"Boys are from planet football? Girls are from planet pink?": Gender dualism and beyond in the construction of young children's gender identities in the early years of schooling.

Barbara Martin

Goldsmiths College
University of London

PhD
Educational Studies

2009

Abstract

My aim in this thesis is to make a contribution to feminist understandings of how young children are active participants in the construction of their own individual gender identities. My theoretical framework draws on a Foucauldian analysis of power and feminist poststructuralist theory to explore the gender discourses within which young children are positioned. The thesis is based on a two year empirical research project in an inner London Primary school, using qualitative methods including participant observation and semi structured interviews. I understand the development of gender identity as relational, and I explore how children are positioned, and position themselves within discourses of gender, 'race', ethnicity, class, sexuality, (dis)ability and age. The children in the study came from diverse ethnic backgrounds and 13 languages were spoken in addition to English. My two year fieldwork project followed cohorts of 3 and 4 year old children as they joined Nursery and moved into Reception classes, exploring how children learned and performed masculinities and femininities in early years classrooms and playgrounds.

My data analysis focuses on how children learn about the salience of gender in local communities of practice, with local power/knowledge relations being central to children's understandings of gender. Newcomers learned to perform masculinities and femininities through legitimate peripheral participation in the activities of older children. My findings show that children learned to enact and embody hegemonic practices of gender dualism and heteronormativity through apprentice participation in play and schooling practices, with young children often interpreting gender positions as oppositional. Children experienced pleasure through demonstrating knowledge of gendered use of play technologies, toys and play spaces. Children learned that some 'masculine' marked objects carry more power and status than 'feminine' marked objects. The gender divide in terms of objects of knowledge often positioned girls as less powerful than boys, because masculine objects of knowledge such as construction, superhero and football games gave greater access to space and resources. Children sought to understand the gender boundaries in their social settings, and they negotiated these boundaries through interactions and gender performances.

My findings show how young children established and strictly policed gender borders between girls and boys, but also show that the borders remain fluid and open to change, as some children resist and contest boundaries. I argue that discursive practices are not simply reproduced, they are reinterpreted and recreated and sometimes modified and changed, and therein lies the potential for shifts in power relations and moves towards equity. I conclude that early years educators need to intervene to help children to discuss their ideas about gender and enable them to access a wider range of gender positions through which they can experience pleasure and power. Many schooling practices reinforced gender dualism, whilst some encouraged subversion of gender norms. I suggest that imaginative role play can provide an important way of working towards gender equity.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements

Introduction to thesis

Introducing gender discourses

Reception playground
2 girls turning long skipping rope, 3 girls jumping in, 2 more join.
Counting as they skip "1,2,3, go!"
Marsha "You gotta lift it up!" (to Ayla, who is turning one end of the rope rather ineffectually)
Girls taking turns jumping over rope.
Marsha starts chant "Ole, Ole, Ole," as they jump.
3 boys with hoods up, attacking mode, dash right into the skipping rope.
Lisa shouts "You move out of the way!"
Boys laugh and run on across playground and join a football game with 5 other boys."

This is a typical fieldnote taken from my observations of lunchtime play in a London state primary school. I frequently observed girls playing skipping games and boys attempting to disrupt the skipping games. The largest space in the playground was dominated by boys playing football. I rarely saw girls playing with footballs. In this thesis I will explore how and why young children in this early years setting usually played separately from each other.

Western philosophies, religions and cultures have been dominated by discourses of dualism, whereby the world and human activity have been interpreted in binary terms, through opposites such as good/evil, male/female, mind/body, reason/emotion. These dualisms frequently privilege one side of the binary, positioning the second part of the pair as Other, and inferior (Derrida, 1973). Women have been positioned as inferior Others within dualistic Western discourses (de Beauvoir, 1949; Paechter, 1998).

Feminist researchers including Davies (1989, 1998), Thorne (1993), Danby, (1998), Lowe (1998), Browne (2004) and Blaise (2005) have highlighted the constraints imposed on young children by dominant gender discourses that position girls and boys within a dualistic gender order. A central theme that emerges from

recent feminist research into gender is that educators need to examine the power relations involved in children's relationships (Browne, 2004; Renold, 2005; MacNaughton, 2005; George, 2007). My thesis is based on analysis of data obtained during two years fieldwork with young children in a London primary school. I aim to add to research that explores gender as multiple and relational by investigating the complexities of children's power relations and ways in which children learn about, negotiate and enact a range of femininities and masculinities within specific localities (Francis, 1998; Connolly, 1998, 2004; MacNaughton, 2000; Marsh, 2000; Renold, 2005; George, 2007).

Ofsted's[1] Report on the Foundation Stage in 144 settings (2007) draws heavily on the discourse of gender dualism. The Report states that girls 'chatter to themselves and others' and boys 'need to be physically active.' Boys are positioned as innately boisterous and physically active, in contrast to girls, who are positioned as naturally chatty, less active and more physically restrained. The report suggests that boys are not achieving as well as girls because practitioners are not taking sufficient account of the ways in which boys learn. The report states that many boys choose not to play with girls, and choose competitive raiding games involving physical gestures and running around whereas girls choose co-operative 'home corner' play. The report does not address the question of why children make these choices. I explore this question in my thesis by looking at how children are positioned within gender discourses and what they learn about the salience of gender. I examine where and when boys and girls interact with each other, and what happens when they do.

When I talk to early years educators and parents, they often tell me that they encourage boys and girls to choose activities freely, regardless of gender, but that

---

[1] Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education) Official government body for inspecting schools in UK.

most boys and girls 'naturally' have different interests and are essentially different. The danger of generalisations based on gender dualism is that they ignore differences between individual children. As in the 2007 Ofsted Report, they also often focus attention on the needs of boys, to the potential detriment of girls, by suggesting that special strategies are required to teach boys, whereas girls are doing fine. By suggesting that boys, as a group, are underachieving, the needs of girls and some boys are likely to be overlooked and discounted (Murphy and Elwood, 1998; Francis, 2000).

Key concepts

In this thesis I draw on feminist poststructuralist theories because they offer a way of moving beyond binary opposites of gender difference. Drawing on the work of Foucault (1978, 1980), I use the term 'discourse' to refer to social, institutional and emotional frameworks and practices through which humans make meanings of their experiences. I use the term 'discourse' to refer to a way of speaking, writing, interacting or thinking that is made up of particular 'given truths' that define what can and cannot be included, said or done (Paechter, 1998). Some discourses enable specific groups to exercise power in ways that benefit them, and others provide challenges to the status quo. Available discourses are often contradictory or conflicting, and they produce subjects within relations of power, who can resist or comply.

I draw on feminist poststructuralist theory in understanding 'gender' to be socially constructed in discourse. Following Paechter (2007) I use the term 'gender' to refer to the ways that individuals are positioned as male or female within power relations. We enact 'masculinities' and 'femininities' through our behaviours,

thoughts, practices and performances in specific social situations. I understand 'identity' to be the active engagement of individuals in constructing meanings about the self in interaction with others through discursive practices (MacNaughton, 2005; Paechter, 2007). Identity is not fixed, but is negotiated and developed over a lifetime, and it is fluid, multiple and relational (Weedon, 1987).

'Subjectivity' is the process whereby individuals take up different subject positions, and the range of subject positions available depends on the social relations of power operating within particular situations and discourses of difference, including gender, age, 'race', ethnicity, sexuality, class and ability (Weedon, 1987). I understand 'embodiment' to be the social process of bodily inscription whereby subjects are corporeally constituted in discourses, through conscious and unconscious thoughts, emotions and bodily performances (Weedon, 1987). Subjects' bodies are constituted as both objects and agents of practice (Connell, 1995).

I use the term 'space' to refer to embodied ways in which individuals inhabit and use places in social relations of power (Paechter, 1998). I conceptualize 'places' in terms of the social interactions across time/space which they tie together (Massey, 1994). Organisation of space has symbolic meanings which are invoked through social action (Bourdieu, 1977).

Autobiographical context

I have a specific feminist research agenda and I believe it is important to explain my research paradigm in relation to my own history, emotional investments and cultural context. Our perceptions about appropriate ways of being 'masculine' and 'feminine' have important consequences for how we live our lives. They affect how we classify, label and judge others and ourselves. As a feminist teacher, I was concerned to challenge ways that boys and girls are socialised by providing alternative role models and anti-sexist

materials. I drew on socialist and radical feminist ideas, based on my beliefs that reorganisation of social structures can result in greater equality between women and men, and that women's oppression by men is a continuing and significant feature of women's lives (Rich, 1980). I tried to prioritise girls' needs and counter some boys' dominance, although I was aware that my anti-sexist teaching did not prevent boys and girls from segregating themselves by sex, nor did it result in lasting changes in gendered behaviour. I also drew on liberal humanism, assuming that human beings can take responsibility for their own actions, using free will to achieve individual goals and identities. This assumption fails to take sufficient account of power relationships.

As a teacher, I was often faced with contradictory demands, juggling external demands that I teach obedience to the status quo with demands of my conscience that I should encourage children to question and resist. I sometimes took the expedient, easy way out, and endorsed the status quo. When I see other teachers doing this I remind myself how difficult it is to challenge orthodox pedagogies. Furthermore, my privileged position as a white middle class English woman no doubt compromises my understandings and actions, despite my best intentions.

As a volunteer in a preschool and in my role as grandparent, I began to think more about the emotional importance of gender. I observed how important our grandson's gender was to people, even before his birth. As a volunteer in preschool, I realised how important gender is to young children themselves, and observed how often they struggle to get their behaviour 'correct', even if it means they limit their activities. I began to explore the investments that people have in positioning themselves as 'masculine' and 'feminine', and began to understand how the learning and performance of these positions are bound up in relationships of power.

The narrative that I construct about my own history includes several key aspects of my developing identity that are important for my research. I was born and brought up as a girl child in a white middle class family. As an adult woman I identify myself as a lesbian feminist. I was a teacher and I enjoy being with children. In the following fieldnote from my MA research, I identify with Dee's positioning of herself as a 'good girl', recognising in her some of the pressures I felt myself as a girl child.

> *"Dee seems to worry a lot about being correctly positioned as a girl.*
> *BM "What do you like to play?"*
> *Dee "I share my toys with my sister and make sure my sister doesn't cry and I teach my sister and I am a good girl and my mummy and daddy say I'm a good girl."*
> *Dee told me it would be "bad" if she said she was a superhero "'cos superheroes is for boys... 'cos boys say dat all the time."*
> *I felt very upset when she said this, and I felt like crying when I played back the tape. I tried to suggest to her that she could choose a superhero role, but she just looked at me, as if to say, 'you have got to be joking'.*

As a child, I was often told I was a 'good girl' and I struggled to become this 'good girl' with all its contradictions and rules. Despite growing up in a loving family, 'being a good girl' for me involved trying to please other people, and denying my own feelings when they were not 'nice.' I wanted to do more research into gender identity because I am convinced that many young children are harmed by the limited options for behaviour which arise from perceptions of what is appropriate for them as girls and boys.

In my MA dissertation I explored preschool children's understandings of gender, and I wanted to investigate this further in a PhD thesis. My inspiration comes from feminist early years researchers including Bronwyn Davies, Debbie Epstein and Glenda MacNaughton.

Research questions

What discourses of femininity and masculinity do young children draw on in their early years of schooling?

How do young children embody and perform femininities and masculinities?

In order to explore these questions I designed my research study to explore how cohorts of young children in an early years setting were positioned, and how they positioned themselves within gender discourses. I examined how children's play practices and social interactions were affected by their understanding of themselves as girls and boys, in different social situations in Nursery and Reception classes. I observed ways that children learned about 'masculine' and 'feminine' behaviours, and how they experienced pleasure and power in their activities and relationships. I explored how children used fantasy, imaginative play and stories to explore gender constructs and gender identity. I considered how the development of children's gender identities related to the development of other aspects of identities, namely, 'race', ethnicity, sexuality, class, ability.

Outline of thesis

In Chapter 1 of my thesis I set out my theoretical framework, explaining how I use a Foucauldian understanding of local power/knowledge relations to analyse my data. I examine Foucault's theorization of power and resistance, his concepts of panoptic surveillance, and spirals of power and pleasure, and show how I relate this to my own research. I give examples of key feminist research that has used a Foucauldian framework to analyse young children's gender work. I then place my research within its historical context and outline the development of Western discourses of childhood, explaining my rationale for challenging the 'truth claims' of developmental

psychology. I give an account of the ascendancy of 'developmentally appropriate practice' in early years education and explain why I agree with reconceptualists that developmental discourses prevent gender equity work. I draw on Foucault (1977, 1978) to explore how schools are sites for the production of 'normal' children, where the regulatory practices of schooling operate to control children's movement and behaviours. I explain how I use communities of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Paechter, 2007) to theorize how young children become legitimate participants in constructing local practices of masculinity and femininity in my research settings. I explain my understanding of 'masculinities' and 'femininities' including how I use the term 'hegemonic masculinity', and I elaborate on key feminist research on multiple and relational masculinities and femininities. I outline key research that shows how children's gender identity develops in relation to 'race' and class and relate this to my research.

In Chapter 2 I elaborate on the key discourses that impact on the range of subject positions available to young children in my research setting. I discuss the ways in which discourses of gender dualism reproduce and reinforce gender differences and unequal gender relations and outline recent research that shows how young children use 'category maintenance work' to police gender boundaries. I discuss the impact of cognitive-developmental discourses, arguing that these take insufficient account of social contexts. I discuss how discourses of childhood innocence pathologise deviation from gender norms. I then explore how discourses of compulsory heterosexuality and heteronormativity permeate young children's development of masculinites and femininities. I consider how discourses of diversity often construct difference as a deficit and explain how this relates to my research setting. I discuss discourses of embodiment, outlining research that explores how

children learn to embody a range of masculinities and femininities in school. Finally I discuss the impact of discourses of resistance on children's range of subject positions, noting research that shows how difficult it is for children to disrupt and resist hegemonic gender norms.

In Chapter 3 I give an account of how I developed my research methodology and research methods to explore how young children in my research setting drew on specific discourses of masculinity and femininity. I explain the details of my research methods, the design of my study, and the details of my research setting. I give an account of my research dilemmas and ethical considerations. I discuss how my use of a feminist poststructuralist framework impacted on my research methodology, and I explain how I used tools of data analysis, deconstruction and discourse analysis. I examine issues of power in how I was positioned as an adult researcher working with young children and reflect on the ethical and practical issues that arose during my fieldwork.

In Chapter 4 I analyse data from my fieldwork project that shows how newcomers in my research setting learned to use play technologies, taking part as legitimate peripheral participants in playground games. I show how girls learned to play skipping games, and boys learned the practices associated with playing football, and how they became members of communities of practice of femininities and masculinities by taking part in these gendered play practices. I contrast this with analysis of data that shows that basketball is played by both girls and boys and but does not enable children to participate as peripheral members in football games. I show how use of play technologies had emotional and symbolic significance for the children and explore how use of play technologies involved children in complex gendered power relations.

In Chapter 5 I analyse data that shows how young children in my research setting learned to enact masculinities and femininities in specific spaces within the Nursery and Reception classes and playgrounds, and how they learned that some objects of knowledge are 'for boys' and some are 'for girls', drawing on discourses of gender dualism and often taking up oppositional gender positions. I analyse ways in which newcomers to school classes observed the local practices of more established pupils, learning to use key objects of knowledge and reproduce gendered behaviours. I show how boys learned to perform practices of hegemonic masculinity in 'battle' games, football and construction activities, and how girls learned practices of emphasised femininity and enacted practices that bolstered boys' power at their own expense. I document how children policed gender boundaries strictly. I show how schooling practices reinforced and encouraged practices of gender dualism and how staff emphasised gender differences and encouraged boys and girls to enact differentiated and heteronormative gender performances.

In Chapter 6 I discuss my data analysis that shows how children in my research settings engaged in gender 'borderwork'. I present an analysis of my data that shows how and where children explored gender boundaries, where they policed gender boundaries, where they engaged in play activities together, and where they crossed gender borders or experimented with play that involved positioning themselves beyond stereotypical gender roles. Firstly I demonstrate how gender borderwork often relates to other aspects of borderwork. I then discuss ways in which children positioned themselves as 'correctly' gendered and policed gender boundaries. I show how children enacted practices that kept boys and girls separate, showing how this was related to specific activities and spaces. I then discuss how some children crossed gender borders and discuss the difficulties they faced in resisting gender norms. I

discuss children's gender positionings in imaginative play. I then show how schooling practices encourage gender conformity. Finally I present data that shows boys and girls engaging in complex interactions and power relations with each other in play practices and I discuss children's spirals of power/pleasure, and heterosexual chasing games.

In Chapter 7 I summarise my key findings from my fieldwork study and explain how these findings relate to my research questions. I discuss how new children in my research setting learned to enact and embody discourses of gender dualism and how difficult it was for children to resist or transgress gender norms. Schooling practices reinforced and reproduced discourses of gender dualism. I then discuss the implications of my findings and make suggestions for further research.

Chapter 1

Learning 'masculinities' and 'femininities' within power/knowledge relations

"Power is everywhere, not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere" (Foucault, 1978:93).

Introduction

In this thesis I explore how young children are active participants in the creation of their own gender identities, positioning themselves, and being positioned within different and sometimes contradictory discourses (MacNaughton, 2000). By analysing the discourses within which they struggle to understand their world, I aim to examine how children experience gendered power, and how this shifts constantly over time and in different spaces. The meanings and practices of gender vary according to culture, 'race' and historical time. In contemporary Western society, differences in gender roles involve a power relation in which 'masculine' activities are often perceived as higher status than 'feminine' ones. Gender is seen as dimorphic, and requires compulsory heterosexuality (Connell, 1987, 2002). As feminist early childhood educators and researchers, we need to deconstruct gender in order to disrupt gendered power differences so that we can reconstruct something more equitable (Francis, 1998). In this chapter I discuss how young children learn to construct masculinities and femininities within local power/knowledge relations.

Although my focus is on gender identity, I aimed to consider the relational aspects of the development of children's identity. The concepts of 'race', ethnicity, class, sexuality, ability and gender are socially constructed and their meanings are reproduced and redefined within specific geographical and historical locations. The

children in the Nursery where I conducted my research came from 16 different ethnic groupings and 13 different languages were spoken in addition to English. My theoretical framework and data analysis aim to take account of the cultural diversity of the children's backgrounds and practices.

> "It is in honouring our diversities of gender, 'race', class, ability, sexuality, age, geography and language that social justice, democracy and equity become possibilities" (MacNaughton, 2005: 38).

I understand the development of social identities as an ongoing process of construction through intermeshing of different aspects of social relations, in specific historical contexts (Hall, 1992, 1996; Archer, 2003). Dimensions of gender, ethnicity, 'race', sexuality and class are relational, intertwined and combined, giving meaning to each other, and produced in specific lived situations. Power relations and inequity cannot be addressed by separating out different aspects of identity; rather it is important to consider them as relational (Gilroy, 1993; Mirza, 1992; Walkerdine et al, 2001; Robinson and Jones Diaz, 2006).

The dimension of power relations is crucial to an understanding of how racism operates between individuals and at an institutional level. 'Race' is a social construction that implies unequal power relations between different groups of people. When I use the term 'race' I will use Gaine and George's working definition, "a group of people who may share some physical characteristic to which social importance is attached", and the term 'racism' to refer to "belief that one 'race' is superior to others, coupled with power to put this belief into practice" (Gaine and George, 1999:5). I will use 'ethnicity' or 'ethnic group' to refer to a group of people who share certain aspects of culture, such as religion, language, and customs.

> "...ethnic groups are not biological, cultural or natural phenomena – they are loosely bounded, ever-shifting collectivities whose membership is subject to continual re/construction and contest" (Archer, 2003: 20).

In the following sections of this chapter I explain the theoretical framework of my thesis. I discuss how I draw on Foucauldian theory for my understanding of power/knowledge relations. I explain the historical context of my research, and how I position my research within pedagogies of early childhood education. I explain how I use communities of practice as a key concept in understanding how young children develop gender identities within power relations.

Power/knowledge relations

I draw upon Foucault's understandings of power and knowledge in my analysis of young children's gender constructs. Foucault (1977, 1978) conceives of power as both a productive and a repressive force, and argues that the study of local practices can show how power operates at specific moments in relations between individuals through the discourses that circulate.

> "It is in discourse that power and knowledge are joined together...Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it" (Foucault, 1978:100/101).

Foucault emphasises that power is exercised in micro situations, in interactions between individuals, and argues that where there is power, there is also resistance (Foucault, 1978).

Following Foucault, I understand power not as an exercise of force whereby one person or group makes others do something, but rather, power is omnipresent within networks of relationships, in struggles over how we give meanings to our lives, in how we are positioned and position ourselves within discourses. Institutionalised 'truths' are produced and reproduced in ways that govern and regulate us, through the organisation of fields of knowledge. For example, discourses of education,

psychology, and medicine regulate, classify, categorise and organise people in relation to a set of 'truths' about what is normal or abnormal, healthy or unhealthy. These 'truths' are maintained and reproduced partly through individuals' self-surveillance and self-correction to established norms of behaviour.

> "...there is no need for arms, physical violence, material constraints. Just a gaze. An inspecting gaze, a gaze which each individual under its weight will end up interiorising to the point that he is his own overseer, each individual thus exercising this surveillance over, and against himself" (Foucault, 1977:155).

Following Foucault, Bordo (2004) notes that power relations between men and women can be seen to be reproduced through self-normalisation to everyday practices of femininity and masculinity. For example diet and exercise regimes train the female body to be docile and obedient to certain cultural norms, giving individual women/girls feelings of being in control and powerful, whilst at the same time objectifying female bodies and positioning women as objects available for male pleasure (Bordo, 2004). In my data analysis I consider how young children enact practices of self-surveillance and self-correction.

Foucault emphasises that power relations are inseparable from other types of relationships (knowledge, sexual relationships, economic processes) and that "power is exercised from innumerable points, in the interplay of nonegalitarian and mobile relations" (Foucault, 1976:94). Foucault analyses specific types of discourse on sex, in their historic and spatial contexts, exploring how local power relations shape, and are themselves shaped, by discourses. Following Foucault, I start my analysis from local centres of power-knowledge and understand relations of power not as static; rather they are constantly shifting "matrices of transformations" (Foucault, 1976:97). Discourse can be an instrument and an effect of power, but also a point of resistance. Foucault sees resistance arising most productively at points where power relations are

most rigid and intense. The sexed body is a target of disciplinary power, and homosexuality is a site for resisting techniques of disciplinary power. Foucault's analysis of 18[th and] 19th century sexualities, particularly with regard to homosexuality, gives insights into the complex interplay between the production of subjects who are positioned within disciplinary regimes, and who are simultaneously resisting or reworking these positions. I discuss possibilities for resistance and subversion of norms in relation to development of gender identity and subjectivity in Chapter 2.

Foucault argues that some 19th century discourses such as the pedagogic report and medical examination apparently function to prohibit wayward or unproductive sexualities, but can be seen to function also as mechanisms with an impetus to both pleasure and power, evidenced in what Foucault graphically describes as "perpetual spirals of power and pleasure" (Foucault, 1976:45), for example, in relations between doctors and patients, parents and children, educators and students. Foucault demonstrates the complex power relationships involving, on the one hand, the pleasure that comes from exercising a power that watches, monitors and searches things out, as for example performed by a psychiatrist, and on the other hand, the pleasure that arises from evading, fooling, scandalising or resisting this kind of examination or interrogation.

> "These attractions, these evasions, these circular incitements have traced around bodies and sexes, not boundaries to be crossed, but perpetual spirals of power and pleasure" (Foucault, 1976:45).

In Chapters 5 and 6 I present findings that show how young children in my research are involved in spirals of power and pleasure, in their relationships with each other, and with adults in the setting.

Feminist educational researchers have drawn on Foucault's concepts of discourses, power and knowledge to theorise gendered power relations and to analyse

young children's gender interactions and discursive practices (Davies, 1989; Walkerdine, 1990; Epstein, 1997; MacNaughton, 2000). Walkerdine (1989) showed how young preschool boys were able to use a gender discourse of sexist objectification and harassment to enact a powerful position as males, in relation to a girl in their class, and to their female teacher.

"Miss Baxter, show off your bum. Show your knickers your bum off" (Walkerdine, 1989:65).

Walkerdine reported that the teacher merely told the boys not to be silly and later described their behaviour as normal for their age. Although the boys were positioned as less powerful in relation to their teacher within the discourses of schooling and childhood, they were able to position themselves as powerful in relation to the teacher as a woman. Walkerdine's work emphasises how young children are positioned in different ways within different discourses and how developmentally appropriate discourses can lead teachers to trivialise oppressive sexist language and behaviours.

Davies (1989) showed how young children learn that people are either male or female through discursive practices and use knowledge about signifiers such as dress and activities to position themselves correctly as boys and girls. She showed how the children in her study negotiated power relations, undertook gender category maintenance work, and negotiated contradictory gender discourses. She explored the importance of children's constructions of narratives and fantasy play in creating gendered identities and she argued that contradictions "provide the creative cutting edge with which individual identities are formed" (Davies, 1989:29). MacNaughton (2000, 2005) drew on poststructuralist Foucauldian theory to deconstruct discourses of early childhood education and analysed young children's gendered interactions in Australian preschools. She explored the range of masculine and feminine discursive positions available to children in specific preschool settings. My research aims to add

to feminist research that explores how young children position themselves within power/knowledge relations. In the next sections I explain the historical context of my research and explore how dominant discourses of pedagogy and childhood impact on how children learn masculinities and femininities in the early years of schooling.

Historical context

I place my research within the growing field of childhood studies that understands childhood as a social construction, and children as active social agents (James and Prout, 1997; Mayall, 2002; Kehily, 2004).

> "…the immaturity of children is a biological fact of life but the ways in which it is understood and made meaningful is a fact of culture" (James and Prout, 1997:7).

There is a plethora of discourses of childhood that serve a variety of different purposes (Mayall, 2002). The notion of a stage of life termed 'childhood' has had different meanings ascribed to it at different historical times (James and Prout, 1997). These include discourses of 'natural' childhood where children were seen variously as essentially either innocent, or evil, or as 'tabula rasa', in need of nurture, training, discipline or control, in order to become 'civilised' adults.

Conflicting and contradictory discourses of childhood developed in the 18th and 19th century that reflected and reproduced the values and practices of the European middle classes. Girlhood, in particular, was often represented by associations with Nature and vulnerability, drawing on Romantic discourses (Walkerdine, 2004). Childhood has been seen as a stage of life when children require care and protection due to their innocence and the discourse of the innocent child continues to be influential in educational and social policies and institutional practices (Renold, 2005; Robinson and Jones Diaz, 2006). I will consider this discourse of innocence in more

detail in Chapter 2 in relation to contemporary discourses of childhood and sexuality. In my thesis I draw on social constructions of childhood that perceive childhoods as periods of lived experience, rather than just preparations for adulthood, and constructions of children that emphasise that they are persons in their own right, competent social players with their own distinctive cultures (Mayall, 2002; George, 2007).

Developmental psychology has been particularly influential in educational research, including research into gender identity, and much research is still carried out using this perspective. Early childhood pedagogy is also strongly influenced by theories from developmental psychology, and it is important to set these in their historical context as I will be challenging the 'truth claims' of some of these theories (Cannella, 1997; MacNaughton, 2000; Robinson and Jones Diaz, 2006). Modern British developmental psychology became established during the late 19th century to answer questions related to evolutionary theory, anthropology and philosophy.

> "The study of infants in the mid-nineteenth century, along with that of 'primitives' and of natural history, was motivated by the quest to discover the origins and specificities of mind, that is, the human adult mind...A set of equivalences was elaborated whereby the conception of the child was related to the 'savage', who, in turn, was seen as akin to the neurotic" (Burman, 1994:10).

This discourse presupposed a hierarchical concept of development, with an assumption that there is a 'normal' path of human development based on biological principles. The majority of 19th and 20th century research into young children was dominated by approaches taken from natural sciences. Children were seen as in the process of becoming adults, progressing through observable stages of adaptation to the environment. Children and 'primitive peoples' were both seen by 19th century western scientists as intellectually immature, and were studied through observational

methods that purported to be objective. These studies privileged rationality, which was seen as a masculine attribute. These 'scientific' discourses were used to promote political agendas that perpetuated and attempted to justify inequalities and oppression based on class, 'race' and gender (Robinson and Jones Diaz, 2006). One example of this is how gendered practices of scientific research into children's development excluded women/mothers on the grounds that they were too emotional and insufficiently objective to investigate children's patterns of behaviour (Burman, 1994).

Developmental psychology in the late 19th and 20th century was made possible by the clinic and the nursery school, where large numbers of children could be observed and measured (Burman, 1994). Controlled experiments allowed researchers to use standardisation and analysis to construct norms based on average performances of children in tests and examinations at certain ages. These results were then used to assess other children by comparing them to the established norms. Research in developmental psychology has focused on the individual child, attempting to document and understand how children develop through a sequence of stages. The highest stage in this progression is understood to be the use of abstract reasoning.

> "Developmental psychology is wholly predicated on the notion of childhood's 'naturalness' and on the necessity, normality and desirability of development and constructive change through 'growth'. Children are thus routinely constructed as partially rational – that is, in the process of becoming rational" (Jenks, 2004:79).

This developmental discourse of childhood sees childhood as a preparation for adulthood (Walkerdine, 2004). Theories from developmental psychology are used to establish norms which lay claim to universal application.

> "Although most of these theories have been developed from limited populations, often white and male, they are expected to apply to all. Those

who do not follow the appropriate path are treated as problems, not for the theory, but for themselves and /or society; their trajectories are seen as pathological" (Paechter, 1998:58).

Developmental psychology's classification of individuals and groups continues to be used to maintain, promote and justify oppressive political agendas and institutional practices that blame children, working class families, and mothers (Burman, 1994). Walkerdine (1999) argues that developmental psychology has constructed gendered models of normality, whereby some children are pathologised if they do not appear to conform to certain gender norms. I discuss this in more detail in Chapter 2, in relation to discourses of age and gender.

Pedagogies of early childhood education

Piaget's theories were taken up and developed in the 20th century as central tenets of western early childhood education. In Piaget's stages of development (1977), the child is seen as an egocentric individual, an object of study, progressing through measurable stages of age-related cognitive development. Piaget's child is supposedly gender-neutral, but actually has stereotypical masculine attributes, such as playfulness, creativity, and rule-breaking (Walkerdine, 1988, 2004). Child-centred pedagogy drew on the work of Piaget, arguing that a child's learning takes place through individual discovery. Theories from developmental psychology were adopted as the central tenets of western early childhood education, enshrined in 'developmentally appropriate practice' (often referred to as DAP) (MacNaughton, 2000). The individual child is seen as 'naturally' progressing through stages of development, increasingly able to use reasoning. The task of the (usually female) teacher is seen as fostering and nurturing this 'natural' development, by providing appropriate stimulating play experiences to enable individual children to progress

through the stages. Teachers are required to engage in constant observation of individual children in order that they should be able to provide for individual children's cognitive and emotional needs. The child centred discourse has a model of a male child as an active learner, engaged in free experimentation and discovery. The (female) teacher is positioned as attentive and nurturing, at risk of harming the 'natural' development of her charges if she fails to facilitate their progress (Paechter, 1998).

Piaget's hierarchy of cognitive progression is inadequate to explain aspects of children's emotional and social development. Subsequent psychological theory and research has explored children's understanding of social relationships and demonstrated that young children engage in meaning-making and engage with the emotions and behaviours of others as active social players from infancy (Dunn, 1998; Trevarthen, 1998). Donaldson (1978) demonstrated that Piaget did not take adequate account of the importance of context in assessing children's thinking, demonstrating that children as young as three appreciate others' viewpoints and reason deductively. Vygotsky (1978) showed that behaviour is culturally contextualised, learnt through adult scaffolding and modelling, with children as active participants. Bruner (1986) argued that the scaffolding of early adult-child interaction begins through adults attributing intentional communication to young children. Rogoff (1990) demonstrated that children learn within specific social contexts, through guided participation in cultural activities.

The discourse of 'developmentally appropriate practice' continues to underpin western early childhood pedagogy (Grieshaber and Cannella, 2001). The term DAP was formalised in the USA with the publication of the National Association for the Education of Young Children's booklet on Developmentally Appropriate Practice

(DAP) (Bredekamp, 1987). This enshrined Piaget's principles of using individual play as a central means of encouraging children's learning, with the teacher's role to be a provider of appropriate materials and concrete experiences to enable children to progress through developmental stages by self-directed experimentation. Teachers were encouraged to undertake ongoing observations of individual children, with the goal of providing age and stage appropriate experiences. These principles were also adopted as central tenets of early childhood education in Australia and UK. Using Piaget as a guide to good practice made adult intervention in children's learning problematic, and gave no framework for examining children's power relations. Schools continue to function as sites for the production of a certain kind of unitary, rational subject (Walkerdine, 1999). Child development knowledge and DAP has become a 'regime of truth' that regulates and governs the ways that are considered 'correct' in the organisation of young children's learning. Developmental 'truths' are cited to normalise, classify and regulate children in early years settings, and it is very difficult for early years educators to challenge DAP (Blaise, 2005; MacNaughton, 2005). I found that staff in my research setting adhered firmly to these DAP principles, and I discuss the problems this posed for gender equity in Chapters 5, 6 and 7.

'Reconceptualists' in early years education have challenged DAP principles, arguing that DAP has contributed to social inequality and injustice by ignoring sexism, racism and issues of (dis)ability, class and sexuality (Robinson and Jones Diaz, 2006). Some 'reconceptualists', including Cannella (1997), argue that DAP institutionalises white, male, middle class systems of morality, with class-based and differentiated curriculum goals, privileging a mono-cultural approach and ignoring issues of social justice. Working class children are labelled as deficient because of

inadequate home backgrounds. I agree with MacNaughton when she argues that these attempts to impose so-called universal norms amounts to a form of violence.

"Early childhood educators who reproduce and act on these supposedly universal developmental norms are committing a form of violence that privileges cultural homogeneity and marginalises cultural diversity" (MacNaughton, 2005:37).

Within discourses of developmentally appropriate practice in contemporary English education, children's development is controlled through the teaching of the National Curriculum. DAP discourses operate alongside a discourse that sees early childhood education as a time of training and preparation for formal schooling and the 'serious' adult world of work. Children are taught to use their minds and bodies in very specific ways, often privileging cognitive development over emotional development (Burman, 1994). The Foundation Stage goals emphasise the development of rational thought, independence and formal skills. Educators are expected to intervene to regulate children's behaviour to ensure that these goals are met. DAP discourses emphasise the importance of child-centred learning contexts, whereby individual children are encouraged to explore materials independently and develop concepts through 'free play' and discovery. The principles of DAP are often cited as reasons for non-intervention in children's 'free play'. Issues of social justice are often not seen as being a central part of good early years practice, because of the emphasis on allowing children to engage in 'free play'. Focusing on individual child development and ignoring gendered power relations results in the perpetuation of inequalities and reproduction of oppressive hegemonic practices (MacNaughton, 2000; Blaise, 2005). As MacNaughton argues, practitioners need to ask what children in their setting are 'free' to do, which children are able to make choices, and who is excluded from various activities. I discuss this in relation to discourses of diversity in

Chapter 2 and I examine the impact of discourses of developmentally appropriate practice and gender in my research setting in Chapters 6 and 7.

The school as a site of normalisation

Drawing on Foucault, I will argue that schools are sites of normalisation; specifically schools are sites for the construction and production of 'normal' children. This has important implications for how children are positioned within gender discourses. Children in school are encouraged to conform to norms of behaviour, their minds and bodies are regulated, disciplined and controlled, and they are subject to constant surveillance and assessment (Foucault, 1977; Nespor, 1997). Paechter (2007) explains how Foucault (1977) developed the concept of panoptic surveillance from Bentham's design of a model prison, the Panopticon. Bentham's prison was designed to instil good behaviour in prisoners by placing guards in a central darkened watch tower, and prisoners in lighted cells, so that prisoners knew that they could be being watched at any moment. The idea of this was that prisoners would learn to internalise good behaviours and police themselves, so that there would be no need for heavy surveillance. Foucault develops this concept of surveillance, showing how panoptic mechanisms of surveillance permeate social relations through this "disciplinary modality of power" (Foucault, 1977:216). One group of people exert a disciplinary gaze upon another to induce conformity and regulate behaviours.

The school, as a physical space, provides contexts for practices and processes that 'take place' within it (Gordon and Lahelma, 1996:306). Spaces are designated for different purposes, and decisions are made about the location and movement of bodies in specific areas of the school. Teachers are expected to control children's movement and teach them to sit still, be quiet, and listen attentively in class. The

organisation of school buildings, classrooms and teaching arrangements make it possible for teachers to engage in surveillance of pupils. An example of this in my research setting is the assembly hall where children are seated in rows facing the Head Teacher, with form teachers positioned at the end of rows of children, so that all children are under surveillance. Similarly, all children in Nursery and Reception are required to sit on a carpet facing the teacher for periods of instruction, all within the gaze of the teacher. As Connolly (1998) notes, this kind of spatial organisation enables teachers to rely on self-regulation as pupils do not know when the teacher is looking specifically at them. The Head Teacher's gaze from the front of the hall, or teacher's gaze from the front of the carpet, their naming of individuals who are not paying attention, and occasional public humiliation of individuals who are misbehaving all serve to demonstrate to all children that their behaviour is being monitored.

Shilling emphasises the power relations inherent in spatial practices of schooling, arguing that the organisation of school space "reflects the societal and legal rules which view children as subordinate to adults" (Shilling, 1991:32). Foucault (1977) uses the term 'bio-power' to describe forms of social control that focus on the body. Ethnographic researchers including Renold, (2005), Connolly (2004) and Nespor (2000) have explored how body-reflexive practices of girls and boys are constrained by the ways that schooling regulates bodily expression and movement through space. Adults in school often cite bodily control as an indicator of maturity. Researchers including Swain (2003) and Connolly (2004) have examined how institutionalised practices of schooling often use techniques of discipline, surveillance and classification to regulate and control the ways in which children move and use their bodies, attempting to produce 'docile bodies.' Connolly (2004)

found that teachers' perceptions of discipline were gendered, as they expected boys to be more disruptive, and girls to be more passive.

The regulation of bodies in school needs to be seen in a wider historical and political context. British elementary schools for working class children in the nineteenth century functioned as part of the tightening of bodily control and processes of 'individuation' whereby the body was seen as separate from the mind (Shilling, 1993). Nespor (1997) argues that schooling aims to produce a particular kind of ideal of adult embodiment, based on replacing the "spaces of the body" with the "body in space". Nespor sees schooling as a process during which children are shaped into detached observers rather than actors in space, by 'civilising' bodies through practices such as expecting silence, walking in line, sitting still.

> "Inside- the- body becomes the space of control and intellect, and the exterior of the body, its extensions and emissions, become uncontrolled spaces, celebrated by kids and suppressed by adults" (Nespor, 1997:121).

Different teaching styles can affect the ways in which the same space is experienced and used by children. Power has multiple modalities, including authority, domination, persuasion, coercion and seduction (Allen, 2003). This can be seen in teaching styles. Pedagogic practices can open up classroom spaces for learning, by encouraging movement in the search for knowledge, and collaborative learning, through a 'seductive pedagogy' (Fielding, 2000). Alternatively, a 'reductive pedagogy' can close off spaces for learning, forcing individualistic learning, and focusing on classroom order and control. Fielding (2000) gives examples of these styles from his ethnographic research, showing how teachers and children used different body postures in different lessons, depending upon the teaching style. He maps the geographies of one year 5 girl, Rebecca. He shows how girls react to one teacher's loud, formal controlling style by removing themselves for example to the

toilet, and are reprimanded for talking when they are trying to collaborate. I consider the impact of the organisation of space and teaching styles on the children's development of gender constructs in my research setting in Chapters 5 and 6.

Children's movements are regulated in school, so they have to be in certain places at certain times, and they are expected to use their bodies in approved ways that convey that they are sensible diligent pupils. Children are taught how to embody and perform the role of school pupil. Their understanding of this role is shaped by the educational and social discourses and discursive practices of the school. This in turn is shaped by discourses and relations of power that circulate beyond the school and impact upon the pedagogic practices that occur within the school. Foucault traces the practices of specific institutions, including hospitals and prisons, showing how power/knowledge relations are interrelated and how 'regimes of truth' are developed with regard to what is deemed 'normal' at any time. This genealogical method has been used to consider how norms and 'regimes of truth' are established and contested within early years settings (MacNaughton, 2005). Although pedagogic messages about how to become a successful pupil may be presented as though they are 'gender neutral', there are many implicit messages that suggest to children that they should behave in different ways according to whether they are a boy or a girl.

I document in Chapter 5 and 6 how panoptic surveillance and techniques of control are used in my research Nursery/Reception to persuade boys and girls that certain ways of behaving are necessary for them to become successful members of school pupil communities of practice. These techniques of control are presented to the children as being in their best interests, although they form a rigid system of social control. Children do sometimes resist, but most of the time, staff do not need to impose sanctions, because most young children, boys and girls, are eager to please the

adults in the setting, and want to become successful school pupils. They are therefore

willing to accept the lack of autonomy of movement, restricted bodily freedom and

rules for behaviour, even when these are at odds with their home experiences.

Communities of practice of femininities and masculinities

Feminist ethnographic research has produced rich analyses of children's play

practices and relations with each other, showing that children often construct gender

as oppositional (Lowe, 1998; Francis 1998; Danby, 1998; Jordan, 1995; Reay, 2001;

Renold, 2005; Blaise, 2005). Researchers including Lloyd and Duveen (1992) and

Browne (2004) have shown how young children choose same-sex playmates and

engage in category maintenance work to uphold the dominant styles of femininity and

masculinity available to them.

Walkerdine (2004) argues that there is a need for micro-analysis of the practices

and discourses through which childhood is produced that explores how people of

particular ages become subjects within specific local practices. The study of

communities of practice of femininities and masculinities (Paechter, 2003a, 2003b,

2007) provides a theoretical framework for examining the complex ways in which

children are involved in constructing their own local cultures. In my thesis I draw on

Paechter's theoretical work in order to explore how young girls and boys become

members of local communities of practice of masculinities and femininities within my

research settings.

A community of practice can be defined as a group engaging in a shared

practice. The term was introduced by Lave and Wenger (1991) to describe the

learning of apprentices, and further developed by Wenger (1998). Lave and Wenger

emphasise that learning takes place in social contexts through "legitimate peripheral

participation". Apprentices develop knowledge about practices, including social practices, and develop their own expertise, through observing more experienced members, and through gradually being permitted to take a more central part in the activities of the group. They begin their apprenticeship by making minor contributions to the practices of the group, and, if they are successful in learning relevant skills and knowledge, they gradually progress to become full participants. As new members are inducted, the community itself is constantly reconstructed through the participation of individuals within the group.

> "...collective learning results in practices that reflect both the pursuit of our enterprises and the attendant social relations. These practices are thus the property of a kind of community created over time by the sustained pursuit of a shared enterprise" (Wenger, 1998:45).

Paechter (2003a, 2003b, 2007) applies these ideas to masculinities and femininities. She argues that children learn what it is to be masculine and feminine through legitimate peripheral participation in communities of femininity and masculinity of older children and adults. At the same time, children take part in communities of practice of girls and boys of a similar age to themselves, as full participants. Boys can been seen as apprentice men, and girls can be seen as apprentice women, learning through observation and peripheral participation what it means to be a man or a woman in the local communities of practice in which they live.

> "...the learning of what it means to be male or female within a social configuration results in shared practices in pursuit of the common goal of sustaining particular localised masculine and feminine identities...Practice is also not fixed, but fluid; the practices of a particular community are constantly being shifted, renegotiated and reinvented." (Paechter, 2003a:71).

To be a full participant in a community of practice, Wenger argues that core meanings must be shared, there must be involvement in a shared repertoire of performances,

there must be a contribution to an ongoing practice, and there must be accepted markers of membership. Wenger understands a community of practice as locally based. He argues that identities are developed and negotiated through the practices with which we engage and that mutual engagement, joint enterprise and a shared repertoire become central to our identity as we become participants in communities of practice. Paechter suggests that the most important aspect of this for communities of femininities and masculinities is the shared repertoire aspect of identity. She argues that in order to be accepted as 'fully masculine' or 'fully feminine' within a particular social group, it is important to perform and display specific characteristics and behaviours.

> "Identity can in this way be seen as being related to competent and convincing performance of a particular role; it is defined not just internally by the individual but externally by the group's inclusive or exclusive attitude to that individual" (Paechter, 2003a:74).

Wenger sees individual identity as being developed through our participation in various communities of practice.

> "Our various forms of participation delineate pieces of a puzzle we put together rather than sharp boundaries between disconnected parts of ourselves. An identity is thus more than a single trajectory; instead it should be viewed as a nexus of multimembership" (Wenger, 1998:158-159)

Paechter (2003a) applies this to the way that individuals become members of different overlapping communities of practice of femininities or masculinities, and points out that these identities are just one aspect of our sense of self. Furthermore, Wenger understands identity as a learning trajectory, as a 'work in progress', as temporally situated, and constantly reworked within communities of practice. Paechter (2007) argues that identities can also be locational, so that new identities are developed as individuals move from one institution to another, for example when children move

from Nursery to school. Children adapt their behaviours according to what they perceive to be 'correct' in different situations.

As Hatcher (1995) points out, it is important to study how children actively construct their own cultures, but there is also a need to theorise the relationship between the worlds of children and adult cultures, by exploring the ways that children's cultures are shaped by adult discourses. Communities of practice, again, provide a framework for this. Girls and boys learn about gender by participating as peripheral, and later as full members of children's communities of practice. They also participate as legitimate peripheral members in adult communities of practice (Paechter, 2003a, 2003b, 2007). Paechter (2003a, 2003b, 2007) emphasises power/knowledge relations in her work on communities of practice of femininities and masculinities. The naming of a baby as a boy or girl at birth places the child within a particular community of practice, and this performative naming results in differential treatment and expectations (Butler, 1993; Paechter, 2007). Children are seen from birth as legitimate peripheral participants in local communities of practice of femininities and masculinities. Consequently, certain behaviours are encouraged, ignored, praised or emphasised, depending on whether the child is a boy or a girl. As a child learns they are a boy or a girl, they also learn that this positions them actually, and potentially, within different power/knowledge relations and this relates to aspects of gender, class, 'race', age, ethnicity, and sexuality (Paechter, 2007).

Paechter (2007) applies the concept of panoptic surveillance to communities of practice of masculinities and femininities, arguing that members exert a disciplinary gaze on each other, and this encourages conformity to the gender norms of the group. Paechter (2007) suggests that panoptic surveillance is particularly important in early childhood communities of practice of masculinity and femininity, as it affects the way

in which newcomers learn to engage in practices as legitimate peripheral participants. This has important implications for my data analysis, and I consider how children in my research setting were regulated by adult surveillance, and by classmates in Chapters 5 and 6. In the next section I discuss the importance of gendered power/ knowledge relations in the development of masculinities and femininities.

'Masculinities' and 'femininities'.

As Paechter argues (2007), Western Anglophone 20th century writers used 'sex' as a fixed term relating to physical bodily characteristics denoting male or female assignment, and 'gender' to refer to a person's attributes of masculinity or femininity. As Paechter points out, this distinction is problematically dualistic, as it suggests that questions of identity are not related to bodies. Furthermore, Paechter (2007) shows how 'sex' and 'gender' have been used in compulsory correspondence so that the performative naming of a baby's sex becomes also a naming of their gender. In this thesis, I use the term 'sex' to refer to children's assigned gender label of boy/girl. I use the term 'gender' to refer to the ways that children are positioned as male or female within power/knowledge relations.

The ways in which an individual can 'do' boy or girl are related to the 'sex' that they were assigned at birth, and to their material body. However, gender is not fixed by the sex assigned; but rather, gender is a contested social category that is open to cultural change (Butler, 2004; Robinson and Jones Diaz, 2006). As Paechter demonstrates (2007), biological processes are themselves social constructions, and whilst bodily characteristics are important factors in the construction of masculinities and femininities, they do not determine children's gendered positions. Paechter argues (2007) that children are treated differently by adults according to the 'sex' they are

assigned at birth, and this has far reaching consequences for children's understanding of themselves as male or female, and on their social behaviours, their physical development and even the structure of their developing brains.

Following Butler (2004) and Paechter (2007), I understand 'masculinities' and 'femininities' to mean the ways in which we 'do' boy/girl, man/woman, throughout our lifetimes, by demonstrating through actions, thoughts, speech, and bodily gestures our understanding of ourselves as male and female. As Paechter argues (2006), masculinity and femininity are often constructed in a dualistic relationship to each other, positioning femininity as a lack, an absence of masculinity. She suggests that we need to pay attention to the multiple constructions of 'masculinities' and 'femininities', emphasizing the variation of possible individual embodiments. This allows for men/women and boys/girls to position themselves in a variety of masculine and feminine ways.

As Paechter (2007) argues, we rework and reconstruct our ideas and feelings about our masculinity and femininity in response to whom and what we identify with, learning and enacting various masculinities and femininities in different places and at different times.

> "A person's masculinity or femininity is not innate, is not natural, but instead is something that is learned, constantly reworked and reconfigured, and enacted to the self and others" (Paechter, 2007:14).

Paechter (2007) argues that masculinities and femininities are active states, representing group ideas about what it means to be male or female within a particular society.

Hegemonic masculinities

I use the concept of 'hegemonic masculinity' as a key term in my analysis of children's interactions. The concept of hegemonic masculinity was developed by Connell (1987, 2002) drawing on Gramsci's analysis of class relations in Italy. 'Hegemony' refers to a social ascendancy of certain groups that is achieved through cultural processes and institutions, rather than just by use of violence or force. Hegemony is maintained and reproduced by structuring discourse in such a way as to ensure that unequal power relations within the status quo are taken for granted and understood as 'natural' and inevitable. Hegemonic masculinity refers to discourses of dominant masculinity that position some men, and all women, as subordinate inferior Others.

> "The forms of femininity and masculinity constituted at this level are stylized and impoverished. Their interrelation is centred on a single structural fact, the global dominance of men over women" (Connell, 1987:183).

Discourses often delineate 'ideal' types of dominant masculinity, rather than ways that actual men live their lives and specific ways of performing masculinity achieve dominance in particular cultural settings.

Connell (1987) argues that hegemonic masculinity is always constructed in relation to subordinated masculinities as well as in relation to women. She emphasises that hegemony does not mean total cultural dominance, so that other ways of performing masculinity are not eliminated; rather they are subordinated. Subordinated masculinities do not, themselves, need to be clearly defined, as a key way of achieving hegemony sometimes consists of preventing alternatives from gaining cultural definition and recognition, for example by confining them to ghettos. Local hegemonies may be achieved by preventing other forms of masculinity from being recognised as valid alternatives (Connell, 1987).

Connell (1995) argues that men can take advantage of the 'patriarchal dividend', which is the surplus of power and resources that is potentially available to men, worldwide. This patriarchal dividend gives men a vested interest in maintaining unequal gender relations. Connell describes ways in which hegemonic masculinities must always be defended, and re-enacted, through the operation of power in institutions, social and sexual practices. She shows how hegemonic masculinity operates at all levels of social relations, including objectification of women's bodies.

"The power of heterosexual men in a patriarchal system makes it possible to treat women as objects in a way that not only depersonalizes desire but practically dismembers their bodies" (Connell, 2002:92).

Connell argues that a central feature of contemporary hegemonic masculinity is that it is heterosexual, and homosexuality is a key form of subordinated masculinity. Gender and desire are constructed in heterosexual terms, with heterosexuality positioned as the norm, against which other sexual relationships are constructed as Other, inferior, deviant (Epstein and Johnson, 1994; Paechter, 1998; Kehily, 2001). I explore discourses of compulsory heterosexuality and heteronormativity in more detail in Chapter 2.

Following Connell, Paechter argues

"The key hegemonic force in the operation of gendered power/knowledge relations is the understanding of difference as 'natural' and therefore inevitable" (Paechter, 2007:44).

Paechter argues that if gender differences are accepted as 'natural', and innate, then the unequal power/knowledge relations that are embedded in these differences are also seen as inevitable. Shared assumptions about 'natural' gender differences support hegemonic masculinity and make it difficult to sustain resistance and develop discourses that promote gender equity. I discuss this in relation to my own research in Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7.

Hegemonic forms of masculinity take different forms in different cultural contexts. The concept of hegemonic masculinity is useful because it focuses on how gendered power relations operate at micro and macro levels. However, it is important to examine hegemonic masculinities in specific communities of practice in order to avoid essentialising and stereotyping 'masculine' behaviours by suggesting that they are universal or immutable (Paechter, 2007). Buchbinder (1994) emphasises that the terms 'masculine' and 'feminine' are often used as though their meanings are fixed and permanent, whereas they depend on historical, political, social and cultural attitudes and practices. 'Masculine' and 'feminine' behaviours are learned; it is what people do that gets them acknowledged by others as being correctly positioned as male or female, within different contexts, and this in turn, affects how they feel about themselves as boys/girls, men/women. There are certain 'taken-for-granted' positions that reinforce and confirm what people think they already know about masculinity, such as it is manly to be physically strong, that 'real' men are heterosexual, or that men 'naturally' tend to be violent.

> "Access to power may be correlated with such factors as physical build and strength, sexual orientation and prowess (even if only rumoured), social class and advantage, race of the individual, and so on"
>
> (Buchbinder, 1994:33).

The relative positions of men within the 'pecking order' are determined by men, through the attitude and behaviours of other men, regulated by the circulation of dominant discourses. The rules for dominant masculinity are mostly learned through observation and imitation rather than direct instruction. Buchbinder (1994) calls the competition between males the 'Masculinity Stakes', drawing attention to the way that in patriarchal societies, only men can confer masculinity, although women can confirm it. This has important consequences for young boys, in that they have to work

out how to behave in order to belong to a male community of practice, and they must compete if they want to achieve a dominant position. To compete, they need to figure out what 'objects of knowledge' and physical attributes are valued within the group, and find ways of exercising power over others to achieve status. Some boys reject or refuse to take part in the 'Masculinity Stakes', by embodying alternative masculinities, but this carries the risk of exclusion and public humiliation from peers and older males. Groups of men and boys who define and dominate hegemonic masculinities position those who do not conform as not only subordinate, but often not 'properly' masculine at all (Connell, 1995).

Researchers including Swain (2003) and Paechter (2007) have documented how boys often learn that legitimate participation in communities of masculinity confers considerable benefits, and frequently seek to enact and reproduce local hegemonic practices of masculinity such as display of skills and knowledge about sport. Furthermore, boys' constructions of racialised masculinities are often underpinned by discourses of 'natural' biological gender differences. For example, Archer (2003) explores how a group of teenage Muslim boys construct a 'local' hegemonic masculinity

> "...by associating Muslim masculinity with power, privilege, 'being the boss', hardness, and hyper-sexuality. They also drew on specific racialized/religious discourses through which they constructed themselves as active free agents who were responsible for controlling Muslim girls" (Archer, 2003:86).

Researchers including Swain, (2003), Browne, (2004), and Renold, (2005) have documented how groups of boys scorn girls and stigmatise boys who perform anything connected to femininity, by 'Othering' girlishness and distancing themselves from it. Renold (2005) notes how some boys attempt to resist hegemonic masculine

practices by drawing on misogynistic discourses. Paechter explains why it is so important for boys to distance themselves from practices of femininity.

> "Because masculine-marked forms of knowledge convey and confer actual power on those who "master" them, it becomes important for boys (both for themselves and to help sustain hegemonic social forms) to claim privileged access to this knowledge, and hence this power, and to deny them to their female peers" (Paechter, 2003a:71).

