

A Study of Learning and Identity Production within
Extracurricular Activities set for University Students.

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Abstract

This thesis is a study of two extracurricular groups – a Dance Group and a Singing Group established for students at a university in the United Kingdom. The study centres on learning facilitated by student group social practices in relation to the production of identities, focusing particularly on gender and the role of the body. A review of the existing literature reveals distinct strands in this area. The first focuses academic success and future employment. A second strand critiques simplistic notions of academic skills and employability. The third analyses a diversity of student identities development within communities of practice in legitimate peripheral participation. This study extends this third strand by investigating the questions: How are student identities constructed in extracurricular dance and singing groups in a UK university? What role do the body and gender play in identity construction?

Ethnographic techniques mainly participant observation and general conversations were utilised for collection of empirical data from student groups for one academic year (2007-2008) for ten sessions each term, as well as additional related events.

The analysis draws on three bodies of theory: the theory of the body and of corporeal realism (Shilling, 2012), feminist theory and theories of masculinities and femininities (e.g. Connell, 2013); and the community of practice theory of learning (Wenger, 1998; Lave and Wenger, 1991). Analysis suggests that extracurricular groups were used to both achieve an externally-set objective and for engagement in complex social relations that constitute a significant aspect of student life. Furthermore, analysis explores specific ways in which masculine and feminine identities were produced. Gendered norms and relations were variably repeated, challenged or resisted through students' embodied engagement in group activities. Thus, this contribution enhances existing knowledge through analysis that incorporates the importance of the human body in gendered identity production within extracurricular activities in higher education.

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During the doctoral study I have had support from many people in different ways and I will always be grateful to all of them. I thank Dr. Claudia Lapping my supervisor, whose advice and comments and support have helped to shape this thesis. My gratitude also goes to Professor Charlie Owen for making constructive contributions during the last stages of the writing of this thesis.

Dedicated to: David and Sarah.

I hereby declare that, except where explicit attribution is made, the work presented in this thesis is entirely my own.

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Thesis Statement

This statement briefly discusses my doctoral study journey from the taught courses, Institution Focused Study through to the main Thesis.

The subject of doctoral focus in research was informed by my study for MA in education. During the MA course, I became increasingly concerned about the difficulties experienced by students in education particularly women. This gave me the impetus to pursue doctoral studies which I envisaged would allow me entry into academia in Kenya.

The first module of my doctoral study was 'Foundations of Professionalism in Education'. The assignment I wrote for this was an exploration of the literature on the identity of a Kenyan professional teacher and researcher in society. Thus, I focused on the 'Challenges of a professional Kenyan woman as a teacher and researcher' in her society and in education.

The challenges of a Kenyan woman as a professional are to be understood within a dominant African patriarchal cultural context in absolute terms, compared to the emerging Western definitions of professionalism. An African culture places a woman in a subordinate position in relation to man, and defines her role and place to be in the home thus, marginalising her in education and in employment. African

notions of professionalism have remained traditional and are not under strict scrutiny as in the West. The lack of scrutiny means that issues for instance, social injustices continue to be ignored.

Because of subordinate positioning of Kenyan women, it is men who produce knowledge even about women's lives. Thus, women have been silenced from articulating their experiences and needs in society and in education. Thus, I expressed my anxiety concerning my future role as a teacher and researcher in Kenyan society and education particularly in gender issues. Thus, I realised early in the course that my doctoral study was not just a pursuit of qualifications for entry into academia. It was important for me to engage in a deliberate determined cognitive development of the self in a process of critical approach to cultural issues rather than allowing them to constrain me. This was an important step in the development of my own identity as a professional teacher and researcher, who would focus on works which give voice to the marginalised, particularly women.

Methods of Enquiry 1 (MoE1) - Research design

The second part of the doctoral work is MoE1. For this we were required to write a research design. For me this entailed a literature exploration based on previous works on 'African women student adjustment in British higher education'. I paid special attention to the research methods employed in the studies and the findings of their analyses. The literature suggested that studying away from home, cultural issues, language and discrimination present adjustment difficulties to African

students in British universities. Thus, I chose an in-depth open ended interview, using these findings as a guide in formulating research questions for MoE2 seeking to draw empirical data from student accounts of their experiences.

However, at this stage, I did not consider how I would obtain the sample for the research. What was most important to me was formulating research questions but, this omission became a disturbing issue when I set to research for MoE2.

Method of Enquiry2 - MoE2 African cultural effects on African students adjustments in British Universities

The third part of my doctoral work entailed using the design I prepared in MoE1 to collect empirical data for MoE2. I realised at that stage that I did not plan for sampling. I decided that I would use a random sample, using street kind of 'market survey'. Thus, I stood at the university's main entrance at lunch breaks and evenings where I approached black women seeking to find African women to recruit for the research. Only one among those I approached declined to the interview. The sample enlarged through skewing as students invited their friends and finally I had a sample of 22 women all together.

The interviews took place at the university library each lasting an hour and half which I tape recorded and also scribbled notes. Out of the 22 tape recorded interviews only 12 were transcribed as the others had been destroyed through a technical error.

The analysis of the data confirmed earlier findings that African culture still affects African women adjustments to British universities (see MoE1). However, the findings of MoE2 were inconsistent with some previous findings. For instance, Maundeni (1997) claimed that African women were likely to succumb to men's sexual demands, whether the men were their partners or not. My study suggested that the positioning of the women may be changing. This was suggested by cases of two women who had said during separate interviews with them that they had sued their husbands in court for domestic abuse. At the time, the men had perceived that they had been ignored by the women who were focusing on the demands of education. Even though this was a small project, it has far reaching implications that African women are beginning to break away from cultural demands to follow individualistic concerns.

Specialist Course in International Education

The last work within the taught courses is 'Specialist Course in International Education'. In this paper, I explored 'Globalisation of Education in Kenya', focusing on its effects on gender. Globalised education in Kenya is traced to the 18th Century with the onset of the expansion of British Empire, Evangelisation of Christianity and the spread of Islam. From that time, Kenyan education became racially structured so that the Europeans had the best in terms of resources and personnel, then Asians and African men at the bottom. The previous system in Kenya supported social cohesion and subsistence. The discrimination supported by the system can be understood in the context of the time, when it was important to protect women.

The Kenyan society is changing rather slowly, and women continue to be gravely marginalised in society and in education. The conclusion I drew from this work is that although a nation can learn from education of another, it is important to scrutinise it so that only aspects relevant to the needs of a nation are adapted.

Institution Focused Study

The fifth aspect of the doctoral work was a study of an institution of further education (IFS). The IFS was informed by MoE2 and focused on the experiences of Minority ethnic students, with special reference to African women. I explored how the experiences might contribute to the high drop among this group of students out of college. Because research in this field is scarce, the research was informed by specialist but related fields; black women in education, International students, Adult women and refugee studies. The literature suggests that language, cultural issues, discrimination, lack of involvement and inclusion in academic institutions among other issues affect Minority ethnic students in British education.

A year's longitudinal in depth open ended interview with women and men students, in autumn, spring and summer was employed. A group discussion interview with both women and men students was utilized at the end of the study. The group interview produced different data from individual interviews. The latter related to external issues and how these affected the students while in college.

The main difficulties I experienced during the research were delayed permission to the research the setting, denial of access to statistics which would have allowed me to compare students dropping out in previous years with those dropping out during this study. Additionally, the teaching staff declined their participation in the research. Thus, an important aspect of analysis of the phenomena from the staff was missed. Some students did not turn up for research and a long time was wasted while waiting for them. The longitudinal nature of the research was also affected by the sporadic attendance, as some students dropped out before completing three interviews, in autumn, spring and summer.

The main conclusion made from this study is that multiple factors contributed to students dropping out and not only cultural effects. Despite all the difficulties, many African students remained in education to complete their courses. The key to their completion was resilience and finding ways of coping. These included silence, particularly when they perceived that articulating problems, was futile or that would constrain their relationships with teachers and other staff. Nonetheless, some students pointed out that they stood up for themselves. Others chose to use the local library to deal with perceived discriminated by staff in the college library. The research suggested that there was a need to extend research about the students to other areas such as extracurricular activities instead of a continued study of problems and this became the research focus for thesis.

Thesis

The study for this thesis focused on extracurricular activities set for International students informed by IFS:

The study focused on social cultural practices of two extracurricular group activities set for International students at a university in the UK. I employed aspects of ethnographic methods mainly participant observation and general conversations. This is because these aspects are suitable for naturalistic studies involving social cultural practices. I recorded the information I collected in a notebook and kept a record of events in a diary.

There were many difficulties I experienced during this research. For instance, I had not formulated research questions like I had in the previous studies. The questions had helped to structure the research, data collection and analysis. The research for the thesis involved recording a lot of information and presented difficulties particularly in data reduction to the scope of this thesis, yet, not to leaving important insights unanalysed became problematic. Nonetheless, a further study of the literature suggested that a regrouping of categories into main themes would help and suddenly the data began to make sense to me.

Then I began to interpret the themes using the theories discussed in Chapter Three of this thesis. The most significant aspect of my learning during the research is the process and means through which identities such as gender are produced,

experienced in concrete realities of life in social contexts and how this affect individuals. The other key insight drawn from this thesis is that although individuals may engage in achieving objectives set by institutions/organisations, the same contexts can also be used to develop other aspects of their identities in real social lives. In this thesis, these aspects relate to the development of social and sexual interactions and engagement in gendered identity work, in which the body plays a significant role. This study further suggests that the latter may be significant to some individuals and may give them the impetus to engage in set objectives. This process is regulated by implied social conventions of a social context. This means that it is important that any analysis of learning considers that multiple identities can be developed in any given social context, a process which enhances learning.

The progress made in doctoral work was mainly facilitated by feedback given by the supervisors throughout the course, both constructive criticisms and encouraging remarks and also during student group discussions. Comments such as ‘this work is well structured, I enjoyed reading this work, this work is very good and can be published, there is a good argument’, and similar comments were very encouraging in doctoral work.

All the pieces of research I have carried out during the doctoral work are somehow related. All of them have international, cultural aspects and relate to the construction of identities and gender, and that the body plays an important role in the process. This is the ‘golden thread’ which cuts across the doctoral work. The concept of

identity in MoE1, Moe2 and IFS is subtle but it emerges clearly in the Thesis. The 'Foundations of Professionalism' began the construction of my own identity as a professional teacher and researcher, which has continued to be refined during research writing. For instance, I have articulated some of the practices of the women in Chapters Four and Five of this thesis, which previously I would have marginalised as 'unimportant'. Yet, these became key aspects during the analysis of empirical data. In each piece of doctoral research, I have identified gaps in existing knowledge and these will continue to be the focus in subsequent research.

[2000 words].

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Chapter One

Extracurricular Activities set for University Students

Introduction

This thesis is a study of extracurricular group activities set for university students at a university in the UK. The central focus of the research is social practices in relation to the production of student identities, within the group contexts. A significant strand within the existing literature in this field suggests that students who participate in extracurricular activities remain in education to complete their degrees and that they may be more successful with their studies than those who do not (Chotmonkol and Jones, 2008); Gaskell et al, 1994). This literature further suggests that extracurricular activities are an important context in which students develop important skills for future employment. There is another strand that is more critical of the narrow notion of academic development and employability; for instance York and Knight (2006, p. 99) argue that the focus on these two aspects compromises ‘good learning’. Another strand focusing on gender analysis of participation of students in extracurricular activities emerges in Chachra et al (2009). Recent work on these activities by Clegg et al (2011) extends gender to include the wider conceptions of a diversity of student identity development in these activities. They also look at how, for example, social class, ethnicity and religion, and past generations influence participation in extracurricular activities. The study for this thesis contrasts with existing works which foreground external objectives, such as academic success or employability.

Based on the analysis of empirical data drawn from the research for this thesis, I will argue that students use group contexts in other ways which may not be directly linked to academic achievement or future employment. These are linked to gender and ‘the human body’ which may also be significant to students, in relation to externally defined objectives.

This chapter begins with an exploration of the literature on extracurricular activities in order to establish what is known and to contextualize this research within the literature. For this analysis, I focus on extracurricular activities set for university students. The exploration of the literature is an important step from which I will suggest how this study can contribute to knowledge in this field. Following this, I will discuss my story, which explains my background and academic journey. This chapter will also briefly discuss the aspects of ethnographic method which were employed in this research to collect data and the theories used during the analysis. The last part of this chapter sets out the structure of the thesis explaining the central focus of each chapter. Clegg at al (2011) identified the lack of a concrete definition of what extracurricular activities are. They argue that this problem has an implication on how student participants in these contexts may be supported; however there are some attempts made to define these activities.

Definitions of extracurricular activities

According to Brian (2005, p. 1), extracurricular activities refer to ‘ungraded activities offered beyond structured academic contexts’. To Johnson and Ryan (2011,

p.3), extracurricular activities are ‘any structured activity supervised by one or more adults outside regular school [college/university] hours’. These activities include sports, social activities, religious activities, volunteer work, performing arts and academic clubs. These analysts define involvement as the number of hours a student spends participating in these activities.

Clegg et al’s (2011) working definition includes traditional campus-based cultural, sporting and volunteering activities, faith-related activities, paid work and care among others in their analysis of extracurricular activities. ‘Traditional’ in this case refers to activities which are well known and take place in campuses or outside university, such as some sports and are supported by academic institutions. For this analysis, I adapt the traditional definition of extracurricular activities by Clegg et al (2011) to refer to activities which are known and are supported by university. Support means that the activities are recognized and maintained through university assistance in finance, personnel and other aspects such as meeting facilities.

Extracurricular activities are now researched more in higher education than in previous years. There seems to be the realization that these activities play an important role in student life within their educational institutions. Many studies focusing on extracurricular groups explore the extent to which student activities facilitate the acquisition of specified ‘useful skills’ (Gaskell et al, 1994; Chotimongkol and Jones, 2008). Such skills include verbal communication, presentation, group work, leadership and self-management. These studies suggest that such skills positively contribute to student academic development. Studies which examine the difficulties experienced by university students, such as the works

carried out by Leonard et al (2003), suggest that a lack of these skills presents specific difficulties to students. Other studies which centre on involvement, integration and retention, suggest that extracurricular student groups are important contexts in which students can form social networks for support (Peterson et al, 1997; Tinto, 1975). Tinto (1975) claims that friendships are facilitated by social networks and that these contribute to a better life experience for students within their academic institutions. Other researchers, such as Gaskell et al (1994), suggest that students who engage in such groups achieve higher academic grades compared to students who do not. It is unclear if the extra-curricular activities lead to better academic performance or if students who are motivated to join extra-curricular groups are more able or more motivated academically too.

The limitation of these studies, however, is that as focus is given to specific outcomes; other student practices taking place within the groups are marginalized, which may also be significant to students, in relation to what may be externally perceived to be important. There is a strand of literature which extends the analysis of extracurricular activities to explore social practices and identity. Another strand has begun to explore these issues, drawing on theories of identity and social learning (Clegg et al, 2011) and Lave and Wenger's (1991) communities of practice. This thesis will add to these studies by analysing the learning facilitated by social practices of student groups, to explore the construction of student identities, and which identities are developed within the groups. For me, the issue that is most interesting in the current literature is an analysis of student practices within extracurricular groups' contexts in relation to the production of student identities, gender and the body. Gender is an important aspect of this research in my quest to

understand the processes that produce, normalise and underpin oppressive gender practices. This study seeks to expand on the findings of studies that include gender analyses such as Clegg et al (2011) and Chachra et al (2009), to include an analysis of gender and the role of the body. By exploring social contexts of student groups, I seek to understand the processes through which oppressive gendered practices are produced, particularly in relation to bodily practices of extracurricular dance and singing groups and to explore ways through which these can be resisted.

Background to the study

When I began the doctoral study, I wanted to understand the problems African women were experiencing in education while studying abroad, with special reference to female African students in the UK. My quest to understand women's problems in education, particularly African women, began in Kenya. I was brought up in a family which valued education of both women and men. However, I went to a high school situated in a different culture, away from home. Some of the male teachers within the culture who taught in that school also seemed to attach less value to education of girls and women at that time. This attitude was reflected in the words of my male chemistry and biology teacher, who taught in that school. During a biology lesson in my class towards the end of the four year course, the teacher said: 'You girls need to keep your school uniform because they may be the only nice clothes you will have as your Sunday best when you get married. Some of you will never afford nice clothes anyway. After all, what are you for?' The remark by the teacher echoed the general attitude towards the place of girls and women in relation to education. At the time, there was intense pressure on girls to drop out of education in order to get married

and many girls left school in that district before they completed the course. Some of the girls who managed to complete their course married their male teachers, even before examination results were out. At the time, the girls who attained 'O Level' qualifications were viewed as 'highly' educated and were seen as having 'achieved'.

When I got married, I was a teenager, but with time I became increasingly disaffected with my position as a housewife. With the support of my husband and some members of his family, and my family, I began to pursue education further. This happened amid great discouragement from some other close members of my husband's family, some of whom had also pursued education themselves. This discouragement affected me intensely, emotionally, particularly as I thought about their claims that returning to learning could adversely affect my children. These individuals also pressed that I should be withdrawn from college to live in the countryside away from my husband. The countryside was viewed as free from contaminating ideas about the position of women, compared to urban settings. These family members also claimed that 'educated women are not submissive to their husbands'. However, these issues did not deter me from continuing with education. On the day I graduated from university years later, many people from that community came to witness the event. They were puzzled because it was not the custom of women to return to learning after they got married. These experiences have continued to give me the impetus to explore the difficulties experienced by women, particularly the educational experience of African women, both in Africa and abroad.

My professional work and the relevance of this study

I am a minority ethnic outreach worker at a UK university. This involves meeting with students to find out their needs and feeding back to the university to help the institution to develop Widening Participation. I also network with other organizations to explore issues that affect prospective students applying to the university. This involves selecting educational projects within the local community, to help raise the profile of the university, particularly among marginalized groups of people. I also organize community events focused on informing parents about the benefits of their young adults going to university. However, one problem we have is that people who come to these activities have examples of individuals that they know very well, as brothers, sisters or neighbours, who they argue that even after having graduated from university, ended up in jobs that are inconsistent with having attained a degree. This example is one of many arguments put forward against university education, which also include getting into debt. Thus, the analysis in this thesis is envisaged to give some insights into other ways of persuading prospective students to enrol in university.

Because of the overwhelming problems some students reported to have been experiencing, I was puzzled that they remained in education, were achieving high academic grades and completing their courses. This gave me the impetus to study other aspects of students' lives rather than problems. Thus, an interest in extracurricular activities set for black or African or International students became the starting point for my research. This will be discussed further in the methodology. I wanted to find out how these contexts might have been supporting students while in

university. I envisage that this analysis will have particular implications for professionals working with a diversity of groups of university students. An important aspect is an exploration of gender relations in extracurricular activities as this is an important aspect in social situations.

At the beginning of research for the degree of Doctor in Education EdD, experiences of African women in British education became the central focus. The first part of this research was a small study for Method of Research (MoE2 - one of the taught modules for the degree) in which I analysed data from multiple interviews with African women students at a university in the UK. I wanted to understand the difficulties these women were experiencing as students at that time. The work of Maundeni (1997) which explored the problems experienced by African women in British education helped me to ground that research. The second stage of the course involved a longer study focused on African women at a college of further education – the Institution-Focused Study - IFS (Maina, 2007).

That study explored the experiences of minority ethnic students with special reference to African women. I wanted to understand why minority ethnic students were dropping out of the college at that time. I had expected the culture of the students to account for their dropping out, particularly the women. The analysis of the data drawn from interviews with both female and male students suggested that cultural issues still persisted among students who were studying abroad. However, these did not account for the students dropping out of the college. The main difficulties experienced by the students at the college did not appear to be related to cultural issues, but were connected to institutional, pedagogical, and personal

problems. Despite these problems, the analysis suggested that African students remained at the college and only a very small number of them did not complete their courses. Those who dropped out seemed to be influenced by other external factors beyond their own or their institution's control.

One of the recommendations that emerged from that study was the need to extend the research to other areas of student life, rather than continuing to only study their problems. The research on extracurricular activities for this thesis was born out of the recommendations which emerged from the IFS.

Aims of the study

The study for this thesis seeks to contribute to policy and practice by bringing other aspects of extracurricular groups to the centre of analysis. This extends academic development and employment and gender theories in extracurricular activities. It seeks to include an analysis of gender and the role of the body in the construction of student identities within these contexts. Researching other aspects of university student life is consistent with Preece (2006, p. 90-91) who stresses that:

There is a need to give attention to the marginalized areas of student's lives so that their interests are accounted for in university policy and practices. This is where the researcher becomes the tool through which issues that concern students can be brought to the surface ... in any given field.

The focus of this thesis is to centre my research on areas which have been marginalized within the understandings of extracurricular groups in much of the research literature. This means an analysis of other ways in which students use extracurricular groups. The study focuses on social learning, and the way identities are constituted within the contexts of extracurricular student groups. Thus learning, as understood within this thesis, is facilitated by social practices of students in the groups in relation to the production of students' identities. In order to elicit data from group practices, ethnographic participant observation and conversations are the main techniques chosen for the research. For the interpretation of ethnographic data, I will draw on a range of theories of learning, gender and the body. These include the social theory of learning (Lave and Wenger, 1991); Wenger, 1998), gender theories such as Brook (1999), Hook (2003) and (Connell (2011), among other analysts and Shilling's (2011) body theory. My understanding of learning draws on Wenger (1998) and Lave and Wenger's (1991) theory of 'Communities of Practice'. I will also explore the way gender might be understood as an important aspect of identity that is produced within extracurricular activities. This aspect of analysis draws on feminist theory and theories of the body. The following section explores the literature pertaining to extracurricular groups in higher education. As I mentioned earlier the purpose is to establish what is known and the theoretical perspectives which have so far emerged in this field.

Literature review

Current studies on university students focus on the difficulties experienced by students while in academic institutions. These studies claim that the problems relate to a lack of integration of students into their academic institutions and to personal and external issues (Tinto, 1975; Astin, 1975; 1999). The specific issues identified in works which centre on university students include language and integration, absence of familiar social networks and loneliness experienced from studying away from home (Maundeni, 1997). The studies also suggest that students may experience academic cultural shock or significant impacts related to family or political events, which might be thought to be external to their academic studies. Much of the research in this field suggests that such issues affect students' academic lives within educational institutions (Chotimongkol and Jones, 2008; Leonard et al, 2003; Maundeni, 1997). Research on extracurricular groups in higher education centres on exploring how such problems can be addressed within educational institutions. Researchers focusing on experiences of students suggest that addressing the problems is crucial and that student groups can help them to deal with these complex issues. So, for example, some studies assert that those who participate in student extracurricular groups achieve higher academic grades and that they are also more successful than non-participants in their entry into the world of work.

The search to establish what is known about extracurricular student groups revealed a paucity of empirical studies on the subject. In this section, I will refer to the relevant literature in chronological order of ideas, beginning with the earlier works and proceeding to the most recent.

Within this small body of literature there are two different strands: one explores external objectives of qualifications and employability. These works include Astin (1975; 1999) who analysed quantitative and qualitative data, and his own interview data centring on involvement, integration and the retention of students in higher education. Sedlacek's (1999) work undertaken at the University of California explored how student groups facilitate the development of both leadership skills and academic skills in American universities. Similarly, Gaskell et al (1994) examined extracurricular groups at a university in the UK and suggest that these create contexts in which students develop knowledge and acquire 'transferable skills'. Chotimongkol and Jones (2008) undertook a separate research specifically focusing on groups intended to support university students in Auckland, New Zealand. There are other works which begin to look at student identities. Stevenson and Cleggs' (2011), research on extracurricular student groups at a university in the UK centred on the development of student academic identity within educational institutions in relation to gender. They focused on how this relates to future employability. All these studies explored student groups in order to understand their role in involvement, integration, retention, development of leadership skills, and development of academic and future employability identities. All the studies described so far suggest that students' involvement in these groups contributes positively to their academic performance and successful exit into the labour market. I will discuss these studies in more detail in the following section.

Astin (1975; 1999) examined quantitative and qualitative data to compare the academic achievements of those students who participated in student groups or any other activity, for instance, working to earn a living in their academic institution,

compared to those who did not engage. From his analysis of the data, he argued that students who commute are more likely to drop out of college or university than those who live on campuses. The analysis also suggested that students who worked on their campuses and those who participated in student groups had achieved higher academic grades on average compared to those who did not participate (Astin, 1975, p. 522). Using the evidence drawn from his analysis, Astin (1975) urged educational institutions to find ways in which to encourage students to spend more time within their academic institutions. The limitation of Astin's (1975) study is that he approached it from a psychological perspective centring on motivation, involvement and retention, marginalising social aspects in student participation. His analysis is consistent with integrationist theory used in the works of Tinto (1975) and Peterson et al (1997). This psychological approach to data collection and analysis however is limited in that it focuses on such phenomena as the physical manifestations of mental states of being, rather than exploring specific social processes and how these might affect how people behave. Astin's (1975) analysis is consistent with Herbert's (1992) and Wilson's (1999) analyses of university students which made similar conclusions. Astin's (1975) analysis of student activities does not account for other practices of students within group contexts.

A similar study of extracurricular student groups was carried out at an institution of education in the UK by Gaskell et al (1994). Gaskell et al (1994) employed a survey and interviews to collect data from both previous and current students. The researchers explored the role played by extracurricular groups in student life within educational institutions. From the analysis of their data, the researchers claimed that students spend about a third of their time engaging in academic work. However, they

did not establish how the students used the rest of their time. Statistical analysis of documented data suggested that some of the students spent some of their time engaging in extracurricular activities. The analysis further suggested that the students who participated in these groups had achieved higher grades for their academic work, compared to those who did not. From this data, the researchers concluded that the students were acquiring skills within the groups which they then utilized in solving academic problems, thereby enhancing their learning. This conclusion is problematic in that it is difficult to tell whether the students who joined the groups were high performers, or it is the groups which strengthened the performances. Using the statistical data, the researchers argued that students who participate in groups academically outperform those who do not. From this understanding, Gaskell et al (1994) urged educational institutions to recognize the work done by student representatives in extracurricular group activities. The researchers then began to lobby for an independent module which focused on extracurricular activities to be introduced and evaluated as one of the modules studied in university. Such a module, they contended, would encourage more students to attend extracurricular groups when they saw the connection to their academic work. Gaskell et al's (1994) argument is similar to Astin's (1975), in that they both pressed for ways to support and encourage students to spend more time at their academic institutions. They suggest that students who participate in extracurricular activities acquire important skills within groups. These skills are utilised within students' academic contexts while those acquired in academic contexts are in turn used within the groups' extracurricular contexts, a process which enhances learning. Gaskell et al's (1994) analysis is consistent with Ackermann's (2005) analysis of interviews with undergraduates from Rowan University, USA. These analyses suggest that students

acquire important skills in extracurricular activities, remain in university to complete their courses and have successful exit into in employment.

