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‘Doing’ gender in a rural Scottish secondary school: A case study

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Abstract

This ethnographic case study examines how pupils' gendered identities are constructed in one rural secondary school in Scotland. It utilises the work of Michel Foucault and Judith Butler to provide theoretical insight into how and why pupils take up particular gendered positions in the school. Data collection is primarily by ethnographic observation, supported by semi-structured interviews. The findings highlight the discursive role of peer interactions in affecting how pupils shape their gendered identities, with boys seen to be more affected by peer influences than girls. Subject choices emerged as the strongest gender-related curricular theme; girls in the school appear somewhat bound by gender norms when making subject choices throughout their school career. Insights into how some pupils and teachers perceive the rural space as a masculine one also emerged in the data. Overt femininity was seen as very much at odds with the rural landscape, meaning that some girls find conflict in how they construct their feminine identity. The findings also suggest that teacher discourse can reinforce traditional constructs of masculinities and femininities, and that some teachers' understandings of gender rely on binary views of girls and boys.

The findings are taken up in the study to make recommendations for policy and practice, and future research. A key recommendation highlights the need for teachers to have deeper and more sophisticated understandings of gender, an area which is currently neglected in both Scottish educational policy and in teacher education programmes. It also recommends that pupils are given the opportunity to gain a greater understanding of how their gender construction affects their educational experiences.

Finally, this research calls for further exploration into how young people shape their gendered identities within the rural setting, an area where there is a dearth of research.

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Chapter 1 – Introduction

1.1 Context

1.1.1 Background to the study

Since the 1990s in Scotland and the UK more generally, as well as in many parts of Europe, Australia, Canada and the United States of America, concerns regarding gender and education have shifted from girls' educational experiences to boys' experiences - and in particular, boys' (under)achievement (Francis, 2000b; Condie et al., 2006; Montgomery, 2009; Smith, 2010; Forbes, Öhrn & Weiner, 2011; Riddell, 2013). Recent discussions remain focused on the notion of boys' underperformance in school in comparison to that of girls. Researchers note that this continues to receive both widespread media and political attention (Francis, 2000a; Kehler & Martino, 2007; Moreau, 2011). However, a key area of neglect in these discussions is how young people shape or construct their gendered identities, and the potential role that this plays in their educational experience. In this conceptualisation, gender is seen as a flexible and socially constructed entity, one which should "be understood as a concept requiring analysis, rather than something that is already known about" (Järviluoma, Moisala & Vilkko, 2003, p.2).

Several years ago, my interest in the impact of gender on pupils' educational experiences led me to undertake a small-scale research study within the comprehensive Scottish secondary school in which I taught at the time. The study sought to explore the apparent underachievement of boys in school compared to girls, or what is commonly referred to as the 'gender gap', from the perspective of

the young people themselves. The principal findings suggested that the male participants viewed attitudinal factors such as peer influences, general work ethic, and attitudes to school work at home, to be of more relevance to the perceived 'gender gap', than issues relating to curriculum and pedagogy. Further, boys considered the role of the teacher, specifically the teacher/pupil relationship, to be of central importance in affecting their experience in school. In addition to extending my understandings of the complex interplay between gender and education far beyond my initial thinking, this study sparked a further interest in investigating gender issues within the secondary school context. This is one of the primary reasons I decided to embark on a further study. I have since ruminated on issues surrounding gender identity and how this identity might be shaped or constructed within the school setting, reflecting the view of Davison and Frank (2006) that "secondary schools are locations where students spend a great deal of time not only learning, but also navigating gendered identities" (p. 152). My thinking has remained focused on two prominent areas, each of which has contributed to shaping a clear rationale for this study. The first relates to how the notion of 'gender issues within education' is currently understood within the school, and the second relates to the school's rural setting and the role that this might play in affecting how pupils construct their gender identity. On the former point, having worked in secondary education for over 14 years, I find myself increasingly aware that gender is considered by many within schools as somewhat synonymous with the scrutiny of academic results, relying upon direct comparisons between boys and girls. This is reflective of the aforementioned national and international picture, where gender issues in schools are most often

couched in terms of the academic successes, or otherwise, of boys, compared to those of girls. As much as this may seem surprising to those who consider gender to be a highly significant and complex issue in terms of educational experience (as I do), and particularly to those involved in academic research, it is arguably less surprising when education policy relating to gender within Scottish education is considered. Here, a distinct lack of focus on the concept of gender quickly becomes apparent. Riddell (2013) asserts that the notion of gender within the field of education has become narrowly synonymous with the issue of boys' apparent underachievement in school. Forbes et al. (2011) support Riddell (2013) in suggesting that this potentially silences and marginalises issues relating to girls' education, in terms of attainment, wider educational and social achievement. Forbes et al. (2011) further conclude there to be "little interest in gender in Scottish educational governance", claiming that "gender is not seen as relevant or of the same level of importance as race and religion in education and social policy discourses" (p. 766). As such, "the un-gendered, individualised child is thus positioned at the 'heart' of services" (Forbes et al., p. 767).

The second point of relevance in terms of the context of this study links to the physical location of the school which provides the setting for this study. Bothy High School[1] can be found in one of the most rural areas in the otherwise fairly densely-populated Central Region of Scotland. The school is situated in the heart of a small

[1] Bothy High School is pseudonym. A 'Bothy' is an old Scots term for a farm building. Bothies served as a basic shelter and a storage facility and were also often used as a local gathering spot for farm workers, providing both accommodation and a place to socialise. They were seen as a community resource, available for all to use.

rural town and is surrounded by scenic views and beautiful countryside. The majority of pupils grow up on farms or in small hamlets and villages in the surrounding area, attending very small primary schools, often with less than 20 pupils in total. Importantly, the stunning rural location of the school provides more than a scenic backdrop for this study. It also offers a site for the enactment of masculinity and femininity that may be fundamentally different from that of the urban or suburban setting. In my initial stages of research planning, I was increasingly aware of a lack of gender-based research undertaken within the Scottish rural context. It became apparent to me that the majority of gender studies within Scottish education are undertaken within urban or suburban contexts. This is in keeping with the findings of studies undertaken elsewhere in the UK, the USA and Australia, that call for further research focusing on geographical location, including that set within the rural context (Dunkley, 2004; Cairns 2014; Ward, 2015; Casey, Mooney, Smyth & Payne, 2016). This realisation provided further impetus for a study which explores the ways in which pupils construct their gender identity, and the impact that this may have on the educational experiences of pupils, within a distinctly rural context.

1.1.2 Gender identity as a social construct

Connell (2009) argues that gender is "a social structure, but of a particular kind. Gender involves a specific relationship with bodies" (p.10). The sharp distinction between 'sex' and 'gender' was proposed by feminist theorists in the 1970s, 'sex' being the biological differences between the male and female human body, and 'gender' relating to the social construction; the difference between male and female personalities or the roles undertaken by each (Connell, 2009). This is

because the term ‘sex’ was becoming increasingly problematic as of a means of categorisation, particularly for many feminists, who noted that connotations of the term ‘sex’ led to assumptions that gender differences in behaviour were a biological inevitability. The term ‘gender’ emerged from the writings of Anne Oakley (Oakley, 1972) and was adopted as a means of describing and analysing behaviours linked to sex identification, from the social constructivist vantage point (Francis, 2006). By using the term ‘gender’, as opposed to ‘sex’ when indicating differences in behaviours, users were able to reflect a notion of a social, rather than a biological, influence.

This study is underpinned by the view that gender is both socially and culturally constructed (Butler, 1990; 1993; 1997; 2004; Connell, 1995; 2009; Francis, 2006); that is to say, “gender is not fixed in advance of social interaction but is constructed in interaction” (Connell, 1995, p.35). This position is borne out of the views of feminist theorists, notably Judith Butler, and is built upon the notion that there is no gender identity prior to the expression of gender. Instead, gender is constructed by the repetition of performative expressions (Butler, 1990), where ‘performativity’ refers to the performative constitution of gendered conventions. A more detailed consideration of Butler’s theory of performativity is provided in the Theoretical Framework Chapter, Chapter 3. In order to examine these ideas, this study predominately draws on the theoretical writings of Foucault (Foucault, 1974; 1979; 1980; 1981; 1988; 1994; 1998) and Butler (Butler, 1990; 1993; 1997; 2004).

1.2 Aims of the Study

This study aims to understand how gender construction impacts upon the ways in which young people perform the role of pupil within one rural secondary school. It is underpinned by an argument that the performance of gender is highly significant in terms of a pupil's educational experience. Conversely, it also supports the view that a pupil's educational experience has a notable impact upon the way in which they construct their gender identity. This study is concerned with exploring how gender identity is constructed both *for* and *by* pupils within the rural school context. The experiences of pupils both within the classroom and during other school based activities are explored as a means of revealing the discursive practices operating in and around the rural school environment in which these pupils find themselves. The role of the teacher is crucial here, as are the daily interactions between pupils, both within, and outwith, the classroom.

1.2.1 Research questions

Specifically, this study will address the following questions:

- How do interactions between pupils work to construct pupils' gender identities in one Scottish rural school?
- What role do subject choices and the wider curriculum play in gender construction within the rural school setting?
- How do teachers contribute to gender construction within the rural school setting, both in terms of their actions, and in their interactions with pupils?

This study takes the form of a case study, one which uses ethnographic research methods. This study does not claim to represent the lives or views of all Scottish pupils educated within the rural setting. Rather, it explores in depth, the experiences of a group of pupils within one Scottish rural secondary school. That said, the findings may resonate with researchers and teachers in other similar contexts. Issues surrounding generalisability, validity and reliability in relation to the qualitative case study are considered in detail in the Methodology Chapter.

1.3 Organisation of Dissertation

Having established within this introductory chapter, the context and background to the study, and having made mention of an existing gap in literature surrounding the rural context in Scotland in terms of research into gender and secondary schooling, the subsequent chapters are arranged, as follows:

Chapter 2 (Literature Review) - By way of a review of relevant literature, this chapter traces key contemporary themes relating to gender and education, latterly focusing on gender within the rural context. Here, a gap in literature in relation to the rural Scottish secondary school emerges.

Chapter 3 (Theoretical Framework) - Here, the theoretical literature which underpins this research, and upon which the theoretical framework is built, is considered in depth. Fundamentally, the notion of gender as a socially constructed entity is given attention within the post-structuralist framework. Michel Foucault's work is then given careful consideration, in order to illuminate theoretical issues particularly

relating to gender, power and discourse. The chapter concludes by looking at Judith Butler's theories of performativity and agency, both of which are central to this study.

Chapter 4 (Methodology Chapter) - This chapter outlines the methodological framework shaping this study. Theoretical and practical aspects of the chosen methodology are discussed herein, with a particular focus on explaining and justifying the ethnographic approaches to data collection and data analysis. Limitations of the study are considered and discussed, followed by a discussion of ethical issues and dilemmas.

Chapters 5-8 (Findings Chapters) - These chapters present an analysis of the findings of this study, and are structured around the prominent themes emerging from the data. Chapter 5 focuses directly on the rural location and the influence that this has upon pupils' gender construction within the school. In the three remaining findings chapters, the rural location provides the context, with each chapter exploring a different theme which emerged during the data collecting process. Chapter 6 presents data on the role of sexualised language in gender construction in girls and boys. Chapter 7 focuses on the role of 'playful banter' in constructing boys' gender identities, and Chapter 8 focuses on the interplay between the subject choices, the wider curriculum, and gender construction within the Scottish rural secondary context.

Chapter 9 (Tying the Threads Together) - This final chapter discusses the findings within the theoretical framework and in relation to the research questions posed at the outset. It then offers concluding thoughts on issues surrounding gender within the

rural Scottish secondary context. Drawing on the analyses built in the preceding chapters, this chapter considers the implications for the education profession, teachers and pupils. It ends by making recommendations of areas requiring further study.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

An abundance of literature surrounding gender issues in education exists. As such, a key matter in terms of providing a review of relevant literature for this study was not merely one of selecting literature, but also one of rejecting it. This chapter reviews literature that focuses on how young people construct their gendered identities and the impact this has upon various aspects of their educational life. The relationships between subject choices and gender are first considered, followed by literature surrounding how gender is conceived within the classroom. Further literature relating to the construction of masculinity and femininity within schools are then considered, encompassing: attitude to school work; academic achievement; behaviour; sexuality; physical appearance; and relationships with peers and teachers. There then follows a section on literature surrounding gender and place, latterly focusing on the rural context, which is of particular relevance to this study. Here, the interplay between gender construction and rurality is considered.

Whilst a key focus of this study relates to the influence of the rural setting on gender construction, it is in no way ignorant of research that demonstrates the influence of other social factors, such as class, race and ethnicity, upon gender construction. That said, it must be stated at the outset that in keeping with the homogenous ethnic identity of the school's pupil population, all of the participants in this study are white. The role of social class in affecting masculinity and femininity construction is increasingly brought to the fore in gender research. As such, this review gives due

attention to social class where it is highlighted in research as impacting upon how boys and girls construct their gender within the school setting.

2.2 Gendered Subject Choices in Schools

According to Smyth and Darmody (2009), gender differences in terms of subject choices in school remain a constant in Western societies. Croxford, Tinklin, Ducklin and Frame (2001) attribute gendered subject choices to deep-seated attitudes which result in some subjects being seen as more appropriate for girls than boys or vice versa. Within the Scottish context, Riddell (2013) notes that gender differences in subject uptake have proved remarkably resistant to change; subjects considered as 'male' and 'female' have experienced very little in the way of "boundary-crossing" (p.787). In particular, Riddell (2013) observes that, whilst there has been a limited increase in girls taking traditionally 'male' subjects, there is very little movement in the opposite direction. It is reasonable to conclude that such decisions by young people are, at least, part-influenced by their perceptions of gender and by how they construct their gender identities. Elsewhere in the UK, in the recently published research of Ward (2014; 2015) undertaken in the Welsh Valleys, school subject choices are noted as an important arena for performance of gender for boys in that they enable the construction of a particular form of masculinity.

In a Swedish study that seeks to contribute to the gender and subject-choice debate, Brandell and Staberg (2008) investigate student perceptions of mathematics as a subject, specifically whether it is perceived as a male, female or a gender-neutral domain. The study used both quantitative and qualitative data collected during 2001–

2004. Two large surveys were conducted; one in 2002 with 750 pupils, and one in 2003 with 550 pupils across 23 schools in total. Forty-eight students (24 female and 24 male) participated in interviews thereafter, following a preliminary analysis of the responses to the questionnaires. Brandell and Staberg (2008) conclude that there is a notable tendency for students to view mathematics as a 'male' subject, with older students appearing to hold more strongly gendered views. Furthermore, the belief that mathematics falls within the male domain is one held most strongly by the boys who participated in the school's science programme. No earlier studies concerning students' perceptions of mathematics as a male domain have been reported in Sweden, and thus, Brandell and Staberg are clear that it is not possible to trace and compare attitudes from the previous times. The findings of this study echo those of Mendick (2005) whose study explored why more boys choose to study mathematics than girls in England. The study collected interview data from pupils from post-compulsory advanced mathematics course in a sixth-form college. Mendick's research reveals that the young people position themselves in gendered, binary oppositional terms in relation to their perceptions of their mathematical ability. It also explored the social-cultural construction of gender and mathematics within western society and popular culture, one which constructs mathematical ability as being "natural, individual and masculine" (p.204) and thus leads to difficulty for girls and women to identify themselves, and be identified as good at mathematics. Shaw (2009) contributes to this debate by asserting that mathematics is one of the most masculinised of subjects within the UK, both in terms of who chooses to study it, and how it is conceived culturally. The author observes this combination to be mutually reinforcing; subjects seen as being masculine attract boys and men whilst deterring

girls and women, and vice versa. Shaw's work provides further insights into how mathematics is conceived: "gender is one of the 'not-so-hidden meanings' of mathematics" (p.89), stating that its reputation as a difficult subject is, in part, as a result of it sharing "some characteristics for which men are valued - that is, of being potent, precise, authoritative, determined, demanding, and willing to take the grand view" (p.90).

Early research by Francis (2000a) supports the view that 'the sciences' (comprising subjects such as mathematics, science and information technology) have traditionally been constructed as masculine in school, with 'the arts' (art, languages and humanities) perceived as falling within the feminine domain. This binary, according to Francis, carries a hierarchy in terms of status, with the masculine subjects appearing to be more difficult and therefore more important than the feminine subjects. Francis (2000a) states the purpose of the study was not to explore the reasons behind why pupils see subjects in a sex-based stereotypical way, rather it sought to investigate whether there had been any shifts in pupils' constructions of gender as a result of changing perceptions of gender and improving academic results of girls in the science subjects. The findings reveal that there had been significant shift in pupils' perceptions of gender and subject choice in the decade leading up to the study. This related to subject preferences, where traditionally gendered choices were far less common. That said, pupils' least favourite subjects appear to follow a more traditional trajectory, with the sciences and mathematics remaining the least favourite amongst girls, and modern languages the least favourite for boys. Francis (2000a) calls for educationalists to highlight the potential of all pupils in all subject

areas, regardless of gender, as opposed to, for example, encouraging competition between boys and girls, which may lead to possible feelings of inadequacy.

A study undertaken in the Republic of Ireland by Smyth and Darmody (2009) also considers the issue of subject-uptake, with a focus on the often male-dominated craft technological subjects. The researchers point out that, whilst past research has tended to focus on attitudinal factors and gender stereotyping within wider society, increasing attention is now being paid to ways in which schools unwittingly encourage gendered uptake in subject areas. As such, Smyth and Darmody sought to examine the role of school provision, school policy and student choice in shaping gender differences in the uptake of technical subjects. Strong gender differences are reported as evident in the uptake of ‘male’ craft technological subjects by girls. Commonalities are also reported in relation to subjects that are constructed as ‘male’. Smyth and Darmody (2009) argue that such persistent gendering of subjects has implications for pupils, in this case, particularly working against some girls in terms of the skills acquired in school, their engagement in education, and the education, training and career opportunities open to them when they leave school. They also note that school policy and practice regarding subject provision and choice can impact upon the subject choices pupils make, thus potentially affecting such trends in gender-led choices.

A recent study by van der Vleuten et al. (2016) suggests there to be little in the way of change regarding the influence of gender on pupils’ subject choices. Drawing data from a longitudinal study in the Netherlands involving young people at aged 15 -16 (N = 1062), van der Vleuten et al. (2016) argue that the young people in the

study are led by gender expectations in terms of what is ‘appropriate’ male and female behaviour. This, they argue, can affect educational choices by influencing how pupils evaluate their competence in certain subjects (competence beliefs), what they find important in a future occupation (occupational values) and what school subjects they prefer (subject preferences). The findings reveal differences between boys and girls; boys’ gender expectations affect their occupational values and subject preferences, whereas for girls it shapes their competence beliefs. Van de Vleuten et al. note that this leads boys to gender-stereotypical educational choices. They conclude that these findings support the idea that gender expectations are stricter for boys than for girls and that this may prevent men from entering more feminine career tracks. This chimes with the research findings of Riddell (2013) as discussed at the start of this section.

2.3 The Binary (Op)positioning of Boy and Girl

Francis (2000b) asserts that oppositional constructions of gender are perpetuated in the classroom and as such, a “sensible girl’/silly boys” (p.66) binary can dominate pupils’ views of gender construction. Interestingly, this also appears to reflect the way in which gender is conceived by some teachers (Allard, 2004; Jones & Myhill, 2004; Cushman, 2011; Wardman, 2016). Major and Santoro (2014) draw a similar conclusion, observing a lack of understanding amongst teachers in relation to the complexities of gender. This includes a lack of appreciation of gender as a fluid, performed social and cultural construct (Oakley 1972; Butler 1990; 1993; 1997; 2004; Connell 1995; 2009), as well as a lack of understanding about how gender “intersects with other markers of identity to influence their own and their students’

attitudes, expectations and beliefs" (Major & Santoro, 2014, p. 2). This, Major and Santoro (2014) conclude, can lead to the stereotypical, dichotomous view of gender dominating teachers' views of girls and boys. Major and Santoro, reflecting the view of Skelton (2009) and Cushman (2011), also conclude there is a lack of focus on gender issues in education policy and teacher education programmes, noting this as a key contributing factor to teachers' limited understanding of gender. They call for gender to be an explicit part of teacher education, otherwise such unawareness of teachers' own contributory role in how pupils shape their gendered identities may remain unchallenged, to the possible detriment of girls' and boys' educational experiences. More recently, Wardman (2016) observes gender stereotyping amongst teachers (and pupils) whereby girls are constructed as hard working, responsible and mature, and boys as the opposite - lazy, irresponsible and immature. Teachers' influence, as Major and Santoro (2014) assert, should not be understated, given that the ways in which identity is constructed in the classroom are "largely determined by dominant discourses and the discursive practices of teachers" (p.13).

The literature reviewed in this study illustrates that gender is often conceived by both teachers and pupils in binary terms. However, in recent times, literature has increasingly emerged on the multiplicity of genders in schools and on issues relating to transgender and gender nonconforming youths (Sausa, 2005; Rands, 2013; Dowshen et al. 2016; Jones et al. 2016). Research literature also exists around how teachers and schools are both reacting to, and dealing with, these issues (Ryan, Patraw & Bednar 2013; Case & Meier, 2014; Swanson & Gettinger, 2016). Whilst acknowledging that these emerging literary themes are not a specific focus of this

study, it is nonetheless worth highlighting that they are both of interest and relevance to the exploration of issues surrounding gender and education.

Within the secondary school setting, Francis (2000b) reports the dichotomous, binary view of gender as reconceptualised by pupils in terms of girls' maturity versus boys' immaturity. Beyond this, Francis (2000b) also concludes that the means by which boys construct their masculinity tend to be more visible than those employed by girls, describing boys as being "far more physically active" (p.42) in the classroom than girls. This, she suggests, is linked to their struggle to construct themselves as masculine through a demonstration of power and physical strength over others. That said, girls are not simply 'passive', but tend to use other means to assert their presence in the classroom, which is arguably, as Francis (2000b) points out, "an aspect of their construction of femininity" (p.48). This is considered more fully in later discussion surrounding femininity construction. The following section focuses on literature relating to boys and masculinity construction in school.

2.4 Constructing the Masculine

2.4.1 Hegemonic masculinity

Whilst a considerable body of research has built up around patterns of masculinity over the last 20 years, as Connell (2008) states, perhaps the most crucial conclusion of this research is that there is no single pattern of masculinity in all cultures and in all periods of history. There is a plethora of evidence to suggest that multiple patterns of masculinity - and indeed femininity - exist (Connell, 2008). One such construct of

masculinity that appears to be of particular interest in relation to the educational experiences of boys is that of 'hegemonic' masculinity. This concept, is, in short, understood as a 'normative' form of masculinity, where the emphasis is on male dominance, anti-femininity and unshakeable heterosexuality:

> Hegemonic masculinity can be defined as the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women (Connell, 1995, p. 77).

Given that the basic tenet of hegemonic masculinity is one of dominance over women, it is unsurprising that physical violence is often considered characteristic of such a gender construction. That said, it is not a taken-for-granted feature:

> Hegemony did not mean violence, although it could be supported by force; it meant ascendancy achieved through culture, institutions, and persuasion (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 832).

This conception of masculinity, despite having influenced recent thinking about gender studies and men considerably, is not without its critics. Connell & Messerschmidt (2005) highlight serious criticism from various directions: sociological, psychological, poststructuralist, and materialist. They also note that which has come from outwith the academic world, citing an internet backlash where

it was conceived as "an invention of New Age psychologists' determined to prove that men are too macho'" (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p.830). Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) have sought to rethink the concept of hegemonic masculinity, and in doing so, have attempted to respond to criticism which has been laid upon it. The authors put forward a reformulation of the concept, focusing on four recommendations: a more complex model of gender hierarchy which highlights the agency of women; clear recognition of the geography of masculinities with an emphasis on the interplay among local, regional, and global levels; a more specific treatment of embodiment linked to privilege and power; and a more direct emphasis on the dynamics of hegemonic masculinity that recognises internal contradictions and the possibilities of movement toward gender democracy.

2.4.2 Masculinity, peer pressure and sexuality

Notwithstanding the aforementioned criticism, the concept of hegemonic masculinity has provided a useful means of exploring aspects of boys' educational experiences. One such example relates to gender stereotype behaviour, and the resulting perceived pressures and constraints imposed by such forms of hegemonic masculinity. This is highlighted in a study by Kehler and Martino (2007) that focuses on seven boys who attended two different schools: one in the mid-west United States and the other in a major Australian city. These boys had participated in a six-month ethnographic research study during the final semester of their secondary school academic career and had been identified by their teachers as exhibiting gendered behaviours that were not typical of many of their male classmates. Kehler and Martino (2007) assert that boys often exemplify the extent to which the norms governing hegemonic

masculinity impose constraints on ‘being yourself’. They call for a focus on boys’ own self-awareness of, and capacity to deal with, these social relations. Moreover, Kehler and Martino (2007) also claim that boys are literate about the social practices of masculinity that impact on their everyday lives at school, observing that the boys are heavily influenced by their peers in relation to masculinity construction. For example, a number of the boys interviewed by Kehler and Martino (2007) highlight the role played by peers (in this case, other boys) in “policing acceptable masculinity” (p.97), a matter also noted by Martino (1999). This is linked to challenges faced in expressing feelings, accentuated by the need to be “normal” (p.97) and accepted by their peer group. Indeed, the powerful influence of the peer group in regulating masculinities is increasingly acknowledged in research (Martino, 1999; Connell, 2000; Warrington, Younger & Williams, 2000; Swain, 2004; Smith, 2007; Smith, 2010; McCarry, 2010; Ward, 2014, 2015; Huuki & Sunnari, 2015; Wardman 2016). In the research findings of Ward (2015), the author asserts that one group of participants, known as ‘The Valley Boiz’ performs their own “hegemonic version of masculinity, based upon physical sporting prowess” (p.47). This mirrors earlier findings of Swain (2004) who concludes that the most prevalent demonstration of hegemonic masculinity draws on physical strength and athleticism. This position is apparently supported through influential roles offered by the school as a result of boys’ sporting success, further supported by the school’s sport uniform, which adds to the “front of the performance” (p.47). Similarly, Swain (2004) notes that in each of his three research sites, hegemonic masculinity performance manifests itself through competitive sport, speed, physical strength and toughness. Wardman (2016) evidences peer pressure as acting as an intervention mechanism when

individuals are seen not to conform to gender norms. Wardman's ethnographic study utilises observation fieldnotes and focus group discussions, and draws on theoretical work of Foucault, Levinas and Butler for analytical purposes. Wardman (2016) notes that the dominant discourse practices of gender that prevail see responsibility as a feminine pursuit, and violence and irresponsibility as representing masculine traits. Her study focuses on the latter, highlighting the pressure on boys to prove their masculinity through aggressive means. Wardman (2016) concludes that gendered discourses based on biological understanding of gender, coupled with peer pressure, work to reinforce the misconception that violence and irresponsibility are 'naturally' masculine traits.

Research by Huuki and Sunnari (2015) examines the relationship between peer cultures and hegemonic forms of masculinity at a micro level via a case study of one schoolboy in a rural school in Northern Finland. The study explores the challenges faced by boys in balancing compassionate concern with culturally accepted or hegemonic forms of masculinity, focusing on the micro-politics of gendered practices in boys' interactions. The article draws on data from four interviews with one boy, Mikael, - twice when aged 12, one when aged 15 and one when aged 19. The findings reveal the strong tensions between dominant forms of masculinity and the concept of compassion. The concept of compassion is taken by Huuki and Sunnari (2015) to represent "the ability to imagine the experience of another human being, including the capacity to see another person as an end in itself and not a mere means" (p.3).

Huuki, Manninen and Sunnari (2010) focus on illustrating how humour, recognised as an important means of constructing culturally accepted forms of masculinity, is also seen as an important way of elevating boys' social status amongst their peers. Drawing on data from interviews and observations across three schools, the findings reveal that whilst humour is often used in a positive, inclusive and uniting way, it is also used in an exclusive, aggressive or violent manner, as a means by which boys cultivate their masculine identity. This is often at the expense of other boys. Huuki et al. (2010) also suggest that mock homosexual performances between high-status heterosexual boys are commonplace in boys' masculinity construction and are seen as means by which the boys attempt to further elevate or maintain their social status. Huuki et al. conclude that in order to act as a resource for gaining status, these performances have to be combined with humour. Such performances may be considered as ridiculing non-heterosexuality, and also as a way of consolidating the group participating in these 'humourous' acts; that is to say, providing a resource for "confirming camaraderie" (p.375) amongst groups of boys. According to the authors, only those whose social status was high enough were able to participate in these performances without risking ridicule or having their heterosexuality (a fundamental ingredient in their masculine identity) questioned.

Sexuality and gender construction is also a theme in research by Smith (2007), where the open resistance to working hard in order to avoid being labelled as 'gay' by peers is seen as highlighting the link between acceptable masculinity and sexuality. Here, homosexuality appears to reflect the antithesis of masculine behaviour- a point also raised by Martino (1999), Smith (2007) and Haywood and Mac an Ghaill (2012).

Smith (2007) goes further by arguing that some teachers paradoxically act as "cultural accomplices" (p.179) in supporting such constructions of masculinity, claiming that research evidence suggests this to be, at least in part, a result of pressures to tackle the apparent boys' underachievement phenomenon. Smith (2007) posits the notion that some teachers "courted the admiration of 'macho lads'" (p.181) in efforts to establish 'friendly' relations, with the hope of improving classroom behaviour and pupil engagement in learning. This finding is echoed in the research of Pascoe (2012) which reveals that teachers most often failed to intervene in incidents where boys were seen to affirm their dominant masculinity and heterosexuality in school by way of "touching rituals" (p.97). These were seen to range from playful flirtation to assault-like interactions towards girls. This lack of intervention is, in effect, a means of supporting such hegemonic and sometimes aggressive forms of masculinity.

Some research suggests that homophobic attitudes are lessening in schools, and that contemporary masculinities are much more fluid, flexible and open, particularly in relation to sexuality (Anderson, 2009). Anderson refers to this as 'inclusive masculinity'. McCormack (2012) shares this view, concluding within his research that his male participants were more comfortable being physically affectionate with one another than had been noted in some of his previous studies with men. This, he suggests, indicates that homophobic attitudes have seen a reduction in schools. That said, when considering the findings, particularly in terms of generalisability, it is important to take account of the social status of the participants, given that the study

takes place in a private, fee-paying school. The role of social class in influencing how boys construct their masculine identity is not to be underestimated.

A distinct contrast in findings is provided by the aforementioned research by Ward (2015), where homophobic attitudes appear to remain prevalent amongst the working-class boys. One group of boys, referred to as the 'emos' was observed as presenting an alternative version of working-class masculinity, and as a result was subordinated by others for not adhering to the norms of masculinity within their local area. In order to counter-balance their alternative masculinity and thus be seen to adhere to the conventional norms of the hegemonic masculine identity as is the norm in their geographical area, Ward (2015) notes that the group overtly projected itself as "strongly heterosexual or homophobic in terms of sexuality" (p.104). This is seen as further demonstrating the boys' desire to 'fit in' as a result of peer pressure. A further viewpoint is put forward by Pascoe (2012) in exploring the relationship between masculinity and sexuality within the suburban, working-class American High School setting. The author argues that adolescent masculinity in this case study is almost synonymous with heterosexuality. By engaging in public practices of extreme heterosexual behaviour, some boys demonstrate their particular form of masculinity, whilst simultaneously demonstrating their dominance over others (i.e. girls). Pascoe (2012) refers to such sexualised discursive practices and interactions as 'compulsive heterosexuality' (p.86). It also serves to defend boys from being labelled as 'gay' (a fag). Pascoe concludes that the word 'fag', commonly used in discourse in the school, does not necessarily refer to sexuality. If you are known as a 'fag', it does not always mean you are a homosexual male - but it does put into

question your masculinity. In other words, being called ‘fag’ is not conducive to being seen as masculine male. In fact, being labelled as such in the school was seen as the worst possible insult. Pascoe asserts that understanding the word fag as homophobic obscures the gendered nature of this term and masks the relationship between masculinity and this form of insult. Boys risked the label if they exhibited any type of ‘unmasculine’ behaviour, which may include “being stupid or incompetent, dancing, caring too much about clothing, being too emotional, or expressing interest (sexual or plutonic) in other guys” (p.57). He also observes it to be a term used predominantly by white boys, and most often toward their heterosexual peers. Pascoe (2012) refers to the boys’ constant use of the word fag and their repeated mock imitations of fags as “fag discourse” (p.60). It serves as a constant and public reminder to themselves and others that they risk becoming fags, should their masculine identity slip in any way. The fag discourse was also seen as key to the humorous interactions often witnessed amongst groups of boys. Reflecting the findings of Huuki, Manninen, Sunnari (2010), such interactions were seen as central to how boys built and maintained their peer relationships.