Paechter (2007) argues that it is vitally important for gender differences to be seen as 'natural', and taken-for-granted, so that local hegemonic masculine power relations can be preserved and reproduced. This is particularly pertinent to my research, as I was exploring how young children were positioned, and positioned themselves within gender discourses available to them.

Femininities

Connell (1987) argues that there is no form of hegemonic femininity in contemporary societies, as femininities are constructed as inferior Others in a dualistic relationship with hegemonic masculinities. Paechter (1998, 2006) emphasizes that hegemony supports prevailing power relations through dominant discourses that take the status quo for granted. Differences in power relations between men and women, boys and girls, are often masked, or seen as 'natural', and so go unchallenged. Practices of hegemonic masculinity give men/boys access to positions of power so that hegemonic masculinities are reproduced in relation to relatively powerless femininities.

Connell (1987) uses the term 'emphasized femininity' to describe forms of femininity that comply with men's subordination of women, emerging in practices that stress that women should be compliant, nurturing and empathetic in their dealings with men. She defines other forms of femininity as marked by complex strategies for resistance, non-compliance and limited cooperation with women's subordination.

Connell notes that 'emphasized femininity' is maintained by preventing other models of femininity from gaining cultural recognition.

Feminist research has documented how young girls are frequently positioned within discourses of heterosexualised femininities in relation to heterosexual hegemonic masculinities (Ali, 2003; Renold, 2005; Blaise, 2005). Researchers including Reay (2001) Browne (2004) and Renold (2005) document how girls often resist being positioned as less powerful than boys, and are often more willing to engage in activities associated with masculinity, compared to boys who are less willing to be associated with anything they perceive to be feminine.

It is difficult for girls to position themselves in ways that do not reinforce hegemonic masculinity. Researchers working with children aged 7 to 11 in primary schools have documented oppositional gender encounters where children explore and contest hegemonic gendered power relations (Thorne, 1993; Grugeon, 1993; Reay, 2001; Bhana, 2005; Renold, 2005). Thorne (1993) documents ritual episodes of cross-gender chasing, invasions and heterosexual teasing in USA elementary school playgrounds that evoke oppositional dualism and an exaggerated hegemonic view of gender difference. She observes that this oppositional play can also allow for participants to exaggerate and even mock gender dichotomies and hegemonic power relations, and enable less powerfully positioned children to seize power, albeit briefly.

Grugeon (1993) documents many instances of English Primary girls' playground behaviour where they attempt to retaliate against boys' domination of physical space and resist boys' dominating presence through games, chants and rhymes that position boys as less powerful, or even ridiculous. She cites girls' rhymes where boys have pickles on their noses, 'boyfriends' lose their underpants, and are threatened with having willies cut off. Bhana (2005) documents episodes when 7 and 8 year-old girls

seize power for themselves by enacting a sexualised game in a South African playground, together lifting their dresses to show their panties, and taunting boys. These girls act out an aggressive sexuality in resistance to boys who mock, sexually harass, and behave violently towards them. These resistances are performed within a framework of heteronormativity.

Renold (2005) reports that 7 to 11 year-olds who persisted in resisting dominant and hegemonic gender identities were routinely subjected to gendered and sexualised bullying. Some girls drew on discourses that construct femininity as powerless and polluting and used practices of heterosexual harassment in attempts to construct more powerful identities for themselves. Reay's research (2001) with 7 to 11 year olds in a London primary school demonstrates that girls enact multiple femininities. She identifies four groups of girls who draw on different discourses of femininity, with a significant number of girls holding the view that it is better to be a boy than a girl. Some girls, whom Reay labels 'spice girls,' resist hegemonic practices and boys' sexual harassment by retaliating, through objectification and sexual teasing of boys. Reay's research demonstrates how some groups of girls draw on different discourses of femininity, some emphasising heterosexual games, whilst others draw on 'girl power' discourses to act in ways that challenge traditional aspects of femininity. Reay concludes that despite drawing on these alternative discourses, girls still predominantly position themselves in ways that bolster boys' power at the expense of their own.

Reay and Renold's findings emphasise how difficult it is for children to resist heterogendered norms without reinforcing traditional discourses of dominant masculinity and powerless femininity. Strategies for resistance frequently have the effect of reinforcing rather than subverting dualistic gender relations. The possibilities

for subversion of gender norms and resistance to hegemonic power relations depend partly upon the extent to which children are able to access and explore alternative discourses without fear of ridicule or censure from other children and adults. They also depend upon opportunities for collective action (Thorne, 1993; Renold, 2005). I explore this in relation to my own research in Chapters 4, 5 and 6.

Relational aspects of development of gender identity

Children's developing constructs of masculinity and femininity in my research setting are influenced by the attitudes and gender constructs they encounter at home, the performances approved by adults and peers in the setting, images from the media and school structures. Children in my research came from a variety of different home cultures and ethnic backgrounds. A particular strength of using communities of practice as a framework is that it is able to provide a context for exploring differences, as it focuses on how children actively perform and develop gender identities within cultures of practice (Walkerdine, 2004). It also enables exploration of how children enact different masculinities and femininities in different places, spaces and times. Before they come into the Nursery, children have already experienced and taken part in practices of masculinity and femininity at home, within their families. Some children have also encountered practices of femininity and masculinity in extended families, and through participation in religious communities of practice, and other social and cultural groups that share a common language, set of beliefs or common pursuit. I wanted to explore how children draw upon these experiences in the Nursery/Reception settings as they struggle to make sense of the new communities of practice in Nursery/Reception. This is a very difficult aim, because I did not go to the

children in their homes or research communities of practice outside the school settings.

My data analysis indicated that young children in my study are very aware of issues of 'race' and ethnicity. This supports research with young children (Brown, 1998; Connolly, 1998; MacNaughton, 2000; Robinson and Jones Diaz, 2006) showing that children as young as 3 and 4 have awareness and understandings of issues of 'race', racism and ethnic differences, and draw on a range of discourses of 'race' and gender in their interactions in preschool. Troyna and Hatcher's research (1992) into racism and children's cultures emphasises the importance of examining racism and the part played by 'race' within children's social relations in specific situations. This stance is taken from Hall (1980) and Miles (1989) who emphasise the need to analyse how racism operates within specific historical situations and social processes.

Hatcher (1995) explores the work that racism accomplishes and the part that 'race' plays in the cultures of groups of Year 5 and 6 children in three mostly white schools. In his research, Hatcher differentiates between 'hot' name-calling, often arising in disputes, said in the heat of the moment, often to friends, and later regretted, and 'cold' name-calling, said with the intent to inflict hurt or assert dominance. Hatcher found that among some boys in his study, racist taunts were considered to be part of an accepted repertoire for establishing a particular type of male dominance.

In Chapter 6 I discuss relationships between dominant discourses of gender, 'race' ethnicity and class within my research settings and their impact on children's gender constructs. My analysis aims to avoid simplistic reproduction of stereotypes. For example 'Asian culture' has been represented in political and educational discourses as both the source of Asian children's success at school, and the source of

their problems (Archer, 2003). Asian pupils have been stereotyped as well-behaved 'achievers', in contrast to stereotypes of African Caribbean pupils, particularly boys, who are seen as underachieving and disruptive (Gillborn, 1990; Connolly, 1998). With the proliferation of Islamaphobic discourses and negative views of Muslim communities, in Britain, there have been more attempts to replace the homogenous view of 'Asian' culture with a differentiated set of stereotypes. High-achieving Asian 'achievers', mostly Sikhs and Hindus, have been contrasted with low-achieving Pakistani and Bangladeshi Muslim 'believers' (Archer, 2003). Moreover, teachers sometimes assume that there is a clash between repressive family culture and more permissive school culture that results in an identity crisis for Muslim girls. This is not always the case, and some girls experience difficulties arising from racism and schooling practices, rather than restrictions from home (Shain, 2003). Researchers including Shain (2003) and George (2007) emphasise the importance of exploring differences within ethnicities as well as between ethnicities. George (2007) found that girls positioned themselves, and were positioned in a variety of ways within discourses of 'race', ethnicity and schooling. George's research explores the complexities of how a group of preadolescent girls negotiate friendship across ethnic divisions. Some, but not all, prioritised friendships with girls from similar cultural backgrounds.

> "It is unsurprising that black girls, with their different history and heritage rooted in past racism, as well as different futures dictated by institutional racism, will make friends with girls who share similar backgrounds" (George, 2007).

Reay (1995) draws on Bourdieu's concept of 'habitus' to analyse how a group of white middle class 9 and 10 year-old girls, in a predominantly white primary

classroom, excluded a black working class girl from their social group, by ignoring her.

> "The racism of these middle class children was not manifested in any action; rather it lay in the absences. Paradoxically, it was there in what was not there, lack of care, in the lack of contact, lack of recognition" (Reay, 1995:128)

Reay describes the white middle class girls' behaviours as ingrained in their habitus, and suggests that sexism and racism is more hidden in middle class schools, but no less prevalent.

> "I would suggest that taking whiteness fore granted is integral to self-evident understandings of the social world embedded in the habitus of White people" (Reay, 1995).

Connolly (1998) explores the ways in which young children make use of discourses of race. He shows how issues of 'race' and racism operate to provide an important context for the development of individual identities for 4 and 5 year-olds in an inner city multi ethnic school. He shows how racist discourse influences teachers' perceptions of a group of black boys, who he calls the 'Bad Boys.' This group of boys were highly visible in public spaces such as the playground, and were disproportionately disciplined by teachers, reinforcing stereotypes about 'bad' black boys. The 'Bad Boys' developed 'hard' discourse of masculinity based on football and fighting prowess, and a sexualised, derogatory set of discourses in relation to girls.

Connolly (2004) identifies differences between groups of working class and middle class 5 and 6 year-old boys in two primary schools in Northern Ireland. He argues that the schooling practices of controlling children's bodies are particularly difficult for some young working class boys, in contrast to middle class boys who are prepared for the restrictions of schooling as they have home experience of 'school-like' activities. Connolly emphasises that it is not possible to generalise from his case

studies, and his theoretical framework draws on Bourdieu (1977), and Vygotsky (1978) to argue that children have multiple 'habituses' that reflect the complex range of social networks in which they are involved. He describes the working class boys' masculinity as "expressed externally through physicality and strength" (Connolly, 2004:192). In contrast, some of the middle class boys dissociated themselves from this form of masculinity, promoting displays of specialist knowledge and skills. In her ethnographic research with 9 to 11year-olds, Renold (2005) found that the discourse of masculinity based on physical strength and embodiment of 'toughness' went across class. Students described some music, behaviours, bodily displays, and use of spaces within school as 'soft/feminine' and others as 'hard/masculine.'

In Chapter 6 I discuss the complexities involved in children's negotiation of gender discourses in relation to discourses of 'race' and ethnicity. It is important to consider who is included and who is excluded from communities of practice, at any one time, and to analyse how communities of practice change over time as membership changes. Pearce (2005) shows how institutional 'colourblindness' and silence about issues of 'race' and power make difficulties for children in school who are often struggling to understand ethnic differences. I explore this in more detail in Chapter 2, in relation to discourses of diversity.

Researchers including Connolly (1998, 2004) and MacNaughton (2005) have demonstrated how class background has far reaching effects on young children's experiences of schooling and on all aspects of their identity development. Robinson and Jones Diaz (2006) emphasise how important it is for early childhood educators to recognise the impact that globalisation and neoliberalism has had on social identities, including people's socio-economic circumstances and concepts of class. The children in my research setting came from a variety of class backgrounds, but all were living in

rented council accommodation on the large 1930s estate adjacent to the school. Some of their parents were first generation immigrants who had moved to London from other countries; some had come seeking asylum, others were economic migrants. Many families had close ties with their countries of origin, and children sometimes spoke of relatives in other countries.

Children sometimes told me about the jobs and work their parents did. Many children showed awareness that some people have more money and material goods than others, and that some possessions convey social status. They displayed knowledge of branded clothing, shoes and toys, and this was often linked to knowledge about masculinities and femininities. I discuss this in Chapter 5. Some early years staff revealed attitudes that suggested they considered the children's class background as a deficit that needed to be redressed by socialisation in school. I discuss this in Chapter 6.

Conclusion

'Doing' gender in contemporary Western society involves creating differences between boys and girls from the moment they are named boy/girl. These differences are not 'essential' or biological, but once the differences have been constructed, they are used to justify, reinforce and reproduce discourses of gender difference. Young children learn about masculinities and femininities within local power/knowledge relations. When they start school, young children need to establish themselves as legitimate participants in communities of femininity and masculinity practice, by interpreting and generating meanings from the messages available to them, drawing on their experiences from home and those they encounter in the Nursery/Reception. Adults in school are often engaged in training young children to become successful

pupils, and adults exist as powerful agents, giving leadership and affirmation to the children, rewarding them with praise for some behaviours and imposing sanctions for other behaviours. Children often hear different messages from different adults and other children at school and at home, so they have to figure out and negotiate acceptable behaviours in various contexts. In the next Chapter I discuss discourses that have an impact on the range of subject positions available to young children.

Chapter 2 Discourses of gender and childhood

Gender "is not just an aspect of what one is, but, more fundamentally, it is something that one does, and does recurrently, in interaction with others" (West and Zimmerman, 1987:140).

Introduction

In this chapter I will explore key discourses that have an impact on the subject positions available to children in my research setting. Children are both positioned within discourse, and position themselves. Following Davies and Harre (1991), and Renold (2005) I use the term 'interactive positioning' to describe ways in which children are positioned by others, in social interactions, and 'reflexive positioning' to describe how children position themselves, as agents. Researchers including Renold (2005) and George (2007) have demonstrated how these positionings are complex and in constant flux. In Chapter 1 I argue that young children develop individual gender identities by actively engaging with available gender discourses, learning to position themselves within specific power/knowledge relations in the communities of practice to which they belong (Paechter, 2007).

Discursive practices variously position children as powerful and powerless, depending on the specific time, space and social relationships in operation (George, 2007). Young children develop gender identities in relation to ethnicity, 'race', ability, class and sexuality, as well as gender. An active concept of agency emerges in the negotiation of conflicting and contradictory subject positions, as children participate in discursive practices, either conforming or resisting (Epstein, 1993; MacNaughton, 2005).

Paechter (2007) argues that the performance of self to self, whereby we enact particular forms of masculinity or femininity to ourselves, is particularly important for young children, as they do not have a sense that gender remains constant throughout a lifetime. This is a particularly important point for my research, as my data shows how children often experiment with gender positions, sometimes literally 'trying on' different possibilities for themselves, by wearing specific clothes or taking part in specific activities associated with boys or girls. They often try to fix gender boundaries by policing their own, and each other's actions. The range of masculinities and femininities that children are able to perform are constrained by the discourses to which they have access, and they are also limited by the body that they have. The specific materiality of a person's body affects what they can enact (Foucault, 1984; Kehily, 2002; Butler, 2004; Paechter, 2007).

> "Bodies are not inhabited as spatial givens. They are, in their spatiality, also underway in time: aging, altering shape, altering signification – depending on their interactions" (Butler, 2004: 217).

In this chapter I discuss several discourses that have a direct impact on young children's development of gender constructs in my research settings. Firstly I will consider discourses of gender dualism. I will then discuss discourses of age and childhood, including psychological theories of gender identity. Then I discuss discourses of compulsory heterosexuality and diversity, and finally, I discuss discourses of embodiment, space and subjectivity.

Discourses of gender dualism

I argued in Chapter 1 that the hegemonic naturalization of gender difference is a key force in the operation and continuation of unequal power/knowledge relations between men and women, boys and girls (Paechter, 2007). Gender difference is

assumed to be 'natural' and innate. The power/knowledge relations that are inherent in a dualistic gender order are also assumed to be 'natural', and in this way unequal relations are often justified, condoned and perpetuated.

"The essence of the male-female dualism, however, is that power resides in the male" (Davies, 1989: 134).

The discourse of gender dualism is an important cornerstone of power/knowledge relations, and children usually learn this at an early age. Young children learn to categorize themselves and others as male or female and use this categorization as a basis to construct what it means to be a member of their local community or masculinity or femininity practice. The development of children's masculinities and femininities involves biological, cognitive and social processes (Martin et al, 2002). My research centres on social processes, but it is important to bear in mind that biological and cognitive processes also have material effects.

Legitimate peripheral participation in local communities of practice of masculinity and femininity is initially conferred on the basis of bodily anatomy, largely depending on whether a newborn baby has a penis (Kessler, 1990). Furthermore, physical appearance is used to categorise people as male or female in social situations. Paechter (2007) discusses the complexities of identification based on appearance. She argues that the body itself is often understood as a reified marker of membership of communities of practice of femininity and masculinity, although the physical is mediated by expectation, so that people assume a person is male or female if they are told this, even if the person differs from the culturally expected masculine or feminine appearance. Young children learn that gender is dimorphic and fixed, and they learn that certain ways of behaving and embodying practices of masculinity or femininity will enable them to experience pleasure and power. They observe the shared practices of other people in their communities and strive to participate. They

learn about the salience of gender difference, and begin to construct their gender identities in relation to their understanding of gendered power/knowledge relations.

I argued in Chapter 1 that many aspects of contemporary Western schooling can be understood in the context of the school as a site for control and regulation of children's bodies. Social practices of schooling regulate the way children assert versions of 'femininities' and 'masculinities' through regulation of pupils' movement, use of bodies and spaces, and interactions. Formal and informal spatial practices of schooling often emphasise discourses of gender difference and gender dualism. The performative aspect of gender identity can be seen in adults' efforts to induce particular gendered performances and heterosexualised bodies in children. Some schooling practices sanction, reinforce and even create gender differences. Sometimes this is deliberate, as for example in the management of playgrounds in early 20th Century United States (Gagen, 2000). Gagen draws on Butler's work (1990) to show how playground organisers sought to instil heterosexist gender norms through spatial practices in the learning environments of the playgrounds. Her research shows how separate, segregated playground provision for boys and girls required children to take part in different activities and use their bodies in different ways. There were two types of playground, mixed to the age of twelve, and then a separate playground for older boys. Older girls remained with the younger children, as 'helpers', prefiguring their future roles as mothers and domestic servants. Children were directed towards differentiated bodily styles, with boys playing team games, designed to encourage obedience to authority and physical endurance, and girls performing patriotic songs and dance. This separate provision was justified by arguing that the children were being taught to express their 'natural' gender identities.

"Rather than acknowledge the regulatory framework that was responsible for inducing masculine and feminine performances, instructors advance that

children were merely expressing their new-found and true identity" (Gagen, 2000:220).

As Butler (1990) argues, it is the implied 'naturalness' of dualistic gender frameworks that obscures the political aspects of inequitable gender constructions. Gagen's research has many parallels with my own, in that adults explain children's gendered behaviours by appealing to 'natural' differences (see Chapters 5, 6 and 7). Essentialist discourses are frequently used to justify differences in educational provision for girls and boys. Formal and informal spatial practices differentiate between boys and girls. For example there is often an expectation that boys will need to move around more, be noisier, take up more space. Gordon and Lahelma (1996) found that some teachers would reprimand girls for moving about, even though they do it less than boys, because it is less expected from girls.

A contemporary example of separate gendered spatial provision is the reported introduction of new teaching methods in elementary school classrooms in United States (Purves, 2005). Purves reports that special teaching methods are being introduced with the aim of allowing boys to be more physically active during lesson times. A separate carpet area is provided for girls to sit and talk on.

> "They are segregating the sexes and dumping desks to allow boys to sprawl and move in a new approach to learning in the US" (Purves, 2005).

Although this example is quite extreme in terms of its appeal to essentialist gender differences, many practices in my research settings reflect similar beliefs about gender differences. I examine these in Chapter 5 and 6. There is a link between the regulation of children's bodies in school and discourses of gender dualism, as many schooling practices assume gender differences, and encourage children to engage in performances that re-enact gender differences.

Lloyd and Duveen (1992) show how teachers often use gender as a social category, which contributes to children's gender marking of activities and behaviours. Educators give mixed messages to children by saying, for example, 'We don't have girls' only tables,' but at the same time, saying 'Boys, stop shouting!' In his research in primary schools in Northern Ireland Connolly (1998) found that teachers expected a group of black boys to misbehave, and repeatedly praised them if they behaved well, thus suggesting that their good behaviour was remarkable. Browne's research in early years classes in U.K (2004) shows how educators describe boys and girls in binary terms, with boys as 'physical' and 'competitive and noisy' and girls as 'chatty' 'calm and attentive' and 'eager to please.' Ofsted's Report on the Foundation Stage (2007) uses similar dualistic descriptions.

Francis's research with children aged 7 to 11 in English primary schools (1998) shows how teachers and children often construct masculinity and femininity as oppositional, with femininity constructed as sensible and selfless, and masculinity as silly and selfish.

> "Of the feminine construction, maturity, obedience and neatness are the valued 'sensible' qualities, which naturally lead to 'selflessness' – giving and facilitating. The masculine construction involves 'silly' qualities of immaturity, messiness and naughtiness, leading to 'selfishness' – taking and demanding (Francis, 1998:40).

Francis found that these constructs had an impact on gendered power relations as girls sought recognition and praise for positioning themselves as 'sensible' in opposition to boys' enactment of 'silly'. The construction of boys as irresponsible enabled some boys to dominate space and resources. My findings in Chapter 5 and 6 are in agreement with this.

Young children's constructs of masculinity and femininity are embedded in dualistic gender discourses, and their rigid views of appropriate behaviours for boys

and girls are often attempts to reduce uncertainties and position themselves successfully (Browne, 2004). Davies' work (1989) shows how preschool children explore gender relations through fantasy play and stories, and how the romantic discourse of princes rescuing princesses in distress has an important role in young children's construction and reproduction of practices of hegemonic masculinity and emphasised femininity. Individual children can, and do, deviate from these dualistic gender positions, but this provokes category-maintenance work around the gender boundaries. Teasing and ridicule and policing make it clear to individuals that they have got their behaviour 'wrong', and also maintains the category as meaningful, against the challenge to its validity (Davies, 1989). I examine this in relation to my own research findings in Chapters 4 to 6.

The penalties for crossing gender boundaries are often severe (Davies, 1989; Thorne, 1993; Renold, 2005). Davies (1989) observed category maintenance work using a video camera, and documented an episode when a group of boys enacted taking and burning girls' dolls, in response to girls' attempts to join in firefighter play. Blaise (2005) demonstrates how young children in a preschool in USA construct complex gender relationships through engaging in discursive practices within the heterosexualised classroom, not only through activities that are stereotypically associated with 'boys' and 'girls', but also in their power relations throughout preschool. She argues that educators need to encourage children to challenge categorical thinking about gender, in order to enable them to subvert gender norms.

Lowe (1998) shows how boys and girls in Australian preschool reproduce gender stereotyped play patterns, and some boys engage in physical and verbal harassment of girls. Lowe intervenes in children's block play to enable girls to use verbal skills to negotiate a role for themselves. Danby (1998) documents how a group

of older preschool boys initiate younger boys into block play practices, and maintain a "highly scripted ritual of terror". Danby identifies nine phases in this 'local ritual of hegemonic masculinity', and shows how two girls demonstrate their knowledge of the boys' discourse, appropriating it for themselves, by visiting, rather than owning it. She shows how the girls enjoy this shared game, and how the boys react with anger and defensiveness when girls cross gender boundaries. I analyse data from my own research that shows resistance to gender norms in Chapter 6. In the next sections, I consider the impact of discourses of childhood on young children's gender identities.

Cognitive-developmental gender discourses

In Chapter 1 I argued that developmental psychology often fails to theorise power relations, focusing on scientific measurement and establishment of norms. Psychological theories of gender development are important to my thesis because they continue to have a huge influence on educational theory and practice (MacNaughton, 2005). Contemporary psychological cognitive-developmental theories of gender are closely linked to theories of cognitive development. Kohlberg (1966) applied Piaget's analysis of age-related changes in cognitive structures to social and moral aspects of development. He formed a theory about children's understanding of gender constancy that is similar to the developmental concept of conservation of physical properties. Psychologists have devised elaborate tests to measure children's understanding of gender constancy. I will examine these in some detail because they illustrate some of the problems of privileging a cognitive-developmental psychological approach to gender development. The concept of gender constancy is important for analysis of my research data because I sometimes observed children grappling with cognitive and emotional implications of gender

constancy (see Chapter 6). However, the concept of measurable gender constancy development is itself a cultural construct (Burman, 1994). I do not deny that young children are actively engaged in developing cognitive abilities, but I will argue that many cognitive-developmental discourses do not pay sufficient attention to the social contexts in which children develop gender constructs (MacNaughton, 2005).

Psychologists theorise gender constancy by delineating three progressive stages (Martin, Ruble and Szkrybalo, 2002). Firstly, it is argued, children begin to realize that they are either a girl or a boy (gender identity, achieved aged 2 to 3). Then they begin to comprehend that gender identity does not change over time, that they, and others, will always be either a girl or a boy (gender stability, aged 4 to 5). Lastly, children learn that gender identity is not affected by changes in gender-typed activities and appearances (gender constancy, aged 5 to 7). Once children achieve understanding of gender stability, information about gender categories is believed to take on greater significance for them. Children are motivated to respond to gender norms and behave in gender appropriate ways because they want to demonstrate their competence (Martin et al, 2002). When children recognize themselves and others as belonging to the category 'boy' or 'girl' they often generalise and exaggerate gender differences, particularly if they are not certain that their own gender is constant or stable. A number of studies have demonstrated that children aged 2 to 4 tend to 'over-generalise' the categories of male and female, assigning objects and activities in a gendered way on the basis of single examples (Martin et al, 2002). This tendency is often explained as a developmental process, pointing out that young children over generalise in other areas of cognition. For example, some young children over generalise rules of language, by adding 'ed' to all past tense verbs. Martin et al (2002) conclude that

"Gender stereotyping about kinds of objects and activities associated with males and females emerges between 2 and 4 years of age, reaches a peak of rigidity between 5 and 7 years, and shows greater flexibility during middle childhood..." (Martin et al, 2002:925).

Martin et al (2002) argue that more empirical evidence is needed to establish whether higher levels of understanding of gender constancy are associated with a rigid adherence to gender norms, followed by a relaxing of attitudes once gender constancy is fully achieved. I would argue that no amount of empirical evidence will resolve the fundamental inadequacy of gender constancy testing, because the tests themselves are culturally bound representations of understandings about gender. The tests assume gender to be fixed and immutable, which is called into question by queer theory and politics and experiences of transgender (Butler, 2004). I would argue that children are grappling with culturally specific conundrums about the nature of gender and gender appropriate behaviours. Importantly, understandings about gender are connected to power/knowledge relationships (see Chapter 1). The establishment of sex and gender differences is crucial to the hegemony of heterosexuality and masculine power (Butler, 2004; Paechter, 2007).

Much psychological research on the development of young children's gendered social relations does not explore the emotional aspects of children's behaviour, often underestimating children's capabilities (Aubrey et al, 2000; MacNaughton, 2005). Huston (1983, 1985) reviewed existing psychological research on gender identity and provided a matrix, identifying four groups of psychological constructs that have been studied in relation to sex group membership. These are beliefs, self-perception, preferences and behaviour. Ruble and Martin (1998) use Huston's multidimensional framework for their update of research on gender development. Huston (1983) and Ruble and Martin (1998) conclude that there is solid empirical evidence that 3 to 5

year- olds have considerable knowledge of gender marking in activities and interests, and in social relationships. Even before the age of 3, children interact more with children of their own sex group, with correlations between interests and sex-groups. Huston and Ruble and Martin suggest that understanding of gender marking does not necessarily guide behaviour, particularly for girls. For example, girls and boys share a similar understanding of gender marking of toys, but girls display less stereotypical preferences, from age 5 onwards, until adolescence. Lloyd and Duveen's school based research (1992) supports this, and they also explore the power dimensions inherent in gender marking.

> "Masculine objects tend to cohere together, acquire prestige and separate from things feminine, so that the bipolar image of gender represents hierarchy as well as difference"(Lloyd and Duveen, 1992:181).

As they observe, it is not surprising that girls are more willing to ignore gender marking, as they have more to lose by accepting that some objects and activities are unavailable to them as girls. Lloyd and Duveen (1992) found that children in their first year of British schooling (aged 5) had rigid and stereotyped views about sex-group membership and gender-appropriate behaviour.

Observations of 3 to 5 year-olds in British, Australian and USA preschools have consistently found clear differences between girls' and boys' imaginative play, with boys developing superhero themes and girls focusing on domestic and romantic themes, and young children segregating themselves into same-sex groups in the early years of schooling (Paley, 1984; Lloyd and Duveen, 1992; MacNaughton, 2000; Blaise, 2005). Various explanations are offered by psychologists to explain same-sex segregation. Martin and Fabes (1991) argue that entry to preschool results in children spending more time with peers and this itself encourages gender-typed play. Maccoby (2002) suggests that children who show gender-typed behaviours are more likely to

be accepted by same-sex peer groups. Paley's observations emphasise the important

point that young children have emotional investments in same-sex segregation.

> "Kindergarten is a triumph of sexual stereotyping. No amount of adult
> subterfuge or propaganda deflects the five-year-old's passion for segregation
> by sex. They think they have invented the differences between boys and girls,
> and, as with any new invention, must prove that it works" (Paley, 1984:ix).

Children's desire to keep girls and boys separate is linked to children's desire to show

that they are legitimate members of local communities of femininity or masculinity

practice (Paechter, 2007). Boys often make particularly clear distinctions between

'girls' and 'boys', viewing the groups as opposites, as they learn the benefits of

hegemonic masculinity (Ruble and Martin, 1998; Browne, 2004; Paechter, 2007).

The concept of gender constancy and psychological theories of gender

development are important for understanding how young children construct

masculinities and femininities because children learn that gender is dimorphic and

immutable, and this affects their cognitive and emotional understandings of gender

roles and gender identity. Walkerdine (2004) challenges the notion that there is an

'internal' and 'external' world, suggesting that psychology needs to move beyond

this dualism to find ways of understanding how people become subjects within

specific discursive practices. She offers the study of apprenticeship (Lave and

Wenger, 1991) as a useful way of examining specific accomplishment of

competencies. This moves away from a universal developmental model of learning,

and emphasises that learning occurs within cultures of practice, rather than being

isolated within the individual child. I argue in this thesis that young children learn to

perform and develop gender identities through participation in local communities of

masculinity and femininity practice (Paechter, 2007).

I draw on Urwin's (1998) insights into the ways in which young children are active participants in social practices, making emotional investments in the ways they take up different positions in discursive practices. Urwin (1998) explores the power relations within social practices in infants' and toddlers' preverbal experiences. She shows how infants actively engage in relations of power, through communicative strategies around gaining attention and attempting to control and please others. She examines the ways in which preverbal children take up subject positions with regard to social practices of feeding, changing and greeting. These practices are bounded by adult sanctions and produced by particular power knowledge relations. She argues that when children begin to use words, at around the age of 2, and play pretend games, for example, setting a table and saying "need spoons" or "want beans", they are not just rehearsing events or representing their knowledge of social practices. They are using cognitive processes, but they are also taking up subject positions previously occupied by significant adults, and in fantasy, they are actually controlling the regularities of the events. She points out that young children position themselves in ways through which they can manipulate others in play, for example by teasing adults by pretending to be naughty. Sometimes they position themselves as dependent, asking for help with things they can well do for themselves. At other times they want to please, control or gain attention through games, for example in tea party and phone games. She links this with young children's separation anxieties and desire to demonstrate their independence. The re-enactment of familiar routines puts children in the positions taken in daily life by the carer/mother, and the words spoken by the children, such as "more" and "all gone" have emotional significance because they mark the child's own attempts to control situations. I have many examples of

similar enactments in my data from children's interactions in roleplay areas of Nursery and Reception classes.

Similarly, children learn to have conversations about past and habitual events, such as "Daddy gone to work", both controlling and reproducing the 'truth' of these events, as well as imparting information to others. Urwin points out that this includes taking up various gendered positions, as for example in Walkerdine's research (1989) when the young boys taunt Miss Baxter (see page 24). Adults can encourage or reinforce the taking up of various gendered positions, for example by saying to a boy "Daddy does that" if he plays with a screwdriver. As Urwin points out, taking an assertive position within discourse can provide young children with dilemmas. They might want to seem 'grownup', appropriately gendered, or to please a significant adult. Urwin's work highlights the importance of children's emotional investments in taking up various gendered positions, and this is a central consideration in my thesis. In the next section, I consider the impact of discourses of the innocent child on young children's gender identity development.

Discourses of the innocent child

Young children are positioned in discourses of childhood by adults. As Gittins (1998) argues, 'childhood' is a social and historical construct imposed on children by adults. Since the 1800s, in Britain, the discourse of the innocent child has been central in promoting educational campaigns, and also in constructing the child as dependent and vulnerable, in need of protection. The establishment of compulsory elementary schooling for poorer children in British society in the 1880s reflected anxieties amongst the upper and middle classes about crime and 'pauperism', and schooling took children out of the work place and off the streets. The 'natural' innocence of

childhood was contrasted with the poverty and degeneracy of adult life for the poorer classes, and schooling was seen as a way to instil virtuous practices into children, as well as protect them from corruption (Burman, 1994; Gittins, 1998; Walkerdine, 1990).

Walkerdine discusses how children were constructed as 'naturally innocent', with the post-1945 British Primary school projected as a 'safe space', a 'greenhouse' where children could develop in a protected environment (Walkerdine, 1990). This was also the rationale behind the establishment of British nurseries with the provision of nurseries with outdoor open play spaces in urban areas, where young children could develop 'naturally', encapsulated in Froebel's metaphor of 'buds unfurling in a garden'(Moss and Penn, 1996). As Connolly argues (2003) young children's play is not always 'innocent' and school playgrounds are often unsafe spaces for some children who are subjected to bullying and sexist, homophobic and racist abuse. However, discourses of innocence continue to influence educational and social policy and practices, and early years practitioners are often reluctant to intervene in children's 'free' play in playgrounds. My data analysis shows how staff in my research setting were reluctant to intervene in children's 'free play.'

I draw on the work of Valerie Walkerdine for her insights into the complex, contradictory gendered discourses of childhood and innocence, whereby the eroticisation of young girls provokes adult concerns and titillation. Walkerdine (1999) discusses the contrast between the ways that young girls are pathologised if they enact the dominant sexualised practices of older women, whilst young boys are pathologised if they show violent tendencies. 'Normal' young girls are constructed as 'well behaved, hardworking and asexual' so that a sexually precocious, or sexually abused girl is deemed to have 'lost' her childhood (Burman, 1994; Walkerdine, 1990,

1999). 'Normal' young boys, however, are constructed as playful, rule-breaking and inquisitive. Boys who do not adhere to these norms are seen by some adults as cause for concern, in that their non-macho behaviour is interpreted as a precursor to becoming homosexual (Walkerdine, 1999; Renold, 2005).

Renold (2005) makes the important point that though the feminisation of erotic innocence and sexuality focuses attention on girls, and makes visible the heterosexualising process in their development of femininities, young boys are also subject to, and agents of, the heterosexual male gaze. She argues that it is important to pay attention to the specific ways that discourses of age and generation feature in the development of children's gender and sexual identities. Renold (2005) elaborates on the complexities of social generationing processes, exploring how discourses of age-grade and age-class structure and constrain children's lives. Age-grade refers to social groups of children who are the same age, such as 'infants', and 'teenagers', and age-class refers to groups of children who progress through schooling together, such as Reception, Year 1. The divisions between these categories are blurred and complex, but have material effects for children, as there are normative expectations attached to each phase. Children are expected to judge themselves, and be judged, according to their performance within these generational developmental phases (Renold, 2005:25). Children themselves use age related judgements and insults. In my research settings, one of the most hurtful insults children used to each other was calling somebody a 'baby'. The other was to call a girl a boy, and a boy, a girl. Tears and appeals to staff usually followed these insults, as they called into question children's age-appropriate masculine and feminine identities.

Developmental discourses pathologise deviation from age-appropriate masculinities, femininities and sexualities. At a simple level, these encompass adults'

critical comments to, and about, children, such as "you are behaving like infants", or "she is growing up too quickly". In my research settings I often heard adults suggesting some children were behaving inappropriately for their age, by behaviour that revealed they were either behaving 'too young', or 'too old' for their age, or 'growing up too quickly'. Renold (2005) refers to the latter as the 'hurried child' discourse, and points out that this is used to refer negatively to girls who are criticised for becoming sexualised 'too young'. I documented many instances of staff commenting negatively on girls' appearances and encouraging modest behaviour when sitting and moving. This suggests contradictory constructions of girls. On the one hand, they require intervention to prevent them appearing sexual, and at the same time, they are seen as being at risk of having their asexuality and innocence tarnished (see Chapter 5). They are simultaneously positioned as potential little sexual temptresses and as little innocents.

As Epstein argues (1997), instructions to girls to behave in 'ladylike' ways are not only about particular versions of femininity; they are also about behaving in ways that signify heterosexuality. In her empirical research with primary school children aged 10 and 11 Renold (2005) found that girls and boys enacted gender and sexuality practices in multiple and sometimes contradictory ways, but girls were heterosexualised as part of 'normal' femininity. She found that boys were heterosexualised as part of 'normal' masculinity, and homosexualised when they did not conform to 'normal' boyhood and masculinity. Age-appropriate discourses are related to discourses of compulsory heterosexuality, and I now discuss these.

Discourses of compulsory heterosexuality

I will discuss discourses of heteronormativity in some detail because one of my key arguments is that young children develop gender concepts within a framework that emphasises and takes for granted that heterosexual relations are normal, desirable, and 'natural'. In the early 1980s, Adrianne Rich broke new ground by articulating the argument that heterosexuality is 'compulsory' but not necessarily 'natural' or a 'free choice' for many women. She argued that male power is exercised through

> "the enforcement of heterosexuality for women as a means of assuring male right of physical, economical, and emotional access...For women, heterosexuality may not be a preference at all, but something that has to be imposed, managed, organised, propagandised, and maintained by force" (Rich, 1981:19/20).

In the years following Rich's work, feminist poststructuralists and queer theorists have explored the relationships between heterosexuality and gender (Butler, 1990, 1993; Sedgewick, 1990; Sinfield, 1994). My research has been shaped by my understanding that gender difference requires compulsory heterosexuality and all gendered subject positions are produced within a framework of 'compulsory heterosexuality.'

Heterosexuality is the persistent, often unspoken norm, against which other sexual relations remain Other, deviant and perceived as inferior (Paechter, 1998; Richardson, 2000; Kehily, 2001). The hegemonic discourse of 'compulsory heterosexuality' constructs gender and desire in heterosexual terms with 'feminine' and 'masculine' identities positioned as opposites, in a dualism whereby power operates in a regulatory way to privilege heterosexual men (Connell, 1987, 2002). There are many different heterosexual subject positions and these relate to 'race', class, ethnicity and gender, but they are all produced within a heteronormative framework.

The male gaze is also a crucial aspect of heterosexualised power relations, positioning women as Other (Paechter, 1998). Foucault (1977) examines the use of the known but unseen gaze as a regulatory constraint on behaviour and mechanism of discipline, arguing that this gaze becomes internalised. I examine the operation of the gaze in relation to self regulation on page , but I emphasize here that girls and women in my research settings were often positioned by staff as if they were subject to an 'unseen' male gaze, particularly when girls were taught to regulate their own feminine appearances and behaviours (see Chapter 5).

Walkerdine (2004) emphasises the importance of 'circuits of desire and power' in the production of girls' subjectivities in contemporary Western societies. She argues that girls become subjects within circuits of sexual exchange between men, as objects of an erotic male gaze. Men's fantasies of conquering and deflowering innocence are projected onto girls, and this has consequences for the discursive practices through which girls embody their femininity. Walkerdine gives an example of how a young girl comes to understand her own desire to wear lipstick, whereby the girl, as object of male fantasy, struggles to be desirable. This resonates with my findings that show young girls' preoccupation with makeup and feminine fashion (see Chapter 5).

I draw on the work of Judith Butler for her exploration of the performative aspects of gender, showing how gender and heterosexuality are entwined and unstable, and how their 'normality' is upheld by the policing of Other sexualities and gender positions (Butler, 1990, 1993, 2004). Butler understands gender as a process, "a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame" (Butler, 1990:33), and identity as a series of ongoing signifying practices. Gender is thus understood as a series of acts, not a thing, emphasising the way "we do become what we practice

being" (Frye, 1983:34). This is a particularly useful way of conceptualising gender when doing research with children because it captures the way that children often experiment with gender positions, trying to 'get it right' in different social situations (Epstein, 1993; Renold, 2005; Paechter, 2007).

For Butler, there is no subject, no 'I', outside language and discursive practices. A 'subject' is instituted at certain times and in certain contexts, for example, at birth. A child is gendered by being named 'girl' or 'boy', depending on the presence or absence of a penis, and can only be constituted as 'properly' human if designated one or the other. Butler (1993) argues that the initiatory performative 'It's a girl', sets in train a requirement that the girl should go on to cite gender norms by embodying certain ideals of femininity, in order to qualify as a fully human subject. At the time of birth, the 'girl' does not take an active part in discourse, but very soon she does, as she begins to use language and engage in discursive practices. Butler demonstrates the process by which femininities and masculinities are constructed in relation to heterosexuality.

> "Gender norms operate by requiring the embodiment of certain ideals of femininity and masculinity, ones that are almost all related to the idealization of the heterosexual bond…Femininity is thus not the product of a choice, but the forcible citation of a norm, one whose complex historicity is indissociable from relations of discipline, regulation, punishment " (Butler, 1993:231/2).

Butler uses the term 'heterosexual matrix' to describe the way that gender is constructed, arguing that heterosexuality operates through the regulated production of exaggerated forms of 'man' and 'woman', requiring compulsory performances, but that heterosexual norms are 'haunted by their own inefficacy' (Butler, 1990). Butler argues that heterosexual regimes never fully legislate or contain their own ideals, and therefore have potential for subversion within discourse. Gender categories can therefore be destabilised through discursive practices, by 'working the weakness in

the norm'. Butler argues that the 'heterosexual matrix' is open to rearticulation (Butler, 1993) and describes how 'heterosexual hegemony' both constrains heterosexualised gender positions, and allows for the possibility of becoming 'otherwise' (Butler, 2004).

Butler's later work emphasises the importance of embodiment, of history, and of lived experience, arguing that bodily acts as well as speech acts are performative, and can enable humans to rework and exceed norms (Butler, 2004). Butler insists that norms of recognition can change; they function to produce and to deproduce the notion of the human, and this opens up possibilities for transformation, as well as constraint. Butler emphasises the need to examine power/knowledge relations when seeking to transform discursive practices, by intervening and disrupting where conditions are contingent and insecure. She uses the term 'fantasy' to describe how we explore embodied possibilities beyond norms that are constructed through the practices of hegemonic heterosexuality.

> "Fantasy is not the opposite of reality; it is what reality forecloses, and, as a result, it defines the limits of reality, constituting it as its constitutive outside. The critical promise of fantasy, when and where it exists, is to challenge the contingent limits of what will and will not be called reality" (Butler, 2004:29).

I found Butler's conceptualisation of fantasy of great significance for my analysis of young children's imaginative play. Children's roleplays often involved enactment of stereotypically heterosexual gender positions but they also positioned themselves 'otherwise'. Their interactions were often full of passion and emotional investments, and sometimes allowed them to explore beyond gender dualism. I discuss this in Chapter 6.

Renold (2005) argues that discourses of innocent childhood construct young children as asexual, and that sexual innocence is something that adults wish upon

children. Robinson and Jones Diaz (2006) show how the construction of heterosexuality and heterosexual desire are part of young children's everyday life, and note that this contradicts the presumption that young children are 'too young' to understand sexuality. The processes of heterosexualisation continue unnoticed, unless they are perceived to be ineffective, as in situations when individual children are seen to transgress normative behaviours. Researchers including Epstein (1997) and Renold (2005) have demonstrated how children's sexual identities are constructed within social situations, and explored how primary schools are key sites for the production of sexualities through the formal and informal curriculum and through children's informal sexual cultures.

Ethnographic researchers have documented the complexities of children's sexual cultures, showing how spaces within the playground and other school spaces are sites for exploring and policing sexualities and displaying gendered sexual knowledge (Best, 1983; Thorne, 1993; Renold, 2005). As Renold (2005) points out, sexual practices vary between spaces, within and between schools and year groups, and shift over time. The majority of research on sexual cultures has focused on older children and adolescents. However, researchers in early years have explored practices that encourage young children's development of heterosexualised femininities and masculinities including differentiated use of clothing, toys, makeup and roleplay (MacNaughton, 2000; Connolly, 1998; Blaise, 2005). Drawing on Connell (1987), and Davies (1989) Blaise explores how girls in a USA pre-school frequently position themselves within discourses of emphasised femininity, enacting narratives where they dress up and 'make themselves beautiful' for princes and imaginary 'boyfriends'.

Early years researchers have also explored young children's heterosexualised power relationships, demonstrating the complex and diverse power plays involved in

children's interactions (Epstein, 1997; MacNaughton, 2000, 2005; Connolly, 2004; Blaise, 2005; Bhana, 2005). Epstein (1999) and Renold (2000, 2005) demonstrate how heterosexual regulation of primary age children's bodies is constructed through practices such as 'going out', 'dumping' and 'fancying'. As Renold argues, girls and boys experience sexualisation in multiple and different ways, but all positions are produced within a heteronormative framework of compulsory heterosexuality (Renold, 2005:35). I explore how children in my research are positioned, and position themselves, within discourses of heteronormativity in Chapters 4, 5 and 6.

Discourses of diversity

I argued in Chapter 1 that pedagogic discourses of developmental psychology and developmentally appropriate practice (DAP) prevent early years educators from focusing on issues of social justice and equity in their settings. In this section I will outline the importance of alternative discourses of diversity for equity in early years education, and for my own research. Early years educators often draw on discourses of the innocent child to explain why they think it inappropriate to engage with young children in issues concerning racism, sexism, poverty, homophobia, on the grounds that children are 'too young' to understand such matters, or that these issues are irrelevant to children because they are 'immature' (Robinson and Jones Diaz, 2006). Robinson and Jones Diaz show how the hegemonic discourse of childhood and adult/child dualisms perpetuate oppositional thinking, whereby social, economic and political contexts for injustice are deemed to be in 'the world of adults' and therefore outside the 'world of children'. By moving beyond these binaries, it is possible to realise that children are aware of, and participate in, power relations, normalising discourses and social and cultural differences from a very young age. Modernist

discourses of childhood emphasise a homogenous so- called universal experience of being a child, and this does not allow for the complexities and contradictions of children's experiences of multiple identities across different social and cultural contexts, in relational aspects of identity including gender, 'race', ethnicity, class, (dis)ability and sexuality.

Robinson and Jones Diaz (2006) show how diversity and difference are often located in a discourse of deficit. This is particularly pertinent to constructions of ethnicity, class and bilingualism. Children from working class backgrounds, and linguistic, racial and cultural minorities are often constructed as underachievers, as 'needing' interventionist teaching programmes, in order to compensate for perceived 'disadvantages' of family situations. In globalised English-speaking countries, cultural, social and political processes often position bilingual children, families and educators as marginalised subjects. Bilingual children are seen as 'lacking' in discourses of monolingualism, because what counts as cultural capital for these children is their ability to acquire English and 'fit into' the monolingual English-speaking setting. Piagetian developmental frameworks legitimise monolingual approaches to language learning that privilege English and disregard the complexities of learning two or more linguistic codes in childhood. Consequently, early childhood educators often adopt deficit or dismissive approaches to children who are bilingual, underestimating their capabilities (Robinson and Jones Diaz, 2006). Bilingual children often feel shame and are reluctant to use their home languages in school because of the way their home languages are marginalised and positioned as inferior to English.

Many British State schools, including the one where I conducted my research, have equal opportunities policies that encourage celebration of the diverse cultural

backgrounds of their children. However, celebration and toleration of differences do not, by themselves, address structural inequalities that marginalize cultural and racial minority groups and

> "evocations of pluralism and diversity act to obscure differences arbitrarily imposed and maintained by white racist domination" (hooks, 1997:166).

Drawing on Frankenberg (1997), Robinson and Jones Diaz (2006) argue that as early childhood educators we need to question the construction of whiteness, examining how white dominance is rationalized and made to appear normal and natural and how whiteness and racial domination go together. The implications for early childhood educators is that we need to understand how culture and 'race' are connected to issues of power and inequality, and that cultural identities are not fixed, rather they are fluid, multiple and change dynamically and historically. Educators need to provide children with opportunities to think and talk about differences, power relations and inequalities, including awareness of the normative, often unmarked, position of whiteness. The majority of the children I worked with during my research were bilingual and came from non-white families. Many of the school's institutional practices marginalized and subordinated the children's cultures and home languages. These important aspects of children's developing identities were often treated as problematic for their progress as school pupils, with staff worrying that children would not perform well in standardised tests. Although the focus of my thesis is the children's development of gender identities, I emphasise that gender is only one aspect of identity, and intersects with ethnicity, 'race', and class. I discuss this further in relation to my own research in Chapter 6. In the next section I will discuss discourses of space and embodiment in relation to young children's enactment of masculinities and femininities.

Embodiment of masculinities and femininities

> "As a consequence of being in the mode of becoming, and in always living with the constitutive possibility of becoming otherwise, the body is that which can occupy the norm in myriad ways, exceed the norm, rework the norm, and expose realities to which we thought we were confined as open to transformation" (Butler, 2004:217).

Children use space and bodies in schools to construct and develop 'femininities' and 'masculinities' in ways that are not prescribed or sanctioned by official school procedures and practices. I explored in Chapter 1 how the design and organisation of school buildings and spaces within them can enable teachers to exercise power over children's bodies through surveillance and segregation. However, children are also able to use spaces for developing play practices and relationships of their own. Teachers and support staff only see a fraction of what happens in classrooms, playgrounds and corridors. Schools may attempt to deny some aspects of children's embodied experiences, particularly those that do not endorse 'correct' gender positioning for girls and boys, but children develop their own practices, drawing on representations from popular culture and embodying a range of masculinities and femininities. Researchers including Renold (2005) and Nespor (2000) have documented how children create, appropriate and redefine spaces within the school to negotiate and explore their gender identities. One of my key research findings is that young children in my setting learned to embody and develop masculinities and femininities in different spaces through apprentice participation in the play practices of more established community members.

The way bodies are displayed and projected in school spaces is an important aspect in the development of 'femininities' and 'masculinities'. Students perform and develop aspects of gender identity within different school spaces. Embodiment and spatiality are intertwined in many gender performances in schools. Girls and boys

frequently segregate themselves by gender, for example when allowed to choose seats and activities. Nespor (1997) documents instances where children assign tables as being 'for girls or for boys', and are upset when they are punished by being assigned to seats. Nespor documents how children engage in gender performances and bodily displays in school spaces such as classrooms, corridors and playgrounds.

Renold (2005) shows how the physical division of the Primary playground into an area for football, and an area for everything else legitimates a boys-only zone, so that boys who do not play football have to share space with girls and younger children. Renold shows how some boys excluded girls, and some other boys, from playing football, so that they did not get a chance to improve their skills, reinforcing some boys' views that 'girls are no good at football.' Renold (2005) also found that boys frequently defined themselves as 'not female' and did not want to sit with girls, unless they were called their 'girlfriend.' Renold (2005) documents how 9 to 11 year-old boys refashioned their uniforms to try to make themselves look bigger and adhered to a discourse of endurance that privileged withstanding physical pain. These practices were in marked contrast to many girls' behaviours, where girls embodied 'girlie' fashion, emphasising the desirability of being skinny and wearing 'flirty' clothes.

Swain (2003) explores the key role played by the body in the construction of masculine identity amongst a group of 10 and 11 year-old English schoolboys. He points out that despite the volume of recent research into young boys' masculinities there has been relatively little focus on children's material bodies. Swain (2003) emphasises that although the school is a regulatory institution that attempts to control and train pupils and their bodies, boys use their bodies in ways that resist and contest the attempts to produce 'docile' passive bodies. His empirical study shows how the

dominant forms of masculinity in each of the schools in his study were linked to the physical capital of the body. Swain demonstrates how boys were actively involved in developing their bodies in specific ways.

> "...they can be seen learning to control their bodies, acquiring and mastering a number of techniques such as walking, running, sitting, catching, hitting, kicking, and so forth, and using them in appropriate ways that being a boy demands. Moreover, they are aware of its significance, both as a personal (but unfinished) resource and as a social symbol, which communicates signs/messages about their self identity." (Swain, 2003:300).

For many boys, the physical performative aspect of athleticism was the most esteemed resource, and the body was used to enact 'hard' and 'tough' behaviours, and to display certain symbolic items of clothing to convey status.

> "There was an almost ritualistic and fantasised quality to many of the games that I observed, which in many ways were a series of set-piece, highly visible, stylised bodily exhibitions" (Swain, 2003:303).

Researchers (Mac an Ghaill, 1994; Connell, 1995; Gilbert and Gilbert, 1998; Martino, 1999) have documented ways in which knowledge and participation in sport is a defining marker of successful masculinity. Media images encourage boys to be competitive, and physically active, even aggressive, and offer models and fantasies of sporting heroes. The pivotal role of football in the formation of dominant masculine identities has been extensively documented (Renold, 1997; Skelton 1997, 2000; Connolly, 1998; Epstein, 1998). Becoming a football player from an early age has emotional and physical significance for many boys, way beyond the game itself (Browne, 2004). Identifying oneself as a footballer embodies, and is symbolic of, entry into the community of practice of dominant men.

Martino and Pallotta-Chiarolli (2003) draw on postcolonial feminist mestiza theory (Trinh, 1989), where identity is seen as a fragmented, fluid process. They explore how adolescent Australian boys who are 'borderdwellers' construct their

identities in schools that are sites for naturalising gender duality. They explore how different groups of boys adopt aspects of clothing, hairstyles, and postures, modes of walking and talking, to distinguish and police different forms of masculinity, in resistance to heteronormative hegemonic practices of masculinity.

Blaise (2005) shows how children in a preschool in USA use their bodies in diverse ways to perform masculinities and femininities. Blaise explores how gender is constructed in relation to practices of hegemonic masculinity. She documents girls expressing diverse femininities through the clothes they wear, knowledge and use of make-up as a key marker of femininity, range of body movements, enactment of 'being beautiful', and fashion talk. Blaise shows how children regulate gender, for example a boy who shows interest in make-up is subject to strict category-maintenance work by other girls and boys.

Research with young children shows a sharp divide in imaginative play practices of boys and girls (Davies, 1989; Lowe, 1998; MacNaughton, 2000; Browne, 2004). Browne (2004) demonstrates how young children explore different styles of embodied femininities and masculinities through imaginative play. Boys' superhero play involves development and demonstration of physical strength, fighting games to achieve dominance, and use of weapons to signify male power. Superhero scripts often involve running, leaping, noisy exchanges and taking up large areas of space.

> "...superhero play is essentially a display of hegemonic masculinity and therein lies the appeal for some boys" (Browne, 2004:92).

Young girls are often praised for engaging in quiet play that centres on families, and domestic life, and experience power through enacting the role of 'mum' in family scripts (MacNaughton, 2000). Girls find that boys resist their attempts to take part in superhero play, as demonstrated by Davies (1989) who documents a roleplay incident where a group of boys take dolls from girls who are acting assertively and enact

burning the dolls. Marsh's action research with 6 and 7 year-olds (2000) provided girls with opportunities to take part in superhero play in a Batcave. Marsh found that girls were enthusiastically involved in developing superhero scripts when presented with positive images of female heroes. However, she found boys engaged in twice as much imaginative physical play as girls, chasing and physically capturing opponents, whilst girls were more interested in literacy activities, establishing good relationships with co-heroes, and rescuing victims. Boys tried to make girls take passive roles, but when girls insisted on developing autonomous play scripts, boys let them to do this, although boys kept their own play separate.