However these studies do not explain what happens in groups, which facilitates the students' attainment of higher academic achievements. Astin's (1975) and Gaskell et al's (1994) studies differ from my study in that they look at groups in relation to student academic development and employability. They attribute the achievements to the students acquiring 'transferable skills' within the groups. There is a need to extend the focus on acquisition of skills, to include an exploration of other aspects of student groups which may be significant. My research focuses on the marginalized aspects of the activities and practices of students within groups.

Sedlacek (1999) analysed both quantitative and qualitative data from the literature drawn from a longitudinal study carried out over twenty years prior to his study. He investigated the experiences of undergraduate university students in USA focusing on their use of support services and students' sororities and fraternities within their academic institutions. The study suggested that students who had achieved higher academic grades were using their institutions' support services. A further analysis of the students' interview data suggested that there were other students who had remained in university and that they had achieved higher grades in their academic work, but had not participated in student groups in university. The analysis linked the students' achievements to belonging to a community within or outside their university. Sedlacek's (1999) analysis suggested that some students were likely to seek other contexts outside university for support. He then recommended that

universities organize a diversity of programmes, which would cater for different students, focusing on campuses in the US.

It seems to me that for such groups to be initiated there was a need to understand the types of groups the students sought for support outside their university campuses. Such knowledge would help academic institutions to understand needs and thus set relevant support services for students. Sedlacek (1999, p. 540) cited the absence of appropriate counselling services to account for black students' lack of access to such services. Sedlacek (1999) used an interview to explore the phenomenon in greater depth, compared to the survey. Nonetheless, the interview, as a method of research, did not allow him to understand other aspects of student group practices which were not related to academic work.

Sedlacek's (1999) research, similarly to other studies discussed so far, focuses on predetermined outcomes expected of students who participate in extracurricular activities. Researchers suggest that in a group context, students develop 'useful skills' and networks for support. These in turn play an important role in integrating students in academic institutions and that integration contributes to students adapting, identifying with and experiencing a better academic life, through supportive social networks created within student groups (see Cottrell (2007)). As a result, students remain in education to complete their degree programmes and achieve higher academic grades, and that participating students experience a successful exit into the labour market. Further analysis of other aspects of student practices within extracurricular student groups could enhance our understanding of other meanings of the groups for the participant students.

In contrast to the studies discussed so far, Chotimongkol and Jones (2008) used ethnography to study student participation in extracurricular groups. They studied Asian university students in Auckland, New Zealand (mainly Thai and Malay). The study employed participant observation of cultural groups/clubs which the investigators themselves were involved in setting up. They suggest that student group contexts are important in that they provide spaces in which students learn from others as they interact. These researchers argue that because the groups provide useful contacts for interaction, friendship and support, students also develop leadership skills, and that they should be supported. However, their study does not provide details of how students interact, develop friendships and support networks, and practice leadership.

Chotimongkol and Jones' (2008) study is in some ways similar to my study of student groups. They employed ethnographic techniques to collect data and investigated university students. One difference however is that their study took a relatively short time (five weeks) compared to mine which spanned one academic year. Chotimongkol and Jones' (2008) study is similar to other works I have discussed so far in that they all centre on extracurricular student group contexts in relation to student achievement of externally-defined objectives. They are all related to pre-determined notions about what is 'useful learning' as opposed to what is 'not useful'. These studies claim that students who participate in extracurricular groups achieve higher academic grades compared to those who do not, and that they also have successful entry into employment.

There is another strand of studies which is more critical of the notion of employability; for instance work by Yorke and Knight (2006, p.2), who define employability as:

a set of achievements – skills, understandings and personal attributes – that make graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, which benefits themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy.

Yorke and Knight (2006, p. 6) critique the notion of ‘embedding employability’ in higher education. They argue in particular that, as great emphasis is given to employability, good learning is often compromised, as well as ‘learning for aesthetics’. These analysts critique the tendency for a simple match between higher education skills and skills for employment. They argue that the development of knowledge and skills is long term, and not confined to a specified time, such as within a degree course. They suggest that there are various attributes and knowledge which might be recognized by employers and that these can be developed in various contexts outside the academic arena. They note, for instance, that mature adults returning to education will have developed knowledge, attitudes and acquired various skills at home, in employment and other contexts (Yorke and Knight, 2006, p. 4). They argue that in such cases it is difficult to draw a line between skills developed in academic contexts and those developed externally. Thus, Yorke and Knight (2006) critique a narrow conceptualization of employability as measurable skills. They argue that because curricula are diverse and recruitment of students is specific to social locations, determining their direct link to future employment is

problematic. Nonetheless, they support the contribution extracurricular activities make to learning (Yorke and Knight, 2006). However, they point out that there are difficulties linked to assessing employment skills, both within the core curriculum and in extracurricular activities. These authors also argue that there is a limitation of higher education in relation to how to 'reach directly into students' extracurricular activities (Yorke and Knight, 2006, p. 9). They suggest that universities can use co-curricular activities such as career development, to help students recognize the significance of these activities in relation to the knowledge and skills they develop within them, and to use them as evidence to support employment (ibid, p. 9).

The works I have discussed so far focus on student involvement, integration and retention in academic institutions, academic success, and employability. These studies suggest that such aspects can be fostered through extracurricular activities, and there is also a strand which critiques the notion of employability. There is an emerging strand of literature in this field which explores the development of identities within extracurricular activities as communities of practice as used by Lave and Wenger (1991). Community of practice here refers to learning facilitated by social practices of individuals in social contexts and the process of production of identities. This strand explores student groups within communities of practice and extends this literature to include an analysis of identity in relation to gender in Chachra et al (2009) and Clegg et al (2011).

Analysis of extracurricular activities as communities of practice

Research was conducted by Chachra et al (2009) with the extracurricular activities of an engineering student group. The analysts drew data from an in-depth interview involving 15 students to examine accounts of student experiences as they participated in extra-curricular activities related to their degree courses (Chachra et al, 2009, p.3). The primary focus was on whether students were members of student organisation, with a secondary focus on whether they were members of groups other than engineering-related organizations. The analysis suggested that there were both commonalities and significant differences in participation, and these differences related to gender. The analysis further suggests that both sexes participated in 'honour organisations' (ibid, p. 9), and that these enhanced student sense of self-esteem, and these were also connected to their potential future profession. As I will discuss in chapter two, this analysis contrasts with my study in that the students I researched were not engaged in extracurricular activities related to their degree courses. A key feature which emerged from Chachra et al's (2009) analysis is that the women who participated in the engineering club engaged more in the administrative work of the club, while the men focused on doing practical work. These analysts suggest that the women took on perceived gender roles within these clubs, rather than engaging in developing their practical engineering skills. This suggests that the women missed out on legitimate peripheral participation in the engineering student group's community of practice and developing skills for future employment participation in expert engineering communities of practice. This is an example of how women continue to be marginalized in many aspects in university,

particularly in engaging in legitimate peripheral learning, as an important part of preparation for future employment. Chachra et al's (2009) analysis exemplifies how gender differentiation can penetrate into other aspects of student life in academic institutions. Gender is a key issue that also emerges in recent Clegg et al's (2011) recent work, who analysed extracurricular activities within communities of practice. They use this theory to discuss students learning and developing their identities in these contexts.

This idea of how extracurricular activities might connect to academic development and also to future employment has been discussed by Clegg et al (2011, p. 42) who argue that:

Most work on students in higher education has concentrated on students' roles inside the classroom, their understandings of learning, and the social-cultural constraints and enablement as these affect different groups of students ... Very little work has looked at extracurricular activity from a perspective which is informed by a broader conceptualisation of the extracurricular as a site for gendered, raced, and classed practices which are intimately tied to the development of an employable self.

Clegg et al (2011, p. 62-63) introduce the framework of the communities of practice as a way of understanding extracurricular activities as they point out that:

We are extending this idea to students to indicate ways in which extracurricular activities can be used as a form of peripheral participation in preparation for workplace communities of practice.

Clegg et al's (2011) analysis suggests that there is a lack of an understanding of a connection between extracurricular activities and future employment. They also note

a similarity particularly in subjects such as sociology, history and politics which they categorise within 'introjection' where students do not seem to connect to a particular career or profession. These are contrasted with subjects categorised within 'projection', such education and health which have a direct link to employment. In the latter, Clegg et al (2011) argue that participating in related extracurricular activities means involvement in peripheral communities of practice, for instance as teachers, nurses and vocations and professions. This means a learning process of becoming experts as legitimate peripheral participants in developing identities to participate in specialist communities of practice in future employment. The other category that emerges from the work is referred to as 'generic subjects' and that these are directly connected to market or employment. These subjects include hospitality, music, design and technology, global ethics, and community volunteering. From student accounts, this work can allow the development of skills related to future employment such as working in international relations.

Clegg et al's (2011) analysis further suggests that there are differences in how different extracurricular activities that students engage in are valued, and that these link to gender, ethnicity and class. For instance, they found from interviews that the women participating in caring and paid employment did not value some of these activities. Yet, the women were developing knowledge and skills which were not only relevant to the development of student-learner identities, but also for future professional career identities. Their analysis also suggested that participation was affected by prior generation participation and that class influenced the type of activity and the time students gave to some activities. For instance, students from more affluent economic backgrounds often participated in volunteering activities,

while those from less affluent economic backgrounds typically participated in paid work.

Another issue suggested by this analysis is that there is a lack of a definition of what extracurricular activities are. As a result, some of the activities, for instance caring, some paid work which some students engaged in (particularly the women) were not recognized, and therefore the student participants in them were not being supported by the institution. Nonetheless, there were some students, such as women caring for children, who were supported by their individual tutors.

My study develops the approach taken by Clegg et al (2011) and examines extracurricular activities and the development of identities. The study centres on learning in relation to the production of identities, gender and the role of the body in these social contexts as communities of practice. The study employs participant observation aspects of an ethnographic approach to data collection, analysis and interpretation of empirical data. Therefore, the field of research is approached as a set of cultural practices. This draws attention to the aspects of the group activities which seem significant to students, but are not as fully examined in work which focuses on outcomes such as academic achievement and employability. In doing this, I hope to offer a new perspective on the meanings and uses of extracurricular groups for university students.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have stated that this thesis will investigate extracurricular student group activities set for university students. In order to situate my research, I have reviewed the literature in this field and identified three different strands of research. The first strand focuses on academic achievement and future employability, while the second critiques employability. The third strand extends these two aspects of extracurricular activities to include identity and other wider issues such as an analysis of gender within communities of practice. These works point out ways in which extracurricular groups can be beneficial to students in higher education institutions, and thus establish this as a significant field to research. The study for this thesis is an attempt to extend this field in order to enhance understandings of what students might need to support them in their studies, and how these needs may be fulfilled through participation in extracurricular student groups.

The first part of the literature explored studies which directly link academic achievement and employability to student participation in university groups. The general conclusion of these studies is that extracurricular groups are an important aspect of student life and learning. Researchers in this field have argued that these groups provide spaces in which students develop knowledge and acquire skills that enhance academic development. These contexts also allow students to form social networks for friendships, and meaningful relationships for support. The studies also suggest that academic development is indicated by higher grades achieved by university students who participate in extracurricular activities and that they also typically experience a successful exit into the labour market. These studies, however,

do not account for what happens in groups that facilitates the student's academic development. Motivation levels may account for higher academic achievement, and also for participation in extracurricular activities. The second strand of studies takes a more critical approach to the concept of employability while the third strand of studies explores identity and wider aspects including gender, class and ethnicity, and valuation of extracurricular activities. Therefore, there is justification for a study that focuses on the production of student identities and the role of the body within the context of activities associated with extracurricular student groups.

I have argued from the literature that many of the studies relating to extracurricular activities field focus on externally defined objectives. To develop the third strand of research, this study explores the production of student identities, including gender, in extracurricular groups and the role of the body, using the lens of the participant observer. For this purpose, participant observation and informal conversations are the main data collection techniques which will be utilised to collect data for this thesis. The method is important in that it allows researchers to immerse themselves in the social-cultural practices of the setting they are researching, to observe and experience it in order to develop an account of the way identities are formed through participants' engagement in these social practices. I will use gender theories (Brook, 1999; Hook, 2003; Connell, 2012) and other works; body theories drawing on Shilling's (2012) theory of corporal realism and communities of practice theory of learning expounded by Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger (1998). These works provide important insights into what and how individuals learn in social contexts, and how the process produces participant identities. These analysts suggest that

social practices seem to be significant to individuals, in contrast to what is externally perceived to be important.

The structure of the thesis

Chapter two explains the methodology and will focus on the whole research process from preparation to data collection, analysis, and the writing of ethnographies. I will discuss the research design in terms of the purpose and the research method in light of my experience of its use in the field. This second chapter will further discuss the strengths and limitations of the methods used, including the difficulties encountered while collecting information, taking notes and in the writing-up of the data. I will also discuss ethical issues encountered in the research and how such issues were addressed. Chapter three explores the existing theories of identity in the literature, focusing on three different kinds of identity. The first is linked to body identity, the second to gender identity and the third is connected to identities that are acquired or learnt in specific social spaces (communities of practice) and the question of agency. Chapters four and five will focus on the analyses and the interpretation of the practices of the Dance Group and Singing Group studied for this thesis, focusing on learning and the production of student identities, paying special attention to gender, and the role of the human body. Chapter six will summarise and present conclusions drawn from the study, based on the analysis and interpretation of the complete data. Finally, the sixth chapter will discuss the findings of the analysis of data using gender and body theories and concepts relating to communities of practice. This chapter will also identify professional implications to inform policy and possibly

practice, and any identified areas for further research, based on what emerges from the analysed data.

Chapter Two

Research design and questions

Introduction

The research design was to observe what took place in three extracurricular student groups over a period of one year. The design was influenced by analysts who have used a naturalistic participant observation method in the study of sites of social activity, including Preece (2006), Pattman (2005), Brook (1999), and Wenger (1998). I had envisaged that the observations would allow me to see the different kinds of learning that occurred in the groups, as opposed to the learning that might be expected or desirable, as was the focus of earlier studies. The main research questions addressed in the study are:

- What kind of learning takes place in extracurricular student groups for African and/or international students?
- How does this kind of learning influence participant identities in different ways within the group?
- What is the role of the body in the production of student identities within extracurricular activities?

I was a participant observer from October 2007 until July 2008 in a weekly Dance Group and a weekly Singing Group for undergraduates at a new university – post-1992. I focused on groups which had been set up specifically for African and

International students and were observed throughout the autumn, spring and summer terms. I took part in all the activities alongside the other participants, missing only two sessions for each group throughout the whole year. I wanted to understand the learning that took place within these groups and its benefits as a participant observer of the students in the groups. The main focus was to understand what and how the students learned in the groups and how that was producing their identities within these groups.

Sampling of groups

I had to carefully consider which kinds of extracurricular groups I wanted to include in my sample, because the university had many student groups. Currently, the university has over seventy student clubs and societies running. These offered a broad range of activities, for instance those related to nationality, sports, debate, writing, science, politics and many more. All the student groups were listed on the student union's website.

As discussed in chapter one, earlier studies of extracurricular student groups have focused on specific learning, for instance acquiring academic skills, leadership skills and skills for future employment which students acquire through participation in these contexts. These studies, for instance Sedlacek (1999), Gaskell (1994) and Astin (1975), have often included a wide range of groups and activities, or they have set up a group specifically for the purposes of the study (Chotimongkol and Jones, 2008). Neither of these approaches was suitable for my study. This study aimed to explore learning in extracurricular groups from a more naturalistic perspective, seeking to

understand all aspects of what students might learn as participants in these activities (see Lee, 2000). Thus, it was not important for me to focus on one particular kind of activity. It was also not appropriate for me to set up a group especially for the purposes of this study.

In chapter one, I have stated that my particular interest was to understand how African women, and also International students more generally, were dealing with institutional, pedagogical and external issues in their academic institution identified in my previous Institutional Focused Study (IFS). I wanted to see whether the groups helped them in any way with these or other issues. There were no specific African groups operating at the university. Thus, I focused on groups which I thought were at least partly aimed at black, African and International students. The names of such groups for instance, African Caribbean Society, Latino Dance Group and African Caribbean Dance Group suggested to me that these were likely to include the students I wanted to research (See appendices 1 and 2). Using the student union's website to search for the specific groups allowed me to narrow the sample to seven groups. This seemed reasonable to me in that they were likely to include black, International and African members, for my study and thus help answer my research questions. I visited these groups at the university in the process of selecting groups for the full study.

The presentation of the groups on the Students Union's website did not allow me to identify appropriate groups and to explore them as potential samples for my research. After attending all the seven groups, I chose three groups because the majority of the attendees were black students and had assumed these likely to

include African and International students. Other groups were excluded either because they did not include black students or hold regular activities. These criteria were used to select potential groups for study and to identify the final sample of groups to be observed.

In the end I selected the Dance Group, the Singing Group and the Film Group which I attended throughout the year to collect data for my study, but due to finding a sufficient volume of relevant data within the first two to answer the questions stated, the Film Group is not analysed for this thesis. The student union's website provided information about the program for group activities and stated that these were long-term, at least from the beginning of autumn 2007 to July 2008. It was crucial for me to study the groups over a prolonged period of time, at least one academic year; this allowed me to explore the activities and social practices of the groups and to write their descriptions in preparation for in-depth data analysis. I have represented the potential groups in tabular form in the following table (table 1).

Participants in the student groups

Group	Activities	Why chosen/Not chosen
The Dance Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning to dance. • Practicing various types of dance to enhance dance learning. • Preparing to perform in the groups and Student Union cultural festivals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The group was chosen because it had many Black students and envisaged recruiting African students. • The group's activities were continuous throughout the year of my research. • The group members met regularly, at least once a week.
Singing Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning to sing. • Performing in Student Union cultural events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The group had many Black students. • The students met regularly. • The group activities were continuous at least for that year of my research.
African Caribbean TV Talk (Triple T)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watching films and critically analysing scenes observed in discussion. • Articulating opinions about the actors' behaviour and how that affected relations, specifically between women and men who were in sexual relationships. • Relating the films' stories to participants' lives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This group was initially going to be included in the sample. • Excluded from analysis due to sufficient volume of data generated for analysis from the other two groups.
The Christian Worship Gig Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prayer, worship and fellowship. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not selected as only one Black student attended this group.
Christian Theology Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion groups. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not selected because the group did not have Black students and was scheduled to take place for only a few sessions.
Latin American Dancing Club	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dancing. • Learning new dance skills. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not chosen because this group had only one Black woman; I wanted at least three students who met selection criteria in a group.
Mature Student Society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussions on student experiences. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not chosen because the group's meetings were erratic. The group did establish and within a short time disintegrated.

The participant groups in this study were the Dance, Singing and Film Groups. However, the analysis of data in this thesis focuses on two: the Dance and Singing Groups. This is because when I began analysing the data, I realised that I had a sufficient volume of pertinent data from the other two groups in order to comprehensively address my research questions to write about from the other two groups. I intend to write up the observation data from the Film Group in the future.

The Dance Group

The Dance Group held ten dance sessions per semester in which the students learned different dance styles in autumn 2007, continuing during spring and summer 2008. Below, I outline the changing make-up of the group during the study period during which time I attended ten sessions each term.

During the first session in autumn the Dance Group was composed of nine women. At the second session of observation two men joined the Dance Group and the total number of participants was 11. The number of students within the group continued to increase. In spring, 15 students attended regularly; four of whom were men. It is important to note that there were days when this number was higher due to students visiting the group, but it stabilised at 15. In summer 2008, the number of regular attendees had increased to 22 students, six men and 16 women. More than half of the students appeared to be of African origin/heritage, of various ethnicities (see Appendix 1). During the group events, this number soared as, being attended by many students from the wider student community. The events included the Christmas party which did not take place in winter, but in autumn 2007 which was attended by over 70 people (See Appendix 2). At other cultural events, the group

exceeded 100 attendees. The events included inter-group competitions, events organised to welcome new students to the groups and cultural events organised by the student union. I was not certain about the ages of all the students, but the majority seemed to be below 25, while three were over thirty. I learned about the age of the three from listening to their conversations.

The Singing Group

The Singing Group had 14 students, ten women and four men in autumn, 18 in spring, where 11 were women and seven were men. In summer, the number went up to 40 and at this stage the number of women was equal to men - 20. Within the Singing Group, there were four men who said that they were Chinese/Japanese and were regular members and two women who said they were Russian. The rest of the regular members of the group were of African origin or heritage.

By the second half of summer, both the dance group and the singing group had become very large, particularly during intergroup competition events. These events included the Christmas party held in autumn semester, welcoming events and intergroup competitions. The events were advertised on the Union's website and also on university notice boards and this may explain why students attended the events in large numbers. The rapid expansion seemed to impact the interactions within the groups in different ways. For instance, those selected to perform in dance or singing on such occasions seemed to have prepared more so that they performed particularly well in order to win a competition. The students involved in performances also

appeared to dress for the occasion, taking special care over their appearance compared to regular group activities (see chapter four and five).

Methodology

This research sought to gather data in natural social sites of human activity and thus utilises qualitative techniques rather than quantitative methods. Qualitative research emphasises the use of complex historical, political, economic and cultural contexts as criteria for evaluation of enquiry, consistent with Denzine and Linkon (2005, p. 9). These researchers define the word qualitative as ‘qualities of entities and processes and meanings, which are not experimentally evaluated or measured in terms of quantity, intensity or frequency’ (ibid, p. 10). These analysts point out that ‘qualitative researchers emphasise the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and the researched, and the situational constraints that shape enquiry’ (ibid, p. 10; Merriane, 1998; Creswell, 1998; Maclure, 1993; Strauss and Corbin, 1990, p. 17).

In contrast, quantitative research ‘emphasises measurement and analysis of causal relationships of variables and not process. This relates to hypothesis testing and is based on ‘facts’ rather than interpretations. Proponents of such studies claim that quantitative work is done from a value-free framework’ (see Denzine and Linkon 2005, p. 10). However, the social world is not straightforward, as it is comprised of people who think and feel which means that their interpretation of their world must be studied (ibid, p. 13). Denzine and Linkon (2005) also argue that all research is interpretive and is guided by the researchers’ own perspectives about the world and

how it should be understood and studied. This is important in that some of these beliefs may be taken for granted, while others are subtle and these can be very problematic and controversial, especially if they are potentially oppressive to others (ibid, p. 14).

While quantitative approaches focus more on producing generalizable data, qualitative research looks at context-specific cases in depth within specific local situations and its purpose is to inform policy and perhaps practice (see for example Robson, 2011; Angrosino, 2007; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). Thus, the methods chosen for this study are informed by ethnographic studies which employ participant observation as the main tool for collecting their data in social practices. Ethnographic studies informed on my main role as a researcher - to participate in people's activities and to observe what happens in them in order to interpret social situations as observed, in contrast to what might be expected.

Observation

Observation is an aspect of ethnographic methods of data collection used in social settings in which researchers immerse themselves in the life of those they research, in order to interpret it. The term observation in this study refers to 'the act or instance of viewing or noting a fact, in a particular social site of activity, in order to build a picture of what individuals are doing, and saying over a prolonged period of time' (Wisker, 2001, p. 178; Robson, 2002). The type of observation carried out in this study draws on ethnographic approaches and involves collecting first-hand empirical data emerging from real life experience of the researcher in the lives of

those they research. Most prior studies of extracurricular groups (such as Sedlacek, 1999; Gaskell et al, 1994; Astin, 1975) have used questionnaires and interviews. These two methods ask students to give a report on their experience. The limitation of these methods is that the accounts provided may be very different from what actually occurs, or people may verbally articulate what they think researchers want to hear, consistent for instance with the works of Burke (2002), Wetherell (2001), and Chrichley (1999). Observation, in contrast, gives researchers an opportunity to directly observe and make their own interpretations of what happens.

As I have discussed, previous studies of extracurricular groups explored particular outcomes, such as leadership, or academic achievement (Chotimongkol and Jones, 2008; Sedlacek, 1999; Gaskell et al 1994; Astin, 1975). The interviews and questionnaires used in these studies focused on these issues and this might have influenced the responses of participants, excluding other possibly significant experiences. My interest was in other, perhaps less obvious, outcomes that might benefit students. Although I initially had a theory about what was happening in student groups, I still could not plan exactly what to look at in advance, as it was difficult to predict what was going to happen during periods of observation. Students being observed were not explicitly aware of observations being made. Thus, interviews and questionnaires were not chosen as these methods may have precluded impromptu insights. In contrast, participant observation allowed me to explore all possible aspects of student involvement in extracurricular groups and of the culture of the groups. My observation and analysis focused on two separate Dance and Singing Groups. I was not involved in the setting up of the student groups

on which the research focused. I found existing groups and others which were being formed. My observations included 'individual actions, specific events, occurrences, sequence of events, what actors were trying to accomplish (goals), the atmosphere, feelings', and other details consistent with those suggested by Robson (2002, p. 320). The recording of data also included descriptions of the administrative structure within the groups. Initially, the data collection focused on physical descriptions of the layout of the venues used by the dance and singing groups such as furniture and other resources.

Ethnography

According to Silverman (2007, p. 67), ethnography is a systematic study of people and cultures. The method provides a description of an interpretation of a culture or social structure of a social group. It involves immersion into a culture in order to study and analyse it in depth (ibid, p. 11-12). The tradition of ethnographic investigation is that people are studied over a prolonged period of time in their natural environment. One important aspect of ethnographic research is that it allows researchers to produce descriptive data which is not controlled by external concepts and ideas imposed on it (see Lee, 2000).

According to Jessor et al (1996, p. 20), true ethnographic methods seek to 'reveal preferences and constraints, including those that are taken for granted by members of a moral community, that may be implicit in their behaviour, difficult for them to notice, or socially undesirable for them to articulate or disclose under even the most ideal of communicative circumstances'. The definition of ethnography by Creswell

(2007, p. 68) is that it is a 'qualitative design in which the researcher describes and interprets the shared and learned patterns of values, behaviours, beliefs, and language of cultural/social practices sharing groups, as well as the final product of the research'.

According to Brewer (2000, p. 6), ethnography is:

the study of people in naturally occurring settings or fields by methods of data collection to capture their social meanings and ordinary activities, involving the researcher participating directly in the setting.

These definitions inform my study in slightly different ways that are relevant to my research. Qualitative researchers suggest that ethnographic data is very important particularly in the study of cultures where very little is known, and where misleading presumptions and prejudices about cultures of a group prevail (Silverman, 2007, p. 144). Ethnography employs participant observation techniques to gather data from research fields, and I used this aspect in this study of the student groups.