It is worth highlighting at this point that there is research to demonstrate that peer influences affect girls as well as boys. For example, Holden’s (2002) study suggests that girls and boys claim that many of the pressures to conform to gender expectations come from peer interactions within the classroom. That said, McCarry (2010) reports that the impact of the peer group appears to be significantly different for girls and boys (with boys being far more influenced by peers than girls). McCarry notes that some boys appear very aware of links between peer interactions and the

need to conform to a form of normative masculinity. Whilst McCarry' s (2010) work looks specifically at issues relating to young people's perceptions of gender and domestic violence, it nonetheless provides insights which are relevant to this study as it provides as a means of exploring young people's conceptualisations of gender and the subsequent impact upon interpersonal relationships between men and women. The qualitative study, undertaken across 10 schools in Glasgow, Scotland, utilised focus group interviews to elicit the views of 77 young people aged between 15 and 18. The theme of peer pressure was seen as specific to boys, with some boys reporting overwhelming pressure to conform to a hegemonic and culturally acceptable form of masculinity. Even where boys chose not to adopt or conform to such forms of masculinity, the pressures to do so in order to be accepted by peers was strongly felt (McCarry 2010).

2.4.3 Masculinity and (under)achievement

The link between hegemonic constructions of masculinity and underachievement has been illustrated in the findings of a number of studies in Scotland (Condie et al. 2006; Riddell, 2013) and numerous beyond (Willis, 1977; Mac an Ghaill, 1994; Francis, 1999; 2000b; Smith 2007; Francis, Skelton & Read, 2010). In Scotland, according to Riddell (2013), it appears that the dominant masculine culture negatively impacts on the achievements of boys in school, particularly militating against those from more disadvantaged backgrounds. These findings chime with those of Smith (2007), in the aforementioned study undertaken in England. Indeed, the pressure on boys to conform to a notion of masculinity which is 'un-female, active and cool' is widely acknowledged (Epstein, 1998; Martino, 1999; Francis,

2000b; Martino & Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2005). Central to this is the deliberate avoidance of appearing to engage in academic work (Epstein, 1998; Francis, 1999; 2000b; Jackson, 2006). Warrington, Younger and Williams (2000) observe that for boys, masculinity construction frequently entails challenging authority, drawing attention to themselves, pretending not to care about work and adherence to 'laddish[2]' behaviour. As early as the 1970s, the seminal research of Willis (1977) demonstrated that working class 'lads' often consider the notion of masculinity to be incompatible with that of academic success. Research in this area persists, and has been taken up from various positions. For example, Jackson (2002) claims that self-worth, which, many would argue, is conducive to the development of feelings of self-efficacy, is inextricably linked to performances of 'laddish' behaviour for some boys. It is a "self-worth protection strategy" (p.37), a way of protecting oneself from the risk of being judged as 'feminine'. Jackson (2002) develops this argument by comparing key 'self-worth protection' characteristics with 'laddish' behaviour observed by researchers and reported by teachers and pupils. Jackson posits that, whilst achievement itself is not always seen as a problem for boys, working to achieve is seen as a problem. This notion is also attested by Martino and Meyenn (2002) who claim that a 'fear of failure' has links with students' constructions and conceptions of masculinity and as a result, impacts negatively on their motivation towards school work, enjoyment of school and achievement.

[2] The term 'lad' from which 'laddish' derives, is often used to depict white, working-class, boys who involve themselves in anti-social, and anti-school, behaviour.

As Francis, Skelton and Read (2010) observe, whilst such tensions clearly exist between academic success and popularity of pupils - particularly for boys - there are, nonetheless, some who appear to succeed in both areas simultaneously. Francis, Skelton and Read (2010) explore this by way of a qualitative study with a sample of 71 high-achieving pupils aged 12-13 years old. Of the pupils involved, 22 were identified as being both popular and high achieving. The findings of the study suggest that not all academically successful pupils are marginalised as 'geeks', nor do all boys utilise a masculinity construct relying upon academic underachievement in order to maintain social status. The pupils report that an important tool for maintaining their simultaneously high-status and high-achieving identities is their physically attractive appearance. On this point, the authors are keen to remind us that notions of physical attractiveness, like gender, are also socially constructed. For boys, their ability to succeed in sporting activities is also paramount. The findings of Francis, Skelton and Read (2010) also demonstrate that, in their constant attempts to appear effortless in their work, the high achieving and popular pupils are "engaged in constant and perhaps arduous identity work to maintain their classroom subjectivities" (p.335), employing normative gendered performances and practices in doing so. Despite this, pupils appeared able to strike the careful balance between achievement and social status, thus belying notions that the two cannot go hand-in-hand. Francis, Skelton and Read (2010) conclude by calling for further research into how some pupils appear to maintain a high-status/high-achievement identity in the classroom, an area which they consider to be under-researched. Mendick and Francis (2012), in their viewpoint article, support the observation that there is a lack of research into high-achieving boys *and* girls. They, like Skelton, Francis and Read

(2010) attribute this, at least in part, to the ongoing focus on underachievement in schools and the supposed gender gap in terms of the academic attainment boys and girls.

Similarly, Skelton and Francis' (2011) study explores how some boys simultaneously manage to negotiate the role of high achiever in terms of literacy, with popular, high status constructions of masculinity. The authors begin with the observation that improving the literacy skills of boys remains a priority for governments, schools and teachers alike. They also note that there is evidence to suggest that girls' results in literacy are stronger than those of boys. That said, as Skelton and Francis (2011) highlight, there is also evidence which not only demonstrates some boys doing very well in literacy, but also that they appear to "effectively manage being seen to be skillful at English whilst maintaining a position of "proper boy" (p.457), that is to say, able to adhere to a hegemonic form of masculinity. As previously discussed, such a construction of masculinity often relies upon shying away from academic success (Francis, 1999; Martino, 1999; Francis, 2000b; Jackson, 2006). Numerous earlier studies have revealed that for boys, being good at anything can risk being classified as a 'nerd' or a 'boffin' (Martino, 1999; Jackson, 2006). However, being good at 'feminine' subjects such as English (Skelton & Francis, 2011), presents a risk to their heterosexuality. As previously mentioned, heterosexuality is seen as an essential ingredient of hegemonic or high-status masculine identity. As one boy in an early study by Martino (1995) asserts, "most guys who do English are faggots" (p.135). Skelton and Francis (2011) argue that some of the academically able boys in their research appear to re-work the 'proper

boy' masculinity construct to produce a new or "Renaissance Masculinity" (p.457). This is, in effect, a "repackaged hegemonic masculinity" (p.474); one which allows for the successful incorporation of 'feminine' attributes, such as those associated with having strong literary skills, into the 'proper boy' construct. In attempting to address issues raised in their study, Skelton and Francis (2011) call for discussions involving boys around "the ways in which dominant modes of masculinity shape their engagement with literacy" (p.473).

Issues of social class, academic success and gender construction in boys are brought to the fore in Ward's (2014) study. For one particular group of boys in this study, whom Ward refers to as 'The Geeks' (p.709), the challenge faced involves successfully presenting an academic and studious form of working-class masculinity, one which lies in contrast to the more traditional working-class forms of masculinity in the Welsh Valleys. Ward concludes that these boys, restricted by their industrialised heritage, "offer a hybridised form of masculinity" (p.722), which draws upon the traditional form of masculinity and simultaneously balances their own academic desires and abilities. Thus, the cultural and industrial legacy of a particular geographical location can place pressure upon young men in relation to how they construct their masculine identity. Ward (2014) concludes that working class boys must work much harder than those from privileged backgrounds in order to experience success.

Ingram (2011) observes that whilst much research has focused on the failure of working-class boys to succeed in education, far less has been said about working-

class boys' experiences of educational success. Ingram highlights the conflict faced by some working-class grammar school boys in managing two contrasting identities simultaneously. Ingram draws on Bourdieu's theory of habitus to explore the complexities faced by these academically successful boys in forging an identity which is at odds with their working-class background. As Ingram asserts, working within two different social fields puts considerable emotional pressure on the boys, with potential consequences for their social mobility. Ingram (2011) calls for further research into the psycho-social aspect of school mobility for high-achieving working-class boys. An earlier case study by Reay (2002), 'Shaun's Story', also provides an interesting perspective on white working-class masculinities and academic work in school. This paper tells of a motivated, well-behaved, poor, white, working-class pupil, Shaun, who attends an all-boys comprehensive school in London. Data collection took the form of a series of eight interviews over a four year period, bridging Shaun's move to secondary school. This inner city school is described as a failing school. Brought to fore is the conflict felt by Shaun in simultaneously attempting to achieve academically in a challenging school environment, whilst maintaining his social position within his peer group. The article reveals the combination of these two, or "double perception of the self" (p.226) proves an enormous, almost unbearable burden for Shaun throughout his school career. As the author notes, the protagonist in this story bucks the trend in term of normative understandings of the relationship between gender, social class and schooling, putting into question dominant depictions of white working class masculinities. Importantly, Reay (2002) also asserts that Shaun's working class status acts as a "fixing mechanism" (p.224), serving to constrain him educationally.

Issues surrounding the 'Failing boys' argument remain. Reay (2002) argues that such issues cannot be solved by school-based initiatives because the problems will remain until "social processes of male gender socialisation move away from the imperative of privileging the masculine and allow boys to stay in touch with their feminine qualities" (p.232).

There now follows a review of the key themes emerging from literature relating to girls and femininity construction in school.

2.5 Constructing the Feminine

2.5.1 Physical appearance and sexuality

In terms of femininity construction, research demonstrates that girls are less vociferous than boys in the classroom setting, and are less directly assertive (Francis, 2000b). Some earlier research by Öhrn (1993), had, as a means of moving the focus away from the "prominent position of boys in the classroom" (p.147), considered ways in which girls gain influence and control in school via their construction of femininity. In this Swedish study of 15-16 year old students, Öhrn (1993) reports that the interviews with the girls show them to be willing to use "gender-related expectations" (p.150) in order to gain advantage in the classroom setting. This relates specifically to their attempts to "curry favour" (p.151) with teachers, often "being nice, polite, smiling, appearing interested, flattering the teacher, and never questioning anything" (p.151). Öhrn's teacher interviewees suggested that girls 'use' their attractiveness to their advantage in the classroom. Indeed, as numerous studies have pointed out, physical appearance is often expected to be of concern to girls in

relation to their femininity construction (Holland et al., 1998; Francis, 1998; Francis, 2000b; Ringrose, 2007, 2008; Read, 2011; Lamb et al. 2015). This, according to Francis (2000b) is “framed by the dominant construction of compulsory heterosexuality, where a woman must ensure she is attractive to men.” (p.46). In a study by Read (2011), which, despite having been undertaken in the primary school setting, remains nonetheless pertinent to this discussion, the author explores such issues in depth. Read (2011) does so by exploring the links between ‘celebrities’ such as Beyonće and Britney Spears - whom some of the girls claim as their role models - and their associated feminine characteristics of passivity, attractiveness and appearance. Such characteristics are considered to reflect dominant constructions of femininity in today’s society. According to Read (2011), the findings of this study appear to support the “continuing predominance of girls’ desires that encompass and embody a ‘passive’ ideal femininity” (p.10), both in terms of what they desire for themselves as children, and also in what they aspire to become as adults. Similar themes emerge in the recent research of Lamb et al. (2015) where the discourse about the advantages of being sexy is seen as revolving around popularity and attractiveness. Whilst the girls deemed ‘popular’ by their peers generally portray a coherent, sexually attractive “authentic self” (p.14) that is perceived as effortless, there are clear tensions and contradictions around being seen as sexy. In particular, some girls exercise “both resistance and accommodation to hegemonic discourses around sexiness and femininity” (p. 15). While adopting the “hegemonic discourse of dressing sexy to please boys” (p.14), is seen as acceptable, it is also acknowledged by the girls that desiring the sexual attention from boys is somewhat shameful.

Research which focuses on the influence of celebrity status provides an interesting counter point when considering how young people engage with role models (Allen & Mendick, 2013; Mendick, Allen & Harvey, 2015). The findings of research by Mendick et al. (2015) disrupts the view that being 'seen' to work hard is not considered an acceptable means of achieving success. Drawing on data from 24 group interviews across six co-educational secondary schools in England, by way of exploring how and why people are influenced by celebrity status, the study's findings reveal that young people, both male and female, and middle and working-class, value the importance of hard work. The study also demonstrates that gender and class remain obstacles to success. As Mendick et al. (2015) assert, "Women and the working classes continue to be excluded from the realm of intellect and reason, which is coded as masculine, middle-class and white" (p. 175). Similarly, research by Allen and Mendick (2013), serves to demonstrate that 'celebrity' operates within a variety of discursive practices as a classed and gendered discursive device in terms of how young people construct their identity. The article draws on data from three separate studies based in England that focus on how young people perceive their educational and work futures. The findings relate to dominant discourses of how fame is achieved - 'proper' versus 'improper' celebrity - where proper celebrity is reflective of hard work and talent, whereas improper celebrity is achieved despite failing to demonstrate either trait. Allen and Mendick (2013) report that interviewed participants were far more likely to associate females than males with improper celebrity. Such associations are linked to physical appearance and women who seek the "hyper-feminine and (hetero) sexy body" (p. 86). Further findings explored the link between female intellect and physical appearance. Clear parallels can be drawn

here between pressures mentioned in Read's research (2011) where girls' attempt to carefully negotiate the balance between achieving beauty and intelligence as part of an 'ideal' form of femininity.

The link between 'acceptable' and 'desirable' performances of femininity, and 'assumed' heterosexuality is explored in the research of Taylor (2007) who asserts that gendered expectations on women are most often framed within a heterosexual construct. She addresses the intersection between class, gender and sexuality in the negotiation of identities within the school setting, and from the perspective of working-class lesbians. Beyond the pressures to conform to heterosexual norms, this research also demonstrates that expectations in terms of femininity are also indubitably classed, where the middle-class experience is considered the norm. Taylor (2007) draws on data collected via ethnographic observations and from interviews with fifty-three women from Scotland and England who identified themselves as being working-class and lesbian. In facing pressures relating both to their sexuality and their social class, Taylor concludes that the women interviewed face "an intersecting burden of class and sexuality, and a dual positioning as 'failures'…" (p. 353).

Whilst the notion of 'laddish' behaviour is central to current debates surrounding boys' masculinity construction and scholastic experiences, some research suggests that this phenomenon does not only affect boys. Jackson (2006) asserts that teachers have anecdotally supported media reports of some girls, or 'ladettes', acting in a

similar fashion. Drawing on data from 100 pupil interviews and 30 staff interviews, Jackson (2006) reveals that behaviours associated with 'laddishness' or 'ladettes' are clearly evident among 13 to 14 year olds, though concedes that it is difficult to gauge the true extent of these behaviours. Interestingly, the findings also reveal a general consensus amongst teachers interviewed that 'laddish' types of behaviours in boys and girls were increasing and that the number of 'ladettes' was also increasing. Jackson (2006) concludes that the 'ladettes' are, in some ways, "transgressing gender boundaries and entering territories traditionally regarded as masculine." (p. 353). However, in order to recoup any potential loss of femininity, which is considered central to their gender construction, these girls rely on a blatant openness about their heterosexuality. This reflects the previously discussed findings relating to boys in relation to gender construction and sexuality.

2.5.2 'Successful girls', 'girl power' and 'hyper femininity'

In recent times, educational policy that relates to gender and academic achievement has been reported as somewhat fixated with boys' underachievement in comparison to girls' (Francis, 2000b; Francis and Skelton, 2005; Condie et al., 2006; Kehler & Martino, 2007; Ringrose, 2007; Skelton, Francis & Read, 2010; Mendick & Francis, 2012). This, according to Skelton, Francis and Read (2010) has resulted in a view among teachers that girls are "unproblematic academic achievers who are easier to teach than boys" (p.185). The outcome of this is that all girls are seen as being successful in school in comparison to boys who are regarded as failing (McRobbie, 2009). In short, this leads to the point where girls' achievements are positioned as being at the expense of boys' academic successes (Epstein, 1998; Martino &

Meyenn, 2002; Francis & Skelton, 2005; Ringrose, 2007; Francis, Read & Skelton, 2010) and is seen as reflective of a simplistic, binary view of gender. Ward (2015) suggests that this results in the "implicit blaming of girls, teachers and feminists for this crisis" (p.5), a view shared by Lingard et al. (2009). Ward (2015) also highlights a lack of attention to a large proportion of working-class girls who are underachieving academically, suggesting that this is going unnoticed because girls are seen to be the more advantaged group in school, compared to boys. This apparent neglect of girls is attributed by Jones and Myhill (2004) to teachers' attitudes towards underachievement. The authors claim that teachers are more likely to select boys as underachievers than girls, and that they also construct underachievement differentially, depending on gender. The consequence is that underachievement in girls is "often overlooked or rendered invisible" (p. 531).

Francombe-Webb's and Silk's (2015) research directs attention towards the ways in which middle-upper class girls both embody, and discursively construct, feminine identities. Twenty girls aged 12-13 years participated in the study, with data collected via focus groups and weekly workshops. The participants were all attendees of a private, fee-paying school in England. The study explored how the girls perceive working-class femininities compared to their own middle-class social status. The influences on feminine performativity which exist both within and beyond the school setting reflect the role of popular culture. The authors note that whilst the participants struggled to verbalise class inequality, they consistently used the culturally iconic 'chav' to represent the working class, poor females within society. This stands in contrast to how the perceive themselves with their 'normal'

middle-upper class femininities. Female identity was embodied in binary oppositional aesthetic attributes and appearances of working class, versus middle, class. Comparisons were made between the ‘fake’ chav identity epitomised in their use of too much make-up, over-styled hair, and fake designer clothing - and the ‘normal’ and ‘natural’ femininity the middle-upper girls adopted. The chavs’ hyper-feminine identity as described by the middle-upper class girls was seen as excessive and unattractive, and in contrast to their more natural and acceptable femininity. They also described their behaviour in contrasting terms - with the girls’ understandings of working class femininities as “being different in terms of the perceived threat of violence, being tough, engaging in age inappropriate behaviour, and the spacial dominations within which these performances occurred” (p.8). The findings correlate with those of McRobbie (2009) who asserts that middle class women often judge those from working-class backgrounds in relation to their appearance and (non) respectability.

Ringrose (2007) specifically examines the influence of the “ongoing educational panic over failing boys” (p.471) upon girls’ positioning as the victors in education; the so-called “successful girls discourse” (p.471). Media reports are seen to perpetuate this view of girls, a view which, according to Ringrose (2007) helps to conceal the relational impact of other issues upon achievement in education, namely, “class, race, ethnicity, religion and space/location of schools.” (p.473). She further suggests that such educational debates can easily be interpreted to support neoliberal understandings of girls’ educational successes as synonymous with “equality, progress, girl power and girls having ‘come a long way, baby’” (p.472). These

understandings are used to evidence apparent success of educational policy and placate concerns of feminists in relation to girls' education. Ringrose (2007) outlines a key challenge for feminists:

> It is only by staking out the type and scope of our feminist analysis very carefully that our feminism will not be complicit with simplistic gender analysis, and will not easily be co-opted into the seductive discourse of successful girls (p.486).

Baker (2010), taking up the aforementioned notion of the successful girls discourse in education sets out to "conceptualise what it means to be a girl and a young woman in late modern, neoliberal, post-feminist societies" (p. 1). In doing so, Baker (2010) seeks to "explore the influence of the social, political and economic conditions associated with late modernity, including neoliberalism, on young women's lives..." (p.3). The study, undertaken in Australia, collected data via semi-structured interviews with 55 girls aged 18-25 years old. The findings reveal that the girls, when entering traditionally masculine domains such as business, medicine and law, often down-play their academic abilities. Many experienced anxiety and difficulties as they attempted to "transgress traditional femininity and make adaptations to masculine modes of behaviour in professional and business domains" (p.11). Baker (2010) also highlights that much of what is said about the apparent successes of girls in terms of their academic achievement assumes all girls to be part of a homogenous group (Baker, 2010). In a similar vein, Griffin (2004) observes that the successful girls discourse most often reflects white, middle class, heterosexual, high-achieving girls.

Of relevance to this discussion is an earlier discourse surrounding femininity in girls, that of “girl-power” (Walkerdine, 2003; Harris, 2004; Cairns, 2014). This discourse, noted as particularly evident in the media and popular culture in the early 2000s, is seen to depict young women as:

> …a unique category of girls who are self-assured, living lives lightly inflected but by no means driven by feminism, influenced by the philosophy of DIY, and assuming they can have (or at least buy) it all (Harris, 2004, p.17).

This construct of femininity encapsulates the successful girl narrative, representing girls who are at once “self-inventing, ambitious and confident” (p.17). It, like the successful girls discourse, draws on girls’ apparent educational success.

A case study by Fisher (2016) focuses on feminine identity during the transition from primary to secondary school, and explores the perspectives of 10 white working class girls. Data collection, by way of individual semi-structured interviews and classroom observations, demonstrates resistance to the ‘good girl’ discourse which prevailed in the primary school context. Using a Foucauldian framework, and reflecting on the complexity of discourse, power, resistance and resilience, Fisher illustrates how these working-class girls take up alternative discourses in secondary school, including those of ‘girl power’ and ‘hyper-femininity’. The latter of two these discourses can be seen to represent an exaggerated adherence to a gendered stereotype of femininity. A number of girls were able to articulate this move towards a re-construction of their feminine identity reflective of the hyper-femininity and girl power discourses. They described a new emphasis on physical appearance by way of

wearing make-up, dying their hair and wearing short skirts. The girls also described notable attitudinal changes - as one participant voiced: “I’m a bit more cheeky, and have an answer to everything, which actually I do like…” (p.11). Fisher concludes this to be representative of resistance to the compliant and diligent ‘good girl’ identity. She highlights a need to identify girls’ intrinsic strengths as they negotiate, and sometimes resist, dominant femininity discourses, thus providing a structured means of supporting them through primary-secondary transition.

2.5.3 Femininity and (under)achievement

As Skelton, Francis and Read (2010) point out, closer inspection of the apparent gender gap which sees girls as leading the way educationally in relation to boys, quickly reveals a far more complicated picture, particularly in relation to social class and ethnicity. An increasing neoliberal approach to measuring schools by their academic results leads to girls being positioned as the winners in the education system, thus inferring that ‘gender’ is no longer a problematic issue for girls in education. As McRobbie (2009) states, the academic successes of girls have become the “benchmark of equality as achieved” (p.75). Such has been the apparent success in dealing with gender inequalities in schooling that boys are most often pitted as the ‘losers’ in education. Yet, research demonstrates that gender continues to be an important force in the lives of girls. For example, as McRobbie notes, with the overall increase in girls’ academic successes and the clear emphasis on girls’ academic strengths in general, pressures on the very small number of girls leaving school with no formal qualifications are even greater than before. As a result, they are “singled out more forcefully as educational failures” (p.74). McRobbie also

highlights the class element to the academic successes of girls, and thus, educational qualifications simply contribute to a reproduction of existing class divisions between the lower and middle classes. Furthermore, many girls appear to struggle to cope with the resulting pressures of high expectations of consistent academic success; pressures which are both self-imposed and from parents and teachers (Ali, 2003; Osler & Vincent, 2003). As McRobbie (2009) asserts, young women are measured according to their ability to gain academic qualifications which will "provide them with an identity as female subjects of capacity" (p.75).

Research by Skelton, Francis and Read (2010) explore the views of a group of academically successful girls aged 12 -13 years old. The findings reveal that being a high achiever sits well within acceptable constructions of femininity. However, for girls identified as 'clever', it also presents the challenge of balancing their academic ability both with peer relationships, particularly other girls, and also relationships with their teachers. The importance of gender is demonstrated clearly here in terms of its impact upon how the girls perform the role of pupil. In effect, the girls constantly attempt to negate the risk of being seen as a 'geek' because of their academic ability, whilst allowing for the successful negotiation of the "masculine position of academic achiever in tangent with being a 'proper school girl'" (p.192). Skelton, Francis and Read (2010) conclude that one way in which the girls negotiate this balance is by being popular amongst their classmates. Achieving such a balance can be facilitated through physical attractiveness and further supported by a tendency to exhibit stereotypical constructions of femininity through their interest in fashion and relationships with boys. These attributes are compensatory in dealing with their

academic identity, a finding which chimes with earlier research by Jackson (2006). Francis, Skelton and Read (2010) conclude that girls' relationships with other girls are "shaped by the extent to which they are willing to disguise their academic abilities" (p.192).

Gender and Place

Ringrose (2007) observes that the continuing focus on binary conceptions of gender such as those relating to boys' underachievement in relation to girls has arguably concealed the role of other important issues affecting gender construction in schools. One such issue is that of location or place. The following section considers literature in which place plays a particularly important role in how masculine and feminine identities are shaped. There is particular focus on the rural location, as befits this study. This is an area which has recently been highlighted as under-researched (Casey, Mooney, Smyth & Payne, 2016).

Ward (2015), through a longitudinal ethnographic approach, focuses on the lives of various groups of young working-class men. The study considers ways in which these young men, aged between 16-18 years old, perform their masculinity within various educational and leisure contexts. Importantly, it also focuses on how place - in this study, what was once a heavily industrialised community in the South Wales Valleys - is seen to impact upon how gender identities are shaped. As Ward (2015) asserts, "Masculinities must always be understood in time and place" (p.20). During the area's heavily industrialised past, working men were seen to construct their masculine identities around their ability to undertake heavy physical labour, avoiding

anything which might be deemed feminine. This is in keeping with research by Willis (1977), who had claimed that working class masculinity is about "doing a hard job well and being known for it" (p.52). In the context of the coal-mining area in which his research is set, Ward (2015) notes:

> As de-industrialisation has continued, working class young men are no longer likely to be 'learning to labour' (Willis, 1977) but 'learning to serve' (McDowell, 2000) in different industries to those in the past (p.4).

Ward also asserts that the performances of the masculine self that accompany these newer industries are highly contradictory to what had come before, an observation which chimes with the findings of Walkerdine (2010) and McDowell (2012). Ward further reports:

> As access to education and employment opportunities become gradually more uncertain, the impact this has on the social construction of masculinities, especially for marginalised young men, becomes increasingly important (p.4-5).

Ward (2015) argues that, despite the arrival of contemporary requirements in terms of masculinity construction for the young men, expectations of both gender and social class remain framed by the historical and geographical past of the area – the industrial legacy of the area and the subsequent expectations in terms of masculinity standing firmly in contrast to modern-day masculinity performances. In short, "the localised hegemonic versions of white working- class manhood still exist" (p.154) and reflect pressures to conform to culturally dominant constructions of masculinity,

including toughness and pressures to drink alcohol heavily. Ward's study explores how the young men carefully negotiate their way between these two identities, taking a nuanced approach to their gender construction. They are not locked into one particular construct of masculinity, instead adopt a repertoire of masculinities, which are "performed in different ways with different audiences and within different settings" (p.19). Ward uses the metaphor of the "chameleonisation of masculinity" (p.1) to capture the complexities involved in switching between multiple masculine identities. She observes that for the young men, these complex processes encapsulate classed, gendered and heteronormative actions. The author asserts that this metaphor may help those working with young men to:

> …address issues and challenge damaging behaviour by suggesting that there are alternative ways of acting, and to also draw on the positive side that exists to masculinity, such as the closeness of male friendships and the support network this can provide in times of trouble (p.156).

Ward (2015) calls for educational policy to consider the specifities of place in young people's educational decision making, an assertion that is of particular relevance to this study where the rural space is a significant focus.

There are strong parallels to be drawn between Taylor's (2012) qualitative study based in the North East of England, an area with a proud heritage of mining, heavy engineering and ship building, and Ward's (2015) research, in terms of social class and the post-industrial location. However, in contrast to Ward's (2015), Taylor's research focuses on femininity and place. In seeking to capture the complex

intersection between geography, class and gender, and temporality "…memory and history are important processes of placing and locating people and communities both geographically and socially" (p. 56), Taylor explores women's lives in the context of the transition from the industrial landscape of the past to a post-industrial future. Insights into working class women reveal particular challenges with regard to 'fitting into place' in this new setting, highlighting contrasts between working class and middle class girls' outlooks in relation to their perceived futures. Middle class girls did not inherit, and thus did not have to contend with, "classed histories" (p.58) linked to the industrial past in the same way as those with a working class background. As Taylor notes, "Such histories make 'us', and in doing so, reproduce class and gender in the uptake, extension and remaking of space" (p.59). The findings demonstrate that working class women highlight the importance of people over place. In contrast, middle class 'choosers' are highly invested in their physical locations. As Taylor states, "discourses of property choice - as collapsed into geographical choice generally … [are] profoundly classed" (p.80). In highlighting the importance of geographical place in relation to gender construction, Taylor asserts:

> The importance of being in place impacts on experience in a very embodied way where the corporeality of interviewees' lives is evident in the embodiment of different gendered identities as daughter, young woman, mother, grandmother (p.91).

The North East region of England, having lost its industry, faces challenges in terms of the economy as it seeks new employment opportunities. As Taylor observes, this can have strong repercussions in terms of gender and social class inequalities:

> …economic change […] can re-create rather than resolve gender and class polarisations, with women still clustering in low paid, part-time work and still struggling with ideologies of motherhood and care…(p.89).

Observations surrounding an apparent lack of research linking adolescence, gender and the rural context are highlighted in the Northern American community-based research of Dunkley (2004) and are also noted in more recent educational research (Cairns 2014). Dunkley (2004) states that in general, there exists little research that looks specifically at how gender may affect experiences of the "rural teen landscape" (p.562). Cairns (2014) notes that studies surrounding girls in schools within Western contexts remain predominantly focused on urban experiences and constructs of girlhood and femininity. In contrast, Cairns' ethnographic study, based in a school in a rural community in Ontario, Canada, explored "how rural youth envision their futures in neoliberal times" (2014 p.478). She reports that the girls within the study construct contradictory future narratives envisioning urban femininities while insisting they will remain living in the country. This is in contrast to the boys, who tend to imagine "typically masculine futures that align with their rural identities" (p.478) such as those linked with the outdoors and/or with characteristics of physical strength. Where there is an exception to this, the boys usually chose traditionally

masculine occupations which still offered a "site for performing rugged, physically tough and risky masculinities" (p.484). Whilst Cairns (2014) focuses on issues relating to girls and femininity, the discussion surrounding boys and masculinity construction highlights the long standing cultural associations between rurality and masculinity. Here, the rural landscape is contrived as the ideal site in which to enact masculinities, giving examples such as "hunting, fishing and snowboarding" (p. 480).

Cairns (2014) argues that the tension within girls' future narratives should be understood in relation to the gendered context of rural social space, as well as the aforementioned neoliberal, post-feminist discourses of 'girl power'. According to Walkerdine (2003), this construction of femininity offers mobility - a chance to transcend the educational and career limitations endured by mothers and grandmothers. Cairns (2014) concludes that, growing up within post-feminist ideals of choice and self-invention, girls are drawn to the 'girl power' discourse which appears to offer limitless opportunities, opportunities which they do not always see within their rural settings. The author (2014) asserts that activities strongly linked to being female are located more within the urban context, with girls aligning themselves with constructions of femininity they see "represented in popular culture, marked by a cosmopolitan lifestyle more closely associated with urban living" (p. 482). Within the community context, Campbell (2006) concludes that so entrenched are the associations between masculinity, rurality and work, that girls see no future within their rural communities to escape the "male gender order" (p.102), unless they leave the area.

The girls in Campbell's (2006) study are echoed in the pragmatic 'getting-by' attitude adopted by working-class women in Armstrong's (2010) study. Adopting a Bourdieuian theoretical framework, and drawing specifically on the concept of habitus, Armstrong (2010) explores the interconnection between class, place and gender to understand women's dispositions towards employment and motherhood. The analysis revealed a strongly pragmatic approach both to work was in their attitude to motherhood, which "was not presented as particularly problematic or a significant turning point" (243). This, as Armstrong highlights, is in direct contrast to middle-class women's views on becoming mothers. The ability to combine motherhood and employment successfully was also concluded as not problematic for working-class women; it was taken for granted that fitting work into their life was a necessity. In a similar vein, Evans (2010) considers the relationship between gender, place and social class. The study explores the views of working-class girls in South London as they leave secondary school to embark on university courses. For all but three of the participants, they are the first in their family to attend higher education. The girls consider education as a means of achieving respect and status, though they do not feel a sense of entitlement, nor do they expect outside help in achieving this success. Many also see their social class as a key influencing factor when applying to university, to the point where it limits their feeling of entitlement to attend some institutions. Despite this, they are reported as seeing it as a personal duty to overcome any hardships they face in succeeding in higher education.