Jan Nespor (1997, 2000) argues that multiple masculinities are constructed through body-reflexive processes in the context of different topologies. In his ethnographic study of spatialities of masculinity amongst 9 to 11 year-olds in an USA elementary school, he documents instances where young boys attempt to control regions within the classroom by performing exclusionary rituals against girls. He sees this in the context of a situation where female teachers deny boys autonomy of movement. He also identifies network topologies where young boys articulate masculinities by drawing upon phrases, metaphors and images from popular culture across space and time. Furthermore, he suggests that it is possible to map instances of fluid topologies that are found in emergent interactions, where bounded regions are disrupted, in 'borderwork' between girls and boys. He speculates that this may be quite common in situations where girls and boys interact on more equal terms or where women exercise power. This is a useful way of analysing interactions, as it emphasises the link between spatial and temporal bodily practices, and gendered power relations. School is a key site where children learn to embody various masculine and feminine practices, but this is an active process, and gives

opportunities for individual children to rework and resist practices, as well as repeat

and reproduce patterns of behaviour. In the next section I discuss discourses of

resistance and subjectivity in relation to young children's development of individual

gender identities.

Discourses of subjectivity/resistance

> "When the formation of subjectivity is understood not in one-sided terms as an
> exogenously imposed effect but as a result of a lived relation between
> embodied potentiality and material relations, then an active concept of agency
> emerges" (McNay, 2000:16).

I understand subjectivity as a process (Gatens, 1996; Walsch and Bahnisch, 2002)

whereby mind and body are not juxtaposed, but rather, subjectivity is socially

constructed by the embodied, lived situations of humans, historically and culturally

located in time and space. Drawing on MacNaughton (2000) I understand identity

formation as a creative process of constructing narratives, through playing roles and

telling stories, interacting with others. The range of subject positions available

depends on the social relations of power operating within particular situations and

discourses of difference including those of gender, 'race', class, age, sexuality, and

ability. Individuals are faced with conflicting and contradictory subject positions, not

all of which are equally desirable, available or explicit. Discursive practices are

embedded in material power relations, and these have to be transformed to realise

political change.

Connell (2002) emphasises the need to recognise the agency of bodies in the

social world and the importance of acknowledging that the same experience may be

interpreted by different individuals in different ways. She argues that gender

configurations often involve pleasure of creativity and movement. The development

of gender identity is an ongoing process of engaging with gender situations and happens on the larger scale of a whole life, rather than at the level of particular pieces of learning. If specific strategies are successful and pleasurable, they are often repeated, and become settled as patterns of femininity or masculinity (Connell, 2002).

Lather (1991) poses the question of how to theorize subjectivity in ways that allow for the relational, fragmented, multiple and changing aspects of identity, and also take account of discursive self-production whereby individuals try to make sense of their experiences. She takes account of both aspects by her understanding of subjectivity as

> "...both socially produced in language, at conscious and unconscious levels, and as a site of struggle and potential change" (Lather, 1991:118).

'Doing' masculinity and femininity is a central aspect of identity but the performance of an individual's masculinity or femininity is not fixed, and depends on the body, the social contexts, and the range of discursive positions available. As children explore ways of performing the self to the self, and performing the self to others, they position themselves in ways that reproduce and sometimes resist hegemonic gender relations (Paechter, 2007). I draw on psychoanalytic theories for the understanding that the process of becoming a gendered subject is difficult, precarious and never complete (Kehily, 2002). Psychoanalytic theories attempt to account for the continuity of the subject, by exploring motivations and desires, giving explanations for why people behave and experience themselves in contradictory and conflicting ways. By focusing on unconscious processes, they link cognition and affect, providing understandings of how the past is implicated in the present and exploring how sexuality impacts on social relationships. They offer insights into why people repeat courses of actions that are against their own interests and theorise psychic processes contributing to resistance to change. Gender identities have

emotional and psychic dimensions and are defined through social relationships, through how others see us and how we think they see us, and through how we see ourselves.

Walkerdine (1984) uses psychoanalytic ideas from Lacan to explore how girls' comics prepare girls for a romantic solution to their need to transfer desire from the mother to the father. She argues that the positioning of girls in 'helpless' 'caring' and 'selfless' discursive positions within the stories produces and fixes their desires in preparation for later romantic stories where the heroines will be overpowered by heterosexual romantic love. Walkerdine (1990) shows how girls are invited to identify with princesses and heroines who suffer as victims of cruelty, but rise above their circumstances by being selfless and beautiful. They are rewarded by being rescued by a strong and handsome prince. She argues that any attempts to offer girls' alternative fiction needs to take into consideration the importance of embodiment of desire and fantasy in the development of girls' subjectivities. This is also an important consideration for my examination of young children's imaginative play themes and relationships with each other (see Chapter 6).

In this thesis I argue that the possibilities for resistance to gender norms lie in the grasp of the contradictions between discourses, and thus of the possibilities of alternative repetitions through the taking up of subject positions that 'work the weakness in the norm' (Butler, 2004).

> "While one set of desires may be suppressed, along with their signification, by the dominant sexist discourses, the contradictions are never successfully eliminated. They are the weak points in the stronghold of gender difference: taking up gender-appropriate positions as women and men does not successfully express our multiple subjectivities" (Hollway, 1998:252).

Researchers including Robinson and Jones Diaz (2006) and Renold (2005) have shown how difficult it is for children to disrupt and resist hegemonic gender norms,

demonstrating how transgressions from normative masculinities and femininities are often punished rather than encouraged.

It is very difficult for young preschool children to resist heteronormative regulatory practices of schooling and to cross gender boundaries (Davies, 1989; MacNaughton, 2000; Blaise, 2005; Paechter, 2007). Young children gain pleasure and recognition through demonstrating that they know how to perform their gender 'correctly' and this involves reproducing normative gender behaviours. However, young children do attempt to position themselves in ways that challenge gender stereotyped behaviours. They can sometimes do this successfully by embodying what appears to be a contradiction, for example, a girl who plays football, or makes model cars, in a culture that says these activities are only for boys, or a boy who plays skipping, or wears pink, in a culture that says these things are only for girls. I discuss this in Chapters 6 and 7, in relation to my own research.

Children's play episodes have to be analysed in great detail because of the shifts in power relations and experimentation that takes place in children's interactions, as they negotiate their gender identities in different situations. Children position themselves in different ways, depending on the options available to them. There is often a tension between desires to fit in and belong within communities of practice, and desires to experiment and take up adventurous positions. As Davies (1989) shows, it is through negotiating these conflicts and contradictions that individual identities are developed, and young children can attempt to subvert gender norms if they are able to challenge discourses of gender dualism. Blaise (2005) documents ways in which Madison, an Anglo-American girl in pre-school is able to use her competence, confidence and skills to engage in Lego building and how she encourages other girls to participate with her. A crucial aspect of Madison's success is

the support of her teacher, as a group of boys are used to dominating and controlling play with Lego. I discuss the complexities of border crossing in my research setting in Chapter 6.

Conclusion

The range of subject positions available to young children depends upon the discourses to which they have access (MacNaughton, 2000). Young children in my research setting are positioned within discourses of gender dualism, cognitive-developmental discourses and discourses of age and childhood innocence. Their gender positions are produced within a heteronormative framework of compulsory heterosexuality. Children's behaviours are regulated by dominant discourses. Diversity and difference are often located in a discourse of deficit, and this often positions children as 'lacking' in respect to home languages, 'race', ethnicity and class backgrounds (Robinson and Jones Diaz, 2006). School is a key site where children learn to embody 'masculinities' and 'femininities'. This is an active process, whereby children rework and resist dominant discourses, as well as repeating them. However, it is very difficult for children to transgress gender norms in ways that subvert gender dualism. Young children develop gender identities by experimenting with the discursive positions available to them, through embodied gender performances.

In Chapters 4 and 5 I analyse how young children gain pleasure from gender competence in communities of practice of girls and boys in Nursery and Reception classes. They learn what norms and practices will gain them recognition, but they do not always follow the norms, sometimes resisting or reworking practices. In Chapter 5 I examine how children take up and embody different positions in different spaces in

classrooms and playgrounds, at different times, as they develop relationships with others. In Chapter 6 I examine 'borderwork' where children police and contest gender boundaries. In the next chapter I explain my research methodology and fieldwork study.

Chapter 3

Research methodology and design of study.

"To do feminist research is to put the social construction of gender at the center of one's inquiry...Through the questions that feminism poses and the absences it locates, feminism argues the centrality of gender in the shaping of our consciousness, skills and institutions as well as in the distribution of power and privilege" (Lather, 1991:71).

Introduction

In this Chapter, I will explain how I developed my research methodology and research methods in order to answer my research questions. Firstly I will explain the intentions and design of my fieldwork study, and then I will explain my research methodology. I will then discuss details of my research methods, and ethical and practical issues arising from my position as an adult researcher working with young children. My aim in this thesis is to contribute to feminist understandings of how young children develop gender identities in the early years of schooling. My key research questions were:-

What discourses of femininity and masculinity do young children draw on in the early years of schooling?

How do young children embody and perform masculinities and femininities in their activities and relationships in the early years of schooling?

I aimed to consider how young children experienced pleasure and power, how they used fantasy, stories and imaginative play to develop gender constructs, and how their play practices and social interactions were affected by their understanding of gender constructs. I wanted to explore whether children's discursive practices varied depending on the situation and whether their discursive practices changed as they became more established in school. I wanted to find out about the children's ideas

about their own, and other people's gender, and how schooling practices affected their development of gender constructs. I was particularly interested in exploring how young children who were new in school learned about practices of masculinity and femininity and how they conformed or resisted gender norms.

In order to answer my research questions, I decided to use qualitative methods of research, as I wanted to collect and analyse detailed data on all aspects of the children's development of gender constructs. I decided to investigate the ways in which young children in early years classes in one inner city London primary school class were developing constructs of femininities and masculinities, how they understood themselves as a girl or a boy, and how their understandings of gender affected their behaviours. I chose to do a longitudinal study over two years, as I wanted to find out how the children's ideas and behaviours developed over a period of time. I decided to focus my fieldwork study on a specific group of children, who attended one specific Nursery and Reception class, and collect data that showed the range of gender discourses and discursive practices with which they engaged. I wanted to study how the children learned about masculinities and femininities from adults in the setting, from children who already had experience of schooling, and from children in their own cohort. I wanted to find a school where staff had an interest in gender equity and were keen to discuss gender issues. I needed to get to know children when they first came into school, and encourage them to share their ideas and feelings with me, and observe how they drew on discourses of gender as they settled into school. I needed to find a school where the staff and children would be willing for me to spend long periods of time observing activities and talking to the children.

Design of study

I sent out letters to schools in my area that had a Nursery that fed into a Reception class, inviting them to take part in my research. I visited three schools where teachers expressed an interest and had lengthy conversations with early years staff. I chose this particular school, Ash Vale, because initial conversations with staff suggested that gender equity was an important issue for them, and because I felt comfortable when I spent time in the school, as children and adults were very welcoming to me. The school's population was comparatively stable and most of the children who went to the nursery subsequently went into the reception class, so that I could expect to be able to follow groups of children over two years. A further advantage was that the school was very close to my home so that I could visit frequently with ease. I followed cohorts of children from Nursery into Reception in order to see how their ideas and behaviour developed as they moved from Nursery to Reception (see Children in Ash Vale Appendix A and Research Schedule Appendix B). I used qualitative research methods, based on participant observation, working with pupils in Nursery and Reception classes. I drew on ethnographic research methods, as used by feminist researchers including Thorne, Davies, Epstein, MacNaughton, Francis and Browne. I discuss details of my research methods below (page 106).

Research context

The School

'Ash Vale' (name changed to preserve anonymity) is an inner city State Primary school in London, drawing its pupils from the adjoining 1930s local authority housing estate. It has 250 boys and girls aged 3 to 11 on roll. Its pupils come from the local, culturally diverse community, the largest group being of Black African heritage. The

school intake includes a number of children from recently arrived immigrant, refugee and asylum seeker families. Over half the pupils at the school speak a language other than English as their first language. The socio-economic circumstances of many families are described in the school's Ofsted Report (2006) as "not favourable" and over three quarters of pupils are eligible for free school meals (an indicator that the family has a low income). The Ofsted Report indicates that a large number of pupils join and leave each year, many pupils enter school with a very limited knowledge of English, and the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities, including those with statements of special educational needs, are higher than the national average.

Nursery and Reception classes

There are 12 full-time places and 40 part-time places in the Nursery for children aged 3 and 4. Children who have a part-time Nursery place attend either in the mornings or the afternoons. The Reception class (for children aged 4 to 5) takes 30 children in two intakes each academic year, up to half in September and the remainder in January. Full-time Nursery places are allocated chiefly on the basis of age, mostly to older children the term before they are due to enter Reception. Not all children who attend Nursery go on to attend the Reception class at Ash Vale. The Nursery and Reception classes each have their own indoor classroom and outdoor play areas. The Nursery has a garden area. During the lunch break Reception and Year 1 children share two play spaces, and full-time Nursery children join them for the first half hour. Children in Nursery and Reception classes have several periods of whole class teaching each day on 'the carpet'. This involves all children sitting together on a carpet facing the teacher. For the rest of the day, children are taught in small groups, and encouraged to

choose play based activities for themselves, from a selection offered in the classrooms and outdoor areas. The Nursery class has one teacher and one Nursery Nurse. The Reception class has one teacher and one classroom assistant. Children are supervised at lunchtimes for a period of an hour a day by mealtime supervisors. Special needs teachers, bilingual and other support assistants are also allocated to the classes for some of the teaching time.

Details of the children who took part in my research are given in Appendix A.

I changed all children's names to preserve anonymity. I refer to individual staff by an initial, to preserve anonymity.

Mrs R. (Foundation Stage Co-ordinator)

Ms S. (Reception Class teacher

Methodology and ethical considerations

My methodology was feminist in that I put the social construction of gender at the centre of my inquiry (Lather, 1991). I drew on feminist poststructuralism for my theoretical framework and methodology. Feminist poststructuralism is concerned with investigating how gender discourses operate to normalise specific gender positions and to expose the complexities of power relations (Weedon, 1997). I share MacNaughton's feminist aim of engaging with young children and early years educators to expand their ways of seeing and doing gender (MacNaughton, 2000, 2005). MacNaughton emphasises that young children's development of gender identity takes place through interaction with others, and the constructs they can develop are limited to the alternatives that are available to them.

> "In constructing identities, children access the particular meanings available to them and then: read them, interpret them, live them, embody them, express

them, desire them, gain pleasure through them, understand them, take them up as their own" (MacNaughton, 2000:25).

My aim in deconstructing gender discourses was to explore how children were positioned, and positioned themselves, so that possibilities can be explored for developing access to more equitable gender discourses.

I followed BERA and BSA ethical guidelines.

"All educational research should be conducted with an ethic of respect for: the Person, Knowledge, Democratic Values and The Quality of Educational Research" (BERA, 2004:5).

I aim to add to the growing tradition of participatory research with children, in contrast to observation of them (Christensen and James, 2000; Connolly, 1998). In the 20th century, the concept of children's rights encouraged the development of research methods and research agendas that value children's abilities and social competencies and understand children as active social players (Mayall, 2002). Feminist researchers including Davies (1982) and Thorne (1993) used ethnographic methods to study details of childhood cultures and power relations, demonstrating that children actively construct their own cultures.

"Even without the rights enjoyed by adults, and despite the expectations placed on them as members of the institution of childhood, children busily get on with the business of constructing their own reality with each other, as well as making sense of and developing strategies to cope with the adult world as and when it impinges on their world. This reality and its related strategies I refer to as the culture of childhood" (Davies, 1982:33).

Feminist researchers including Danby (1998) Davies (1989) and Renold (2005) and Blaise (2005) have demonstrated children's competence as players in their social world, showing how they use play practices to establish social groups. I aim to add to this work. This approach is taken from a sociology of childhood framework that perceives children as capable of producing competent versions of their own lived

experience (Mayall, 2002, Farrell, 2005). This is in contrast to approaches of early childhood researchers who believe that young children are unable to give consent because they are not old enough to comprehend what they are being asked to do. The human rights agenda has provided an impetus for children to be seen as active participants in the research process.

I understand children as 'active social players', and I believe I had a responsibility to the children who took part in my research project, to work with them, rather than for them or about them, to listen to their ideas with respect, and to explain as fully as possible the intentions of my research (MacNaughton, 2005; Blaise, 2005). This approach necessitates proactive strategies to promote children's rights during the research process, by ensuring children have safe spaces and privacy to share their ideas, choices over how/when to respond, and ownership over data and ideas generated. This means that I saw the children as research players and decision makers in their own right, throughout the whole research cycle. I was often unsure about what children's conversations and interactions meant to them, and I emphasise that their actions were often open to multiple interpretations. I aimed to document shifts in children's power relations, and identify different discursive positions, and this is why I include some lengthy extracts from my field notes in my chapters on analysis of my findings. In my presentation of my findings, I aimed to make my own positions as visible as possible.

Power, knowledge and representation

Different research methodologies provide different claims for the knowledge produced. I drew on ethnographic and discourse analytic methods, and these sometimes employ different ideas about language. Traditional ethnography has

presented research findings as empirical studies, gaining authority from the observational skills and rigorous processes of analysis of the researcher. The role of the researcher in ethnography is seen as interpreting and describing the meanings and functions of people's behaviours in specific communities and contexts. Language is understood as the medium for conveying and portraying what the researcher has discovered in fieldwork. In the first volume of a new journal 'Ethnography', the following description shows the central philosophy of ethnography.

> "...it is a family of methods involving direct and sustained social contact with agents, and of richly writing up encounter, respecting, recording, representing at least partly in its own terms, the irreducibility of human experience. Ethnography is the disciplined and deliberate witness-cum-recording of human events" (Wills and Trodman, 2000:7).

I used methods from ethnography to study children's actions and interactions. Whilst I aimed to use rigorous processes of data collection and analysis, I do not claim that my findings can portray 'how things are', in any objective way. Drawing on feminist poststructuralist theory, I hold that knowledge is constructed through language and social practices. Accordingly, my role as a researcher is to show how different kinds of knowledge are produced within power relations in the social contexts I studied. Social meanings are produced within social institutions and social practices. The meanings of discursive practices are sites of ongoing power struggles so it is not possible to fix meaning once and for all (Weedon, 1987). As Weedon argues, we have access to a range of discursive positions and these positions are often conflicting and inscribed with different power relations.

I drew on feminist research methodology for my emphasis on deconstruction of discourses. Deconstruction of discourses provides very powerful tools in feminist methodologies, by enabling researchers to explore the multiple and fragmented aspects of subjectivities. I used feminist poststructuralist methods of discourse

analysis (Baxter, 2003) to explore the multiple positions and complexities of shifting power relationships in young children's experiences of gender in preschool. The ways that I am positioned, and position myself in discourses is directly related to the 'knowledge' that I produce as a researcher. Mindful of this, reflexivity has been a central feature of my research process. Ribbens and Edwards (1998) claim that feminist reflexivity involves explicitly taking into consideration the operation of power within research processes. They argue that researchers who work with children need to take into consideration how power operates through hegemonic cultural perspectives during the research process. These operations of power are contained in the adult centred language we use, the adult positions we take up during research in the field, and through the specific individual relationships we make with children during research. I agree that it is important for researchers to make their own positions, assumptions and emotional investments as clear as possible to the children we work with, and in the writing up of our findings. I include a brief autobiographical introduction to my thesis in an attempt to make my personal history and standpoint available to readers (see page 11). When I worked with children in the field I attempted to explain my research to them. In the presentation of my research findings I aimed to make visible my own opinions and the way I was positioned within discourses.

As a feminist researcher working with young children, I faced the dilemma shared by many feminist researchers who want to represent the voices of research participants in ways that are faithful to the research participants' language and experiences, but also want to avoid positioning them as 'other', and reproducing hierarchies of power and knowledge (Ribbens and Edwards, 1998). Researchers who use traditional approaches, for example in analysis of interviews, sometimes mask the

relations of power that are inherent in the research relationship, by claiming representational status for their own perspective. This is a hegemonic aspect of Western scientific discourse, and is so entrenched that it appears 'natural'. Research findings are presented as though they are objective, when they are actually dependent upon how the researcher is positioned. For example, Corsaro's research with young children aims to 'escape from' an adult world and 'enter the child's world' (Corsaro, 1981). He presents his findings as a realistic portrayal of children's culture, as if this observed culture existed, independent of his researcher's gaze, available to be reported. A poststructuralist approach understands language as constitutive and productive rather than simply reflective (Alldred, 1998). Researchers have power in the ways they select, interpret and produce meanings through language, and in the presentation of my findings I aim to show how I have selected and shaped my data.

There are complex problems involved in writing and representing the Other. Griffin (1996) highlights these when she emphasises that as a feminist researcher she is telling her story about others' lives. When she 'speaks for' others, she does so from her own understanding of their positions. She emphasises that she can pass on selected aspects of what others have shown her about their lives, but can never speak or write from their positions.

> "When, as a feminist and researcher, I 'speak for' other women (and sometimes 'for' men), I cannot avoid telling my story about their lives. I can use the voices of Others from (my understanding of) their positions, but I can never speak/write from their positions" (Griffin, 1996).

Similarly, I do not claim to 'speak for' the young children in my research setting, but only to pass on something of what they have shown me. Moral dilemmas arise when making decisions about when to intervene in children's conversations and actions. My first priority was to avoid doing anything that would be likely to harm or distress

101

children, acting in good faith in keeping with my aim of contributing to understanding of, and respect for, young children. Different children have different 'voices' and it is important that some are not silenced. I wanted to enable children to speak for themselves, but not to provide spaces for some children to act in racist and sexist ways, without challenging these (MacNaughton, 2005). There are also circumstances when I would have thought it right to break children's confidentiality, if what they told me made me think they were at risk of harm.

I agree with Ball (1990) that data are a social construct of the research process. Ball makes the important point that researchers need to consider how their own role has influenced their research participants and the ways they have collected data, as this will affect analysis. Ribbens and Edwards (1998) and Narayan (1989) argue that feminists need to adopt high standards of reflexivity and openness about the choices we make at every stage of an empirical study, including ways we 'hear' interviewees and 'represent' them in data analysis and writing up. This involves recognition that where we are situated makes a difference to the knowledge we produce, and that we have to make judgements about the best ways of communicating this knowledge to others, who are situated differently. Narayan (1989) terms this a 'perspectival' view of knowledge. This seems to me to be a useful approach because it aims to make power relations and decisions transparent but avoids the paralysing conclusion that research should not take place at all, due to the problems of representation.

These problems of representation have more specific dilemmas in relation to research with young children. Firstly, there is the problem of 'representing' the 'voices of children'.

> "Whilst much feminist research is concerned with adequately recognising difference, representing children within research is always characterised by Otherness across the construction of a defining adult-child difference. Unlike

Women's Studies, Childhood Studies has not arisen from the politics of experience (Oakley, 1994) and is conducted by adults on those who are Other to them" (Alldred, 1998:167).

Alldred (1998) points out the important distinction between research that aims to hear and represent (portray) particular children's experiences/voices, and research that aims to use the discourse of 'hearing children's voices' as a political strategy for arguing for changes in education and health provision. I want my research to address both these aims, and I will therefore examine the methodological implications of each.

In the first instance, there are dilemmas that arise from the power relationships between the researcher, as an adult, and the research participants, as children. Many feminist researchers working with young children have reflected on this power imbalance, and made various attempts to mitigate or give due consideration to it. I agree with Thorne when she asserts that despite her respect for the children, as a researcher, she is a spectator, even at times, a voyeur.

"... for my gaze remained, at its core and in its ultimate knowing purpose, that of a more powerful adult" (Thorne, 1993:27).

In using methods of participant observation with young children, researchers have deliberately adopted a 'least adult role', in order to minimise the power differential and encourage children to open up, talk and behave as they would if the researcher were not present (Davies, 1989; Thorne, 1993; Epstein, 1998). This method has produced a wealth of interesting data, and I used it myself as a major research method, but it is fraught with difficulties. As a researcher, it is necessary to train oneself not to intervene in interactions, to be reactive rather than active, so as not to direct what happens (Epstein, 1998). Children frequently appeal to the researcher as an adult, to help sort out problems, discipline other children, and help with work. As Epstein points out (1998), the researcher in primary school is positioned as one of

a small number of adults responsible for the care and control of large numbers of children. As an adult, the researcher does have a different status within the school, and is able to draw upon personal knowledge and authority. Epstein remarks that her editor, Walford, made the comment that it would be counterproductive to her research relationships with children if she refused to help them, when she clearly could, as they would expect a friend to do. I agree, and would add that we learn certain cultural expectations of helping each other, for example it is sometimes deemed acceptable to ask for directions from strangers.

Epstein (1998) also points to another difficulty in adopting 'least adult role'. Although it is an attempt to reduce the power differential, in some ways it can reinforce it, because it imposes this construction on the children when they might prefer to position the researcher in a more familiar adult role, such as teacher, carer or 'Mum'. I adopted all these roles at different times in my research settings, and I reflected on how this affected the data I produced. I was also aware that I can revert to being a powerful adult when I choose to do so, and either remove myself from a situation, or intervene. Epstein (1998) gives a telling example of this from her reading of Davies (1989). Davies describes herself as taking part fully in the children's world in a game where she takes power as 'Queen of the World' when she is positioned as powerless-as-female by some boys. Epstein points out that the boys might have been furious with her because they were resisting her adult power, and that a girl child would not have been able to resist the hegemonic discourse in the game as easily as Davies.

The second problem specific to research with young children is related to the historical context and discourses of childhood. The empirical study of children in the West since the 19th century has been regarded as the domain of psychology. As I

outlined in Chapter 1, research in developmental psychology has focused on the individual child, as an object of study, attempting to document and understand how children develop through a sequence of stages. The highest stage in this progression is the use of abstract reasoning. This draws on a developmental discourse of childhood that sees childhood as a preparation for adulthood, with children progressing through age-related stages towards the goal of becoming rational adults, as 'becomings', rather than people in their own right (Walkerdine, 2004). These cultural constructions of childhood have an impact on the way research with young children has been conducted.

Developmental discourses exacerbate children's objectification within research, and they can be used to discount what children say and do. Discussion of methodological issues in research with young children often suggests that children are unreliable research subjects because they confuse fact and fiction, lack logical reasoning skills, and tell adults what they think the adult wants to hear. For example, Grant (2002) argues that data from interviews with young children can be unreliable because they will say anything rather than nothing, and she cites Simons (1982) and Lewis (1992) in support. From a poststructuralist viewpoint, children are positioned within a discourse of incompleteness, in an adult-dominated culture. They have to make themselves meaningful in adult-centred terms. I aimed to demonstrate that complexity, ambiguity and contradiction are inherent features of language, rather than just the result of children's immaturity. I also bore in mind that children might not find informal interviews with a researcher an empowering experience, in a context where they are expected to 'make sense' to an adult, and where language is productive of adult power (Alldred, 1998). I found that children did sometimes try to say things to please me, but they also changed the topic of conversation or opted out

if they became bored or uncomfortable (Aubrey et al, 2000). I tried to pick up on their cues to avoid causing distress, although I did, unwittingly, sometimes upset children. On one occasion, Zuhre cried when I said she must wait for a turn to work with me. My insistence that children 'opt in' to work with me was designed to prevent children feeling pressurised to do so, but the practical problem arose that there were often too many who wanted to engage in an activity with me at the same time.

Details of research methods

I used ethnographic methods to find out about the children's social practices through methods of participant observation, data collection and analysis based on field notes, over a period of two years. I used methods of participant observation where I took part in activities based on stories, writing, drawing, construction and roleplay with individual children and small groups. I also had ongoing discussions with children and adults in the settings, and conducted semi-structured interviews with children (see interview schedule Appendix C). I spent one day a week in school throughout my research period, and also made numerous additional visits on different days, varying the times so that I built up a picture of daily routines in Nursery and Reception classes. I observed and documented how girls and boys used space and resources, and how practices emerged from structures. I observed and mapped who used different spaces in classrooms and playgrounds, who moved, where, and when. I documented how children moved, constraints on bodily movement, choices of activities, and who was included and excluded from activities. I collected data about changing friendship patterns, ways of speaking and bodily gestures. I observed how children who were new to Nursery watched older children and copied aspects of their play, and I documented their play patterns as they became established in Nursery. The advantage

of these methods was that they produced rich data on children's behaviours and interactions, and enabled me to focus on ways in which children are active agents in their own learning (Mayall, 2002).

I found that taking detailed field notes of children's play and conversations and making sketches of the children's movements were the most effective ways of collecting data. I spent about half of my time in each session joining in with children's activities, and the rest of the time making detailed observations, sitting in different areas of the classroom and playground and making detailed sketches and notes of who played in the area, what was said, who moved where, and how play episodes began and ended. I found Carlspecken's (1996) method of priority observation useful in ensuring I collected data on all children in the group. I followed each child in turn for ten minute observations noting what they said, did, their movements, interactions, intonation and bodily gestures. I interrupted these individual observations if a significant event such as a change in routine or conflict caught my attention. I also invited children to take part in some semi-structured activities with me. I read stories with the children, as a stimulus for discussing with them their ideas and experiences of gender (see Appendix D). I brought into class a variety of capes for imaginative play and encouraged the children to develop stories and imaginative play themes wearing the capes. I used pictures of popular toys to stimulate discussion about favourite toys (see Appendix E). I invited Reception children to tell me about what they liked to play in the playground and talk about their experiences of lunchtime play. We recorded their comments in their drawings, in my field notes and sometimes on audiotape. Children moved around a lot and the noise levels often obscured speech on the taperecorder so that taperecording did not give me very useful data, although some of the children enjoyed hearing their voices on the tape, and

enjoyed interviewing me and classmates. I also observed children during periods of formal instruction, in teacher directed Literacy and Numeracy lessons on the carpet, in PE lessons in the main Hall, and in whole school assemblies. I had many discussions about my research with early years staff and asked them to comment on my data. I sent letters to parents each term outlining my research aims, and inviting them to talk with me about my research (see Appendix F).

In my data analysis I used grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), and feminist discourse analysis (Baxter, 2003) to examine my data of children's talk and interactions. I used methods from critical discourse analysis and ethnography (Carlspecken, 1996) and feminist discourse analysis (Wetherell et al, 2001; Baxter, 2003) to deconstruct ways in which children draw on different discourses in different situations. Throughout the research process I aimed to be self-reflexive, and keep in mind that the data are a construct of the research process itself (Ball, 1990; Baxter, 2003). I was constantly questioning my beliefs, practices and methods, adapting my methods in response to discussions with staff and children. I focused on ways that children interacted with each other and with adults to negotiate shifting subject positions and I documented ambiguities and complexities of power relations (Baxter, 2003). I used synchronic and diachronic textual analysis to identify shifts in power relations and record developments in discursive relationships over time. I typed up my fieldnotes after each school visit, noting my own reactions and feelings, emerging themes, and ideas for further research. I adopted a standard format for presenting fieldnotes (see Appendix G).

I coded my data using the principles of Glaser and Strauss, whereby categories are discovered by examination of the data, and theory is generated through the "constant comparative method of joint coding and analysis" (Glaser and Strauss,

1967:102). I examined 'slices of data' and these generated categories for comparative analysis. When categories became saturated, I was able to consider emerging core categories and I compared new incidents in a particular category with the properties of the category that I had already noted, using the accumulated patterns of data to generate theory and suggest avenues of questioning. So, for example, I initially coded instances of girls and boys playing in same sex groups, and instances where they played in mixed gender groups. I coded these in relation to activities, areas of classrooms and playgrounds, and this encouraged me to reflect on 'borderwork' and begin coding instances of different kinds of 'borderwork'. I used Carlspecken's (1996) suggested stages for a critical ethnographical research process, compiling a primary record of 'thick' data from my field notes, and then using low level coding to make preliminary reconstructive analysis. I then used low level coding to select passages for intensive analysis and normative/evaluative reconstructions. I found Carlspecken's notion of foregrounded and backgrounded normative/evaluative claims very useful for analysis of children's interactions and staff comments to children.

Following Carlspecken's methods, I coded actions and comments according to norms, resistance to norms, validity claims, appeals to norms of behaviour, evidence of values, moral standpoints, changes in interactive settings, and instances when backgrounded claims were taken into the foreground. I did initial data analysis simultaneously with collecting data in my research settings, and this enabled me to focus and adapt my study as it progressed. For example, I decided to increase my observations of lunchtime play in the Reception class, and I introduced pictures of toys to prompt discussions in Nursery. I noted that children were offered a gender stereotyped selection of role play clothes, and I saw how many boys used their coats as capes for imaginative games at lunch play. This gave me the idea of making a

selection of capes to take in for children's role plays. My focus for ongoing discussions with early years staff often arose from analysis of initial data, as I asked them to clarify their understanding of their practice and share with me their thoughts about the children's play and relationships.

My position as adult researcher

My own adult body had implications for my role as an adult researcher. I am physically much larger than the children, and I sometimes had the feeling that I was taking up too much space in the Nursery, particularly when I was in a small space like the role play area. Children experienced ways in which I used my body in spaces in different ways, and I tried to be aware of this. For example, I could be experienced as intrusive, controlling, dominating, comforting, reassuring or confusing in different situations, by different children. I needed to be aware of this, and also aware that my physical presence in school spaces altered situations for the children and adults. Even when I was sitting quietly at the edge of the carpet, I was writing in my notebook, and children and staff would sometimes address comments to me that showed they were conscious that I was watching them. I was not able to take part in some of the children's activities, even if they would have wanted me to, because I am not as physically fit as they are, and I was too big to use items like bikes, climbing frames and skipping ropes (Epstein, 1998). Also, I could claim adult privileges, in relation to how and when I joined children. Nespor (1997) gives an example of when he refuses, as a man, to reinforce children's gendered meaning of lunch tables, by refusing the boys' request to sit on 'their' table, and sitting instead with the girls. He remarks that this "probably just announced that he was claiming the adult's privilege of refusing to play the game" (Nespor, 1997: 135). When I was in the playground, children often

came up and chatted to me, and asked me to sit down with them. They were often keen to tell me about their games and enjoyed writing and drawing in my notebook. Usually I complied with their requests, but at other times I showed them my notes and drawings, and told them I was busy writing my own notes. I kept some control of my activities, and I had the option of going indoors if I wanted to, unlike them.

Researchers working with young children report that they have felt like a child themselves during the research process, and have drawn on their own memories of childhood to inform their work (Thorne, 1993; Epstein, 1998). This can be a strength, but it is also important to be aware that everybody has a different experience of being a child, and we must not overestimate how much we can understand children's points of view, just because we were once a child (Epstein, 1998). Also, our memories of our childhoods are not entirely reliable. As I recall, I was quite an obedient child, and as an adult, I found myself wanting to encourage certain 'subversive' behaviours in the children, particularly aspects of rulebreaking related to carpet time. I resisted these impulses, but I was also careful to make it clear to teachers and children that I was not in a position of authority in the school. Some teachers tried to put me in a 'teacher' role; whilst I tried to be helpful with routine classroom tasks, I did not take on a disciplinary role. Staff were usually very polite, and sometimes even deferential with me, which surprised me. I conclude that they viewed my presence as non-threatening to them and beneficial to the children. Certainly, that was my intention. I always discussed my work with teachers and support staff, and I asked staff to tell me if anything I did was not helpful to them. If children asked me to intervene in disputes I usually referred them to a member of staff, reiterating that I am not a teacher/dinner supervisor. Most children and staff accepted this, and did not ask me to deal with

discipline issues. I think that staff found me acceptable in the school, partly because of my status as an older woman and a retired teacher.

As an experienced teacher, I found the role of researcher challenging, as I had to learn to intervene far less, and relinquish control of activities. When engaged in stories and roleplay with the children, I was sometimes tempted to try and assert my authority, as an adult, at least, if not as a teacher. In the following field note, I describe Marsha's behaviour as 'bossy', when she tries to direct an activity, and I was drawing on a gendered discourse myself in this interpretation, as I would not have used this word to describe a boy.

2/07 Diary entry

As it was raining, the children couldn't go outside today, and there was a cover teacher as well, so I was more 'in demand' than usual. Children kept crowding round my table wanting a turn, and interrupting, and I had difficulty keeping focused myself. Marsha started getting very bossy at one point and telling children who would be next to have a turn with me and where they should sit. I said to her "Marsha, wait a minute, are you in charge here?" She said no, and backed off, but I felt a mixture of alarm at being so bossy myself, and triumph in asserting control again. I do find it hard to get a balance, I don't want to be in teacher mode, but I do want to have some authority, so I can get them to focus on my research agenda, and so they get a fair turn if they want one. Playing back my tapes, it strikes me that I do sound calm, interested and encouraging. Which is a relief, because I quite often feel rather overwhelmed and harassed by the sheer number of demands for my attention.

I found myself trying to claw back some semblance of order in situations that sometimes felt too chaotic to me. I worried that staff would think we were making too much noise. I felt annoyed when some children tried to dominate proceedings, and I

felt overwhelmed by the demands on my attention and concentration. More than all these things, however, I felt enormous respect and admiration for the children I worked with, and I was moved by their trust in me and by their willingness to share their experiences and thoughts with me. Some were very keen to make sure I was 'happy' with what I was learning from them, and made efforts to explain what they were doing in ways that they thought I would understand. In the following field note I recorded how Ravi made me welcome at the start of his first term in Reception. I was feeling rather nervous myself, and it may be that Ravi saw this.

01/07 Ravi "Miss! Barbara! I am in Reception now. Do you remember I was in Nursery I do stickers with you."

(Ravi shows me his alphabet book and demonstrates what he can read now.)

Ravi (to me) "Are you happy now?"

[...] Ravi brings the junk model boat he has made and gives it to me.

Ravi "This for you."

The research process must avoid exploiting those who take part (Stanley and Wise, 1993). This means that I needed to consider how to give adults and children choices about whether and when they participate at each stage of the process. Moral dilemmas occurred at every point. I promised to preserve the anonymity of all participants, but I realised that this is not compatible with another important commitment which was to share my research findings. Individual children and staff are recognisable to those who know them, despite the changes in names, so I had to make decisions about when to share my findings, and with whom. For example, I decided not to share some analysis of children's play episodes with staff, because I thought the staff might be annoyed with the children about some of their behaviour, and I felt it would be a betrayal of the children's trust in me.

Gaining the consent of young children is problematic – they are often eager to participate, but it was difficult to explain to them what my work as a researcher entailed. Epstein (1998) describes how she tried to give her young research participants some information and control over their involvement. She showed them her notebook, invited them to ask her about what she wrote, and promised she would tear out an entry if they did not like what she had written. She promised not to show the notebook to the teachers, and tried to answer their questions honestly. Epstein also promised the head teacher that she would show him the finished research before publication, and despite pseudonyms, he would be able to recognise the children, so she was not really able to offer the children confidentiality. Even though they were able to make some decisions about when, and what, to tell her, Epstein argues that it was impossible for the young children to give informed consent to taking part in her research, as they had no experience by which they could understand her role as a researcher. I agree with Epstein that this is a problem, and that the concept of 'informed consent' is problematic in ethnography, as the presence of the researcher, as an outsider who observes, changes the dynamics of the group. I also agree with Epstein that a judgement has to be made as to whether the research is important enough to justify researching with young children who have limited capacity for informed consent. My own judgement is that my research fulfils this criterion.

Epstein's experiences emphasised for me how difficult it is to empower young children in the research process, and also how children are not ultimately in control of how the researcher uses what they say later in analysis and comment. Her experience made me wary of giving promises to adults in the setting, as I felt my first loyalties should be to the children. I promised the teaching staff that I would discuss my research at all stages, and provide them with feedback, but I did not say I would show

them everything. At the start of each stage of my fieldwork, I explained to the children that I am a researcher, not a teacher, and that they could choose whether they wanted to take part in my research. I said that I was writing a book and I was interested in what they like to do in preschool/school. I did not emphasize that I was interested in gender as I did not want to produce generalising responses based on gender dichotomy (Francis, 1998). I was fortunate in being able to spend a lot of time with the children, and was able to listen and wait for them to show me about 'doing' boy and girl. Getting their gender behaviour 'correct' was an important issue for them, and they often talked spontaneously about their understandings of gender dualism. The majority were very keen to take part in activities with me and talk to me. They enjoyed writing and drawing in my notebooks, talking on the tape recorder and telling me about themselves. However, I was sometimes confronted with the realisation that even if I try not to pressurize the children, some did feel an obligation to please me, and sometimes even tried to give me the answers they thought I wanted. At the very least, they had to put up with having me around in their class and playground. In the following fieldnote, Ayo tells me she does not want me to be with her class on this day. I interpret her remark to mean that she feels she needs to be on her 'best' behaviour if I am there. My reply shows how the children's choice to participate in my research was limited. Ayo need not talk to me, but she cannot prevent me joining her class.

01/07 Ayo to me "Barbara, I want you to go to the Nursery today. I'm not in a very good mood."

BM "Well, I'm with your class today Ayo, but you don't have to talk to me if you don't want to. That's fine." (Later she comes and asks to do a picture).

When I was reading stories and doing roleplay activities, I often chose the focus and steered discussions towards my own agenda, whilst children were sometimes determined to set their own. All human interactions involve power relationships, and in my data analysis, I take account of the context in which children make comments, and the dynamics of the relationships, including my own interventions. Connolly (1998) discusses the impact that his presence, as the adult man, had on the ways 6 year-old boys behaved in group discussions with him. He argues that the boys emphasised their physical competence for his benefit as well as their own, and took pleasure in demonstrating 'adult' knowledge by discussing 'taboo' topics involving violence, sex and 'cusses', as a way of countering the dominant discourses of childhood within the school. In doing so, they were also able to challenge Connolly's authority as an adult, and so he sees this as expressive of a power struggle between himself and the young boys.

In my own research discussions with children, I was often aware of children wanting to demonstrate adult knowledge to me, and I think this is partly so they can gain status amongst other children, but also it is a way of telling me they are the experts on their own lives, not me. I think some of the girls related their knowledge about adult feminine behaviours to me because I am an adult woman. On one occasion I happened to be wearing nail polish, and this resulted in lengthy discussions about makeup and appearance. Many girls initiated conversations with me about what I was wearing, their own clothes and differences in our names, skin colours and family relationships. Zuhre was pleased that my name sounded like her grandma's Turkish name, Amena told me on many occasions that she knew a Barbara at her church who sang with her, but that she was black, like Amena, not white like me. Ayo, looking at my face, told me, on a day when I was feeling stressed and hot "You

used to be white but now you are red!" Many children were very welcoming to me and took a lot of trouble to show me things and explain things about their life in school and sometimes talked about home life to me.

I wanted to explore how children draw upon experiences from family and home in the Nursery/Reception settings as they struggle to make sense of the new communities of practice in Nursery/Reception. This was a very difficult aim, because I was not observing the children in their homes or researching communities of practice outside the school settings. I was interested in how the different communities to which they belong present similarities and/or contradictions for the children, but unless they shared their thoughts about this with me, I was not able to collect much data about this. I asked children questions and encouraged them to draw pictures, take part in roleplay and talk when it seemed appropriate to do so, but I did not want to be intrusive, or cause distress. I felt very honoured when children chose to share aspects of their home experience with me. Omar told me about his enjoyment of visiting his grandparents and riding on his uncle's farm tractor in Turkey, and his pride in his family's Turkish name.

Stories provided a useful starting point for discussion, but many of the children were not yet fluent speakers of English. More importantly, I encountered fundamental problems connected to the institutional ideology and practices of the school. The school's institutional practices do not encourage children to speak or write in their home languages or discuss their home experiences. The children learn that English is the only acceptable language in the classroom. The lack of status given to children's home languages was also in contrast to the status given to French, which was taught to all Nursery and Reception children. Many children were anxious to demonstrate knowledge of the few French words they had learned in school. The school's equal

opportunities stance aims to encourage respect for cultural diversity but its practices privilege white Anglo Saxon heritage in curriculum delivery. This 'colourblind' approach results in an institutional silence about ethnic, religious and cultural differences, and marginalises the children's home cultures (Pearce, 2005). I found this a very difficult aspect of working in the school, as it is contrary to my understanding of education and equity. I discuss this in more detail in Chapters 2 and 7.

I agree with Farrell (2005) that children's consent should be sought at each stage of the research process. As an adult, I am in a position of power in relation to children in my research settings. I have ultimate control over how I use data supplied to me by the children in interviews and activities. As a participant observer, I saw and heard things that other adults were not privy to, and sometimes entered children's worlds by their invitation. I realise I only entered partially, and not as a child, and can only glimpse aspects of how they see themselves and their worlds (Paley, 1981). My privileged position as a 'visitor' to the children's social world gave rise to ethical dilemmas for me. I sometimes saw things that I thought the children would not have wanted me to see, and were not aware that I had seen. I was not able to discuss this properly with them, so I decided to omit some sections of data from my analysis. Of course they might have disliked other things I wrote too, if they had been able to access them, so this was not really a solution. I did discuss children's contributions to my research with them, but recognise that I retained control over the end product.

I also found myself getting into power struggles with children over the ownership of their data. I was committed to involving the children in decisions about their data. By using the phrase 'their data' I am acknowledging, at a rational level, their ownership of work produced during the research process. However, I sometimes

found myself reacting at an emotional level in the classroom, even begging individual children to let me have their drawings 'for my book'.

4/07 I feel like I want to keep control of what they are drawing now, get them to draw people not patterns. There is a power struggle too over whether they will give me the drawings or take them home. I try to let them have a proper unforced choice, but sometimes catch myself using manipulative tactics.

BM to Zuhre "Please can I have that picture for my book?

Zuhre "No I want to take it home."

BM "Oh, but I will be sad if I can't have a picture from you Zuhre."

Zuhre (smiles) "OK you have this one" (gives me one of her pictures).

(She has already got several to take home, is what I was thinking. On reflection, I can't believe I said that. So much for giving them control over their input! I feel guilty and try to make amends at once.)

BM "That is kind of you Zuhre, but of course you take it home if you want to." (I try to give it back to her, but she smiles and shakes her head. Oh dear!)

(This reminds me of the games my goddaughter and I play when I try to persuade her to let me have a turn with her rubber ring in the swimming pool or wear her jewellery. She sometimes refuses me and it is one way she has of exerting power in our relationship, so I encourage her to make the choice, but at the same time I feel myself getting a bit upset if she persists in refusing to share with me. It is as if, in these moments, I go back to being a child myself. Except that as a child, I don't think I would have made my wishes clear. If I wanted something, probably I would not have asked for it, in case I did not get it. On one level it pleases me when children are 'stroppy' and ask for what they want!)

Even when I tried to give children ownership of their data, I was not always certain that I had not put pressure on them to give me what I wanted.

6/07 Lan wants to take her picture home, but I persuade her to let me borrow it to take a copy for my book. Is this ok? Not sure, because perhaps I put too much pressure on her to say yes to me. Feel a bit bad. But it's such a great picture. Will check with her when I give the original back that it is ok by her if I put it in my book.

The phrase 'my book' emphasises for me, and the children, that the finished product will be 'mine'. I agree with Francis (1998) that however careful we are, research with young children involves ethical problems due to differences in power and experience between adult researcher and children.

Conclusion

My aim is to contribute to educational practice that promotes equity and social justice. I believe that it is important to listen to 'the voices of children', in the context of widening their access to a range of gender positions. I want my research findings to show recognition of the power relationships arising from my role as researcher (Weedon, 1987). Whilst I want to make a contribution to representational politics, I also want to avoid reinforcing the notion of the psychological child, the 'subject' of developmental discourse, by emphasising that children take up different 'subject positions' within different discourses (Alldred, 1998). I aim to address issues of how children's subjectivity is constructed through language and through discursive practices (Weedon, 1987) by exploring the range of discursive gender positions available to young children, as they struggle to make sense of what it means to be a girl or boy in the early years of school. In the following three chapters I analyse data from my fieldwork project.

Chapter 4

Analysis of play technologies

Introduction

A central tenet of developmental early years pedagogy is that young children learn best through self-directed experimental 'free play', with minimal adult intervention. 'Free play' encompasses voluntary, active, pleasurable, freely chosen, spontaneous play (Garvey, 1990). Piagetian discourses emphasize that children's free play is their 'work', and as such, it is seen as an important developmental stage in their learning (see page 28). This has led to dominant developmental discourses in early childhood education that suggest practitioners should not interfere in children's 'free play', with the result that children's inequitable power relations have not been addressed (Walkerdine, 1989; MacNaughton, 2000). As Walkerdine (1990) shows, children's play reproduces power relations based on dominant gender discourses. Walkerdine argues that in order to change power relations, children need access to new discourses through which they can construct femininities and masculinities. In their play children are positioned within discourses as variously powerful or powerless, depending on the social relations of power operating in specific play situations. In this Chapter I explore how new children in my research setting learned from established children that 'football is for boys' and 'skipping is for girls'. My research findings add to feminist research that shows that young children's 'play' involves complex power negotiations as children use play practices to create and enact social relations (Davies, 1989; Danby, 1998; MacNaughton, 2000).

In this chapter I analyse the ways in which children in my research setting learn to use play technologies. I use the term 'play technologies' to refer to children's application of knowledge and skills to particular ways of using play objects such as footballs and skipping ropes within communities of practice in my research setting. The term

'technologies' is taken from Lave and Wenger's (1991) work showing how learning to use 'technologies' is an important part of becoming an apprentice participant in communities of practice. In Chapter 1 I explained how I draw on Lave and Wenger's and Paechter's work on communities of practice to explore young children's embodiment and performance of masculinities and femininities.

In my analysis of play technologies I consider two interrelated processes that are involved in the development of communities of practice. Individuals are learning to engage in practices that become central to their sense of self through participation in a shared repertoire with others (Wenger, 1998; Paechter, 2007). At the same time, the community itself is in a process of constant reconstruction, change and development, as new members learn to participate and meanings are negotiated and reworked. Both these processes occurred within my research setting. The communities of practice of girls and boys were not static or fixed and there were conflicts between continuity and displacement, demonstrated in power struggles, for example when newcomers moved from peripheral to full participation. Children have different interests and make different contributions. What they learn to demonstrate is some shared understanding about what it means to be a boy and a girl in this setting.

Gendered power/knowledge relations are sustained, re-enacted, reworked and sometimes challenged through the children's use of play technologies. In order to become full members of communities of practice of femininity and masculinity it was important for girls and boys to learn the skills and appropriate uses of play technologies. The value of participation lies in becoming part of the community, not just in knowledge and skills acquired, but also in the increasing sense of identity as a member of the community.

> "…understanding the technology of practice is more than learning to use the tools;
> It is a way to connect with the history of the practice and to participate more
> directly in its cultural life" (Lave and Wenger, 1991:101).

Historical and cultural connections can be seen in the ways that children in my study learn to use play objects such as skipping ropes and footballs. Girls learned how to use skipping ropes in specific ways through peripheral participation in the games of older girls, connecting with the history of skipping games through rhymes and shared practices. Boys learned to use footballs through peripheral participation in the games of older boys, connecting to the wider history of men's football through knowledge of the game, cultural associations, such as wearing football team shirts, and seizing of opportunities to develop ball skills.

The use of play technologies is linked to processes of reification. Wenger uses the term reification to refer to the process by which certain objects and practices are taken as markers of community membership or points of focus for organising the negotiation of meanings within communities of practice (Wenger, 1998:59). It has been widely documented how boys often use knowledge and expertise about sport as a way of defining their community, and actively exclude girls, even when girls display knowledge and skills (Nespor, 1997; Swain, 2003; Blaise, 2005; Paechter, 2007). Within my research setting, some objects and practices have become reified as markers of masculinity and femininity in particular contexts. These markers are deeply embedded in children's power relations.

In the following sections I discuss how new girls learned that skipping is for girls and new boys learned that football is for boys through legitimate peripheral apprentice participation in the games of more established classmates. I discuss ways in which children learned social rules about how to perform masculinities and femininities through gendered uses of play objects.

"Skipping is for girls"

Children gradually learn that skipping is a shared activity for girls. When children are in the Nursery, ropes are freely available as play objects outside in the Garden. Girls and boys sometimes play with skipping ropes, and some children begin to experiment with using them to jump over in the conventional way, either one child holding onto the ends of a short rope and attempting to jump over it, or two children holding a long rope and turning it so that another child can jump over it. The Nursery staff confirmed to me that they have not had a child who was able to skip in this way at the age of 3 and 4, although they often enjoy 'having a go.' I have seen boys and girls 'having a go' at conventional skipping with ropes.

However, I observed far more instances of children in Nursery using ropes for other games, such as chasing, monster games and using ropes for reins for imaginary horses and tying people up in prisoner and rescue operations. Children in Nursery are already differentiating ways that ropes are used by girls and boys, although there is some overlap at this age.

11/06 Nursery playground

Monster game (encouraged by Mrs T. She gives out skipping ropes that she calls 'monsters')

Sammie, Sara, Oni, Ayla, joined by Madia.

Girls laughing, waving their ropes, talking to their 'monster' and saying the colours.

Jake comes to join in. Mrs T gives him a rope.

He immediately starts flicking the rope, and making fierce sounds "AHR RR. You're coming with me" (aggressively to his 'monster')

Jake runs into the play house (Chloe, Shona and Madison in there)

Jake "I've got a monster called Mr ??? (laughing, pretending to menace the girls)

They ignore him.

Jake runs out waving the rope, "Ah, Yer" threatening Nina on the pots.

Jake joins Sara, Lan and Sammie who are carefully tying their ropes on to the trikes.

Sara to Jake "Have you got a big monster? Why you not holding it like that?"

(tries to show him how to tie it round the trike bar)

[...]

Mrs C brings out skipping ropes and musical instruments.

Yomi and Ayo very dominant, confident, start chanting game. Stand and look at Mani, who is trying to skip, repeating "Go Mani, go Mani!" (He keeps at it, not very successful)

Yomi (shouts) "Good boy! Mani is the winner! Now it's Reece's turn." (Both girls move purposefully to Reece and stand over him).

Yomi and Ayo (chanting loudly) "Go Reece, go Reece!"

Reece looks uncomfortable and runs away to the sand pit.

Here, Yomi and Ayo do not need to be able to use skipping ropes themselves to exercise power. They command the boys to perform in public for them, chanting and giving instructions, with the expectation that the boys will obey. Their knowledge consists of confidently manipulating the boys' behaviours, knowing which boys they could single out and order around in this way. The boys appear surprised and discomforted by the attention, and both move away quite quickly. This is an unusual episode because girls are very dominant.

The following fieldnote documents the use of a skipping rope one Nursery playtime, and is typical of how ropes are used in Nursery. Oni and Tagan use a long skipping rope in the conventional girls' way, and they allow Oni's younger brother Ade to join in. Oni is not yet skilled at turning the rope, and hurts Nina by accident.

One of the younger boys, Ervin 'has a go' with the rope briefly and Omar uses it as a whip in his riding game.

6/07   Oni and Tagan turning big skipping rope together Nina watching.

Ade jumps in the rope.

Tagan drops the rope.

Nina jumps in.

Lots of giggles.

Tagan and Oni turn rope v quickly, Oni lets go of it and accidentally the handle catches Nina and hurts her.

Nina starts to cry and goes inside.

[...]

Ervin picks up the rope, makes skipping like movements then drops it on ground, moves off to pick up a ball.

