



Young people doing dance doing gender: relational analysis and thinking intersectionally

Beccy Watson 

Carnegie School of Sport, Leeds Beckett University, Leeds, UK

ABSTRACT

Scraton [(1992). *Shaping up to womanhood: Gender and girls' physical education*. Buckingham: Open University Press)] asserts in her conclusion to 'Shaping up to Womanhood' that feminist analysis of PE (and sport and leisure more broadly) needs to engage more directly with masculinity as a means to understanding the 'dynamics of gender'. Focusing on young people's involvement in recreational dance, this paper demonstrates how some of those dynamics of gender are played out, reproduced and resisted by both boys and girls who participate at community-based dance organisations. Selective data in the form of research frames are incorporated to illustrate how gender is constructed, enacted and embodied by young people engaged in recreational dance. Masculine and feminine hegemonies are highlighted and demonstrate that gender is both relational and intersectional. This contributes to ongoing analysis of masculinities and femininities as practices and processes imbued with complex power relations for young people.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 12 March 2018
Accepted 25 June 2018

KEYWORDS

Young people; recreational dance; gender as relational; thinking intersectionally

Introduction

This paper draws inspiration from Scraton's (1992) call, in her seminal text 'Shaping up to Womanhood', for a critical analysis of masculinity (as well as femininity) to inform understanding of the 'dynamics of gender'. Drawing on feminist theory and critical masculinity studies the paper aims to show how recreational dance is a significant context in which to assess the dynamics of gender. In doing so, it argues that gender is both relational and intersectional and it calls for masculinity studies to engage more fully with femininity and the feminine other. I am interested in dance and gender as a context in which we can explore and examine how young people 'learn' and 'do' gender (Paechter, 2006, 2012). This is informed by ongoing research interests and theoretical engagement with a feminist sociological analysis of leisure (Watson & Scraton, 2013; Watson & Scraton, 2017a) and a commitment to feminism and social justice across sport, leisure and PE more broadly (Long, Fletcher & Watson, 2017; Mansfield, Caudwell, Wheaton & Watson, 2017).

Analysis of boys' and girls' participation in recreational dance prompts consideration of the possibilities and limitations of 'alternative' masculinities and draws on theoretical accounts of hegemonic masculinities, pariah femininities, hegemonic femininities, gender hegemonies and to some extent inclusive masculinity and soft essentialism. I consider these concepts in relation to feminist theory and masculinity studies and assess their potential for relational analysis and thinking intersectionally. My research interests in masculinity and gender and dance to date have touched upon a number of questions that I re-examine in this paper. I seek to demonstrate how certain gender hegemonies are

CONTACT Beccy Watson  r.watson@leedsbeckett.ac.uk  Leeds Beckett University, Cavendish Hall, Headingley Campus, Leeds LS6 3QS, UK

manifest in and through dance and to explore the scope for pariah masculinities and femininities in dance.

The term 'young people' is used purposefully as a descriptive device as binaries of boys/masculinity and girls/femininity are often problematically simplistic. Meanwhile, young people's engagement in dance and the gendered and gendering nature of this involvement intersects with social class, race and sexuality (Ashley, 2009; Atencio & Wright, 2009; Polasek & Roper, 2011). I seek to contribute to understanding the ways in which gendered identities are embodied by individuals and are embedded in institutional and cultural practices and I frame this as thinking intersectionally (Watson, 2017; Watson, 2018; Watson & Ratna, 2011; Watson & Rodley, 2015; Watson & Scraton, 2013; Watson, Tucker, & Drury, 2013). As bodies are the sites and situations where the complexity of identity is played out, dance has the potential to contribute to mainstream debates on intersectionality. Bodies are formed via dynamic interactions across structure and agency and the body in dance represents a site through which to examine difference and account for power relations (Villa, 2011; Watson, 2017; Watson & Rodley, 2015; Watson & Scraton, 2013). My argument is that we need to acknowledge and account for multiple and complex factors that constitute, and through which young people are constitutive of, gendered, classed, racialised identities. The paper approaches dance as a practice or form of active engagement that is continuously informed by inter-relationships between space and embodiment.

Qualitative research data is selectively included in the paper to highlight various relational and intersectional aspects of the dynamics of gender that are evident across young people's participation in recreational dance. Data have been gathered across a number of projects and there are exciting possibilities and some epistemological challenges in revisiting research data in this way. Prior to outlining the methodological context of research data that are incorporated and discussed, the following sections trace theoretical and conceptual developments focused on masculinities and femininities, and thinking intersectionally.

The feminine other and the limits of masculinity studies

Established views assert that young people 'learn' and 'do' gender (Paechter, 2006; 2012; Pascoe, 2005; 2012; West & Zimmerman, 1987) via social interaction, that gender includes 'doing', as well as 'being' and 'having' (gender) as an identity (Coston & Kimmel, 2012). In situations where young people are actively encouraged to perform gender differently and embrace disruptive articulations of gender (in e.g. education), a fairly rigid gender binary of masculinity and femininity nonetheless remains as a pervasive backdrop (Markowitz & Puchner, 2016; Pascoe, 2012). Scraton's (1992) research demonstrated how femininity was embodied by individuals in relation to the gendered norms and expectations of institutional and broader ideological contexts (of school, family, friendship groups, popular culture and so on) and her empirical data evidenced how gender was both institutionalised and embodied by individuals and resulted in gender inequalities. Femininity continues to be considered as an antithesis and subordinated category to masculinity (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Gardiner, 2002; Messerschmidt, 2012). This informs my ongoing engagement with masculinity as a concept and critical masculinity studies as a potential complement to feminist theories of gender.

Somewhat ironically, analysis of femininity and femininities remains conspicuous by its continued absence in much theorising on masculinity (Gardiner, 2002; O'Neill, 2015; Pascoe, 2012; Schippers, 2007). Schippers (2007) for example, has called for the 'feminine other' to be placed at the centre of theories on gender hegemony. She pointed out that despite Connell's various attempts to locate femininity in the gender order (Connell, 1987, 1995) and calls to re-engage with 'emphasised femininities', particularly in relation to multiple and complex masculinities (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Messerschmidt, 2012), we have little conceptualisation of the relationship between femininity and gender hegemony. In light of this, Schippers asked if femininities can ever be hegemonic, and/or what the 'quality content' of hegemonic femininity would or could be based upon. She outlined a model of 'pariah femininities' (2007, p. 95) to highlight instances where women embody and

enact gender in ways that are non-normative, that reclaims the feminine 'other' as viable and visible (Gardiner, 2002). Messerschmidt (2012) has also employed the concept of pariah femininity to explore working-class gendered identities amongst girls in high school, identifying instances of young women's resistance to and re-appropriation of gender hegemony and gender normativities. Similarly, Pascoe's (2005, 2012) study of gender in high school argued for a concept of gender hegemony that does not reduce femininity to the behaviour of girls and masculinity to the behaviour of boys. Pascoe (2012, p. 6) offered an approach that 'looks at masculinity as a variety of practices and discourses that can be mobilized by and applied to both boys and girls'. From such a perspective, we can consider alternatives to gender norms and gendered practices (Butler, 1993). Schippers claimed that masculinity and femininity are more than practices, processes and/or sites of symbolism, they are conditions and contexts through which all social life is enacted and need to be understood as such.

Various scholars have argued that to situate masculinity and femininity as binaries, as antithetical and oppositional positions limits our analysis of how power relations exist in multiple contexts that manifest in gendered, and other, inequalities (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Coston & Kimmel, 2012; Gardiner, 2002; Pascoe, 2012; Schippers, 2007). Masculinity and femininity have long been considered as oppositional (for a recent overview of theorising masculinity and its implications and links to sport and leisure see Pringle, 2017). An ongoing issue for scholars and practitioners alike interested in accounting for and changing unequal gender relations is a rather precarious relationship between feminist theory and masculinity studies (Gardiner, 2002). This issue is particularly relevant in relation to young people and dance as masculinity is positioned as 'other' in the context of dance (Burt, 1994). I approach analyses of young people doing dance doing gender from a feminist perspective seeking to explore, critically, how masculinity is constitutive, and an outcome of, complex gender relations. Gender relations are dynamic and yet are persistently shaped by idealised notions of masculinity. Masculinity is ideological and discursive, it is a set of practices (even if only in terms of aspiration) and it is firmly institutionalised. Conceptually, identifying how masculinity achieves and maintains its ascendancy, the term hegemonic masculinity, as defined by and associated with the work of Raewyn Connell (1987; 1995; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005), continues to retain considerable significance (Messerschmidt, 2012). Certainly, reference to hegemonic and hegemony retains a focus on power that is meaningful in terms of exploring young people and gender. There have, however, been some proposals that hegemonic masculinity has diminished, notably as a consequence of more acceptance of gay male sexuality.

Shifting masculinity?

Some claims suggest that diminishing homo-hysteria and an increased tolerance of homosexuality has had a profound impact on masculinities in practice and has prompted new conceptualisations around inclusive masculinity that refute the continued significance of hegemonic masculinities (Anderson, 2009). Feminist critiques of inclusive masculinity however suggest that in emphasising increased inclusivity towards gay male sexuality, little or no attention is given to gender inequalities that continue to result from unequal sexual politics more broadly. O'Neill (2015) for instance, has warned that the concept of inclusive masculinity resonates with notions of post-feminism that has claimed significant advances in gender equality. O'Neill pointed out that Anderson's (2009) references to feminism and feminist theorising are scant, thus limiting the analytical credibility of the concept of inclusive masculinity. O'Neill argued for masculinity studies to confront rather than evade a post-feminist sensibility. Gill's (2007) concept of post-feminist sensibility conceptualised post-feminism as a tangible context for scrutiny and enquiry, requiring examination of how and where persistent dominant discourses continued to result in gendered inequalities. This was in contrast to some feminist critiques that referred to post-feminism as an epistemological frame or basis for theorising gender politics as 'beyond' gender inequalities and sexual politics.

Resonant with critiques of post-feminism and applied to the context of youth sports, Messner (2011) offered the concept 'soft essentialism' to explain contradictions and complexities associated

with apparent changes and increases in girls' involvement in sports. He highlighted how hegemonic claims regarding boys' 'natural' flair and propensity for sport persist. Messner concluded that in spite of a broader 'repertoire of masculinities' (2011, p. 166) available to young men they remain an 'unmarked category' (Messner 2011) in terms of gender inequality. This reproduces normativities and gender hegemonies rather than challenging or disrupting them. Messner acknowledged the significance of social class and its relationship to gender, in particular the negotiation and resistance expressed by working-class women and 'othered' women who fall outside the implicit middle class and white enclaves of soft essentialism. This prompts consideration of thinking intersectionally as a fundamental aspect of my feminist approach to examining young people and dance and gender.

Thinking intersectionally and relational analyses of gender

Intersectionality rejects additive approaches to gender, race, class, age, sexuality, (dis)ability, and aims to provide explanations of how these identity categories intersect and are routed through each other (Brah, 1996; Cho, Crenshaw, & McCall, 2013; Davis, 2008; Hill Collins & Bilge, 2016; Lewis 2009; McCall, 2005; Nash, 2008, 2016; Valentine, 2007, 2011). That is, as a conceptual framework intersectionality seeks to account for the impacts and consequences of different aspects of identity and how they 'collide'. Its primary focus was on intersections of race, gender and class (Crenshaw, 1989; 1991) and contemporary feminist analysts continue to highlight the salience of these interrelationships (Cho et al., 2013; Hill Collins & Bilge, 2016; Yuval-Davis, 2006, 2011).

With regards relational analysis of gender, both Schippers (2007) and O'Neill (2015) pointed to the need for intersectional analysis of gender hegemonies; both authors argued that masculinity studies required (and requires) a more intersectional framework. Schippers (2007) suggested a need to '... move away from defining variation in gendered practice across different races, classes, and settings as different masculinities and femininities, and instead understand this variation as hegemonic masculinity and femininity refracted through race and class difference' (Schippers, 2007, p. 98). Some scholars have called for intersectionality and masculinity to be more explicitly engaged with (Hearn, 2011; Messerschmidt, 2012), in relation to masculinity and sport (Anderson & McCormack, 2010; Coston & Kimmel, 2012; McDonald, 2014) and in leisure and sport contexts (Watson & Scraton, 2013; Watson & Scraton, 2017a). Calling for masculinity studies to think intersectionally requires reengagement with feminist theory and feminist praxis.

Bilge (2013, 2014) warned for example, that attempts at 'un-doing' privilege, at epistemological levels certainly, can result in re-inscribing privilege. Referring to White epistemic certainty, she argued it is White feminists who repeatedly define the possibilities and boundaries of deconstructionist analysis. This does not necessarily challenge and displace inequalities that are constitutive of privilege. I raise this here because confronting whiteness is a key part of thinking intersectionally from my feminist perspective (Watson & Scraton, 2001; Watson & Scraton, 2017b). In terms of the present paper, it also resonates with O'Neill's (2015) wariness regarding inclusive masculinity studies that centre masculine subjects and subjectivity, thereby reinforcing rather than challenging hegemonic knowledge positions (Gardiner, 2002). In practice-based contexts, privilege is reproduced through different axes such as white middle class women and girls benefitting from relative increases in access and opportunities in cultural contexts such as sport and recreation (McDonald, 2014; Messner, 2011).

As indicated in the introduction, space and embodiment are central concepts in my approach to thinking intersectionally; they inform and are informed by attempts to make sense of gendered relations including individual, collective and institutional contexts. Engaging intersectional thinking recognises and is prompted by the salience of lived experience, of acknowledging embodied lives in everyday contexts (Watson, 2017). How bodies and identities are perpetually constructed via a reliance on binaries of normative and non-normative being, across gender, race, sexuality and able/disabled needs deeper analysis than outlining multiple identity categories (Puar, 2012). Recognising the significance of affect, Puar argued that young people's different bodies in neoliberal

contexts require acknowledgement (in relation to identity) and contextualisation (in relation to power). From my perspective that means assessing how difference is manifest and how it is experienced (Watson, 2017; Watson & Scraton, 2013). I seek to examine how dance operates as a space, a context in which femininity and femininities and masculinity and masculinities are simultaneously normative and potentially hegemonic.

Definitions of gender hegemony need to be empirically useful for identifying how and where masculinity and femininity are generated by and in turn generate race, class, ethnic and sexual inequalities. Not surprisingly, attending to theoretical and conceptual material in some detail in this paper results in less capacity for incorporating substantial amounts of empirical data in this paper. Nonetheless, my approach to thinking intersectionally and my intention of framing more nuanced analysis of femininities, masculinities and gender hegemonies is inextricably linked to empirical data (Watson, 2017).

Research frames and methodological considerations

A number of research frames are offered below to support and evidence my claims regarding young people doing dance doing gender. I use the term research frames to make explicit the fact that material discussed here is not from a distinct study and nor is it adhering to specific themes in the way we might usually expect in coverage that includes empirical findings. Data presented in the research frames was gathered from three different studies of young people's participation in recreational dance. The projects were undertaken between 2011 and 2017. Each study had a context-specific brief and consequently had differences in aims and research questions; no claims are made regarding research reliability in that respect. The studies shared some common elements regarding a research approach of involving the participating dance organisations in determining the scope of the projects and the methods used. Discussing this in relation to participatory action research or action based research models is beyond the scope here though there are some interesting political debates surrounding what an 'evidence base' for the effectiveness of dance might be (Watson, Lashua, & Trevorrow, 2016). The community-based dance organisations and young people/participants that I am privileged to work with as a researcher link firmly to an approach of thinking intersectionally and the concept of reflexive responsibility (Watson, 2017; Watson & Scraton, 2017b). All data gathered adhered to ethical guidelines and ethics protocols as appropriate. I have carried out a fourth study (data not included here as analysis is incomplete) and I have ongoing research involvement with the organisations from a long/slow ethnography perspective.

The community dance organisations are RJC Dance and Dance Action Zone Leeds/DAZL (see RJC Dance at <https://www.rjcdance.org.uk/> and Dance Action Zone Leeds at <http://www.dazl.org.uk/>). Both organisations are based in low socio-economic status areas in the city of Leeds in the north of England (UK) and the demographic of participants reflects this. RJC Dance identifies with and celebrates Black British heritage (in particular African Caribbean) through dance and has a relatively high proportion of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) participants. DAZL is predominantly white working class with some BME participants. RJC Dance offers all provision as mixed (boys and girls) and DAZL offers mixed and separate boys' and girls' groups. The areas where DAZL and RJC Dance are located and the populations they work with are in marginalised and deprived areas where many young people face economic hardship, marginalisation and challenging circumstances that impact on health and well-being in multiple ways. Both organisations reflect inclusive approaches to working with young disabled people but data considered in this paper does not include disabled participants.

The age of participants referred to in the research frames ranges mostly across 13–15 (some were 16 at the time and still in Year 11 in the English school system). The dance styles participated in included street, hip-hop and some contemporary. Cheerdance is a central aspect of provision at DAZL, but is not offered at RJC Dance. Participation takes place outside of school time and does not involve formal examination/classification of level of achievement. Young people are not required

to purchase specific clothing/shoes other than t-shirts/hoodies through the respective organisations and the cost of attendance at classes is low (in some cases subsidised depending on the funding stream that supports it). Both organisations have a relatively small number of core staff engaged in programming and delivery and both RJC Dance and DAZL encourage and engender enthusiasm and commitment from young people who participate in their provision. The use of interpretive description of individuals and at times groups is offered as a means to inform understanding of the complexities and contradictions of masculinities and femininities for young people. The first of the three studies, 'Flip n Strike', was a 12-week dance programme for boys/males only, delivered in 2011 at RJC Dance. A short film was made about this project (see RJC Dance: A Research Project). Data from this project is referred to as FnS 1. Methods included observations at weekly classes and at sharing events and interviews were held with the instructors. Attendance figures varied across nine to 15 participants with an average of 10 or 11 per week. The second study FnS 2 had two aspects to it. The first part was researching another Flip n Strike programme delivered by an RJC Dance instructor to DAZL boys at DAZL premises. Methods included observations and focus groups with participants. Average figures were 11–13 boys attending/participating. The second part of the study included observations and interviews with boys/participants. Observations included the researcher attending cheerdance competitions and rehearsals and cheerdance was a key area for analysis (Watson & Rodley, 2015). Both Flip n Strike research studies were supported by internal institutional funds (university).

The third study, 'DAZL makes a difference' was a commissioned piece of research to gather evidence regarding DAZL's impact on physical activity and engagement levels. The sample for this research was all girls, aged 13–16 years and methods of data collection included wearable technology, qualitative mapping, focus groups and observations. The number of participants for data collection averaged out at 13. This third study was carried out in 2015/2016 over a six month period. In the first two studies, identifying and assessing masculinity was explicit in the research aims. This was in relation to providing male-only space and exploring how boys actively engaged in dance. In FnS 1, this included boys new to dance and FnS 2 focused more on boys who already danced trying out different styles and different choreography through working with a new instructor. In the third study gender and the construction and articulation of femininities was more of an emergent theme although gender was a factor in assessing physical activity levels in a policy context. Data presented in research frames are labelled as and where appropriate in terms of which study – FnS 1, FnS 2 or DAZL – and participants are identified in relation to gender and racialised identity. All the young people involved in these particular studies seemingly identified with a male or female gendered identity. All came from lower socio-economic status backgrounds.

The research frames illustrate how young people are doing gender through doing dance. They consider boys and girls in feminised terrain, girls and boys relationally speaking about dance and third, feminine and masculine pariahs. A fourth section on thinking intersectionally about gender hegemonies offers a conclusion to the paper. It is not surprising that there are overlaps and interconnections between and across the frames as indeed these links are also a feature of conceptual and theoretical accounts of gender hegemony.

Boys and girls in feminised terrain

Reference to terms such as 'feminisation' and 'effeminacy' are common when describing boys' involvement in dance. As the conundrum of boys being like girls (in dance) often implies, we are limited in how to describe this masculinity because dominant discourse persistently valorises masculinity over and above femininity and the 'value' of femininity is unaccounted for and left unspoken (Gardiner, 2002; O'Neill, 2015; Schippers, 2007). For boys who want to dance, outside and inside school, formally and informally, research demonstrates how dominant discourses of masculinity serve to regulate not just opportunities for dancing but also limit the possibilities for positive affective engagement by boys if and where they participate (Gard, 2008; Risner, 2007; 2009, 2014). When boys do participate

we need to be mindful of over claiming new and/or progressive masculinities and to engage with complexities and contradictions of alternative or inclusive masculinities (O'Neill, 2015; Watson & Rodley, 2015).

Boys who participate in cheerdance and cheerleading for example, commonly describe how they need to adopt 'feminine' associated traits to succeed (Priyadharshini & Pressland, 2016; Watson & Rodley, 2015). A number of DAZL boys described how they need to 'pout' and use 'loads of facials' (as in facial expressions) and at times they refer to this as just 'being girly'. Acceptance of all-boys squads at cheerdance competitions has been commonly met with considerable resistance by female judges (Watson & Rodley, 2015). On the one hand, we might suggest that dance as a feminised terrain represents feminine hegemonic value yet on the other hand we have little or no means of articulating or framing this. Although boys' bodies might be out of place to an extent in space for dance, they are still able to draw on recognised aspects of masculinity that bestow value including physical competence and dominating spaces more generally through language and gesturing and normative social bonding with other males (Pascoe, 2012). How masculinity is embodied and at times parodied in dance contexts prompts engagement with what Pascoe (2012, p. 164) refers to as 'combined gender markers' as boys negotiate various tenets of feminised terrain. Despite efforts to explore and examine a range of acceptable and/or alternative masculinities and femininities that might be available and potentially articulated through dance, gender binaries and hegemonies are reproduced. My dance research with boys has highlighted how displaying body competence and expressions of physical capital remains a key feature of masculinity (Watson & Rodley, 2015; Watson et al., 2013). In FnS 1, a number of the boys were new to dance and were participants in a local football academy. They expressed positive aspects of involvement in FnS in relation to getting fitter and learning new skills. This would appear to represent a normative, common language linking physical prowess and masculinity for many boys (Messner, 2011).

Relationally speaking: girls and boys do dance

Girls at DAZL provided interesting commentary to suggest that dance is a normative context for femininity. The girls 'drew' narratives as part of a focus group format that generated hand-drawn maps. They chatted about places on their maps and distances between them in terms of everyday life (school, home, friends, dance), how they travelled to dance (many walked), time spent at dance and meanings attributed to dance and DAZL. It seemed fairly apparent that sociability was a key aspect in participating at DAZL. The girls were evidently proud of life-long participation and involvement in dance was a key aspect of community belonging. 'I started dancing at DAZL when I was 5 and I "ant quit yet"' (white, working-class girl, aged 14) was one such expression and another said 'Well I "ad no choice because she were going (pointing to a friend) so I just went along with it. I've always gone (to dance) cos she as"' (white, working-class girl, aged 15). 'Place' is a constituent feature of the communities that, in this instance, DAZL is both 'of' and 'for'. DAZL has a main site but numerous satellites across community centres and church halls. RJC Dance has a main site/dance studio and most provision is offered there (with some off-site opportunities) and both organisations are rooted in their respective communities. Context-specific configurations of 'community' are significant in ways that can often be overlooked when we focus on gender and participation (in any number or type of activity).

Dance represents a viable and valued 'space' for girls, as alluded to in the above example, where girls make time and space for dance and regard their involvement as worthwhile, certainly in relation to sociability. Participation is normalised through friendships and family involvement for girls and yet there is little analytical 'currency' available for making sense of femininity in this context. In the example of girls' talk reflecting how dance is normalised we can trace legacies about perceptions of 'feminine appropriate' activities that are ideologically based and continue to generate dominant discourse regarding gender normativity across dance, and arguably active recreation, PE and sport more broadly (Messner, 2011; Scraton, 1992; Flintoff & Scraton, 2001). We need to consider why

and how dance is a consistent frame of reference and enjoyable activity for (some, certainly not all) girls. And we need to reposition femininity accordingly, that is, not only as a subordinated category or via a post-feminist account of agency and individual 'choice' (Gill, 2007; O'Neill, 2015; Schippers, 2007; Watson & Scraton, 2017).

I have also gathered data that demonstrates that socialisation into dance also occurs for boys in fairly mundane, everyday ways. One participant at DAZL commented:

... because he's been my mate since nursery, so ... when he started, when we were older, dancing, I started dancing and then we just get better and I just got better. I used to be rubbish at dance and he helped me and I got better. (White working-class boy, DAZL, aged 14)

It is not surprising that some researchers call for a disruption of discourses of dance and masculinity to enable greater possibilities for participation and enjoyment and give consideration as to how this can be achieved, for instance in PE (Gard, 2008). We need to continually unpack what we mean by shifts in masculinities for boys in dance and to contextualise these claims with regards gender, race, class, sexuality, able bodiedness. Scraton (1992) was alluding to this in calling for engagement with masculinity. The quote above suggests how a key male friend was a role model for getting better at dance and not just the motivation for taking part. Interestingly, the friend regarded as a role model referred to wider influences that affected boys' experiences in the area where they lived. He said,

I know some mates and they get caught by the police sometimes. And then the police give them criminal records. But I don't want to go to a job and that having a record. Coming here (to dance) is better than that. (White, working-class boy, DAZL, aged 15)

Thinking intersectionally prompts us to ask questions regarding the back story and broader contexts of young people participating in dance. Hence my assertions about the location and spatial aspects of dance for young people and, drawing from Puar (2012) my arguments regarding embodiment, as well as the need for ongoing feminist analyses of difference. By doing this we can be mindful not to reproduce simplistic binaries across gender and to question discourse that normalises dance for girls whilst positioning dance for boys as alternative. This enables analysis of different hegemonic expressions of masculinity and femininity and requires assessment of their respective quality content (Schippers, 2007).

Pariah femininities and masculinities

Schippers (2007) model of pariah femininities proposed a means of acknowledging and accounting for embodiments of femininity that challenge the hegemonic relationship between masculinity and femininity. An example from when girls at DAZL were talking about different style of dancing offers a useful illustration here.

I like contemporary because, excuse my French, but if I have a shit day at school, and I've got contemporary I like going to it because like it I don't know it feels like something I can take my feelings out on. Like say, if you are mad at someone and you want to punch 'em, or like say I'm mad or upset then I enjoy doing contemporary. (White, working-class girl, DAZL, aged 14)

Working-class girls who dance and who talk about fighting and getting into trouble potentially disrupt, and yet are simultaneously constrained by, discourses of dance as a 'feminine appropriate' activity. These girls remain othered by gendered and classed discourse and although their whiteness and able bodiedness, in this particular instance, may be an unspoken position of privilege, the intersection of gender and class raises further questions regarding how we come to identify and label the quality content of feminine, femininity and femininities.

We might want to consider if and where the notion of pariah can be attributable to masculinities as well as femininities and if and how soft essentialism is relevant as a term attached to femininities as well as masculinities. Messner (2011) questions the extent of change regarding hegemonic masculinities in sport and points to examples where particular sporting masculinities continue to be imbued

with what Schippers (2007) might refer to as a quality content that reproduces and preserves male power, for example, continuities surrounding 'natural' ability of boys in sports. Furthermore, as suggested earlier, Messner (2011) warns against post-feminist based claims regarding increased inclusion for girls and women in sport. Some interesting questions emerge regarding whether or not boys' involvement in dance can be considered as a form of pariah masculinity and indeed whether such a description is progressive for critical masculinity studies. That is, can a concept of pariah masculinities disrupt masculine subjects and subjectivity at the centre of gender theorising?

One way I have explored masculinity as potentially progressive in terms of gender hegemony has been in relation to boys who are 'new' to dance through applying a concept of volunteered vulnerability. This is an interesting theme in researching masculinity and dance when looking at boys learning and/or trying out new movements. Observing boys at RJC Dance in FnS 1, for example, I noticed how boys take calculated risks amongst other participants when they cannot easily perform moves or techniques. This included those that require strength (such as full press-ups), those that require some grace and agility (such as jumps and cartwheels) or concentration required for following new dance rhythms. Observational data suggest boys disrupt some elements of dominant (sporting), masculine hegemonies when they offer each other support and encouragement rather than overt demonstrations of dismissal and ridicule, and this can occur when boys are regular participants as well as new to dance (Watson & Rodley, 2015; Watson et al., 2013). This was supported to an extent by commentary from a male instructor working on FnS 1 who was 'pleasantly surprised' by the level of respect boys showed one another in the dance studio.

Recent research in PE highlights multilayered articulations of masculinity in boys' participation (Gerdin & Larsson, 2018). To some extent, when boys engage in a 'soft' activity like dance (Gard, 2008) they potentially subvert an accepted 'bad boy' image (Archer & Yamashita, 2003). Boys can capitalise on expectations of physicality and levels of body competence and allow themselves moments of vulnerability. Whether this has potential to disrupt masculine hegemony consistently remains unknown but the dynamics between boys is certainly an interesting context in which to explore expressions of shifts in gender hegemony. As Pascoe (2012) states, shifts in interactions do not necessarily challenge structural inequalities but they are an important aspect of social change. Where inclusive masculinity perhaps makes a potential contribution here is through recognising that changed attitudes towards homosexuality among heterosexual men can have a direct influence on behaviour (Anderson, 2009). However, we do need to engage directly with discourses of gender hegemonies at institutional levels. How boys participate and perform gender and dance is also profoundly influenced by their instructors (Clegg, Owton, & Allen-Collinson, 2017; Gard, 2008; Risner, 2007; Watson & Rodley, 2015; Watson et al., 2013). I have explored elsewhere (Watson & Rodley, 2015) how boys' involvement in cheerdance is intersectional in character and complex in practice. This can include the significant influence of dance instructors on the expressions and possibilities of masculine identities available and articulated through dance (Risner, 2007; Watson et al., 2013). It is also an area for further consideration in relation to girls' participation in dance. Messner's (2011) concept of soft essentialism is potentially relevant in this regard and represents an interesting framework for examining how discourses of gender hegemony are generated and reproduced through dance teaching.

Thinking intersectionally about gender hegemonies

We need to challenge persistent discourses of black and working-class masculinities as dangerous and non-normative (Archer & Yamashita, 2003; Bereswill & Neuber, 2011) or we are in danger of misreading and misrepresenting young people doing dance doing gender in stereotypical ways that suggests black and working-class boys do street dance and hip-hop and middle-class white boys do ballet and contemporary. We also need to consider where and how racialised identities have a direct influence on styles and choices around dance participation and opportunity. RJC Dance explicitly states its celebration of and commitment to dance and Black British cultural heritage. It provides

a space for dance in which Black and BME and white boys and girls can feel they belong in dance. DAZL provides opportunities for young people to participate in a range of dance styles and its established boys' only cheerdance provision is an exemplar of how dance is not just feminised terrain. As yet however, we have little intersectional analysis of dance. Material presented here, in the form of discussing young people doing dance doing gender, conceptually and through the use of selective research frames, makes a contribution to this topic and builds on conceptualisations of space and embodiment to inform further conceptual and empirical work.

The paper has demonstrated that critical masculinity studies can contribute to understanding the dynamics of gender. However, it has also argued that masculinity studies do not sufficiently engage with femininity and femininities. It has outlined and applied conceptualisations of the feminine other and pariah femininities and masculinities (Schippers, 2007), and considered the contribution a concept of soft essentialism might make (Messner, 2011). It has highlighted potential limitations of inclusive masculinity (Anderson, 2009; O'Neill, 2015). In short, masculinity studies needs to re-engage with sexual politics and feminist theories informed by intersectional thinking that question the dominance of particular aspects of gender theorising that fail to account for privilege in multiple configurations. Masculinity theorists need to take female masculinity more seriously whilst acknowledging that this requires more than generating rhetoric for more fluid sexualities and gendered identities. Recreational dance is a meaningful context in which to engage with these issues and it is a context that can usefully inform ongoing discussion regarding gender, intersectionality, queer theory, trans identities and young people. These topics have not all been outlined or discussed here but nonetheless they are significant to understanding complex identities that young people embody (Puar, 2012).

The paper has explored how dance operates as a space, a context in which femininity and femininities and masculinity and masculinities are simultaneously normative and potentially hegemonic. This raises further questions such as what is the relational equivalent of volunteered vulnerability for femininity when girls? What is at stake for girls who embody gendered identities in different contexts in different ways and what consequences does that have for gender hegemony? What expressions of masculinity are 'available' across gender, race and class for boys who dance and what expressions of femininity are available when masculinity and femininity are not limited by oppositional and anti-theoretical positions?

Further research could look to assess relational and intersectional analysis of gender hegemony in relation to key policy contexts that impact young people's lives. Dance is a context that has relevance across education, youth work (such as it still exists), health and physical activity (as relatively new policy discourses), and has resonance with broader cultural contexts, not least the changes occurring in terms of space and embodiment in increasingly social mediated and online lives for young people. Of course, it is precarious to conflate conceptual and theoretical development with claims to pragmatic, policy-related outcomes. Dance cannot change gender relations any more than it can solve current crises of inactivity levels and or persistent opt out of school PE. However, it can usefully inform some of the debates about what might be done in these areas to improve the health and well-being of individuals and families and communities. Young people's participation in recreational activities, their leisure, in all its manifestations, remains a key site, space, identity and embodied form in and through which they do gender.

The paper opened with an intention of taking up Scraton's call to more fully engage with masculinity as a means to explaining the 'dynamics of gender' – shaping up to manhood and to womanhood – not as oppositional binaries but as relational gendered identities (Schippers, 2007). Thinking intersectionally means rearticulating some firm beliefs, grounded in empirical study, that structure and agency, micro and macro, are always relational and are evident in the complexity of people's everyday lives and the interplay between space and embodiment.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

ORCID

Becky Watson  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-3534-3543>

References

- Anderson, E. (2009). *Inclusive masculinity: The changing nature of masculinities*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Anderson, E., & McCormack, M. (2010). Intersectionality, critical race theory and American sporting oppression: Examining black and gay male athletes. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 57(8), 949–967.
- Archer, L., & Yamashita, H. (2003). Theorising inner-city masculinities: 'race', class, gender and education. *Gender & Education*, 15(2), 115–132.
- Ashley, M. (2009). Time to confront Willis' lads with a ballet class? A case study of educational orthodoxy and white working class boys. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 30(2), 179–191.
- Atencio, M., & Wright, J. (2009). Ballet it's too whitey: Discursive hierarchies of high school dance spaces and the constitution of embodied feminine subjectivities. *Gender and Education*, 21(1), 31–46.
- Bereswill, M., & Neuber, A. (2011). Marginalised masculinity, precarisation and the gender order. In H. Lutz, M. T. H. Vivar, & L. Supik (Eds.), *Framing intersectionality: Debates on a multi-faceted concept in gender studies* (pp. 69–88). Farnham: Ashgate.
- Bilge, S. (2013). Intersectionality undone. *Du Bois Review: Social Science Research on Race*, 10(02), 405–424.
- Bilge, S. (2014). Whiteness intersectionality: Evanesence of race in intersectionality scholarship. In W. D. Hund & A. Lentin (Eds.), *Racism and sociology* (pp. 175–205). Berlin: Lit Verlag/Routledge.
- Brah, A. (1996). *Cartographies of diaspora*. London: Routledge.
- Burt, R. (1994). *The male dancer: Bodies, spectacle, sexualities*. London: Routledge.
- Butler, J. (1993). *Bodies that matter: On the discursive limits of 'sex'*. New York: Routledge.
- Cho, S., Crenshaw, K., & McCall, L. (2013). Toward a field of intersectionality studies: Theory, applications and praxis. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 38(4), 785–810.
- Clegg, H., Owton, H., & Allen-Collinson, J. (2017). Challenging conceptions of gender: UK dance teachers' perceptions of boys and girls in the ballet studio. *Research in Dance Education*.
- Connell, R. W. (1987). *Gender and power*. Sydney: Allen and Unwin.
- Connell, R. W. (1995). *Masculinities*. Polity: Cambridge.
- Connell, R. W., & Messerschmidt, J. W. (2005). Hegemonic masculinity: Rethinking the concept. *Gender & Society*, 19, 829–859.
- Coston, B. M., & Kimmel, M. (2012). Seeing privilege where it isn't: Marginalized masculinities and the intersectionality of privilege. *Journal of Social Issues*, 68(1), 97–111.
- Crenshaw, K. W. (1989). Demarginalizing the intersections of race and sex: A black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory and antiracist politics. *University of Chicago Legal Forum*, 140, 139–167.
- Crenshaw, K. W. (1991). Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics and violence against women of color. *Stanford Law Review*, 43, 1241–1299.
- Davis, K. (2008). Intersectionality as buzzword: A sociology of science perspective on what makes a feminist theory successful. *Feminist Theory*, 9(1), 61–85.
- Flintoff, A., & Scraton, S. (2001). Stepping into active leisure? Young women's perceptions of active lifestyles and their experiences of school physical education. *Sport, Education and Society*, 6(1), 5–21.
- Gard, M. (2008). When a boy's gotta dance: New masculinities, old pleasures. *Sport, Education and Society*, 13(2), 181–193.
- Gardiner, J. K. (Ed.). (2002). *Masculinity studies and feminist theory*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.
- Gerdin, G., & Larsson, H. (2018). The productive effect of power: (dis)pleasurable bodies materialising in and through the discursive practices of boys' physical education. *Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy*, 23(1), 66–83.
- Gill, R. (2007). Postfeminist media culture. *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 10(2), 147–166.
- Hearn, J. (2011). Neglected intersectionalities in studying men: Age(ing), virtuality, transnationality. In H. Lutz, M. T. H. Vivar, & L. Supik (Eds.), *Framing Intersectionality: Debates on a multi-faceted concept in gender studies* (pp. 89–104). Farnham: Ashgate.
- Hill Collins, P., & Bilge, S. (2016). *Intersectionality*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Lewis, G. (2009). Celebrating intersectionality? Debates on a multi-faceted concept in gender studies: Themes from a conference. *European Journal of Women's Studies*, 16(3), 203–210.
- Long, J., Fletcher, T., & Watson, B. (Eds.). (2017). *Sport, leisure and social justice*. London: Routledge.
- Lutz, H., Vivar, M. T. H., & Supik, L. (2011). *Framing intersectionality: Debates on a multi-faceted concept in gender studies*. Farnham: Ashgate.
- Mansfield, L., Caudwell, J., Wheaton, B., & Watson, B. (Eds.). (2017). *The handbook of feminisms in sport, leisure and physical education*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Markowitz, L., & Puchner, L. (2016). Troubling the ontological bubble: Middle school students challenging gender stereotypes. *Journal of Gender Studies*, 25(4), 413–426.
- McCall, L. (2005). The complexity of intersectionality. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 30(3), 1772–1800.