This chapter has sought to review literature that focuses on how young people shape their gendered identities in school. It also looked at the impact this has upon various

aspects of their educational life. Permeating the literature reviewed in this chapter are key themes of particular relevance to this study: gendered subject choices; attitudinal factors relating to school work; academic achievement; behaviour; physical appearance; the role of peer influence; teacher-pupil interactions; and physical location. The latter focus on literature surrounding the rural setting reflects the location in which this study is set. The next chapter sets out the framework used to provide theoretical insight into *how* and *why* pupils take up particular gendered positions within this study.

Chapter 3 - Theoretical Framework

3.1 Introduction

This study assumes a position that gender is not a fixed entity, rather it is fluid, changeable, and socially constructed (Butler, 1990; 1993; 1999; 2004; Connell, 1995; 2009; Francis, 2006). This chapter lays out the theoretical framework for the study from this perspective. It begins by looking at post structuralist theories, where the foundations of theories relating to the construction of identity, specifically, that of gender, can be traced. Foucauldian Scholarship (Foucault, 1974; 1977; 1980; 1981; 1994; 1998; 1999) is of particular relevance in this chapter, with a focus on Foucault's conceptualisation of discourse, power, knowledge and subjectification. This is supplemented by the work of Judith Butler, whose reformulation of relevant post structuralist theories is regarded by many as having succeeded in stretching feminist thinking on gender construction beyond its previous conceptual boundaries (McNay, 1999). Here, the notion of 'performativity' is particularly pertinent, serving to augment the theoretical framework underpinning this study. The chapter ends by considering the notion of agency, and looks at how the Butlerian and Foucauldian accounts of agency allow for an understanding of gender construction in the context of this study.

3.2 Post Structuralism

Post structuralism may be considered a means of theorising the post-modern 'mood', one which "captures the end of totality, holism and presence" (Walshaw, 2007, p. 4). In short, what the post-structuralist writers were able to do was to critically re-visit

and re-shape existing beliefs and conventions - both cultural and linguistic - those of knowing and those of being (Wolin, 1992). Post structuralist thinking grew from that of structuralism. Their particular focus was on conceptualisations of objectivity and reality. Walshaw (2007) observes that within the post structuralist framework, reality is:

> ...a constant and ongoing process of construction, and as such, there exists no conceptual space not already implicated in that which it seeks to interpret [...] there is no stable unchanging world, no realm of objective truths, to which anyone has access (p. 5).

Structuralist thinking sought to convey elements of a culture in terms of their relationship to an overarching system or structure, a position from which was derived the concept of binary oppositions. Post-structuralists later saw this position as both limited and limiting. In the context of gender, this meant disrupting ways of thinking about identities as being fixed, clear cut or singular. Importantly, it also led to challenging the view that male and female gendered characteristics exist as binary opposites (Davison & Frank, 2006). Put another way, gender identity is seen as fluid and changeable, and as such, "becomes a verb, not a noun, a position to occupy rather than a fixed role" (McRae, 1996). This depiction of gender had earlier been voiced by Butler (1990): "In this sense, gender is not a noun, but neither is it a set of free floating attributes [...] gender is always a doing..." (p. 24). Hence, in the context of this study, which works within the post-structuralist framework, gender is seen as something that you *do*. This allows for an examination of the different ways students

might take up gender identities, and also how these identities might be constructed by others. This notion is taken up in more detail in the later section on Butler's theory of 'Performativity'.

Post structuralist thinking incorporates fundamental assumptions of language and subjectivity. Language is the key mechanism through which the individual is formed. It is seen as fragile and complex; a means of "*constituting* social reality rather than *reflecting* an already given reality" (Walshaw, 2007, p.5). This is particularly reflective of the writings of Michel Foucault (though the term 'post structuralist' is not one which Foucault comfortably used when describing his own work). There now follows a discussion of concepts which are central to Foucault's theoretical thinking. These concepts provide a framework for understanding within this study; a means of gaining insight into the data collected and of shaping its subsequent analysis.

3.3 Discursive Practices and Gender Construction in Schools

3.3.1 Discourse

Discourse, a key notion within Foucauldian scholarship, is considered to encapsulate "what can be said and thought, but also about who can speak, when, and with what authority" (Ball, 1990a, p.2). Mills (2003) defines discourse as "a system which structures the way we perceive reality" (p. 55). Foucault's concept of discourse encompasses different ways of structuring knowledge, social relationships, and

fundamentally, context. It constitutes both subjectivity and power relations. Importantly, discourses are not merely descriptive or symbolic of social practices, rather they actively *construct* these practices. As Foucault (1981) postulates, discourses are:

> ...practices that systemically form the objects of which they speak...discourses are not about objects; they do not identify objects, they constitute them and in the practice of doing so conceal their own invention (p.49).

Discourses may be seen to constrain the possibilities of thought, as they order and combine words in certain ways and exclude or displace other combinations. They are very powerful in that they are the means by which *reality* can be read (Walshaw, 2007). They also express the "historical specificity of what is said and what remains unsaid" (Ball, 1990a, p.3):

> Discourses are composed of signs, but what they do is more than use these signs to designate things. It is this move that renders them irreducible to the language and to speech. It is this move that we must reveal and describe (Foucault, 1974, p 49).

From this conceptualisation, any existing discourse, according to Foucault (1980), is constituted by its own boundaries of the language used to describe it, and stands in

an opposing, sometimes hostile, relationship with other discourses. This is Foucault's 'principle of discontinuity':

> We must make allowance for the complex and unstable powers whereby discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling block, a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy (p. 101).

An issue of key relevance within Foucault's conception of discourse is why, at any point, and out of what might have been expressed at this given time, only certain words are said: "how is it that one particular statement appeared rather than another" (Foucault, 1974, p.27). According to Ball (1990a):

> The world is perceived differently within different discourses. Discourse is structured by assumptions within which any speaker must operate in order to be heard as meaningful. Thus the concept of discourse emphasises the social processes that produce meaning (p.3).

This is of particular interest when considering educational systems and individual establishments, as they are both subject to discourse, and also involved in the controlled selection and sharing of discourses: "Every educational system is a political means of maintaining or modifying the appropriateness of discourses with the knowledge and power they bring with them" (Foucault, 1981, p 46). Here, Foucault's notion of 'power and knowledge' as being inextricably bound, is made

clear. Indeed, in terms of discourses, what seems of most interest to Foucault is firstly, why we are compelled to use them and secondly, what effects of power and knowledge arise from their use. Foucault was fundamentally interested in how discourses produced certain ‘truths’ (Allan, 2013). This is as opposed to, for example, a preoccupation with the derivation of discourses or with whose interests they might serve (Walshaw, 2007). Foucault's theorisation of power will be given due consideration in a later section of this chapter.

This study is primarily concerned with how one particular educational site (the rural secondary school) is a generator of discourses, and at the same time, subjected to discourses. As Foucault notes, schools and educational institutions are able to control what kinds of discourses their students are able to access and those which they cannot:

> But we know very well that, in its distribution, in what it permits and what it prevents, it follows the lines laid down by social differences, conflicts and struggles. Every educational system is a political means of maintaining or modifying the appropriateness of discourses with the knowledge and power they bring with them (Foucault, 1971, p. 46).

Within any education system, as with any system aimed at controlling populations, students are inevitably caught up in discursive practices, be it in the classroom or in any other school-based activity. Such discursive practices define what is normal,

acceptable behaviour (Foucault, 1981, 1998; Butler, 2004). However, at the same time we are reminded by Foucault that discursive practices are themselves always in a state of constant flux (Foucault, 1981). Notwithstanding the influence of Foucault on Butler's writings on gender identity, upon which this study draws heavily, Foucault's theory of discourse will be used within this study as a means of thinking about how gendered discourses might shape students' gender; that is, how they identify themselves, and how they are identified by others. Through a Foucauldian lens, discourses relating to gender within a particular context or institution tend to make girls and boys think, feel and act in ways which others might expect. Discourses shape the experience of being a particular gender. Girls and boys experience learning and education in the ways that the gendered discourses to which they are exposed, permit. It is important to consider not only the impact of discourse on spoken and written language, but also on non-verbal means of self-representation, for example, body language, posture, dress sense, and so on. It is also pertinent to consider that discourses are produced both knowingly and unknowingly by subjects. Furthermore, as Butler (1997) observes, even discourses which are intentionally shared may gain unexpected meanings as they are disseminated, or spread beyond the intention of the person who shares them.

Discourse and power are inextricably linked within Foucault's writing. As Walshaw (2007) states, "discourses transmit and produce power" (p. 42) as they work to shape our thinking, viewpoints, beliefs, and practices. The following section discusses Foucault's complex conception of power in more detail, a theoretical position on which this study draws.

3.3.2 Power

Foucault's analysis of power and how it operates provides a very useful framework for understanding how girls and boys construct their gender identities, and also how these identities are constructed by others within the rural school setting. In Foucault's conception, power operates from *within* the social realm and not from *above* it. This is made explicit in his text, *The History of Sexuality: The Will to Knowledge,* where Foucault (1998) asserts that power is not "a general system of domination exerted by one group over another" (p. 92). Thus, it does not simply emanate from a central hierarchy, but instead, it occupies all social structures and societal processes, and therefore, as Foucault (1980) posits, "reaches into the very grain of individuals." (p. 39). Power, in this construct, may be seen as an integral part of our personal and public lives (Walshaw, 2007). In this way, it cannot be simply challenged at its highest level in order to be eradicated.

> What makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it doesn't only weigh on us as a force that says no, but that it traverses and produces things. It needs to be considered as a productive network which runs through the whole social body, much more than as a negative instance whose function is repression (Foucault, 1980, p 119).

In this Foucauldian analysis, unlike those which precede it, power is not depicted as a repressive force from above. Rather, it is regarded as having a productive and enabling capacity, one which operates in all social interactions, in and through all people and all institutions (Allan, 2013). Foucault's analysis is concerned with how

power is exercised by individuals and groups at a local level, working amongst, and between, social hegemonies. He suggests that power should be understood as “a grid of intelligibility of the social order” (Foucault, 1998, p. 93), within ‘state apparatus’ (by which he means institutions such as prisons and schools). This reveals the interlinking of power and knowledge as individuals are constructed as “objects of knowledge and as subjects who were controlled, even - and perhaps especially - by themselves” (Allan, 2013, p. 24). Within the context of this study this construction of power means that it not only operates at the macro level of the school or in the more conventional ‘political’ sense, for example the power exerted by Senior Management or at Local Authority level. It also operates at a micro level, in, for example, through interactions between students, those between teacher and students, and indeed, in all day-to-day social practices in school life. In short, power involves everyone, and acts from all sides. It controls and constrains individuals.

Within education, Foucault also considered how normalisation, as a key instrument of power, is used to promote standardisation and homogeneity. In this context, individuals are judged in relation to a norm, and where this norm is not met, disciplinary techniques are employed as a means of normalising behaviour:

> It is easy to understand how the power of the norm functions within a system of formal equality, since within homogeneity that is the rule, the norm introduces, as a useful imperative and a result of measurement, all the shading of individual differences (Foucault, 1977, p. 184).

Foucault theorises there to be three modes through which power takes effect: 'dividing practices', 'scientific classification' and 'subjectification'. Of particular relevance to this study, are the modes of 'dividing practices' and 'subjectification'.

3.3.3 Dividing Practices

Foucault's work centred on how human beings are made subjects within a culture. He was fundamentally concerned with the objectification of the subject by processes of classification and division. He referred to the latter as 'dividing practices', reflecting practices involving power relations, specifically those which seek to distinguish and separate one group of people from the next. As organisational processes, such practices are often clearly recognisable within the educational setting, with examples including the use of testing or examining, profiling, setting or streaming, and any forms of scholastic identification. According to Ball (1990):

> In these ways, using these techniques and forms of organisation, and the creation of separate and different curricula, pedagogies, forms of teacher-student relationships, identities and subjectivities are formed, learned and carried. Through the creation of remedial and advanced groups, and the separation of the educationally subnormal or those with special educational needs, abilities are stigmatized and normalized (p. 4).

Within the context of this study, gender will be considered through the 'dividing practice' lens, where an action or discourse may serve to separate one gender group of students from another. In this sense, students are objectified in terms of their 'fixed' gender. As Butler's (2004) states:

> A restrictive discourse on gender that insists on the binary of man and woman as the exclusive way to understand the gender field performs a regulatory operation of power that naturalizes the hegemonic instance and forecloses that thinkability of its disruption (p.43).

3.3.4 *Subjectification*

In Foucauldian terms, subjectification is the process by which people willingly and actively constitute themselves. More than this, it is the way we are led to think about ourselves, and as a result, present ourselves in ways which meet social norms. As Mansfield (2000) observes, it is:

> …the type of being we become as we fit into the needs of the larger political imperatives of the capitalist state. It requires us not only to behave in certain ways, but to *be* certain types of people (p.53).

It is important to reflect on Foucault's notion of power in understanding subjectification through a Foucauldian lens.

> The question is one of determining what the subject must be, what condition is imposed on it, what status it is to have, and what position it is to occupy in reality or in the imaginary, in order to become the legitimate subject of one type of knowledge or another. In short, it is a matter of deterring its mode of 'subjectification' (Foucault, 1994, p.315).

Here, Foucault suggests that when considering issues of power, the purpose is to explore and understand what subjects must become in order to fit within social norms; to have legitimacy and status within their culture or context. Importantly, Foucault's analysis of subjectification demonstrates how individuals can be rendered incapable of resistance, a point which, as Allan (2013) suggests, has proven attractive to researchers working within educational contexts.

Subjectification presupposes a subject, one which does not develop according to its own wants and desires, but instead serves the needs of the society in which it exists. The subject is always connected to someone or something else, be it an idea, principle or society: "one is always subject *to* or *of* something" (Mansfield, 2000, p. 3). It is defined by Walshaw (2007) as a positive process of self-understanding that involves the "willing development and transformation of selves and usually involves disciplinary power, and with it, surveillance and normalisation" (p.102). Within the context of educational research, the authority figure undertaking the mediation role is commonly the teacher and as such, their role in this study is of key importance. That said, it is worth emphasising that, unlike the other two modes through which power

takes effect, subjectification is not a passive nor constrained process (Ball, 1990a). Relating this to the educational context, Ball (1990) asserts:

> Education works not only to render its students as subjects of power, it also constitutes them, or some of them, as powerful subjects. The effects of power are both negative and positive (p.5).

This study is concerned with analysing how the pupil participants are made subjects within the secondary school context, where the subjectivity of gender takes centre stage. This analytical approach is important because it allows for an understanding of how pupils as subjects can be seen to take up gendered identities as a result of Foucauldian conceptualisations of discourse and power within the school.

Foucauldian theories surrounding power and discourse have been hugely influential in terms of informing debates about gender, and have been notably taken up in the work of Judith Butler, who has, in turn, been highly influential on feminist theory relating to gender identity. There now follows a detailed consideration of Butler's key theoretical thinking around gender identity, with a focus on the notions of 'Performativity' and 'Agency'.

3.4 Gendered Identities

3.4.1 Performativity

The key poststructuralist concept within Butler's theory of performativity is that the subject is seen as an *effect* rather than a *cause*. Taking gender identity as the context, Butler (1990) writes:

> There is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be its results (Butler, 1990, p.25).

Butler's work, *Gender Trouble* (1990) and *Bodies that Matter (1993)*, takes up the poststructuralist question of the production of self and meaning by a decisive but complicated new move, one that "undermines the core idea of the ontological and psychological integrity of femininity and masculinity" (Hey, 2006, p. 444). Butler argues that identities, such as those of gender, are brought into existence by actions and are shaped by naming practices, becoming, as it were, that which they are named. Butler calls this practice 'performativity'. It sits in opposition to the view that gender is the expression of a pre-existing state. As Butler (2004) asks:

> After all, is there a gender that preexists its regulation, or is it the case that, in being subject to regulation, the gendered subject emerges, produced in and through that particular form of subjection? Is subjection not the process by which regulations produce gender? (p. 41).

Such a framework of understanding brings to the fore, the constitutive function of speech and language, as is best exemplified in one of Butler's seminal texts, *Excitable Speech (1997):*

> What does it mean for a word not only to name, but also in some sense to perform and, in particular, to perform what it names? On the one hand, it may seem that the word - for the moment we do not know which word or which kind of word - enacts what it names; where the 'what' of 'what it names' remains distinct from the name itself and the performance of that 'what' (p.43).

Here, it is suggested that people are not only named as subjects, but also produced by such names. Butler's performativity discourse relies both on the afore mentioned post structuralist assumptions of language, meaning and subjectivity, and on Foucault's previously discussed theory of subjectification, which serves as an indicator of the dialectical aspect of building identities. Butler's complex notion of the performative may be seen as an attempt to elaborate upon this theory (Bell, 1999) and arguably represents an attempt to go beyond an understanding of gender identity as a "one-sided process of imposition of determination, without lapsing into a voluntarist model of the subject" (McNay, 1999, p. 176). Rather than thinking of gender as almost permanent state, it is considered as the regulation of socio-symbolic norms. In this sense, the performative aspect of construction is "precisely the forced reiteration of norms" (Butler, 1993, p. 94) in the form of compulsory and constraining heterosexuality that impels and sustains gender identity, than a voluntary process of performance. As Butler (1993) explains:

> Performativity is neither free play nor theatrical self-representation; nor can it be equated with performance. Moreover, constraint is not necessarily that which sets a limit to performativity; constraint is, rather, that which impels and sustains performativity. [...] performativity cannot be understood outside of a process of iterability, a regularized and constrained repetition of norms. And this repetition is not performed *by* a subject; this repetition is what enables a subject and constitutes the temporal condition for the subject. This iterability implies that "performance" is not a single "act" or event, but a ritualized production, a ritual reiterated under and through constraint, under and through the force of prohibition and taboo, with the threat of ostracism and even death controlling and compelling the shape of the production, but not, I will insist, determining it fully in advance (p. 95).

As McNay (1999) points out, despite the constraining norms of sexuality, these are not unstoppable or preventable. Conversely, change arises from the instability of such performative acts. Whilst they are arguably deeply entrenched as culture norms, they are neither fixed nor unchangeable.

Further to this, Butler (1990) and others have fervently argued that, beyond the behavioural aspects of gender identity being socially constructed, the apparent biological givens of gender difference are also affected by social interaction, and are "far less rigid and immutable than we are perhaps led to believe" (Francis & Skelton, 2005, p.31). Whilst the inherent complexities which lie within the Butlerian theories of identity in terms of uncoupling of gender, biology and sex, extend beyond the confides of this study, the performative language of gender is central to this study, given that it is primarily concerned in making sense of how gender identities are

shaped for, and by, pupils within the rural school setting. The study works within the Butlerian framework of performativity in order to explore this issue. In this sense, performativity is considered in order to make sense of the way gender identities are produced through naming practices.

3.4.2 Agency

Agency, a core concept in understanding power relations, performativity and the construction of identities, fundamentally relates to the extent to which individuals are able to act for themselves in controlling their surroundings. Foucault theorises agency in terms of its role in power relations: "where there is power, there is resistance" (Foucault, 1979, p. 95). Foucault suggests that subjects are exposed to forces which are both self-inflicted and external and he distinguishes between techniques of domination, government and those of the self (Hoffman, 2014).

> We must not understand the exercise of power as pure violence or strict coherence. Power consists in complex relations: these relations involve a set of rational techniques, and the efficiency of those techniques is due to a subtle integration of coercion-technologies and self-technologies (Foucault, 1999, pp.162-163).

In providing clarification, he defines self-technologies, as:

> …techniques which permit individuals to effect, by their own means, a certain number of operations on their own bodies, on their own souls, on their own thoughts, on their own conduct, and this in a manner so as to transform themselves, modify themselves, and to attain a certain state of perfection, of happiness, of purity, of

> supernatural power, and so on. Let's call this kind of technique a techniques or technology of the self (Foucault, 1999, p.162).

Here, Foucault suggests that subjects are the recipients of both external and self-inflicted forces. This relies on Foucault's previously discussed conception of power, where power is not seen as a top down force, rather permeates all social relations, in, and through, all people. This ability to self-regulate is at the very core of agency, where a subject is able to resist power being exerted over them.

Butler's account of agency is very much reliant on the aforementioned Foucauldian idea of subjectivation, which draws on the dialectical aspect of identity construction: "the subject is constituted through practices of subjection, or, in a more autonomous way, through practices of liberation, of liberty" (Foucault, 1988, p. 50). In relation to Butler's concept of the performative, a possibility for agency is outlined when one considers the notion of gender subjectivity as being constrained but not fully (pre) determined. Butler formulates the notion of performative agency on an understanding of temporality not as a process of materialization: As McNay (2013) asserts:

> The performative construction of gender identity causes agency in that the identificatory processes, through which norms are materialized, permits the stabilization of a subject who is capable of resisting those norms (p. 34-35).

Butler's text, *Excitable Speech,* is based on the central tenet that speech is never fully planned or controlled; the *excitable* nature of discourse is recognition of this, and leaves it susceptible to differing interpretations. As McNay (2013) remarks, it is open to "unauthorized appropriation, and, hence, resignification" (p.48). This offers

potential for another form of agency: "a counter-discourse that acknowledges its emergence from a dependency upon structures of constraint" (McNay, p. 48), or, as Butler (1997) asserts:

> …agency begins where sovereignty wanes. The one who acts…acts precisely to the extent that he or she is contained as an actor and, hence, operating within a linguistic field of enabling constraints from the outset (p.16).

In the four findings chapters that follow, the key concepts outlined herein - discourse, power, knowledge, subjectification, performativity, and agency - are taken up and used to discuss events that took place during the data collecting period where the shaping of gendered identities was brought to the fore. These concepts are used to provide perspective on the data collected in order to investigate how and why pupils construct their gender identities in particular ways. Before presenting and examining examples of data of everyday life in the rural Scottish secondary school context, the following chapter sets out and justifies the choice of research approach and methods for this study. Reflecting the methodological epistemological underpinnings of this research, it is important to include here, my own position as researcher.

Chapter 4 - Methodology

4.1 Introduction

In seeking to explore in depth the impact of gender construction upon how young people 'perform' the role of pupil within the school, this study is informed by the methodological understandings outlined in this chapter. It uses a qualitative case study approach incorporating ethnographic methods to generate insightful data that both supports and answers the research questions posed at the outset. Following on from initial discussions surrounding the overall research design, where the alignment between the qualitative case study and ethnographic methods are made clear, this chapter then considers the research site in more detail. After this, there follows a consideration of the ethnographic data collections methods used and the fundamental role of the researcher within ethnographic research. This is followed by a justification of the approach to data analysis. The chapter ends with a discussion of critical ethical dilemmas and considerations.

4.2 Qualitative Research

Social research is ordinarily guided by the ontological and epistemological orientations of the researcher (Bryman, 2012) which subsequently guide the methodological design. In recognising such philosophical positions, one may argue the social researcher is acknowledging that the principal concern of research is to gain a better understanding of the world around us, and that their own interpretations and views of the world are interconnected with the findings of their research (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011).

Bryman (2012) summarises the three key features of qualitative research. First, it relies predominantly on an inductive relationship between research and theory, with an emphasis on the generation of theory as opposed to the deductive approach and theory testing characteristic of the quantitative paradigm. Second, it has, for the most part, moved away from the natural sciences and positivism, preferring instead to examine the ways in which individuals make sense of the social world, and third, qualitative research aims to understand the world through the shifting perceptions of those who inhabit it, i.e. there is no static or objective reality.

Grounded in the interpretivist paradigm, this study is primarily interested in uncovering and exploring human experience (Bryman, 2001) as it seeks to explore the impact of gender construction on how young people perform the role of pupil within a secondary school. In keeping with such epistemological orientations, the main focus is on the social rather than the natural world, and the main purpose is to seek understanding rather than explanation (Bryman, 2001).

4.3 Case Study

Recognised for its strength in offering an insight into the dynamics of particular situations and people, the case study approach is seen as a salient means of exploring "real people in real situations" (Cohen et al. 2011, p.289). Case studies have enjoyed a long union with the social sciences and educational research, where the aim is not to cover a whole population, rather to "provide an in-depth picture of a particular area of the educational world…" (Drever, 2003, p 7).

Hammersley (2001) describes a ‘case’ as being “the phenomenon (located in time/space) about which data are collected and/or analysed” (p.184). The case study differs from other forms of research where a ‘case’ is selected because it relies on “*naturally occurring* (rather than researcher-created) cases” (ibid, p.185). Put another way, there is no manipulation of the events or behaviours being studied within the case by the researcher (Yin, 2009, p.11). Stake (2005) considers there to be three categories of case study: the *intrinsic* case study, where the focus remains on the case itself; the *instrumental* case study, where a case is used to illuminate or provide insight into an area of interest; and a *collective* case study, which extends the instrumental study to several cases. Taking Hammersley’s (2001) aforementioned definition, the case under investigation within this study is the school itself. Returning to Stake’s (2005) categorisation, whilst the school was of interest in its own right, the purpose of this study was to explore how gender impacted upon the lives of pupils within the rural school setting. As such, the school may be considered as *instrumental* rather than *intrinsic* to the study.

The case study is often the method of choice when the phenomenon under study is not readily distinguishable from its context, according to Yin (2012). As such, stand-alone case studies are not designed to act as a point of generalisation. Indeed, they are oftentimes criticised for this very reason - the apparent inability to generalise findings (King and Horrocks, 2010). Certainly, this study does not claim to represent in data from *one* rural school in Scotland, the educational experience of *all* students

within the rural school Scottish context. That said, the opposite argument is offered by Cohen et al. (2011):

> ...case studies are down-to-earth and attention-holding, in harmony with the reader's own experience, and thus provide a 'natural' basis for generalisation (p.292).

Whilst it is unrealistic to assume that all case studies can be described in such terms, it is reasonable to conclude that a case study may result in findings that resonate with teachers or researchers in similar contexts. Thus, the findings of this, or any, case study may be considered generalisable where others see their application, even where no such claim is made (Stake 1995).

From the positivist perspective, the case study approach may be criticised as being anecdotal or 'non-scientific', and as a consequence, findings dismissed as lacking validity and reliability (Cohen et al. 2011). However, this is not in keeping with the philosophical underpinnings of interpretive research. Here, the researcher does not lay claim to 'one truth', the argument being that if validity and reliability were to be pursued within the context of scientific enquiry, this would suggest that there is *a* reality and *a* truth to be discovered. Within this context, the intention of the interpretivist study is to explore a unique situation, rather than to test theory (Bryman, 2001).

The following section, through an examination of ethnographic research, provides a rationale for such an approach within the context of this study. According to Jeffrey (2006), ethnography can be problematic in terms of: the researcher as a research

instrument, validity claims and the representation of reality. These issues are also given due attention in this section.

4.3.1 Ethnographic Methods

Fetterman (2010) succinctly describes ethnography as "the art and science of describing a group or culture" (p.1). In a literal sense, it is "written accounts of people's ways of life" (Trondman, 2008, p. 127). In order to achieve such representations, the ethnographer "participates overtly or covertly in people's daily lives for an extended period of time…" (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007), with a view to understanding the perspectives of those within. Here, lies an assumption that we all move within social worlds, and in order to understand individuals or groups, we must recognise their cultural context:

> The ethnographer adopts a cultural lens top interpret observed behavior, ensuring that the behaviors are placed in a culturally relevant and meaningful context (Fetterman, 2010, p. 1).

In this sense, the word 'culture' is representative of "certain values, beliefs, practices, relationships and identifications" (Walford, 2008, p.7).

As Jeffrey and Troman (2006) observe, since the early days of its application, ethnographic research has "proved both remarkably popular and successful in developing understandings of social and cultural processes within educational settings" (p. 22). Indeed, ethnography is a research strategy considered to be especially well-suited to the study of many learning, teaching and educational issues

(Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). According to Walford (2008), this is fundamentally linked to a correspondence existing between the ways in which children and others learn, and the way ethnographers go about their task. By adopting an ethnographical approach within this study, I, as researcher, immersed myself in the lives of the pupils. I decided that far richer data would be generated through ethnographic data collection techniques, than, for example, other qualitative or mixed methods approaches such as standalone interviews or questionnaires, thus providing greater insights into the lives of pupils within the school.

Troman (2006) reminds us of the need to remain ever mindful of criticism directed towards any form of research, which must of course include ethnographic research. One such criticism of ethnography, as with the qualitative case study, is the longstanding debate surrounding generalisability of findings. In approaching this issue, one might be encouraged to recognise that, while strict generalisation is not possible in the statistical sense, ethnographies (and indeed case studies) can achieve transferability through thick description. Here, it may be argued that where authors give full and detailed descriptions of the particular context studied, "readers can make informed decisions about the applicability of the findings for their own context or situations" (Walford, 2008, p. 17). Another way to deal with this issue is to argue for theoretical generalisability. Many authors have moved away from statistical or empirical generalisation towards an understanding that the wider significance of findings from a particular ethnographic study can be derived through the strength of logical argument for each case. That is to say, "a case is significant only in the

context of a particular theory, and logical inference replaces statistical inference" (Walford, 2008, p. 18).

Ethnographic case studies differ from qualitative case studies in that they rely on work conducted in the field and are most often undertaken over an extended period of time. Further to this, arguably the most fundamental difference between ethnography and other forms of qualitative research is the role adopted by the researcher within ethnographic research. This role differs as a result of the need to work within the field, as Jeffrey (2006) notes:

> Ethnography, alone in all the methodologies, requires site immersion in order to gather the empirical data upon which any analysis and any theory building depends (p.162).

Issues which arise from the researcher's distinctive role within the field are given due attention in a later section. For now, I will focus attention on the field or research site, and also on the research participants. Prior to its commencement, a key pragmatic decision in terms of this study came in relation to the choice of research site. As a teacher working in full-time secondary education, I was somewhat limited in terms of the time I could potentially devote to data collection. Had I chosen to undertake research in a rural school out-with my own school, this issue would have been compounded and I would realistically only have been able to arrange to undertake a very short period of observation. On the other hand, a study within my own rural place of work seemed the most sensible option and this allowed for a longer period of data collection, and also allowed for some benefits as an 'insider', as

will be discussed in a later section of the chapter. There now follows a detailed outline of the school and research participants, as befits an ethnographic case study.

4.4 The Research Site

This study was undertaken within one rural Scottish secondary school, with data collecting taking place during the academic year August 2014 - June 2015. This school was the one in which I worked as a teacher at the time of the study being carried out. Bothy High School is a small school, with a pupil population of at the time of the study of 667. The school is situated in a small rural town in Scotland. It is a mixed comprehensive, non-denominational secondary school and is funded by the local education authority. It serves a large area in terms of physical location, taking in two small rural towns and the surrounding areas, including numerous small hamlets and villages as well as farmland. The area served by Bothy High School is classified as 'Remote Rural' according to the Scottish Government's 6-fold Urban Rural Classification. This places Bothy High in the most rural category, that is, "areas with a population of less than 3,000 people and with a drive time of over 30 minutes to a settlement of 10,000 or more" (Scottish Government, 2014).

In terms of socio-economic status, 55 of the 667 pupils within the school were entitled to free school meals during the research period. This represents just over 8% of the school's pupil population, which is far below the national average of 15%[3]. In

[3] Pupils entitled to free school meals are those from low income (or no income) families. The percentage of pupils registered for free school meals is widely used as an indicator of deprivation in Scottish secondary schools.

terms of ethnicity, 643 of the 667 parents/carers described their child as white, which is over 96%. This gives a clear picture of the homogenous nature of the ethnicity of pupils within the school.

4.5 The Research Participants

> The method you use to get a setting or a group of informants or whatever is not that important. What is crucial about sampling is honesty and reflexivity (Delamont, 2002, p.84)

Pragmatic considerations were taken in the selection and recruitment of participants. I chose to focus on third and fourth year (Secondary 3 and Secondary 4) pupils for a number of reasons. First, it gave a wide enough sample within the restrictions of not knowing the timetable before the commencement of my study. This also was linked to my own teaching timetable, and required flexibility. Second, pupils at this stage have been involved in subject option choices, meaning that they have opted to take particular subjects beyond the compulsory Mathematics, Physical Education and English. This was, as outlined in the literature review, of key relevance to my study. Whilst senior pupils (Secondary 5 and 6) also make subject choices, I felt that including them would lead to too large a sample that would be potentially unmanageable.