Method

According to Silverman (2007), the tradition of ethnographic method of investigation is that people are studied over a prolonged period of time in their natural environment. One important aspect of ethnographic research is that it allows researchers to produce descriptive data which is not controlled by external concepts and ideas imposed on it. The research seeks to describe data from within and to interpret what happens in social sites. This contrasts the narrow conception that objective observers can detach from what they observe, to allow objective analysis of their data. This means that there is a need for researchers to remain aware of their subjectivities, in order to minimise their influence in data collection and analysis. Qualitative researchers suggest that ethnographic data is very important, particularly in the study of cultures where very little is known, and where misleading presumptions and prejudices about cultures of a group prevail (Silverman, 2007, p. 144). Ethnography employs participant observation techniques to gather data from research fields, and I used this aspect in this study of extracurricular student groups.

Participant Observation

According to Robson (2011, p. 132), participant observation refers to ‘the act or instance of viewing or noting a fact, within a setting in which the researcher engages in what people do’. The technique is used to explore interactions, actions, behaviours and the way people interpret their world and act on it within specific social contexts, for instance, within the classroom. They explore the multiple realities of the people they research as they collect data. This technique specifically allows researchers to

experience social contexts as experienced by other participants (Robson, 2011, p. 314). This is how observations centre on participants, actions, specific group events, occurrences, and sequences of events. Analysts can then examine what individuals may be trying to accomplish, the atmosphere, feelings, practices and beliefs and any other relevant details, focusing on responses to social contexts. These data include what makes people laugh, the relationships they form, their likes and dislikes (Robson, 2002, p. 320). Investigators live in cultures in order to observe people in their regular engagements; they record and interpret the observations made in order to compare and contrast them with reference to relevant theories (Wisker, 2001).

The study of groups for this thesis did not require that I lived among the students. I regularly visited the group meetings and I was involved in their activities, learning to dance and learning to sing. Because the students resided in different campuses or outside the campuses, it was not possible to observe them collectively as a group outside their university.

I chose participant observation to study extracurricular activities in order to observe the students' 'real life settings' within the groups. I conducted observations for the period of one year and in the process established close relationships with the students as a participant in their groups. I attempted to capture what the students were doing as much as was possible. This included what the students got out of participation and how they went about it, which I recorded in a notebook. The observations I made included informal conversations between the students and non-verbal behaviour. This allowed me to examine what the students were actually doing in contrast to what they said they were doing, or were expected to do, as recommended by

Silverman (2007). The observations allowed me to collect data on social interactions within the group contexts as they occurred, and to record how these were affecting the students. This was an important process in developing an understanding of what students were doing as I observed them, as opposed to relying on retrospective accounts in order to reconstruct what had happened. I wanted to understand the student group practices as I experienced them and then interpret them as I observed them within the groups consistent with Robson (2002, p. 145). Thus, I remained an active participant observer, being a member of the student groups.

My experience of participant observation of the Dance Group

At the beginning of the first session of my observation of the Dance Group, I sat out and just observed when others were dancing in the 5th week of the group's sessions. This is not because I was taking the role of a researcher, it was because I wanted to see the kind of dancing that was going on and decide if I was going to be physically able to follow. My participation in the group changed and involved my own relationship to the dance activity. I have a knee problem, and I thought I may not be able to manage some of the dance moves. After a while, the instructor encouraged me to join in, which I did. In relation to the role of the researcher as participant observer, I do not think the fact that I initially held back made me different from other members of the group. In reality, several others also began by observing and, like me, only began to join in when encouraged by the instructor. For me at least, it was the warm encouragement she gave that instilled the confidence to begin to dance. I think this is a good example of how the method of participant observation

can help the researcher to understand the culture and feelings of a group, because I experienced the same encouragement as other group members.

After that first session with the Dance Group, I made an effort to participate in all activities. At times when I felt able to engage in particular dances, those that did not involve a lot of jumping about, I almost forgot that I was a researcher. It seems to me that in such moments, my experience was very similar to that of others in the group. At other times when I found the dances difficult, and struggled to keep up, I felt conscious of my age, as I was older than most (not all) of the group's other members. However, it is also true that there were other participants who sometimes struggled, or sat out during certain activities. This suggests that failure to dance well did not really mean that I was not like other participants. Perhaps, even at times when I felt more like a researcher, I was still experiencing the group in a similar way to some of the others, who like me, struggled.

At other times, when I was not taking part directly in dancing, I remained in my role as a participant, enjoying watching what was going on. For example, a small group of the women initiated a dance where they would protrude their bottoms in an extreme way and wiggle. They would do a similar move with their chests. I did not join in these dances, but I enjoyed watching. This is when I felt that my role was solely as a researcher and thus I did not have to engage in all the performances of the students. These are the practices I felt uncomfortable with, perhaps because they seemed to involve the students teasing others; particularly sexually teasing the members of the opposite sex within the groups. This does not mean that I was judgemental of the student practices. I felt constrained to engage in such practices

perhaps because of implicit African cultural values, which restrict what a woman should do, particularly in public. Additionally, because of my background as a teacher, I think that I may have been unconsciously looking at the members of the groups as my previous students and thus policed my own behaviour within the group. Furthermore, it is important to note that these practices were not part of those which were stated and there were other students who did not engage with them. Thus, I did not feel the pressure to participate in the practices during the rapid instances of informal dance during the dance and singing sessions. Several other students also watched these dances and there was a lot of hilarity in the group. This is an example of how one does not need to participate in all activities to be a participant observer.

One other pertinent feature to acknowledge is whether the fact that I was a researcher might have influenced the way the participants interacted with me. In the first session, only the facilitator was aware that I was there for research purposes. However, this did not stop her from encouraging me to join in, just as she did with others. In the second session of my observation in the Dance Group, the facilitator introduced me to the group and gave me the opportunity to tell students about my research. I started by introducing myself and then explained to the group about the study. Somehow, when I introduced myself, the group found what I said very funny and laughed, although I had not intended it to be humorous. This was typical of the way the group was always ready to find humour in what went on. Finally, it is worth noting that after this, when they knew I was a researcher, I did not notice any change in the way they interacted with me. At this stage, I had not developed a good idea of the group norms.

As a participant, I was at the same time making observations of the students' actions, conversations and other practices within the group and recording them in a notebook (see tables 2 and 3). From the informal conversations for instance, I learned that the participants were not enrolled in performing arts school and that the facilitators had not been trained to teach the group to dance, but that they had learned through dancing in other contexts. I had expected the group activities to be related to the students' study disciplines, but they were not. The conversations I recorded also included instances which seemed like reprimands, the process and structure of teaching dance to students. This is in addition to the support given, evaluation and feedback about the performances during dance sessions and the group events. I kept an open mind to allow more information about the group to emerge naturally as I continued to observe.

My experience of participant observation in the Singing Group

Similarly to the Dance Group, initially I sat down in the hall to observe what was going on and to assess how I was going to engage in the Singing Group. At that point, I was not sure how my participation would transpire, whether as a non-participant observer, or participant observer. Almost immediately, the facilitator introduced me to the Singing Group and asked me to explain to the students about my research, which I did. Then, she encouraged me to join the group and participate in the singing session.

From then on, I realised that I would be a participant observer in the group. The first session of the group was an introduction by the facilitator to the topics to be covered that day. She then tested everyone's voice and we were grouped according to the pitch of our voices. I was placed in the soprano group. Throughout the year, I took part in the different activities in slightly different ways. When the group was learning to sing a new song together, I took my turn singing solo. However, when the group was discussing or answering questions about the genre or structure or lyrics of the songs, I only listened. This was due to the fact that I did not know about these things rather than as a conscious decision not to participate due to my role as a researcher.

Despite the fact that I took part to some extent in many of these activities in the Singing Group, I was more aware of my role as a researcher, than I was in the Dance Group. I think this was because I would have liked to have spent more time practicing the new songs and reading about the theory. It seemed to me that the others were all spending more time perfecting their singing and their knowledge. Furthermore, the facilitator gave assignments most weeks for people to do at home. I never had the time to complete the assignments, but I had the impression that other participants were generally fairly diligent. Because of this, the extent of my participation was less in the Singing Group than in the Dance Group; I was missing out on practices and other activities outside weekly meetings. I also missed out on the experience of reading theory, and the practice at home, to have a sense of the student experiences in these activities, and in analysis of this extra data. Nonetheless, because the focus of my analysis was on activities which took place within the university, the absence of data collected from activities outside university did not affect the full analysis.

Leaving the setting

I participated in at least ten sessions in each of the groups in any given term. By the end of the research period, I felt very much part of the groups and was finding it difficult to break away. The students had also become familiar with me as a member of the group and looked forward to seeing me again in the 2008 – 2009 academic year. The facilitators continued to send me emails to remind me of the dates of the sessions and the activities of the groups. After the research, I also became nostalgic about the groups and the temptation to keep attending was great. I attended two sessions in that year because I felt the pressure to do so, but after this I overcame the nostalgia. At that time the scale of my research also dictated that it was the appropriate time to leave, in order to commence full analysis of the data. Because the groups had by then become very large, these two sessions felt different, particularly because some familiar students had left and new members had joined. These issues eventually helped me to detach from the groups.

Note taking and analysis in the Dance Group

During the first Dance Group session, I sat out to observe what was going on. I made notes of what was happening in the group on an A4 notebook and noted, in particular, specific incidents which occurred that day in my diary. In my experience, it was difficult to know what to jot down and what to leave out. This is inconsistent with Emerson et al (1995, p. 17) who suggest that ‘the field researcher ... decides

what to look at and what questions to ask ... and writes it down'. The observations included the actual activities which directly linked to learning to dance, interactions between the students and the dance instructor(s), the interactions between the students themselves and information about the structure of the group. I did not use a structured observation schedule, because I focused on what was happening within the group activities during each observation. This is consistent with Silverman (2007, p. 79), who states that ethnographic researchers 'work primarily with unstructured data which are not coded at the point of data collection in terms of a closed set of analytical categories'. Verbal articulations were minimal as only the dance instructor spoke a little during the introduction to the dance activities, and students during short breaks. Table 2 presents the activities and the interactions I recorded from the Dance Group.

Table 2: Examples of the activities and the interactions/practices of the group

Activity	Behaviour	Examples of trigger responses	Theme emerging
Learning to dance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Calypso Dance • African Rumba • Dance Hall • Belly Dance • Performing dance for competition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teasing and taking pictures • Eating and drinking • Pushing and wiggling bottoms • Pushing chests up • Laughing • Silence • Staring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choreography • Struggling to perform • Difficulties speaking and performing at the same time • Inability to dance • An instance of eating and dancing at the same time • Pushing chests • Pushing and wiggling bottoms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning • Entertainment • Meeting new people • Stage performance • Practice new skills • Physical fitness • Culture • Competition • Cultural events

During the group activities, it was difficult to record information while at the same time dancing. Stopping to scribble notes in the middle of an activity felt inappropriate, perhaps because of potential disruptions to a session and raising suspicions about why or what I was writing. Thus, to deal with this problem, I developed the habit of going out of the dance hall to the ‘loo’ in order to scribble my observations. I felt awkward initially trying to get my note book out of my bag, while at the same time seemingly going to the loo considering how many times I did so. I scribbled as much information as I could remember very quickly and tried to return to the group promptly, not wanting to miss out on anything. After noting the cumbersomeness of the notebook, I started using little note pads for the remaining period of the research.

Note taking and analysis in the Singing Group

The first sessions of the Singing Group were different in that they dealt with the introduction of all singing activities planned for autumn. The group's instructor focused more on the theory aspect of the sessions. Initially, the students sat down to listen and to answer questions asked by the facilitator. This gave me the opportunity to write my observations being as inconspicuous as I had been in the Dance Group. There were also other times when an individual or a small group was engaged in an activity while the others watched. This provided many opportunities to record my observations and there was no need in this group to go out to the loo in order to write. However, I was still conscious that no one else within the Singing Group was obviously writing. I tried to write quickly, using shorthand, trying to avoid raising suspicions about what and why I was writing. However, there were times when I was unable to make the notes during an observation of a particular case, for instance, when I was directly involved in an activity such as singing solo or in a group. Nonetheless, I found opportunities to write my observations and reflections in my notepads and diary respectively while the group sessions were in progress, when others were performing. My observations included all the activities which were directly linked to learning to sing. I also recorded observations on interactions between the facilitator and the students, and among students themselves (see table 3). I could have used video recording instead of a note book, but I thought it might influence students' behaviour as I wanted to gather data occurring naturally in the group environment.

Table 3: Some of the activities and practices of the Singing Group

Activity	Behaviour	Examples of what triggered some of the reactions	Theme emerging
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning to sing • Listening to a song sung by the tutor or played on CD • performing a song • Singing as individuals or in a group • Singing competition • Group event 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Screaming • Clapping • Ululation • Laughing • Dancing • Whispering • Teasing • Wearing makeup, Combing hair during singing sessions • Taking pictures • Nudging • Rolling eyes • Tapping shoulder • Pushing and wiggling bottoms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance which involved students of both sexes • Women and men teasing each other (as an individual or group) during singing sessions when an act was viewed as funny, such as dancing around a singing performer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practicing stage performance • Entertainment • Rehearsing for group events • Practicing skills learned • Meeting new people • Performing during competitions

The notes after observations

I typed the notes of the observations made from the dance and the Singing Groups which I had recorded in the notepads, later in the evenings after each day of data collection. Because these groups operated on different days, I had time to write their observations and fill in the gaps every evening, based on my reflection on a particular observation. During that time, I also started to produce typed transcripts of observations, written memos and reflection notes. At this stage, I particularly

experienced problems when I was trying to organise and write up the descriptions of the enormous volume of raw empirical data for analysis. When my write-up was finalised and the manuscript redrafted, I perceived that the research was then completed at that stage. However, after further exploration of the literature, particularly the work of Hammersley and Atkinson (2007), I realised that the purpose of research is not just for recording and organising all the materials into descriptions for presentation. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007), Creswell (1998), Denzine (1997) and Emerson et al (1995, p. 39) all advise that descriptions require an interpretation in order to be understood. I realised then that the theories of involvement, integration and retention and achievement which I had used in the analysis of data for the Institutional Focused Study (IFS) were not helpful in interpreting data from the groups for this thesis. Thus, I began to explore various theories, developed from studies which explore social contexts of regular engagements, and it took some time for me to make sense of them, and to relate them to my data, but finally began to see how they were relevant to my data.

The initial analysis

The analysis of the data I had gathered from the student groups took a longer time than I had envisaged. The initial analysis began with the selection of the final sample from the wider data set derived from study and observations. At this stage I used tabular form to present these samples and basic information on group activities, student behaviours and what triggered them. This is a technique recommended by Huberman and Miles (2008, p. 8) and Simpson and Tuson (2003). These analysts

point out that the technique can help ensure that the meanings of data remain original through avoiding extensive alteration by intensive coding. These authors also contend that the technique allows unique data to emerge so that it can be compared with others. The initial analysis of the data collected by early spring suggested that the students were not just engaged in the set activities related to learning to dance or to sing, but also participated in other activities which were not explicitly stated. Indeed, the latter type of activity appeared to be more important to students than the set, structured activities of the group. I began to note that students were learning other things apart from dance and singing. I then explored the learning which was taking place particularly focusing on how it was producing student identities within the group contexts.

Initially, I read all the information I had gathered, trying to make sense of what it was suggesting. It took a long time trying to separate the data relevant to what I was examining from the information I had gathered. The research had by then generated an overwhelming amount of data which presented difficulties in writing the analysis (see page 23).

Hammersley and Atkinson (2007, p. 192) note that:

Ethnographic writing can often be a frustrating business. One of the major problems is that the social world does not present itself as a series of separate analytic themes...We have to detangle the multiple strands of social life in order to make analytic sense of them, before we reintegrate them in the synthesis of an ethnographic account...accomplished through writing. But it is not easy to produce a linear text from the host of the data, impressions,

memories and ideas that inhabit ethnography. Starting and finishing and constructing a coherent account that does justice to the experiences of daily life, ordering themes and events, providing adequate details and evidence, these are all issues to be resolved when constructing an ethnography.

I find the above quotation relevant in that it explains the difficulties in ethnographic writing and analysis, and is similar to what I experienced in writing-up my naturalistic observations using some elements of ethnography – participant observation and conversations. After reading it, I realised that writing and analytic difficulties are experienced by many researchers and that my experience was not unique.

Searching for patterns

Searching for patterns refers to identifying practices which are repetitive. Huberman and Miles (2002) suggest that this can be done by comparing cases, for instance in threes and/or pairs within groups and intra-groups to identify patterns emerging. These researchers point out that this can allow conflicting evidence to be reconciled by probing the meanings more in depth, and trying to understand the differences (ibid.). The categories I was using were not set, but were those which emerged from the empirical data, a practice recommended by Simpson and Tuson (2003). These included acts of learning to dance and to sing within the explicit objective of the formal sessions, and instances of performances which seemed to produce gender identity – femininity and masculinities during the formal sessions. Another category

related to the performance of femininity and masculinity identities within the informal sessions of the Dance Group, and the use of instances of opportunities found within the Singing Group to perform masculinity and femininity identities. The other category related to the body which the student used to produce a sexually attractive identity through either feminine or masculine performances. These categories continued to be flexible as I continued to identify new and repetitive practices and interactions. This entailed looking at patterns of actions and responses in specific cases which were compared with the findings across cases. I analysed what I observed according to the content (activities and conversation) and context in relation to what was happening in the groups and recorded the events of what was occurring continuously. The themes identified continued to be modified as further insights emerged from subsequent observations of patterns of actions and interactions, predictable routines and the unpredictable surprises, or even crises, as Hammersley and Atkinson (2007, p. 200) note:

We trade in between the complex and sometimes difficult contrasts between the familiar and the strange, between the taken for granted and the explicitly theorised, between intentions and the unintended consequences of social action.

In this process, I found some relationships between categories through a search of the specific, constant categories identified from previous observations and new insights. This is similar to the initial stage of the process of sorting out the transcripts of observations, written memos, reflection notes and summaries of field notes noted by Denzine (1997). This process is not just concerned with the naming of the

categories and finding supporting data; the focus is on interpretation and generating a theory or theories with which to compare and contrast other existing theories in order to draw conclusions about what research suggests.

Ethics in this research

Potential harm

There are several ethical codes of conduct with which researchers are expected to comply while researching human subjects and their settings, one of which is provided by the British Educational Research Association (BERA). Because of previous incidents which were perceived to have the potential to harm research participants and institutions, ethical conduct guidelines with regard to the conduct of researchers were put in place for reference prior to embarking on data collection and the writing-up and dissemination of research (Homan 1991, p. 34).

In relation to this research, I felt the potential harm to participants was limited. However, there was potential to cause difficulties for relationships within the groups. This could occur if, for instance, information confided to me as the researcher by individual participants leaked to other students in the groups. If this happened, it might have caused divisions, quarrels and even fights within groups. This could be psychologically damaging to participants and may jeopardise the research process/setting. This potential problem was addressed by ensuring that the participants were protected during the research process and will be safeguarded

during dissemination. is the safeguarding is achieved by ensuring that the names of the students and also the name of the researched institution remained anonymous. In the current research, care was taken to keep what was shared strictly confidential. I was also aware that gossip had the potential to cause harm to students. During one observation, a member of the group confided some sensitive information about another student during one of the singing events. I did not discuss the issue with other students and thus avoided possible misunderstanding from information being reported back in a way which was not intended.

The necessity for consent: covert or open research

The guidelines for research stipulate that investigators must consider whether and how to gain the informed consent of research subjects prior to research. They state that participants should normally be informed about the nature of research, its purpose and how it will be used (see appendices 5 and 6). This entails allowing participants the freedom to choose whether or not to be involved. The guidelines also state that participants have the opportunity to withdraw from research should they choose to at any point, as stated by BERA.

Research can take overt or covert forms. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007), Wacquant (2004), and Brewer (2000) are among ethnographers suggesting that covert research can be beneficial to society, particularly when researching problem areas which are difficult to access. They contend that such research is justifiable especially if it relates to social problems connected to discrimination and oppression, for which it seeks to inform policy and practice, and for social change.

In contrast, Angrosino (2007), Hammersley and Atkinson (2007), Denscombe (2002) and Treweek and Linkogle (2000, p. 43, 53) critically oppose covert research. Covert investigation has generated serious debate in recent research developments over ethical dilemmas. The method has also increasingly been criticised by Cohen and Manion (2007, p. 347), Mauthner et al (2002, p. 17), Bryman (2001), Lee (2000), Brewer (2000), and Hammersley (1998) for violating important ethical principles connected to human rights and informed consent. Because covert research uses human beings to produce knowledge, if subjects do not understand that they are being studied, this could amount to deception. The application of covert research may also be perceived as an invasion of privacy (Lee, 2000, p. 58). Besides, the professional conduct of a researcher requires honesty by using research methods that exemplify good conduct in that they are expected to be models of good behaviour as professionals (Lee, 2000, p. 58-59). This is the stance of absolutists and raises important questions about how inaccessible social areas can be approached for research. My study did not seem to me to justify covert research.

However, the reality of accidentally stepping into covert research became an issue briefly in the early stages of my project, when I was attending many groups in order to select my sample. At this stage I had not told either the organisers or other group members why I was attending and I was treated as if I was a student participant. During this time, I attended all the groups for a session to explore them before seeking consent to research them. In the groups in particular, this felt ethically inappropriate and socially awkward. At this point, after four weeks of exploring different groups, I withdrew from those I did not intend to use for data collection and

analysis and sought consent to conduct research for the ones I wanted to include in my sample.

After examining the meanings of covert research in the pertinent literature, it became apparent that this phenomenon was minimal in my research. Nonetheless, to address this issue, the information collected during the familiarisation stage will not be used in the main analysis. Nonetheless, the method allowed me to select an appropriate sample for research. However, the observations I made at the time may have continued to unconsciously influence the way I made subsequent observations. For instance, I had observed other practices the students engaged in which initially seemed to me unrelated to the set group activities. When I formally began the research, I became increasingly interested in exploring these practices, but did not realise that these would form an important part of the analysis of this thesis.

The process of gaining informed consent in this study

After four weeks of familiarisation with the groups, I decided which ones I wanted to work with and sought permission to research them. I contacted the Student Union and the groups' leaders by email and in writing seeking to begin research (see Appendix 3). I also spoke to each of the group leaders in person. A letter seeking informed consent of the group to participate in the research was given to individual student group members. This is consistent with the advice given by Simpson and Tuson (2003, p. 60) on the importance of informing participants that they are being

researched, so as not to invade their 'personal space'. Informing participants is respectful of their human right to know they are being researched. During my introduction to the group to explain my research, some students asked what the research was about. I explained that I wanted to understand the experiences of the students in order to inform their academic institution of the changes which might be needed to make their life better.

I explained to the students that the study would necessitate their consent to allow me to make observations during the group meetings and activities, where they would be engaged. These observations also included discussions, and general conversations, which would be recorded and the students were free to review the transcripts if they so wished. I also explained that students' identities would be protected by the use of pseudonyms. I informed students that their written consent was required to confirm that their involvement was voluntary. I explained to them that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time if they wished to. One student said that she was happy to be involved in my study because it was for educational purposes, but stressed that she would have declined if the research had been for another purpose. The other students apparently agreed with her as they did not articulate any opposition explicitly or in subtlety. I assumed that the students understood my explanations because almost all of them signed the forms.

The student participants in the dance and singing groups numbered 65 in total; each was provided with a consent form. However, three were not signed and were left out on the tables. Because a large majority of students did not raise any concerns at that time about the research, it was difficult to separate those who did not want to

participate based on the forms which were not filled. It was difficult to identify or separate those who did not want to participate in the research. This is because they did not write and sign their name on the forms. The three participants may have declined their participation and thereby did not attend later sessions, but they may have attended, even though they did not want to be a part of the research. They could also have been visitors, as it took time for me to know and recognize the faces of student attendees. In the end, it was impossible for me to know for sure why these students did not fill in the forms, and to interpret the meanings of the signed consent forms.

Because of this, and the fact that they represented only a small minority of the whole study sample, I decided to proceed with the observations. I continued to hand over letters seeking informed consent of the participants to new members joining these groups, explaining about the research, except during the bigger events. This is because the attendance at these events exploded with the majority of the attendees being visitors. I also kept explaining to the students the meaning of the form to help them make informed choice as to whether or not they wanted to participate in the study (see Appendix 5).

Summary and conclusion of the methods chapter

In this study, I have employed participant observation, a naturalistic aspect of ethnography for exploring social sites in which people participate. Data collection was informed by ethnographers (such as Robson, 2011; Silverman, 2007; Miles and

Huberman, 2002) who have used participant observation in their research. They inform on the strengths and the limitations of the method from their experience. I have also discussed participant observation in light of my own experience of its use in the field, in relation to strengths and limitations in the whole research process: data collection, recording, analysis and writing. Nonetheless, the major strength of using participant observation is that it allowed me to participate in the student groups and to collect data as they naturally emerged from their activities. This allowed me to explore and interpret the practices of the groups as an observer of the student practices, from my own perspective.

The most important aspect of my learning through the research is that it is by an analysis of empirical data that we can understand people, what they do and the meanings they attach to their behaviour. I have also learned that people are not what they seem to be or are expected to be. They also do not always do what they say or are expected to do. What people are expected to do may be subtly influenced by other concerns and these may be what gives them the impetus to engage in what they do. By participating in a social world, we can learn what people do and what it means to them from the experience of observers of social worlds as interpreters of practices of those we research.

In chapters four and five, I will analyse empirical data drawn from the observations in depth. This is an important step in understanding group practices and how the process affects participants in them. First, however, in the following section, chapter three, I discuss the theories which will be used in the analysis of empirical data.

Chapter Three

Human Body, Gender and Identity

Introduction

This chapter explores theories of identity. It looks at three different kinds of identity: body identity, gender identity (masculinities and femininities) and identities that are acquired or learnt in specific social spaces (communities of practice) and the question of agency. In general, debates on the meaning of identity have encompassed arguments about which parts of person's identity are fixed and which are constructed or able to change. In the literature on bodies, the debate focuses on the extent to which the physical body is fixed and how much the physical body can be changed according to social context. In relation to gender, traditional debates discuss the distinction between 'sex' (fixed) and 'gender' (socially constructed). Some recent theories also look at other more universal or fixed aspects of gender. For example, Connell's (1995; 2000; 2012; 2013, p. 10) idea about hegemonic masculinity suggests that all gender identity is constructed around a dominant, powerful masculine ideal. There is a different way of thinking about more 'fixed' elements of identity rather than the body being fixed as male or female. It is the political masculine dominance that appears to be fixed (though this may also be changeable), yet this is not the most comfortable norm (Connell, 2013, p.11).