- McDonald, M. G. (2014). Mapping intersectionality and whiteness: Troubling gender and sexuality in sport studies. In J. Hargreaves & E. Anderson (Eds.), *Routledge handbook of sport, gender and sexuality* (pp. 51–159). London: Routledge.
- Messerschmidt, J. W. (2012). Engendering gendered knowledge. *Men and Masculinities*, 15(1), 56–76.
- Messner, M. (2011). Gender ideologies, youth sports and the production of soft essentialism. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 28, 151–170.
- Nash, J. C. (2008). Re-thinking intersectionality. *Feminist Review*, 89, 1–15.
- Nash, J. C. (2016). Feminist originalism: Intersectionality and the politics of reading. *Feminist Theory*, 17(1), 3–20.
- O'Neill, R. (2015). Whither critical masculinity studies? Notes on inclusive masculinity theory, postfeminism, and sexual politics. *Men and Masculinities*, 18(1), 100–120.
- Paechter, C. (2006). Masculine femininities/feminine masculinities: Power, identities and gender. *Gender and Education*, 18, 253–263.
- Paechter, C. (2012). Bodies, identities, and performances: Reconfiguring the language of gender and schooling. *Gender and Education*, 24, 229–241.
- Pascoe, C. J. (2005). 'Dude, you're a fag': Adolescent masculinity and the fag discourse. *Sexualities*, 8(3), 329–346.
- Pascoe, C. J. (2012). *Dude, you're a fag: Masculinity and sexuality in high school* (2nd ed.). Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Polasek, K. M., & Roper, E. A. (2011). Negotiating the gay male stereotype in ballet and modern dance. *Research in Dance Education*, 12(2), 173–193.
- Pringle, R. (2017). On the development of sport and masculinities research: Feminism as a discourse of inspiration and theoretical legitimation. In L. Mansfield, J. Caudwell, B. Wheaton, & B. Watson (Eds.), *The handbook of feminisms in sport, leisure and physical education*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Priyadharshini, E., & Pressland, A. (2016). Doing femininities and masculinities in a 'feminized' sporting arena: The case of mixed-sex cheerleading. *Sport in Society*, 19(8-9), 1234–1248.
- Puar, J. (2012). Coda: The cost of getting better: Suicide, sensation, switchpoints. *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 18(1), 149–158.
- Risner, D. (2007). Rehearsing masculinity: Challenging the 'boy code' in dance education. *Research in Dance Education*, 8(2), 139–153.
- Risner, D. (2009). *Stigma and perseverance in the lives of boys who dance*. Lampeter, PA: The Edwin Mellen Press Ltd.
- Risner, D. (2014). Bullying victimisation and social support of adolescent male dance students: An analysis of findings. *Research in Dance Education*, 15(2), 179–201.
- RJC Dance: A Research Project. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6oqUUMkREHG>.
- Schippers, M. (2007). Recovering the feminine other: Masculinity, femininity, and gender hegemony. *Theory and Society*, 36(1), 85–102.
- Scraton, S. (1992). *Shaping up to womanhood: Gender and girls' physical education*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Valentine, G. (2007). Theorising and researching intersectionality: A challenge for feminist geography. *The Professional Geographer*, 59(1), 10–21.
- Villa, P. I. (2011). Embodiment is always more: Intersectionality, subjection and the body. In H. Lutz, M. T. H. Vivar, & L. Supik (Eds.), *Framing intersectionality: Debates on a multi-facteted concept in gender studies* (pp. 171–186). Farnham: Ashgate.
- Watson, B. (2017). Thinking intersectionally and why difference (still) matters in feminist leisure and sport research. In L. Mansfield, J. Caudwell, B. Wheaton, & B. Watson (Eds.), *The handbook of feminisms in sport, leisure and physical education*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Watson, B. (2018). Thinking intersectionally: Fourth wave feminism and feminist leisure scholarship. In D. Parry (Ed.), *Feminisms in leisure studies: Advancing a fourth wave* (pp. 58–78). London: Routledge.
- Watson, B., Lashua, B., & Trevorrow, P. (2016). What difference does dance make? Critical conversations across dance, physical activity and public health. *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics*, 8(4), 681–693.
- Watson, B., & Ratna, A. (2011). Bollywood in the park: Thinking intersectionally about public leisure space. *Leisure/Loisir*, 35(1), 71–86.
- Watson, B., & Rodley, I. (2015). Dazzling yet invisible: Boys in Cheerdance. In C. Hallgren (Ed.), *Invisible Boy: The making of contemporary masculinities* (pp. 95–106). Umea: Umea University Press.
- Watson, B., & Scraton, S. (2001). Confronting whiteness? Researching the leisure lives of south Asian mothers. *Journal of Gender Studies*, 10(3), 265–277.
- Watson, B., & Scraton, S. (2013). Leisure studies and intersectionality. *Leisure Studies*, 32(1), 35–47.
- Watson, B., & Scraton, S. (2017a). Gender justice and leisure and sport feminisms. In J. Long, T. Fletcher, & B. Watson (Eds.), *Sport, leisure and social justice* (pp. 43–57). London: Routledge.
- Watson, B., & Scraton, S. (2017b). Re-confronting whiteness: Ongoing challenges in sport and leisure research. In S. Farooq, & A. Ratna (Eds.), *Race, gender and sport* (pp. 85–106). London: Routledge.
- Watson, B., Tucker, L., & Drury, S. (2013). Can we make a difference? Examining the transformative potential of sport and active recreation. *Sport in Society*, 16(10), 1233–1247.
- West, C., & Zimmerman, D. (1987). Doing gender. *Gender and Society*, 1(2), 125–151.
- Yuval-Davis, N. (2011). *The politics of belonging: Intersectional contestations*. London: Sage.

Copyright of Sport, Education & Society is the property of Routledge and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.