As previously stated, the focus of this case study was pupils in S3 and S4. Of the 128 S3 pupils present within the school during the study, eight received free school meals. The S3 cohort comprised 60 girls and 68 boys. There were 115 pupils in S4

and this year group comprised 58 boys and 57 girls, six of whom were entitled to free school meals. The predominantly white ethnic origin of the S3 and S4 pupils mirrors that of the whole school:

Ethnic Origin	No. of pupils in S3 Cohort (2014-15)	No. of pupils in S4 Cohort (2014-15)
Asian	2	1
Mixed or multiple ethnic groups	1	0
white - other	0	3
White - British	6	9
White - Scottish	119	100
Not Disclosed	0	2
Total	128	115

Forty nine of these pupils (31 in S3, and 18 in S4) were directly observed during the data collection period. This means that their individual actions, interactions or comments were noted in observation notes. Seven of these pupils also participated in semi-structured interviews. Twenty four teachers were observed during the data collection period. Of these, eighteen were observed teaching, five were observed both teaching and participating in wider curricular activities such as the Debating Society and the Dance Club, and one was observed only during wider curricular involvement. One teacher participated in an individual semi structured interview because she was responsible for co-ordinating the Rural Skills course, attended by some of the pupil participants. This course was considered to be of relevance in

addressing the study’s research questions. There now follows a section that provides further details on the data collection process.

4.6 Methods of data collection

> Data collection is not an objective, unbiased task that provides the ‘raw materials’ through which ‘the truth’ will be revealed upon analysis. […] researchers are not just ‘collectors’ of data, as though they exist in some predefined form, ripe for the picking (Santoro & Smyth, 2010, p. 494).

Reflecting the complex and multi-faceted nature of cultures (Walford, 2008), data collection within this study required an open, varied and ‘objective’ approach in order to gain a clear understanding. In keeping with the norm for ethnographic methods, this study sought to primarily generate qualitative data. This was achieved through both observations and interviews.

4.6.1 Observation

Given that a basic tenet of ethnography is the “observation of culture within situ” (Denscombe, 1995, p. 184), the predominant tool for collecting data was direct observation. This took the form of classroom observations, as well as observations of pupils outwith the formal learning environment, for example, during intervals, lunchtimes, assemblies and extra-curricular activities. The primary aim was to observe pupils in all aspects of their school experience as they ‘acted out’ the role of the pupil.

During the first few weeks of observation, I intentionally started with a period of “relatively unfocused watching” (Delamont, 2002, p.130) during which time I was

able to practice the art of taking notes during observations. It also allowed for the organic emergence of potential themes to explore in great depth. Immediately thereafter, I began focusing in more detail on particular classes, individuals or groups of pupils, ever aware that "choosing where to look and when to look is also a matter of systematic, principled, reflexive decision-making" (Delamont, 2002, p.134). I was somewhat bound by my own teaching timetable when planning observations and as a result, I was not always able to see all subject areas or events which might have been of relevance in terms of answering the research questions which this study set about to answer. Reflecting methodological considerations particular to ethnographical research, I was mindful of the need for flexibility in both the planning and implementation stages of the study.

> Departures from the research design stated at the outset in ethnographic projects is highly likely since the ethnographic enterprise centres around compromises, short cuts, hunches and serendipitous occurrences (Troman, 2006, p.118).

One such example came when, mid-way through my data collection period, there was a significant change to the school timetable as a result of a staffing crisis in the school. This was brought about as a result of very difficult circumstances and led me to have to change the classes I had planned to visit for observation. It also led to difficulties in terms of conducting classroom observations for a short period of time, as teachers (including me) were often being used for class-cover. This meant that I had far less time to observe. Even when I had planned to visit a class, I sometimes had to reschedule, due to class cover issues, if, for example, I was required to take extra classes at late notice. It was a short, but intensely difficult time for staff in the

school. As a means of dealing with this situation, I chose to focus more on non-classroom observations during this time. As it turned out, there were some longer term benefits to this challenging situation in terms of my research design. As a result of re-timetabling in the school, I now had access to other classes which before had clashed with my own teaching timetable. I was thus able to extend my observations of pupils to other curricular areas of the school.

Observation notes were recorded chronologically and classified under either the class name/subject/year group in the case of classroom observations, or date/event/time for out of class events or activities. Observations about particular students were classified under the pupil's pseudonym. Analytical memos were also taken during and after observations. These were noted in a column on the page, separate from the observation data, yet still on the same page. Keen to avoid potential confusion between 'data' and my 'analyses' (Delamont, 2002), these notes were not word processed along with the observation notes, rather they were copied and developed onto printed copies of the observation notes, as a first, then second, level of analysis.

Wolcott (2005) suggests there are three forms of participant observation within research – the *active participant,* the *privileged observer* and the *limited observer*. As the title suggest, the active participant not only observes, but also takes an active role within the research setting. The other two forms, whilst not taking a participatory role, differ as follows. The privileged observer is privy to certain privileges within the research site, be it access or observation, whereas the limited observer has no such link to the setting or context where the research is being undertaken, and thus

plays no role beyond that of researcher. Given my role within the school as a teacher, I considered myself a 'privileged observer', although I also found myself, at times, an active participant within the setting, where, for example, I had been invited to take part in a task or activity during an observation by a teacher or pupil. I found, as a less experienced researcher, that observing and participating simultaneously presented problems in terms of maintaining my focus on careful observation, and so I aimed, where possible, to avoid any form of active participation. However, there were times where active participation was both helpful and anticipated by staff and/or pupils. Regardless of the shift between forms of observations, I sought at all times, to use my role as researcher to explore the impact of gender construction within the school, aiming to ensure the observation was "reflexive, properly documented and had a clear aim" and was "undertaken in a thoughtful, principled way" (Delamont, 2002, p.131).

4.6.2 Interviews

As a means of gaining further insights into the data generated during observations, interviews were carried out throughout the data collecting period. These fell into two distinct categories: semi structured interviews and open-ended, informal interviews. Interviews within the context of this study are seen as reconstructed accounts which are progressively shaped by both the participant and the researcher (Forsey, 2008).

The semi-structured interviews were conducted in such a way as to reflect the methodological underpinnings of qualitative research, aiming to gain further insight about the human condition, as opposed to hypothesis testing. Further influence came

from Forsey (2008), who advocates an approach that allows semi-structured interviews within ethnography to be:

> …conducted with an ethnographic sensibility that aims at revealing the cultural context of individual lives through an engaged exploration of the beliefs, the values, the material conditions and structural forces underpinning the socially patterned behaviour of any individual (p.59).

Seven pupils participated in a semi-structured interview, as did one member of staff. Interviews were audio recorded and I later transcribed them myself. As the study unfolded, and following the early stages of observation, I approached the six pupils for individual reasons. These reasons were the results of comments, actions or reactions witnessed during observation periods. Put another way, pupils whose discursive trajectories seemed to offer the most in terms of answering the research questions posed at the outset were approached to become involved in interviews. This was an organic process, and one which I believe has led to the richest data in terms of answering the research questions that the study sought to address.

The teacher who was interviewed co-ordinated a 'Rural Skills' college course, attended by one of the pupil participants. She was thus able to provide vital information and insights into this course. Whilst I had planned for all of the interviews to be individual in nature, one of the pupils requested that her friend attended her interview alongside her as she felt that she too could contribute to the discussion. She also maintained that she would feel more comfortable talking to me with a friend there. This, at first, raised a concern as it did not fit with my research

design. More importantly, I did not want to make this pupil feel in any way uncomfortable in participating in the study. When I asked her why, her response was that she was worried about using inappropriate language in front of me because I was a teacher. This offered a chance for a discussion of my role as researcher in this context, and I was able to reassure her that using such language would not get her into trouble here. I felt that it was reasonable to meet her request and also felt that it would not seriously impact upon the quality of the data collected. Arguably, it led to more fruitful data, as the two girls were both able to contribute interesting data during the interview. In order to provide further details about each of the interview participants, thumbnail sketches are included within the appendices[4].

The informal ethnographic interviews were only conducted with members of staff whose classes I visited. These often took place before the planned observation, but also sometimes took place during, or occasionally immediately after it. Lofland, Snow, Anderson and Lofland (2004) point out that it is often not possible to differentiate between the unstructured, ethnographic interview and participant observation, as much of the data collected during participant observation is done in the field via informal interviewing. Denzin and Lincoln (2011) note that other researchers still maintain there is a distinction between the two, conceptualising the interview as a distinct act designed to supplement the observation process. An issue resulting from interviewing members of staff came as a direct result of the informal nature of these discussions, and the fact that they sometimes relied upon chance conversations or comments by staff. This was arguably further exacerbated by the

[4] See Appendix 6.

fact that I was a known person to the other staff - I was their colleague, one whom they presumably trusted enough to allow into their classroom and with whom they were comfortable in sharing their thoughts. On a number of occasions, teachers made comments which I found quite surprising and which arguably revealed their personal thoughts on aspects of the research study. It was reasonable to assume that they had potentially only done so as they both knew and trusted me. When I undertook observations, careful consideration was given in terms of the extent to which this research might impinge on others and that my dual role as colleague and researcher may "introduce explicit tensions in areas such as confidentiality" (BERA, 2011, p.5). In addressing these potential concerns, I had decided prior to undertaking the study, that should any potentially controversial issues or comments arise during an observation with a member of staff, I would offer to share my observation notes with the staff member involved prior to inclusion in the final study.

During all interviews, observations and note-taking opportunities, I was careful to suspend premature judgment on what should be selected as data. This quality of openness, according to Walford (2008), lies at the heart of ethnography, in its process, purposes and ethics. During these processes which all involve writing, I was also conscious that the act of writing itself helps us compose and represent meaning from data:

> Writing helps us attend to the odd intersections or unexpected corridors of meaning and to the unexamined echoes and resonances that lead to sense-making as we write our way through various versions of understanding. Aware, then, of the importance of

> writing in composing and articulating meaning, we suggest ways in which the writing leads toward intensified discovery and meaning (Ely et al., 1997, p.7).

What is made clear here is that ethnographic methods rely on the researcher as the primary instrument for collecting data. However, the researcher also shapes the data, rather than simply collecting it. There now follows a section focusing directly on the role of the researcher.

4.7 The Researcher - Issues of Position and Power

Within this study, I found myself as having a dual role of both researcher and teacher. I consider this issue in detail within this section. The purpose of doing so is two-fold. First, as a reflexive researcher, I seek to demonstrate that I have given due consideration to my own identity and the impact that this may have upon this research. Secondly, it is hoped that providing such a framework may allow those reading this work to apply their judgments in terms of its validity and reliability. Before this, more general issues and implications of insider/outsider research are discussed.

4.7.1 The outsider/insider researcher

The role of the researcher in ethnographic research is of the utmost importance in methodological terms, arguably more so when the participants and the researcher are not of the same background, be it race, class, gender, culture and the researcher is therefore an ‘outsider’. Where this is the case, the researcher, finds herself on the periphery but keen to explore and understand the group to which she does not

belong. The researcher may, as a result, be drawn to attempts to become an ‘insider’. ‘Insiderness’ is defined by Taylor (2011) as:

> …a contemporary cultural space with which the researcher has regular and on-going contact; where the researcher’s personal relationships are deeply embedded in the field...and where the researcher is privy to undocumented historical knowledge of the people and the cultural phenomenon being studied (p. 9).

Situations such as this inherently raise methodological issues, both ethical and logistical. For example, in recent times, there has been considerable debate about outsider research within the educational setting, with particular skepticism around whether outsiders can truly understand the workings of classroom environment (Bridges, 2009).

Taking Taylor’s (2011) aforementioned definition of the insider researcher, at first reading, I may be considered a knowledgeable, professional ‘insider’ within the context of this study. I am certainly privy to information which might otherwise not be readily available or accessible to an outsider in terms of undocumented knowledge of the school and its inhabitants. However, being a *teacher* and not a *pupil* in the school means I am not totally an inside member of the culture which I am studying. I certainly do not consider myself an insider in the pupils’ world and I am confident that they would share this view. To them, I am an adult, a teacher, and presumably a person whom they see as holding a position of power and authority in the school. As such, when positioning myself in relation to the research, I consider myself to be both an insider and an outsider. This reflects the position adopted by

Bridges (2009) who argues that we are "never entirely insiders to another's condition" (p.108), just as we are never truly outsiders. Bridges extends this debate by warning against a sharp dichotomy between the insider and the outsider, claiming it to be "one that is readily undermined" (p.109). Arguably, such a dichotomy can only be maintained by adopting a position which Sen (2006) describes as 'solitarist'. That is to say, seeing yourself as a member of only one group or culture, as opposed to many.

> A solitarist approach can be a good way of misunderstanding nearly everyone in the world. In our normal lives, we see ourselves as members of a variety of groups – we belong to all of them. The same person can be, without any contradiction, an American citizen, of Caribbean origin, with African ancestry, a Christian, a liberal, a woman, a vegetarian, a long distance runner, a historian, a schoolteacher, a novelist, a feminist, a heterosexual, a believer in gay and lesbian rights, a theatre lover, an environmental activist, a tennis fan, a jazz musician... All of these collectivities, to all of which this person simultaneously belongs, give her a particular identity. None of them can be taken to be the person's only identity or singular membership category (Sen, 2006, xii–xiii).

In dismissing a dichotomous view of the insider/outsider researcher, I would summarise my position as that of outsider researcher with insider privileges, as opposed to the other way round. This raises important implications and considerations. For example, in terms of insider research, Malone (2003) makes the following stark assertion:

> The most dangerous and difficult place to attempt [...] research is in a familiar institutional setting (p. 812).

Malone relates this to issues surrounding a lack of trust, and when observing staff within the school in which I am also member of staff, I was faced with several potential dilemmas linking to such issues. In particular, I was ever mindful of the fact that during classroom observations, my interpretation of an event involving the class teacher might not have matched up with the teacher's interpretation. They might deem my view as inaccurate or worse, offensive or potentially threatening. The potential impact of this on any future professional relationships was a moral dilemma which remained with me throughout the duration of the data collection period and one to which I return in the Ethical Considerations section. What remained paramount was the need for honesty and transparency in dealing with such potential situations.

A further dilemma I faced related to my position as Middle Manager (Head of Faculty) and Acting Senior Manager in the school at the time the study was undertaken. I was aware that teachers may have questioned my purpose and motivation in requesting to observe their lessons, assuming that they were expected to respond in a certain way during observations, given my position of authority within the school management structure. This may have biased the data and led to mistrust. In order to limit or negate such issues, care was taken to ensure that all participants were aware that their contribution to this study would not directly impact on their school or professional life. I emphasised to all teachers involved that that this form of 'observation' differed from that normally experienced in school. Such

visits are often undertaken by Senior Managers or Heads of Faculty who visit classes for 'Quality Assurance' purposes. Here, the observer has a particular position of power, in that they are both promoted and are charged with 'measuring' the quality of teaching in the classroom. On the other hand, the fact that such classroom visits have become fairly common place within the school, led me to feel it reasonable to assume that pupils and staff would not be overly uncomfortable with having an observer in the classroom. This was seen as helping to limit the potential bias to data resulting from participants potentially changing their behaviour during observations. That said, it is, of course, impossible to second guess what the pupils and teachers might be thinking when they are aware that they are under observation in the classroom and consequently, how this might impact upon their behaviour or actions. As the observer, I must therefore consider myself as potentially implicit in the construction of gender within the observation process. The impact that this may have had upon the data generated is therefore acknowledged as a potential limitation of the study.

Delamont (2002) notes a further potential challenge for the insider researcher - that of "trying to make the familiar strange" (p.115), although she adds that even in a familiar setting, "one can still be 'gob-smacked' by unfamiliar things, and asked questions that leaving one gaping" (p.115). Further, Bridges (2009) notes that the role of researcher itself arguably distances the researcher from his or her culture or setting. Delamont (2002) concludes that the early days of fieldwork are often the best time to 'see' situations as an outsider. I remained ever-mindful of these points throughout the data collection period.

Notwithstanding the potential limitations and dilemmas, being an insider in the school also brought some clear benefits for me as researcher. For example, there was obviously no need for me to 'negotiate entry' to the site, as I already worked there. This immediate access alleviated one of the key potential barriers faced by ethnographers when planning and undertaking research within the school environment, that of gaining access in the first instance (Jeffrey, 2006). Furthermore, having worked in the school for over ten years, I was confident in having established strong working relationships with staff and pupils and I found that this made "blending" (Ball, 1990b, p. 157) into the research setting an easier task. I saw this as helping to negate potential bias of data brought about by those being observed feeling pressured into changing their behaviour during observations. I would further argue that, as a teacher used to working with young people on a daily basis, I have an ability to empathise and engage with them. Finally, being both teacher and researcher arguably also allowed me to review situations and data through two lenses. It is important to state that these two different stances will have influenced what and how I write about the data that I have collected (Ely et al., 1997). Similarly, it will have undoubtedly impacted upon the data I chose to collect, and that which I chose to leave out of this dissertation.

4.7.2 My position as a reflexive researcher

As both teacher and researcher, I was also very conscious of the need for a reflexive approach. Part of a reflexive approach involves openness to declaring my position as researcher. Thus, to that already stated above, I add that I am a white, female

researcher and teacher. I am middle class as a result of my professional occupation and have a working class background. As a reflexive researcher, I remained mindful of my own gender, and social status and class throughout the duration of the study. However, simply acknowledging autobiographical or personal information does not in itself result in reflexive research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011), nor does simply being mindful of one's position. Reflexivity within research is a complex and subtle process which, amongst other things, relies on an acute awareness of power relations and power differences between the researcher and the researched:

> Reflexivity requires a critical attitude towards data, and the recognition of the influence on the research of such factor as the location of the setting, the sensitivity of the topic, power relations in the field and the nature of the social interaction between the researcher and the researched (Brewer, 2000, p. 127).

Reflexivity of this nature requires time - time to think, and time to reflect in a critical manner. This, of course, is not always easy during busy research periods. It may be argued in ethnography, where the role of the researcher is central, it is all the more challenging and at the same time, essential, that reflexivity be considered as a core ingredient of the study. Within the ethnographic context, Delamont (2002) points out that reflexivity is also relevant to data analysis: "Reflexivity in the collection of material, and analysing it as it comes in, not letting it pile up unread, are the two most essential things" (p.67). There now follows an outline of the approach to data analysis in this study.

4.8 Data Analysis

In this study, as is commonly the case where ethnographic methods are employed, data analysis and data collection took place contemporaneously (Jeffrey, 2008). Fetterman (2010) describes ethnographic data analysis as iterative, “building on ideas throughout the study” (p.93). From a pragmatic point of view, this early analysis helped avoid the likelihood of becoming overburdened by the large amount of data collected during observations (Cohen et al., 2011). It also allowed for the emergence of areas of significant themes or issues which would then help shape the next steps of data collection, reflecting the view that qualitative analysis is “an inductive and emergent process” (Lofland et al., 2004), one which is intentionally open-ended in nature. That said, there still exists a rigorous and systematic approach to the analysis of data.

Ethnographic observation sees analysis as taking place the minute the research site is entered (Fetterman, 2010) as decisions are made about what or whom to observe. This links to issues relating to, for example, what the researcher chooses to observe and what they choose to leave out. Ball (2002) suggests working in the interpretative mode of “understanding and insight”, noting that “complexity and interrelatedness rather than simplicity are the endpoint” (p.189). In this study, observations were recorded on site in the form of handwritten fieldnotes. All observation notes were word-processed very shortly after, most often on the same day or in the evening. This approach was adopted as a means of supporting data analysis, as it was found to be a manageable way of allowing for careful reflection on, and analysis of, the data. I share the view of Ely et al. (1997) that “the writing process shapes and sharpens the

analysis" (p.65) and so the process of writing and re-writing the data was central to the data analysis. The context in which the data was generated was always noted and taken into account during the analysis and interpretation stages (Walford, 2008).

Analysis of the data generated via observations and interviews was undertaken using the principles of thematic analysis. The first stage required an in-depth familiarisation with the data. Building on the action of word-processing my own hand-written notes, this was further achieved through a careful and rigorous reading and re-reading of the data. This initial analysis was immediately followed by a period of coding and categorising, as the following section outlines.

4.8.1 Coding and categorising

In terms of developing analysis within this study, the first step involved systematically ascribing codes to the data collected during both observations and interviews. I opted for a more traditional form of coding, by way of physically colour-coding paper copies of the data. Such an approach was adopted as a personal preference, as opposed to, for example, using an IT based process. This process acted as a means of classifying, categorising and initially sorting the data (Lofland et al., 2004). Following an initial coding and categorising process, the categories were refined by way of further analysis. I undertook what Cohen et al. (2011) describe as 'domain analysis' - a process which involved grouping together the data into related themes, many of which contained sub-themes. From the inductive emergence of key themes, as with all qualitative analysis, the process of analysing ethnographic data is very much reliant on interpretation. Of course, there are very often multiple

interpretations of this data (Cohen et al., 2011). Ever mindful of this fact, I sought to reflect the view of Fetterman (2010) that ethnographic research is about "telling a credible, rigorous, and authentic story." (p.1). In terms of validity, throughout the analytical process, particular focus was placed upon maintaining rich data (Cohen et al., 2011) in order to provide a "sufficiently revealing, varied and full picture of the phenomenon, participants and settings" (p.240).

4.8.2 Transcription

A further writing practice central to qualitative research, the act of transcription, is considered by some to be overlooked within the paradigm. In an attempt to avoid what some consider to be the taken for granted notion that interview transcripts are transparent and therefore not subject to bias or worthy of particular note (Davidson, 2009), I give due consideration to the role of transcription here. I consider transcription as a subjective and interpretative 'theory' (Du Bois, 1991, p.71), one that, as the following sections seeks to illustrate, falls clearly within the realms of data analysis. The act of transcription is also seen here as a representational process (Davidson, 2009), one which, through a selective process, reflects the theoretical goals and definitions of the study. The researcher must be recognised as central here, in as much as they aim to represent in a written form that which was said by the participant(s), and select and/or reject what is to be included in the final text of the study during the transcription. I recognise the selective nature of this process and acknowledge that transcription both reflects and shapes the research (Du Bois, 1991). Any actions taken and decisions made by the researcher when aiming to represent the meaning behind what is said in a written format, show the transcription process

to be far more than simply a mechanistic process in which researcher literally restates that which is said by a participant during an interview or observation. Rather, transcription “entails a translation or transformation of sound/image from recordings into text” (Davidson, 2009). As researcher, I cannot be separated from the final transcription; my subjectivities and choices are an integral part of the end product. Thus, within this context, the act of transcription is very much part of the analytical process.

I endeavoured throughout this study, to provide a fair, trustworthy and valid representation of what was said by the participants during the transcription process, whilst acknowledging within the epistemological and ontological leanings of the study, that such accounts cannot be seen as the only ‘true’ portrait of what was said (Davidson, 2009). Included in the transcripts is an attempt, via descriptive text and/or symbolic representation, to convey aspects beyond the spoken word, such as pauses, rhythms, an emphasis of particular words, overlaps of speech, etc. These representations are outlined in the key below and are incorporated because they are thought to add further meaning to the participants’ words. Of course, it must be emphasised that this perceived meaning is as it is understood from my perspective and is part of the analytical process; the impact on the final text of the study brought about by my own subjectivity and potential bias as researcher is duly noted.

4.8.3 Key to transcripts

This key refers to all data collected from both interviews and fieldnote observations. The following conventions have been adopted in representing data:

- Where participants use colloquialisms or the Scots language, I provide a translation using [square] brackets.
- Information about how speech was delivered, including actions and facial expressions, appears within [*square, italicised*] brackets.
- CAPITALS are used when depicting shouting or a raised voice.
- Quoted speech in the interview or observation transcripts appears within 'single quotations marks'.
- An ellipsis indicates a pause in speech…
- Significant gaps in dialogue or text created through the editing process are indicated by […].
- In the findings chapters, extracts from fieldnote observations and interviews are prefaced with a *short, descriptive, italicised paragraph,* as a means of 'setting the scene'.

4.9 Ethical Considerations

The following discussion summarises ethical issues pertinent to this study, reflecting the guiding principles outlined in the Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research, published by the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2011) and those published by the Scottish Educational Research Association (SERA, 2005).

Prior to their involvement in the research, consent forms, designed to ensure voluntary informed consent (BERA, 2011, SERA, 2005) were issued to all participants pupils. The well-being of those who participated in the research remained of paramount importance throughout the course of the study (SERA, 2005,

p. 5). Crucially, given that young people were involved, I acted in accordance with the school's policy on Child Protection whilst undertaking this study. No incentives were offered in return for involvement in the study, and all participants were made aware that this study did not impact upon their working or scholastic life within the school. It was made clear that, on completion, no specific organisation or person should be identifiable from the text[5]. All participants (staff and pupils) were also informed that, following completion of the research, they would be able to access the findings of the study.

As Woods (1986) states, it is not possible to suspend or 'wash away' one's experiences, values and beliefs. Indeed, it may be argued that attempting to do so would negatively impact upon the quality of the data collected (Ball, 2012). This was of particular relevance to me as both a teacher within the school and as researcher, and as such, I remained ever mindful of the possibility of author bias. In order to further challenge and constrain such potential bias, an emphasis was placed upon seeking out diverse perspectives throughout the data collection period (Jeffrey, 2006). A further ethical issue arose in regard to my dual role as teacher and researcher. It can be argued that some pupils and teachers may have felt unable to decline the invitation to participate, given that I was already known to them as either a teacher or a colleague. However, this power imbalance was partially offset by ethics procedures which made clear to all potential participants, both in discussion and via consent forms issued prior to their participation, that involvement in the study was entirely voluntary. Additionally, the different roles I performed as teacher

[5] All names of people and places are pseudonyms.

and researcher were made explicit to the pupils and formed the basis of discussions with them prior to recruitment, and during the research. While the power imbalance between teacher-researcher and pupils and teacher-researcher and her colleagues can impact on the nature of data collected and its trustworthiness, the insider knowledge that a researcher-teacher possesses can, as previously noted, result in a range of methodological advantages and allow for insider researcher privileges that arguably support the collection of rich data.

The following chapters offer an analysis of the data. Each chapter is constructed around a dominant theme which emerged during the data collection period. The first chapter, Chapter 5, looks specifically at the rural location and farming, and how this acts as a site for gender construction. In the three remaining chapters, the rural location remains important contextually, with each chapter focusing on a particular theme, as follows: Chapter 6 focuses on the discourse surrounding gender and sexual dialogue; Chapter 7 considers the theme of playful banter and how this enables masculinity construction in boys; and Chapter 8 focuses on matters relating the curriculum and gender identity.

Chapter 5 - The Gendered Construction of Rurality

5.1 Introduction

Taking the view that gender is socially constructed (Butler, 1990; 1993; 1999; 2004; Connell, 1995; Connell, 2009; Francis, 2006), this chapter considers the role of rurality in influencing how gender is constructed for, and by, pupils in Bothy High School. Included within the notion of rurality in this chapter is the farming way of life, as is experienced by a significant number of pupils in the school. It begins by exploring the apparent association between the rural landscape and masculinity construction. Against this backdrop of rural masculinity, it was possible to gain some interesting insights from data into how girls deal with this gendered construct of rurality in terms of how they constructed their own gender identity. The role played by the school in appearing to support the masculine construction of the rural setting is also discussed within this chapter.

As is the case in all of the Findings Chapters, data in this chapter are presented as a series of episodes, each of which is drawn from interview transcripts or fieldnote observations.

5.2 The Masculine Construction of Rurality

Long-standing cultural associations between masculinity and rurality often result in the rural location being conceived as an ideal setting for constructing and enacting masculine identities (Cairns, 2014; Campbell, 2006). Recent research has found this to present challenges for girls in how they construct their gendered identities within

the rural context, leading to further issues when, for example, they come to consider future career paths (Cairns, 2014). Within the context of this study, from early on in the observation period, the strong association between the rural landscape and the construction of a masculine identity emerged as a theme. This was supported by the data collected during interviews with pupils. The following episode which exemplifies this theme is in two parts - the first part records a classroom observation and the second, an extract of an interview with Anna, the girl who features in the observation. An analysis of this interview extract, alongside the classroom observation, follows thereafter.

Episode 1 (i) - S4 Design and Manufacture Class

The following observation describes an interaction which took place during an S4 Design and Manufacture class, a subject taught by teachers in the Technical Department. The class comprises 2 girls and 8 boys. At this point, the pupils are working individually designing a cover for a mobile phone.

Jack and Anna pass remarks as Anna walks towards Jack's desk to collect something. Jack is now standing in front of this desk. They meet awkwardly and she jokes about them doing a 'dance' as they try to shuffle past each other. He makes a comment about her not being a dancer. Anna [*smiling*]: "I do highland dancing *and* I used to do ballet, actually!"

Jack: "You're no' a dancer!" [*dryly and jokingly*]. Anna rolls her eyes, laughs, and sits at the desk in front of Jack. He returns to his seat. Anna immediately turns round and begins

to chat to Jack. The conversation turns to farming, as Jack asks: “Did you see me driving the other day?”

“In the tractor, like?” Anna replies. Jack: “Yeah.” Anna nods. They continue to chat about working on the farm and Anna talks about how someone owns all of the land around her house. “He owns all the fields around me too...” comments Jack. They joke about farmers being ‘inbred’ in their area.

Fieldnotes: 9th September 2014.

Episode 1 (ii) In Discussion with Anna

The following interview was recorded at Bothy High School, primarily as a means of gaining Anna’s perspective on the interaction in Episode 1. The extracts provided here are taken from a longer interview. I began by asking her why Jack might have made the assertion ‘you’re no’ a dancer’.

Anna: I think ‘coz [because] I’m from a farm, and Jack’s from a farm, it’s quite kind of like … he thinks of me more of a boy, almost. [...] …like, because I play rugby…and not many rugby players do dancing... I just don’t think they look at me as a dancer [*laughs*].

FM: Why do rugby players not ‘do dancing’?

Anna: Well, I think rugby players tend to be bigger built, or… not really good at dancing, but they tend to be… have mostly two left feet than… a lot of dancers are really skinny and really fragile and in rugby you’re not skinny or fragile!

FM: And you mentioned that you’re from a farm. What sort of part does that play?

Anna: I think because, like, because of the farm, I know that I'm stronger, and it doesn't really bother me, like… I'm not as feminine as some … like, I play rugby and I'm from a farm, so I don't mind getting dirty, or wee [small] things wouldn't really bother me.

Anna: He knows that I'm from a farm and everything, so… […] Like, he knows that I'm maybe not necessarily a dancer…

Interview: 11th November 2014

This extract demonstrates how talk, a form of discursive practice, can impact upon how gender identity is constructed. As Butler (1997) writes: "Being called a name is...one of the conditions by which a subject is constituted in language" (p.2). Butler (2004) suggests that discourse functions are used to articulate the boundaries set out to allow people to achieve (or otherwise) social normativity. In his initial remark about Anna, not being a dancer, Jack may be intentionally questioning Anna's ability or desire to conform to stereotypical gender norms of femininity. From a Butlerian perspective, I suggest this may be because Jack is trying to shape Anna's gender identity as masculine, reflecting the role of the rural setting in this construct. When Anna argues against this statement, Jack restates his belief. He seems unwilling to accept her view that she is, in fact, a dancer. Thus, he can be seen to question her feminine identity, albeit in an apparently light-hearted manner. According to Anna, Jack knows her to be a farmer. Dancing, which I assume he considers a feminine activity, arguably stands in contrast to his masculine construct of farming, and therefore how he sees Anna. It may be reasonably assumed that Jack would not have made the same comment had he been speaking to a fellow male pupil. Nor is it likely he would have made such an assertion to a fellow female pupil who didn't live and

work on a farm. I suggest that this, supported by Anna's interview, reveals that Jack sees farming as a masculine construct. Jack therefore assumes that Anna's gender identity falls outwith the social norms of femininity; she is different as a result of her farming background. In the interview, Anna is clear in stating that she thinks that Jack sees farming as a masculine occupation. This construction leads him to consider Anna to be 'almost a boy'. Furthermore, there is also the classed dimension of the farming lifestyle to consider. The jobs undertaken on a farm involve manual labour; work traditionally associated with the working classes. In this study, Jack talks of driving tractors, and Anna makes reference to her own physical strength. This depiction of farming, with the emphasis on hard, physical work, arguably sits in contrast to most forms of dancing, arguably a gentle, feminine leisure pursuit, more often enjoyed by the middle classes than the working classes. Anna then mentions the fact that she plays rugby, the picture of a rugby player also standing in direct contrast to that of a dancer. She also notes her physical strength and the fact that she doesn't mind getting dirty. Presumably Anna sees these traits as being masculine. She also comments that she is not 'as feminine as some', which again she suggests is due to her farming background. Anna does not seem too perturbed by this construction of a less feminine identity. This point is worth considering in light of the findings of Campbell (2006) who concluded that, so entrenched are the associations between masculinity, rurality and work, girls often see no future within their rural communities in terms escaping the "male gender order" (p.102) unless they leave. In fact, Anna's attitude appears to suggest that she is less affected by this masculine world. She appears fairly able to work within this masculine gender construct of rurality. It is worth considering the above discussion through the

framework of agency. Butler (1993) argues that the subject is constituted by normative frames, which are, at the same time, open to resistance:

> … and if there is agency, it is to be found, paradoxically, in the possibilities opened up in and by that constrained appropriation of the regulatory law, by the materialization of that law, the compulsory appropriation and identification with those normative demands (p.12).

