially during the pandemic). However, they provided staff an opportunity, together, to hear updates on the research, and also to challenge/ask questions (see 4.8.3).

Having presented the data gathering methods in Table 3, let us now consider the analytical approach in more detail, before turning to some of the ethical considerations of this inquiry.

#### ***4.5.5 Analytical approach: crystallisation as embodied inter-play***

Analysis was an ongoing sensory praxis throughout, in that I was continually reflecting upon what I was seeing, hearing, and feeling, however there was a substantial six-month period in 2021 in which I largely focused solely on analysis. My main framework to consider analysis is crystallisation, which my interpretation intentionally considers both 'pattern and fragmentation' (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2014): using different types of data modalities to see if there are concurring/diverging 'angles of analysis' (Richardson: 2000: 934). The different angles enable and facilitate an ability for breadth and depth in the analysis process. However, this is not to say that all data collected were used: I chose to have a main method for analysis, thematic analysis, because of the rich rigour often associated with a Braun and Clarke (2019a) approach, and then to supplement this with a secondary form of ethnographic analysis that focused on using selected notes and audio/video

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<sup>24</sup> 'Pod' was the term we decided upon as a group, to give a name for the reflective sharing spaces, and help create a sense of common interest.

recordings that related to the generated themes (either in alignment or as challenge). For the second and third research questions I also introduced other embodied angles of analysis. Table 3 summarises the methods of analysis for each question.

In the spirit of sense-making and constructing, the analytical approach was embodied (Ellingson, 2017; Leigh and Brown, 2021) and sought ways and opportunities for being/experiencing fun, such as through the laughter critical incidents. Ellingson (2017) suggests that the body is both a text and a tool that is mutually constitutive of the world around and therefore dispels the myth that data exists independent to the researcher. Data analysis is a material practice, and each time a new modality or approach is introduced the data is 'worked on and worked up' (p. 136). Theories are engaged, emotions generated, and an attentiveness and curiosity (reflexivity) acknowledged.

Hrach's findings on the interrelations of brain, body, and environments (3.4.2) were useful in assisting how I moved and shifted my own body in relation to analytical processes. I disrupted sensory expectations as a way of analysis, because if analysis feels like drudgery, you are more likely to miss insights. Furthermore, in relation to being online, the embodied ecosystem moves/diffracts self, others, materials through space and time – and this transmutes perception. Analysis is always in motion. Therefore Hrach (2021) states that being open, alert and in a sensitive state is necessary for two kinds of embodied activities that encourage thought processes. These are mindful meditation (individual states), and play (participatory states) (p.42).

In relation to individual states, I was acutely aware of the ways play-working with my body catalysed an ability to change my perception; something that is vital at the analysis stage. I consciously moved and engaged with my office environment in a way to encourage and overcome an overreliance on prior experience/thinking. I purposefully changed my chair to a saddle chair so that my spine was more supported, did shoulder and neck exercises to open my heart and mind, as well as stretching and Qigong movements periodically to generate capable and confident thoughts. When my room felt restrictive, I made sure the window was open. I also went for lots of reflective walks. In these ways I acknowledged and honoured that 'moving around, handling things, sensing the position of our bodies in space, and

sensing motion internally: these are the ways our bodies work to understand the world' (Hrach, 2021: 127).

I'll discuss the play(ful) participatory approaches in relation to laughter critical incidents in 4.7.4, but at this point, let us consider the ethics of the inquiry.

#### **4.5.6 Ethics: becoming compassionate**

*'We are moving into people's daily lives, talking to them, watching them, asking them questions, thinking about what they are saying, writing about what they are saying, analysing what they are doing, and sometimes being critical about all these things. Some would consider this an inherently unethical activity' (O'Reilly, 2004: 62).*

Reading the ethnographer O'Reilly's reflection on the ethical intimacy of doing ethnography (shown in the quote above) was deeply refreshing. As an ethnographer and practitioner, it is so important to confront essentialising assumptions that research is inherently 'useful' or 'good'. It may not be, and making intentional choices throughout is imperative, as is acknowledging that as an inquirer you are not superhuman, and mistakes are likely. Considering the ethics of an inquiry 'encourages researchers into becoming more thoughtful, more informed, more reflexive, and more critical of their own actions' (O'Reilly, 2004: 62). My experience of ethical deliberations was that they made me a more compassionate researcher; compassionate of myself as well as all the participants, and the Ethics Committee.

I often felt like 'piggy in the middle': caught between the desires of an organisation that takes pride in its ability to adapt, move and evolve (CAC), that told me early on 'if we want it to happen, we make it work', and a comparatively more bureaucratic and cautious Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC). The approaches to ethics couldn't have been more polarised in many ways. However, this is not to say that CAC disregards ethics – as an organisation the terms 'safety', 'risks' or 'safeguarding' would be used and inform their operational approach (noted during observant participation during online meetings). In between these paradigms were my own viewpoints and experiences, drawn from my Masters research on child trafficking, as well as my career in International Development. I realised early on that it was important to be accountable to the organisation and individual participants, my university HREC and supervisors, and myself. This was a lot of proverbial balls to keep juggling, and occasionally they didn't align. The fourth group to consider (and



never have control over) is you, my reader; how can this research be used by different possible groups in the future? This futuring of ethical considerations can only ever be partial but is still important: it will inform what I choose to write or leave out.

The ethics of ethnography has particular moral considerations (Iphofen and Tolich, 2019). An inquirer must have 'encounters' (Koning and Ooi, 2013) with other thinking, feeling and sensing people (mothers, fathers, students and so on), and in this regard it is a particular type of relationship with research participants, that requires trust (Iphofen, 2011). In particular, considerations around the 'coalface' or 'street level' nature (Iphofen, 2020) of the research mean that whilst many possibilities should be anticipated, some will always be unpredictable, and unexpected. It is, after all, a fundamental assumption of ethnography that people experience life as an ongoing social process and it continues to be so, while being researched (Iphofen, 2020). Moments of discomfort or awkwardness are part of the inductive uncertainty of social process (Koning, 2013), but knowing when an aspect of research becomes overwhelming, disturbing, or too painful for a participant/an ethnographer must also be continually assessed. This is the nature of lived experiences, and how we each consider how to relate to each other.

I made both formal and informal ethical considerations. The formal ethical considerations included four submissions throughout the design and data collection phases (see 4.5.1), as well as one phone/check in to the HREC. I also read and followed the BERA Ethical Guidelines (2018), and the OU's Education Committee (2021) Code of Academic Conduct that draws upon Macfarlane's (2008) approach to researching with integrity. Both guidelines espouse the importance of getting valid consent, and a participant's right to withdraw at any time. In addition, I used informal means such as conversations with my supervisors and participating in an ethnography and ethics workshop by [the New Ethnographer](#); a group set up by experienced researchers to deal directly, and honestly with the competing demands and challenges that ethnographers face. This research, therefore, is influenced by both formal and informal approaches. I needed both.

Regarding ethical challenges and how I worked through them, I'll discuss three, which I hope will be useful for other (online) ethnographers. In Phase 1, the main

ethical consideration was the lack of anonymity for staff. There is a well-worn debate within educational studies and anthropology as to whether anonymity is appropriate, and if so how (Kelly, 2009), and I draw on this debate to frame my decisions. In relation to this inquiry, a potential risk could be of an unforeseen detrimental knock-on effect towards individuals' careers. As CAC is a small organisation (often around ten full-time paid staff), it is impossible to ensure complete anonymity. This was mitigated in several ways. Firstly, staff were explicitly informed of this risk before conducting their interviews, and so could tailor their responses, accordingly, see Appendix 3 for the consent forms. Secondly, the research does not use individuals' names, except for the founder and education advisor who already have public profiles via organisational communications on their website. Specific quotes are attributed by pseudonyms and/or qualified in brackets by the type of role i.e., staff/coach. Thirdly, if children or a sensitive topic are mentioned by a coach i.e., homosexuality in a country where it is prohibited, that specific information is not written about or attributed to an individual even though the general topic may be. The approach above is deemed to be proportional for the context: it is a 'contextually contingent approach to anonymising data' (Saunders et al., 2015: 618).

In phases 1-3, the main ethical challenges related to the online nature of the inquiry. As I started engaging with participants beyond the staff of CAC, I needed to secure informed consent of individuals. The challenge with online meetings was that on occasion I didn't know entirely who would be participating; CAC brings in new volunteers or board members periodically. In these occasional instances, I did not audio/video record, and instead only took notes during observant participation of the staff/coaches from whom I had consent. To inform this process I produced a Data Management Plan in year 1, which was updated in year 2 (see an extract as Appendix 4). Finally, in relation to GDPR digital platform use is an ethical consideration: fortunately, CAC was already using Skype for online meetings at the start of the research, and they moved over to using Zoom from the autumn of 2020. I could participate on Zoom, but not according to my university's protocols, video record because Zoom was not deemed GDPR compliant. I therefore used a handheld audio recorder instead. This was my predominant method for the online trainings, alongside note taking. For Skype/Skype for Business meetings I also video

recorded because this served as a more complete verbal/nonverbal record, *if* required during the challenging/crystallisation stages of the analysis.

Another ethical consideration related to my self-identity as a researcher-practitioner, or practitioner-researcher (depending on who I am with). This has been both useful and challenging in relation to what skills/influence I bring to the research dynamics. Having spent twenty years working within International Development, I bring a conscious practice of doing continual 'risk assessments' for activities, which has supported my research design and practice. However, my two main identities (as researcher and/or practitioner), at times potentially posed a conflict of interest: my experience as a freelancer with a background in youth development meant that CAC staff sometimes asked me for inputs in relation to external-facing workshops specifically relating to play/fun. In one sense this was positive, demonstrating my 'quasi-insider' credentials, however, to follow through substantially would have undermined the legitimacy of this research. So, when in August 2021 Nick Gates stated in a staff meeting that I often 'sit on the fence'; this was a compliment regarding my positionality as the 'resident' PhD researcher, and a moment of relief. I could not be an in-house rapid researcher for them and do justice to the integrity of this research whilst designing, data gathering and analysing, it would simply have been overstepping my influence. Once, when asked to contribute to literature on play for an external workshop, I decided that was as far as I could go.

The final ethical conundrum I learned to face with compassion, was simply the pace of change and adaptability required of me. It was immense. Not only was I researching with an organisation whose ethos is to adapt, change and be dynamic, but then research during a global pandemic added a whole other dimension of change to this. The pandemic created fractures of uncertainty on so many levels; would the organisation keep their operations going? Would they adapt them? If so, how? Did these changes continue to fit with my research interests, and reasons for doing a PhD study? And so on. I outline in 4.5.2 how I changed my research design due to the pandemic, but here I want to mention that changing methods to focus on online trainings (instead of on football pitches), and the unpredictability of scheduling (online trainings were unexpectedly brought forward by a month), meant that I missed a supplementary aspect of my third ethics amendment: gathering photos. I therefore had to retrospectively make a fourth additional request to HREC. Whilst I

had verbal consent for photos from three participants, I missed adding the photos into their original consent form; it was not part of the original plan. I retrospectively informed HREC. I was able to request individual photo consent *because of the retrospective nature*, so the participants had a greater control over what they shared, rather than just signing a 'yes' prior to taking imagined photos. With hindsight, I would have sought written consent in advance, *and* offered them the opportunity to sign off the photos individually retrospectively.

Whilst I agree with O'Reilly (2004) that the practice, the doing, the learning and refinement of an ethical inquirer generally 'encourages researchers into becoming more thoughtful, more informed, more reflexive, and more critical of their own actions' (O'Reilly, 2004: 62). I would also suggest that an ethical inquirer should also be compassionate towards themselves, their HREC and the organisation and individuals they are researching; this is part of a relational ontology. There will undoubtedly be tensions and contradictions between these.

## **4.6 Documentary review**

Having discussed ethics, I now focus my attention on each of the methods I used to gather data. I'll present them mainly in a time-sequenced order, however, as Figure 7 in 4.5.1 shows, several methods, such as document review or participant observation often overlapped. The first way of gaining an understanding of CAC was to read some of their documents. Whilst the use of documentary review as a method of analysis is secondary, in terms of the crystallisation approach, it offered a useful entry point into the initial phases of the inquiry, focusing on constructions of fun by staff and coaches (Research Question 1). I intentionally did not track and read all internal (online) working documents, as this was beyond my capacity, therefore I developed a strategy to focus only on documents that related directly to Purposeful play, fun and learning.

### **4.6.1 Focusing in**

My strategy meant focusing on 25 core documents, both internal e.g., training manuals, Theory of Change, and external facing e.g., annual reports. I kept a handful of examples of CAC working/live Google Docs, website/Twitter screenshots, and screenshots of Facebook Workplace as descriptive artefacts, rather than as part of my method and analysis. My focus on CAC's online experiences was

predominantly on their synchronous video conferencing constructions of fun (as verbal and non-verbal expressions).

I participated in 46 online staff meetings between January 2020 and February 2021 (shown in green in Appendix 5). Communications between staff predominately occurred via an online platform – Workspace by Facebook, Google Docs, Zoom (prior to autumn 2020, this was Skype) and emails. Individuals also live chat on WhatsApp and occasionally use Google Hangouts. External-facing social media include Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook. In addition to the online meetings, I conducted 17 interviews, enabling a direct engagement with the discourse and narratives from staff members and coaches.

The types of documents reviewed included:

- internal organisational documentation, including, training manuals/curriculums (8); the theory of change (1); monitoring and evaluation data (3); child protection guidelines (1); and working documents relating to the Impact and Instruct teams (6) as well as
- external-facing documentation, including, A Decade in Review Report, 2018 (1); the Annual Report, 2020 (1)
- Judith Gates (educational advisor) PhD thesis (1)
- published articles; by CAC staff (1), and other articles which refer to their work with partner organisations (2).

Some of the documents were provided by CAC staff, and others I found online via searches e.g., articles that refer to their work. The ethos in CAC is that documents must serve a purpose and be as concise as possible. Whilst at times it seemed there could be a paucity of CAC documentation, I realised this was likely due to the values of the organisation, which focus on ‘doing’ and ‘being dynamic’<sup>25</sup>. Therefore, bureaucratic processes seem to be minimised, and documentation streamlined. In addition, as an organisation with few staff, there simply wasn’t the luxury of pursuing all projects of interest.

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<sup>25</sup> The founders’ comments during his interview in January 2020.

## **4.7 Semi-structured interviews**

After an initial review of documents and a discussion with the founder, it was agreed that interviews with staff would be a useful entry point into the organisation. The Skype interviews began with the founder and educational advisor, and subsequently the six other full-time staff members were identified as ‘the most relevant for the research’, because they were *all* the full-time staff members, and because they made up a small number, this was manageable. Therefore, individuals were selected based on a ‘purposeful sample’ that focused on inclusivity (i.e., all staff) and practicality (i.e., the number was feasible) (Markula and Silk, 2011). Skype was deemed the most appropriate tool as this was one of their normal ways of communicating in real time, at this pre-pandemic time.

### ***4.7.1 Skype interviews with staff and then coaches***

Semi-structured interviews were the main method for collecting the data used to answer Research Question 1 (on constructions of fun). This method was also used to contribute towards answering Research Questions 2 and 3 (on the relationship to learning and significance of fun). This was because an ‘individual interview is a valuable method of gaining insight into people's perceptions, understandings and experiences of a given phenomenon and can contribute to in-depth data collection’ (Ryan et al., 2009: 309). Interview as method therefore facilitated an in-depth way of tracing participants’ constructions of fun. In particular semi-structured interviews, which have a series of crafted (and consistent) questions for each participant and also allow ‘the exploration of spontaneous issues raised by the interviewee’ (Ryan et al., 2009: 310). This removes some of the researcher-participant hierarchy and enables participants to draw from wider frames of language and communication, not just from the researcher. When looking at a slippery concept such as fun, this included open questions and was intentional; signifying to participants through playful body language/tones, that they could bring in elements of their own playfulness (throwing off constraints) in relation to the subject matter. But also preconceived traditions of how to respond to research questions (see 4.7.4).

Seven online Skype interviews with staff and the CAC educational advisor were conducted in Phase 1, and then nine were conducted with coaches in Phase 2. I will outline the process and justifications fully in 4.7.3, but suffice to say coaches were

also selected via purposeful sampling. My criteria again focused on inclusivity: this time through speaking with a range of genders, age groups and nationalities, to reach a spectrum of views; and practicality – the founder was keen that I approach ‘engaged’ individuals. These interviews were the main mechanism and opportunity to build rapport (Merriam and Grenier, 2019) with core staff members, understand their roles in the organisation and begin a conversation around fun, play and learning. Semi-structured interviews (Drever, 2003; Mason, 2018) were chosen as a suitable method, because they allow for a balance between covering certain topics i.e. staff roles, meanings of learning etc. and allowing for a freer conversational approach that enables participants to diverge, and co-construct; they are a good example of disciplined improvisation as method. General themes and associated questions were prepared in advance, and whilst the sequence for themes was consistent, the exact wording, and flow of questions had some variance depending on the real time responses. The interview question templates are shown in Appendix 6, for staff, and Appendix 7 for coaches.

I engaged in Skype interviews for two main reasons. The first was pragmatic; several of my participants lived in a different country. Secondly, the nature of Skype Interviewing (Janghorban et al., 2014; Salmons, 2015; Iacono et al., 2016; Hanna and Mwale, 2017) brought benefits, compared with face-to-face interviews, including in disrupting preconceived notions of interviews. Hanna and Mwale (2017) discuss five main benefits (and disruptions), which I observed to be relevant (and interrelated), to this inquiry. I am by no means saying that every Skype interview has all these dynamics/benefits all of the time; they require the researcher to facilitate them, but I certainly experienced and witnessed these attributes during this inquiry.

Hanna and Mwale (2017) suggest that Skype interviews can bring:

- 1) a greater degree of ease and flexibility with scheduling, thus lessening the research burden on participants;
- 2) the virtual and visual interaction can help facilitate rapport and trust, including via concentrated visual cues (and I would also add camaraderie in the face of the challenges of technology);
- 3) ease of data capture through audio/video recording functions/software;

- 4) a sense of space as both 'public' and 'private', because the social space is both (more or less) private and familiar, but also accessible to the researcher who remains physically removed;
- 5) a greater control for participants, namely choosing a video or just voice call – the latter enhances their anonymity, if they desire it.

Whilst virtual synchronous interviews can strengthen rapport building, they nonetheless require a carefully considered approach in terms of how to build *and maintain* rapport, especially when there may not be any visible, bodily forms of communication, such as facial expressions (not all the interviews used video) (Salmons, 2015). Therefore, for the staff Skype interviews I sought to find some alignment with the content of the research and the organisational culture through presenting an attentive, friendly, and good-humoured tone.

The interviews were framed as an 'opportunity for dialogue and to share initial thinking'. They lasted from 40–90 minutes. Participants were asked how they felt most comfortable regarding the use of the video camera, which I then mirrored. A minority of participants chose to have the video on, preferring virtual eye contact, whereas others preferred the camera off. There is an element of hypervisibility or performance with the video function on i.e., needing to look engaged and well-presented that can be distracting. Whilst visual cues can provide further data gathering opportunities, the primary focus was on establishing rapport and verbal constructions. However, where a physical gesture was observed, it was noted in alignment with the theory of meta communication. This is explored further through the method of capturing 'laughter critical incidents', see 5.3.1.

#### **4.7.2 Transcription**

In addition to virtual interviews, the act of transcription is a situated act informed by the conceptual and epistemological underpinnings of a discipline (Green, Franquiz and Dixon, 1997: 172). It is not a neutral act 'whereby talk is just written down' (Green et al., 1997: 172). Rather it is a political endeavour that demonstrates an inquirer's assumptions and conceptualisations, including the nature of what is being studied, the theories informing the research, and the overall objectives of the research. Transcription is therefore an analytic tool to serve a particular purpose (Corsaro, 1985).



According to Green et al. (1997), transcribing is both an interpretive and representational process. Whilst Green et al. (1997) draw from sociolinguistic traditions in cultural anthropology, their rich rigour can be applied to this inquiry. It is useful to consider a transcript as a text that re-presents an event; and not the event itself. The researcher re-presents data through their own research lens, and in doing so makes interpretive choices. For example, it is important to reflect upon the researcher's cultural and educational assumptions about language, including what counts as language and meaning in situ. From this socially constructed perspective, a transcript represents both the inquirer(s) and the participants in granular (and detailed) ways. The transcription decisions and justifications, to understand constructs of fun (Research Question 1) are based upon the framework presented by Green et al. (1997), which consists of five key questions shown in Table 4 and concluded in Appendix 8. Similar choices were taken for Research Question 2 (see 4.9.1 for these choices).

Table 4: Transcription decisions and justifications in relation to Research Question 1: constructions of fun

	<b>Framework – Questions (1-2 out of 5)</b>	<b>Approach taken</b>	<b>Justification</b>
1.	<p>What is represented in the transcript? What level of contextual information will be provided, so that ‘readers’ may ‘hear’ or ‘see’ the researcher’s interpretive processes?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The transcript will include: an introduction stipulating, who, what, where, how long, and how (online/face to face) the semi structured interview took place.</li> <li>• If there are any significant and pointedly made (affect intonations) nonverbal actions, these will be recorded in brackets.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The ‘setting the scene’ re-presentation by the analyst provides useful contextual information, which will be reflected upon in terms of how interviews may/ may not be used depending on the research purposes going forward in the study.</li> <li>• Non-verbal actions conveyed additional meaning, such as the hand gesture of quotation marks to indicate divergence from the normative meaning of a word by a participant. The guiding rule for nonverbal gestures recorded was anything that appeared a form of ‘metacommunication’ (Bateson, 1972) that was performative/theatrical: essential to convey an extra layer/bracketing of meaning. Interviews without a camera focused on tone of voice and pause only.</li> </ul>
2.	<p>Who will be involved in constructing the transcript? How does the analyst position themselves?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In this instance the analyst alone is involved in constructing the transcript, although the process of the interview is a co-construction.</li> <li>• The analyst’s positioning is minimised in the transcript in order to foreground the participant’s talk i.e., if the analyst provided a long example/ explanation for a question it is edited down. The participant’s text remains minimally edited i.e., only repeated words/ incorrect grammatical utterances.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This is understood by the organisation as the ‘role’ of the researcher, and for standardisation purposes this should be the same person.</li> <li>• Foregrounding the participant’s talk regarding meanings is more important than analysing relationships with regard to the research question.</li> </ul>

### **4.7.3 Inviting coaches to join the inquiry**

Access to CAC had been established prior to starting the research project via my supervisors, and our RUMPUS research group on fun at The Open University. Nick Gates (the founder) then provided access to six core staff members, and I later interviewed the CEO when he returned from a sabbatical, as well as a new member who joined in the spring of 2020 to help with fundraising efforts. The consent forms made it clear that staff did not have to participate. Staff returned forms (in general) quickly, and the interviews were lively; I did not sense that I was overburdening/ putting pressure on participants.

The intention was then to match the staff (8) voices with the same number of coaches' voices in Phase 2. These followed the format of general introductions, a discussion of the coaches' roles and how they came to partner and work with CAC, before exploring the central concepts of 'fun', 'play' and 'self-directed learning' and how COVID-19 is affecting their work. Skype interviews in localities/countries where the internet was less reliable meant that on occasion there was no option for visual communication, and therefore a concerted effort to establish rapport with some non-native English speakers was sought via pacing, an engaged tone, and a deep practice of listening. Recruitment was initially conceived of as being an 'open' process via sending out an 'Expression of Interest' form to potential coaches to consider joining the research.

However, due to the pandemic, the accreditation program was no longer operating, and the founder thought it best to reach out to coaches that already expressed an interest in being part of COVID-19 emerging programmes. We agreed on a purposeful sampling method (Patton, 2002) that included maintaining working with a mix of coaches by gender, country, and age (diversity); ensuring their right to participate or otherwise (via the consent form); building upon an existing level of engagement with CAC; competency with English; and access to Skype. See Table 5 for an overview of nationalities of coaches.

*Table 5: Nationalities of all the coaches*

No.	Pseudonym	Nationality	Gender	Adult/youth (18-25)
1	Ned	Tanzanian	Male	Adult
2	Sita	Indian	Female	Adult

3	Manila	Filipino	Female	Adult
4	Jose	Mexican	Male	Adult
5	Mary	Indonesian	Female	Youth
6	Denis	British (Scottish)	Male	Adult
7	Carol	Peruvian	Female	Youth
8	Anjali	Nepalese	Female	Youth
9	Dasia	Lebanese	Female	Youth

It is likely that the purposeful sampling meant that I was researching with some of the most engaged coaches, and/or those most likely to be in tune with CAC values and approaches. However, it was useful to get the perspective from the coach from Scotland, as this was a very new partnership for CAC, and so potentially offered a less embedded viewpoint. As I finished the interviews in Phases 1 and 2, I was already in the process of thinking through methods to encounter embodied expressions of fun, within learning experiences online. This is now, where we turn.

#### ***4.7.4 An embodied expression of fun: laughter critical incidents***

As an ethnographer concerned with meta communication, I focused on thinking and sensing how ‘fun’ may be embodied in specific learning activities. In this regard, I drew from the educational literature on ‘critical incidents’. The term ‘critical incident’ is defined in a number of ways: ‘an everyday event that stands out’ (Martin, 1996), ‘vivid happenings that are considered significant or memorable’ (Brookfield, 1995, 2017; Woods, 1993), ‘a problematic situation that presents itself as a unique case and promotes reflection’ (Schön, 1987), or ‘highly charged moments and episodes that have enormous consequences for personal change and development’ (Sikes and Measor, 1985: 432). I refer to the term, using Brookfield’s (1995) and Woods’ (1993) conceptualisation as a significant or memorable occurrence, because this aligns with Finchman’s (2016) suggestion that fun is a phenomenon that comes into being with the recollection of a specific moment.

Several educational researchers have used critical incidents to improve teaching practices, most notably Tripp (1993). Tripp (1993) argues that the interpretation of the significance of an event makes it critical. Therefore, it is not something to be uncovered, like a pot of gold, but rather an interpretive investigation with participants,

to jointly seek out meanings. The criticality of an event comes from an interpreted broader significance with something in the wider context. Thus, critical incidents are not simply observed; they are crafted and created. Secondly, Tripp (1993) believes that most critical incidents are not at all dramatic or obvious but can be created via post-event analysis with participants. This is a crucial aspect of the methodology of critical incidents. It is only through a process of co-analysis that these rather typical incidents are rendered critical. 'In a research context, rendering incidents as critical incidents involves the need to seek out the... meaning of what is usually taken for granted' (Halquist and Musanti, 2010: 450).

I also refer to the work of Lisahunter and Emerald (2016) who apply a sensory lens to their notion of critical incidents. As an embodied ethnographer, with both presence online and offline (Stanley, 2001; Bolander and Locher, 2020) sensory ways of knowing, beyond language and discourse, are significant ways of exploring the meaning of events (Field-Springer, 2020). For Lisahunter and Emerald (2016)

sensational – learning points' focus specifically on what has captured the attention of either the participant or the researcher, and 'turned' them 'in some way...not necessarily because it is shocking or surprising...but because it moves senses...towards it (p.40).

These moments are not 'sensational' in the normative understanding, as something bombastic and out of the ordinary, but rather the focus is on the stimulation of the senses i.e., intense lighting, a state of 'flow' or a particular smell evoking a memory. With regard to this inquiry, the turn will be in me, the researcher participating and observing the coaches, rather than in the coaches themselves.

I am interested in meta-communication (Bateson, 1972), because it focuses on the layers of messages conveyed via non-verbal/indirect cues, as well as in the sensory perception of such cues. Lisahunter and Emerald's (2016) 'sensational – learning points' encourage the researcher to be sensorially alert to non-verbal/indirect cues, to seek out complex meanings or, as they state, 'ways to capture layering's of specifically sensed experience' (p.30). In the context of researching an ambiguous, amorphous, and socially constructed concept as 'fun' I therefore adapted Lisahunter and Emerald's (2016) definition, conceptualising a 'fun learning-turning point' as a particular type of critical incident, which sensorially tunes into possible non-verbal

cues of fun – in particular laughing. I also identified references to laughter during the interviews in Phase 1 (see 4.5.1), which later becomes part of the thematic definitions of fun by several of the coaches and staff (see 5.2.1). To manage the observation of laughter as a cue, as *a possible* entry point towards understanding the roles of fun, I later refined a ‘fun learning-turning point’ (my particular concept of a critical incident), as a ‘laughter critical incident’ (LCI) i.e., one that prompts one or more of the participants to spontaneously laugh.

Further propositions/questions to be explored in relation to defining a ‘laughter critical incident’ can be summarised as follows. Firstly, can fun be sensorially recognised via a physical, non-verbal bodily expression/cue (Bateson, 1972), specifically in this instance as a laugh or smile? What other moments of fun are left out in using such a definition? Second, this definition assumes that fun can be connected to experiences both on the screen and/or within the physical space an individual occupies (Bolander and Locher, 2020), as well as that it is likely to have an effect (as defined by the coaches) upon themselves, as well as potentially an effect on others participating e.g., they join in and laugh. Furthermore, this definition proposes it is likely that fun can be mediated by digital/physical artefacts (Macpherson et al., 2006), and it may be unplanned, unanticipated and uncontrolled i.e., spontaneous, as well as including intertextual moments e.g., connecting across time and events. The above propositions predominately draw from the work of Richards and Haberlin (2019); and lisahunter and Emerald (2016).

I am not limiting fun to something conceived of as a positive universal state of being/phenomenon. However, by using a particular type of laughter, I am assuming that these incidents offer an entry point, a non-verbal conduit, and more specifically a learning-turning point: a place from which to then discuss and challenge the assumption that fun is just an emotion/associated only with forms of enjoyment.

I now turn to outlining why spontaneous laughter, in particular, may be a useful nonverbal cue to begin with. Cognitive scientists Bryant et al., (2018) build on previous research that shows that as humans we have the ability to tell genuine laughter from so-called ‘fake’ laughter i.e., genuine laughter transcends culture. In their study across 21 countries, their findings show that spontaneous laughter has certain identifying qualities. During spontaneous laughter, the emotional vocal

system produces qualities that signal ‘arousal’ — higher pitch and volume, as well as faster bursts of non-articulate sounds and more non-tonal noise. These sounds carry subtle clues that a laugh is authentic. Therefore, these are the qualities of laughter that I sought to identify when participating and observing the coaches during the online training.

There are assumptions and several problems with simply aligning spontaneous laughter as a visual marker of ‘fun’. For example, the work of the psychologist Lafrance (1983), points to the problems and assumptions embedded in using smiling and laughter as a gauge of ‘humour’, commenting that there are issues defining humour as ‘smiling-laughing’ or ‘self-reported funniness’ (p.2). Notably, it assumes that there is a direct correlation between a level of internal felt funniness and the type of visible response. However,

the person laughing the loudest may be the least amused, while the person smiling the least may be suppressing full-flow fun until a more appropriate context can be found. In both cases, the response is less to the humour present than to the *operating social context* [my italics]. A second problem...is the constraint they put on what can be considered humorous (Lafrance, 1983:2).

Indeed, for Streaan and Streaan (2011), ‘humour is not about telling jokes and not essentially about getting laughs. Humour is fundamentally about a mood of lightness that facilitates learning’ as a way to counter stress, anxiety, fear, disengagement (Streaan et al., 2011: 189). And the psychologist and embodied emotion researcher Feldman Barrett (2009) reminds us that there is huge variability in emotional expression not only across cultures, but also across individuals. Specifically, on humour, Ellingson (2018) shows that it is used to help students reflect on subjects they may feel defensive or disinterested in, in order to engage more enthusiastically with learning activities; creating more active communication.

It is possible that the findings and assumptions for humour may also apply to fun (see 6.3). For my purposes here, the work of the psychologist Lafrance (1983) serves as a reminder that I am interested in sensory non-verbal (possibilities of) expressions of fun in motion i.e., moments that act as a conduit to provoke further discussion, to identify negotiated, encounters of being with/in fun.

The steps of the laughter critical incident analysis will be outlined in 5.3.1.

### **4.7.5 Interviews post Zoom trainings – playing with ‘laughter critical incidents’**

The main focus of Phase 3 of data gathering was to provide data to answer Research Question 2 (on how and why particular learning activities were experienced as fun). The main data-gathering methods were the participant observation in four online Zoom trainings (discussed in 4.8.4 in detail), and the post interviews including reflecting upon ‘laughter critical incidents’ during these. These methods provided ways to consider embodied experiences of fun, through the observation of spontaneous incidents of laughter with one staff member and two coaches. In Figure 8 I outline the stages of developing the method of laughter critical incidents in relation to answering Research Question 2. The process was as follows:

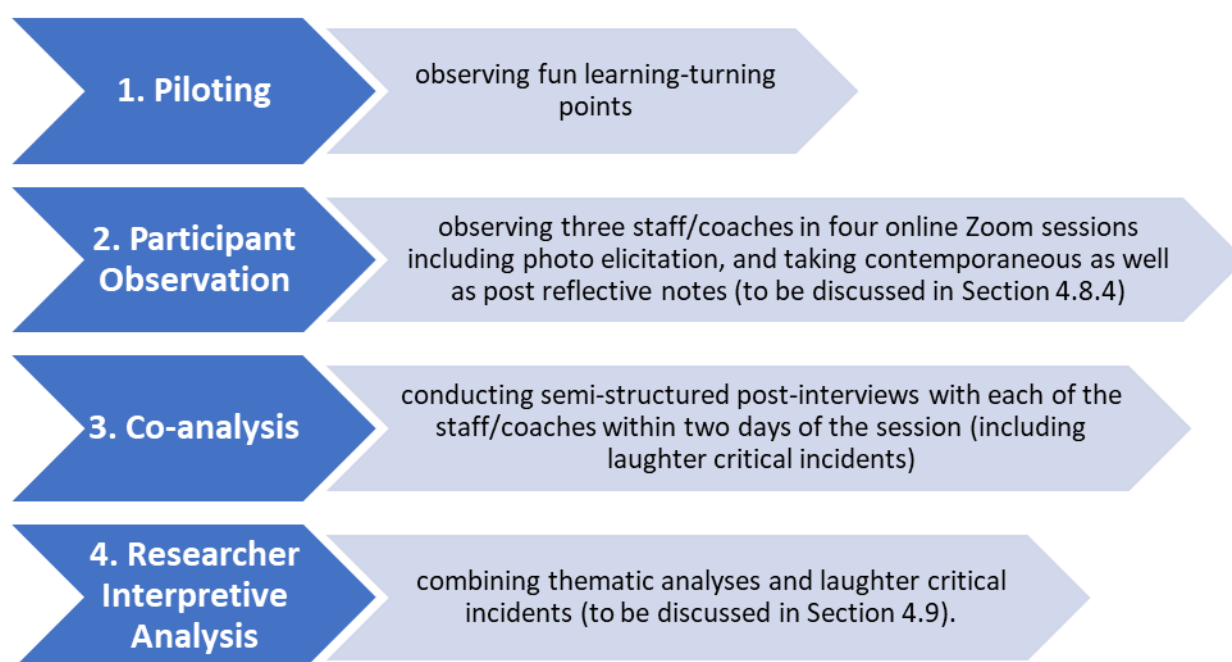


Figure 8: The Four Stages of developing Laughter Critical Incidents

Points 2- 4 did not take a linear path i.e., the continual nature of reflective notes also built upon previous participation observation in earlier sessions.

I now turn to the detailed overview of the stages that relate to the post interviews in the process (points 1 and 3 above).

#### **Piloting laughter critical incidents**

In order to understand further if/how feasible it would be to observe laughter critical incidents in three individuals, I observed two staff members in a recording of an



online meeting they conducted with CICs from Asia in September 2020. This provided the nearest replica context for the forthcoming online Beirut trainings i.e., focusing on 2-3 participants amongst a group of about 12. I focused simply on seeing if I could identify laughter critical incidents as defined previously and responding to: Does this process generate too many/few critical incidents to be workable? Does this definition capture all the times I sensed that fun 'took place'?

I selected a 10-minute clip at the beginning of the session and identified five laughter critical incidents by the two participants in this time. Three were spontaneous laughs and two 'smiling with the eyes' smiles. I originally considered working with these 'Duchenne smiles' as well. However, I noted that spontaneous laughter was relatively straightforward to observe, compared with the smiles: smiling seemed to be used more frequently as a form of acknowledgement, group socialisation – a putting at ease – or nervous energy in relation to whether or not the technology was operating as they intended. Therefore, I decided just to work with spontaneous laughter and not Duchenne smiles for two reasons: firstly, it is harder to observe the nuances of types of smiles in an asynchronous videoconferencing event, and secondly technological issues of Zoom could restrict visibility e.g., virtual backgrounds interfering with facial recognition, or a drop in bandwidth resulting in a loss of image.

After establishing feasibility, I reflected on the question: Does the working definition of a 'laughter critical incident' capture *all* the times I thought 'fun' took place amongst the two people I was observing? I decided I would need to discuss this with them to answer this question fully, because as an individual I alone could only provide a partial viewpoint. However, what I could do is identify *moments for dialogical discussion* to help facilitate the co-analysis of the recalled moments during the interview. I chose a co-analysis approach, understood in this inquiry as a discursive practice, whereby the inquirer and participant discuss the witnessed, possible laughter critical incidents to ascertain whether they were inherently 'fun' for the participant, or not. In this method it is not imperative to capture all, but rather to gather some instances relating to the analytical framework of the critical incidents: embodiment and mediating artefacts. In the pre-testing observation, the instances did relate to embodied experiences: in terms of both physical movement, and jokes about physical appearances, as well as participants acknowledging and wanting to

subvert the mediating role of digital artefacts e.g., a smile turning into a spontaneous laugh after an exchange regarding whether they should use the PowerPoint prepared: 'but you put so many hours into preparing this presentation!'

### **Co-analysis: discussing with coaches their experience and interpretations**

I conducted one-to-one semi-structured Skype interviews (Bott and Tourish, 2016) with each of the coaches, normally within a day of the online trainings. I followed guiding questions (see Table 6), and where a moment presented itself asked additional questions to unpack or gain further clarification. I also sought to make the interview more engaging by the second and third rounds by spontaneously heralding in the interviewee's LCIs with a vocal drum/trumpet sound, in an effort to re-create a game show atmosphere. Hence, I continued to embody my research approach of play-working with disciplined improvisation.

The questions intentionally cover both an exploration of understanding 'how' the learning and experiences manifested for each participant, but crucially also why certain moments were perceived as fun, in relation to the specific learning encounter because there are these two aspects to Research Question 2.

The one-hour interviews proceeded as follows:

#### Introduction

- I explained that the aim of the interviews was to understand the role and purpose of fun during the online trainings; and that I was encouraging a space for coaches' own interpretations.
- Therefore, I explained that the questions were focused on *how* they experienced the training.
- I video recorded the interviews to facilitate transcript write-ups and requested that they had their video cameras on, knowing that in previous interviews they had chosen this way of engaging. This helped to provide a richer data set, assuming no connectivity issues arose. Overleaf are the general questions:

Table 6: Post online training session interviews – guiding questions

	Question	Reason for asking
Context, and approach to learning and fun in general		
1	What were your role(s) during the session?	To understand how participants are positioning themselves within the learning context. This is likely to influence their experience and reflections.
2	From your point of view, how did it go overall?	To contextualise and facilitate their recall of the event through an ice breaker activity.
3	What did you learn? Did you have any learning experiences?  [not just content/functionality – but what did they learn about the social environment, materials/tools, their bodies i.e., the integration and sensitivity contexts]	To establish whether they experienced any learning during the session, and if so what.  To understand a broad range of types of learning.
4	Were there moments you recall as particularly fun? Both on screen, and/or in your physical space?	To understand which parts of activities were interpreted as ‘fun’.  To consider their online presence as well as their physical presence
5	Can you tell me why?	To understand how fun is defined during this particular experience.
6	In relation to the moments, you describe as particularly ‘fun’, how did they serve a purpose for <i>your or others’</i> learning?  [learning = context, socially, personally. Or might not have anything to do with learning]	To understand purposes of fun in this particular session. As well as how fun contributes to learning activities/practice.
7	What is the relationship (significance) between fun and learning here?	To understand purposes of fun in this particular session. Focusing on their beliefs.
Laughter critical incidents		
8	I am exploring whether laughter may help to identify fun moments or not. I noticed that you seemed to laugh during x activities. Were these all fun?  Can you tell me more about that?  (If not – can you say more about that?)	To check how useful/bounded my critical incident definition is.

9	How was the experience of fun mediated (enabled/hindered) by being online?	To understand the use of mediating artefacts, presence, and embodiment: affirming the online nature of the experience.
10	Could the session objectives have been achieved without fun?  Please explain (how would it be different?)	To challenge their assumptions about fun and learning.
Wrap Up		
11	Did my presence (as a researcher) influence the experience? Did it change anything?	To understand the nature of my impact in this particular research activity from coaches' perspectives.
12	Open question: are there any other reflections you would like to share in regard to your experience of fun and the purposes it served in the session?	To provide an open space for reflection; they may have more to say.

Having discussed the interviews, I now turn to outlining the 'how and why' of online participant observation, including the Zoom online trainings.

## 4.8 The spectrum of online participant observation

*'Interviews do not alone constitute ethnography, because, in many cases, interviewees cannot report upon what they 'do' – for 'doings' are often unconscious or unarticulated practices' (Watson and Till, 2018: 12).*

As explained in 4.4.1, the method of 'participant observation' is a fluid approach that moves along a spectrum of trying to understand others' lived experiences and social meaning making, through shades of direct involvement, versus removed observation. Participant-observation necessitates close attention to, and at times joining in, everyday geographies, to become aware of how social spaces are created in various contexts. 'Only by participating with others can ethnographers better understand lived, sensed, experienced, and emotional worlds' (Watson and Till, 2018: 12). This aligns with my research questions, because I am concerned with social constructions, including non-verbalised forms of meta-communication (Bateson, 1972), lived experiences, and the relations between learning experiences and a specific social phenomenon – fun.

In certain situations, as an ethnographer, one aspect of 'participating' or 'observing' may be more appropriate compared to the other. For example, during Phase 1, it

was important to maintain a strong sense of research independence ('being an outsider'). I signalled this by maintaining a university email account, and not taking the organisational email account that was offered. I will now discuss the nuances of *online* participant observation, before outlining each of the different spaces for participant observation, and why I focused on certain aspects more than others, as well as what opportunities this afforded me or potentially closed off.

To understand an overview of all the 46 instances of participant observation, see Appendix 5 for the complete log of events (including the 'Pods', online trainings, and post interviews).

#### ***4.8.1 Participation, membership, and visibility***

The nature of participation in online participant observation is different compared with face-to-face research (Kulavuz-Onal and Vásquez, 2013). For my purposes I outline the last three of Dewalt and Dewalt's (2002) typography of in-person participation. Moderate participation suggests the researcher is identifiable as a researcher and occasionally interacts with the persons being studied. Active participation is where the researcher becomes a member e.g., a road sweep to study road sweepers, whereas complete participation is when the researcher is already a member of the community to be researched e.g., a trumpet player studying a group of trumpet players. According to Kulavuz-Onal and Vásquez (2013), netnography specialists, these typologies do not relate to online ethnographers' experiences when aligned with membership (access) roles. Access to an online group can be peripheral, active, or full. They argue that moderate, active, and complete participation require peripheral, active, and full membership in the community, respectively. In online ethnography, even though a researcher is given active/full membership they can still maintain passive participation; this is not feasible with in-person ethnography. There is a digital persona – a visibility of 'being here and there' online; a presence that is generated through direct engagement with feelings, physical movements, and online/offline artefacts. These are, as Chapter 3 illustrates, important ways to respond to the research questions, which are focused on understanding experiences and the relationality of fun and learning.

An online ethnographer, in addition to participation and membership, must also consider their visibility (an aspect of presence) and use this to define 'the boundary

between non-participation and participation' (Kulavuz-Onal and Vásquez, 2013: 229). While the ethnographer is automatically visible to others when s/he is present in the field, Kulavuz-Onal and Vásquez (2013) state that the netnographer needs to make a greater effort to be visible to the community, by engaging with others and involvement in activities. It is the extent of visibility which informs the degree of participation. I assert that an online researcher is likely to move between these states/identities of participation, membership *and* visibility depending on the type of online space they find themselves in, such as a staff meeting, or conducting an interview, but also *within* a single event, shifts can occur. The following sub-sections illustrate this, and contribute towards reflexivity, as well as broader understandings of doing ethnography in online synchronous/video-conferencing spaces.

#### **4.8.2 Online meetings**

Initially I was invited to a range of staff meetings, but subsequently I enquired/heard about opportunities, or occasionally created an opportunity to continue a discussion, such as with Judith Gates on Purposeful Play, after a staff meeting. Participant observation in online (Hine, 2000; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2019) staff meetings requires a sound understanding of how the technology and software operate (Howlett, 2021), as well as a degree of skill in how to interact online/being visible and present. For example, sitting inert for minutes on end, or showing a partial aspect of a face can be distracting/disengaging. Fortunately, I had experience of conducting interviews online (on Skype and Skype for Business predominantly) prior to the research project as a social development consultant. I learnt that using a physical notebook alongside whilst online could be a useful *visible prop*, not only to perform my role as 'the researcher', but also to allow for moments of pause/reflection.

Depending on the meeting agenda, and the atmosphere, I predominately chose to be a moderate participant (identifying as a researcher who occasionally contributes), sporadically moving into active participation, normally during instances of rapport building, such as jokes and 'banter', or asking direct questions relating to fun. Rather than contributing content/opinions. I had active membership, although never full, as I was aware that staff members could communicate on other social media channels such as WhatsApp simultaneously. My default visibility/persona was to be an 'engaged observer', and this meant I often had my camera on and used my body to communicate interest in what was being said, for example, by looking into the

camera, nodding my head, joining in with laughter and so on. I chose not to be a 'complete participant' or an 'in-house researcher'; and did not respond fully to direct questions such as 'what do you think about our approach to play in relation to others?' As explained in 4.4.1, I believed this type of participation would have undermined the legitimacy of the research: if I introduced something novel related to fun/playfulness that then became dominant in CAC practice and discourse, *whilst* doing this research; it would be the equivalent of an 'own goal' in football.

### ***4.8.3 The 'Pods' as a high visibility performance: active participation and membership***

Over the course of the year of data gathering I also conducted three online 'Pod' reflection sessions. The aim being to create a space to update all staff together, build and maintain rapport, and allow them to reflect on the research (during design and data gathering stages). Figure 9 outlines the aims of each of the 3 'Pod' reflection spaces', and Appendix 9 presents some of the power point slides used for session 2.

I intentionally created these spaces to ensure that I would have some moments in the research of active (to almost complete) participation, full membership (I created the spaces and others joined) and high visibility. As already mentioned, in online ethnography the visibility of being a researcher needs to be carefully crafted, and by creating the spaces themselves, and generating mediating artefacts (like the PowerPoints I used to guide the sessions) I was signalling I was present, facilitating and *doing* the research; and it was in motion.

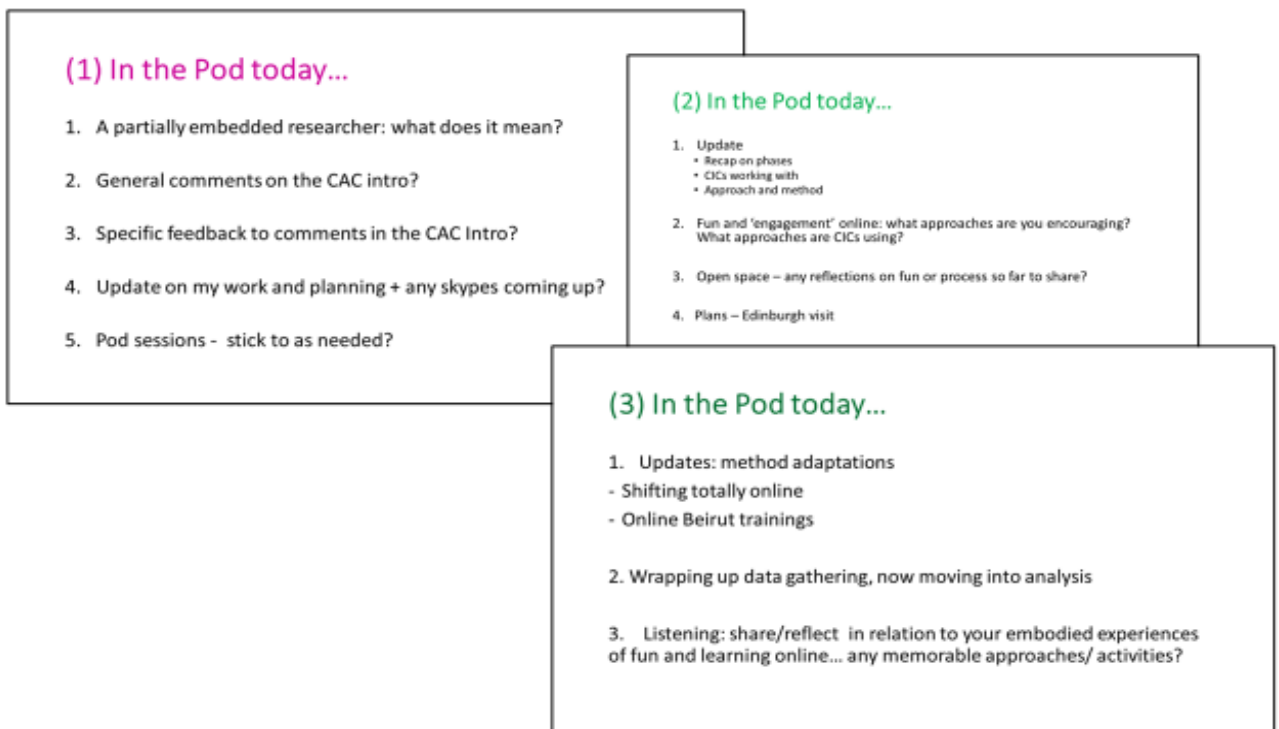


Figure 9: Agendas of the 'Pod' reflection spaces; March 2020 (1), September 2020 (2) and February 2021 (3)

Staff created an online space entitled 'What is fun?' on the Facebook Workplace site, but this was not synchronous, and did not offer the type of engagement that video conferencing can. I therefore created and invited CAC staff to Skype for Business meetings, as this procedurally was deemed more secure by HREC in relation to video recording. Several of them had used Skype for Business but commented that it was 'cronky' and that the way of showing individuals' faces was less than ideal, especially if I used a PowerPoint, because all faces disappeared.