[...]

Omar gets hold of the rope, running round the play area with it, holding on to one end, making whipping motions. "Ya, ya, go, go, go!"

Boys and girls in the Reception/Year 1 playground use skipping ropes in different ways. Girls almost always use the ropes for organised skipping games, often helped by a member of the dinner staff or Year 6 girls. Two girls turn the rope, and other girls take it in turns to jump in the rope, joining in with counting and rhymes.

4/07   Group of 6 girls with Mrs B with big skipping rope, jumping and counting, taking turns, very orderly.

Older girls dominate these skipping games, showing the younger girls what to do and sometimes there are arguments over whose turn it is, or whether somebody is out.

4/07 Sara has joined skipping with big rope, tries to skip in the rope, trips, then has a

turn to turn the rope.

Lisa (has been turning the rope says encouragingly to Sara) "It your turn"

Sara smiling as she turns the rope.

[...]

7 girls jumping game with long skipping rope.

Some pushing amongst the girls to determine who will skip next, push each other out

of way.

Yr 1 girl to Hong "You cant do it right!"

These skipping games take place at one end of the Reception playground, and the only rule for joining in appears to be that you must be a girl. Younger girls learn the rhymes from older girls, and these rhymes often involve repetition of heterosexualised scripts. As Epstein argues, the rhymes are

> "certainly reproducing part of a culture of heterosexuality in which girls grow up to be women who marry men, go on honeymoon, and have babies" (Epstein, 1997: 43).

In one popular rhyme, on the theme of marriage and babies, the girls inserted names of boys they knew. This was sometimes done to tease boys who had disrupted their game.

06/07(Jason had been running across the skipping rope earlier)

Ayla, Lan, Molly skipping

Lan "Jason Jason, will you marry me,

How many children will we see? (repeats x3)

Ayla jumping in, all counting, 1,2,3.

I did not see boys taking part in skipping games, although I frequently saw boys disrupting the games.

2/07   Girls taking turns jumping over rope.

Jason and Charlie run into the skipping rope, laughing.

Girls' skipping games take up a small area of the Reception playground, compared to boys' football games. Below, I document an episode at lunch play where some girls are trying to play skipping with a long rope. I assume the 'problem' is the way the girls have positioned the rope, but, as I realise later, they are only taking up a fraction of the playground, compared to the group of boys playing football.

3/07. Group of girls start a game of skipping, have problems getting it going because of where they are positioned, across the middle of the playground.

This is my impression, but thinking about it later, why did I think the positioning of the rope is the problem? Actually, what was happening was that some of the boys kept running into the rope, sometimes to get to the other side of the playground, and sometimes deliberately to disrupt the game.

Later in the same lunch time play, Jake deliberately takes hold of the rope to prevent the girls from skipping with it.

Chloe turning rope on left, Sara on right. Marsha, Molly, Zuhre waiting by wall for turn, chatting, twirling a hoop.

Lan and Shona jumping in.

Jake comes over to wall.

Jake takes the rope, makes whipping motions with it.

Outcry from girls. Game disintegrates. Rope lies on ground abandoned.

Boys do play with ropes, but do not use them for skipping. They use them for tug-of-war, strangling and fighting and capture/rescue games. Girls very occasionally join in these games.

2/07   Liam and Yr 1 boy having tug of war with small rope.

[...]

Skipping rope used by Year 1 boy to capture another boy, strangling him round his

neck.

[...]

8 boys, 2 girls, long rope being used to have tug of war across the table.

When I asked the Reception girls about skipping games, they all confirmed that it is a game for girls, and that boys do not play. Below, Nadia explains that she does not play skipping with Charlie, because he is not able to skip, presumably because he is a boy. She therefore plays basketball with him. This is interesting because basketball seems to be an acceptable game for boys and girls to play together. The children all have a go at skipping in PE lessons, but boys do not get as much practice as girls and tend to be less enthusiastic and less skilled. Also, they do not get a chance to learn the skipping rhymes from the older girls. (Boys do sometimes know about skipping, but this is not desirable knowledge within the boys' community of practice in Reception.)

7/07 Interview with Nadia Molly Shona

Nadia "I like to play with Molly and Ayla. Skipping rope."

[...]

BM "Do you like to play with any boys.?"

Nadia nods.

BM "Who?"

Nadia "Charlie."

BM "What do you play with Charlie?"

Nadia "He cant do skipping."

BM *"Would you let him play skipping with you if he wanted to?"*

Nadia *"Basketball. I play basketball with Charlie, not skipping, cos he cant do it."*

In the next fieldnote, Lan tells me a skipping rhyme and goes on to draw a wonderful picture of herself and her girlfriends skipping together (see Appendix H). Clearly she gets a lot of pleasure from skipping, both from the social and physical aspects. Lan's favourite playtime activity is belonging to a group of girls who skip together. Other Reception girls told me it was their favourite thing as well.

7/07 Lan "I like to play skipping with Zuhre and Chloe and Sara. I like to jump in the big rope. We do apple pie."

BM *"Apple Pie? How does that go?"*

Lan *(recites it for me, has to start over several times because children are interrupting, and I cant hear her.)*

"Apple crumble

Apple pie

Tell me the name

Of your sweetie pie

ABCDE (etc through the alphabet).

Then you say the name of sweetie pie."

[...]

Lan *draws picture of self skipping in the big rope with Shona and Sara turning the rope and Chloe and Zuhre waiting in line for a turn.*

[...]

Hong *"I like skipping with Lan and Shona with the big long rope."*

Draws picture of self skipping on her own.

As well as skipping in the big rope, girls also skip with individual ropes, often in pairs. It seems to be one of the only games that some girls play involving energetic exercise. Hide and seek and chasing games are also popular with girls, but some girls seem to be reluctant to run around, even at this early age. Their reasons include thinking running is against the rules, and fear of falling over.

BM "Is there anything you don't like at lunch play?"

Lan "I not like racing."

BM "Oh, why is that?"

Lan "I will fall down."

[…]

Chloe "I play with Tagan. Tagan wont get off me. We play hide and seek. In the big playground. I count and she hides.

BM "And then do you run to find her?"

Chloe "You're not allowed to run in the playground."

Ravi "Yes you are."

Chloe "No."

Running in the Nursery garden is forbidden, although most boys ignore this rule. It may be that some girls still think it is a rule in the Reception playground, although it is not. Skipping provides girls with an inclusive group activity that is fun, relatively safe from injuries, approved of by adults, and understood to be 'for girls'. Older girls initiate younger ones into the specific practices of jumping over the rope, ropeturning and chanting rhymes. It is not necessary to be particularly skilled to join a skipping game, and it is acceptable to make mistakes, although girls enjoy showing that they know the rhymes and can skip many times in the rope.

Football for boys – hegemonic masculinity at work.

Some boys played boisterous football games at lunch play in Reception and in the Nursery garden. The boys' games take up large areas of the play spaces. Boys dominate in football games. There is no marked out pitch for football in the Nursery, Reception or Year 1 playgrounds. In the Nursery garden, one end is used by boys for football games, using the entrance gate as a goal. The official rule of no running seems to be ignored by boys and staff alike when football is in progress, although staff do sometimes tell boys not to run in the Nursery garden. Although the games are informal, the older boys in Nursery display considerable knowledge of the rules and behaviours of football, and practice skills of dribbling, passing and scoring. They sometimes, but not always, allow younger boys to join in, if they are persistent, as in the following incident.

4/07   Daniel, Jake, Ben, Ryan, Lewis, playing football, scoring goals against the gate.

Daniel "Yeah!" (adult footballer behaviour, running around, arms up, and cheering)

Jake in goal, gets accidentally hit by Ryan's ball.

Jake goes over to Mrs C "Ryan keeps hitting me with the ball."

Mrs C goes over to investigate. She tells them to be careful and Ryan to say sorry.

Daniel "You pass it to me."

Adil trying to join in football.

*Lewis to Adil "**No***!"*

Adil runs round football area for a while, trying to get to the ball, then runs over onto the slide.

[...]

Later that afternoon

Adil gets another big ball and is joining in with older boys now, trying to get his ball in goal.

Omar joining in today, his football skills coming on now, great dribbling.

In the next episode, Daniel and Omar dominate the action, demonstrating knowledge of football language, moves of the game, and how adult footballers behave on the pitch.

3/07 Football game in Nursery garden, one ball, Omar, Daniel, Jake, Lewis.

Boys are trying to score goals against the gate.

Daniel to Omar "Pass it to me."

Omar passes to him.

Daniel runs with ball and kicks it into gate.

Tu runs around after them, following them.

Omar gets a goal "Yeah!"

Daniel runs up to him and gives him a big footballers hug saying "Yes!"

Omar arm in air punching like a professional football player on football field "Yeah!"

Daniel v focused, gets ball from Omar by tackling him "Yeah!"

Eser watching from playhouse door, comes over towards gate.

Daniel and Omar crouching down, looking at Omar's leg.

Omar up again and running, kicks in another goal. "Yes!"

Daniel "Yes!"

Another big footballer hug.

Lewis (admiring) "Daniel!"

Daniel gets another goal, hugs Jake. "Jake! Jake! Yeah!" (Lots of air punching.)

Eser goes to climbing frame.

Tu holding ball.

Daniel "Tu! Here!"

Tu gives ball to Daniel, looks pleased to do this.

Daniel kicks it in gate. "I scored it!" (triumphant)

In this episode, Eser watches the boys, but she does not play with the football. She often plays basketball and kicks a football around, but does not get to play in the games. Tu tries to join in, but he does not display sufficient knowledge of football so he is not successful in his attempts to join the game. However, he is allowed to join as a peripheral participant, in that he tries to copy the actions and handles the ball. When there are more balls in play football games seem to be much more mixed ability and easier for younger boys to join. When there is only one ball available, the more experienced, more skilled boys take over the action. Girls are usually excluded, no matter how many balls are in play.

In the following episode in the Reception playground there are two balls available. Ayla is the only girl to have any access to them during the whole lunch play. The episode is typical, in that the football games are boys only, but remarkable because Ayla tries to have a go. Usually girls do not try to play football.

7/07

Ayla to me "I want to play with the football."

BM "Well, they are playing football over there, can you go and join in?"

Ayla goes over to where 6 boys playing a vigorous game with red football - 4 Year 1s plus Ho and Tarak. Ayla gets hold of the ball and throws it into the game.

Boys don't pass to her.

She gives up after c2mins, goes over and complains to dinner lady, who tells her to play with the hoops. She goes and stacks up the hoops.

BM "Did you get a turn with the ball?"

Ayla "No."

Ayla the only girl I see with the ball all playtime, and she only has it for c30seconds.

[...]

9 boys playing with blue football.

When I asked boys about their favourite games, they frequently described football as their best game. They described details of the games and became very animated and definite when telling me that football is a game for boys, not girls. Below is a typical conversation. Ben, at this time in his first term in Reception, explains to me why girls do not play football.

12/07 Ben "I'm a boy. I play football. Girls can't play football."

BM "I know lots of girls who play football. Leonie and Jala in your class, they like to play football."

Ben "No, girls can't play football 'cos there's lots of boys. There's no room for girls."

BM "Do you think that's fair?"

Ben "Girls just don't want to play. All the boys let **me** *play."*

I think Ben has been very honest in this discussion and pinpointed a dilemma of gender dualism. Of course he wants to be correctly positioned as a boy who plays football. He can also see that it is not fair if girls want to play football and can't, so he comes up with the explanation that girls don't play football because they do not want to. When he says that there are lots of boys playing football so 'there's no room for girls' he accurately summarizes what I painstakingly documented over eighteen months. It is not so much that there is not enough space in the playground for girls to join in, although the area for ball games in the Reception playground is quite small.

What happens is that boys dominate all the action and however much space there is, boys expand their activities to fill it, when and where they want to. This is not to say that girls don't struggle to gain space and they sometimes succeed in doing so.

Football was a marker of hegemonic masculinity in my research setting. In the following incident in the Nursery garden, Daniel polices Tia's choice of a footballer's tabard, insisting that football is for boys.

11/06 Daniel (indicating Tia) "She's taking off her coat."

Mrs R "That's ok because she's putting on a tabard."

Daniel "No, but that's for boys. Boys are footballers."

Mrs R "She can be a lady footballer. There are ladies' football teams as well as men's teams."

Daniel "No, its men's football. Ladies don't play real football."

Tia quietly takes off the football tabard and starts a cheerleader dance with the pompoms instead.

Within the boys' community of practice in this Nursery, football is a masculine object of knowledge. Daniel goes on to talk about football teams, displaying considerable specific knowledge, and hotly disputing the idea that women play 'real' football. He contests Mrs R's rather vague assertion about women's teams. Mrs R's attention has focused on trying to persuade Daniel that Tia can be a footballer, even though she is a girl. Meanwhile, Tia has given up her attempt to wear the footballer tabard and does not get the chance to experiment with positioning herself as a footballer. I did not see her put on a footballer tabard again after this episode. This incident demonstrates how important, and how difficult, it is to contest the idea that football is 'for boys', when it is such a powerful marker of boys'/men's hegemonic masculinity.

Apprentice participation in play technologies.

My analysis of the following episodes in the Nursery garden highlights some of the conflicts and negotiations involved in apprentice participation in play technologies. It is Tu's third term, but he is still trying to join the 'big boys' group. In the following episode, Tu is eager to be accepted as one of the 'big boys' but his football skills and knowledge of English are quite limited. He tries to gain acceptance by an overture of providing additional balls for the game. Ryan rejects this. Ryan and Lewis are 'established' full-timers, who often play a 'serious' game of football using the entrance gate as a goal. They use football terms and display skills and knowledge of the game. They wear football shirts and talk about football teams.

2/07   Nursery Garden

Ryan and Lewis with big ball, kicking goals against the gate.

Tu takes two balls to Ryan, no reaction from Ryan.

Tu gets another ball and tries to kick it in goal.

Jake accidentally (?) kicks his ball so that the ball hits Tu in the nose.

[...]

Later, at Story time, on the carpet.

Daniel to Mrs M "Tu had blood on his nose."

Mrs M "Why, what happened?"

Daniel "Cos Jake kicked the ball on his nose."

Mrs M "Oh, so it was a real footballer's injury. That happens to footballers sometimes. My grownup sons play football and they sometimes have injuries like that."

Tu still looks subdued. (I think he was quite hurt, and I am not convinced it was an accident.)

In this episode, Tu tries to join in the 'big boys' game, and gets injured. When Daniel reports this later at carpet time, Mrs M refers to it as 'real footballer's injury', thus promoting Tu's status as 'a football boy,' and football as an approved game for adult men, fraught as it is with dangers of injury.

Tu is also learning that it is acceptable for boys to dominate girls. In the following episode, which took place a fortnight after the 'football injury', Tu tries to dominate Fifi, a girl who at this time in her first term at Nursery. She successfully resists Tu's bid for power.

2/07 Fifi is pushing a buggy with a doll inside it round the area outside the play house.

Tu goes to Fifi, teasing her, grabs hold of dolls buggy, advancing on her.

Fifi "No!" (Tu goes on pushing the buggy in front of Fifi. She goes over and tells Mrs N who says "Tu just want to look, let him look." (Mrs N did not see what he was doing, but I saw he was deliberately disrupting her game with the buggy!)

Fifi goes back to Tu, and she advances on him, stands over him holding the buggy.

Fifi "Hey, that my buggy!"

Tu runs off, grabbing hold of another empty buggy and pushing it across the play area.

Fifi shouts after him "Hey, you need to have baby in the buggy!"

Tu tries to exert power over Fifi, using physical force. Despite Mrs N's failure to take her complaint seriously, Fifi succeeds in stopping Tu continuing to spoil her game. She tells him the buggy is hers, and demonstrates that she knows, unlike him, that you need to have a baby in the buggy in order to play with it properly.

This is also the first term in Nursery for the two boys Damien and Ervin. In the episodes below, both boys try to join in the football games of the older boys. Fifi is

also keen to play with the football, but faces considerable opposition from Tu and Damien.

2/07 Daniel and Jake come out, kicking a football, big gestures, taking up lots of space by the gate. Damien runs over and tries to join in but they do not pass the ball to him.

Tu tries to join in, kicking another green ball.

Fifi gets another ball, but Damien kicks it away from her.

Fifi "You bad boy!"

Fifi goes to get another ball, Tu comes over and tries to take that one.

Fifi "No Tu!" (She takes the ball, runs with it across the play space and climbs with it to top of climbing frame.)

Tu does not follow her.

Damien is persisting in trying to join the football game, but, as yet, is not accepted. He is learning that it is acceptable to take a ball from a girl. Fifi succeeds in getting control of a ball, but only by removing herself from the football game. In the following weeks, I observe her playing with the older girls, Tagan and Oni, with increasing frequency, watching them, and beginning to join in their play with buggies and dolls. As a girl, she is not accepted as a peripheral participant in the boys' ball games. In contrast, Damien and Ervin are beginning to learn the rules for participation. Below Ervin is finding out that football is the game that carries status.

2/07 Damien and Ervin are trying to throw balls into the basketball net. Damien keeps missing but Ervin is getting the ball in frequently.

Damien goes to get a bike and rides it round and round near the basketball net, watching Ervin.

Ervin climbs to top of climbing frame and is trying to throw a ball into net from top of

climbing frame, tries to get other boys to join in.

Ervin calls to Daniel "Come and play netball."

Daniel "No, we are playing football." (goes over to the gate with Jake and Ryan)

Ervin's ball skills are good, but he has not learned that football is the game that conveys status. He invites Daniel to play 'netball' with him. Daniel is an older full-time boy, who is particularly skilled at football and takes the lead in organising the boys' football games. He rejects Ervin's overture, and Ervin proceeds to exert power over Damien. He asks Damien to get a ball for him, then takes his bike when Damien goes to get the ball for him. Ervin does not appear to react when Ben (an established older full-time boy) tells him off, but perhaps he has taken note because he goes on to try and engage Damien in a game of play bat and ball, giving him a bat.

2/07 Ervin (to Damien) "Give me my ball!"

Damien runs over and picks up the ball Ervin was throwing, goes to give it to Ervin,

but meanwhile Ervin has jumped down and taken the bike Damien was riding.

Ben notices this, goes over to Ervin, says very sternly, getting right up close to his

face, "Ervin, Damien had that first."

Ervin seems to ignore him.

Ben goes to sandpit.

Older boys often take on the role of instructor. In the next fieldnote, Omar (an established older full-timer who often elects to play football) is keen to show Ervin and Fifi how to play bat and ball. When Ervin ceases to be compliant, Omar turns his attention to Fifi. She asserts herself by pointing out that as he has not been batting to her she does not want to play with him. Omar tries to gain Fifi as a playmate by introducing a 'superhero' theme. He declares himself to be Batman (an important and

powerful role, as well as a play on the word 'bat',) and says she can be 'supergirl', mollifying her with an important role, as things go, for girls. Fifi accepts his overture, and there follows a cooperative sequence where the 3 children play bat and ball, taking it in turns to bat. My data suggests that a period of dispute often precedes a period of cooperative play like this, when girls and boys manage to negotiate episodes of play with each other.

2/07 Ervin gets two bats and a small ball, gives one to Damien.

Damien goes over towards gate, watching older boys playing football.

Fifi gets another bat.

Omar comes over, picks up bat, to Ervin "Can I show you how to do it? I'll show you how you play." (demonstrates, hits ball across into grass)

Omar "Yeah, that's how to do it!" (pleased with self, smiling)

Fifi "I didn't bat it! You didn't bat it to me."

Ervin to Mrs N "He batted it" (complaining, indicating Omar hit it onto the grass,then Ervin hits another ball away from Omar)

Omar to Fifi "You play with me too!"

Fifi "No! I'm not playing with you you didn't bat it to me!"

Omar "I'm Batman. You super girl.

Fifi smiles and bats ball to him.

Omar bats back to her.

Ervin bats to Omar. (3 play together for about 3mins)

In the following play episode Damien gets opportunities to develop ball skills as an apprentice participant at the basketball net. The older girls, Tagan and Jala encourage him, but are, themselves, pushed out by Femi and Jake. I have many

fieldnotes similar to this, when boys take over equipment and space from girls, and girls either put up with this or protest quite mildly.

3/07 Older boys playing football. Damien tried to join but was refused.

Damien holding a ball on own and running round basketball net on his own. "I'm the leader!"

Jala with ball at basketball, throwing and getting ball into net consistently. "Yeah!" jumping up and down triumphantly.

Jake joins her, pushes in front of her with another ball. Throws and misses, runs to gate end of playground to play football.

[...]

Femi and Tagan throwing balls in net. Tagan gets it in.

Tagan and Jala "Yeah!" arms up.

Femi pushes in front of them, throws and misses "Oh!"

Jala and Tagan watching him.

Femi throws again, gets it in 2nd time

Jala "Yeah!"

Phoebe watching.

Damien throws and gets it in "I win!"

Jala "Yeah!"

[...] four weeks later 4/07

Older boys playing football.

Ben Damien Tagan Jala at basketball net.

Ben takes ball from Tagan.

Jala gives a ball to Tagan.

Damien very keen, often getting balls in net now.

Ben gets one in.

Mrs N claps "Oh good Ben."

These episodes show Damien gaining confidence and skills at throwing, kicking and catching the ball at the basketball net, where he is allowed to join in freely, and encouraged by the girls. He is still trying to join the older boys' football games, so far without success. Jala is skilled at throwing the ball into the net, and takes pleasure in her ability, but also gets pushed out by the boys, Jake and Femi. She supports Tagan Femi and Damien in their attempts to use the net. Ben gets a ball in the net, and is praised by a member of staff, when he has just taken a ball from Tagan. Mrs N did not see him take the ball, but my data shows that boys are often praised for their ball skills, irrespective of their behaviour towards girls. This gives a message that their behaviour is condoned by staff, even though staff do not mean to give this message.

These play episodes demonstrate how Damien and Ervin and Tu become legitimate peripheral participants in the community of practice of boys in the Nursery playground. They learn about football through observing the older boys, and take part in aspects of the game, such as kicking and throwing balls, and developing hand/eye coordination through playing with bats and balls and basketball. Fifi, a girl who enjoys ball games, has to struggle to get a share of the ball. Fifi's experience is typical of my findings, as my data analysis shows that girls in the Nursery playground are frequently prevented by boys from taking control of the ball, and if they try to play, boys exclude them from football games. Fifi is unusual in her persistence, but even she becomes discouraged and goes increasingly to play with the buggies with other girls.

Basketball

Basket ball is a game that is played by girls and boys in the Nursery Garden. In the following field note, Tagan and Ryan are playing at the basketball net together.

9/06 Tagan and Ryan playing with big ball together, throwing it into the net. Quite amicable, both getting turns to throw ball.

I have many instances of boys and girls playing together at the basketball net. It seems that use of the basketball net involves play that is less formal, more inclusive, more experimental, and has fewer rules and emotional investments than use of footballs or skipping ropes. However, basketball is not played without power struggles and conflicts and older boys often dominate the action at the basketball net.

10/06 Kumi gets big ball, throwing it into net.

Daniel and Kumi throwing ball to eachother.

Daniel (looking at Kumi for praise and acknowledgement of prowess) "Oh man!" "Yeah!"

Daniel and Lewis throwing ball.

Kumi goes away, and comes back over, climbs up onto top of climbing frame with plastic gun (taken from play house), watching Daniel and Lewis, pointing the gun and waving it around. Not clear at whom, if anybody, or why.

Daniel and Lewis throwing ball to eachother.

Daniel (throwing high) "Watch this!" Watch this man!" "Yah" (triumphant sounds) [...]

Nadia takes a small yellow plastic ball over to net and tries to give it to Daniel. Daniel ignores her, carries on playing with Lewis.

Nadia has to duck out of the way to avoid being in the line of the big ball, as he

throws it up into the net. She goes and joins Lan and Oni in the play house. (Why did

she bring the ball?)

The above is an episode from my first term of fieldwork in Nursery. Subsequent data analysis suggests that girls and younger boys often play at the basketball net when older boys do not want to be here, for example when a game of football is in progress. I have a number of instances of girls giving balls to boys, sometimes when asked to do so by boys, but also when no request has been made. It is still not clear to me why they do this, but it adds to my data of instances when girls give toys and equipment to boys, seemingly because they think the boys might want them to do this. My tentative explanation for this 'selflessness' is that some girls learn very young that deference and service to males is an important aspect of belonging to a community of practice of femininity. This is not to say that all girls (or women) enact 'selflessness' or are taught to behave in this way.

In the Nursery playground, the basketball net provides a focus for individual children to throw a ball, and they sometimes throw to each other as well, when using the area. Basketball is an inclusive game, as potentially anybody who has a ball can join in. It is interesting that Nadia, after a year in Reception, still says that she plays basketball with Charlie (see page 130). I wish I had asked her when and where. Analysis of basketball play seems to offer insights into what constitutes legitimate peripheral participation in play activities. Peripheral participation requires that the apprentice learner be engaged in an activity that is connected to the main activity. Lave and Wenger (1991) give the example of some butchers apprentices in supermarkets, who are given tasks away from the main activity of butchering, so that their participation is legitimate, but removed, rather than peripheral. In a similar way,

I would argue that playing basketball can been seen as legitimate peripheral participation in ball games, but it is removed from football, and so does not amount to peripheral participation in football. Basketball games provide many boys and girls with opportunities to develop ball skills, but many boys do not accept that girls have the skills and knowledge to participate in football. Having the requisite ball skills does not enable girls to be accepted into football games. Of course basketball and netball are recognised games in their own right in the wider sporting world, but amongst the older boys it is football prowess that carries status in this Nursery and Reception.

Conclusion

How does it happen that skipping ropes are 'for girls' and footballs 'for boys'? In my research setting staff encourage all boys and girls to play with ropes and balls in the Nursery garden, and no adults tell children that skipping is for girls and football for boys. However, as new children work out the 'rules' for belonging to the communities of practice of femininities and masculinities in the Nursery, they begin to learn to use footballs and ropes in gendered ways.

My data analysis shows that children learn to enact complex social rules as well as developing skills for using play objects. Ropes and footballs carry symbolic and emotional significance within the girls' and boys' communities of practice. Children learn about the technologies as legitimate peripheral members of communities of practice of girls and boys, through observing older members, and taking part in certain minor aspects of the games, then gradually take a fuller part, and some go on to dominate and initiate changes in the games. Many children derive emotional as well as physical pleasure from playing with ropes and footballs. One of the most

potent aspects of pleasure sometimes arises from the 'same-sex' dimension of the technologies. In other words, it is **because** skipping is 'for girls', and football 'for boys', that children want to participate and excel. Some boys and girls police the boundaries so strictly because to allow children of the 'opposite' sex to use each other's technologies and gain appropriate knowledge would undermine and allow challenges to the individual and collective power that goes with the use of ropes and footballs.

Boys do not allow girls to join in football because they do not want their masculine preserve to be tainted by femininity. The rituals of football are so appealing to young boys because they are 'in training' as apprentice men. This is demonstrated in their references to adult male footballers. Staff sometimes endorse these aspirations. When they exclude girls and younger/less skilled boys, the older boys assert their membership of a community of practice of hegemonic masculinity of boys, and lay claim to future membership of a community of adult men (Nespor, 1997; Paechter, 2007).

My data suggests that girls hold on to skipping as a girls-only activity in situations where this is sometimes the only space they can claim for themselves. Boys dominate all other outdoor play spaces. Nadia says she does not play skipping with Charlie because he 'cannot' skip (page 130). This might be true at a physical level; at this stage of Charlie's physical development he is less skilled at skipping than Nadia. But it is also true at an emotional level. He 'cannot' skip because to do so would go against the norms of behaviour within the boys' community of practice in Reception, and he would risk rejection and ridicule from boys and girls. Girls derive pleasure from their proficiency and knowledge about skipping, and the activity is encouraged and supported by female staff. However, skipping is not something that adult women

do, (unlike football for men) nor is it a highly paid, high status sport, to which girls can aspire.

Skipping provides girls with an inclusive group activity that is fun, relatively safe from injuries, approved of by adults, and understood to be 'for girls'. It is not necessary to be particularly skilled to join a skipping game, and it is acceptable to make mistakes, although girls enjoy showing that they know the rhymes and can skip many times in the rope. Older girls initiate younger ones into the specific practices of jumping over the rope, ropeturning and chanting rhymes. Participation in skipping games involves girls in enacting heteronormative scripts. Some rhymes, like 'Apple Pie', where the girls name a boy as their 'sweetie pie', enact discourses of romantic love and heterosexuality (Epstein, 1997, 1999). As Epstein argues, rhymes like these are an activity through which heterosexuality is normalised, even if not thought about consciously by the girls who take part.

My data analysis shows that the adoption of gendered play technologies had emotional and symbolic significance for boys and girls in my research setting, and use of play technologies involved children in complex gendered power relations.

Chapter 5

Analysis of Space and Embodiment

Introduction

In Chapter 4 I analysed data in relation to objects of knowledge in children's gendered use of play technologies. In this chapter I analyse data that shows gendered use of spaces within the Nursery and Reception classrooms and play areas. My analysis of use of play spaces supports research that shows that young boys and girls usually play in same sex groups, at different activities (Lloyd and Duveen, 1992; Browne, 2004; Ofsted, 2007). My analysis aims to show how and why this happens in my research setting. In this chapter I analyse the ways in which newcomers to Nursery and Reception become legitimate peripheral members, and then full members of communities of practice of boys and girls in Nursery and Reception classes (Paechter, 2007).

It is important to bear in mind that local communities of practice are always in flux, and there is nothing inevitable about the process of becoming a member. There are power struggles as some oldtimers struggle to dominate activities and some children opt out or are excluded from participation. I identified three stages to becoming a full member, and I examine each stage. Firstly, in order to participate as a legitimate peripheral member, children must categorise themselves, and others, as either a boy or a girl. Secondly, they need to participate in a shared repertoire of masculine or feminine activities. Thirdly, in order to influence the local practices of masculinity or femininity, they must embody them and demonstrate that they know and can use the appropriate gendered objects of knowledge. Using and embodying objects of knowledge is closely linked to gendered use of spaces, as children delineate

specific areas within the classroom and playground 'for boys' or 'for girls' and police access to the areas.

When new children come into Nursery they usually spend a lot of their time observing older children, and gradually join in aspects of play. New children usually join in cohorts, at the beginning of Autumn and Spring terms, when older children move into Reception (see Appendix A). There are 10 full-time places, and the group of full-timers are mostly also the older children and have a dominant presence in Nursery. Usually, these older children have more developed cognitive abilities and understanding of Nursery routines, are more skilled at activities and use of equipment, have more developed language skills, are more confident English speakers, and know the formal and informal social 'rules'. They have frequently made friends in Nursery, and are often confident in the setting. They draw on their skills and knowledge in relation to how to perform boy/girl, inducting younger children into Nursery masculinity and femininity practices. When children move into Reception, a similar process takes place, whereby established Reception children induct new children into local practices.

In the following sections I analyse ways in which newcomers to Nursery and Reception observed the local practices of more established pupils, learning to use key objects of knowledge and reproduce gendered behaviours. I explore how boys learned to dominate spaces and perform practices of hegemonic masculinity in 'battle' games, football and construction activities, and how girls learned practices of emphasised femininity, often bolstering boys' power at their own expense, but also resisting boys' domination of space. I document how children policed gender boundaries strictly. I show how schooling practices reinforced and encouraged practices of gender dualism.

Legitimate peripheral participation in Nursery activities

The first important thing to know in order to become a member of the girls' or boys' Nursery community of practice is whether you are a girl or a boy. Children learn that gender is dimorphic and fixed. One key way in which children learn about the salience of gender is through following Nursery teachers' direct instructions. One of the first things children have to learn is that they must follow instructions, and in doing so, they demonstrate that they are competent individuals. When the teacher plays the music tape in Nursery, all children must stop what they are doing and go and sit on the carpet. When a session on the carpet is finished, one of the most common instructions from the teacher is as follows:

"If you are a boy, stand up and go and choose something to do."

When the boys have left the carpet, the teacher gives the second instruction:

"If you are a girl, stand up and go and choose something to do."

These instructions are sometimes reversed, so that girls are told to leave the carpet first, and boys second. Children in the category to be chosen second often make a comment, anticipating their turn, or saying something that shows they recognise themselves as a boy or a girl.

1/07 carpet time

Mrs C "If you are a girl, stand up and go and choose something to do." (Girls get up and leave carpet.)

Ben (anticipating what Mrs C will say next) "Now, all the boys stand up. I'm a footballer boy."

Mrs C (smiles) "So you are Ben. Now, if you are a boy stand up…"

By making these comments, Ben demonstrates that he recognises himself as a boy, and that he can anticipate instructions. He also shows that he knows what boys do, that is, play football, and he positions himself accordingly. Mrs C reinforces his positioning with her positive remark and smile. Below, Tagan demonstrates that she recognises herself as a girl, and anticipates Mrs R's next instruction, although she receives a mild rebuke, rather than praise for her comment.

1/07

Mrs R "If you are a boy, stand up and go and choose something to play with."

Tagan "I'm a girl."

Mrs R "I didn't say girl did I?"

Sometimes new children do not follow these instructions, for a number of reasons. Sometimes they do not understand the English, or they have not categorised themselves as boy/girl. Sometimes they do not hear the teacher or apply the instruction to themselves. Some children are shy about moving off the carpet or unsure of what to do next, and sometimes they do not want to do as they are told.

3/07 Raksha not sure what to do when Mrs C says "If you a girl, stand up", she stays sitting down, looking at a loss, watching the children leave the carpet.

On the following occasion, Fifi fails to comply with the teacher's instruction, although I have seen her follow the instruction on previous days. Seemingly she does understand it and she does recognise herself as a girl. However, she quite frequently does not follow instructions, resisting conforming to routines.

3/07 Mrs C "If you are a girl, stand up and go and choose something to do."

Fifi stays sitting down.

Mrs C "You are a girl Fifi so you need to stand up too."

Fifi slowly gets up.

*Evan to Fifi "I'm a **boy**."*

Fifi went on finding strategies for resisting Nursery routines, but she soon complied with the instruction to choose an activity when told to do so with all the other girls. Children very quickly learn to follow this instruction and the carpet is a very public arena for demonstrating that they know they belong to one category, girl, or the other, boy. These instructions reinforce and reproduce the discourse of gender difference, emphasising that there are differences between boys and girls, and publicly drawing attention to the importance of recognising you are either a girl or a boy. If you 'get it wrong' it is also a very public mistake, and other children are quick to show that they have got it 'right'. The children are required to give an individual bodily response; as a member of a clearly defined category they must stand up and move when their category is called.

Another important way of demonstrating that you know you are a boy or a girl is by playing with other children who are the same sex as yourself. This might appear obvious, but it can be overlooked as a motivation to play in same sex groups. Children who are new to Nursery often watch older children, sometimes for long periods of time, and then copy an aspect of what they have observed. 'Knowing' whether you are a boy or a girl is a prerequisite for taking part in activities as peripheral members of girls' and boys' communities of practice. As older children in the Nursery usually play in same sex groups, new children observe that this is what is done, and re-enact similar practices. The children who are new to Nursery do not always copy exactly what the older children do, often spending periods of time watching them, and then attempting to take part in an aspect of the activity. In this way they become legitimate peripheral participants in Nursery communities of practice of girls and boys. Below, Malik and Damien watch older boys playing with

cars and later play with the cars themselves. Zoe and Eser watch an older girl, Tagan at the water tray and on the climbing frame and copy her.

1/07

9.25 Malik comes and stands at edge of construction carpet, watches Daniel, Ryan and Jake who are having a very boisterous racing game with the cars. Malik watches 2 minutes, then goes away.

[...]

10.02 Malik returns, looks at the boys playing cars, goes away.

10.03 Damien comes over, stands at edge of carpet watching the 3 boys who are racing the cars across the carpet, goes away.

[...]

10.45 Damien playing with cars on his own on the construction mat. Making revving sounds. Malik joins. Parallel play.

[...]

Tagan and Zoe at water tray, Zoe is watching Tagan fill up the bottles. She takes a bottle and is copying Tagan. Tagan does not say anything to her, but allows her to play alongside.

[...]

Tagan running round, Eser following her. Tagan runs and gets on to the climbing frame. Eser climbs up behind her and follows her down the slide. Tagan goes into the tunnel and Eser runs round to see her come out the other end.

Below, Damien tries to join in games with older boys on the bikes.

1/07 Nursery garden

Damien running round following Ryan who is riding a bike.

Damien (shouting) "I want a bike."

Damien gets hold of a bike for minute, but cannot manage to get on.

[...] Damien chasing Ryan on bike. Ryan ignores him.

One week later

Garden

Damien and Ben on trikes

Damien to Ben (looking at him, trying to get his attention) "Ready steady go!"

Ben (no reaction)

Damien "Come and get me"

Ben "I can get **you**. *I'm a big boy."*

(they go round and round in circle)

Ben (laughing) "Ra, ra!"

Ben, as an established older boy, makes it clear that he will only play with Damien if he plays on Ben's terms, with Ben as the boss. The older children often ignore new children, or allow them to copy them as long as they do not interfere with their games.

Shared repertoire in Nursery and Reception

Being a girl or boy is not sufficient to become a member of a community of practice of boys or girls. You have to demonstrate that you take part in the shared repertoire of practices (Paechter, 2007). A key object of knowledge in Nursery and Reception is knowledge about the things that are 'for boys' and the things that are 'for girls'. One way of demonstrating this knowledge is to enact appropriate boy or girl practices, and another is to police the behaviours of other children. These two aspects are often linked, as children display knowledge of a particular practice, and at the same time, exclude children of the 'opposite' sex from the activity. This is demonstrated most simply when boys opt to sit with other boys and avoid sitting next to girls, and vice

versa. Some children go to considerable lengths to sit with their same-sex friends, and avoid sitting next to somebody of the 'opposite' sex on the carpet. Areas of the classroom and activities are gender marked by the children and specific objects and practices are used to delineate femininity and masculinity within girls' and boys' communities of practice. Within my research Nursery and Reception classes, Art and collage activities, knowledge about fashion, play centring on families and home, Disney princess stories, Barbies, the colour pink, and dance were markers of femininity, seen by the children as 'things for girls'. Construction, 'fighting' games, football games and knowledge of sport were markers of masculinity, seen by the children as 'things for boys'.

Shared repertoire for girls

11/06 Nina comes in late, when children already on carpet. She looks for Madia, catches her eye, waves to Madia, Madia waves to her across the carpet, and indicates that she should sit by her. They sit close, whisper and giggle together, reprimanded by teacher. When told to go and choose an activity, they go together to the role play area.

My data analysis shows that girls played predominantly with other girls. As demonstrated in the fieldnote above, they used an extensive range of communication strategies to show friendship and solidarity with each other, including verbal exchanges (talk about clothes, shoes, family, and Disney princess films), eye-contact, shared jokes, giggling, hugging, pleasure in collaborative play and shared activities. Girls develop close friendships with each other through shared practices (George, 2007). Shared practices included greeting each other, physical closeness, shared gestures, sitting and talking together, doing 'helpful' tasks in the classroom, and

cooperative play centred on family role plays, writing and drawing and sand and water play.

Overtures and bids for friendship often take place when girls are engaged in activities they have chosen for themselves. Below, Zuhre and Yomi have chosen to do collage. Collage is chosen almost exclusively by girls. The girls take pleasure in both the activity and the social interactions.

11/06 Zuhre doing collage. Yomi leaves Ayo at the water tray and comes and sits beside Zuhre, and begins a collage of her own.

Yomi (smiling, making eye contact) "It my dad's birthday today. You can come to my birthday too."

Zuhre (smiling, leaning towards Yomi) "You can come to my birthday too."

Girls claim and develop friendships through repetitive exchanges like this, often involving smiles and exchange of eye contact. The interactions often have overtones of competition, involving power struggles between the girls. In the above episode, Yomi has had a quarrel with Ayo, and comes to sit with Zuhre, and Ayo can overhear Yomi inviting Zuhre to her Dad's birthday.

Girls who are new to Nursery often copy aspects of older girls' play, as below.

1/07 Nursery garden

Tagan and Oni go into the playhouse, get dolls, put them in buggies and push them round the area outside the play house. Fifi goes into the playhouse, puts a doll in a buggy and follows Oni and Tagan round, pushing her buggy.

Mrs O "Oh very good Fifi, you've got a baby in your buggy."

Fifi smiles.

Fifi is learning that adults in Nursery approve of girls who push dolls round in buggies. She embodies feminine 'girl' behaviour. By pushing the doll in the pram

with other girls, she enacts a central practice of girls in this Nursery community of femininity. The older girls allow her to follow them but do not include her in their role play.

In the next episode, Madia takes on a role of instructor, showing Madison how to use a funnel. In doing so, she is also positioning herself as more competent and powerful than Madison.

2/07   Madia and Madison cooperative play at water tray.

Madia "Watch me!"

Madison "Look, quick!" (water spills)

Madia "Oh Madison!" Madia holds bottle, Madison pours.)

Madison "I make it bigger for you."

Madia "Here, Madison, what you doing again Madison?" (pleasant jokey rebuking tone)

Madison is trying to pour water with the funnel upside down. Madia demonstrates how to do it properly, Madison holding the bottle, Madia pouring through funnel.

Girls frequently take on a role of being helpful, sometimes taking on a quasi teacher role with other children, especially younger ones.

11/06 carpet

Mrs R "Make sure you have space to sit properly"

Sammie (looking at Mrs R, and then at Madison, who is not sitting down, and patting a space next to her, helpfully) "There's room here."

Older girls demonstrate to younger girls their knowledge of classroom routines and skills such as the ability to write their names.

1.05 Ayo brings Molly to writing area, finds and shows her her name label, helps her

write her name, by giving instructions (subsequently told off by Mrs R for getting all

the names out of the box, has to put them all back, sad slightly aggrieved face)

[...] 1.15 Ayo "Molly, let's do a rainbow."

" I have a bad cold today. Molly, why did you do this? (critical 'teacher' voice) "

Molly, let me do it for you. It's supposed to be like this." (Ayo's tone is kind, helpful,

slightly patronising, showing off her superior skills.) Ayo is, initiating Molly into

schoolgirl community of practice, encouraging Molly to be apprentice. Molly tries to

do what Ayo tells her, looks serious, does not say much. Later in the afternoon Ayo

and Molly play together outside, lots of hugs and eye contact and laughing.)

Many girls took pleasure in demonstrating knowledge of classroom rules, and

'helping' staff. Staff often encouraged and praised girls for being helpful. *11/06*

Zuhre goes round the class, looking for the adult whose list of names she has found

lying around. "Is it yours Mrs S?"

[...]

Mrs M "They don't need us really" (Watches, smiling approvingly, as Sammie and

Lan sort out younger children's coats, gloves etc).

In the following episode Ayo and Zuhre enact helpful school girls in the public

arena of the Nursery carpet.

11/06

Mrs M (to Ayo and Zuhre) "You two girls here, can you be very kind and go and ask

Mrs C for the fruit please?...What sensible carrying Zuhre, good girl."

(Ayo and Zuhre look very proud of themselves, carefully carry the bowls of fruit, put

them on the table, and come back to the carpet demonstrating very restrained and

correct postures, sit down and cross their arms and legs and sit up with very straight

backs, like 'ideal' schoolgirls.)

Mrs M (approvingly) "Very sensible!"

The two girls' movements appear slightly exaggerated, but they look very serious. This is a very serious and public event, as it takes place on the carpet, in front of the whole class. Ayo and Zuhre are performing 'good girl', and 'good pupil' and these two roles are identical here. Neither of them habitually sits so 'correctly' on the carpet, in fact, they both frequently get told to sit properly, but here they show Mrs M and the (younger) children that they know and can demonstrate the rules. They take pleasure in being the centre of attention and being praised by Mrs M. Mrs M is explicitly asking them to demonstrate and perform 'good pupil' which is often identical to 'good girl'. The role involves being kind, sensible, helpful, sharing with other children, following the teacher/staff instructions, having good posture, that is, sitting up straight, keeping one's own body controlled in its movements, walking slowly and carefully, doing things independently, not interfering with other people's bodies. In theory, the correct way for boys to perform 'good pupil' is for them to perform these same behaviours. I have instances of boys being told to control their bodies, for example they are told to sit properly on the carpet, but my data analysis shows girls are more frequently reprimanded and more closely monitored. The foregrounded normative/evaluative claim (Carlspecken, 1996) made by Mrs M is that Zuhre and Ayo are sensible, helpful pupils, backgrounded is that they are girls, and girls should be helpful and kind. Mrs M conveys approval and praise for Zuhre and Ayo through her smiles and comments. This is in contrast to her tone and comments to three of the younger girls earlier in the same story session.

11/06 Madia and Nina come dancing and holding hands onto carpet., smiling to each

other.

Mrs M (stern voice) "Excuse me, we're not having that. It's not singing and dancing

time, it is story time. Madia come and sit! [...]We are going to read 'Peace at Last',

we are not jumping about Nina, and Madia, this is a peaceful, quiet nursery"

[...] (warningly) "Madia and Madison, I might separate you. It's nice to sit with your

friends but you have to behave."

In the next episode four girls volunteer to carry trays of toys, enacting sensible helpful behaviour. In theory this is gender neutral, but in practice it emphasises gender difference.

10/06 Nursery garden

Mrs R gets some children to carry in some of the trays of toys, as it looks like it is

going to rain. She asks for 'strong people' rather than boys or girls, but none of the

boys respond, they go on playing ball.

Mrs R "I need some strong people to carry these in"

4 girls rush to help. Some quarrelling amongst the girls about who is going to carry

the trays.

Yomi to Melek "You took mine!" (accusing, angry voice)

Ayo (to Mrs R) "I'm strong!"

Mrs R (smiling approvingly) "Yes, you eat your dinner up." (4 girls carry in the

trays. No boys show any interest in helping with this)

Mrs R does not ask any boys to help, so the implicit message is that boys are free to go on playing whilst the girls clear up, although the official rule is that all children help clear away. Her intention is to avoid being sexist by asking boys rather than girls

to carry things, but the effect is to allow the girls to take responsibility for the clearing up.

Shared repertoire for boys

Boys choose each other as playmates, and enjoy demonstrating that they take part in activities that are marked 'for boys', such as football, sports in general and superhero play. The following is taken from my informal interview with Harrison and Daniel in their first term in Nursery.

10/06

BM "Who do you like to play with, Harrison?"

Harrison "My brother. And Daniel and Femi and Jake and Ryan and Omar."

BM "Who do you like to play with, Daniel?"

Daniel "I like to play ball with Lewis and Femi and Harrison. I was bouncing the ball (demonstrates) and I throw it in the net. Basket ball with Lewis."

My data analysis shows that boys play predominantly with other boys and demonstrate friendship and solidarity by using a range of shared physical gestures and sounds. They usually avoid physical contact with girls.

10/06

Madison puts arm round Femi who is sitting next to her on carpet. He pulls away from her, and screws up his face in disgust.

This is Madison's first term in Nursery. She does not appear to know the 'rules' yet for acceptable behaviours for boys and girls. Girls and boys rarely touch each other in affectionate ways. The norm is for girls to have a lot of physical contact with each other, hugging and stroking each other, and boys to engage in displays of physical strength and copy each other's gestures. Boys do sometimes put arms around each

other in friendship, give each other 'footballers' hugs, and hugs of consolation (see Chapter 4).

Boys dominate activities in construction areas, play with vehicles, and ball games. Boys rarely choose collage or writing activities. Many take pleasure in demonstrating physical strength, ball skills, ability to build elaborate constructions, and engage in 'fighting games' including rescue operations, animal and pirate battles.

10/06 Sandpit 4 boys. Mani, Ravi, Femi and Reece making castle together.

Ravi "One more!"

Femi "Yeah one more!"

Ravi "Let's get some more!"

c4 mins collaborative play, not much talking, concentrated on building castle and tracks.

[…]

Ravi "Hey, let's get off the sand now!" (leaves sandpit, runs to get bat and ball, spinning round in big space on own. Femi follows and gets bat and ball joins him spinning round with bat, big gesture whole body engaged. They take up whole area outside the playhouse.)

Ravi and Kumi are at this time two of the older boys in Nursery, and often take the lead in games with other boys. They provide a model of embodied masculinity, demonstrating 'fighting' postures, expansive physical gestures, taking up space, and making loud noises.

10/06

Lewis, Daniel and Kumi scooting round on big wheel and trolley together, lots of loud 'Neeow, rah' sounds. Kumi gets big ball, throwing it into net. Daniel and Kumi throwing to eachother, taking up whole area around the net.

Daniel (looking at Kumi for praise and acknowledgement of prowess) "Oh man!"

"Yeah!"

Daniel and Lewis go on throwing ball. Kumi goes away, and comes back over, climbs up onto top of climbing frame with plastic gun (taken from play house), watching Daniel and Lewis, pointing the gun and waving it around, making 'piu' noises like gunfire. (Not clear at whom, if anybody, or why, except he looks as if he is enjoying waving gun around.)

Sometimes gestures and bodily postures were used by boys to exclude girls from areas and activities usually dominated by boys. Below, a group of girls, unusually, play together in the Nursery construction area but are soon ousted by a boy, Kumi.

12/06   Big bricks in construction area

Sammie, Chloe, Sara, Zuhre (4 girls play here for 10 minutes! The girls are in an unusual situation here, they have an advantage, only boy in room at moment is Mani, as only the full time children are in the room. The afternoon children have not yet arrived.)

They sing, build a house with the big bricks and play a family game, assembling the duplo figures and allocating roles of mother, sister and baby amongst themselves. Kumi comes in, straight over to construction mat, jumping and leaping across the room. Music starts for carpet time, all leave area.

[...]

1.08 free choice.

Kumi, Chloe, Sara, Sammie go to big bricks on construction mat.

Sammie Sara and Chloe go on building their house, and pick up the 'Families' storyline that they started earlier.

Chloe "I'm Mum."

Sara "I don't want to go bed."

Chloe "You goin bed."

Kumi making long tower with bricks, (says "look at this" to me, I say "oh yea").

Kumi uses tower like a sabre, 'piu' 'wop' 'woah' lots of thrusting and waving it

around, taking up most of the space.

1.11 Sammie "I gonna do something else."

Goes to roleplay area. Chloe follows her, they start a game in there, with dolls.

Sara goes on making house, quite elaborate by now, has 3 play people.

Sara "Now I got a boy n a girl."

Kumi waves his tower at Sara, (and at Tagan and Lan at collage table) "SSSS a

snake!"

1.14 Sara leaves area, goes to roleplay area, leaving Kumi on own.

Kumi to me "Look at this!"

BM "What is it Kumi?"

Kumi "A machine." (shows me the two parts and how they can be pressed down to

work it)

BM "What does it do?"

Kumi "It a gun." (challengingly, looks at me, like, what do you say to that, expects

me to object?)

BM "Oh, I see."

Kumi "Now, we need a track, n I building a castle."

(He accidentally knocks down the girls' house with his legs, kicking out, as he works

on the new track.)

It took six minutes for Kumi to get the area to himself. He has not spoken to any of

the girls or directly threatened them physically; he has just taken up a lot of space and

introduced a different kind of discourse, a 'fighting game'. I have colluded in this by failing to intervene when he started waving his sabre and making his war noises, then endorsing his choice of building by asking him questions about it, and not pointing out that he has destroyed the girls' house. The girls move their play to the roleplay area, but in there they do not have as much space, as it is much smaller than the construction area, and they have no bricks. Also, the rule of four only at a time in the roleplay area limits the number of children who can take part. My data analysis shows that girls often dominate play in the roleplay area, but it is important to note that this is a very small space, and girls often retreat here because boys dominate other larger spaces.

This episode demonstrates how some older boys come to take for granted their right to take up space in the construction area. Domination of areas of the Nursery class and Garden is an important aspect of becoming a member of the boys' community of practice of masculinity in Nursery. Younger boys see established Nursery boys taking equipment and space from girls on a regular basis, and often model their actions on what they see. Adults in the setting unwittingly endorse this behaviour, as the boys' actions often go unchallenged. My own action of engaging with Kumi in the above episode probably reinforced his assumption that the construction space was 'his'. I have numerous instances documenting boys taking play equipment from girls, and boys barging into girls, pushing them out of the way, and casually poking them. Often girls do not protest, or if they do complain, it is mildly.

9/06

10.40 Harrison and Ravi at duplo. Parallel play, making tower with lots of windows.

10.45 Sammie joins, sits on other side of carpet, parallel play, she building a house,

showed me brick with 'up' sign on her model. Harrison leans over and takes it from

her and puts it on top of his tower. No reaction from Sammie. (And I do not say

anything either, thereby endorsing his action?)

[...]

10/06 Jake and Nina at puzzle table.

Jake pokes Nina quite hard. (I can see no provocation from Nina, she is getting on

with her own puzzle. She does not react when he pokes her.)

The following episodes in the Nursery playground demonstrate how some boys come
to expect to dominate space and resources. Below, Jake overtly asserts the need for
boys to have space for their pirate ranger game, and goes to get a girl to be their
audience.

11/06 Jake "Let's play pirate rangers." We need space, we need someone to look at

us."

Runs over to Madia at the phone. Looks at her, smiles, she smiles back, giggles.

Some boys use physical gestures and noises to exclude girls from activities in 'boys'
spaces. In the following episode, Madia tries to play with the cars on the construction
mat.

10/06

9.45 Reece, Femi, Harrison and Madia on carpet with cars

Harrison (loudly) "Madia is n't sharing the cars"

Boys ignore Madia, make comments only to each other.

[...] Omar joins car play - very confident playing here.

Reece to Omar (pleasant voice, one mate to another) "Don't break it that's an

aeroplane"

Omar (nods to him) "Neow" flying the plane. Parallel play.

Omar is accepted easily into the vehicle play, in contrast to Madia.

Madia (frozen look on her face) tries to collect and hold on to some cars, but after 3

minutes, goes to the water tray.

Harrison accuses Madia of not sharing the cars, but it would seem that the boys do not want her on the construction mat with them. She has an unpleasant experience there, and it may well put her off going there again. I recorded her subsequently going to the collage table, roleplay area and water tray but not the construction area. Through experiences such as this, girls learn that certain areas in the Nursery are not for them.

Markers of femininity and masculinity in Nursery and Reception

Within my research setting, some objects and practices have become reified as markers of masculinity and femininity in particular contexts (Wenger, 1998; Paechter, 2007). These markers are deeply embedded in children's power relations and relate to the ways in which boys and girls embody masculine and feminine practices. 'Pink for girls' is used in play practices by both girls and boys as an important reified marker of femininity. When girls join the Nursery class they learn to embody 'pink for girls' from messages from older girls within the communities of practice of nursery girls, as apprentice participants, and later, as full members. They learn that 'pink' can be a symbol for powerful 'girl' things. They also learn about 'pink for girls' from young boys, who use 'pink for girls' as a way of keeping girls out of certain activities and exerting power over girls in specific play situations (see Chapter 6). Girls also learn about 'pink for girls' from media images, advertising, and adults' comments and behaviours. When they come into Nursery girls have already learnt from the clothes

they have been dressed in and the toys they have been given at home that 'pink is for girls'.

An important marker of belonging to the girls' community of practice within my research Nursery and Reception involves having the correct appearance as a girl. This affects the activities that girls engage in. The 'correct' appearance for girls involves having 'girl' clothes, hair styles, shoes and choosing appropriate dressing up outfits. There are variations in style, for example African girls often have braids and hair extensions. But wearing pink is a common marker of girlhood. Even though children at this age do not choose and buy their own clothes, they are very aware of the importance of having girls' clothes and accessories (Blaise, 2005). The norm of 'pink for girls' is embodied by individual girls, in their clothing, hair ornaments, jewellery, writing and drawing materials, toys, lunch boxes, school bags, coats, socks and fashion items. In Nursery classes, there is a 'sea of pink' when girls sit on the carpet. When children move into Reception they are required to wear school uniform, so differences in clothing are less marked than in Nursery (no pink). Hairstyles and shoes continue to be masculine/feminine markers.

Girls often make remarks to each other about their clothes, as overtures of friendship.

10/06 Sara to Hong "I like your skirt. I like your pink shoes." Hong smiles, two girls sitting close, lots of eye contact.

Some girls express considerable interest, preferences and concern about clothes, hairstyles and shoes. Below, Yomi draws on her home experience, in conversation with a female member of the Nursery staff.

10/06

Yomi to Mrs M "I like doing fashion."

Mrs M "Does your sister like fashion?"

Yomi "My sister like fashion. She likes to do, she likes to, shows off, she wears

Nigeria clothes. My sister wear high heels."

Mrs M "That's nice."

Yomi "She got red hair and black hair."

Mrs M "Yes. Your sister has textured hair. She uses dye."

As girls get older, they continue to develop knowledge and awareness of makeup, clothes and feminine fashion. Blaise (2005) documents ways in which girls in a preschool in USA embody and enact heteronormative practices of femininity, displaying knowledge of female fashion, makeup and 'beauty'. My data analysis shows that the majority of girls in my research setting frequently drew on discourses of female fashion, and positioned themselves within heteronormative scripts in role play and drawings. Below, Ayo is in her first term in Reception. She has drawn a picture of her herself and her sister wearing makeup and high heeled boots.

Ayo "I like to wear my sister's clothes. And she has high boots. She has pink lipstick. Its for bigger girls my sister says. My Mum has red lipstick."

Molly, also in her first term in Reception, draws a picture of herself in a long pink dress and high heels.

Molly "I am going to my sister's party. My new dress. And shoes.

Ayo and Molly position themselves as legitimate peripheral members of teenage and adult communities of practice of femininity, through their imaginary portrayal of themselves. Below, I have been talking to Zuhre about what she likes to do in the playground. Although she has told me she likes playing football and jumping on the blocks, her picture of herself shows her in a conventionally 'girly' outfit.

Zuhre "I like jumping on the blocks."

Draws a very elaborate picture of herself in a long dress with highheeled shoes.

Zuhre (to me) "My shoes have heels with spikes, go tap tap tap on the floor."

Many of the girls drew elaborate pictures of themselves in princess costumes, party and wedding dresses and often portrayed their faces with bright big lipstick, exaggerated eyelashes, and 'big' hairdos. These pictures were in marked contrast to boys' self portraits, as these usually showed them playing ball, eating, running or jumping. Appendix I shows two typical drawings.

The next episode illustrates Nina and Madia's preoccupation with their appearances.

2/07

11.00 Nursery Storytime

Mrs M (in front of everybody, reprovingly) "Nina, pull your skirt down!" (Nina looks embarrassed and tugs her skirt down. There is a fashion for girls to be dressed in very short tight skirts over leggings or tights at the moment. The skirts tend to ride up.)

[...]

11.45 TV time

Nina to Madia, gesturing to her legs, in concerned voice "Look, dere [there]!"

Leans across and touches Madia's trousers, pointing out that there is a muddy mark on her white trousers.

Madia "Oh my goodness!" (Looks in consternation at the muddy stains, then at Nina, eyes wide in horror, then starts to scrub ineffectually at her muddy trousers.)

It is possible that Nina noticed and commented on Madia's 'problem' with her clothes partly because Mrs M had just commented on Nina's. Mrs M is policing Nina, and Nina is policing Madia, to make sure girls are neat, clean and modest in their attire.

Furthermore, "My goodness', or more often, 'goodness me,' is a phrase used by teachers to convey disapproval. Here Madia is using the same phrase to criticise herself for having got her white clothes dirty playing in the garden. Nina and Madia are learning that it is their responsibility, as girls, to adapt their behaviours to accommodate their clothing. They are also learning to pay close attention to their appearance, and monitor how they look to others (Foucault, 1984).

A key marker of masculinity for boys in Nursery and Reception is avoidance of anything feminine. I discuss this in detail in Chapter 6. New boys in Nursery learn from 'oldtimers' that 'pink is for girls' and that they should avoid anything coloured pink as if it were a pollutant.

Kumi (disgusted voice) "That a girl pen. Don't use that!" (It is pink)

Sometimes 'pink' is used by girls as a symbol to enable them to claim space. The climbing frame in the Nursery garden is an area where girls sometimes seize power. In the following episode, Ayo declares that the climbing frame is 'pink' and boys are not allowed in. She is using 'pink' in a symbolic, not literal sense, as the climbing frame is yellow not pink.

10/06   Ayo, Yomi, Ayla, Molly on the climbing frame.

Ayo (standing on the climbing frame, speaking loudly, as if making an announcement) "This is girls' pink house, boys not allowed to come in".

I discuss these 'girl power' episodes in detail in Chapter 6 in relation to borderwork, but in this context, it is important to note that younger girls often watched older girls and then joined in with climbing and chanting. I understand the episodes as taking place in the context of the Nursery where girls had to struggle to gain access to resources. The 'pink' girl power bids are successful attempts by some girls to gain space and control over activities. They also provide a way for girls to demonstrate

publicly that they are members of a community of practice of girls within the Nursery. All girls can join these episodes, as long as they can get on the climbing frame and join in the chanting. They derive pleasure and excitement from the shared activity. Girls often had difficulties accessing the climbing frames at other times.

Some boys attempted to keep girls off the climbing frames, by demonstrating their superior skills, and trying to make the girls take the role of spectator. Consequently some girls had few opportunities to develop their climbing skills. This was compounded by the Nursery rule that children may not climb if they are wearing jewellery.

11/06   Climbing frame

Ryan shows Mrs R his socks, pulling up his trouser legs.

"Very nice Ryan. They look like men's socks."

Ryan, very pleased face, grinning "Yeah, they're football socks."

[...]

Tagan goes to climb.

Mrs M "No Tagan, you can't climb today you are wearing jewellery. Tell Mummy."

Tagan goes over to Mrs M, taking off her ring.

Mrs M "No, don't take it off Tagan, you have got to leave it on. You've got to tell Mummy."

Here, Tagan is not allowed to go on the climbing frame because she is wearing a ring. She tries to resolve the problem by taking off her jewellery, but is not allowed to do this. Ryan gains Mrs R's attention and approval with his request that she look at his socks. Mrs R compliments Ryan's appearance, telling him his socks are 'like mens' socks', which positions him within the adult community of practice of men who wear football socks. Teacher approval consolidates Ryan's position as a central member of

a community of masculinity. In contrast, teacher disapproval emphasises problematic aspects of femininity practice for Tagan. Mrs M says to Tagan that she must tell her mother not to let her wear jewellery, thus making her responsible for her mother's behaviour, but not allowing her to make a decision to take off her ring for herself. The rule of no jewellery in theory applies to boys and girls, but I have never seen a boy wearing anything that resulted in him being forbidden to climb.

Some boys also made comments that showed that they wore clothes that linked them to wider communities of masculinity practice. Football team shirts were particularly prized, and staff often commented on these with approval.

Carpet

Mrs C "Damien, come up and show us all your Man U Tshirt. My son supports that team."

Some boys used superhero shirts to demonstrate that they are correctly positioned within communities of masculinity practice.

Mani "I got a spiderman shirt indoors."

Space in Nursery

I analysed the use of spaces in Nursery in detail and my findings are represented in sketch maps A to D in Appendix J.

In the Autumn Term 2006 nine of the full-time children were girls and there was only one boy (see Appendix A(i)). There was an assertive group of girls with strong personalities, dominating collage and roleplay areas. Two girls were very competent on the computer and often took the lead there. Boys dominated construction through strategies of making loud noises and taking equipment from girls. Older girls and

boys used their understanding of masculine and feminine objects of knowledge within the Nursery to influence local practices.

Below, Lan is wearing a pink Barbie Dancing Princesses Tshirt, and she demonstrates knowledge of the fairy tale princesses that enables her to direct the action in the roleplay area. Although it has been set up by staff as the House of the Three Bears, Lan, Sara and Sammie introduce a storyline based on their shared knowledge of Disney princesses, and exclude a boy, Mani. Mani, the only full-time boy in this term's Nursery class, tries to gain access to the home corner roleplay area, which is dominated by girls. The girls argue about who will take dominant roles in the story, and invoke the traditional storylines to support them, when this suits their power bids. The role of the ugly sister is not a desirable one for Sara, but Sammie insists that she must stick to the role, because she has already accepted it, and because it is part of the story. Mani is not as confident or fluent in English as any of these girls. He shows that he has learned some of the rules for being accepted in the roleplay area by the girls, but he has insufficient knowledge and command of Disney princess stories to take a full part in the action, and is still there under sufferance. He changes his position from the relatively powerful Daddy bear to powerless 'baby', but the girls go on ignoring him, and he leaves the area.

11/06

Roleplay area set up as 'House of 3 Bears' in 'Goldilocks'.

Mani "I'm the Daddy Bear"

Lan showing her Barbie Dancing Princesses tshirt to Sammie and Sara, they name the princesses, very animated, ignoring Mani.

Sara "I be the Cinderella [...] (to Mani) Please can you be quiet!"

Lan "I be Jasmine"

[...]

Lan "I'm Cinderella"

Sammie "I'm Sleeping Beauty."

Lan "Tomorrow my Mum going to get me Little Mermaid."

Mani "I'm be the baby." (girls ignore him).

Mani leaves roleplay area.

[...]

Some talk about who is which princess, who is older.

Sara "I'm the princess, I'm not a baby."

Sammie to Chloe "She (indicating Sara) is the ugly sister."

Sammie to Sara "You said you're the ugly sister so you gotta be."

Sara "???(inaudible)"

Sammie "We cant have 3 princesses otherwise it'll be another story!"

Girls sometimes guarded 'their' territory. The collage table in Nursery was the 'girls' domain'.

10/06 Shona to Femi who is passing the table "You, here!"(loudly, sharp voice,

staring at Femi accusingly)

Femi "No, I'm making a cars!" (defensive, as if, I need to pass by you but I am not

staying or bothering you)

Femi hurries past the collage table to the construction mat.

Boys rarely went to the collage table, and it is an area of the classroom where girls can usually expect to be only with other girls. The positioning of the collage table is such that boys have to pass it on their way to 'boys' territory, the construction mat. In theory, Femi could stop and do some collage, rather than go on to the construction

mat, but he would have had to face up to Shona's hostility and also knows that boys do not usually do collage.

After six months, this full-time group went into Reception, so there was a new group of full-timers. During this Spring Term 2007 there were eight full-time older boys, and only two full-time older girls (see Appendix A (ii)). My data analysis shows that a group of older boys, mostly full-timers, were dominating access to all areas indoors. They took over any area that they wished to play in, including roleplay areas that had been dominated by girls during the previous term. The group of older full-time boys excluded younger boys and girls from any area where they wanted to play, at any time, by their physical presence and things they said. Daniel, Jake, Harrison, Ben and Ryan often played together and took over areas of the Nursery. In the mornings, Lewis joined them. Ervin, new to Nursery, began to copy their behaviour. Outdoors this group of boys controlled space round the gate for their football games. Girls played mostly in the play house and area around the phone.

Daniel and Harrison were particularly adept at employing strategies of exclusion, and took a leading role in the older boys' games. These two boys were also the most competent speakers of English this term. The extract below shows how Daniel and Harrison are able to use their knowledge of Nursery rules, their competence as English speakers, and their combined physical force to implement a strategy that excludes girls and younger children from the roleplay area. They demonstrate to the children new to Nursery that they are in charge. They act assertively and confidently together, and claim their 'right' to take over all the space in the roleplay area.

2/07

Ryan, Daniel, Harrison and Ben in roleplay area, which is set up as a Chinese restaurant for Chinese New Year.

Ryan *"Where the food gone?"*

Daniel *"We need shooters."*

(Boys are pointing chopsticks at each other, and putting two in their mouths to make weapons.)

Zoe at the entrance, looking on.

Daniel *(gently, but firmly, to her) "You can't come in!"*

Malik comes over to entrance.

Daniel *"Zoe, you cant come in. Malik, you cant come in. (to Harrison) I'm gonna stay here and not let anyone in."*

Malik goes away, chewing his finger disconsolately.

Zoe goes on watching from entrance.

Malik comes back to the entrance.

Daniel *(warningly) "Malik!"*

Harrison *(loudly) "1, 2, 3, 4!" (ie its full in here.)*

Mrs C calls Daniel to work with her.

Daniel calls to Harrison, as he leaves the area "Don't let anyone in but me. You stay!"

Malik tries to get in again, Ervin also comes over and makes as if to enter.

Harrison *"You can't go in!"*

Harrison *"Ben, just keep in!"*

Harrison stands with one arm on each side of the entrance, blocking it, and barring anybody from entering, although there are only 3 in there.

10.45 Harrison, Ben and Ryan leave r/p area.

Eser and Ervin go into r/p area.

Harrison sees them and hurries back in "Ben, Ryan, come!"

Ben and Ryan rush over.

Below, Daniel and Harrison use their knowledge of Nursery rules, that there are only four children allowed in the roleplay area, to exclude Fifi.

2/07 roleplay area (This is set up as a hospital)

Ben, Daniel, Lewis, Ryan, Fifi

Boys are all wearing tabards and being doctors. They tell Fifi she cant play there because there would be too many people, although she was there first. She looks annoyed but leaves the area.

[...]

Their exclusive behaviour was noticed by Mrs M who remarks on it at story time "I hope if we have new children you will play with them, [unlike the children in the story who don't]. You boys, Daniel, this morning in the hospital you didn't want to play with Fifi did you? It would have been nice if you had included her in your game." (Daniel looks a bit contrite, nods his head, but he is most unlikely to include any girls in these games.)

Staff shared with me their concern that this group of boys were so dominant. Staff set up a new roleplay area on construction carpet, a firestation, to encourage boys to take part in roleplay and let younger boys and girls have a turn in 'homecorner' roleplay area. This new roleplay area was set up in the space that was previously the construction area. Immediately, it became very popular with many boys, partly as it had fire helmets and firefighter equipment as props. Boys enjoyed 'battle' games and frequently claimed the area 'for boys'. In the following episode, Ervin, a new boy this term, joins in with Tu and Lewis, old-timers, to exclude two of the older girls.

6/07 Lewis, Tu and Ervin playing in fire station role play area (in space that used to be construction area).

Tagan on edge of area, hands on hips, looks determined, makes loud announcement "I gonna come in."

Lewis (loudly) " Na! 1,2,3,4" (as if, there's 4 already, but actually there are only 3)

*Tu "You can't come in. You a **girl**."*

Tagan (defiantly) "I'm a girl!" (as if, so what!)

Tu (chanting, jumping around and laughing at her) "I'm a girl, I'm a girl, I'm a cake!"

Tagan points to him, smiling, still standing on edge of mat "You're a boy!"

Tagan "I want to come in."

Repeats to me " I want to come in. The boys say No."

BM "You can go in Tagan."

Tagan shakes head (I should have intervened at this point?)

Jala comes over and stands beside her.

Ervin (warningly) "1,2,3,4,5,6,"

Jala (makes as if to enter) "1,2,3,4,5,6,7."

Boys taking up lots of space, leaping about and making lots of noise, menacing Jala and Tagan and blocking the entrance to the area.

Jala and Tagan leave area.

The boys are using the 'four only' rule to keep out the girls, and then they use the 'make a noise and intimidate routine' to back up the verbal refusal. This makes it sound more deliberate than it probably is, as their usual play style is noisy and expansive, but it also serves to exclude girls. Tu is also using humour/teasing to exclude Tagan. Tagan is clear that she is being excluded because she is a girl. Tagan

is at a further disadvantage because she cannot count to 4, and is not sure if there are already four in the role play area. However, Jala is confident with numbers to 10 and ignores the 'four only' rule, but she still fails to gain access. When I read my field notes after this episode, I thought I should have intervened and helped Tagan and Jala gain access to the role play area. But I missed the moment, and recorded it in my journal instead. When I discussed the episode with staff they seemed dismayed by the boys' behaviour, and said it was typical, but concluded "that's just the way boys are".

Keeping the rules in Reception – embodying 'good school pupil'.

I followed two cohorts of children as they moved from Nursery to Reception (see Appendix A(iii) and A(iv)). My data analysis shows that in this Reception class knowledge of being a school pupil is much more salient in lesson times than knowledge of feminine/masculine markers, although demonstrating knowledge of masculinity and femininity practices continues to be a central feature of boys' and girls' social relations. Being a successful Reception pupil involves keeping the class rules, and following instructions and routines, often in public. The children are required to sit on a carpet for several teaching sessions each day. When they are in this space they are encouraged to embody 'good school pupil' by sitting up straight on the carpet, with hands folded, legs crossed, and sometimes fingers on lips to show that they are listening quietly. They must be quiet and careful when walking and moving around. Nursery routines have prepared them for this. Children in this Reception class were usually eager to demonstrate that they are knowledgeable about behaviours that constitute a 'good' school pupil (as defined by their teacher, reinforced by support staff, other teachers and Head Teacher). All children I observed sought and valued positive attention and praise from their teacher.

Some of the teacher's daily practices and organisational routines give all children opportunities to demonstrate that they know the rules for behaviour within the classroom. There is a notice at the front of the class that displays the class rules, and Ms S refers to these on a regular basis. The rules emphasise control of bodily movements.

Notice –
'Reception rules
We share and take turns.
We sit quietly on the mat.
We put up our hand to ask a question.
We walk around the school.
We have kind hands and kind feet.'

Ms S praises individual children who are performing these rules correctly and reprimands individuals who are not adhering to the rules. She employs techniques of panoptic surveillance, encouraging children to monitor their own behaviour, and children can never be sure whether she is looking at them at any moment. She uses praise and occasionally picks out individuals who are not conforming to her expected norms of behaviour. She uses techniques of persuasion and seduction (Allen, 2003) to exert power as a teacher, and the children are keen to please her. The following is a typical example of her comments during a carpet session.

1/07

Mrs S "Ayo is sitting so nicely I am going to put her name on the smiley board."

"Ayla is not looking, come and sit next to Marsha then you will be able to see.

Look at Jing, sitting so nicely. You need to sit on your bottom Liam."

Turns away for minute, Ravi starts calling out

Ms S "Ravi!" R looks ashamed, puts finger on his lips.

[...]

Ayo and Sara fingers on lips whole time Ms S is talking.

Ms S "Good sitting and good listening Ayo and Sara."

"You listened really well Reception I am really pleased with you."

Bodies show pleasure and pride, almost seem to expand as they sit up even straighter.

Although the attributes of a 'good pupil' are not gendered, there is a backgrounded normative/evaluative claim, shared by staff and children, that there are certain differences between boys and girls, that this is 'how it is.' When possible, most children sat on the carpet with someone of their own sex. Despite their eagerness to perform 'good pupil' I saw many same-sex social exchanges on the carpet, often non verbal, as below.

1/07All sit very quiet on carpet, no noticeable girl/boy divide, although when I look closely, can see that girls are sitting with girls, and boys with boys, as usual. Nadia and Molly are having a 'conversation' , they are looking at gap between them, keep on moving to sit closer together, making eye contact, copying each other's gestures, fingers on lips, nothing spoken aloud.

[...]

Daniel and Omar sit close together. Omar leans towards Daniel, making eye contact. Daniel smiles and gives Omar a playful punch on the shoulder.

When given a chance, most children opted to work with a same-sex partner in activities on the carpet. This was made easier as they were usually sitting next to somebody of the same sex, so when asked to work with a partner, they had only to turn towards them.

1/07   Carpet

Ms S "Pick a friend to go and get your coats." Lots of smiles. All children make same sex choices.

[...]

Songs, 'Row the Boat'

Ms S "Everybody sit with a partner." Boys all choose another boy, girls another girl,

except Lan and Jason who work together.

There was a shared assumption amongst staff that boys and girls will work together when given tasks in class, but will play in same sex groups in different spaces when given a choice.

2/07

BM to Mrs D " I am looking to see when/where girls and boys play together".

Mrs D (classroom assistant) "They dont play together much... It is always female dominated in the playhouse."

Ms S. encouraged established children to help newer children follow routines and keep rules. Some of the older children, particularly some girls, enjoyed taking on the role of instructor. They eagerly seized opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge about being a 'good' pupil.

1/07

Amena to Nadia "You're not allowed to say 'na, na ni na na' at school. You are allowed at home, but not at school. We don't do that. You not allowed to say anything to Ms S cos she's working with a group. Oh, is it my group? (looks a bit worried, stands to check that it isn't her group.) You are not allowed to talk to her til she's finished."

[...]

Marsha to Zuhre "Do you want me to help you? Shall I draw a treasure chest for you? I'm good at drawing treasure."

[---]

Lan to Tarak "Line up here!"

My fieldnotes indicated that the most frequent exchanges between children in play and more formal group learning situations employed instructional language, issuing commands and admonitions to each other, reflecting the dominant mode of teacher instruction used in the setting. More established children seized opportunities to demonstrate their understanding of class rules and positioned themselves as knowledgeable by instructing children who were unfamiliar with school routines. I have many more instances of girls enacting 'teacher' behaviours and issuing commands than boys. Ms S has a lot of personal influence over the children, and some of the girls modelled their behaviour on hers. I observed how some of the girls watched her carefully and learned details of how she does 'teacherly' things. Ms D, an experienced classroom assistant, who had worked with Reception class for several years, told me,

06/07 "Ms S has them so well trained, and some of the girls, they know just what to do. I had to do the register and I was asking, what colour pen does Ms S use? I wasn't sure and you don't want to make a mistake in the register. Marsha says straight off, it's a red pen. She knows everything! And she was right about the pen too. But every year it's the same. They learn how to do things."

Gender dualism in Reception

Ms S. encouraged the established group of Reception children to enact and demonstrate the correct practices of a Reception child to Nursery children. Nursery children make a number of visits to Reception class during the term before they join the Reception class.

11/07   Phonics on carpet

Ms S "Stand up if you have a picture of a van.

Show the Nursery how we do it. Get your robot arms ready. VAN!"

[...] Ms S " Have any of you Nursery children got a web? (to Reception)Show them

the picture of the web so they know what it looks like. "

Alita "He got one!" (indicating David.)

Fifi looking worried.

Ms S "Reception can you show the Nursery how we do strong robot arms to say

ZIP?"

Extra keen rendering of the robot arms.

The teacher goes on to encourage Reception children to take care of a Nursery child for the following play session. She does not suggest same-sex pairs, but all children pick somebody of the same sex as themselves. The girls all go to the writing area, and the boys go to the construction area.

Ms S "Now you can all go and choose an activity. I am looking to see who is sitting

nicely to go and choose. Melek, you pick someone from Nursery and go with them. "

Melek picks Eser, holds her hand takes her to writing area.

Tagan picks Fifi, takes her to join Melek and Eser.

Oni picks Tia and joins the other girls.

Oni and Tia talking quietly together colouring in pics.

In turn, Tu, Ben and Jake pick Ervin, Adil and Leon and take them to the construction

area.

In this way, the teacher encourages established children to induct newcomers into Reception practices of femininity and masculinity. New children immediately begin to participate as peripheral members, learning that it is usual for girls and boys to play separately.

186

Although Ms S. makes no distinction between behaviour she expects from boys and girls, and gives all children turns to perform all school pupil tasks, my data shows three times as many instances of girls showing knowledge of what it is to be a school pupil, compared to boys. Furthermore, Ms S. makes frequent comments about girls' need to modify their appearance, dress and bodily postures, whereas she makes few comments about boys' appearances.

10/07 Carpet

Ms S "Molly, tuck your hair behind your ear."

[...]

Ms S to Alita "Why did you take down your hair again? We need to keep our hair up all the time, it keeps it from getting knotty and it keeps it clean."

[...]

"Molly, pull your skirt down." (Very short skirt over tights,skirt has ridden up, as she walks to get her coat, Ms S notices it.)

Although all children are keen to perform jobs around the classroom, and all help with the clearing up, some of the girls are often chosen to do more demanding tasks as, in general, girls perform jobs more competently than many of the boys.

2/07 Boys and girls all get given jobs, but girls more often get extra ones, eg today Amena and Marsha were asked twice to do something extra. (Ms S calls them " sensible")

Some of the boys enjoy showing off their strength and willingness to do jobs, but actually accomplish very little.

3/07 Ms D "Can you please take in the blocks." (general to children in outdoor area.)

Ravi "I'm strong." (spends ages trying to pick up several blocks at once and trying to carry too many. Making a big deal about it, showing his muscles.)

Ms S "Ravi, Liam, one at a time!"

Liam "I want to take that one."

Jason "I'm stronger."

Jason to Chloe "I'm stronger." (shows her he is carrying 2 blocks to her 1.) "I'm strong."

Indoors, stacking blocks in construction area, Liam to Shona "Leave it like that." (Shona was doing a pretty good job of stacking the blocks)(Liam pushes her out of his way. Ms S comes over to supervise.)

Perhaps the girls' relative competence influences the teacher's choice of children to do extra jobs. When she actually needs something done, she finds it is more efficient for her to choose a 'sensible' girl. Some of the girls also make extra efforts to guess what she needs and help her in 'teacherly' ways.

Ms S says she forgotten words of new song.

Ayla "You need to get a paper of it."

Some girls take the job of tidying up so conscientiously that they have to be told to stop doing it.

Miss S "Marsha, I asked you to come and sit on the mat. Come and hurry up please."

[...]

Zuhre hanging up clothes in roleplay area.

Ms S "Ayo and Zuhre, goodness me, I asked you to come and sit on the mat. You did a really good job helping but now you need to sit on the mat when I tell you."

Walkerdine (1990) notes that one of the only positions available to girls in the classroom is often quasi-teacher. Francis (1998, 2000) found that girls in primary and

secondary schools frequently positioned themselves as quasi-teacher, taking up 'sensible' behaviours, in contrast to boys' 'silliness'. I have numerous examples of this in my research data. Francis argues that children's constructions of gender as oppositional has an impact on gendered power relations. Some girls believe that their sensible behaviour will gain approval from teachers and other pupils, but some boys take advantage of girls' sensible behaviour to dominate girls and other boys. Francis reports

> "...a dominant construction of boys as irresponsible and competitive allowed many boys to dominate the classroom space and interaction, and to exercise power over girls and other boys" (Francis, 2000: 65).

I found that some boys in my research setting learned that they could gain power and pleasure by dominating other children by taking up positions of 'selfish' in contrast to girls' 'sensible' positions. I documented many instances of this, not only in the classrooms, but also at lunchtime, in the playground.

The Reception/Year 1 playgrounds at lunch times provided a key site for the transmission of gendered knowledge and development of gendered identities. In Chapter 4 I discussed the children's use of gendered play technologies. My data analysis shows that boys and girls played mostly in separate same-sex groups at lunch time play. At lunchtimes Year 6 children were encouraged to volunteer to help mealtime supervisors in the Reception playground. During my research period, all who volunteered were girls, except for two boys who volunteered for a few sessions at the start of a new term. The girls were mostly very conscientious when they were helpers. The senior meals supervisor explained to me why she thought girls volunteered.

3/07 Ms L "The girls like to play with the little ones, and they do a good job of looking after them. And tidying up too. The boys don't want to be bothered, they want the time for their football. And if the boys do come over they just muck about."

Ms L draws on the discourse of oppositional gender in thinking it is 'natural' that girls would want to help with younger children, and boys would want to play football, or if boys do volunteer as 'helpers', would not be helpful. The younger children see only older girls, not boys, helping at playtime, and this reinforces the discourse of gender dualism. The Year 6 girls helped the meals supervisors to clear up at the end of dinner play, and some of the younger girls did small jobs such as collecting up hoops. Many of the boys carried on playing chasing games and often started 'playfighting' games whilst the clearing up was being done. Meals supervisors would often shout to these boys, "Stop being silly, boys", and would often call them several times to line up when the bell went, "Boys, boys, hurry up!" In this way, some younger girls became legitimate peripheral participants in the community of practice of 'sensible helpful' girls, in contrast to boys' 'silly selfishness'.

One of the year 6 girls, Carlie, set up dancing sessions for the younger children at lunchtimes. She organised this very efficiently, with taped music and she and a couple of other Year 6 girls demonstrated the routines. My observations show that it was predominantly girls who joined in these dancing sessions, although a few boys imitated the moves, rather self-consciously, keeping close together on the edge of the group, and with much laughter. Carlie was keen to include boys as well as girls, but realised that she had a hard task in doing this, because dance in this school was seen as mostly a feminine activity.

2/07 Carlie to me "I'm helping them with their steps and that. Its all girls at the

moment, but we're gonna change it and get some boys involved. It's a bit girlie

now"(swivels her hips). I go to Dance Club after school. It's mostly girls there too. "

As Francis (2000) notes, discourses of gender dualism are often self-perpetuating, as oppositional gender performances become a key cornerstone of children's identities. My analysis of children's play practices at lunchtimes shows how children learn to perform oppositional practices of masculinity or femininity. Young children observed the play practices of older children, and observed the expectations that adults had about their gendered behaviours, and acted accordingly.

Practices of hegemonic masculinity

In analysing how boys in Nursery and Reception learned to engage in practices of hegemonic masculinity in the setting, I draw on Buchbinder (1994) and Connell (1995, 2002) for their insights into the complex operations of power in the reproduction of hegemonic masculinities. I discussed these in some detail in Chapter 1. In my data analysis I found that the majority of the boys in my research learned to take an active part in three key hegemonic practices of masculinity in the setting. These three practices were superhero play based on 'battles', football, and construction (including Lego, train and car play). I use the term 'battle' play to describe the 'fighting' games, because this is what the boys themselves often called it, and it emphasises the serious strategic work that took place in these games. Staff used the term 'playfighting' which has rather different connotations, and I discuss staff attitudes below (page 197).

One of the central practices of hegemonic masculinity in Nursery and Reception classes in my research school was 'battles' and associated superhero play. Some boys

developed superhero play themes, often taken from films such as 'Spiderman' and Power Rangers, and showed their physical strength, competitiveness and comradeship through elaborate physical displays of wrestling, running and leaping around the playground. Many boys at lunch play put up the hoods on their coats and wore them open, like capes, using these as superhero costumes in territorial playground battles. They ran back and forth between the two playgrounds, and had wrestling bouts against the walls and on the grassy bank, out of sight of dinner supervisors. Younger boys would often run after older boys, copying their gestures. I saw some boys getting hurt in these 'battle' games.

The objects of knowledge and physical attributes that were valued by many boys were related to these activities, and boys often had to work hard to be accepted as full participants in these practices. Part of the way boys could claim membership was through demonstration of physical skills, ball skills in football, construction skills, skills in running, jumping, and physical strength and endurance in 'battle' play. They could also gain access by demonstrating appropriate knowledge, of the game in football, and knowledge of storylines as superheroes. The relative positions of boys within the 'pecking order' in my research settings were determined by other boys, regulated by the circulation of dominant discourses of football and 'battles'. Boys who were new to Nursery and Reception learned the rules for dominant masculinity through observation and imitation rather than direct instruction. Girls were excluded from football, construction and 'battle' play. Some girls confirmed boys' right to participation in these practices of hegemonic masculinity, by deferring to boys, although some also resisted being positioned outside the practices. I discuss the complexities of this in Chapter 6.

Only boys could confer masculinity upon each other, and they had to compete if they wanted to achieve a dominant position. It is no coincidence that the two key practices (football and 'battle' play) have highly competitive elements. Dominant boys who defined and dominated hegemonic masculinities did not allow younger/weaker boys to join their games. In the following football episode, Damien and Malik are both in their first term at Nursery. Damien comes and takes a ball to play with on his own and Malik tries to join a football game but Jake tells him to go away. However, Damien and Malik have watched the dominant boys, and store up the knowledge for the future.

3/07 Daniel "Let's play football."

Ryan "Yeah."

Daniel "This is what you do, you do this." (demonstrates kicking ball at gate to score a goal.)

3 balls in play.

Malik watching.

Jake "This is my Chelsea ball."

Damien comes and takes a ball runs off with it by himself to other end of playground.

Older boys kicking balls at gate. Daniel Jake, Ben, Omar

Daniel takes ball from Jake, kicks it.

Malik comes over, by gate.

*Jake (to Malik) "Hey, **no!**"*

Malik goes to sand pit.

My data analysis shows that all boys in my research setting actively positioned themselves as participants in 'battle' play, although some did so more than others. Some boys, such as Omar were initially not participants, but like Omar, they

gradually took a more active part. For Omar, shared football and 'battle' games solidified his close relationship with Daniel, and this continued into Reception.

1/07 Ryan, Daniel, Harrison, Jake, playing a very energetic superhero game,

involving chasing across the play area and onto the climbing frame, very expansive

gestures, loud cries and having lots of fun

Omar not joining in, on his own, going round on scooter.

Daniel "Stretch rangers!" (arms out, runs up and climbs to top of climbing frame.)

Omar to Mrs M "They are playing the sword game."

Mrs M "Oh I hope not, we don't want anybody getting hurt."

Daniel (looks hostile to Omar) "No, we're not!"

Omar was very keen to play with Daniel, and learned that this friendship depended on his participation in 'battle' games. Over the next months I often saw him practising the physical moves necessary to join in.

3/07 Nursery Garden

Omar joins action, from top of climbing frame, punching down at Lewis.

Daniel comes up behind him, "Spiderman!"

Omar being particularly rough, and he goes on play fighting, karate kicks, punching

into the air at imaginary foes, after all told to pack up and others have left climbing

frame. "Yurr, yar!"

Boys who were not particularly athletic had to persevere with considerable determination in order to be accepted into football and 'battle' play. Tu worked very hard for the whole time he was in Nursery, and it was only in the Reception class that he really became established as a full member of the boys' community of practice of masculinity. He achieved acceptance partly by persevering as a peripheral participant in football (see also Chapter 4).

1/07 Football game Daniel, Lewis, Jake, Ryan, Tu

Tu running round football area.

Daniel "Pass to me Jake!"

Jake kicks ball to Daniel.

Tu arms in air,, dashes about, but not in a way of a footballer, the body postures are all wrong. Others mostly ignore him, but let him fetch the ball for them.

As he became a more confident and fluent English speaker, Tu was also able to take a more active part in developing plots in 'battle' games, and used his sense of humour to amuse other boys.

10/07 Ryan and Tu in construction area

Ryan crouching down, firing 'gun'.

Tu follows, pointing and shooting 2 guns "OOO piu, piu."

Tu "The monster coming!"

Tu points gun up at ceiling "I missed it!"

Ryan (laughing) "Look Tu, piu, piu!"

Tu also demonstrated that he was a boy by disassociating himself from all things feminine, and by being aggressive to girls.

02/07 Milk table. Tu turns to Fifi, making fist at Fifi.

Fifi looks annoyed, backs off, thumb in her mouth.

Tu (quietly, leaning towards her) "You ???"

Fifi (loud voice) "I'm not!"

Tu puts his fisted hand on her leg.

Tagan gets up to leave the table, Tu moves, blocking her way past him.

Tagan "Hey Tu, let me by."

Tu moves back next to Fifi, making harassing movements to Fifi again.

Liam talked to me one lunch time about his ambivalent feelings about 'battle' games. He was in his second term in Reception at this time.

2/07 I am sketching groups of children in play areas at lunch time.

Liam to me "What are you drawing?"

BM "I'm drawing a picture of your playground."

Liam "Why have you drawn me?"

BM "Well, it isn't you, but I will draw you if you want me to."

Liam "Can I draw in your book?"

I give the book to Liam and he draws a picture of himself skipping, and one of a girl walking to the flower bed.

BM "That's a great picture. Do you like to skip Liam?

Liam "Yes, at home. Not here."

Liam (points to his picture of a girl) "I would like to play with her. I don't know her name. But that boy, he (Liam points to a Year 1 boy) always fights me."

BM "Why does he do that?"

Liam (disapprovingly) "I think he watches Power Rangers. It makes you a bit fighty."

BM "Do you like to fight?"

Liam "No! (excited) I like to jump on people's heads!"

[...]

Later in this lunch play, Liam comes running up to me.

Liam (to me, very excited) "I'm doing battles!"

On one level, Liam was excited by the 'battles'. I imagine that he has been told, possibly at home, that watching Power Ranger films can make you 'fighty', and he is both disapproving, and eager to join in. Subsequently I observed Liam getting hurt several times in these 'battles', once getting his arm twisted, and getting wrestled to

the ground, and he did not appear to be enjoying himself, but he persevered in joining these games. Liam was learning that taking part in these 'battles' was an important way of demonstrating membership of the community of practice of boys in this playground. He thinks his knowledge and enjoyment of skipping are not appropriate for lunchtime play in this playground culture. He confessed to me in private that he would like to play with a girl, but I never saw him attempt to do so. Liam's experience emphasises for me how difficult it is for boys in this setting to resist identifying themselves with practices of hegemonic masculinity.

Hegemonic practices carried emotional weight with many boys. They were proud of their physical strength in 'battle' and football games. It is significant that staff attitudes to boys dominating football and construction were mostly tolerant, and, in the case of football, sometimes admiring. Staff attitudes to 'battle' play were less favourable, but in some instances, this disapproval seemed to make the activity more attractive to some boys. The boys were experiencing 'spirals of power and pleasure', as described by Foucault (1976:45). The disapproval of [female] adults gave an extra excitement to the 'battle' play, as the boys enjoyed evading the watchful eye of the dinner staff and teachers. Staff, particularly at lunch play, often did not see some of the 'battle' games and I saw some boys getting hurt. However, most of the battle moves were very stylised, designed as public displays, and not intended to hurt anybody. Certainly, I saw many power struggles between individuals and groups of boys, but these mostly revolved around who was leading and directing the 'battles' rather than physical 'fights' in a combative sense, as in the episode below.

1/07 Nursery Garden Daniel, Jake, Harrison and Ryan

Daniel (On top of climbing frame) "Oh no, there's an emergency, come on!"

Daniel vaults over the small tunnel, followed by other 3 boys, all vault over the

tunnel, copying Daniel, and all run across to the fence. Shouts of "Ranger, change to

a battle ranger" "Power rangers!" Jake finds it quite difficult to vault over the

tunnel, but much more competent on return journey when they all vault over again

and climb back up onto the climbing frame.

Jake shouting "Everyone! Save the world!"

Ryan "Daniel and Jake!"

Harrison "Come up to the ship. I'm the baddies!"

Mrs T "Boys, not that fast running." (pleasant tone, and they don't take any notice.)

These 4 boys are using up whole of the play area. Girls are in play house.

As in the episode above, many of the narratives centred on archetypal themes of 'goodies' and 'baddies'. I noted that girls very rarely tried to take part in these games, and on the odd occasion when they did, it appeared to me their bodies were not used to performing in ways that enabled them to participate. This is not to say that girls would not be as proficient or skilled in these moves as boys, if they habitually took part in these kinds of play. In the episode below, Tagan, unusually, gets involved in a 'battle' play, but soon retreats to the play house.

02/07 Tagan, Jake, Ben, Ryan, Omar in wild chasing game round play area, all very

animated. Turns into play fighting, when Brogan pushes Ben. Jake starts doing karate

kicks, fists out, shadow boxing. Ben and Omar join in similar actions.

Ben fists up, against Omar.

Tagan trying karate type kicks, but looks uncomfortable.

Ryan to Jake ""Let's play" they jump about, making lots of noises, "Wah, Rahhr".

Tagan now just watching them, then moves away, to playhouse.

There were some disputes over whether boys were 'fighting' or 'playfighting' and staff tended to forbid anything that looked as if it was getting 'too rough' or likely to injure anybody. Gendered panoptic surveillance (see Chapter 1) was taking place in complex ways. Boys were looking out to make sure their battles were not noticed by female staff, but wanted their performances to be seen by peers. These very public displays of hegemonic masculinity took place in some approved ways within the classroom, in imaginative 'battle' scripts in role play areas and small world play (fire station, pirate boat, Lego). However, the majority of 'battle' play was discouraged by staff, particularly when it involved physical embodiment of 'fighting' moves.

3/07Nursery playground

Power ranger play fighting, quite rough, but very stylised. Lots of karate type lunges and fists up, legs kicking out.

Lewis "You can't kill me."

Daniel "Batman do this."

Lewis "I Spiderman."

Ervin trying to join in, hits Lewis in the eye with his fist, probably an accident. Mrs T sends him in. Says she does not want to see even pretend kicking.

The disapproval of one major form of hegemonic masculinity within the setting has implications for how young boys developed gender identities. Female staff disapproved of 'battle' play and often discouraged it or actively forbade it. In the following exchange, Daniel and Omar talk about the details of a 'fighting' programme they have seen on TV. At the same time, Daniel takes the opportunity to assure Omar that he will 'beat up' a boy in another class who Omar says has been attacking him. I overheard this conversation when I was sitting in the construction area and Omar and Daniel were at the playdo table, in their first term in Reception.

12/07 Madison Omar and Daniel at playdo table.

Omar (looks upset)(to Daniel) "Tarak got me. It was Tarak."

Daniel (puts arm round him) "I'll beat him up for you. You know John Michael he's the champion."

Ms S overhears, comes over asks what they are talking about.

Daniel "Wrestling, I saw it on the TV."

Ms S "Wrestling? On TV? Oh, OK."

Ms S goes away.

Daniel "Then he kicked him down. He was on the rope and Batista kicked him down. He got him and then he kicked him."

Omar (grinning) "Yeah, he kicked him down."

Daniel "Then he was on the wheel."

Omar (excited) "He was on the floor. Undertaker came out and saw his partner and he was down."

Daniel (sounds confused) "Where was Batista?"

Omar "He was on the road."

Daniel positions himself as a 'real' hero, supporting his friend, by offering to 'beat up' Tarak. Daniel realises that Ms S would not approve of him saying he will beat up Tarak, and he says they are talking about wrestling. Ms S appears reassured by this response, and leaves them to continue their 'fighting' talk. This emphasises for me the ambiguities of the adult discourse of 'fighting' within the classroom. Talking about wrestling is acceptable, because it is an official sport, wrestling in the classroom or playground is definitely not acceptable, because it might result in injury. But the emotional pleasure that the exchange appears to give Omar and Daniel seems to be about giving themselves feelings of being powerful, through narrating a story about

'fighting', identifying themselves with the successful wrestlers. Madison is sitting with them, but she makes no contribution to the conversation.

Some girls positioned themselves as quasi teachers and gained pleasure from threatening to 'tell' staff when boys were engaging in 'battle' play. Sometimes they did report boys' transgressions, but more often, they used the threat to gain a feeling that they were powerful, and 'good', in contrast to boys' 'badness'.

01/07 Amena to me "That's the 'battle' table (pointing to group of boys engaged in a shooting game with stickle bricks). If I tell miss, they'll get in trouble."

[...]

03/07 Shona to Ravi (he is standing on a chair, and 'shooting' with cardboard tube) "You're not allowed to do that. I'm gonna tell Ms S."

Ravi grins, and carries on with his game.

I understand this in the context of 'spirals of power and pleasure' (Foucault, 1976), whereby the girls gained pleasure from detecting and exposing the boys' wrongdoing, and the boys enjoyed evading detection. These positions reinforced gender dualism.

My position as adult female researcher in this setting made my observations of 'battle' play problematic. I was often poised to intervene if 'battles' seemed to me to be 'too rough', and boys often stopped their games if I was nearby.

Daniel, Omar, Lewis having wrestling game, quite unusually rough. I move towards them, they see me looking and let go their grips.

My own attitude to these games was ambivalent, and I expect this was apparent to the boys. Interestingly, boys were reluctant to talk about their 'battle' play to me, (except Liam, above) and no one wanted to tell me about it in the interviews about playtime, although they were keen to tell me about football. I conclude that they felt this was an area of expertise that was the preserve of boys, and as a female, and as a disapproving

adult, I was excluded. This was in marked contrast to my work with the children with capes in Reception class. All the boys seemed to enjoy taking part in play using the capes I took in, and developed storylines around rescues, with animals, birds and space themes (see Chapter 6). However, the boys differentiated this play from their own 'battle' play. On one occasion I observed Daniel taking off his cape to engage in a 'battle' sequence.

10/07 Daniel puts on blue butterfly print cape "I am a superhero! I'm saving the world!" (very careful flying, as if he was flying over and looking down on the world. Solo play.)

He takes off the cape when he joins a gun battle with Jake and Ryan.

Swain (2003) describes how 10/11 year old boys learn to embody a range of hegemonic masculine practices, arguing that

> "The body is thus an integral part of identity and of our biographies, for the process of making and becoming a body also involves the project of making the self" (Swain, 2003:300".

The boys in my research were learning to value certain masculine performances, and fashion their bodies in specific ways so as to position themselves as strong in relation to other boys, and superior to girls. Browne (2004) notes how young boys embody physical gestures in their superhero play, and use superhero play to explore aspects of hegemonic masculinity, by positioning themselves as dominant, strong, brave and physically agile. Similarly, boys in my research setting used their 'battle' games to embody and explore these aspects of hegemonic masculinity, drawing on discourses that circulate beyond the school, in media images and home communities. My findings add to work of Jordan (1995:76) and Marsh (2000:218) who report that boys in Primary school use superhero play to position themselves as powerful through enacting a 'warrior' discourse, drawing on images of fictional male superheroes.

Power/knowledge relations in Reception

In this section I analyse children's gendered power/knowledge relations in relation to ability. In Reception, the teacher allocated the children to one of five ability groups, and they were expected to work in these groups for the majority of lesson times. Membership of ability groups was decided by the class teacher based on various baseline tests from Nursery.

In the Spring 2007 Reception class, (see Appendix A(iii)) the older boys and a few girls were mostly in the top ability groups. The younger children were therefore together, much as they were in Nursery, with girls being in the majority. When not being directly taught in a group, children could choose activities indoors and outdoors. Girls continued to dominate role play areas in this situation and Mani and Tarak were still struggling to get access to role play areas. There was no dominant 'boys group' in this class. Ms S told me that she did not notice if there were more boys or girls in her class, as she gave them all the same opportunities. Whilst I agree that she intended to promote equal opportunities, I think it is significant that there were nineteen girls and only eleven boys in this Reception class, as this allowed girls to have access to proportionally more space and resources.

In the Autumn 2007 Reception class (see Appendix A(iv)), there were ten boys and ten girls. The ability groups all contained a mix of boys and girls, ensuring that boys and girls worked together. However, this underlined the separation of work and play. Work takes place in ability groups and play happens in single-sex groups. Also, it creates a hierarchy of learning which is also social, in that boys and girls of similar ability work together but do not work with children in other ability groups. Below, the 'top' purple group are doing a task at the writing table.

10/07

10.20 purple group directed to writing table.

Daniel and Ellie, Richard and Jala, sitting together, discussing their letters.

Daniel to Ellie "Look at this! I did a big one."

Ellie to Daniel "I did a big one."

Oni wanders over and looks at Jala's work.

Jala "This is a sharp pencil. I'm already finished. Look Oni!"

Daniel "Me too."

There is an undercurrent of competition in the children's interactions, and also awareness that the teacher sees them as the cleverest children and expects them to do more difficult work than others in the class. Daniel would not choose to go to writing table but concentrates with good effect in this directed task.

Within ability groups, girls are often encouraged by the teacher to enact 'sensible' and 'helpful' in contrast to boys who enact 'mischievous and naughty'.

10/07   Teacher calls for purple group (top ability group)

Jala comes out into playground.

Jala (teacher voice, very assertive) "Daniel, Richard, you gotta come now!"

Richard to Fatima "I gotta go. Don't touch my motor"

Fatima "OK."

Richard and Daniel go inside.

After 2 minutes Richard comes out again, rides bike.

Jala comes out, stands in doorway and calls across to Richard "Come ON Richard

Ms S is waiting!"

Richard goes inside again.

(Ms S has used Jala as a 'sensible' girl to go and fetch Richard twice. I have noticed that Jala is beginning to be given quite a lot of little jobs like this, as she can be relied on to be sensible and is confident and assertive.)

As in Nursery, when there was a chance for free play in Reception, boys and girls separated out and often played in same sex groups in different spaces within the classroom. Girls frequented the writing area and boys dominated the construction areas.

11/07 5 boys start a game together at construction table, throwing the pieces (Ho, Richard, Daniel, Tu, Jake.)

However, unlike in the Nursery, girls and boys frequently played together in role play areas, although they usually adopted stereotypically gendered roles. Some girls enjoyed 'playing teacher' in their roleplay in the outdoor play areas. I did not observe any boys do this.

3/07 Playhouse 3 girls.

Using big blocks for chanting games, taking turns to give instructions "Hop!Skip! Jump!"(like in PE, being 'teacher').

Ayo "I don't know if I can do this."

Marsha (encouraging 'teacher' voice) "Do your best."

In the Reception classes boys and girls made frequent comments aimed at policing children's activities to ensure that boys and girls were seen as different and belonging to distinct and separate groups. I documented many instances where children policed gender boundaries by insisting that some activities and behaviours were only for girls, or only for boys. I examine this in detail in Chapter 6. Policing took place when a child tried to behave in a way that broke the norms of masculine or feminine behaviour within the communities of practice of Reception. Competence as

a school pupil is closely linked to successful performance and embodiment of practices of masculinity and femininity. Some children were quick to point out when other children 'get things wrong'. I observed many instances of this with regard to Paige, who was new to the school in Reception, had not been to Nursery with the others, and understood and spoke little English. Other girls often deliberately excluded her from play, and constantly criticized and corrected her behaviour. She continued to attempt to join in activities and was quite assertive at times.

6/07 Paige playing on her own at the sand in her coat.

Marsha to Paige (harsh tone) "No Paige, you have to go outside if you have got your coat on."

[...]

Chloe, Shona, Molly, Nadia playing with pots and ropes outside

Paige trying join in, others ignore her attempts.

Nadia "She's catching us" (moves away from Paige)

Nadia (to me) "Paige cant do it."

Paige perseveres, actually she can do it, as I point out, but they don't like to be told this.

[...]

Tidy up time

Hong to Paige "You do it like this." (demonstrates how to put away the equipment, stacking and counting.) Paige watches her, then starts to stack the blocks.)

Molly to Paige (very stern voice, repeats 3 times, getting louder as she ignores her) "Leave it!" (ie don't touch the blocks)

Paige was the only girl who failed to be accepted into girls' games in this Reception class. She was not able to speak English, she did not know daily routines as

she had not attended Nursery, and she was slow to understand the rules for gendered play, although she tried to join in girls' games. Some girls repeatedly rejected her, saying she couldn't skip, couldn't write, couldn't 'talk' (meaning she could not talk English; she is a Twi speaker). She was in the lowest ability group and had been referred to the educational psychologist for help with learning difficulties. Paige was 'Othered' by some Reception girls partly because her lack of competence in schoolgirl practices highlighted their own comparative skills. Children who were bilingual themselves understood from the school staff's attitudes to their home languages that only English was acceptable in school. They equated 'speaking' with 'speaking English' and mocked Paige because she could not speak English. Jason, a confident boy in her class, was also a Twi speaker, but nobody suggested that he might help Paige by speaking Twi with her.

Class, sexuality and gender

Connolly's research (1998) with 5 and 6 year olds in an inner city multi-ethnic school reveals that staff at East Avenue assumed girls would be more creative and boys would prefer Lego, and justified a very structured day on the grounds that children were not adequately socialised at home. My findings are similar. I heard many staff comments that suggested they assumed children's family lives to be chaotic and inadequate because they live on council estates and often have low family incomes. Schooling is seen as having a 'civilising' function for children, so staff in Nursery believe they need to provide a very structured day and very clear boundaries for behaviour.

10/07 Ms T "A lot of the children when they come to us they have never shared. Most

of them have unstructured home lives and Nursery gives them clear paramerters

These assumptions are gendered, with staff having different expectations of girls and boys. Staff made frequent comments about girls' appearances, emphasising that they should be modest, neat, and tidy. Girls' hair and skirts were contested areas, hair must not be over their faces, messy or hanging loose, skirts must not reveal too much leg or bottom. I observed an ongoing conflict in Nursery between staff and some of the African girls. Yomi, Molly and Oni often wore their hair in braids across their faces, and the Nursery staff repeatedly tied their hair back when they were sitting on the carpet in class. The backgrounded normative evaluative belief is that these girls need to be trained to monitor their appearances. These injunctions need to be examined in the context of the discourse of compulsory heterosexuality (Epstein, 1997). Epstein shows in her research with primary age children (1997) that many teachers assume and reinforce performances of heterosexuality, seeing heterosexuality as the key construct in gender development, for boys and girls.

I observed many instances when girls and boys were required to perform heterosexist scripts such as the following circle game in Nursery, entitled 'There was a princess long ago'. In this circle singing game, based on the story 'Sleeping Beauty', the teacher chooses a boy to be the prince who rescues a princess from a tower. The teacher chooses a girl who plays the princess. The princess is required to stand passively in the middle of a circle of children throughout the song whilst the 'handsome prince' gallops round the circle, chops down some trees, and wakes the princess with a kiss (kissing her hand not her lips, presumably as a sop to childhood innocence!) Ms L. told me the game helped girls and boys to mix. The following is a typical enactment of the story, and shows how Fifi, usually very energetic and assertive, is positioned as passive within the heterosexist script.

3/07 Mrs L "Get into circle!"

Daniel organising boys to be together Omar, Jake, Ryan, Lewis, Ervin, Damien, Ben, Femi all join him on one side of play area.

Girls standing together to one side.

Mrs L splits up boys, Jake very fed up face when moved.

Femi pulling hard on Eser's arm when told to hold her hand.

Mrs L "Fifi would you like to be the princess?"

Fifi nods yes, but her head cast down, no animation in her face.

Lewis chosen for prince, grinning, seems to enjoy himself.

Tu wicked witch very vigorous casting a spell over Fifi, gets close, menacing her.

Fifi standing very still, head bowed, hands together, then eyes shut, very passive for whole game.

"Sleep for 100 years", Fifi shuts eyes tight, rests head on her folded hands, still as a statue.

Lewis gallops round, a bit unsure what to do at first but gets into the part with enthusiasm, and grins as he chops down the trees, one by one, with great gusto and energy.

Mrs L "Now Lewis, blow her a kiss to wake her up!"

Lewis looks embarrassed, puts his hands over his face, but blows the kiss as Mrs L has demonstrated.

Mrs L "Now hold her hands."

Fifi opens her eyes and Lewis grabs her hands.

Mrs L "Well done Lewis."

Lewis goes back into the circle.

Fifi stays standing, at a loss.

Mrs L (impatient) "Fifi, get into the circle!"

Staff encouraged girls and boys to embody differentiated heterosexualised gender roles in other games, such as 'Farmers Den', and Christmas plays. In one Christmas play staff chose girls to perform as Sugar Plum fairies, dancing in pink fluffy costumes, and chose boys to be reindeer, galloping and jumping around. In the following Christmas Nativity play rehearsal, Mrs R asks the children if they remember who they are supposed to be in the play.

11/06 Mrs R "Ayo, who are you?"

Ayo "Mary"

Mrs R "Yes, well done. Molly who are you?"

Molly "Mary"

Mrs R "No, there's only one Mary. You are an angel."

The children's replies when Mrs R asks them who they are include the following hopeful answers:

Hong "Barbie"

Ryan "Power Ranger"

Zuhre "King"

Mrs R "No, you cant be a king. Are you a boy? Kings are boys. We've chosen boys for kings." (Zuhre looks very fed up)

Daniel "Viking"

Mrs R "Well, you could be I suppose. You are a king, yes."

Chloe "Fairy"

(Mrs R torn between amusement and exasperation) "No Chloe, an angel, not a fairy."

Mrs R (lots of fidgeting) "Tu, stand up, go and sit next to Mrs F"

Ryan sticking his tongue out at Zuhre.

Mrs R "Who is Mary's husband?" (no answer) "Ayo, you have got a big Joseph from

Reception for your husband. Mary's husband looks after her."

At first some of the children hoped they will be allowed to choose who they will be, but they soon learn that there will be no Barbies, Fairies, Power Rangers or female kings in this production. The discourse of compulsory heterosexuality is re-enacted through the public performance of Mary and Joseph as a heterosexual couple. During the weeks leading up to the final performance, the children are often called by their roles in the play, and are required to perform the roles over and over in rehearsals and carol practices. Consequently, they spend extra time in same-sex groups, for example angels practice their dance together, kings and shepherds sit together. All children practice walking together, and line up together in groups according to their part in the play.

11/06 1.15 Xmas Play practice

Boys told to line up together, because of their parts in the play. Have to wait to go into Hall, holding on to each other round their waists, jostling, making a train.

Comments from boys of 'I'm squashed', Mrs M separates them out. Boys are very physical, boisterous. But it is Yomi who is reprimanded.

Yomi bumps into Oni.

Mrs R "Yomi, walk carefully."

Yomi to Mrs R "Are you shocked?"

Mrs R "I am shocked by the way you were walking."

Lots of hanging around, children getting restless in Hall. Kings are told to sit together, start biffing each other with their elbows, giggling, playing pretend tune, shaking heads back and forth.

Mrs M "Boys, kings, Jing, be sensible."

Mrs M goes over and has a quiet word with the kings.

Mrs R (to 'Joseph'), "You should have been taking Mary with you. Hold her hand. (To 'Mary') "You've got to pretend you've got a baby."

Ayo pretends to rock a baby, looking serious. Some boys copy her, exaggerating the gesture humorously, end up digging each other in ribs with their elbows, grinning.

Ms S leads the angels (all girls) in a fluttery dance with arms outstretched.

Rocking song, Jing and Daniel bumping bottoms together, Tu jumping about and doing karate type lunges, much more movement amongst the boys than girls.

1.55 Mrs M moves Yomi for talking.

"Angels stand up, in a line, are you in a good queuing line? Walk with nice careful feet."

(Performing angel equates with good girl, and good pupil.)

2.05 back to class, lined up boy/girl/boy/girl (implicit message is that if girls are interspersed with boys, girls will modify boys' unruly behaviour.)

Staff comments were addressed to 'boys' and 'girls' more frequently during Nativity play practices, because of the differentiated roles in the play. However, the children were not just practicing a role in the Nativity play, they were also performing 'boy' and 'girl', in specific ways. Girls were angels who had to dance gracefully and look pretty. Boys were 'important Kings'. 'Mary' is told that a big boy in Reception will be Joseph, and that he will look after her. This reproduces and reinforces heteronormativity and differentiated gender roles and behaviours. Boys were expected to be more boisterous; although this was never said by staff. Boys were not reprimanded for their boisterous behaviour, whereas, when girls moved around or talked, they were usually told off immediately.

Staff made far fewer comments to boys about their appearance, often indeed making positive remarks about their 'smart hair' and 'footballer T shirts'. However, there were expectations that many boys will need firm discipline, because of their socio-economic family backgrounds. There is a backgrounded assumption that many boys could be at risk of becoming future criminals. In informal discussions with me, staff often made comments to me that suggested they viewed the children's backgrounds as deficient.

9/06 Mrs T "Lots of these boys don't get taught to tell right from wrong at home...there's a lot that's in trouble with the police on the estate."

Staff expected boys and girls to be interested in different activities.

11/06 Mrs R "Indoors the girls will go for the creative things, boys don't want to know... Outside there's always a group of boys want to play football. They don't want the girls to interfere. Girls go for the home corner, they get it from home".

[....]

"We try to encourage them all to have a go at everything, but in the end you are trying to encourage independence. A key Foundation Stage goal is choosing independently and persisting with the choice. You can't go and say why don't you go and do something different."

Mrs R. described Daniel to me as an ideal boy, unusual because he enjoyed playing ball with the boys, but was prepared to have a go at creative activities as well. Staff adhered to the belief that there are inherent differences between boys and girls, and that although equal opportunities should be implemented in offering all activities to all children, girls and boys would 'naturally' separate out and play in same sex groups at different activities. These beliefs, along with a firmly held belief in the supremacy

of developmentally appropriate practice, made staff unwilling to intervene to promote gender equity.

Conclusion

Children learned to enact an embodied gender identity as they discovered that certain ways of moving, speaking and behaving enabled them to participate in local communities of masculinity and femininity practice in my research setting. New children observed and copied aspects of masculine and feminine practices, becoming legitimate peripheral participants, by claiming and demonstrating appropriate knowledge of gendered practices. Children learned that some activities were gender marked, and claimed membership of communities of femininity and masculinity as much through avoidance of certain spaces and activities as they did through participation. For example, boys avoided going to collage and writing areas, as these were associated with girls and femininity. My data analysis shows that masculinity has to be conferred by boys upon each other, in a way that femininity does not, for girls. Boys had to earn acceptance into the hegemonic masculine practices of 'battle' play, construction and football in Nursery and Reception.

Children became full members of communities of masculinity and femininity practice by embodying and enacting central practices, and in doing so, they often enacted and reproduced discursive practices of gender dualism. Full members influenced local practices by interactions in same-sex groups whereby boys and girls dominated specific spaces within the classrooms and outdoor areas. Relationships between the children were complex and shifted in different times and spaces. Use of spaces was directly related to power/knowledge relations and children learned to participate in local play practices that emphasised gender differences.

My data analysis shows that some boys took up more space than girls, took equipment and resources from girls on a regular basis, and dominated activities indoors and outdoors in all construction areas and outdoor areas. Despite intentions to implement equal opportunities, staff actions often unwittingly endorsed and emphasised gender differences. Schooling practices of grouping children by ability, dominant discourses of normative heterosexuality and gender dualism, and having English as the only language of instruction had an impact on the way girls and boys were positioned, and on how they related to each other and enacted dualistic masculinities and femininities.

Chapter 6

Analysis of Borderwork

Introduction

In this chapter I will discuss my data analysis of children's 'borderwork' in my research setting. By 'borderwork' I am referring to interactions between girls and boys, either when children police gender boundaries and keep girls and boys separate, or when children cross gender boundaries, or when girls and boys explore activities and relationships with each other beyond a gender dichotomy (Nespor, 2000). Researchers including Lloyd and Duveen (1992) and Browne (2004) have documented how young children establish borders between girls and boys, and police them strictly, but the borders remain fluid and open to change, as children resist and contest boundaries (Thorne, 1993). Borderwork (Thorne, 1993) often involves the maintenance of distinctions between girls and boys, in dress, behaviours, use of space and body, and in 'Othering' (Paechter, 1998) of the 'opposite' sex. The very phrase 'opposite sex' emphasises the differences between boys and girls, and evokes a gender dualism. The danger of this for gender equity work is that carers and educators assume gender differences in behaviours and aspirations are 'natural' (MacNaughton, 2005).

I analysed the boundaries and demarcations between girls' and boys' communities of practice. Borderwork is so important because it is through this that children explore renact and rework discourses and discursive practices. Herein lies the potential for shifts in power relations and moves towards equity. Children often try to understand what the boundaries are, and to fix them. Sometimes they test and push the gender boundaries; sometimes they struggle to break through the boundaries. I use

'border' as a spatial metaphor, and it has connotations of power struggles and conflict. Borders are created to separate areas. Geographical and political borders are sometimes established along physical features of the land, such as rivers and mountains. In school gender borderwork is often spatial, as children claim and negotiate access to areas of classrooms and playgrounds and borders are often negotiated at entrances and doorways.

In this chapter I first discuss relational aspects of borderwork, then I analyse data that shows children enacting practices that keep boys and girls separate. I then present analysis that shows girls and boys crossing borders, and engaging in activities more usually associated with the 'opposite' sex. Finally I examine instances where girls and boys take part in shared activities.

Relational aspects of borderwork

My research focuses on gender borders, but it is important to take account of ways in which gender borderwork relates to other border work. For example, enacting practices that demonstrate you are a member of the community of practice of Reception boys can involve crossing borders of acceptable behaviour for a 'good' school child. In the following episode Omar engages in boisterous play with Daniel and gets into trouble.

9/07

First chance Omar and Daniel have had to be together this morning. Daniel puts arm round Omar. Go to sand together.

Lots of laughter, spilling sand.

Daniel "You forgot to put the shapes in...now you gotta do this, no you gotta do shapes!"

Omar jumping about and running round, getting quite excited.

Ms S sees him, calls him over to sit on carpet near her, tells him to sit still with his arms folded. He complies, sad face.

Gender borders often relate to home/school borders and borderwork around 'race', ethnicity and cultural differences. I have a lot of data that suggests children are very aware of ethnic differences and struggle to understand their salience. Children came from 16 different ethnic groupings and 13 different languages were spoken in addition to English in the Nursery during my research period. Equal opportunity school policies are implemented and home languages and cultures are celebrated in school assemblies and festivals. Pearce (2005) shows how institutional 'colourblindness' and silence about issues of 'race' and power make difficulties for children in school who are often struggling to understand ethnic differences. I have found this in my own research. Some children have shared their pride in their home language and culture with me, in quiet moments. But the norm is for children not to refer to home cultures; desirable knowledge within the classroom is display of school knowledge, what it is to be a successful school pupil. There are often no fixed rules, so that children have to interpret and generate meanings from the messages available to them, drawing on their experiences of home communities, and those they encounter in the Nursery/Reception.

The children I worked with often made comments that showed they were thinking about issues of skin colour and difference.

11/06 Reading 'Marcellus'

Omar "He be friends with that boy (Points to the Black boy). But he not be friends with him (points to White boy.)

BM "Why do you think he wont be friends with him?"

Omar "Because he not Black. "

[...]

10/07 Drawing pictures

Jala "My Mummy is light. My Daddy is brown. Like me. "

Occasionally I heard some children use skin colour and cultural differences to insult each other.

10/06 Hong to Mrs R "He (Kumi) say I speak China girl" (aggrieved tone, looking indignant and insulted)

Kumi looking inscrutable, standing close by (waiting to be told off, defend himself?)

Mrs R to Hong and Kumi "You can speak Chinese, Kumi can speak Yoruba. You are such clever children. "

Hong looks fed up.

Although a 'correct' response by Mrs R, because it values the languages they both speak, it has not satisfied Hong because it does not deal with Kumi's perceived intention to insult her. Is he insulting her as a girl, or as a person who speaks Chinese, or both? When children report insults, staff take them seriously. However the insults need to be understood in the wider context of power relations within the Nursery and beyond, where competence in languages other than English is undervalued. I discuss this in detail in Chapters 1 and 2. English is the language of instruction and demonstrates that you are a 'proper' school child. Even when children share the same home language, they do not speak to each other in this language. Nobody tells them not to, but they pick up on cues that it is not something you do in school (Pearce, 2005). Madia and Nina are close friends but I never heard them speak in Spanish together, except occasionally when a Spanish speaking Bilingual Support Assistant was working with them. Jason is a Twi speaker, and was a confident established

Reception boy, but he was not encouraged to speak Twi with Paige, even when she was struggling to understand class routines (see Chapter 5).

Staff did not encourage children to speak or write in home languages in classes or playgrounds. Bilingual Support Assistants were used in class as general assistants rather than support for bilingual pupils. In Nursery children were encouraged to take dual language books home, but the cover was put on the 'home' book box, as soon as the children had chosen their books. This is a symbolic border between home and school cultures whereby children are expected to leave home languages at the classroom door. In the classrooms English speaking and writing is given status, and ability to speak or write another language is not generally valued or seen as relevant to learning within the school.

In the following episode, Yomi and Ayo emphasise their shared pride in their identity as Black African English speaking girls, and in doing this, they exclude a new girl Madia who speaks Spanish.

10/06 Yomi, Ayo and Madia at collage table.

Yomi "You talk Chinese. You're not English" (to Madia, hostile voice)

Ayo "We talk normal than you" (boasting, staring at Madia)

Yomi "We talk African" (proudly)

Harrison (overhearing, pleasantly, matteroffact voice calls across) "She has a

Chinese mouth."

Madia gets up from table, goes to fetch apron, fills containers in water tray. (Ignoring comments, removing self, says nothing, stiff body and frozen face)

[...]

Yomi (loud, challenging) "I told her she talks Chinese, (pause) and you are a ???nut"

playfully to Ayo (in contrast to hostile voice she used to Madia)

Ayo (jokey) "No I'm not!"

Yomi "Yes you are!" (Repeated several times like a chant, smiling and laughing)

Ravi joins Madia at water tray, parallel play, Madia silent, looks upset (stays there,

joined by Chloe)

Madia was new in Nursery this particular term. She actually speaks Spanish, not

Chinese. She appears upset by the incident and she removes herself from the collage

table to the water tray. This is still within earshot of the collage table, so she hears

Ayo and Yomi's subsequent remarks. Their playful exchange emphasises that she

does not belong in their friendship group. English is the language of instruction and

social interaction in the Nursery. Ayo and Yomi are performing competent pupil in

this incident, in their ability to use English, as well as asserting their superiority as

older girls. Whilst the staff would not condone their boastful position, the Nursery

culture endorses their attitude, in the sense that children are expected to speak English

in class. The backgrounded normative/evaluative claim (Carlspecken, 1996) is that

English is superior and that it is desirable for all children to communicate in English.

Your home language is fine for home, but not for school. When Yomi says 'We talk

African", she is identifying herself with Ayo, as Black girls who are proud of the way

they talk. This adds a further dimension to their friendship, in that they can both take

pride in 'talking African', although both are actually speaking in English to each other

in Nursery. Ayo's home language is Ijaw, and Yomi's is Yoruba. Issues of 'race' and

ethnicity are entwined with issues of gender in complex ways in children's

interactions.

Gender borders

In Chapter 5 I showed how boys and girls learned to take part in masculine and feminine activities in separate spaces in Nursery and Reception. A gender border was crossed if a child engaged in behaviour or used something more usually associated with the 'opposite' sex. In the following fieldnote, Lan is distressed until she is offered a pink sticker, because she 'knows' pink is the one for girls and Paige learns that she should have asked for pink when the other girls police her choice.

7/07 When children have finished work I invite them to choose a sticker of a toy. All the girls pick a pink one – either the dolls house or the fairy castle. When Lan comes to choose, there are no pink ones left. She just sits and stares at the stickers for ages.

BM "Do you want to choose one Lan?"

Chloe "She wants a girl one."

BM "Is the one you want not there Lan?"

Lan "No."

I get out a spare sheet with all the stickers on it. Lan immediately points to the pink dolls house "I want that one."

When Paige picks, she takes a car sticker. I overhear other girls telling her she has a 'boy' sticker. About 5 minutes later she brings it back and holds it out to me, indicating that she wants a different one. I offer her a full sheet to choose from and she points to the pink dolls house. Paige has been told that she has the 'wrong' sticker, and peer pressure has sent her back to get a proper 'girl one'.

In the episode below I am reading 'Titch and Daisy' with Ayo and Amena. Ayo and Amena both demonstrate their knowledge to me that girls, not boys wear pink hairbands. Amena goes on to demonstrate that she 'knows' girls play with Barbies and boys play with Power Rangers, positioning herself as a girl within a discourse of

gender difference whereby pink is understood as a marker of femininity. Liam demonstrates to Amena and me that he has the 'correct' toys for a boy.

1/07

Ayo (pointing to picture in story book) "That a girl."

BM "How can you tell?"

Ayo "She got a pink hairband."

BM "Couldn't a boy wear a pink hairband?"

Amena (as if, are you kidding) "No,oh! Girls wear pink hairbands. I got a pink hairband. No boys."

Ayo "The boy, he has to get his hair cut, he has to get it flat. (points to girl) She can wear a pink hairband, not a boy."

Amena (to me) "I tell you a secret. (whispers in my ear) I got a Barbie singer. Its pink one."

Ayo looks fed up at being left out, and says "Tell me Amena!."

Amena whispers to Ayo.

Amena "Shall I tell Liam?"

BM "Yes, why not."

Amena "Liam, I got a Barbie singer."

Liam "I got a Power Ranger and a Power Ranger gun."

Amena "My brother got a power ranger."

BM "Would you like a power ranger Amena?"

Amena "No, I got ones for girls. Pink. Liam got a Power ranger the same like my brother."

Children were often careful to position themselves correctly as a boy or girl by selecting an appropriately gendered toy. The following exchanges took place in a

semi-structured activity I did with children in their first term in Reception class. I invited them to choose pictures of toys (see Appendix Eb). The majority were keen to show me and the other children that they knew which toys were 'for boys' and which 'for girls'.

11/07 BM to Richard "Would you like the Nintendo?"

Richard "No!"

BM "Why not?"

Richard "Cos its pink. That's for girls."

Ben "I'm having the Shooter (Star wars) and Robocop. Not the dolls!"

In the following episode, Oni initially wants a Spiderman, but then changes to a doll when Richard polices her choice.

Oni "I like the Spiderman."

Richard "That's for boys not for girls."

Oni looks worried.

BM "Oni can choose the spiderman if she wants."

Richard "No, its for boys!"

BM "You can choose the spiderman if you want Oni."

Oni (looks distressed) "No! I want that one! (points to the dolls).

It is very difficult for children to select toys that are stereotypically associated with the 'opposite' sex in this Nursery and Reception setting. As in the episode below, when they try to cross gender borders, their behaviour is usually policed by other children.

12/07 Omar points to the Barbie doll "I want to get that! I gonna get that for mine." (very enthusiastic.)

Jake to Omar "Like for a girl?!!" (disbelieving, jeering)

Omar (long pause, looks at Jake, looks at the Barbie doll, then sadly, frowning, low voice) "No,oo."

Borders are invoked if children cross into the 'territory' of the 'opposite' sex. 'Rules' about these 'territories' are implicit and are not always rigorously enforced. This means that in less public situations, children are sometimes able to contest and cross borders, particularly when they are not in a same-sex group. Here, there is a link to spaces, because some spaces in Nursery and playground are fiercely guarded as 'boys' or 'girls' territory, whilst other spaces do not carry such gendered connotations. However, non-gender marked spaces do sometimes become the focus for borderwork to establish gendered territory (climbing frame, water tray) so the matter is quite complicated and each instance has to be analysed in detail for significant factors. Instances of successful 'crossing' and co-operation between boys and girls are often fleeting, and less dramatic than instances of border policing, so they are easily missed.

Oppositional gender work – policing the boundaries

Borders frequently require people to identify which side they are on, emphasising differences rather than similarities. They are used in disputes over territory, resources and ideologies. Thorne (1993) uses the metaphor of borders in her analysis of interactions between girls and boys in elementary schools in America. She takes the term from Barth (1969) who uses it in the context of analysis of social relations that are maintained across ethnic boundaries. She cautions against interpreting the image of 'border' as an unyielding fence that divides social relations. She replaces this image with the idea of many short fences that are built up quickly, and taken down quickly (Thorne, 1993:84). I find this a useful interpretation as it emphasises that

gender boundaries are not fixed and that the salience of gender varies depending upon the situation.

Thorne uses the term 'borderwork' to refer to situations when girls and boys interact with each other in ways that are based upon, and sometimes strengthen, gender boundaries. These situations consist of chasing games, contests, pollution rituals and invasions. She describes the stylised, scripted quality of many of these encounters, and suggests that they are so compelling because they are characterised by intense emotions, forbidden desires, and conflict. These episodes emphasise hegemonic views of gender as oppositional and exaggerate gender differences.

"The ritual form focuses attention and evokes dominant beliefs about the 'nature' of boys and girls and the relations between them" (Thorne, 1993:85). My data analysis shows many instances of oppositional encounters between groups of girls and boys, in the Garden area of the Nursery and in the Reception playground. As in the episode below, girls sometimes invoke 'pink' as a symbol for powerful femininity. The climbing frame in the Nursery garden is an area where girls sometimes seize power. In the following episode, Ayo declares that the climbing frame is a 'pink house' and boys are not allowed. She is using 'pink' in a symbolic, not literal sense, as the climbing frame is yellow not pink. She uses 'pink' as a rallying cry to other girls, as a symbol of female power and feminine solidarity.

10/06   Ayo, Yomi, Ayla, Molly on the climbing frame.

Ayo (standing on the climbing frame, speaking loudly, as if making an announcement)

"This is girls pink house, boys not allowed to come in"

3more girls run over and get on to the climbing frame, total 7.

Yomi "This is a secret place"

Girls chanting loudly, rhythmically, together, hugging close together "Her, hay, her, hay"

Daniel and Kumi run over together, in attacking postures, at base of climbing frame,

both wearing caps, making loud combative sounds "Rah, rah", punching air with

their fists (playful, with hint of aggression, fists in the air, threatening tone, facial

expressions combative) (girls have advantage of height, and strength of numbers, and

solidarity of shared chant). All children involved appear to be enjoying this episode,

very absorbed in their performances. The episode has the feel to me of a staged event,

a ritual. Unusually, no adults outside.

Ayla climbs into the tunnel. "Ha, ha, ha ha" (chanting, looking out at the boys from

inside the tunnel, amused, mischievous grin)

Daniel comes charging up, in attacking mode, laughing, fist punching air, holds onto

his cap, running round the bottom of climbing frame. Tu (one of youngest boys)

running after him, copying him.

When the girls chant together, they link arms and hug, and their physical closeness emphasises their group membership as girls. Ayo and Yomi were often leaders in these ritual power bids, and they derived a lot of pleasure from leading a group of girls and taking over territory on the climbing frame. Younger girls often watched them, and then joined them, and a great sense of drama and excitement developed as more girls joined and the volume of the chanting increased. Some of the boys enjoyed responding to the girls' challenges, by grouping together and going into 'battle' mode, attacking the girls' stronghold, as in the episode above. The ritual format of the girls' and boys' different performances here is similar to the playground episodes documented by Thorne (1993). The episodes are an enactment of gender difference and symbolise gender as not only different but oppositional. The 'girl power bids' usually started when adult supervision was at a minimum as staff discouraged them. Mrs R. (Foundation Stage Coordinator) told me that some girls quite often tried to

'take over' on the climbing frames, and I observed other similar episodes during the term when a group of older girls were the full-timers in the Nursery. I did not see any similar episodes of 'girl power' in the following terms in Nursery when the full-timers were a group of older boys. My data analysis shows that this group of older boys dominated all areas inside and outside in the Nursery, whether staff were present or not (see Chapter 5).

I understand the 'girl power' episodes as taking place in the context of the Nursery where girls had to struggle to gain access to resources and space (see chapter 5). The 'pink' girl power bids are successful attempts by some of the more assertive girls to gain space and control over activities. My data analysis shows that girls often have difficulties accessing the climbing frames at other times, as boys routinely excluded and sidelined them. The climbing frames in the Nursery garden were contested territory, used by girls and by boys, and as such, they were often the scenes of ritual confrontations.

The milk cartons produced another focus for ritual borderwork. All Reception children were given a carton of milk each day, and they went to the milk table to drink their milk when they had finished their work. Consequently, this was a time when boys and girls were often together. The classroom assistant labelled each carton with a child's name before the school day, and there were two designs on the cartons (see Appendix K). Children had no choice over which carton they got. I presume that the manufacturers intended the 'moohican' carton to be 'boy milk' because of the 'masculine' hairstyle, and the 'miss spectacular' carton was designed to be 'girl milk', with the bikini top and pink lips. However, the children made their own meanings from the logos. These designs were the focus of many gendered arguments and insults. There was an ongoing debate amongst the children in Reception about 'girls'

and 'boys' milk, and a particularly common and hurtful insult was to say to another child that they had 'boy' milk if they were a girl, or 'girl' milk if they were a boy. This reflects anxiety about gender constancy, but also the insults were used to tease and antagonise members of the 'opposite' sex. The legend of 'boy' and 'girl' milk was passed on through successive groups of children, and the insults often had a ritual quality of repetition and oppositional confrontation.

9/07 Milk table

Children are comparing their milk cartons again. (There are two different pictures on the cartons and this provokes comments about boy/girl milk)

Jake to Ayan (new girl) "You got boy milk. You're a boy!"

Ayan, standing up "I'm telling of him!" (pointing to Jake)

Melek (to Ayan, matter of factly) "He said I'm a boy too, but I'm not I'm a girl!"

Ayan moves away from the boys and sits by Melek. Melek smiles at her.

Here, Jake says Ayan has got boy milk, so she is a boy. This annoys and upsets her. Melek tells Ayan he has said the same thing to her, but she does not sound upset. Melek quite often does 'boy' things with boys (see page 246), so perhaps this remark makes her less uncomfortable because she is confident that she is a girl and confident about border crossing. At the same time, she is sympathetic to Ayan, recognising that Jake's remark was intentionally insulting.

I tried on several occasions to talk to the children about the 'girl' and 'boy' milk, but I was not able to get beyond common-sense replies. Ms S. (Reception teacher) was aware of the boy/girl milk arguments, but dealt with them by telling the children that all the milk comes from cows, and there is no difference between the cartons. When I tried to ask the children more about the boy/girl milk legend, they reiterated a

version of this 'adult' answer to me, but this does not explain the intense emotions that were stirred by the boy/girl milk debates.

12/07 Omar and Ryan talking about which carton is girl and boy milk.

I ask why one is girl, the other boy, what is the difference?

Ryan "That from cows." (points to 'boy' milk)

Omar "And that 'boy' milk the same. Another one there. (shows me another carton the same on the table.)

BM "So why is that 'boys' milk?"

Omar "Cos its a cow. The cow makes the milk."

BM "Yes that's right the cow makes the milk. But the cow makes the milk on this one too." (I point to a 'girl' carton.)

Omar (patiently) "Yeah, its girl milk cos it's a cow."

I understand the boy/girl milk saga as a ritual enactment of gender dichotomy, and exploration of gender borders, deeply resonating with emotional significance. I also wonder whether some of the boys found it disconcerting that both the cartons had pink logos and the milk came from female cows. They were unable to avoid associating themselves with femininity when they drank the milk.

In my research setting the colour pink was reified (Wenger, 1998; Paechter, 2003a) as a symbol for 'girl things'. It was used inclusively by girls, and seen as a pollutant or sign of feminine weakness by boys. Below, Mani offers to share his sand bucket with another boy, Ravi, to save Ravi from being contaminated with a pink girls' bucket.

1/07 Sand tray

Ravi starts to fill a pink bucket with sand.

Mani (to Ravi, urgent voice) "No! You can't have that. That's for girls. Pink! You can

share my one. "

In the following episode Harrison extends the category of 'pink for girls' into dinosaur play, in an attempt to exercise power over Chloe. His performance is successful because she changes her position from performing fierce dinosaur to female in need of protection, and abandons the game.

12/06   At dinosaurs table

Chloe and Harrison

Chloe to Harrison, advancing a dinosaur to attack his dinosaur, roaring fiercely,

"Rah, rhah"

Harrison to Chloe (scornful) "You don't even scare me." Gives her a pink dinosaur

"You gotta have this one. It's a girl one." Attacks her dinosaur "Mrrr, rrh" (fierce

sounds)

Chloe (high pitched voice) "Help!"

Shona comes and sits next to Chloe, they do not play with the dinosaurs, talk together,

leaning towards each other, giggles, eye contact.

For many boys, pink is a pollutant, to be avoided at all costs. Researchers including Ivinson and Murphy (2007) have documented how some boys will go to considerable lengths to avoid anything pink, such as refusing to use pink paint in their portraits. Douglas (1966) argues that although pollution can be committed intentionally, intention is irrelevant to its effect, and pollution is more usually unintentional. The result of becoming polluted is that a polluting person unleashes danger for others because they have crossed some line or developed a 'wrong' condition (Douglas, 1966:140). This is what happens when some young boys treat pink objects as pollutants in Nursery, as 'pink' is understood to feminise and therefore weaken boys.

In order to stay strong, and protected as a group, they need to avoid 'pink' as it is a symbol of femininity.

Thorne (1993) discusses the problem that I encountered in initial analysis of fieldnotes in that analysis seems to suggest 'separate' cultures of boys and girls, as there are so many instances of gender policing and separate play. However, as Thorne shows, if we ask the questions, how, when and where do girls and boys relate together, which girls, which boys relate together, we can begin to realize that the 'separate cultures' is only one, often very public, gender narrative. Another narrative is what I am calling 'daring to be different'. This encompasses children's desires and attempts to cross gender borders, and it also includes subversive struggles against school rules and assertions of aspects of identities being forged in home communities. It also encompasses moments of collaboration and co-operation and fun between girls and boys that are not based on heterosexual teasing or flirtation. In the next section I analyse data that shows children negotiating borders and border crossing.

Border crossing – daring to be different

There is pleasure in knowing where you belong, and being acknowledged as a member of a community of shared ideas, outlooks and activities. There is also pleasure in taking control of new areas, in exploring new ideas and 'forbidden' territory. The unfamiliar or 'forbidden' has an excitement of its own, although there is often a price to be paid for daring to cross borders.

Newcomers in Nursery and Reception sometimes try to engage in activities usually engaged in by the 'opposite' sex, but this is before they have learned the 'rules' from oldtimers. They often learn that it is more acceptable to play with children of the same sex as themselves, at 'masculine' or 'feminine' activities. In the

following play sequence, Madison, one of the youngest girls in this particular Nursery group, tries to join in play with the garage and cars. My data analysis shows that boys dominate play with the garage and girls rarely play with it. The boys' behaviour can be understood as policing the boundaries by preserving 'boy' territory, although this is not made explicit. Madison is border crossing in the sense that she is trying to take part in an activity usually undertaken by boys, but she is seemingly not fully aware that this is not something she is expected to do as a girl. She told me she enjoys playing with cars at home.

11/06 Car mat and garage. 'Boys domain'. Lots of parallel play, lots of moving cars, and filling up with petrol, revving up and off. Reece, Ravi, Jake, joined by Harrison (comes from throwing big ball into net)

Femi joins.

Madison joins, picks up two cars, crashing them together, then runs round to (vacant) petrol pump on other side of table. Starts to fill up a truck very purposefully.

Jake takes Madison's truck from her

Madison "No, no, that's mine!"

Jake "No, I need it." (Jake has made a line of vehicles in front of him, and adds Madison's truck to his line.)

Madison starts to fill up another truck in the middle of the mat, and then adds this to Jake's line.

Jake moves in front of Madison and changes the dial on the petrol pump.

Madison reaches up and changes the dial again, looking at Jake.

Jake "No, no, (appealing to others) She's keeping that!

Jake, Ravi and Reece "Peep, pip, peep pip" (lots of loud aggressive noises.)

Madison leaves the area, leaving 5 boys playing.

Boys achieved dominance in this episode by making a lot of noise. They did not actually tell her to go away, but made it unpleasant for Madison to stay. Madison had not yet learned the rules for what the boys consider to be acceptable behaviour from girls. As a girl who wanted to play in a boy-dominated area, she lacked successful strategies for asserting herself in this situation, although she was initially quite assertive when Jake took a truck from her. Madison subsequently played more frequently with dolls and buggies in the playhouse, spending her time with other younger girls, Madia and Nina. When she moved into Reception, she became quite withdrawn and I often saw her walking round with dinner supervisors at lunch play, rather than playing with other children.

In contrast, Sara often border crossed from her early days in Nursery, and continued to border cross successfully as she got older.

10/06 Fire station. 'Boys domain'.

The only girl to play here all afternoon was Sara.

1.30 Sara joins fire station play with Daniel and Ryan.

Daniel "Watch this Ryan!"

Sara and Daniel lifting up firefighters, all 3 handling pieces quite roughly, engaging the firefighters in a kind of fight amongst themselves, with some attempts to make them use the hose and climb up the building, presumably to put out a fire. Lots of sounds, more like a battle than a rescue. Ryan parallel play on other side of table, Daniel to Sara "Let me do that!" (grabbing firefighter from Sara, making lots of loud noises, "rra, rrha" "Inside!" (pushes the hose and firefighter into the building) Sara "Eee!" (high squeal, as if surprised/alarmed, not clear if she in role here) Daniel "I do that!"

Daniel (smashing his firefighter into Sara's firefighter) "Ahra ra ra!" (roaring

sound)

Sara to Daniel"Look at the yellow ranger! Get off me"

Daniel "Warrr warrr!"

Sara "Let me go!"

Daniel "Warr, war!" (continues loud noises, clashing firefighter onto Sara's area,

looks triumphant, v amimated)

*Sara "Let **me** go" (continues to advance her firefighter, does not seem distressed,*

fierce face, enjoying the 'battle'?)

1.45 music on for carpet time, game finished.

Sara has to struggle to keep hold of some firefighters to join in the action with Daniel, but she manages to do so. It is perhaps significant that she chooses this moment to sit at the fire station table, as there are only two boys there. For most of the session there were 5, sometimes 6 boys there. 6 is the maximum allowed, and there are only 6 chairs round the table. Sara is successful because she is persistent and assertive, and she has the skills necessary to join in 'battle' games. Sara maintains and develops friendships with girls, and also takes part in 'boys' activities, sometimes quietly, sometimes assertively. She is articulate and confident in a wide range of social situations in Nursery and Reception. She is articulate and persuasive, speaking English and Farsi fluently, and she holds her own in physical 'battle' games.

Thorne (1993) contrasts ritual public oppositional gender encounters with situations when boys and girls 'cross' gender boundaries and take part in activities that are stereotypically associated with the other gender. Her analysis of her research findings shows that children who successfully engage in border crossing are able to succeed because they want to participate in a particular activity, and are prepared to

persist in attempts to gain access to their chosen activity, in spite of the risk of teasing. Furthermore, she found that having the skills and knowledge about the activity before they try to join in increases their chances of acceptance. My research findings are in agreement with Thorne's analysis.

Thorne (1993) points out that when children 'cross' successfully, they challenge the discourse of oppositional gender relations. She suggests that this can only occur in interactions when gender-marking is minimal and heterosexual interpretations are avoided. My own research supports this contention. The majority of my data showing children border crossing takes place in quiet moments rather than public displays. Older, more established members of communities of practice do cross borders in Nursery and Reception. Children who border cross successfully are usually confident, often dominant within their same-sex friendship groups. Daniel is an articulate popular boy who enjoys playing football and has close friendships with other boys. He often takes the lead in boys' games. However, he also enjoys border crossing. I documented numerous instances when he played quietly with dolls, particularly enjoying bathing them in the water tray. He often finished his milk very quickly and went outside to play at the water tray before the other boys came out.

11/06 Nursery Garden

Daniel on own at water tray, very carefully and gently bathing a doll, washing her hair and holding her.

Oni joins, parallel play.

Daniel leaves 4 minutes later when other boys come out he goes to join Ryan, Omar and Femi at the basketball net.

Daniel told me that he enjoyed helping his Mum with his baby sister at home. Daniel also enjoyed initiating play activities with girls when he moved into Reception class, as in the episode below.

12/07 Daniel (puts his arms round Ellie and Jala, one arm round each) "Ellie! Jala! Put your arms round like this."

(They make a close circle together.)

Daniel (confidentially) "Do you want to have a race when we go in the playground?" They both say yes.

I was particularly interested to explore what constitutes legitimate peripheral participation in activities, and the complexities of how children are included or excluded, how they police their own and others behaviours. In the next play episode in the Reception playground at lunch time Sara tries to let a new boy join a skipping game, and Ayo and Marsha prevent this happening.

3/07 New boy Leon from Nursery comes to where Sara is sitting, Sara gets up and gives him the rope to turn. He sits in the chair where Sara was sitting.

Outcry from other girls.

Ayo (very annoyed, loud, disgusted tone, emphasising 'white' and 'boy') "That white boy, I don't know his name, he doesn't even know what to do!"

Sara goes and sits by herself on bench by shed.

Tussle whilst Ayo and Marsha try to wrench the rope from Leon's hands. Succeed in getting the rope from him, he gives up and goes to sit with Sara on bench by shed.

Sara takes his hand, leads him as if to take him back to the skipping, then redirects him to whiteboard. Shows him how to put up letters.

He puts his arms round Sara and gives her a hug.

Skipping game back on track, "Teddy bear teddy bear..." Very orderly again.

[...]

Sara takes Nursery boy by hand leads him to corner by bushes, puts her arms round him.

In this instance, when Ayo talks about the 'white boy' who is trying to join the girls' skipping game, she is saying 'white boy' as in 'he is not one of us, and he shouldn't be allowed to play this game because he does not belong, and he will spoil it for us. This is based on her experience of what boys like him do, boys like Jake in her class. She says 'white boy' in disparaging tones, and says she does not know his name; he is new in the playground, and does not know the rules. Potentially, he could be incorporated into the game, but Ayo's sense of herself, as a member of the community of practice of Reception girls, in this instance, does not encompass a play relationship with this 'outsider.' She is outraged by his temerity. Sara, in contrast, is prepared to let him have a turn and tries to make it possible for him to join in. Sara often border crosses successfully herself, and draws on discourses of 'fair play' and equal opportunities. She told me that she thinks boys and girls should be allowed to play with whatever they like.

In the next episodes, children in their first term in Reception interact in the construction area. A central practice of masculinity in Reception is enacting superhero scripts and this often involves boys in making 'guns' and 'battle' play. This sometimes includes episodes where boys act aggressively towards girls, not only by taking up space, but also by threatening girls with physical gestures. In the field note below, Ben makes a gun, and Jala tells him this is not 'responsible' and threatens to tell the teacher, so he pretends it is something else. When Ben menaces her with his 'gun' Jala is able to experience a moment of power by taking up a sensible good girl role.

10/07 Construction area Jala (only girl in here) Ben, Jake, Femi

Ben "I'm making a gun." (with stickle bricks, points it at Jala and makes firing sounds).

Jala "No. You not allowed to make a gun. You gotta be responsible. That's not responsible." (said in an adult tone).

Jala gets up, as if to go and tell teacher.

Ben (quickly, urgent voice) "No. I not making a gun it something else."

Jala comes back, sits down.

Ben makes a long gun-like model. "Look what I made."

Jala "What is it?"

Ben (sing-song voice, as if to say, what do you think? It's a gun but I'm not going to say so.) "I don't know!"

Jala meanwhile has quietly made an elaborate construction made of triangles, rectangles and squares.

Jala to Ben "I made a bashing thing. (makes bashing gestures with the model to demonstrate, and points out to me the different shapes) "That's a square, and 1,2,3,4 triangles, and that's a rectangle."

Femi makes bricks into a phone "Hello Ben."

Jake makes a long pistol shape. "This is my big war (water) pistol".

Repeats this remark 4 times, raising his voice, as he gets no reaction from anybody.

Jake to Femi "This good war (water) pistol. I got one at home. It can shoot water out of it. That's what water pistol do."

Femi "OK!"

Jake stands up with his pistol, points it over partition to home corner and shoots it quietly "Ch, ch, jjjj, Phoi!"

Femi and Jala watching him but do not say anything.

Ms G calls Femi to work with her. Femi leaves area.

Fatima comes into construction area, sits opposite Jala on the carpet, both making models, lots of eye contact between them.

Jala makes a gun shape, points it like a gun "ch, ch Shshsh" (makes quiet firing sounds.) "I'm making a number 7." (demonstrates by drawing the shape of 7 over the model.

Jake is standing behind the girls by the partition "I know how to make 100!" (points his model at himself like a gun) "Jjjjjj" (firing) "Ow!" (falls down 'dead' onto carpet, very theatrical.)

Jake "I know how to make something big. It's easy."

(not clear who he is talking to. I say, "oh what's that Jake?" he says to me "I wasn't talking to you!" (clearly he wants attention from Fatima and Jala, not me, at this point!)

Jala has made another shape "Look at my I" (shows Fatima) "It's a capital I".

Fatima smiles and copies Jala, makes an identical shape.

Fatima to Jala "I made it too." (big smile, sounds v pleased.)

Jake "Oi! I made a water pistol!" Bends down and shows them his model, puts it on the box so they can see it.

Fatima leans across and pushes his model away "Sh,sh,sh".

Jake (looking at Fatima, voice raised, annoyed) "Oi, don't break my water pistol."

Fatima looks alarmed and gets up immediately and leaves construction area.

Jake wants the girls to play the part of his admiring audience, but Jala and Fatima want a more active role. Jala and Fatima experiment with making shapes, and Jala has a covert go at making a gun shape herself, despite having told Ben making guns is not

'responsible'. This episode is one of many that show girls resisting the attempts of some boys to dominate construction activities.

I documented many instances of Jala and Tagan trying to gain access to areas dominated by boys in the Nursery (see page 180). In the Reception class, they continue to do this, as shown in the episode below, when Tagan speaks and acts assertively and uses her body to prevent Jake spoiling her railway. This episode demonstrates how persistent and assertive Tagan and Fatima have to be in order to gain pleasure in the construction area.

11/07 Construction area set up as a railway station. Tagan and Femi together.

Tagan to Femi (re train tracks) "You put this one here."

Tagan "What about this one?"

Tagan "And the other one – just move this and this."

Femi "What about this?" (puts out a junction box)

Tagan "I don't want to have this!" (puts back the junction box) "This is stuck."

Femi "I can do."

Tagan takes the junction box from him and puts it back in tray. Takes out a bridge.

Tagan (firmly) "No more trains. We need this."

Tu, Ryan, Omar, Ho, Fatima join.

Ryan starts messing about, puts a piece of track on his head and menaces Tagan.

Tagan "Hey!"

Takes up space with her body, moves into the area next to the tray quite assertively and keeps on laying down track.

Fatima laying down another piece of track at front of carpet.

Ho takes a piece of track from Fatima, who looks annoyed.

Ho "She's got to share!"

Fatima ignores him and continues to put down track and gets a train and moves it

along her track.

Tagan and Fatima working together, cooperating in making train line.

Tagan moves to front of carpet next to Fatima, puts pieces of track next to Fatima's,

as if to join the two lines together.

Tagan "Choo, choo!"

Ho advances his train down the line towards Tagan's.

Tagan (to Ho) "No, no!" (carries on moving her train towards him, then jumps her

train over his to avoid a collision.)

On this occasion, Tagan dominates the construction of the train track with Femi, and goes on to work cooperatively with Fatima. It is very unusual for a girl to border cross so successfully into this masculine marked activity in this setting.

In the next episode, Tu, Ryan and Daniel dominate the construction area with their superhero play. Jala, Ellie and Ayan all gain access to the construction area for short periods of time, but remain on the periphery of the action, not making any attempt to join the superhero play. When Ayan offers playdo to Tu, he rebuffs her, and when Ellie offer bricks to Tu, he takes them, but then she is told off by Daniel. Ayan and Ellie are both new to the school in this term. I do not know why they want to give construction materials to the boys, as they seem to get very little attention or reciprocal shared play in return. My tentative conclusion is that some girls learn that there is a cultural expectation that boys will dominate activities and girls are expected to service them.

11/07 Free play session.

Wooden bricks and playdo set out in construction area

Tu making gun with wooden bricks by himself. "Pu, pu" (points gun out of entrance).

Ryan sees, comes to join. Gets 2 bricks points them like a gun

Ryan to Tu "I got a shotgun!"

Tu "We pretend we got ??? shot."

Tu (urgently to Ryan) "The monster still coming! (repeats several times, both crouching down at entrance to construction area, pointing guns, and firing them at 'monster' outside, out of sight..

Ryan "I got him!" (has advanced out of the construction area to fire shots in open.)

Daniel is sitting at playdo table.

Ryan turns his gun and points it at Daniel.

Daniel sees him, gets up and joins in the gunplay.

Daniel gets a long brick "This is my gun. I'm the leader."

3 boys crouch in corner together, very close, guns pointing to 'invisible enemy' outside the area.

Jala comes in, ignores them, sits on floor by tray of bricks, begins to build a tower solo. (Stays a few minutes, then leaves. Tu kicks down her tower when she has left the area).

Ryan "The baddies are out there. They don't know we're here!"

Tu (in entrance, jumping up and kicking motions, very excited) "I got weapons I gonna kick him in the botty and he dead now. The monster dead!"

Tu "I pick a piece up, I break it! Ryan! Ryan!"

Ryan "Look at my gun Daniel! I got 2 guns!"

Ayan has been quietly making small balls at playdo table. Shows me 2, then a whole lot.

Ayan goes over to Tu. "Tu, look! I made too much balls!"

Tu (contemptuously) "No, I don't want dat. I want to play with Ryan!" (leaves area)

Ayan goes back to playdo table.

Jala comes back in, sits on carpet. Starts to build a tower.

Ellie comes in, sits down and starts taking bricks from the tray.

Ellie "Where has Tu gone?"

Tu comes back in.

Ellie starts giving bricks to Tu, and he puts them into a small drawstring bag.

Tu "I got lots I can buy something."

Ellie starts arranging small cubes along the long brick that Daniel used earlier as a gun.

Daniel to Ellie "That's my gun!" (reaches over and takes the brick from Ellie.)

No reaction from Ellie.

Ellie takes some more bricks from the tray and starts to build a house.

Daniel exits.

Ryan and Jake come in, they pick up bricks and point them like a gun.

Ryan to Jake "That's not a gun! You have to have one like this!" (holds out his brick to Jake.)

Jake "No, look, I got a machine gun."

Jake "I can make a circle. I got a door shape."

(I am surprised by this sudden change of topic, but then see that Ms S has come into the area. The talk is about circles and squares until she goes out!)

The making of guns is not formally banned in this setting, but staff discourage it, and children usually pretend they are doing something else when staff are present, as here. As I suggested in Chapter 5, participation in 'battle' games might become more desirable for some boys because it is disapproved of by the staff, who are all female. The boys in this episode demonstrate that a key masculine object of knowledge is

expertise in making guns. None of the three girls make any attempt to take part in these activities. The boys mostly ignore the girls. I do not know why Ellie wanted to give bricks to Tu. This seems to me to be a very important episode because it demonstrates how some boys expect to dominate action in the construction area. I have numerous instances when girls do not go to this area at all, going instead to the book corner, writing area or role play area. This episode explains why so many girls do not feel comfortable in the construction area, as their presence is barely tolerated by some boys.

Blaise (2005) shows how one girl in her research Nursery, who is assertive and keen to do construction activities became a leader in encouraging other girls to do construction, and the teacher allowed girls to reserve time in the construction area. The teacher's awareness and support is crucial to their successful border crossing. In contrast, staff in my research Reception class seemed to think that it was 'natural' that boys would dominate in this area, and did not intervene to support the girls' efforts to gain access. When I talked with the classroom assistant, she told me

Ms K "I don't notice who chooses what. I am just looking to see that everybody is behaving properly and doing what they should be. The boys go to the construction, that's what they like to do".

This remark is not as contradictory as it first appears, as Ms D is reiterating a version of the tenets of developmentally appropriate practice (see Chapter 2), maintaining that children should be given 'free choice' in play opportunities, and ignoring the dualistic gendered power relations that prevent some children gaining access and satisfaction in some activities.

My data analysis shows that three girls, Oni, Madison and Melek, rarely chose to go in the construction area in Reception class, although they often seemed to enjoy

specific construction activities when they were organised by staff. Melek's behaviour was unusual for a girl in this setting, in that she often played chase, bean bags, skittles and imaginative games in the outdoor playground with boys, Ryan, Jake, Daniel, Omar, Ben and Femi. Ms K remarked on Melek's behaviour to me, with puzzlement.

Ms K "Melek is always playing with the boys. They seem to let her. Girls are usually more mumsy. Boys are more, um, I don't mean selfish, but they want their own time."

Melek also had long conversations with Ryan sitting on the bench in the playground at lunchtime. She seemed to be comfortable playing with boys in her class, and as far as I know, she was not teased or policed for this behaviour by other children. In the following play episode, Melek seems to enjoy playing skittles with the boys, and she amuses Omar and Ryan when she puts a skittle cover on her head, pretending it is a new headscarf. Melek sometimes, but not always, wore a headscarf to school. Omar's mother always wore a headscarf, and he and Melek share a moment of humour.

10/07 Melek, Jake, Omar and Ryan chasing round skittles in outdoor playground. Daniel joins, picks up a skittle, chasing others, takes a skittle from Melek. All laughing.

Melek puts a skittle cover on her head "Ryan! Omar! Look at my new headscarf!"

Melek and Ryan run into the playhouse.

Melek sits in the sink, swinging her legs and smiling.

Ryan sits next to her.

Omar puts the skittle cover on his head, laughing, "Look Melek, this my Mum!"

Many of the boys seem to enjoy playing games with Melek. Perhaps it is significant that Melek does not attempt to gain access to their specific 'masculine marked' practices of hegemonic masculinity, construction, 'battle' play or football.

Imaginative play

There were racks of dressing up clothes in the Nursery and Reception classes. These included a variety of hats and tabards and specific items such as equipment for a hospital and a fire station. Children in Nursery and Reception policed the roleplay clothes very strictly, insisting that girls were not allowed to wear firefighters', footballers' or builders' outfits, and boys were not to wear dresses or anything pink.

I documented girls, and occasionally boys, reiterating heteronormative scripts in their imaginative play scenarios, often drawing on fairy tales.

11/06 Nursery toy pictures. Magic castle

Yomi (pointing to princess) "The Prince will kiss her".

[...]

Omar (pointing to King and Queen who are standing close together) "They liking each other. Gonna cuddle and kiss."

In the following exchange, Yomi seems to take pleasure in telling Sammie that the princess is going to be forced into marriage and eaten up, whilst Sammie seems quite anxious about the fate of the princess.

11/06 Nursery toy pictures. Pirate ship

Yomi and Sammie

Yomi "The pirates have weapons, they are fighting" (factual)...

Sammie (points to princess figure in cage, sounds alarmed) "Pirates fighting! The princess is captured!"

Yomi (with relish) "She's been taken to be married...they'll eat her up".

Sammie "No! (Looks closely) I think she's being taken somewhere!" (looks worried)

In Reception class, Holly and Nadia frequently put white veils on their heads and enacted heterosexualised scripts, such as 'weddings', where they looked at

themselves, danced in the mirror in the role play area, and talked about and enacted 'getting married'. Sometimes girls enacted scripts from fairy stories, such as Cinderella. Some were eager to tell me about their 'romances' but also to make me aware that 'knew' they were 'too young' to have serious intentions.

Nadia to me (shyly, as if telling me a secret) "Holly said I want to marry the Prince. We were only pretending though. We're not old enough."

When girls took part in these role plays they were enacting heteronormative scripts. Staff sometimes made comments suggesting that they approved of these roleplays.

Ms T "They look so cute! See how they wiggle those hips!"

Mrs T draws attention to the way that some of the girls embody heterosexualised gestures of emphasised femininity. Blaise (2005) documents numerous instances when young girls in a preschool in USA embody and perform femininities within a heterosexual matrix. My data analysis shows similar enactments.

When I introduced an assortment of capes for imaginative play, children were sometimes more experimental and flexible in what they wore and roles they took. Some of the boys developed hunting and rescue stories.

10/07

Daniel chooses African print cape, and Ben goes and gets same cape, they both run round together in the capes. Act out a story about bear hunting.

Some girls enacted superhero stories. In the following episode Leonie takes on the role of Batman and encourages Madison to join her. Leonie then takes up the character of Violet, in the film 'The Incredibles'. Although Violet does superhero deeds, I think it is unfortunate that one of Violet's major accomplishments is being able to disappear, as this tends to position girls as invisible, rather than as active protagonists.

10/07

Leonie puts on gold shiny cape "I'm gonna wear this one. I'm gonna be Batman!"

(runs swiftly and lightly round the playground with arms outstretched "Swish swish!"

swooping and making "Psh, psh" sounds to accompany her movements, very

absorbed in her performance.)

Madison goes over to the capes, keeps touching the shiny pink one.

Leonie calls to Madison "You want to be Batman?"

Madison puts on a gold cape and follows Leonie round copying her gestures.

Leonie "I gonna be Violet. Gonna disappear. Woosh!"

I encouraged children to take on non gender stereotyped roles but they often policed their own, and each others' performances. Wearing capes sometimes allowed children to cross gender boundaries, as Ryan does below, although he is careful to make sure he is not observed by other children.

Ryan puts on a shiny pink cape and tiptoes round the play area. (He is on his own, so no chance of ridicule from other children)

Wearing a cape sometimes encouraged children to make overtures to play with children they did not usually mix with.

Oni (wearing an animal print cape, same as Ryan and Jake) "I can play with Jake and Ryan."

Some boys and girls seemed to feel freer to relate to each other in the capes and I observed more eye contact between boys and girls, and more imitating of each other's actions, as in the following episode.

10/07

Leonie and Ben choosing capes. Both choose a white shiny cape.

Smile at each other, acknowledging they have the same outfit.

Leonie (arm outstretched) "Pow! I can do magic!"

In the next episode Melek chooses a stereotypically feminine shiny pink cape and announces that she is a princess. However, she enacts a very different way of doing princess from the traditional fairy tale passive princess.

10/07

Melek puts on a pink shiny cape. "I'm a princess." (runs around, making very fierce roaring noises and waving her arms, not clear how this is related to role of princess, but she is having great fun.)

Jake and Ryan running round with her, roaring too.

Ben (in blue butterfly cape, runs after Melek) "I'm a rescuer!"

Ben starts a chasing game with Melek.

In the following episode, I am reading the story about a girl called Rita, who becomes a superhero when she puts on special magic clothes (Offen, 1985). Two of the girls, Leonie and Tagan, are very interested, and Ho gets very annoyed, saying that superheros are 'for boys', pinching Leonie, and tearing the book. I had already spent a long time with Ho that particular morning, and I think he resented my attention going to the two girls.

10/07 Leonie, at the cape box, putting on a white cape "White shiny". (to me) "I like to be a superhero. I fly and do rescues."

Tagan watching, comes over, chooses blue shiny butterfly print.

BM "What will you do in your cape?"

Tagan "I do magic show." (waves arm in air like a magic wand.)

BM to Leonie "I have a story about a girl who flies and does rescues.

Leonie "Can I see?"

I say we can read it together, she comes and sits next to me, Tagan comes too.

Leonie very engrossed in details of pics, asks lots of questions about what Rita is doing, e.g "What she going to do?"anticipating next part of story. Identifying with Rita as a superhero.

Leonie "I can be a superhero."

Leonie pointing to Rita "She can be a superhero" (when Rita gets her magic clothes)

[...]

Leonie very enthusiastic and confident when she sees the pictures of the children who won't let Rita play. "I can skip. I can play football."

Tagan "Me too!"

(Our story is interrupted by Ho.)

Ho comes over. He chooses a white shiny cape, the same as Leonie's.

Leonie (happily) "I wearing a superhero cape. And I rescue the world."

Ho (loudly, pushing in front of Leonie) "I'm the superhero its for boys."

Gets very annoyed when I am reading 'Rita' with Leonie and Tagan. He wont join us to listen to the story, tries to grab the book and tears a page. Pinches Leonie on arm. Leonie looks shocked and looks at me to see what I will do.

I tell Ho he is not to hurt Leonie or spoil book and say he must go away if he will not share and listen. (I feel this is inadequate as a response on my part. I should at least have got him to apologise to Leonie. At the time, I felt upset and surprised by his behaviour.)

Ho goes away, I resume story with Leonie and Tagan.

[...]

After the story, Leonie puts on white cape, "I like this cape!"

Leonie "She (Rita) was flying!" (very delighted)."I like to fly rescue everybody." (jumps around, arm outstretched) "POW!"

Tagan copies her. They fly together.

With some support from me, Leonie and Tagan were able to enjoy experimenting with taking on superhero roles, but Ho's aggressive intervention shows how difficult it can be for girls to position themselves in ways that challenge dominant practices of masculinity. I consider that my own response to his aggression did not support Leonie and Tagan adequately. Marsh's work with 6 and 7 year-olds (2000) shows how girls respond enthusiastically to opportunities to take part in superhero play as active protagonists when they are given sufficient support.

'Girls are angels, boys are Kings': reinforcing and reproducing gender dualism.

Children who resisted dominant discursive practices of masculinity and femininity often found their efforts were curtailed or ridiculed by staff and other children in my research settings. Some institutional practices of the school reinforced, normalised, and encouraged gender dualism. The Christmas Christian Nativity play took up a lot of time in the Autumn Terms, and was very rigid in the allocation and performance of gender roles. Boys were kings and girls were angels. In the following episode, Omar tries to take the part of an angel in the Nursery Christmas play, and thereby positions himself temporarily as a girl. The teacher and his classmates make it clear to him that it is not possible for him to perform as an angel because he is a boy.

12/06 carpet

Mrs M says Miss S is doing dance practice for angels for Xmas play.

Omar, grinning, puts hand up "I'm an angel"

Mrs M (ignores Omar) "Madison, I like your hair clip, what a beautiful butterfly you have got in your hair. Do you want to go dancing with Miss S?"

Madison shakes her head.

Omar "I do."

Mrs M (affectionately) "No, because you are a **king** *(makes this sound important)*

King Omar."

[....]Fruit time

Mrs M "Some of you are going to do dancing."

Omar "I am."

Harrison (firmly) "No, you are not. (scathingly)Are you a girl?"

Omar (nodding) "Yeah!"

*Harrison "***No***, you are a king."*

Omar "Mmm. You're a king too."

Harrison puts his arm round him "Yup."

Oni to Omar "You're not an angel, you're a king."

Yomi (mixture of regret and pride in her tone, but a sad face) "They took me off being

an angel cos I was naughty."

Yomi to Omar (teasing tone) "Good girl, good boy." To Harrison "You good girl"

Harrison (cross) "I not a girl (disparaging voice), I'm a boy!"

Sammie (to Harrison, teasing voice) "Good girl!"

Omar is told, in public, by Mrs M, that he cannot be an angel because he is a boy, and as a boy, he is a king. He persists in saying that he wants to do dancing with the angels, but is not allowed to do this. Other children tease him, calling him a 'girl' because he wants to perform as an angel. He 'knows' he is a boy, but is reluctant to accept the restriction this is placing on him, so he tries out saying he is a girl. Harrison makes sure Omar knows he has made an error, telling him he is a king, and

offering this as evidence that he must be a boy! Harrison rewards Omar with a hug when he appears to accept his proper 'boy' role again. Oni, Yomi and Sammie reinforce the policing of gender boundaries by teasing Omar and Harrison, and Harrison gets very annoyed at the suggestion that he might be a girl. Yomi reveals that she has had the part of angel taken away from her because she has been a 'naughty' girl, not proper angel material. Being a good girl is equated with performing angel in the nativity play. Boys, as kings, get away with more boisterous and loud behaviour, without forfeiting their parts in the play.

In the following Reception class PE lesson girls and boys sit in same-sex couples and groups when given a choice, making eye contact, laughing and gesturing to each other. The teacher does not intend to set up a competitive atmosphere between boys and girls, but as soon as she differentiates between 'girls' and 'boys', children seize on an oppositional interpretation of gender difference. Omar does not like it when the teacher praises the girls' performances.

10/07 PE in Hall

Children jump and hop along their ropes.

Ms G "Right, girls all sit down, boys stay standing."

"Boys, show the girls what you have been doing."

Boys demonstrate.

Ms G "Good work. Now boys sit down and girls stand up. Show the boys what you have been doing."

Girls demonstrate.

Ms G "Well done, look at their concentration boys!"

Omar (singsong chanting voice) "Girls are losing!"

Other boys join in the chant.

Ms G (annoyed) "Its not about winning or losing."

Beyond gender dualism - girls and boys together

My data analysis shows that girls sometimes develop friendly relationships with boys, and boys develop friendly relationships with girls within the Nursery and Reception settings. Girls and boys sometimes engage in activities together in classrooms and playgrounds. These instances are not frequent, compared to instances of same-sex play, but they do occur. Interactions between girls and boys often involve complicated negotiations and compromises, as with Ayo and Harrison in the following 'tea party' episode at the water tray in the Nursery. I include a detailed analysis of this episode because it demonstrates the complexities of power relationships between boys and girls, and shows how children rework and refine gender discourses in their play. Same-sex interactions also involve negotiations, power struggles and compromises, but they tend to follow more stereotypically gendered positions (see Chapter 5).

At the beginning of the following episode at the water tray, Ayo and Yomi try to establish it as a 'girls only' activity. Harrison persists in joining in the action, listing boys in the Nursery class in his support (although they are not physically present at the water tray). He appeals to Mrs C when Yomi splashes him, and with Yomi gone, he holds his own with Ayo. Harrison manages to position himself as an instructor to Femi in the 'masculine' domain of the construction area, thus securely within membership of the boys community of practice, but combines this with more experimental play with Ayo at the water tray.

11/06 water tray

9.20 Ayo moves to the water tray (loudly) "Let's make a tea party"

Yomi joins her. Harrison joins after c 2 mins.

255

Ayo "This for girls."

Yomi "This is for girls team."

Harrison "This for boys team. Ravi, Jake, Reece, Kumi , Omar"

Yomi "??? (inaudible)"

Harrison "You not allowed to do that. My Mum says you not allowed call me names."

Yomi (ignores him) "...I'm so strong. Did you watch Jackanori Ayo?"

Ayo "Yeah"

Harrison "I watched it too."

Ayo "Let's make this tea party again."

Yomi splashes Harrison. Harrison complains to Mrs C.

Mrs C "I'm very disappointed in you Yomi. Take off your apron and go and draw a picture for Harrison to say sorry to him."

Yomi gives Harrison a hostile look, then goes to the other end of the room.

Ayo "Thanks Harrison!" (scathingly, as in what did you have to tell the teacher for?)

Harrison "I gonna say to my brother" (splashes Ayo)

Ayo "Mrs C, he wet me."

Mrs C (mildly) "Be careful with the water. Maybe you should move round a bit Ayo."

Yomi and Harrison have both splashed water. Mrs C deals more severely with Yomi, perhaps because Yomi is seen as a 'troublemaker'. Yomi is often singled out to be reprimanded for example for talking on the carpet. She is beginning to have a reputation as being a 'naughty girl', partly because she is very assertive.

Ayo to Harrison as he takes teapot "I had that." "Harrison you just have to put more water in there."

Harrison (indicating cup of water) "You have to pretend to be drinking it."

Ayo (primly) "You're not allowed to drink it."

Harrison (sounding cross, as if, you are deliberately misunderstanding me) "No, you

have to pretend"

Ayo (firmly) "Harrison, can you put the drink there?" (ie the teapot)

Harrison "No."

Ayo (indicating side of tray next to her) "Put it in there."

Harrison (irritated voice) "Ayo, I put it in there. I gonna put it back in there"

Ayo is asserting herself as the one who is making the decisions about this tea party and up to this point Harrison has accepted this, but not without protest. A tea party more usually takes place in the roleplay area, and is often dominated by girls. Here, Harrison is enjoying the opportunity to take part in tea party roleplay. When Reece and Femi join the play, Ayo and Harrison cooperate to bring the others into line in the game, to keep the tea party going.

Reece joins.

Ayo to Reece "We're making a tea party."

Harrison to Reece "We're making a tea party."

Femi joins.

Harrison to Femi "We're making a tea party."

Ayo "Harrison is right."

Reece stirs spoon in cups vigorously.

Ayo "I was in Woolwich. My Mum taked me." To Harrison "Can you get that for me

Harrison?"

Harrison passes cup to her.

Femi "This is magic." (vigorously churning the water around)

Harrison to Femi "No Femi! Femi is spoiling the party."

Ayo "Beautiful tea."

Harrison "We making a tea party aint it Ayo?"

Femi takes off his apron, goes to car mat.

[...]

Harrison takes off his apron goes to join Femi on car mat.

Harrison "On your marks, get set, Yeah!"

Femi "Yum, vum, vum!"

Harrison (in a 'teacher' voice) "You have to check, then go."

9.45 Ayo at water on own. To Harrison "Harrison, come back!"

Harrison leaves cars and returns to water tray.

Ayo (gives him a cup of water) "Here's tea and I put sugar"

Harrison (pretending to drink) "It's delicious!"

Ayo (Harrison drops a cup on floor) "Oh, my goodness!" (sounding like an

exasperated Mother/teacher)

9.50 Harrison wipes hands, returns to car mat.

Ayo "Harrison, come back!"

Harrison "No, I'm have to be here for Femi."

Harrison to Femi (firmly) "You have to do the traffic. Peep, peep."

Femi "Peep, peep."

Harrison "You have to use another car." (Harrison is now taking the role of

instructor, telling Femi what to do with the cars.)

Femi "My Dad's 18 years old."

Harrison "My Dad's 91"

Femi (sounds impressed) "Woah!"

Harrison "What's your Mum?"

Femi "My Mum's 18"

Harrison "That's a small number."

9.55 Harrison returns to watertray.

Ayo (to Harrison) "You've been a long time with Femi.

Ayo (to Femi) Are you goin to come and have a tea party with us Femi?" (Ayo tries to

get Femi to join her tea party game)

(no response from Femi, who goes on playing with cars)

Ayo takes pleasure in organising the tea party, dominating the play at the water tray for over 30 minutes. Twice, she asks Harrison to leave the car mat to play with her. Harrison enjoys the tea party game with her sufficiently to return to it twice, and he takes an active part in the imaginative dialogue. However, he makes Ayo wait, taking time on the construction mat with Femi. He says he 'has to' stay for Femi, suggesting that his role is to help and guide Femi, as a matter of duty, rather than pleasure. He is inducting Femi into car play in the construction area, one of the key practices of masculinity within the Nursery. Accordingly he tells Ayo

"No, I'm have to be here for Femi."

This is after she has scolded him for dropping a cup, so he might be punishing her by withdrawing himself for a while. He enjoys instructing Femi on the car mat, but also enjoys the tea party play with Ayo. This is an interesting episode, because it is unusual for a girl and a boy to sustain such a long period of interaction in this Nursery. The water tray is relatively 'gender neutral' territory and therefore has the potential for girls and boys to explore and develop their relationships together.

Reception girls and boys together in the playground.

At lunch play the Reception playground is usually divided into a football area dominated by boys, and a smaller area of girls' skipping. At lunch play in Reception

most children play in same-sex groups, but Melek and Ryan sometimes spend time sitting and talking quietly together.

10/07 Ryan and Melek together all play time in Reception playground.

They sit very close together, friendly, talking quietly together, on bench, then on a table. At one point both stand on the table, get told by dinner staff to get down.

Ryan to Melek "You gonna line up, or if you stay here?"

Melek "We go in the other playground."

They go into other playground, sit together on bench on grassy bank.

When the balls and ropes have been put away, there are sometimes episodes when girls and boys share the space, having fun, enjoying spontaneous physical play together.

4/07 Chloe, Sara, Jason in circle, joined by Kumi and Liam.

Holding hands, Jason pulling them round. "Go fast, we're going fast."

Lots of laughter.

3 boys split off, circle together, Kumi falls on ground from force of spinning, laughing.

Sara and Chloe together, spinning round. Jason takes their hands, in a 3, then in 2s again.

[...]

Melek Ryan Jake and Tu running round play area chasing game, lots of laughter.

Boys and girls often play together in roleplay scenarios, often taking stereotypical gender roles, with girls taking powerful roles of Mum and teacher. Sara often encourages boys to join in games with her and her girlfriends, taking a dominant role in the storylines so that other children take part on her terms. The following incident is typical of her interactions, in that she directs the play.

7/06   Reception playground

Sara, Chloe, Lan and Kumi hospital roleplay

Sara to Kumi "Don't tell me you are sick again! You can't be sick again Dad cos you

gotta go to work. You are just like a little kid!"

Kumi goes to back of sandpit, watching the action.

Sara to Chloe and Lan "You go and get your sister. You gotta get your sister back.

Bye you two."

Sara (calls to Mani across playground) "Mani, I need you!"

Mani "OK!"

Sara goes to chalk board and Mani follows her. She demonstrates how to draw a car

on the chalkboard.

Sara to Mani "I'm gonna wait for Chloe now. Chloe comin."

Mani (very excited voice) "I'm goin to rub it out now."

Sara (dismissively) "Anyway" (runs off to play with Chloe)

Sara often notices when somebody, either boy or girl, has nobody to play with, and engages in an activity with them. She is adaptable and takes part in a wide range of activities with different children.

Spirals of power and pleasure

In Chapter 1 I discussed Foucault's understanding that pleasure and power are entwined in the complexities of human relations in "perpetual spirals" (Foucault, 1976). In Chapter 5 I explored how this happens between young boys and female adults in my setting. My data analysis also shows many of the play episodes where girls and boys played together involved spirals of pleasure and power. Same-sex play episodes also involved spirals of pleasure and power, as in the episode on Page 175

when the girls use the Disney fairytale stories to gain the upper hand over each other. However, same-sex power struggles usually lacked the oppositional confrontational aspects that I found in scenes when boys and girls were together.

In the following episode, Daniel, Melek and Jake enact a teacher/pupil play scene where Melek takes power in the role of female teacher, and the two boys resist her authority. This scenario is a popular play theme, and often ends, as in this case, with 'naughty' boys getting the upper hand. The children are enacting school routines that are familiar to them, but they introduce their own power relations within the play scenes. Here, Daniel and Jake enjoy being disobedient in ways they would never be with Ms S, their teacher. Melek, the girl who takes the role of teacher, seizes moments of power, using her position as teacher to exercise control, and she introduces the 'pink' handbag to undermine Daniel's menacing behaviour with the gorilla.

10/07 roleplay area

Daniel comes in. "Let's play school."

Melek "OK we play school."

Daniel "I'll be the leader."

Daniel sits down on chair, Melek sits opposite him, on 'teacher's chair.)

Melek starts reading a book in a teacherly voice.

Daniel starts being naughty, fidgeting, then grabs the book.

Melek "No! Give that to me!"

A tussle with the book.

Melek "I'm goin to do the register now!"

Daniel "Look, you see this?" (points to a picture in the book.)

*Melek "Mm. OK now sit down **now**."*

Daniel sits down.

Melek starts ticking names on piece of paper.

Melek "Right leaders come and get the register!"

Daniel "There's just one leader!"

Melek "OK. Put the register in here!" (indicates the table).

Jake comes in, sits on a chair next to Daniel.

Melek (sits back on teacher chair, holding a piece of paper, looking at them to see if they are ready, stern expression, as if 'I'm waiting for you to be sitting properly') "OK now!"

Jake smiling, sitting up very straight with arms folded, exaggerated pose of 'good pupil'.)

Melek "OK!" (looks at her piece of paper)

Daniel gets up starts playing with the furry animals, gets the gorilla and makes it jump up and down in front of Melek. Jake joins in, waving his arms in front of Melek. Melek "No!"

Enter Richard (new boy) watching them.

Melek snatches the gorilla from Daniel, grabs a pink handbag off the shelf

To Daniel "And you get the handbag!"

Daniel looks very fed up, face screwed up in a grimace of disgust "No, oh! (as in no way!) "That's a girls' one!"

Daniel grabs the gorilla and menaces Melek.

Melek leaves role play area.

In many of the playground episodes boys and girls enact spirals of power and pleasure that centre on physical activity. Below, Fatima enjoys the excitement of going fast on the trike with Ho, and Ho enjoys scaring Fatima and driving into Tagan.

11/07Reception playground

Fatima sits behind Ho on the trike.

Tagan "Your turn here Fatima."

Ho is peddling the trike rather wildly outside the circle around the playground,

towards a wall.

Fatima "Hey, look where you are going!"

Fatima "Faster!"

All 3 giggling, Tagan watching them, sitting on chair to side, holding the sand timer.

Fatima "Faster, faster!"

Ho drives into Tagan's chair.

Tagan "Ow!"

Tagan moves to sit on another chair away from Ho.

Fatima (to Ho) "Eh, no pushing!"

Fatima (to Ho, smiling and laughing) "Faster! Faster! Oh! Ah! Oh!"

Fatima alternates between telling Ho to go faster and telling him to be careful. She is enjoying the thrill of going fast but does not want to fall off or crash into Tagan. She urges Ho to be careful when he hurts Tagan. Ho is enjoying being in control of the bike and scaring Fatima and hurting Tagan.

Heterosexual chasing games

Researchers have documented young children taking part in heterosexual girlfriend/boyfriend scenarios, enacting heterosexual practices of dumping dating and 'going out', as well as episodes of kiss chase (Epstein, 1997; Connolly, 1998; Bhana, 2005; Renold, 2005). My data analysis shows that boys and girls sometimes took part

in chasing games, in the Reception playground at lunch times. In these episodes, girls usually chased boys, and the girls 'captured' boys and sometimes kissed them. In these chasing episodes girls seized moments of power through heterosexualised games. For short periods of time girls are able to work together to overwhelm individual boys and physically overpower them. The encounters have a ritual quality of confrontation and oppositional gender positioning (Thorne, 1993; Bhana, 2005). I first saw these games being played by older Year 1 children.

2/07 Two Yr 1girls dragging Yr 1 boy on grass bank. Pull him to ground, get so they are pinning him down and both kiss him on his face. Get up and run off. He gets up, runs after them, all looking animated, looking to see if anybody watching – very public, dinner staff do not see, or if they do, ignore.

Subsequently I saw boys and girls in my research classes playing these chasing games.

5/07 Shona and Molly chasing and catching Mani, arms round him, all laughing, seemingly having fun. Mani and Tarak running in and out the toilets, screaming, peeking out to see if they have been seen and are going to be chased by group of girls – Zuhre, Lan, Molly Sara Chloe chasing Mani and Tarak.

[…]

Marsha, Lan and Jason playing chase. Girls are chasing Jason, children running in and out the toilets and up on grassy bank. Lots of screaming and excitement.

Marsha grabs Jason, gives him big kiss on cheek, runs off. He ostentatiously wipes off the kiss, runs after her.

[…]

Shona Molly and Lan chasing Kumi in game running from bench down grass bank. Shona and Lan push Kumi to the ground. Kiss him on his face. Kumi looks upset.

The girls who played these games seemed to find them very exciting, but the boys involved seemed more ambivalent. Ravi was the only boy who mentioned them to me in interviews about play preferences. As Ravi's comment below indicates, boys do not usually like to be kissed by girls, although they sometimes seem to enjoy the excitement of the chasing. None of the girls mentioned the games to me.

7/07 interview

Ravi to me "I like playing with Tu. He's the silly one. Some girl in year 1 chase me. She got a blue hairband.

BM "What do you do when she chases you?"

Ravi "I run. No girl gonna kiss me!"

Sometimes the girls' skipping games enact the oppositional and confrontational aspects of the heterosexual chasing games. In the following extract Marsha seizes power by using a popular skipping chant to make fun of Jake when he has been disrupting the girls' skipping game.

5/07 Reception playground

Marsha taking lead in organising skipping game now.

Girls chanting loudly "Tell me the name of your sweetheart, ABCDE....

Jake runs into the rope, laughing.

Marsha (to dinner supervisor) "Miss, he's spoilt it!"

Dinner supervisor intervenes, tells Jake to move away.

Jake moves away, still within earshot.

Marsha (loudly chanting) "Tell me the name of your sweetheart. JAKE! Jake!"

Girls scream and laugh.

Girls chanting together "Jake! Jake!"

Jake looks uncomfortable, moves away.

266

The girls have a small area of the playground for their skipping game, and even this area is contested by some of the boys. This group of girls are acting together to seize power, albeit briefly, using the heterosexual skipping chant and shared laughter to discomfort Jake, when he has been harassing them. In Chapter 2 I discussed how opportunities to resist hegemonic power relations can emerge through practices that 'work the weakness in the norm' (Butler, 2004). Although clearly still operating within a framework of heteronormativity, Marsha takes the lead in encouraging these girls to position themselves briefly as powerful, in relation to Jake. As Thorne shows (1993), these episodes where girls seize power take place in the context of girls' daily experience of playground aggression from some boys. As Thorne observes, episodes of playground harassment often take the same format as sexual harassment.

> "The harasser, nearly always male, often claims that verbal and physical intrusions into the target's personal space are 'all in fun', while the target, usually female, sees it as unwanted and even coercive attention" (Thorne, 1993:80).

Girls and boys enact their oppositional encounters within a heteronormative framework.

Conclusion

My data analysis shows it was difficult for young boys and girls to border cross and to make positive relationships with each other in my research setting. Children worked hard to make sense of gender 'rules', and categorised and policed gender boundaries strictly. Newcomers observed that girls and boys usually played separately and wanted to 'get it right' in terms of gender behaviour. Also, adults in the setting frequently emphasised differences between boys and girls. Despite equal

opportunities policies adults often had different expectations of boys and girls, and showed this in their words and actions. However, girls and boys sometimes managed to border cross successfully, drawing on home experiences, and experimenting with alternative discourses that enabled them to experiment with non-stereotypically gendered activities.

My data analysis supports Davies' contention that

"contradictions, when they are recognised as such, provide the creative cutting edge with which individual identities are formed (Davies, 1989:29).

Children were sometimes positioned within conflicting discourses. Discourses of 'fair play' and equality clash with discourses of security and traditional gender roles. Desires for adventure conflicted with desires to be accepted and avoid teasing and ridicule. My data analysis suggests that successful border crossing was possible when a girl or boy was already a confident established member of his or her community of practice of boys/girls. Those who have learned the rules and taught them to others are in a stronger position to resist and rework aspects of hegemonic gender discourses. Sara, Melik and Daniel were particularly successful in positioning themselves 'otherwise', by border crossing. Relationships and power relations between the children were complex and shifted in different times and spaces.

My data analysis shows that girls and boys participated in play practices that enacted dualistic femininities and masculinities and policed each other's behaviours. Children also policed their own behaviours. I initially saw Fifi playing with footballs in the Nursery garden, but as her efforts were opposed and she was marginalised by older boys, she went more often to play with girls, pushing dolls in prams. I would argue that this is not a 'free' choice on her part. There is often a high penalty to be paid for transgressing gender norms. As Blaise's research in a USA preschool shows

(2005), the support of a member of staff or other adult is often crucial to the success of young children's attempts to gain pleasure from subverting gender norms.

As Fifi's experience demonstrates, girls' femininities are deeply embedded in heteronormativity. She is praised for behaviour that prefigures her expected future role as mother and carer. It is also difficult for young boys to resist the practices of hegemonic masculinity, and their behaviours are strictly policed by other children, and sometimes adults, if they do anything that is associated with femininity, as shown in Omar's attempts to be an angel and imagine himself choosing a Barbie to play with. Ritual enactments of oppositional genders were often very visible, in contrast to quieter moments of gender border crossing.

Chapter 7

Discussion and implications of findings

> "Fantasy is what allows us to imagine ourselves and others otherwise, it
> establishes the possible in excess of the real; it points elsewhere, and when it
> is embodied, it brings the elsewhere home" (Butler, 2004: 29).

Introduction

In this chapter I present the key findings from my fieldwork project, explaining how I
have addressed my initial research questions. These were:

What discourses of femininity and masculinity do young children draw on in their
early years of schooling?

How do young children embody and perform femininities and masculinities?

In the section 'Learning gender discourses' I explain how my findings show that the
children in my research setting drew on discourses of gender dualism. In the section
'Embodiment of masculinities and femininities' I summarize how children learned to
embody and perform oppositional masculinities and femininities through adoption of
differentiated play practices in complex power relations. I then discuss the
implications of my findings and make suggestions for further research. I conclude by
explaining how my thesis makes an original contribution to knowledge.

Learning gender discourses

My data analysis shows that children in my research setting drew on discourses of
gender dualism. Boys established and reproduced local practices of hegemonic
masculinity and girls enacted practices of femininity that often bolstered boys' power
at the expense of their own. Boys and girls learned about masculinities and

femininities within communities of practice by taking part as legitimate peripheral participants in the activities of older, or more established classmates. Children learned norms of gender behaviour from each other and were keen to show that they had understood and could reproduce these gender norms in play practices. They regulated their own behaviours and policed their classmates.

Discourses of gender dualism gave boys and girls access to a very limited range of subject positions. Children in my research setting learned to demonstrate knowledge of gender dualism in Nursery and Reception classes and playgrounds. It was vital to being accepted in play activities and work groups to be able to show knowledge that girls and boys have separate spheres of activity. An important aspect of becoming a school pupil in this setting was to enact appropriate femininities and masculinities. Use of spaces was directly related to power/knowledge relations and different objects of knowledge were used to denote and embody masculinities and femininities. Boys learned to embody and enact practices of hegemonic masculinity in football, 'battle' games and construction activities. Skipping games, 'fashion' and domestic roleplay were key practices of femininity.

The gender divide in terms of objects of knowledge often positioned girls as less powerful than boys, because masculine objects of knowledge such as construction, superhero and football games gave greater access to space and resources. Girls often positioned themselves as less powerful than boys, by giving them play equipment and acquiescing to their demands. The colour pink was used as a reified symbol of femininity, variously understood as a pollutant by boys, and a marker of femininity by girls. The Reception/Year 1 playgrounds at lunch times provided a key site for the transmission of gendered knowledge and development of gendered identities. .

Schooling practices frequently emphasised gender dualism and heteronormativity. Boys and girls were required to enact heteronormative scripts in public displays at Christmas, in assemblies and in classroom activities. Girls were taught to monitor their appearances, and behave modestly. The children in my research were constrained by the way they were positioned within discourses of gender dualism and heteronormativity. These intersected with discourses of age, 'race', ethnicity, class, and ability. Many of the children I worked with during my research were bilingual and many of the school's institutional practices marginalized and subordinated the children's cultures and home languages. These important aspects of children's developing identities were often treated as problematic for their progress as pupils. Despite intentions to implement equal opportunities, staff actions often unwittingly endorsed and emphasised gender differences. Schooling practices of grouping children by ability, and having English as the only language of instruction impacted negatively on how girls and boys related to each other and enacted masculinities and femininities.

It was very difficult for children to transgress or subvert gender norms and take up gender positions that resisted reproduction of dualistic gender positions. When children did attempt to transgress gender norms, their behaviours were usually strictly policed by other children, and sometimes by adults in the settings. Some children did border cross successfully, sometimes drawing on home experiences, and experimenting with alternative discourses that enabled them to experiment with non-stereotypically gendered activities. Children were most successful at border crossing when they were already confident established members of communities of femininity or masculinity. Daniel, Melek and Sara experimented successfully with positioning

themselves 'otherwise', and all three were confident, verbally assertive and physically strong.

Nursery and Reception staff often told me that they tried to provide girls and boys with equal access to all activities, but that they could not influence the children's gendered choices because children must be allowed 'free choice'. My research demonstrates that young children do not have 'free choice' over activities because they learn what is acceptable and valued within early years communities of practice to which they belong. The discourse of 'developmentally appropriate practice' focuses on individual child development and ignores gendered power relations. This allowed some young boys to enact practices of hegemonic masculinity that perpetuated inequitable relationships to the detriment of all children (MacNaughton, 2005).

Embodiment of masculinities and femininities

Boys and girls in my research setting learned to embody and enact oppositional masculinities and femininities in different spaces through apprentice participation in the play practices of more established community members. Pleasure and recognition for young children was often bound up with demonstrating that they knew how to perform their gender 'correctly' and competently in social situations, and this involved reproducing normative gender behaviours, rather than queering or bending gender. My data analysis shows how boys and girls who were new in my research Nursery learned from older children how to enact local practices of masculinity and femininity through bodily displays and use of play technologies. New children learned to enact an embodied gender identity as they discovered that certain ways of moving, speaking and behaving enabled them to participate in local early years communities of practice (Paechter, 2007). Children predominantly performed

femininities and masculinities within heteronormative and stereotypically oppositional gender positions. Boys learned to avoid taking part in feminine marked activities, and girls learned to avoid masculine marked activities.

Boys learned to perform hegemonic practices of masculinity through public physical displays of bodily strength. Boys embodied masculinities through participation in 'battle' games, developing skills in football games and physically dominating spaces within the classrooms, particularly in construction areas. Girls learned to embody femininities through domestic and fairy tale role plays, through skipping games and adoption of 'pink' in their clothing and accessories. Girls learned to monitor their appearances and embody 'sensible good girl' and quasi-teacher, in contrast to boys' 'silliness' (Francis, 1998).

Boys learned to disassociate themselves from femininity, often physically distancing themselves from girls, and viewed 'pink' as a pollutant. 'Pink for girls' was used in play practices by both girls and boys as an important reified marker of femininity. Some girls learned that 'pink' can be a symbol for powerful 'girl' things. Some girls also learned about 'pink for girls' from young boys, who used 'pink for girls' as a way of keeping girls out of certain activities and exerting power over girls in specific play situations, as for example when Harrison insisted Chloe must have a pink dinosaur (see page 231).

When boys categorised things 'for girls', they were doing more than making simple classifications. They were learning to disassociate themselves from 'feminine' things, as they realised that 'masculine' things carried more power and pleasure for themselves, within communities of practice of boys and men (Paechter, 2007). Boys learned through apprentice participation that boys and girls are different, and that boys can claim that they are superior to girls. For many boys, understanding pink as a

symbol of femininity and as pollutant was an important way of keeping boundaries in place, of policing boundaries, and denying power to girls. Pink as a pollutant was used by boys to re-enact and rework hegemonic discourses and discursive practices of masculinity.

Implications of findings

My research findings show that young children's gender identities are constructed through regulatory processes and practices of heterosexuality, and discourses of gender dualism, but also through resistance to these norms, as the children construct their gender identities within local communities of masculinity and femininity. An important part of becoming a full member of a community of practice of femininity or masculinity was to show knowledge to peers of 'correct' gender positioning, by policing one's own, and other children's, gender performances (Thorne, 1993; Paechter, 2007). It is therefore very important for early years teachers to focus on issues of gender equity at all stages of their curriculum planning and delivery. Young children need opportunities to talk about, and experiment with, different gender positions (MacNaughton, 2005).

One of my key findings was that young boys in my research setting learned from more established boys that in order to claim legitimacy as a participant in communities of masculinity in Nursery and Reception, they needed to adopt practices of hegemonic masculinity. These enabled them to gain access to space, resources and shared comradeship with other boys. The practices of hegemonic masculinity in my research setting were football, 'battle' games and associated superhero play, and construction activities. Important aspects of becoming a full member of the communities of practice of masculinity were to demonstrate knowledge and skills in

the practices, and to exclude girls, and younger/weaker boys. Masculinity in this setting had to be earned, and repeatedly demonstrated by publicly engaging in central practices. My data analysis shows how boys who were newcomers to school had to establish themselves as legitimate peripheral participants first, and as their skills and knowledge increased, they were gradually allowed to take a fuller part in practices.

Teachers and support staff discouraged 'rough' physical play and violent play themes. This disapproval of a central practice of hegemonic masculinity in the setting had a serious impact on girls and boys, and reinforced gender dualism. Some boys gained additional pleasure from evading adults' gaze when they played 'battle' games (Foucault, 1976). Some girls positioned themselves as virtuous by condemning and reporting boys' 'violent' games. In this, they were making a virtue of a necessity, as boys did not allow them to participate in these games. The violent reaction of Ho (page 250) when Leonie and Tagan positioned themselves as superheroes was quite unusually extreme, but it demonstrates the force that some boys will employ if their hegemony is threatened. I think in the case of Ho, his reaction was particularly vehement because, as a new boy, he was still attempting to gain acceptance into the community of practice of Reception boys. My data analysis shows that boys had to continually prove their skills and demonstrate their commitment to hegemonic practices, in order to be accepted by more established boys. Staff showed approval for girls' more domestic play themes, centred on families and fairy tales, and girls gained pleasure from positioning themselves in ways that gained them adult approval. The absence of male teachers and support staff in early years in this setting contributed to the polarisation of male/female spheres.

Staff contributed to the naturalisation of 'battle' games by variously condoning the 'battles', forbidding the more boisterous and potentially violent aspects, and

expecting that boys would want to take part, because boys are 'naturally' keen on superhero play. As Holland (2003) argues, a ban on weapon play, and constant negative feedback when boys engage in 'fighting' games in early years settings results in boys engaging in this covertly, and does not allow for any discussion or development of play themes. I agree with Marsh (2000) and Holland (2003) that a more constructive approach is to encourage children to extend their play through imaginative themes such as rescues, and exploration of good and evil. My research findings agree with Holland that 'playfighting' rarely leads to real fights, although, as Holland points out, it is important that educators help children to resist play and behaviour that they dislike, for example aggressive behaviour that hurts others. Superhero discourses that circulate through films, computer games, TV and media images impact on how boys enact superhero scripts, and the media and toy industries manipulate boys' interest in these, often encouraging harmful sexist and racist stereotypes (Marsh, 2000). As Browne (2004) notes, the principle discourse of masculinity available to boys in commercial superhero stories is 'tough', violent and heterosexual. Davies (1989) showed how boys' superhero play often positions them as heroic, and my research findings agree with this (see page 297). As Marsh (2000) argues, educators need to acknowledge the attraction that popular culture holds for children, whilst encouraging them to question negative stereotypes. Superhero play offers young children opportunities to experience power in a world where adults often control and regulate their activities (Jordan, 1995; Marsh, 2000).

Rich (2003) shows how adults can provide role models, vocabulary and resources for children to develop fantasy play, and encourage collaboration and exploration of issues of concern to children such as war and violence. My research findings on the children's use of capes suggest that young boys and girls are keen to

explore a wider range of story lines, if they are provided with suitable encouragement and props. However, my findings also suggest that boys have a lot of emotional investment in enacting 'battle' scenes, and they learn to embody this practice of hegemonic masculinity as a key way of demonstrating membership of the community of practice of masculinity in school. As Browne (2004) argues, many boys enjoy superhero play and physical play embodying physical strength and domination because it signifies male power. They explore ways of enacting masculinities by competitive combative displays of power.

Browne (2004) shows that many girls do not want to engage in superhero play and when they do, their play centres on female heroism that is defined by qualities of endurance and kindness, in contrast to boys' scripts that involve physical strength and use of violence. Marsh (2000) found that 6 and 7-year old girls were very interested in taking part in superhero play when they were given opportunities and presented with active female heroes. My findings agree with Marsh, in that girls in my study were keen to read and make up stories about female superheroes. I found that some girls drew on images from a film that was popular at the time of my fieldwork, 'The Incredibles'. This has two powerful female characters in central roles, although the script is very heteronormative, and the girl and woman are not portrayed as being as strong as the male characters. This emphasises the need for young children to have access to alternative stories that include a range of sexualities and gender positions. As Marsh argues,

> "In order for girls to take a more active part in heroic discourses, teachers need to ensure that they create the conditions in which this can happen. Girls need to feel safe and be given permission and space in which to explore these roles" (Marsh, 2000:219).

Teachers in my research setting were constrained by delivering a Literacy programme that emphasised rote teaching of phonics, often decontextualised and not related to literature. Teachers felt they could not spare time to help the children develop creative writing and dramatic play themes. I believe this had a detrimental effect on the development of children's identities. As Marsh points out (2005), children's identity development is linked with acquisition of skills, knowledge and understanding in communication, language and literacy.

> "As well as recognising and valuing children's cultural experiences, teachers need also to give permission for children to reflect on ways in which their subjectivities have been shaped by the literacy experiences encountered in school and in out-of-school settings" (Marsh, 2005).

Children in my research setting were subject to panoptic surveillance by staff, and this often encouraged them to monitor their own behaviours, not only to position themselves as 'good' school pupils, but also to perform oppositional masculinities and femininities. Girls took up 'sensible' and 'helpful' positions in school, in contrast to boys' enactment of 'silly' and 'selfish' positions (Francis, 1998, 2000). The public nature of many gender performances, on the carpet, and in the playground contributed to mutual panoptic surveillance, as any deviation from norms was quickly noticed and commented on.

Support from adults in early years settings is crucial to the success of children's attempts to resist stereotypical gender behaviours. When children cross gender borders, early years educators need to recognise that this is what they are doing, and they need to be aware of how difficult it is for young children to do this. They need to be prepared to discuss and endorse transgressive gender positions by talking with children who attempt to police those who deviate from normative femininities and masculinities. They also need to support children who are engaging in non-

stereotypically gendered behaviours. So, for example, it was not sufficient for Mrs R to tell Daniel that 'girls can be footballers' (see page 136). Tia gave up her attempts to wear a football tabard, whilst Mrs R was talking to Daniel, and the moment was lost. It is very challenging for staff in early years to seize moments when they can usefully intervene in gendered play because these are often fleeting, and because discourses and practices based on gender dualism are often so entrenched that they go unnoticed. Early years staff need to become aware that children's play practices and schooling practices often encourage gender dualism and heteronormativity, and thereby contribute to inequity.

Reliance on principles of DAP was probably the greatest impediment to gender equity work. I often heard teachers, teaching assistants and meals supervisors maintaining that differences between boys and girls are innate and 'natural', and therefore access to more equal opportunities would not change the behaviours significantly. One way forward from this impasse is for staff to monitor the play practices in their setting, paying particular attention to power relationships, how the children learn from each other, and how children gain pleasure and satisfaction. Early years educators often unwittingly reinforce gender dualism, and this can also be tackled through monitoring. It is then possible to take action to set up alternative play scenes and support children in experimenting with gender positions by discussing their choices and beliefs. Early years educators need INSET to enable them to consider how their beliefs, learned often in initial teacher training, are preventing them from intervening to help children develop gender identities through access to a wider range of discursive positions (MacNaughton, 2000).

Children can be actively involved in developing transgressive gender constructs and challenging gender dualism. Children in my research project showed that they

were able to take up different gender positions, depending on the situation and specific relations of power. Young children can be very flexible and adaptable, if given encouragement and permission to experiment. Role play activities and listening to stories offer opportunities to try out different gender positions in relative safety. Many children have very keen imaginative powers, and can think and act 'otherwise' (Butler, 2004) with support.

Young children have not much personal history or life experience to draw on in positioning themselves, and are constantly using their imagination and information from their senses to trying to modify and extend their understanding of how they should act. They are very quick to pick up on clues given by other children and adults as to what behaviour is valued and what will give them recognition and praise. Davies (1989) demonstrates how young children often behave very differently in different social situations. In my research settings I observed a huge contrast between behaviours, for example in the playground, where children enact practices from childhood cultures, and on the carpet in class, where they enact practices of schooling, as pupils. Conflicts in positioning are often embodied for young children as they want to run, to move freely and expansively, but they also want to please teachers and carers who often encourage them to restrain their physical movement.

Children also experience emotional and cognitive dilemmas when objects of knowledge require conflicting subject positions. So, for example, some young girls want to position themselves as correctly feminine, by wearing 'girlie' pink dressing up items, but also want to experience pleasure and power by wearing masculine marked items such as fire-fighters' and footballers' clothes. Some young boys want to position themselves as 'correctly' masculine, by taking part in activities such as superhero play and 'fighting' games, but also want to experience pleasure in feminine

marked activities such as domestic play. Individual gender identities are forged in the resolution of such conflicts. Opportunities to work collaboratively and cooperatively in a variety of same-sex and mixed groups can have an important effect on young children's ability to position themselves in ways that challenge gender dualism. The provision of play resources often has an impact on how children relate together. For example, I observed that younger, less skilled boys and girls enjoyed play with balls when there were plenty supplied, but these children were excluded by dominant boys when there were only a few balls. Early years educators need to intervene in play practices, to ensure that all children have access to play equipment, through introducing strategies such as 'timed' periods of play, and 'girls only' periods of access. The lunch time play was a key site for the production of gendered identities and children experienced a lot of pressure to conform to oppositional gender norms at this time. The lunch time amounts to a sixth of the time spent by children in school each day, and early years educators need to focus on how and what children are learning during this time.

Adults in the settings and other children provide important role models for younger children, and encouragement to experiment with non-stereotyped gender roles can be very important in enabling young children to experiment with a range of positions, rather than always enacting stereotyped gender positions. Contemporary mass media and toy advertising has a harmful effect on children's play options because toys and games are heavily marketed at either girls or boys. A limited range of toys, predominantly pink and centred on domestic play, crafts and Barbies are marketed for girls, and weapons, superhero and construction toys, and nearly everything active are marketed for boys. Within early years classrooms, these gendered play options can be challenged by introducing a range of non gender

specific play items, such as dressing up and role play clothes and props, art and craft materials for construction, and a range of non gender stereotyped story books. Early years educators need to be able to allocate time for themselves to play with children in role play areas, and have discussions about gender and equity issues so they can help children develop critical thinking and narratives that challenge dualistic gender positions.

Suggestions for further research

Children are often described as being 'too young' to consider issues of social justice, but this is not so, and my research findings support studies that show young children are aware of, and participate in, power relations, normalising discourses and social and cultural differences from a very young age.

> "Normalizing discourses of gender diminish the options and choices children have in their lives" (Robinson and Jones Diaz, 2006:143).

Robinson and Jones Diaz (2006) show how diversity and difference are often located in a discourse of deficit. My research findings show how this discourse of deficit operated through 'normalising' schooling practices in relation to dominant constructions of ethnicity, class and bilingualism. Early years educators drew on discourses of childhood that emphasise a homogenous so- called universal experience of being a child, and child development theories that do not allow for the complexities and contradictions of children's experiences of multiple identities across different social and cultural contexts. Further early years research needs to examine how children are positioned within discourses and regulatory practices, and also how they position themselves, as active participants and learners, within discourses of gender, 'race', class, (dis)ability and sexuality. As Robinson and Jones Diaz (2006) argue, children's choices are located in relation to neo-liberal frameworks and discourses of

individualism, but, at the same time, children are active agents in the construction of their own identity, able to act with intent.

My research findings support research by Browne (2004), MacNaughton (2005) and Thorne (1993) showing that there are possibilities for reworking gender positions within discourses through borderwork. It is at the margins, at the borders that there are possibilities to 'work the weakness in the norm' (Butler, 2004). As Butler argues, it is possible to realize/imagine the potential of fantasy, beyond heteronormativity and gender dualism, to think speak and act 'otherwise'. Resisting norms often results in punishment, but the alternative can be what Butler describes as 'the social death of a person' (Butler, 2004). Further research could usefully explore how young children's imaginative play constructs and embodies a range of femininities and masculinities. By experimenting with different gender positions, young children can take risks in relative safety, and 'try out' alternative ways of 'doing' boy and girl.

My understanding of children's learning about play technologies is based on Lave and Wenger's (1991) and Paechter's (2007) insights into the dynamic and social processes involved in learning through apprentice participation. The challenge for educators is to provide opportunities for children to try out a range of activities without fear of ridicule and to empower children to make bold choices. Young girls often learn that they gain approval from adults and peers when they behave in ways that are stereotypically associated with particular ways of demonstrating femininity. Young boys learn that they will gain approval and status from adults and peers by enacting practices of hegemonic masculinity. As feminist educators we need to intervene to help young children explore their feelings and understandings about gender, so that children can make choices beyond stereotypes of gendered behaviours (Brown, 1998; MacNaughton, 2000, 2005). Only by understanding what gives

children emotional satisfaction and pleasure, will we be able to help boys and girls participate in a full range of activities and develop their skills and abilities. It is vital that we pay attention to power relations between children within early years settings. In order to do this we need to observe how children learn to participate as peripheral members of communities of practice of femininities and masculinities. We need to observe children's play choices and styles, in specific early years settings, and find out which children dominate activities in different spaces and at different times, who takes control, how they achieve domination, who is included and who is excluded. Settings can vary, and change quite quickly in a short space of time, as new children become 'oldtimers'. It is important for early years educators to find out how their settings are experienced by children, by talking with them and discussing gender issues.

Further research is needed on relational aspects of young children's identity development. Studies need to focus on how young children develop gender identities in relation to identities of 'race', ethnicity, class, sexuality, age and (dis)ability. One of the disadvantages of a school based study like mine is that it does not explore how children's experiences at home influence their learning in the early years of schooling. I had hoped to talk more with parents about their children's experiences at home, but parents were not encouraged to come into the classes, and I did not follow up my initial letters when I had no response from parents. Further research is needed to show how children understand and enact femininities and masculinities at home, and how this impacts on their experiences in school. Interviews with parents, carers and family members could enhance understanding of the relational aspects of gender identity development. Children's understandings of class, 'race' and ethnicity could be explored in relation to their home and school experiences. Class background has a

very important effect on how children experience schooling and on how young children develop gender identities. My research did not focus on this, and it is an area that warrants further research in relation to children's identity development in the early years of schooling. My impression was that early years staff in my research school expected children to leave their home cultures at the school door. Further research could highlight the significance of interrelated aspects of identity development, of how ethnicity, 'race', class and gender impact on young children's early experiences of schooling.

Further studies could usefully focus on how young children learn through peripheral participation in communities of practice in other early years settings, in rural schools, inner city schools in different geographical locations, in middle class and working class areas. It will be important to investigate how class, ethnic background and geographical locality influence how children learn about masculinities and femininities in the early years of schooling, and how school policies, early years staff attitudes, practices and beliefs influence how young children in their early years classes develop gender constructs.

The media, popular culture and children's fiction perpetuate heteronormativity in young children's lives. Play is a site of gender construction and heteronormative discourses operate to regulate children's behaviour. Children's play practices are an important part of the normalisation of the construction of heterosexual desire and the inscription of heterogendered subjectivities. Heterosexual gender performances such as chasing/ kissing games, stories with weddings, 'happy ever after' princes and princesses, and other heterosexual happy endings were part of young children's gender constructs, approved by adults in my research setting who saw these performances as a 'natural' part of children's lives. Further research is needed to

explore how young children's gender constructs and development of gender identities are affected by their experiences of computer programmes, TV programmes, films, and advertising of toys, clothing and games. More research is needed into the development of children's imaginative play scripts, including superhero and domestic play themes.

Walkerdine (2002) points to the need for micro-analysis of practices and discourses through which childhood is produced, emphasising that learning occurs within cultures of practice, rather than being isolated within the individual child. Walkerdine (2002, 2004) argues that psychoanalytic theories can make a contribution to our understandings of subjectivity. I am interested in relating this to how young children use imaginative play and stories to enact practices of femininities and masculinities within their communities of practice at school. There is a need for further research into local practices, drawing on psychoanalytic theories, investigating how young children experience desire, power and pleasure through play practices and relations with each other.

There is a need for more research into gendered power relations in early years settings (Browne, 2004; MacNaughton, 2005). By exploring what gives children gender security and pleasure, we can appreciate the emotional investments they make in enacting particular practices of femininity and masculinity, and we can gain insights into the difficulties children face when they cross gender boundaries. Imaginative play opportunities and storytelling can enable young children to access alternative gender discourses and position themselves in powerful roles (Davies, 1989; Marsh, 2000). Children in my study policed roleplay clothes very strictly, insisting that girls were not allowed to wear firefighters', footballers' or builders' outfits, and boys were not to wear dresses or anything pink. When I introduced an

assortment of capes for imaginative play, children sometimes allowed each other to be more experimental and flexible in what they wore and roles they took. Through experiences like these we can help children gain access to alternative discourses that enable them to gain pleasure and empowerment beyond gender dualism.

My research contribution

I conclude that this thesis makes a significant and original contribution to feminist knowledge and understandings of how 3 to 5 year-olds in the early years of schooling learn about masculinities and femininities from each other. I show how cohorts of boys and girls who are new to Nursery and Reception classes in my research setting learned to draw on discourses of gender dualism by taking part in a shared repertoire of local play practices as legitimate peripheral participants in their pupil communities of practice of masculinity and femininity. I show how new children became competent social players by learning to embody and perform oppositional masculinities and femininities, taking up specific gendered play practices in different spaces. I show how children learned the 'rules' for gendered behaviour by using gendered objects of knowledge to position themselves as legitimate participants in play practices. I show the complexities of children's gendered power relations and explore how they policed each others, and their own, behaviours.

My thesis shows that young children played in same-sex groups because they needed to position themselves as 'correctly' masculine or feminine in order to participate in social practices in this early years setting. I emphasize that it is very important for early years practitioners and policy makers to analyse how young children in early years settings learn play practices from each other and to understand how this reproduces discourses of gender dualism and prevents moves towards equity.

By understanding how and why children take up dualistic gender positions we can begin to support them in taking risks in positioning themselves beyond discourses of gender dualism.

Bibliography and References

Ali, S. (2003) 'To be a girl': culture and class in schools. *Gender and Education*, 15(3), 270-291.

Alldred, P. (1998) Ethnography and Discourse Analysis: Dilemmas in Representing the Voices of Children. In J.Ribbens and R.Edwards (Eds.) *Feminist Dilemmas in Qualitative Research*. London: Sage Publications.

Allen, J. (2003) *Lost Geographies of Power*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Archer, L. (2003) *Race, masculinity and schooling: Muslim boys and education*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Aubrey, C., David, T., Godfrey, R., Thompson, L. (2000) *Early Childhood Educational Research: Issues in methodology and ethics*. London: RoutlegeFalmer.

Ball, S.J. (1990) Self-doubt and soft data: social and technical trajectories in ethnographic fieldwork. *Qualitative Studies in Education*, 3 (2), 157-171.

Barth, F. (1969) *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Cultural Differences.* Little, Brown and Co.

Baxter, J. (2003) *Positioning Gender in Discourse: A Feminist Methodology*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.

Best, R. (1983) *We've All Got Scars: What Girls and Boys Learn in Elementary School*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Bhana, D. (2005) Show me the panties': girls play games in the school playground. In C.Mitchell and J.Reid-Walsh (Eds.) *Seven Going on Seventeen*. New York, NY: Peter Lang.

Blaise, M. (2005) *Playing it Straight*. London: Routledge.

Bordo, S. (2004) *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture and the Body*. California: University of California Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1977) *Outline of a Theory of Practice.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1990) *The Logic of Practice*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bredekamp, S. (1987) *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programmes serving Children from Birth through Age 8*. National Association for the Education of Young Children: Washington DC.

British Educational Research Association (2004) *Revised Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research.* BERA.

Brown, B. (1998) *Unlearning Discrimination in the Early Years.* Stoke on Trent: Trentham Books .

Browne, N. (2004) *Gender Equity in the Early Years.* Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Bruner, J. (1986) *Actual Minds, Possible Worlds.* Harvard: Harvard University Press.

Buchbinder, D. (1994) *Masculinities and Identities.* Melbourne: Melbourne University Press.

Burman, E. (1994) *Deconstructing Developmental Psychology.* London: Routledge.

Butler, J. (1990) *Gender Trouble: feminism and the subversion of identity.* London: Routledge

Butler, J. (1993) *Bodies that matter: on the discursive limits of 'sex'.* London: Routledge.

Butler, J. (2004) *Undoing Gender.* New York, NY: Routledge.

Cahill, S. (1986) Childhood Socialization as Recruitment Process: Some Lessons from the Study of Gender Development. In (Eds.) P.Adler and P.Adler *Sociological Studies of Child Development.* Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.

Cannella, G.S. (1997) *Deconstructing Early Childhood Education: Social Justice and Revolution.* New York: Peter Lang Publishing.

Carlspecken, P.F. (1996) *Critical Ethnography in Educational Research.* New York, NY: Routledge.

Christensen, P. and James, A. (Eds.) (2000) *Research with Children: perspectives and practices.* London: Falmer Press.

Cicourel, A.V. (1993) Aspects of Structural and Processual Theories of Knowledge. In C. Calhoun, E. Lipuma and M.Postone (Eds.) *Bourdieu: Critical Perspectives.* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Connell, R.W. (1987) *Gender and Power.* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Connell, R.W. (1995) *Masculinities.* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Connell, R.W. (2002) *Gender.* Cambridge, Polity Press.

Connolly, P. (1998) *Racism, Gender Identities and Young Children.* London: Routledge.

Connolly, P. (2003) Gendered and gendering spaces: Playgrounds in the early years. In C.Skelton and B.Francis (Eds.) *Boys and girls in the Primary Classroom.* Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Connolly, P. (2004) *Boys and Schooling in the Early Years.* London: RoutledgeFalmer.

Corsaro, W.A. (1981) Entering the child's world – research strategies for field entry and data collection in a preschool setting. In J.L.Green and C.Wallat (Eds). *Ethnography and Language in Education Settings.* Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing.

Danby, S. (1998) The serious and playful work of gender: talk and social order in a preschool classroom. In N. Yelland (Ed.) *Gender in Early Childhood.* London: Routledge.

Davies, B. (1982) *Life in the Classroom and Playground.* London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Davies, B. (1989) *Frogs and Snails and Feminist Tales.* London: Allen and Unwin.

Davies, B. (1998) The politics of category membership in early childhood settings. In N.Yelland (Ed.) *Gender in Early Childhood.* London:Routledge.

Davies, B. and Harre, R. (1991) Positioning: The discursive production of selves, *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour,* 20(1), 43-63.

De Beauvoir, S. (1949) *The Second Sex.* Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books.

Derrida, J. (1973) *Speech and Phenomena.* Trans. D.Allisson. Evanston I.L.: Northwestern University Press.

Donaldson, M. (1978) *Children's Minds.* London: Fontana.

Douglas, M. (1966) *Purity and Danger.* London: Routledge Classics.

Dunn, J. (1998) Young children's understanding of other people: evidence from within the family. In M.Woodhead, D. Faulkner, K. Littleton (Eds.) *Cultural Worlds of Childhood.* London: Routledge.

Epstein, D. (1993) *Changing Classroom Cultures: Anti-racism, politics and schools.* Stoke on Trent: Trentham Books.

Epstein, D. (1997) Cultures of Schooling/Cultures of Sexuality, *International Journal of Inclusive Education,* 1, 37-53.

Epstein, D. (1998) Are you a girl or are you a teacher? In G.Walford (Ed.) *Doing Research about Education.* London: Falmer Press.

Epstein, D. (1999) Sex Play: romantic significations, sexism and silences in the schoolyard. In D.Epstein and J.T.Sears *A Dangerous Knowing: sexuality, pedagogy and popular culture.* London: Cassell.

Epstein, D., Elwood, J., Hey, V., and Maw, J. (1998) *Failing Boys?: issues in gender and achievement.* Buckingham: Open University Press.

Epstein, D. and Johnson, R. (1994) On the straight and narrow: the heterosexual presumption, homophobias and schools. In D. Epstein (Ed.) *Challenging Lesbian and Gay Inequalities in Education.* Buckingham: Open University Press.

Epstein, D. and Johnson, R. (1998) *Schooling Sexualities.* Buckingham: Open University Press.

Farrell, A. (2005) *Ethical Research with Children.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Fielding, S. (2000) 'Walk on the left!': Children's Geographies and the Primary School. In S. Holloway and G. Valentine (Eds) *Children's Geographies: Playing, living, learning.* London: Routledge.

Forgacs, D. (Ed) (1988) *A Gramsci Reader.* London: Lawrence and Wishart.

Foucault, M. (1976) *The History of Sexuality Vol.1: An Introduction.* London: Penguin.

Foucault, M. (1977) *Discipline and Punish.* London: Penguin.

Foucault, M. (1978) *The History of Sexuality Volume 1.* New York: Vintage Books.

Foucault, M. (1980) *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977.* London: Harvester Press.

Foucault, M. (1997) *Ethics: The Essential Works of Michel Foucault 1954-1984 Vol.1* (Ed) P.Rabinow. London: Penguin.

Foucault, M. (1984) *The History of Sexuality Vol.3: The Care of the Self.* London: Penguin.

Francis, B. (1998) *Power Plays.* Stoke on Trent: Trentham Books Ltd.

Francis, B. (2000) *Boys, Girls and Achievement: Addressing the Classroom Issues.* London: RoutledgeFalmer.

Francis, B. and Skelton, C. (Eds.) (2001) *Investigating Gender: Contemporary perspectives in education.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Frankenberg, R. (1997) *Displacing Whiteness. Essays in Social and Cultural Criticism.* Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Friere, P. (1972) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed.* London: Penguin.

Frosh, S., Phoenix, A., and Pattman, R. (2002) *Young Masculinities.* Basingstoke: Palgrave.

Frye, M. (1983) *The Politics of Reality: Essays in Feminist Theory.* New York, NY: The Crossing Press.

Gagen, E. (2000) Playing the part: performing gender in America's playgrounds'. In S. Holloway and G. Valentine (Eds.) *Children's Geographies: Playing, living and learning.* (pp 213-230) London, Routledge.

Gaine, C. and George, R. (1999) *Gender, 'Race' and Class in Schooling.* London: Falmer.

Garvey, C. (1990) *Play.* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Gatens, M. (1996) *Imaginary Bodies, Ethics, Power and Corporeality.* London: Routledge.

George, R. (2007) *Girls in a Goldfish Bowl.* Rotterdam, Netherlands: Sense Publishers.

Gilbert, R. and Gilbert, P. (1998) *Masculinity Goes to School.* Sydney: Allen and Unwin.

Gillborn, D. (1990) *Race, Ethnicity and Education: Teaching and Learning in Multi-Ethnic Schools.* London: Unwin Hyman.

Gilroy, P. (1993) *Small Acts.* London: Serpents Tail.

Gittins, D. (1998) *The Child in Question.* London: MacMillan.

Glaser, B.J. and Strauss, A.L. (1967) *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research.* London:Weidenfeld and Nicolson.

Gordon, T. and Lahelma, E. (1996) 'School is Like an Ant's Nest': spatiality and embodiment in schools. *Gender and Education,* 8(3), 301-310.

Gore, J. (1993) *The Struggle for Pedagogies: Critical and Feminist Discourses as Regimes of Truth.* London: Routledge.

Gramsci, A. (1971) *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*. London: Lawrence and Wishart.

Grant, V. (2002) Understanding gender issues in preschool settings. In C.Nutbrown (Ed.) *Research Studies in Early Childhood Education*. Stoke on Trent: Trentham.

Grieshaber, S. and Cannella, G.S. (Eds) (2001) *Embracing Identities in Early Childhood Education: Diversity and Possibilities*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Griffin, C. (1996) "See who's face it wears": Difference, otherness and power, *Feminism and Psychology*, 6 (2), 184-91.

Grugeon, E. (1993) Gender implications of children's playground culture. In P.Woods and M. Hammersley (Eds.) *Gender and Ethnicity in Schools*. Routledge, London.

Hall, S. (1980) Race, articulation and societies structured in dominance. In *UNESCO, Sociological Theories: Race and Colonialism*. Paris: UNESCO.

Hall, S. (1992) New ethnicities. In J.Donald and A.Rattansi (Eds.) *Race, Culture and Difference*. London: Sage.

Hall, S. (1996) Introduction: Who needs 'identity?' In S.Hall and P. du Gay (Eds.) *Questions of Cultural Identity*. London: Sage.

Hammersley, M. (1984) The researcher exposed: a natural history. In R.Burgess (Ed.) *Strategies of Educational Research*. Lewes: Falmer.

Hammersley, M. and Gomm, R. (2005) Recent radical criticism of the interview in qualitative inquiry. In M.Holborn and M. Haralambos (Eds.) *Developments in Sociology*, Vol.20. Ormskirk: Causeway Press.

Hatcher, R. (1995) Racism and children's cultures. In M.Griffiths and B Troyna (Eds.) *Antiracism, Culture and Social Justice in Education*. Stoke on Trent: Trentham Books.

Holland, P. (2003) *We Don't Play With Guns Here: war, weapon and superhero play in the early years*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

hooks, b. (1994) *Outlaw Culture*. London: Routledge.

hooks, b. (1997) Whiteness in the black imagination. In R. Frankenberg (Ed.) *Displacing Whiteness: Essays in Social and Cultural Criticism*. Durham NC: Duke University Press.

Hughes, P. and MacNaughton, G. (2001) Fractured or manufactured? Gendered identities and culture in the early years. In S.Grieshaber and G.Cannella (Eds) *Embracing Identities in Early Childhood Education*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Huston, A.C. (1983) Sex-typing. In E.M. Hetherington (Ed.) *Handbook of child psychology: socialization, personality, and social development* Vol. 4, pp 388-467. New York: Wiley.

Huston, A.C. (1985) The development of sex typing: themes from recent research, *Development Review*, 5, 1-17.

Ivinson, G. and Murphy, P. (2007) *Rethinking Single-Sex Teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

James, A. and Prout, A. (Eds.) (1997) *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood: Contemporary issues in the Sociological Study of Childhood.* London: Falmer Press.

Jenks, C. (1996) *Childhood*. London: Routledge.

Jones, L. (1996) Young Girls Notions of Femininity, *Gender and Education*, 8(3), 311-321.

Jones, L. (2001) Trying to break bad habits in practice by engaging with poststructuralist theories, *Early Years: An International Journal of Research and Development*, 21(1), 25-33.

Jordan, E. (1995) Fighting boys and fantasy play: the construction of masculinity in the early years of school, *Gender and Education*, 7(1), 69-86.

Kehily, M. (2001) Issues of gender and sexuality in schools. In B. Francis and C.Skelton (Eds.) *Investigating Gender*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Kehily, M. (2002) *Sexuality, Gender and Schooling: Shifting Agendas in Social Learning.* London: Routledge.

Kehily, M.J. (Ed.) (2004) *An Introduction to Childhood Studies.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kessler, S. (1990) The medical construction of gender: case management of intersexed infants, *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 16 (1), 3-26.

Kohlberg, L.A. (1966) A cognitive-developmental analysis of children's sex role concepts and attitudes. In E.E. Maccoby (Ed.) *The development of sex differences* (pp 82-173) Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Lather, P. (1991) *Getting Smart: Feminist Research and Pedagogy With/in the Postmodern.* Routledge, Chapman and Hall, Inc.

Lave, J. and Wenger, E. (1991) *Situated Learning: Legitimate peripheral participation.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lewis, A. (1992) Group child interviews as a research tool, *British Educational Research Journal,* 18,(4), 413-21.

Lloyd, B. and Duveen, G. (1992) *Gender Identities and Education: The impact of starting school.* Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Press.

Lowe, K. (1998) Gendermaps. In N.Yelland (Ed.) *Gender in Early Childhood.* London: Routledge.

Mac an Ghaill, M. (1994) *The Making of Men: Masculinities, Sexualities and Schooling.* Buckingham: Open University Press.

Maccoby, E.E. (2002) Gender and group process – current directions, *Psychological Science,* 11, 54-58.

MacNaughton, G. (1998) Improving our gender equity 'tools': a case for discourse analysis. In N.Yelland (Ed.) *Gender in Early Childhood.* London: Routledge.

MacNaughton, G. (2000) *Rethinking Gender in Early Childhood Education.* London: Sage Publications.

MacNaughton, G. (2005) *Doing Foucault in Early Childhood Studies.* London: Routledge.

Marsh, J. (2000) 'But I want to fly too!': girls and superhero play in the infant classroom, *Gender and Education,* 12(2), 209-220.

Marsh, J (2005) Ritual, performance and identity construction. In J. Marsh (Ed.) *Popular culture, new media and digital literacy in early childhood.* London: RoutledgeFalmer.

Martin, C.L., and Fabes, R.A. (2001) The stability and consequences of young children's same-sex peer interactions, *Developmental Psychology,* 37, 431-446.

Martin, C.L., Ruble, D.N., and Szkrybalo, J. (2002) Cognitive theories of early gender development, *Psychological Bulletin* 128(6): 903-33.

Martino, W. (1999) 'Cool boys', 'party animals', 'squids' and 'poofters': interrogating the dynamics and politics of adolescent masculinities in school. *British Journal of Sociology of Education,* 20, 239-263.

Martino, W. and Pallotta-Chiarolli, M. (2003) *So What's a Boy? Addressing issues of masculinity and schooling.* Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Massey, D. (1994) *Space, Place and Gender.* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Mayall, B. (2002) *Towards a Sociology of Childhood.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

McGuffey, C.S. and Rich, B.L., (1999) Playing in the gender transgression zone: Race, Class, and Hegemonic Masculinity in Middle Childhood. *Gender and Society,*13(5), 608-627.

McNay, L. (2000) *Gender and Agency: Reconfiguring the Subject in Feminist and Social Theory.* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Miles, M. (1983) *Racism.* London: Routledge.

Mirza, H.S. (1992) *Young, Female and Black.* London: Routledge.

Mohood, T. (1992) *Not Easy Being British.* Stoke on Trent: Trentham.

Moi, T. (1999) *What is a Woman? And Other Essays.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Moss, P. and Penn, H. (1996) *Transforming Nursery Education.* London: Paul Chapman.

Murphy, P. and Elwood, J. (1998) Gendered learning outside and inside school: influences on achievement. In D. Epstein, J. Elwood, V. Hey and J.Maw (Eds.) *Failing Boys?: issues in gender and achievement.* Buckingham: Open University Press.

Narayan, U. (1989) The project of feminist epistemology: perspectives from non-western feminists. In A.M. Jagger and S.R.Bordo (Eds.) *Gender/Body/Knowledge: Feminist Reconstructions of Being and Knowing.* New Brunswick NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Nespor, J. (1997) *Tangled up in School.* Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Nespor, J. (2000) Topographies of Masculinity: gendered spatialities of preadolescent boys. In N. Lesko (Ed.) *Masculinities at School.* California: Sage.

Oakley, A. (1994) Women and children first and last: parallels and differences between children's and women's studies. In B.Mayall (Ed.) *Children's Childhoods: Observed and Experienced.* London: Falmer Press.

Ofsted (2007) *The Foundation Stage: a survey of 144 Settings.* Ofsted.

298

Paechter, C. (1998) *Educating the Other: gender, power and schooling.* London: Falmer Press.

Paechter, C. (2001) Using poststructuralist ideas in gender theory and research. In B.Francis and C.Skelton (Eds.) *Investigating gender: contemporary perspectives in education.* Buckingham: Open University Press.

Paechter, C. (2003a) Masculinities and Femininities as Communities of Practice, *Women's Studies International Forum*, 26(1), 69-77.

Paechter, C. (2003b) Learning masculinities and femininities: power/knowledge and legitimate peripheral participation, in *Women's Studies International Forum*, 26 (6), 541-552.

Paechter, C. (2006) Masculine femininities/feminine masculinities: power, identities and gender, *Gender and Education,* 18 (3), 250-270.

Paechter, C. (2007) *Being Boys, Being Girls: Learning masculinities and femininities.* Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Paley, V. (1981) *Wally's Stories.* Harvard: Harvard University Press.

Paley, V. (1984) *Boys and girls – superheroes in the doll corner.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Pearce, S. (2005) *You wouldn't understand: white teachers in multiethnic classrooms.* Stoke on Trent: Trentham.

Piaget, J. (1977) *The Development of Thought.* Viking Press.

Rabinow, P. (Ed.)(1997) *The Essential Works of Michel Foucault 1954-1984 Vol.1.* London: Penguin.

Reay, D. (1995) Using 'Habitus' to look at Race and Class in Primary Classrooms. In M.Griffiths, and B.Troyna, (Eds.) *Antiracism, Culture and Social Justice in Education.* Stoke on Trent: Trentham Books.

Reay, D. (2001) 'Spice girls', 'nice girls', 'girlies', and 'tomboys': gender discourses, girls' cultures and femininities in the primary classroom, *Gender and Education*, 13 (2), 153-66.

Renold, E. (1997) 'All the've got on their brains is football': sport, masculinity and the gendered practices of playground relations. *Sport, Education and Society*, 2, 5-23.

Renold, E. (2000) 'Coming Out': gender, (hetero)sexuality and the primary school, *Gender and Education* 12(3), 309-326.

Renold, E. (2004) 'Other' boys: negotiating non-hegemonic masculinities in the primary school, *Gender and Education* 16(2), 249-260.

Renold, E. (2005) *Girls, Boys and Junior Sexualities*. Abingdon: RoutledgeFalmer.

Ribbens, J. and Edwards, R. (Eds.) (1998) *Feminist Dilemmas in Qualitative Research*. London: Sage Publications.

Rich, A. (1981) *Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence*. London: Onlywomen Press Ltd.

Rich, D. (2003) Bang! Bang! Gun play and why children need it, *Early Education Journal*, 41.

Richardson, D. (2000) *Rethinking Sexuality*. London: Sage.

Robinson, K. and Jones Diaz, C. (2006) *Diversity and Difference in Early Childhood Education*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Rogoff, B. (1990) *Apprenticeship in Thinking*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ruble, D. and Martin, C. (1998) Gender Development. In W.Damon and N.Eisenberg (Eds.) *Handbook of Child Psychology* Vol.3 pp 933-1016. New York, NY: Wiley.

Sedgwick, E.K. (1990) *Epistemology of the Closet*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Shain, F. (2003) *The Schooling and Identity of Asian Girls*. Stoke on Trent: Trentham Books.

Shilling, C. (1991) Social space, gender inequalities and educational differentiation, *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 12,(1), 23-44.

Shilling, C. (1993) *The Body and Social Theory*. London: Sage.

Simons, H. (1982) Conversation Piece: the practice of interviewing in case study research. In R.McCormick (Ed.) *Calling Education to Account*. London: Heinemann.

Sinfield, A. (1994) *Cultural Politics, Queer Reading*. London: Routledge.

Skelton, C. (1997) Primary boys and hegemonic masculinities. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 18, 349-369.

Skelton, C. (2000) 'A passion for football': dominant masculinities and primary schooling. *Sport, Education and Society*, 5, 5-18.

Skelton, C. (2001) Typical Boys? Theorizing masculinity in educational settings. In B. Francis, and C. Skelton, (Eds.) *Investigating gender: contemporary perspectives in education*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Skelton, C. (2001) *Schooling the Boys: Masculinities and Primary Education*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Skelton, C. and Francis, B. (Eds.) (2003) *Boys and Girls in the Primary School*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Stanley, L. and Wise, S. (1993) *Breaking Out Again: Feminist Ontology and Epistemology*. London: Routledge.

Swain, J. (2003) How young schoolboys become somebody: the role of the body in the construction of masculinity, *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 24(3), 299-314.

Thorne, B. (1993) *Gender Play: Girls and boys in school*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Trevarthen, C. (1998) The child's need to learn a culture. In M.Woodhead, D. Faulkner, and K. Littleton (Eds.) *Cultural Worlds of Early Childhood*. London: Routledge.

Trinh, T.M. (1989) *Woman, native, other: writing postcoloniality and feminism*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Troyna, B. and Hatcher, R. (1992) *Racism in Children's Lives: A Study of mainly-White Primary Schools*. London: Routledge.

Urwin, C. (1998) Power relations and the emergence of language. In J.Henriques, W.Hollway, C.Urwin, C.Venn, V.Walkerdine (Eds.) *Changing the Subject: Psychology, social regulation and subjectivity*. London: Routledge.

Vygotsky, L. (1978) *Mind in Society*. Harvard: Harvard Press.

Walkerdine, V. (1984) 'Some day my prince will come': young girls and the preparation for adult sexuality. In A. McRobbie and M.Mava (Eds.) *Gender and Generation*, pp162-184. Basingstoke: Macmillan.

Walkerdine, V. (1988) *The Mastery of Reason*. London: Routledge.

Walkerdine, V. and The Girls and Mathematics Unit (1989) *Counting Girls Out*. London: Virago.

Walkerdine, V. (1990) *Schoolgirl Fictions*. London: Verso Books.

Walkerdine, V. (1999) Violent boys and precocious girls: Regulating childhood at the end of the millennium, *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, 1(1), 3-23.

Walkerdine, V. (Ed.) (2002) *Challenging Subjects: Critical Psychology for a New Millenium.* Basingstoke: Palgrave.

Walkerdine, V. (2004) Developmental psychology and the study of childhood. In M.J. Kehily (Ed.) *An Introduction to Childhood Studies.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Walkerdine, V., Lucey, H., and Melody, J. (2001) *Growing Up Girl: Psychosocial Explorations of Gender and Class.* Basingstoke: Palgrave.

Walsh, M. and Bahnisch, M. (2002) Political Subjects, Workplaces and Subjectivities. In V. Walkerdine (Ed.) *Challenging Subjects: Critical Psychology for a New Millennium.* Basingstoke: Palgrave.

Weedon, C. (1987) *Feminist Practice and Poststructuralist Theory.* Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Weedon, C. (1999) *Feminism, theory and the politics of difference.* Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.

Wenger, E. (1998) *Communities of Practice: Learning, meaning and identity.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

West, C. and Zimmerman, D.H. (1987) Doing Gender. *Gender and Society* 1(2), 125-151.

Wetherell, M., Taylor, S., and Yates, S. (Eds.) (2001) *Discourse Theory and Practice.* London: Sage.

Willis, P. and Trondman, M. (2000) Manifesto for Ethnography, *Ethnography* Vol 1, 5-16.

Appendices

Appendix A	Children in Ash Vale
Appendix B	Research schedule
Appendix C	Interview schedule
Appendix D	Story books
Appendix E	Toy pictures
Appendix F	Letter to parents
Appendix G	Field notes
Appendix H	Lan skipping
Appendix I	Children's self portraits
Appendix J	Use of Nursery spaces
Appendix K	Milk cartons

Appendix A Children in Ash Vale

A (i)   Children in Ash Vale Nursery Autumn Term 2006

All names changed to preserve anonymity. Dates of birth and home
languages/ethnicity as given to me by staff from information from parents.

*children I follow into Reception in January 2007
#children I follow into Reception in September 2007

Fulltime girls

*Sara	03.02	Farsi
Sammie	05.02	English
*Zuhre	04.02	Turkish
*Ayla	04.02	Turkish
Yomi	04.02	English/Yoruba
*Lan	04.02	Vietnamese
*Chloe	07.02	English
*Ayo	06.02	English/Ijaw
#Oni	10.02	Yoruba

Fulltime boys

*Mani	05.02	Tamil

Morning girls

*Shona	07.02	English
Nina	03.03	Spanish
Madia	04.03	Spanish
#Madison	01.03	English

Morning boys

*Ravi	03.02	Bengali
Reece	09.02	English
#Jake	10.02	English
Harrison	10.02	English/Yoruba
#Femi	11.02	Yoruba
#Omar	12.02	Turkish

Afternoon girls

#Melek	11.02	Turkish
*Hong	06.02	Chinese
*Nadia	08.02	Somali
*Molly	08.02	Ugandan
#Tagan	10.02	English
Tia	03.03	English/Yoruba

Afternoon boys

*Kumi	07.02	Yoruba
*Jing	08.02	Cantonese
*Tarak	08.02	Bengali
Lewis	09.02	Twi/English
#Ryan	09.02	English
#Daniel	12.02	English/Yoruba
#Tu	01.03	Vietnamese

Appendix A (ii)
Children in Ash Vale Nursery Spring Term January 2007
#children I follow into Reception in September 2007

Fulltime girls

#Oni	10.02	Yoruba
#Tagan	10.02	English

Fulltime boys

#Jake	10.02	English
Harrison	10.02	English/Yoruba
#Femi	11.02	Yoruba
#Omar	12.02	Turkish
#Ryan	09.02	English
#Daniel	12.02	English/Yoruba
#Tu	01.03	Vietnamese
#Ben	11.02	English

Morning girls

Nina	03.03	Spanish/Benin
Madia	04.03	Spanish
#Madison	01.03	English

Morning boys

Lewis	09.02	Twi/English

New morning girls Jan 2007

#Jala	01.03	Krio
Eser	05.03	Turkish
Fifi	07.03	Yoruba
Zoe	11.03	English
Raksha	12.03	Yoruba
Phoebe	01.04	English
Patsy	11.03	Yoruba/English

New morning boys Jan 2007

Damien	07.03	English
Malik	09.03	Somali
Ervin	06.03	Albanian
Adil	07.03	Malayan
Ade	12.03	Yoruba

Appendix A (iii)

Children in Ash Vale Reception Class Spring/ Summer Term 2007
30 children -19 girls
           11 boys

Children from September intake
14 children – 6 boys, 8 girls
Boys referred to in data

Jason	10.01	Twi/English
Liam	10.01	English
Jo	11.01	English
Charlie	12.01	English
Philip	10.01	English

Girls referred to in data

Marsha	10.01	English (Ghanian)
Lisa	11.01	English
Amena	01.02	English

New Reception Children join January 2007
16 children – 5 boys, 11 girls

Fulltime girls from Nursery

Sara	03.02	Farsi
Zuhre	04.02	Turkish
Ayla	04.02	Turkish
Lan	04.02	Vietnamese
Chloe	07.02	English
Ayo	06.02	English/Ijaw

Fulltime boys from Nursery

Mani	05.02	Tamil

Morning girls from Nursery

Shona	07.02	English

Morning boys from Nursery

Ravi	03.02	Bengali

Afternoon girls from Nursery

Hong	06.02	Chinese
Nadia	08.02	Somali
Molly	08.02	Ugandan

Afternoon boys from Nursery

Kumi	07.02	Yoruba
Jing	08.02	Cantonese
Tarak	08.02	Bengali

New girl (no Nursery experience)

Paige	05.02	Twi

Appendix A (iv)

Reception Class Autumn Term September 2007
20 children
10 boys, 10 girls.

Fulltime girls from Nursery
#Oni	10.02	Yoruba
#Tagan	10.02	English

Fulltime boys from Nursery
#Jake	10.02	English
#Femi	11.02	Yoruba
#Omar	12.02	Turkish
#Ryan	09.02	English
#Daniel	12.02	English/Yoruba
#Tu	01.03	Vietnamese
#Ben	11.02	English

Morning girls from Nursery
#Madison	01.03	English
#Jala	01.03	Krio

Afternoon girls from Nursery
#Melek	11.02	Turkish

NOTE
New LEA rules for admittance to Reception result in children no longer being automatically placed in Reception if they have attended the Nursery.

New girls from outside Ash Vale Nursery
Fatima	10.03	Turkish
Ayan	01.03	Somali
Leonie	12.02	English/Yoruba
Ellie	11.02	English
Alita	11.02	Spanish/Benin

New boys from outside Ash Vale Nursery
Richard	01.03	English/Yoruba
Ho	10.02	Cantonese
Emilio	11.02	Spanish/Benin

Appendix B   Fieldwork schedule

Phase 1 Summer Term 2006, Autumn Term 2006

Open-ended participant observation in Nursery class, focusing on peer group relationships, friendship patterns, choice of activities, use of resources, use of space, behaviours, language, imaginative play, children's relationships and interactions with adults in the setting (including staff and parents within the setting).

Small group and individual activities with children – stories, toy stickers.

Discussions with Nursery staff.

Phase 2 Spring Term 2007, Summer Term 2007

Continued participant observation in Nursery

Discussions with Nursery staff.

Focus on changes and developments arising from new intake of children.

Follow cohort of children who moved from Nursery to Reception in January '07.

Open-ended participant observation in Reception class and playground, focusing on peer group relationships, friendship patterns, choice of activities, use of resources, use of space, behaviours, language, imaginative play, children's relationships and interactions with adults in the setting.

Discussions with Reception staff.

Semi-structured group interviews with Reception children (2-4 children) encouraging children to talk about play preferences and gender issues. Use of stories/roleplay as a stimulus for talk. Use of tape recorder.

Phase 3 Autumn Term 2007

Follow cohort of children who move from Nursery to Reception in September 2007

Continued participant observation in Reception classes and Reception/Year 1 playgrounds. Focus on any changes in behaviours and interactions resulting from children moving from Nursery to Reception/Year 1.

Semi-structured group interviews with Reception children, using pictures/stories/roleplay as stimulus.

Phase 4 Spring Term 2008, Summer Term 2008

Coding and analysis of data.

Ongoing discussions/feedback with Nursery/Reception /Year 1 staff and children.

Appendix C   Interview schedule

Semi-structured interviews with Reception children July 2007

I invited children to come and tell me about what they liked/disliked about playtime at lunchtime. Many had already had informal conversations with me in the playground, telling me what they enjoyed doing and what they did not like. I had been working with most of the children since they first came into Nursery.

I set up a table in a corner of the Reception class, and children came to be 'interviewed' when they wanted to do so, providing there was space at my table (room for three children at a time).

I recorded their answers in field notes. When they had finished answering my questions, I invited them to draw a picture of themselves playing in the playground at lunch time.

Questions

What do you like to do at lunch play?

Who do you like to play with?

What games do you like to play?

Do you like to play with any other boys/girls?

Is there anybody else you would like to play with?

Is there anything else you would like to play/do at lunch time?

Is there anything about lunch play you don't like?

Children interviewed
Ravi, Liam, Mani, Kumi, Jing, Tarak, Jason
Marsha, Amena, Zuhre, Hong, Nadia, Molly, Shona, Ayla, Lan, Chloe, Ayo

Appendix D   Story books

Children's Picture Books used in my research

I chose these picture books because they have characters involved in a range

of domestic activities and adventures, with visually interesting pictures, and a

variety of characters, including people from a range of ethnic backgrounds.

Cole, B. (1986) Princess Smartypants. Picture Lions.

Havill, J. (1990) Jamaica Tag-Along .Heinemann.

Hutchins, P. (1996) Titch and Daisy. Julia McRae Books.

Hutchins, P. (1993) Tidy Titch. Red Fox.

Moon, N. (1995) Something Special. Orchard Books.

Offen, H. (1985) Rita the Rescuer.Methuen.

Simeon, L. (1995) Marcellus. Black Butterfly.

Includes 3 minifigures!

Anakin Skywalker™   Naboo Pilot   R2-D2™
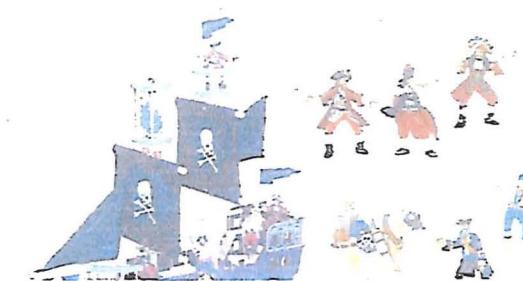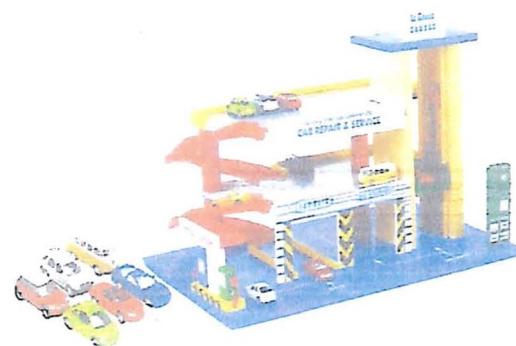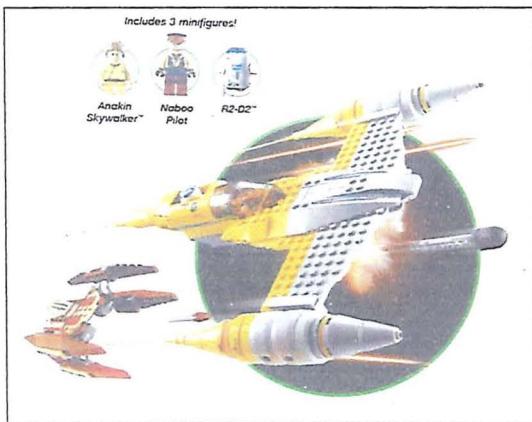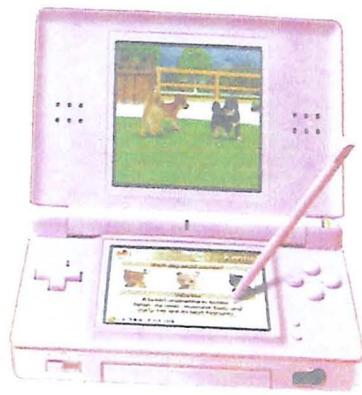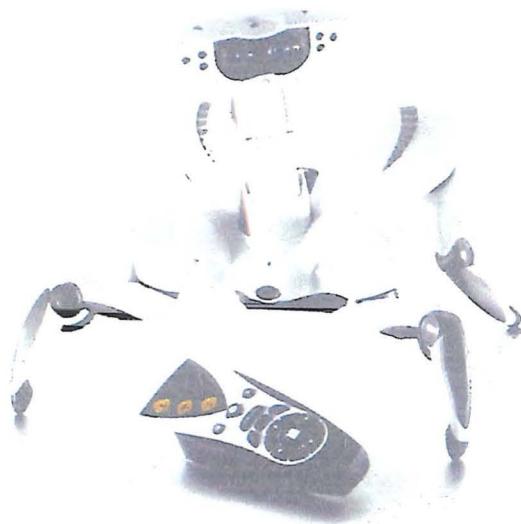
Appendix E   November 2006   Toy pictures analysis

I selected 8 large A4 pictures of common children's toys, from toy catalogues, and made up a sheet of 8 matching stickers, each depicting a different toy. I invited the children to have a turn to look at the pictures with me, and then asked them to choose 3 stickers of the ones they would like to keep. The task was open in the sense that they interpreted it as a choice either of a favourite toy they already had or liked to play with, or as something they would like to have. I worked with 2 children at a time, and they opted in to the activity. They seemed to enjoy it, and several requested more than one turn, (and more than 3 stickers!) Boys invariably chose to work with another boy, and girls with another girl. One problem I had was that other children would come and give advice, interrupting children who were having a turn, saying things like, "I chose such and such, you choose that too!" Zuhre told Tarak to choose the magic castle, in a very threatening way, and he obeyed her, despite my attempts to encourage him to choose for himself. As the magic castle was seen as a 'girl toy', this is even more remarkable, but Zuhre sometimes behaves in a very assertive way.

	magic castle	house	animals	cars	trains	ship	knights	fire st.
Ayo	*	*	*					
Lan	*	*	*					
Nina				*	*			*
Oni	*		*	*				
Sammie	*	*		*				
Chloe	*			*		*		
Yomi	*	*		*				
Sara	*		*			*		
Madison	*		*	*				
Madia	*		*	*				
Hong	*	*						*
Tagan	*							
Tia	*	*		*				
Melek	*	*						*
Ayla	*	*		*				
Zuhre	*		*					*
Ryan			*		*			*
Lewis				*			*	*
Jing				*	*			*
Mani			*	*		*		
Harrison				*			*	*
Reece			*		*	*		
Jake			*		*			*
Tarak	*		*			*		
Kumi				*	*			*
Daniel						*	*	*
Omar		*					*	*
Ravi								
Ben						*		*
Femi				*	*			*

Ben and Tu did not want to do stickers with me. Tu rarely joins in organised activities. Ben enjoyed looking at the pictures with Ryan. Said he would like to play with pirate ship and fire station.

Only boy to choose magic castle Tarak, did so under pressure from Zuhre. Only boy to choose dolls house was Omar, at a time when he wanted to be an angel in Nativity play. Said 'Barbie' for Magic castle and dolls house (points to pink roof when I say why, I cant see a Barbie)
Nina only girl not to choose magic castle.
Nina said cars, pointed to them. Showed me Nursery pirate ship which was out that day (I saw her playing with it earlier) Matched the pink on her dress to the pink on the magic castle, holding the skirt next to the picture and smiling. Said "I want a girl one."
Wanted dolls house extra, then animals, wanted more stickers!

The animals and trains were popular with both boys and girls. There was a lot of talk about the different animals they could see.
Yomi and Sammie talked lots about the animals, about their own experiences of going to the zoo and animals they have seen.

The majority of boys and girls chose stereotypically gender marked toys. Girls chose the magic castle, and boys chose pirate ship, fire station, cars and knights castle. This reflects the toy advertising and marketing strategies that emphasise different toys for girls and boys. As Mrs R said to me, children's preferences often come from home, in that they choose toys they are familiar with, that they have been given to play with at home. They sometimes told me they were choosing particular pictures because they enjoyed playing with the toy at home.
Reece knights castle "I've got one of them at the caravan."
Sammie chose the train set, not only because it is a favourite toy at home, but also because her Dad plays with the train set with her.
Sammie, V keen on train set (excited tone) "I've got one at home. I play it with my Daddy"

The most interesting thing arising from this survey is not so much the choices, as these follow a predictably stereotypical boy/ girl divide. Rather, I am interested in the emotional and embodied reactions of the children, and in the way that some pictures provoked an animated response in boys, whilst others provoked animation from girls. This suggests to me that some boys and girls become emotionally involved in gendered storylines at a very early age, and are beginning to gain pleasure from embodying certain ways of enacting these stories.

Girls often described 'boys' toys in a factual way, without becoming actively involved with the pictures.
Knights Castle Zuhre "It a house ...fighting games" (factual rather than animated)
Hong Re knights castle "It's a castle. My brother likes that."

However, it should be noted that 2 girls did choose the knights castle, perhaps reflecting an interest that they would like to pursue. One of them, Sara, often border crosses, and so it is not a surprising choice for her. I am more surprised by Chloe, but she was looking at the pictures with Sara, and may have been influenced by Sara's choice. Although she chose the sticker, Chloe said nothing about the knights castle, and told me firmly "The best one is the magic castle." She might have said this partly to make sure I knew she could position herself correctly as a girl. Although I did not mention anything about some toys being 'for girls' or 'for boys', she might have been concerned to show me that she is aware of what is 'correct.'

Girls became animated and started acting out storylines when they saw the magic castle, and to a lesser degree, the dolls house. They enjoyed showing their knowledge about family roles and fairy stories.

When looking at pics, said she wanted dolls house and magic castle.
Yomi Animated re magic castle
Yomi "The prince will kiss her" (princess)
Dolls house – Yomi pointed said "Mummy" "Daddy"

One character in the pirate ship provoked very different responses from boys and girls. There is a female figure in a circular enclosed tower, suspended above the sails on the ship. She appears to be wearing a blue dress and has long blonde hair. I confess that I had not noticed this figure, until it was pointed out to me by the children.

Omar got very giggly when saw a 'girl' figure on the pirate ship
Omar "He locked someone, girl, princess there" (pointing to 'princess' in the tower)
(Femi pointed to her and giggled as well. This is the first time I have noticed this figure in the picture.)

Yomi and Sammie Pirate ship
Yomi "The pirates have weapons, they are fighting" (factual)...
Sammie (points to princess figure in cage, sounds alarmed) "Pirates fighting. The princess is captured."
Yomi (with relish) "She's been taken to be married...they'll eat her up".
Sammie "No! (Looks closely) I think she's being taken somewhere!" (looks worried)
BM "Oh, we'll have to rescue her?"
Sammie "Yeah"
(music for carpet time)

Sammie seemed quite anxious about the fate of the 'princess', whilst Yomi enjoyed thinking of an awful fate for her, to be married, presumably forcibly, or worse, eaten up! Here, she draws on familiar fairy stories, where princesses are so often passive; they have things done to them rather than being active protagonists.

In contrast, boys often became involved in acting out storylines and making physical gestures in response to the 'fighting' 'action' toys pirate ship, knights castle and firestation. With the exception of Omar, they showed very little interest in the dolls house or magic castle.

Femi and Omar

Very animated about the pirate ship

Femi "I like that...shooting...batman"

Omar "He got a sword"

Femi "He killed him"

... Femi Showed no animation re magic castle.

Harrison shows great involvement with the pictures.

Magic castle

Harrison (pointing) "A man" (king) "Swordsman here. He going to cut him" (pointing to man on the horse, said with relish, swishing his arm about as if wielding a sword)

Harrison dolls house "Dolls house. Dollies (pointing to figures in house) "Girl, boy, boy, baby" (no question or prompt from me, H telling me what he sees in the pic, voice as if he giving me information, not personally involved or interested)

Harrison train "bus, bus, car, car, train, (factual, labelling, information giving tone) this is the bridge (becomes animated) 'boom' (makes 'blowing up' gestures)

Harrison firestation "Firemans...this is fire engine somebody in trouble, open the door and be driving vvrmvrrm" (making driving gestures, very animated)

Harrison pirate ship "That's the man" (admiring, pointing to pirate sword, wields an imaginary sword himself), whrang, wrang he cutting"

Harrison Knights castle "Some mans are fighting with them swords" (does lots of sword wielding gestures and sounds)

Reece became very animated when looking at the pictures of the knights castle and pirate ship. This is in contrast to his lack of interest in the dolls house. He was more interested in the design of the house than in the characters.

Reece "Go pying, piying" (makes sword thrusting gestures to and fro with his arm) ...Oh look at them stairs. Those guys got horses." (points to staircase up to castle turret and makes riding gestures after pointing to knights on horseback)

Reece pirate ship "A pirate, two pirates. One with a gun. That got a sword, and that one. They gone in." (points to pirates in turn, and shows where they are on the ship, then wields sword, waving his arm around)

Omar (Jan '07 enjoyed looking at pics with me.

Omar (re knights castle) "This is my favourite...they fighting."

317

BM "Why are they fighting?"

Omar "Cos he's a swordsman. He got a gun (pointing to the figures.)

Omar (re magic castle) "That princess flying. That a ghost, no it a witch do magic (waves his imaginary wand.) (pointing to king and queen, indicates how they are standing close together) "They liking each other, gonna cuddle and kiss."

Re pirate ship "I got one of those. You press his eye, it goes red. He gonna jump, he gonna kill, got a sword" (swishing arm around).

Reece dolls house "house" (no further comment)

BM "Who's in the house?"

Reece "A girl (points to doll upstairs) A boy" (points to doll downstairs at computer)

"Up the ladder (points to ladder for bunk beds,) you cant get up the ladder (points to balcony railings at front of top floor of house)

When Sara talks about the magic castle, she tells me and Chloe that the prince is going to kill the princess. I find this an interesting and unusual response, as princes in fairy tales usually rescue princesses, not kill them.

Sara Magic castle "That have princesses. Yeah (pleased, points to princesses) It a castle.

Sara "He (indicating man on horseback w sword) gonna kill the princesses."

BM "Why's he going to kill them?"

Sara "Cos he don't like princesses" (I have often observed her roleplay involves killing/dying incidents, also said she wanted to die after story one day. I asked her why he wanted to kill the princess. I did not ask any of the boys who have commented on "mans cutting and fighting"etc. It seemed to me different in tone, more serious rather than pure fantasy, for Sara, but I could be wrong. Try asking boys "why are they fighting?" seems an almost redundant question, after all, they are pirates and knights and that is what they do by definition! In magic castle stories, the prince usually comes to rescue the princess, not to kill her! But I don't think Sara said it because she is unfamiliar with the story format.)

Chloe "That's Beauty and the Beast"

Sara "No it not...That a boy. That the king. He gotta crown."

Argument re who is who.

Sara "I think shes a beauty... (points princess) there a wicked witch..."

Ravi was careful to show no interest in toys that he perceived as being 'for girls.'

Ayla to Ravi "Do you like this one?" (dolls house)

Ravi "No"

...BM "Would you like to play with this one?" (magic castle)

Ravi "No"

BM "Why not?"

Ravi "It's for girls"

BM "Why is it for girls?"

Ravi "Because!"(very firm voice, smile, as if don't you know that..!)

318

Appendix F
Letter to Parents

Goldsmiths
UNIVERSITY
OF LONDON

23rd February 2007

Dear Parents and Carers,

I am writing to introduce myself to those of you whose children have recently started at XXXXXX. I am a post graduate research student at Goldsmiths College. I am working with the children and staff in XXXXXX Nursery and Reception classes.

My research is about how young children develop individual gender identity and relationships with other children during the Foundation Stage of schooling. I will be reading stories and talking with children in class.

I would be pleased to discuss my work with you. I am in XXXXXX on Mondays and Fridays this term. If you would like to arrange a time to talk with me, please tell your child's teacher. I look forward to meeting you.

Yours faithfully,

Barbara Martin

Appendix G   Key to field notes

|	
…	pause
/	speaker interrupted
[ ]	material edited out
(comment)	background information, information re gestures, movements
???	inaudible responses
bold	emphasis given by speaker

Symbols adapted from Renold, 2005

Appendix H
Lan skipping with her girlfriends July 2007

 (Lan jumping in rope, Shona and Sara turning rope, Zuhre and Chloe waiting
their turn.)
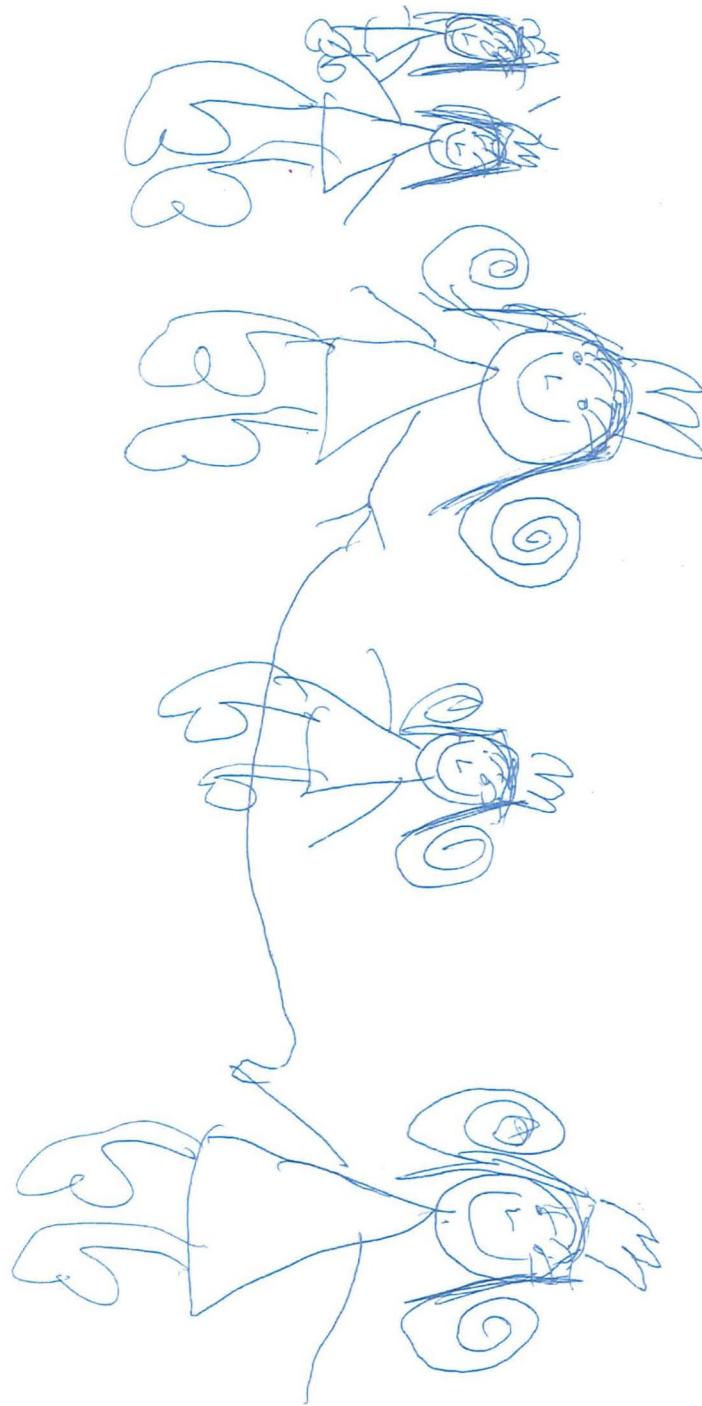
Appendix I   Children's self portraits

Ravi playing football June 2007
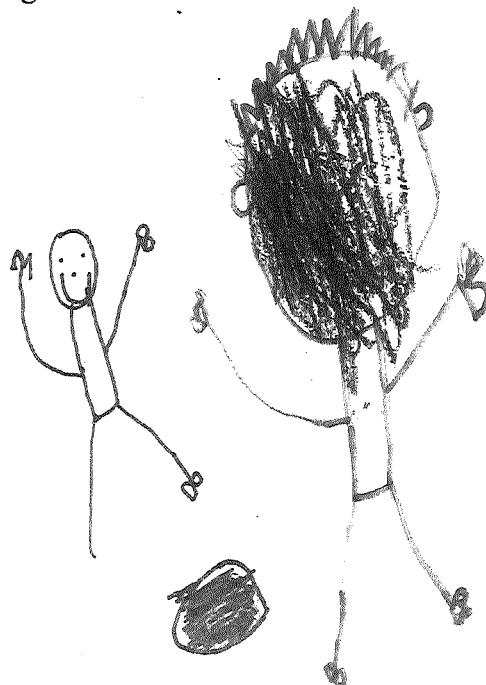
Appendix I Children's self portraits

Molly June 2007

Molly "I got a bag and silver shoes for wedding."
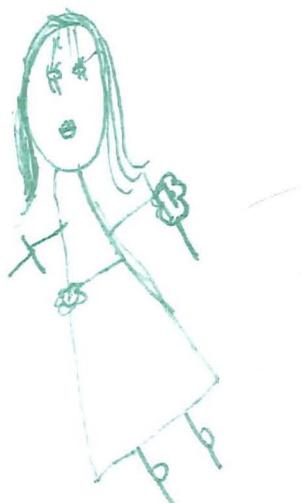
Appendix J   Use of Nursery spaces

Analysis of Plans of Nursery areas

Plan A December 2006

Nursery classroom

At the end of the Autumn Term, my data shows that some boys were dominating access to, and activities on the construction carpet, and the construction table.

Some older girls were dominating and controlling access to the roleplay area, and sometimes excluded boys from the roleplay area.

The computers and water tray were used by boys and girls. Ayla and Zuhre were particularly skilled on the computer and spent a lot of time there.

The writing area and collage table were used mostly by girls. Boys rarely chose to write or do collage.

Plan B June 2006

Nursery classroom

Following the changes in January 2007 (Older children moved into Reception, new intake into Nursery, new group of fulltime children in Nursery) use of classroom areas changed.

By the middle of the Summer Term, my data shows a group of older fulltime boys dominating all areas of the classroom.

Staff have established a second area for roleplay on the construction carpet, after a visit from the fire brigade. Staff have set up the area as a firefighters station, and it is dominated by boys. Girls rarely get access to this area, as boys deliberately exclude them. Prior to the setting up of the fire station, the older boys had taken control of the original roleplay area, but by June their preferred space is the fire station, so younger boys and girls now use the original roleplay area.

The older boys also dominate and control access to the activity tables off the carpet indoors.

Boys and girls use the computers, but access is often controlled by older boys. Girls do not dominate any indoor areas, and the writing table has now been moved to the (smaller) old milk table.

NB When staff organise activities they take mixed groups of girls and boys. The Nursery Nurse has been on leave for Summer Term, and a BSA has been standing in, with no replacement for the BSA. There are fewer staff organised activities, compared to the Autumn term. When not supervised by staff, the activity tables are usually occupied by a same-sex group.

Plan C December 2006

Nursery garden

Boys dominate activities at the construction table, and the area around the basketball net.

Girls use the roleplay area, buggies and playhouse.

The climbing frames are disputed territory.

Plan D June 2007

Nursery garden

The group of older fulltime boys dominate the construction table, the area around the basketball net, the area around the sandpit, the climbing frames, the grassy bank, and the area by the entrance gate.

The area around the gate has been developed as a football pitch by the older boys, using the gate as a goal.

Staff have developed the playhouse by adding a set of tools and builders props. Boys and girls now use the play house, but the group of older boys dominate the playhouse when they choose to do so.

Girls use the roleplay area, buggies and telephone. Some older girls have started to walk around the play area, linking arms and chanting. It may be that this is a way of asserting themselves in a situation where boys control and take up most of the space.

To summarise, from January 2007, the group of older fulltime boys control any area of the classroom or outdoor area they choose to play in.

Plan A
Nursery Classroom December 2006

Plan of Ash Vale Nursery

Appendix J Analysis of Nursery Spaces

Plan B
Nursery Classroom   June 2007

Plan of Ash Vale
Nursery
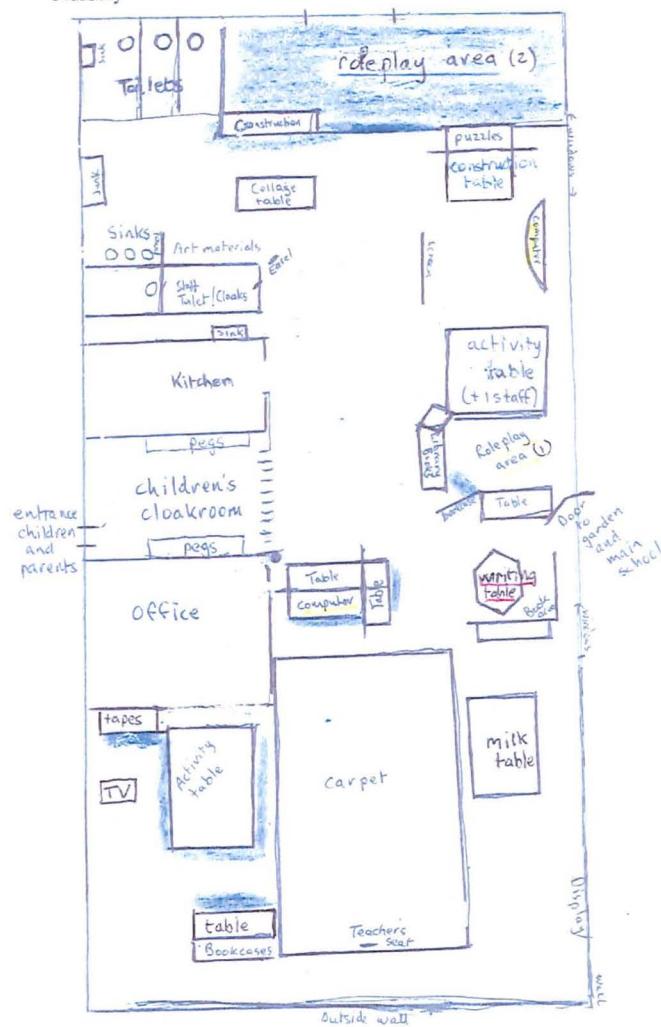
B) June 2007
— girls
— boys dominate
— girls and boys

Appendix J Use of Nursery spaces

Plan C

Nursery Garden December 2006
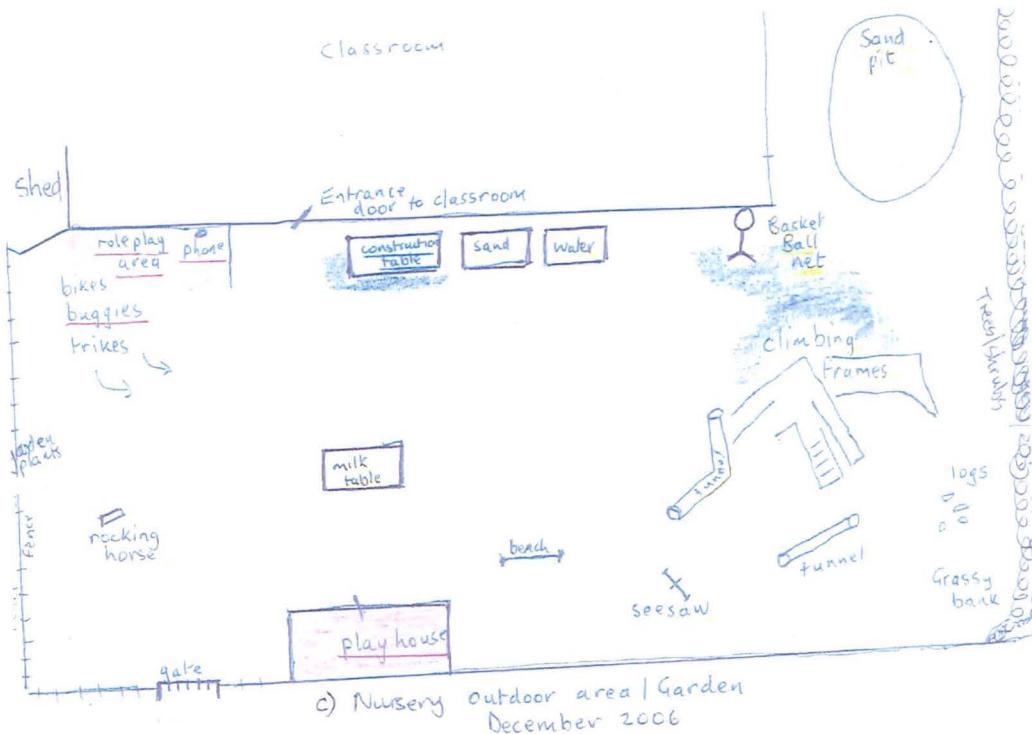
Key
— girls dominate
= boys dominate
  girls and boys

c) Nursery outdoor area / Garden December 2006

Plan D

Nursery Garden June 2007

b) Nursery outdoor area / Garden
June 2007
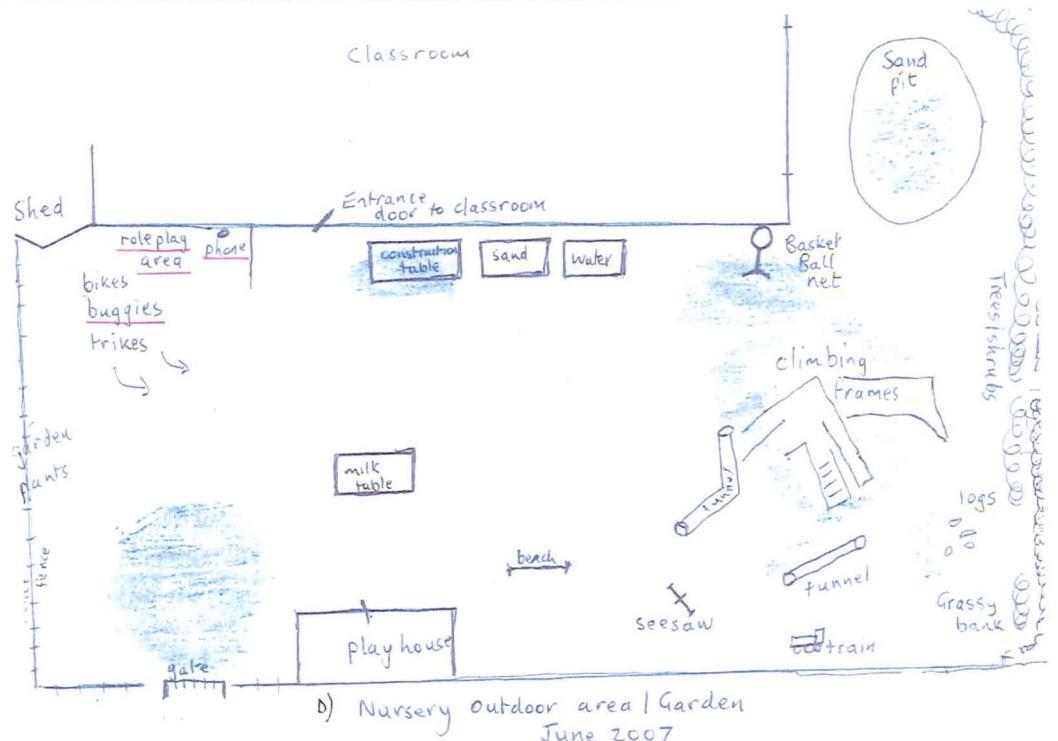
Key
— girls
— boys
— girls and boys

Appendix K   **Milk cartons**