In returning the focus to Jack's actions during the observation, it is interesting to note that after Anna's initial comment, he is very keen to steer the conversation towards farming. Here, Jack leads the conversation to him driving a tractor on his farm. This provides a further example of the rural setting providing an ideal site in which to enact masculinities (Cairns, 2014). Reflecting Jack's masculine construct of farming, it may be assumed that he is deliberately talking about the stereotypically masculine task of driving a tractor in order to further assert his own masculine identity. Given that he is aged fifteen, and therefore too young to be legally driving, it may also be assumed that this comment is designed to demonstrate that he is taking on traditionally adult roles on the farm. Dancing and tractor driving are juxtaposed – the image of dancing, especially ballet dancing is of gentle, flowing movements by someone dressed in soft, feminine costumes, whereas a tractor is a heavy-duty piece of machinery that destroys, ploughs and shapes earth, operated by someone wearing rough, coarse work clothes.

Anna's aforementioned willingness or ability to accept the stereotypically masculine identity, as apparently befits the rural setting, serves as an interesting contrast to Tina, an S3 girl in Bothy High School. Whereas Anna appears able to work within the masculine gender construct which comes with being a farmer, the following interview with Tina demonstrates a contrasting attitude to constructing a feminine identity within the rural context.

Episode 2 - In discussion with Tina

The following interview was recorded at Bothy High School while Tina was in S3 at Bothy High. The extracts provided here are taken from a longer interview which took place following observations of an after-school Dance Show rehearsal.

Tina: I used to get called a boy at Primary school, coz [because] I wore trackies [track suits] and trainers and that all the time. We'd run about outside all the time. I had a tiny school you see, and we played outside all the time. Like…I played with the boys mostly, but you come here and you have to change. When I came here, I saw what being a girl was like and so I got into like this dancing and stuff.

FM: What do you mean by 'saw what being a girl was like'?

Tina: Like the other girls here - the older ones. I saw them and I saw what being an older girl was like so I changed my clothes and stuff and like, you see my hair band [*she shows this to the interviewer*], well... I wear things like this now.

Interview: 11th November 2014

Butler (1993) states that subjects are named and made by discursive practices: "Discursive performativity appears to produce that which it names, to enact its own referent, to name and to do, to name and to make" (p. 107). Using this Butlerian discourse of performativity, the experience of Tina in terms of 'being a girl' highlights her feminine identity construction as being influenced by naming practices - in other words, as a girl, she is enacting that which she is named (Butler, 1997). Furthermore, Tina's comments: "I saw what being a girl was like [...] Like the other girls - the older ones" clearly demonstrates the influence of the senior girls upon how Tina now constructs her new feminine identity. Tina appears to see gender as something that can be learned from older girls; it can be argued that Tina is aligning herself with the dominant construction of femininity within the High School, as she perceives it. There is also a suggestion that her prior construction of her gender identity in her small, rural primary school was somehow flawed, and certainly unsuitable for high school. She refers to having been called a boy on a number of occasions because of her choice of dress code and behaviour in primary school. Tina's new construction of her gender identity relies heavily on dress and physical appearance: "I changed my clothes and stuff...", a theme which also emerged in the findings of Read (2011). This is also reflective of the research of Fisher (2016), which focused on the transition from Primary to Secondary school for working-class girls. Tina, who is also from a working class background, speaks of taking up new gender discourses in the move to secondary school, just as the girls in Fisher's study do so. This relies heavily on an exaggerated form of femininity, or 'hyper-femininity' which emphasises physical appearance. To demonstrate this in the interview, Tina chooses to show off her 'feminine' hair band. Adopting a post -

structuralist view, where [gender] “identity is performatively constituted by the every ‘expressions’ that are said to be its results” (Butler, 1990, p.25), Tina’s (female) gender identity in this observation is constructed by her actions - that is to say, by her deliberate exhibition of an item which she thinks is associated with femininity and feminine appearance. The idea that femininity construction is very often linked to a strongly female appearance is reminiscent of the study by Francis (2000b), where it is concluded that the construction of femininity is often framed by the dominant construction of compulsory heterosexuality, based on the fundamental assumption that a woman must ensure she is attractive to the opposite sex. This also supports the findings of Read (2011), where attractiveness and appearance, along with passivity, were oftentimes recognised by students as characteristics linked with being feminine. Echoing the findings of Pascoe (2012), where dance is perceived as a feminine pursuit within the school setting, Tina also appears to consider dance a form of feminine expression. For her, it provided a means of constructing an overtly feminine identity as she moved into secondary school.

5.3 The Rural Curriculum

A further area of relevance in regard to gender construction and rurality in Bothy High School was revealed in an observation of an S3 Maths class. During this observation, mention was made of a ‘Rural Skills’ course. This is a college-based course which at the time of the study was attended by a small group of S3 pupils, all of whom were boys. These pupils miss one day of school per week to attend the course which is run by a Further Education College. The pupils often work on

‘hands on projects’ to gain experience in various outdoor-based activities linked to the rural location, including those linked to farming, stonemasonry, and horticulture.

Episode 3 – S3 Maths Class & the Rural Skills Course

The following fieldnote was taken during an observation of an S3 Maths class. Prior to the lesson, the teacher, Miss Stevens, informs me that the class are the ‘bottom - set’, in other words, the least academic Maths class in the year group. She also informs me that the class comprises all boys. She tells me that there was one girl originally, but her attendance is so poor that she is, according to the teacher, very rarely in class at all.

The teacher comes to the front of the classroom [*gives a ‘thumbs up’ sign and smiles*]. She asks the class:

“So, can we move onto to something new tomorrow?”

Wayne: “We’re no’ in the mora, [not in tomorrow] Miss.”

Miss Stevens: “Ah....Rural Skills! Back on, I guess?” “Okay, Thursday then.... I hope it’s a nice day for you if you’re outside tomorrow!”

“Disnae [Doesn’t] bother me!” Wayne immediately answers in a confident tone.

“Aye [Yes], we can work in any weather! It’s no’ [not] a problem fur [for] us!” adds Alan.

Fieldnotes: Tuesday 7th October 2015.

Taking Butler's view that subjects are named and made by discursive practice (Butler, 1993), it would appear that the boys in this interaction want to portray themselves as tough and not bothered by poor weather, in fact they are able to "work in any weather", like 'real men farmers'. Here, the classed and rural dimensions of farming are revealed, with the boys keen to emphasise their apparent ability to withstand physical hardship, a characteristic of a 'real' man, and in particular, a man from the working classes. I conclude that this interaction works to further cement the construction of farming as a working class, male occupation.

After this observation, I sought to find out further information about the rural skills course on offer. Through discussion with the pupils at the end of the lesson, it became apparent that the rural skills course was only attended by boys, all of whom were members of this bottom-set Maths class. This is of relevance because it appeared to suggest one of two things: either the course only attracted the interest of boys, or alternatively, boys were more actively encouraged to attend than girls. In order to explore this further I sought to explore how pupils were recruited and selected for the course and to find out whether pupils chose, or were chosen, to attend. Either way, there are interesting points for consideration in terms of the role of gender construction. For example, if the pupils themselves had chosen to participate, then it would conceivably suggest that pupils within the school see the rural skills course as a masculine construct, one which is not in keeping with being a girl. Alternatively, had the pupils been selected for the course, then it may suggest that the school sees rural skills as something more suitable for boys. In order to obtain further information regarding the recruitment and selection process, I arranged

an interview with the teacher who was charged with liaising with the local Further Education College.

Episode 4- In discussion with Mrs Edison (Rural Skills coordinators)

The following extract is taken from an interview with the member of staff, Mrs Edison, who co-ordinates the Rural Skills course in Bothy High School. This course is run in conjunction with a Further Education College- Mrs Edison acts as the liaison between the school and the college. At the point in the interview printed below, I ask Mrs Edison about the process for recruitment for the course, having mentioned my observation that it is all boys who currently attend.

Mrs Edison: First of all, the lady who runs the course will send me an email to say - 'This is the new course that's starting'. She gives me some details, but not very many, about what we're going to do and the age group to pitch it at. At that point, I'll then forward all the details to Pupil Support[6] and to Senior Management, just to say, 'Do they have anyone that you feel would be interested in that process?' So they would then… obviously… because they know their kids really well… they know what direction they're going to be headed in, being their Pupil Support teachers. And I think management get involved. They'll maybe know that it might be good for certain kids to come off classes, that it would help them progress further if they attended some classes away from school. So, they send me a list of names. I then go round and speak to those individuals. The list of names I got back… they were all boys. […] Each Pupil Support teacher puts a wee [small] reason behind their suggestion, you know: 'lives on a farm', 'would like to be in construction', etc.

[6] In the Scottish education system, Pupil Support teachers, sometimes referred to as Guidance Teachers, support pupils in relation to pastoral, health and career issues.

FM: That was one of my questions… is it linked to their career aspirations, or their rural location? I suppose it's linked to both, really?

Mrs Edison: Absolutely! I think all the children here who are maybe not too keen academically outside the school and the studying; if you already live on a farm, and we know that, potentially, in this area that's what they're going to end up doing is taking over the farm, it's these little courses that the Pupil Support teacher's trying to get them on so they've got some bits of paper.

Interview: 18th December 2014

It may be concluded that the staff involved in the recruiting process for the Rural Skills course appear to actively encourage boys to participate in this course, as opposed to girls, given that no girls were identified by staff as potential candidates. In this configuration, the school appears to have set gender-based boundaries in relation to those who are invited to attend the Rural Skills course. Whilst it is certainly the case that a significant number of boys within the school live and work on farms and are therefore likely to have an interest in pursuing this occupation in later life, it is also undoubtedly the case that a number of girls do too. Furthermore, as with many of the boys, girls are often heavily involved in working on their family farm outwith school, Anna from the previous episode being one such example. However, as with the research findings of Cairns (2014), the rural landscape in this study is seen to offer an ideal site for the enactment of masculinity as opposed to femininity. It is suggested later on in the interview that some of the pupils who have been attending the course may go on to take over the family farm, and as such, it may be concluded that this masculine construct of rural life is established outwith the control of the school. That said, it is argued there that the school is actively

supporting this masculine construction of rurality, at the potential educational expense of girls. This would seem to suggest that some teachers within this study appear to conform to stereotypical gender norms, as highlighted in how they approach the recruitment of pupils for the Rural Skills course. This is reflective of the findings of a study by Major and Santoro (2014), who assert that "stereotypical views of males and females can dominate teachers' views of boys and girls, and they can be seen as essentially different" (p.60). This risks further entrenching the already strong association between masculinity, work, and the rural community, which, as Campbell (2006) concludes, can result in girls seeing no future for themselves in the rural community.

5.4 Conclusion

This chapter has presented an analysis of data focusing on how the rural setting, including the farming lifestyle, is often seen by pupils as a masculine, working-class occupation. It is also argued herein that the fact that the rural setting is often presented as a gendered space can lead to a sense of conflict for girls in terms of their gender construction. Whereas some girls appear comfortable with being seen adopting a more stereotypically masculine gender identity, as apparently befits the rural setting, others are drawn to conform to the stereotypical norms of femininity, which may appear to contradict their rural upbringing. This is reflective of research by Cairns (2014) and Campbell (2006), where longstanding associations with the rural landscape and masculinity are seen to stand firm.

This chapter also presented the case that the masculine construct of the rural setting is at times supported, or arguably encouraged, by some staff within the school. In particular, this relates to the gendered recruitment and selection of pupils for the Rural Skills course. It may be concluded that as a result of the school being complicit in the masculine construction of this course, girls are currently unable to negotiate access to it and this limits their educational opportunities.

Chapter 6 - Gendering Through Sexual Dialogue

6.1 Introduction

This chapter seeks to explore the role of pupil-pupil interactions in the gender construction in Bothy High School, taking the view that “gender is not fixed in advance of social interaction but is constructed in interaction” (Connell, 1995, p.35). Specifically, these pupil interactions involve sexual dialogue, a theme that emerged both during classroom observations and in extra-curricular activities. Discourses of normative heterosexuality appear to underpin these interactions. The contrasting ways in which teachers responded (or otherwise) to the sexual language being used by pupils is also given attention here. As with the previous chapter, data are presented as a series of episodes, each of which demonstrates the theme of sexual dialogue and its perceived role in the gender construction of pupils in Bothy High School.

6.2 How Dancing Girls Do Femininity

Early on in the data collection period, the dance floor emerged as a key forum thorough which some girls in Bothy High School constructed their gendered identities. Reflecting research of Pascoe (2012), and as discussed in the previous chapter, dancing is very much considered a feminine pursuit in the school. The following section outlines the role of sexual dialogue in uncovering how some girls consider femininity, with the dance club providing the setting.

Episode 1 (part i) - Dance Club Rehearsal

The following observation fieldnotes were taken during an after-school rehearsal for the school's Dance Club. The group of girls I observe is rehearsing for a forthcoming Dance Show. This is an annual school event, and one which attracts many performers, almost always girls. The girls are standing in the corridor chatting casually when I approach them. Most of them know me fairly well as a teacher and they seem eager for me to see what they are doing:

Katy asks: "So you want to see *our* dance?!"

Tina replies (answering on my behalf): "She does, 'coz [because] it's all bums and things!" A number of the girls giggle and laugh as one demonstrates - as if to make the point - a fairly seductive dance move involving a lot of fast bottom wiggling. Lorna adds: "It's okay, though, the teacher likes it. We are just warning you!"

The others nod, laugh or verbally agree and immediately begin rehearsing their dance, after one girl runs to the iPod Dock to start the music. As they dance, they make comments to each other about particular dance moves. They stop and start the track a number of times. After completing the routine, Katy asks the others: "Right, so, is there anything we need to sort?"

Chatter breaks out, as they begin to work on a move which involves finger-clicking and twisting hips in time with the music. The music goes on again and Tina leads the way as they try out the move..."Step-Click-Step-Click", says Tina, the self-designated 'leader' as she dances. They all join in, laughing.

Fieldnotes: 15th September 2014

During this observation, I was struck by Tina's initial description of their dance as being "all bums and things!". This, she declared, was the reason why I, as someone with an interest in gender issues, had chosen to observe their dance rehearsal. This

comment appears to suggest that Tina considers gender to be synonymous with sexuality. Put another way, Tina's comment demonstrates that her understanding of gender is linked to the girls' sexually provocative behaviour, or their overt demonstration of sexuality through dance. Furthermore, it appears to suggest that she thinks I share this understanding of gender, and hence, is the reason I have asked to watch their rehearsal. This is in contrast to how I had attempted to explain the focus of my study to all pupils, including Tina. I had done so by way of a participant information sheet[7] which I had provided when gaining their consent to be involved in the study, and then through a follow up discussion. Here, I had I attempted to define the notion of gender in 'pupil friendly' language, emphasising that I was exploring the impact of gender on young peoples' educational experiences. At no point did the description of gender relate to sexuality or sexual behaviour. I was also interested in the comment by Tina's friend, Lorna, when she was keen to 'warn' me about observing them rehearsing their dance. I took her comment to mean that she was warning me against the sexual nature of the dance; that I might find this surprising, distasteful or unsuitable for them. I conclude that this reflected how the girls saw me, given my authoritative position as both an adult and a (female) teacher in the school. It perhaps also suggested that Lorna herself thought their dance moves quite risqué. My observation led me to see that the way in which the girls are constructing their gendered identity in the dance was, as they had 'warned' overtly seductive, sexual and provocative, with a clear focus on attempting to appear sexy. It also became quite apparent that this construct is, in their opinion, at odds with what is socially acceptable, hence why they were keen to alert me to what was to follow. However, a

[7] See Appendices 1 - 4 for Staff and Pupil Participation Information Forms and Consent Forms.

further comment from Lorna – "It's okay, though, the teacher likes it." suggested that the dance forum somehow negates this view, making such sexual constructs acceptable, even in the eyes of their class teacher. In order to explore these comments in more detail, I invited Tina and Lorna to participate in an interview, the content of which will now be considered.

***Episode 1 (part ii)* - In Discussion with Tina and Lorna**

The following interview was recorded at Bothy High School as a means of further exploring issues in the Dance Club Rehearsal observation (15th September 2014). The extracts provided here are taken from a longer interview.

FM: When I was asking if I could come and observe your dance, and I was chatting about the purpose of my studying being linked to being a boy or a girl and how it affects your school experience and things, I think you said something like your dance was all 'bums and things'...

Tina: [Laughs] Yeah.

FM: What did you mean by that?

Tina: Em... it's something we would do only in dance, or we would get called flirts and stuff, 'coz like there's a thing in it where you call it the 'slut drop' and it's just something we wouldn't do in everyday life, unless you were… like… a tart[8].

[8] Collins Dictionary definition of a 'tart' (n): a promiscuous woman, especially a prostitute: often a term of abuse.

Lorna: It's quite like, sexual in a way, but Catherine's kind of in... I don't know… she's just kind of into that kind of stuff, where you have to have your hips going and all that, so... but when we do it, we just, you know, people look at you... they just think ..."Wow, that dance!". [...]

FM: Now, I think it might actually have been you, Lorna, afterwards who said "It's okay, the teacher likes it - we're just warning you?"

Tina: Some people think we're too young to dance like this but the teacher said it's okay, so...

Lorna: Yeah, because obviously a lot of people are quite shocked when they see it, and obviously the janitors and things like that. When they saw it, they looked quite appalled [*both girls laugh*].

FM: By your dance?

Lorna: Yes.

Tina: But the dance teacher liked it, and obviously she didn't want us to change it, cos she thought it was kind of a bold kind of 'woman stand up' kind of thing, like we're women and we're proud to show what we have.

Interview: 11th November 2014

This extract confirms that, whilst the Dance Club facilitates and arguably reinforces a particular form of highly sexualised femininity, the girls feel that this form of femininity would not be readily accepted away from the dance floor as it falls out with the socially acceptable norms of everyday life. Such public acts, according to the girls, would risk any girl being classed as flirts or tarts. It may be assumed that the girls think it acceptable to act in such ways on the dance floor because it is a 'performance' and therefore not necessarily a representation of them as individuals. It is also reasonable to conclude that the group setting makes this an easier and more acceptable way to construct their sexualised feminine identity. Lamb et al. (2015) note there to be clear tensions around being seen as sexy because while it might be seen as acceptable in some instances, desiring sexual attention from boys is also socially constructed as somewhat shameful. This finding is reflected in the words of the girls in this episode. It is interesting to note that Lorna is keen to credit her fellow dancer, Catherine, with designing such provocative dance moves, thus making clear that neither of the girls being interviewed is taking ownership of their overtly sexual performance within the interview setting. This is in spite of the fact that Tina appeared to have taken the lead role in the rehearsal. Lorna also suggests that part of the allure of dancing in this sexually explicit way is to attract attention, role-playing an example of a response from an imaginary witness: 'Wow, that dance!'. I suggest the dance floor allows the girls to construct and demonstrate a risqué form of gendered behaviour in a public forum, without the risk of repercussion, and with the active support of those watching, including their teacher.

Indeed, the dance teacher's apparent comments on their chosen style of dance are also worthy of mention; Tina claims that this teacher saw their dance as one which

symbolised strength in women, that "it [the dance] was kind of a bold kind of 'woman stand up' [...] like we're women and we're proud to show what we have...'. Their teacher, in accepting the dance style, describes their form of femininity, not in terms of being sexually degrading or suggestive, but as demonstrating a strong and assertive form of feminine identity. Despite this, the girls are still convinced that a public demonstration of this feminine identity would not be widely accepted away from the dance platform. Furthermore, they also concede that, whether on the dance floor or not, for some, such constructions are not socially acceptable. For example, in stark contrast to their teacher, the girls note the apparent shocked response from the school's (female) janitors when they first witnessed the group's dance moves. Their reaction is to the clear amusement of Tina and Lorna and they seem to relish the fact that the janitors found their dance distasteful. I suggest this is further demonstration of their desire to rebel and push boundaries in terms of their gendered identity by using dance as a means of ensuring they are without fear of repercussion or lack of social acceptance.

Tina and Lorna clearly link desirable performances of femininity with overt heterosexuality and hyper femininity – with an emphasis on appearing sexy and physically attractive. In the research of Franscombe, Webb and Silk (2015), working class girls like Tina and Lorna are often depicted as constructing overtly (hetero) sexy identities, particularly by middle class girls. Tina and Lorna appear to aspire up to this stereotype when dancing, while at the same time, seeming all too aware and somewhat fearful of the judging eye of those who disapprove of it. It may be

concluded that the girls are very aware of the negative discourse surrounding girls and the 'hyper-feminine' stereotype.

Later in the interview, the girls seem to be in little doubt about whether being a girl impacts on how they are viewed by people:

***Episode 1 (part iii)* - In Discussion with Tina and Lorna (continued)**

Tina: […] boys get away with a lot more than girls do. Like, boys are, a lot of them are just disgusting in school. The way they behave and everything is quite… and the comments, it's actually quite appalling. But if a girl were to do that they'd get called like all the names under the sun.

FM: Give me some examples...

Tina: Right, well...if a boy goes out with five girls, that's okay, their mates are all "oh, you're in, well done, you've done it!" If a girl does that, the boys are like, "oh, we're not going near you, you're a slag," or something like that, like why would we go near you if you're just going to go out with everyone. But if boys do that, that's completely fine.

Lorna: Yeah, like you've scored, you're in there.

Tina: Like a stud, or … [...] I know a lot of girls that go home and cry just because they [...] they get judged for it.

Interview: 11th November 2014

Here, the girls reiterate that any overt demonstration of sexualised femininity would not be socially acceptable, and would result in them being classed as a 'slag'[9]. Furthermore, in the view of the girls, some boys in the school, by way of discursive practices (Foucault, 1974; 1980), set clear boundaries of acceptability in relation to how girls portray themselves as females. The clear message here is that, for these girls, the dance floor makes for a safe forum where they can construct a very sexual form of femininity; a place where they can rebel against what is otherwise seen as inappropriate behaviour. However, away from the dance floor, this group of girls might not necessarily choose to construct their identity in this way. In other words, the girls choose to adopt different gender identities, depending on where they are and what audience they are presenting to. Similar findings emerged in the research of Ward (2015), which looks at masculinity construction in boys. Ward (2015) speaks of some boys using a chameleon-like approach, by adopting a complex negotiation process which allows them to switch between various masculine identities, as befits the surroundings in which they find themselves. Just as the boys in Ward's research are not 'fixed' into one particular construct of masculinity, so too are the girls in this episode able to adopt different forms of femininity, depending on audience and setting.

Tina and Lorna provide insights into how they see some boys in the school constructing their masculine identity. This construct is overtly hegemonic, and based on public demonstrations of their heterosexual promiscuous behaviour and their

[9] Collins Dictionary definition of a 'slag' (n): a colloquial term which denotes a promiscuous or sexually immoral woman who has had many casual sexual partners.

sexual command over girls. In stark contrast to their description of reactions towards girls, this equivalent form of masculine identity would result in boys being congratulated for their achievements by their male peers: "like you've scored, you're in there". The following section focuses on a group of boys whose hegemonic form of masculinity construction reflects Tina and Lorna's views of how some boys in their school construct their gendered identity.

6.3 Sexual Talk and the Construction of Masculinity

Episode 2 - Design & Manufacture Class

The following extract is taken from observation fieldnotes during a visit to an S4 Design & Manufacture class, a practical-based subject taught in the Technical department. This small class comprises 8 boys and 2 girls. The teacher is Mr Blade, who is in his early thirties and has worked in Bothy High School for two years. At this point in the lesson, the class have been welcomed and taken straight into the 'workshop', where they have been working for around 10 minutes. This room has five work benches, with many tools kept underneath and more around the parameter of the room. The teacher has invited me to sit at his desk which is at the front of the room:

> The pupils are asked to gather round the teacher's work station again while he demonstrates filing the plastic, and are soon encouraged to move to a work station and begin filing their pieces of plastic, creating a 'v-shape'. There is much activity in the room as pupils collect various tools and equipment. Laughter breaks out at the back of the room, where four boys are working. It transpires that one boy, Kenny, has broken his piece of plastic. The teacher heads over, commenting:

> "If you are too rough, this is what happens - it snaps". He holds the piece up for the class to see.
>
> "I wanted to make it a big v" retorts Kenny, smiling. The others snigger.
>
> The teacher responds: "Firm but gentle with plastic".
>
> "Why didn't you say so...", says Kenny and laughs again. Stewart continues to laugh at Kenny's misfortune. Whilst most of the boys are chatting, the two girls remain almost silent throughout this time, working independently at the station. They do not work at the same desk. The group of boys at the back continues to chat quite loudly, and it is clear that the conversation is not directly about their work. Stewart comments on something being 'warm and salty...' and the others laugh. The teacher walks over to the boys' work station and tells Kenny to "forget about the v" and concentrate on filing a smooth edge on his piece of plastic. At this point, some of the boys snigger again and it's clear that they are teasing each other about the shape of the plastic being like female genitalia.
>
> **Fieldnotes: 2nd September 2014**

While my primary focus here is on the group of boys who sit together at the back of the room, it is interesting to note that the two girls in the class do not sit together, and instead work at different work stations. This, according to the teacher, was their own choice. However, the boys at the back of the room group together and arguably use this all-boys space to actively construct a dominant masculine identity. The girls are also very much in the background in this setting, in stark contrast to the boys -

particularly the group of boys at the back - who play a far more active and vocal role in the classroom. This reflects earlier findings of Francis (2000b), who observes that boys are more likely than girls to construct their gendered identity in a more visible and physical manner. It is possible to argue, as Francis (2000b) does, that rather than this being a form of passivity on behalf of the girls in the class, this 'less visible' gender construct is itself an aspect of their femininity construction.

The group of boys in this episode appears quite comfortable making sexual references and using sexual innuendo in front of their peers, including the girls. Reflecting the views of Martino and Frank (2006), I conclude that the boys are using this sexualised banter as a form of male-bonding, and are doing so as a mean of regulating their heterosexual (or hegemonic) construction of masculinity. Further still, they also appear willing to make such comments within the teacher's ear shot, and also within mine, as I sit in the teacher's chair at the front of the classroom. I conclude that the teacher was also able to hear their conversation, given that he was closer in distance than I was. This was further confirmed in a later discussion with the teacher, who, though not able to recount any 'explicit' discussions, did allude to hearing 'silly comments' which reflected the boys' immaturity. He felt that the predominantly male forum perpetuated this, as he called it, 'The Boys' Club'. Whilst it is possible that these boys may have acted differently around a female teacher, I deem this unlikely given that I was in the room, and in a dominant position sitting at the teacher's desk. In fact, I felt my obvious position in the room would only serve to highlight my attendance in the classroom, a factor I had initially worried would affect my ability to remain in the background. However, I quickly realised that this

was not the case. It is interesting to note that the (male) teacher does not confront the boys about this sexualised dialogue. Thus, in appearing to condone this sexual banter within the classroom, it may be argued that the teacher is complicit in constructing the boys' gender identity, as Smith (2007) notes: "unwittingly legitimating certain gendered discourses" (p.191). The discussion continues, with one of the boys, Stewart, turning his attention to another male pupil, Barry, who is working at a neighbouring workstation. He turns to Barry, asking: "Do you even know what we're talking about?" then laughs. Barry looks mortified by this, blushes and says nothing. The other boys smirk and continue to make comments under their breath, to each other's amusement. The teacher does not react to this. I encountered a similar peer interaction on my return visit to this class later in the same day:

***Episode 3* - S4 Design & Manufacture.**

The pupils are continuing with their filing in the workshop as I enter. I take a seat again at the teacher's desk, at the front of the room. I immediately note that the boys up the back are still quite boisterous.

"I'm no' [not] happy with you..." says Stewart in a strong manner, speaking to Barry. Another boy in the group makes a comment about being 'wet', though I am unable to hear the full conversation. The boys laugh loudly. Stewart, turning to Barry who is standing beside him, adds confidently:" I bet you don't get that, Barry". He then laughs. Barry doesn't respond vocally, but smiles meekly. At this point, the teacher, who is working with Anna at the workstation directly in front of me, brings an example of this pupil's work to me to show me: "If I was the buyer, I'd be looking for a clean edge like this..."

Fieldnotes: 2nd September 2014.

In this episode, again it may be argued that the same group of boys, in their boisterous manner and through their open use of sexual language, continue to portray a hegemonic construct of masculinity; that is, a "normative standard of (heterosexual) masculinity and one which endorses an ideology of male domination" (McCarry, 2010, p.19). This is further demonstrated in Stewart's interaction with Barry: "I bet you don't get that, Barry", to the amusement of both himself and the other boys. Here, it would seem that he is attempting to undermine Barry's masculine status in inferring that Stewart does not understand the connotations of the sexual dialogue. Put another way, discursive practices are at play, defining what is normal, acceptable behaviour; as Foucault (1981) postulates, discourses are:

> ...practices that systemically form the objects of which they speak...discourses are not about objects; they do not identify objects, they constitute them and in the practice of doing so conceal their own invention. (p.49)

Drawing on Foucault's (1977) conceptualisation of power, Barry's comment can be considered a means by which normalisation, a key instrument of power, is used to promote standardisation and homogeneity. Stewart is making clear that a lack of understanding of sexual language on Barry's part is not in keeping within the norms of what is a socially acceptable form of masculine identity. This is reminiscent of the findings of Wardman's (2016) which evidence peer pressure as acting as an intervention mechanism when individuals are seen not to conform to gender norms. Stewart's comment and actions also serve to strengthen his own dominant masculine

identity by way of demonstrating his authority within the classroom, as he publicly mocks his classmate. In a study by Huuki, Manninen, Sunnari (2010), there is a similar focus on how humour, recognised as an important means of constructing culturally accepted forms of masculinity, is also seen as a way of elevating boys' social status amongst their peers. Their findings reveal that whilst the humour is often used in an affirmative and uniting way, it can also be used in a way that is exclusive, aggressive or violent as a means of cultivating a masculine identity, at the expense of others. Whilst the example in this episode is neither aggressive nor violent, it is certainly designed as a means of excluding Barry from the rest of the group.

Focusing on the teacher's role, it may again be assumed that Mr Blade, being closer to the group of boys than I was, might have overheard the conversation between the group of boys, or at least the comment from Stewart towards Barry. In his study, Smith (2007) posits the notion that some teachers "courted the admiration of 'macho lads'" (p.181) in efforts to establish 'friendly' relations, with the hope of improving classroom behaviour, and pupil engagement in learning. This is somewhat reflective of the findings here. Whilst the teacher in this episode did not directly engage with the sexual banter, it may be argued that, by way of his apparent lack of intervention, Mr Blade is supporting a form of masculinity construction within this classroom and was thus, acting as a "cultural accomplice" (Smith, 2007, p.179). The teacher's reaction after this is very much one of distraction. He brings an example of work to me from another pupil, thus avoiding his need to approach the boys and providing a distraction for me and for him.

In order to gain insights into being a girl in this male dominated class, I arranged an interview with one of the two girls, Anna:

Episode 4- In discussion with Anna

The following extract is taken from an interview with Anna, an S4 girl. Here, we discuss the Design and Manufacture class, which predominantly comprises boys:

Anna:	Well... a lot of the conversations aren't really what I would talk about [laughs].
FM:	Can you give me any examples? What sort of conversations?
Anna:	Em …[pauses and laughs]. They talk about girls a lot...which is kind of awkward for me, cos I'm just going to sit there...
FM:	So when they're talking about girls...what sort of ... you're saying they talk about what they look like?
Anna:	Yeah. Like if "oh, this girl looks really good," and everything, then sometimes I'll be asked what I think [laughs], and I'm like "emmm..." […] And with some of them it's even like...if it's like, one of my friends or something that they're talking about, or like I know them, then they'll be like "oh what are they like?" Or something like that.