The Communities of Practice Theory looks at the ways particular social spaces or frameworks in which aspects of individuals identities will change, as they learn the

practices of that social space (community of practice). The theory of communities of practice does not look so much at the fixed parts of people's identities but at those that change. This is probably because the theory is focused on learning in social spaces and identity change, rather than the body and identity. The theories of gender identity are explored in order to select those that inform my analysis. This is followed by the question of agency while the final section explores the Theory of Community of Practice and identity.

The Body

This section explores the literature based on studies of the body and will give a brief overview of some different approaches developed so far. I will also explain why the theory of corporeal realism developed by Shilling (1993; 2012) is useful in my analysis. I became aware of the importance of understanding the body while exploring the literature on gender theory. I realised then, that the 'self' is intertwined with the body, and that the body plays a significant role in the production of individual and group identities, consistent with Shilling's (2012) theory of corporeal realism.

The significance of the body in identity production is consistent Howson (2013, p. 50) who argues that:

In daily life, it is by looking at the appearance of individuals we can 'discern' who they are. For instance, individuals' hairstyle, body shape and size, clothes, posture, stance, facial characteristics, expression and

muscular tone can tell a story about their sex, about whether one is male, or female.

However, as argued by Preece (2006, p. 15), our assumptions surrounding identity can be challenged. The question that is contested is which elements of the body and of gender identity are fixed, and which are fluid or open to change. This is, for me, the key difference between theories. Typically, theories of the body focus on one of the following key factors for understanding the body: biology, psychology or social context. Each of the three theories considers one of these aspects to be more important than the others. Shilling (2012) defines the theory of 'corporeal realism', which, in contrast, combines the physiological, the psychological and the social as important factors in constructing the body and its associated identity. Shilling (2012) also identifies four main approaches including biological, psychological, extreme social constructionism and corporeal realism. Biological analysis assumes that the body is a natural material phenomenon, and that its attributes are predetermined and therefore natural and fixed (Shilling, 2012, p. 45). Biological theory centering on the human body as a natural phenomenon ignores cognitive and social aspects of the body and has been blamed for social injustices that structure social roles to the advantage of men over women in society (Shilling, 2003, p. ix; Shilling, 2012, p. 45, 75, 106; Hooks, 2003; Brook, 1999). This means that particular 'images of femininity and masculinity are promoted and given higher status than others and this affects human bodily experience' (Shilling, 2003, p. 94; Swain, 2005). Thus, it is crucial to understand the processes through which the body becomes constructed into female and male, the roles attributed to it and their effects as experienced by people.

Psychological analysis looks at the functions of the body as a cognitive manifestation of the internal self, through human actions and articulations. Several authors have pointed out how these approaches ignore facts of embodiment such as ageing and pain, which the body has no control of and also that the body lives in a social world, which it shapes and is shaped by (Shilling, 2012; Evans et al, 2008; Brook, 1999). Sociological studies focusing on the body centre on constructed meanings in social contexts. They pay special attention to how these meanings can become oppressive to human persons (Shilling, 2003, p. 5). Extreme social constructionists such as Foucault (1979) and Butler, (1990; 2011) focus on social aspects of the body, but give less attention to the biological material phenomena and cognitive aspects. They reduce the body into discourse and in the process marginalises subjective experiences of embodiment identified, for instance in Shilling (2003; 2012) and Brook (1999) in body analysis.

The theory of corporeal realism

Shilling (2012) extends social theory to include the body and ‘corporeal realism’ from an analysis of ethnographies of the ageing and the dying. Shilling (2012) studied ageing and dying bodies, and Evans et al (2009) studied girls’ experiences of their bodies going through puberty. In both cases, they argue that there is an interaction between the biological material development of the body and social context. For example, Evans et al (2009) explored responses girls received due to acne on their faces. Acne is part of the biological process of puberty, but the responses are social because social constructions around acne are directed towards

those who experience it by those who do not. Social context also constructs identity and how people feel about and respond to their body issues. This can be achieved, for instance, by addressing feelings that could be associated with being or appearing different, and the question of agency in cultural reproduction. This echoes MacDonald (1990) who suggested that organised educational contexts can be sites of social-cultural reproduction. This is consistent with Shilling (2012, p. 107) who points out that the body (referring to person (s):

has the capacity to sense, experience and manage [other] bodies and that this is central to the exercise of human agency and constraints, and the maintenance of social systems in that life is experienced through the body. The body thus becomes the unifying factor in that through it, human beings can communicate with one another, experience common needs, desires, satisfactions and frustrations. The body is an important agent that can act on its environment and it is active in lived experiences in social reproduction.

An example given by Shilling's (2012) analysis is the eye. He points out that the eye works as a 'unit of interaction, to initiate contact and to initiate interaction' (Shilling, 2012, p. 86). This example illustrates how the body itself can be understood as an agent. In this way, the eye, like ageing or puberty, can be understood as kind of an agent.

Connell's (2012, p. 107) analysis of an interview illustrates how powerful the eye can be in this response from an interview.

CWR: Did you get into many fights?

R: Not really, most people would take one look at us and then move. No big drama. Anyone who got the guts to stand up ended up backing down away, anyway, most of the time.

As this example suggests, the eye is a part of the body that acts on the world. The difference between Shilling's (2012) theory of corporeal realism and other theories I have discussed so far is that, in his analysis, the human body is not just a physiological or psychological phenomenon. It is 'characterised by higher levels of organisation involving feelings, beliefs and reflexive consciousness that enable the embodied to exercise agency' (Shilling, 2012, p. 103). This means that these characteristics enable the body to be shaped and to shape society. Further, Shilling (2012, p. 107) argues that '... while social relations, actions and classifications do not create bodies, they contribute to their development'.

The Body, Agency and Subversion

Current feminist works on social constructions of bodies, focus specifically on how these become oppressive to women (Brook, 1999). At the same time, they explore agency and opportunities for subversion in public, including schools, work places and other social contexts. This makes it very complicated to identify the difference between helpful political acts and acts that repeat the oppression of women's bodies.

According to Jary and Jary (1991, p. 10), agency refers to the 'power of actors to operate independently of the determining factors of social structure'. Critics of the

notion of agency, for instance Giddens (1997), question the extent to which actors are politically and socially free to make choices to act in their world. He argues that social structures enable and constrain what individuals do (ibid). These ideas will be used in the analysis chapters (four and five) to explore the question of the agency of students investigated in this study.

Brook (1999) explored ethnographies of young women university students' control and management of their bodies. The purpose was to examine the extent to which women 'can choose practices of body management, in relation to sexual health and to suggest a feminist intervention that could protect the women from HIV/AIDS' (ibid, p. 66).

Brook's (1999, p. 66) analysis that is most relevant to my study is 'bodies as spectacle for gazes'. According to Brook (ibid, p. 6), all body practices are connected to 'what is desired by men both in private and in public' and performed for male gaze. This means that both female and male performances serve to advantage men so that women remain disadvantaged in a position of subordination and oppression. Brook (1999, p. 66) suggests that 'negotiating sexuality underlines that for most women, there is a clear, if not always totally articulated, nexus between their body size and appearance, heterosexual availability and their sense of the self'. Brook (1999, p. 67), for instance, suggests that the women she researched 'disassociated themselves with their body to construct that which was perceived beautiful by men' and constructed the feminine in relation to the 'man in the head'. Brook suggests that 'such construction allows for the creation of an image of sexual knowledge and availability, which seemed to be at odds with their actual experience,

and own desires' (ibid, p. 67). This phenomenon allows women to subject themselves to 'male gazes' and are then disciplined to become 'docile' bodies as heterosexual objects of desire (ibid, p. 68).

Brook (1999, p. 110) further contends that bodies constructed within social contexts are then 'policed and controlled through social codes and taboos' in an attempt to ensure that body practices remain consistent with heterosexuality. She suggests that 'moving bodies' work to establish gender and gender relations with student practices' (ibid, p. 120). Moving bodies can have different meanings depending on specific social contexts. Brook's moving female bodies refers to changes for instance in size and shape in pregnancy, physical exercise, body building and surgery (ibid, p. 23, 32, 45, 89). For my analysis, the meaning of moving body refers to continuous movement for instance in dance, circus and acrobatic performances in relation to how the body becomes socially constructed as described by Duncan (2007, p. 55-66). The actors in these contexts use feminine gestures to suggest that women are not 'passive objects of desire' (Brook, 1999, p. 127-28). These gestures represent real life experiences of women in their private lives which they act out in public. The question is the extent of women's awareness of the meaning of these performances in relation to how these might contribute to self-objectivism, which points again to the question of agency, but that there can be opportunities for subversion. Although performances that are subversive can contradict perceptions of femininity, there is a risk in that transgressive practices could reinforce the very identities which individuals attempt to subvert.

The potential for subverting oppressive bodily practices is also discussed by Bell Hooks. Hooks (2003) analysed African Americans construction and the experience of the body as portrayed in the media, art and fashion magazines. She notes in particular that black women's bodies were represented in stereotypically sexualised images. These were portrayed in 'sexual iconography of the black pornographic imagination, where protruding of 'butts' was seen as an indication of heightened sexuality' (ibid, p. 123). Hooks (2003) contends that contemporary music promotes those who 'protrude their butts with pride and glee', for instance in the dance 'doin' the butt'. She argues that such practices can be used to resist sexual objectivism by using them for subversion (ibid). However, Hooks points out that the practices can also work to sexually objectify women, and to revive previous misrepresentations of 'black female bodies as expendable, sexually liberated and available sexual objects' (Hooks, 2003, p. 124, 132). Hooks in the end suggests that this kind of repetition is risky. Similarly, Grogan (2008, p. 160) suggests that on the one hand images of black women in the media portray them as 'shameless, sensual and available'. On the other hand, black men's bodies are reduced to sexual stereotype, sensual and dangerous, and black models may be used to contrast purity (ibid, p. 160).

Howson (2013), Grogan (2008) and Brook (1999) all suggest that although objectifying practices can be oppressive, they can also play an important role in troubling notions of expected mainstream femininity practices. This can allow women to begin to assert their autonomy in subversion, even when this happens from a position of subordination to masculinity. It seems to me that there is a need to consider the meanings of objectifying practices in relation to diversity of cultures. For instance, I wore a pair of jeans at my parent's home in Kenya, which I perceived

to be modest. In England, where I was living at the time, the jeans would be quite normal. I was puzzled that my mother was troubled and seemed to perceive the jeans as objectifying, particularly in the presence of my father, and perhaps in the village. Although this is a very simple example, it suggests that what (according to Brook (1999) could give autonomy to women in one context can also lead to difficulties in another, and this links to a diversity of contrasting social-cultural norms.

Similarly, Howson (2013, p. 77) analysed ethnographic interview accounts of young ethnic black American inner-city high school women students who participated in dance cultures. She focused on how practices and meanings of dances produced and sustained social hierarchies related to dominant 'notions of embodiment, race, social, class, femininity, and dance' (ibid, p.77). The women engaged in the production of multiple femininities, through 'negotiation of a diversity of dance cultures represented in the clubs. They produced multiple white, black and shifting minority subjectivities', for instance in Salsa dance' (ibid). Howson (2013) suggests that this allowed the women to produce a black and diasporic identity in an attempt to construct alternative modes of self-governance. This analysis suggests that the dance types worked to reinforce femininity subjectivities, but that the versions were both subversive and conformist to the dominant discourses (Howson, 2013).

Howson (2013) further argues that educational dance spaces constructed discourses and power relations potentially creating docile bodies, using white middle-class values. However, what this achieved was regulation, marginalisation, and exclusion of lower-income and 'racial' young women. Yet, these women employed their specific culture and class backgrounds, which they used in an attempt to negotiate

prevailing institutional discourses so that they created complex and unique 'black' femininities (ibid, p.76). These subjectivities are consistent with the analyses Grogan (2008), Hooks (2003) and Brook (1999). Howson (2013, p. 77) argues that particular femininity practices work to resist and to conform to dominant discourses. This suggests that although we take the body for granted, 'the body is lived, experienced, but is done so in ways which are profoundly influenced by social processes and shaped by particular social contexts and that the sense of who we are is inseparable from our bodies (Howson, 2013, p. 12). Howson (ibid, p. 13) suggests that 'complex psychic and embodied processes are involved in creating subjectivities that are in practice, more fluid and multiple'. This to me explains corporeal realism, incorporating the biological, the cognitive and the social. However, subjectivities are not limited to women. This is suggested by display of eroticised 'idealised images of the male body and masculinity, particularly in advertising, media and popular culture to invite 'gaze', and that these foster 'themes of corporeal indulgence and sensuality' (Howson, 2013, p. 126-127). These ideas are relevant to the analysis of femininity and masculinity bodily display and gazes during dance and singing sessions in my study. An important question for my analysis while thinking about these issues is agency, to engage in subjectivities and objectifying practices, and subversion.

Having examined the works discussed earlier in relation to agency and subversion, there are apparent difficulties within the subject. Brook (1999) suggests some awareness and thus a deliberate choice for the women she researched to perform for heterosexual gaze. Nonetheless, she also notes that women act out what they perceive is expected of them in social contexts, and this works to support or subvert heterosexuality (ibid). She contends that although engaging in objectifying practices

can be oppressive to women, it can also play an important role in subversion. Subversion can take the form of ‘display of feminine bodies in ways that are not expected particularly in public places such as in schools and work places’ (Brook, 1999, p. 110-111). This means that the private can be used to trouble the constructions of femininity in public. Public here refers to masculine spaces, in which, women can enter as actors, dancers, athletes, body builders. These activities can allow women to draw attention to their identities as entertainers, rather than the way their femininities are constructed in relation to men (Brook, 1999, p. 112). Other masculine spaces include ‘work places such as courts, classrooms and lecture theatres, and that in these places women can act as if performing to an audience’ (ibid, p. 113). However, exactly what may be defined as transgressive practices for subversion, without sexually objectifying women at the same time and possibly subjecting them to danger, is problematic.

Paechter (2006) suggests that transgressive practices within lower levels of learning, for instance in the classroom, can be girls playing with boys’ toys and vice versa. The question in my mind is ‘how can women engage in transgressive practices in academic contexts and workplaces, without risking their academic development and careers?’ It seems to me that what is transgressive is specific to social contexts. Therefore, feminists’ focus may be to raise the awareness of agency and identify opportunities that are available for subversion

Genz and Brabon (2008, p. 139) stress that it is important that analysts take into consideration the contradictory functions of gendered power in social contexts, in relation to enablement and constraints and how individuals make sense of notions of

agency. Just like Brook (1999), Howson (2013), Grogan (2008) and Hook (2003) stress that it is important that feminist's agency explores how women can work against dominant masculinity interests. Although women still remain subject to hegemonic masculinity, they can work together to challenge gender relations by taking opportunities available for subversion.

The literature explored in this section suggests that the body plays a significant role in the production and construction of human identities and that the two are intertwined. I have argued that corporeal realism theory is helpful because it looks at the interaction between biological and social aspects of the body. It can also help us to understand the ways in which the body plays a part in oppressive gender practices and perhaps also in subversion. I will use the theory to analyse ageing and pain, the use of eyes, laughter, gestures and moving bodies during dance and singing activities, signaling tabooed sexuality and the question of agency. The following section explores the literature based on studies of masculinities and femininities, to help understand these phenomena in student groups.

Masculinities and femininities

The previous exploration of the literature on the human body suggested that the body plays a significant role in the production and construction of human identities. Human identities are various, but they are always linked to gender in that by looking at a person, we discern whether they are female or male. Different practices are associated with men and women and are expected particularly in social contexts.

These practices are referred to by many authors as masculinities and femininities and these are used by individuals and groups to produce their identities (Connell, 1995; 2012; Preece, 2006; Paechter, 2006; Halberstram, 1998).

According to Halberstram (1998, p.1), 'masculinity is the social-cultural and political expression of maleness', which connotes power legitimacy and privilege. This means that she considers aspects of maleness as fixed biological functions and also characteristics that are socially constructed. Preece (2006), Paechter (2006), Swain (2005), Kimmel et al (2005) and Connell (2005) suggest that ways of being masculine are multiple, and that these can shift in relation to social contexts. Recent works on boys' and men's masculinities, still support this idea and that diversity can exist within one context (see Connell, 2013, p. 10).

Analyses of masculinities from around the world, for instance Kimmel et al (2005), suggest that constructions start in childhood, and are shaped in the family, by peers, the school and society. Yet, 'the physical maleness and femaleness becomes central to cultural construction of gender, while normal masculinity is what a man is expected to be and do and this exists only in contrast to femininity' (ibid, p. 70). The understanding of and solution to masculinities is constrained by their provisional nature and their specificity to social-cultural contexts (Connell, 2005, p. 151). Social institutions maintain and regulate traditional or 'normal masculinity', through interactions.

In her most recent work, Connell (2012, p. 5) points out that, 'one is not born, but one becomes, or rather is in a state of becoming' referring to the socially constructed

body, rather than the real, fixed material biological phenomenon. This means that an individual can take on different identities in certain situations, but that these can be shifted or radically transformed to fit into another context. My focus for this study is not on the radical transformation of identities such as gender change from the assigned to the preferred/core identity. It is the construction, performing and shifting of masculinity and femininity identities in social contexts. It is the performances of repeated acts which, Butler (2011) argues, produce gender. The repetition means that these characteristics appear as if they are possessed by individuals and are then accepted as normal/natural when they are just social constructions, based on an interpretation of some aspects of a physiological body.

Connell (1995; 2011) produced extensive works on masculinities and defines masculinity as 'what boys and men do' which means that femininity could then be defined as 'what girls and women do' (Connell 2011, p. 68). She analysed historical masculinities in the literature and also his own work in Australia and other Western countries. These works suggest that masculinity exists only in contrast to femininity (Connell, 2011, p. 68). She further suggests that masculinities are constructed in relation to 'race', location, culture, time period, age and ability - for meaning and for resistance. Social, political and economic situations play a significant role in such construction (Connell 1995, p. 77; 2005, p. 191; 2011, p. 185). Connell suggests that multiple masculinities encompassing hite, working class/black, and middle-class are constructed in Western countries and that it is important to consider how these relate to 'race' and gender (Connell 1995, p. 76; 2005, p. 35-7). She contends that hegemonic masculinity is not universally fixed so as to exist 'anywhere and everywhere at the same time' (ibid, p. 76). It is masculinity which 'occupies

hegemonic position in a given pattern of gender relations, a position always contestable' (ibid, p. 76).

Connell (1995, p. 71) argues that:

‘Masculinity’, to the extent that the term can be briefly defined at all, is simultaneously a place in gender relations, the practices through which men and women engage that place in gender, and the effects of these practices in bodily experiences, personality and culture.

Connell (2011, p. 77) looked at the practices and relations that construct ‘the main patterns of masculinity in the Western gender order’. She suggests that hegemonic masculinity is ‘cultural dynamics which claim and maintain a leading powerful position in social life and gains legitimacy and dominance over women at a particular time period’ (ibid, p. 77). A relational approach means that ‘hard compulsions under which these are configurations, the bitterness as well as the pleasures of gendered experiences’ are explored (ibid, p. 77).

Connell (2011, p. 109) analysed ethnographies from other researchers and her own work, based on accounts of experiences of adult men, from childhood to adulthood from a diversity of social classes in Australia. She explored the meaning of masculinity and sexuality in the wake of the HIV/AIDs epidemic. She explored insights on strategies that could be used for intervention in relation to sexual health of gay men based on her previous work (Connell, 2005, p. 154). This study also sought to address the fear of other forms of sexuality which seem to contrast with

compulsory heterosexuality, as discussed by Connell (1995 p. 230) and Butler (1993). From her study, Connell (1995, p. 76) identifies four different but related types of masculinities. Hegemonic masculinity is defined as the 'legitimate' patriarchal position of men and subordination, domination and oppression of women and is closely linked to marriage. The ideal of hegemonic masculinity is control of women, competition among men, aggressive display and predatory sexuality (ibid, p. 77). The second one is complicit masculinity which Connell argues enjoys some benefits of hegemonic masculinity, but at the same time is sympathetic to women (ibid, p. 31). Men who ascribe to this type for instance, help their wives at home with domestic responsibilities and are not violent to women. The third type of masculinity is marginalised masculinity which is constructed in relation to ethnicity, for instance, black men in relation to white men.

According to Connell (1995, p. 64), marginalised masculinity can be used by a dominant group to oppress an ethnic group. The fourth type is subordinate masculinity and this refers to cultural authority given to heterosexual men and subordination of homosexual men. These last three masculinities emerge from empirical studies' findings and these contrast what is expected of all men, based on hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1995, p. 69). Analysts explore how such identities are experienced in social contexts and their effects on individuals and groups. Subordinate masculinity is associated with femininity and has been the subject of aggressive criticisms socially and in the political arena. Connell (2011) points out that masculinities and men are not the same, in relation to positions of men and the practices through which they engage in a gender order. In this case, Connell (1995, p. 76) treats 'men' as a fixed biological material phenomenon in order to

differentiate the term from the conceptual, socially constructed masculinity identities.

Similarly to Foucault (1974), Butler (1990) can be said to be an extreme post-structural social constructionist in that she sees gender as construction of discourse. She argues that ‘the body is repeatedly imagined as existing prior to the discursive field within which it is produced and that the ‘truth of sex is that it is produced through regulatory practices that produces the norms of gender’ (Butler, 1990, p.8; Brandy and Schirato, 2011, p. 32). This does not mean that Butler denies that there exists a natural physical body, as a biological phenomenon. She points out that, ‘I do not suggest that it is purely cultural signs which produce the material body, but only that the body does not become sexually readable without those signs, and those signs are irreducibly cultural and material at the same time’ (Butler, 2004, p. 87).

Humans have an innate sexuality as biological organisms and bodies are sexually readable without any culturally ‘readable signs’. Butler (2004) also argues that anyone could exhibit any gender, and still maintain the integrity of his/her sexed embodiment (also see Brandy and Schirato, 2011, p. 34). Although this notion can help our understanding of how social process constructs gender, Butler (2004) seems to pay little attention to the reality of embodiment. By focusing on the social, the reality of how the physical body contributes to identity, both fixed and socially constructed, is marginalised. This aspect of the human body has been given great attention by Shilling (1993; 2012) and Connell (1995; 2011). Butler (1990) ignores a key point that human beings are animals and do have instincts (to eat, drink, seek shelter, sleep and have sex), aspects which are broadly transferrable across cultures.

In contrast to Butler (1990, p. 8), Connell (1995; 2009, p. 57) recognises that there is a real biological body, through which the human person is produced as male or female. This refers to a gendered dichotomy between man and woman which is based on this natural fact of the natural biological body. For instance, even a radical transformation through surgical procedure, from man to a woman, the new woman will not become pregnant. It is possible that a woman, who goes through a surgical procedure in order to change her gender to man, although physically appearing to be a man, can still be pregnant. This is the reality of the body as a biological phenomenon which Connell (2005, p. 61) recognises in his work on masculinities, and the more recent one on gender (Connell, 2009). Connell's (2005, p. 61) analysis finds that although the social exploitation of the biological is a reality, bodies are active agents in the construction of gender because they have a material reality that binds and empowers them'. This analysis also notes for instance how bodies such as males' can be subjected to abuse to reach somatic limitations through bodily exercise, excessive risk taking, and violence to reach crises level (Connell, 2005, p. 54). In a recent work, Connell (2009, p. 67) argues that 'Bodies have agency and bodies are socially constructed. Biological and social analysis cannot be cut from each other, but neither can be reduced to the other'. This is consistent with Shilling (2012) who focuses on the body as real, with its capabilities and agency, in his theory of 'corporeal realism'. In this case, the body is not a product of social construction, but a reality of the biological human body, and its agency. These ideas contrast Butler's notion that gender is a product of human imagination (Butler, 2004 p. 87; Butler, 2011 p. 34) (see also Brandy and Schirato's (2011) critique of Butler's (1990; 2011) notion of the body as a product of discourse).

Masculinities construction in educational institutions

In this section, I will explore the literature on masculinities based on studies carried out in schools, further education colleges and higher academic institutions. Swain (2005) analysed ethnographies of culture and interactions in schools and provides important insights on masculinity. His analysis of boys' accounts suggests that multiple fluid masculinities can be constructed in one social context. Individuals use available resources to construct a diversity of identities some of which can be oppressive. Educational contexts offer important spaces for development of peer groups, where masculinities can be learned. Thus, it is important to explore aspects of masculinity constructions that might be oppressive to others (Swain, 2005, p. 217). This is broadly consistent with Butler (2011) who points out that when particular practices are repeated, they can begin to be taken as an essence and thus expected, even when they may be oppressive. This suggests that individuals find it difficult to free themselves from such practices in that they become a way of life. Nonetheless, it is important to consider that collective identity does not imply an individual's identity or essences. Rather, it suggests that individuals under pressure conform in order to 'escape dangers of detaching', but on their own, 'individuals can be sensible and amenable' (Swain, 2005, p. 217). Thus, an analysis of interactions to explore dominance, subordination and alliance in educational institutions is crucial in that it can illuminate potentially oppressive practices and ways of addressing these issues (Swain, 2005, p. 37; Connell, 2005).

Another key insight from Swain's (2005, p. 218-220) analysis is that masculinity constructions are the means through which individuals gain acceptable and popular status. Swain (2005, p. 220) suggests that other masculinities remain marginal, are liminal or neutral. In schools, masculinities which conform to authority and are polite may be from higher social status backgrounds (Swain, 2005, p. 220). Both Swain's (2005) and Connell's (2005) analyses find that masculinities are always constructed in relation to femininity.

In an earlier piece of research, Frosh et al (2002) conducted group and individual interviews with young masculinities in secondary schools in London and produced key insights to my analysis. The study suggests that ethnicity plays a key role in the construction of masculinities and social positioning in social contexts in which hegemonic masculinities relate to physical toughness and sport skill (ibid, p. 100). Frosh et al's (2002) work identifies forms of masculinities where the language used to talk about them can be subtle. Nonetheless, these masculinities are consistent with those identified by Swain (2005) and Connell (1995) in that they are constructed in relation to femininity. In Frosh et al (2002, p. 87) masculinities are socially constructed through talk, where for instance the 'term gay' is used for 'cussing'. This contrasts Connell's (1995) analysis which finds that some aspects of gay masculinities are socially produced during intimate physical interactions, between a man and a woman through bodily experience. These findings contrast scientific analysis, which suggest a genetic connection with sexuality (Connell, 2009, p.82). Educational analysis is concerned about how masculinities can become dominant and oppressive and explore ways of addressing this issue. Frosh et al (2002) suggest that even among young masculinities, there exist some opportunities for subversion.