This was a time when relational ethics (what was deemed most suitable/of value to participants), and procedural ethics (those deemed most suitable by the University) did not align. As this was a space and performance, to assert my 'independent' role as a researcher, (and I knew there would only be a small number of these) that wouldn't be too inconvenient, I persisted. I was actively participating as the visible, active 'alongsider' researcher. The sessions remained well attended, and I kept them informal and light-hearted, even in the last one trying an online [Pecha Kucha](#) to help create a dynamic pace, and a sense of potential 'fun'. It was partially successful: the content was perhaps slightly lost, as the presentation started before, I intended it to. The 20 seconds for each of the 20-slide format required a bit more practice online than I had anticipated. Although that, in itself, was entertaining for several of the participants; the unexpected often is.



#### **4.8.4 Participant observation in Zoom trainings**

The four online Zoom training sessions were intended for a wider group of nine Lebanese youth trainers from Cirquenciel, a circus art group that is part of a youth programming NGO called Arcenciel, a partner organisation of CAC. The Lebanese trainers subsequently worked with children and youth affected by the August 2020 explosion in Beirut. Neither the Lebanese youth trainers, nor the children they worked with are the focus of this inquiry, but I included the trainers as they were an integral part of the online learning experience. My method focused on the three coaches, and my own reflective experiences as an online ethnographer. The staff member and two coaches participating in the training all participated in Phase 1/2 interviews. The staff member came from the Impact team of CAC, and the two coaches were Community Impact Coaches (CICs) from the Philippines, and Lebanon respectively. The Filipino coach had experience of conducting a 'trainer of trainer type workshop using play as a response to trauma', and the Lebanese CIC worked as the Youth program manager for Arcenciel. The Filipino and Lebanese coaches had never met in person, whereas the CAC staff member had previously worked with the other two in person.

During the Zoom trainings, I positioned myself as taking an 'active participatory role' aligned to the synchronous online context (Kulavuz-Onal and Vásquez, 2013). This means that as an active participant/researcher, I asked questions, joined in with ice-breaker games, engaged in discussions with the group (including in breakout rooms), and was generally part of the activity being studied. In an online context, this also meant generating a medium-high 'visibility' (Kulavuz-Onal and Vásquez, 2013), by turning my video on, jotting in my notebook, and engaging in text chat periodically. This enabled me to experience the event in the first instance – the doing and being there of the lived experience, so that I could use my own reflections of the experience to act as a compass from which to explore their experiences: it created a dialectical/relational aspect to the interview between researcher and researched. Table 7 captures some of the quotes from participants in relation to if/how I influenced the session.

Table 7: Session 1 responses on the influence of the researcher

<b>Question: Did my presence as a researcher influence the experience for you? Did it change anything?</b>	
<i>Person</i>	<i>Response</i>
Dasia	I really think of you as a friend, or someone that helped us prepare this. I don't think of you as an observer, as a researcher: I forget you exist. I know you exist!! I am happy to see you...The questions you ask us really sometimes help us shape or focus.
Katie	Nothing bad, if anything I think your whole presence in this thing has been interesting, because I wonder if we would be using the term fun, we might just be saying play more. Nick says – we have always had fun there, it's part of our curriculum in the past, but more intentionally thinking about the link between play and fun and then learning. It is huge credit to the conversations with you and getting us thinking about it more... and in terms of the actual training the only thing I had to do, was think about another only English speaker.
Manila	Not really. Just oh Sarah is here, the researcher. I think when you shared you are a researcher, we were more comfortable.

I audio recorded the trainings to generate a memory prompt; a bank of material to draw upon if needed, providing a greater level of detail and nuance, than relying on personal memory alone. I did not video record the session(s) for two reasons: firstly, this can influence the nature of participation from individuals within a group where rapport is not already established (more so than simply an audio recording); and secondly this is ethically problematic recording a session with potentially vulnerable individuals as part of the group, even though they are not the individuals being researched. I did not focus on visual cues during the Zoom sessions, rather on the sound of spontaneous laughter as part of my method, therefore I did not need to take a video recording.

At the start of the training, I was introduced as a researcher working with CAC at the Open University exploring the learning practices of CAC. I explained my role was to *only* observe the three coaches, write notes of my own learning experience, and I communicated my playful nature: stating that I would keep a watch over the coaches (to subvert the power imbalances inherent in the training dynamics). Finally, I asked

if they had any questions or concerns. Any reaction that the Lebanese youth trainers showed in response to the coaches, or something that they did to cause a coach/staff member to spontaneously laugh was recorded in my notebook using pseudonyms.

During the training I made contemporaneous notes. Firstly, in my notebook I recorded my embodied presence and type of participation, at the start and periodically. This referred to both my embodiment in my room, and in anticipation for my online distributed image/embodiment. I constructed and positioned myself with an open body frame (not hunched over) in my chair, ensured my camera had my face and torso on screen, and adopted a friendly smile. I wore smart casual (colourful/patterned blouses) to signify and further embody a 'friendly' researcher disposition, in order to minimise any unease due to my presence. Secondly, I focused my notes on looking for laughter critical incidents with the three individuals. I did not view the focus on particular individuals as a limitation, rather the second research question demands a focus on the granular of individual experiences. Fortunately, prior to the online session, Zoom did an update in November 2020 which enabled a 'gallery view': I therefore knew I would be able to watch all participants at once on one screen.

Immediately after a Zoom session I:

- 1) Checked I had audio recorded laughter critical incidents
- 2) Added to the notes in my notebook with any further reflections. In particular:
  - a. I noted any change between participation types from myself.
  - b. How I embodied and maintained both physical and digital presence/visibility, and how this may have related to my experience of fun.
  - c. Considered how the type of presence (possibly including mediating artefacts) may have shaped the experiences of fun.
  - d. Other responses not yet identified.

I repeated this process for each training session and recorded reflective notes onto the notes of the subsequent training.

In addition to the notes, digital photos were a way of providing a (partial) visual representation (through the participants' own body-mind) of the situated context from which they experienced both their physical and online experiences of the Zoom trainings. Prior to starting the training sessions, I asked the staff/coaches to take photos of their immediate surroundings and set-up, and I also took a couple of photos of my context. Figure 10 shows some of the material artefacts that were similar or unique to each participant prior to session 1 on 7<sup>th</sup> December 2020. This was important because any experience of fun takes place in a specific situated context/environment, and mediating artefacts (Macpherson et al., 2006) both online and offline are likely to have a role in how experiences of fun are generated. I too recorded my context, so that I could discuss contextual learning with the coaches, from a place of experience.

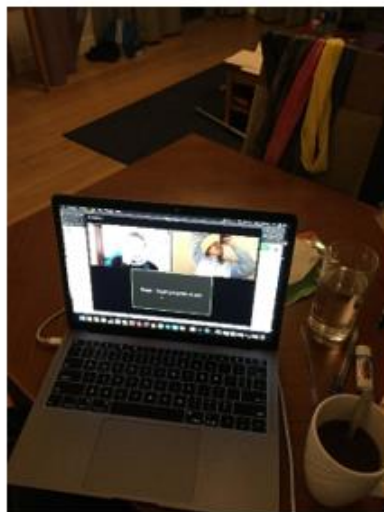
Therefore, the photos produced just before/during the Zoom training sessions were a record of the context of the training for each individual participant, solely for the purposes of this inquiry. I asked the staff/coaches during a preparation session a few days earlier, and through a reminder email (see Appendix 10) to capture images on their smartphones, either prior to the session starting, or when they were alone on screen. I received thirty-seven photos, which are research artefacts intended to (visually) support the staff/coaches' own accounts of their fun learning experiences. They are not a form of analysis in themselves, but rather offer a visual validation of 'fun moments' explored in the post session interviews.



Manila's image



Dasia's image



Katie's image



Sarah's image

*Figure 10: Four physical contexts, prior to the first online training*

## 4.9 Methods of ethnographic analysis

Having discussed the methodology (ethnography), research design (disciplined improvisation) and data collection methods (interviews, participation observation and laughter critical incidents), I now consider how I analysed the data. I conceive of data in a similar way to Bateson (2017), who perceives it as 'warm data': 'information about the interrelationships that integrate elements of a complex system' (Bateson, 2017: 36). It is dynamic and purposefully contextual and relational, rather than concrete and highly reductive. Contextuality – the ontological exploration of a particular setting, and some of the defined components and inter-actions, can be geographical, and/or conceptual. In this way my overall analytical approach – using a crystallisation metaphor (see 4.5.4 and 4.5.5) is a geographical and conceptual prism through which I crafted (and sensed) the data to answer the research questions. Crystallisation is conceived of as the interactions between materiality and

space-times (Massey, 1994): a way of looking at different warm data sets on fun ('molecules') in different ways/methods, through 'angles of approach' (Richardson, 2000), in order to understand both the pattern (a credible coming together), and fragment (contradiction/divergence) of the narrative (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2014).

O'Reilly (2014) discusses the ways of ethnographic analysis as 'iterative-inductive' processes, as a going between processes of data collection - analysis – and writing from the beginning. This involves usually working with draft research questions in mind and 'it is sorting, summarising, organising, and translating...it is moving from a jumble of words and pictures...standing back' (p.186). Whilst this level of analysis happens throughout, there is still a phase of 'analysis', which involves a specific kind of 'sorting and categorising'. I chose to use a hybrid (online/offline) embodied reflexive thematic analysis as my way of sorting and categorising because, as 4.9.1 shows, it enabled me to find a rhythm of disciplined improvisation; play-working with the warm data in an 'whole person' sensory manner to respond to my research questions. The transdisciplinary literature I read helped to shape the framing, such as working with Bateson's (1972) theory of meta communication. In summary, the crystallisation of ethnographic analysis, for example for research question 1, involved focusing on a primary (main) sorting and categorising exercise (thematic analysis), followed by engaging with (field) notes to trace patterns and fragments of convergence and/or divergence.

For Research Question 1, understanding constructions of fun by staff and coaches, this meant starting with the primary (main) thematic analysis. This used both software and index cards, before I moved onto using a different 'angle of approach' (Richardson, 2000) and data source. I did this by searching for alignment/contradiction within the thematic analysis candidate themes constructed; firstly, in hard copy (field) notes, and then OneNote summary notes and/or recordings.

For Research Question 2, understanding how and why certain online learning activities were experienced as fun, I also used the primary (main) theme sorting and categorising exercise – as a thematic analysis, but also generated a comparative table to understand if and when my sensory method of listening to 'laughter critical incidents' were confirmed/not, as entry points into staff/coaches' experiences of fun,

providing an additional sensory angle of alignment or fragment (challenge). I supplemented the thematic analysis with other modes of supportive ethnographic analysis, specifically tracing through (field) notes, summary notes and/or recordings.

For Research Question 3, on understanding the significance of types of fun within CAC, I built upon the generated methods and modes of analysis from the previous research questions, re-engaging with my (field) and summary notes, and introducing a found poem. I will elaborate in 5.4.



#### **4.9.1 Play-working with a hybrid/embodied thematic analysis**

To answer Research Question 1, I started with a thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006, 2019, 2020a, 2020b, 2022) of staff and coaches' transcripts. I developed my method of analysis intensely over a six-month period. It became a hybrid embodied approach: I used Quirkos (Paulus and Lester, 2020), a Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS), and material index cards to complete 'final' constructions. This dual approach enabled me to really consider how I was *generating* units of meaning, as neither a CAQDAS approach, nor a material write, cut, and move approach seemed sufficient alone. Using a CADQAS provided more of the breadth, and the analogue write, cut, and move approach often facilitated a more granular level of engagement and a more straightforward way of presenting the process.

A Braun and Clarke inspired reflexive thematic analysis (2019) follows six stages: familiarisation with the data; coding; generating initial themes; reviewing themes; defining and naming themes; and writing up. For the purposes of this inquiry the thematic analysis took both an inductive and deductive stance: the content of the data informed coding and theme development, as well as the questions and literature review (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2006). It also took a semantic (descriptive) and latent (interpretive) stance; and a constructionist stance, focusing on how a certain reality is created by the data.

The process of a reflexive thematic analysis is not linear (Braun and Clarke, 2019) and therefore aligns with my research epistemology. Table 8 outlines the main phases of development/learning with my thematic analysis. Whilst I tried three methodological approaches, within each of these there were several iterations.

*Table 8: Main phases of the hybrid/embodied reflexive thematic analysis*

	Iterating different ways of doing a thematic analysis	Limitation/ Strength	Changes made
1.	<p><b>Physical – cut and move</b></p> <p>Print, cut, re arrange, present as Word tables and photos</p> 	<p>I found it difficult to be transparent regarding the process, using printouts cut up and re arranged on the floor.</p>	<p>I considered different CAQDAS. NVIVO supports a more positivist approach and therefore did not epistemologically align. Dedoose offered a more intuitive approach, but Quirkos was the most suitable because of its visual use of 'Quirks/ bubbles': a visual embodiment of fun.</p>
2.	<p><b>CAQDAS - Quirkos only</b></p> <p>Creating Quirks/thematic bubbles from highlighted transcripts. Present as Quirk image, tables, and photos</p> 	<p>Using Quirkos exposed that I needed to further define my 'unit of meaning' and how engage with latent/semantic meanings</p>	<p>Quirkos did not enable presenting analysis in all the ways I hoped. I therefore decided to use both digital tools and material.</p> <p>I also acknowledged some interpretive researchers' mistrust of CADQAS i.e., that the depth of narrative analysis is perceived as generated through embodied and material praxis alone, and not deemed part of online-technological experience.</p>



3. **Hybrid - Quirkos, Word tables and index cards**

Using Quirkos and then refining via Word tables and index cards. Present as Quirk image, detailed tables, and photos

No.	Example (quote)	Codes: descriptive (interpretative in brackets)
1	"When we reflect a lot of thoughts come, but I don't think about them too much." "I see"	In that minute (being present) Not (only) thinking (thinking by itself, by oneself, is a lesser form of learning)
2	"It is something that [unclear] box"	Moves your body (motion/movement/position)
3	"When you [unclear] and see [unclear] from your players - that is fun." "While"	Feel laughter (physical manifestation/embodied sensation) See smiles (physical manifestation/embodied sensation)
4	"[unclear] the [unclear] or [unclear] to participate in that activity... in an emotional way." "Why"	Big smiles (physical manifestation/embodied sensation/being open/being consumed) Want to participate in an emotional way (connect with deep feelings/affective engagement)
5	"Like with right... you think you do it's interesting." "It's interesting and it's fun." "Mary"	To play (action of exploration) To sing (physical manifestation/embodied sensation) To dance or use another expressive way (physical manifestation/embodied sensation/being open)
6	"[unclear] When they are looking at their challenge and solving, they [unclear] to see what's going on (being inquisitive)" "I see"	Look at the challenge and solve it (overcoming challenge) Start to laugh and enjoy (release)
7	"The opportunity to be creative means whenever you give someone [unclear] A task to do and it's impossible (contradictory qualities) What can we do? (options)/can do attitude/ possibilities"	Start to learn how to move (new physical expressions) The opportunity to be creative (being creative/opening up and out)
8	"That guy is charming." "How you behave and most matters (social/relational)" "A role model is fun (embodies fun/being magnetic)" "Enjoy with their players (social/relational)"	That guy is charming (being magnetic/charming) How you behave and most matters (social/relational) A role model is fun (embodies fun/being magnetic) Enjoy with their players (social/relational)



I worked with both descriptive and interpretive meanings

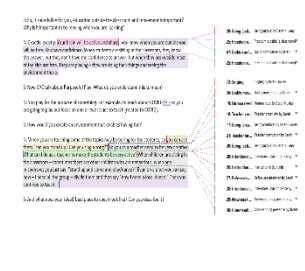

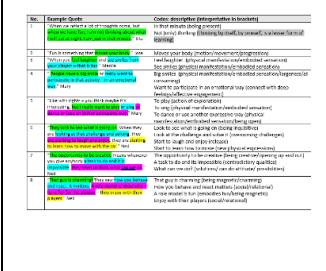

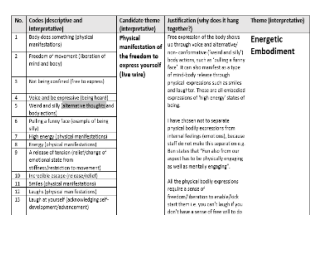
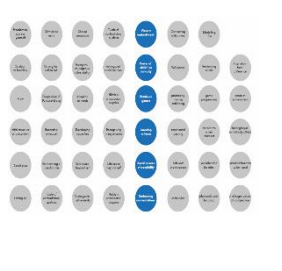
Feedback from other researchers concluded I now had a clearly articulated process, enabling a rich and detailed level of thematic analysis.

I started with the coaches' thematic analysis and completed the whole process before moving onto the staff thematic analysis.

Throughout the process I considered what an embodied approach to doing, being and becoming through a thematic analysis could mean (Ellingson, 2017). My approach focused on the materiality of the artefacts/objects (Woodward, 2020) around me, and the *movement physically and online* between different materials and objects through space-times. Table 9 indicates how the materiality shifted and summarises my overall approach to a thematic analysis. Here, I emphasise that the use of varied materials facilitated my ability to iterate, from slightly different vantage points (refractions). The process was a movement through generating/opening up ideas, and then refining and focusing in. Both were essential. I reached an entirely different type of analysis by play-working with both, rather than using Quirkos or cut-outs/index cards alone. I noted like others (Hrach, 2021) that a physical/experiential way of knowing was equally as important as my mental processes; I enjoyed the cutting of index cards, and the smell of the felt pen as I crafted a thematic label. The

materials inter-acting with the ideas through these materials (like Merleau-Ponty's blind stick) in a different way to Quirkos. Quirkos afforded a greater amount of (simultaneous) coding, and a different body-mind manipulation; an ability to see and stage-manage the overall picture of themes, changing these at speed. Using Quirkos also challenged my cognitive bias towards words over images and allowed a playful and creative engagement with warm data, represented as colourful bubbles of thought. Writing out on cards, worked well as a process of refinement of themes.

Table 9: Six stages of an embodied reflexive thematic analysis (including materiality)

	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Stage 5	Stage 6
<b>Focus</b>	<b>Familiarisation</b>	<b>Coding</b>	<b>Generating initial themes: codes - candidate themes - subthemes</b>	<b>Re-viewing themes: gaps and contradictions</b>	<b>Defining and naming themes: patterns and linkages</b>	<b>Writing up the narrative</b>
<b>Main activities (and choices)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Define underpinnings: constructionist framework</li> <li>Define Units of meaning: relational with context</li> <li>Initial coding via annotated transcripts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Generate Quirks/code labels (drag and drop onto canvas)</li> <li>Simultaneous coding: both descriptive and interpretive</li> <li>Start bubbles (clusters) of codes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Move codes, (re) name and generate candidate themes in Quirkos</li> <li>Refining: pull out quotes and re-generate codes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Write codes onto index cards</li> <li>Move cards to re-consider candidate themes (and refer back)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Type up codes to subtheme to theme</li> <li>Ask: why do x and y hang together?</li> <li>Create a comparative table (refer back)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pause</li> <li>Telling a narrative/story</li> <li>Rich description</li> </ul>
<b>Main materials</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Thematic analysis literature</li> <li>Quirkos software</li> <li>Word document of process and reflective/analytical notes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Quirkos: basic clusters</li> <li>Word doc of notes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Quirkos: detailed clusters</li> <li>Word doc of notes including quote to codes tables</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Index cards</li> <li>Felt pen</li> <li>Highlighter</li> <li>Movement from desk to floor</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Word doc of notes including codes – candidate theme - theme tables</li> <li>Annotated comparative table of staff and coaches' themes and candidate themes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Text</li> <li>Tables</li> <li>Figure</li> </ul>
<b>Core image (as a visual reminder)</b>						

\*The dashed line indicates that stages 2-5 were much more fluid than stages 1 and 6.

I will now outline the main process and decision making that happened in relation to the doing, being and becoming through this praxis. There were three main parts to the familiarisation process of stage 1: firstly, creating transcripts soon after Skype interviews (and recording any initial notes), and then secondly, returning to the roughly typed up transcript to finalise these based on the specific transcript process selected (see 4.7.2). This generated another layer of familiarisation in and of itself. Familiarisation was thirdly further explored, by identifying ‘points of interest’<sup>26</sup>: understood as between a phrase and up to three sentences, I refer to these as a ‘unit of meaning’. To have picked only a word/phrase at the start of the process would have obscured the situatedness of the meanings and could be a misleading abstraction (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2014). The assumption here being that the meaning of words/codes is partly generated by their *relation to other words*. The criteria for identifying a relevant unit of meaning in the text were therefore that it:

- Directly mentions/refers to ‘fun’, including ironic uses
- Is a response to a question on SDL or Purposeful Play i.e., specific questions related to fun, learning and play.

**Stage 2** focused on the coding processes. Here I understand coding to be ‘essence capturing’ or assigning an ‘evocative attribute’ (Saldana, 2016). Coding is an intensely constructed and crafted performance, informed by the inquiry’s ontological and epistemological underpinnings. In my case this is understood as:

- Interpretivism and social constructionism – these frame a ‘code’ as a researcher generated construct (a re-construction of the participants constructions). Coding is a process that seeks to identify meaning as it relates to your participants, you, and the research question.
- Braun and Clarke (2019) and their adherents (Byrne, 2021) encourage the researcher to embrace reflexivity, subjectivity and creativity as *assets* in ‘knowledge production’, whilst acknowledging some scholars, such as Boyatzis (1998), may interpret these assets as threats.

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<sup>26</sup> In the first Cut and Move approach this involved printing out the transcript, hand circling, highlighting, and annotating ‘units of meaning’ that were associated with the word ‘fun’.

- However, ontologically I perceive binaries as problematic e.g., the mind body dichotomy (Merleau-Ponty, 1964), I therefore decided not to force a strict binary rule as to whether I should play-work with only semantic (descriptive) or latent (interpretive) codes. I agree with Byrne (2021) that any unit of meaning can be double-coded in accordance with the semantic meaning communicated by the respondent, and the latent meaning interpreted by the inquirer that underpin the theoretical assumptions. Ultimately, the epistemology demands that due consideration and attentiveness are given to both the meaning constructed and communicated by the participant *and* my interpretation of this meaning, as the inquirer in a specific context.
- Whilst the analysis is largely inductive, there are deductive elements (i.e., the research questions themselves and initial literature reviews including theories. As Zimmerman et al., (2009) remind us, feedback loops are applicable to the researcher, as learner! Therefore, the coding and analysis process is likely to reflect researchers' own growth and learning in the process. It is a *generative* praxis that needs to hold both a focusing in, on the research question, and an attentiveness/opening for new knowledge (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2014).
- The slipperiness of trying to understand meanings of 'fun' itself requires a broad/generative approach, not a reductionist one. Therefore, I chose not to restrict codes to phrases/sentences that use the word 'fun', but to also code units of meaning connected to the questions on the participants' understanding of learning, play and education more broadly: this is the context that all organisational documentation situates fun within.
- To follow through on being generative (opening up), rather than closing down, I used 'simultaneous coding' (Saldana, 2016) i.e., several codes can be ascribed to one unit of meaning, because 'all coding is a judgment call' since we bring 'our subjectivities, our personalities, our predispositions, [and] our quirks' to the process (Saldana, 2016: 482–3).
- Furthermore, initial reflections on 'fun' from early coding suggested that it wrestles with paradox. This was another reason to avoid early reductionism.

See Appendix 11 for an example of the first iteration of generating an annotated transcript in Quirkos. After an initial coding in Quirkos (via uploaded transcripts), I then created 'quirks' (or clusters of meaning) on the canvas page; this was a

constant process of iterations as I dragged and dropped initial codes, and continually refined them in relation to each other. See Figure 11 for an example of the coaches' canvas of quirks after starting to code one transcript. Figure 12 shows the complete coding after all nine coaches' transcripts were coded. The initial clusters of candidate themes, in Figure 11, are each made up of many different subthemes/codes. I decided not to colour code/organise the image because I knew this was not my final step. The coaches' canvas produced 780 codes altogether (see Appendix 12 for an extract of the word tree produced from Quirkos), and the staff produced 795 codes from the canvas, see Appendix 12 as well.



Figure 11: Starting to code one transcript on a Quirkos canvas



Figure 12: Final coaches' canvas (after coding nine transcripts)

**Stage 3** involved searching for patterns of meaning (potential candidate themes) underpinned by a central concept. This involves collating data relevant to each candidate theme, so that the researcher can consider the accuracy of each candidate theme. Twelve potential themes were identified on Quirkos for staff, and 11 for coaches. At this stage it was useful to re-assess codes and candidate subthemes by doing the process *in a different embodied and sensory way*: to see if similar patterns were still generated, or not. Whilst this was not the only way of gaining insight, it provided a different entry point (angle of approach) to understand theme generation. This was a pivotal moment in the generation of analysis, because ‘themes don’t reside in the data, they reside in our heads’ (Ely et al., 1997: 205–206), and I would add - our bodies. This was an intentional disruption/rupture to the body-mind praxis of analysis, through physical and material alterity.

This process of seeking and sensing patterns, next included checking candidate sub-themes/themes outside Quirkos. The first step was to pull out example quotes from candidate themes. They were chosen based upon the perceived clarity and alignment to the existing candidate codes. See Appendix 13 for the table of potential candidate themes and subthemes (for both staff and coaches) at this point. I looked in Quirkos for an example quote under each candidate theme, and then re-coded in a granular way i.e., using short phrases to check, but also as a way to increase transparency and trustworthiness via presenting my workings, see Table 10. The grey highlights show new codes/ideas building on from previous thinking.

Table 10: Re-viewing Staff quotes associated with the embodiment candidate theme

No	Example Quote	Codes: descriptive (interpretative in brackets)
1	"We are very interactive, and we encourage people to be loud and confident, use their voice, be expressive." Justin	Interactive (social/relational) Loud and confident (being visible) Voice and be expressive (being acknowledged)
2	"Fun makes you wake up in the morning. Fun for me was my job [as a footballer] knowing every day I was going to play, and how much fun I would have, and be playing with other awesome women." Katherine	Wake up (alertness/eagerness) My job (purpose in life) Going to play (physical actions) Playing with others (social/relational)
3	"When we do a training, and then you see how one or two coaches at the beginning of the week, how their eyes become wide and wow, what is this and why didn't I know about this sooner?" Katie	Eyes becoming wide (new sensation/knowledge) Wow, what is this? (Surprise/excitement) Why didn't I know? (Greater possibilities)
4	"There's a oh, she's doing that, I could do that too, and let's just be weird and silly, and playful together, now." Katie	I can (confidence) Weird and silly (alternative thoughts and body actions) Playful together (social/relational)
5	"The kid that would pull a funny face, and it's not ADHD – it's because the world should be fun." Ben	Pulling a funny face (alternative thoughts and body actions) Not ADHD (example joke and extreme curiosity) World should be this way (fun should be the norm)
6	"With the freedom of movement in that type of playground you have a world that pushes back at your learning, and you are not being confined by this pre-determined idea of this is how the slide is going to be." Cuthbert	Freedom of movement (liberation of mind and body) A type of playground (engaging with materiality in a fluid way) Pushes back at your learning (positive challenge) Not being confined (free to express)
7	"Sports I think, happiness, interaction, positive relationships and yeah enjoyment – enjoying something." Justin	Sports (physical activities) Happiness (joy)

The process for **stage 4** (reviewing themes/subthemes) included writing all the descriptive and interpretive codes shown from these tables (Table 10 is an extract), onto index cards that could then be easily moved on a floorspace. I had piloted sticky notes on walls and deemed using a floor less precarious. This involved putting recurring concepts in the centre, and then moving the remaining codes to relevant clusters/subthemes. Sometimes granular codes didn't fit, and I kept them to one side, to see if they would be relevant for another theme. Similarly, some codes aligned to several candidate subthemes, and I chose to allow this because of my epistemology, which seeks connections and relations, rather than separation, or restriction. See Figure 13 for an example of re-viewing a candidate/potential theme and its subthemes.





Figure 13: Re-viewing a potential theme using index cards

A continual reflection and iteration occurred throughout, however in stage 4 it was important to consider the relationality of candidate subthemes and themes. I did this by thinking about gaps and/or contradictions in candidate sub/themes: an attentiveness to seeking a different perspective.

In relation to the Coaches and Staff re-viewing I noted for:

- Coaches: the code 'rhythm of movement' merges into 'flow of play and learning'; rhythm and movement being attributes of 'flow'.
- Coaches: different codes relating to 'free' should not be kept as one subtheme i.e., 'freedom outside' and 'free expression' fit in different candidate themes i.e., 'embodied vitality' and 'creating spaces of trust' because they are part of the story i.e., Braun and Clarke (2022) suggest that the 'story' is the features and meanings in a data set, which are not necessarily conveyed by a singular word, but rather by the situatedness of them.
- Staff: 'Making it known'; this code suggests a deeper layer to learning and fun, connected to 'real conversations' and a sense of revelation through dialogue.
- Staff: new idea of fun as a 'release' (or 'escape') and as both 'exciting and calming'; fun as changing states and wrestling with contradictory qualities.
- Staff: 'Interacting with others'; this is part of a candidate theme, probably 'evolve with others'. It includes the idea that the synergy of energy created between each other (bodies, minds, place) enables the group progression.
- Staff: the sessions are talked of as 'theatre' – as having performative qualities – whereas this was not the case with coaches.

**Stage 5** involved examining the links and patterns between themes to refine and finally define themes. This was achieved by creating a table that showed the final index card arrangements i.e., how the candidate themes combined to show the theme, per theme for both the staff and coaches. See Table 11 for an example, and Appendix 14 for examples of the first theme for both staff and coaches. It also involved a focused reflection on *choice of language*, to make sure the final language reflected the ‘essence’ (Braun and Clarke, 2022) of descriptions as accurately as possible. Therefore, I continually referred to a thesaurus at this stage.

Table 11: An extract from the coaches 'code - candidate theme - to theme patterning table' for RQ1

No.	Codes (descriptive and interpretative)	Candidate theme (interpretative)	Justification (why does it hang together?)	Theme (interpretative)
1	have to create a safe environment where participants can feel safe, physically, mentally, emotionally (holistic safety)	<b>Safe and brave spaces</b>	Fun facilitates the creation of safe and brave spaces. These are a physical, <u>mental</u> and emotional spaces in which participants can learn about themselves as well as their co-participants.  A collective energy is generated whereby individuals can often become less self-conscious, for example girls become more aware of things their bodies can do; becoming more confident to physically express themselves. This is often created through trust building games and games that encourage empathy or seeing from different perspectives.	<b>Profound collaboration (in empathetic spaces of trust)</b>
2	Figuring out themselves in a safe space (self-learning/ development/ trusting space)			
3	Means teamwork (group effort/ learning)			
4	When playing, together, thoughts of what others think go (become less self-conscious/ become a collective self)			
5	In the game and part of the team (collective energy)			
6	maximum of the girls didn't want to jump because – oh my breasts and body (self-consciousness)			
7	stand to side and make excuses – I have stomach pain			
8	never scold and just watch (self-limiting beliefs)			
9	Gradually they just come. It's okay to play – it's okay to jump (self-expression/ confidence/ movement)			
10	To create trust there is a game: Fools Game (a game for building trust)			
11	ask questions around your name – ah you like carbonara pasta (ask questions/Trust game)			

The final part of Stage 5 – defining the themes is shown in Chapter 5, the findings. Stage 6 – the bringing together of narrative, figures and literature will also be elaborated upon in 5.2.

For Research Question 2, I used a similar hybrid/embodied reflexive thematic analysis, with 16 different transcripts. The transcripts include the four-training sessions plus post interviews for each session, for each of the three participants I was observing: one staff and two coaches (see Appendix 15 for specific activities and descriptions of the four online training sessions). I also created a comparative

table to show whether laughter critical incidents were confirmed in relation to the staff and coaches' experiences of fun. Finally, in line with my crystallisation methodology, I refer to a minimal (5) number of audio/video recordings. The justifications for these different and complementary warm data types will now be outlined.

**Stage 1**, the familiarisation process with data transcripts followed a similar transcription process outlined for research question 1 (see 4.7.2). I focused on constructing a reading flow, and capturing the detail of what participants said, as well as specific aspects of nonverbal communication, to enhance a sensory layer of 'being there'. The criteria I used are summarised below:

### **Included**

- everything said on the recording from participants, with minor edits of the researcher's speech
- non-verbal communication – focusing on laughter critical incidents, pauses, and large/sensorially received gestures
- intrusive ambient sounds
- for session transcripts, information on screen changes i.e., breakout rooms, use of PowerPoint etc and pre and debrief sessions.

### **Excluded**

- grammatical errors
- fillers (ums, uhs, you know, etc.)
- stutters (In- In- In- In fact), false starts (incomplete sentences)
- repetitions
- time stamps
- speed of responses
- Arabic translation – the focus was on the pause this creates in the rhythm of the session
- overlapping conversation/speaking at the same time.

The criteria for identifying a relevant 'unit of meaning' in the text was that it:

- Directly mentions/refers 'fun', 'learning', purposes/intentions, or the wider embodied experience itself.
- Is a response to a specific question related to fun and learning and their relationship i.e., this was most of the content in the post-session interviews.

**Stage 2**, the starting of coding on the Quirkos transcript of training session 1 produced 177 codes. I continually made notes in response to the question, and added codes (quirks/labels), both descriptive and interpretive to the canvas as I worked through all 16 transcripts. Figure 14 provides a snapshot of this process in motion as I started to cluster potential candidate themes (stage 3), and Figure 15 shows the chain of codes within a potential candidate theme of 'Keep moving'; the column on the right shows transcript extracts that make up the early codes.

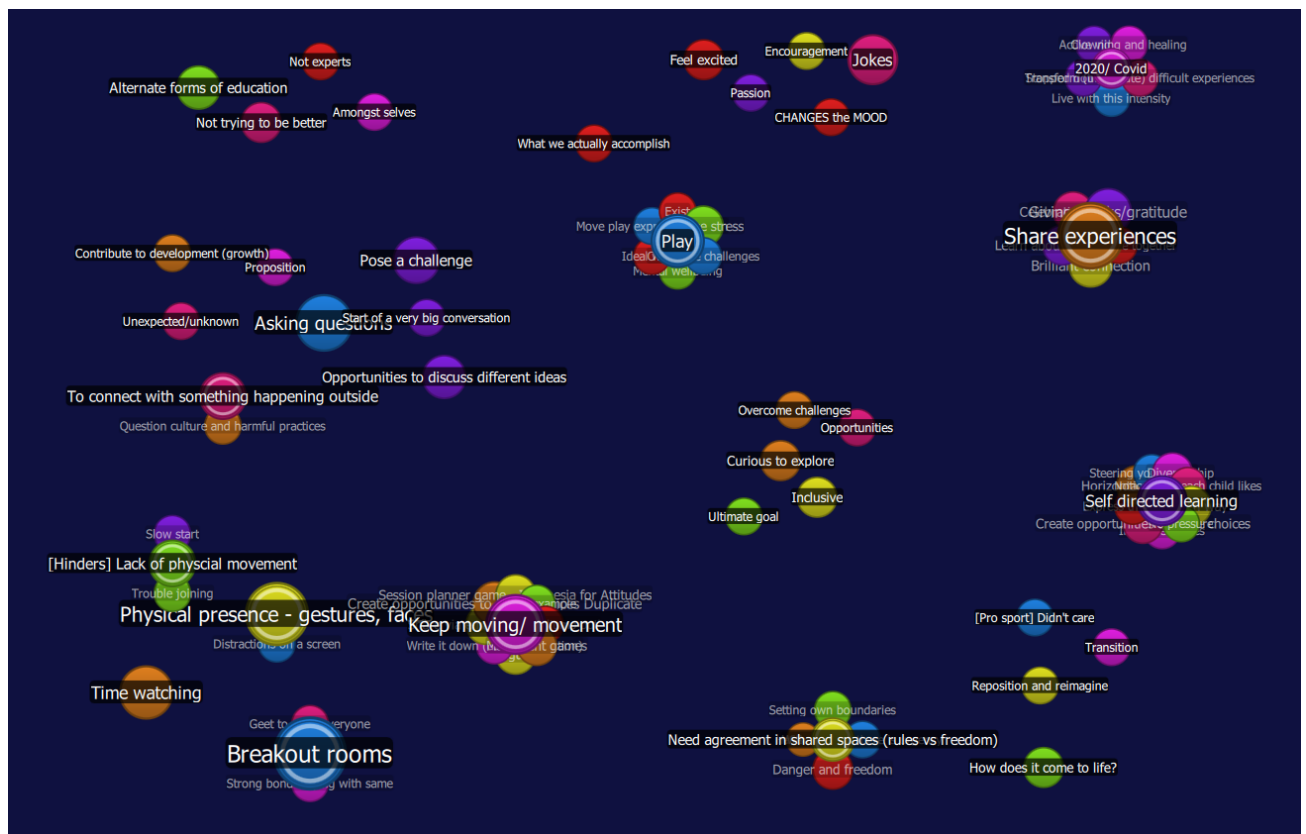


Figure 14: Clustering potential candidate themes

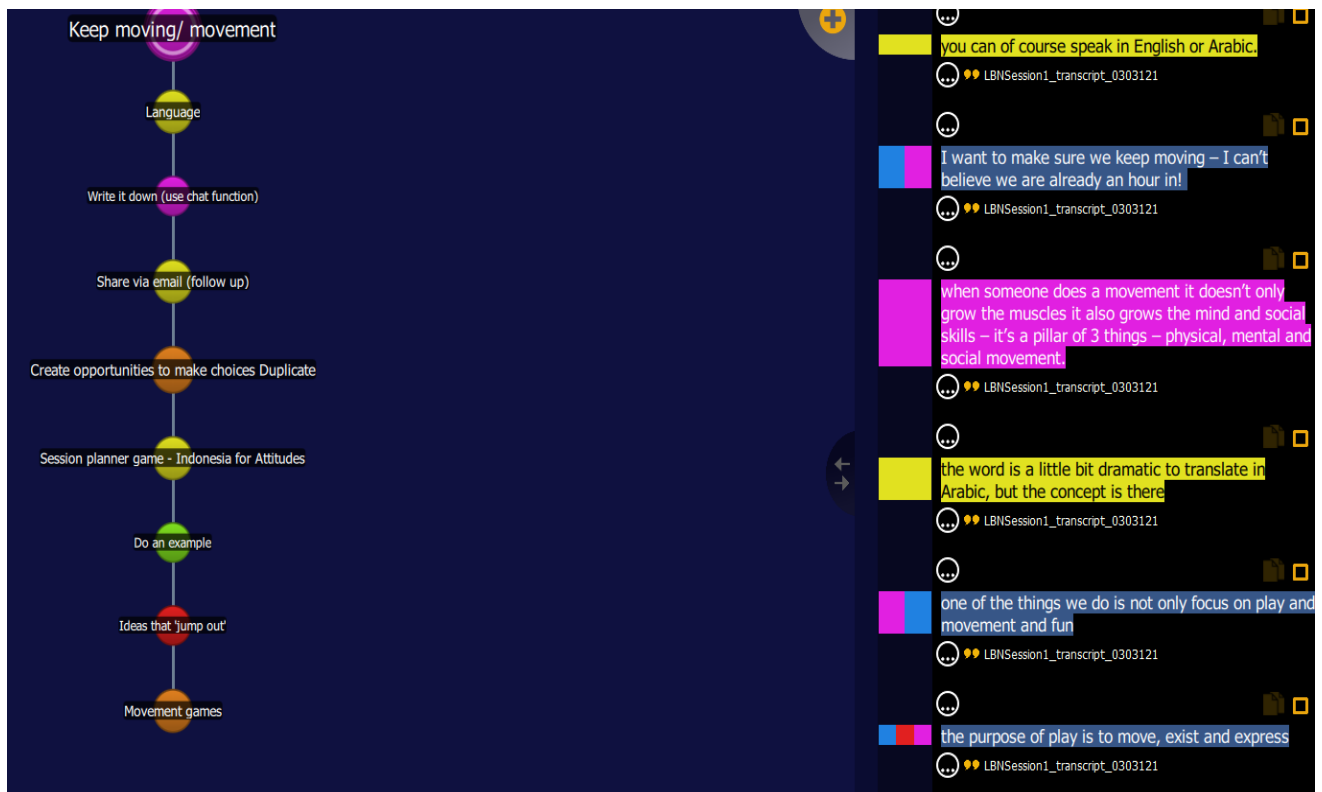


Figure 15: A chain of codes within one theme

**Stage 3**, searching for patterns of potential candidate themes involved pulling out example quotes from Quirk clusters. They were chosen based upon the perceived clarity and alignment to the potential candidate themes/subthemes e.g., ‘Keep moving’ in Figure 15. I left Quirkos with six candidate themes. These were:

- 1) Be creatively inspired to learn and live in the present. This means a curiosity and an ability to laugh at oneself/life/leaving behind the thinking ego. A sense of flow and acceptance. Fun as *nomotia* – the illusion of something fixed.
- 2) Builds connection and inclusivity (sharing of experiences). Inclusivity as both celebration of similarities and differences. Seen as the ‘individual and undivided’ (Ingold, 2000) self in relationship. Dots and the movement/affects between them.
- 3) Changes the mood of a (learning) experience. This is a core part of generating *and* disrupting a rhythm/tempo/flow. How subtle is it? ‘Nearby-ness’ (Hayward and Gossett, 2017); relationally as a pause, a surprise, a distraction, a new line of inquiry – it’s fast/slow, loud/quiet – a rhythmic affect.
- 4) Activates grasping new ideas through questions, challenges and an ‘openness’ (or courageous vulnerability) towards learning who you are.

- 5) One tool to heal – it can feel liberating and lightening (a ‘release’) through play-based games, movement, and learning. It can also hold a space for forgetting/timelessness. There is an absence of the assumed societal norms for intellectual knowing i.e., only thinking/talking/sitting.
- 6) Reposition and reimagine yourself, your community, your world (not competing/ judging/punishing). This comes from changing your body movements, feelings, and ideas/thoughts (on pitch) into actions off the pitch.

To check and refine these six, I then looked in Quirkos for example quotes under each. With the ‘word table and index cards’ method I re-checked codes in a granular way, creating word tables with example quotes. Table 12 shows an excerpt from a candidate theme for a role of fun as being ‘creatively inspired in the present moment’. This was also to increase transparency and trustworthiness. Throughout the process of stages 3 and 4 I refined these six candidate themes down to four, interpreting that ‘being creatively inspired’ (1) and ‘grasping new ideas...’ (4), were actually part of the other themes.

Table 12: Re-checking the candidate theme of ‘creatively inspired in the present moment’

No.	Example Quote	Codes: descriptive (interpretative in brackets)
1	So, another example of something that should be just the start of a bigger conversation. So that kind of conversation, how do we prepare for the unknown is always useful. LBNSession4	Another example (another way) Start of a bigger conversation (unending/flow/ non-linear) How do we prepare for the unknown (embrace uncertainty/ realisation of limited control)
2	Think of something you haven’t done before. It can be inspired by, but not the same. LBNSession3	Think of something you haven’t done before (another way/ new) Inspired by [your past], but not the same (another way/ new)
3	We were able to learn from everywhere – to see that this trauma feeling is everywhere is very inspiring and to play games to help with healing. LBNSession4	Learn from everywhere (everything is a learning experience) Trauma feeling is everywhere is inspiring (connection through trauma) Play games to help with healing (play is part of healing)
4	I want to play some of the games, and we have never done them on sounds. I am inspired! LBNSession4	want to play some of the games (drive/motivation to play) never done them on sounds: I am inspired! (enlivening/ motivate/encourage)
5	After I told her, I am loving you more and more every day: you are amazing. This woman is amazing, and I never knew that. I have known her for about 3 years. She is very committed and gives a lot. I learned a lot or maybe I was really inspired. Dasia	I am loving you more and more every day: you are amazing (deep connection/ appreciation) I never knew (realisation/ unknown) very committed and gives a lot (dedicated/open) I learned a lot or maybe I was really inspired (growth/ motivation/ enlivened/ stimulated)
6	already inspiring me on how to design new games and how it could create opportunities for learning around the world and then there’s still so much to learn from that. Katie	inspiring me on how to design new games (motivated/stimulated) how it could create opportunities for learning around the world (new possibilities for expansive learning) there’s still so much to learn (joy to confront unknown)
7	It’s exactly what I want from this training: to introduce you to a new way of thinking where we can address bigger problems that exist in society. Not just physical skills but rather a social skill. Interpersonal skills. LBNSession3	introduce you to a new way of thinking (new ways of knowing) address bigger problems that exist in society (connect learning to outside world) Not just physical skills but rather a social skill; interpersonal skills (relational skills are the most important)
8	We all have ego! So, I think it’s also learning how to recognise your ego and when it emerges and	We all have ego (sense of self-importance/ individual consciousness) Learning to recognise ego – it’s emergence and when its leading (self is more than a thinking mind)

**Stage 4**, the process of reviewing themes, included writing all the descriptive and interpretive codes shown in the right-hand column of Table 12 onto index cards, which were then easily rearranged on a floorspace (as explained previously for research question 1). In stage 4 it was important to consider the relationality of candidate subthemes and themes. Braun and Clarke (2019, 2021) remind us that at this point, themes are often refined, which can involve them being split, combined, or discarded. In relation to re-viewing potential themes, as a pattern of shared meaning ‘underpinned by a central concept or idea’ (Braun and Clarke, 2006: 94), I noted from the session 3 transcript that roles of fun related to three overlapping ideas. These were:

- A disruption of existing rules/patterns/behaviours that seemed to instigate...
- A transition from one state to another, and here I noted a quote from Katie to ‘let the silence get someone motivated’ i.e., an idea from a pause/absence of something, learning/growth can occur through...
- An ‘exercising of [both a physical and mental] muscle’. This speaks to the idea that body-mind movement is paramount to the relationship between fun and learning. That there is fun within both a value of ‘being there’, but also that learning goes ‘further and deeper’ if it starts with the energy and movement of ‘fun and silliness’ by ‘shaking it out’ and experiencing the excitement of fun itself embodied by ‘goosebumps’.

I will discuss these patterns of meaning in Chapters 5 and 6, but for the purposes of this chapter, it is useful to acknowledge that these ideas support and extend the initial patterns of meaning generated in Phase 3 i.e., the potential themes relating to changing a mood, or repositioning self and community.

**Stage 5** involved examining the links and patterns between themes to refine and finally define themes. This was achieved by creating a table that showed the final index card arrangements i.e., how the candidate themes combined to show the theme, per theme for staff and coaches, see Appendix 16 for an overview of the final theme ‘Opens up inclusive relations’. It also involved a focused reflection on choice of language, to make sure the qualities of descriptions were as accurate as possible.

The final four themes generated are presented in 5.3.3 and discussed in 6.3. The roles of fun in relation to the context of embodied learning (stage 6), shows that fun:

- 1) Opens up inclusive relations
- 2) Alters the mood
- 3) Helps heal
- 4) Re-positions and re-imagines futures.

#### **4.9.2 Tracing for dissonance amongst (field) notes and recordings**

Once I had finished my primary (main) thematic analysis, my second angle of approach, or interpretation of O'Reilly's (2014) 'iterative-inductive' ethnographic analysis, involved looking for text/ideas that both aligned and/or challenged the themes generated from the thematic analysis. I did this first by reading my notebooks, then summary OneNote notes and then (infrequently) watching recordings. I read all four of my notebooks and summary notes, first highlighting for a) connections and similarities with the six themes on constructions of fun and then b) for challenges/fragment with the six themes. I listened to/viewed only a handful of recordings, when I thought there was a particular interaction that required further context or clarification. My field and summary notes already provided a cursory level of reflection/analysis *close to the time of observation i.e.*, without the hindsight of the thematic analysis, but with proximity to the effects of the immediate experience. I therefore wanted to focus on my initial thoughts and sensory responses, rather than a 're-working' (Sandelowski, 1993) of them by viewing/listening to the complete experience again, which is already what a thematic analysis involves.

Qualitative research seeks out a *considered selection* of 'typical, deviant, critical, or otherwise exemplary information rich cases' (Patton, 1990: 169). As I search for patterns (similarity, typicality, resonance), I also look for considered disconfirming cases' (Booth et al., 2013), or as I prefer – the dissonance, roughness, and fragment – a space and pause, at the end of the more formal phase of 'data analysis'. The assumption is: by seeking out disconfirming cases researchers are able to generate a richer, more in-depth understanding of a phenomenon and therefore credibility (Booth et al., 2013). Hence, I went through my notebooks and summaries again and highlighted (in a different colour) any noted challenges to the six themes. The same



process was followed for the analysis for Research Question 2 (relationship between fun and learning), looking for resonance and dissonance with the four thematic constructions of roles. I present the findings in 5.2.2 and 5.3.4.