Interview: 11th November 2014

Anna describes the classroom discourse as being very much led by the boys. She reveals her awkwardness at the conversations which take place, many of which centre around girls. Here, it is often, girls' attractiveness in terms of physical appearance is the primary topic of conversation. Here, I conclude that the boys use such discourses to construct or emphasise a masculine identity which relies on overt demonstrations of their heterosexuality. Whilst it is reasonable to conclude that the all-male forum is active in facilitating their form of masculinity construction, it is also clear from Anna's interview that the boys are not only willing to speak in front of the girls, but are also happy to involve them.

A further peer interaction where sexualised language was used to construct gendered identities took place in an S4 Art lesson, as the following episode portrays.

Episode 5- S4 Art Class

The following extract is taken from fieldnote observations taken during an S4 Art lesson. The class is taught by a young, female teacher, Miss McKirdie. She has three years teaching experience. The class comprises 10 girls and 5 boys. I join the class 10 minutes into the lesson - at this point, the room is very quiet.

The boy sitting in front of me, Harry calls on Tracy, who sits in front of him. She turns round as he mutters something very quietly. She laughs but her facial expression looks a little uncomfortable and she 'No' several times to whatever he is saying or asking. They start talking about the social media site, 'Facebook'. At this point, the teacher tells Harry, whose voice is louder, to be quiet. "She is trying to crack onto [chat up] my pal, and I'm telling her to do one [go away]!", says Harry in a loud, assertive manner. The teacher

instantly asks him to get on with his work and lectures him about the need to “catch up” on the work, as he is behind the rest of the class.

Harry retorts, laughing: “But she is trying to get my mate, Chris!” The teacher ignores this comment, and quietly asks him to get on with his work. Both pupils are quiet for a few minutes, but neither does any work. The girl turns round so that she is sitting side-on her chair, i.e. almost turning round to face Harry. She sits and stares. Harry mutters to her again - inaudible from where I sit. He continues to try to get her attention, swinging his arms in a sweeping gesture, so that it might catch her eye. The teacher walks over and again reminds them to get on with their work. Tracy throws something (a small crumb?) at Harry when the teacher moves away. She then stands up and moves to sit at the other side of the room, beside a different boy.

As Tracy leaves her seat, Harry shouts: “YASS! [Yes!] Stay there!” adding - “Don’t ever come back!” He is laughing, but also has a very firm tone to his voice. Despite her seat move, Tracy remains almost facing Harry, turning round on her seat (to the right). Neither has drawn anything at this point. The teacher moves towards Harry and he begins to work for the first time as she approaches. [...] As soon as the teacher moves away, Harry is immediately out of his seat again, sharpening his pencil at the bin at the front. He wanders passed Tracy’s desk on the way back...

“Shut up, you dyke!” he says loudly, immediately followed by: “She called me a prick so I called her a dyke.” (Though, from what I observed, the girl did not actually say anything). The teacher asks him to leave the room and he does so. I can see him pacing the corridor outside after he leaves...

Fieldnotes: 24th September 2014

In referring to Tracy as a ‘dyke’, a term often used in a sexually derogative manner to depict a lesbian who is masculine in appearance, Harry is very publicly raising the issue of Tracy’s sexuality. Interestingly, this contradicts an earlier statement by Harry, where he accuses Tracy of trying to flirt with his male friend. In considering this in relation to Foucault’s notion of discourse, what is of relevance is why, at this point, Harry chooses to refer to Tracy using such a term; as Foucault (1974) asserts, “How is it that one particular statement appeared rather than another?” (p.27). Just as homosexuality is seen as the antithesis of masculine behaviour (Haywood & Mac an Ghaill, 2012; Martino, 1999; Smith, 2007), Taylor (2007) asserts that gendered expectations on women are most often framed within a heterosexual construct. This reflects earlier findings of Francis (2000b) who concludes that femininity is very often “framed by the dominant construction of compulsory heterosexuality, where a woman must ensure she is attractive to men.” (p.46). I conclude that Harry’s comment is designed to make explicit the link between what is seen as ‘acceptable’ and ‘desirable’ performances of femininity, and ‘assumed’ heterosexuality, in order to publicly put into question Tracy’s femininity. This social interaction between Tracy and Harry also demonstrates how power works to promote standardisation and homogeneity:

> It is easy to understand how the power of the norm functions within a system of formal equality, since within homogeneity that is the rule, the norm introduces, as a useful imperative and a result of measurement, all the shading of individual differences (Foucault, 1977, p. 184).

Harry's comment is designed to separate Tracy from the 'norm' of femininity by way of dividing practices, where the norm reflects heterosexuality. Harry's actions are also a way of him exerting his own dominant and hegemonic masculine identity in the classroom. His overt use of insulting language which is often sexual in nature, serves to outline this authoritative identity. As does his willingness to shout across the classroom at various points, in a confident, almost aggressive manner. This reflects both the early findings in this chapter and also those of the research of Huuki, Manninen, Sunnari (2010), where aggressive humour was seen as a salient means of constructing a masculine identity, often coming at the expense of his peers. In the episode above, it is a girl, rather than other boys, who is the butt of Harry's 'joke'. His hostile, domineering behaviour continues after he leaves the room, as he paces up and down outside the classroom door in what could be described as an animalistic action of marking territory. Again, this behaviour clearly asserts his commanding masculine construct.

On hearing this verbal interaction between Tracy and Harry, Miss McKirdie immediately intervenes, asking Harry to leave the room. This is in direct contrast to the action of the Design and Manufacture teacher, Mr Blade, in the previous episode, who chose not to intervene when sexual language was used in the classroom. It is worth highlighting that this art class was taught by a female teacher, in contrast to the previous example. The class also comprised two-thirds female pupils. These factors may be of relevance in terms of the actions and reactions witnessed during this observation, and will thus be given due consideration in the final chapter.

6.4 Conclusion

This chapter sought to explore the interplay between sexual dialogue and gender construction within the context of Bothy High School. Working within a framework which sees gender as fluid, ever-changing and socially constructed (Butler, 1990; 1993; 1997; 2004; Connell, 1995; Connell, 2009; Francis, 2006), the data presented in this chapter would suggest that pupils use sexual dialogue both to construct their own gendered identity, and also to shape that of other pupils. The findings also clearly show that pupils' willingness to engage in such discussions is gendered, in that boys are more likely than girls to openly discuss matters of a sexual nature in school. Furthermore, they seem more willing to do so in front of teachers. Finally, the findings demonstrate how teachers can be seen to support particular gender constructs in the classroom either through their response to, or lack of response to, sexualised pupil-pupil interactions in the classroom. An example in this chapter demonstrates how one male teacher supported the construction of a hegemonic, heterosexual form of masculinity amongst a group of boys. In contrast, a further example of data demonstrates a female teacher who was keen to disrupt a pupils' attempt to shape his gender and that of a peer through his use of sexualised language.

Chapter 7 - Boys Gendering Through Playful Banter

7.1 Introduction

This chapter explores ways in which some boys at Bothy High School employ playful banter as a means of constructing their masculine identity. The term banter is used specifically in this chapter to describe a particular type of humour based on interactions which are intentionally comical in nature; the ostensibly playful and friendly exchange of teasing remarks. The interplay between this boy-banter and masculinity construction is evidenced in two ways: during interactions between boys and their peers; and in those involving boys and their teachers. The data suggest that the gendered make-up of particular classes may play a part in supporting or perpetuating the construction of masculinity through boy-banter. This issue is explored within the all-male class forum, a learning context in which some of the boys in this chapter regularly find themselves.

There are some strong links between the notion of banter and the data presented in the previous chapter on sexual discourse. It important to make a clear distinction between the two; whilst the idea of sexual innuendo can be based upon humorous interactions, and is, in this sense, 'banterful', the language is sexual in nature. In contrast, the notion of playful banter within this chapter seemed distinctly non-sexual in nature.

7.2 Playful Boy-Banter in the Classroom

Humour is well documented as a strategy for constructing a socially accepted form of masculinity (Huuki, Manninen & Sunnari, 2010; Swain, 2004). The first section of this chapter focuses on a particular form of humour, that of playful banter amongst boys in the classroom setting. The findings in this section and in the rest of the chapter relate only to boys. However, there is no suggestion here that girls might not adopt forms of similar humorous banter as a means of constructing their gendered identities. The data presented in this chapter represent a theme that emerged during the data collection period. During this time, no examples of girls adopting humourous banter in the classroom were witnessed. I have a number of fieldnote observations relating to the notion of playful banter involving boys, too many to include here[10]. I have therefore attempted to choose the three examples which I believe best illustrate this theme. The first episode in this section features an observation of an S4 physics class. This is followed by two classroom observations of two S3 classes, one Maths class (Episode 2) and one English class (Episodes 3(i) and 3(ii), respectively). In these two classes, the classroom teacher becomes involved in the bantered interactions, though each time, this banter is instigated by pupils.

Episode 1- S4 Physics Class

The following episode is an excerpt from a field note taken during observations of a S4 physics lesson. As I enter the room, the pupils are watching a video about the structure of buildings and forces. The female teacher taking the class tells me she is a cover teacher, and therefore not a subject specialist. The ten boys are very quiet. There are no girls in the class.

[10] My fieldnotes recorded ten instances of boy-banter in the classroom setting.

After around twenty minutes, the pupils are asked to talk in groups about something they have learned from the film [...]. The boys to whom I am nearest soon stray off-topic, led by Max: "Here, Andrew's getting his haircut at the weekend!" Andrew replies, "No' [not] properly cut! I'm keeping it long." Harry laughs, "A wee tidy up, eh?" Andrew responds, "Last time I got it done, I ended up with a bowl cut!" [*Boys laugh collectively*].

"Get one we can all laugh at!" responds Dave [*laughing*]. Andrew [*leans back in his chair stretching his legs out, laughs along*] replies: "You'll probably laugh at it anyway!" to which Max responds, "It's only good if it's funny for us..." The other boys laugh. They begin talking about two local barbers. Harry leads the conversation:

"By the way, Bobby's bad, but Ryan is worse! Here *[calls over to another boy],* mind [remember] when Ryan the hairdresser sneezed and shaved your eyebrow off?" The four boys erupt in laughter.

Max adds, "I hate going in town, but. You're surrounded by neds[11]" *[puts on a 'ned' accent with forceful tone]* 'Gees a 'Nike' sign shaved into ma heid [I want a 'Nike' sign shaved into my head]!' Then I walk in, and I'm like *[puts on an exaggerated posh voice]* 'Hello, I'm from Bothy High School, I'm getting my haircut too!' The boys laugh again. He adds, "I live in a brick house, peasant!" and smirks [*Others laugh enthusiastically*].

Fieldnotes: 4th December 2014.

Previous research has suggested some boys appropriate humour as a resource both for constructing masculinity and for gaining peer acceptance (Huuki, Manninen & Sunnari, 2010). The episode above relies on humour through playful bantered

[11] This derogatory term is widely used in Scotland to represent young trouble-makers, hooligans, or petty criminals; those who display loutish behaviour.

interactions, where all four boys are seen to employ banter as a means of performatively constituting (Butler, 1990) their masculine identity. Max initiates this banter by way of his comment aimed directly at Andrew, and in relation to his forthcoming haircut. It is interesting that Max chooses to raise an issue relating to physical appearance. My observations note that Andrew has longer hair than his friends, and what might be described as a less than traditional boys' haircut. I have considered this from a Foucauldian perspective, with a focus on the notion of discourse. As previously noted, discourses are not symbolic of social practices, rather they actively construct them. Hence, they are "practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak" (Foucault, 1981, p.49). Through this lens, Max's comment is arguably a gentle knock at Andrew's masculinity, because attending to one's appearance is a stereotypically feminine activity. The comment arguably reveals an attempt by Max to shape Andrew's gender identity as less masculine. The other two boys, by way of further bantered comments, are seen to support Max in his teasing of Andrew. At this point, Andrew chooses to participate in this banter, joking about his last visit to the barbers. This would suggest that the boys' banter is seen by him as being more playful than intimidatory. His body language further suggests this to be the case in that I observe him to be neither upset nor uncomfortable with their bantered remarks. In joining in with the humourous banter, as opposed to merely being the 'butt of the joke' which might have weakened his masculinity within the group, Andrew appears able to defend his masculine identity in a way that is socially accepted by his peers.

The remainder of the playful banter in this episode is very much at the expense of those not present in the classroom. Firstly, the boys poke fun at the two local barbers, before Max leads the discussion to those whom he describes as 'neds' from the nearest town. When Max imitates these neds, he portrays them as being rough, inarticulate and uncouth. He opts for a broad, Scots accent, one which might arguably be seen as slang by many in Scotland. He then openly contrasts this with his own identity. Here, he deliberately adopts a well-spoken, articulate manner, accentuating what may be described as a middle-class accent. Max's construction of this masculine identity sits in contrast to his depiction of neds' masculine identity, one which resonates Willis (1977), Walkerdine (2010) and Ward (2015) in depicting a tough, 'laddish' working-class identity, both in tone (forceful) and in content (slang and arguably uncouth). Max's supplementary comment in which he talks about these neds as 'peasants' adds to the notion of the working-class status of the neds. It is also relevant in relation to his own masculinity construction. He juxtaposes this depiction of the neds with his own seemingly comfortable financial status - 'I live in a brick house'. This banter would appear to suggest that his own construction of a masculine identity also intersects with social class, the latter made apparent by his intentional self-depiction of himself as middle-class class. By poking fun at those of a lower social status than him, Max constructs an identity of power, authority and relative wealth amongst his peers. Parallels can be drawn between these findings and those of Huuki, Manninen and Sunnari (2010), in that Max is cultivating his masculine identity at the comic expense of others, and in an exclusive manner. It also chimes with findings which suggest that humour is an effective way of elevating boys' social status amongst their peers (Huuki et al. 2010). That said, it is important

to acknowledge at this point that other factors that may be at play here, including Max's popularity or status amongst his peers within the school, and, as previously mentioned, his social class and background.

Episode 2 –S3 Maths Class

The following episode is part of a fieldnote observation of a Maths lessons. It depicts an interaction mid-way through the lesson. The class was described by their teacher as the 'bottom-set'- in other words, it contains those considered to be the least able maths pupils in S3. The class comprises seven boys and one girl, who turns out not to be part of the class after all (she has been put in here as a result of a discipline issue in another maths class). The teacher, Miss Stevens, is in her early 30s.

The teacher begins to go over the answers to the questions and a conversation breaks out about using calculators, rather than doing 'sums [calculations] in your head'. This discussion starts because the teacher asks someone to work out an answer. The pupil asks to use a calculator, and she agrees, jokingly adding: "What would have happened before they were invented!"

"You used yir heid [your head]!" Wayne responds, laughing.

"Did you use slates, Miss?" Larry shouts out. Miss Stevens replies [*bold, but joking tone*]: "Larry!! What age do you think I am?!" The whole class laughs at the teachers' over-exaggerated 'shocked' face and response. She laughs with them, then goes back to writing up the answer to the first question on the board and pauses before completing it:

"What did we all do the other day? Remember we went over decimal points and you nearly drove me mad on Friday because you had all forgotten again?! Can anyone remember how to round this number up?"

“Well, it wasn’t a very good idea for a Monday morning, Miss!” jokes Wayne. The teacher laughs and by now I am also finding this lesson quite entertaining.

Fieldnotes: 7th October 2014.

As I observed the class, it soon became apparent to me that the type of banter evident in the above episode was commonplace, both amongst pupils and also between the teacher and the pupils. The tone and the body language of both pupils and the teacher immediately conveyed this banter to be good humoured in nature. In the banter between Larry and Miss Stevens, Larry asks Miss Stevens, a young female teacher, whether she used ‘slates’ instead of a calculator, presumably referring to when she was a pupil at school. By asking this, it is reasonable to conclude that he is referring to his teacher’s age, and is deliberately suggesting that she is far older than she clearly is, albeit in an obviously light-hearted tone. The teasing tone of this banter may be seen as a means by which Larry constructs a masculine identity. Larry’s language and behaviour, whilst not overtly sexual in any way, is bordering on being gently flirtatious. Therefore, it arguably serves to construct a heterosexual masculine identity for Larry. As such, it may be reasonably concluded that Larry would not have made this joke to a male teacher as a means of constructing this particular masculine identity. It is worth highlighting that this interaction takes place in a predominately male forum; the one girl present in the class does not participate in the lesson at any point or react to any of the numerous bantered interactions. This raises the question as to whether this bantered behaviour would be the same in an all-female context or in

a mixed forum. This point will be given due consideration in relation to Episodes 3(i) and (ii) which follow.

In the teacher's response to Larry's question, equally light-hearted in tone, it would seem that she is comfortable playing along with this banter. Certainly, she is not seen to disrupt, nor resist, this particular masculinity construct, and is therefore somewhat complicit in supporting this particular construction of heterosexual masculinity. Given the comical nature of the interaction, it may be argued that Miss Steven's actions also support the stereotype of the 'silly' boy, as depicted in research by Allard (2004), Francis (1998; 2000b), Major and Santoro (2013) and Wardman (2016). Here, teachers' views are often seen to consider boys as generally considered as demonstrating 'silly' qualities of immaturity; adventurous risk takers; and not in control of their actions. In contrast, girls are seen as the antithesis of boys; mature, sensible and in control of their actions. Reflecting Foucault's conceptualisation of power (Foucault, 1970; 1977; 1980; 1998), it may be argued that the boys use this 'silly' behaviour to assert their position in the classroom. Power in this sense is regarded as having a productive and enabling capacity, one which operates in all interactions, in and through all people. It is not depicted as a repressive force from above; in this instance, it does not emanate solely from the key authority figure in the room – i.e. the teacher.

Episode 3 (i) - S3 English Class

The following two episodes, 3(i) and 3(ii), are extracts from a fieldnote written during the observation of an S3 English class. The teacher, Miss Baker, has been a teacher in the school for 18 years and is in her early 40s. This is the 'bottom set', according to Miss Baker - she tells me this prior to the visit.

The class is working in the library today - I arrive just after them. Seven pupils are sitting at the computers in the library, and four are sitting at individual desks. I sit in-between the two groups. The class comprises all boys (11 in total). [...]

Alan shouts over to Wayne: "Way, what's your best [favourite] breakfast? The teacher interjects, telling Alan to "get on with his work." Alan immediately asks the teacher what she eats for breakfast - "Do you have cereal, Miss?" "No!" She answers firmly, but not in an angry way - she smiles after saying it.

"That's why you're so small, Miss!" Wayne says, and laughs. She laughs back, then comments that she doesn't like milk, and so eats cereal 'dry'.

"How do you eat it then?" he asks. "Put it in your mouth, and chew..." the teacher responds dryly, then laughs. The other boys are laughing enthusiastically at this conversation. I think the whole class is listening by now.

Episode 3 (ii)

The pupils are asked to gather at the door. They do so, bustling and laughing as they go. Miss Baker instructs them to walk back to class. I notice Deklan chooses to walk beside the teacher, and so do Alan and Wayne. Deklan looks down

at the teacher, who is quite small. He gets the attention of the other two. Wayne remarks: “See, Miss, if you ate your cereal, you’d no [not] be as small! Deklan’s looking right down on you!”

She looks up at Deklan, who at the same time, looks down at her. They all laugh, including the teacher.

Fieldnotes: 3rd February 2015.

In this classroom observation, as in the previous one, the boys also employ humour in their interaction. In the initial interaction between Alan and Wayne in Episode 3(i), where the boys discuss their preferred breakfast choices, Alan and Wayne seem eager to engage the teacher in their conversation. Whilst she does, at various points attempt to keep the pupils ‘on task’, she also appears comfortable joining in with the bantered exchanges which follow: she engages in the discussion about eating cereal for breakfast by adding that she doesn't like milk; she laughs at the joke about her height being linked to this lack of cereal; and she adds a gently sarcastic comment about how to eat ‘dry’ cereal by chewing it. The pupils’ enthusiastic response suggests that they know that she is accepting of their light-hearted banter. Her contributions can be seen to support the boys’ construction of masculinity in that she actively encourages their use of humour in the classroom.

In the interaction between pupils and teacher in Episode 3(ii), Deklan, along with the other boys, again playfully jokes about the teacher’s height by deliberately

looking down on her as they walk back to class. Wayne adds a joking remark about her short stature being linked to the fact that she doesn't eat cereal. Again, the teacher is clearly amused by the boys' behaviour and involves herself in the joke about her height, thus supporting and enhancing the masculine identity available to these boys. Whilst having superiority in terms of height may have offered the boys an opportunity to construct a dominant, hegemonic form of masculine identity - one in which their physical strength and size over their teacher, this does not appear to be the case here. Akin to the boys in Episode 2, I argue that they opt, instead, to use humourous banter to assert power and position in the classroom. Reflecting Foucault's conceptualisation (Foucault, 1970; 1977; 1980; 1998), power is not a hierarchical and repressive force, operating from within the social realm rather than from above it.

As with the majority of my fieldnote classroom observations where banter amongst boys was prevalent, it is worth highlighting that this class was being taught by a female teacher, as opposed to a male. Several possible conclusions emerge as a result of this observation; that the presence of female teachers enables or facilitates this type of interaction, where intentionally or otherwise, more so than male teachers; and that boys behave differently in the company of female teachers, and as a result are more likely to adopt banter in the company of a female member of staff. Where this is the case, it may be argued that the see the boundaries to be different with a female teacher, than with a male teacher. Caution is exerted when drawing conclusion here, given the number of possible contributory factors, for example, the different teaching approaches and styles

amongst the various teachers, the different make-up of pupils in the majority of the classes, including the gendered make-up of the classes, and the fact that I was clearly unlikely to have observed *all* classes where this type of banter took place. That said, it would seem from the data collected that boys appear more likely to engage in public displays of banter in the classroom in the presence of a female teacher, and appeared keen to engage their teacher in this banter, where the teacher is female[12].

It is worth highlighting further contextual information at this point relating to the gendered make-up of the two bottom set classes in both Maths (Episode 2) and English (Episode 3(i) and (ii)). In both cases, it is boys who are, or who are deemed to be, the least able in terms of academic ability in each subject within the S3 cohort in the school. Whilst there is nothing in the data collected to suggest that this imbalance in gender is the norm, as opposed to an unusual blip, it nonetheless raises questions as to why the lowest set class in both core subjects comprises only boys. The answer as to why this might be the case lies outwith the scope of this study; a longitudinal approach may be required in order to explore whether this is a common occurrence in this school, and if so, what factors might lead to this gendered phenomenon. What is worthy of note is that this class was an all-male forum. My fieldnotes suggest that this type of bantered behaviour is more common in all-boy classes, or predominantly male classes, than in mixed-sex forums (there were no all-female classes during my classroom observations)[13].

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[12] Of the 10 observations of boy-banter, 7 classes were taught by female teachers, and 3 by male. Of the 7, the female teacher was seen to participate in bantered interactions in 6 of the observations. Where a male teacher was present, the boys did not actively seek to engage the teacher in the banter.
[13]. I acknowledge that this may possibly account for the lack of examples of girls employing banter in the classroom setting. I did, however, observe all girls groupings in extra-curricular contexts.

These findings are again reminiscent of those of Huuki et al. (2010), where the all-male peer group is seen to provide an important setting to cultivate masculine identity using humour. However, in this instance, there is no attempt to do so at the expense of peers – the humour is light-hearted and inclusive in nature. I was keen to explore pupils' views in relation to this issue. In order to do so, I arranged an interview with one pupil, Wayne, who was present in both the English class (Episode 3) and the Maths class, as documented in Episode 2. Wayne, whom I witnessed as an outgoing and lively pupil in observations, was noticeably quieter in the interview, away from his male peer group. This may be because the interview setting is not always a comfortable one. Furthermore, as I audio recorded all interviews, this may have contributed to the interviewee feeling uncomfortable or nervous. However, I think it is more likely that being in the presence of his peers built confidence and contributed to the construction of a masculine persona for Wayne characterised by comical behaviour and banter.

7.3 Leading by Example: Teachers Instigating Playful Banter

Analyses of other data reveal that teachers in Bothy High School not only engage with banter in the classroom, but sometimes encourage or actively instigate it. This chapter argues that this use of bantered talk as a form of discursive practice, impacts on how pupils construct their gendered identities. The following two episodes are reflective of the type of banter adopted by a number of male teachers in the school during the observation period.

Episode 4 (i) - Dance Assembly

The following two fieldnote observations are presented together because of the similar themes contained within the data. The first episode is an extract from a fieldnote observation of an S3 assembly held in the school's Assembly Hall. The assembly was to publicise the school's forthcoming Dance Show. The banter is led by a young, male teacher. The second episode is taken from an observation of an S4 History class. This extract records a bantered interaction also led by a young, male teacher.

> The first group of girls walks onto the stage, wearing black tops and brightly coloured skirts with golden coin-shaped objects attached. These skirts jingle when they move. They girls dance to a current pop song which is influenced by Indian music. Their dance reflects this, with what I assume to be 'Indian' style dance moves. I hear a few of the S3 boys whom I am sitting next to mutter to each other. When it finishes, a young, male teacher walks over to these boys and addresses one of them:
>
> "Your shoulders were going there!" (The teacher is implying that the boy is enjoying the performance and 'dancing' along with the music). The teacher laughs and the boy's classmates sitting beside him laugh too. The boy looks a little embarrassed, but laughs along.
>
> The next group take to the stage [...] As the girls dance, the boys next to me begin to mock-imitate them, subtly copying the arm gestures and smirking at each other.
>
> **Fieldnotes: 12th November 2014.**

Episode 4 (ii) S4 History Class

[…]

"Let's listen to the masterpiece that is Boney M!" jokes the teacher. "You can even sing along!" [*Several pupils laugh*]

“Chris is going to get up and do the ‘Kalinga’ in a minute! Aren’t you Chris?” The teacher laughs and smiles over in Chris’ direction.

“Naw!” [No!], remarks Chris [*coldly and straight-faced*].

“He’s embarrassed now...” says the teacher to the rest of the class. Quiet laughter follow... “Now, who likes Lady Gaga?” Two girls put up their hands. “This is the inspiration for her song, ‘Poker Face’ you know!”

Fieldnotes: 14th January 2015.

When considering this data within the post-structuralist framework, it is useful to place a focus on the notion of discourse. Discourse, as a key notion within Foucauldian scholarship, encapsulates “what can be said and thought, but also about who can speak, when, and with what authority” (Ball, 1990a, p.2). As Foucault (1974) observes:

> Discourses are composed of signs, but what they do is more than use these signs to designate things. It is this move that renders them irreducible to the language and to speech. It is this move that we must reveal and describe (p 49).

In relation to Episode 4 (i), it is contextually important to note that the performers on stage are all girls, and that earlier field observations had clearly demonstrated to them that dancing is commonly regarded as a feminine pursuit within the school, one which does not sit well with masculinity construction, and one that ‘real’ boys do not participate in. This reflects research by Pascoe (2012). In light of this, I suggest that the teacher, in commenting to a male pupil - “Your shoulders were going there!”,

then laughing, is openly highlighting the inappropriateness of the boys participating in the dance from the sidelines. He would seem to be discursively insinuating, albeit it playfully, that this behaviour is not masculine. The pupil's embarrassed response would further suggest this to be the case. I suggest that the teacher is insinuating that this behaviour is not masculine. The comment is made by a male teacher, towards a male pupil. Again, taking the view that dancing is as feminine activity, it may be possible to make an assumption that it would have been unlikely that the male teacher would have made such a comment to a female pupil; within the cultural norms of the school, it is socially acceptable for girls to be involved in dance. Towards the end of the episode, a second group of dancers takes to the stage. At this point, the group of boys begins to mock the dancing, laughing and imitating the dance moves they see. This can be seen as them supporting this notion that dancing is not for boys in that they are openly constructing a masculine identity, one which shuns dancing as a means of constructing this identity.

A very similar theme emerges in Episode 4(ii). Again, the male teacher in this class can be seen to use dance as a means of socially constructing or influencing a boys' masculine identity. In presuming the heterosexual norm (Epstein & Johnson, 1994), the teacher publicly banters with this boy about him apparently wanting to dance. My observation notes clearly highlight this not be the case - in fact, Chris' less than amused facial expressions suggest quite the opposite. I argue here that the teacher's discourse represents the notion that dance is often considered a feminine activity, and therefore not conducive to constructing a hegemonic, masculine identity. The teacher's actions further compound this when he chooses to highlight the boy's

apparent embarrassment at the comment he had made, after which the other pupils support him by laughing along. I conclude that the teacher uses banter as a means of gaining the acceptance and approval of the other pupils in the class. It can also be seen as an attempt to disrupt Chris' masculinity construction in the company of his peer group.

Episode 5- S3 Maths Class

This following episode is an extract from a fieldnote of an S3 Maths class. The class comprised all boys and was taken by a female cover teacher, who was a non-subject specialist. This extract describes the last few minutes of the class.

At the end of the period, the teacher asks pupils to tidy up and pack up. They are asked to bring the textbooks out to the front. They put them in a pile, which is messy, with the books all lying in different directions. They pile their folders next to this, and they are equally untidy looking. Another female teacher enters at this point.

"Everything okay?" she asks the cover teacher, to which the cover teacher responds: "All went very well!". The visiting teacher looks at the pile of folders and books: "Shame about the folders!" she says, smiling and addressing the class. "You can tell it's boys here...they are always very untidy!" She neatens the piles of folders and books up, before leaving the room.

Fieldnotes: 10th November 2014.

This study sees gender identities as products of discourse, and as such, these identities are continually shaped and re-shaped. Episode 5 illustrates how gender identities may be performatively constructed through naming practices. Butler (1997), in arguing that we are not only named as subjects, but are also the product of naming practices, writes: “What does it mean for a word not only to name, but also in some sense to perform and, in particular, to perform what it names?” (p.43). Here, the “powers of language to ‘name’ [...] and to shift meaning” (Hey, 2006, p.442) become apparent. From this theoretical perspective, the visiting teacher in this episode, in choosing to associate the mess on the folders with the fact that the class comprises all boys, arguably reveals a binary view of gender which is based on the stereotypical view that all boys are messy. Although this teacher does not directly mention girls, it is reasonable to assume that the teacher would not have made a similar comment about girls. Dividing practices (Foucault, 1998) are arguably at play here. The teacher may be seen as seeking to distinguish and separate one group of people from the next, with her comment aimed at separating one gender group of students from another, thus presenting boys and girls as binary opposites. Her comment is also reminiscent of the binary, stereotypical constructs of gender held by teachers in the aforementioned research of Allard (2004), Francis (1998; 2000b), Major and Santoro (2013) and Wardman (2016). Furthermore, given that the statement is made in such a way as to ensure that the boys in the class hear it, it is possible to understand how this comment might act to performatively constitute the boys by way of naming practices (Butler, 2004). As such, one may reasonably argue that the teacher’s comment about the boys’ untidiness might in fact serve to ‘make’ them untidy.

7.4 Conclusion

Humour has been recognised as a strategy used by boys to construct a masculine identity that is culturally acceptable (Huuki, Manninen & Sunnari, 2010; Swain, 2004). This chapter focused on playful banter as a particular form of humour and presented evidence from data collected during observations and interviews which would suggest that this type of banter between boys can act as a constituent of masculine identities. Classroom observations appear to reveal that the all-male class forum perpetuates this type of bantered behaviour, providing opportunities which may differ from the mixed-sex forum, and thus, is an important forum for masculinity construction. This bantered behaviour would also appear to act as a means of gaining acceptance from peers. It was also apparent that some boys did not act in this way when away from this group context, suggesting the male peer group setting facilities boy banter. Whilst I do not claim that this type of behaviour only exists between boys, or that girls do not use humour as a means of constructing their gendered identities or maintaining their social status in school, the data presented in this chapter demonstrate the common occurrence of boy-banter during the data collecting period.

Evidence from the data suggests that teachers have a significant influence on how boys construct their masculine identity through bantered behaviour. For example, the data demonstrate that some teachers, particularly female teachers, respond to this bantered behaviour in a positive way, thus arguably supporting this particular construct of masculine identity. That said, while the presence of a female teacher is seen to perpetuate boy banter in the classroom in some cases, it may be argued that

this is more a result of the boys' actions, rather than the teachers'. For example, it is possible that some boys assume that the boundaries of 'acceptable' classroom behaviour are different for male and female teachers, and are therefore more likely to try to engage female teachers in bantered interactions. It might also be the case that some boys attempt to engage female teachers in their banter, as opposed to male teachers, because interacting with a female teacher provides a means of further supporting a heteronormative masculine identity in the classroom.