An analysis of the data suggests that some masculinity practices, for instance that lead to racial insults and bullying can be oppressive in educational institutions (ibid, p. 25).

This section has explored construction of masculinities in schools. The key insight drawn from the literature is that masculinity constructions are not limited to adult men. They also take place among boys and young men and are constructed in relation to gaining popular status specific to social spaces. Masculinities can be extremely powerful in domination and oppression as individuals may not be able to detach from them and that they are always constructed in relation to the domination of femininity. I will now examine the literature that explores gender in academic institutions or which involve university students outside these institutions.

Pattman (2005) conducted empirical research on university students in Southern Africa. His analysis of individual and group interviews suggests that masculinities and their competitive nature are constructed in relation to femininity. Pattman (2005) identified two main masculinities through which the majority of the students in that university identified. He referred to these as traditional and modern masculinities which related to differential economic statuses of students' backgrounds. There were also cases of identities which were at the margin, liminal and even neutral (ibid). From the analysis, Pattman (2005) argues that masculinities work to dominate and oppress femininity. For instance, the men he investigated engaged in practices that produced their masculinities in relation to ethnicity, nationality, social status and these were produced in relation to their contribution to gaining 'the access of women' irrespective of social status of women within or outside that university.

Pattman's (2005) analysis is relevant to my study in that he explored students in informal contexts similar to the context in which I undertook my research. Although the activities of students differed, the operation of masculinities in relation to dominance and access to women seem similar to my study. In the following section, I will examine the literature on femininity constructions, focusing specifically on academic contexts.

Femininities

According to Paechter (2006a, p. 20) 'femininities in schooling' refers to ways of 'constructing and enacting collective femininity and their individual femininities.' Femininities are practices through which individuals produce themselves as women in specific social locations. Several authors have written extensively about femininities based on their empirical studies. As Connell (1995) has argued, because social power is concentrated in the hands of men, women do not have the space to construct institutionalised power over other women, or men. Similarly, Paechter (2006a, p. 7) argues that we cannot really talk of 'hegemonic femininity' at all in that these are constructed to the interest and advantage of men over women.

However, it is possible to construct some sort of 'hegemonic femininities' in particular kinds of situations. Hanlon's (2012) analysis of men working with children suggests that women in charge take on dominance similar to hegemonic masculinity and police male workers to ensure the job is done correctly. Men are generally perceived as incapable of looking after children when placed 'within

gender order, including its discourses, institutional practices, political, sexual and effective dynamics of daily life' (ibid, p. 8). Consequently, this affects how men work in such contexts in that they take up positions of stereotypes and subsequently act them out at work. This is not because they are incapable, but because that is what is expected of them. This is an example of how women can be involved in furtherance of their own oppression. This explains how women can contribute to the shaping of men's identities and subsequent roles in social contexts. However, women's identities and belief about them is constructed and shaped by society. This is because men's identities are shaped by interpretation of patriarchal traditions of male dominance which is enacted in social situations that privilege men over women (Brook, 1999).

Connell (2012) identifies three forms of femininities including emphasised femininity which refers to complacency with patriarchy, so as to accommodate the interests and desires of men. This type resists other forms of femininity in that it centres on marriage. This femininity is consistent with what Paechter (2006a, p. 6) refers to as 'hyperfemininity', pointing out that many women cannot live up to it and is likened to 'drag'. This concept is used by Brook (1999, P.114); Butler (1993, p. 126) referring to a 'range of signifiers such as mascaraed eyelashes, prominent breasts and movements by transvestites. These practices have no point of origin in any female body' and femininists argue that these are oppressive to women, but are expected in specific social situations, a concept similar to Pini's (2001, p. 121) 'hypersexed femininity'. Feminist analysts argue that 'drag is offensive because it is an imitation based on misogynistic ridicule and degradation of women' (see Butler, 1993 p. 126; Hooks, 2003). As will be discussed later in the analysis chapters, Pini's

(2001) research context posed different potential risks to women compared to the student groups I researched. Emphasised femininity is the type given ideological support in society and is compliant with men's desire for instance in childcare, marriage and domesticity. Emphasised femininity is performed for and supervised by men. The second form is resistant femininity meaning that it does not conform to the emphasised type. Finally, then, is the combination of emphasised femininity and compliant femininity to produce cooperative femininity, and this is the interplay of the femininities and plays an important role in gender shift (Connell, 2011). This is where women can together explore what may be oppressive and explore opportunities for subversion, as they learn from different femininities.

It is important to note that it is difficult for women to distance themselves from hegemonic masculinity. This is consistent with Paechter (2006, p. 8) who argues that 'distancing oneself from hegemonic or hypermasculinity is about giving up power, symbolically, if not in practice', which women may not want to do, or are incapable of letting go. Similarly, men might not give up power for fear of losing benefits received particularly through domination and oppression of women. Paechter (2006a, p. 8) argues that, 'such positioning especially when set against wider power relations, may confer considerable advantage, in interpersonal relations with women'. Connell's (1995) analysis of men suggests that even an attempt to renounce such power may work to achieve the same that is being rejected.

Conclusion

The exploration of the literature has suggested that the human body plays an important role in the production of identities. This refers to the fixed biological body identity in terms of its agency and also its role in the construction of social identity, and gender identity. Gender identity refers to masculinities and femininities, practices which men and women use to produce their identities in social contexts. These aspects are not indications of essences of men and women, but are influenced by social contexts and shift with locations and take place in interaction. Masculinities and femininities are influenced by ethnicity/nationality, social class, time period, disability and sexuality and that they can be multiple in one context. The key point from the literature is that these phenomena are influenced by subtle dominant patriarchal notions, which work to dominate individuals and to oppress women. Because individuals are not always aware of being dominant or through their subjectivity to oppression through bodily, or gendered practices, they continue to act out their identities and in this way attract domination and oppression in social contexts. These practices can then be passed on to future generations. Feminist research seeks to explore agency and opportunities of subversion of oppressive practices in social contexts. The ideas drawn from this section will be used in the analysis of relevant cases in student groups used for my study.

Chapter Four

The analysis of the Dance Group

Introduction

This chapter analyses the practices of the student participants in the Dance Group. This takes place within the explicit objective in the formal taught sessions – learning to dance. This will be followed by an analysis of the implicit objective, within the informal section of the group, defined in chapter one.

The Dance Group set out to achieve an explicit objective - learning to dance; this had stated criteria for evaluation of competence. The following section presents the typical introduction to a dance session, the process of learning and the production and reification of student identities within the context of the Dance Group. The facilitator always introduced a session and informed the group when she was going to use a tutor where she needed some expertise in a specific choreographic style (Field notes: 6th observation, African Caribbean Folk Fusion, 2007).

However, there is also evidence to suggest that the students had other objectives, not explicitly stated. The analysis of other practices of the students which took place during the structured dance sessions suggests that these were important, and may have contributed to their regular attendance at the group's sessions. Some of the vignettes presented in this section draw attention to how participants used the group

for social identity work and the development of both social and gendered identities, as well as simply learning to dance, which was the more explicit objective of the group.

Throughout the Dance Group, it was notable that sessions were disrupted by three women who appeared to be an established sub-group comprised of Alice, Etho and Mboka. Etho and Mboka were also assisting the main facilitator, Alde, to teach some specific dances. While Etho assisted the facilitator to teach Hip-hop, Mboka assisted to teach African Rumba.

The construction of identities in relation to competence in dancing

This section discusses the Dance Group in relation to the structure of learning, using data vignettes.

Reification in this chapter refers to the production, and meaning making, of the student identities within the Dance Group. The Dance Group is a complex site, which gave students the context in which to perform various aspects of their identities. The facilitator occupies the highest position, followed by the assistants and finally the student participants in the Dance Group. These positions relate to the structural composition of the Dance Group administratively rather than dance 'competence'. The vignette below illustrates the process of the construction of competent/incompetent identities within the group during one of the dance sessions.

Vignette: An instance to illustrate the structure of explicit learning led by the group facilitator

Alde the facilitator begins new choreography with instructions followed by demonstrations on a dance. The first dance is Calypso and she asks the group to imitate her, while they also listen to some music played on the stereo placed on a table. The facilitator notices that a small group of students are struggling to perform the choreography. She stops teaching and moves to assist them. First, she demonstrates the movements again and asks the students to dance with her, while the rest watch and then she introduces Belly Dance to the whole group. She then asks the group to repeat performing the different choreography learned during the session while she watches before she concludes the session. Some students perform the choreography taught throughout the session, but some miss a few steps. At the end of the session, Alde asks the group to repeat the Calypso and Belly Dances in pairs, and individuals take turns while she watches. She then asks the group to continue practicing the dance at home. Alde also informs the students that they would be tested on the mastery of the skill as individuals in the following week, before learning a new dance (Field notes: 7th observation, Calypso 2007).

The analysis of this vignette is suggestive that the facilitator halts teaching at times out of empathy for participants in order to help the students who are struggling. Yet, because this relates to a person's character, it is difficult as an analyst to evaluate empathy in relation to competence. The act of offering help, which is accepted, while others wait for her to finish assisting in order to continue with dance session,

suggests that Alde is recognised by students as competent, and as able to judge competence. The vignette is also suggestive that the teacher is in a position to support students to develop competence.

The vignette, further suggests that many students had started to develop some level of expertise in the dances taught by the facilitator. Expertise here refers to students learning an aspect of dance and being able to successfully perform the steps according to criteria set by the facilitator, before moving on to a different stage. It is also possible that the students may have been learning the dance for the first time, but that some had mastered the skills faster than others. Based on the vignette above, it is possible to argue that the students began to acquire the basic Calypso dance skills within the context of the Dance Group, but they may have learned elsewhere. The facilitator emerges as a competent teacher, as the majority of people in the group apparently have developed some level of competence in the choreography by the end of the session.

Further analysis of the vignette suggests that the dance session could also be analysed as a formal context, where learning may be rigidly structured. This is suggested by the relationship between the facilitator and another tutor and how the two are positioned in relation to teaching dance as suggested by the following vignette.

Vignette: An instance of the assistant facilitator's laughter and how that constructs her as different from the main facilitator

Etho is assisting the group's facilitator to teach 'Hip-Hop', in which she is an 'expert', but a few students struggle to perform it and Etho has noticed them. For instance, one feature of the dance is to make steps to the left, then right, forward and backward. These moves are intermitted by abrupt turns, jumps, twists and a hand clap. At the start of the session, the students are instructed to make one step into the four directions, but then the steps keep increasing and the moves become more complex.

A group gets mixed up while making dance steps and students almost physically collide with others. Some students appear to be confused as they try in vain to perform the choreography. Etho busts out laughing and seems to find the scenario hilarious. This act leaves the struggling group seemingly uncomfortable and more confused. *[I am also struggling to dance as I am not able to follow the steps because of a knee problem].* Some of the members stop dancing and move to sit outside the group. *[I have moved to sit out of the group, after a near collision with other students on my right and my left. My reaction is not because of being laughed at for incompetence, but due to the pain on my knee]* (Field notes: 8th observation, Hip-Hop, 2007).

The analysis now begins to suggest the role of the body, through the gaze of the eye and through the mechanism of the laughter, and through pain or aging. Laughter can be understood perhaps as a spasm in the belly moving up through the mouth.

Although laughter is, clearly, in many ways socially constructed (what we find funny depends heavily on social context), individual instances of laughter might be understood as the body playing an active role, taking over and to some extent controlling social interaction consistent with Billing (2005), Anthony et al (2006) and Shilling (2012) and a diversity of explanations of what causes laughter, but my focus is on its effects on the group. In the same way, my knee problem plays an active role in controlling my participation in the activity.

The vignette suggests that as the assistant tutor laughs at struggling students, she ascribes them to lower status than herself and others within the group. As a result, the small group withdraws from the session, apparently in protest at being laughed at instead of being assisted. Thus, in comparison, although Etho is an expert teacher in specific dance styles, Alde has a distinctive role as the facilitator within the structure of the group, which also seems to relate to the way she assists students who struggle without laughing at them. Her role can be compared to that of Etho, the assistant facilitator. Etho is produced as an expert in Hip Hop as observed in the group. When Etho is compared to Alde, the facilitator, it might be argued that one can be an expert as a dancer in one aspect of identity, rather than a facilitator.

Alde supports the students' development of competence within the explicit objective of the group. Etho's role as the assistant tutor reifies her competence in relation to this objective, but not in empathising with students who struggle. We can see a distinction between Alde and Etho in relation to the different aspects of group practices. The vignette further suggests that students begin to experience the negative effects of being laughed at, but this is also where they begin to laugh at others. The

laughter here seems to relegate students to a lower status of incompetence, and there is some protesting going on against being laughed at for being incompetent in dance. Alde's identity is most visible, or has the highest status in relation to learning and competence, in relation to the explicit objective. Etho's role and status is more complicated. Although she is an 'expert' in dancing, when she is in the role of assistant facilitator, her laughter and her relation to the participants is very different from the formal teaching structure that Alde creates when she is leading. This might be understood better in relation to what I have called the social identity work that is an implicit objective for participants attending the dance group. However, during the more formal, taught stage of the Dance Group, this laughter perhaps felt a little inappropriate. In the later stages, when participants stayed behind, there was more space for this implicit identity and status work.

The members of the Dance Group themselves had ways in which they constructed others' identities in relation to competence. The expert students in a dance style positioned themselves strategically within the group to observe how other students were performing. They used somehow subtle methods such as staring and laughter, seemingly to put those who appeared to struggle in their lower status. These contributed both to the development of status in relation to the explicit objective of dancing, but they also contributed to the social identity work of the group. It can further be suggested that these methods are not wholly socially constructed, because they rely on the body, or use the agency of the body which is beyond human control, for instance in ageing), rather than the individual agency of the participants to choose action in social contexts consistent with Shilling (2012).

Vignette: The role of looking and laughing within the group

The vignette below illustrates Alde teaching Belly Dance and Latino Dance, but some students act like they have some difficulty performing the movements. The vignette also suggests that the group began the process of production of identities in relation to competence in dance among the students themselves within the Dance Group.

A small group of three women students; Alice, Etho and Mboka appear as if they are finding learning a new dance 'difficult'. For instance, one aspect of dance involves making shoulder moves but the women use feet movement instead. Then, the group laughs and the three women move to the back and form a small semi-circle behind everybody else seemingly to camouflage from the group. The women move to the back seemingly like they are protesting from being laughed at. From this position, the three women explore the group at a glance and seem to notice other students who are struggling to dance and then look at each other. Then Ethos smiles and a bellow of loud laughter erupts from the small group seemingly oblivious to the effects of their behavior on other students. Alde, the facilitator looks sternly at the group laughing and almost instantly the students stop giggling (Field notes: 2nd observation, Belly Dance and Latino Dance, 2007).

The vignette suggests to me that the students developed different types of dance competences during the ongoing sessions. It also suggests that the three women Alice, Etho and Mboka were messing about by making feet moves instead of moving

their shoulders as they were instructed by the teacher. They then moved to the back when they were laughed at, seemingly to protest against the group's reaction. This small group then formed a small semi-circle behind the others, where they started to laugh at other students who were struggling to dance. It seems to me that staring and laughter worked to relegate struggling students to a status of incompetence which the students being laughed at resisted by moving to the back. They retaliated by laughing at others, while protecting themselves from the critical gaze of the rest of the class. They used their bodies to move from being watched, to watching others. They responded to their laughter by returning the laughter. At this point, looking at the vignette, it is difficult for me to differentiate between the students who may have been acting as if incompetent in dance, from those who were genuinely incompetent. I realised later that Etho, Alice and Mboka were probably joking when I observed that did not have difficulties when they danced with vigour and also how this then connects with the implicit objective of the group. This seemed also to link to their development of a distinctive role in the informal sessions when participants stayed behind. I will discuss more about the three women later in this section.

The vignette further suggests that the staring by the facilitator at those who laughed at those struggling seemed to work to reprimand the small group in that the students stopped laughing at others immediately. Laughter and staring engaged individuals in non-verbal communication within the Dance Group. This is consistent with Shilling's (2012) analysis which suggests that aspects of the body (such as the eye) can control other bodies (individuals' actions). Yet, whether or not these aspects of body functions are spontaneous or intended actions, the students seem to understand their specific meaning in certain instances.

In this case the eye and the mouth play an important part in the meaning of identity within the group, in relation to the process of developing dance competence. The two body features are also used to initiate and to control behaviour within the Dance Group during the dance session. This is an example of how the body can play an active role in controlling our environment, and thus can contribute to the shifting of some aspects of our identities which is consistent with Shilling's (2012) theory of corporeal realism. This theory becomes very meaningful, particularly in the reality of my experience of aging and pain in the Dance Group. Because of these effects of embodiment, I was among another small group which seemed incompetent in choreography and was then laughed at. Yet, if I had been younger and not in pain, I may have been able to learn to dance and acquire expertise required according to the group, and to fully participate in the sessions. I was quite embarrassed and nostalgic of the days I was young and agile when I used to dance with ease. Nonetheless, my awareness of being a researcher helped me not to focus on myself, but how such laughter affected the students.

In the above example, the facilitator used her eyes to intervene and stop the laughter. This again illustrates how there was a limited space for students to engage in social identity work during the more formal part of the Dance group – but the fact that it occurs and then has to be policed suggests that it is an important additional, implicit objective for students. However, the next vignette suggests that the facilitator did not always reprimand students for laughing at others during dance sessions. This is when joint laughter worked to control practices which if allowed to develop within the group, were perceived to potentially make teaching and learning dance difficult.

Vignette: An instance of joint laughter policing unacceptable practices within the group

Half-way through the dance session, Alice enters the hall holding a big cookie in a transparent plastic bag. Standing by the table on which the music system is placed, she removes the cookie from the bag. She uncovers a small portion, bites the cookie and puts the remaining part of it back into the bag and places it on the table before joining the dancing group. Her mouth is quite full and she seems to be struggling to chew. A bellow of laughter echoes in the hall from the students who see Alice eating the cookie. Alice acts as if she did not hear the laughter and was not aware of the staring from the group. After dancing for about ten minutes, Alice goes back to the table, picks up the plastic bag, removes the cookie from it and bites it again. The group laughs again while staring at her. When she repeats the action for the third time, the group pays no more attention to her, but she continues eating until the cookie is finished. The students concentrate on dancing uninterrupted as though nothing else is going on. After this episode, it was noted that Alice did not attend three subsequent sessions (Field notes: 11th observation, 2007).

The above vignette suggests that identity could also relate to implicitly learned acceptable practices within or outside the Dance Group, with which all the members were expected to conform. This case is a typical example of how the facilitator sometimes seemed to let the students get away with laughing at others. In the previous sessions, Alde's staring worked to control behaviour which was perceived as disruptive to learning to dance. In such instances, she was seemingly not overly

concerned when group joint laughter worked to control disruptive behaviour within the Dance Group. This does not mean that Alde deliberately used or encouraged joint laughter for the control of the group. The analysis suggests that spontaneous laughter worked to impede disruptive practices during dance sessions. This is another point where laughter affects the group and contributes to implicit learning through the body. After this episode, Alice did not attend three consecutive sessions. It was observed that from this occurrence, no other member of the group including Alice attempted to eat during subsequent sessions. It seems to me that the group had adjusted itself to the acceptable behaviour according to the group during the sessions. I will discuss more on Alice within the implicit identity work of the Dance Group.

It is also worth noting briefly some recent studies which have explored laughter. According to Encyclopaedia Britannica (2009, p. 1), our bodies perform ‘rhythmic, vocalized, expiratory and involuntary actions to produce laughter under certain conditions’. Laughter is controlled by the human brain and helps people to clarify their intentions in social interaction and work to provide an emotional context to conversations. Laughter can rise from a tickle and humorous stories or thoughts. Laughter can also be ‘an expression of joy, mirth, happiness, relief, embarrassment, apology, confusion or courtesy (ibid p. 4), consistent with Edwards (2005), Porter (2005) and Billing (2005). Whether or not an individual will experience laughter is determined by features such as age, gender, education, language and culture.

According to Brain (undated), many researchers believe that the purpose of laughter is in making and strengthening human connections, and that it occurs when people are comfortable with one another. Brain suggests that when individuals feel open and free the more they laugh and the more bonding happens within the group and laughter is often contagious. Brain (undated, p. 1-3) suggests that laughter can also be used as an exercise of a powerful tool through which people's emotions can be controlled. These analyses are consistent with my observation in the previous vignettes.

Puchta and Potter's (2004, p. 45) analysis of conversation based on a focus group points out that 'moderators of groups should not laugh at participants'. In my observation of the Dance Group there is a case where the assistant tutor laughed at learners, may be trying to create humour; but as a result, those who were laughed at withdrew from the activity. These analysts suggest that close friends engage in shared laughter and even when they laugh at one another, the action is normally not offensive. However, from my observation of the groups, excessive laughter has the potential to become offensive, even to close friends. Puchta and Potter (2004) argue that although laughter is said to be triggered by a reflex action, it can also be intentionally used in various ways in conversations.

In my analysis of the Dance Group, shared laughter began to emerge in the formal part of the sessions, but seemed to increase when the students continued dancing after the formal dance sessions, in more informal contexts. During the structured sessions, the students seemed to laugh at those who made mistakes in dances. Laughter was mutual among those who laughed at others, but seemed to offend those

being laughed at. In contrast, all the students seemed to laugh together as they enjoyed the humour during the informal contexts, which may explain why the laughter seemed to be contagious. As will be discussed, in the informal context, there is one case where joint laughter may have been perceived as being laughed at.

Initial conclusions related to the explicit objective

In this section, I have used four vignettes to show that the setting of the Dance Group was very complex. The analysis also suggests that learning to dance had different meanings within the explicit objective the formal context of the Dance Group and related to competence. I have used competence to refer to two practices: the facilitator's ability to teach dance and the learners acquiring expertise, which is evaluated according to the group's set criteria. The analysis further suggests that being empathetic, conscientious, and assisting students might count as a kind of competence in relation to supporting learning within the explicit objective. This type of competence is not part of the stated objective: learning to dance. However, the students seem to have an implicit way of evaluating what practices support their learning and which do not. For instance, a sub-group sitting down when the assistant tutor laughs at them may suggest that she cannot maintain the same distinctive status as someone able to support them as Alde, the main facilitator.

The four vignettes analysed in this section suggest that communities of practice facilitate the process of learning and the production of identities, their evaluation and their meanings in relation to competence. The analysis also suggests that there are

other aspects of the practices of the group, for example, which are difficult to analyse in relation to competence in the same way as Wenger (1998) analysed the workers he researched. These aspects include gendered practices, qualities such as empathy and sympathy related to social identity of the teacher and the students. This entails not laughing at students, which seems to be a key support to learning and developing competence within the Dance Group.

The main conclusion drawn from this section is that communities of practice facilitate the development of multiple facets of identities in one social context rather than one as Wenger's (1998) theory suggests. The analysis suggests a staged learning process and also the role the body plays in it. The facilitator controls the learning process and student behavior, but also the body plays an important function as seen in the role of laughter, the staring, as well as aging and pain. The following section will explore the Dance Group within the implicit identity work strand. I will pay special attention to the resources and strategies the students used to gain status in the informal context of the Dance Group, compared to the formal context.

The creation of an informal context, social interaction and the production of an attractive identity through bodily performances in the Dance Group

The concept *informal* here is used to refer to times after dance sessions where students remained behind and engaged in practices that were less structured. These times are compared to and contrasted with the more rigidly-structured learning to dance sessions of the group, in that they were not facilitated by the teacher. These took place after 8pm when the structured, taught dance sessions ended, and lasted for

an hour, but as time progressed, these took longer, and sometimes continued until 10 pm. The learning in these contexts was not formally structured and there was more freedom compared to the formal context.

The analysis of data within the taught section of the Dance Group suggested that the students' engagement in femininity and masculinity practices. These practices were constrained from forming and becoming fully established during the structured dance sessions by the facilitator and also by the members of the Dance Group. This seemed to take place through body language for instance in staring and laughter and suggests that the practices were perceived to potentially hinder learning to dance.

The role of the body in the control of students and the construction of attractive feminine identity within the informal context of the Dance Group

The analysis of the following vignettes suggests that the Dance Group constructed other, informal contexts outside the formal dance context. The group used these contexts to engage in social identity work and utilized their bodies for social interactions and the performance of their sexual identities. These practices continued to develop and over time became firmly established within the group after dance sessions.

The first part of the analysis of vignettes looks at the initiation of exaggerated dances by three women, namely Alice, Etho and Mboka, which were introduced in the formal sessions of the group. This took place on week seven and from then on the dances continued the process of becoming firmly established as regular practices,

every week after the formal session of the Dance Group. Prior to this week, the women seemed to practice the dances they had learnt within the formal dance sessions within the first six informal dance sessions and left the hall together at 9 pm. These dances did not appear to be exaggerated, but were rather sort of play. The women appeared as if they were polishing the choreography taught during the formal sessions which was consistent with Alde's advice to the group to practice the dances at home. The three women Alice, Etho and Mboka had become the main leaders of dance within the informal contexts.

The second part will explore the responses of men to the women within the group from the onset of exaggerated dances onwards. From the analyses of vignettes used in this section, I will finally draw a conclusion about what these informal practices can tell us about the development of identities in the Dance Group and about the objectives of the participants in attending the group.

Vignette: The initiation of exaggerated dances and the production of attractive feminine sexual identities

The vignette below exhibits the introduction of exaggerated dancing, and describes some aspects of the practices of the group after structured dance sessions. The students engaged in the production of what appeared to be sexually attractive feminine identities. These were distinguished from femininity and masculinity practices within the formal dance sessions in that they seemed to engage the body in exaggerated movements and these seemed more significant to the students than

within the formal context. These practices became established throughout the group during the period of the research.

Small sub-groups of students are scattered all over the dance hall, chatting immediately after a dance session. Three women, Alice, Etho and Mboka, start to dance together in one corner of the hall. Other students present notice the three and begin to observe the women. Two men from the group stare at the women for few minutes from a distance, and the women see them. The men walk towards the dancing women and stand few yards away and observe them. On noticing that they are being observed, the women dance even more vigorously as they move towards the men and dance near them. The men stand still, but their eyes are fixed on the dancing women. The women move to dance in front of the men. They turn their backs to the men, pushing bottoms towards them while wiggling them, seemingly mimicking snake movements. Then, knocking their knees together, they also sway their hips from side to side, bending, and tilting, and their whole bodies seem to vibrate. Suddenly, the women begin to touch the men with their bottoms as they continue dancing and seem to tease them. The men keep looking at the women and seem completely unaware of the spectators present, and how intensely they observe the phenomenon. As the women continue dancing, one of the men removes a camera from the inner pocket of his jacket. He takes pictures of the dancing women, focusing more on the bottoms. The women now dance in a circle while swinging their hips, bottoms protruded as the men continue staring. The men are now leaning forward at an angle, seemingly to have a better view of the bottoms. The men also turn their heads as well with every movement the women make, quite oblivious of how focused they are on the women. A below of laughter erupts from among the spectators, but the dancing women just focus

on the dance, occasionally smiling slightly. None of the men seem to be disrupted by the laughter, or is try to make any physical contact, or to dance with the women. The women seem very powerful in the way they control the situation, while the men just stare perhaps unsure of how to respond to the women. The dancing is over and the same man who took pictures earlier removes the camera from his pocket, switches it on and stretches the right hand holding it towards the women. The women move closer to the camera and observe the pictures on camera's screen. Suddenly the women laugh hysterically while moving away from the men and begin to leave the hall (Field notes: 7th observation, Jazz Ballet/ Salsa, 2007).