A final point, is to problematise the myth of 'cherry-picking': often understood as a researcher 'rather than working with large categories, the researcher has terminated data collection with a minimal data set, yet forges ahead nonetheless, completing the analysis' (Morse, 2010). If you see, as I do, that data are part of us rather than something existing entirely separately, a terrain where certain things can be found that are capable of yielding meaning and insights, once consciously sensed and crafted. Then as long as considerations are made transparent regarding *how* selections and re-presentations are made, it is *precisely* the 'cherry-picked' that is of significance in qualitative research. There is importance in the small and granular, or rather small and sticky. In this way, '*sticky* cherry picking' is intentional and seeks to create an analysis that works with both pattern and fragment, from within a substantial warm data set.

#### ***4.9.3 Staging and building voices: using tables, figures, photos, and a poem***

Honouring bodily ways of knowing, within analysis, using multiple forms of representation, as a praxis of sensory meaning making, destabilises heterogenous knowledge claims. This is all the more necessitated by conveying and understanding the nature of fun itself – both a highly subjective and social phenomenon as Chapter 5 outlines. Such a juxtaposition of forms of representation Ellingson suggests,

reveals the cracks in the glossy, cerebral surfaces of academic prose, making the absent present...the ways knowledge is produced by and through a body rather than a disembodied voice, moves beyond just representation to consider the knowledge itself, rooted in carnal experience... the body not as an object of cognition to be transparently or accurately represented but as a source of knowledge and a way of knowing that produces representations (Ellingson, 2017: 180).

Analysis and representation are therefore not separate parts of an inquiry's embodied process, rather they are part of a continuum of sense making, and therefore choice of figure, use of an image, or disruption/digression of text, are all intentional in the construction of reality that I as a seeking truth-maker select.

I do this in several ways throughout this inquiry, including the construction of 'theme tables', 'laughter critical incident tables', photo images, figures, a model, and a found poem. This uses predominately coaches' and staff codes and phrases from interviews, and a couple of my own interpreted text during thematic analyses (see 5.4.1). As a non-representational ethnographer (Vannini, 2015), I therefore consider this thesis to be *impressing*: it 'strive[s] to animate rather than simply mimic, to rupture rather than merely account, to evoke rather than just report' (Vannini, 2015: 318). Choosing a form to represent the analysis of data is not a passive re-action; it is an active choice of how and why – just like transcription.

## 4.10 Summary

I have presented the ways of knowing I align with (interpretivism and social constructionism) and connected these with an ethnographic methodology grounded in sensory, online (and offline) and organisational contexts. Ethnography allows for diversity, 'pattern and fragmentation' (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2014) in understanding a particular group's meaning-making processes; such ways of knowing are celebrated through an interpretivist epistemology. I described the importance of an embodied and iterative inter-play as an integral part of the performance and praxis of *doing* analysis; mind, materials, and body synchronously, jostling and encouraging the other on. After outlining particular ethnographic considerations such as positionality and reflexivity, I turned towards considerations of the research design, presenting a phased approach and the data gathering overview as examples of an explicit consideration of inquiry as 'disciplined improvisation' (Sawyer, 2004).

The three main methods are documentary review, semi-structured interviews, and participant-observation (including my development of laughter critical incidents), chosen for three main reasons. Firstly, the research questions focus on understanding the *relationship* between fun and learning. Ethnography, through multi methods is often concerned specifically with this type of *how and why* (relationship) research questions: How is fun constructed? How and why are particular learning activities experienced as fun? And ultimately if fun is significant, then why? Secondly, the carefully crafted methods allow for a change in angle of analytical approach: 'a crystallisation' (Richardson, 2000). This is a different viewpoint from

which to consider pattern and fragment i.e., staff may talk about fun in an interview in one way, and then embody or enact it in a different way. Thirdly, the main (primary) methods of semi-structured interviews and participant observation allow for experiential and embodied explorations within online (and offline) synchronous learning environments, to understand social spaces and experiences. To examine the purposes of fun without sensorially engaging in learning experiences would be tokenistic: the equivalent of describing ice cream without eating it (Huxley, 2020).

The findings in the next chapter are partial and particular, and there will be inevitable gaps/absences. I'll pick up on some of the limitations in 7.3, notably the fixity inherent in a 'model' and the limitations of ethnography. Suffice to say here that credibility is sought by the transparency of the choices and justifications made, in the selection of particular 'sticky cherries', or warm data that has been play-worked and re-worked within a mapped-out methodological terrain. Ethnography revels in the interpretive acts of sorting and categorising; seeking colour and shade, texture, and nuance, amongst patterns. It is rarely only concerned with reduction and fixity (or one truth), as the next chapter will explore further.

# Chapter 5 Generated findings: patterns and fragments

## 5.1 Introduction

In this chapter I focus on presenting the generated findings, or rather interpreted artefacts of 'warm data' (Bateson, 2017); the present *made* past. The findings are staged with an active consideration of trying not to fall into 'the privileging of pattern-seeking' only, or falling into easily recognisable assumptions and categories of types of patterns:

where the researcher wants control and therefore underestimates the value of allowing the empirical material to surprise. One key aspect here is to counter assumptions about patterns with ideas about social reality being more fragmented – at least in relation to the type of patterns that are assumed (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2014: 2)

This includes cautioning against 'exoticising', because the 'other' can so often slip into the 'lesser', if, assumptions are not challenged. However, the point is to play-work with pattern and fragment, and fun's significance may well be related to this 'border realm', of pattern and fragment, which is both a deconstruction and movement of rules, often expressed through a more-than-verbal communication of human experience, an unlatching. In this chapter, I present my play-worked findings, framed (perhaps trapped) in response to each of the three research questions. To navigate and summarise the types of analysis and associated findings, see Figure 16. This can be returned to throughout the chapter.

	<b>Process of analysis</b>	<b>Main findings</b>
	<p><b>RQ1:</b> An embodied reflexive thematic analysis of staff and coaches transcripts</p> <p>Cross-challenging with notes (and recordings)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Constructions of fun: 12 themes (Table 15)</li> <li>• Refined into six themes (Figure 17)</li> <li>• Fun can be inhibited if these are not accounted for:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- subjective/cultural sensitivities i.e. fun is not always large/loud</li> <li>- body consciousness (gendered)</li> <li>- inclusive pedagogical design (including online)</li> <li>- a rhythm is broken i.e., a prolonged inertness.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
	<p><b>RQ2:</b> Laughter critical incidents (Table 16)</p> <p>Physical and online embodiment interpretive categories (Table 17)</p> <p>An embodied reflexive thematic analysis of online training sessions and post interview transcripts</p> <p>Cross-challenging with notes (and recordings)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LCIs provided extra recollections of fun moments, and some aligned with subthemes e.g., surprise.</li> <li>• Interplay between physical and online space-times, including 'In two+ worlds at once'</li> <li>• Roles of fun: four themes (Table 18)</li> <li>• The fifth shadow role: fun as a reverse projection and provocation to consider the unfamiliar/alterity.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>RQ3:</b> Poetic inquiry through a found poem, using data codes and transcript excerpts from RQ1 and RQ2</p> <p>Analysis from RQ1 and RQ2, including laughter critical incidents</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fun is an embodied phenomenon, experienced and interpreted. Educators should consider qualities of learning experiences in relation to being well. The 'Six principles of fun embodied learning' guide this.</li> <li>• The Bracketing Model shows that fun-ing (a sensory attunement of inhabiting the socio-cultural-material world around), can disrupt and create a widening way of doing things. Fun-ing is a present pause, a collapse and expansion into future learning.</li> </ul>

Figure 16: A summary of the processes of analyses and associated findings

## 5.2 RQ1 How is fun constructed by staff and coaches?

*'A metaphor is language that simultaneously creates and solves its own riddle; within that minute explosion of mind is both expansion and release... it is how the mind instructs itself in a more complex seeing' (Hirshfield, 2015: 100).*

In the quote above, the poet Hirshfield (2015) reminds us that metaphors give words a way to go beyond their own (singular) meaning. Further-more that the enactment of language has a power to bring in a new movement of ideas through the acts of writing, speaking, listening, and reading. What we name, focus on, define - changes and morphs our relationality to it, just as the doing, being and becoming of the entire research process. Braun and Clarke (2022) remind us of the importance of 'telling a story'; a narrative to convey the 'important features and meanings of the data set, as you made sense of it' (p.295). Both these sets of thinking helped to inform my choice of language in the praxis of constructing the themes, subthemes, and the 'final' description of them.

### 5.2.1 Six themes

The challenge and/or opportunity, depending on your vantage point, is always the balance between granularity and wholeness with themes. Braun and Clarke (2021; 2022) suggest that there shouldn't be an explosion of subthemes, to help maintain the coherence, and the stickiness of the themes. However, this research is interested in nuance and shades of meaning, so a continual consideration of both, granularity/nuance, and wholeness, should leave them vacillating somewhere in the middle. Not inert or bolted down, in the falsity of certainty, but rather acknowledging, a wink towards, that we need to know how much we still do not know (Smith, 2016), whilst acknowledging the wealth of what is generated. This element of mystery or leaving a humble learning space for not-knowing, and surprise, is important in understandings of fun, as Chapter 6 unpicks.

At this point, I will present the thematic constructions of fun (completing stage 5 and 6 of the embodied reflexive thematic analysis), first for the staff, and then the coaches. In Table 13 (for staff) and Table 14 (for coaches), I outline the themes and subthemes individually, before exploring their focus and scope. I will then compare the 12 themes, and refine them into six, explaining how and why. In this way I start with a focus on granularity and move to wholeness.

These themes are not divisible and neatly bounded, rather this is a device to discuss the qualities, values, and sensibilities of experiencing fun learning in this specific context and with resonances across groups. It is also worth illuminating that the interviews sought to understand different cultural understandings of fun, in a light touch manner. Appendix 17 presents these constructions, serving as an artefact that celebrates the diversity of cultural meanings of fun in and of themselves.

Table 13: The Six Staff Themes

Staff Themes	Subthemes
<p><b>1. Energetic embodiment</b> Meta Theme (disrupts the linearity of the themes and is pervasive in others i.e., codes overlap)</p>	<p>a. <i>Live wire</i>: Physical manifestation of the freedom to express yourself            b. <i>Switched on</i>: Stimulated mind            c. <i>Connective sparks</i>: Shared sensations and inter-relations            d. <i>Push pull of resistance</i>: Tussle of contradictory qualities</p>
<p><b>2. Child-like learning power</b></p>	<p>a. <i>Taking the first step</i>: A catalyst for learning and change            b. <i>Carry on</i>: Striving for self-belief            c. <i>Trying new things</i>: Toying with courageous vulnerability            d. <i>Change making without threat</i>: Pushing past social barriers/restrictions</p>
<p><b>3. Rhythmic fluctuations (within games)</b></p>	<p>a. <i>Being like water</i>: Flow            b. <i>Moving along steppingstones</i>: Progression/tempo of Purposeful Play            c. <i>Changing direction</i>: Adapting to needs            d. <i>Refreshing surprises</i>: Hidden or unexpected</p>
<p><b>4. Building self-directed learning</b></p>	<p>a. <i>Putting up scaffolding</i>: Initial structure and intention            b. <i>Designing your home</i>: Becoming an expert in your own learning            c. <i>Building your home</i>: Developing capacities and skills to respond to change            d. <i>Building an extension</i>: Sensing there are many answers, many solutions</p>
<p><b>5. Trusting in social (safe) spaces of possibility</b></p>	<p>a. <i>Social glue</i>: bonding/socialisation            b. <i>Re-inventing</i>: the role of a coach            c. <i>Redefining</i>: a safe space beyond yourself            d. <i>Letting go</i>: in the free form play-ground</p>
<p><b>6. Embracing contradictions (to transform personal and social challenges)</b>  Meta Theme (see 1.)</p>	<p>a. Tussle of contradictory qualities            b. Courageous vulnerability            c. Unexpected/surprises            d. Redefining a safe space inside and outside of yourself            e. Learning for alternative futures            f. Lessens the burden and heaviness of complexity (but needs it)</p>



1. Energetic embodiment: this theme is focused on physical, observable, often 'high energy' bodily movements and expressions, which are part of the subtheme of *live wire*. This includes smiles, laughs, 'weird or silly' physical expressions like 'crazy dances', 'piggy backs' and so forth. The movements manifest as visible articulations of free will. They are believed to facilitate a 'letting go' of the 'confinement' of conditioned thought patterns and help to alter and move emotional states and cognition. Intertwined with these physical manifestations are stimulated and invigorated possibilities of thought. These are expressed by embodied states of mind such as 'being curious', 'motivated', 'excited', or 'alert'. Fundamentally they are all developing a self-awareness for embracing other possibilities (ways of thinking and doing). The 'self' or subject is both a singular and collective relation; staff are interested in how a person relates to themselves ('self-awareness') as well as how an individual then 'relates with others' (a collective self). Ultimately, fun as energetic embodiment is shared inter sensations: an attentiveness with the tussle between contradictory ideas, feelings, and expressions that 'can be uncomfortable' but must be embraced; to release self-resistance to fixed beliefs.
2. Child-like learning power: Fun can enable a sudden change of movement and direction within the learning process. It is a provocation, an invitation to try something, as yet unknown or new. The idea, state of being, and generation of fun (activities) in and of itself has a learning power - a capacity (or boost) that learning without fun lacks. Fun is an intentional act of giving the singular self, permission to choose a line of thinking, a series of actions, or not. It is a personal power that is enacted, demonstrated, and shared through a particular, playful, child-like power of 'courageous vulnerability'. This is a curiosity that goes beyond the known i.e., preconceived ideas of beliefs, self, actions, and of others. Fun enables the questioning of serious issues, and challenges existing social norms perceived as harmful, in a non-threatening way (like a child).
3. Rhythmic fluctuations (within games): Fun can be a state of 'flow'. This means there is an intensity and absorption within the engagement, a fluidity in the collective movements and learning of a group, whereby 'bodies are doing', and there is a heightened sense of inter-presence (whereby singular and collective

selves appear to align). Fun has a rhythm/tempo to it, just like the activity/physical based games of CAC. Fun is transitory and comes and goes. There will often be pockets of fun throughout a session. Moments of stillness (reflection) and silence/quiet (to a lesser extent) are important to punctuate the flow and ebb. The changing tempo reflects the ability of fun to contribute towards accepting adaptations and altering perspectives, often through 'surprise' or 'happy accidents' that can arise through the bodily knowing of physical games.

4. Building self-directed learning: Fun is a part of the foundations and on-going process of self-directed (determined) learning. A facilitator will normally provide an initial structure and intention that learners can then 'insert their own knowledge into'. Fun as part of self-directed learning emphasises that whilst an individual is becoming an expert of their own experiential learning, they are also simultaneously 'honouring the self in the other person' and developing empathetic pathways. This is part of a cluster of skills such as 'problem solving', 'collaboration' and 'listening' that are believed to be crucial for developing the capacities of learners to respond to change. Fun as part of life long self-directed learning processes recognises that 'there are many answers, many solutions', and that 'all identify something different'.
  
5. Trusting in social (safe) spaces of possibility: Shared fun has an ability to create social bonds. The coaches are crucial instigators of fun: they create a physical place, and reflective space that is both set aside from reality, but also deeply connected to the everyday challenges and realities of the players' lives. In this sense multi layered 'mirages' of learning realities are generated and overlaid with one another. Play-working with the imaginary is paramount, and fun is important in helping to stimulate an ever widening 'confident', and 'safe and trusting space', both within a singular self and beyond: 'feeling safe is both an individual choice and sensation as well as an individual feeling safe with others'. This requires a letting go of self-limiting beliefs and a drawing out of the self, to be able to connect with others. The physical setting becomes secondary because fun is intrinsically about the embodied choice to embrace it. If you choose to feel and have fun – you are much more likely to feel and have fun. It can therefore be anywhere in space-time but is most likely to be 'education outside the classroom',

in non-traditional environments known as 'free form play-grounds' which can be as imaginary as they are real.

6. Embracing contradictions (to transform personal and social challenges): There is a humility in what fun within learning processes brings: it purposefully confronts learners and coaches alike with the tussle of contradictory qualities/states of being (attitudes, emotions, movements) e.g., whereby an activity can be 'exciting and calming' at the same time. Fun also is the embodiment of 'courageous vulnerability' when the end of a learning opportunity can be a beginning, and equally the beginning, an ending. Fun is a 'time of vulnerability or questioning, or just an odd moment'. It holds unexpected surprises and facilitates the re-defining of a safe learning space as something both increasing in capacity within an individual, but also as something relational, and with others (a collective self). These subthemes all draw from subthemes relating to the previous themes. In addition, there are two new narratives: fun is a way of learning for alternative futures, which doesn't necessarily focus on 'outcomes' and can be autotelic i.e., fun for fun's own sake. Fun foregrounds the 'tension between how we have always done things, and a widening way of doing things'. Secondly, fun lessens (lightens) the burden and heaviness of complexity (but requires complexity); 'through play it makes them feel less complex'.

Table 14: The Six Coaches' Themes

Coaches' Themes	Subthemes
<p><b>1. Vibrant embodiment</b></p> <p>Meta Theme (disrupts the linearity of the themes and is pervasive in others)</p>	<p>a. <i>Physical manifestation</i>: of connecting with others</p> <p>b. <i>Moving your thoughts</i>: towards opportunities</p> <p>c. <i>Modelling fun</i>: for others</p>
<p><b>2. Celebrating will power, diversity and choice</b></p>	<p>a. <i>Will power</i>: encouraging personal and collective will power (motivation, not limitation)</p> <p>b. <i>Diversity</i>: drawing inspiration from difference and change</p> <p>c. <i>Choice</i>: revitalising minds as continual renewal</p>
<p><b>3. Reaching a place of 'I can'</b> (through game-based play)</p>	<p>a. <i>Physical activities</i>: prioritising moving and doing (over inertness)</p> <p>b. <i>Change it up</i>: game progressions and shifting pace</p> <p>c. <i>The smile of I can do</i>: celebrating a sense of achievement</p>
<p><b>4. Learning through doing</b></p>	<p>a. <i>Experiential moments</i>: connecting to everyday lives</p> <p>b. <i>Transforms a bad moment</i>: from here to there</p> <p>c. <i>Sense of belonging</i>: aligns mind, body, and relations with others</p>
<p><b>5. Profound empathetic collaboration</b> (in spaces of trust)</p>	<p>a. <i>Safe and brave</i>: spaces of shelter, challenge, and risk</p> <p>b. <i>Experiencing the other</i>: empathy and friendship</p> <p>c. <i>Being heard and seen</i>: finding an inclusive freedom outside (classrooms)</p>
<p><b>6. Creating alternative narratives and values</b> (to transform personal and social challenges)</p> <p>Meta Theme</p>	<p>a. Shifts/moves rules and social norms</p> <p>b. Play-works alongside hardship and sadness</p> <p>c. Challenges values focused only on individual competition and winning</p> <p>d. Brings some ease and lightness</p>

1. Vibrant embodiment: Fun is understood in this theme as the physical manifestation of feeling good, connecting with others. Physical bodily expressions such as smiles, dancing, laughing, singing all demonstrate ways of reaching out to connect with other minds and bodies. Physical expressions are acts of doing and moving and are a performance/enactment of celebrating the aliveness, the effervescence of a learning process, of the self in relation to others. Fun is always a relational embodiment: human vibrational resonance generates and expands more of the same. Conversely, being 'silent and still means no participation and boredom'; unintentional inertness associated with classroom sitting is the antithesis of fun as vibrant embodiment. Fun manifests as an alertness/attentiveness and eagerness to experience and risk the as yet unknown. It is a conscious effort to 'be open' to changing, moving thoughts and emotions. This often involves creative thinking, and it is about moving forward with an internal drive/will power as the 'excited will to do something'. Inner thoughts/motivations inform outer actions. Modelling fun is paramount: coaches can sustain the excited will to do something if they themselves embody and enthuse a 'charming' and 'magnetic' personality. This can include 'making a fool of yourself' and making jokes. To make others comfortable but also to encourage their own similar outward facing self-expressions.
2. Celebrating will power, diversity and choice: Fun is a way to encourage personal and collective will power and motivation. It is an opportunity to be creative/expansive and seek out possibilities rather than finding one answer. There is never just one so-called correct answer to a question. Choice and possibility are crucial aspects of what a fun coach/environment should inspire. The can-do attitude of 'let's give it a shot' is germinated because something is perceived as fun. Fun renews our thoughts, beliefs, and habits. It maintains an element of mystery and is something that can never be fully known. The realisation that all learning has no end point – just like fun is the not knowing the totality of an experience is important. There is a humility that fun brings to the learner, reminding her/him that there is always more to learn/ know – a newness to every experience: 'I was willing to crack my shell and become someone else'. Mistakes are part of learning journeys. What's fun for one person is not necessarily fun for another – learning experiences are highly subjective and

therefore must change and adapt. Fun inherently values diversity (and other egalitarian principles). By incorporating different ideas to your own, intentional change is inherently generated. Fun is part of a transformative learning experience, which can reverse role expectations such as children designing games and teaching the teachers, as well as going beyond the pitch into challenging and changing daily lives.

3. Reaching a place of 'I can' (through game-based play): Fun is associated with a state of moving and doing (over sustained inertness). Being inert for long periods means a disconnect of mind, body, and self. Fun is therefore often associated with physical activities, which transform a 'task into a game'. Games can represent personal/social challenges, and the act of playing (and praxis) rather than sitting and talking is believed to create a greater level of engagement. Games have progressions, some structure, and a shifting pace. They normally involve a quick introduction/set up and then straight into the physical play of it. There is often then a pause and a chance to reflect. This is a 'good stillness' of intentional reflection. Fun comes and goes (transitory). This is partly because some of the progressions may be too challenging, but also that playing a game is fundamentally about embracing change; fun too therefore has to evolve and dissipate before re-generation. Fun is only generated because of change and progression; it cannot be generated in stasis/fixity. Games and roleplay can help shift the stories we tell about ourselves and others. Games can be a fluid way of physical storytelling. Fun ultimately provides a sense of achievement – this can be the simple realisation that you 'had fun' or it can be a realisation that a player learnt memorably in some way: 'the smile of I can'.
4. Learning through doing: Fun is often associated with experiential moments along the learning journey. Fun contexts are often informal and 'on the ground' i.e., connect directly to everyday lives, and are therefore relevant but also sensorially rich i.e., 'learning they can touch'. There is often a 'storytelling element' that connects the games to the players lives. Fun often transforms a sad/difficult moment. Coaches expressed this in their interpretations of *furaha* (Kiswahili) and *diversion* (Spanish/Mexican) respectively, see Appendix 17. Fun can develop capabilities such as critical thinking, and problem solving, but it is the ability to

align mind (thoughts), body (movement), and social relations with others that creates a sense of belonging.

5. Profound empathetic collaboration (in spaces of trust): Fun can facilitate the creation of safe and brave spaces. These are physical, mental, and emotional spaces in which participants can learn about themselves as well as their co-participants. A group generates collective energy, whereby individuals can often become less self-conscious, for example girls may become more aware of the things their bodies can do. Becoming more confident. This is often created through trust-building games and games that encourage empathy or seeing from different perspectives. Fun is a moment of realisation in relation to experiencing 'the other' or how another feels/thinks/behaves, as part of a group. An individual generates a sense of fun when thinking/behaving in a novel way to their normal patterns. Laughter can function as a physical expression of recognising yourself in the other or recognising an alternative viewpoint. Having fun is part of the process of making friends. Fun is an inclusive endeavour; whereby everyone outside the confines of a traditional classroom and its assumed didactic teaching should feel they are heard and seen. This is 'equal participation'. Participants are encouraged to open up, be excited and be very active and 'free'. Freedom is understood as an absolute embodied form of fluid self-expression; this includes physical manifestations e.g., authentic smiles.
6. Creating alternative narratives and values (to transform personal and social challenges): Fun is about shifting rules. Including refashioning and crafting what rules themselves could and should be. This is a continual process depending on the group and environment: games need to be adapted, especially to tailor the social change/impact messages within them. Games are often designed to show that girls can do what boys can do in practical, fun ways. 'Fun and change go hand in hand'. Fun is intertwined with hardship and sadness in everyday lives. It can provide a 'release' to overcoming challenge and hardship; and 'make it pass better'. Fun acknowledges suffering, and rather than try to get rid of it can prompt an alternative perspective/way to deal with it, or simply just be alongside it. Fun challenges values focused only on winning (being 'better' in a conventional sense), especially values focused on an individual seen to be getting ahead. This challenges the conventional notion of what football is and does. The emphasis on

fun ideally as the focus in the learning process suggests that the qualities of experience are more significant than being better at certain skills. However, group and team-based activities are believed to be more fun and more fulfilling: socialisation skills are perceived as ultimately important in terms of how to be a 'good citizen'. This means how to learn, grow, and create social impact as a group/collective.

As RQ1 is a comparative question, addressing staff and coaches, it is important to show their linkages and shades of meaning, to explore similarity, pattern, difference, and fragment. I placed the themes alongside each other (as index cards on a floor), and could see some strong similarities, such as themes focused on types of learning or embodiment, as well as some nuances, such as the coaches' subtheme on 'transforming a bad moment'. This subtheme was unique to them. After finding an initial patterning on the floor, I placed the themes and subthemes into a comparative table (Table 15), as a way of considering whether there was any 'wholeness', moving away from the granularity, through subthemes, and towards refinement, and capturing their 'essence' (Braun and Clarke, 2022).

Table 15 presents the similarities between staff and coaches' interpreted themes (highlighted in orange text). The first theme on embodiment had many codes related to physical manifestations of sensory feelings and attitudes by both staff and coaches. The other themes all had threads of connection, which I will discuss further in Chapter 6.



Table 15: Similarities and differences between staff and coaches' interpreted themes of fun

No.	Staff themes	Subthemes	Coaches' themes	Subthemes
1	<b>Energetic embodiment</b>	Physical manifestation of the freedom to express yourself (live wire) Stimulated mind (switched on) Shared sensations and inter-relations (connective sparks) Tussle of contradictory qualities (push pull of resistance)	<b>Vibrant embodiment</b>	Physical manifestation of connecting with others Moving your thoughts towards opportunities Modelling fun
2	<b>Child-like learning power</b>	The catalyst for learning and change (taking the first step) Striving for self-belief (to carry on) Toying with courageous vulnerability (trying new things) Pushing past social barriers/restrictions (moving/ change making without threat)	<b>Celebrating will power, diversity and choice</b>	Encouraging personal and collective will power (motivation, not limitation) Revitalising minds as continual renewal Drawing inspiration from difference and change
3	<b>Rhythmic fluctuations through game-based play</b>	Flow (being like water) Progression/tempo of Purposeful Play (moving along steppingstones) Adapting to needs (changing direction) Hidden or unexpected (a refreshing surprise)	<b>Moving to a place of 'I can' through game-based play</b>	Physical activities: prioritising moving and doing (over inertness) Game progressions, shifting pace (change it up) Sense of achievement ('the smile of I can do')
4	<b>Building self-directed learning</b>	Initial structure and intention (putting up scaffolding) Becoming an expert of your own learning (designing your home) Developing capacities and skills to respond to change (building your home) Recognising there are many answers, many solutions (building an extension)	<b>Learning through doing</b>	Experiential moments that connect to everyday lives Transforms a bad moment Aligns mind, body, and relations with others (sense of belonging)
5	<b>Trusting in social (safe) spaces of possibility</b>	Social glue (bonding/socialisation) Re-inventing the role of a coach Redefining a safe space beyond yourself Letting go in the free form play-ground	<b>Profound empathetic collaboration (in spaces of trust)</b>	Safe and brave spaces Experiencing the other (empathy and friendship) Inclusive freedom to be heard and seen outside (classrooms)
6	<b>Embracing contradictions (to transform personal and social challenges)</b>	Tussle of contradictory qualities Courageous vulnerability Unexpected/surprises Redefining a safe space inside and outside of yourself Learning for alternative futures Lessens the burden, heaviness of complexity (but needs it)	<b>Altering narratives and values (to transform personal and social challenges)</b>	Shifts/moves rules and social norms Play-works alongside hardship and sadness Challenges values focused only on individual competition and winning Brings some ease and lightness

Whilst Table 15 shows that some themes are more closely aligned, such as theme 1, and others more loosely aligned, such as theme 2, between staff and coaches, at this point I chose to represent the information in an image (Figure 16). This helped to refine my thinking and summarise the final Six Themes. The blue circles indicate the final six themes, and the grey circles on the left are the staff's corresponding subthemes, aligned by row, and on the right, the coaches'. The dark blue indicates the overall meta-themes: codes within these two themes also appeared across the other themes, as indicated by the dashed lines. In relation to the staff, two subthemes are repeated under 'Embracing contradictions'; 'tussle of contradictory qualities' and 'toying with courageous vulnerability' because these are at the essence (heart) of this theme. Repetition provides impact.

I chose 'vibrant embodiment' over 'energetic embodiment' for theme 1, because vibrant places an emphasis on an allure and charismatic magnetism. I chose 'power of childlike curiosity' for theme 2, because the quality of a non-judgemental (naïve) curiosity, coupled with an element of power, which cuts across both the staff and coaches' themes on reflection was the essence across the subthemes. For theme 3, 'Rhythmic games' summarised the progressions of game-based play for both groups, and for theme 4, the staffs' theme focused on self-directed learning, and the coaches' emphasis was upon experiential learning. On reflection both considered 'learning to learn', attributes of how to learn (see the subthemes). Theme 5 considers the 'social spaces' of interactions, and whilst at first, I was considering summarising this theme across both groups as 'safe and brave spaces', I realised that the language of 'safe spaces' is well used in the NGO world with sometimes a hollow meaning. This theme on contemplation for both, had subthemes of 'letting go' and 'freedom to be heard and seen'; the sense of possibility in social spaces seemed much more accurate, for both. Finally for theme 6, I decided upon 'Embracing contradictions', because the subthemes for the coaches 'altering narratives and values' also play-work with contradictions in order to transform personal/social challenges e.g., challenging values of competition; some coaches described this as fun, going against the organisational discourse.

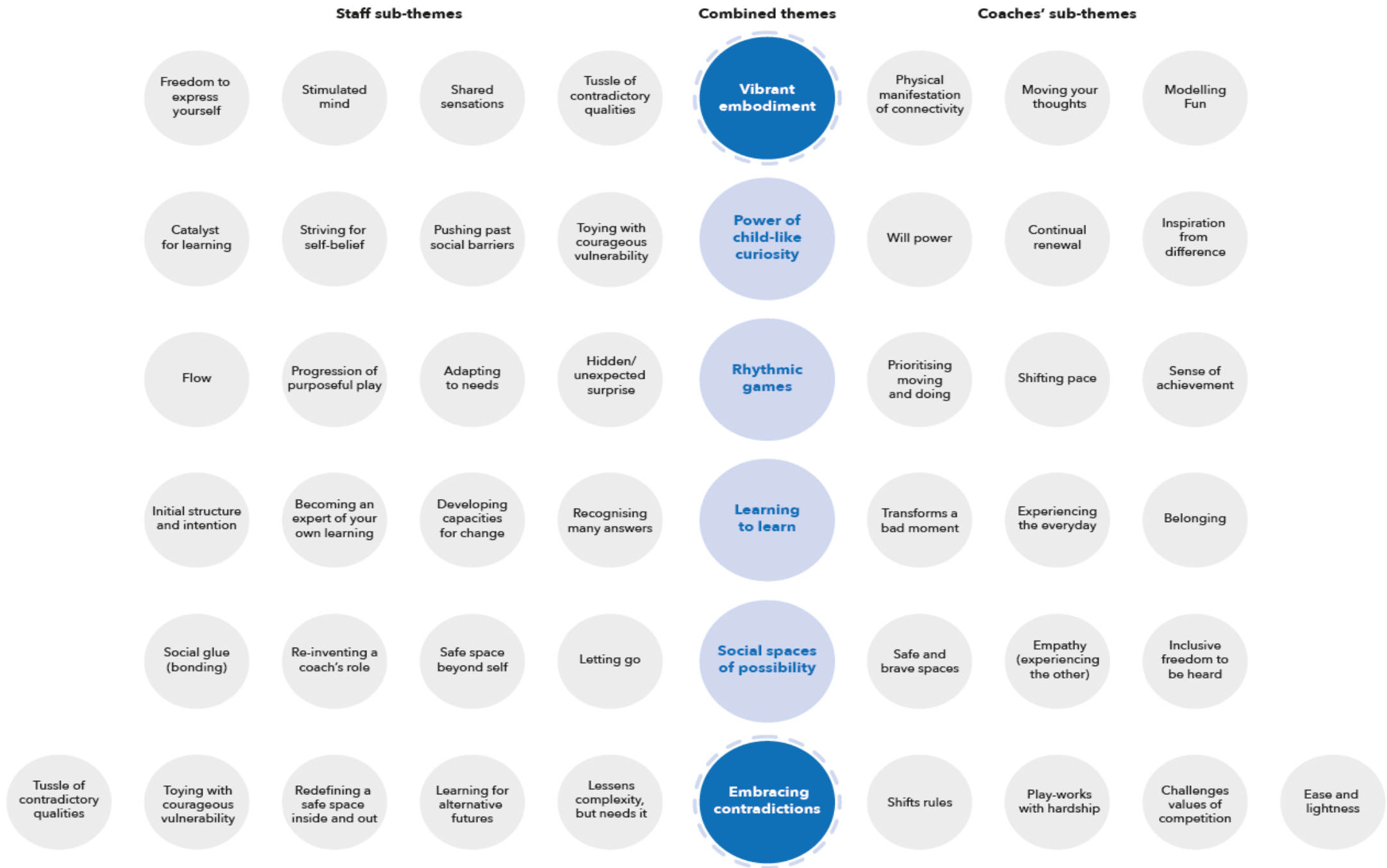
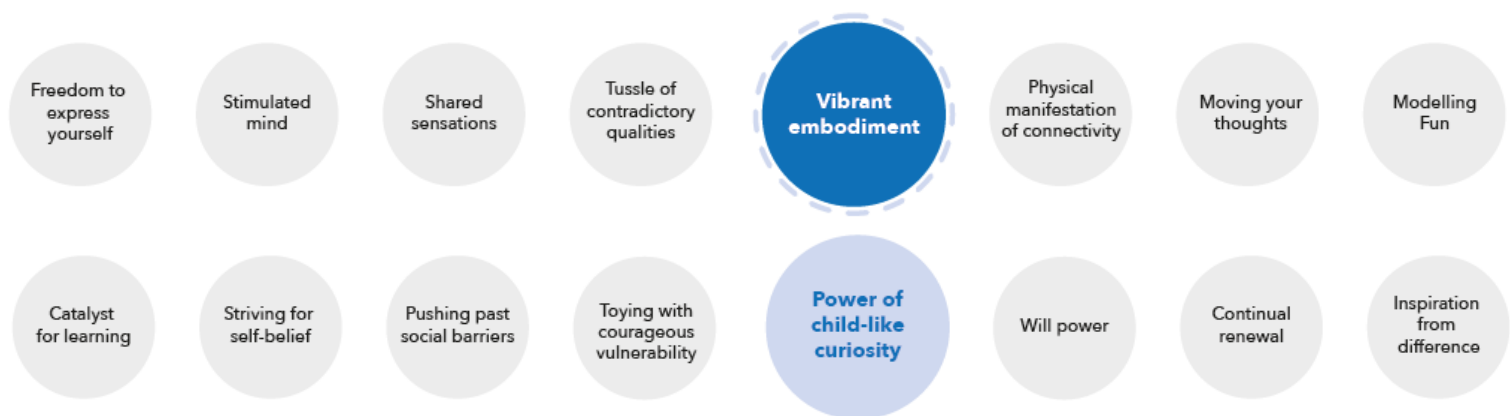


Figure 17: Constructions of fun - the final themes and subthemes

### 5.2.2 Alignment or alterity within notes (and recordings)

Having generated the six themes, I then, from a different ‘angle of approach’ (Richardson, 2000), sought to find connections and/or challenges by reading through my notebooks and summaries, highlighting points of resonance or dissonance. The intention was not to find every connection or disconnection, but rather to note the value of ‘sticky instances’; those my interpretive colouring (personal background), framing (literature) and ‘ethnographic hunches’ or intuitive knowing (Pink, 2021) were drawn to. The purpose was not to do a methodical beachcombing, because the thematic analysis had already achieved this, rather the intention was to give light to the treasures.



#### Vibrant embodiment and the power of childlike curiosity

In relation to the first two themes as constructions of fun, I noted that in the ‘ladies’ chat’ (an informal catch-up session amongst female staff) in November 2020, Katie, a member of staff reinforced her earlier supposition from her January interview. This was that being ‘silly’ is meaningful towards learning: ‘There’s a “oh, she’s doing that, I could do that too, and let’s just be weird and silly, and playful together now”’. In November she also talked about the necessity to ‘get silly and weird’; this aligns with staff themes 1) Energetic embodiment and 2) Power of child-like curiosity. Being ‘silly’ is associated with Katie’s facilitator identity as others commented in meetings ‘she has a special dance; you should see one day!’ This was a dismantling of self-judgement that is often associated with very young ‘childish’ behaviour; in this sense it is a positive attribute. Indeed, Katie’s comment during the first online session that ‘as adults we are still growing’, speaks to a sense that as adults there is still much more to learn, even from children. There was only one coach who contradicted this

sense of adults learning from children’s non-judgmental capabilities, and instead offered a paternalistic view of how to engage with children.



### **Rhythmic games and learning to learn (self-directed and learning by doing)**

In relation to the third and fourth thematic constructions of fun, I noted during the first staff meeting of 2021, in February, that Katie remarked, ‘it’s not fun anymore’; referring to sitting, and the often-inert experiences of Zoom at some online workshops organised by other groups. This aligns with physical movement and embodied co-presence as being a key aspect of the construction of fun within the ‘rhythmic games’ theme. But also, the ‘online-ness’ was challenging, but not in a fun way, because the reconceiving of movement and rhythmic games online required different conceptualisations and skills altogether. One male staff member remarked, ‘we need to learn how to make virtual spaces more fun, because connection is harder in virtual settings’. And whilst early attempts to create rhythmic flow and bodily movements were attempted, occasionally they resulted in emphasising the gap in physical learning by doing. For example, during the Asia CICs’ December 2020 online meeting, the comment ‘let’s hit that slide button to keep us moving’ actually reinforced the physical movement they missed.

Katie also acknowledged that self-directed learning online seemed to be more ‘structured’ than perhaps on field. Yet striving for a ‘horizontal learning together’, during her reflections on the first training session, was still important and the act of being heard by others, at times seemed very powerful online, a ‘purposeful listening’. This was reinforced by Dasia, who commented in a planning session for the online trainings that active listening ‘makes me melt’; a felt sense of empathy and belonging. In this way learning by doing (experiential learning) had different qualities and emphases, than those experienced on field.



## Social spaces of possibility

The subthemes of ‘social spaces of possibility, such as ‘experiencing the other’ (empathy) and ‘social glue’ (bonding) were certainly aligned when tracing through my notes. Dasia’s statement, ‘it makes me melt’, in reference to how she feels when a group shares personal responses she too can identify with, also speaks to this. As does the reflection by Katie that ‘I would rather see faces than a PowerPoint’, implying that physicality and bodily image remain an integral part of the learning experience and social space – even online. Creating a trusting, social space is often about being heard *and* seen.



## Embracing contradictions

Judith Gates (educational adviser and mother of the founder) directly acknowledged contradictory qualities with fun in her first interview in January 2020. She stated that ‘there is a tension to what people see as being whole-heartedly committed to having fun and learning the CAC way, but also, it’s a time of vulnerability, or questioning, or just as an odd moment’. Here the intentionality of asking a question is juxtaposed with a seemingly autotelic moment i.e., fun for fun’s sake with no singular/original intended outcome. This contradictory statement supports the theme of ‘embracing contradictions (to transform personal and social challenges)’. Other contradictory constructions of fun were conveyed by coaches. For example, Manila in a post-training interview remarked that when she (and her family) talk about surviving a natural disaster; they communicate through laughter, humour, and fun. For example, she ambiguously asserted, ‘it was kind of funny, so we could all survive’. In this way she is using fun as a transformational act: providing relief from a deep traumatic pain, but also inherently trying to change her relationship with a negative past experience into something else, more positive in the present.

Most of the constructions of fun in this inquiry were presented in a positive way, however there was recognition that fun is not always a positive phenomenon. There were fragments of divergence i.e., particular activities/'thought-feelings' (Wikan, 2020) that individuals described as *not* necessarily fun for themselves, but which they witnessed and perceived in others, as experiencing fun. These were all described in embodied ways:

- 1) Big energetic expressiveness is not fun for everyone. Manila, one of the coaches, remarked in her interview that, it is 'not always a fun explosion' – thereby acknowledging that big, loud bodily gestures and expressions are not fun for all. Indeed, she did refer to a concept of 'introverted fun' as something that often gets overlooked, meaning that fun can be something to create alone and sometimes in subtle, more gentle ways through the body.
- 2) Body consciousness: 'In the beginning a maximum of the girls didn't want to jump, because – oh my breasts and body. Ten girls stand to the side and make excuses; oh, I have stomach pain. I never scold, I just watch. Gradually they come. It's okay to jump, and it's okay to play'. Sita, the Indian coach describes here the discomfort of body consciousness that types of fun can create. In her opinion the girls shifted their viewpoint, however it is not clear if they all did.
- 3) How to generate 'inclusiveness' and the difficulties of maintaining a horizontal pedagogic approach online was expressed as challenging by several staff and coaches. This is an attribute/value associated with fun and several conveyed that they weren't quite sure how to do/gauge this online – it required a different pedagogic approach than in person. For example, Katie remarked after the second online training session that 'I laughed, when I spoke too long, or when there was a delay, and we spoke at the same time. I will immediately retreat and giggle. I don't know if it's fun – it's rather a little silly and awkward. It's not about learning; it's just the nature of conversation virtually'. She developed this sense of having a more dominant educator/teacher role online than on field and commented after the fourth training session that, 'There's a lot of silliness and playfulness and individuality [on field]. No one is on the spot, because you are just doing it, and in different groups, so no one is ever exposed, while online you're the leader – you are exposed! It's up to you now!'

4) Prolonged inertness of the body and mind is often in opposition to having/making fun. Anjali describes this as, 'if you are silent and still, the games talk about this, you kind of lose concentration and you don't like to participate in the activities, and you start to feel bored, instead of having fun'. Yet what is not clear is when stillness and, by implication, reflection as well is too much or too little. Moments of stillness and reflection are built into the Purposeful Play methodology, and it is down to the coaches' best interpretation of 'the atmosphere' of a session as to what is too much or too little for the group as a whole.

Fun and discomfort can be aligned (Benford et. al., 2018). Indeed, it is unclear whether any of these four embodied experiences of discomfort directly resulted further in 'self-enlightenment' or 'social bonding'. The work of Benford et. al., (2018), performance researchers, suggests that these states can be achieved after experiencing discomfort/pain through fun experiences (see 6.2.2). Benford et al., (2018), refer to these as 'higher goals', described as the re-collected memories of personal/witnessed discomfort and a fearful anticipation, interspersed amongst moments of passing fun/pleasure; a bit like popping a blister. This association of discomfort and fun aligns with the description of theme 6 ('embracing contradictions'), whereby fun acts as a provocateur, a bracketing mechanism (see 6.4.3), undoing known certainties in learning experiences, and through a 'whole person', embodied-thought-feeling way. Fun is ultimately subjective, an experience of the 'whole person' and always in relation to the rest of a particular social group, spaces, and materials, continually in motion.

For now, let us turn towards the findings in response to Research Question 2.

### **5.3 RQ2 How and why are particular learning activities experienced as fun for staff and coaches?**

To understand a relationality between fun and learning, it is first crucial to understand how particular learning activities are experienced as 'fun'. The learning activities I discuss refer to the four online training sessions that I participated in and observed from December 2020 – January 2021. These were selected for two reasons: firstly, it included staff and coaches I had already interviewed and knew in relation to Research Question 1; secondly, the subject matter of reflecting on play, fun and healing in a context of personal and social trauma (the Beirut Blast of August



2020) was especially intriguing, given the apparent contradictory nature of these social phenomena.

The overall iterative stages to answer the *how* part of the question included:

- a) Constructing the laughter critical incidents
- b) Presenting individual quotes (voices) that relate to individuals' physical and online embodiment experiences
- c) My reflexive observations of the experience of the online trainings. This will be presented in the discussion chapter.

I will now turn to presenting the generated findings on how the learning activities were experienced as fun (in 5.3.1 and 5.3.2), before framing the reasons as to why i.e., the roles of fun in the specific learning context, (see 5.3.3 and 5.3.4).

CAC's historic documentation refers to 'self-directed learning' as part of their Four Pillars (see 2.2.1). However, during interviews, and participant observation, it became apparent that many staff and coaches understood the latest iterations of 'self-directed' to be either 'not fully pure' (i.e., learners were not in complete control of the methods and goals of a learning session), or that 'Purposeful Play' i.e., intentional movement games-based methodologies was now a more accurate conceptualisation. I am not saying that elements of self-directed learning were not evident; they were. For example, did learners modify session goals or tasks? Yes – this was evident in some of the 'ice breakers' (improvisation games) and some exercises, but generally they were fairly structured and guided processes. This is perhaps due to the unfolding of the global COVID-19 pandemic, which forced staff to reconceive how their learning methodologies could be reimaged online, at speed. The sessions I participated in were the *first* iterations of this reimagining, and I perceived them as more aligned with embodied (transformative) learning (as outlined in 3.4.2).

### **5.3.1 Laughter critical incidents**

In 4.7.4 I explained how I developed and incorporated 'laughter critical incidents' into the post-interviews of the staff and coaches I observed. I will now briefly outline how I analysed them, before framing the findings, not only because analysis in ethnography is a continual reflexive process throughout an inquiry, but also because

this serves as a useful way to introduce the findings. As Halquist and Musanti (2010), educational specialists assert, it is important to 'recognise that the identification, careful representation, and in-depth description of critical incidents form an intrinsic part of the process of analysis' (Halquist and Musanti, 2010: 458).

Therefore, the laughter critical incident analysis included the following steps:

- 1) Noting the 'fun moments' as recalled by the staff/coach member in their post-interview transcript. This was done per individual, and per session.
- 2) Supporting these characterisations with a contextual quote.
- 3) Finding laughter critical incidents in my notes, that were fun moments I observed through a spontaneous laugh, and then checking these with the individual during the post session interview.
- 4) These were also supported with a quote, only if they were confirmed 'as fun' by the individual during the interview. In this way the laughter critical incidents, provided an extra angle of warm data through 'retrospectively' (Fincham, 2006) co-analysing fun.
- 5) Often the laughter critical incidents I noted were also picked up in the individuals' primary (self) reflections on fun, and therefore they are not repeated. Similarly, where I may have noted a spontaneous laugh and it wasn't deemed fun – this is not captured. For the purposes of answering the research question, Table 16 (an example of the findings from the final session, out of four) provides a concise way of capturing this information.

Table 16: Laughter critical incidents from session 4

Session/ Individual	Fun moments recollected by the individual (during post- interview)	Contextual Quote	Fun moments observed via the Laughter Critical Incidents (LCIs) during AND confirmed by the participant in the post-interview	Contextual Quote
Session 4				
Katie	1. Playing online 'follow the leader'	'So that was really fun – just the sound they made, and K's tricky movements are fun. It's just fun to see people do it on zoom – it's hilarious!'	3. Online tools (e.g., Menti) changing the dynamic of a session	'After Menti I forgot about that! That was a fun moment because it changed the whole dynamic! It was fun to see the words come up and read the Arabic, and it was silly. It was fun and amazing to see their hopes and dreams. And after that I thought that works better than I thought it would.'
	2. Idea of a new game using sound	'The idea of playing with sound which came through in two different games is really interesting and very neat. We don't do that in a lot of CAC games. And so that was incredibly fun – just the idea of it!'	4. Surprise (unexpected) in a pleasant way (reference to using Menti for the first time)	'It worked better than I thought...When you are surprised in a pleasant fun way. It's like oh – you are held up as this expert and then you come out and say that – that amazing. I was not expecting that. That's brilliant!'
Dasia	1. Playing online 'follow the leader'	'When H said that weird sound – that was really fun!'	2. Inter play (dialogue) with lead facilitator Katie	'She said this group didn't have a [draft] game idea...and you laughed and said to the group, I know you do!'
			3. Getting responses from participants in Menti (a new tool for most of them)	'I was really happy with the responses [to Menti]'
Manila	1. Playing online 'follow the leader'	'It was fun because it was silly! We are adults playing a game. It was nice to see us trying to do something that seems a bit childish. If we can do it – it was a challenge! Challenges are always fun!'	3. Her online space: watching an aspiring coach in her physical space spontaneously dance	'All of a sudden one of the kids, the aspiring coaches, would just dance. There wasn't even music, and really, really, dance. So, everyone in the shooting in the production was staring at him. He was doing something he didn't ask permission for and so everyone was laughing!'
	2. Filming with colleagues in her physical environment	'In my particular environment, I smiled and laughed a lot because it was really all just the hullabaloo going on around.'		

The findings for the other sessions (for all three participants) of all their 'fun moments' including additional laughter critical incidents is shown in Appendix 18. Some of the moments align with the constructed subthemes. For example, a state of fun as 'surprise', aligns with the staff fun as 'rhythmic fluctuation's' theme. In addition, there is also an explicit interplay between the participants' physical space-times and their engagement in online space-times. In the case of Manila, her second 'fun moment' is a direct realisation of the coming together of the two; she generates fun through trying to be 'in two+ worlds at once'. The laughter critical incidents, for all the participants, provided extra recollections of fun moments (as the two columns on the right in Table 16 show).

### **5.3.2 Individual's physical and online embodiment**

Let us now turn to a more detailed presentation of the findings relating to participants' individual voices, as they consider their physical and online embodied experiences, throughout the course of the training sessions. This provides a prism through which to understand subjective embodied (transformative) learning experiences in greater detail, and a consideration of embodiment in relation to fun and learning, in response to Research Question 2. At this stage it is useful to emphasise how personal the inter play is between physical and online experiences of embodiment, as shown in Table 17. For example, I discovered a different way of relating with my own body and sensing, *because* of being online, including noticing a lazy right eye, and that the use of sound online often goes unnoticed. The playing of charades and discussion of sound in relation to the Beirut blast all served to heighten my personal online senses of sound. Manila (see No. 2 in Table 17) also discusses her senses of sounds colliding in both her online and physical spaces; in this instance, the effect was to reduce her experience of fun in her physical space. These data will be discussed further in Chapter 6.

Table 17: Physical and online embodiment interpretive categories

No.	Interpretive categories	Participant/ Session	Example/Quote
1	<b>In two+ worlds at once</b>	Manila Session 3	<p>S: So, was she jumping during the training? [referring to Manila’s dog]</p> <p>M: [nodding] Yes, she was doing that, and listening because I was talking a lot. She was hearing my voice and trying to come in my house through the window. She does it in one jump. She is a tiny chihuahua type puppy. She was by the window, and I was fearing she would actually do it! And the trash came as well of course! [laughing] I was anticipating it would happen during the session, and it did. The fun part is the sharing and what you experience - the unexpected things that happen!</p> <p>S: Yes, and you seem to be laughing at the fact that you were in two different worlds at one time?</p> <p>M: Yes!</p> <p>S: You seem caught in between?</p> <p>M: You can’t just be part of one! You have to be in the online presence and also be in your physical presence.</p>
2		Manila Session 4	<p>‘I had to restrict myself from laughing so much at what was going on around me because of my online presence. In the video production [in her physical space] they were all laughing so I had to mute myself a lot, because it was noisy! The idea of fun on the outside, I had to restrain myself from actually being part of the fun outside, because of my online presence’.</p>
3	<b>Personal physical experiences (including objects/artefacts)</b>	Manila Session 4	<p>S: So, would you say you were more in your physical space rather than your online space?</p> <p>M: I think that is very precise. How I felt was oh my gosh – I wasn’t really there during the online discussion. Although it seemed I was I could have contributed more. The thing is if I had gone out my Wi-Fi would have gone. And when I talk outside, they would still hear me, so it would still be captured.</p>
4		Dasia Session 1	<p>S: I wonder if in your physical room, were you doing anything we didn’t see?</p> <p>D: I move a lot because I made this couch myself – there is a hole here, so I put this cushion. I made coffee and at one point in a breakout room I turned my camera off and had a cigarette.</p>
5		Katie Session 1	<p>S: Were there any materials or objects you became conscious of or were part of your experience?</p>

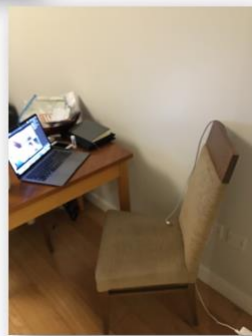
			K: Yes, so at the necessity level I use this notebook once and a while; I jot down random things. So, the time a breakout session would start, so I could know how much time had passed. And sometimes I would doodle.
6		Katie Session 1	Sometimes I have something I am fidgeting with a bit in my hand [showing pen top] and I have water or coffee and sipping helps me take a pause or break.
7	<b>Online physical presence</b>	Manila Session 1	Manila: We are having a staff meeting and the Wi-Fi is not great here, so I went outside. I can still hear. [Wearing a face mask].
8		Dasia Session 1	Dasia: Katie would you prefer everyone to have their cameras on? Katie: Yes, if people are comfortable. Dasia: they will unless there are connection problems.
9		Katie Session 1	I try to be very aware of body language because it's all we can see when someone is speaking. You don't get the full body either, but you do get an idea if I am laid back relaxing [lies back].
10		Manila Session 1	I was thinking about if I am fixing my hair is that bad? So, what to say and how to present myself in case they have a different cultural understanding. Will it be offensive? I stopped because I didn't know.
11		Dasia Session 4	It added because on one screen you can see everyone, maybe doing it live you would just be focused on one person.
12		Dasia Session 2	It was funny to see other people bodies moving. It was cool to see other people on the screen trying to move somehow. So, I was like okay it's not only me moving and trying to find a good space with the computer etc.
13		Manila Session 2	I got a bit conscious of myself. I didn't know how to adjust my laptop to be comfortable with my online presence.
14		Session 4	[Playing 'follow the leader'] Halifa: [Sound of a bird/clown, group laughing] Katie: Okay 1, 2, 3 go! [scratching head – some copy – then Halifa trying to wall climb] Katie: Thank you Halifa. Who wants to be the next leader? Aleyna: Okay, I have an easy one. Peecooo.
15		Session 3	[Taking a screenshot] Katie: Ready! 3, 2, 1, smile. And again, in case any funny face. 3, 2, 1, Beautiful [clapping] I'll send them all to everyone.

A complementary form of representation to be viewed alongside Table 16 is the collage of photos (shown in Figure 18). The collage consists of three sets of photos by each participant, from each of the four online training sessions. They provide a visual image, a prop, to supplement Tables 16 and 17 and should be viewed alongside the fun moments and laughter critical incidents, presented in these two tables. The photos are spontaneous improvisations, always partial, transitory and 'of the moment'. They were often taken quickly and provide a different sensory engagement to facilitate understandings of the sessions.

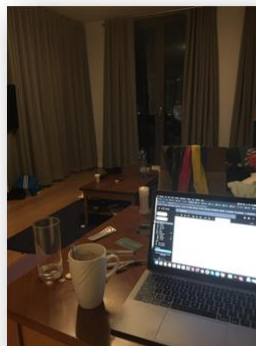
**Katie's photos**



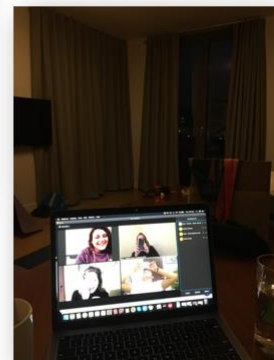
Session 1



Session 2



Session 3



Session 4

**Manila's photos**



Session 1



Session 2



Session 3



Session 4

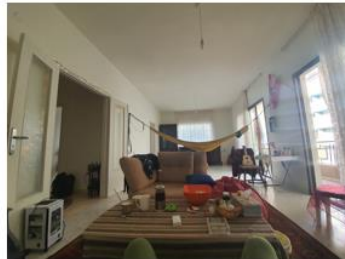
### Dasia's photos



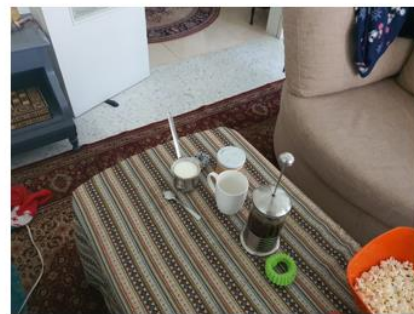
Session 1



Session 4



Session 3a



Session 3b

Figure 18: A collage of photos for each of the four online trainings

Having presented the findings to respond to the first part of Research Question 2 (how are particular learning activities experienced as fun), I now present the findings in relation to the second part of the question: why are particular learning activities experienced as fun? This demands consideration of the relation between fun and learning, and what roles a state of fun/phenomenon of fun enables and generates, in the context of the four online training sessions.

I play-worked a thematic analysis as outlined in 4.9.1 but drew on codes that directly related to 'fun', 'learning', 'roles/purpose' and 'experiences' (embodiment, presence, movement, and artefacts). I treated the coach and two staff members as a totality, as my interest was now in their combined understandings of roles. The constructs suggested there was significant alignment, but I was also particularly focused on *social* constructs, and how meaning is made within groups.

The overall iterative stages to answer this sub question included:

- a) Generating shared themes from four online session transcripts, plus the 12 post-session interview transcripts; 16 transcripts in total.



- b) Reflecting back on interview responses, notes (and recordings), including from the three most influential 'higher-ups' in the organisation; the founder, educational advisor, and CEO to the question; 'What roles does fun have in the learning process'?
- c) Reflecting on a) and b) in relation to my own reflexive observations of the online trainings. This will be presented in Chapter 6.

### **5.3.3 Four themes: relationality between fun and learning**

Based on the process above, I refined the six original candidate themes down to four, see Table 18. The purposes of fun within the learning context of CAC can be understood as:

1. Building Inclusive relations (celebrating similarity and difference)
2. Altering the mood (as an 'air of fun')
3. Helping to heal (through feelings of lightness and liberation)
4. Repositioning, re-storying and re-imagining self, community, the world

Stage 6, the final 'write up' of the thematic analysis, will be presented in the next chapter, in 6.3.

Table 18: Four themes: relationality between fun and learning

No.	Themes	Subthemes	Definition (scope and focus)
1	<b>Building inclusive relations</b> (in celebration of similarities and differences)	<p>Provokes contributions in an inclusive space</p> <p>Encourages an abundance of gratitude and empathy</p> <p>Brings ‘wired thinking’ to life (appreciation of enlivened beingness, in the moment)</p>	<p>Fun provides an invitation to contribute amongst a wider group, through sharing experiences, responding to questions, and an embodied energy. It helps create an inclusive, horizontal learning environment, whereby the coach is keen to learn together with the learners.</p> <p>Learners can feel at ease or mellow, and the process of sharing helps to create a safe and trusting space. Asking (often unasked/taboo) questions is more important than answers. In a learning experience fun can catalyse an abundance (generosity) of empathy and thankfulness. Having fun enables, the celebration of how ‘different and similar’ we all are, because what is fun for one person is not necessarily fun for another, but also because of role play games. Empathy is created because some learners share their ‘scariest’ or most vulnerable parts of themselves. The role of fun is to provoke alternative questions and ways of thinking.</p> <p>There is a continual encouragement and offering of thanks back to participants. Fun brings ‘wired thinking’ to life – this is enlivened, stimulated embodied knowing. Wired thinking is the engagement with the content, but also the passion and excitement – fun ‘vibe’ or ‘energy’ that learners are part of in a <i>specific moment</i>. It is the holistic learning experience, made up of stimulated learners, reacting and sharing together to create a bigger enlivened sense of selves and possibilities. Fun is the experience itself, in motion i.e., fun-ing as a verb and (compound) noun.</p>
2	<b>Altering the mood</b> of a learning experience: ‘air of fun’	<p>Shaking it out: creating a different energy</p> <p>Silliness helps to forget or disclose</p>	<p>Fun is a mood/atmosphere that is bigger than any individual. Individuals can help to change the fun mood by making jokes, doing ice breaker games, laughing, and smiling, but it is the combination of BOTH individuals having fun, and the perception of the group having fun that is especially important.</p> <p>Fun can always be found alongside serious ways of experience. The ‘lightness’ enables a deeper conversation, shared as a ‘silly bond’. There are ‘moments that shift’ between fun and serious moments. Fun comes and goes; it is transitory in learning experiences. It is not fixed and unchanging in itself. What was fun may not continue to be so. The fun generated from being silly is important</p>

		Disrupts the stuckness of behaviours/ social norms	<p>because the apparent ease can build towards discussing serious topics. The outcome of silliness can be a tautology i.e., for silliness in and of itself, but it can also enable a progression to discuss traumatic social issues. Sometimes there is 'grey area' – so they are not discrete binaries e.g., being confused</p> <p>Fun disrupts old, ingrained ways of thinking and being. It is NOT about brushing aside or mitigating discomfort; this is natural to learning. The learner has control over how to respond. If the learner responds by being, making and doing fun – then their ability to move on from restrictive social norms is increased. CAC have games that illustrates this e.g., a group starts playing in a small space and thinks of things in their community they want to get rid of until they are shoulder to shoulder. They then turn this around by thinking of things they want to add – the embodied (transformative) learning becomes expansive: the physical, social, and intellectual spaces expand.</p>
3	<b>Helping to heal – it can feel liberating and lightening</b>	<p>Moving feelings through the body</p> <p>Unloading/releasing with others</p> <p>Finding balance (with contradictions)</p>	<p>Painful/troubling thoughts and feelings can be moved through the body via physical actions. Fun movements (the doing of fun) assist with this, such as singing, wiggling, laughing. 'Shaking it out' helps to process tragic experiences. Fun instigates the release and unburdening of traumatic learning experiences. Fun should create an ease for individuals to share in a group. It can act as a pressure valve to release the overwhelm/ inertness of traumatic experiences.</p> <p>Physically moving, playing – especially with ice breakers at the start of a learning experience – is important to generate energy/physical expression of aliveness. Fun can be a liberating experience that is often achieved through the honest vulnerability of an individual with others. It also demands a 'carefree' or 'light' perspective that is open to new ideas, rather than resistant.</p> <p>Fun tackles contradictory qualities and ideas and therefore enables the learning of individuals to go 'more places'. The balance (of a spectrum of ideas/questions) are important to expand the learning. Entirely serious learning experiences reduce the ability of participants to share candidly. Being 'torn' about something or finding it tricky is not assumed to be judged as negative, rather the fun enables an ability to look at challenges in a non-judgmental way, more like a fool/clown (divergent).</p>

4	<b>Repositioning, re-storying and re-imagining</b> yourself, community, and world	<p>Expanding the frame (increasing perspectives)</p> <p>Growing your muscles: mental, physical, and social capabilities</p> <p>Realisation of a change in thinking/knowing</p> <p>Learning as art and play</p> <p>Preparing for the unknown</p>	<p>Fun (through the play of games) enables a learner to reposition and reimagine whatever they are learning. The tools are through sport, play, and art. Fun is the creative opening of minds; the expansion of perspectives (and from a Vygotskyian perspective, the expansion of ‘accommodation’). This entails the use of imaginary skills and an ability to ‘dream’ or ‘story’ i.e., go beyond social norms and realities. In this sense fun is about moving your mind (thought patterns). It can involve playing with rules/stereotypes and then deconstructing and re-framing them.</p> <p>Physical movement is connected to the growth of intellectual and social – interpersonal skills. This is embodied (transformative) learning and is often conveyed through metaphors in speech, such as ‘jump out’. Designing games is central to flexing a ‘learner muscle’ because it entails thinking through options/challenges, working with others, and physically trying the game out.</p> <p>No learning is ever complete. Every learning experience is ‘just the start of a bigger conversation’. Fun can catalyse the realisation of a change in thinking/knowing in a (learning) environment. This is a type of ‘moving forward’. Not in linearity. It often involves humility and laughing at oneself – an acknowledgment that learning is not a fixed end goal, like ‘a switch coming on’.</p> <p>The role of fun in learning is to express ourselves like performative art (art in motion) and play. These forms of human expression encourage alternative thinking. Children often have this capability; adults need to re-learn it. Jokes have a learning power to disrupt and create a new realisation. Although it is associated with children, it is for everyone. The play of games encourages innovation and ingenuity. A fun learning environment has to be a creative and inspired environment that includes embodied expressions of aliveness and facilitates social connection with others.</p> <p>Having and being (embodying) fun means that uncertainty and the unknown (or not yet known) are nothing to be fearful of, or resist. It is through being adaptable that the unknown (questions/challenges), can become the known (answers/solutions). Acknowledging that you don’t know is not a shortcoming; it is an expected and integral to the learning process.</p>
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### **5.3.4 Alignment or alterity within notes, interviews, and recordings**

As part of the iterative-inductive ethnographic approach to analysis (O'Reilly, 2004), as discussed in 4.9.2, I also searched for points of resonance or dissonance with these themes. The points of interest selected below were chosen based on their 'stickiness': my interpretive colouring (i.e., personal background and interests), framing (literature) and 'ethnographic hunches' (intuitive knowing), or 'when something not previously visible has been rendered knowable through the ethnographic or analytical encounter' (Pink, 2021: 35).

#### **Building Inclusive relations (celebrating similarity and difference)**

The majority of embodied fun learning experiences are those that encompass both, body-mind and social resonance. For example, Dasia exclaimed in one of the online trainings, 'I am tingling'. This was a direct acknowledgement of a visceral mind, body, and perceived social alignment. This supports the first theme on roles of fun as 'building inclusive relations'.

There was also recognition from several of the participants that one person's fun is not necessarily another's e.g., from one pre online training session in September 2020, a coach mentioned, 'it's not *always* an explosion of fun'. Whilst at first this seems a contradiction to the theme of fun as 'energetic embodiment', it also potentially aligns with the subtheme of 'wired thinking' in relation to roles of fun: this doesn't negate that enlivened learning may be simply internal (cognitive or physiological), as opposed to always internal and external (physically) performed.

Furthermore, not everyone always feels a part of the learning experience, because without the fun-ing (the embodied experience itself, in motion), a sense of isolation may arise. Moments of this 'outlier' experience are expected, but it is important they are transcended through skilful coaching (asking other questions, using different games etc). The closest I came to witnessing a frustration with not being able 'to read' a participant, in relation to whether they were having fun or not, was Katie's reflection from a post online training session interview: she remarked that one of the young participants didn't contribute, sitting still and staring. She noted his refugee status in the group, a lack of familiarity with the approach to learning, and/or the online nature of the experience. However, she lamented the fact that across the four sessions, there seemed to have been little change in his demeanour. The lack of

apparent change seemed almost more troubling than the inert and visibly 'less wired' demeanour.

### **Altering the mood (as an 'air of fun')**

This concern with stasis was also evident during the third planning session for the online trainings (November 2020), Katie commented; 'we don't like to write things down because then they die'. This aligns with the role of the fun subtheme, 'disrupts the stuck-ness of behaviours/social norms' as part of the theme of 'altering a mood' which is inherent in the movement and change that fun brings to learning experiences. If something is perceived as inert and fixed for a period of time, it is understood to be boring, and therefore in antithesis of fun.

The final complementary note of alignment with a theme comes from a CIC group call in September 2020. Cuthbert was facilitating a session and seemed to be very sensitive to the body language and online energy/atmosphere of the group. I noted he had a very calm tone to his voice, and at one point he mentioned that he was 'taking the temperature of the room'. This complements the second theme of fun's purpose as 'altering the mood of a learning experience: air of fun'.

### **Helping to heal (through feelings of lightness and liberation)**

Part of this 'mood of fun' is an intentional avoidance by coaches of saying whether something is right or wrong. In session 4 of the online training sessions, I witnessed Katie ask further questions, enabling a participant to think further for themselves about the assumptions and claims that they were making. Katie commented in the debrief that this was intentional because 'making a quick judgment when someone is learning often involves punishment, and at CAC we associate this with religion'. This aligns with the theme of fun learning as a process of healing through lightness and liberation, embodied by open questions and curiosity, rather than shame and judgement, and a perceived false certainty in the viewpoint of a coach.

### **Repositioning, re-storying and re-imagining self, community, the world**

An attunement to theme 4 (reposition, re-story and re-imagine) comes from Judith Gates' interview. She remarked that 'fun is about curiosity, exploration, wondering in a purposeful way', and that 'education has a drawing out'. Both of these statements align with the role of fun as a creative endeavour, and with the subthemes of

'learning as art and play' and 'expanding the frame'. This was further reinforced by Judith Gates's reminder at a staff meeting: 'don't just view the pandemic as a deficit'. In other words, there are possibilities to reframe perspectives, reposition and reimagine opportunities during periods of difficulty.

Further notes in support of the 'Reposition, reimagine and re-story' theme was Nick Gates's comment on the non-linearity of learning (and education more broadly) that learning, and fun are expansive/generative with no one ultimate purpose. This was confirmed in the statement; 'we are just the equippers'. This reminded me of Katie's reflection in a post interview of a training session that every learning experience is 'just the start of a bigger conversation', because the philosophy of CAC as Judith Gates commented in her solo interview, 'is not education to change the world, but education for a changing world. It will change anyway'. This aligns with the subtheme of 'preparing for the unknown'. In order to 'move forward' fun enables a *suspension of disbelief* within the learning process.

I could find no challenges to this theme on the role of fun in relation to learning, which is in and of itself a useful finding. This idea about movement, change, another way, as inherently driving the relationship between fun and learning is paramount. Fun is never the same. It is like learning, an evolving generative, expansive, phenomenon – accepting of some structure, but not confined or entrapped by it.

### **The fifth shadow role**

It was at this point, that I was also struck, when going through my notebooks, by a fascinating comment from one of the male staff members. He said that fun 'makes the thing more of itself'. This idea that there is an *authenticity that fun surfaces* in relation to learning is especially interesting in the context of the subtheme 'finding balance (with contradictions)' as part of theme 4, and the persona (presence) connected to this of acting like a fool (jester). In this way, I sensed there was something inherently significant in this statement, the autotelic nature of fun that was worth exploring further. And because this role of fun did not come from the systematic thematic analysis, but rather a post reflection on notes, I marked this as a 'shadow', firstly because this analysis came from a different process, but also the nature of a shadow, not as an absence (lesser entity), but rather as a *reverse*

*projection*, a provocation to consider another aspect altogether. To be discussed further in 6.4.1.

### Challenging assumptions

In a similar vein, part of the process of looking for pattern and fragmentation is considering ways to challenge participants and my own assumptions (see, for example, 6.2.2). It is not an easy thing to do, but it does require a conscious choice to try. In relation to participants, I encouraged them to think about their own assumptions by asking the question: ‘Could the session objectives have been achieved without fun?’ This was an important question to ask because it encouraged reflection on preconceived biases and, in so doing, provoked divergent thinking. Table 19 presents the findings. This shows that all participants throughout the course believe that fun is important to the learning experience, and that without ‘it’, the learning experience is lesser in some ways, such as less memorable or more restrictive. I will pick up on this further in the next chapter.

Table 19: Could the session objectives have been achieved without fun?

	Participant name	Quote
1	<b>Dasia</b> Session 1	‘It can’t be done without fun: it is the tool we are using to heal.’
2	Session 2	‘We addressed through [online] games, but it was a <i>light feeling</i> in the discussions because we didn’t address them through a game in a normal face to face. The element of fun was in the background because the discussions were serious in the breakout rooms. Serious in the sense we weren’t playing and jumping and laughing. It [still] couldn’t have been achieved without fun.’
3	Session 3	‘Another aspect of fun is that you need it to feel comfortable around others and we already established that, so fun is also that everyone can feel safe and say whatever they want.’
4	Session 4	‘In a more formal way, which wouldn’t necessarily stick in the mind so people. Having fun and this nice space for people really helps achieve the goal of what we are doing. I can’t say without fun, no, it wouldn’t be achieved.’
5	<b>Katie</b> Session 1	‘The whole idea is that if we move and have fun and engage with each other through our activities then that’s going to help us heal and move forward together as a community, as an individual, from the traumas of 2020. So no, the objectives are dependent on fun.’
6	Session 2	‘No!...the intention of having fun was there. If we think just about a pure safeguarding session, I think those goals can be achieved without fun, but at the same time if we think about fun as the <i>connection and engagement with the content and the passionate feeling</i> , feeling provoked to contribute to listen and to participate. There is a fun energy in there. There is probably a



		grey area when it becomes – when talking about something like violence is not fun at all: so, when it enters fun, it remains to be connected and engaged.’
7	Session 3	‘I don’t think so...there needs to be just <i>lightness</i> in order to be able to talk about trauma or whatever heaviness. People can disagree but I think we know on field you have got to <i>shake it out</i> and then we can go and talk and play. But we have to have moments where we are just laughing and connecting, and being silly with each other, and that allows us to go to more places.’
8	Session 4	‘No, because the session focused on the games, and they have to be fun in order to have a social impact...fun is a necessary ingredient. And the fun and silliness of ice-breaker activities we need that to, one gets a read on the group’s energy and two, to inject some lightness and silliness, because that allows us to be more connected, and to go to the hard places as well.’
9	<b>Manila</b> Session 1	‘I don’t think so. If you are asking people to talk about their experiences and to talk about ideas and you are not enthusiastic, and you are not fun. I don’t think people will be open about things. You have to look trustworthy and if you are too serious you won’t. Fun is the ingredient that makes conversations alive basically! It makes connections in different ways, whether its online or not.’
10	Session 2	‘It may still have been achieved, but without fun and a physical activity and just talking about what to do: the ideas won’t really stick to the participants, because they didn’t learn by doing. The objective of teaching the game will only be achieved faster with the fun aspect. The picture won’t be painted quickly without fun.’
11	Session 3	‘I don’t think so...if the fun part wasn’t there...you might have had sharing, but not <i>comfortable sharing</i> . There has to be a balance when you are trying to share something serious. There should be a lighter side to the serious. If not, everyone will just be crying.’
12	Session 4	‘I don’t think so because I think icebreakers and activities like that make participants comfortable so even if we had the three sessions before we are still in the process of getting to know the dynamics of the group. Ice breakers and fun games make us feel more similar with each other: it’s something we can do together.’

In addition, I also asked a direct question on the roles of fun in relation to learning during the original interviews: ‘What are the roles of fun?’ Table 20 presents the findings from the three most influential figures in the organisation. These are useful because they suggest the normative conceptualisations on what purposes fun generates in relation to personal and/or social change. From here I will assess whether these conceptualisations remain dominant, or not, in the next chapter.

Table 20: What are the roles of fun?

	Participant	Quote
1	Educational Advisor	'I am interested in people learning how to learn. So therefore, in skills development such as observation, classification, problem solving, collaboration. All of these transferable skills into different contexts. Irrespective of the context they have been educated to have, capacities that enable them to respond to change.'
2	Founder	'I don't think you should always start with the end goal, and this is where we struggle on funding because it should go [hand gestures for wiggly loops], and if a better thing takes us that way – that's where we should go, because things have changed in the community. I think end goal development doesn't work.'
3	CEO	'The more you do something the better you become at it. So, it's not that people need to repeat. It's that people need to be able to want to do our curriculum, they want it to be enjoyable. So, I think it's very intentional. Again, every part of our curriculum has so much thought into it – so much freedom and fun and everything else. It's a complete façade and mirage. In that people think they are running around and having fun, but our learning outcome is about socialisation.'

We can see that fun learning is constructed as:

- Capacities to respond to change (resilience/adaptability)
- Divergent/alternative thoughts and actions
- Socialisation (learning to be and belong with others)
- Intentionality, including to be intentionally divergent i.e., the fifth shadow role: 'it's a complete façade and mirage!'

## 5.4 RQ3: Is fun a significant (meaningful) within CAC? If so, why?

This brings us to considering the generated findings in response to Research Question 3: Is fun a significant (meaningful) concept within CAC? If so, why?

To respond to this question, the ethnographic analysis, builds on the generated findings from the previous two questions, and brings in one other element aimed at providing an intentionally embodied, affective, and sensory response to the question through a found poem; as 'ways of noticing' with a multiplicity of voices, in order to create an 'enlivening of an unknown marking' (Ballestero and Winthereik, 2021: 3). The use of one found poem (Leavy, 2009) as an additional angle of approach in analysis and representation serves to emote and communicate a relational ('with') way of knowing (between writer, reader/listener and text) that encompasses an

attentiveness (an aliveness and presence) with alterities to the already familiar, known or singular.

Being in a state of fun-ing in an embodied (transformative) learning environment is an active provocation to consider and act upon alterities to the already familiar. This is meaningful and significant in a learning context because it reminds the learner and the educator/coach that there is always a new way to think, do, be and ultimately learn itself. This has implications beyond CAC and for non-formal learning contexts, which I will explain in Chapter 6, but for now, I present the found poem, an embodied expression of what fun is, does and why it has significance. To respond to whether fun-ing is significant or not, means that what it is and does, in relation to learning, is part of this response.

#### ***5.4.1 At its heart: a found poem***

In order to experience the poem beyond the written text, on the page, you may like to hear it read, as a different way of receiving and engaging with it. Spoken word, rather than written text, can resonate in a different way. You may also consider tracing and reading the form of the text, as you listen. The choice, reader, is yours.

If you wish to listen, please click on the hyperlink<sup>27</sup> in the title – ‘At its heart’.

#### **[At its heart](#)**

Just in that minute,  
feel laughter  
capturing your attention  
the whole sense, of it  
a refresh: an excited will to diverge, from something  
an embodied knowing, with the unfamiliar.

The moment sticks, and you go back to your centre.

Of this world, your body, my body, life:

go where you want to go;

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<sup>27</sup> [https://soundcloud.com/sh\\_1/19-apr-0947-fun?utm\\_source=clipboard&utm\\_medium=text&utm\\_campaign=social\\_sharing](https://soundcloud.com/sh_1/19-apr-0947-fun?utm_source=clipboard&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=social_sharing)

hearing it, feeling it, being it, becoming.

Making it pass better.

We arrive back together,

with the good stillness of reflection.

Belonging in relation with others

is a fluidity at ease with physical manifestation.

It's both

the team and by yourself.

Find the importance of experiencing the other:

crack a shell and become someone else;

it is an opportunity to gain learning that can. *Be* touch.

Feeling – is a mode of active, responsive, *presencing*

Not! a passive, interior re-action.

Wake up

realise on your own

let your eyes become wide; just be weird.

It is possible you find a fun space, place or moment from a sad thing.

Be freedom of movement, however small. Release tension. Release.

All of a sudden, energy, eruption, a shared sensation, a depth and intensity

confrontation with the constant questioning about how we live in contradiction

confined by community (religion, tradition, culture)

rebel: play is more expressive of you than any ladder of rules.

Invite a bridge –

feel free – open your hands –

give yourself permission.                      judgement is lifted is lifted.

Body is so much more.

It doesn't have to be one thing, immersion

with movement and patterns

more willing to fail; being more of itself, ourselves  
creating a space, asking questions, but not giving answers.

Fun is at its heart, the cleanest, clearest way for me to inhabit a space.

We all identify something different in it,  
because that's the self

where you make it

imagination, movement, improvisation

honouring the self in the other person:

we do that together.

Both – in one.

Feel safe, first.

You set the space up, in a different way.

Give yourself to it.

All sorts of things happen,,,,, spinning, laughing, shaking,,,,

that's a conundrum and a paradox.

No-thing can ever happen twice.

[Fun is

education for a changing world

a widening way of doing things

or

was it just an odd moment?]

The six generalised constructions (combining staff and coaches) of what fun is as a phenomenon are within the found poem. These are: vibrant embodiment; the power of childlike curiosity; rhythmic games; learning to learn; social spaces of possibility; embracing contradictions (towards changing personal and social narratives). All of these definitions of fun re-direct learning away from outcomes/products and instead towards qualities of learning experiences. Whilst there is a subtheme as part of the staff theme on 'building self-directed learning' that speaks of 'life skills', this is

actually a small part of the discourse especially from staff, who are perhaps more embedded in donor driven discourses. Ultimately, conceptualisations of fun learning generate a different *value system and language* for learning as Chapter 6 explores.

In addition, the four themes related to roles (purposes) of fun in the specific online learning contexts of this research suggest that fun is acutely significant in relation to holding a space for spontaneity and digression within learning experiences (alongside planned learning pathways). This echoes the findings in 5.3, but also requires a much deeper reflection in Chapter 6. Suffice to say here that the roles of fun, as a phenomenon of body-mind-material-social relations are also evident in the poem. These roles are: building inclusive relations (in celebration of similarities and differences); altering the mood of a learning experience; helping to heal suffering through lightness and liberation; and its ability to enable a repositioning, re-storying, and re-imagining of self, community, and world. All suggest that fun(s) are by definition dynamic and in motion. The poem is in and of itself a repositioning, reimagining, and re-storying. The improvisational aspect of learning that fun calls forward in a learning process is reinforced by the statement from Katie during an online training session: 'it doesn't matter that we accomplish what we set out to accomplish – it's as long as we move', or in Nick Gates's words, at a staff meeting in December 2020, that what is important in a learning process is the 'collective imagination'. A way of speaking, embodying, and creating a new idea, action, or world into being.

Furthermore, the flexibility with conceiving what 'outcomes' are/can be is deemed highly significant, and relates to the fifth shadow role, or as (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2014) call it 'fragmentation seeking' of fun facilitating an anti-role provocation, a subversion, by focusing on *the* purpose of fun as simply to 'be more of itself' (a comment from a male staff member). It acts as a reminder, that process itself becomes product, and that there is so much more to know. Judith Gates explored this at a December 2020 meeting, asking: 'What have we learnt this year that you never thought you needed to know?' A direct challenge to go beyond certainties and existing perceptions of what learning is and why. I will develop this in 6.4.3, proposing a model of 'becoming in a state of fun-ing' in relation to embodied (transformative) learning. This has significant implications for learning processes.

## 5.5 Summary

In this chapter I presented the six refined themes in response to Research Question 1 on constructions of fun, as well as ethnographic notes that directly aligned or contradicted the six themes. The six core themes are: vibrant embodiment, power of child-like curiosity, rhythmic games, learning to learn, social spaces of possibility and embracing contradictions. Table 15 shows both the granularity and wholeness of the findings, or fragment and pattern, including where there were shades/angles of meaning between staff and coaches.

In relation to Research Question 2 (on the relations/roles of fun), four themes were generated: building inclusive relations (in celebration of similarities and differences); altering the mood of a learning experience; helping to heal suffering through lightness and liberation; and being in a state of fun-ing as enabling a repositioning, re-storying, and re-imagining of self, community, and world. In addition, the laughter critical incidents and participants' voice of how they experienced their synchronous online and physical space times provide further contextual understanding in relation to how fun and embodied (transformative) learning coalesce.

Finally, the findings for Research Question 3, drawing from the integration of multi methods, suggests that fun is highly significant in the context of CAC. Not only because of how it is constructed, and roles in relation to learning, but because of the intentionally dynamic, often improvisational, and digressive essence conveyed by the shadow (fifth) theme/role: fun as a rebellious provocation; an autotelic state of being and becoming whereby fun learning should simply 'be more of itself'. Free, spontaneous, and digressive, and often in contrast to fixed goals, narrow definitions, and rigidity – the types/shapes of fun cannot always be planned. In the context of learning and education more broadly this has big implications in relation to narrow fixations on skills and outcomes in learning environments, and instead suggests that qualities of a learner's experience should be considered with far more attentiveness. This will be discussed in the next chapter.

# Chapter 6 The Discussion: fun-ing as a state of attentiveness and becoming

*'Crack a shell, and become someone else' (Dasia, December 2020).*

## 6.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I revisit the generated findings of my research questions and present their aggregated (or crystallised) main messages, to continue the conversation with the literature started in Chapter 3. I will discuss each research question in turn and outline the new ideas that this inquiry brings to thinking and sensing about the relationships between fun and embodied (transformative) learning.

In relation to the first research question that seeks to understand how fun is constructed, I discuss the similarities and nuances between the six staff and six coaches' thematic constructions, and why it is useful to consider an approach that seeks both granularity and wholeness, pattern, and fragment. I also consider if there are any pedagogical disbenefits. In relation to the second research question, I discuss the importance of re-defining 'seriousness', and the relationships between fun and learning, specifically what the four main roles of fun are in online (and offline) synchronous learning activities. Thirdly, I discuss the final overarching question, concerned with the meaningfulness (significance) of fun within CAC activities by explaining the shadow role, the Six Principles, and the Bracketing model. I conclude by outlining my learnings.

In considering the meaningfulness of fun, I make conceptual contributions through Six principles regarding how fun as an overall phenomenon presents a different experiential and value-based ideology for non-formal learning (and education more broadly). The principles are not focused on outcomes, compartmentalised skills and the instrumentalisation of learning, but rather on *qualities of experience*. This includes generating and holding a space-time for spontaneity, digression and the unfamiliar, within a learning activity (the shadow).

Finally, I present a conceptual model, the 'Bracketing model: becoming in a state of fun-ing' that encompasses certain qualities of experience associated with online (and offline) embodiment, playfulness and bracketing, and socio-cultural-material learning cognisant of the imaginary and materiality. This is not intended as a frozen



classification system, far from it, but as a way of starting to think/sense the phenomenon from an interpretivist perspective.

## **6.2 Constructions of fun**

Research Question 1 asks ‘how is fun constructed by staff and coaches at CAC?’ The main methods for gathering data to respond to this question were: analysing semi-structured Skype interviews with eight CAC staff and nine coaches; a document review; observation participation in online (staff and/or coaches) meetings (46); and participant observation in three Skype 'Pod' reflection spaces with staff. From these data, I created an integrated multi-method ethnographic analysis, which consisted of play-working with a primary (main) embodied thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006, 2019, 2022) of staff and coaches’ transcripts, and then reviewing (field) notes for points of interest as they related to the generated themes. In this way the ethnographic analysis followed an iterative-inductive approach (O’Reilly, 2004). I will now discuss the themes, notes on alignment/alterity as they relate to the wider literature, and tease out where my findings add value to understanding constructions of fun.

### ***6.2.1 Six themes: similarities and differences between staff and coaches***

The six constructions of what fun is as a phenomenon are:

- 1) a vibrant embodiment (of self in relation to social);
- 2) a learning power of child-like curiosity;
- 3) rhythmic games;
- 4) learning to learn;
- 5) social spaces of possibility; and
- 6) embracing contradictions (towards changing personal and social narratives).

All these definitions of fun re-direct learning away from outcomes/products, towards qualities of learning experiences. Whilst there is a subtheme as part of the staff theme on ‘building self-directed learning’ that speaks of ‘life skills’ this is a small part

of the discourse from staff and coaches. Ultimately conceptualisations of fun and learning generate a different value system and language for learning.

Table 15, in 5.2.1, showed the 12 overall themes (constructions of fun) of eight staff members and nine coaches, and their associated subthemes. I am interested in how perspectives of fun may be similar or different, depending on how far from the core ideology i.e., founding members and staff coaches' perspectives they are. Whilst there are nuances (such as 'child-like learning power', for staff, and the corresponding 'will power and diversity' for coaches, under theme 2), which I refer to as the granularity and '(de-)fragmentation' (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2014) of the co-created findings, there are also commonalities (or 'patterning'), between the staff and coaches' thematic constructions of fun, such as theme 3, both focused on the flow of game-based play.

With regard to patterning, I arranged each of the six themes (outlined in the 6 bullet points above) around similar conceptual ideas (see Figure 17 in 5.2.1). The different themes reflect both my interpretation as a researcher i.e. I used my own generated terms to re-present the data (interpretive codes, subthemes and themes), as well as terms from the participants (i.e., descriptive words/codes directly from the participants). Therefore, the research process and artefact (this thesis itself) are co-created, but the ultimate choice of words and interpretation lies with me (see 6.5.3), and my aim to get *as close to the essence of meanings*, all the time knowing that 'the world does not speak. Only we do' (Rorty, 1989: 6). In other words, as the philosopher Rorty (1989) asserts, a 'rock' does not call itself a rock – we (human inquirers) ascribe meanings and associations to any specific material or interpretive truth-making experience.

My findings reinforce Bisson and Luckner's (1996) claim that from a universal point of view, 'fun is relative, situational, voluntary and natural' (Bisson and Luckner, 1996: 6). In particular, the relational and subjective interpretation of fun is a well-known finding in both sociology (Fincham, 2016) and physical education (Wellard, 2013). However, this inquiry brings new interpretations, especially relevant for online (-offline) learning environments, as Chapter 7 concludes.

I now discuss these six main generalised themes, and nuances within the staff and/or coaches' subthemes, in the context of wider literature.

## **Theme 1: Vibrant embodiment (or embodied alive-ness)**

I understand 'vibrant embodiment' to be both representative and resonant for both staff and coaches. I use the term 'resonant' intentionally to mean 'attitudes we might label sympathy, empathy, or *Verstehen*. Whether it is 'the same' or 'different'...it entails using one's feelings as well as, and at one with, one's thoughts' (Wikan, 2020: 465-466). It is the 'physical manifestation of connecting with others' (a coach subtheme), which aligns with the staff subtheme of 'shared sensations and inter relations'; the mind and body are stimulated, and there is a freedom in self-expression (which came through the staff responses). This builds on the dance educator Stinson's (1997) theme of the 'Fun of Moving around', simply keeping the body in motion. Ultimately, fun as vibrant embodiment is about an alive-ness conveyed through the sensory body–mind–material–social dynamics.

I understand this as a meta theme (along with theme six, 'embracing contradictions') because these two themes, in my interpretation, encompass all the others. Whilst there are similarities between the staff and coaches, my interpretation of the coaches' theme was that their codes were more focused on expressions of being, such as 'being creative', 'making a fool of yourself', 'being charming', whereas the staff in general, under 'physical bodily expression' also brought in the ideas of 'weird and silly'. Both focused on fun as a physically manifested form of enjoyment e.g., 'smiles', 'laughter' and 'dance'.

In contrast to the findings of Avner et al., (2019), within the sports education literature, this inquiry suggests that rather than 'fun' being used to create 'docile bodies' by coaches/educators, it can serve to encourage 'release', a 'sense of freedom', and a heightened self-awareness within an individual's own learning experience. Unusual or 'awkward' body movements and expressions are often encouraged, rather than frowned upon. Whilst these are not sustained, but temporal, and there is always a dance with how much structure or not – the framing itself of the learning experience is openly and often intentionally discussed, rather than hidden. In addition, whilst sensory manifestations of fun are understood to be socially embedded in the literature (Fincham, 2016), this inquiry goes further.

The CAC Chance to Choice developmental model (Appendix 1), adapted from a personal development model, based on interconnected stages, is most resonant with

the sixth theme on 'embracing contradictions'; the idea of contradiction is introduced as stage 5 in the CAC approach. However, this inquiry does not follow a developmental/laddered approach to fun learning (see Figure 4), as is evident in the Chance to Choice philosophy, in original documentation. There is no hierarchy of ways of knowing for fun. Whilst the two meta themes (1 and 6) are highly likely to be constructed more often than the other themes, and/or be interwoven with themes 2-5, they are not in and of themselves more significant.

## **Theme 2: Learning power of childlike curiosity**

In particular, the construct of a type of fun as a learning power associated with childlike curiosity supports game designer and play practitioner, de Koven's (2005) reflections on fun and learning. This theme of fun illuminates many children's capabilities to be highly attentive to the world around them; bringing a sensory, imaginative, and embodied way of being to their learning, which is increasingly forgotten/conditioned out of many adults. The focus of fun learning in this instance is a non-judgemental curiosity.

For Snowber (2012), an embodiment theorist, this joyful attentiveness that many young children have is instinctively held in the body and essentialised as

what I call a body signature, a dance of our own. Delight is taken in the wind sweeping through limbs, and exhilaration is found in hopping, jumping, dancing on the beach, or just skipping down the street. Uninhibited joy is the mark on the flesh. Until we were habituated otherwise, learning in school was associated with 'paying attention,' which was equated with sitting still rather than being deeply engaged' (Snowber, 2012: 53).

There is a re:membering and re play-working that needs to be actively sought and disrupted within an embodied (transformative) learning environment, one that reclaims the body's engagement with the world around.

Indeed, for the phenomenologist Bachelard,

the primordial, ontological mode-of-being [being-well] that we should strive to return, to relive, and dwell within ... [is] most perfectly lived and embodied in the child, [which] harbours and shelters our most profound powers of creativity (Magrini, 2017).

Whilst creativity and curiosity are inter-linked, this theme re-centres on curiosity, as an instinctual desire to make meaning (to know), un-encumbered by layers of assumptions, or already (often) entrenched belief systems. Fun therefore is understood as a way up and out.

Both staff and coaches believe that as adults we turn away from some of our learning capabilities i.e., that in some ways there is a reverse developmental/linear progression (perhaps until very old age), in which intuitive and emotional learning are dismissed, and only rational logic is encouraged (Lawrence, 2012). I am not saying that rational logic is unimportant, but it is only one part of a learning experience; there are intuitive and embodied ways of meaning making, and this inquiry into fun learning suggests that to dismiss embodied experiences is profoundly limiting, and probably damaging.

The notion of 'power', not as 'power over' (Gaventa, 2021), but rather a form of 'power to', as the self-realisation of initiating and creating alternatives, to social norms, is important in this theme (within an egalitarian frame). This is because, whilst the coaches in general focused more on 'will power' and motivation, and the staff focused more on the potential of 'courageous vulnerability' as a learning capability, in both instances these attributes were associated with child-like behaviours. Here, a 'courageous vulnerability' is understood as the power of being authentic to oneself, and trying new ways of being, even if it may illuminate a perceived social-cultural weakness i.e., boys crying. Therefore, a belief amongst most staff and coaches is that children have a profound imagination capability that gets dismissed as we get older, unless it is intentionally generated through using fun within learning processes in adulthood as well.

In the wider literature, it is evident that the complete separation of children's learning capabilities from those of adults, in the context of playful learning or fun is problematised. For example, Rieber (1996), an educational technologist, argues that fun is often misconstrued as only appropriate for children, yet his work suggests that it is also highly appropriate for adults to experience, in the workplace. Similarly, there is a wealth of evidence now that game-based learning is also relevant for adults, see for example the work of Charlier et al., (2012). This opens possibilities for

intentionally designed multi-generational learning spaces, which should be both cognisant of inclusion and safeguarding issues.

### **Theme 3: Rhythmic games**

In the context of CAC, playing games must be embodied, and ideally learning games have a physicality to them; human bodies must move (Hrach, 2021). Both the staff and coaches' subthemes cover the notion of progression and 'shifting pace' or 'adapting to needs. In this sense, the concept of Purposeful Play has a rhythm to it (a patterned pace of varied activities), and the ideal is a state of 'flow' – of bodies being in 'the present moment' – highly engaged with the learning games and processes and attuned to the social context. This means transitioning from states of doing (physical and intellectual movement and change), being (intentional, reflective pauses) and becoming (moving, again, in new/unfamiliar terrain). Change of tempo in learning is essential; even when it is 'the good stillness of reflection'. If stillness/silence is intentionally a reflecting activity, then this is deemed appropriate. For example, Katie during the third online training stated, 'let's, let the silence get someone motivated'. Here the juxtaposition of silence and stillness, in contrast to the talking and playing ice breakers online was welcomed, because it provided a change in momentum. This was reinforced by the statement from a female coach that 'sometimes, just sitting and doing nothing is fun'.

The notion of 'flow' was coined by the psychologist Csikszentmihalyi (1990) who describes it as a feeling of timelessness, in which a task seems easy and things just 'come together', as a

state in which people are so involved in an activity that nothing else seems to matter; the experience is so enjoyable that people will continue to do it even at great cost, for the sheer sake of doing it (p.4).

There is a great resonance between flow and fun, in that the distortion of actual time, and experienced *felt time* do not necessarily align; for example, a coach described fun as 'when we reflect a lot of thoughts come, but when we have fun, I am not thinking about what I will eat at night. I am just in that minute'. Fincham (2016) also acknowledges these similarities between fun and flow and suggests that fun is understood only as a state retrospectively, and not in the very moment. This research shows that it can be both something understood retrospectively, but also

acknowledged in the moment. Tisza et al.'s, (2021a) theme of fun as immersion (as a loss of sense of time and space), also builds from Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) concept of flow, but as 6.4.3 shows fun-ing is not a *loss* of sense of time and space – but rather a hypersensitivity to the pause, (more aligned with Biesta's (2020) concept of 'suspension'), and then a collapse and *expansion* of different times and spaces colliding.

My findings suggest that because of the online-offline embodied nature of the learning context of fun in this inquiry, the state of fun-ing, as a state of attentiveness and becoming in the world as the individual and the undivided, can be *experienced as both* a hyper awareness in and of the very moment, 'nowness', as well as a past recollection, or future imprint. I will discuss this further in 6.4.3. The experience of overlapping space-times means that the *felt* attentiveness towards inhabiting a fun moment, in and of itself contributes to a state of fun-ing.

#### **Theme 4: Learning to learn (self-directed and learning by doing)**

My findings show that fun is integral to understanding what learning is and does, and that a learner should be actively aware of their own framework *for* learning. The intentions behind learning, in relation to how fun is constructed are significant i.e., for what purposes does learning and fun occur? In the context of CAC, the fourth theme considers the learning frameworks (or intentions) discussed and enacted the most. These were 'self-directed' and 'experiential learning' (or learning by doing). Whilst these types of learning are not mutually exclusive, the coaches focused more on connecting fun with experiential learning ('grounding'), whereas the staff went into greater explanations of self-directed learning, and this is indicated by the themes and subthemes (see Table 15).

CAC does not espouse starting with a 'pure' form of self-directed learning, whereby the process and content are entirely decided by the learner (Mocker and Spear, 1982). The staff subtheme of 'initial structure and intention' speaks to this, and this aligns with the socio-cultural theory of Vygotsky (1934/1978), in particular his 'Zone of Proximal Development', which stipulates that learners first learn through the help of a more informed individual/group. The intention is for learners to choose how and what they want to learn; how this evolves is dependent on the group and the coach

facilitating. Fun as self-directed learning is entirely grounded in the belief that both are a personal experience informed by the social group.

Indeed, de Waard (2017) reminds us that:

self-directed learning is part of an array of learner-centered concepts. In the 20 to 25 years following the Second World War ...the idea of learner autonomy, and learner-centeredness came as a counter-reaction to the mechanistic psychology of behaviourism. Learning was no longer seen as something that could be pushed onto people, but as a personal experience (de Waard, 2017: 18).

This idea of learning as experience is also central to 'experiential learning theory' (Passarelli and Kolb, 2011). The coaches' subtheme of 'learning by doing' as 'experiential moments that connect to everyday lives' aligns directly with this theory and includes descriptive codes such as 'problem solving', 'bodily movement', and 'daily life', which were created through discourse such as 'deliver, experience, reflect and then come back'. The coaches also aligned fun and experiential learning with constructs of transformation, in particular as fun changing 'a bad moment' (this will be discussed in 6.3.3), but also as a way of generating a sense of belonging, through a coming together of thoughts, bodies and social relations e.g. Sita's comment, 'when playing and coming together then these thoughts, 'what do people think about me?' go, because you are in the game and part of the team'. Learning relationships (interpersonal) thus influence the intrapersonal ways of knowing, and as learning interactions increase in quality and frequency, so too does the strength/ depth of the social interactions. 'Each interaction carries with it a sentiment, or emotional charge, that sets the tone for learning' (Passarelli and Kolb, 2011: 21). Hence, creating, being and giving fun helps to generate the 'emotional charge' required to maintain motivation in a social experiential learning encounter.

### **Theme 5: Social spaces of possibility**

Fun within CAC is understood as more enriching if it is a social phenomenon, rather than a personal activity. This theme is directly concerned with how social spaces, as 'flows of sociality' (Massey, 1994), are constructed as fun, in order to generate notions of 'trust' and 'safety' so that learning becomes intellectually and physically generative, widening – an embodied engagement with spaces of possibility. And whilst both staff and coaches referred to 'safe spaces' throughout the inquiry, the



concept of safety needs to be problematised, because it is such a relative construct that can have grave implications for a person's wellbeing. There are different types of safety, which have different degrees of importance to each individual; it is not a normative concept. Indeed, the subthemes show that both staff and coaches are aware of the tensions within trying to create 'safe spaces'; the staff subtheme of 'letting go in the free form playground' refers to this, as does the coaches' subtheme of 'safe and brave spaces'. Safety is therefore bound up with notions of trust, bonding/ friendship, and empathy, but also courage and freedom. I therefore chose not to limit this theme to 'safe spaces' alone, because the interpretive bigger picture behind 'safe spaces', is the continually negotiated flows of sociality that fun transmutes within different space-times. Thus, the very notion of fun *and* safety is problematic, and suggests that types of risk and failure should also be part of a fun learning experience, and not so readily dismissed or side-lined.

This aligns with Whitton and Langan's work (2019), which shows that for students within higher education in the UK, an acceptance of risk and failure was understood as part of a 'safe learning space'. They assert that

the creation of safe learning spaces ...encompassed three areas in particular: feeling comfortable with others; an acceptance of risk and failure; and a sense of playfulness and humour with both peers and academics (p.1007).

Arao and Clemens (2013) prefer to speak of 'brave spaces' instead of 'safe spaces': 'to emphasise the need for courage rather than the illusion of safety' (p.141) and encourage students to reflect on the term, and how they might construct it in the process. They seek to avert the conflation of safety with comfort: brave, *and* safe spaces are needed (Arao and Clemens, 2013). Therefore, learning processes involve risk (the unfamiliar), but also the discomfort, or resistance of giving up a former value/belief, however small.

### **Theme 6: Embracing contradictions**

Fun is an embodied state of social learning (including inter- and intrapersonal) curiosity, which focuses on *experiencing and accepting the contradictions of life* from a place of courageous vulnerability. To my knowledge this generated finding does not exist in the literature on fun. I decided that the coaches' theme on 'altering narratives and values' is a part of 'embracing contradictions' when I was constructing

Figure 17 and could see all the subthemes together as an image. At this point, I realised there were further contradictions within subthemes, which at first, I did not perceive, for example the subtheme of 'play-works with hardship' (for coaches), speaks to the inherent tension/contradiction within 'play-works'. Creating an image also reaffirmed the status of 'vibrant embodiment' and 'embracing contradictions' as meta themes. In addition, I also interpreted the coaches' parallel theme of 'altering narratives and values' as the secondary step in the process i.e., the value change/concrete actions and alterity that is taken *after* contradictions in the learning experience are acknowledged and embraced (this relates to the role of fun in re-storying, see 6.3.5). In this way, this construction of fun reminds a learner/educator that considering contradiction is an inherent part of a learning process and not something to be dismissed or shied away from. This is also evident in CAC's historical literature, for example the Chance to Choice philosophy (Appendix 1) explicitly mentions contradictions. The discomfort of a perceived conflict of contradiction can actually be a substantial recognition of moving from one belief to another and is therefore a highly important aspect of a quality learning experience.

One of the subthemes that the coaches focused on was 'challenging the values of individual competition and winning', which can be viewed as aligned with the staff subtheme of 'learning for alternative futures'. In relation to the wider literature on learning and educational futures, Erstad and Silseth (2019) remark that young people are often educated to compete in the global economy of tomorrow, which is:

inadequate for understanding how young people position themselves, and...how educational institutions need to find ways to address much broader orientations towards learning and living in digital futures. This is not only about qualifications for future work, but ...about what future orientations represent for us today and how young people think about their own futures (p311).

In this inquiry most staff and coaches did not define 'competition' as fun, and instead intentionally pursued playing football in non-competitive contexts or professional places. Although they also recognised and enjoyed the debate as to whether football and/or education should be intentionally competitive or not, and recognised that at the end of learning experiences on field, many groups often 'just want to play football'. Neither did this mean that they did not enjoy discussing, watching, or supporting professional teams, and working with professional football funders.

Fun learning as a state that intentionally ‘embraces contradictions’ is directly related to the notion of futuremaking as essentially choice making, whereby ‘choice’ is framed as a series of decisions: between the short and long term; places and institutions; and local and global options. These choices, framed as distinct binaries, close off other possible narratives about the future. ‘Making a future’ is cast as a narrative process of justifying, rationalising, and selecting evidence to support a *particular* storying (Erstad and Silseth, 2019). My findings suggest that futuremaking – as it relates to learning futures are more than a distanced narrative process, but rather a wholly embodied felt process, which intentionally positions conundrums, assumptions, and apparent contradictions as integral in the ways of imaginatively carving out futures of alterity, as 6.3.5 will discuss further.

### ***6.2.2 Is fun always a positive phenomenon? Are there any pedagogic disbenefits?***

The synthesised six themes above, in general present the phenomenon of fun as a ‘positive’ state (and by that, I mean closely aligned with an enjoyable state). However, in the interests of looking for the ‘fragmentation’ alongside the ‘patterning’ (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2014) it is important to challenge and think through this possible assumption – that fun is always positive and singular. Benford et al. (2018), computing/gaming specialists, suggest that there is a ‘“dark side” ...a vital, even necessary, part of the entertainment. Encountering and passing through suspense, horror and fearful anticipation may be a key part of the fun’ (p.209). Benford et al.’s (2018) research uses the lens of interaction design (using mobile and virtual technologies) and performance-led research. They consider the frequent use of discomfort in interactive entertainment experiences: from the physical unease of running out of breath while riding a breath-controlled rodeo-bull ride... to the more emotional distress of being lost in an unfamiliar city. Their findings suggest that discomfort, understood as an uncomfortable sensation of fearful anticipation, may be ‘closely bound’ with fun. They note that

experiencing discomfort – even pain – has also long been a tradition in various religions and mystic routes to self-enlightenment [and that] ... passing through discomfort together can facilitate social bonding. Many groups have initiation ceremonies while even relatively familiar experiences such as riding a roller coaster

can be part of a shared rite of passage as reported in Durrant et al.'s (2011) study of families visiting theme parks (Benford et al., 2018: 218).

This acknowledgement of passing through discomfort to experience fun was explicitly mentioned in the conceptualisations of *furaha* (Kiswahili for fun, see Appendix 17).

Fun can also be exclusive. The highly subjective nature of how fun can be experienced is for example, discussed within the context of training in American workplaces by business management academics, Tews and Noe (2019). They suggest that individuals with 'a high avoid goal orientation' (p. 233) can react unfavourably to engineered fun trainings, in which trainings with a lot of social interaction, and that introduce ambiguity, can create significant resistance in these individuals. This is because, asking others for assistance and seeking novel solutions for difficult problems/game scenarios can be perceived as threatening by individuals with a high 'avoid goal orientation', because they present opportunities for failure, perceived in a negative sense as spotlighting skill and knowledge weaknesses to others. The place of being a critic/judged within a learning experience is not assumed in CAC, and whilst 'failure' is not intrinsically perceived by staff and coaches as a negative aspect of learning processes, participants may/may not share this belief.

Both staff and coaches discussed the game-based play as a learning method to facilitate embodied experiences of questioning (and perhaps disorientation for some) within a learning experience. Participants, staff, and coaches are continually invited, through questions and movement, to consider their conditioned beliefs. There was a general awareness that for this to happen there had to be 'safe spaces' for participants. Theme 6, 'social spaces of possibility' is concerned with fun learning, and the coaches' subtheme of 'safe and brave spaces' speaks to the inherent unease (tension) of creating both a comforting (safe) and discomforting (seeking the unfamiliar) space at the same time (Arao and Clemens, 2013). I noticed that creating 'fun' serves to act as a bridge/conduit between the apparent contradictions and facilitates the letting go of resistance towards a former belief/value. Five of the coaches' conveyed this in their interviews, pointing to 'the importance of experiencing the other' (experiential empathy) through game-based play as a way of

finding the boundaries, as a group, as to appropriate levels of safety/risk taking. This inevitably is negotiated across body-minds, material, and space-times.

Alongside the ambiguity in understanding where safety/risk taking aligns with different individuals within a group, the other ambiguous concept concerned with learning activities was individual participant perceptions of 'failure' within a group learning experience. An explicit discussion about failure within learning processes never emerged, nor was witnessed. Perhaps because the concept of absolute failure (as a dead end in a learning process) in CAC ideology often equates with learning in a positive way. For example, a question posed to staff members, reflecting on the COVID-19 pandemic in December 2020: 'What have we learnt this year that you never thought you needed to know?' conveyed that failure, is perceived as *challenge*, not weakness. Indeed, such learnings are generally viewed as an opportunity, a possibility for self-awareness within a group: going beyond the constriction of a label, or an assumed negative judgement that is inaccurately frozen in time.

In addition, there is a general perception within CAC that, as Nick Gates stated, 'football is universally liked' (interview, January 2020). However, assuming that sports and physical movement are generally fun for all can be problematic. Whilst there is an awareness that 'art, dance' and using circus and 'other play and art forms' are useful ways of exploring embodied (transformative) learning, these are secondary. The work of Carlson (2016), whose phenomenological research considering junior high school students reflections of physical education in America shows that physical education can generate 'alienation'. This is understood as one/a combination of three affective states in students: meaninglessness (no purpose for the subject in their lives); powerlessness (lack of control); and isolation (withdrawal emotionally/socially from peers/teachers). These sensations can be described as 'boring'. This is particularly interesting in the context of this inquiry, because 'boring' was repeatedly used by both staff and coaches to describe the opposite of fun, as Jose remarked: 'If it is boring, there won't be learning, so it's important to find the game they connect with'. A lack/inertness of whole-person engagement with a sense of belonging and emplacement (Pink, 2012) within the learning experience is therefore perceived as the antithesis of fun; there is no zest with life. However, interpreting 'boredom' as a sense of alienation from a learning experience, ironically

mirrors the transitory nature of fun: both boredom and fun can arise and/or be dispelled and seem to be bound with each other, rather than entirely separate.

In summary, there is sporadic literature on the 'dark side' of fun, but what is inherently missing is research that evidences these disbenefits, rather than often simply assuming it. This inquiry acknowledges the subjective tensions inherent in assumptions/ambiguities about conceptualisations of discomfort/safety, exclusion/failure, the universality of football and fun. A limitation of many of these studies is that they do not consider different types of fun, and therefore treat the phenomenon often as a fixed emotional state, rather than an evolving social phenomenon. Therefore because of the highly subjective nature of fun, not everybody is always going to experience the same moment, or type of fun learning, in the same way, and my participants acknowledged that this could restrict (rather than expand), the learning for some individuals within a group. In particular, those that were especially self-conscious of their bodies, or individuals who were very conditioned to learn through stillness (inertness), or who preferred quieter/subtler forms of fun, as discussed in 5.2.2. With regard to fun learning online, the potential pedagogic disbenefits also relate to possible social inequalities being further exacerbated, for example language differences, access issues and differences in technological capabilities with programmes (Alerby et al., 2021; Ylirisku, 2021). These are not necessarily overcome through making the learning fun; if it's not your type of fun, then inclusion issues can be compounded, rather than mitigated. I will return to this in 7.2.

### **6.3 Relationship between fun and learning**

Building on from understanding what fun is, my second research question considers the relationships between fun and learning: how and why are particular learning activities experienced as fun for staff and coaches? Based upon my findings I believe that there are four main ways in which fun has an intentional (or purposeful role) in relation to learning processes. As Figure 19 shows, these are: the phenomenon of fun can open up possibilities for inclusive relations (social bonding); it can alter the mood of a group's learning experience; it can help heal (relieve) memories and feelings associated with suffering/trauma by generating embodied

sensations of lightness and liberation; and finally, it enables the repositioning, re-imagining, and re-storying of assumptions and beliefs within a learning process.



*Figure 19: The four roles (purposes) of fun in relation to embodied (transformative) learning*

What fun is (means), and what it does, are not mutually exclusive. For example, the staff's sixth theme of what fun is: a state of 'altering narratives and values', extends the fourth theme of the purposes of fun in relation to learning i.e., 're-positions, re-imagines and re-stories assumptions and beliefs'. This suggests that a state of fun-ing is as much about what it is i.e., the components/aspects that give it meaning, as well as what it then does (emits/generates/extends). In other words, types of fun are relational: fun-ing, as a state of attentiveness and becoming in the world as the individual and the undivided (Ingold, 2000), exists in relation to learning because of what it does, just as much as what it is.

I now will discuss my contributions to the conceptualisations of embodied online (-offline) learning, before discussing each of the four roles of fun in relation to the wider literature.

### **6.3.1 Finding a serious rhythm: the simultaneous nature of online (-offline) learning experiences**

The unexamined merit of 'seriousness', which is often understood as solemnity and gravitas, remains unchallenged in much educational theory and practice.

Seriousness is often assumed to have an intellectual value in and of itself. This is surprising, after the work of historians and philosophers such as Huizinga, (1938/2014); Bakhtin, (1963/1984); and more contemporary academics such as Hamayon (2016) and Nugent (2020), who challenge such a one dimensional interpretation of 'seriousness'. This inquiry *fundamentally* challenges the concept of seriousness as gravitas. I assert that it is a lack of understanding of the qualities of 'fun-ing' that have enabled the embodied demeanour of a 'good' learner/educator to be associated with seriousness (in most contexts, most of the time). If seriousness is instead understood as the significance of authentic and sincere learning processes/moments, then fun-ing is a highly serious state within learning processes to play-work with as 6.3 will show.

The slipperiness and elusiveness associated with the concept of fun are also evident in the (2019/2020) internal documents of CAC, largely by its absence. In many of the documents reviewed there was an explicit mention and conceptualisation of 'Purposeful Play' but not 'fun'. The one direct mention that I found was in the Theory of Change (2018). This stated that CAC work on 'sport for social impact education that focuses on local issues such as: female empowerment, including gender equity; conflict prevention, including social inclusion; health and wellness, including HIV/AIDS behaviour change; child rights; vital life skills; and fun'. The absence of detailed explanations of 'fun' may be both a reflection that CAC perceives funders at present to be uncertain/uninterested in the nature of fun itself, or that by placing it at the end of a list of diverse areas, it in some ways is all encompassing.

By adding to the thinking, sensing, and doing of embodied (transformative) learning, this inquiry simultaneously strengthens the case for understanding fun-ing, because 'fun' is not perceived as something 'out there', an object to be collected and contained, but rather as an interrelated state of being and becoming, of body-mind-materials, *presencing* (Ucok-Sayrak and Brazelton, 2021) with other body-mind-materials across space-times. My contribution to the literature on online embodied



learning is twofold. Firstly, that online embodied learning must also consider the offline nature of the learning experience, simultaneously. This is acknowledged by digital educationalist Landri (2013), who contributes the notion of ‘here and there’ (p.250), but my work goes further, by positioning embodied learning as being in felt encounters with others (body-minds and materials), as a series of space-times (Massey, 1994) in any online learning context; the ‘online’ experience of encountering must also equally engage with the physical/material reality. Secondly, by framing online (-offline) embodiment through the social-cultural-material (Pink, 2011) lens of presence, movement and artefacts a spotlight is put upon the tempo/pace and rhythm (pattern) of learning experiences, including ironically, the necessary dis-engagement of individuals at certain times: when a necessary pause, a breath, a movement away (absence) from always ‘being’ visible/present/performing online is important.

The point here, is that the highly dynamic nature of any learning experience is always in movement (Leander et al., 2010) and transition: as physical, observable, bodily movements (however large or small), and as the *sensorial noticing* of changes in/types of relations (Massumi, 2002) between persons and artefacts themselves: *presencing*.

A performance of self can be associated with *presencing*— which includes non-judgmental noticing of the ways in which one interacts with, incorporates, and becomes part of, her environment, rather than a calculative, manipulative strategising of how one appears in front of others (Ucok-Sayrak and Brazelton, 2021: 7).

Grasping how fun and *presencing* mesh together has big implications with regard to understanding how to create qualities of learning experience that are cognisant of the rhythm (a pattern of activities/tools as movement) and tempo of a learning encounter. I will return to this in 6.3.1 and 6.4.2.

### **6.3.2 Role 1: Opens possibilities for inclusive relations**

The first of the four themes points to a role of fun in relation to embodied (socio-cultural-material) learning, as a way to build connections and moving towards inclusivity, through a sharing of experiences. In this way, being in a state of fun provides an invitation to contribute and engage amongst a wider group. This is encouraged through sharing experiences, responding to questions, and sharing an

embodied energy/sensation that can provoke contributions to the group's learning. Inclusivity is understood as both a celebration of similarities *and* differences or, in the philosopher Rorty's words, this is 'the ability to think of people wildly different from ourselves as included in the range of "us"' (Rorty, 1989: 192). In this way, the 'individual and undivided' (Ingold, 2000) are inseparable. This was corroborated by Nick Gates, when I asked him directly whether he thought individual or social learning was more important. His response: 'we always try to recognise an individual within a group, at the same time. It's both'. During the end-of-year staff meetings in December 2020 he commented, 'how do we use our collective imagination...how do we create a space where we can come together?' This construct of different parts/individuals making a whole, which is then greater than the individual parts, is a key concept in cooperative ways of learning, in contrast to competitive ways of learning. This is evident in Montessori's active learning theory, which suggests that every child should be educated in values of cooperation, as a way of striving towards communal values of peace (Moretti, 2021).

How then does fun—ing fit into this aspect of cooperative learning? Well, the sub-themes generated for this theme suggest that it is through encouraging gratitude and empathy. Having fun enables, the celebration of how 'different and similar' we all are. This is partly because what is fun for one person is not necessarily fun for another, but also because of the role-play games that CAC play. Empathy is created because some learners share their 'scariest' or most vulnerable parts of themselves/life experiences. The role of fun is to provoke alternative ways of thinking – to literally and figuratively *move on* through a holistic learning experience which comprises stimulated learners, reacting and sharing together to create a bigger enlivened sense of selves and possibilities.

The wider literature acknowledges experiencing fun as a way to encourage participation (which I use interchangeably with engagement to mean contribution and sharing). Koekoek et al., (2009), for example, remark that one of their student participants said: 'When I do not have fun, then I do not feel like participating' (p. 321). It is therefore through participating that a broader sense of belonging is generated, helping to catalyse social bonding. However, this inquiry shows that it is not as straightforward (or linear) as one hegemonic type of fun (or play), correlating directly with generating equality for all (processes and values of egalitarianism).

Koopmans and Doidge (2021), sports researchers working with young refugees, suggest that ‘creating a space of equality ensures that fun can take place. Where there are hierarchies, it is likely that fun is inhibited to some members’ (p.5). My inquiry implies that this is much more complex. Firstly, because the phenomenon of fun is subjective – there are many types of fun, and some may appeal to certain individuals more than others, and secondly to sustain and generate as many types of fun (to appeal to different understandings), the learning context is continually in motion, oscillating between discipline and improvisation. Fun makes learning intentionally precarious, risky and at times uncomfortable. There is a rhythm of going between states/alternatives, including times when there is a greater felt experience of self (as whole person body-mind), and other times when the felt experience is emphasising belonging with a social group. Therefore, tensions and contradictions are perpetually arising in order to transform old beliefs and assumptions, and ‘equality’ itself cannot be hegemonically understood when fun-embodied-learning (fun-ing) is in process. Fun will deconstruct any values and intentions behind a learning process, and ask ‘Is this the way to proceed?’

### **6.3.3 Role 2: Alters the mood: ‘air of fun’**

*‘A bird doesn’t sing because he has an answer, he sings because he has a song’*  
(Anglund, 1967).

The second role of fun learning generated understands fun as a mood/energy that is bigger than any person, material or affect. Individuals can help to change the fun mood/energy by making jokes, doing ice-breaker games, laughing, and smiling, but it is the combination of BOTH individuals having fun, and the perception of the wider group having fun that is especially important. As the quote above suggests, assumptions can be limiting. The same is a truth of fun-ing; it is more than the play and games themselves that generates the vibrant embodiment. It is actually the whole atmosphere; a felt energy that is created through the values, sensations, an embodied relationality, which at times is synchronising (focusing on similarities) and at other times disruptive (focusing on differences) within a learning experience.

Fun-ing needs play and games, but it is the entirety of body-minds-materials in a social context of play and games that alters the mood of a learning context and creates an ‘air of fun’. This can be achieved by physical movements – such as

‘shaking it out’, or ‘silliness’, to suspend or disclose something, in a non-threatening way. In this way fun-ing disrupts the stuck-ness of behaviours/social norms, again in a non-threatening way. This is enabled by the ‘dwelling’ (Magrini, 2017) or as Anjaria and Anjaria (2020) refer to *mazaa* (Hindi-Urdu for fun); a receptivity to the ways in which the sensuous and the pleasurable are created. And this generates further, widening ways of thinking/sensing. Being with the sensuous is inherent in embodied learning, as a way of (collective) being-well and inhabiting a learning space, without inhibitions; it creates ‘an air of fun’.

One such moment during staff meetings, noted on several occasions, was the performance or dwelling with – banter. This was a particular experience of fun, often generated (which appeared spontaneous but was also often intentional), at the start of many CAC meetings. For instance, in several staff meetings there was an explicit verbal recourse to ‘banter’ such as jokes, or its performed and embodied metacommunication of playfulness via tones and body movements/gestures that acted as play cues. The senior staff predominately led this, to create a space – a shift into the participation or expressions of self-autonomy encouraged in other members. This shift served as a form of metacommunication (a bracketing of playfulness) that there was an altering of the mood, and an invitation to change the rhythm/tempo of the learning experience. Whilst banter wasn’t necessarily always experienced by all as fun, it was an invitation to create and dwell with an ‘air of fun’, a particular type, as a social space of possibility. I will pick up on the ‘bracketing of experience’, as an attitude of playfulness further in 6.4.3.

#### **6.3.4 Role 3: Helps heal (feelings of lightness and liberation)**

The third purpose of fun in relation to embodied (transformative) learning that this inquiry has generated is that fun can help heal and create feelings of lightness and liberation. This is a gap in existing literature. It is a powerful finding because this disarms the assumption that fun is trivial and frivolous in all respects. In fact, fun is relational with pain and suffering. This theme shows that painful/troubling thoughts and feelings can be moved through the body via physical actions. Fun movements (the doing of fun) assist with this, such as singing, wiggling, laughing. The doing of fun, ‘shaking it out’, helps to process tragic experiences. Fun instigates the release and unburdening of heavy/traumatic learning experiences. It can act as a pressure valve to release the overwhelm/inertness of very sad, upsetting experiences. Fun

can be a liberating experience that is often achieved through the honest vulnerability of an individual releasing their emotional burdens with others. It demands a 'carefree' or 'light' perspective that is open to new ideas, rather than resistant.

The sociologist Fincham (2016), finds that his research participants identify fun with freedom, stating that

'I like the idea that part of fun for them is the opening up of possibilities and an activation of the world...there is something about the unknowable consequences of abandonment that I, and these respondents experience as fun' (p.165).

Such an 'activation' is also associated with how fun 'helps with emotional expression' and 'confidence'. For example, Koopmans and Doidge (2021) claim that 'the point of having fun is much more profound than simply giving children a break. It helps emotional expression, developing confidence and wellbeing and potentially proving the foundations for other SDP [Sports for Development Program] outcomes, like stronger communities, health, and education' (p.10). Freedom of emotional/bodily expression must be part of any social learning.

This inquiry shows that a resonant type of fun can help ease and re-frame a period of trauma and suffering within a learning experience. This was evident in the participant observation of the online trainings, and in Manila's re-telling of her experience of a typhoon in the Philippines, as well as in the definition of fun by Ned as *furaha* (transforming a sad/difficult moment, see Appendix 17). However, this is not to over claim: fun in relation to embodied (transformative) learning is always transient, because of the subjective and ever changing social/contextual nature.

#### **6.3.5 Role 4: Repositions, re-imagines and re-stories**

Fun (through the play of games) enables a learner to re-position and re-imagine whatever they are learning, facilitating a change in the way we see and experience the world. The tools to achieve this are through sport, play, and art. Fun is the creative opening of minds; the expansion of perspectives, and from a Vygotskyian perspective, the expansion of learning with others – through a zone of proximal development (1934/1978). An important aspect of this re-positioning is the use of imaginary skills and an ability to 'dream' or 'story' i.e., go beyond social norms. Ways

of knowing become 'storied' i.e., they have features and webs of meaning, rather than classificatory groups/grades (Ingold, 2011). Fun-ing as a state of attentiveness and becoming in the world, provides a way to redirect learning processes towards storied ways of knowing. It is about moving your mind (thought patterns), often instigated by moving your body and emotions first (Hrach, 2021). Fun often involves playing with rules/stereotypes and then deconstructing and re-framing them. It creates the intention to change, and ideas for how, but does not necessarily complete the action/change. That requires further cycles of discipline, focus and play-work.

In this way the reframing that having fun can instigate, is heavily enmeshed with other constructs such as 'stories' and 'imagination', aligned with theme 2 of constructions of fun, 'a child-like learning power of curiosity'. This requires an assumption and acceptance that there is always more to know, but also that what you may already think you know, is actually more precarious and fragile than what you first believed; there is a space for ambiguity. This is similar to the way that the archetype of a 'fool' or jester reveals the fragility, contradictions and often absurdity of life to their audience. Fun-ing requires humility and generates it within a learning experience; it is a reciprocal relationship (not causality) in which, as one participant during the second online training said, 'you need to put your ego to the side'. The narrative play-working (storying) as part of fun-ing offers novel meaning making, and at the same time, certainty. The confidence is in the seeking and making, rather than the certainty of a fixed end point/object.

According to the psychologists Landrum et al., (2019), stories often facilitate a structuring process upon a reader/listener's experience, and are essential tools of cultural and self-learning and reflection. I understand stories to be 'instantiations, particular exemplars, of the grand conception' (Kilty, 2019: 822); of seeking a response to 'What do you mean?' or 'Why?' questions. Stories have an ability to engage our emotions, stimulate our memories and hopes for the future (McDrury and Alterio, 2003), and ultimately forge an inter-subjectivity, empathy, and a deeper understanding of what it *means* to be human. The Storytelling Guide (Baines, 2020) points out that 'in places where it is possible to speak authentically, stories' are pedagogically significant, because they:

- 1) Highlight diverse backgrounds and different abilities and viewpoints as positive;
- 2) Explore multiple identities, allowing people to take pride in their unique experiences;
- 3) Help people make connections within and between cultures (Baines, 2021: 2).

Such a storying praxis within fun-ing is dependent on the use of the 'imaginary' (Lennon, 2016). According to Lennon (2016) the imaginary is the recognition

that the working of the imagination within the world gives that world an affective texture...a salience...that images are expressive, such that experiencing in terms of images provides normative anchorage for our desiring, fearful etc. responses (p. 3).

The values, intentions, and feelings (affective attributes) behind the imaginary, are very real, though intangible or, as Merleau-Ponty would say, 'the imaginary texture of the real' (Merleau-Ponty, 1964: 165). The imagination is play-working within the everyday world of our perceptions, and it is not inseparable from cognition and symbolism, but it is more than these alone. There is a 'tolerance for ambiguity' (Morley, 2003: 93). It is a belief in the *re*-presentations of values, purposes, and meanings – the re-storying of learning in which the allure and delight of everyday experience matters deeply, as a felt imaginary world in which the imagination is at work, creating/disclosing forms, expressive of possibilities for living affectively and effectively (Lennon, 2016). Not in the sense of a world of illusions or projected fantasies. Imagination is not used in any 'soft', lesser than way, but as an *active and intentional* bodily part of a generative, playful, disruptive, and fun learning process. A way of creating a more rounded sense of the self, of 'really being yourself' (Willis, 2000), emplaced and embodied (Pink, 2012), going beyond institutional or ideological social norms.

Furthermore, the philosopher of education Magrini (2016) aligns enchantment and the imaginary with learning, stating that

learning, if we are authentically attuned to the unfolding of phenomena, is bound up with the sense of uncertainty that accompanies moments of disruption to our long familiar thought patterns, because it represents the potential shattering of our current view of things (p.771).

Being in a state of fun-ing through embodiment is a way of using the imaginary to re-story, reframe and disrupt, shifting a learning experience. Fun-ing provides qualities to a learning experience; affective patterns of texture (tools) and rhythm (pattern of activities), a disciplined improvisation, which are otherwise dismissed, feared, or actively suppressed. I now will discuss why fun-ing, based on my analysis, should be actively encouraged, rather than shunned within learning experiences.

## **6.4 Is fun meaningful (significant)?**

My third research question: 'Is 'fun' a meaningful (significant) concept within CAC? If so, why?' is based upon the generated findings from the previous two questions. It brings in and condenses a response to this question through one other analytical angle, providing an intentionally embodied, affective, and sensory response to the question. Namely, through the poetic inquiry (Penwarden and Schoone, 2021) of a found poem (Leavy, 2009), which explores and generates ways of noticing the meaningfulness of fun, through a multiplicity of voices. Chapter 7 will consider the implications of the response to this question beyond CAC, but for now I present three areas where I believe fun is meaningful (in relation to learning) within CAC activities. The first is that the phenomenon holds an embodied space for spontaneity and digression within learning experiences (the shadow role), that specifically acknowledges and is attentive to un-knowing/ un-certainty; the undoing of the familiar, to be re-cast. The second is that the phenomenon invites a different educational value system, moving learning away from a reductionist perspective that focuses on skill development and outcomes and towards sensing, attentiveness (being) and becoming with qualities of experience. In articulating this, I present 'Six Principles of fun embodied learning'. Finally, I present a model, which crystallises the findings and learnings in relation to constructions of fun, learning, embodiment (as presence, movement, and mediating artefacts) and playfulness.

### **6.4.1 The shadow (fifth) role: a space for spontaneous digression**

*'Poetry lies ambiguously, somewhere in between: more verbal than song, and yet more musical than speech. Thus in poetry we stretch words beyond the limits of normal utterance so that, in their sounding, they become expressive in themselves'* (Ingold, 2000: 408).

The most authentic way for me to convey the fifth role of fun in relation to learning in an embodied manner was through a poem. Poetry, as a 'more than' verbal modality



(as Ingold's quote above asserts), calls upon sensations and affects, as well as purposefully inviting a reader to bring their own experiences to the words, imagery and metaphors (Hirshfield, 2015). Poetry can also provoke and re-present elements/qualities of multi-vocality, uncertainty, un-knowing and divergence that are part of the phenomenon of fun itself. Therefore, poetic prose and poems are considered a more authentic and credible way to convey the relationship between fun and learning, rather than using an authoritative researcher voice. In this way, a state of becoming with fun-ing not only considers the constructs and roles of fun, but also problematises what you think as a reader/listener you know by the end of the poem with the line – 'or, was it just an odd moment?'

In this way the poem invites a deconstruction and defamiliarisation process (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2014), by opening up the studied reality as both a familiar *and* unfamiliar place. Poetry and metaphor allow the familiar to feel unfamiliar and vice versa (Hirshfield, 2015): a type of resonance (Wikan, 2020); it is an affective play-working with language to convey spontaneity and digression (it disrupts!) Taking an inquirer in a different direction, which includes text, form, sound – the rhythm and shape of words – it is an inhabiting/dwelling that is greater than the sum of its parts. The shadow role of fun learning is rebellious: suggesting insights in multiple directions; and laughing at the idea of one single truth.

A state of becoming in fun-ing, which extends beyond an individual's own body-mind, reminds me of Bakhtin's (1963/1984) comments on laughter. His translator, Emerson states that laughter can hide as much as it reveals regarding a person's temperament:

Bakhtin felt that carnival laughter was ambivalent. 'It asserts and denies', he claims, 'it buries and revives' (1984, 12). Laughter possesses two contradictory necessities; 'I become myself', Bakhtin claimed 'only by revealing myself to another, through another and with another's help' (Todorov, 1986: 96). While there is a need to connect with another (the centripetal force) there is a simultaneous need to separate from the other (the centrifugal force)' (p574). For Nugent (2021) laughter 'liberates' (Bakhtin, 1984: 94), it is 'capable of communicating information in such a way that amounts to a revelatory experience' (p.574).

Whilst centrifugal forces are an illusion, the idea of a push and pull is highly relevant to being in a state of fun-ing; the attraction/repulsion of needing to connect with

others and 'be yourself' at the same time. This conundrum is at the essence of the fifth shadow role of fun learning; the push and pull or, as I prefer, compression and expansion within a learning experience of how much freedom (or conformity), spontaneity (or planning), or digression as an 'individual and the undivided' (Ingold, 2000) is useful for the tempo, rhythm, and texture of the learning experience.

#### **6.4.2 The six principles: inviting in an embodied and experiential value system**

Being attentive and becoming in a state of fun-ing in an embodied learning environment is an active provocation to consider and act upon alterities, to the already familiar. This is meaningful and significant in a learning context because it reminds the learner and the educator/coach that there is always a novel way to sense, think, do, be, and ultimately learn itself. There is an option, a possibility, a worthwhile consideration of *what to value* within learning and education.

Learning with the intentionality of embodiment and fun-ing in the context of CAC brings an attentiveness to the *qualities* of inhabiting and dwelling in a space, with other peoples' body-minds, and mediating/physical artefacts, across several space-times (online and offline, imagined, and physical). Such an attentiveness to qualities of the state (being and becoming) of the learning context itself generates and invites a different learning value system, not solely focused on skill development and outcomes. Whilst it might be compatible with elements of entrenched and existing value systems at present: Sfard (1998) reminds us that all learning needs to strive towards both participation and acquisition, I focus on the merit of an embodied and experiential value system. This is generated by being in a state of fun-ing, but also informs it – a symbiotic relationality (Massey, 1994; Pang 2021).

Fun-ing (within online-offline contexts) can induce qualities of experience that potentially contribute towards understandings of 'being well'. In this case, 'being well' is conceived of as a refocusing on the social-material spaces of learning by educators/the educating system, beyond a neo-liberal agenda focused solely on individuation, skills, outcomes, and learners as products/consumers. Understanding fun in online learning spaces presents embodied and experiential learning values focused on 'being well'. These extend neo-liberal thinking on learning by focusing on joyful and novel ways to: inhabit spaces; relate to each other; pace activities;

consider non-verbal ways of communicating; recognise online-offline capabilities; and measure learning focused on feelings and affect. I call these the ‘Six principles of fun embodied learning’. The intention is that they are used and developed (in their own contexts) by coaches/educators/practitioners, and that they can apply across the (often inter-related) four types of learning identified by Mocker and Spear (1982) and beyond. The principles are:

### **1) Inhabit the learning space**

Bring an attentiveness to the ‘now’ of the learning experience – noticing (with an attentiveness) the qualities your range of senses invites to your learning contexts. Acknowledge the presence of your body-mind and that of others. Katie reminds us that ‘play brings us into the most immediate moment – into presence’ (23 February 2021, at a staff meeting).

The final alignment with existing themes to emphasise here, is from a note connecting the theme of ‘embracing contradictions’ and the now-ness of an embodied presence. In January 2021, I recorded in session 1 of the online trainings Katie explaining that; ‘sometimes what we hope to accomplish, doesn’t matter as much as what we actually accomplish’. Within the context, this referred to the CAC belief that there is never just one end point in learning, and that often there are a range of ‘other outcomes’ that go beyond ‘content delivery’. Fun as an expression of ‘being in the moment’, where learners and facilitators both embody a vitality/aliveness that can catalyse a group into different types of learning, often ‘reconstructive’ (Van Rossum and Taylor, 1987), is central to this principle. Here the roles of fun are also integral to inhabiting a learning space, see 5.3.3.

### **2) Consider novel ways of relating to each other**

Invite a fun embodied type of learning, which is an explicit engagement with playful undoing, and considering other pedagogic ways of relating, either interspersed as moments within learning, or if the intention of the learning is informality, then as a whole experience. As one staff member noted during a staff meeting in December 2020, ‘informality is so important for online. There is value in it. You can find that connection’. This means seeking out unfamiliar ways of relating to each other. This can employ more horizontal ways of teaching and

learning but it also can be a commitment to pedagogy that emphasises process and praxis, alongside or even over outcomes.

### **3) Craft the tempo of a learning experience (allowing for spontaneity)**

The subjectivity of how fun is experienced requires that a learning experience needs to be a form of disciplined improvisation, in that each session is crafted to offer up a change in the pace and type of activities/learning games included, but also the type of fun. This approach to 'changing it up' is a way to seek to keep the learning experience inclusive as all learners will have different types of fun that appeal to them. The group may eventually construct certain games/types of fun as a group. This principle acknowledges that there can be six main types of fun: vibrant embodiment, power of child-like curiosity, rhythmic games, learning to learn, social spaces of possibility and embracing contradictions.

### **4) Embrace verbal *and* non-verbal ways of communicating**

Verbal and non-verbal ways of communicating are important for an embodied understanding of fun, and its contributions to learning experiences. A core aspect of this is taking on an attitude of playfulness, as a shaking off of constraints (Gordon and Esbjorn-Hargens, 2007). Such an attitude and bodily attentiveness with nonverbal communication open up new possibilities for thinking, doing and being within learning experiences. The method of 'laughter critical incidents' building from the work of Tripp (1993) and Lisahunter and Emerald (2016) are incidents rendered critical (Tripp, 1993): spontaneous laughter becomes a conduit towards understanding the roles of fun learning experiences. Whilst not all laughter has a direct correspondence to every experience of fun, by noticing moments of spontaneous laughter, learners and facilitators/educators can intentionally pursue and develop qualities/roles of fun which generate inclusive relations; alter the mood; generate sensations of lightness (ease); and enable re-imagined stories for learners about themselves and their worlds.

### **5) Recognise online-offline capabilities and limitations**

Learning online (-offline) provides different mediating approaches, and ways of considering the social role and type of interaction of fun learning opportunities and limitations, compared with face to face. What are the full-bodied aims of a

learning experience, and what physicality and/or online technology is available? Considerations of the answer to these questions, including pragmatism will inform your choice. Sensory experiences are in some ways greater/more experiential, and in others smaller/lesser. For example, by not always seeing the 'whole body' on screen there can be a felt partiality to the relational experience. However, at the same time the visibility of a person's room in their background can bring an element of connection/novelty that is not necessarily present in face-to-face learning encounters.

Indeed, watching back the third Pod session (February 2021), I was struck by the attentiveness and curiosity towards learning online (-offline), and the realisation from Katie that there are different social uses and fun learning opportunities and limitations. She stated:

there is a huge difference between an on-field training and an online training. On field we get so much done in terms of sharing content: what we experience, what we share, what participants do etc. In an online training there is no point in [it]...if there isn't a point to it. Some groups want a lot of material covered, but what's the difference between reading the material and having an online space? The challenge is what's the point of doing something in a virtual space, if they can achieve the same thing offline, on their own? So, it's about finding ways to create a different dynamic than they can have on their own, and we can accomplish that to some extent through breakout rooms and certain activities, but there is a lot more we could do.

#### **6) Sense measurement as rhythm and texture** (placement of activities and tools) patterning qualities of experience

Here measurement is focused on affects (emotional changes in someone/something), feelings (a mode of active and responsive engagement), and relationality: with self, other body-minds, and materials. Learning in the now is less focused on real time and output/productivity, and instead values *felt time* and the experiences of fun(s) as movements of embodied (un)learning, through a heightened sense of inter relational presence. It expands beyond a reductionist neo-liberal agenda on so called 'life skills' i.e., problem solving, creative thinking etc. to include more nuanced/subtler, but by no means 'softer' (or lesser), aspects of an 'individual and undivided' (Ingold, 2000) learning experience. This re-focus on generating qualities of experience, specifically the making opportunities for the

four roles of learning identified in 6.3, through an attentiveness to the praxis (Freire, 1972) of socio-material spaces of learning, offers a valuable re-framing for learning, which is called for by many practitioners and theorists alike (Biesta, 2008; Passarelli and Kolb, 2011; Ronkainen et al., 2021).

### **6.4.3 The Bracketing model: becoming in a state of fun-ing**

The rhythm and texture of the learning experience is generated through what Gordon and Esbjörn-Hargens (2007) call a 'bracketing of experience' (p.200). This is a *setting aside coupled with an attitude of playfulness* (shaking off constraints), which enables a shift from 'reality' to a new 'play specific space-time' with its own rules of procedure. This 'play-specific space-time' or 'imagined community' (Holston and Appadurai, 1996), can 'then become reality itself when the attitude of playfulness is infused into everyday life' (Gordon and Esbjörn-Hargens, 2007: 200-201). Therefore, whilst at first a shift may seem like a suspension away from reality; a 'setting aside' in Husserlian terms (Husserl, 1933/1973), the work of Gordon and Esbjörn-Hargens (2007) suggests that there is a further *re-engagement* with reality, through playfulness. I extend this concept of bracketing, to convey the relationality of an online learning experience, one which also includes types of fun, embodiment, and socio-cultural-material learning. The bracketing of becoming in a state of fun-ing enables a reorientation towards qualities of experience of being well during a felt moment of fun learning, as well as larger reconstructive learning possibilities towards personal and social changes. Figures 20-22 introduce the component parts of the Bracketing model, which is shown complete in Figure 23.

In Figure 20 the orange angled brackets, like a stretched 'M' shape on its side, represent the felt and sensory experience. These hold the series of space-times that contribute to the learning qualities in a particular moment. Whilst they happen in the now (a present pause), they often refer back to past memories and/or future hopes. The model is therefore non-linear, and should be considered in motion, like a pulsing squeeze box (accordion). The orange brackets compress and expand, indicated by their neon/pulsing effect, both horizontally and vertically. This enables the content on either side of the horizontal pink dashed line, to be considered both above and below. The pink dashed line shows the three main elements of a fun learning experience: constructions and roles of fun; embodiment and socio-cultural-material learning.

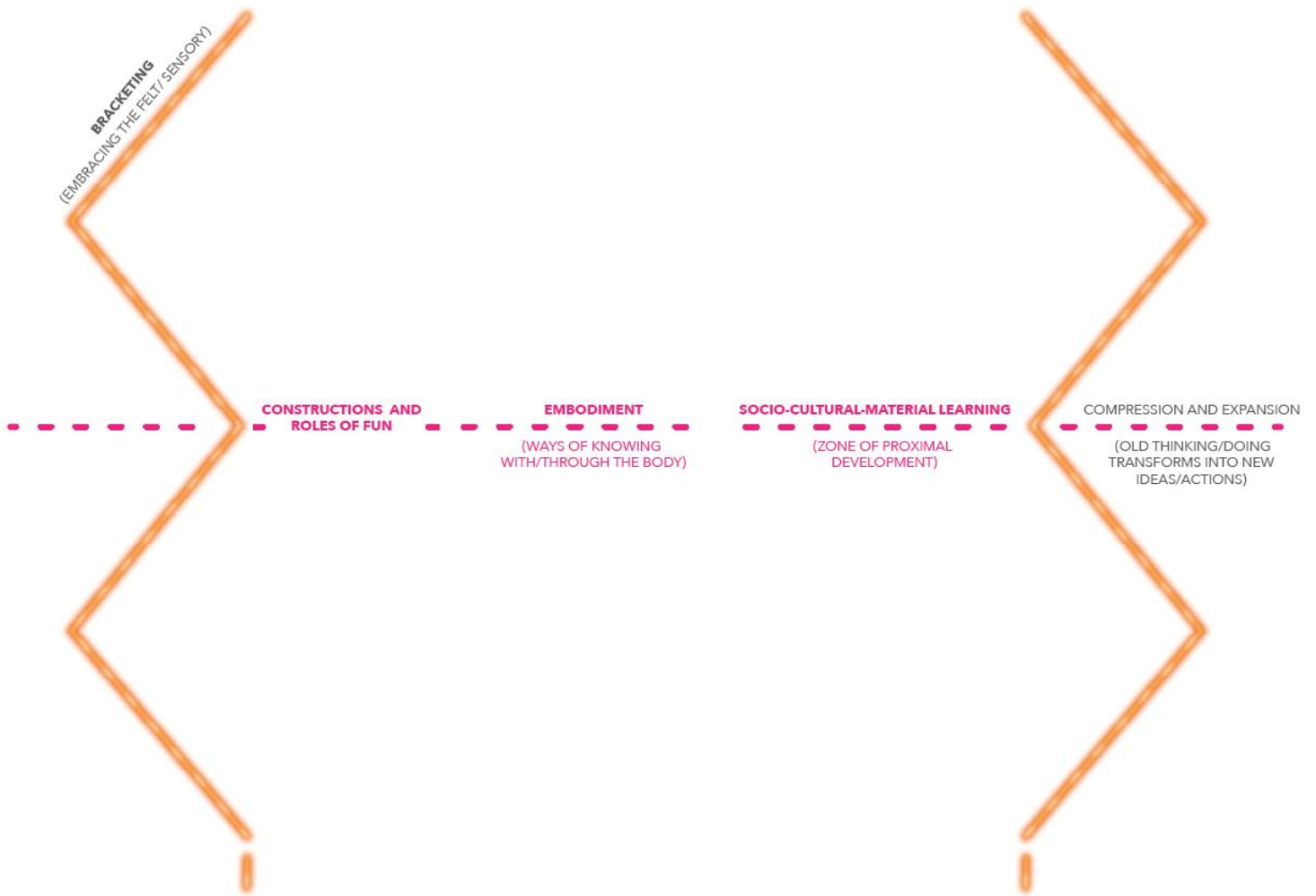


Figure 20: The pulsing nature of the model

In Figure 21 the two grey dashed horizontal lines in the middle, reflecting the orange bracket on the left, show the permeability between the six constructions of fun, four roles (on the left), embodiment (in the middle), and socio-cultural-material learning on the right. The six constructions of fun (shown originally in Figure 17) are indicated by blue circles, with the two types of fun, generated in *most* moments, represented by the dark blue circles: vibrant embodiment at the top and embracing contradictions at the bottom. The other four constructions of fun (power of child-like curiosity, rhythmic games, learning to learn and social spaces of possibility), may *or* may not be part of an experience; these will always be context specific – depending on the individual, group, and environment. The four roles of fun are conveyed in the grey diamond shaped boxes, previously shown in Figure 19: opens inclusive relations, alters the mood, helps heal and re-positions and re-stories. Only one of these roles, or up to all four may be evident in any given context.

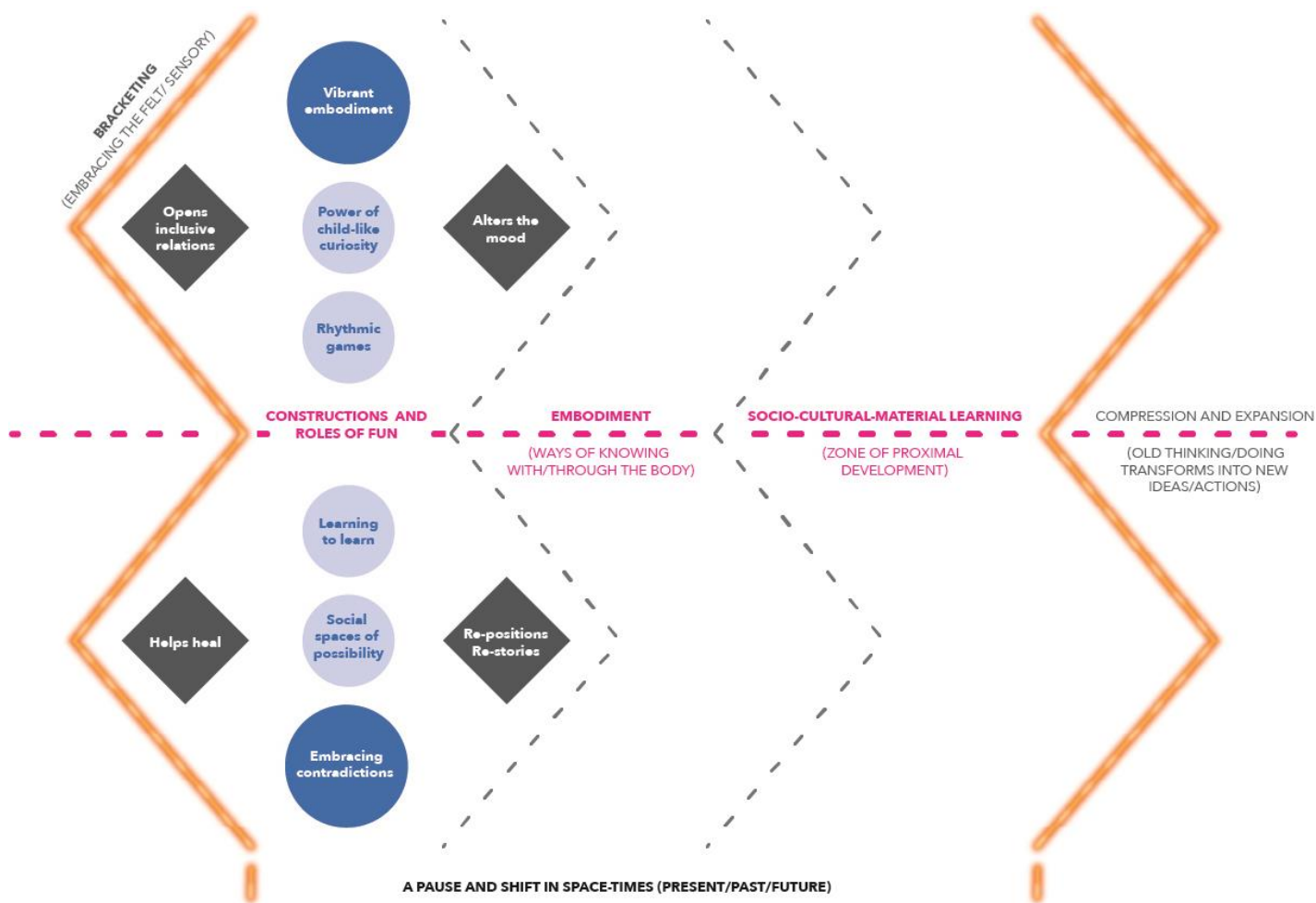


Figure 21: Constructions and roles of fun in the model

In Figure 22 and 23, the four main types of space-times are shown by the headings of ONLINE and OFFLINE (shown in capitals), and the IMAGINARY and PHYSICAL (material). The bullet points show the considerations within these. For socio-cultural-material learning these are: other people’s body-minds; the materials noticed/used; and the attributes of the environment. Within the imaginary i.e., other people’s body-minds, materials, and the context (bottom right). These can be compressed and expanded into the imaginary (top right) part of the diagram. Similarly for embodiment, the online considerations of presence, movement and mediating artefacts are also relevant in the offline embodied space-time. Outside of the left orange bracket, is a half-angled bracket. This is shaded to represent the fifth subversive shadow role – of fun ‘being more of itself’ i.e., having no purpose other than to be fun, and playfulness, as it’s associated attitude of shaking off constraints. Set aside, these represent the possibility to go beyond an existing zone of proximal development and experience a new idea/action during a state of fun-ing.



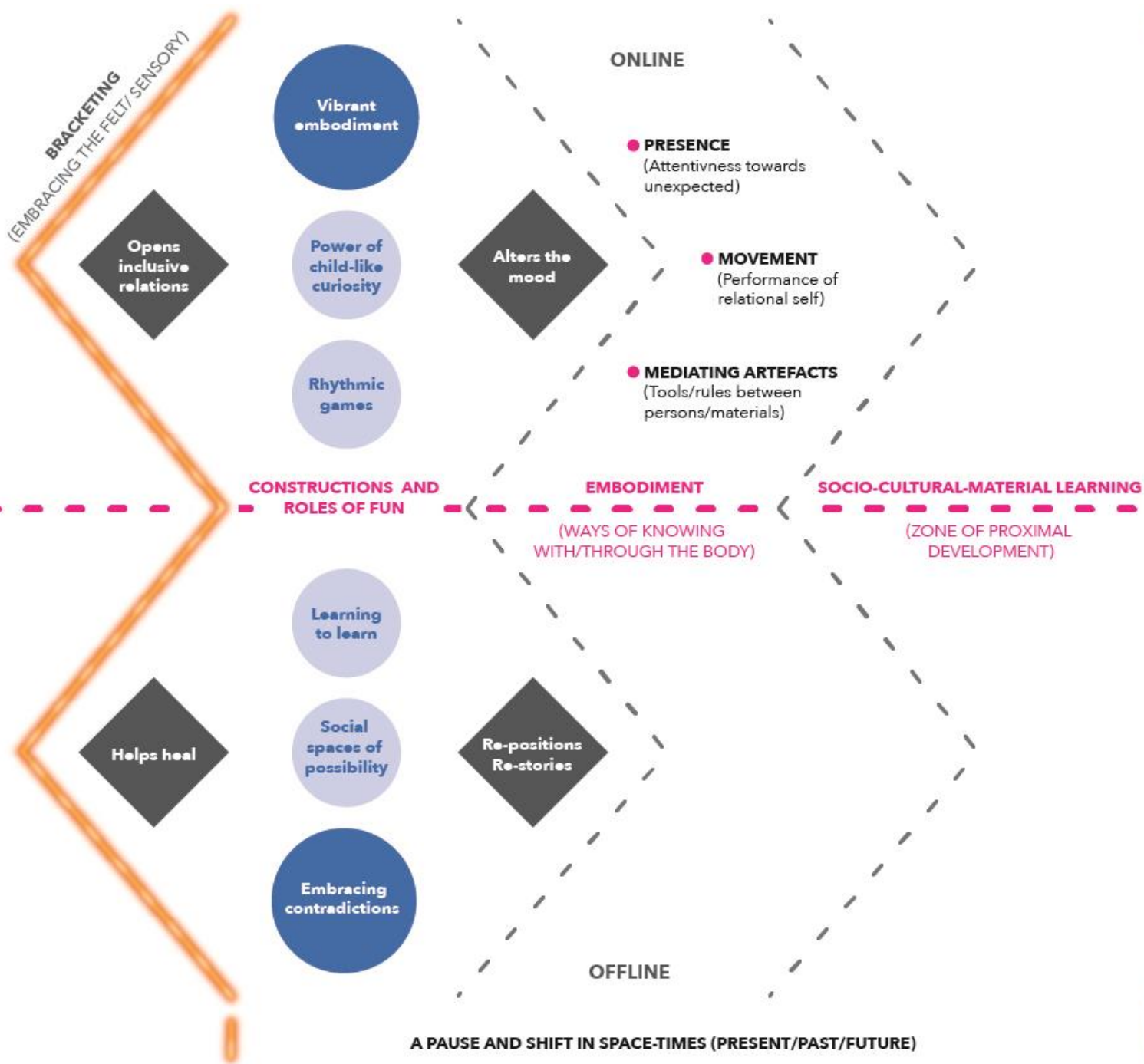


Figure 22: Embodiment as both online and offline space-times

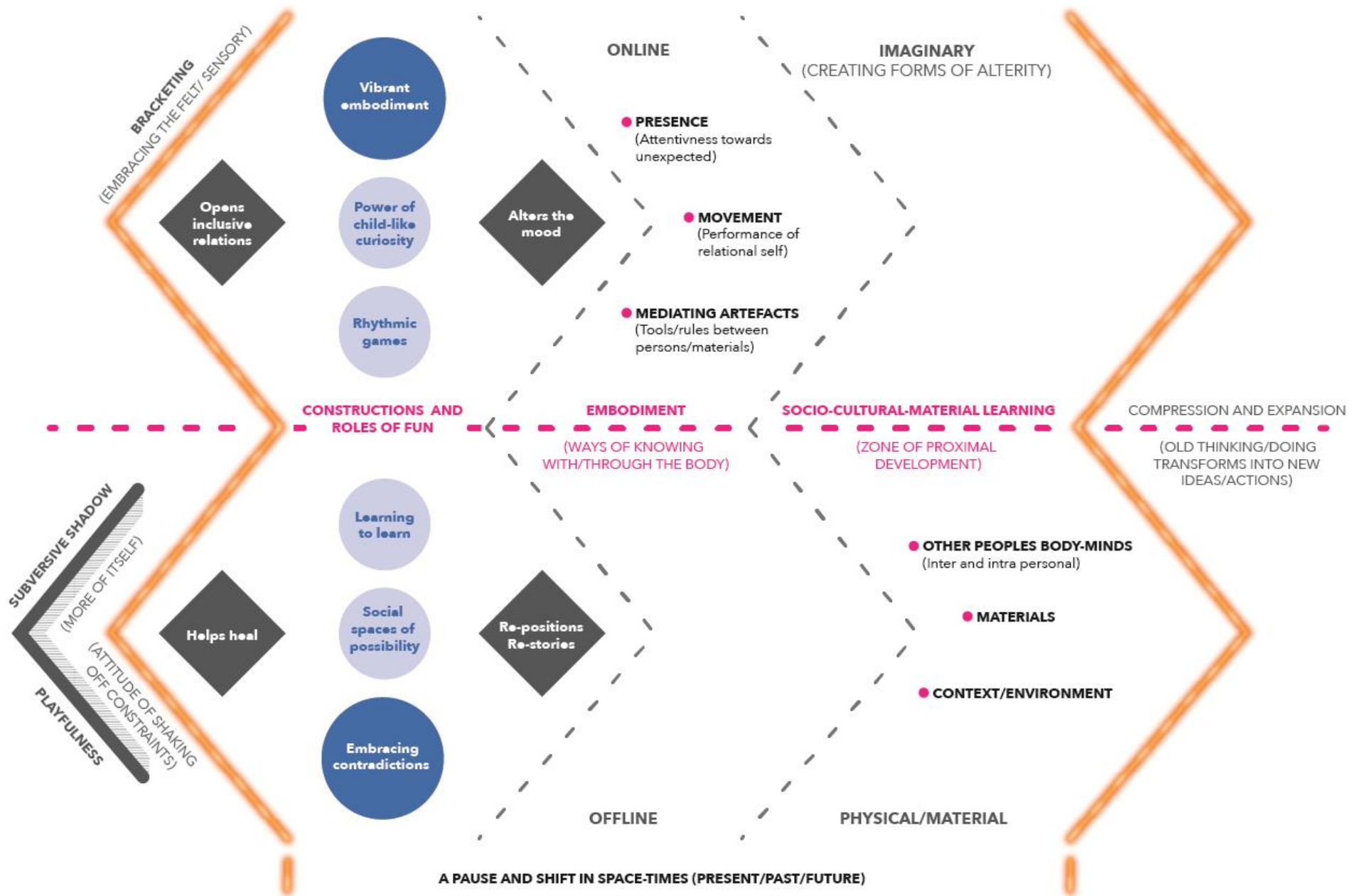


Figure 23: The Bracketing model: becoming in a state of fun-ing

If you are in this state of fun-ing, you will move through different space-times, often experiencing fun as a type of vibrant embodiment that embraces contradictions, as well as potentially any combination/tempo of the other four constructions and roles. You will also experience different aspects of both online and offline embodiment through presence, movement, and mediated artefacts. As well as a learning experience that encompasses different patterns and tempos of the imaginary and physical, engaging with other people's body-minds, materials, and the broader environment.

A state of being in fun-ing is both a real and direct engagement with the imaginary and the physical world, at the same *felt* time. Both are deemed equal and essential. Particular elements of a bracketed section in Figure 23 may be emphasised, at any given instance, but the sense of vibrant embodiment - an attuned aliveness to the socio-cultural-material learning experience, and a willingness to embrace contradictions, are part of most felt moments of fun learning.

Within such a moment/pause of fun learning, clock time is distorted. Rather there is a felt/experiential sense of time, which can manifest as a suspended space-time ('in flow'), or 'immersion' (Howlett, 2021; Tisza et al., 2021a). It is captivating. This aligns with Biesta's (2020) principle of 'suspension' — of slowing down, of giving time...[for students to] meet themselves in relation to the world' (Biesta, 2020: 98). Fun-ing in the moment of pause draws from past recollections and future imaginaries (desires), and/or the moment of fun is the recollection of 'this is fun' – a retrospective imprint, as suggested by Fincham's work (2016), and corroborated by the laughter critical incidents of this inquiry. However, the recollection is often used to drive forward the re-positioning and re-framing of personal and social change; in this way the recollection can co-exist with present and future space-times (as felt imagined realities).

Therefore, being in a state of fun-ing as a bracketing of experience is a heightened awareness, with both a pregnant pause [...], and a shift [a collapse that makes way] into future intention and possibility. This moment, or now, draws from present, past and/or future. If there is no intention towards an imagined alterity, in conversation with past experiences, then a subsequent action is very unlikely to follow. Fun-ing is a foundational state of attentiveness and becoming; it comes and goes but is always

making way and expanding possibilities for embodied knowing. As a learning energy, fun-ing can be conceived of as a multifaceted bracketing threshold that enables a generativity/expansiveness with body-minds, during learning processes. It is not simply a setting aside and re-engagement with 'reality' as Gordon and Esbjörn-Hargens, (2007) suggest for playfulness, fun-ing is an all-encompassing experience of being the most real – the most alive and most tuned into inhabiting the world around.

It reminds a person within a social group of the felt experience of meaning making (knowing), and in so doing directly confronts the unfamiliar, mysterious, and ambiguous within learning processes. There is always a consideration of alterity, a dance with otherness, and invariably, an element of absurdity (as a belief in the undoing of absolutes), and humility experienced by a learner/educator. In this way I use the metaphor of a bracket, as an embrace, rather than a fixed boundary; fun-ing is concerned with the felt, sensory and often pleasurable experiences of learning and education.

#### **6.4.4 Fun-ing and embodied (transformative) learning**

Let us now consider in more detail the relationship between embodiment and generating fun-ing online, indicated in the model, before outlining how fun-ing can be situated within embodied learning more broadly. Making fun, being fun, becoming fun, giving/passing fun on – are all ways of relating with and embracing a state of fun-ing that exists in and between minds, bodies, material, and social space-times. In order for this to occur there must be a direct engagement with embodiment, and in the context of online (-offline) embodiment: I claim that presence, mediated artefacts, and movement are especially significant in this model and in relation to research question 3 (on fun's significance).

The notion of *presencing* (Ucok-Sayrak and Brazelton, 2021), is especially useful. They assert that the performance of self is associated with *presencing* – a non-judgmental noticing of the ways in which a person interacts with, and becomes part of, their environment; a process of incorporating rather than a calculative strategising of how one appears to others. In this way the movement of how a body-mind interacts and integrates within an online (-offline) learning environment is of interest. When fun-ing becomes mutually resonant; understood in a Balinese sense as a 'feeling-thought', whereby feelings and thoughts are understood as mutually

constitutive (symbiotic), then this is understood as ‘thinking with the heart’ (Wikan, 2020). There is a collective pleasurable quality of experience, which I also reflected through the metaphor of a heart in my found poem.

In relation to *presencing* online and how it relates to fun-ing, these are my key reflections from the online training sessions:

- 1) Designed ‘ice-breaker’ activities (short play-based games, often involving physical movement e.g., online charades) aimed to generate an inter-relational awareness of (body-mind) self, amongst others. This can be a way of creating co-presence.
- 2) For the coaches, as expressed in post-interviews, these moments were often space-times of heightened ‘being-here-now’, and all the more so, because they were experienced and embodied as ‘fun’ (as the vibrant embodiment theme).
- 3) Yet these moments of heightened presence, an aliveness (‘energetic/vibrant embodiment’ of fun) were always transitory: and often shifted into a controlled presentation of the self; an awareness of the mediated nature of being online – e.g., readjusting of hair/item of clothing. These could be communal (‘should we all turn our cameras on?’), or individual (inert bodies and facial expressions).
- 4) There were often *necessary* forms of dis-engagement: a necessary pause, a breath, a movement away (absence) from always ‘being’ visible/present/performing online. For example, the intentional witnessing/audienicing by one coach who turned her camera off to smoke, listen and observe. It was a necessary part of a continuum of her online experience that would enable her rhythm of learning. This is not the same as inert ‘boredom’ (often prolonged).

If we now consider Vygotsky’s ‘zone of proximal development’ (1934/1978), we can summarise that he addresses three issues related to the learning of a socialised individual:

- 1) Learning takes place in a socio-cultural context, including artefacts
- 2) Learning has a cognitive dimension

- 3) Learning has an emotional (or psychodynamic) dimension, interrelated with the former two points.

This inquiry develops Vygotsky's conceptualisation of the 'zone of proximal development' (1934/1978) further, by bringing in embodiment in three particular ways. Firstly, by considering online (-offline) embodiment through the lens of presence, movement and artefacts, the body is understood in an intentionally sensory/attentive way (Lawrence, 2012; Anjaria and Anjaria, 2020), concerned with a 'whole person' (Yorks et al., 2006) inhabiting a learning context in relationship. Secondly, the direct consideration of how the imaginary is a potent force and dynamic within an embodied and fun learning experience adds a further layer to considering 'sensitivity'. The imaginary as a quality of expansive attentiveness (Ingold, 2000), and one in which the temporal present is held together with the sensory and affective past and/or future possibilities, which open out to grapple directly with considerations of an 'alterity of the present' (Pink et al., 2020). This is a purposeful departure from 'just the known, to consider the uncertainty of the sensory and emotional possibilities of what could or should happen next...rather than a distant eventuality' (p. 133). Thirdly, consideration of embodiment and fun connect directly with the sensory experiences of unknowing and the unfamiliar of an individual's social learning. Unknowing is not assumed as a weakness/lesser-than way of being-well in relationship to a learning experience, but rather as a possibility to be explored. Fixity is not valued more, and as the activist philosopher and psychologist, Akómoláfé (2020) suggests, 'confusion can lead to surprising new encounters with a world that resists being fully known'.

There is of course a paradox of making rational sense of the mysterious or unknowing; and indeed, this is where the sensory attributes of fun engage with the dance of intuitive knowing and rational knowing. Sensory/embodied ways of knowing claim that experience itself is empirical and precognitive (Hrach, 2021), and dissolve hierarchies of knowledge, raising up the ways of knowing that sensations bring alongside cognition and social integration. To know is a dance between the rational and the irrational, the known and the as yet unknown. Here I do not refer to inattention or carelessness, but rather to the inspired sense of acknowledging that your zone of proximal development can always be extended.

This means maintaining oneself in the right relationship with unknowing (or the unfamiliar). Indeed, the art or disciplined improvisation of fun learning is, in this sense, a capacity to keep ourselves in harmonious relationship with that which will always partially escape us. So, Bisson and Luckner's (1996) analogy of fun as an ephemeral phenomenon, a melting snowflake, is very helpful, but for me fun – embodied – learning is rather the whole experience of *being in and with* a snowstorm – there is a compound sensory effect of experiencing the subjective relationality to other bodies-minds-materials. In this way fun-ing, a present participle often used as a noun, represents both an active process, but it can also refer to the complete experience itself. This includes the sense of anticipation, noticing the crease of a smile on a face; all that happens through and around body-mind-materials in specific space-times. Being in and with. This ultimately rebels against the instrumentalisation of fun itself and suggests the same for the learning environment in which it is situated. The more an educator/learner tries to make fun-ing a fixed product, or outcome, the more it will melt away in a learner. Fun-ing, like a poem, is similar 'to the emotions they awaken in us; not preservable object but living event' (Hirshfield, 2015: 184). There is no-thing inherently exclusive, or costly about fun-ing. That is the release; the sense of lightness and liberation that having, and toying with fun brings.

## **6.5 My learnings**

I now discuss my learnings in relation to the online nature of qualitative research methods, the hybrid embodied reflexive thematic analysis, and the use of creative artefacts, such as the poem. These are all coloured and shaped by the visibility of 'I' the inquirer throughout, sensitive to the role I have in re-presenting the life worlds I witnessed.

### **6.5.1 Methods**

Qualitative research, and more specifically ethnography, by its very nature, is interested in individuals and individuals' pieces of data (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2019) – often in relation to the whole (as this inquiry is). This means that the micro/individual utterance may be relevant for the very fact that it contradicts/is in opposition to more generalised patterns. This was also evident in relation to specific types of nonverbal communication, such as the laughter critical incidents (see 5.3.1). But also, the crystallisation of using different angles/methods of analytical approach

to understand the data, in turn facilitated different/novel ways of play-working the data. This was important to not only keep my body-mind from stagnating (Hrach, 2020), but reinforced the desire to enjoy the experience of doing a fun PhD. I learnt that this needed its own flow and ebb, and that I could not always anticipate what would be the most/least fun activities. For example, I surprised myself by how much I enjoyed researching and considering different data gathering methods. The least fun moments were during repivoting methods due to the global pandemic and deciding where, and how far, my research project could change.

In consideration of the method of communication i.e., using online synchronous methods (Skype and Zoom), necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic, there are some common assumptions to dispel. In agreement with Weller (2015), an expert in conducting online synchronous interviews, I assert that whilst internet video calls can be technically challenging, if the audio and video quality are stable and the 'researcher and participant are comfortable with the mode then they offer a degree of flexibility and informality that physical co-present interviews can lack' (p.44). Whilst an apparent limitation online may be that 'the observation of non-verbal gestures is only partial, moulded not only by the reach of the webcam(s) and the type of device used but also by the effect that the presence of such technologies' (p.25); the lack of opportunity to observe the fullness of nonverbal communication (often assumed with physical co-presence), is not always a disadvantage. For some participants engaged in online interviews the choice of modality (audio only/video and audio) helped to ease discomfort and build rapport. Some expressed a preference for audio-only communication arguing that they felt more comfortable, than being visible.

The lack of 'pressure of presence' as Weller (2015), refers to physical face-to-face presence, coupled with the encroachment of myself, as researcher on the personal spaces of participants (via seeing into participants' personal office/home spaces) in many instances aided rapport. Online rapport could also be developed through the use of objects/materials in each other's physical space, such as side conversations on drinking mugs, whilst an interview took place. Therefore, whilst my initial assumption was that the social uses of online medium were inferior, my findings indicate that the medium provides different ways of social engagement, which can be play-worked with to achieve similar intentions, such as building rapport.



### **6.5.2 Analysis**

The main method of analysis within this inquiry was an (embodied) reflexive thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2019a, 2022). Fundamentally, Braun and Clarke (2022) argue that a reflexive thematic analysis is an unapologetic interpretive act. It is the transparency of the *storying process* which provides its credibility (Braun and Clarke, 2022). I therefore reflect upon learnings in relation to the praxis of doing and being with a thematic analysis. Holloway and Todres (2003), qualitative researchers, remark that whilst a thematic analysis is flexible, 'this flexibility can lead to inconsistency and a lack of coherence when developing themes derived from the research data' (p.346). I found that by doing a comparative (staff and coaches) thematic analysis I had to continually challenge myself and ask if the data was more coherent for one group, or if my technique was different? Keeping a detailed record of each stage of each analysis provided a way to track and monitor consistency of technique, as did peer review. I concluded that the coaches' data was slightly more coherent than the staffs', and this was reflected in the slightly smaller number of subthemes. Whilst I agree with Holloway and Todres (2003) that consistency and cohesion can be promoted by 'applying and making explicit an epistemological position' (p.355) to underpin a study's claims, it must go further. There is an inherent beautiful trouble held within the praxis of doing a thematic analysis and that is how to hold/work with granularity and wholeness at the same time. I endeavoured to do this through the construction of the themes, subthemes, and use of metaphorical imagery (energetic for the staff and the persona of a fool for the coaches in Table 15).

The use of metaphorical imagery throughout the inquiry enabled me to explore ways of going beyond text alone, allowing the images (and in the case of the found poem), the sounding, to provide a richer web of meaning and narrative to resonate with the body-minds of others.

### **6.5.3 'I' the Inquirer**

Several researchers have commented on the notion of 'researcher as tool' (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2014), or as I like to think and feel of it, as 'I' the inquirer, supported by a broader network of colleagues (see the acknowledgements). This necessitates a certain modesty, when confronted by the idea that truth, or the 'right' or 'the best' interpretations, can be extracted and produced, as was. Rather, I aim for a greater

authenticity, which allows diverse vocabularies, interpretations, and voices to make themselves heard in research texts and artefacts. The knowledge and sensory meaning making by the person doing knowledge work cannot be separated from the data, or wholly from the participants, as feminist researchers such as Calás and Smircich (1992) have identified.

There are of course many types and ways of approaching reflexivity (Richardson, 2000). Let's not forget it is a social construct all of its own. This inquiry has focused on two main ways of 'doing reflexivity': conveying the feelings 'I' the researcher experienced throughout the process, to provide 'you' the reader with contextual information as to why certain decisions were taken as sensory information (including feelings) to inform logical reasoning. As well as using metaphor (such as crystallisation), poetic prose (in places) and a poem (see 5.4.1) to introduce the notion of diverse vocabularies, interpretations, and the unfolding of crafted words in the body of the reader. This is all based on the assumption that inquiry is a generative and creative process in and of itself: a series of co-constructions and representations continually considered and justified. That's why 'I' can only ever offer a partial construction of meaning making, and why I prefer to focus on the learnings of an inquiry, which are framed as generative— rather than the constriction inherent in 'limitations' of an inquiry; this confines the ongoing conversation.

## **6.6 Summary**

In this chapter I have discussed the six themes of fun for both staff and coaches and what my value-adds are within the literature. I cautioned against always assuming that fun is a positive phenomenon and suggested that there may be pedagogic disbenefits associated with the highly subjective nature of fun. Not everybody is always going to experience the same moment of fun learning, and individuals may have different understandings of discomfort, safety, and failure. Participants acknowledged that these could restrict (rather than expand), the learning for some individuals within a group. Regarding fun learning online, the potential pedagogic disbenefits relate to possible social inequalities being further exacerbated; if it's not your type of fun then inclusion issues can be compounded, rather than mitigated.

I then discussed the relationship between fun and learning, suggesting that my contributions to embodied online (-offline) learning are threefold: firstly, the need to

redefine 'seriousness' as being aligned to authenticity rather than gravitas, then fun-ing is a highly serious state within learning processes. Secondly, the significance of physicality and materials/artefacts alongside *presencing* online, and thirdly putting a spotlight upon the rhythm and tempo of learning experiences, including, ironically, the necessary dis-engagement of individuals at certain times. Following on from this, I discussed each of the four purposes of fun in relation to embodied (transformative) learning and their novel contributions. Fun-ing is not perceived as something 'out there', an object to be collected and contained, but rather as an interrelated state of being and becoming, of body-mind-materials ('whole person') in relationship.

Finally, before outlining some of the contributions, opportunities, and limitations of this inquiry I suggested that fun is significant in the context of CAC, for three main reasons. Firstly, I discussed the fifth shadow role of fun learning as spontaneous/rebellious digressions, conveyed through a found poetic form, expressing the more-than verbal essence of fun-ing. Secondly, I proposed that fun as a phenomenon invites a different embodied and experiential value system to current mainstream educational paradigms focused on outputs, skills, and products. Learning with the intentionality of fun-ing in the context of CAC, brings an attentiveness to the *qualities* of inhabiting and dwelling in a space that have a potentially significant contribution to make towards understandings of 'being well'. Here I outlined six principles for practitioners and theorists alike.

Thirdly, I summarised the being and becoming of fun-ing in the Bracketing model (Figure 23), conveying not only the transitory nature of fun, but also moulding the concept of bracketing differently to Husserl (1933/1973), as not so much a 'setting aside', but rather an intentional and active engagement with both the imaginary and the physical world, at the same *felt time*. The sense of vibrant embodiment – an attuned aliveness to the socio-cultural-material learning experience, and a willingness to embrace contradictions – are present in any *moment* of fun learning. A bracketing of experience is a heightened awareness, with both a pregnant pause [...], and a shift [a collapse that makes way] into future intention and possibility. Hence, I use the metaphor of a bracket as an embrace, rather than a fixed boundary; fun-ing is closely associated with the felt, sensory and often pleasurable experiences of learning. Therefore fun-ing should be considered as part of *any* learning process,

which is concerned with the felt, and sensory noticing of qualities of learning experiences, and education more broadly.

## Chapter 7 Conclusions

You set the space up, in a different way.

Give yourself to it.

All sorts of things happen,,,,, spinning, laughing, shaking,,,,  
that's a conundrum and a paradox.

No-thing can ever happen twice.

[Fun is

education for a changing world

a widening way of doing things

or

was it just an odd moment?]

The last lines of the poem, *At Its Heart*, made from the multiplicity of voices that contributed towards this inquiry, encapsulates much of what fun-ing is, what it does, and why it is significant in relation to learning, especially embodied learning. The words above not only convey the state of attentiveness and becoming that is fun-ing, but also elements of the learning experience. These include: the intentional making of the learning space(s); a courageous vulnerability of 'giving yourself to it'; letting go into the experience full of movement, and group affects through embodied learning. The experience is full of contradiction, transition, expansion, and a growth in belief and/or behaviour. Or simply an experience of 'an odd moment' – something different, and unfamiliar.

Hrach (2021) states that 'embodied, sensory experience may confirm our intuition that fun activities can enhance learning' (p.78). This inquiry does just that, it confirms that fun-ing, as 'learning within relationship' (Yorks, 2006) with the other body-minds, and materials enhances the qualities of a learning experience – the felt and embodied dynamics of learning, especially in relation to online (-offline) learning experiences. It also supports Hrach's claim that knowledge is constructed through embodied experience, and that physical exploration is needed to notice/be mindfully attentive to our environment. Finally, her assertion that the 'boundary in between our

inside and outside our physical bodies is more permeable than we think...[we] sense things through the objects we use as tools' (p.51) is also highly aligned with the findings of this inquiry. Where this inquiry adds to understandings of embodiment, beyond the online (-offline) context, is an explication of the relationship between fun, embodiment, and social-cultural-material learning. The Six principles and Bracketing model, call for an embodied/experiential approach within education systems.

An embodied and experiential value system has implications beyond CAC and for online-offline learning contexts more broadly. Fun-ing as part of embodied learning re-pivots a focus upon pedagogies that value qualities of experience, such as altering a mood, and opportunities for digression, which ultimately view learning as reconstructive (Van Rossum and Taylor, 1987) and transformative (Lawrence, 2012). I define 'fun embodied (transformative) learning' as the un-doing-otherwise of formal, normative, lecture-based learning. This can be achieved through explorations of embodiment and fun, specifically in online synchronous spaces. Formal education remains the assumed and normative way of teaching within secondary and higher education in many parts of the world. Un-formality in contrast emphasises the un-conditioning and explicit engagement with *other than* formal ways of learning (i.e., didactic lecture-based teaching). Therefore, un-formality (un-doing-otherwise) is relevant to both formal and informal education contexts because it can be interspersed within formal contexts, or wholly embraced as a type of informal education. It is not simply the absence of something deemed superior.

This whole inquiry is concerned with the praxis (Freire, 1972) of meaning making, rather than a fixed/hierarchical uncovering of 'knowledge' or 'the truth'. As an interpretivist I grounded my research design in the notion of 'disciplined improvisation' (Sawyer, 2004), which is based upon valuing structure, planning and rational/logical processes, alongside improvisation and uncertainty. Improvisation allows for spontaneity and imaginative/divergent sensing and thinking, both in response to the highly dynamic nature of the organisation being studied, but also researching in a time of global pandemic.

I will now summarise the main contributions of this inquiry before outlining the provocations and opportunities that these findings open out. Namely, how they might be practically integrated within online (-offline) learning contexts, and in movement-

based learning contexts (including Sport for Social Change and alternative play spaces).

## **7.1 Contributions**

This inquiry demonstrates that embodied (body-mind as one) and sensory ways of knowing, challenges objectivist (teacher-centred) perspectives on fun learning. This means that a research project on fun should strive to be a process and artefact that intentionally seeks and allows for constructions of fun. In this way personal feeling, collective affect, and meta communication (more than verbal) is intertwined with cognitive/mental thought, rather than separated and relegated. 'Feeling-thought' (Wikan, 2020) or body-mind (ideally) become inherently symbiotic and equal. To not seek out opportunities to embody different (often overlapping) types of fun in the praxis of the doing of a research project, *fundamentally* de-legitimises the practitioner-researcher dynamic, because this is an inquiry grounded in interpreting body-mind-material meaning making, within situated space-times. This necessitates that 'I' the researcher am continually considering my 'whole person' (whole bodied) reflexive approach towards the state of being and phenomenon researched.

This research calls for a greater questioning of what learning is and should be in the 21st century, but also encourages movement-based pedagogies or Sports for Social Change pedagogies (for children, youth, and adults) to go further than a focus on narrow skills focused competencies. If we don't intentionally consider how to be-well in a state of fun-ing in our learning environments, including what qualities of experience to encourage, then our learning can only ever be partial, and certainly not fit for a *quality* of purpose.

I now summarise the contributions of this inquiry in relation to the criteria for doctoral level research. Namely, the creation, interpretation and systematic acquisition and understanding of a body of new knowledge; the ability to conceptualise, design and implement a project; and a detailed understanding of techniques for advanced inquiry.

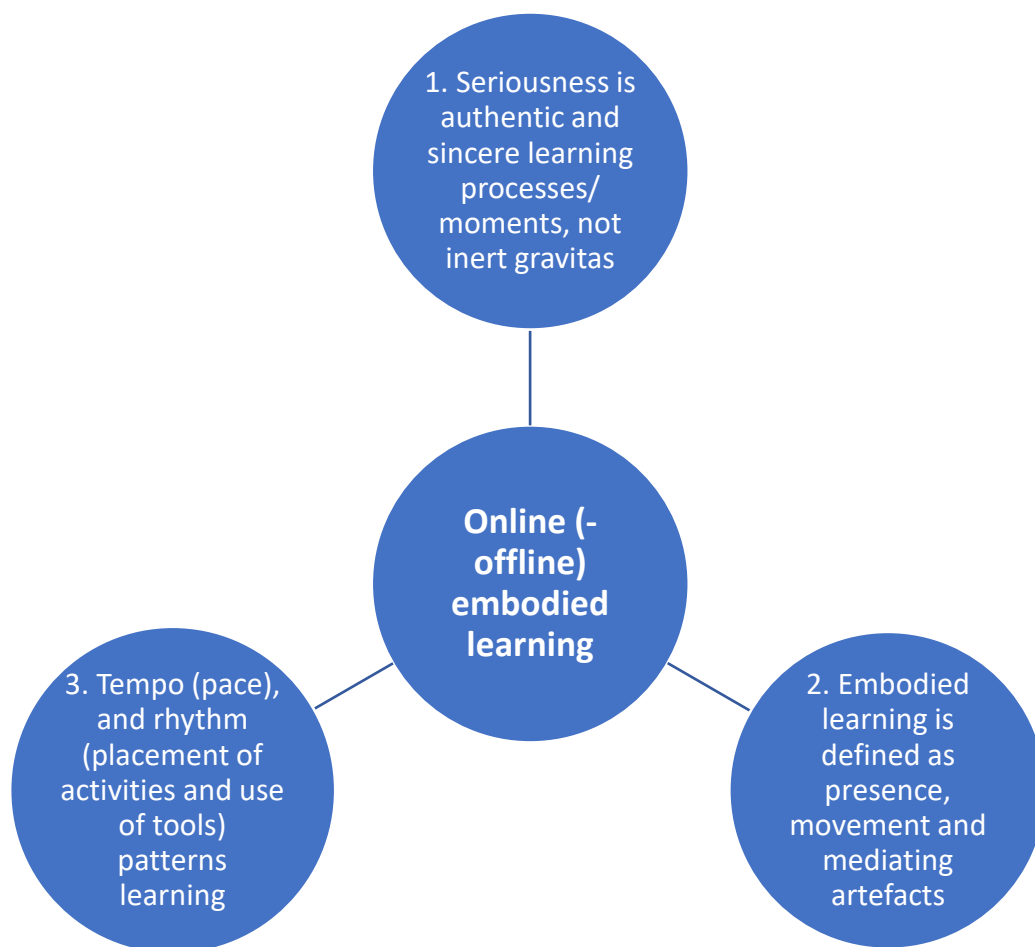
### ***7.1.1 A body of new knowledge (meaning-making)***

This inquiry creates, interprets, and understands a substantial and systematic (or richly rigorous) body of new knowledge, through original transdisciplinary research at

the forefront of educational studies, movement, Sport for Social Change, and ethnography. The new knowledge generated includes contributions to embodied online (-offline) learning, constructions of fun in the context of socio-cultural-material learning, novel understandings of the roles of fun, and findings relating to the significance of fun learning as a state of fun-ing conveyed through the Six Principles and the Bracketing model.

### **Online (-offline) embodied learning**

With regard to the relationship between fun and learning, my contributions to online (-offline) embodied learning are summarised in Figure 24:



*Figure 24: Contributions to online (-offline) embodied learning*

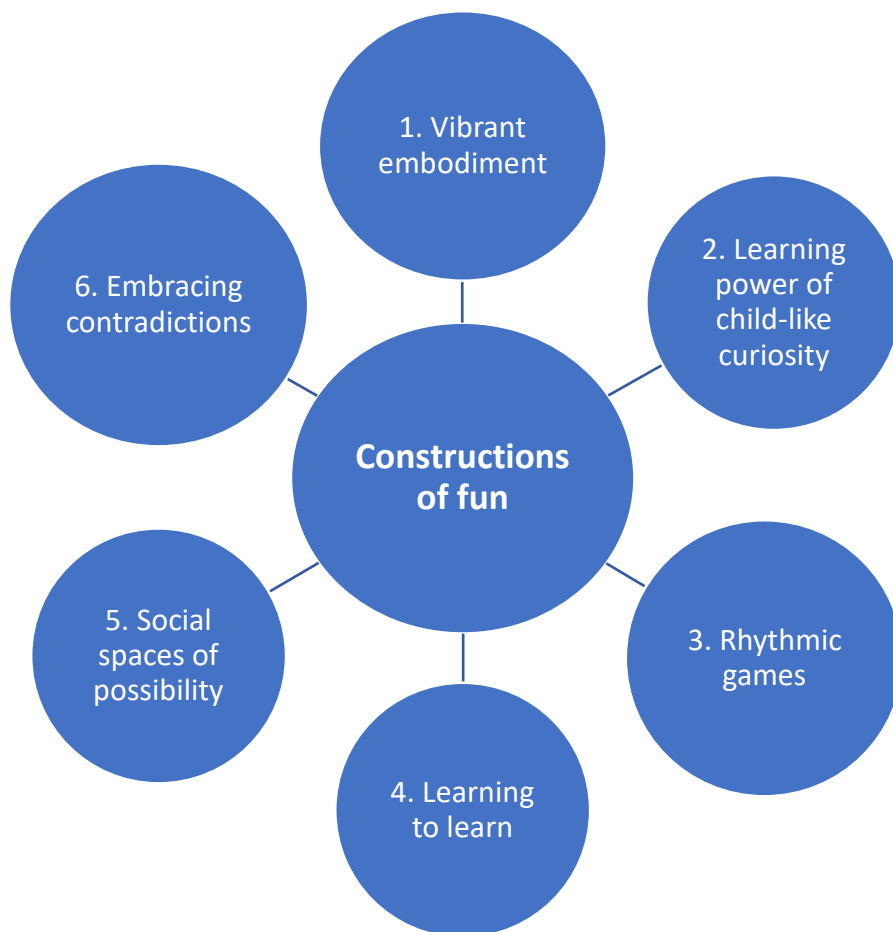
Firstly, I redefine seriousness based on values of authenticity and sincerity, not as inert gravitas. Secondly, I consider embodiment as constituting presence (an attentiveness towards the unexpected), movement (as a performance of a relational



self), all in relation with materials/artefacts and the social norms that guide their use, offering a holistic conceptualisation of both online *and* offline embodied states of being. And thirdly, by putting a spotlight upon the tempo (pace), and rhythm (placement of activities and use of tools) of learning experiences, including ironically, the necessary dis-engagement of individuals at certain times i.e., with cameras sometimes off, this inquiry offers a rich way to consider the qualities of patterning learning experiences, to strengthen being-well during learning praxis.

### **Constructions of fun**

The constructions of fun as a phenomenon in the context of learning are summarised in Figure 25:



*Figure 25: Contributions towards constructions of fun*

All these definitions of fun re-direct learning away from outcomes/products, and instead towards qualities of learning experiences. Whilst there is a subtheme as part of the staff theme on 'building self-directed learning' that speaks of 'life skills', this

was a small part of the discourse from staff and coaches. Ultimately, conceptualisations of fun and learning generate a different value system and language for learning, which is in opposition to self-doubt, criticism, judgement, or boredom; stagnant and heavy-feeling emotions.

This inquiry acknowledges that because of the highly subjective nature of fun, not everybody is always going to experience the same moment of fun learning, and this can restrict (rather than expand), the learning for some individuals within a group. In particular, those who were especially self-conscious of their bodies, or those less used to participatory approaches. Fun-ing does not always have to be big and loud. Each individual and collective group need to find and explore the levels of discomfort, risk taking and failure that are acceptable for them, acknowledging the challenge of this, as both 'the individual and the undivided' (Ingold, 2000).

Furthermore, with regard to (fun) learning online, there are potential pedagogic disbenefits. These relate to possible social inequalities being further exacerbated, for example language differences, and differences in technological capabilities with software programmes (Ylirisku, 2021). Such challenges for learners (and teachers), are not necessarily overcome through making the learning fun. If it is not your *type* of fun – then inclusion issues can be exacerbated.

### **Roles of fun**

Concerning the roles/purposes of fun, in relation to embodied learning, this inquiry makes original findings summarised in Figure 26.

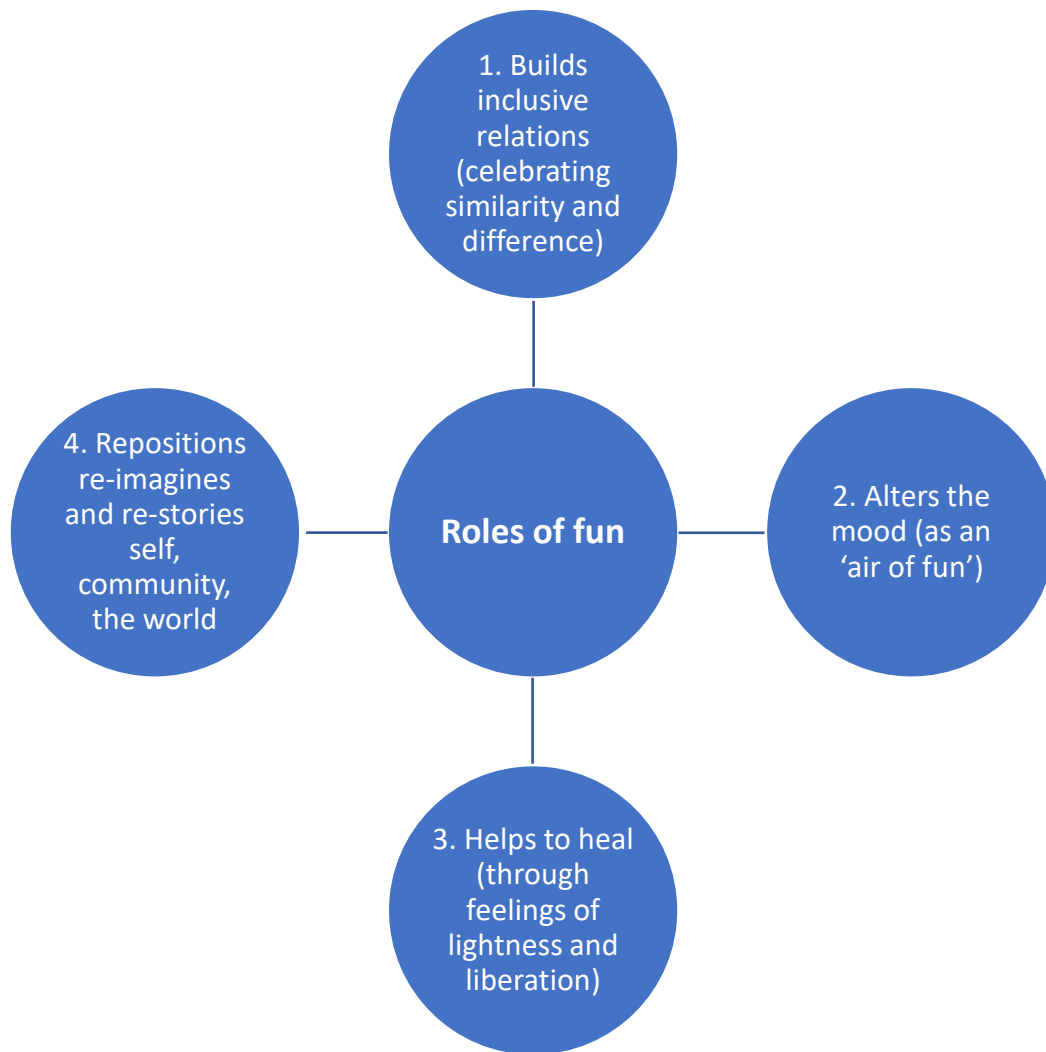


Figure 26: Contributions towards the roles of fun

The four roles of fun identified above put 'feeling-thoughts' or 'thinking with the heart' (Wikan, 2020) at the centre of learning experiences. These roles also all acknowledge the challenge/tension and transition inherent in fun-embodied-learning e.g., shifting from a heavy emotional feeling into one of greater lightness and liberation (fun helps to heal). Fun-ing is not perceived as something 'out there', an object to be collected and contained, but rather as an interrelated state of being attentive and becoming, of body-mind-materials ('whole person') in relationship with a specific context and space-times.

## Meaningfulness (significance) of fun-ing

Fun is conceptually significant and meaningful in the context of CAC, for the reasons summarised in Figure 27.



Figure 27: Contributions on the meaningfulness of fun-ing

The phenomenon invites a different embodied and experiential value system to the current mainstream societal paradigms focused on outputs, skills, and products (Ronkainen et al., 2021). Learning with the intentionality of embodiment and fun-ing in the context of CAC, brings an attentiveness to the qualities of *inhabiting and dwelling* (Magrini, 2017) in a space and can induce qualities of experience that have a potentially significant contribution to make towards understandings of being well and seeking out the unfamiliar.

The Six Principles for practitioners and theorists alike, offer a practical way to play-work towards developing the praxis of being well and embracing the unfamiliar in fun learning environments. The Six Principles are ways to generate qualities of experience (see 6.4.2), associated with a state of fun-ing and embodied learning. They are not mutually exclusive, nor always equal or necessarily all needed. Fun as a phenomenon is relative, voluntary, and transitory. Therefore fixed, rigidity or exactness are not inherently qualities associated with this state of being well or aliveness; there always has to be an opportunity for spontaneity to arise. The intention is for coaches/educators/development practitioners to use and develop these, within their own contexts:

- 1) Inhabit the learning space
- 2) Consider novel ways of relating to each other
- 3) Craft the tempo/pace of a learning experience (allowing for spontaneity)
- 4) Embrace verbal and non-verbal ways of communicating
- 5) Recognise online-offline capabilities and limitations
- 6) Sense measurement as rhythm and texture, the patterning and fragmentation of activities and tools, within qualities of experience.

I also present a new way of conceiving of fun as an attentive being and becoming (fun-ing), through the 'Bracketing model for fun learning'. The model encourages a consideration of using the imaginary equally alongside physical/material experience to re-story, reframe and disrupt, shifting a learning experience. Similarly, it acknowledges the embodied attributes of online (presence, movement, and mediating artefacts), as equally important with offline embodied experience. And that ultimately any experience of being in the now (present) always also draws from imprints of the past or conceptualisations of a desired future; time in a state of fun-ing is best conceived of as *felt time*, rather than clock time. Fun-ing provides qualities to a learning experience; affective patterns of texture and rhythm, a disciplined improvisation, which are often dismissed, feared, or actively suppressed in many pedagogies.

The model conveys the transitory nature of fun, but also uses the concept of bracketing in a different way conceived of by Husserl (1933/1973), as a setting aside: and rather play-works with bracketing as a direct engagement with the

imaginary and the physical world, at the same *felt time*. In this way, both are deemed equal and essential. The sense of vibrant embodiment – an attuned aliveness to the socio-cultural-material learning experience, and an eagerness to embrace contradictions, is vital to any moment of fun learning. A bracketing of experience is a highly sensitised awareness, with both a pregnant pause [...], and a shift [a collapse that makes way] into future intention, expansion and possibility. Hence, I use the metaphor of a bracket, as an embrace, not a fixed boundary; in so doing, fun-ing is closely associated with a playful, relational performance of self-other awareness. Therefore fun-ing contributes to the knowledge and practical guidance on how non-formal embodied learning (including within the International Development field) can be better understood and utilised in the 21st century. But more than this, it should be considered as part of *any* learning process, which is concerned with the felt and sensory qualities of learning experiences *per se* and engaging with the unfamiliar within education.

I also affirm the shadow role of fun learning as spontaneous and rebellious digressions, including fun-ing to simply be 'more of itself' i.e., intentionally without learning outcome. The rebellious nature of fun-ing is conveyed through a found poetic form, expressing the more than verbal and embodied essence of fun-ing. The poetic form enables a re-presentation and performance of the relationship between fun and learning, emphasising the reflective movement (as compression/collapse and expansion) between how much freedom (or conformity), spontaneity (or planning), digression (or fixity) for an 'individual and the undivided' (Ingold, 2000) is authentic/useful, for the rhythm, tempo, and texture of the qualities of learning in a given context. Fun-ing is *more than* playfulness, understood as an attitude of shaking off constraints, because whilst both are digressive, fun-ing includes the entirety of body-minds-materials, interacting in given learning space-times, where as an attitude of playfulness is only one ingredient that enables this to happen.

Fun-ing aligns with Van Rossum and Taylor's (1987) 'reconstructive' type of learning (see 3.3.1), as an interpretive process aimed at the understanding of reality. Fun-ing is an interpretive process, or rather praxis, but whilst the phenomenon may align with obtaining harmony and happiness or changing society, it is not necessarily fuelled by personal interests. I add to this literature on defining reconstructive types of learning. The holistic experience of fun embodied learning (fun-ing) is intrinsically concerned

with learning to build empathetic spaces of trust, and ‘experiencing the self in the other’ (a quote from a participant interview). Learning is therefore understood as a relational praxis between the individual and the undivided, as bodies-minds-materials and social space-times in flow, all colliding.

Finally, fun-ing disrupts the categories of formal, non-formal, self-directed, and informal learning (Mocker and Spear, 1982), because it can be both the means and the outcome itself in learning. Fun gathers meaning from the phenomenon’s relational properties of itself; so, it is not the bird (the players) or the act of singing (playing games), but the song (the aligned attributes of fun-ing) itself, which is the integrated and embodied quality of the whole experience, all aligned. Each part contributes, but the felt whole is greater than each part, alone.

### ***7.1.2 Expanding qualitative research: conceptualisation, design, and implementation***

This inquiry is the first transdisciplinary (Pohl, 2011) research project to consider fun in the context of embodiment and socio-cultural-material learning. There are two key contributions towards the conceptualisation and design of (post) qualitative inquiry (Carlson, 2021) that this inquiry makes. These are built on the assumption that as an embodied ethnographer, research on a state of being, fun, should seek to understand the state of being, with and through my own body - with and through feelings, affects, sensations as well as rational thought. This is a reflexive way of conceptualising an embodied ethnography. The enquirer, I, doing a PhD on fun, should consider what it is to have/make fun, whilst participating in the lived experience itself, because this provides a ‘sincerity’ and ‘credibility’ (Tracy, 2010) to the endeavor. My ways of honouring this, for any future researchers of fun to consider, and adapt, included:

- 1) Creating intentional ways of moving my body throughout each day. This ranged from starting my day with Qigong practices, to going for a walk, to small movements at my desk when writing. By moving my body intentionally in diverse ways, I hoped to be able to move my thoughts; a type of *bodyfulness*, rather than mindfulness.
- 2) Play-working with creative and performative writing (Pollock, 1998; Pelias, 2019) is a way that foregrounds the challenges of language and text in research;

It assumes a reader who is in motion and trying to make sense of language that is also in motion. It also attunes to the affective aspects of reading and writing of research...text not just as a meaning making enterprise, but as an emotive and a vibrational endeavor' (Carlson, 2021: 158).

Two ways that I intentionally sort to do this was firstly by using metaphors, notably that of crystallisation (Richardson, 2000), as a way of communicating analysis as both process and product, and as a tool to help seek and make both 'pattern and fragmentation' (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2014). And secondly, by creating a spoken found poem (Leavy, 2009), I sought to communicate something of the more than verbal (Bateson, 1972) attributes of fun-ing.

- 3) Framing the research design as 'disciplined improvisation' (Sawyer, 2004). An acknowledgment of the dance between structure and agency in research praxis, especially during a time of heightened flux, created by the COVID-19 pandemic. This framing enabled me to consider a phased approach to the inquiry, but also to understand 'warm data' (Bateson, 2017) collection, analysis, and writing, not as discrete or linear in praxis, but rather as conversational, requiring planning and form, but also open to spontaneity, and uncertainty. Ultimately, facilitating a way of expanding my own learning experience and frames of reference, or 'zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1934/1978), rather than being overly constricted, and this included in the approach to the literature review itself.

### **7.1.3 Advancing applicable techniques**

Regarding a detailed understanding of applicable techniques for research and advanced academic inquiry, this research makes three notable contributions:

- 1) The finding that online synchronous learning experiences (such as through Zoom) can be constructed to be embodied and transformative learning space-times is significant. Especially in relation to the conceptualisation of online (-offline) ethnography as a method that can be cognisant of physical context and materials/mediating artefacts as well, creating a sense of immersion and co-presence (Howlett, 2021). This adds to the literature on netnography (Kulavuz-Onal et al., 2013), and has implications for how to make online teaching more engaging, see 7.2.1.



- 2) This inquiry developed the 'Laughter critical incident'. Building on from the work of Tripp (1993) and Lisahunter and Emerald (2016) these are incidents rendered critical (Tripp, 1993): spontaneous laughter (Bryant et al., 2018) becomes a conduit towards understanding the roles of fun learning experiences. Whilst not all laughter has a direct correspondence to every experience of fun, they are viewed as an entry point to discuss historical events.
- 3) This inquiry developed an embodied, reflexive thematic analysis, extending the approach to a reflexive thematic analysis by Braun and Clarke (2021). This approach play-worked with physical movement (Qigong/walking), the use of online software, Quirkos and physical materials, such as index cards and felt tip pens. This combination facilitated a way of knowing and sensing through physical and material movement (Hrach, 2020), as well as interactions between online and material tools/artefacts and their social uses.

## **7.2 Provocations and opportunities**

I like many educationalists, practitioners, and academics sense, think, and feel that many learning approaches and education systems are outdated. This inquiry contributes towards some of the ways that a re-pivoting can occur. Using the findings from this inquiry, I present considerations for further exploration in relation to learning and online educational experiences, as well as for movement-based learning and Sport for Social Change.

### ***7.2.1 For learning and online educational experiences***

To be clear, I am not saying that fun-ing is a continual state to aim for all of the time, in every learning situation. Nor that it will solve all the ills in our current education systems. But I am saying that it can be a way to encourage and generate neglected qualities of a learning experience. Why does this matter? I understand learning as a 'reconstructive' endeavour (Van Rossum and Taylor, 1987): as an interpretive process aimed at the understanding of reality; a conscious process, fuelled by personal interests and directed at obtaining harmony and happiness or changing society, then qualities of experience that support being well are vital. These do not need to cost or be heavily controlled, because the conceptualisation of learning is one which is embodied and un-formal (the undoing of formal/non/in formal), requiring a conscious engagement with seeking alterity, novelty and the unfamiliar within

learning. Subjective types of fun in relation to learning are actively reminding you there is so much more 'out and in there' to learn. Being and becoming in a state of fun-ing is celebrating the process of learning (as never ending), rather than fixating on one inert end point, which may well be challenged throughout a learning process. Fun-ing is inherently concerned with movement/motion and a curiosity with aliveness: a valuing of being in relations with other body-minds, materials, space-times, and specific contexts (online/offline, imaginary/physical).

In so doing, within an embodied epistemology, the learning 'person' of body–heart–mind, whilst acknowledging a physicality of self, also extends far beyond, including an engagement with other body–heart–minds, materials and space-times and specific contexts (online/offline, imaginary/physical). Experiencing fun-ing whilst learning, is often a moment when the learning subject and objects of attention partially dissolve, and there is a felt sense of a coming together/connection, and then expansion. This is not intended in a 'romantic' or 'idealistic' sense. Rather this is an intentional way to extend learning praxis, beyond the false privileging/default in the Global North, which often still falls back on learning/education through a mind body split, prioritising mental cognition only. This study contributes towards the growing research on embodied cognition, and phenomenological and ethnographic studies that consider 'whole-person' learning (Yorks et al., 2006). This, for me, includes play-working with co-operative and relational knowing, rather than competitive singularity.

Furthermore, the findings of this inquiry support Ucok-Sayrak and Brazelton's (2021) work, finding that online learning experiences can produce a sense of presence and connection. I too argue that (if intentionally constructed and made so) online learning environments can be safer, more open (Ingold, 2008), and respectful places to engage in learning experiences grounded in relational exchange with other persons, body-minds, and materials. Face to face interaction does not inherently guarantee presence. You can certainly be in a physical space amongst bodies, but your mind may be absent (Sheehy et al., 2014). I by no means want to suggest that intentionally crafted, face-to-face, formal/informal lessons are inferior to online learning spaces, nor do I suggest that all online learning spaces/experiences are superior. There can be an assumption that it is necessary to premise one above the other. I think it depends on context and intentions.

Finally, this inquiry has shown how assumptions about online synchronous learning are far more complex than methods that don't consider both online and offline lived experiences, but also that there is a value in carefully crafted online learning spaces. The pandemic forced a rapid change in use of online learning, and in the context of a physical movement-based organisation this was fascinating, making me consider wider notions, including *presencing*, and making sure I confronted my own biases about online learning and ethnography. Researching fully online actually confronted myself with aspects of embodiment, I had previously not engaged with. There were surprises; I discovered a different way of relating with my own body and senses *because* of being online (including that I have a lazy right eye), and that the use of sound online is very underdeveloped in pedagogies.

### ***7.2.2 For movement-based learning, Sport for Social Change, and alternative play spaces***

Experiencing the phenomenon of fun or attentively being and becoming in a state of fun-ing is not necessarily always 'a fun explosion' as one of my participants shared. Fun-ing does not always have to be big, loud, raucous. It can be a smile to yourself. In the context of movement and game-based play, this serves as a reminder that fun can become something negative, not necessarily because of a certain level of discomfort, but rather when there is a fearful body self-consciousness, or dissonance with the type of fun being explored. Therefore, in relation to movement/sports/play-based physical learning spaces, acknowledging this may cause changes in modes of movement, such as a shift towards interoception, and/or transdisciplinary approaches. For example, the coming together of both a circus group and sports coaches was beneficial for transplanting ideas and supporting each other's collective learning during the Beirut trainings.

The word 'training' is problematic for several staff members in CAC, because it suggests a fixed beginning and end, and this is ideologically at odds with how many (including Judith Gates) understand what a learning/educational experience should be. Learning is a generative experience. In other words, it opens up possibilities, ideas, ways of being and doing, rather than something that is linear and pre-determined. This raises challenges for synchronous online learning sessions, because so often they are heavily controlled/fixed by the rigidity of clock time, more

so than a face-to-face learning space where sessions may spill over, or a side room conversation continues etc. Exploring how to facilitate fun ‘social spaces of possibility’ (Theme 5) online remains a challenge; it requires considering the mediating nature of different platforms/technological tools, and how they can interact, to facilitate flow and spontaneous conversations/activities without overly complicating the learning environment. This could mean using other platforms alongside platforms such as Zoom, including asynchronous options, as well as ways to consider bringing in materiality more substantially.

### **7.3 Limitations: ethnography, doing ‘fun’ and modelling findings**

There are three limitations (learnings) to highlight within this inquiry. The first being the limitations of ethnography as an approach, the second being the ideological stance that doing a PhD on fun should often be fun, and the third being the use of a model to summarise the findings.

I acknowledge that ethnography, as a methodology encompassing different methods (Gaggiotti et al., 2017), has limitations in relation to the data and knowledge it can surface. There are two other notable methods within an interpretivist paradigm, which would have been appropriate to play-work with to answer the research questions. These are focus groups (Finch et al., 2003) and phenomenography (Marton, 1981). Focus groups, with staff, and coaches separately, would have enabled participants to compare their understandings of issues, but ultimately it would have reflected a consensus view of staff, and of coaches respectively. Whereas phenomenography would have focused on the understanding of individual staff and coaches within the organisation, and presented an ‘experiential description’ (Marton, 1981: 180) of each individual. The online (offline) sensory ethnographic approach I applied, instead produced a greater focus on the embodied lived experiences of two defined groups (staff and coaches), whilst also acknowledging a degree of individual meaning making within these groups.

As an embodied researcher, I decided that a PhD *on* fun should strive to be a PhD that *is* often fun. Whilst there were many times that the PhD was fun, either through planning (discipline), such as designing and delivering the reflection spaces (‘Pods’)

with CAC staff, or improvised moments, such as suggesting wearing hats during online supervisions, this stance requires further consideration. For example, did I seek to create fun moments in areas of the research that came more easily to me/ were more socially acceptable? I think so. I could have pushed this embodied and ethnographic positioning further by exploring the making/doing of fun in contexts not commonly associated with fun. For example, I did not consider if/how I could make the ethics process fun.

Another limitation, in relation to presenting the findings is that the subjectivity of fun-ing means that it is highly unlikely that all participants in a learning experience will all together, always experience the same qualities/reactions. This means that the Bracketing model can only ever be a partial holding place, a fixed image, representing a phenomenon in flux. If I could have produced the model as a series of moving holograms, it would be more accurate. Furthermore, the model is limited by its association with a specific research context. I anticipate that in another educational context, certain elements may be less/more relevant, therefore it is hoped and intended that the model is adapted and further developed in other contexts, including both non-formal spaces as well as higher educational institutions.

## **7.4 Fun-ing and learning futures**

This inquiry serves as a reminder for pedagogues to 'change up' methods, and not overly rely on what has seemingly always worked, either face to face or online. The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the weaknesses, and stagnation of entrenched assumptions regarding lecture-based didactic approaches (Rapanta et al., 2020; Ucok-Sayrak and Brazelton, 2021), especially in relation to quality of experience. Where online synchronous approaches have been carefully crafted, (and I propose the Six Principles outlined in 6.4.2), and have generated opportunities for online (-offline) embodied learning and fun-ing, this has challenged assumptions regarding the quality of learning experiences, and a sleep walking into pedagogies focused on teacher centred approaches and/or learning outcomes alone.

And so, where might this inquiry go next? Well, I think and sense that there is much more play-work to do in relation to understanding fun-ing in the context of 'learning futures'. And here I mean how 'futuremaking' is enacted in the now. Using Erstad and Silseth's (2019) concept of futuremaking as drawing from the past, present and

future in the now, opens up real possibilities of embodied experiences as imprinted, present and imagined. Therefore, enacted, and embodied learning is a continuous being made and remade. In this way, futuremaking is grounded in the 'alterity of the present' (Pink, Akama and Fergusson, 2017), as a purposeful departure from the known, to consider the 'uncertainty of the sensory and emotional possibilities of what could or should happen next...rather than a distant eventuality' (p. 133).

This inquiry is intended to support the practice of both 'academics' and 'practitioners', as well as those in between, or on the edges. The intention is to connect and find synergies between the constructs of 'theory' and 'practice', or 'reflection' and 'action'. In this regard, the findings will continue to be disseminated through a variety of means beyond this thesis, which so far has included interactive talks, blogs, and a podcast. The endeavour to bridge this divide is captured using the term 'praxis' (Freire, 1972). In the educational literature, this is understood as 'reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it' (Freire, 1972: 52). Indeed, in adult education Zuber-Skerritt (2001) defines praxis as, 'the interdependence and integration – not separation – of theory and practice, research and development, thought and action' (p. 15). In youth work, White (2007) suggests praxis is 'ethical, self-aware, responsive, and accountable action. In other words, praxis involves knowing, doing and being' (p. 226). All three are relevant to this inquiry, which seeks to find points of contact and conversation between academics and practitioners alike. In the first instance, I will be writing a short, plain summary document focused on the principles and model for educational and international development practitioners, as well as discussing with CAC how the findings and implications can be used in relation to their strategic priorities. I also intend to examine if/how the model and principles can be used in other movement/art-based contexts.

Fun alone is not the panacea for all the educational ills there are, but an intentional focus on fun-ing, as alternatives to being and becoming, in relation to embodied learning enables a reconnection with aspects of our humanness that are often cut away, by outdated and/or unchallenged ways of learning and teaching. If we (practitioners and theorists alike) don't start by asking what the purpose of learning in any specific context is, then many assumptions about how best to learn, remain unchallenged. If learning is intentionally aimed at personal, and social change,

focused on being well, fulfilled and uplifted as the ‘individual and the undivided’ (Ingold, 2000), then considering how to catalyse being in a state of fun-ing, with embodied learning, offers a *seriously* novel way to expand qualities of any learning experience. Opportunities to create qualities attuned with other types of knowing – bodily, tacit, and intuitive.

The involvement of the ‘whole person’ (or body-mind-material-social) in the process of futuremaking, a praxis of speculative ways of knowing, focused on sensory and felt ways of knowing, destabilises the overemphasis on seeking the truth. Rather the intention of this embodied interpretivist inquiry is in the noticing and truth-making of a fuller ‘range of our qualities of apprehension, understanding, [and] interpretation’ (Smith, 2016: 275). In this way, the attentiveness of learning through the sensorium (Ellingson, 2017; Leigh and Brown, 2021), a complex web of touch, or sound, intuitive feeling, or group affects, can all be explored in ways not yet conceived of. All in the pursuit of co-constructing learning activities as ‘actual resources for futuremaking and educational trajectories’ (Erstad and Silseth, 2019: 320) i.e., striving towards being present with the unknown. This aligns with Anjaria et al.’s (2020) conceptualisation of *mazaa*, as an openness to a politics neither ‘inevitable nor foreseeable [and] ... the ways in which the sensuous and the pleasurable appear in our lives, not just to reflect or challenge the status quo, but to generate worlds as well’ (Anjaria et al., 2020: 234). Fun-ing reminds us that by intentionally moving feeling-thoughts towards the unexpected/unfamiliar – *prescencing*, we can eventually change our physical realities.

Fun is at its heart, the cleanest, the clearest way for me to

inhabit a space.

We all identify something different in it, that's the self

where you make it

imagination, movement, improvisation

honouring the self in the other person:

we do that together.

Fun-ing, as a verb and noun, is an embodied socio-cultural phenomenon. It is an experience of inter and intra body-mind-material states, as well as the expressive interpretation of these mediated states (within specific space-times). In today's world, being in a state of fun-ing whilst learning, can seem like a radical or peculiar act. However, such a dwelling with the imaginary texture of the real – can provoke an authentically alternative way of being; an attentiveness to celebrating being alive. Fun-ing is not something to be dismissed or trivialised. Dwelling with fun-ing is a sensorial noticing of the unexpected and familiar, differences and similarities at the same felt time: an 'honouring the self in the other person'. Fun-embodied-learning (fun-ing), not only provokes a shift in thoughts/actions, through a socio-cultural-material becoming, but it reminds us to *seriously* choose, how to be alive.



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## Appendix 1 – From Chance to Choice Philosophy

The second pillar of the CAC educational approach draws on Judith Gates's work. She is currently the educational advisor to CAC. Her doctoral thesis was submitted in 1995, and in it she develops a hermeneutic personal developmental theory called from 'Chance to Choice'. This work draws on theorists such as Bruner's (1990) 'Acts of Meaning' and Gadamer's (1975) 'Truth and Method'. Her career includes being a head teacher for a primary school, a school inspector in England and a visiting fellow at Harvard University. In discussion with her son in 2008, CAC founder Nick Gates, they envisaged a guiding framework for Nick's ambitions to develop a sport for social impact/change project. Just as she could see a developmental trajectory in her own development as a learner in the work of her thesis, together they could also imagine a personal and social developmental trajectory for learners using Sport for Social Change, which follows a progression towards 'Choice' and 'Self-Directed Learning' (Gates and Suskiewicz, 2017).

This progression is shown in Figure 1 (p.422) of Gates and Suskiewicz's (2017) article 'Soccer changes lives: from learned helplessness to self-directed learners', in *Soccer and Society*, 18(2–3). The figure shows a V shape starting from Chance at the bottom of the 'V' working through Conformity, Conflict, Certainty, Contradictions, Challenge, and up to Choice at the top. The left of the 'V' is associated with learners. This is shown in the bottom left corner with the text, 'Learned Helplessness as dependent, status quo, vulnerable and unquestioning, outside of the 'V' shape. In the bottom right, outside of the 'V' shape, associated with educators is the text 'Educator Controlled', understood as authoritative, memorisation, supervisory and domination. After certainty in the V shape is a horizontal dashed line, and above this is the question 'Is there a better way?'. The figure suggests that both learners and educators can experience the seven types of personal and/or social change.

## Appendix 2 – Example methodical search

No.	Date	Database	Keywords	No. of results	Notes
1	11/11/21	Scopus	sports AND fun AND learning AND movement	207	Refined by only selecting articles from Social Sciences and Arts & Humanities (excluding Computer Science, Economics etc)
				Refined to 15	2011-2021 Excluded Sports sciences articles
				Refined to 5	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The (mis)alignment between young people’s collective physical activity experience and physical education curriculum development in Ireland</li> <li>2. Students’ views on the purpose of physical education in upper secondary school. Physical education as a break in everyday school life—learning or just fun?</li> <li>3. More than Fun and Games: Cell 16, Female Liberation, and Physical Competence, or Why Sport Matters</li> <li>4. Developing a game and learning-centred flexible teaching model for transforming play</li> <li>5. Exploring 'what' to learn in physical education</li> </ol>
2	12/11/21	Scopus	self-directed AND learning AND play AND fun	2	Not relevant: surgical research and interactive music creation
3	12/11/21	Scopus	learning AND play AND fun AND sports	26	2011-2021
				6	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Children's experiences of fun and enjoyment during a season of sport education</li> <li>2. Young athletes and their coaches: disciplinary processes and habitus development</li> <li>3. New teaching methods in sports engineering; how to speed-up learning while having fun!</li> <li>4. Meanings of a sport social project: A study from the perspective of professionals, parents, children, and adolescents</li> <li>5. 'PE should be an integral part of each school day': parents'</li> </ol>

					and their children's attitudes towards primary physical education 6. Developing a game and learning-centred flexible teaching model for transforming play
4	12/11/21	Scopus	"non-formal" AND learning AND fun AND embodiment	0	
5	12/11/21	Scopus	online AND play AND fun AND ethnography	1	Not relevant: The fun culture in seniors' online communities
6	12/11/21	Scopus	"Sport for social change" AND play OR fun AND embodiment	0	
7			leisure AND fun AND movement AND online	1	Promoting physical activity in children through family-based intervention: Protocol of the "Active 1 + FUN" randomized controlled trial
8			football AND fun AND learning	15	2008-2021
9				5	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. "to mean something to someone": Sport-for-development as a lever for social inclusion</li> <li>2. Perceived importance of the fun integration theory's factors and determinants: A comparison among players, parents, and coaches</li> <li>3. The meaning of football in physical education classes</li> <li>4. Combat versus team sports: The effects of gender in a climate of peer-motivation, and levels of fun and violence in physical education students</li> <li>5. The contribution of structured activity and deliberate play to the development of expert perceptual and decision-making skill</li> </ol>

## Appendix 3 – Consent forms

There were five different consent forms used during the inquiry during different phases. These were: Staff Phase 1, Staff Phase 2, Coaches Phase 2, Lebanon training participants Phase 3, and Photo consent Phase 3. Below I present two as examples: Staff Phase 1 and Lebanon training participants Phase 3.

### Information sheet for staff at Coaches Across Continents

#### Phase 1

As part of the first phase of research, as you may already know, I have been invited to interview several staff members across CAC (later phases will involve engaging more widely with partners, coaches, and young participants). This will provide an initial insight into a) organisational practices b) understanding how fun is conceptualised and used in the organisation in non-formal learning processes c) an opportunity for you to take a step back from your day-to-day work and reflect upon ‘why fun matters?’

To do this I hope to carry out one to one semi structured skype interviews. It is typical in research to offer de-identification of data and confidentiality to participants, but as you have a specific role in CAC, and as this project focuses on CAC, it is likely that your contributions will be identifiable in any written materials, reports and academic articles that result from this study. Please weigh this when considering your contribution and participation in the study.

The interview is likely to take up to 90 minutes, and we can schedule convenient times directly via messaging on your workspace platform. I will then send a skype meeting invite to block the agreed time in your calendar. I may require shorter follow up skypes later in the year to develop or clarify any responses.

As you are central management level staff, of a small organisation, as mentioned, I think your quotes may be identifiable by some readers of the outcome of the research. Please bare this in mind as you decide if and how you want to participate. I will start to use and merge information that I gather from the interview transcripts after one week from your interview date. Therefore, information cannot be excluded from analysis exactly one week after your interview. Please also be aware that anyone whom you mention during the interview will not be directly named in a research publication/ outcome. Instead, I will use broader social markers such as age, gender, and nationality.



If at any point you change your mind and don't want to take part anymore in the skype interview you can stop. There will be no adverse consequences. The deadline for changing your mind and wanting to retract data is one week after the interview takes place.

To facilitate the interview, I plan to audio-record it with your agreement. This will enable me to come back to the responses at a later phase in the study and compare responses, but also understand which questions were harder to respond to, more interesting for you etc. Please indicate if I may record the skype interview on your consent form. The interviews will be typed out and stored.

The data will be used for research and educational purposes. I will archive the research data at least 10 years after the end of the project (de-identified where possible), so that this remains available to the wider research community.

**Please read, tick (as appropriate), sign, scan and return** the attached consent form.

In addition, I have attached the types of questions we will cover – so you have an idea in advance.

Please get back to me if you have any questions.

---

**Contact details:**

*Sarah Huxley*

*PhD researcher*

*Faculty of Wellbeing, Education and Language Studies*

*The Open University*

Email: [sarah.huxley@open.ac.uk](mailto:sarah.huxley@open.ac.uk)

**A contact for someone who is outside the project, in case you wish to raise any issues or concerns:**

*Jan Draper, Professor of Nursing, Director Postgraduate Studies*

*Faculty of Wellbeing, Education and Language Studies*

*The Open University*

Email: [Jan.Draper@open.ac.uk](mailto:Jan.Draper@open.ac.uk)

## The Role of Fun in Learning: A Collaborative Research Project between Coaches Across Continents and the Open University

### Consent form for staff

Your name:

Please return this form by Thursday 12 December.

I have read the information about this project. I understand and agree that Sarah Huxley, a PhD researcher with The Open University has my consent in the following areas...

- I am happy to take part in a skype interview lasting up to 90 minutes.
- I am happy for the skype interviews to be audio recorded.
- If I change my mind about taking part, I understand I can stop at any point during the interview, and that I have one week after the interview to retract any information provided. There will be no adverse consequences for not taking part.
- The interview transcripts will be confidential.
- I understand that *my views are likely to be identifiable* in subsequent written reports, academic articles, and presentations, given the specific nature of my management/ senior staff level role in a small organisation. I understand that they won't be anonymised.
- I consent for my quotes to be used in reports, articles, blogs, and presentations.
- Transcripts of the interviews will be stored on a password-protected computer on OneDrive.
- I would like to receive a copy of the interview transcript. I will email [sarah.huxley@open.ac.uk](mailto:sarah.huxley@open.ac.uk) within 3 weeks of conducting the interview to request the transcript. I understand my email address will be stored on a password protected computer and OU email account and will be deleted on completion of the PhD research.
- I understand that the names of other colleagues or young people will not be included in transcripts (if I provide example case studies/stories to illustrate my inputs). They will only be identifiable via their gender, age, and nationality.
- I understand the data will not be archived for at least 10 years.



Signed

Name (please print)

Date

---

**If you have any questions, please ask!**

**Contact details:**

*Sarah Huxley*

*PhD researcher*

*Faculty of Wellbeing, Education and Language Studies*

*The Open University*

Email: [sarah.huxley@open.ac.uk](mailto:sarah.huxley@open.ac.uk)

**A contact for someone who is outside the project, in case you wish to raise any issues or concerns:**

*Jan Draper, Professor of Nursing, Director Postgraduate Studies*

*Faculty of Wellbeing, Education and Language Studies*

*The Open University*

Email: [Jan.Draper@open.ac.uk](mailto:Jan.Draper@open.ac.uk)

This project has been reviewed by, and received a favourable opinion from, The Open University Human Research Ethics Committee, reference HREC/3396/Huxley.

## Information sheet for wider participants of the online trainings

### Phase 3

Greetings! I am a PhD researcher based at the Open University in the UK. I am exploring the learning and playful approaches of Coaches Across Continents (CAC) in relation to their staff and some of the coaches they work with. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, my research has now shifted entirely online!

As an ethnographer, I am now planning to **observe the three coaches** who will be facilitating your online training sessions starting in December 2020. I will also be noting down my own experiences of the training.

I would like to audio record the online sessions, in order to use this as my own personal (confidential) memory tool. I will delete the audio recordings from my personal audio recorder on completion of writing the transcripts of the sessions. There is no obligation/pressure whatsoever to agree to the audio recording(s), and there will be no negative consequences if you do not wish to give consent to the session(s) being audio-recorded. This will not affect your training in any way.

I would like to transcribe the audio recordings with your (trainee) contributions omitted, **except** for when your action/conversation relates to a coach laughing, such as where the group are enjoying themselves. In which case, I will record the specific event in the transcript, and use a pseudonym for you. This will enable me to destroy the audios swiftly once I have completed the transcripts.

It is possible that your comment/action in an online session (as it relates to laughter) may be written about in a future publication, or presentation, in which case I would refer to you as part of the specific event, again using a pseudonym for your data.

If for any reason, you change your mind and do not want me to use this anonymised information at all, you can request that it is withdrawn, and email me within two weeks after a session to do so.

**If you are happy for the recording to occur then please read, tick, sign, scan and return** the attached consent form. If you are unable to scan these forms, a photo from your smartphone of the ticked and signed form will suffice. Thank you so much!

---

## Consent form for wider participants in online trainings

**Your name:**

Please return this form by **6 December** to Sarah at: [sarah.huxley@open.ac.uk](mailto:sarah.huxley@open.ac.uk)

**I have read the information about this project. I understand and agree that Sarah Huxley, a PhD researcher with The Open University has my consent in the following areas...**

- I am happy for Sarah to join the online trainings being organised by Arcencial and Coaches Across Continents.
- I understand her research is focused on the three coaches. She will only collect my personal data in relation to an event that makes a coach laugh, and then I understand this data will be anonymised.
- I am happy for the online trainings that I am apart of to be audio recorded, for the sole purpose of being a tool for Sarah to write subsequent transcripts from.
- I understand Sarah will destroy the audio recordings once the transcripts are written, and that any reference to myself in the transcript, or future possible publication/presentations will refer to my data through the use of a pseudonym.
- If I change my mind about the audio recording, I understand I can request that it is stopped at any point during the online training(s). There will be no adverse consequences for requesting this.
- If I change my mind about the use of my anonymised data, I understand I have up to two weeks to request that it is deleted.
- I understand Sarah will store the transcripts in her university password protected OneDrive folder and delete these group audio recordings once she has completed writing her transcripts.

Signed

Name (please print)

Date

---

**If you have any questions, please ask!**

**Contact details:**

*Sarah Huxley*

*PhD researcher*

*Faculty of Wellbeing, Education and Language Studies*

*The Open University*

Email: [sarah.huxley@open.ac.uk](mailto:sarah.huxley@open.ac.uk)

**A contact for someone who is outside the project, in case you wish to raise any issues or concerns:**

*Inma Alvarez, Director Postgraduate Studies*

*Faculty of Wellbeing, Education and Language Studies*

*The Open University*

*Email: [Inma.Alvarez@open.ac.uk](mailto:Inma.Alvarez@open.ac.uk)*

This project has been reviewed by, and received a favourable opinion from, The Open University Human Research Ethics Committee, reference HREC/3396/Huxley.

## ورقة معلومات للمشاركين في الدورات التدريبية عبر الإنترنت

مرحبًا! أنا باحثة في الدكتوراه في الجامعة المفتوحة في المملكة المتحدة. أبحث في الأساليب التعليمية والمرحة التي يلجأ إليها المدربون عبر القارات مع الطاقم والمدربين الذين يعملون مهم. وبسبب جائحة كورونا، يتم بحثي تمامًا عبر الإنترنت!

بصفتي خبيرة في الأثنوجرافيا (وصف الأعراق البشرية)، سوف أراقب المدربين الثلاثة الذين سيسهّلون محاضراتكم في الدورة التدريبية التي تقام عبر الإنترنت ابتداءً من كانون الأول من عام 2020. إضافة إلى ذلك، سوف أدون خبراتي الشخصية في الدورة.

أريد تسجيل المحاضرات التي تقام عبر الإنترنت صوتيًا من أجل استخدامها كاستذكار (سري). سوف أذف التسجيلات الصوتية من مسجلي الصوتي عند انتهائي من كتابة نصوص المحاضرات. لستم مجبورين أبدًا على الموافقة على التسجيلات الصوتية، ولن تواجهوا أي نتائج سلبية في حال رفضتم تسجيل المحاضرات صوتيًا. فلن يؤثر ذلك أبدًا على تدريبيكم.

سأكتب نصوص التسجيلات الصوتية من دون أن أشمل مساهماتكم (المشاركين)، **باستثناء** عندما يؤدي حديثكم إلى ضحك المدرب مثلاً عندما يكون الأفراد في المجموعة التدريبية يمزحون أو يمزحون مع بعضهم. ففي هذه الحال، سأدوّن الحدث هذا في النص وأستخدم أسماء مستعارة لكم. وسأُلف التسجيلات الصوتية بسرعة عند انتهائي من كتابة النصوص.

من الممكن أن أكتب عن تعليقكم أو فعلكم (المتعلقة بالضحك)، أثناء محاضرة تُقام عبر الإنترنت، في منشورة أو عرض مستقبلي. وفي هذه الحال، سأشير إليكم مجدداً وأستخدم اسمًا مستعارًا لنشر بياناتكم.

إذا في أي حال، قررتوا تغيير رأيكم وأن ترفضوا تمامًا استخدامي لهذه المعلومات مجهولة المصدر، يمكنكم طلب سحبها عبر بريد إلكتروني موجّه لي خلال أسبوعين بعد انتهاء محاضرة.

إذا توافقون على التسجيل، الرجاء وضع علامة وتوقيع ومسح وإعادة استمارة الموافقة المرفقة ربطًا. في حال عدم قدرتكم على مسح الاستمارات هذه، قوموا بتصوير الاستمارة الموقّعة مع العلامات عليها عبر الهاتف الذكي. شكرًا جزيلاً!

## استمارة الموافقة للمشاركين في الدورات التدريبية عبر الإنترنت

الاسم: ....

الرجاء إعادة الاستمارة قبل 6 كانون الأول/ديسمبر إلى بريد ساره الإلكتروني:

[sarah.huxley@open.ac.uk](mailto:sarah.huxley@open.ac.uk)

لقد قرأت المعلومات عن هذا المشروع وأفهم وأوافق على التالي بما يخص الباحثة في الدكتوراه مع الجامعة المفتوحة ساره هكسلي:

- أوافق على انضمام ساره إلى الدورات التدريبية التي تقام عبر الإنترنت والمنظمة من قبل أرسنيال والمدربين عبر القارات.
- أفهم أن بحثها يركز على ثلاثة مدربين. سوف تجمع فقط بياناتي الشخصية المتعلقة بحدث يُضحك أحد المدربين وأنّ البيانات ستكون مجهولة المصدر.
- أوافق على التسجيل الصوتي للدورات التدريبية التي تقام عبر الإنترنت والتي أشرك فيها، فقط لهدف كونها أداة تساعد ساره على كتابة النصوص.
- أفهم أنّ ساره ستُتلف التسجيلات الصوتية بعد كتابة النصوص وأنّ أي إشارة لي في النص أو في منشورات أو أعراض مستقبلية تتم عبر استخدام اسمًا مستعارًا.
- في حال غيرت رأيي بما يخص التسجيلات الصوتية، أفهم أنّ يمكنني طلب توقيفها في أي وقت أثناء الدورة التدريبية عبر الإنترنت، وأن لن يؤدي ذلك إلى أي نتائج سلبية.
- في حال غيرت رأيي بما يخص بياناتي مجهولة المصدر، أفهم أنّ يمكنني طلب مسحها في خلال مدة أقصاها أسبوعين.
- أفهم أنّ ساره ستخزن النصوص في ملفها ال"ون درايف" المحمي بكلمة سر وأنها ستمسح التسجيلات الصوتية الجماعية عند انتهائها من كتابة نصوصها.

التوقيع

الاسم (الرجاء الطباعة) التاريخ

لا تترددوا في التواصل بي في حال لديكم أي سؤال!

تفاصيل الاتصال:

ساره هكسلي

باحثة في الدكتوراه

كلية الرفاه والتربية والدراسات اللغوية

الجامعة المفتوحة



بريد إلكتروني: [sarah.huxley@open.ac.uk](mailto:sarah.huxley@open.ac.uk)

للاتصال بشخص خارج عن المشروع في حال أردتم إثارة مسألة أو قلق ما:

إنما ألفاريز، مديرة الدراسات العليا

كلية الرفاه والتربية والدراسات اللغوية

الجامعة المفتوحة

بريد إلكتروني: [Inma.Alvarez@open.ac.uk](mailto:Inma.Alvarez@open.ac.uk)

لقد تمّت مراجعة وموافقة المشروع من قبل لجنة أخلاقيات البحث الإنسانية في الجامعة المفتوحة،  
المصدر. HREC/3396/Huxley.

## Appendix 4 – Extract from the Data Management Plan

1. High level description of the objectives of the project or business activity, and the proposed processing of personal data. This description could draw on existing Project Initiation Documents or business cases.

My PhD research focuses on a rigorous examination and theorisation of fun, and its relationship to staff and coaches learning. The hypothesis is that fun matters, but that it is, as yet an undervalued and misunderstood integral component of learning and development. The research will therefore examine how fun is constructed within the activities of one organisation, Coaches Across Continents.

For some organisations ‘having fun’ takes a central, serious role in learning models. This includes Coaches Across Continents (CAC) an NGO that works in over 60 countries via a global collaboration with communities, corporations, and foundations. It has developed the Purposeful Play and Education Outside the Classroom methodologies that aim to contribute towards the UN Sustainable Development Goals. In essence, CAC aim to facilitate learning (and personal and collective change) via ‘fun’ processes through non-competitive soccer-related games.

My research is a [sensory and embodied ethnography](#) and therefore it requires access to data as rich as possible i.e., both verbal and nonverbal communication. For this reason, I have used a handheld audio recording device, and video conferencing software. I have used software that is accessible to my research participants (Skype for Business or Skype), and that they are already familiar with.

This research is focused on the staff that are employed by CAC, who are based all over the world, as well as a selection of their partner coaches. They predominately come from NGOs or Community Based Organisations in countries in the Global South such as Tanzania, the Philippines as well as Scotland.

The **first phase** of data collection focused on **interviewing staff members of CAC**. The processing of this data is 8 Skype interview transcripts stored on the OU OneDrive system via my personal account. Audio and video recordings (Skype for Business/Skype) of these interviews are also stored in my personal OU OneDrive account.

The **second phase** of data collection focused on **interviews with 9 coaches**. The processing of this data is 9 Skype interview transcripts stored in my OU OneDrive account. In addition, audio and video conferencing recordings of these meetings, plus subsequent **staff and/or coaches’ online meetings together**, are also stored in OneDrive.

The **final phase (3)** focused on **four online Zoom trainings**. These sessions were audio recorded by me (with all participants permission), and the CAC staff member running these sessions also shared her Zoom recordings with me. Photos were elicited prior to the 4 online trainings and are stored in my OneDrive account. In addition, audio recordings and Skype for Business/Skype recordings of online meetings throughout phase 3 are stored in OneDrive. Draft transcripts have been made of these four sessions and stored in OneDrive. The audio and video recordings will be deleted when transcripts are finalised.

Is a DPIA necessary?	Yes, because it will involve profiling and combining data sources.
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## Appendix 5 - Log of all online meetings and activities

No.	Date	Skype/ Zoom	Type of meeting	No.	Date	Skype/ Zoom	Type of meeting	No.	Date	Skype/ Zoom	Type of meeting
1	24/01/2020	Skype	SSPIntro	23	13/08/2020	Skype	General	45	08/12/2020	Zoom	End of Year meeting
2	27/01/2020	Skype	M&E	24	13/08/2020	Skype	CIC check in - India	46	08/12/2020	Skype	Post session interview (1)
3	27/01/2020	Skype	Instruct	25	01/09/2020	Skype	Autumn plans	47	08/12/2020	Skype	Post session interview (2)
4	11/03/2020	Skype	Pod 1	26	01/09/2020	Skype	Pod 2	48	08/12/2020	Skype	Post session interview (3)
5	11/03/2020	Skype	Coronavirus response	27	02/09/2020	Skype	Lebanon Planning (1)	49	09/12/2020	Zoom	End of Year meeting
6	16/03/2020	Skype	Aside to Pod1 (a)	28	01/09/2020	Webinar	Aurora	50	10/12/2020	Zoom	Beirut training (2)
7	18/03/2020	Skype	Nick - check in	29	03/09/2020	Skype	Ladies call	51	10/12/2020	Zoom	End of Year meeting
8	09/04/2020	Zoom	Coronavirus response	30	10/09/2020	Skype	Whole team - staff meeting	52	11/12/2020	Skype	Post session interview (1)
9	17/04/2020	Skype	Aside to pod 1 (b)	31	16/09/2020	Zoom	Asia CICs catch up	53	11/12/2020	Skype	Post session interview (2)
10	05/05/2020	Skype	Strategy during Covid	32	16/09/2020	Skype	Cuthbert catch up	54	11/12/2020	Skype	Post session interview (3)
11	12/05/2020	Skype	Adapting to Covid	33	17/09/2020	Skype	Ladies call	55	04/01/2021	Skype	Cuthbert catch up
12	18/05/2020	Skype	Fun and conflict	34	29/09/2020	Skype	Staff Meeting - branding as CL17 and CAC	56	05/01/2021	Zoom	Beirut training (3)
13	19/05/2020	Skype	COVID strategy	35	30/09/2020	Zoom	Aurora - 2	57	06/01/2021	skype	Post session interview (1)
14	20/05/2020	Skype	Nick - coaches selection strategy	36	03/10/2020	Skype	Lebanon Planning (2)	58	06/01/2021	skype	Post session interview (2)
15	26/05/2020	Skype	COVID strategy	37	29/10/2020	Skype	Staff meeting - 2020 annual report	59	06/01/2021	skype	Post session interview (3)
16	11/06/2020	Skype	Coaches	38	05/11/2020	Skype	Ladies call	60	07/01/2021	zoom	Beirut training (4)
17	18/06/2020	Skype	Impact	39	11/11/2020	Skype	Lebanon Planning (3)	61	08/01/2021	skype	Post session interview (1)
18	23/06/2020	Skype	Staff	40	19/11/2020	Skype	Ladies call	62	08/01/2021	skype	Post session interview (2)
19	25/06/2020	Skype	Call to discuss ROTA global citizens bid	41	24/11/2020	Skype	Catch Up with Katie regarding Lebanon	63	08/01/2021	skype	Post session interview (3)
20	01/07/2020	Skype	Empower prep	42	04/12/2020	Skype	Lebanon Planning (4)	64	16/02/2021	Skype	Pod (3)
21	21/07/2020	Skype	Whole team - Civics presentation	43	07/12/2020	Zoom	Beirut training (1)	65	23/02/2021	Zoom	Staff Meeting
22	10/08/2020	Skype	Staff meeting -Cancel culture	44	07/12/2020	Zoom	End of Year meeting				

# Appendix 6 – Staff guiding questions

## Introductions

- Explain who I am and intentions of the skype interview (PhD student, beginning/first phase of research partnership)
- Explain it's the start of a process of working together on understanding the role of fun in CAC's work
- Responses will be stored on the OU's password protected OneDrive online data storage system
- Explain although the interviews themselves are confidential, that contributions cannot be fully de identified, given their roles in a small organisation.
- Check consent form is completed/submitted
- Any questions before we begin?

## Organisational: Background/situating roles within CAC

1. How did you come to be a part of CAC?
2. What is your role in CAC?

## Learning, fun and play

3. Are there similarities between learning and fun? If so, what? What are the differences?
4. Why is education outside the classroom important?
5. What are the main stages of the CAC Purposeful Play methodology?
6. How do you describe what fun is? How do you define it?
7. What synonyms might you use on the pitch to create an environment conducive to 'having fun'?
8. Does fun matter? Why?

## Successes and challenges

9. What have been the biggest successes of using fun in learning processes in CAC? Any specific examples?
10. What have been the biggest challenges of using fun in learning processes in CAC? Any examples?
11. How is Purposeful Play/fun embedded in the organisational culture?
12. What principles do you think I should consider to help decide which countries/partners to work with? Why?

## Open question and reading materials

13. Anything else you would like to share at this stage? Internal reading materials i.e. training manuals, Purposeful Play curriculum etc? Any concerns to flag at this point?

## Give thanks and explain next steps.

# Appendix 7 – Coaches guiding questions

## Introductions

- Explain who I am and intentions of the skype interview (PhD student, beginning the second phase of research with CAC and now its wider community)
- Explain the research is focused on understanding the role of fun in CAC's work
- Note that responses will be stored on the OU's password protected OneDrive online data storage system
- Explain although the interviews themselves will remain confidential, that any contributions a participant makes cannot be fully de-identified, given the small nature of the study and the number of coaches affiliated to CAC.
- Check consent form is completed and submitted
- Any questions? **Let's begin...**

## Establishing roles: in partner organisation and with CAC

1. Please tell me about how you came to work/ volunteer with CAC?
2. What is your role in your own organisation/group?
3. What is your role currently with CAC?

## Understanding learning, fun, and play

4. What is the role of a 'coach'?
5. What does 'education outside the classroom' mean to you? Is it important? If, so why?
6. What would you do on the pitch to create an environment that enables 'having fun'?
7. What type of learning is important to you? What values underpin how you think the learning process should happen?
8. What do you understand to be the similarities or differences between learning and fun?
9. How do you describe what fun is? What ingredients does it consist of?
10. In your own language what is the word for fun? What does that mean?
11. Does fun relate to play, if so, how?
12. Does fun matter to you, if so, why?

## Successes and challenges

13. What have been the biggest successes of using fun through learning in the work you do with CAC resources? Any specific examples?
14. What have been the biggest challenges of using fun through learning in the work you do with CAC resources? Any examples?

## Open question

15. Anything else you would like to share at this stage with me?

**Many thanks and explain follow up steps.**

## Appendix 8 – Transcription choices (continued)

	Framework – Questions 3-5	Approach taken	Justification
3.	How will 'talk' be selected, in what ways, and for what purpose?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Units of talk structured into sentences and paragraphs (or question responses) directly connected to the word 'fun' will be selected in preparation for a thematic analysis.</li> <li>The transcript is not verbatim; some of the interviews went beyond the scope of the primary research question.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The research question is focused on the concept of 'fun', and 'learning', therefore finding utterances explicitly using the concept 'fun' is the logical way to begin a thematic analysis.</li> <li>For the purpose of focusing on meanings of fun, a verbatim transcript including all the details with regard to rapport building at the start and end of the interviews; for example, relating to field trips was not necessary.</li> </ul>
4.	What is represented in the transcript? What level of contextual information will be provided, so that 'readers' may 'hear' or 'see' the researcher's interpretive processes? What is invisible within the transcript that may need to be articulated?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The transcript will include: an introduction stipulating, who, what, where, how long, and how (online/face to face) the semi-structured interview took place.</li> <li>If there are any significant and pointedly made (affect intonations) non-verbal actions, these will be recorded in brackets.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The 'setting the scene' re-presentation by the analyst provides useful contextual information, which will be reflected upon in terms of how interviews may/ may not be used depending on the research purposes going forward in the study.</li> <li>Non-verbal actions - the justification is the same as in the first core question.</li> </ul>
5.	How will persons and their talk and related actions be represented in the transcript? How are other notes, audio being used?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Punctuation will be used to show pauses, breaks in a train of thought and impact statements.</li> <li>Keep word forms, the form of commentaries, and the use of punctuation as close as possible to what is typically acceptable in written text.</li> <li>The interviews were conducted over Skype and recorded on an audio recorder primarily, and via Skype as a backup. Primary data collection was from the audio.</li> <li>Two types of recording were useful: in one interview the audio recorder stopped working and so the analyst relied on the video material, in another interview the video recording failed and so reliance was on audio only.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Punctuation provides a tool for exploring meaning via emphasis, reflection and so forth. This wasn't granularly coded, because it was the overall sense/affect i.e., a noticeable pause in an utterance was noted as [pause] in the text.</li> <li>In order to allow a freer flow of discussion, the analyst didn't record many notes as the interview was in process. This enabled a more 'natural' type of conversation. As these were first time encounters this enabled rapport to be established.</li> <li>Some participants chose to have a video Skype, rather than just audio – this was their personal/cultural/organisational preference.</li> <li>Word dictate was used and edited in most transcripts.</li> </ul>

## Appendix 9 – Pod example slides

### The Reflection Pod (2)

- A 'pod' is:
  - an elongated seed vessel of a leguminous plant such as the pea
- Safe space for reflection, growing and learning



### In the Pod today...

1. Update
  - recap on phases
  - CICs working with
  - approach and method
2. Fun and 'engagement' online – what approaches are you encouraging? What approaches are CICs using?
3. Open space – any reflections on fun or process so far to share?
4. Plans – Edinburgh visit

## Appendix 10 – Request to capture images

It was great to catch up with you all last week, and to meet Celia,

It's exciting to learn that the project is now externally funded by UNFPA. In relation to this research, I don't think this should impact it in any way. As an independent researcher, conducting this research with CAC and CICs, I think in terms of good practice, what this practically means is: a) informing them that I exist and b) I will have an interest to share any blogs/publications etc. with them that relate to the online trainings in due course. It is also likely that my final thesis will refer to learning approaches in online training spaces, so that could be of interest to them, and also shared. The findings will be an added bonus for them.

Now that we are using zoom, I have reflected (and discussed with a supervisor) how it's best to position myself. Given that there will be break out groups, we think it's best that I go back to focusing on being an *observer* of the three of you. My research questions focus on 'staff and coaches', so I have bounded the research in this way. This also acknowledges, Rose your suggestion to tread lightly. This would practically mean that:

- I have my camera on so everyone can see me as the 'visible' researcher
- I ideally can see the three of you throughout the zoom session
- During break out groups, I would 'stay' with you in the main space (rather than go into break out groups as a participant)
- During the introductions I would be clear to say the following:
  - Thank them for reading and completing a concise info and consent form [Rose this I will send to you to coordinate – including translation and gathering back]
  - Remind them I am a PhD researcher with the Open University, UK exploring the learning and playful approaches of CAC
  - In these online sessions I will be observing the 3 coaches, and noting down my own experiences of the training
  - In my notes, nothing will be directly identifiable to them [i.e. I am *not* gathering any personal info on them]
  - Remind them I plan to audio record, in order to use this as my own confidential memory tool
  - If anyone has any questions/ concerns please ask
  - Looking forward to this shared experience.