Finally, data in this chapter demonstrate teachers instigating banter at times. Through a post-structuralist analysis, this bantered approach can be seen as a contributory factor towards how boys construct their masculine identity in school. This banter relies on stereotypical views of gender, and as such, raises important questions about teachers' understandings of boys and girls, questions which will be explored in more detail in the final chapter.

Chapter 8 – Gender, Subject Choices and the Wider Curriculum

8.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the interplay between gender and the school curriculum in Bothy High School. It begins by identifying a key theme emerging from the data - that of subject choices made by pupils - focusing on the role that gender plays here. The second section of this chapter considers the notion of the curriculum in a wider sense, encompassing that which takes place outwith the formal classroom setting, with a focus on what are often known as 'extra-curricular' activities. Building on data from previous chapters (Chapters 5 & 6) in which the notion of dance as a means of constructing a feminine identity is discussed, this section highlights an apparent link between gendered construction and involvement, or otherwise, in extra-curricular activities.

8.2 Jobs for the Boys: Gendered Subject Choices

This first section draws on data from interviews and observations. As previously outlined in the Methodology Chapter, all of the S3 and S4 pupils in this study make choices in relation to the subjects they would like to study; pupils choose eight subjects at the end of their second year, and then again at the end of their third year, where they narrow their choices down to six subjects.[14] During classroom observations, there was a noticeable gender imbalance in some subject areas. This

[14] As previously stated, all Bothy High School pupils must take the two core subjects English and Maths, both in S3, and in S4.

was particularly the case in those subjects which are traditionally seen as masculine, most notably Physics and Technical Subjects - Design & Manufacture and Graphic Design. This reflects previous studies by Riddell (2008) and Smyth & Darmody (2009). I was keen to explore this in more detail and in order to do so, arranged interviews with two of the pupils in these classes. The first two episodes in this chapter draw data from these two interviews, one featuring an S4 boy and the second an S4 girl (Episodes 1 and 2, respectively). The fieldnote observation which follows (Episode 3) was taken immediately prior to a planned classroom observation and further supports my claim that gender plays an active role in pupils' subject choices in Bothy High School.

Episode 1-In Dicussion with Richard

The following is an extract taken from an interview with a Richard, an S4 boy. I noted from classroom observations that Richard had chosen subjects which might be considered stereotypically masculine, including Physics, Design & Manufacture and Graphic Design. All of these classes were male-dominated. I was keen to find out why Richard thought this to be the case and invited him to take part in an interview in order to explore this further. I began by asking Richard why he thought there were more boys than girls in these classes:

Richard: I don't know, I guess it is just the popularity of the subjects and boys may be more interested in Physics because of all the experiments and stuff you do in it...and in graphics, a lot of maybe more graphics related stuff is with the boys. [...] For example, there's building stuff and there are a lot more boy builders than girls, if you like. And I think... art is the other side of it. I suppose, like graphics is maybe for the boys and art for the girls.

FM: Art for the girls?

R: I think it just splits almost like that.

FM: You said something about 'graphics for the boys'…do you mean in school?

R: The future…so the boys could use the graphics if they want to become a builder or some sort of plumber, or electrician, or something.

Interview: 18th June 2015

This study argues that our gender identities are both socially and culturally constructed. From this perspective, it is apparent in this extract is that Richard's own construction of masculinity relies heavily upon a presumption of the stereotypical norm (Epstein & Johnson, 1994). This sits in contrast to Richard's construction of femininity, both in terms of girls' subject choices in school and their future career choices post-school. In each case, he presents boys and girls as being binary opposites; in Foucauldian terms, dividing practices are at play here, serving to separate one gendered group of students from another (Foucault, 1998). By way of example, when discussing school subjects, Richard's clear view is that art is for the girls, and graphics is for the boys. This reflects findings from earlier research of Francis (2000a) that assert that 'the sciences' (comprising subjects such as mathematics, science and information technology) have traditionally been constructed as masculine in school, with 'the arts' (art, languages and humanities) perceived as falling within the feminine domain. The resulting gender binary of subjects, according to Francis (2000a), carries a hierarchy in terms of status, with the

masculine subjects appearing to be more difficult and therefore more important than the feminine subjects. More recent research of Ward (2014; 2015), undertaken in the Welsh Valleys, reflects a similar picture, with school subject choices being noted as an important arena for performance of gender in that they enable the construction of a particular form of masculinity. These findings are reflective of Richard's interview, where I conclude that some boys in Bothy High School, including Richard, use subject choices as a means of enabling their masculinity construction. While I am not able to ascertain the extent to which the school facilitates such gendered positions, it is clear that Richard's comments are strongly influenced by gender stereotyping, which may be reflective of views held within the school and/or in wider society.

At the end of the episode, Richard lists several occupations that he perceives as being jobs for boys. All of these are traditional trades involving manual work. One may reasonably assume that he would consider these jobs unsuitable for, or unattractive to, girls. Through this extract, it is possible to understand how the views illustrated in Richard's comments might act to performatively constitute boys and girls by way of naming practices (Butler, 2004); as Butler (1997) writes, "Being called a name is...one of the conditions by which a subject is constituted in language" (p.2). Butler (2004) also suggests that discourse functions are used to articulate the boundaries set out to allow people to achieve (or otherwise) social normativity. In the context of this interview, Richard is setting out what he believes to be the accepted, social norms of gender, both in terms of subject choice and in relation to future career choices.

An interview with another pupil, Anna, provides further insights into subject choices, this time from a girl's perspective:

Episode 2- In Discussion with Anna

The following is an extract taken from an interview with Anna, an S4 girl. Unlike many of her female counterparts, Anna opted for what may be considered traditionally male subjects, having chosen to study both Design and Manufacture and Graphics. I asked Anna to participate in this interview, in part, to explore why other girls might not choose these subjects. I began by asking her why she thought the class was predominantly male:

Anna: Well, I think it's probably mostly boys because it's like a techie [technical] class, so there's a lot more like, the saw and the big machines and stuff.

FM: So why would boys take that, do you think?

Anna: Emm… probably because a lot of the type of work in the long term involves a lot of things maybe boys are more interested in than girls … like mechanics and stuff…[*laughs*].

FM: So why do you take it, then as a girl?

Anna: I like the… I don't know, I like the designing part of it, it's like art. But, compared to art, I don't know, I prefer the techie. I like when you design something and then you follow it through and you make it.

FM: And, so you were happy taking it. Do you think other girls didn't take it?

Anna:	Well, a lot of the things in design and manufacture is like… you need to be quite strong. So maybe some people aren't as strong.
FM:	What sort of things would you do?
Anna:	Working some of the machines…you need to be quite strong.
FM:	Does it bother you at all, being one of few girls?
Anna:	It doesn't bother me … I'm not really … I've a mixture of friends, like, I can mix. So probably some people prefer just being friends with girls, but it really doesn't bother me [*laughs*].

Interview: 11th November 2014

In this extract, Anna talks in particular about her experience in Design and Manufacture, a subject offered within the Technical Department. Here, she suggests that boys may be more interested in the type of work involved in the class, relating to it being a technical subject that uses large machinery, and then later its links to mechanics. She thinks that this would account for the heavily male population of the class. This suggests that Anna's views of boys, like those of Richard's in the previous episode, rely upon stereotypical norms particularly in relation to subject choices. Anna also suggests that other girls, in contrast to the boys, are put off by the laborious nature of the subject, one which she notes often involves using heavy machinery and requires strength. It is reasonable to conclude that Anna believes the other girls' constructions of their gender relies upon a more passive form of feminine identity, and therefore reflective of the findings of Read (2011). This leads to them avoiding subjects where physical requirements would not act to support this construct. When asked why she, as a girl, took the subject, Anna refers to being

attracted to the artistic nature of Design and Manufacture, apparently not being phased by the physical challenges of the subject. She then remarks at the end of the extract that she is comfortable in the company of boys, whereas other girls perhaps prefer to be with other girls. Thus, whilst it would seem that other girls are somewhat bound by heterosexual norms in relation to making subject choices, and thus is reminiscent of research by Riddell (2013) and Smyth and Darmody (2009), Anna is not. It is interesting to contrast this with the views of an S3 girl, Tina, who is very clear on her views in terms of being part of an all-male class, as the following observations demonstrates. Here, complexities surrounding gendered identities are highlighted in the contrasting ways in which these two girls in Bothy High School construct their femininity**.**

Episode 3- Morning Interval

The following fieldnote observation was taken in the corridor, as a group of pupils await the start of their music class after the morning interval.

Four S3 girls are standing waiting outside the music class. The bell hasn't rung yet. They are chatting about their subject option choices for next year. I hear that they are completing their 'draft' option forms, which are due to be handed in this week.

Elsie: "What subjects are you taking?"

Sara: "Music, Maths, Biology, English..." Sara is interrupted by
Tina: "I want to take Hospitality but I'd be the *only* girl!"

Elsie: "Yeah?"

Tina: Yip. I'm not doing it if that's right!"

Lauren: "Really?"

Tina exclaims: "Yeah!"

Lauren: "So, how come you're the only one?"

Tina: "Just am. It's only me taking it.... all boys apart from me."

Fieldnotes: 8th January 2015.

While observations of other Hospitality classes in Bothy High School demonstrated it to be a subject which attracts equal numbers of girls and boys, an example being the S4 class, this particular interaction would immediately appear to suggest that, in this year at least, Hospitality in S3 had attracted far more boys. This point would seem of interest given that this subject is not one which would necessarily be regarded as a traditionally 'male' subject. In fact, one may argue quite the opposite: it is taught by the Home Economics department (in Bothy High this is an all-female teaching staff) and primarily involves preparing, cooking and presenting food, pursuits which might be considered by some as 'feminine'. Furthermore, historically speaking, in Scotland only girls would have studied what was then called Food and Nutrition, while the boys would have partaken in 'masculine' subjects offered by the Technical department- Wood Work, Craft and Design, etc. In the case of Hospitality, the S3 boys in Bothy High School appear not to be influenced by such stereotypical, gendered views of subject choices. As noted the analysis of the previous two episodes, this stands in contrast to findings within this chapter relating to girls. It also

stands in contrast with other research into gendered subject choices in schools relating to boys, where more traditional views of gendered choices do still appear to dominate (Riddell, 2013), a view which is supported in the recent research of Ward (2015) in relation to boys' subject choices. There are clear similarities here to research by Skelton and Francis (2011), where boys are reported as being able to re-work the 'proper boy' masculinity construct to produce a new "renaissance masculinity" (p. 473). As the authors note, renaissance masculinity is, in effective:

> …a recent construction of repackaged hegemonic masculinity whereby those "feminine" attributes which offer social and financial merit in an economic neoliberal society are incorporated and rendered "non-gendered" (Skelton & Francis, p.473).

It is worth highlighting that Skelton and Francis' study focuses on academically able boys, which is not the focus in this study. That said, clear parallels can be drawn in how the group of boys in the hospitality class are able to appropriate a traditionally female subject, without it impeding on how they construct their masculine identity in school.

Returning to the interaction involving Tina and her friends, what is of key interest is the impact that gender has upon how Tina intends making her subject choices. She is determined to emphasise that she will not be choosing to study Hospitality next year. However, it is clearly not the fact that this subject might be considered a masculine one that is putting her off, and as previously mentioned, Hospitality would not typically fall into this category. Rather, it is the thought of being the only girl in the class which is enough to dissuade Tina from choosing this subject. One may assume

that either she does not want to be in a classroom full of boys, or that she does not want to be *seen* to be in a classroom full of boys. The latter view arguably relates to how Tina constructs her own gender identity within the school in that she does not want to be seen as the type of girl who would choose subjects which are dominated by her male peers. Thus, I argue that part of constructing a female identity for Tina involves being around other girls, to the point where this impacts upon her curricular choices in school. This chimes with the views voiced by Anna in the previous episode relating to girls preferring the company of other girls, and her view that this impacts upon their subject choices. It also reverberates with the views of another S4 pupil, Rhona, as the following Episode reveals.

Episode 4 – In Discussion with Rhona

Rhona, an S4 pupil, was invited to participate in an interview following my observations of her as one of a small number of girls in traditionally male subjects, and having seen her participate in numerous extra-curricular activities.

FM: I do remember that in the Physics class there were 3 girls out of a class of 20. I wonder why that might be?

Rhona: Maybe it's a traditional sense. Maybe I certainly maybe got a bit freaked out by the fact that first of all it's traditionally all boys, so you have to be comfortable being surrounded by boys, so I think some girls, although it may be subconscious, are a wee bit frightened by that.

Interview: 12th June 2015

Rhona describes binary view relating to school subjects, reflecting previously mentioned research of Riddell (2008) and Ward (2015), where Physics lies within

what would be traditionally considered a male subject. Whilst Rhona, despite being a little uncomfortable, did take Physics, she infers that the heavily male forum may put other girls off, albeit subconsciously. This was exemplified in the comments made by Tina in Episode 3, where she described being uncomfortable in the all-male classroom.

8.3 Gender Construction and the Wider Curriculum

The second section of this chapter focuses on the wider curriculum in Bothy High School. Specifically, the data relate to activities which seek to enhance the formal, taught curriculum, most of which take place during lunchtimes and after school. Data collection took the form of observation of the following activities and events: Debating Society, Human Rights Society, Music rehearsals, Dance rehearsals, Pupil Council Meetings, and Class Representative Meetings. From the data collected, a clear theme emerged, that of gendered participation: ten pupils attended Human Rights Society, all of whom were girls; attendance at Debating Club varied each week, ranging from nine girls and four boys, to seventeen girls and three boys; all pupils involved in performing at the school's Dance Show were girls, and this was reflected in the observations of the rehearsals I undertook; the Class Representative Meeting was attended by thirteen girls and eight boys; during a music rehearsal, I noted eighteen girls and seven boys; and the Pupil Council comprised ten girls and four boys. In short, without exception, the groups were either predominantly or solely attended by girls[15]. In an attempt to explore this apparent gender imbalance, I

[15] That is not to say that other groups were not more readily attended by boys - there were other activities available to pupils which I was unable to observe. Some of these were gender specific, like Girls'/Boys' Football Clubs, Girls'/Boys' Rugby Clubs. Others were open to both girls and boys - e.g. Badminton Club, Art Club.

arranged a number of interviews with pupils involved in some, or all, of these activities. This section predominantly draws data from these interviews.

Episode 5(i)- In Discussion with Adam.

The following two extracts are taken from a longer interview with Adam, an S4 boy. Adam was one of a small number of boys I observed participating in a Class Representative Meeting. He was also observed at a meeting of the Pupil Council. Both activities are designed to give pupils a voice in aspects of their education within the school. The meetings were both chaired by a member of staff. In the interview, I began by asking Adam how he had come to be a Class Representative:

A: I just put myself forward. Well, I just asked… like I heard that Kim was going to be Class Rep[representative] but she didn't want to, so I said I'd just help her and take over.

FM: And the others?

A: I think they were just chosen and then if they didn't want to do it obviously they weren't forced to, and if they were fine with it then they did.

I: Do you think they were chosen or do you think they chose themselves?

A: I think they were chosen. Yeah, I think the teachers just needed names and thought…. […]

Interview: 11th December 2014

In this section of the interview, Adam alludes to the fact that teachers play a fundamental role in choosing the class representatives. This suggests that teachers play

a role in actively constructing gender within Bothy High School given that the vast majority of pupils who have been chosen by teachers are girls. Being a member of the Pupil Council or undertaking the role Class Representative is seen in the school as a way of taking a role of responsibility and authority; both committees are consulted on changes to the school and are regularly attended by authority figures in the school, such as the Head Teacher. They require regular attendance at meetings; one would assume that this would mean that the pupils who are nominated need to be sensible, reliable and committed. Wardman (2016) notes that schools often foster pupil responsibility through means such as encouraging them to participate in Pupil Councils. Through Adam's interpretation of events at least, by their actions in actively favouring girls for the role of Class Representative, these teachers are arguably supporting, or fostering, a feminine gender construct, one based upon reliability, authority and responsibility. Whereas, by their omission of boys, they are arguably supporting a construct of masculinity as quite the opposite. As such, it may be argued that the teachers involved are exhibiting a dichotomous view of gender, reflecting a similar one to that of the 'sensible girl'/silly boys' binary, as revealed in research by Allard (2004), Jones and Myhill (2004) and Major and Santoro (2014). Through Butler's (2004) notion of discourse, it may be concluded that this would serve to articulate boundaries that allow pupils in the school to achieve social normativity in terms of their gender.

Notwithstanding the apparent role played by teachers in affecting the gender imbalance in both the Class Representative Meeting and the Pupil Council, later in the

interview, Adam suggests further reasons for boys' lack of involvement in extra-curricular activities, as the following extract illustrates:

Episode 5(ii)

Adam:	With the groups and the years like you get the rugby boys and you get like the smoker group that like misbehave all the time, that's really all the boys groups, but it just really depends, I think it really matters if you care about what people think about you, because I don't care what people think about me, I'll do whatever I want, like I don't care if they think I'm geeky or anything, but like with the rugby group they'd worry about what the other rugby boys would think about them if they started doing like Pupil Council and stuff.
FM:	You mentioned the word geek there...
A:	Like Pupil Council and like…you think of the Prime Minister and your Government and stuff…yeah…not like cool people.
FM:	Okay and so you think that could be a possible reason?
A:	Yeah.
FM:	You mentioned when you were talking about yourself you said you don't care what people think…Do you think that's an unusual thing or do you think that's the norm?
A:	I think that's quite unusual...but...last year…like…Michael was on the Pupil Council and he doesn't care what people think about him. I know that. He does what he likes and he just doesn't care what people say. If they don't like it, it's ok.

FM: I notice you chose a boy there. Do you think it's different for girls as opposed to boys?

A: Well, yeah.

Interview: 11th December 2014

This episode demonstrates how talk, a form of discourse practice, impacts on how gender identities are constructed. When Adam talks of the role he perceives to be played by peers in influencing whether boys become involved in certain activities, he is describing the impact of peer pressure upon how boys construct their masculine identity in school. This relates to the pressure placed upon boys not to participate in activities which might, for example, label them as 'geeks'. The powerful influence of the peer group in regulating masculinities is increasingly acknowledged in research (Martino, 1999; Connell, 2000; Warrington, Younger & Williams, 2000; Swain, 2004; Smith, 2007; Smith, 2010; McCarry, 2010; Huuki & Sunnari, 2015; Ward, 2014; 2015) It is also widely recognised in research evidence that the deliberate avoidance of appearing to engage in academic work in central to this (Epstein, 1998; Francis, 1999; 2000b; Warrington, Younger & Williams, 2000; Jackson, 2006). According to Adam, the peer pressure exerted is different for boys than for girls, a point which is supported by the research of McCarry (2010). However, Adam considers himself immune to such pressures. He also talks of another boy, Michael, whom he considers disinterested in the views of others, and who is thus able to participate in activities such as the Pupil Council without concern. This is akin to the findings of a study by Francis, Skelton and Read (2010) who observe that whilst such tensions clearly exist between academic success and popularity for pupils -

particularly for boys - there are, nonetheless, some who appear to succeed in both areas simultaneously. The findings of the study support the notion that not all academically successful pupils are marginalised as ‘geeks’, nor do all boys utilise a masculinity construct relying upon academic underachievement in order to maintain social status. The pupils report that an essential tool for maintaining their simultaneously high-status and high-achieving identities is their physically attractive appearance. Returning to Episode 5, Adam is describing the peer-pressured behaviour of other boys which relies upon ‘presuming the heterosexual norm’ (Epstein & Johnson, 1994). This behaviour means that dominant forms of masculinity are constantly worked on and defined (Skelton, 2001, p. 50). These forms of masculinity would appear to relate to, for example, playing rugby, and avoiding the ‘geek’ label.

Numerous earlier studies have revealed that for boys, being good at anything can risk being classified as a geek, “nerd” or “boffin” (Martino, 1999; Jackson, 2006) and being good at ‘feminine’ subjects such as English (Skelton & Francis, 2011) risks a label which questions their heterosexuality. These labels sit in contrast to hegemonic or high-status masculine identities. Again, the research of Skelton and Francis (2011) chimes with the findings of this study, where both Adam and the other boy he describes, Michael, appear able to re-brand their masculine identity, ignoring the peer pressures which exist.

In seeking a girl’s perspective, I sought the views of Rhona, a girl whom I had seen involved in numerous extra-curricular activities:

Episode 6 – In Discussion with Rhona

Rhona: Ever since I joined a lot of those clubs in first year it's been like that. I honestly feel it's probably just the groups that you're in, the year group, but it does sort of seem to be mostly girls, whether that be debating club. Science club is as well, which as a subject tends to be quite male-oriented, I was very surprised about. I think the same social circles do tend to be the ones in the club. So, I'm friends with a group of girls who go to 'Human Rights'. That was what drew me into that. I'd also say some of my girl friends in the lower years, they're the people who'll be covering and doing the clubs next year. So, say in debate club especially, all of us are a big group of friends. We all go. That's what kind of attracts us too.

FM: So, you go together as a group? You mentioned about next year. You think it'll be a similar thing? Tell me a bit more about what you mean by that.

R: […]. I feel that the girls probably feel more confident speaking out on issues, maybe, such as the Debating Club, or in Human Rights, both quite human rights based. You have to have an opinion, and I think maybe in classes as well, girls do tend to be able to speak up a wee bit more. But maybe it's just they're more comfortable in their own skin; they're able to put their views across.

Interview: 12th June 2015

Rhona describes a culture in Bothy High School where girls are very keen to get involved in wider curricular events and activities, and boys are not. According to Rhona, this is in part a social thing – she was initially attracted to various clubs because

friends attended too. She also describes girls as being more ‘comfortable in their own skin’, suggesting that boys may be uncomfortable putting themselves forward in social situations and this stops them choosing to be involved. Girls, on the other hand, are more able to articulate their views in a public setting, which draws them to being involved in particular extra-curricular activities.

8.4 **Conclusion**

This chapter presented data which focus on how gender construction impacts on curricular issues, firstly, in relation to how some pupils’ perceptions of gender affects their subject choices. The data collected demonstrate the impact of gender in relation to subject choices differs for girls and boys. Whereas some boys are attracted to traditionally male subjects to facilitate their masculinity construction on the one hand, others are happy to choose subjects which are seen as traditionally female girls. However, girls appear more likely to avoid subjects in order to support their femininity construction, either because they fear the all-male forum, or because they do not want to be seen to choose male subjects. As such, whilst traditionally feminine subjects in Bothy High School attract a fairly even balance in term of gender make-up, traditionally male subjects remain heavily populated by boys. The data also show that girls appear to prefer the company of other girls in the classroom.

Gendered views were also demonstrated in the wider curriculum, namely in extra-curricular involvement within Bothy High School. The data presented demonstrate that the school facilitates gendered participation in extra-curricular activities because of the actions of some teachers in their encouragement, or otherwise, of pupils to

become involved in these activities, based on their gender. In short, some teachers are more likely to encourage girls to contribute to the wider life of the school, than boys. Data also suggest that pupils' decisions on whether to become involved in such activities are based upon how they construct their gendered identity - and as a result, far more girls actively involve themselves in extra-curricular activities than boys.

Chapter 9 – Tying the Threads Together

9.1 Introduction

The previous four chapters each focused on a particular theme emerging from the data and addressed the initial research questions driving this study. The overarching themes which emerged from the findings and permeate the four findings chapters are summarised, thus: the role of peer interactions in enabling gender construction; the teachers' role in impacting on how pupils shape their gender; the impact of the geographical rural space on gender construction; and subject choices and the wider curriculum and how these work to construct gendered identities. The purpose of this final chapter is to draw these thematic strands together, offering conclusions and making recommendations for future research, and policy and practice. In doing so, this chapter outlines the main contributions made by this study to the body of research surrounding gender construction and education. The chapter ends with a final reflection - included here is a concluding thought on the impact of the limitations of the research design.

9.2 Drawing Conclusions

9.2.1 The role of peer interactions

Perhaps unsurprisingly, particularly when considered in light of the plethora of previous research where the role of peer interactions in affecting pupils' gender construction has been highlighted, the influence of peers emerged as significant in

this study. Furthermore, boys were seen to be more affected by peer interactions than girls when it came to shaping their gendered self. Again, this resonates with much contemporary research cited in Chapter 2 and woven throughout the findings. The findings of this study contribute to the existing research findings that reveal ongoing pressure on boys to conform to gender norms resulting from peer interactions. This pressure, in turn, works to affect how they construct their masculine identities. Pupil interactions that relied on sexual dialogue emerged as a particular theme with boys involving themselves in such discussions as a means of discursively constructing their masculinity. They also used pithy, sexualised comments to shape their own identities in school, sometimes at the comic expense of their male and female peers. In such instances, pupils were seen to use sexual language to publicly question their peers' masculinity or femininity and as a means of regulating what they considered to be a (hetero) normative construction of masculinity. Such interactions were also considered a way of exerting power over others, with Foucault's conceptualisation of power (Foucault, 1977) providing theoretical insight.

The findings of this study also demonstrate that some boys used humorous, non-sexual classroom banter as a means of performatively shaping their masculine identity. Contributing to research where the use of humour is documented as a strategy for constructing a socially acceptable form of masculine identity (Huuki, Manninen & Sunnari, 2010; Swain, 2004), the findings herein reveal that the all-boy forum perpetuates such bantered behaviour, providing a secure backdrop for boys to perform this construct of masculinity. Interestingly, the presence of a female teacher was also seen to encourage this classroom banter.

Girls in the study provided further insights into the role of peers in shaping gendered identities. Whilst data indicate they are far less likely to openly use sexual language in the classroom setting than boys, some girls did speak in sexual terms when describing their femininity in relation to dance. They were clear about what constitutes acceptable and unacceptable femininity, noting that highly sexualised behaviour was appropriate on the dance floor, but not so in everyday depictions of femininity. Interview data highlight the different pressure on girls as opposed to boys in relation to how they construct their gendered identities and as such, contribute towards a clearer understanding of how peer interactions can impact on how girls shape their gender identity. Whilst it is actively encouraged amongst boys and their peers to boast of numerous sexual conquests, when girls engage in similar dialogue, they are at risk of being labeled as having loose sexual morals by their peers.

A clear message emerges from the analysis of data relating to both boys and girls: that peer interactions play an unquestionable role in enabling and affecting gender construction. As is discussed in more detail at the end of this chapter, I argue that pupils' educational possibilities are sometimes limited by decisions made in light of pressures from their peers to conform to gender norms.

9.2.2 The impact of the rural space

Interesting insights into how some pupils in Bothy High School perceive the rural space as a masculine one emerged strongly in the data. This finding represents one of the main contributions to existing research relating to gender in the rural setting. Overt femininity was seen as very much at odds with the rural landscape, meaning that girls who work on the land or are associated with rurality often find conflict in how they construct their feminine identity. This was illustrated in peer regulatory attempts by one boy, Jack, towards his female classmate, Anna. He, albeit light-heartedly, refused to accept she was a dancer, given that she was known to him as a farmer and that dancing in the context of this school is considered a feminine pursuit. The study provided insights into how some other girls cope with this apparent clash between femininity and rurality. For example, whereas Anna was able to work well within the masculine domain of rural life in a similar way to how the boys in Ward's (2015) study were able to 'code-shift' (p.85), others felt pressure to conform to stereotypical norms of femininity, particularly when they moved to high school. Here, one girl, Tina, spoke of how older girls in the school provided inspiration for what it is like to be a 'real girl', allowing her to leave behind her rural, primary school identity. Socially acceptable femininity, as depicted by Tina, was linked to actively seeking sexual attention from boys and by wearing distinctly feminine clothing. Despite the contrast in approaches, it was very apparent in discussion with both Anna and Tina that the girls were able to readily articulate what living in the rural setting meant for them in terms of the construction of their gendered identity.

The findings herein lead me to conclude that this masculine construction of the rural space is aided and at times actively encouraged by the actions of some teachers in the school. Some teachers' actions appear to conform to stereotypical gender norms in supporting this masculine construct of the rural landscape, as demonstrated by their active recruitment of an all-boy cohort for the Rural Skills course. This acts to discursively shape the rural landscape as a masculine one, further emphasising the already strong association between masculinity and the rural space. This in turn, restricts girls' ability to access to the rural curriculum.

Moving beyond the rural landscape, the fact that some teachers in the study were bound by their own stereotypical views of gender is a finding that also emerged in various other contexts, as the following section highlights.

9.2.3 The teachers' role

The findings of this study revealed some teachers as often relying on stereotypical views of boys and girls in their daily interactions with pupils. This was also demonstrated through teachers' actions, reactions and inactions to events that occurred in the school. Some teachers' views can be seen to support a stereotypical construction of gender amongst pupils which presumes heterosexual norms, be it in relation to their lack of response to sexualised classroom banter based on hegemonic constructs of masculinity, or in their use of gender-stereotyped humour while in the presence of male pupils. Interestingly, teachers' actions and reactions in both cases appear to be gendered: it was male teachers who instigated classroom banter with

boys, and a male teacher who failed to react to the use of overtly sexual dialogue by male pupils. This stands in contrast to other data that demonstrated a female teacher actively confronting sexualised language from a male pupil. Female teachers were also seen to perpetuate banter in the classroom more than male teachers, particularly in the all-boy classroom.

Binary conceptions of gender were also apparent in the actions of some teachers who appeared to actively recruit girls rather than boys for key roles within the school, such as nominating pupils for the Pupil Council and for the role of Pupil Representative. By their actions in actively favouring girls for the role of Class Representative or as members of the Pupil Council, these teachers are supporting, or fostering, a feminine gender construct based on being reliable, dependable and responsible. By omitting boys, they are arguably fostering a construct of masculinity that is quite the opposite - unreliable, willful and cavalier. It is reasonable to conclude that the teachers are not only tolerating, but perhaps even valuing these characteristics. It may be argued that the teachers involved are exhibiting a dichotomous view of gender, reflecting a similar one to that of the 'sensible girl'/silly boys' binary, as illustrated in research by Allard (2004), Jones and Myhill (2004) and Major and Santoro (2014). Through Butler's (2004) notion of discourse, it can be concluded that this would serve to articulate boundaries that allow the pupils in the school to achieve (or otherwise) social normativity in terms of their gender. In a further example of teachers' binary views of gender, another teacher spoke publicly of boys being stereotypically 'messy'. I conclude that the teacher actions and reactions noted herein are more a result of a lack of understanding of

issues surrounding gender, than a conscious attempt to affect how pupils construct their gendered identities.

Feminist researchers have, for some time, been concerned that teachers lack a clear understanding of the complexities surrounding gender. Areas of particular neglect include the social construction of gender and the interplay between gender and attitudes, expectations and beliefs. Issues surrounding the social construction of gender are often missing from teacher education programmes. As a result, teachers are often insufficiently prepared to address the complex nature of gender-related issues found in the school environment. This assertion certainly appears to be reflective of some teacher attitudes within this study, the findings of which contribute to understandings of how gender is conceived by teachers in the Scottish context, an area where there is an identified lack of research. I assert that the apparent lack of attention to gender issues in education policy and teacher professional standards is a primary cause for teachers' lack of understanding of the complexities surrounding gender and education, a point to which I shall return in the final section.

9.2.4 Subject choices and the wider curriculum

Subject choices emerged as the strongest gender-related curricular theme in this study. Some girls in the school appeared bound by gender norms when it comes to making choices in what subjects they pursue throughout in their school career, demonstrated in the gendered make-up of traditionally 'male' subjects. Insights into why this was the case came in the form of interview data, where most girls spoke of

being uncomfortable in predominantly boy or all-boys classrooms. There were some exceptions to this, one being the S4 girl Anna, who, whilst very aware of other girls who fit into this category, still felt able to make personal subject choices which sat outwith stereotypical gender norms. Another S4 girl, Rhona, again not affected personally, was also able to clearly articulate the fact that many girls are uncomfortable taking traditionally male subjects. Boys, in contrast, appeared more able to re-shape their masculinity to incorporate more feminine subject choices, proving an interesting reflection of the findings of research by Skelton and Francis (2011), who observe that some boys are able to re-brand their masculinity and ignore peer pressure to conform to the stereotypical 'norm' in terms of hegemonic masculinity and subject choices. That said, not all boys in the study fitted into this category, with interview data showing some boys who maintained very traditional views of subject choices, based on binary understandings of gender.

Gendered choices didn't stop at the subject selection process. Early in the observation period, it seemed very apparent through observations that girls were far more likely to become involved in wider-curricular activities than boys. I was able to gain further insights into this situation by way of interviews. Peer pressure from other boys was mooted as a reason for boys not to get involved in the wider school curriculum. Returning to the discursive influence of peer interactions on how boys construct an 'acceptable' masculine identity, interview data revealed pressure from peers to avoid involving themselves in extra-curricular activities beyond the formal classroom environment, for fear of being labelled a 'geek'. That said, not all boys in this study considered themselves as subject to such negative peer influence, as was

evidenced through observation and interview data. The findings of this study contribute to an understanding that whilst such pressures also exist beyond the formal learning environment, some boys are nonetheless still able avoid succumbing to them.

The findings of this study serve to illustrate the unquestionable role played by social interactions, both pupil-pupil and teacher-pupil, in shaping pupils' gendered identities. To this is added a further layer of complexity brought about by preconceptions in terms of how gender is conceived in the rural context, and also in terms of how the curriculum is sometimes viewed in gendered ways. I assert that the gendered discursive practices of peers, teachers, and relating to the rural landscape and curricular matters can sometimes limit pupil possibilities in terms of their educational experiences. Such discursive practices can serve to articulate or emphasise boundaries of what is the 'acceptable' norm for pupils, in relation to their gender. As has been demonstrated in the findings, such boundaries can, and do, impact on aspects of pupils' school experiences, in a potentially limiting way. The data collected in this study reveal that some pupils' educational possibilities in Bothy High School are strongly affected by such gendered boundaries. This is seen to impact on pupils' approach subject choices, how they act or behave in school, including what they see as suitable dress code, and the activities they choose to engage in, and those they avoid. A further important contribution made by this study relates to the rural context being discursively shaped in masculine terms by some pupils and teachers. This, I argue, emphasises gendered boundaries in relation to the rural setting, working to restrict girls' ability to access rural curriculum, and at the

same time, creating potential hardship in terms of how they shape their femininity within their rural setting.

Challenges are therefore placed firmly at the feet of educators and policy makers to ensure that pupils are not adversely affected in terms of their educational experience as a result of the actions, inactions and reactions of fellow peers and teachers. The recommendations which follow are suggested ways of overcoming these challenges. These will have implications for policy and practice, an issue also given due consideration in the following section. There are implications, too, in relation to teacher education programmes. Beyond those relating to policy and pedagogical matters, some of these implications point towards further research in key areas which may contribute to better understandings of the role of gender in effective learning and teaching.

9.3 Recommendations and implications

9.3.1 Policy and practice

What emerged most clearly in this study is a lack of understanding by some teachers of the complexities surrounding gender. This immediately raises questions about how gender is approached in initial teacher training in Scotland. The clear lack of attention to gender issues in teacher professional standards in Scotland is a likely contributory factor to teachers' apparent lack of understanding of the complexities surrounding gender and education. Currently, gender does not feature heavily in teaching standards for Scottish Teachers, as set out by the Scottish Teachers' professional registration body, the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS).

These professional standards both underpin and shape teachers' career long professional learning, as well as initial teacher education. An important shift would see the complexities surrounding gender as a social construct being brought to the fore. I recommend that teachers be given the chance to explore these complexities and that they are supported and enabled to challenge traditional stereotypes of gender which exist in school and in wider society. Whilst cultural challenges and influences clearly exist away from the school environment, schools are nonetheless important places to challenge preconceived thinking in relation to gendered norms, for teachers and pupils alike. A clear starting point in terms of progressing has to be challenging the knowledge and understanding of teachers in relation to gender as a social construct, rather than a biologically set binary. This would enable greater understanding of issues surrounding gender in education and would also allow for greater scrutiny of gender-related issues, such as the apparent 'gender gap' in relation to attainment. Thus, teachers need to be provided with more chances for professional development opportunities that relate to gender in schooling. Initial teacher education should give a higher status to the interplay between gender and education by providing structured opportunities for trainee teachers to explore and discuss complex issues surrounding gender as a social and cultural construct. Experienced teachers must also be made acutely aware of the ways in which their discursive practices can both enhance and constrain how pupils construct and take up gendered positionings. As such, policy makers must ensure teacher education that addresses issues of gender does not stop at the early stages of teacher education, but should permeate ongoing teacher professional development opportunities too. In making such opportunities readily available to teachers, it should be made explicit in

our expectations of teachers that they actively engage with this in terms of their own commitment to career-long development. A clear policy, both at local authority, and school level, that looks specifically at the concept of gender and the shaping of gendered identities within school, would support these changes. Currently, within Scottish educational policy, issues relating to gender tend to be subsumed into those relating to social equality. This approach arguably fails to illustrate the complexities of gender construction. A policy that focuses directly on gender could help develop teacher understanding, and at the same time, provide strategies to ensure that learning and teaching approaches do not limit pupils' educational experiences. This could enable teachers to scrutinise both their everyday practices and the curriculum materials they use, in order to avoid a reliance on binary gender stereotypes.

With this, undoubtedly come pedagogical implications for teachers in classrooms. There is a requirement for a more reflective and reflexive practice, where teachers actively consider and implement pedagogies that challenge the kinds of binary views of gender as have been demonstrated herein. This involves challenging discursive practices that may lead to pupils being treated according to their 'fixed' gender, those which potentially limited pupils' educational thinking and experiences in school. Importantly, it is not only about what teachers do, but also about what they do *not* do. Put another way, not only do teachers' actions and reactions have repercussions, but so too do their *in*actions in certain circumstances. Teachers need to know when and how to challenge behaviour in the classroom as well as how to disrupt and challenge their own preconceptions of gender.

In relation to supporting pupils, I recommend that they are given the opportunity to gain a greater understanding of how their gender construction affects their educational experiences. It is essential that pupils see that any stereotypical preconceptions of gender they hold can potentially limit their choices in school and beyond. For example, the decisions pupils make in school relating to their subject choices, their involvement in activities outwith the classroom, and how they act and behave, have all been demonstrated as areas directly influenced by how they shape their gendered identities. These decisions, in turn, can impact on their future lives beyond school, for example in allowing them access to future career paths and further educational opportunities. Teachers can play an important role here in supporting pupils to develop a deeper understanding of the complexities surrounding gender by placing an emphasis on the social and cultural aspects of gender construction. The role of peer influences on young people cannot be underestimated and pressures from peers to conform to gender stereotypes must be challenged by teachers as part of a commitment to moving pupil conceptions of gender beyond where it currently lies. Again, a clear school policy on gender could support this by outlining strategies for allowing pupils to explore gender-related issues. This might be achieved, for example, by supporting the inclusion of a topic on gender as a core part of existing personal and social development programmes.

At the outset, this study identified a lack of focus on issues surrounding gender within policy and practice in the Scottish context, noting a narrow focus on the perceived ‘gender gap’ which sees boys falling behind girls in terms of academic attainment. This research supports the view that such an ongoing emphasis on the

underperformance of boys within political and educational circles in Scotland is allowing other important educational issues to go unnoticed and unchallenged. A policy shift is required which moves beyond this, one which sees a change of direction in terms of how gender is conceptualised in Scottish educational policy, in a way that moves beyond the apparent gender imbalances in academic attainment. Thus, the next step is for policy makers to consider notions of gender as a complex social and cultural construct. Policy support and leadership require a real focus on raising awareness, increasing understanding, and offering appropriate challenge and support for teachers in all matters gender-related. There is also a need to develop strategies and support for teachers, whilst being ever aware of how best to implement such approaches in such way as to minimise teacher misconception or resistance.

The study has also shown that some curricular matters require attention. In this case study, pupils were seen to conform to gender norms in terms of subject choices, demonstrating that schools such as Bothy High School must aim to challenge pupils' thinking in relation to such matters. Educators are in the invaluable position of being able to help pupils make connections between their educational world and the cultural world they find themselves in away from school. Changes in pupil thinking will not be achieved through educating them alone, however. A critical approach from teachers in relation to their own discursive practices in terms of the curriculum is also required, for they themselves have been seen as supporting gender stereotypes in relation to curricular matters. In rural educational contexts like the one in which this research was conducted, there is a need for teachers to question the fact that the rural landscape is very often represented as an exclusive site for the construction of

masculinity. A disruption of this binary view will allow *all* pupils greater access to all that the rural space has to offer educationally. This extends to ensuring teachers actively challenge and disrupt traditional views of subject choices amongst young people as again, such stereotypical views can limit pupil choices and experiences in school. The same is said for the wider curriculum, where clearly there is a need to address the gender imbalance in relation to pupil involvement in extracurricular activities.

9.3.2 Future research

In terms of context, the rural landscape is one which has previously been highlighted in Scotland as an area of particular dearth in terms of educational research. Whilst this study has contributed to filling this gap in research, I believe further consideration into the impact of the rural setting is warranted on how pupils shape their gendered identities. I advocate further research into the impact of all geographical settings, be they rural, urban or suburban, thus providing further insights into the connection between the social and geographical worlds our young learners inhabit. A fundamental challenge for future researchers in this area is to understand how best to prepare teachers for working in such contexts. Research approaches where classroom practice is at the centre provide a strong way forward in continuing to develop our understandings of both *how* and *why* pupils shape their gendered identities in specific ways. Ethnographic methods of data collection and analysis have the potential to reveal the fine-grained detail that shapes pupil gender identities. I therefore call for further research using such methods, as they allow for

an intensive analysis in which subtle nuances relating to gender construction are able to emerge.

At this point, it would be remiss not to acknowledge the strong influence of other relevant social and cultural factors in researching the educational experiences of young people, and how these factors impact on how young people shape their identities in certain ways. I refer primarily to social class, race and ethnicity, and consider these influences to be thoroughly relevant to future studies in this area. As was stated at the outset, the homogeneous nature of the participants in the school meant that this study could not contribute towards understandings of how young people of different races and ethnicities construct their gendered identities in the Scottish secondary setting. However, social class did play a noticeable part in the shaping of gendered identities, and, as illustrated in the findings, this was particularly apparent in relation to how working class girls shaped their femininity construction. Further research in this area will support a greater understanding of the interplay between social class and gender.

9.4 Final Reflections

This study set out to explore how gender construction impacts on the way in which young people perform the role of pupil within one rural secondary school in Scotland. In doing so, it has contributed to research evidence that demonstrates how and why pupils shape their gendered identities in particular ways.

Fundamentally, this has highlighted the potentially limiting impact of this on pupils' educational experiences in school.

It is essential to acknowledge the limitations in terms of research design when undertaking research. As was discussed in the methodology chapter, being a teacher in the school at the time with a considerable teaching commitment meant I was restricted in terms of when I could collect data. For the same reason, I was also restricted in how long I could spend data collecting on a daily basis. Further issues arose from my role as teacher in terms of the potential impact on the reliability of data, given that I was known to staff and pupils alike as an authority figure in the school. That said, the methodological approach adopted offered much in the way of strength to lessen the impact of the limitations stated. Again, this was highlighted in the methodology chapter, but it is worth re-emphasising the benefits in terms of research design as a result of having been a teacher in the school. This included the lack of restriction in terms of gaining to access the research site, and the ability to build on my strong, existing working relationships with staff and pupils when data collecting. This, I argue, undoubtedly led to the generation of richer data than would have been possible had I, for example, undertaken the study in an unfamiliar setting. The considerable length of period spent in the field (one academic year) served as a means of overcoming the limitations resulting from my dual role as teacher/researcher.

Whilst the focus of my recommendations falls firmly on the teaching profession, this project was not designed to level undue criticism on teachers. As a teacher

myself, I am all too aware of the everyday pressures placed on our profession, pressures which can at times be quite overwhelming, even for the most effective and committed of practitioners. I have undoubtedly benefited from having a greater understanding of issues surrounding gender in education and this places me in a more privileged position. I am also very aware that contemporary research is not always readily accessible to teachers, nor is it deemed a priority by some who feel constrained by the daily pressures of classroom teaching. This is a final matter worthy of note to those involved in teacher education in particular.

Reflecting the aims and purpose of the Ed.D course, the outcomes of this study place an emphasis on the link between research, policy and practice within my own professional context. Therefore, I have committed to providing detailed feedback from the study to interested colleagues within Bothy High School. At the outset, I had agreed share findings of the study with staff participants. I now see this as taking the form of both a presentation exploring the complex issues relating to gender construction in the school setting, and an abbreviated written summary/discussion of the key findings and recommendations of the study. I hope that this will go some way to providing colleagues with a professional development opportunity to explore issues around gender in education. At the same time, it allows me to share what I believe have been the real benefits to me as a professional of having undertaken this research study. In particular, I wish to highlight how I understand the vital role I play as a teacher in shaping young people's gendered identities within the school context. Finally, I aim to share the study's findings with pupils in a manner suited to their age and educational stage.

The recommendations outlined herein are about allowing individual young people the support to construct their identities without the restriction of cultural norms of gender. It is only through shifting teacher practice, that our classrooms and schools will become places where gender does not define a learner nor his or her aspirations.

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Appendix 1

University of Strathclyde Glasgow

Participant Information Sheet for pupils

Name of department: School of Education

Title of the study: How does gender (being a boy or girl) impact upon the lives of pupils in one rural Scottish secondary school?

Introduction
I am a teacher and I am carrying out this research project as part of my studies at the University of Strathclyde.
Contact details: fiona.g.menzies@strath.ac.uk

What is the purpose of this investigation?
This project aims to explore how your gender (being a boy or a girl) might affect your experiences as a pupil in school. There is already research to suggest that the way that young people think about their gender can affect parts of their school life. This project aims to add to this research by focusing on our school, which is in a rural setting. In this project, I will be working with pupils in S3 and S4.

Do you have to take part?
*It is your decision whether you take part in the project or not (i.e. participation is voluntary). If you decide to take part and then you change your mind for any reason, then you have the right to withdraw without giving a reason or explanation. This will **not** affect any other aspects of your school life.*

What will you do in the project?
For the most part, this project will involve me, as researcher, observing various classes and activities within the school. During these observations, you will not be required to do anything beyond what you would normally do during the school day. You may also be invited to take part in a short individual interview to talk about issues or events which I have noticed during my observations. It will be your choice whether you take part in this interview or not. Again, this will not affect any other aspect of your school work.
The project will run from August 2014-June 2015.

Why have you been invited to take part?
You have been invited to take part in this project because you are a member of the school community and a pupil in S3/S4.

What are the potential risks to you in taking part?
There are no perceived risks involved in taking part in this project.

What happens to the information in the project?
*If you decide to take part in this project, then any information you provide (for example, in an interview) will be treated confidentially. This means that this information will **not** be shared with anyone, except the researchers involved in the project. All notes taken during observations will also be treated in strict confidence. All names of participants and organisations involved*

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will be changed in the final project so that they cannot be identified. All information (data) will be stored securely in the university, and will only be seen by the researchers.

The University of Strathclyde is registered with the Information Commissioner's Office who implements the Data Protection Act 1998. All personal data on participants will be processed in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998.
Thank you for reading this information – please ask any questions if you are unsure about what is written here.

What happens next?
If you are happy to be involved in this project, you will be asked to sign a consent form to confirm this. Should you decide to take part, you will be able to read the results of the project after it is completed. It is hoped that some pupils involved in this project may help to produce a pupil version of the results, so that this can be shared with other pupils in the school. It is likely that the results of the project will be shared with other staff in the school, or with teachers in other schools, or those involved in educational research. In the future, the results may also be published in an educational journal.

*If you decide not to take part, can I thank you again for taking the time to read this form. This decision will **not** affect your school life in any way.*

Researcher contact details:

Miss F. Menzies
E-mail: fiona.g.menzies@strath.ac.uk

Chief Investigator details:

Professor G. Smyth
Department: Humanities and Social Sciences, Lord Hope Building.
Telephone: (0141) 444 8087
E-mail: g.smyth@strath.ac.uk

This investigation was granted ethical approval by the School of Education Ethics Committee. If you have any questions/concerns, during or after the project, or wish to contact an independent person with any questions or to get further information, please contact:

Mr Allan Blake
Research Associate
Lord Hope Building
University of Strathclyde
Glasgow
G4 0NT

Telephone: (0141) 444 8106 Email: a.blake@strath.ac.uk

Appendix 2

University of Strathclyde Glasgow

Consent Form for pupils

Name of department: School of Education

Title of the study: How does gender (being a boy or girl) impact upon the lives of pupils in one rural Scottish secondary school?

- I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet for the above project and the researcher has answered any queries or questions to my satisfaction.
- I understand that it is my decision whether I take part or not and that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time, without having to give a reason and without it affecting my work or life in school.
- I understand that I can withdraw my data (in other words, any information which relates to me) from the study at any time.
- I understand that any information recorded in the project will remain confidential and no information that identifies me will be made publicly available.
- I agree to taking part in the project.
- I agree to being audio recorded as part of the project during individual interviews. Yes/ No (please delete as appropriate).

(PRINT NAME)	
Signature of Participant:	Date:

Appendix 3

University of Strathclyde Glasgow

Participant Information Sheet for staff

Name of department: School of Education

Title of the study: How does gender construction impact upon pupils' lives in one rural Scottish secondary school?

Introduction
I am a teacher and I am undertaking this research project as part of my doctoral studies at the University of Strathclyde.
University of Strathclyde contact details: fiona.g.menzies@strath.ac.uk

What is the purpose of this investigation?
This project seeks to explore issues relating to how gender affects pupils' experiences in school. Specifically, it focuses on the idea of 'gender construction'. This term reflects a view that our gender is not a fixed state, but is affected by our interactions with other people, in this case, within the school setting. This project is looking at how young people's gender construction impacts upon their lives within school. There is already research to suggest that gender construction can impact upon aspects of pupils' school life. This project seeks to contribute to this body of research by focusing on the rural context.

Do you have to take part?
It is your decision whether you take part in the investigation or not (i.e. participation is voluntary). If you decide to take part and then you change your mind for any reason, then you have the right to withdraw without explanation. This will ***not*** *affect any other aspects of your school life.*

What will you do in the project?
For the most part, this project will involve me, as researcher, observing pupils as they participate in classes and activities within the school. During the observations, you will not be required to do anything beyond what you would normally do during the school day. As much of this observation will take place within the classroom, I would seek to observe S3/4 pupils as you teach them during their normal timetabled classes. These classroom observations differ from other types of observations often experienced within the school, in that the focus here is on how pupils act and interact within the classroom. Further to this, you may be invited to participate in a short interview aimed at exploring any relevant issues arising from the observations. It will be your choice whether you take part in this interview or not.
The project will run from August 2014-June 2015.

Why have you been invited to take part?
As a teacher of S3 and/or S4 classes in the school and a member of the school community, you have been invited to participate in this project.

What are the potential risks to you in taking part?
There are no perceived risks involved in taking part in this project.

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University of Strathclyde Glasgow

What happens to the information in the project?
If you decide to take part in this project, then any information you provide (for example, in an interview) will be treated confidentially. Similarly, all notes taken during observations will also be treated in strict confidence. All names of participants and organisations involved will be changed in the final project so that they are not identifiable. All information (data) collected during the project will be stored securely in the university, and will only be accessible to the researchers. The findings of this project will be written up as a Doctorate of Education thesis. I may then seek to publish the results in an educational journal.

The University of Strathclyde is registered with the Information Commissioner's Office who implements the Data Protection Act 1998. All personal data on participants will be processed in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998.
Thank you for reading this information – please ask any questions if you are unsure about what is written here.

What happens next?
If you are happy to be involved in this project, you will be asked to sign a consent form to confirm this. Should you decide to participate, you will have access to the findings of this project on its completion. In the future, the results of the project may be shared with other staff in the school, or with teachers other schools, or those involved in educational research. In the future, the results may also be published in an educational journal.

If you decide not to participate, can I thank you again for taking the time to read this form. May I remind you that your professional life will not be affected in any way by your decision not to participate.

Researcher contact details:

Miss F. Menzies E-mail: fiona.g.menzies@strath.ac.uk

Chief Investigator details:

Professor G. Smyth
Department: Humanities and Social Sciences, Lord Hope Building.
Telephone: (0141) 444 8087 E-mail: g.smyth@strath.ac.uk

This investigation was granted ethical approval by the School of Education Ethics Committee.
If you have any questions/concerns, during or after the investigation, or wish to contact an independent person to whom any questions may be directed or further information may be sought from, please contact:
Mr Allan Blake Research Associate
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Appendix 4

University of Strathclyde Glasgow

Consent Form for staff

Name of department: School of Education.

Title of the study: How does gender construction impact upon pupils' lives in one rural Scottish secondary school?

- I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet for the above project and the researcher has answered any queries to my satisfaction.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time, without having to give a reason and without any consequences.
- I understand that I can withdraw my data from the study at any time.
- I understand that any information recorded in the investigation will remain confidential and no information that identifies me will be made publicly available.
- I consent to being a participant in the project.
- I consent to being audio recorded as part of the project during individual interviews. Yes/ No (please delete as appropriate)

(PRINT NAME)	
Signature of Participant:	Date:

Appendix 5

University of Strathclyde Glasgow

Semi Structured interview Schedule for pupils/staff

[N.B Exact interview questions may change depending on the observed situations. Any substantial changes will be notified to the School of Education Ethics Committee, University of Strathclyde.]

Q.1 In a recent observation [provide details] I noticed that [give details of relevant issue/event which was observed]. I am keen to find out a little more about this, from your point of view. *Can you tell me about this?*

Q.2 Do you think being a boy/girl [delete as appropriate] affected that way you/the pupils [delete as appropriate] acted here? If so, why might this be the case?

Q.3 Do you think a boy/girl [delete as appropriate] might have behaved differently? If so, why?

Appendix 6

Thumbnail Sketches of Interviewees

Adam (S4[16]), 16, lives with his parents and younger brother in the small rural town in which Bothy High School is situated. Like the vast majority of S4 pupils, Adam studies 6 subjects at school, including the compulsory core subjects of Maths and English[17]. He also opted to study Biology, PE, Music and Home Economics. At school, Adam presented himself as a popular, confident boy with a positive attitude towards learning. He actively participates in many aspects of school life outwith the classroom. For example, he is member of the Rugby Team, the School Orchestra and the Pupil Council, and is also a 'Class Representative'. My observations of him in Pupil Council and Class Representative Meetings prompted me to invite him to take part in an interview. His teachers describe him as academically able, hardworking, and reliable. Adam wants to study at university when he leaves school, but hasn't a clear career path in mind. His dad is an engineer and his mum works in a local shop.

Anna (S4), 16, lives on a farm with her parents and younger siblings. The farm is approximately 8 miles from the school. Anna often helps out on the family farm at nights and during the weekend. In addition to the compulsory Maths and English, she had opted to study Biology, Graphics, Design & Manufacture (both Technical subjects), and Geography. My observations of Anna in Design & Manufacture led to me asking her to participate in an interview. Anna presents herself as a confident, mature and articulate pupil in school -when she passed me in the corridor, she would often stop me to ask how my research project was going. She has a close group of friends, both boys and girls, and appears to be a popular girl who was able to 'fit in' in all situations. Anna plays in the school's girls' rugby team. She hopes to study design or architecture at university when she leaves school.

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[16] S4 denotes Secondary 4 or Fourth Year in a Scottish secondary school.

[17] NB: All S3 and S4 pupils also study Religious and Moral Education (RME), Personal and Social Education (PSE) and core Physical Education (PE) for one period per week.

Lorna (S3), 13, interviewed with Tina, lives in a small rural town approximately eight miles from Bothy High School. She lives with her mum and younger sister. Lorna's attendance at school is not reliable; teachers note that she often falls behind with class work due to her regular absence. In the interview, Lorna was mature and a strong communicator. I rarely observed her in class, partly due to her attendance issues and also because she had initially only attended the interview on Tina's request. Lorna wants to be a hairdresser when she leaves school, following in her mum's footsteps.

Rhona (S4), 16, lives with her parents and sister in the small rural town in which Bothy High School is situated. She studies Maths, English, Biology, Geography, Art, and Chemistry. Rhona presented herself as an extremely diligent pupil in class. She actively involves herself in many wider aspects of school life and attends numerous extra-curricular activities. For example, she is a member of the Pupil Council, the Debating Society, and the Human Rights Society. I approached Rhona to participate in an interview because of her strong involvement in extra-curricular activities. Teachers describe Rhona as academically able, well-mannered and very hard working – one described her as a 'model student'. Rhona appears very quiet in class, rarely chatting to her peers, but keen to ask for teacher support, where required. Out of class, she appears very articulate - for example, she is happy to engage in public speaking in the Debating Society. She is interested in politics and has ambitions of studying this at university. She would like to work in education, like her mum.

Richard (S4), 15, lives with his parents and two brothers in the rural town in which the school is situated. He studies six subjects at school; the core subjects of Maths, English, along with Graphics (a Technical Subject), Geography, Physics, and PE. He is a keen rugby player and plays for both the school team and the local rugby team. He presents himself as a popular, laid back pupil. He is described as quite able by his teachers, though is not seen as overly hard working. Richard has a large social circle comprising boys from his year and the year above. Like Richard, these boys all appear to be physically fit, well-built, rugby players. I was prompted to invite him to participate in an interview because of his apparently gendered subject choices.

Richard has not decided what he would like to do when he leaves school, but has thought about university. His father is a teacher, and his mum, a house wife.

Tina (S3), 14, interviewed with her friend Lorna, lives in a small, rural village approximately 15 miles from the School. She is an outgoing student and has a close circle of female friends in school. She is described by several teachers as a work-avoider. For example, a number note that she often asks out to the toilet during class - they consider this a deliberate means of avoiding work (Indeed, I bore witness to this on a number of occasions). Tina, though very pleasant and articulate during interviews, often appears sullen and withdrawn in classes. She seems less than keen to participate in class discussions, despite being a sociable and assertive girl when with her peers. Tina studies eight subjects, which include the two core subjects of Maths and English. In addition, she studies Biology, Hospitality, Dance, History, Music, and PE. A keen dancer, Tina is heavily involved in the School's Dance Show. My observation of her in dance rehearsals was the main catalyst for inviting her to participate in an interview. Tina also plays rugby, though does so outwith school. She wants to work in the beauty industry when she leaves school.

Wayne (S3), 14, lives approximately ten miles from Bothy High School in a small, rural town. He lives with his elder sister and mum. His mum works as a cleaner in a local primary school. Wayne is a humourous boy, keen to entertain his friends both in class and outwith. He presents himself as 'happy go lucky', confident and light hearted in observations, though was far quieter when away from his peer group - e.g. in the interview setting. He is a popular boy, and, despite playing the 'class clown' at times, is not badly behaved in school. His teachers describe him as a pleasant boy to teach, with a keen sense of humour. His strong rapport with teachers is very apparent in classroom observations. He is not considered to be academically able and is in the 'bottom set'[18] classes for Maths and English. For his remaining subjects, Wayne had chosen to study Biology, Geography, Music, Art, PE, and Hospitality. Wayne also attends a local college for one day per week, where he studies 'Rural Skills'. His

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[18] Maths and English classes are 'set' in Bothy High School according to perceived ability levels in the subject.

involvement in this course, along with my observations of him in Maths, English, and Hospitality, led to me to asking Wayne to participate in an interview.

Mrs Edison, 30, is a full-time teacher in the school, and has an additional remit to co-ordinate the Rural Skills College Course. This is an optional course offered to a select number of S3 pupils covering skills associated with the rural landscape, such as farming, horticulture, and stonemasonry. Mrs Edison was approached to participate in an interview in order to provide valuable insights into how this course operated, including information regarding the recruitment and selection of pupils for the course. Mrs Edison has worked in the school for five years, and has been a teacher for seven years.

Appendix 7

Extract from Interview Transcript – Anna, 11th November 2014

FM (Interviewer): There was one other thing I'm interested to find out about from your point of view …when I was in the Design and Manufacture class room, I noticed you had a wee [short] discussion with one of the other boys in the class, Jack. I think you were walking past him, and you'd made a joke about sort of doing a dance … you were trying to get past each other, you know, as one goes one way, the other goes another, and you said 'oh, we're doing a wee dance,' and Jack replied and said, 'you're no' [not] a dancer!'

Anna: Yeah. I think 'cos [because] like, 'cos I'm from a farm, and Jack's from a farm, it's quite kind of like … he thinks of me more of a boy, almost.

FM: Okay.

A: Like, because I play rugby…And not many rugby players do dancing… I just don't think they look at me as a dancer *[laughs*].

FM: Why do rugby players not 'do dancing'?

A: Well, I think rugby players tend to be bigger built, or… not really good at dancing, but they tend to be… have mostly two left feet than… other people. Like, a lot of dancers are really skinny and really fragile and in rugby you're not skinny or fragile!
[*Both laugh*].

FM: Okay. And you mentioned that you're from a farm. So what sort of part does that play in....?

A: I think because, like, because of the farm, I know that I'm stronger, and it doesn't really bother me, like… I'm not as feminine as some … like, I play rugby and I'm from a farm, so I don't mind getting dirty, or wee [small] things wouldn't really bother me.

FM: Yeah. So, are those things you would link to being feminine? Or you are saying you're not maybe as feminine. Then you talk about getting mucky and …

A: Yeah, or stronger.

FM: Stronger? So are those things that you think go against your notion of being feminine?

A: Maybe, yeah.

FM: And you think Jack knows that you're a …

A: [*Interrupts*] Yes, Jack's friends with my cousin and stuff, so …he knows that I'm from a farm and everything, so … Like, he knows that I'm maybe not necessarily a dancer, and …

FM: That's funny, because you did say to him, 'Well, I do highland dancing and ballet'?

A: I did.

FM: So, you were actually a dancer, even though your hobbies include other things that you told me about as well?

A: Oh, I used to do ballet and then I did highland, but I stopped that to do rugby.

Appendix 8

Excerpt from Observation Fieldnotes

Tuesday 7th October, 2014. S3 Class, Maths.

[…]

Miss Stevens writes the answer on the board then explains the last task, which involves working in a group. She sorts the pupils into groups and helps them to get organised round various tables. I notice there are ten minutes left of the period.

"I want four triangles on your page", says Miss S, as she hands each group a very large sheet of 'grid paper'. The pupils immediately try to start, but are asked to put down their pens as she explains what they have to do. She draws her example on the board.

Miss S: "Understand?"

Alan: "Easy Peasy!"

The group in front of me (two boys) begins to laugh.

"Mines is dead small!" [My one is really small] says Wayne. His partner, Ryan, laughs again.

"I'm just warming up, but! He looks at his partner's... "How big is yours?!" [*Laughs in exaggerated manner*]

The teacher notices the laughter and comes over...

Miss S [*looks at Wayne's triangle*]:"We are being very sensible here, I see – a small one!"

[Boys laugh again].

Wayne: "I'm just warming up, Miss!"

Miss S [*speaks to Ryan, smiling*] “See, I like how Wayne is being dead [very] sensible! Yours is huge!!”

They all laugh together and Wayne starts to help Ryan count the squares to measure his triangle.

The teacher moves over to help other pupil, Larry, who looks to be struggling to count the number of squares in his triangle. He counts as the teacher moves her finger down the page, pointing at each square. She soon notices he has lost concentration:

Miss S: “You’re not even looking! [*Light-hearted, smiling*]

Larry: “Miss, we’re not magicians, you know!”

The teacher leaves the group and moves to the back to work with the girl who is sitting herself.

“He ate a raw potato in class, btw!” says Wayne loudly enough for all to hear, but directed at his partner, Ryan. (I am not sure who he is suddenly talking about but I don’t think it is anyone in the room).

“He’s a farmer, that’s how!” responds Ryan. [*Both laugh*].

Alan (other pupil, sitting behind Wayne) blurts out: “FINISHED! Aced it!”

The teacher comes to the front of the classroom [*gives a ‘thumbs up’ sign and smiles*]. She asks the class:

“So, can we move onto to something new tomorrow?”

Wayne: “We’re no’ in the mora, [not in tomorrow] Miss.”

Miss Stevens: “Ah....Rural Skills! Back on, I guess? Okay, Thursday then.... I hope it’s a nice day for you if you’re outside tomorrow!”

“Disnae [Doesn’t] bother me!” Wayne immediately answers in a confident tone.

“Aye [Yes], we can work in any weather! It’s no’ a problem fur [for] us!” adds Alan.

I leave just before bell.

Notes post-observation:

I’m aware that “Rural Skills” is a college-based course which is offered to a small group of pupils in S3 (Find out more about this) All boys in here who attend. Why them? Do girls attend too? Ask Mrs E, who runs course….