The above vignette suggests that the women, Alice, Etho and Mboka, engaged in exaggerated dances using their body which worked to constitute an attractive feminine identity through performances such as wiggling bottoms, shaking hips and lifting chests up. The practices are consistent with 'doin the butt,' in Hooks (2003), Brook (1999), Chatterjea (2003 p. 251) (see also 'sexual dances' in Thomas (2003, p. 155) and 'hyper-sexed gendered performances' in Pini (2001, p. 121) all of which are discussed in chapter three). The difference is that although Pini's (2001) contexts posed health risks and potential sexual exploitation as suggested by Anderson and Doherty (2008, p. 8-13), this is not the case within the groups I studied. I will use these terms where appropriate to describe similar types of dances in this analysis. These dances seemed to accord the women dancers elevated status suggested by intense attention focused on the women by the men and women as spectators within the group. The dances apparently impeded the men from joining the dance, touching the women or even conversing with them. This happened despite the fact that the women were touching the men with their bottoms as they danced, as if they were

sexually teasing the men. The works cited, particularly Brook (1999), suggest that the women may have been producing identities in relation to what they perceived the men in the group wanted. Because the women's performance intensified when they noticed the men gazing at them, it seems that the very presence of men was subtly very powerful. It seemed to influence the women to intensify their dancing even when the men did not make attempts to dance with or touch the women. The men then took up a powerful position, suggested by taking pictures of the women's bottoms. The objectifying pictures were then in the hands of men, who from then on had the power to use them as they chose, rather than just keeping them for the memory of the event. For instance, the pictures could then be used to threaten or objectify the women through the internet's social networks and the media.

The men's staring at the dancing women's bottoms and seemingly remaining passive may suggest powerlessness. Restraining from responding or trying to dance with or touching the women is consistent with Frosh (2002) who suggests that men in such situations may be trying to avoid a display of their vulnerability (see chapter three, p. 103). This act may have given the men powerful status for being seen to have self-control, particularly when they were seemingly being sexually teased by the women (Frosh, 2003, p. 81).

However, practices which may be subversive in one context could be objectifying in another context and this is consistent with Howson (2013), Hooks (2003), Brook (1999), Chatterjea (2003) and Thomas (2003) (analyses discussed in chapter three, (p. 129). These analysts suggest that, for instance, the dance practices like the those emerging within the unstructured Dance Group context do not only work to oppress

women. They can also lead to a misrepresentation of an essence of an ethnic group of people as sexual objects due to residual identity (Howson, 2013).

As exhibited in the vignette, the sexual dances worked to produce attractive feminine identities, as they emphasised extreme body movements which seemed very popular and in turn attracted the attention of the members of the group. Thus, in these informal contexts, the students began to learn other ways through which they were becoming more popular. Dancing which involves moving the body to the extreme constituted a significant practice in relation to gaining status.

As the year progressed, other women began to join Alice, Etho and Mboka in exaggerated dances. The analysis suggests that some of the women were also developing increasingly radical feminine identities compared to the three women, who by then had continued to be the most radical. The women who joined the three women included Meli, Ihwe, Anne and Yasmin who were regularly among the incompetent dancers, within the formal dance context. The development of the more radical women is exemplified in the following vignette.

Vignette: More women join in informal context dances and the phenomenon of men halting to observe the dancing women.

A group of four women, including Meli, Ihwe, Ann and Yasmin join Alice, Etho and Mboka to dance together. In the first instance all the women dance in separate dances in turns and these appear like play or a warm up. Then, in one style initiated by Ihwe, the women dance in pairs, the right hip touching, the

dance partner's left hip each placing the hands around the partner's hips. Finding no partner, Anne steps out to join the spectators. After a short time, Ann goes back to the sub-group and pulls Alice, who had been dancing with Meli, out of the group. Ann then starts to dance with Meli while Alice stands still watching the phenomenon before joining the spectators. Then, suddenly, laughter erupts from the group and almost halts the dance, but then the women quickly pick up and begin to dance even more vigorously. After this, all of the women engage in what seems to be a mixture of the dances learnt during the structured sessions. Then Janice, also one of those who had joined the spectators within the formal context joins this group, Alice also goes back in so that all the women pair up to dance. The women sway their hips and seem to be grinding against each other in an up and down body movement. Then they let loose and start to initiate new moves and are dancing vigorously in a circle. They are now bending over at the hips, keeping their legs straight and apart, with backsides raised up towards the spectators. Three men enter the hall through another door near the hall's platform, opposite the figure eight painting on the floor. One man is carrying a big rucksack on his back, while the other one holds a big file folder in his right hand. The men stand in the middle of the hall, staring at the women dancing for some time from a distance. These men are not members of the Dance Group, and they regularly pass through the dance hall while going to the adjacent bar, but this is the first time they are carrying anything with them. They seem to use this route rather than the main entrance to the bar. They walk towards the dancing women but stand at some distance observing them for about twenty minutes. Then, they turn towards the main bar, but keep looking back to the dancing women until they exit the hall. About twenty five minutes later, the same men repeat the same actions and when they notice the group beginning to disperse, they also exit the hall. They do not

speaking to anyone and their names are unknown in that they never joined membership of the Dance Group fully (Field note: 13th observation, Hip-Hop/Urban Street, 2008).

The vignette suggests that other women, such as Meli, Ihwe, Anne and Yasmin were beginning to join Alice, Etho and Mboka in exaggerated dances. From the analysis, it could be argued that the informal context contributed to the development of confidence that allowed the former to join the three in exaggerated dance. The absence of an explicitly stated criterion of dance competence within the informal context may have allowed the women to take initiative to participate in the dance. The analysis of the vignette further suggests that other women joining the dances may have developed an even stronger identity compared to the three initially radical women. For instance, Ihwe initiated a dance, while Anne took a seemingly a more radical step to remove Alice (the most radical among the women in the group) from dancing with Meli and took her place. Alice did not attempt to resist Ann, in order to continue dancing with Meli, but just joined the spectators to watch the phenomenon of the dance. When another woman joins the group, Alice re-joins the group so that there are then eight women who then dance in pairs. This could be interpreted as another vulnerable aspect of Alice's identity, or that she was happy to see others lead. It can also be argued that the context allowed some sort of freedom that allowed the women to explore various opportunities through which they could acquire popular status. These statuses may have been more meaningful to the woman who had not acquired status through dance expertise within the formal context. The women seemed even more radical in that they took positions to dance with each

other, as if they were dancing with men, for instance when dancing in pairs, seemingly acts of subversion of expected heterosexual norms.

Although the women seemed to continue to attract a lot of attention from the group students watching, the men at that point had not attempted to join in the dance, but participated by watching the women. The analysis further suggests that there were also some men who seemed to be peripheral members and often seemed to use the dance hall as a shortcut to the students' bar located in the same building. These men may have regularly passed through because they were aware of the Dance Group activities in the hall, or had seen the dancing women just by chance and then from then on purposely passed through in order to watch the dancing. The men may have wanted to join the group, the dance or to interact with the women and men but the phenomenon of the dancing women somehow impeded them from taking further steps towards a fuller integration. It was not clear to me whether these men were students, staff or people from the outside, but may have impacted on the dances.

The analysis so far suggests that men had not taken initiative to dance with women. Nonetheless, the analysis suggests that at the end of the second term, men's identities had developed to some extent and they were beginning to take initiative to converse with and ask the women for a dance, as one case involving Mobi and Ngyma suggests.

A man initiates conversation and a dance with a woman

The previous analysis suggested that the men did not initially join in to participate in exaggerated dances with the women or on their own. The following vignette suggests that with time, some men were developing a relatively strong identity in the group, so as to initiate conversations and dance with the women.

Vignette: An instance where a man initiates a conversation and dances with a woman

After the structured dance session, small groups of six, four and five are scattered in the hall conversing. In one small group, Ngyma (a woman) and Mobi (a man) are chatting. Mobi asks Ngyma which dance she can perform. Ngyma makes some twist moves, Mobi moves closer and dances to the same choreography, taking a position opposite Ngyma. The two students dance twist together and it seems like in an instant they forget where they are. Other students slowly move from their little groups and crowd around the two, but Ngyma and Mobi do not seem to notice those around them as they are focused on dancing. After a few minutes, there is a sudden roar of laughter in the hall from the onlookers. Then Ngyma looks up and on seeing other students around them, she stops dancing seemingly embarrassed, and slowly moves away to join another group of women and starts to converse with them. Mobi also moves away and joins a group of men standing close by. Ngyma is normally quiet within the structured sessions and does not have expert dance status within the Dance Group. Quedi, Andy, and Ukipai (men) were also present among those observing (Field notes: 8th observation, BellyDance/African Folk, 2008).

This vignette suggests that at some moments, men were also able to initiate activity within the Dance Group. For instance, Mobi initiated a chat with Ngyma, and then the two began to dance together and consequently attracted lots of attention as they danced. It was only after the group joined in laughter that echoed in the hall that the two stopped dancing and moved away to join the spectators of the same gender seemingly embarrassed. It was difficult to tell why the students were laughing. Ngyma was not part of the group of radical women, but she was among those who had taken the position of incompetence within taught sections of the Dance Group formal context. Nonetheless, Ngyma can be said to be strong compared to other women in that she was the first one to initiate a dance with a man. This suggests that there was a variety of different ways in which attractive feminine identity could be constructed within the group – both by women dancing with other women, and by a woman dancing with a man, only that the latter did not become fully established within the Dance Group informal context.

Within the more formal taught context, Mobi and I sat out of the group, at the onset of the dance sessions, trying to find out what was going on in order to decide when to join, when I asked him the following question:

MM: Why have you not joined the dancing group?

Mobi: Why are you also not joining the group?

MM: I want to see what people are doing first, before joining them.

Mobi: The people dancing are mainly women and I am the only man now and this is my first time. I guess I am feeling a bit awkward, to be the only man dancing with a bunch of women

dancing like that (*He laughs. Within about 15 minutes, two other men enter the hall and straight away join the dancing women*).

MM: (*to Mobi*) Join them.

Mobi: (*reluctantly joins the group and at first acts as if he cannot dance, but beginning to dance slowly and after two sessions seemed like the rest of the group.*)

(Field notes, 1st observation, 2007).

It seems that by the end of the second term, Mobi had developed a strong aspect of his identity in that he conversed with Ngyma when he asked her for a dance. Mobi was the first and only man to make such an attempt to dance with a woman within the informal context. It is also interesting that Mobi and Ngyma did not engage in one of the dances taught during the structured sessions. She used a dance she seems to have learned elsewhere. Nonetheless, she attracted the attention of the other small groups, which seemed to find the dance hilarious, as suggested by their joint laughter. Instead of dancing with more energy to attract more attention which may have worked to allow other students to join in, Ngyma moved away quickly suggesting that she was embarrassed. It is also interesting to note that Mobi did not ask one of the main radical women discussed earlier to dance with him. He asked Ngyma who was not a competent a dancer within the formal context of the group. She also seemed not so competent in the informal context in that she did not start with the dances taught. So it seems that the informal context played an important role in allowing the group to choose other dances and this may be what kept the students attending the informal sessions.

It is difficult to tell exactly why the laughter erupted, but there can be various interpretations about the phenomenon. The laughter may have erupted because Ngyma's dance created humour, particularly in that it was clearly identified as not having been taught in the formal group. It could also be interpreted that the woman had not paid much attention to the fact that the others did not bring new dances on their own, but mingled them with those they had learned in the formal sessions. The group may have laughed because dancing with members of the opposite sex was not part of the practices of the group. From an observers perspective, Ngyma seemed a bit conservative within the formal context, which means that the group may not have expected her to lead a dance or to dance with a man, or because up to that point, this had not been part of the explicit practice of the group. It also seems to me that here, laughter once again worked to stop Ngyma dancing, even when the group may not have been laughing at her, but the humour of two individuals from the opposite sex dancing together. The laughter was cut off, something that would have created more humour and perhaps helped to start closer social interactions involving conversations between students of the opposite sex in the group, and perhaps more dances together.

There were other women who did not dance within the informal structure of the Dance Group. For instance Zaya, Winnie, Ferisha and Zaina participated by watching and enjoying the hilarity created through the dances by participating in joint laughter, but they did not dance.

So far, the analysis has explored the development of exaggerated dances and their becoming established within the informal context of the Dance Group. The analysis has also suggested that the women and men who had taken the position of

incompetence in dance, in the formal context were able to join and to initiate activity within the informal context. This is seen in other women joining the radical women while for instance, Mobi (a man) initiated a conversation and a dance with Ngyma. This suggests that with time, the women were taking opportunities available to explore and initiate new practices.

During these informal contexts of the group, it was becoming evident that the body was playing a very important role in the production of attractive feminine identities and also in controlling actions. For instance through the eye, the women noticed that the men in the group and also those outside the group passing by were gazing at them as they danced. There were also other women in the group who were watching the women dancing. Nonetheless, when the dancing women noticed that the men were looking at them, they responded to the gazes by intensifying their dancing. The men also responded to the body movements by moving towards the women and the closer they moved, the more the women kept on exaggerating the dances. In these instances, communication was through the eye and through the body. The eyes of the observers followed dancing bodies, while the bodies of the women were responding to the gazes. In this case, also different parts of the body responded to, and provoked attention from the eye in reciprocating dynamics which seemed to intensify each other. This is consistent with Shilling's (2011) theory of corporeal realism that suggests that parts of the body can act to control a social situation.

The spectators also employed their eyes as they watched the women dance, and then responded with laughter. Staring and laughter are factors of the body, which are not wholly a construction, which is consistent with Shilling's (2012) analysis. Shilling

(2012) suggests that factors of embodiment are significant in real life situations in which they play a significant role in controlling social actions. In this case, the dancing bodies, the eye and laughter become tools which propel and control people's actions and identities as in the Dance Group.

While my analysis has focused on the way the students engaged in their gendered identity work in the informal context, they were at the same time using the dance styles they seemed to have learned during the dance sessions, for instance, Calypso, Hip Hop, Belly Dance and Rumba (Field notes, 6th observation, 2007). Thus, as well as being significant in relation to identity work, the informal context can be said to have worked to enhance the developing of competence in dance and attractive femininities.

Initial conclusions in relation to gendered identity work in the setting: some features of the group and the role of the facilitator

From the comparison of the gender performances of different women, it can be suggested that some were seemingly perceived by the group to be more important than others. This is because they produced more attractive gendered identities or, at least, they produced gendered practices that were given more attention during the sessions. For instance, in the initiation of exaggerated dances, Etho, Alice and Mboka seemed to attract a lot of attention, when compared to other women in the group in that they occupied a central position in sexual dance, while the group watched. This suggests that as the women employed their body in exaggerated

dance, they produced an attractive feminine identity. The data analysed here also suggests that other women also joined in these practices and this seemed to accord the women popular status. Yet, the same practices also seemed to work to distance these women from the men within the Dance Group, suggested by the way the men did not seem to attempt to dance with the women.

I have also suggested that same practices can have different meanings even in one context for instance to objectify and at the same time for subversion. For instance, the practices of the women in the Dance Group informal contexts seemed to distance the women from the men. Because the women were very strong, in so far as they took up a dominant role in the production of gendered identities and subversion of hegemonic masculinities within the group, it may have been difficult for the men to form and establish relationships with them in the Dance Group. Except for one instance, in which Mobi danced with Ngyma, the women may also have used subversion in keeping themselves distant from the men.

Throughout, the analysis suggests that three women, Alice, Etho and Mboka, who were also 'expert dancers' engaged in activities which appeared disruptive to the dance sessions in the formal context. When Alice failed to attend three sessions, it felt different even when the dance sessions and subgroups were quieter. Etho and Mboka somehow seemed to have been treating some aspects of the informal contexts as structured, for instance, waiting for their turns. This suggests that they had learnt the practices during the structured sessions. Alice continued doing the opposite of what was expected, and it did not make much difference, whether in the dance

sessions or the informal dance contexts only that she was constrained in the former and more relaxed to do as she liked in the informal context.

In conclusion, I have argued that the students in the dance group created spaces after dance sessions, in which they constructed attractive feminine and masculine identities through the body. It is important to note, nonetheless, that the construction of an attractive masculine identity did not seem to be through exaggerated dance movement which the women used to construct an attractive self. The very presence of students who were physically identified as men through their body appearance, greatly influenced the production of radical identities of women who engaged in exaggerated dances. These identities became very popular and were given lots of attention and time by the some group members compared to the structured sessions. It is important to note also that some of the students who had taken up positions of incompetence in dance in the formal context, including Meli, Ihwe, Ann and Yasmin and Ngyma dance found another way to acquire status. As long as they were able to exaggerate the movements of their body for instance the bottoms, or dance with a man as Ngyma did, they became 'experts' in the way they created humour and hence drew attention from the others. These practices were particularly significant in that they seemed to accord popular status to those who had been relegated to the position of incompetence and thus had become spectators in formal dance context.

Throughout this section, the vignettes I have analysed suggest various contrasting practices of the Dance Group, which I have highlighted. On the one hand, the practices seemed subversive to the men within this particular context and thus an example of how women can resist such men in similar contexts. On the other hand,

such practices of the women can repeat oppressed positions in relation to gender, heterosexuality and ethnicity. Thus, it seems to me that these different positions can socially coexist, and are dependent on individual interpretation of occurrences and their and intentions.

The analysis of the Dance Group suggests that the body played a vital role, not only in the construction of identities, but also in controlling the actions of the students through laughter and staring. Laughter worked both to create humour and to impede actions, while the eye worked to initiate and intensify performances. The eye also determined when to laugh, while the performances controlled the loudness of laughter. While the interaction of women and men within the formal context was somehow constrained, there seemed to have been more freedom within the informal context. The analysis further suggests that although the creation of the informal context worked to facilitate practices that suggested more 'freedom' compared to the former, both the dance and verbal interactions did not develop fully between the members of the opposite sex.

Chapter Five The Singing Group

Introduction

Similarly to the Dance Group, the Singing Group is a complicated site in which learning and production of student identities takes place within three main strands.

The first part of this chapter will explore the process of learning and the production of the student identities within the first strand which is the explicit objective – learning to sing. The second part will explore student practices in relation to social and gender identity work. The third part will look at the role of the body in the production of student identities within the group, and then I will draw a conclusion based on the overall analysis of these three aspects of identity production within the Singing Group. The analysis will look at how gender theories might help our conceptualisation of the production and reification of student identities within the Singing Group.

General organisation of the sessions in the setting

The Singing Group met weekly, for two hours from 6 pm to 8 pm and was observed for one year for ten hours each term. In autumn 2007, 14 students participated regularly with ten women and seven men attending. In spring 2008 there were 18 students, seven men and 11 women while in summer 2008, the number increased to 40 students - 20 women and 20 men. This number increased to approximately 100 during group competitions. It is important to note also that there were some students

who attended both the Dance Group and the Singing Group. These included Quedi, Andy, Mobi, Meli and Alde. Quedi was a regular member and performed solo or in a group during the sessions. Meli and Mobi attended regularly and did not engage in active singing or performance of song, but had taken the of position spectators. Andy was also a spectator, but was very active in giving feedback while Alde was an erratic participant in the group but attempted to perform songs.

The first five sessions of the Singing Group were referred to as 'Introductory Workshops' (Appendix 3). The objectives of the workshops were designed to introduce the group to singing. This included 'harmonising, voice projection, group singing, individual song performance, making it your own, stage presence, incorporating drama into the performance, improvisation and utilising props to portray the message of a song' (Appendix 3). From the sixth session, Nelly the singing teacher downloaded songs from the Internet, which were then projected on the screen in the hall. The students read as they listened to the theoretical aspect of music. Then the teacher asked the students various questions which tested their general knowledge of music, based on the concepts she had introduced during the workshops.

Vignette: Nelly teaches theory in music in preparation of the student practical singing

Nelly: What improvisation have you spotted in the music?

Group: Vocal.

Nelly: What was the structure?

Group: The beats.

Nelly: How do you know the one who has composed a song?

Group: The voice.

Andy: Signature.

Mobi: Change of sequence.

Wong: The type of music.

(Field notes: 6th observation, Introductory Workshops autumn, 2007).

Based on this vignette it can be suggested that that the Singing Group begins the process of producing identities in relation to competence within the theoretical part of the introduction to singing. The teacher appears the most competent and this seems more related to her structural positioning as an authority within the group, and perhaps in music, particularly in that she asks the students these questions. Seemingly, the students answer all the questions asked by the facilitator. Because the facilitator does not state whether the answers are right or wrong, it can be assumed that all the responses are correct. The example also indicates that that at this stage the teacher does not correct the students, particularly if she thinks that doing so might be detrimental to group cohesion. It can also be suggested that the teacher wants to allow the answers to emerge as the session progresses or for the students to further explore the answers to her questions at home.

In the seventh session, the teacher used the song 'We belong together' to teach singing theory, a key element being 'making others' music your own'. Then, the teacher played a song from the Internet performed by Britney Spears, after which she asked the group these questions.

Vignette: Making others' music your own

Nelly: How do you make others' music your own?

Etho: The beat.

Yana: The voice.

Nelly: From Britney's song, can you say it is one thing or a mixture?

Group: (Group is silent).

(Field note: 7th observation, autumn, 2007)

In this vignette the Singing Group's teacher was focusing on proficiency based on theoretical understanding of what it meant to 'own a song'. Owning a song was an important criterion used in evaluating competence and this will be explored more, later in the chapter.

This was followed by the group beginning the sessions by learning to sing 'Joy to the World' (from the Preacher's Wife 1996, by Whitney Houston (see Appendix 3)). The purpose was to produce students performances that involved singing in harmony, so that they could perform at the Christmas party planned to take place in week 10, in winter 2007. The students practiced singing repeatedly many times in small groups which had by then been formed by the teacher according to voice pitches. After learning a song, these small groups finally joined together to sing in harmony. The introductory hand-out had a list of songs given to the students to select some for more practice at home. The singing teacher also downloaded songs from the Internet onto CDs, which she distributed to students to take home for further singing practice.

The students were also informed that they could choose a preferred song from another source, if they could not find one they wished to perform from the sources presented to them by the teacher.

These two vignettes are intended to give an initial sense of the organisation of the sessions and of the way in which singing proficiency was constructed in relation to both theory and practice of singing within the sessions.

The body and singing competence

The practice of singing within the group was organised in several ways, and this aspect of the group practice can be interpreted as dependent on bodies in several ways. At a physiological level it is possible to notice, firstly, the organisation of groups according to voice pitch; secondly, the organisation of groups according to the ear of the tutor; and thirdly, the organisation of groups according to the eye of the tutor, noticing and intervening to support students during the sessions. In addition, aspects of rhythm, the style of different songs, and psychological tension which affected participants' singing competence might be related to the social or psychological construction of the body. Below I give instances from my observations that suggest these different ways in which the body – in its physiological, social and psychological constructions – affected the singing competence of participants in the group.

Physiological constitution of bodily singing competence

Having completed teaching the theoretical aspect of music, the teacher fused various means to facilitate learning in the Singing Group. First, she tested participants' voice pitches, and then grouped students with similar voices together into four main categories: soprano, alto, tenor and bass. This suggests that from the beginning of the singing sessions the body began to play a vital role in the production of the student identities in relation to categorisation of participants according to pitch of their singing voice. This is not, however, indicative that the students had not trained their voices to the different pitches elsewhere previously. Rather, it is the fact that the voice pitches seemed to have been identified as already existing by the teacher, through the testing of the student voices. This suggests that these phenomena were a physiological phenomenon of the biological body, rather than a social construction. This suggests the agency of the body in the organisation of the group, in a way that is consistent with the theory of corporeal realism.

Vignette: The facilitator assists a struggling student: voice and ear in the development of singing competence and group relations

A group of female students are grouped together based on their soprano voice pitch, in order to learn to sing together in harmony during a singing session. The purpose is to prepare the group to ultimately join up with others from different voice pitches to sing songs in harmony, but one student seems to be struggling to sing.

Six students are standing up on the platform practicing the lyrics 'We belong together' by Mariah Carey, while eight other students are spectators, as they wait for their turn. The teacher is assisting the group to sing together where an individual sings a piece of lyrics and pauses for another individual to pick up a line to complete a verse, and finally the six sing together as a group. Jeanette one of the six students has just left the group of five students standing on the platform, and moves to sit down in the hall. The five appear puzzled as to why Jeanette has left the group and just stare at her. Nelly, the teacher seems to perceive that the student has a problem and halts the session to give her some attention. The teacher encourages Jeanette to return to the group, she concedes and continues singing with the rest (Field notes: 8th observation, Singing in Harmony, autumn 2007).

Thus, the criterion of singing competence seemed not only confined to proficiency in singing, but also to the interaction between group members and between the teacher and the group, which constituted another aspect of competence. These small groups based on voice pitches began to sit together in the hall when they were not performing on stage, and also sat together at other times in the campus, particularly at lunchtime. This suggests that the singing groupings, based on bodily voice pitch, were playing a vital role in establishing social relationships which extended to other contexts within the campus.

The vignette also suggests that the Singing Group produces three levels of aspects of identities in the process of the production of competent singers. The teacher had been institutionally reified within the highest level of competence structurally. The five members of the group who remain on stage seem less competent as learners

compared to the teacher, while the one who pulls away may be seen as the least competent at this stage. The teacher leaves the seemingly more competent students in order to assist and encourage the student who is struggling, who subsequently re-joins the group and participates in the session. It seems to me here that at times the development of competence requires empathy, sympathy and the patience of the teacher – qualities which facilitated learning and student cooperation. These features related more to the character of a person rather than expertise, which can be evaluated using set criteria within the explicit objective of the Singing Group. However, in exploring the role of the body, it is important to note how the personal responses of the tutor are facilitated by the agency of bodily senses. In this case, the ears is working to listen to the singing and voice pitch, while the eye is working to notice the eye is working to notice student performances, including struggles, and to respond appropriately to perceived needs.