My research and methods are focused on the online trainings and you three, therefore the invitation to extend out, into the other 'on the ground' parts of the whole project, or with the trauma expert, whilst very thoughtful, goes beyond my remit.

Thank you to each of you for agreeing to:

1. Take photos (when the participants are in the break out sessions) on your smartphones of the setting and context i.e. your immediate surroundings and computer that you are joining from. This would give me a sense of the physical space that you are engaging with during the online training.
2. A one to one skype interview (ideally the next day) after each session.

I hope this clarifies some of the aspects we started to discuss, and makes sense. I am always here to talk through any aspects further.

Thank you all for your support, and I am super looking forward to it!

Very best,

Sarah



## Appendix 11 - Extracts from an initial annotated transcript using Quirkos

S: OK great so moving on we talked really briefly in London around the fact that CAC started with soccer and then other play based games, and then you mentioned some countries have been doing things a bit wider with arts and other creative forms, tell me a bit about that.

K: Yes, so I know when I came in it was very soccer, football and then partners, so what's cool, what happens at CAC is that at our trainings we encourage all of our partners to invite anyone from the community who could find value in what we are offering. You never know someone shows up and all of a sudden, it's like this is amazing, I have never seen anything like it. I want to start something, or I could use this in my program. I remember in Peru my first full year working in 2014, we had 50 participants and I would say about half were football, and the other half were all sorts of other stuff. Wow this is a new challenge for me, but what I realised is these are just the same games, because we all have to just stop and ask how would you adapt this to your activity? We had martial arts and rugby, basketball, we probably didn't have rugby in Peru, but we have had a lot of rugby elsewhere. Now we had a chess teacher (I didn't speak Spanish at the time) which was hilarious, because in every pause and every water break, he would come up to me and speak Spanish, and I would have the translator help me, and he would just tell me how excited he was to do like cross training for his chess students: so to get them physically active and their brains engaged before going back to the chess table. This was so cool I've never seen anything like that! What we realised is yes there are ball-based games, and there's a lot of our activities that don't even have a ball and can be adapted to without a ball, and its physical movement, its playful it's for everybody. We can adapt to people who have more limited movement whether it's chosen, or that's their situation. Now I feel comfortable, someone can tell me tomorrow a sport that I've never seen in my life, and I am yeah like yeah let's do it, because its physical movement, its playful, it's for everybody you know. Because of my experience I know that I don't have to be an expert in anything to be able to do this job, and that's the coolest part, is that my role, if I'm doing it well, it should be so minimal that it is like if they know how to play then I can teach them an initial structure of some fun activities, and then they insert their knowledge about sport. What we do is so not competitive sport related that being the most technically skilled football player is not important. I have knowledge about technical football and ability, but I rarely have ever used that in CAC.

S: Interesting, and now I believe you are leading the impact silo what does that mean for

The screenshot displays a vertical list of text segments from a transcript, each with a title, author, and a 'Reply' button. The segments are:

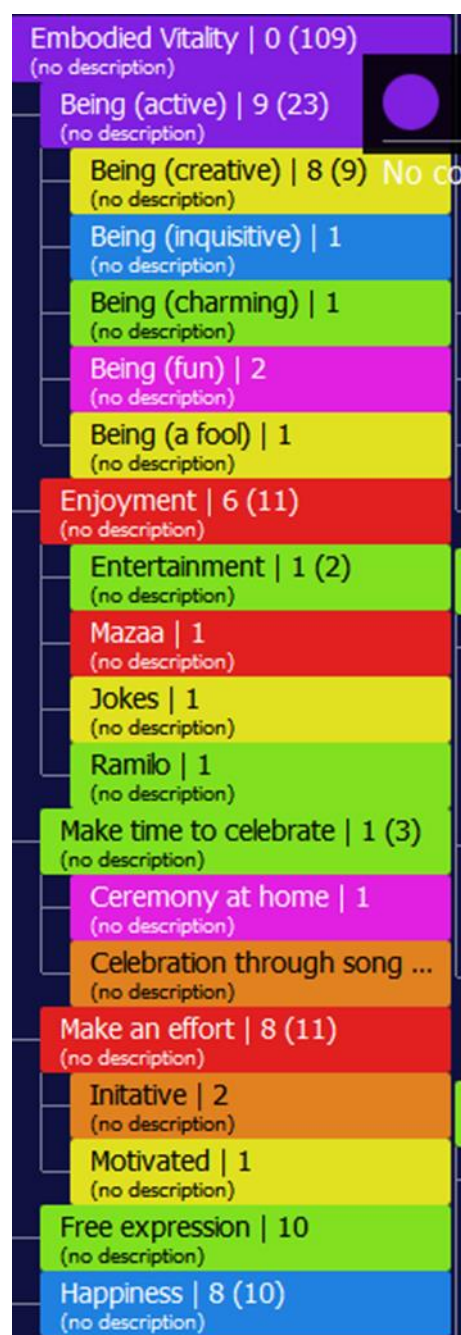
- 68: Physical bodily expression (Physical bodily expression by Sarah Huxley)
- 8: Sessions as theatre (performance) (Sessions as theatre (performance) by Sarah Huxley)
- 32: Playing - laugh and think (Playing - laugh and think by Sarah Huxley)
- 1: Learning through play, sport & fun (Learning through play, sport & fun by Sarah Huxley)
- 68: Physical bodily expression (Physical bodily expression by Sarah Huxley)
- 85: Adapt to needs (Adapt to needs by Sarah Huxley, dated 06 May 2021, 09:36)

Small speech bubble icons are visible to the left of the transcript segments.

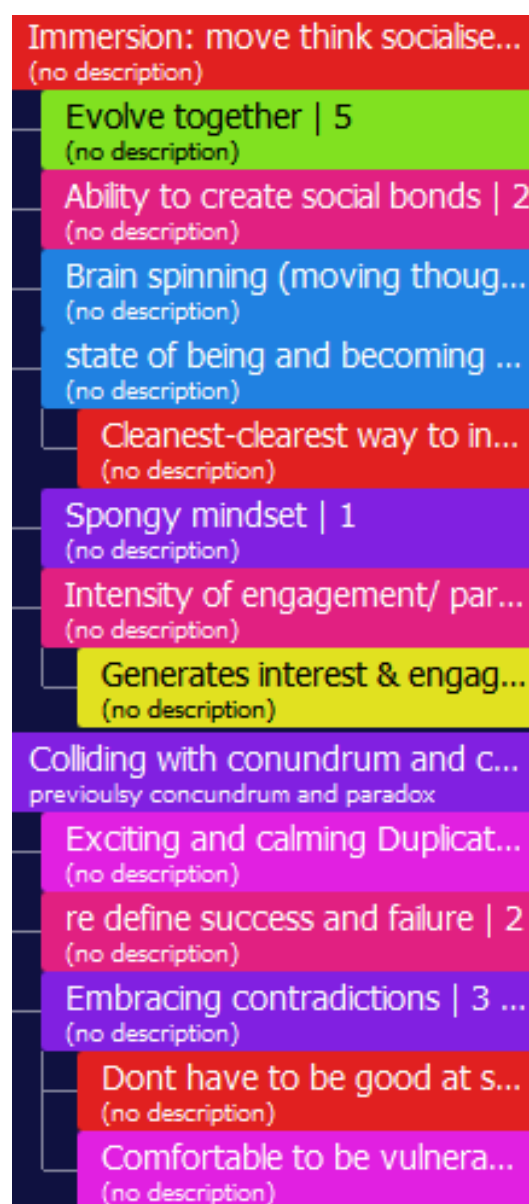
that our curriculum does. It creates this wow, play can do that, sport can do that, sport doesn't have to just be 2 teams doing like that, and then once we kind of present that, and there's a light bulb in our partners, then it's like oh my gosh, what else can I do! There's an initial welcome and push: they invite us in, and they want to see something new, and so we bring in this new thing, and it could be a bit uncomfortable at first, and then it's like, wow, now there's this part of my learning experience I didn't know existed, and now I have more information about myself to direct my learning. There are endless amounts of other things that we could bring into that, and I think music and art, and play, fun do those things for people. They open up doors.

## Appendix 12 – Extracts of word trees showing some of the codes for coaches' and staff constructions of fun

Coaches' codes relating to constructions of fun (question 1)



Staff codes relating to constructions of fun (question 1)



## Appendix 13 – Potential candidate themes and subthemes for staff and coaches (up to stage 3)

No	Candidate themes (mostly descriptive) STAFF	Potential subthemes (descriptive/interpretive)	Codes combined	Explanation and Justification
1	Physical bodily expression	<p>Body language</p> <p>Enjoyment</p> <p>Laughter</p>	<p>Body language includes eyes becoming wide, loud, and confident, pulling a funny face, weird and silly and wake up.</p> <p>Enjoyment includes, self-expression, happiness, feeling good, motivation, exciting and calming, and repetition</p> <p>Laughter includes smiles, shared sensation, energy, and humour</p>	<p>This theme captures how a person conveys fun in a nonverbal way, through using their body i.e., 'body language'. This can include doing 'weird' and 'silly' body/ face contortions/movements.</p> <p>Enjoyment as a state or process of taking pleasure in something is emotion most commonly associated with fun. This includes a freedom to move/ self-express, being excited and calm at the same time and feeling motivated, which encourages the desire to keep going/repeat.</p> <p>Physically enjoyment is often conveyed through laughter, smiles, humour, and it has a cumulative affect: if one person is laughing another is highly likely to share in the experience, even if it is experienced in a slightly different way.</p>
2	Rhythmic Game based play	<p>Rhythm (flow)</p> <p>Progression of Purposeful Play</p>	<p>Includes pause for dialogue, in the moment, silence as anticipation/uncertainty, and happy accidents</p> <p>Moving it forward includes release, not stuck in one place, release</p>	<p>There should be a rhythm and flow to the games that CAC play. The games build upon each other as do the questions and so there is a generated and intentional progression, however there is always time and space for happy accidents and pause/dialogue.</p> <p>Games force the mind and body to continually move from one physical and mental place/thought to another. The games are highly adaptive to the group and seek a form of 'release' – a letting go from previous thoughts/beliefs and body actions to new thoughts and body actions.</p>

		Adapting to needs  Unexpected/ inappropriate	Includes learning through play, sport and fun, sport in itself doesn't educate  Includes not recklessness and rebel against norms	This progression is often punctuated by unexpected or inappropriate movement/ talks. This confronts participants with challenging existing social norms.
3	Self-directed (organised) learning	Expert of your own experience  Learn by doing  Initial structure and rules  Developing skills to respond to change  Ease/lightness of learning	Includes freedom and expressing yourself  Includes deeper learning and scaffolding  Includes internal discussions and processing information  Includes confidence and bravery, active listening, inquisitiveness and comfortable being vulnerable Includes jokes	Self-directed learning for CAC staff focuses on the person (relational to others) as the 'expert of their own experience' and learning. However, it does also mean that there are some rules and structure (especially at the start of a game). They are scaffolded.  The learning itself is experiential i.e., people learn best by doing and being active, not talking/sitting; this generates a deeper sense of learning focused on developing skills for the changing world such as confidence and being vulnerable amongst others.  Generating fun supports self-directed and organised learning by creating an ease/lightness to the process.
4	Colliding with conundrum and contradiction	Educating for the unknown, changing world  Redefining success and failure  Exciting and calming	Embracing contradictions, comfortable to be vulnerable, don't have to be good at sport  Internal aspirations and external expectations	Fun means juggling the continual collision of contradiction and conundrum during the self-directed learning process. This is essential for the world we live in which is continually changing and uncertain. Having fun, being willing to play the fool, is a way to self soothe the potential anxiety of believed certainties being dismantled during game play.  Inherent contradictions in any deep learning mean a person must acknowledge vulnerability (opening up) as a strength and confront their understanding of what success and failure can be. Fun itself

		The dark side	Includes unequal, safeguarding and elite athletes	holds the contradiction of being both exciting and calming at the same time.  Fun can have a dark side in that not everyone has the privilege to experience fun learning, nor are spaces always/ever entirely safe and protective.
5	Embodying core values	Opening up and going beyond yourself  Making it known  Self-ownership  Celebrating the playfulness of childhood	Includes give yourself permission, release, escape, exploration, and push your boundaries, comfortable with being vulnerable  Empowerment, speaking up, liberated, non-judgemental, identity Includes subjective  Includes finding a different/new way	Fun in learning demands that an individual is continually pushing beyond existing personal and social boundaries. This requires giving yourself permission to do this and the result of which is a sense of release, and sometimes escape.  Experiencing fun through the body is liberating, empowering and requires being non-judgemental in the learning process. It is a form of self-mastery/ understanding in continual development and is highly subjective.  Ultimately, fun is a celebration of the playfulness with life associated with childhood; part of this is finding a new next step/direction in the learning process.
6	It's opposite – fear	Authoritative dictatorial teaching Loss of freedom  Static and disengaged	Includes sitting and listening, intimidated  Competition  Boredom, work (as higher status)	Authoritative/dictatorial teaching and learning is the antithesis of fun. It requires sustained stillness, intimidation and being static, disengaged, and bored. There is a loss of freedom - both personally and in terms of evolving together as a group. Hence competition is normally viewed as restrictive (closing in) and potentially harmful rather than generative/widening out.
7	Moulding safe spaces	Outside a classroom  Free form (fluid) playground  Role of a coach	Includes overall effect, make it anywhere  Created, imaginative, provides opportunities, celebrates choice  Includes hidden power, minimal, not to give answers	A safe space is a place where a person can feel both protected and in a free form learning flow. Protected from everyday life; it therefore optimally constructed as somewhere outdoors, often a patch of grass or football pitch.  This is not essential; the main aspect is that a 'free form playground' is created whereby people and props – such as balls/cones if available are positioned to encourage imaginative opportunities.

		Theatrical (artistic) performance	Play, music, art, and sport	A coach plays a pivotal role in setting this up although their power must be hidden and appear minimal. The outdoor learning process can appear as a performance because it is about self and group expression through physical movement.
8	CAC as different	Leader in alternative education A fun heart  West does not know best	Includes, not being boxed in, dynamic  Identity  Importance of local knowledge	Fun is exploring the unknown, the uncertain and by inference, difference. Therefore, fun is a core part, 'at the heart' of what they do, and a central aspect of the CAC identity, which sets itself apart from, although connected to other sport for social impact organisations. CAC sees itself as a leader in informal/alternative education, which focuses on local knowledge.
9	Contagious interaction with others	Active engagement  Friendship and collaboration	Inspiring others, contagious, networks Trusting relationships, encouraging solo fun to connect	Fun is a contagious interaction with other bodies, genders, ages, thoughts, and cultures. It requires an active engagement with others built on trusting relationships.
10	Intense immersion: spinning minds and bodies	Evolving together  State of being and becoming	Includes move, think, socialise, intensity of engagement, ability to create social bonds Spongy mindset and spinning thoughts	Fun is greatest/ strongest when people are learning and evolving together, creating social bonds. The bonds are also formed at a smaller scale, when bodies are in motion, thoughts are dynamically spun and a collision/interaction with others is also created.
11	Seeking many possible outcomes /solutions	Hidden outcomes  No fixed end goal  Fun in and of itself	Includes mirage and façade, socialisation  Includes nonlinear  Achievement is a feeling	Fun normally doesn't have a fixed goal/outcome. It may have hidden outcomes such as socialisation, or producing more of itself, because it is truly generated when a learning process is nonlinear. Fun is a personal sense/feeling of achievement, not something that is defined and bounded from the outset of a learning process.
12	Confronting deep social issues	Discussing hard/serious things	Includes dangerous situations, moving away from gender stereotypes, behavioural change and sexual health and fun	Fun enables the discussion of hard/ serious social topics in a way that encourages an exploration of alternative viewpoints that can challenge personal certainties.

		Challenging certainties	Includes access to information and opportunities to explore alternatives	Problem solving is viewed as a way of being curious and fun provides the momentum to push through challenge. Fun is a way of encouraging learners to seek out their own truths.
		Embracing problem solving	Includes curiosity and questions, pushing through challenge and positive challenge	
		Generating many alternatives	Includes encouragement rather than answers, protest as a dead end	

No	Candidate themes (descriptive) COACHES	Potential subthemes (descriptive/int erpretive)	Codes combined	Explanation and Justification
1	Embodied vitality  (Vibrant aliveness)	Manifests physically  Being - active, energetic, and creative  Freedom to express yourself	Manifests physically includes nowness (being present), bodily movements e.g., laughter and smiles  Being active includes being inquisitive, charming, a fool and making an effort  Freedom to express includes enjoyment, happiness, celebration	This theme captures the physical and visible manifestations of fun as expressed through the human body. Bodily knowledge.  These subthemes all suggest that fun is generated via an embodied projection of bodily expressions of alertness/aliveness/attentiveness.

2	It's opposite (inertness) – part of embodied vitality?	Boredom  Disengaged	Dead – the ultimate form of disengagement with being alive and learning.  Unmotivated and annoyed are part of disengaged	Understanding the opposite of how fun is constructed, helps to realise what it is. The opposites described are all qualities of inertness: of mind, body, and engagement with the world around.
3	Movement of games, play and learning	Sports (physical) activities  Game progressions  Changing pace (rhythm)  Sticky (memorable) and transitory moments  Subconscious (hidden) learning	Sports activities includes soccer, intentional play, song, and dance, playing favourite things and adults' way to de-stress  Game progression includes describing games progressing, traditional games, a simple way, warmups  This includes reflection; an acknowledgement that pausing with possibility via created stillness and thought is at certain times important. Movement then comes again from true reflective spaces.  Sticky moments includes forgetting time and a positive addiction  Out of these 'sticky' moments comes a true 'hidden learning' whereby learning can be 'a biproduct' of play/fun	Whilst sports and soccer are the starting place for most coaches, many also referred to other physical creative activities and their belief that fun is generated through these non/preverbal forms of expression.  Within the playing of these physical activities, games are developed and build upon the previous iterations: they are intentionally scaffolded. Within the progressions there are moments of stillness to reflect.  Having fun is not linear, so whilst it may be generated in a warmup, it will come and go throughout. 'Real' learning is often indirect and realised only after the play of games, which in turn generates fun moments.  Play of games – fun – sticky and hidden learning.
4	Experiential learning	Grounding & practical	Positive mood change includes can come from sadness, lose track of time	Fun is perceived as a generative learning process – a doing/making of it. An inert only 'sitting and thinking' approach to learning will not



		Mind-body synergies  Positive perception/ mood change	Transitory includes hard to define, fluid environment	embody/generate fun. Hence all the subthemes refer to aspects of the experience/ doing.  A person has to actively create fun, and this increases the likelihood of more fun: it grows from itself.
5	Profound collaboration	Team activities  Experiencing the other (empathy)  Inclusiveness	Group consciousness is part of team activities  'Opening yourself' and 'friendship' is part of experiencing the other.  Equal participation is part of inclusiveness	It is the engagement of different minds, bodies, and cultural conditioning all intentionally interacting (collaborating) that generates fun: most coaches see fun as a group endeavour that incorporates egalitarian values such as inclusiveness and the ability to see the self as many possibilities, but also as part of a whole that is continually changing.
6	Creating spaces of trust	Safe and brave spaces  Freedom outside (classrooms)  No longer body conscious	This includes 'in different areas', 'lack of resources'	Fun facilitates the development of a confident engagement with the unknown (ideas, body movements, team members, places of learning beyond classrooms etc.)
7	Coaches' presence	Coaches as learners  Enthusiastic role models	Includes symbiotic, non-judgemental, and non-directive  Includes encouraging and mentors	How coaches conduct themselves, through their body, words and overall presence is very important to creating the 'safe space'/ atmosphere for fun to be generated from. Coaches need to be the spark.
8	Transformation of challenges	Tackling difficult topics	These subthemes all contribute towards personal and social behavioural change.	There can be many possible 'solutions' to any challenge/problem. The process of transforming challenges contributes towards 'changing the narrative' in order to step closer to personal and societal change. This is a continual dynamic process.

		Problem solving Changing the narrative	Tackling difficult topics includes being a good citizen and championing gender rights/responsibilities.	
9	Exploring possibilities – part of transformation of challenges	Refreshes your mind Generative (widening circles) Hard to grasp	This includes diverse thinking and newness  This includes future opportunities and self-realisation of potential  This includes the subjective and for its own sake	Fun is a process that necessitates a continual refresh of assumptions and certainties. This is generative; new possibilities for learning (and by association personal/social behaviour change) are opened up, but are never fixed, and always in flux. There is no fixed end point.
10	Making your own life	Free will (choice)  Self-ownership and directive	Free will includes thinking on your own and choosing a different way. Human need is a way of saying to exert free will/ choice is a truth/ natural.  Becoming is part of self-ownership and self-direction.	Free will and choice is part of Western Neo liberal philosophies. Fun is perceived as part of the inter play/ dynamics of giving power over and holding onto it at the same time. Fun shakes up the power dynamics.
11	Accepting paradoxes (binaries)	Rules/structure (versus free will) Competition and winning (versus for its own sake) Introvert fun (versus group collaboration)	The subthemes show apparent contradictions to other codes in other themes. Most coaches seemed to accept that there were elements of rules/structure, competition and introvert fun depending on the group, time, and place. Even if the dominant/ overt learning processes foreground the exact opposite.	Apparent contradictions are not necessarily static problems from which a side has to be taken. Rather they present opportunities to be curious about i.e., possible alternatives. Fun as defined by the other themes enables this curiosity/ holding of paradox.  Children make fun and learning themselves contradicts the need for a coach to embody/ spark fun. Both are accepted.  Competition is fun for some and not others; games will openly discuss/move with this. Fun for its own sake and 'not always hard' is also in opposition to competition and one fixed end goal/winning.

## Appendix 14 – Complete overview of theme 1 for staff and coaches

The staff table below shows the descriptive and interpretive codes that generated candidate themes, which then resulted in the final theme ‘energetic embodiment’ in the right-hand column (stage 5). Read this table from left to right.

No.	Codes (descriptive and interpretative)	Candidate theme (interpretative)	Justification (why does it hang together?)	Theme (interpretative)
1	Body does something (physical manifestations)	<b>Physical manifestation of the freedom to express yourself (live wire)</b>	Free expression of the body shows up through voice and alternative/ non- conformative (‘weird and silly’) body actions, such as ‘pulling a funny face’. It can also manifest as a type of mind-body release through physical expressions such as smiles and laughter. These are all embodied expressions of ‘high energy’ states of being.  I have chosen not to separate physical bodily expressions from internal feelings (emotions), because staff do not make this separation e.g., Ben states that “Fun also from our aspect has to be physically engaging as well as mentally engaging”.  All the physical bodily expressions require a sense of freedom/liberation to enable/kick start them <u>i.e.</u> you can’t laugh if you don’t have a sense of free will to do so.	<b>Energetic Embodiment</b>
2	Freedom of movement (liberation of body and mind)			
3	Not being confined (free to express)			
4	Voice and be expressive (being heard)			
5	Weird and silly (alternative body actions)			
6	Pulling a funny face (example of being silly)			
7	High energy (physical manifestations)			
8	do this crazy dance (joyful body movement/ expression)			
9	if you don’t, I’ll keep doing it (perseverance)			
10	all sorts of things happen – piggy backs, spins (physical movement is stimulated)			
11	Energy (physical manifestations)			
12	Energy and engagement from fun and play			
13	A release of tension (relief/change of emotional state from stiffness/restriction to movement)			
14	Fun is this letting go (release to expand)			
15	Incredible escape (release/relief)			
16	Smiles (physical manifestations)			
17	Laughs (physical manifestations)			
18	Laugh at yourself (acknowledging self-development/advancement)			

19	Spongy mindset (more open/porous and more likely to stick)	<b>Stimulated mind (switched on)</b>	This candidate theme is concerned with the state of being curious and motivated, whereby the body and mind are aligned and the duality between physical expression and internal ideas/feelings are dissolved.  It includes embodying surprise, wonder, excitement, alertness, and developing a self-awareness for embracing other possibilities (ways of thinking and doing).  Curiosity and motivation are understood as being heavily connected to purpose, desire, <u>drive</u> and commitment.	
20	Eyes becoming wide (new sensation/knowledge, wonder/awe)			
21	Wow, what is this? (surprise/excitement)			
22	That's the lightbulb moment (change of thought)			
23	Why didn't I know? (greater possibilities)			
24	Not ADHD (example joke and extreme curiosity)			
25	Wake up (alertness/eagerness)			
26	My job (purpose in life and commitment)			
27	Want to do (desire)			
28	Want enjoyment (desire joy/aliveness)			
29	Only reason to do anything (motivation)			
30	Ultimate goal is to have fun (to be generative/be switched on)			
31	Interactive (social/relational)	<b>Shared sensations and inter-relations (connective sparks)</b>	The embodied sensations generated are inter-active i.e., relational. Positive expressions of 'feeling good' (joy) are communicated through the interaction of positive relationships.  This is about being playful with each other and this is often expressed via humour – which requires engagement and co-expression between players.	
32	Interaction and positive relationships (social/relational)			
33	Interactions (social/relational)			
34	Shared sensation (inter – relational)			
35	Humour (jokes/absurdity/bonding/provocation)			
36	Happiness (joy)			
37	Feeling good (joy)			
38	Engagement (Social/relational)			
39	Playful together (social/relational)			
40	Playing with others (social/relational)			

	Physically, mentally, <i>and socially</i> engaging (spinning bodies, minds and social interactions/ need all 3 at least)		Humour can strengthen the bonds between players and be provocative, encouraging new knowledge.	
41	Pushes back at your learning (positive challenge)	<b>Tussle of contradictory qualities (push pull of resistance)</b>	<p>In this candidate theme the challenge of contradictory ideas, feelings, activities are all to be embraced as positive reminders to release self-resistance to fixed beliefs.</p> <p>Experiencing excitement and a sense of calm simultaneously is not a dead end/loss of (fun) energy. Rather the tussle between apparent contrasting ideas/qualities contributes to the transformation of (fun) energy into new learning possibilities. This tussle is transitory: a new game should always move on the thinking, sensations, and bodily experience.</p> <p>The intentions of CAC games are to playfully engage with apparently contradictory qualities/types of purpose/intention. These are games that ignite a stated/overt purpose and end goal; yet contain a hidden goal (such as socialisation); and thirdly allow for the unknown/unexpected purpose to arise.</p>	
42	Exciting and calming (embracing contradictory qualities)			
43	Opposites at the same time (embracing contradictory qualities)			
44	For as long as possible (transitory/comes and goes)			
45	Intentional (partly obvious goals, partly hidden and partly unexpected/unknown goals/purposes)			
46	Can be uncomfortable at first (discomfort is something to be embraced/ contradictory qualities)			
47	Notions of disempowering, empowering, having power and sharing (flow of energy/ power/ contradictory qualities)			

The coaches table below shows the descriptive and interpretive codes that generated candidate themes, which then resulted in the final theme ‘vibrant embodiment’ in the right-hand column (stage 4/5). Read this table from left to right.

No.	Codes (descriptive and interpretative)	Candidate theme (interpretative)	Justification (why does it hang together?)	Theme (interpretative)
1	About their body (body knowing)	<b>Physical manifestation of connecting with others</b>	Physical expressions of the body such as smiles, dancing, laughing, singing all demonstrate a way of reaching out to connect with other minds and bodies.  Physical expressions are all acts of doing and moving and therefore are a performance/enactment of the continual flux and change of the learning process but also the self-development of an individual in relation to others. It is always a relational embodiment: human engagement and energy generates more.	<b>Vibrant embodiment</b>
2	Dance or another expressive way (physical manifestation/move to communicate/share/connect)			
3	Sing (physical manifestation/vocal expression)			
4	When you are doing something (active/actions/doing/motion)			
5	Celebration when they score or a ceremony (acknowledge different achievements/ rituals/ connectivity)			
6	Come with that smile (physical manifestations/ energy)			
7	High energy (physical manifestations/ aliveness/ connectivity)			
8	Start to laugh and enjoy (release)			
9	Start to learn how to move (new physical expressions)			
10	To play (action of exploration)			
11	To sing (physical manifestation/embody sensation)			
12	Big smiles (physical manifestation/embody sensation/largeness/all consuming)			
13	Its brilliant – the smile of I can do this (physical manifestation of achievement/confidence)			

14	Feel laughter (physical manifestation/emodied sensation)			
15	See smiles (physical manifestation/emodied sensation)			
16	Take initiative on their own (make an effort/ self-motivation)	<b>Moving thoughts towards opportunities</b>	Fun manifests as an alertness/attentiveness and eagerness to experience and risk the as yet unknown. It is a conscious effort to 'be open' to changing thoughts and emotions to seek out new possibilities and futures.  This often involves some creative thinking and it's about moving forward with an internal drive/ will power as the 'excited will to do something'.  Inner thoughts inform outer actions.	
17	Be willing (eagerness/ risk the unknown)			
18	Telling you what they think about this world (listening/learning)			
19	You feel more open (self-expression/possibilities)			
20	Makes me motivated (curious/intentional/focused)			
21	Move forward (change/progress/evolve)			
22	The opportunity for them (new ways/ideas)			
23	About life and the future (future thinking)			
24	What can we do? (solutions/ can do attitude/ possibilities)			
25	The opportunity to be creative (being creative/opening up and out)			
26	Makes me excited (excitement/aliveness)			
27	Want to participate in an emotional way (connect with deep feelings/affective engagement)			
28	The excited will to do something (making an effort)			
29	That guy is charming (being magnetic/charming)			
30	How you behave and react matters (social/relational)			
31	A little joke to raise engagement (humour/connectivity)			

32	Make a fool out of yourself (express alternatives/humour/ find lightness/ bring a different energy/ entertain)		and making jokes. To make others comfortable but also to encourage their own similar outward facing self-expressions.	
33	A role model is fun (embodies fun/being magnetic)			
34	Feel the place is fun (energy/environment/collective sensations)			
35	The right people – fun people so I can be fun as well (social/relational)			



## Appendix 15 – Overview of the four online trainings

There were 3 planning sessions held on Zoom amongst the staff member and two coaches from November to December 2020. Manila, the coach from the Philippines, who was volunteering her time (during her evenings), was not able to participate in the final planning session on 4 December 2020. Dasia was the Lebanese coach assisting Katie (the CAC staff member) in designing the sessions, as well as ‘co-facilitating’ during the sessions, especially in relation to providing Arabic translations. Each session was approximately an hour. Both prior to the session and straight afterwards, the four of us had a mini prep and debrief dialogue respectively.

**Session 1 – 4 December 2020** I recall that I woke up early on a dark winter’s morning, about 6am with the nervous, excited physical sensations I would normally have if I was leaving for an early morning flight. I laughed at myself for the strangeness of this, because of course the training was not happening in a room/football pitch in Beirut, but rather from the cold and well-known walls of my office, but my mind-body was reacting in a similar way.

There were 9 participants in this online Zoom training as well as Katie, Dasia, Manila, and I. Manila was not always visible on camera. Only one participant had their video camera turned on at the start of the session, as well as the four of us. The session involved several breakout rooms of smaller groups of four. The flow of the session is shown below. The aim of the session was to build connections/relationships with the participants so that they feel comfortable to ask questions and respond, as well as learn from them what they think about fun and self-directed learning. And then share what CAC thinks about fun and learning. The learning environment created was informal, curious, and non-judgemental. Katie summarised this at the start of the sessions as, ‘we are good at asking questions, creating opportunities for people like yourselves; to share your knowledge and experiences’.

	<b>Session 1 Activities</b>
1	Introductions
2	Break out rooms (1): what does play mean to you? Why do you play?
3	Whole group sharing
4	Introduction to Self-directed learning (by Katie)
5	Break out rooms (2): what is SDL and how does it ‘come to life’?
6	Whole group sharing

7	Break out rooms (3): what has happened this year (2020) for you? How have you worked in your communities?
8	Brief sharing
9	Session Planner game shared on screen 'Indonesia for Attitudes': four groups name four spaces with a word to describe their community; then 4 words of things they would like to change in their community.
10	Wrap up – emails game pack

**Session 2 - 10 December 2020** The second session included 8 participants plus Katie, Dasia, Manila and myself. This time to encourage play, movement and to re-establish rapport Katie started with an ice breaker. These were to become important tools/mediating approaches, as was the use of break out groups through the online trainings. These often-necessitated cameras to be switched on and the participation/inclusion of as many persons as possible. This session focused on exploring how to create a safe environment. See the table below for the flow of the session. Again, no power point slides were used, and cameras were encouraged to be on, however they were not made compulsory due to both access issues; some participants had intermittent Wi-Fi connectivity as well as personal comfort preferences regarding use of video cameras. A screen share of how CAC designs games using Session planner was shown at the end of the session, and the session concluded with a reminder from Katie that play has a bigger purpose: 'while I am playing, I can also learn about what is happening in my life'.

Session 2 Activities	
1	Welcome
2	Ice breaker Session Planner game 'Armenia for Skills' adapted for Zoom break outs; each group creates a non-traditional activity and then one person switches in. They have to be taught the activity without using language.
3	Group sharing: how was it when you arrived? How does it relate to community experiences?
4	Break out (1): why do you play? Why do children play? Why do coaches coach?
5	Group sharing
6	Break out (2): what makes you feel safe? Conditions needed? And imagine you are a girl/ disabled/ refugee child (3 groups) what makes them feel safe?
7	Group sharing
8	Session planner game shared on screen 'Nepal for Choice'; play an activity and ask one thing they want to get rid of in their community; step closer. Keep going until shoulder to shoulder. Then ask one thing want to add, and circle expands.
9	Screenshot and wrap up – survey sent for feedback

During the winter break Katie had had COVID-19.

**Session 3 – 5 January 2021** Feedback was actively sought from the participants to inform sessions 3 and 4 which started a few weeks after the Christmas break. Originally it was planned to hold the four sessions over a 4–6-week period. However

due to existing commitments and the Christmas holiday period the final two sessions started in January. This session focused on the participants starting the process of designing their own learning games through small group discussion in break out groups and this session also included using a playful digital tool 'Menti' to display participants responses to a question as a word cloud. See the table below for the full outline of the session. Language focused on 'healing' rather than 'trauma'. The tone of this session was thoughtful, reflective, and less energised than pervious.

<b>Session 3 Activities</b>	
1	Welcome and invite participants ice breakers
2	Ice breaker: charades on Zoom
3	Katie shares experiences of 2020
4	Break out (1): 3 groups each discuss their/ children's experiences of either physical trauma or personal or collective psychological traumas
5	Group sharing
6	Break out (2): how can a game address collective/personal/physical trauma? How does it evolve, make sure to ask questions?
7	Group sharing
8	Screen shot and request for rough game ideas for Katie to develop post session

**Session 4 – 7 January 2021** The aim of this session was to present the worked-up participants games' and discuss them as a whole group. Katie had made suggested developments to each of the four groups games, and explained using Sports Session planner, how she had interpreted them and made suggestions for development. See the table below for a complete overview of the session. There were 8 participants in this session. Questions such as 'what was success in the game' were posed to participants, encouraging them to think beyond only valuing 'winning' as an outcome. The session also had spontaneous moments such as the use of a 'follow my leader' ice breaker, however in general the session had a more serious tone due to the nature of discussing experiences of the blast in August 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic as well as the economic and political problems in Lebanon.

<b>Session 4 Activities</b>	
1	Welcome and invite participants to lead an ice breaker
2	Katie does 'follow the leader' and others take a turn looking at each other via Zoom
3	Participants games developed into session planner – Katie shares physical trauma group first, then collective, and then personal. The whole group discusses possible progressions.
4	Menti: what do you dream of achieving with this project?
5	Break out (1): what's your plan to put your ideas into action?
6	Group sharing and screenshot [group decide on next activities]
7	Break out (2): what could go wrong and how to plan for risks?
8	CAC - opportunities via workplace
9	Thanks, and will send certificates

## Appendix 16 – Code to candidate theme to theme: table for Inclusive relations (research question 2)

No.	Codes (descriptive and interpretative)	Candidate theme (interpretative)	Justification (why does it hang together?)	Theme (interpretative)
1	asking questions and creating opportunities (generative/ expansion of ideas/ provocations)	<b>Provokes contributions in an inclusive space</b>	Fun provides an invitation to contribute amongst a wider group. This is through sharing experiences, responding to questions, and an embodied energy to feel provoked to contribute.	<b>Builds inclusive connections (in celebration of similarities and differences)</b>
2	intentionally connecting with words and questions (power of words)			
3	to share your experiences (connect/bond/ come together)		In the CAC context, a role of fun is to help create an inclusive learning environment. This means that the coach doesn't have all the knowledge and is keen to learn together with the learners; a horizontal learning environment where learners should feel safe and connected.	
4	Proposition (intention/ attention/invitation)		Learners can feel at ease or mellow, and the process of sharing helps to create a safe/trusting space. Whereby asking (often unasked/ taboo) questions is more important than the answers.	
5	feeling provoked to contribute to listen and to participate (encouraged by others)		The role of fun is to provoke alternative questions and ways of thinking.	
6	share about your community or work (engage others)			
7	If you did not get a chance to share, please do so now (inclusion)			
8	share more about who you are, how you are feeling (identity/ emotions)			
9	A coach/ teacher doesn't have all the knowledge (horizontal learning)			
10	Including someone into your community (welcoming/ attentive/ generous)			
11	Have their identity (accept/ acknowledge individual)			
12	How does it feel (acknowledge mind-body expressions)			
13	We both have knowledge - lets learn together (horizontal learning)			

14	sharing idea contributes a lot in achieving safe spaces (process of connecting creates comfort)			
15	Part of my listening process is not necessarily the need to know the answer (no one 'right' answer/ answers are less useful)			
16	Providing a space to ask the question (holding a space for deeper connection)			
17	Have the space to be heard by each other (actively listened to) more importantly than by me (horizontal learning)			
18	It's an inclusive rule (intentionally create opportunities to confront inclusion challenges)			
19	Play can help us empathise, connect, and heal (experience similarities to move on)	<b>Encourages a generosity of gratitude and empathy</b>	In a learning experience fun can catalyse an abundance (generosity) of empathy and thankfulness. Having fun enables, the celebration of how 'different and similar' we all are. This is partly because what is fun for one person is not necessarily fun for another, but also because of the role play games that CAC play.	
20	empathising with them and using sound (using other senses/ ways of being to connect)			
21	celebrate how different and similar we all are (contradictory qualities)			
22	just thank you (appreciation/ gratitude/ acknowledgment)			
23	enjoyed this space (feel good)			
24	thanks for trusting us (gratitude/ bravery/ connection)			
25	for the trust in us and CAC (individuals and undivided group)			
26	empathy – that's fun (acknowledging others' expressions is fun)			
27	to connect with people who understand the scariest parts of your year (contradictory qualities)			
			Empathy is created because some learners share their 'scariest' or most vulnerable parts of themselves/ life experiences.	
			There is a continual encouragement and offering of thanks back to participants.	

28	don't usually hear encouragement that way (support)			
29	Telling me that I am good and great (positive feedback)			
30	formed this brilliant connection (energised comradery/ enlivened)	<b>Brings 'wired thinking' to life</b>	Fun brings 'wired thinking' to life – this is enlivened, stimulated embodied knowing. The 'coming to life' of thoughts/emotions/ social relations and hopefully how they translate into actions.	
31	Share more, not just theory (move beyond abstract ideas into physical realities)			
32	How does it come to life? (enlivened/ vibrant/ luminous)			
33	connect with (relational/ attention on others)			
34	I have wired thinking; I connect (energised ways of being)			
35	Fun is the ingredient that makes conversations alive (enlivened/ vibrant)			
36	It makes connections in different ways (adaptable/ mysterious)			
37	whether its online or not (omnipresent)			
38	fun as the connection and engagement with the content and the passionate feeling (enlivened connection)			
39	is a fun energy (mood/atmosphere/dynamic environment)			

## Appendix 17 – A glimpse into different cultural understandings of having fun

	Country	Language (dominant)	Participant's Word (given during interview)	Word Reference definition (as noun/compound noun/adverb)	Example sentence	Sentence translated into English
1	Tanzania	Swahili	<i>Furaha (change from a sad/difficult moment) and chikeshha (laughter)</i>	<i>Furaha</i> (noun) - Gladness, joy - Violent and excited activity <i>Burudani</i> (noun) - entertainment	Je, watoto hao hawaonekani kuwa wenye furaha?	Don't the children seem to be having fun?
2	India	Hindi	<i>Mazaa (energetic)</i>	<i>Mazaa</i> (noun) - enjoyment/ amusement	Angrejee bolana bahut majedaar hai	Speaking English is a lot of fun.
3	Philippines	Filipino	<i>Masaya (happy)</i>	<i>Masaya</i> (noun) - cheer, glee, lightness <i>Pagbibiro</i> (noun) *16 variants as nouns	Mas masaya ang mga laro sa app na Mga Laro sa Google Play.	Games are more fun with the Google Play Games app.
4	Mexico	Spanish	<i>Divertido (adjective; joyful)</i>	<i>Divertida/o</i> (noun/feminine/masculine) - play - relaxation - amusement Bromear (verb; to joke)	Salgamos a divertirnos este sábado	Let's go out and have fun this Saturday.
5	Indonesia	Indonesian	<i>Senang (happy)</i>	<i>Seru</i> (noun) - exciting - exclamation  <i>Berolok-olok</i> (verb)	Well, sangat seru.	Well, that was fun.

6	Scotland	English	<i>Fun (enjoyment)</i>	<i>Fun</i> (noun) - Amusement, mirth - Jokes/banter	I had a lot of fun.	I had a lot of fun.
7	Peru	Spanish	<i>Diversión (can be from a sad thing)</i>	<i>Divertida</i> (noun/feminine) - play - relaxation - amusement <i>Bromear</i> (verb; to joke)	Jugamos al fútbol por diversión.	We play football for fun.
8	Nepal	Nepalese	<i>Ramilo (good times)</i>	<i>Ramilo</i> (noun) - enjoyable - pleasurable	Ramilo cha.	It is fun.
9	Lebanon	Arabic	<i>Marah and Altamatue (revel/entertain)</i>	<i>Marah</i> (noun)  <i>Hazal</i> (noun/verb)	hadha yabdu waka'anah mutea	This sounds like fun.

The above concise definitions and sentences are sourced from [www.wordreference.com](http://www.wordreference.com) and [www.glosbe.com](http://www.glosbe.com).



## Appendix 18 – Laughter critical incidents (sessions 1-3)

Session/ Individual	Fun moments recollected by the individual (during post-interview)	Contextual Quote	Fun moments observed via the researchers' 'laughter critical incidents' (during the session) AND confirmed by the participant during the post-interview	Contextual Quote
<b>Session 1</b>				
Katie	1. <b>Learning about others</b> (how they behave; their experiences; what they think)	'I thought learning about them was fun for me. Just hearing about what they all do.'	6. <b>Sharing a memory:</b> playing football on an unusual pitch next to the sea in Beirut [with Dasia]	'It's a classic example of people not really knowing CAC. Classic indoor classrooms with PowerPoint training. No! We need to go outside and play! We always say it to a partner before. They found a place, but it was the weirdest circular fall of the edge into the water – it was very funny.'
	2. <b>Being silly</b> (doing something a person wouldn't normally do in a spontaneous manner)	'I made a comment at some point about having them teach us all their moves. Some of them laughed about that. That felt silly and fun.'		
	3. <b>Creating a different dynamic in the learning process</b> e.g., using breakout rooms in Zoom	'I think I define breakout sessions as fun because you get a different dynamic; you get a smaller group and I think more vulnerability, and a zoomed in look literally!'		
	4. <b>Play and movement</b> (physical/virtual) encourage different thinking and sharing of experiences	'We use play and movement to get to those kinds of conversations, and so it's interesting thinking about the movement going to break out rooms, as the fun thing to stimulate a different kind of conversation.'		
	5. <b>Asking, thinking, and responding to questions;</b> being intentionally curious	'There's silence to fill and a question to answer, and we try to ask questions that could also be fun to answer. So why do you play? In my opinion that is a fun question to answer.'		
Dasia	1. <b>Mispronunciations</b> across different languages	'People must confuse your name? how do you spell it? Manila kept saying Beet Beet!' [in the debrief]	4. <b>Sharing a memory:</b> playing football on an unusual pitch next to the sea in Beirut [with Katie]	'Yes, it brought a memory of a first CAC experience! It made me laugh because we were playing at this hotel in the middle of the sea!'
	2. <b>General atmosphere</b>	'In the session, the general ambience was fun and relaxed, but I don't recall	5. <b>Disrupting formal roles/expectations:</b> researcher shares in a breakout room how	'It was a fun laugh. I identified with it: you are trying to break the ice in academia.'

		super funny moments, except in the debrief.'	she brings fun into supervisor meetings by requesting everyone wears a hat online	
	3. <b>Debrief</b> amongst four of us (staff, two coaches and researcher)	'Maybe afterwards you are looking for an excuse to laugh!'		
Manila	1. <b>Facilitation</b> – being intentionally curious asking questions to catalyse participants sharing their experiences	'The fun part was getting people to talk. The facilitating was fun. What questions can I ask to get their inputs? It was fun!'	5. Moments recorded <b>not directly connected to fun</b> ; some ways of releasing awkwardness.	'I smile and laugh a lot!'
	2. <b>Planning a secret Christmas party with colleagues in her physical space</b>	'It was fun listening to my colleagues talk about their plans for Christmas. We deserve to have a fun Christmas after the crazy year that 2020 has been! Even if it is not allowed in our city (due to lockdown) we are going to another place!'		
	3. <b>Sharing experiences with like-minded people</b>	'It's fun to converse and talk about ideas and listen to others who have a similar wavelength as yours.'		
	4. <b>Ease and flow of a conversation</b>	'When conversations flow easily, the fun is really there. You don't force the conversation. It's fun when the conversation unfolds.'		
<b>Session 2</b>				
Katie	1. <b>Sharing experiences with like-minded people</b>	'When someone asks a question say S's or the gender one, I feel it in my body, and I am more connected and drawn to the content and the group because it is stuff that I have thought about.'		
	2. <b>Challenging a fixed sense of self</b>	'I went into a breakout room, and we started talking about ego, and that's always fun for me... did I call anyone out?'		
	3. <b>Surprises</b>	'When they came back, I was so excited Sarah to hear – I have no idea – I did that intentionally. He [C] was relieved and I wasn't expecting that. I love that when it happens!'		

Dasia	<b>1. Physical movement during a breakout (ice breaker) game</b>	'Mostly the game doing funny moves. It was really nice. That was the most fun for me...it was an actual game and we experienced it. We didn't just talk about it'	<b>2. Sharing a recent memory</b> as a group of four during the debrief: reflecting on the switch game ("jumping in and out") of breakout rooms	'Then I moved into a new room, and that was really fun! It was challenging!'
Manila	<b>1. Going between different online sessions:</b> CAC training on Zoom and a test for her students on Google Meet	'It was fun to know I was able to do two things...that I knew something that not everyone knew was going on! My students didn't know I was in a training. They were in Google Meet.'	<b>2. Self-affirming:</b> remembering validating herself as a 'good' coach.	'I said I coach because I am good!' It was good to get it out there. I don't usually hear encouragement!'
<b>Session 3</b>				
Katie	<b>1. Playing online charades</b>	'The pantomime [online charades] with B was very fun. I think the moment was hilarious because everyone knew what it was, but no one wanted to say it because you knew you would be the next person. It turned from getting it right to if you were the first person!'	<b>4. Specifically laughing 'at yourself'</b> during online charades	'I started doing the macarena for some reason, and so he said that, and it was so funny, because I hadn't even realised that was what I was doing!'
	<b>2. Sharing a personal difficult experience</b>	'I am thinking about telling my story [personal accident trauma]...I could find a way to define that moment as fun because it feels liberating and was an unloading.'	<b>5. Unexpected moments:</b> Dasia swearing	'It always makes me want to say something, but I don't know what to say! I love it! I don't care – I think it's hilarious...I think swearing in another language is always kind of funny to other people.'
	<b>3. Sharing game ideas</b>	'I hope that in the sharing of game ideas that people had fun.'	<b>6. Trying to speak another language</b> (Arabic)	'I am going to share it in a way that makes people laugh. They laugh at me. I'd rather them laughing than not at all.'
Dasia	<b>1. Playing online charades</b>	'I think when I was doing the duck, and that game – that was really fun. That was the most fun and the game. The other parts were more serious, and I was really thinking, and my phone kept falling; so that was really annoying. But the duck, I was happy shaking my ass [both laughing]. It was fun!'	<b>2. Foreigners trying to speak another language</b> (Arabic)	'Schway schway. It was a fun moment because it's always fun to hear foreigners try to speak Arabic.'
Manila	<b>1. Sharing game ideas</b>	'Sharing in the group. I was asking B to do it. We were sending private messages on chat. He said you do it, and I did!'	<b>3. Playing with the wrong answer</b> (in online charades)	'It was fun because it was the wrong answer of course, but I wanted it to be right! [laughing] It was sensible – acceptable. Any kid would have said I was reading a book and you said I was buttering toast! I wanted to be out of the spotlight! That was particularly fun.'
	<b>2. Unexpected moments: chihuahua pet dog jumping at her window</b>	'She [pet dog] was hearing my voice and trying to come in through the window. She does it in one jump. She is a tiny chihuahua puppy. I was fearing she would actually do it!'		