Social and psychological constitution of bodily singing competence

In my observation, singing the lyrics to 'We belong together' was very difficult for most of the participants, including me. Each student had to sing a line of a verse with different rhythms and another had to pick up and sing another line on time. The timing of when to pick up a line from where another person paused was difficult and quite confusing, which might explain why Jeanette almost gave up on the session. Jeanette's problem may have stemmed from such factors as the body's inability to coordinate, for instance, the rhythms or perhaps that the student's singing expertise in this aspect had not fully developed at the time. This suggests that it is one thing to have an important feature of the body, but to use it may require training and also the

agency of the body, which enables or constrains what a person can do, consistent with Shilling's (2012) theory of corporal realism. In the case of song rhythm, this may not be solely physiological, as familiarity with different rhythms may be related to social-cultural context, and the composition of songs is also strongly related to a particular society at a particular time and place.

The new singing context and arrangement, and new group of people created some psychological tension that constrained Jeanette from consistency with the group. Jeanette was singing within a group which had already been put together based on similar voice pitch. Jeanette may also have been unable to follow instructions due to a number of factors such as embodiment, or due to impatience or shyness. Moving away suggested that she may have felt embarrassed or frustrated that she was not able to sing within that small group. Nonetheless the teacher encouraged her to return and continue developing her singing skills. It was observed throughout the year that Jeanette did not attempt to perform a song solo as others did, but remained in her group and joined in group singing only. The difficulties in singing did not present solely in learning to sing, but also among performers who had already developed expertise to perform solo to an audience within the group.

Vignette: The body as a means of communicating the meaning of a song and group feedback

Wong (female) is performing a song, which she has introduced saying it is a love song in an unspecified Chinese language. She sings with great passion and the emotions of the group are heightened. During the performance, Wong appears to

speak to the group or an individual in the audience as she communicates the message of the song, but the group does not seem to understand the words. She receives some positive feedback, suggesting that she is competent in some aspects of the task of singing. She also receives suggestions about how she could perform much better from the group who in the process seem to introduce another criterion of competence.

Feedback

Nelly: It came from the heart. (The teacher speaking to Wong)

Group: Group applause.

Andy (Male): You should have used gestures to help us understand the meaning of the song.

Wong (Female): I have had to read the script and hence could not dance to the song and sing at the same time.

(Field notes: 12th observation, spring 2008).

Andy offered a solution to a language problem to which he suggested physical actions to accompany a song. He argued that such actions could help the audience to understand the meanings of the words of a song performed in a foreign language. This criterion relates to another way in which the body could have contributed to the acquisition of competence by supporting learning. However, Wong's response suggests that she did not take the feedback as constructive criticism, from which she could have learned, thereby improving in subsequent performances. Instead, she tried to explain her situation seemingly trying to justify herself, but in the process revealed another aspect of incompetence: not being well prepared for the song performance.

The expected practice was that individuals memorised a song at home, and not to read from a script while performing in the group (see Appendix 3). This appendix emphasises the importance of completing assigned tasks at home. The assignments included printing a song, reading it at home in order to understand its background, practice singing it at home, and to critically analyse its message to see how it might relate to real life situations. The students were expected to discuss these aspects at some point during their performances, but could also use an instance of a simple monologue. So, while Wong's singing met some of the criteria for competence within the group, it did not meet others. Also, in this vignette, she did not seem to be very positive in her response to the suggestions for learning with the group. This could be related to linguistic and cultural differences or a struggle with understanding the difference between constructive criticisms and being openly or negatively criticised.

This section has outlined several ways in which the body was implicated in singing competence. Physiological aspects of the body include voice pitch, eye (seeing) and ear (listening). I have also suggested that some aspects of singing competence, such as rhythm and the composition of songs can be understood as socially constructed, and that embarrassment and other emotions that affected participants' engagement in activities might be understood as psychological aspects of bodily singing competence. Finally, I noted that students watching performances suggested that the body might be used to communicate the meaning of the words of songs. This might also be understood as a social construction of bodily singing competence.

The body and the evaluation of singing performance

In this section I will explore the way the body was involved in the evaluation of singing performances. As already indicated, several criteria were used to assess singing competence within the group, and there was not always agreement on these criteria. However, here I want to focus particularly on how bodily responses - laughter, foot stamping, shouts and other noises - were part of the evaluation of singing performances within the group.

Vignette: Different criteria and bodily responses in the evaluation of a singing performance

The following vignette illustrates how a combination of criteria and bodily responses emerged in the group, and can be interpreted as different ways of evaluating a performance. In this vignette participants' evaluation of competence also included whether or not a performer was aware of the contemporary music and how they were adjusting to it, as in the following example after Ann (an older member of the group) performed a religious song. The responses also included bodily reactions:

Anne performs a song titled 'Wasted Years' by Jimmy Swaggert

Group: Applause (Joyful noises, clapping and stamping feet)

Andy: I did not expect you to sing like that. You have such a lovely voice. However, where can you sell such type of music?

Nelly: Andy, don't say that. She is such a good singer.

Group: Murmurs. (Field notes: 15th observation, spring, 2008).

The above vignette suggests that competence is complex and can have multiple interpretations. Anne's voice seems to produce her as a competent singer within the group. Nonetheless, Andy seems to use genre and the possibility of finding a market in which to sell as one criterion for judging a performance. However Nelly, the teacher doesn't seem to agree and says that this does not matter as Anne has a good voice. As already discussed, this can be seen as a way in which the physiological body played an important role in the production of a competent singing identity. The feedback further suggests that the criteria for competence in singing were not always shared or explicit. When students introduced new criteria, Nelly confirmed or disagreed, using her institutional position to suggest the preferred criteria for competence.

As well as these spoken criteria for evaluating the performance, the joyful noises, clapping and stamping of feet were significant in giving feedback on the reception of Anne's singing. It is difficult to say which was more important in establishing the success of the performance, the noises, clapping and stamping, or the discussion of evaluation criteria.

Vignette: 'Owning it' as a criterion of evaluation of competence

As the analysis of the previous vignette illustrates, the bodily evaluation of singing competence by the group may have influenced the final evaluation by the singing teacher as suggested by the following vignette.

A major focus of the Singing Group was to translate the theoretical aspect of learning

to singing, to exhibit competence in applying it to a concrete performance at a complex level: 'Owning it'. This was the level at which the students were expected to create their own versions of songs, including voice pitches without changing the original meaning from the composer. In this case, the body would play a key role in owning a song, particularly in the use of different voice pitches to sing and also the extent to which the performance heightened the emotions of the group to suggest that they were also enjoying the singing. Quedi had just presented the song 'I believe I can fly' by Kelly Roberts, when the group stood up and clapped for him.

Quedi also received feedback from Nelly, the facilitator, as presented in this vignette:

Nelly: 'Owning it'

Group: (Clapping, shouting joyfully).

Group: Great voice!

Group: Stands up to applaud him

Nelly: You have made the song your own, 'owning it'!

(Field notes: 6th observation, summer, 2008).

Within the Singing Group, the concept of 'owning it' had already been introduced. The facilitator had used various means to help the students to understand its meaning (see Appendix 3). The group had by then learned how to take a song from a composer to modify it so that it sounded like they had composed it themselves. Here, again, the body becomes key in this aspect of singing competence in that one criterion of owning a song involves the voice, using a combination of different voice

pitches, rhythms, quality of sound and sometimes gestures. All of these aspects involve the body and its agency, but also the agency of a person as crucial in enhancing a singing performance. Yet, this level of competence required that the performer did not alter the meanings of the original song. This to me is another aspect of competence within the explicit objective of the Singing Group. In this example, the whole group seems to have a shared understanding of what it meant to give a good performance and to be a competent singer. While the group are signaling their approval, the teacher, Nelly, explicitly reinforces what she has taught the group throughout, repeating the criteria for an expert singer is 'owning' a song.

The body and the construction of acceptable gendered/sexual identities within the Singing Group

Within the third strand social interaction referred to as implicit objective, the students used the rigidly structured group's singing context to engage in the production of gendered and sexual identities, a practice that became firmly established throughout the research. This identity work involved the production of masculinity practices, to which the women within the Singing Group reciprocated through the production of feminine identities. These gendered practices worked to create the awareness of the presence of both men and women within the group and draw the attention of the group away from the teacher.

Vignette: The bodily performances of heterosexual identities; and the control of the group through laughter

The singing performance is in progress. Mobi (male) enters the hall through the main entrance with his hands raised up (as if drawing the attention of the group to his presence). He walks to Meli who is seated and pecks her on the right cheek. She stands up and Mobi holds her tightly in his arms for about a minute. Mobi is a regular member of the Dance Group who attends the Singing Group, but does not perform in singing. The other students notice these actions and are chatting to each other, while staring and smiling looking at the pair. The group has lost its focus on the singing session, to pay attention to the two. The group's facilitator seems to notice that Mobi is drawing the attention of the group to himself and disrupts the singing session. The group's facilitator laughs very loudly so that the attention is taken from Mobi and Meli and is drawn back to her. Mobi and Meli sit with the other students in the hall as spectators. Nelly the facilitator then draws the attention of the group back to the singing session through her laughter (Field notes: 8th observation autumn 2007).

The interaction between Mobi and Meli apparently was of a sexual nature. Their open behaviour could have been an interpretation of heterosexual interaction as often portrayed in the media, or a new culture constructed within the Singing Group or brought in from other social contexts. The facilitator's use of laughter does not appear as a way of controlling the exhibition of sexuality. Laughter is a factor of the properties of the body and is often an involuntary response to what may be perceived as funny, but psychologists suggest that individuals can also laugh when nervous and that it can work to release tension. According to Edward and Potter (2001), shared

laughter can be enjoyable when it works as a basic sign to suggest group members' agreement. When Nelly laughed, this worked to bring order in the group as Mobi and Meli sat down so that she could then continue teaching. It seemed that the laughter worked to address a possible distraction from learning to sing and to refocus the group back to the session, perhaps just by chance. On this occasion there appeared to be a conflict between the explicit objective of the group and the other identity work students performed in the setting. This case also suggests that those who could not sing engaged in practices which worked to create popular identities. The identities seemed to have even more elevated status than singing itself and these allowed the students to acquire other statuses that allowed them to be recognised in the Singing Group in relation to heterosexuality.

These heterosexual bodily interactions were sought out in different ways by members of the singing group. As I mentioned in the introduction, the hall in which the singing sessions were conducted was locked up at a specified time. This means that there was no space for the students to use and 'stick around' for social interactions after the sessions.

Finding no venue for identity work after sessions, the students created spaces within the seemingly rigidly structured singing sessions, where they engaged in gendered social interactions, and performed their (hetero) sexual identities. The response of the group to these phenomena suggests that it was not just the singing expertise that gave status to the students. It seems that a lack of expertise in singing was sometimes compensated by engaging the body in masculinity and femininity practices, and this seemed to create an awareness of the presence of men and women. These practices

attracted much attention and were reciprocated by the members of the opposite sex.

It also seemed that the production of masculinity and femininity identity was not enough by itself for heterosexual interaction. Thus, the students extended their performance by employing the body in the production of sexually attractive masculine and feminine identities. This happened through such activities as wiggling bottoms, vibrating their bodies and stretching the body. The following vignettes support this argument.

Vignette: The bodily performance of sexual identities within the Singing Group

This vignette illustrates a typical example of how the students created spaces within the structured singing sessions to engage their body in the production of a sexually attractive identity.

Rosa goes to the stage and introduces herself as Russian, and says that she will perform 'Heartbeat'. She seems to be struggling to attach the microphone to herself. Due to the limited time for the performance, she almost gives up using the microphone. Quedi (male) walks from the audience to the stage to help her. He fixes the microphone on Rosa's waist, to the left side of jeans trousers. Quedi is tall, and wears what seem to be expensive sports clothes and shoes. He attracts great attention from both sexes particularly from the women even when not singing. Instead of sitting down among the audience after helping Rosa, he dances around her. The group is paying great attention to Quedi. He wiggles and vibrates as he dances with great abandon. His hands are held together lifted up in the air above his head, twists, turns and jumps around front of, behind and

besides Rosa. Rosa does not appear to be distracted from her performance by the drama and continues performing until she finishes the song. After the performance, a roar of shared laughter from the group echoes in the hall. Quedi hugs Rosa as the group clap and stands up for them in applause (Field notes: 9th observation, autumn, 2007).

From the vignette, it is difficult to tell why the group applauded. It could be due to Rosa's singing competence, the meaning of the song to the group, or the dance with Quedi or all of these things. Quedi's dance to Rosa is more convincing explanation, and could have camouflaged any sign of singing incompetence. Rosa's singing may have been implicitly judged competent to some extent by the group when the students' reactions to her singing are taken into consideration. Quedi's presence and his dance is another way through which the body worked to produce an attractive masculine heterosexual identity. This suggests that Quedi used the instance as an opportunity to 'incorporate drama' into music as was instructed by the teacher (See Appendix 3), but this seems less likely because it was not his turn to perform a song. His attractive masculinity produced an even more sexually attractive, high status masculine identity, through his body in what appeared as sexual dance, which received a lot of attention. In this case, Quedi may have been acting out his sexually attractive masculinity to hint heterosexual availability and prowess or to support heterosexuality. It is also possible that he was creating humour within the group, but it is difficult to tell whether these practices and subsequent reactions were spontaneous or intended.

It is important to note, in particular, that it was not stated that Quedi would join Rosa

for the two to perform the song, but that may have been implied. It seems to me that Quedi used the opportunity to interact with Rosa and to perform his sexual identity. It is interesting to note also that the teacher appeared not to be concerned about Quedi's involvement even though his acts seemed likely to distract the group from Rosa's performance. It seems to me that such practices were accepted by the teacher and the group, as long as they were timely, and seemed to enhance the development of singing competence - the achievement of the explicit objective. Such practices worked to produce cultural masculinity and femininity communities of practice within the Singing Group. This is consistent with Preece (2006) who suggests that because social practices are not normally a stated objective, they can be inferred to have been enabled by a specific community of practice. It appears that individuals will engage in important identity work despite strict structures. Quedi may have genuinely sought to help Rosa, but the need to interact with her or to perform his sexual identity became most important to him at that particular moment.

All these practices appeared to hint at or to support heterosexual availability/preference within the group, consistent with Brook (1999), discussed in chapter three. On another occasion Quedi went up on stage to perform his song.

Vignette: A lack of singing competence can be compensated for through the performance of sexually attractive identities

Immediately after a performance, the group asks, 'Who is next?'

Quedi steps out and chooses a larger stage (which is lifted up like a small balcony), instead of performing at the platform like everyone else before

him. Because the chairs in the hall are joined together, it is difficult to manoeuvre them. The audience has to keep turning their necks to the right to watch Quedi performing. It is better to observe performers on the platform than from this stage. Some people in the group seem uncomfortable turning their necks and are murmuring. Quedi shouts, 'Some people know me'. 'No, we don't!' the group responds. Another man in the group mumbles something unintelligible and other students laugh. Quedi shouts, 'Shut up!' and a bellow of laughter breaks again from the group. Quedi is tall, elegant and appears very confident in the way he presents himself on stage. He is the tallest man in the group. He also attracts the attention of the group, particularly women, to himself. When he starts performing his song however, he makes a mistake and the group, particularly the men, thunder with laughter. He starts all over again. The women who had joined him also dance, one by one, and seem to tease him as they wiggle their bottoms pushing them backwards while going round and round about and in front of Quedi. Each time he follows the women with his eyes fixed on their backsides as they continue to wiggle them, but he is still trying to sing. The emotions of the group are very high. This performance is the most hilarious act in the group so far. When the performance is finished, the group claps, makes joyful noises and ululations erupt from among the women (Field notes: 18th observation, spring 2008).

The vignette suggests that, the body is a very important feature in the construction of identity and also a particular kind of identity. For instance, Quedi's body does not only produce him as a man, but also as an attractive individual as seen through the eye. Quedi is drawing the attention of the group to his presence for instance in that he says 'Some people know me'. The group says 'No we don't', when Quedi shouts,

'Shut up'. He is then laughed at for making a mistake during his performance, but he does not seem to pay much attention to this response. This is because, although Quedi seems more attractive to women, compared to the other men in the group, being laughed at can be an attempt to lower his status in relation to the other men. This suggests that men resent his performance in that it draws the attention of women to him and not to them. This suggests that the men within the group may be in competition over the attention of the women, consistent with Pattmann (2005) discussed in chapter three, who found similar phenomena among the male students he researched. Quedi treated the instance as 'comic', despite it being an embarrassing moment, presumably so that he did not 'lose face'. This suggests that sometimes it was possible to combine the explicit objective of the group with gendered and sexual identity work. It also indicates that sometimes the lack of competence within the explicit objective of the Singing Group could be compensated for by a high status performance of gendered identity work. It is important to note however that the women's performances of their sexual identity in this case seemed to sexually objectify them which is consistent with Howson (2013), Hooks (2003), Thomas (2003), Brook (1999) and Gaunlette (1999). This is because the performances of dance involving exaggerated body movements suggest an awareness of what is considered a sexually attractive body (in this case, the bottoms). The women may have learned from Quedi's previous dance around Rosa to dance as they perceived he may have expected. It can also be argued that the women were teasing him perhaps in reciprocation of his previous actions towards Rosa, in play, or in an attempt to subvert how women may have been expected to act/dance in public spaces.

In this case, the body seemed to play an important role where, for instance, the eye

worked to control the singing performance. This is because, the more the people stared at the performance, and made gestures that worked to support the performer's competence, the more vigorously the individuals danced. This dance involved exaggerated body movements which continued to intensify with the staring. This performance was not followed by feedback given by the facilitator or the group. It seems that in this case, the bodily responses of laughter, clapping, ululations and gestures of encouragement indicated that the performance was judged competent or already incompetent considering that Quedi had made a mistake initially. The performances alongside the singing seemingly hinted at or supported heterosexuality; the mistake made during the singing was not noticed, or was ignored.

With one exception, the analysis also suggests that all the women's practices conformed to what appeared to be a heterosexual ideal within the Singing Group.

Vignette: Non-conformity to group regulation of heterosexual identity

While the group recognised and valued certain sexualised performances of heterosexual identities, one example suggests that there were codes of what were acceptable and not acceptable performances of feminine sexual identity within the group:

The singing session is in progress and it is extremely cold in winter. Cecilia enters the hall wearing a shiny, silver-coloured shower coat and is removing it while at the same time trying to find a place to sit. She is wearing an extremely tiny yellow outfit so that her pair of knickers is visible from the back with the slightest movement she makes, and also uncovered part of her buttocks. She is

also wearing an extraordinary pair of high-heeled shoes which look like a pair of heeled flip-flops. The shoe laces appear somehow homemade from different strips cut from various coloured pieces of cloth - yellow, green, blue and red. They are criss-crossed from her feet to the knees where they are tied into a knot. As she passes, the students look at each other and begin to giggle and whisper while staring at her. (*I am beginning to get quite disturbed at the reaction of others towards Cecilia*). She is wearing make-up such as lipstick, has shaped and lined her eyebrows, but in a way that seems exaggerated, compared to how women generally wear their make-up. Cecilia sits two seats away from me. After a short while Judy, a member of the Singing Group, walks to her and points to the refreshments table, but Cecilia shakes her head perhaps meaning she does not want to eat. Nonetheless, she audibly articulates to Judy that she would be performing a song on stage. Within a short time, Judy is seen exiting the hall. About ten minutes later, Judy returns carrying a bag. She whispers into Cecilia's left ear. Then the two women stand up and are seen walking to the back of the hall and exit behind a purple curtain. They return to the hall after about 10 minutes or so, but Cecilia has changed clothes and is now wearing an elegant-looking African outfit - a long skirt, top and elaborate headdress. She goes up to the platform to perform a song. She seems to outperform many other performances completed so far within the group. There is a long applause when she finishes her performance. She heightens the emotions of the group, particularly when she incorporates dance into her singing (Field notes: 12th observation, spring, 2008).

The vignette illustrates an observation of a singing performance in a competition held to select expert singers for further training in preparation for the group Student Union competition. Cecilia's case can be interpreted from various angles. For

instance, Cecilia may have worn her dress assuming that the Singing Group event was similar to a night club. Some of the students had worn similar outfits at a previous event organised by the Dance Group Christmas party. The event was held on 22nd November, 2007 to welcome new students in autumn term. During the event, the female students wore tiny clothes, similar to the very short dress Cecilia was wearing. The Dance Group teacher had asked the group to dress appropriately in that after the event, new students would be taken out to show them the local night clubs within the university location. This means that what may be appropriate in one group may be inappropriate in another, and also suggests that for that event there may have been an explicit social objective to the group activities, which Cecilia may have misconceived. This means that dress code may depend on the type of a social occasion of a social group and that some individuals' awareness and interpretation of what is appropriate attire was different to that of others.

Cecilia's dress did not match the subtle dress code of the Singing Group, and thus was resisted and modified by the group, which is consistent with Preece (2006) who suggest that gender practices are policed in order to maintain their purity. This was accomplished not just through laughter and unpleasant staring practices (as observed in the Dance Group) which Preece (2006) suggest can be threatening, consistent with Connell's (2012) analysis (see chapter three, p. 86). The student was coerced to conform to dress code, on the spot, within the Singing Group. The also vignette suggests that there were spare clothes available on the day of the event, or were always there reserved for such eventualities. This response suggests that, at times, implicit conventions are made explicit in group activities. It seems that the dress was perceived as unrespectable for women as Cecilia was almost nude. Coercion to a

dress code seemed to allow conformity to compulsory heterosexuality perhaps not to police her, but to save her and the group from embarrassment.

Quedi's first dance around Rosa and the second dance with the other three women seemed more objectifying to the women to an observer. Nonetheless, because the women were dressed in trousers, they did not seem to objectify themselves in the same way as Cecilia. It seems that Cecilia was being coerced to conform to an ideal image of a woman within the group. The seemingly required appropriate behaviour of the Singing Group was not only confined to a dress code, but also to an implied social interactive behaviour which was expected to conform to heterosexuality. The following vignette exhibits an instance where a moment of social interaction between Jeddy and Cecilia during a singing performance did not conform to the expected behaviour. Jeddy (female) was a student and regularly participated in the Singing Group activities.

Vignette: Signaling homosexuality

The analysis of this vignette suggests that the performances of students' sexual identities were expected to conform to heterosexuality, consistent with Connell (2012), Brook (1999) and Butler (1990).

It is Jeddy's turn to perform a song solo, sitting on the second step to the stage in the hall while others wait for their turns. The other members of the group are staring and seem to whisper to one another, perhaps because she is the only one who performs her song while seated so far. Cecilia is standing by the computer

and moves towards Jeddy. She pats Jeddy's right shoulder with her left arm and catches her by surprise. Cecilia then pecks Jeddy on her right cheek but Jeddy edges away from Cecilia, which suggests that she is feeling uncomfortable. While still seated on the step, Jeddy shoves herself away from Cecilia to the far left, but then Cecilia keeps following her. The audience stares at the two and some members of the group hold their mouths with one or two hands (appearing shocked, feeling embarrassed, anxious or alarmed). Others giggle and some students just stare, halfway trying to smile (Field notes: 4th observation, winter, 2008).

It could be suggested that Cecilia was trying to create humour in the group by introducing a 'joke' related to homosexuality. It is also possible that she was performing her homosexual identity and this worked in subversion to heterosexuality. It is important to note also that a heterosexual social interaction initiated by men or women, such as Mobi's and Quedi's cases, did not attract negative reactions from the group, but seemed acceptable. No man in the Singing Group exhibited behaviour which signaled homosexuality. Heterosexual performances seemed to facilitate the reification and the fixing of the 'normal' and the appropriate identities within the context of the Singing Group. This seems to relate to mainstream notions of what are appropriate femininity, and masculinity practices (see chapter three). This is consistent with Brook's (2003), Connell's (1995), Butler's (2011) notion of compulsory heterosexuality which they argues is enacted and reinforced within social contexts where social values and norms are interpreted. These practices are reproduced, shifted and underpinned in social contexts' communities of practice and is consistent with Preece (2006) who suggests that gender identity performances are policed in an attempt to maintain their purity. In

this case, it would appear that Cecilia's behaviour is being resisted, corrected and marginalised in subtlety or overtly.

The analysis of the Singing Group suggests that the body played a vital role in the construction of singing competence. The body also played an active part in the responses to, and evaluation of, performances and gender. The students created spaces within the more rigid singing sessions in which they engaged in social identity work, where they produced their masculinity and femininity identities. This kind of identity production did not seem to require expertise in singing, and sometimes it seemed to give the actors some sort of status as particular men and women initiated social interaction between with members of the opposite sex within the group.

The analysis further suggested that the students extended masculinity and femininity identity practices and engaged the body in practices which seemed to produce an attractive masculine identity and an attractive feminine identity. This identity work was initiated by men and involved hip movements, shaking and vibrating the body, which the women reciprocated through practices such as wiggling bottoms, which worked to produce an attractive feminine identity. This social identity work also seemed to give certain actors elevated status, and these sometimes compensated for a lack of singing expertise.

Although the practices seemed to be potentially disruptive to the singing sessions, they also seemed to sometimes enhance the process of learning to sing. Apparently, the teacher and the group implicitly judged when the practices were potentially

disruptive and had subtle ways of addressing the issue, and these included laughter and staring.

The analysis further suggests that social identity work was significant to the students, in the sense that the students used any available opportunity and acted rapidly in the production of those sexually attractive identities I have discussed. These seemed to be supported through bodily gestures such as joint laughter, clapping, making joyful noises. Some other gestures, for instance fidgeting on seats, worked to support and also to suggest disapproval of practices or lack of competence in singing. The analysis also suggests that although gender practices hinted at or normalised heterosexuality within the Singing Group context, there was also some resistance to conforming to these practices. For example there are two instances involving Cecilia which suggest an attempt to subvert what Connell (2011), Butler (2011) and Brook (1999) refer to as compulsory heterosexuality, and dress code within the group.

The production of an attractive masculine identity was responded to by the production of an attractive feminine identity which appeared potentially oppressive to the women. This raises the question of the agency of the women in the group, as to whether their responses were spontaneous or intended, a question which will be discussed further in the concluding chapter.

Conclusion of the Singing Group analysis

The analysis of the Singing Group has suggested that although learning in a social context can be set for the achievement of an explicit objective, such as learning to sing in the Singing Group, the context can also be used for other purposes. The analysis further suggests that the body played a vital role in the construction of student identities in relation to singing competence as a physiological phenomenon. This refers to the real body in relation to its agency, as in voice pitches, rather than it being a social construction, for instance in what is sexually attractive in relation to what is not. The body also worked to influence the evaluation of singing in relation to competence through body language, which sometimes encouraged or discouraged a performance. The analysis has also suggested that the students engaged in masculinity and femininity practices which created the awareness of the presence of the students as men, to which the women seemed to reciprocate by performing their gender through femininity practices. The students also engaged the body in practices which produced sexually attractive masculine and feminine identities. These practices were initiated by the men and were subsequently reciprocated by the women. This identity work seemed to signal or support heterosexuality. The analysis has also suggested that masculinity and femininity practices which were somehow normalised within the group were being subverted through practices which signaled, mocked, or supported homosexuality. These practices seemed to enhance learning, but with some policing which worked to address potential disruption to the singing sessions. These sessions were very important in that they provided contexts in which the students created spaces for identity work. Sometimes the identity works seemed

to compensate for a lack of singing expertise, or enhance learning to sing and accorded other significant statuses to those who could not sing. The students also responded psychologically to group phenomena, for instance heightened emotions or tensions during the sessions or the song performances. These emotions influenced the evaluation of singing expertise and also to correct behaviour, for instance through staring and laughter. The group also extended supportive gestures, for instance by helping Cecilia to wear more appropriate clothes which allowed her to fit in within the group. In the following concluding chapter, I will compare and contrast the Dance Group and Singing Group practices. I will then draw final conclusions about the groups based on the whole thesis, in order to answer the questions set to be answered in this thesis in chapter two.

Chapter Six Thesis Conclusion

Introduction

This chapter highlights the main arguments drawn from the study of the Dance Group and the Singing Group researched for this thesis. As discussed throughout this analysis, the study centred on learning which is facilitated by social practices in relation to the production of student identities, gender, and the role of the body within the extracurricular group contexts.

The main conclusion drawn from this thesis is that in structured learning within institutional and organisational settings, individuals do not only focus on institutions' or organisations' stated explicit objectives. Individuals use the same contexts for other purposes which I have referred to in this thesis as 'implicit objectives'. These implicit objectives are linked to gender performances of masculinities and femininities in which the body plays a key role (see chapters four and five). Yet, implicit objectives may not have obvious relevance to structured learning, but they may be significant to individuals compared to what is externally expected to be important. Identifying the implicit objectives, recognising, and understanding that these are meaningful is an important step in bringing other aspects of student life in university to the centre of analysis, and supporting students in identified areas.

The analysis has also suggested that the human body played an important role in the production of student identities, both within the explicit and the implicit objectives.

The literature which I explored to foreground and conceptualise the student groups investigated for this thesis suggests paucity in other aspects of student life, particularly extracurricular activities within communities of practice (see Clegg et al, 2011).

Summary of literature existing in extracurricular activities

The literature explored in Chapter One suggests that research in extracurricular activities which research student identity within communities of practice is scant (Clegg et al 2011). Thus, I have drawn on a wide range of relevant works which focus on these activities and identified distinct strands of research. There is a strand focusing on student involvement, integration and retention, including the work of Astin (1975), Herbert (1992) and Wilson (1999). Within the same strand of research, Gaskell et al (1994) and Ackerman (2005), centre on academic and employment skills. The works of Sedlacek (1999) and Chotimongkol and Jones (2008) explore extracurricular activities and student development of social networks in relation to the establishment of important friendships and relationships. These analysts suggest that the latter contribute to better life experience for students in their academic institutions. These conclusions are consistent with Cotterell (2007) which also suggested that students develop leadership skills and academic skills in extracurricular activities. The aspects of student engagement in extracurricular activities briefly summarised here are ultimately linked to academic success and future employment. These studies examine student groups from externally defined

objectives and perspectives based on notions of what is ‘useful learning’ as opposed to what is ‘not useful’ (see chapter one).

In contrast to the works I have discussed, there is a strand in research of Yorke and Knight (2006) which critique generalised notions of academic success and employability. They argue that a focus on these two means that other aspects of learning, for instance learning aesthetics are marginalised. These analysts recognise that extracurricular activities play an important role in student academic success and future employment. Their critique is confined to academic contexts where they argue that a focus on these two aspects for undergraduates, ‘good learning’ is compromised. They point out the difficulties related to the university’s direct evaluation of skills in order to distinguish those developed within extracurricular activities contexts from those developed in academic contexts. The analysts further contend that the development of skills is not confined to these particular contexts, in that they can be acquired in other contexts such as in the home, in employment, or other life’s aspects.

This leads to a third strand which focusing on gender from Chachra et al (2006), while Clegg et al (2011) extend analyses to include the wider issues of gender, class, ethnicity, and religious influences in student participation in extracurricular activities. These analyses are similar to my work in that they include an analysis of gender in extracurricular activities, within communities of practice as used by Wenger (1998) and Lave and Wenger (1991). The theory is used as a way of understanding how learning in extracurricular activities can be understood as legitimate peripheral participation in student-learner identity development in communities of practice, and for the development of future personal, social,, professional and career identity development.

The contribution of this thesis to knowledge in extracurricular field

Based on the two case studies of the Dance and Singing Groups researched for this study, the analysis within this thesis extends Clegg et al's (2011) works to include gender and the role of the human body in the production of student identities within extracurricular activities.

The analysis of the Dance Group and the Singing Group suggests that within one specific social context, multiple identities or aspects of identities can be developed as opposed to only one. The analysis suggests that these relate to the explicit, stated objectives (i.e. learning to dance, learning to sing) and the implicit objective(s) (related to implicit identity work, linked to social interactions and the performance of gendered and sexual identities, and body identity). Body identity here refers to the role of the physiological body, psychological body and socially constructed body in the production of identities such as singer identity through voice pitch and dance identity, for instance facilitated by young age and agility. However, age and pain can inhibit the development of expertise in dance and this is consistent with Shilling's (2012) theory of corporeal realism, in relation to body agency in such activities. These two aspects and also psychological influence can affect the production of sexually attractive body identities in social contexts.

As discussed in the analysis chapters, the stated objective context played an important role in providing spaces which facilitated engagement in implicit identity work. The analyses suggest that this was gendered and involved the performance of sexual identities. The latter seemed to be significant to some students within the

groups, as women or men. For instance, within the Dance Group, the students attempted to find and use spaces during the formal dance sessions to engage in other identity work. After unsuccessful attempts, the students gathered together in small groups after the sessions and engaged in activities which appeared like further practice of the dances learned during the formal sessions. In this informal context, some of the female students engaged their body in exaggerated dance movements and these worked to construct a sexually attractive feminine identity. The men in the group responded to the women by moving closer and observing them, but without dancing themselves. The women seemed very strong in that except for one case (see chapter four), the men did not attempt to dance with or touch the women. The women used this opportunity for gendered interactions and the performance of their sexual identities within the groups using their body to produce a sexually attractive identity which seemed to produce or support heterosexual identity.

The sexual identity performances accorded the performers elevated status compared to others. The acquisition of such status was not dependent on whether or not the individual was competent within the explicit objective. What counted was the performance of a sexually attractive identity. It is the seemingly expert dance identities within the explicit objective who initiated the exaggerated bodily dances to produce a sexually attractive identity. This identity at times also worked to compensate for some students' lack of expertise in dance and in singing (see chapters four and five). This suggests that a sexually attractive feminine identity was still more important, compared to the dance expert identity within the Dance Group]. Such femininity performances are consistent with what Connell (2009) refers to as emphasised femininity which can become oppressive, particularly because not all

women are able to live up to this perceived ideal. It was observed in the Dance Group that not all women engaged in exaggerated dances.

However, the context of the Singing Group did not allow the students' implicit identity work after the sessions. This was due to time constraints and because the hall in which the students performed their activities was locked at a specific time. This issue was resolved by utilization of spaces within the rigidly structured formal singing sessions. In such instances, the students acted rapidly at any available opportunity to interact with others. The students also performed their gender and sexual identities even when such performances seemed potentially disruptive to the singing sessions. The teacher of the group controlled the situation so that to an outsider, often these acts seemed to be part and parcel of the singing performances. Nonetheless, she intervened when such acts seemed likely to seriously disrupt a singing session. There were specific gendered identities that seemed to accord the students elevated status (see chapter five). In this group, it was the men who initiated bodily practices which included exaggerated stretching, shaking and vibrating their bodies, for instance grinding the hips, while dancing, as in one case where a man danced round a woman. Such actions were responded to by some women by wiggling their bottoms. These performances also seemed to produce or support heterosexual identities. Nonetheless, there is one case which suggests a resistance to conformity to an idealised form of compulsory heterosexual identity within the group. These performances are also consistent with Connell's (2013) idea of hegemonic masculinity within the Singing Group, but not all the men in this context performed these masculinities and there seemed to be some sort of competition between the men as Quedi's case suggests (see chapter three, p.161).

My analysis drawn from this thesis adds a fourth strand in extension to Clegg et al's (2011) work to include an analysis of extracurricular activities in relation to the production of identities, gender, and the role of the body within communities of practice.

The significance of the body and gender to extracurricular activities

The researcher for this thesis has approached extracurricular activities as a participant observer, employing techniques also used by Chotimongkol and Jones (2008) in similar contexts. While Chotimongkol and Jones (2008) focused on social networks, and leadership skills, my analysis extends this work by looking at identity production, gender and the role of the human body in extracurricular activities within communities of practice. In my study, the body played an important role in the production of student identity facilitated by real physiological phenomena within the explicit objective in relation to singing and dancing. The body also played an important role in the social construction of identity, for instance a sexually attractive identity. Sexually attractive identities attracted a lot of attention from both men and women within the group. This phenomenon is consistent with Brook's (1999) analysis which suggests that women act out what is heterosexually expected of them in public, and then becoming docile bodies for male gazes (see chapter three).

The analysis for this study has suggested that extracurricular activities are set for the purposes of involvement, integration, academic development and future employment. However, these are also sites in which students engage in activities where the body plays a vital role in the production of identities in relation to explicit learning, and in

relation to other implicit learning. The latter relates to social and gendered objectives and the human body. The implicit refers to practices the students engaged in, which they may or may have not been aware of, for instance, that their performances were producing their femininity and masculinity identities, and body identities.

I have argued in my analysis of both the Dance Group and the Singing Group that the body played a vital role in the production of student identities in relation to the explicit objectives – learning to dance and learning to sing. I have also argued that the physiological body affected group activities, for example in the division of singing according to the pitch of voice. I have also discussed constraints related to age or illness which impeded dancing in the Dance Group.

The eye also affected engagement and the production of gendered and sexual identities. Staring seemed to produce more exaggerated masculinity and femininity performances and vice versa. These are examples where perhaps there were psychological effects relating to bodily engagement in activities. This phenomenon is consistent with corporeal realism which relates to the physiological body (for example, body agency in voice pitch production) and the psychological body. For instance, some students hesitated when they found it difficult to sing. Observations also indicated the importance of the socially constructed body which worked to produce a sexually attractive body through the performance of exaggerated dances in which some students did not join in. This aspect of extracurricular activities was not explored in the previous studies I have discussed. In order to develop these insights, I draw on a combination of theories: Communities of Practice (Lave and

Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998), corporeal realism (Shilling, 2012) and feminist theory (Hooks, 2003; Brook, 1999; Howson; 2013).

Extracurricular activities as a site for subversion and/or reproduction of gender interactions and (the question of agency)

The analysis of the practices of the two student extracurricular activities suggests that these contexts also work as sites for the reproduction of gendered relations. These relations can be oppressive, particularly in sexually objectifying women. There are other times when these same practices work for subversion, and this raises the question of agency. Based on participant observation, the method I used to collect the data, it is not possible to tell whether or not the students utilised agency in participating in the objectifying practices discussed in chapters four and five. This points to the inherent limitations of participant observation (see chapter two), and thus there is a need to consider the inclusion of other methods such as the use of interviews, to help explore the question of agency in future studies focusing on extracurricular activities. Nonetheless, participant observation allowed me to participate and to observe the practices of the students. I was an interpreter of the practices I observed during the activities, rather than relying on student accounts. Participant observation is a particular strength in that it helped me to explore the implicit practices, involving the three aspects of the body discussed in the analysis chapters. Individual accounts sometimes may not be consistent with what really happens, but what they think analysts seek to hear, consistent with previous analysis of interviews conducted as part of the Institutional Focused Study in Maina's (2007), Critchley's (1999) work and Burr's (1995) analyses.

From my analysis, it is difficult to be certain whether objectifying practices in the student social group contexts I researched were intentional, or spontaneous. The choice to engage in specific gendered performances is sometimes referred to as having agency (see chapter three). This suggests that individuals have a choice in the actions they take in their world, such as the group contexts I investigated. However, individuals are not entirely free to make choices of actions because, as argued by Giddens (1997), and feminist analysts such as Preece (2006), Hooks (2003) and Brook (1999), choices are enabled and constrained by social structures which people use to make sense of their world and hence what they do. In my groups for instance, the human eye was very powerful in enabling and also constraining actions, both within formal and informal contexts. For instance, women's performances of potentially sexually objectifying practices can potentially lead to oppression. This is why some people have argued that such women are not victims of male oppression. They contend that women bring such oppression to themselves, a notion consistent with Anderson and Doherty (2008, p. 8-13); (see also Thomas 2003 advice to women). Individuals who hold such an opinion further contend that women engaging in these processes may experience a gain in relation to status and identity (see Brook, 1999). Brook (1999) suggest that women's femininity performances in specific social contexts are influenced by what they have learned in society, and that this relates to their perception of what is expected of them in relation to men, which they then perform in social contexts.

Feminists contend that choices are enabled and constrained by existing social structures which influence gender relations in given social contexts (Paechter, 2006; Preece, 2006; Pattman, 2005; Hook, 2003; Brook, 1999; Pini, 2001) (see gender

section in chapter three). These analysts choice in every performance in any given social context is always intertwined with gender, which is learned, and through which the social world is structured, and that this happens to the advantage of men over women. This suggests that individuals' behaviour is enabled or constrained by social practices of a specific context, which they use to make sense of their world, consistent for instance with Pini (2001), Wetherell et al (2001), Brook (1999) and Giddens (1997) who critique a simplistic notion of agency.

The focus of feminist analysis is how gendered practices are produced through performances in social contexts and become resistant to change. Feminist analysis centres on instances of oppressive gendered performances and how these are resisted in social contexts. The majority of the women in the Dance Group engaged in femininity and bodily practices which seemed to give them elevated status compared to others. The dominant ones included protruding bottoms and raising chests up and forward while dancing. The women also tried to brush against or touch the men with these parts of their body, seemingly teasing them. Some of the women were also vocally radical compared to the women in the Singing Group. The men who participated in the Dance Group during such 'informal contexts' stared at the women without attempting to converse or dance with them. Nonetheless, there is the one case where Mobi danced with Ngyma. This case was notably different, in that these two had a conversation then danced together. Ngyma was not engaged in the exaggerated dances and this distinction is significant, but such practices did not become fully established. This practice might be interpreted in one context as one way in which women might put themselves into a typical form of sexual objectification, as argued for instance by Pini (2001). Hooks (2003) in particular

raises the risk of such practices in relation to the production of residual identity connected to ethnicity. She argues, for instance, that such performances have the potential of essentialism, objectification and oppression of specific groups of people in social contexts (see chapter three).

I have argued that some of these practices within the Dance Group can be interpreted as resistance, consistent with Brook (1999). In chapter four, I have used an example of an instance that suggests that the women were not only subversive in bodily practices, but also verbally radical. For instance, in one Dance Group's event which included approximately one hundred attendees, the same three women, Alice, Etho and Mboka who were radical in dance took to the front, took the microphone from the hands of Andy (male student), a member of the group and one by one articulated that they wanted to vie for seats in the Student Union. The manner in which the women spoke seemed to put the men in lower status than themselves. The men only watched the women without saying a word, but in the end, the women did not vie for the seats after all these performances. Although it appeared like the men were powerless in as much as they did not seem to react, they were very strong in that their very presence facilitated these seemingly subversive performances, which worked to produce these women as radical.

In contrast, in the Singing Group, the women and men often danced together in a small group, or alone on stage. During the sessions, there were also instances where interactions between the members of the different sexes had intimate moments. For instance, there were instances where two individuals hugged while standing up,

kissed, or held each other for prolonged periods than might be expected in public, particularly during the seemingly rigidly structured singing sessions. These practices suggest that such performances related to other needs of students, which the literature in extracurricular activities does not explore. Nonetheless, as I discussed earlier, there were signs of resistance to what seemed oppressive to some individuals in the Singing Group, but this did not take a radical form as in the Dance Group.

Influence on professional understanding of my work with groups accessing university

From the analysis of the student groups, it is not possible to make direct links between my participants and the groups I work with in the community, because the students are a more international group, while in my professional role I work with people who live here in the UK. Nonetheless, I can see many parallels between the two. I have argued that the literature on extracurricular activities focuses on academic success and employment, and has not looked in detail at social enjoyment and sexual identities performed in these contexts, which my study suggests are important to students. Similarly, when I presented at the events discussed in chapter one, I often focused on issues of academic achievement and employment. The outcomes of my thesis have helped me to broaden my previous understanding about what might be important to prospective students, even in attending my events in the community. This means that future events will include a discussion that entails details about other things which take place at university, such as extracurricular activities which could be of importance to students. These could work to motivate

students to enroll in university, based on the knowledge that life in such an institution has other aspects, rather than purely focusing on academic work, in that these might be of special interest to students.

As discussed in chapters four and five, the student participants attended the groups regularly, and the numbers continued to increase throughout the year of the research. This was still the case during the first two sessions I attended in the year that followed, just before I detached from the research field. This study and future analysis deriving from it may have implications for student retention, and how we value what is important to students, including that which is not immediately obvious as relevant to their studies. This also means that it is important to continue exploring, to identify and set up relevant extracurricular activity groups for a diversity of students in academic institutions which should be supported. These findings may have relevance to university students, particularly international students, and the question of whether there are implications for women. It is important for further studies in this area to consider other methods which could help to explore the question of agency. Such studies could explore how oppressive gendered practices might be identified by students themselves, and resisted within a specific community of practice.

In relation to my professional identity development as a teacher and researcher, I discussed my anxieties at the beginning in relation to my future role in these two aspects of Kenyan society (See p. 7), consistent with Maina (2001; 2007). My concern was how I would work particularly with women, specifically to give them voice in a culture that marginalises and silences women. In the initial stages of the

study, I was struggling to report my initial findings because they did not seem consistent with some of the literature, or what I had expected to find. During the writing, I realised that the very practices I had not regarded as knowledge and often found difficult to articulate, became key aspects in the main analysis of the data. These practices linked to the construction of gender identity through the body. Through the doctoral journey, I have developed knowledge, acquired skills and gained confidence to engage in gender studies in order to give voice to the marginalised, particularly women.

In extension of Wenger's (1998) theory, I propose a theory of social learning which includes gender, and the role of body in the analysis of extracurricular activities. Such a theory would encompass learning within explicit objectives, implicit gendered work and the role of the physiological body, the psychological body, and the socially constructed body. These are important aspects in social settings within communities of practice, in relation to production of identities. The findings from the analysis of empirical data in this thesis suggest that these three aspects of social practice can work together to enhance learning.

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Appendices

In this section, I will use some excerpts mentioned in the main text of this thesis as examples to help clarify what was going on within the student groups.

Appendix 1

This appendix is a table that presents the nationalities which were represented within the student groups researched for this thesis.

Appendix 2

This excerpt shows examples of the activities of the Dance Group and other events as advertised on the university Student Union website.

Appendix 3

The excerpt used in appendix 3 is a hand-out given to the Singing Group by the instructor. It is an example of the types of songs taught in the group. Some of the songs were also performed during the group events.

Appendix 4

This appendix illustrates that the Dance Group and Singing Group engaged in other bigger events in addition to the regular activities and group events.

Appendix 5

A copy of the letter I wrote to seek permission to research the student groups.

Appendix 6

The letter seeking the consent of students to participate in the research

Appendix 1

Nationalities represented in the student groups

This appendix is a table that presents the nationalities which were represented within the student groups researched. There may have been other nationalities present that are not represented in this table. This is because they did not stay in the group long to allow me to listen to or engage in conversations with them, a possible means through which discussions about where they came from would naturally emerge.

Table

America (US)	Jamaica	Sierra Leone
Antigua	Japan	Somalia
China	Kenya	Tanzania
Congo	Nigeria/Dominican	Trinidad and Tobago
England	Malawi	United States
Ethiopia	Russia	Zambia
India	Scotland	Zimbabwe
Ireland	Senegal	

Appendix 2

African Caribbean Society 4th week, autumn 2007

African Caribbean Society Dance Group – It's back! The ACS Dance Group is here to offer you a wide variety of African Caribbean dance forms including: Reggae, Salsa, Drum, Calypso, Dancehall, Afro Caribbean Folk, Latino and Belly dance; on Mondays, from 6 pm to 8 pm – The Students' Union Venue.

Semester 1

Week 4: African Caribbean Folk Fusion.

Week 5: Salsa/Hip Hop and Soca.

Week 6: Hip Hop/Urban Street.

Week 7: Jazz Ballet/Salsa.

Week 8: Belly Dancing/African Caribbean Folk.

Week 9: Revision and Choreography.

Week 10: Revision and Choreography.

For all levels – Beginner to expert/men and women.

For more information, see: [http:// ... facebook.com/group ...](http://...facebook.com/group...)

Appendix 3

Singing Group Hand-out

The hand-out presents the typical activities of the Singing Group and examples of the songs they practiced. The group hand-out given at the beginning of the introductory singing workshops is discussed in chapter five. The document shows some of the activities of the group, including a part of the list of songs given for practice in preparation for the subsequent sessions (ACS Welcome hand-out Week 7, 2007/2008).

Introduction to singing: What is singing?

Singing is the art of producing sound with the voice

Nearly everyone who can speak can sing since singing is sustained speech.

It can be formal e.g. professional singing for recording in studio singing or informal, for example singing in the shower.

Voice projection

Voice projection is the strength of speaking or singing whereby the voice is used loudly and clearly.

It is the technique which can be employed to demand respect and attention, such as when a teacher is talking to class, or simply to be heard clearly, as in an actor.

Breath technique is essential for proper voice projection.

Stance is also important, and it is recommended that singers stand up straight with feet and shoulder width apart and your upstage foot (right foot if right handed e.tc) slightly forward. This improves your balance and your breathing.

Group task

Group song: Joy (to the World) from the Preacher's Wife (1996).

We will improve on this song each week.

Joy to the World the Lord is come, let earth receive her King...

Everybody sing joy

Sing joy to the World

All over the World

Sing, oh

Sing joy, everybody sing...

Joy to the World

Theoretical preparation for singing activities

- Background to a song.
- Print lyrics to the song you are going to sing.
- What is the message of the song?

When was it composed? Was the timing important? e. g. John Lennon's 'Dreamer'

Vietnamese (peace message)?

- Is this message something people can relate to?
- What key words are used to portray feelings and thoughts in the song?
- Find out the background of the writer.
- What is the relevance of the song? E.g. Whitney Houston – make it on my own – personal fight with management to make it on her own.

3. Think of personal situation you can relate to:

- Examples of the songs practiced by the Singing Group and the composers.
- Redemption Songs, e.g. by Bob Marley.
- Love songs, e.g. by Sean Paul, Whitney Houston, Mariah Carey and Rihanna.
- Religious songs e.g. Joy to the World.

4. Preparation for a singing session

- Regular vocal warm up – relaxing larynx (voice box) to prevent over-extending the voice and damaging muscles.
- Vocal projection – speaking or singing loudly and clearly.
- Breath technique.

5. Group technique –Joy to the world (from the preacher's wife (1996).

Appendix 4

Student engagement in other events

This appendix indicates that the student groups were engaged in other bigger events and activities which were not directly linked to dance and singing regular activities.

It's that time again you have the chance to put yourself forward to run ... university's best cultural and best all-round society 2007. The positions are the President, Treasurer, Secretary, Marketing Representative, 2 Events Representatives, Activities Representative, and Information Technology officer. If you would like to register for a position, please put your name forward by emailing ... @yahoo.co.uk with your name, student number and position. Register yourself by Monday 3rd March by 12 noon. You do not have to be a member of ACS to register your name. (Week 4: February, 2008).

Appendix 5

Permission to Research Student Groups

Dear

I am a research student who is interested in finding out the ways in which international students' engagement in clubs and societies can offer them support during their studies. I have a particular interest in African women but the study will involve students from other backgrounds who are involved in the clubs and societies that I am looking at.

Initially, I attended various groups in order to identify which ones would be most useful for my study. I had thought, just to familiarise myself with a range of clubs, in order to choose from them appropriate ones for my study.

I would now like to ask the permission of the group to continue to attend their meetings and to use the observations I make as part of my research. All the information I gather from the individuals and the groups will be kept strictly confidential and the names of the participants will not be disclosed to anyone else.

I hope that you will agree to take part, as I feel the research will make a valuable contribution to our understanding of how best to support students and the experience of international students in United Kingdom's universities.

I look forward to your reply.

Yours sincerely,

Mary Maina

Appendix 6

Informed Consent to Participate in Research

Appendix 6 in the following page is a copy of the letter which I presented to the student members of the groups seeking their consent to participate in the research. The appendix states the title of the research, focus, purpose, how it would be conducted, the part the students would play and also their rights to withdraw from participation should they wish to. It also states that the information gathered during the research would be treated as strictly confidential and that the research was of benefit and not harm. The students were also assured that their names and their academic institution would remain anonymous throughout data collection, recording, analysis, and also in dissemination.

The Research Title:

University student groups: an investigation of the role of extracurricular activities in relation to their benefits to academic life, with special reference to international students in UK's higher education institutions.

Researcher: Mary Maina

To understand the experiences of students who participate in university groups, in order to inform institutions of higher education on how best to support students.

Participation

This study will engage your consent in: Observations which will be made during the group meetings and activities where you will be engaged.

I ask your permission to observe these activities but any objection to participation will be honoured.

Discussion and general conversations during group activities

I request your permission to make my observations where you will be involved in group discussions and general conversations.

These will be based on the group activities you have been involved in at the university.

Your identity will be protected by the use of pseudonyms throughout. A summary of the findings will be made available for you to view either sent to you directly via email or posted at the African Caribbean Society's website or a way chosen by the participating groups. It is hoped that engagement in this research will help you reflect on the group activities perhaps in a way you had not have thought about throughout the academic year. If you would like to participate, please fill in the form below.

Your agreeing to be involved in this study is highly appreciated. Your written consent is required to confirm that you are doing this voluntarily and that you are aware that you have the right to withdraw from this study at any time.

I hereby consent to the following:

- Observations and discussions of the group during activities and meetings.
- Involvement in general conversations and interviews.
- To be part of group discussions.

Name:

Group:

Email address:

Telephone:

Mobile telephone:

Signature: