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"Inspiration comes from many places, many people and often when you least expect it.....the best inspiration often requires you to move from a place of comfort to reflect upon the niggle you feel inside....this study began with a heartfelt niggle some years ago.......the seed was sown and this study reflects part of the journey (I don't think it's over yet?)...along the way, this journey has been shared........

Thanks go to the inspirational......'L' for making visible your 'hundred languages' at a time when my professional practice needed challenging.....you are the boy that made the difference.

My wonderful children, Sam and Cosima... thank you...for cups of tea, kind words and for loving me despite having to live on frozen food and bought cakes....

My supervisor, Cilel....who showed me that it's okay to be an individualist, thank you.

And finally...my soulmate, thank you James...your belief in me knows no bounds, you are my rock and strength..."

Susie: Early Years Practitioner, Mother, Student and Wife
ABSTRACT

This qualitative case study explores five boys’ self-initiated play as a window into their interests, learning and emotional development and was conducted in a Reception class. The study draws upon gender theory and takes a sociocultural approach to examine how the boys’ identities are engendered in the school and wider context. A multi-method framework, incorporating audio/visual and analytical tools, and introducing Instant Video Revisiting (IVR) techniques, is used for fieldwork to reflect the importance of the child’s voice – a central tenet of the study. Teacher perspectives were also sought. The findings support the view that the boys are interested in physical, social play and that opportunities for self-initiated play promote emotional competencies. Tentative suggestions for practice and further research are made.
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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 THE FOCUS

Overview

Exploration into *if, how* and *why* gender matters, in the context and construct of the child is well documented. To illustrate, Paley (1984) explores how boys and girls assign roles in dramatic play in accordance with their personal and social construct of gender, Connolly (2004) joins the gender debate, addressing the context of gender differences in schooling and more recently, Waller (2010) examines the role of gender through boys and girls narratives during outdoor play.

The (in) effectiveness of studies that focus on gender issues is often dependent upon the intention and purpose of the research, particularly in whose voice(s) informs such research, the methodological stance taken and how results are presented.

For this naturalistic study, the central 'voice(s)' will be those of the boys. The conceptual framework for the study, draws upon pioneering theories that present the construct of the child as socially and culturally bound, such as Bronfenbrenner (1979;1999) and Rogoff (2003), and Piagetian inspired theories of the child as active learner (Athey, 2007).

"What works best for Boys?"

It should be understood in what follows, that the phrase "What works for boys?" in the context of *this* study, is divorced from any connection to governmental initiatives that explicitly address underachievement in schools. Instead it provides a focal point from which the holistic development of boys can be explored. This point will be
reiterated during the study, for example in Chapter 2 prior to presentation of the Literature Review.

The specific focus for this study is an exploration into boys’ self-initiated play, in the hope that it will give an insight into: what their interests are, how these inform their learning and how behaviour and play choices can exemplify emotional development. This determines to shed some light on what works? To do this, priority is given to the many expressive ways the child presents their voice.

1.2 THE RATIONALE

There are moments of truth in the classroom that illuminate a particular aspect of the child’s inner world and forever change my perspective.

Paley, 1988, p.21

Such a revelation provides the genesis of the research journey, beginning as a moment of disquiet some years ago in an early years setting. There, it became apparent that provision was not meeting the entitlement of some of the boys by adopting an approach that was not truly interested in listening (Clark et al., 2005). As personal and professional reflection on this gained momentum, it became increasingly evident how this was becoming externalised resulting in ‘making [gender] difference’ a negative construct (Nutbrown and Clough, 2006:195).

Additional interests in schema theory as an analytical tool (Athey, 2007) and utilising audio/visual means of recording children’s experiences (Forman, 1999) as an invaluable reflective tool, combine with the gender concern in providing a formidable base for this study.
1.3 THE ECEC CONTEXT

The importance of acknowledging gender as a construct located in the early years is not to be underestimated as a key consideration for early childhood education and care (ECEC) settings.

Children’s formation of identity including gender awareness begins early (Davies, 2003) and once at school becomes increasingly context based in reference to others (Waller, 2010). Few studies, however, endeavour to explore gender from the context of early childhood, defined in this study as early primary. Lever-Chain (2008:84) suggests that the paucity of research with young children could be attributed to a culture of thinking that sets children’s attitudes as ‘unstable’ and difficult to measure.

Hence the acknowledgement in this study, of the many ways the boys can express self and the articulation of the many factors that influence and impact on this developing concept. Influenced in part by the Mosaic approach (Clark and Moss, 2001; 2005) the study intends to propel the boys’ onto centre stage as collaborators and narrators of their stories.

This study focuses on the case of boys in one reception class. The emphasis is on an interpretation of qualitative data, generated from a multi-method approach to observing self-initiated play.

The aim of the research reported in this study is to address the primary research question:

“What works best for boys?”

with guidance from the following three questions:

(1) How do boys access the EYFS curriculum?
(2) How can learning be documented?

(3) What can boys’ behaviour tell us about their Emotional Development?

1.4 THE CHAPTERS

A comprehensive review of the literature is presented in Chapter 2 providing both historical and contemporary texts related to the study’s key themes.

This is followed by Chapter 3: Methodology, a presentation of the conceptual framework adopted by the study and details context, participants and the key consideration given to ethics in research with children. This chapter continues, presenting, ‘Ways of listening’, introducing the methods utilised during fieldwork and concludes with data analysis.

A number of Findings involving selected observations and responses to teacher questionnaires are presented in Chapter 4. These are organised according to the methods used in the study, underpinned by previously noted themes and include image-based data.

The penultimate section, Chapter 5 draws together the threads of the study in discussion. Here, a number of findings are presented in correlation to previously noted literature, with the intention of presenting a ‘vignette that says it all’ (Greig et al., 2007:145).

In Chapter 6, the study concludes with a reflection on the research journey, restating main findings and considers the effectiveness of the study in providing a voice for the boys. It contemplates the significance of the study as a provocation for further research into the gender arena and as an introduction to the benefits of using audio/visual means of observing children, particularly in gaining their personal narratives.
The study is evidenced by a full and relevant Appendix, incorporating a broad range of supporting material.

The study continues with the Literature Review.
CHAPTER 2  LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1  INTRODUCTION

The Research Study: Context and focus

"What Works Best for Boys?" Exploring Child-initiated Play as a Window into Boys’ Interests, Learning and Emotional Development.’

Structured by themes drawn from the above research question, this review of the literature determines to provide the conceptual and theoretical frameworks underpinning the research project. For clarification, the research project will be referred to throughout the literature review as 'the current study’, thus acknowledging how the literature has informed research and illustrating where this study is situated.

Key Terms

As previously noted (p?), "What works best for boys?" is a phrase sometimes used in the context of education policy by government departments. As a blanket term within this specific current study however, it is used conceptually to acknowledge development as holistic, looking beyond a single concept like achievement, to the multiple construct of defining boys.

This chapter progresses by deconstructing the research questions, consequently revealing key themes. This provides structure to the literature review and a base from which examination of current and historical discourse takes place. Accordingly each section of the review, in analysing these themes individually will provide literary context to the current study and illustrate the symbiotic interplay between these key elements as vital.
The theoretical framework presented intends to explore the broad scope of literature pertaining to the construct of the child, settling on those that are most applicable to the current study.

Prior to summation, this review introduces, “the voice of the child” (discussed further in Chapter 3), a central tenet of the study residing at the core of each phase of the research project.

### 2.2 Deconstructing: Key elements

The following key themes provide the focus for the main body of the literature review and have been drawn from the main research question cited in the research title, and within supporting guiding questions:

- The Gender Issue: Boys
- Learning and Education
- Child-initiated Play
- Emotional Development

### 2.3 The Gender Issue: Boys

For clarification, the term gender is appropriated throughout as a collective triad; a biological, ‘psychological and social phenomenon’ (Burr, 1998:10), where gender identity is understood to embody concepts of self and linked to gender roles (Golombruck and Fivush, 1994).

*Constructing Identity*

The genesis of the current study was borne from what Paley (2010:11) often alludes to, as the search for deeper understanding of ‘the nature and practice of being a child’. She suggests that often
'conventional thinking’ limits perceptions as to the fluidity of childhood and development (Paley, 2010:11) and in so doing, neglects to fully appreciate how childhood and the child is engendered. This is particularly relevant when exploring understandings of how gender is theorised and understood, for there are many differing and conflicting viewpoints and interpretations, each vying for centre stage (MacNaughton, 2000).

Gender Theories

Theories of gender vary. Traditionally, psychology was the dominant discipline for studies into child and gender development with theories such as psychodynamic theory (Freud, 1916/1963) positioning gender as male superiority and emphasising sexual power relations derived from biological differences (Golombok and Fivush, 1994). This approach posits that gender identity is absent in the early years, only taking shape around five years of age (Sammons, 2009a). However, others such as Erikson (1968) building upon the psychoanalytical theory acknowledged the interplay of the social and cultural milieu with the child and a developing concept of self-identity, while Chodorow (1978) presents infancy as the period when gender identity formation begins.

Social Learning Theory and Cognitive Theory provide contrasts to the psychodynamic view of gender development. The former, advocates that gender roles and behaviours are learnt from the environment through reinforcement, punishment and imitation, whilst the latter emphasises the role of the child’s ‘thinking processes’ with the child as an active learner (Sammons, 2009b:1).

Over the decades, interest in the when, how and what, influences gender identity, have progressed, adding to the nature versus nurture debate. For example, Geake and Cooper (2003), Baron Cohen (2004) and Johnson and Kossykh (2008) suggest that innate biological
determinants of gender difference, as evidenced in neurological science, contribute to gender-differentiated skills. Sax (2006) and Palmer (2009) attribute differences in maturation levels and associated abilities with gender identity formation, while Skelton et al. (2007; 2009) place emphasis on the significance of social factors as a central, contributory factor in gender construction. This latter supports the sociocultural approach to the appropriation of gender identity, discussed later.

Davies (1999; 2003) writing from a feminist poststructuralist perspective, draws on language and the written word as gendered, often subtly imbued with gender related nuances and apparent in early language development. Along with James et al. (1998), she lends weight to the growing body of research that lays gender construction firmly within the child and socially co-constructed in response to and with others (Davies, 2003; Robinson, 2011). It is to constructivist theories espousing the active involvement of children in constructing their own childhoods and identities in tandem with social and cultural contexts (socio-constructivist and sociocultural) that this current study draws upon.

Bridging the gap between these, is Bronfenbrenner (1995; 2005), building upon his earlier systems theory in acknowledgement of the individuals’ interplay with their environment. Here at the interface of the system and the individual, the inclusion of the ‘person component of [his] bioecological [sic] model’ gives a richer understanding of their context (Lerner, 2005: xvi). Connolly (2004) argues in favour of this kind of approach within the gender arena, as the antithesis to traditional sex-role socialisation theories, which he suggests negate the autonomy of the child in creating their own gender identities.

One of the most influential social contexts for Bronfenbrenner (2005) is the familial one, where he suggests attitudes and behaviours are
imbued with gender specific expectations manifested in the different
treatment of boys and girls. Rogoff (2003:75) corroborates, adding
that gender is ‘a salient category’ surrounding children who look to
others culturally, for visual and verbal clues in their gender construct.
This sociocultural perspective recognises how learning and
development is more of a shared endeavour, stressing the importance
of participatory methods between the individual and their cultural
community. It is from these contexts that children’s social thinking,
knowledge and understandings are born, demonstrating how important
context is in informing social cognition which, in itself has significant
bearing then upon emotional growth (Robson, 2007).

When the context is formal schooling, the shift moves from familial
ground to a different learning community, where many concepts of
gender and related discourse are apparent. Here more than anywhere
and certainly within the formative years, gender identity is often
constructed ‘by reference to others’, where differences and similarities
are the measure and gender ‘the marker’ (Waller, 2010:529).

2.4 Gender and Education

Boys in education: deficit ‘v’ credit

If we consider further the sociocultural perspective previously
mentioned and apply its central tenets to the domain of boys’
education, it is evident how damaging to boys the messages are, only
serving to perpetuate the negative cycle. For example, titles such as
‘poor boys’, ‘boys will be boys’ and ‘failing schools, failing boys’
dominate gender discourse (Skelton, 2001:6).

One author calls into question the plethora of literature on boys, the
vast majority of which centre on a deficit model, imploring:
...do we really need more books telling us there is a problem with boys’ underachievement in schools?

Zyngier (2009, p.111)

In providing a critique of selected texts, he derides those that accept girls and boys as competing groups and wish for a caring masculinity, such as Wilson (2006), and aligns himself with texts like Jha and Kelleher (2006) who, ‘reject essentialist theories’ and ‘deficit discourse’ (Zyngier, 2009:114). He concludes by making two important points; firstly, that focus should be on ‘which boys’ rather than on all boys and, secondly, that acknowledgement is given to other factors that combine with gender to affect achievement (Zyngier, 2009:117).

Featherstone and Bayley (2010) add to the nature-nurture debate, seeking ways of honouring the context of boys’ individuality and self identity by exploring structural brain differences. It is because of these differences, they say, that boys differ in terms of enthusiasm for physical, active learning and that language, expressive skills and reading ability develop differently to that of their female peers. In response, Zamen (2007) and Karlson and Simonsson (2011) suggest teaching should be more gender sensitive, acknowledging the role of the adult in creating a learning environment that matches gender attributes.

According to Elmore and Oyserman (2012:176), ‘Identity-based motivation theory’ may provide an alternative strategy in addressing why and how gender matters in the classroom, particularly in connection to boys’ construction of gender roles and behaviours. Findings from Warrington et al. (2000) and Skelton et al. (2009) echo this.

Literature such as, Marcon (2002) and Scholes (2010), acknowledge that schooling is a gendered experience and presenting boys in opposition to girls in measuring achievement and ability, serves
only to perpetuate the boy problem and exacerbate the widening gender gap. The current study determines to present the male participants as individuals, making visible any differences amongst them as a group, rather than as comparative across gender.

Whilst recognising and responding to evidence of boys’ underachievement in key curriculum areas like English and Reading (Batho, 2009; DfE 2011; 2012a), research has tended to focus upon older children. For example, Warrington et al. (2000) and Alloway et al. (2003), respectively, found boys’ attitudes to the subject framed by gender stereotyping and firmly rooted by secondary school.

It is suggested here, that the research base for study involving boys in early Primary education is apparent.

_Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)_

Reception class can be seen to be the last foray into less formalised learning for Foundation Stage children in England and as such, this study argues, possibly the last opportunity to really engage in finding out “What works best for boys?”

The framework within which learning takes place is documented as a principled approach, endeavouring to recognise individual needs and provide ‘equality of opportunity’, by planning around the interests of each child through purposeful play (DfE, 2012b:2). Children are actively encouraged to explore and think critically through active participation throughout specified learning and development areas. Specific regard for gender, however, is a cursory mention in the non-statutory guidance (DfE, 2012c:1). Goddard Blythe (2011) takes issue with this and the target driven intention of the curriculum, which she suggests, ignores how physical development and gender influences educational performance, particularly for boys.
The presence of outcomes and targets children *should* have reached by the end of this stage is in direct conflict with what research tells us about the nature of boys learning styles and development (Katz, 2011). Additional challenges and dilemmas face the EYFS teacher within the prescribed myriad of their roles that, on one hand are intended to support learning through play which Lever-Chain (2008) contends is being eroded by assessment, and also manage downward pressures and expectations in preparing children for the more formal Primary Curriculum (Pugh, 2010; Brooker, 2010).

Accordingly, theory that points to education as, a ‘process of living and not a preparation for future living’ (Dewey, 1972:87) propels the current study forward to look at the many ways boys express their thinking, learning and development, making opportunities for them to tell us in their own way, “What works best?”

### 2.5 Child-initiated play

*Multimodal representations*

The importance of play in children’s lives is well documented, for example, Anderson (1998:103) suggests play ‘shapes.......[and] reflects the individual’, others champion play as an essential communicative resource (Strandell, 1997) and when imaginative, is the ultimate tool for real learning to take place (Bodrova and Leong, 1996; Franklin, 2000).

Although the scope of this review prevents homage to all who articulate it as the epitome of rich opportunities for learning, Fisher (2007:130) assigns play as the ‘bedrock’ of children’s lives and learning. If play is the foundation upon which layers of learning and development can be built, then play which is self or child-initiated adds another, richer dimension to the equation. Allowing children the space
to explore and satisfy their intrinsic drive for play of their choosing, allows opportunities for deep level learning on a grand scale (Pascal and Bertram, 1997; Laevers, 2000; Csikszentmihayli 2004; Moyles, 2010; Moyles and Worthington, 2011).

For boys, this is even more pertinent, for their play choices are often deemed inappropriate or thought not conducive to learning (Paley, 1984, 1988; Holland, 2003; Rich, 2003) and when suppressed, add to feelings of frustration and subsequently disengage boys from their learning. When boys are switched off from learning, the impact on development, in particular their emotional development is a key consideration with future implications (Kindlon and Thompson, 2000; Robinson, 2011).

Socio-constructivist theory presents a blend of pioneering ideologies offering a way of illuminating the emotional and cognitive processes through which children make sense of their place in the world. For Vygotsky (1978) symbolic, child-initiated play becomes the platform uniting thought, action and speech. Piaget (1962, 1971) offers schema theory as an observational and analytical means of interpreting thought and action evidenced in play. Atheys’ (2007:49) seminal works on schematics or ‘patterns of repeatable actions’, were borne from Piagetian theorising into how children’s repeated actions on and with objects, materials and the environment inform learning. Through her research, she built upon the notion of other dimensions in how children represent their knowledge and interests, exemplifying; ‘graphic, action and speech representations’ and the levels at which these are explored by children (Arnold, 2007:43).

For the current study, the application of schematic theory, in conjunction with other research tools (Chapter 3) to the boys’ play, graphic representations and speech, gives life to their inner cognitive
processes and provide an inspirational toolkit in support of empowering and fostering agency.

Previous studies have successfully utilised child-initiated activity as a vehicle through which children engage in self representation and expression, and where observations harnessed audio/visual tools. To illustrate, the children in Ahn and Filipenko’s (2007) study revealed insights through narrative means into how their self identity forms, while Brooks (2005:80), explored how children use drawings to ‘negotiate and construct meaning.’

In keeping with these, the current study attempts to showcase the boys as the experts in their own lives, informing us through their verbal, visual and reflective representations (Haggerty, 2010). Furthermore, the approach taken determines to present the relevant research tools as a symbiotic compendium, similar to the approach taken by Clark and Moss (2001, 2005) whereby, the many methods utilised, are guided by the emergence of new data, pieced together with reflexive dialogue to form a bigger picture.

Applying these approaches to play situations with the adult as learner to child as teacher role, give rise to the concept of the child as a valued co-constructor and by default bolsters their emotional development.

2.6 Emotional development for Boys

This area of boy’s development often receives the most negative attention through its manifestation in boys’ challenging behaviour (Mercurio, 2003).
Emotional development is intrinsically linked to social and cognitive processes (Arnold et al., 2010) and as such has significant bearings on thinking and learning particularly in the formative early years (Goleman, 1996; Claxton, 1999; Robson, 2007). For Goleman (1996:16), emphasis is placed on the physiological, neural part of the individual as at the ‘heart of emotional intelligence’, while Claxton (1999) building on this, suggests that the ability of the individual to regulate emotion, is key to learning of self and others. The current study extends these discourses, suggesting that the process of effective emotional development for boys incorporates: self efficacy and resilience, self esteem and competency and rely heavily on the relationships and surrounding systems. Further credence for this comes from Edmunds and Stewart-Brown (2005) who suggest that the term emotional literacy provides a common core, uniting key elements of both emotional intelligence and emotional competency concepts.

Over the last decade, research has called for more of an acceptance and understanding of how to support boys’ emotional development through language which is gender-sensitive (Kindlon and Thompson, 2000) and an acknowledgement of the fundamental brain differences attributed to biology and gender roles of our predecessors (Baron-Cohen, 2004). Kindlon and Thompson (2000: xix), have long championed the view that from a very young age, boys are ‘systematically steered away from their emotional lives’ within a culture that engenders emotional literacy as a trait outside of the male identity. To counteract this, they advocate viewing boys through a lens that acknowledges
difference, therefore supporting them to become versed in emotional language and self expression.

Bingham (2009:1) concurs, suggesting the most effective strategy for supporting the development of emotional competencies is through naturalistic, experiential observations, where ‘naturally-arising’ situations provide opportunities for real learning. This is implicated in the current study in its intention to observe boys in situ.

2.7 The Voice of the Child

...listening can be understood......as a pedagogy...a way of researching life, a culture....an ethic, a continuous process and relationship.

Clark et al. (2005, p.13).

The call for a ‘pedagogy of listening’ (Rinaldi, 2005:19), has grown in volume over the years, from Pugh and Selleck (1996) who argued that the cultural climate in the UK was too limited for real listening to the voice of the child, to Clark (2010) who embeds listening through all senses in her work. This involves so much more than just listening to the spoken words of children, but encompasses the multiple ways children express their experiences. These expressions can be further enriched by the reflective voice of the child in shared dialogue, subsequently forming the basis for pedagogical documentation that makes the learning and by default, the silent languages visible (Dahlberg et al., 2007).
The ambition of the current study is to make a contribution to the **listening** discourse through participatory methods, whereby boys’ voices have an opportunity to be heard.

### 2.8 Conclusion

In order to explore “What works best for boys”, this review has examined literary texts and theoretical frameworks underpinning each of the key research strands. This has the effect of illuminating their dynamic interplay, and locating the current study amidst founding theories of child development and contemporary socio-cultural theories.

In exploring discourse on issues of gender, the review presented thinking on how external influences impact on boys’ internal constructs of what it means to be a boy. Subsequently, it was revealed how this internal construct can be portrayed through emotional development and play.

A central tenet of the current study, and one which underpins each chapter, is a philosophy that champions children as co-constructors and active participants within the research process and in their play opportunities.

The following chapter progresses with methodological considerations, providing further elements of the conceptual framework.
CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the conceptual framework within which this small-scale, naturalistic study is located. The main purpose of this qualitative case study was to gain insight into provision for boys in a Primary School Reception, enquiring 'What works best for boys?'

The chapter begins by identifying the perspective from which the study is situated, establishing the rationale underpinning paradigm choices. Following this, a brief overview of the school setting determines to set into context where the research took place and who participated, then presents detailed ethical issues considered. The main body of the chapter details the methods utilised for the study, introducing the research tools, providing justification for their choice and explaining how they were utilised in response to the research questions. The chapter closes by presenting data analysis techniques.

3.2 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Paradigm

We seek to understand them. We would like to hear their stories.

Stake, (1995, p.1)

The research project is positioned as a case study, extolled by Stake (1995:12) as an approach that illuminates and preserves the 'multiple realities' of a single case. It utilised an eclectic mix of perspectives under an interpretivist paradigm, for example, phenomenology and social constructivism. Thomas (2011:4) champions the completeness
that a case study affords as a focus on the particular, explored from many angles and where inquiry ‘drills down’ into the subject subsequently revealing rich data. Social constructivism honours the interplay and ‘dialectical relationships’ that feed into the child, culturally and historically underpinning learning, development and knowledge (Greig et al, 2007:45).

Qualitative research with children seeks to understand their subjective views within a contextualised and holistic frame and through an interpretation of emergent data (Hatch, 1995; Greig et al., 2007; Freeman and Mathison, 2009). This inductive approach was more suited to the current study than approaches that aim to measure, quantify or objectify (Gray and MacBlain, 2012) as employed by positivists, because the central premise of the study looked for the child’s voice through narrative. Furthermore, an approach was adopted where emerging data then informed subsequent stages of the research process making clear the evolving nature of the study.

To aid this, the study employed research tools that have been evidenced as effective when researching with children (Karlsdóttir and Garðarsdóttir, 2010). For instance; the video camera utilised by Forman (1999), Whitebread et al. (2007) and Sumison and Goodfellow (2012).

3.3 CONTEXT

The setting

Research was conducted in the Reception class of a rural Primary School located in South Northamptonshire. At the time of the study, the school had 95 children on roll, seven teaching staff and several support staff. The majority of pupils were from White British
backgrounds and the school is rated as below the national average for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals.

The school was chosen on the basis of its longstanding professional relations with the researcher and the interest shown by staff in the research focus as being of potential future benefit to school practice. Nutbrown and Clough (2009) and Fumoto (2011) lend further weight to the significance of building trusting relationships and shared meanings within the research environment, particularly necessary when children are active participants in the research process, also posited by Greig et al. (2007).

Research Participants

The main participants in the study were five boys from Reception class (total $n=17$) aged four years five months to five years four months, chosen randomly to avoid bias. The boys are referred to by numbers one to five in the study for ease during fieldwork and to maintain anonymity.

Also included, were teaching staff ($n=6$) and one Higher Level Teaching Assistant. The decision to include all staff and not solely the Reception teacher, was made in response to the fact that teachers working in Primary education are often expected to teach or have experience in working with the full range of year groups. This made their experiences relevant as contributors to the study.

3.4 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Introduction

The University of Northampton Ethical Code was adhered to throughout (Appendix 1A) in conjunction with BERA (2011).
Formoshino and Arajjo (2006) point out that first amongst the challenges in researching with children is an ethical one: respect for children. In recognition of this, the study drew on what Christensen and Prout (2002:477) call ‘ethical symmetry’. This took the stance that having ethical responsibility for children as participants (rather than on children as objects to study), honoured their individuality, acknowledged the research process as reflexive and did not treat participants as a homogenous group.

**Ethics: Adults in the study**

The ethical issues in this study centered primarily on informed consent, initially from the adult gatekeepers: the Head Teacher and parents of Reception children (Appendices 1B and 2). At this stage it was felt particularly important to truly inform parents of the study’s intentions, therefore letters requesting informed consent were accompanied by a Statement of Intent document, adapted from BERA (2011) (Appendix 3). In addition, a leaflet explaining the benefits and process of researching with children (Appendix 4) was designed and distributed to parents. Justification for including the information leaflet was as a tool for raising the profile of research conducted in collaboration with children, of which, according to Nutbrown and Clough (2009) and Moyles and Worthington (2011) there is a paucity.

As the study aimed to use video as a primary tool for data collection it was imperative that consent from all Reception parents was gained. This acknowledged the likelihood that footage would capture children other than participants during social play episodes.

Letters to teaching staff (Appendix 5) respectfully requested their participation in the study, with assurances given for anonymity and confidentiality throughout.
Ethics: Children in the study

Gaining informed consent from the boys, involved both verbal communication whereby requests were made to observe them playing and action-oriented, involving the boys indicating consent through a colouring activity (Appendix 6). Consent was requested daily and throughout each Reflective Dialogue (RD) episode, thus ensuring the boys’ wellbeing at all times was made a priority. Obtaining consent in this way is more appropriate state Shaw et al. (2011), as creative methods are employed making the research experience more fun, especially for young children.

3.5 METHODS

Procedures and research tools: Overview

Collection of data occurred primarily through: narrative observations; video and audio taping; questionnaires and analysis of documentation during the initial period of fieldwork.

Observational data for the study was collected daily for a period of five days, from 9am until 3:30pm. Observation time was built into the natural rhythm of the school day and not intended to be obtrusive either for staff or the boys involved.

Table 1 (p.24) illustrates the multi-method approach to data collection.

These were in keeping with a mosaic methodology, similar to that of Clark and Moss (2001, 2005) and combined the verbal with the visual in promotion of participatory episodes. Furthermore, the data generated by utilising these methods, subsequently became a tool from which further data was generated through Reflective Dialogue (RD) with the boys. This, say Pascal and Bertram (2012) further
strengthens the authenticity and effectiveness of participatory research.

Table 1. The deployment of methods in the study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary Research Question</th>
<th>Guiding Research Questions</th>
<th>Methods</th>
<th>Participants/Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What works best for boys?</td>
<td>How do boys access the EYFS curriculum?</td>
<td>Narrative Observation Video Recordings Questionnaire</td>
<td>Boys Class Teacher/Boys All teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How is learning documented?</td>
<td>Field notes Analysis Observations Informal Conversations</td>
<td>Documentation Pedagogical documentation Class teacher All teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What can boys’ behaviour and play choices tell us about their Emotional development?</td>
<td>Narrative Observation Video Recordings Questionnaires</td>
<td>Boys Boys All teachers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ways of listening: Narrative Observations

Simpson and Tuson (2003) give credence to the choice of unscheduled observations as a data gathering technique, particularly when the intention is to gain further understanding and insight into a phenomenon. However, they also comment on two main weaknesses of the technique, namely ‘demands on time’ and ‘susceptibility to observer bias’ (Simpson and Tuson, 2003:18), offering piloting as a
solution to both. These were addressed during preparatory visits to the school, through prior experience in observation techniques of the observer and the inclusion of other audio/visual observational tools for data triangulation.

*Ways of listening: Instant Video Revisiting (IVR)*

The video camera was the primary observational method of choice, coined by Forman (1999:2) as a ‘modern tool of the mind’ who, in extolling its virtues also laments how it is ‘underutilized’ [sic] in educational settings. Videoed episodes of the boys’ self-initiated play were captured on screen and then discussed through Instant Video Revisiting (IVR) by the observer with the boy(s), revealing further insight into their interests, learning and metacognition (Robson, 2012). IVR episodes were audio recorded, transcribed and on occasion also videoed, the latter referred to by Makin and Whiteman (2006) as Instant Video Revisiting for Researchers (IVRR). Together, these tools provided data triangulation and consequently added robustness, reliability and authenticity to the research process.

*Ways of listening: Questionnaires*

Mukherji and Albon (2010:133) state that the design of the questionnaire is dependant upon ‘its intended use’ with its ultimate effectiveness reliant upon the types of questions used. Newby (2010:299) corroborates, adding how important this method is in providing ‘an authentic voice’ that gives ‘personality’ to the research discourse.

In light of this, a questionnaire (Appendix 7), using open-ended questions was designed, piloted and distributed to teaching staff with the intention of eliciting qualitative data, rich with attitudes and opinions (Johnson and Christensen, 2012).
3.6 RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

Hamilton (2011) and Thomas (2011) highlight how a case study approach satisfies the call for reliability and validity of the research process.

The former, states that research that takes a multi-perspective stance and utilises multiple methods for data collection gives ‘weight to the validity of findings’ and reliability through ‘triangulation’ (Hamilton, 2011: 2). However, Thomas (2011:71) whilst agreeing to the importance of triangulation in case study research, posits the quality of the study is less dependent upon reliability and validity and more on ‘conception, construction and conduct’. In contrast, Silverman (2011) argues, that reliability in qualitative research can be weakened by researcher interpretations and transcriptions that are not a wholly reflective or representative account of the data gathered.

In light of these, it is suggested that the study addressed reliability and validity through its choice of a pluralistic approach, determining to match methodology to the ‘singleness of the subject’ (Thomas, 2011:66) providing verification and ‘trustworthiness’ (Brooker, 202: 292) derived from unbiased interpretation and thorough data analysis procedures.
3.7 **DATA ANALYSIS**

Pre-identified themes of; *Interests, Learning,* and *Emotional Development*, provided the overarching themes for all data analysis.

*Table 2*  
Breakdown of data sources gathered for each participant.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Methods</th>
<th>Boy #1</th>
<th>Boy #2</th>
<th>Boy #3</th>
<th>Boy #4</th>
<th>Boy #5</th>
<th>Group (all/combi. boys)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Observed during child-initiated play</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narrative Episodes</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Videoed Episodes</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflective Dialogue (RD)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Representations</td>
<td>graphic</td>
<td>photo</td>
<td>photo</td>
<td>photo</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis of documents</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analysis began with a review of narrative observations and fieldnotes made during observations of the boys’ self-initiated play. These were transcribed and coded, drawing upon Athey’s (2007) schema literature as an analytical tool (Appendix 8). Application of this framework identified the boys’ play interests and behaviours during play. Appendix 9 evidences initial coding applied to one boys’ play episode.
Videoed episodes were analysed accompanied by audio transcriptions of the relevant reflective dialogues (RD). From these, photographic snapshots (visual) and narratives (verbal) were selected, allowing for links to be made with earlier data. Newby (2010:495) articulates how discourse analysis honours the significance of ‘communication as a source of insight’.

Emotional Development was explored using PERIK, an empirically based observation scale developed by Mayr and Ulich (2009) for assessing socio-emotional competencies of children in early childhood settings. Appendix 10 evidences which aspects of this coding system were utilised during data analysis.

Teacher questionnaires (n=5), were analysed and cross referenced, thus allowing the emergence of common themes to be drawn from opinions and attitudes and provided the adult voice.

In the ensuing chapter, findings are presented in relation to providing the most accurate response to the research questions.

CHAPTER 4 FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents findings from data collated and is systematically structured according to methods utilised within the study. Sections will introduce coding systems and provide brief commentary where appropriate.
4.2 FINDINGS

4.2.1 Narrative and Video Observations

Interests and Learning

As previously noted, a basic schema coding system Athey (1990; 2007) (Appendix 8) was applied during the first stage of data analysis intending to reveal boys’ interests and learning (forms of thought) in self-initiated play.

A selection of data drawn from unstructured narrative observations, field notes and video transcriptions combined (n=3 episodes per child) revealed a comprehensive range of schemas evident during boys’ play. A further second analysis, revealed more than 28 different schemas (Nutbrown, 2011) (Appendix 10) from which an indicative selection are presented for each boy in Table 3 (p.32). A schema had to be observed twice before being included in the cluster and more than twice to be classed as a dominant schema. Dominant schemas are shown as highlighted.
Table 3  Interests illustrated through boys’ schemas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cluster of Schema’s Observed</th>
<th>Boy#1</th>
<th>Boy#2</th>
<th>Boy#3</th>
<th>Boy#4</th>
<th>Boy#5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Form</strong></td>
<td><strong>Boy#1</strong></td>
<td><strong>Boy#2</strong></td>
<td><strong>Boy#3</strong></td>
<td><strong>Boy#4</strong></td>
<td><strong>Boy#5</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
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<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
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<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: * Schema coding (#’s 1-28) listed in Appendix 11.
The data provided in Table 3 shows that during three analysed events there were consistent patterns of behaviour evident in spontaneous play for:

- Boy #1 46% of the time (6/13 dominant schema)
- Boy #2 47% “ 9/19 “
- Boy #3 40% “ 8/20 “
- Boy #4 33% “ 6/18 “
- Boy #5 33% “ 5/15 “

These give an initial insight into the form that the boys play interests took.

**Emotional Development**

Snapshots taken from video footage (Figures 1-3) provide examples of play where dominant schemas were apparent:

![Fig.1 B#1 & B#2](image1)

**Fig.1 B#1 & B#2**

Form: 1. ‘vertical trajectory’
Content: construction

![Fig.2 B#4](image2)

**Fig.2 B#4**

Form: 9. ‘enclosing’
Content: tent

![Fig.3 B#5](image3)

**Fig.3 B#5**

Form: 12 ‘positioning’
Content: role play

The photographs are presented as a visual sample of data analysed, showing not only how the boys chose to play but; what and how they chose to play with resources (content), involvement and engagement. Further analysis of video vignettes looked at ascertaining the boys’ emotional competencies apparent during their self-initiated play episodes. Data coding utilised four out of six relevant PERIK
dimensions (Mayr and Ulich, 2009) (Appendix 10) as a measuring scale. Highlighted fields focus on emotional strengths.

Findings, summarised below are accompanied by corresponding qualitative extracts.

Table 4.  Emotional competencies during play.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Limitations</th>
<th>Extracts from observations of play</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boy#1</td>
<td>1.\textit{b},c,</td>
<td>1.d</td>
<td>Making contact/social performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.\textit{a,c,e}</td>
<td>3.b</td>
<td>\textit{Boy#1 is directing social play having initiated game}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.\textit{a,d,f}</td>
<td></td>
<td>(narrative 24/01/13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.\textit{a-f}</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boy#2</td>
<td>1.\textit{c}</td>
<td>1.b,d</td>
<td>Self-control/thoughtfulness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.\textit{a,b,d,f}</td>
<td>3.f</td>
<td>&quot;You’re not rubbish A***&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.\textit{a,d,f}</td>
<td>4.a,c,d,f</td>
<td>(dialogue recorded during IVR episode 01/02/13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.b</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boy#3</td>
<td>1.\textit{a,c,f}</td>
<td>1.b,d</td>
<td>Self-assertiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.\textit{a,b,d}</td>
<td>2.a,b,d-f</td>
<td>'Boy#3 is talking animatedly/confidently as he shares stories of his visit to the circus’ (group revisiting 1/2/13).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.a</td>
<td>3.f</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4.b-d,f</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boy#4</td>
<td>1.\textit{a-d,f}</td>
<td>2.a</td>
<td>Pleasure in exploring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.\textit{b-f}</td>
<td></td>
<td>'Boy#3 can be seen persisting with difficulty during group play, asks questions to support his understanding and happy with independent exploration’ (transcription from video 24,25/01/13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.\textit{a-b,d-f}</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.a,\textit{b,c,d,f}</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boy#5</td>
<td>1.\textit{a-d,f}</td>
<td>3.b</td>
<td>Making contact/social performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.\textit{a-c,e,f}</td>
<td></td>
<td>\textit{Boy#5 is initiating game/including others in his play....always social play for him} (narrative 22/01/13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.\textit{a,d-f}</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.\textit{a-d,f}</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although acknowledged as a snapshot, findings illustrate where some of the boys levels of development are complementary (homogenous)
and also dichotomous when viewing their emotional capabilities as individuals.

Findings show higher incidences of positive emotional capabilities versus limitations.

4.2.3 Reflective Dialogue (RD)

Transcripts from 14 RD episodes were analysed with 4 selected on the basis that these gave rich examples of the boys’ metacognition, revealing purpose, intent and understanding (Appendix 12: A-D).

Table 5 (p.36) presents findings with abridged RD extracts and corresponding visual representation.
Table 5. Examples of RD episodes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Revisited Event</th>
<th>Reflective Dialogue (RD)</th>
<th>Visual Representation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| B#5          | 'Wrinkly Fingers'/Traffic Lights | "I was counting"  
"I was taking them [marbles] out and putting them in there"  
"When you press those it changes....the middle..green, red and yellow" | ![Visual Representation](image1.jpg) |
| B#3          | 'Wrinkly Fingers' | "I was trying to put the marbles in the ..er.. bucket...it's an experiment"  
"It [water] was warm for a time and then when I played again it wasn’t ....I left it for a long time" | ![Visual Representation](image2.jpg) |
| B#2          | Drawing         | "I did 3 persons ....It's Mummy ..and Dad ...and R*** is playing football behind Dad ...that's the curve of Dad,[they're] in the house [coloured area]." | ![Visual Representation](image3.jpg) |
| B#1 B#3      | Marble Run      | "We were trying to snap it" (B3)  
"No we were trying to build it" (B1)  
"We had to make it for marbles, remember" (B1)  
[breaking] "Cos it’s got loads on it" | ![Visual Representation](image4.jpg)  
(IVVR Snapshot) |
4.2.4 **Questionnaires** (Template Appendix 7)

Appendix 13 evidences the complete transcript of all Teacher (T1-5) questionnaires; response rate (n=5) from sample (n=7). Individual responses were amalgamated and organised by question, categorised by: *Teaching and Learning; Behaviour and Emotional Development* and *Assessment*.

A summary of the most relevant findings are presented from a coding analysis that looked for contrasting and consensus of opinions and attitudes in responses to each question. Consequently highlighted areas are question specific.

*Teaching and Learning (Q4-10)*

**Responses eliciting opinion on boys’ learning styles...**

*Five respondents were of the opinion that boys’ are predominantly active, ‘hands on’ learners. This theme perpetuated throughout all responses:* 

“.....boys need to ideally experience the learning in a physical way......[they] like to move more than girls”

*(Teacher:T1)*

“... show a preference for a more kinaesthetic style”

*(T4,T5)*

*Two respondents shared the view that boys “enjoy collaborating” (T5) and “discuss[ing]” (T3).*
Responses to the extent of the Primary curriculum in England meeting the needs of boys...

Four respondents agreed that the curriculum does meet the needs of boys, two (T1, T2) added that “it depends on how it is delivered”. Three respondents mentioned testing as a barrier to boys’ learning:

“.....the current over assessment ....does not suit them ....they find revision pointless.....don’t like seeing what they can’t do” (T3)

Responses to which subjects interest boys the most and the least...

Table 6 Subjects that do/do not interest boys.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher Responses</th>
<th>Most Engage</th>
<th>Teacher Responses</th>
<th>Least Engage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>PE/Games</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Science</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>DT</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>MFL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Maths</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>History</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>ICT</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Referencing ‘History’, one respondent added “..they like stories from the past” (T3), whilst one commented on ‘Writing’:

“Many boys find the physical and technical aspects of writing difficult ..this is evident across the curriculum” (T5).

These findings suggest a positive correlation between boys’ action-oriented learning styles and certain subjects offered in the curriculum.
In response to particular strategies utilised to support boys...

Four out of five respondents used specific strategies attuned to boys’ learning styles, for example:

“involve physical activity” (T1), “time-related tasks” (T5), talk buddies” (T4) and “taking an interest in them - becom[ing] an expert in Pokemon!” (T3).

Behaviour and Emotional Development (Q11-12)

In response to opinion as to the Emotional Development of boys...

Respondents articulated the different emotional capabilities of boys and girls. Two teachers (T4,T5) stated that girls are more mature than boys. Some responses suggest that this relates to differing gender/inherent motivations:

“girls....please through conforming to rules...,boys wish to please through achievement.. (T3)

In response to boys’ behaviour and attitudes to learning...

A theme emerged in responses, indicating connections between instances where boys feel challenged in their learning manifested in an inability to self regulate:

“...may verbally lash out if ...vulnerable and [can’t] meet an objective” (T1)

“resolution of conflict can escalate to more physical results..” (T4)

Assessment (Q13-17)
In response to assessing learning...

Two themes emerged from responses. Assessments are made both formally:

“against Accessing Pupil Progress (APP)” level descriptors
(all respondents)

“SATS type tests” (T5)

and, informally:

“during lessons” (T1) and “visual – watching performances” (T4) and “peer/self assessment” (T5).

In response to a) boys’ involvement in their own learning and b) personalising their learning targets...

a) Respondents affirmed that the boys are “encouraged to use ....success criteria” (T5) for self-evaluation across the curriculum, using “Afl – Assessment for learning” tools supporting them in “show[ing] confidence rating….work” (T3).

b) Four respondents stated that boys were not involved in setting personalised learning targets. One acknowledged that “they should be more involved” (T4).

One respondent said that during “PSHE” boys “are asked to decide on personalised goals” (T1).

The Questionnaire was brought to a close with an opportunity for respondents to provide further comment.

Table 7 illustrates three interrelated themes drawn from all three responses.
Table 7. Extracts from Questionnaire: Closing statements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Extract</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher#2</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>“historically it’s considered they’re tougher than girls. They aren’t”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Development</td>
<td>“Boys can be very emotional”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher#3</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>“Boys are wired differently to girls”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Development</td>
<td>“gross motor skills not fully explored/developed before having to develop fine motor skills for holding pencil”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>“formal schooling starts too soon”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“Classroom too confined”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher#4</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>“conform to stereotypes”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>“comprehensive curriculum/more creative planning to engage boys”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following chapter endeavours to draw together findings with literature and the conceptual framework of the study in discussion of ‘What works best for boys?’
CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Intent of the Study

This study explores Child-initiated play as a Window into Boys’ Interests, Learning and Emotional development in an attempt to answer “What works best for boys?” As the main research question, this has provided the overarching intent of the study and was guided by three further questions:

(1) How do boys access the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Curriculum?
(2) How can learning be documented?
(3) What can boys’ behaviour and play choices tell us about their Emotional Development?

One of the central tenets of the study was to give the main participants, namely five boys in Reception, an opportunity to ‘have a voice’, not just a verbal representation, but for an in-depth journey into their world. In light of this, the study adopted a methodological stance that incorporated ‘voice’ throughout (Nutbrown and Clough, 2009:202), employing multiple methods for enquiry.

Main Methods and Guiding Questions

Observations took the form of scribed narratives and video recordings of boys’ self-initiated play proposing to address questions one and three. Analysis of pedagogical documentation addressed question two, while teacher questionnaires provided triangulation and response to elements of all three questions. In reality and due in part to the small sample, question one was extended to include the Primary Curriculum and dissemination of findings reflect this.
In keeping with a case study approach, this discussion is presented as an interpretation of findings and supported by literature.

This chapter is structured according to themes; Interests, Learning and Emotional development. Presenting findings in this way allows for associative links to be made in outcomes from a mixture of the methods used. However, the research reported here found an overlap between these and, endeavours where appropriate not to constrain discourse, choosing instead for discussion to evolve. The gender construct as one of the key aspects of the study forms the backdrop for relevant sections of the ensuing discussion.

Before continuing, two addition themes warrant further mention and will appear under the subheadings of Reflective Dialogue and Graphic Representation. Reflection during analysis and within the process of presenting findings, made visible these particular two elements of the study that were most illuminative as later discussed.

5.2 INTERESTS

‘The physical’

The study adopted a schematic base (Athey, 2007; Nutbrown, 2011) to explore what the boys’ interests are in the context of their self-initiated play. The evidence revealed from a combination of sources suggests that boys are interested in the physical and the social.

Findings evidenced in Table 3 (p.30) and detailed in Appendix 11, demonstrate that the boys in the study are predominantly interested in dynamic physical play exhibited in several schematic forms. Five of these action schemas were identified as common interests across the group and noted as consistent in other, separate episodes of play. For example, Fig. 1 (p.33) illustrates vertical trajectory and Table 5 (p.36)
transporting and trajectory. Athey (2007), suggests that in making the link between how the boys are playing and with what and who they are playing with, insight can be gained into not only their interests, but from a teaching perspective, how learning can be extended in appropriate ways, with appropriate content. It is suggested here, that this type of approach could be offered as a strategy for supporting learning for boys in school.

Narrative responses drawn from teachers in the study through questionnaires (Appendix 13) corroborate the visual representations captured from the boys, also highlighting the physical. Teachers demonstrated understanding of boys’ interests and learning styles, within the educational milieu, presenting a consensus of opinion as to the kinaesthetic approach favoured by boys. In addition comment was made as to how they as teachers adapted different strategies (Zamen, 2007; Karlson and Simonsson, 2011) that honour gendered differences in the classroom (p.39).

The importance of allowing boys space and opportunity for the physical is not to be underestimated. Goddard Blythe (2011:145) makes a compelling case for acknowledging the physical as the ‘lynchpin’, holding all areas of development together and providing the physical foundations for academic learning. This resonates with teacher responses from the study where both fine and gross motor skills were said to play a part in, but also act as a barrier to boys’ learning (p.100).

‘The social’

Observations revealed the boys’ play appears almost consistently located with others in social endeavours and apart from two occasions, involved same gender grouping. Arnold (2010) provides an explanation for this, suggesting that children choose playmates who share their schematic concerns, joining the physical to the social and feeding into
their psychological or the cognitive need. This suggests play choices at this age are governed less by who is playing and more by what they are playing with. However, as there has been little research on whether schemas can influence choice of play partners (Nutbrown, 2011) this is posited as one theory.

For the boys in this study, their social play is providing the context for much learning and as Rogoff (2003) contends, their gender identities and roles are engendered as part of that participation and learning, emerging in the context of their social interactions. This appears consistent with findings (Appendix 14) where Boy#4 persists with a gender discourse revealing both his and others understandings of what it means to be a boy (or girl), which for Boy#3 is located in a stereotypical model (Holland, 2003). How these gender attitudes and understandings can influence boys in their learning is well documented (Warrington et al., 2000; Skelton et al., 2007).

5.3 LEARNING

Child-initiated play is a medium through which the richest sort of learning takes place in early childhood and it is here, that children are able to fully express and strengthen their exploratory drive. According to Laevers (2000:20) this is reliant upon an educational context that provides the right conditions and opportunities for ‘deep level learning’, and whilst this is a documented expectation of the Early Years curriculum, there is often a gap between the rhetoric and the reality.

Nevertheless, when the boys in the current study were given an opportunity for initiating play, videoed episodes appeared to capture motivation, engagement and real learning with purpose, intent and understanding (metacognition) (p.36). However, what is noteworthy here, as it was with research conducted by Moyles and Worthington
(2011), is the missed opportunity for adult interaction and any documenting of the learning. It is suggested in this current study that this said more about the demands of the teaching role rather than lack of commitment.

Further up the school, the curriculum becomes even more target driven (Brooker, 2010) and assessment based. For boys, these are the antithesis to effective learning and seen as barriers by the teachers in the current study who state, that “current over assessment does not suit them” (p.38). Surprisingly however, teachers were of the opinion that the respective curricula offered in Primary education, does meet boys’ needs, emphasising instead that its effectiveness is dependent upon “how it is delivered” (p.38). Once again, this exemplifies the importance of the adult role in children’s lives, which can be seen as particularly vital in supporting emotional development for boys.

5.4 EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

In many respects, it is this aspect of boys’ development that is most debated and not always, suggests Mercurio (2003) with a great deal of understanding. Drawing on renowned texts such as Kindlon and Thompson (2000) she makes suggestions of how to guide boys in handling their emotions, positing the critical role society plays in influencing and labelling boys’ behaviour. A general consensus amongst such texts, places emphasis upon early childhood as the ideal time to support boys’ emotional growth, though Robinson (2011:83) argues that the adult must be ‘cognizant’ of their role as guide. In light of this findings from questionnaires (p.39) are encouraging, reflecting to what extent the teachers in the study perceive boys’ emotional capabilities as gendered and how these are externalised within the school context. In support of boys’ emotional
development, strategies employed by teachers are deemed to be effective and delivered according to boys’ learning styles.

In response to the paucity of experiential research into children’s social-emotional well-being, Mayr and Ulich (2009) developed an observational instrument (PERIK) founded on a credit model of competence. Extracts from observations that utilised relevant PERIK dimensions draw attention to the broad range of competencies the boys in the study demonstrated in self-initiated play. Viewing behaviour as ‘communication’ (Robinson, 2011: viii) and one of the multiple modes of expression open to children, has the benefit of approaching the domain of emotional development from a positive angle.

5.5 REFLECTIVE DIALOGUE

Observational methods of research have long been utilised as tools for exploring many topics and it is to videoing methods to which discourse now turns.

By utilising Instant Video Revisiting (IVR) (Forman, 1999), a method during which footage of participants is replayed with them and further narrative is supplied, the study explored another avenue for the boys’ expression. Reflective Dialogue (RD) was the illuminative result. This is a reflective process that allows children to revisit, for example their play, drawings and photographs and, as a visual prompt, allows children to give thought to their action, resulting in dialogue that extends what they did to why they did it (Robson, 2010). This is referred to as metacognition.

Reflective Dialogue will hereafter be referred to as RD and Instant Video Revisiting as IVR.
Makin and Whiteman (2006:35) contend that much enquiry related to children has traditionally been considered the domain of adults and whilst valid as one voice, it is the children themselves who offer ‘insight from [a] privileged position’. In keeping with Robson’s (2010) research into metacognition in child-initiated play, the current study revisited a number of videoed episodes of play with the boys, individually and on some occasions, collectively. These were conducted as soon as possible after the event to aid memory though this was dependent upon the availability of the boys and their interest in attending. Ethical considerations were a high priority during this phase.

In response to exploring “What works best?” for these boys, selected RD episodes presented in Table 5 (p.34) were drawn from full transcripts (Appendices 12A-D), and give an indication as to boys’ interests, learning and knowledge. Two interesting points can be drawn illuminating the benefits of employing this method.

Firstly, boys’ purpose, intent and understanding were not readily available when viewing footage in isolation of RD for whilst a photograph can be informative it is a static representation. Secondly, adult interpretations of the boys’ purpose, intent and understanding did not always mirror the boys’ accounts, suggesting RD’s to be advantageous for documenting and assessing learning. To illustrate, it was noted during one Adult-initiated/Child-led activity in which a pre-defined Learning Objective had been identified and noted on the board, some of the participant boys had their own purpose, intent and subsequent understandings. Whilst it could be noted that they ‘failed’ to meet the specified Learning Objective, their RD’s showed that effective learning had taken place, just in accordance with their own respective agendas.

A methodological stance that determines to explore the many voices of children through tools such as IVR and RD’s, gives research an
illuminative quality that gathers momentum. The final part of this chapter provides brief comment on one aspect of the study that grew in significance for one of the boys and ignited curiosity.

5.6  GRAPHIC REPRESENTATION

Boy#2 presented a voice that stood out from the others in one very significant way. Although he was engaged with them in very physical, social play for some of the research period, he was more often observed drawing or writing, occasionally alongside female peers, but generally independently.

Appendices 12C, 15 and Table 5 (p.34) provide a sample of these figural representations (Athey, 2007) drawn from narratives, photographs and RD episodes, respectively. Drawing on Vygotskian theory, Brooks (2005:80) would suggest for this boy, that drawing has a major role in his ‘construction and development of knowledge’ which illuminates additionally complex ideas when vocalised during revisiting, particularly audio/visual. Presented as a snapshot here, further research could explore how adults perceive the role of children’s drawings as an expression of cognition and emotional development.

5.7  EVALUATION AND REFLECTION

Strengths and Limitations

The strengths of the study include an intrinsic determination to get to the heart of what works best for boys, through a genuine regard for them as participants in the research journey. This intention was further strengthened by methods chosen, means, which although extremely
time consuming for one researcher (a limitation?), reaped the benefits through the variety of rich, authentic data produced.

The extent to which the research was governed by others, for example the school timetable, restricted opportunities for fieldwork or absent participants, does not negate the robustness or validity of findings, for all data gathering was thorough.

The following chapter presents the conclusion to the study, drawing together the threads in summation of the study’s intent, purpose and findings.

**CHAPTER 6 CONCLUSION**

This chapter begins with a brief recap of the purpose of the study. Following on from this, dialogue continues by combining 'looking back' and 'looking forward' in a summary of the main outcomes. These are primarily presented in response to the main research question (guiding questions included as appropriate), and include tentative suggestions and implications for practice and future research.

**6.1 The study**

*Purpose*

This small scale, qualitative case study has taken a socio-cultural/constructivist perspective to explore “What works best for boys?” The study responded to this within a carefully considered, multi
method framework that promoted ‘internal listening’ (Clark, 2005:35) and acknowledged the boys as best placed to answer.

As a secondary consideration and one which evolved during the research process, the study determined to highlight Instant Video Revisiting (IVR) (Forman, 1999) and Reflective Dialogue (RD) (Robson, 2010) as exemplary tools for eliciting the voice of the child.


Unveiling.....‘the physical’......‘the social’....‘the emotional’

Child-initiated play (Moyles, 2010), utilised as a vehicle for self-expression of the boys’ interests, learning and emotional capabilities, revealed that what works for them are opportunities for; the physical, the social and the emotional. Giving boys the opportunities to develop ‘physical foundations for learning’ (Goddard-Blythe, 2011:131) and explore the social milieu informing their internal construct of identity (Skelton et al., 2009), honours the construct of the child and positively acknowledges what it means to be a boy.

It was evident through the amount of raw data gathered that the boys in Reception did get regular opportunities to initiate play and subsequently have access to the curriculum. However, consistent with Moyles and Worthington (2011), the study suggests that the teacher and support staff had limited involvement in the boys’ self-initiated play and as a result missed opportunities to document or extend these valuable learning episodes. Looking forward, this could be addressed through further research into the use of audio/visual means of observing and in particular, opportunities for Reflective Dialogue with the boys.
A focus on the emotional competencies of the boys rather than a focus on their emotional inabilities endeavoured to honour a credit approach, which Mayr and Ulich (2009) suggest is under researched. Still in its infancy as an approach to measuring emotional development, scales such as PERIK are invaluable to the early childhood education arena, seen as the place to address difference before it becomes an issue later in education (Connolly, 2004). As this study has evidenced, the emotional development of boys is widely debated in isolation of other factors. This study has suggested that in order to address any issues relating to boys, that any approach or strategy undertaken should be a holistic one.

**Final note**

As an individual case exploring the particular, this study does not intend to provide generalisations, preferring instead to present a journey, where findings serve to further personal and professional understandings (Brooker, 2002).

It seems fit that this study should conclude as it began, with inspiration:

‘......a really good research study....does not value closure. It seeks new direction and unexpected results.....The next wave may open a new vista, and we want to be prepared.’

Paley (2010, p.11)
REFERENCE LIST


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Appendix 1A

(Ethics Form removed)
Dear Mrs ***** (Head Teacher)

Re: Susie Addison – Research Project

I am currently part way through the 3rd year of the Early Childhood Studies BA (Hons.) degree course at the University of Northampton and have decided upon a research topic.

As you are aware, I am very interested in how boys in the Early Years access their learning and how learning is assessed. In addition to this, I would like to observe boys self-initiated play, specifically looking at how they play and what they choose to play with.

I would be grateful if you would grant me permission to carry out research within Reception Class at ****** ***** Primary School. I would like to begin observations during the week beginning Monday 21st January 2013. I hope findings from this research will enhance professional understandings of how best to support boys learning in Reception and subsequently inform practice.

My sample would be the boys from Reception Class along with participation from teaching and support staff and yourself as Head Teacher. The sample will be chosen dependent upon parental, informed consent. In light of this, I have included a sample letter and accompanying leaflet in order to fully inform parents of the aims of the research process. I would like to distribute these as soon as possible, for return before 18th January 2013. The rights of the child will be acknowledged on a daily basis involving their consent in the form most appropriate to their age and understanding.

I would like to record on video, the choices boys make during play in class. This footage will then be revisited with the individual boys who can then talk through and share their play intentions with me. Parents will be offered the opportunity to view footage of their child if I am requested to do so.

I would also like to conduct a short, anonymous questionnaire/survey with teaching staff (distributed to staff on Tuesday 15th January) to ascertain their perceptions of how boys access the curriculum and how learning is documented.
This will also involve me looking at assessment documents such as the Early Learning Goals and profiles.

Following this, if possible, I would like to build upon the data collected from the survey and conduct semi-structured interviews and/or a brief focus group with you and the Early Years teaching and support staff. (Date and time to be arranged). I will provide all consent and participatory forms and have included samples for your attention.

It is my intention to conduct this research to the highest ethical standards, acknowledging the importance for example, of informed consent of all parties and the right for participants to withdraw. I have enclosed detailed documentation in support of ethical rigour for all involved including children and state the ultimate purpose of my research.

Anonymity will be assured throughout the research project and neither the individual children nor the setting will be identifiable either during, or upon completion of the research process. My dissertation supervisor and I will be the only persons with access to the research data in line with the University of Northampton ethical policy for research. All data will be securely destroyed once the grading process is complete.

Any concerns you may have during the process can be addressed to my dissertation supervisor: cilel.smith@northampton.ac.uk

To conclude, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your time and attention in considering my request and would welcome any opportunity to discuss this further with you.

Yours Sincerely

Susie Addison
University of Northampton
Early Childhood Studies BA (Hons) Top-up

I hereby give my consent to Susie Addison to conduct research in ***** Primary School, Reception class. I have read the accompanying ethical statement of intent and have been assured of anonymity and confidentiality concerning data collection and all participants’ right to withdraw.

Signed: ............................................................................................(Headteacher)
Print Name: ..........................................................................................
Date: ....................................................................................................

Appendix 1B

~ 66 ~
Dear Parent/Carer,

I am currently studying in my 3rd year BA (Hons) Early Childhood Studies Degree course at the University of Northampton. As part of my course I am required to carry out a piece of independent research within which I have a genuine professional and personal interest.

I have worked within the Early Years as a professional for many years and over the course of study and practice have developed an interest in how children learn and develop through play, in particular how boys access the curriculum through play choices.

I have been welcomed by Mrs ***** and Miss **** into your child’s class in order to carry out my research. Although I am focussed on Reception class boys, I hope that my observations will help to support all children in the Early Years and inform professionals across the whole school.

My observations will be written and videoed, with footage played back to the children involved in order for me to document their responses. Past research has shown this to provide a wonderful opportunity for adults to really listen to children, taking into consideration their own interpretation of play which often differs from that of the adult.

Observations will take place during normal class times and therefore permission is sought from all parents/carers of children in Reception. This acknowledges the potential that children who are not part of the sample, may inadvertently be recorded during play with the research participants.

In line with the University of Northampton’s strict ethical code, I ensure that the setting and the names of staff, children and families are anonymised and that written permission to use any observations, photographs (pixelated) and notes relating to your child is requested. Your child’s identity will be fully protected and any video footage is to be used only as a visual aid to discussion by the children involved. Any data collected will be securely destroyed once I have my final grade and only viewed by myself and if necessary, my personal tutor.

I have been volunteering in Reception for some time now and am known to the staff and children. I also have CRB clearance for work in school.
I have enclosed an information leaflet in order to provide a more comprehensive explanation of the benefits of researching with children and to reassure you of the research integrity. I acknowledge the rights of your child and will request their permission using age and understanding appropriate resources – eg. colour in a smiley face if you want to play?

I would be grateful if you would please complete and return the slip below to school before Tuesday 15th January 2013.

In the event that you do not want your child to participate, I would like to reassure you that your decision will be respected and will in no way affect you or your child’s standing within the school.

Thank you.

Yours Faithfully,

Susie Addison
Undergraduate – BA (Hons) Early Childhood Studies
University of Northampton

Dear Student,

My child’s name is ____________________________________________

Please tick as appropriate:

✔ You can observe my child

You can photograph my child

You can use audio/visual recordings to gain my child’s voice of his/her experience in school and use to support written observations

I do not given my permission for my child to be observed, photographed or written about

Signed: ............................................................................
Print Name: .....................................................................
Dated:   .................................................

~ 68 ~
Statement of Intent: Ethical guidelines for educational research

I have adopted the following guiding principles from BERA (2011) with respect for all participants and myself as researcher.

- I intend to treat any individuals who are part of my research: fairly, sensitively, with dignity and with an ethical respect for diversity, such as: age, gender, race, class, nationality, disability or any other significant difference.

- I will take the necessary steps to seek voluntary informed consent, whereby all participants understand the process in which they are to be engaged, including why their participation is necessary and how information gleaned will be used.

- I recognise the right of any participant to withdraw from the research for any reason and at any time. Any request forms for parents will include this information and I will reassure any participant that withdrawal from the research process will not affect them or their child negatively with respect for standing within the school environment.

- I acknowledge the special considerations undertaken when the research process involves children. I will comply with Articles 3 and 12 of the UNCRC respectively, wherein the best interests of the child will be my primary consideration and where appropriate, I will seek the ‘voice of the child’ in acknowledgement of their right to expression. Parental consent will be sought and I acknowledge the teacher’s role in context to gaining the views of the children within the classroom environment.

- I intend to respect all participants’ right to privacy and the confidential and anonymous treatment of data is of paramount importance. Participants will not be named during the research process and the setting name will also remain anonymous. In keeping with the Data Protection Act (1998) information will be stored securely with the researcher and used for the sole purposes of informing the research project and subsequent dissertation. Once external moderators have graded and returned the final report, any data will be securely destroyed. During the research process, only the researcher and
dissertation supervisor at the University of Northampton will have access to information pertaining to the research project.

- I acknowledge the need for careful consideration should any information or disclosure be made known which could be harmful to the participants or to others. In such cases, I will make known my intentions and reasons for passing on this disclosure to the appropriate persons within the research environment ie. the school.

- I will employ methods that are fit for the purpose of the research I am undertaking, providing discourse on the merits or otherwise of these methods and alternatives.

- I will communicate the extent to which my research findings are reliable, valid and if appropriate, generalisable and intend to make transparent any findings which may impact on future improvement within the early years sector.

Reference

British Educational Research Association (BERA) Ethical guidelines for educational research. London: BERA
Others benefit from research too...

Parents...

"I understand now why she likes to play that way and what she has an interest in."

"I could tell how proud he was by looking at his face in the photo during the session and it helped me enjoy looking at his photos and telling me what was happening."

"It was interesting to see the footage of her playing at school... nice to see them playing and happy when you're not there."

Practitioners...

"Looking back at footage with the child gave me a deeper insight into his interests and made me really appreciate how good learning is taking place all the time..."

"I was able to observe more children when using the video camera... through transcribing footage can take some time."

---

Further reading:

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A Guide for Parents and Carers

---

Why is research done with children?

- Research with children can help professionals better understand how children learn and develop.
- Professionals can then plan their activities and practices based upon findings from their research.
- Researchers that put the child at the centre of the research process aim to really listen to what children say.
- Researching with children rather than about children allows them some control over the research process.
- When children are active participants in research about themselves, their personal, social and emotional development often increases.

---

How is research done with children?

Observations:

- The researcher watches child’s activity and underlines what is seen and heard.
- Play that is chosen by the child (self-initiated), is the perfect opportunity to see real meaning in what they are doing.
- Observing how, what and who they play with helps us to understand what works best for children.

.....with audio/Visual tools.....

---

Who gets to see research results?

This is dependent upon the nature of the research.
Some research is made public as part of academic study.
Some research is published and informs policy and legislation for government initiatives.
Some research provides the foundations upon which further research is undertaken.

Common themes in research with children:

- Sound, rigorous ethical codes
- Anonymity for all participants
- Locates children at the centre of the process
- Robust data protection procedures

---

Appendix 4
Dear (Teacher)

Re: Susie Addison – Research Project

As you will be aware I am currently part way through my final year on the BA (Hons) Early Childhood Studies course. As part of this I am required to carry out a piece of independent research within which I have a genuine professional and personal interest.

My focus for this research is provision for boys in the early years, looking at their self-initiated play choices and in what way the curriculum supports their learning styles and play preferences. Although my sample will be boys and staff in Reception class, I would like to include all staff members in answering a brief survey/questionnaire about their personal and professional perceptions of boys’ learning styles.

The questionnaires will be anonymous and any data confidential, used for the purposes of the current study only. Questionnaires will be distributed on 15\textsuperscript{th} January for return on 21\textsuperscript{st} January. Where possible, I would like to conduct a brief focus group (no longer than 30 minutes) with interested staff and where key themes have been identified from questionnaire responses. This would be audio-recorded for later transcription.

It is hoped that this research will help inform Early Years and Primary practice benefitting staff and although focussed on boys will be beneficial for all children in Primary education.

Yours Sincerely

I would be grateful if you could complete the following slip indicating your preferences.

I am interested in being a participant in the above detailed research project conducted by Susie Addison. I understand that not all of these methods will be utilised, but considered as research unfolds.

I give my permission as follows......please tick as appropriate.

- I would be happy to complete a questionnaire
- I am interested in attending a focus group
- I would be happy to participate in a semi-structured interview

Signed:......................................................... Date:...............................................
Teacher/Practitioner Perspectives on Boys Learning in Primary Education.

This anonymous questionnaire is part of an exploration into what ‘Works best for boys in early education’, seeking to add an alternative perspective to the wider debate which often sets boys as underachieving and failing.

Thank you for providing your professional and personal perspectives on this issue. Your contribution is much appreciated and valuable to the research project. Responses are anonymous and any data collected will be stored securely and destroyed after the degree grading process.

Thank you.

Additional space for responses is provided on page 5.

A. YOUR TEACHING EXPERIENCES : Background

1. Please indicate the year groups you have taught since you began your teaching career. *Tick all that apply*
   - Foundation Stage (FS)
   - Year 2 (KS1)
   - Year 4
   - Year 6
   - Year 1 (KS1)
   - Year 3
   - Year 5

2. Do you have any preference for teaching a particular year group or key stage?
   - Yes, I prefer to teach..................................................
   - No

3. Which of the following applies to your current teaching group?
   - FS/KS1
   - KS2

B. YOUR TEACHING EXPERIENCES: Boys

Whilst this is not a comparative study setting boys against girls, it does aim to acknowledge any differences positively.

4. In your opinion, what do you see as boys’ learning styles?
5. To what extent do you feel the Primary curriculum in England meets the needs of boys?

6. Which subjects or areas of the curriculum do you feel most engage boys?

7. Which subjects or areas of the curriculum do you feel least engage boys?

8. Do you have particular strategies that you use specifically to support boys in accessing the curriculum?
   - Yes  (Go to Q9)
   - No   (Go to Q11)

9. Which strategies in the classroom do you employ to further support boys in accessing their learning?
10. How effective do you feel these strategies are?

SECTION C. BEHAVIOUR AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

11. What do you see as the main differences in the emotional development of boys to that of their female peers?

12. How do these differences manifest themselves in boys’ behaviour and attitudes to learning?
SECTION D. ASSESSMENT

13. How do you assess learning for your current year group?

14. Are the boys involved in assessing their own learning at all?
   □ Yes  (Go to Q15)
   □ No   (Go to Q16)

15. Please explain how the boys are involved in assessing their own learning.

16. Are the boys involved in setting personalised learning targets?
   □ Yes (Go to Q17)
   □ No   (Go to page 5)

17. Please explain what this involves and how effective you feel it is.
Please use the remaining part of this page to elaborate on individual questions and/or, as an opportunity to add any additional information related to professional or personal opinion on the topic.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. Please return to the School Office in the envelope provided before

...........................................

Susie Addison
Schema Framework for Coding Observations - (1st Analysis)
Athey (1990:68-130)

Schemas from Action to Thought

**Action Schemas**
1. *Dynamic vertical*
2. *Dynamic back and forth*
3. *Dynamic circular*
4. *Going over or under*
5. *Going round a boundary*
6. *Enveloping and Containing*
7. *Going through a boundary*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Cognitive functioning</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Motor</strong></td>
<td>The child performs actions that do not appear to have representational significance even though they may have.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Symbolic</strong></td>
<td>The child becomes able to represent known events either internally as thought or manifested in drawings, play and/or speech</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Functional dependency relationships</strong></td>
<td>The child understands cause and effect, if I do this – this will happen, application of knowledge on a current experience or past knowledge of a significant experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Thought</strong></td>
<td>The child gives a verbal account of an experience using prior knowledge and understanding and logic/reasoning ability</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Narrative transcribed from video footage - 1st Analysis

Boy #1 ‘Duplo Gun’

TC is playing independently with several Duplo bricks he has taken from the box in the home corner and is kneeling on the floor constructing. He is using both hands co-operatively to push 2 blocks together. It is proving difficult and he is manipulating them in a number of ways, trying to get them connected. He drops one saying “Ah” in exasperation. Boy #4 is watching. TC picks up the dropped bricks and tries repeatedly to connect them, turning them several ways before he is successful. Getting up from the carpet, he follows #4 into the home corner to the Duplo box – he is singing to himself as he does this. He picks out more bricks and attaches them to his model (evident now as a gun shape construction). He is adding further bricks to the ‘handle’ making it easier to grip. “I got my gun” he is saying to B#5, whilst climbing over the chairs in the home corner.

“I got a special zapper” – he is pointing and holding appropriately (like seen on tv), holding in a stance with 2 hands on the ‘gun’ and arms outstretched in front of him as he walks. He ‘fires’ it, adding sound effects and dives down on the floor as if pretending he’s been hit, others join in the game running around him as he lies still. He jumps up after a minute or so. “He’s after me!” he shouts running back to the group in the home corner. He holds up gun looking down the ‘barrel’. Music begins to play in the home corner and as TC looks around the other boys (girls now arriving) begin to move in various ways to the music. He is still holding his ‘gun’ carefully, but mimics #5’s back and forth dance movements and is laughing along (they all seem to be checking to see if this is okay to do). When the music is switched off, TC immediately raises ‘gun’ and continues ‘zapping’ with sound effects – others are now copying him and making Duplo weapons too. ‘Alien’ enters the home corner...“Hey get out” he shouts whilst firing “bang, bang, bang”.

‘KEY’ to this analysis: DV = Dynamic Vertical DBF = Dynamic back and forth DC = Dynamic Circular GO = Going over GRB = Going round a boundary

Level of Cognitive Functioning for this episode = Symbolic, Functional Dependency & Thought
### Coding for Emotional development during observations of Play

Adapted from Mayr and Ulich (2009:52)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PERIK: Dimensions (1-6) &amp; Items (a-f)</th>
<th>B#1</th>
<th>B#2</th>
<th>B#3</th>
<th>B#4</th>
<th>B#5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Making contact/social performance</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. the child makes (positive) contact easily with peers</td>
<td>◦ ◦ √ √ √</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. initiates games which are attractive for other children</td>
<td>√ x x √ √</td>
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<tr>
<td>c. tells other children about his experiences</td>
<td>√ √ x √ √ √</td>
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<tr>
<td>d. if he wants to join other children in play, he can express this adequately eg: may I play with you?</td>
<td>x x x √ √ √ √</td>
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<tr>
<td>e. his opinion is important among peers</td>
<td>◦ ◦ ◦ ◦ ◦</td>
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<tr>
<td>f. has close relationships/friendships with others</td>
<td>◦ ◦ √ √ √ √</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>2. Self-control/thoughtfulness</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>a. the child can wait for his turn eg, group discussions</td>
<td>√ √ x x √</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. respects the boundaries and needs of other children</td>
<td>◦ √ x x √</td>
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<tr>
<td>c. is worried when he has hurt another child or damaged something; apologises, etc.</td>
<td>√ ◦ ◦ ◦ √ √</td>
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<tr>
<td>d. has respect and empathy for feelings of adults</td>
<td>◦ ◦ x ◦ ◦</td>
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<tr>
<td>e. respects ‘do’s’ and ‘don’ts’</td>
<td>√ √ √ x √ √</td>
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<tr>
<td>f. can be glad for others, shares their joy and success</td>
<td>◦ √ x √ √</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>3. Self-assertiveness</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>a. the child enjoys relating tells his experiences eg. about the weekend</td>
<td>√ √ √ √ √</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. when an adult does not treat him justly, the child will speak up for himself</td>
<td>x ◦ √ √ x</td>
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<tr>
<td>c. is able to make justified demands on adults</td>
<td>◦ ◦ ◦ ◦ ◦</td>
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<tr>
<td>d. when something is wrong/disagreeable he will speak up</td>
<td>√ √ √ √ √</td>
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<tr>
<td>e. can defend himself verbally or physically</td>
<td>◦ ◦ ◦ √ √</td>
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<tr>
<td>f. does not allow himself to be put under pressure eg. holds an opinion that others do not share</td>
<td>√ √ x x √ √</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>4. Pleasure in exploring</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. the child likes to explore new things</td>
<td>√ x √ √ √</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. is optimistic/ positive when trying something new</td>
<td>√ √ x x √</td>
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<tr>
<td>c. asks questions, wants to know things</td>
<td>√ √ x x √</td>
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<tr>
<td>d. explores new things independently</td>
<td>√ √ x x √</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>e. gives himself time to get acquainted with new situations and things</td>
<td>√ ◦ ◦ ◦ ◦</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>f. will try things that seem difficult</td>
<td>√ x x √ √</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Key:**  
√ = observed doing.  
√√ = very confident.  
X = observed struggling with this.  ◦ = not observed.
### Schema Framework for Coding Observations – (2nd Analysis)

Adapted from Athey (1990) & Nutbrown (2011)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Forms of Schema</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Trajectory</td>
<td>Moving in or representing straight lines, arcs or curves.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Crashing</td>
<td>Making oneself or objects move towards each other with force and collide.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Forwards/reverse</td>
<td>Moving forward and back in a trajectory or curve.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Dabs</td>
<td>Making a stabbing trajectory movement, sometimes resulting in a mark.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Vertical Trajectory</td>
<td>Moving in, drawing or building up and down lines or constructions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Targeting Trajectory</td>
<td>Moving oneself or an object in a straight line towards a target.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Directions</td>
<td>An interest in moving oneself or objects in different directions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Transporting</td>
<td>Carrying objects or being carried from one place to another. Frequently involves gathering and distributing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Enclosure</td>
<td>Enclosing oneself, and object or space.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Edge-ordering</td>
<td>Interest in moving around or in drawing with precision the perimeter of an enclosure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Envelopment</td>
<td>Enveloping, covering or surrounding oneself, an object or a space.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Positioning</td>
<td>Children position themselves and objects differently thereby gaining a different view of the world.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Containing</td>
<td>Putting materials inside an object which is capable of containing them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Filling</td>
<td>Putting something into a container/interest in the filling action.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Size/Fit</td>
<td>Fitting objects around/inside other objects. Can result in thinking about &amp; estimating the effect of one’s own actions on materials.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Rotation</td>
<td>Turning, twisting or rolling oneself, or objects in environment around.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Connection</td>
<td>Connecting self to objects, objects to each other - graphic legs to bodies, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Disconnecting</td>
<td>Reversing connections resulting better understanding of connections made &amp; reversibility of operations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. 1-1 Correspondence</td>
<td>Placing objects/acting on objects/people in a one to one correspondence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Core &amp; Radial</td>
<td>Combi. enclosure with trajectories:graphic DAP, spiders, sun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Ordering</td>
<td>Placing objects, people or events in order -leads to sequencing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Classification</td>
<td>Grouping objects, people, materials according to similarities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Twoness</td>
<td>Being interested in and aware of two as a concept.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. Transformation</td>
<td>Transforming self through dressing differently/changes of state</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. Add on</td>
<td>Replication of graphic/construction schema alongside &amp; connected to itself.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. Zigzag</td>
<td>An interest in the open continuous triangle.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Highlighted areas** illustrate application to Boy#1 dominant schemas.
IVR Transcription of Reflective Dialogue (RD)

B#5 - ‘Wrinkly Fingers’

B#5: That was you (in response to hearing my voice on footage)

Obs: What were you doing then this morning with the marbles?
B#5: (now holding flip camera to view footage) I was taking them out and putting them in there. I’m on there a lot (laughs)

B#5: There’s ** (indicates girl he was playing with) she counted….oh there it slipped off my finger
I nearly dropped it (marble)

Obs: Do you remember any of the numbers you counted
B#5: There’s ** (indicates girl he was playing with) she counted....oh there it slipped off my finger
I nearly dropped it (marble)

Obs: Which bit did you enjoy the most?
B#5: That bit (indicates footage of him picking marbles out of the water and transferring them to the bucket)

Obs: Do you like watching yourself on TV
B#5: It’s good (very enthusiastic) I had some special ones (marbles) a black one and an orange one.

Obs: You played a long game didn’t you?
B#5: It wasn’t really a game...(laughs)

Obs: Oh..what was it then?
B#5: It was a ...it was a .......

Obs: Was it a sort of experiment to find something out?
B#5: Yeh

Obs: What is it you were trying to find out?
B#5: you had to take them out there and put them over there (marbles - shows actions)

Obs: So was it about numbers then? (5.46)
B#5: Yeh (not too sure)

Obs: Or was it something to do with wrinkly fingers?
B#5: Wrinkly fingers

Obs: What was it about wrinkly fingers then?
B#5: Not really sure

(looking at screen)
I was counting

Obs: What number did you get up to then?
B#5: 31

Obs: I remember you got up to 35 once
B#5: I did ...and 105

Obs: What other things do you like to do in your classroom?
B#5: Everything.....the universe

Obs: I know you like playing with traffic lights, I saw you with those yesterday and you played with them today didn’t you?

KEY: Purpose Intent Understanding
B#5: My Dad’s got to work until Friday...I’m sad cos he’s gone
Obs: But he’s coming back on Friday.....how many sleeps is that?
B#5: 3 (shows 3 fingers)
Obs: That’s not too long ......then you can have the weekend together. What
do you and Daddy play with at weekends?
(8.03)
B#5: We have a game called Mousetrap, if you land on the trap and you
have to go through it and you fly off (actions) and then you’re on
there and you have to block it and if you get knocked off you keep
going and then miss a go.
Obs: How does it make you feel if you miss a go?
B#5: I don’t mind
Obs: When I used to play with my boy at home he didn’t like to miss his
turn, he used to get a bit cross.
B#5: I didn’t .......
Obs: Does *** (sister) play those games with you?
B#5: Yes and she bees cross when she misses a turn and she whacks me.
Obs: Does she.....how does that make you feel?
B#5: Sad .....and she gets sent to her room and her room is downstairs

(another episode played.....traffic lights) (9.22)

B#5: I like the traffic lights
Obs: I can see that....what do you do with them when you’re playing with
them? How do they work?
B5: Look there’s ****
Obs: Does he play a bit with you then?
B#5: Yeah, he’s higher than me cos I’m on my knees (footage shows)
Obs: He is higher than you because you are on your knees
B#5: I told him to go other there
Obs: Why
B#5: He’s too near me and he kicked me and it hurt me
Obs: So you asked him to move.....that’s a very sensible
thing to do
(10.09)
B#5: There are your fingers......they look like your fingers
(compares footage to now)
They are!!! (exclaimed and we laugh). They’re the same.
Obs: So what is it that you like about playing with the traffic lights?
B#5: I press the buttons over there.
Obs: What do the buttons on the traffic lights do?
(10.44)
B#5: When you press those it changes.
Obs: What changes?
B#5: The middle
Obs: Oh they’ve got colours on them
B#5: Yeah
Obs: What colours are they?
B#5: Red, yellow and ........green
Obs: (repeats back)
B#5: Did you know that green means you can go, yellow means get ready,
and red means stop
Obs: So when you’re in the car with Mummy and Daddy do you see traffic
lights like that
B#5: Yeah
Transcription of Reflective Dialogue (RD)

Boy#3 - 'Wrinkly Fingers'

KEY: Purpose Intent Understanding

Obs: Who’s that on the screen?
B#3: Me (whispers smiling)
Obs: It is, look you’re in your classroom. Do you remember what you were doing this morning?
(2.06)
B#3: Yes
Obs: What were you trying to find out there?
(2.13)
B#3: I was trying to put the marbles in the ...er...bucket...it’s an experiment.
Obs: An experiment?
B#3: I’m putting the marbles in the bucket.
Obs: Why did you want to put the marbles in the bucket?
B#3: I don’t know
Obs: Why did you have water in the tank?
B#3: The water is in there because the marbles are in there
(3.12)
Obs: So you had to put your hands in the water to get the marbles out?
B#3: Yes.
Obs: So I wonder what the experiment was then?

(sound distorts........)

Obs: I can see that you are counting
B#3: Yep...What’s there? (points to screen at area in classroom)
Obs: Over there..., they are the packed lunch boxes...is that where they are kept?
B#3: Yeah.....that one is ***’s
Obs: ***’s? Oh and can you see yours there?
B#3: Mine’s that one
Obs: And what do you have in there today?
B#3: I don’t know
Obs: (pointing to screen) I think maybe you liked the feeling of the water? Your hands are in there a long time aren’t they....is it warm water?
B#3: Yeah .....yeah. It was warm for a time and then when I played again it wasn’t.
Obs: Oh...why was that?
B#3: I left it for a long time.
Obs: That’s an experiment isn’t it, you told me that it was warm and then you left it and then when you came back to play the air had made it cold.
B#3: Yeah...
(concentration waning- video replay faulty)
Obs: Do you watch dvd’s at home?
B#3: (animatedly) Yeah I watch them and then have to go to bed.
Obs: What do you like watching?
B#3: Lots of time I watch Spiderman (launches into dialogue of bad man fighting Spiderman –with actions)

~ 85 ~
Obs:  Does Spiderman win?
B#3:  *Well Harry comes down and fire comes out of his skateboard and he goes woosh...*

Obs:  Fire came out of his skateboard?
B#3:  Yes
Obs:  Wow that’s quite clever...is that all real?  
B#3:  Yeah well I have a skateboard
Obs:  And does fire come out of the end of it?
B#3:  *Harry's skateboard can fly and mine can only go with wheels.*
Obs: Hey there’s your picture...do you remember doing it?
B2: Yes...it was yesterday
Obs: It was yesterday....
B2: I did 3 persons and I coloured 1 in different colours and it had 1 little and 1 little eye and em... it was in some colouring. This is actually me an a fairy
Obs: Ooh a fairy, who’s the 3rd person?
B2: Mummy
Obs: Which one is Mummy...can you point to Mummy?
B2: The middle one (points to screen)
Obs: The middle one’s Mummy ...who’s this one?
B2: Me
Obs: And is there another one under there?
B2: R*** and Dad (brother).
Obs: (repeats names) Under there. What are they doing under there, R*** and Dad?
B2: R*** is hiding [be] ahind Dad
Obs: Is he?
B2: ‘cos he’s playing football behind
Obs: And what’s this red colour?
B2: It’s actually a pinky redy colour...em it’s a house. (1.31)
Obs: And are they inside the house then, is that why there covered over here?
B2: Yeah
Obs: So R*** is playing football inside the house?
B2: (nods)
Obs: Is he allowed to....can you play football in your house
B2: Yeah
Obs: Just carefully then?
B2: Yeah, I hit a picture but it didn’t break
Obs: Oh that was lucky

KEY: Purpose Intent Understanding
B2: It just fell on the CD ....the thing ..the CD thing (circling in air with hand as he speaks) what gets the song out (CD player?)
Obs: What about this bit up here?
B2: It's the curve of dad
Obs: ..... and here?
B2: That's the fairy what's a cartoon
Obs: And what does the fairy do there?
B2: Actually [sic] it's me the fairy
Obs: And what's your job then, when you're the fairy?
B2: I have to try and do something that's very good. When they tell me what to do, I do it when they don't tell me something what I have to do em..that's what I only do. And I always do it.
Obs: Aah, that's good. And very helpful at home as well are you?
B2: (nods)
Obs: Can we look at one of your other pictures?
B2: Yeah. One of dem [them] is very good (smirks)
Obs: I think they're all very good I do. Do you have favourite ones?
B2: Yeah.
IVR Transcription of Reflective Dialogue (RD)

B#1/B#3 - ‘Marble Run’

B1: It keeps breaking (present tense)
Obs: Why does it keep breaking?
B3: ‘Cos it’s got loads of them on
Obs: It is very, very tall isn’t it?
B3: So it goes weeeeee crash!!!!
B1: Yeah (laughs)
Obs: But you keep trying to build it again
B1: Well, it went like this and I whacked it (bangs on the table) and it crashed!
B3: (mimics) Yeah, it when booooie [sic] crash!!!
B1: Yeah....ha ha ha!
Obs: So what were you trying to do ....were you trying to make the tallest that you could?
B3: We were trying to snap it.
B1: No, we were trying to build it (different purpose here)
B3: And build it (changes voice into sing song)
Obs: So you build it up and snap it and build it up and snap it and build it up ......?
B1: And put marbles down it
B3: And snap it.
B1: No (puts hand on arm and looks at B3) **** we were making it remember. We had to make it for the marbles.
Can I talk?
Obs: Yes, talk to me and tell me about your playing.
(B1 begins to talk and is interrupted by other 2)
B4: I think it’s fun to watch playing.
B1: Oh no, I broke it again
Obs: Oh you broke it again did you?
B1: Yes I broke it when I was holding it.... (interrupted)
B3: (loudly) I’m tired ....I’m going to sleep (lies on floor)
B4: Look, I can see me and W***, I can see me and W***
Obs: What were you doing? (1.16)
B4: Playing cars
(B1 and B3 now sitting on table to watch)
B1: I want to feel William (touches screen)

KEY: Purpose  Intent  Understanding
Transcriptions of Teacher (1-5) Questionnaires.

Teaching and Learning

Q4: In your opinion, what do you see as boys’ learning styles?

T1: “I see boys as being learners who need to ideally experience the learning in a physical way eg. write better about visits or when they are very confident about the subject matter. I feel they also like to move more than girls.”

T2: “Hands on, digital”

T3: “Most boys prefer ‘hands on’ learning styles, they are creative but prefer to discuss rather than unite. My experience is that the notion that boys like competition is not true for most boys. They don’t like to fail so competition only suits the dominant types.”

T4: “I would say that boys often show a preference for a more kinesetic [sic] learning style – however this is not always a boy/girl divide. There is a slight leaning towards more mathematical topics rather than literacy.”

T5: “Many, although not all, boys prefer to learn by doing (kinaesthetic learners). They enjoy collaborating.”

Q4/KEY: Physical Learning Style Discussing/Collaboration

Q5: To what extent do you feel the Primary curriculum in England meets the needs of boys?

T1: “The curriculum can meet the needs of boys on the whole, however it depends on how it is delivered.”

T2: “Adequately – it’s not the curriculum it’s the delivery.”

T3. The curriculum can meet the needs of boys but the current over assessment of children does not suit them. They don’t enjoy revision, they find it pointless “I’ve already done this!” They don’t like seeing what they can’t do.”

T4: “In the past it has been quite rigid and very target/level/SATS led. I think we will have more of a creative leeway in the future.”

T5: “The Primary Curriculum does meet the needs of boys provided it is made accessible to them. The SATS do not allow for a kinaesthetic approach to learning.”

Q5/KEY: Does meet needs Delivery/teaching
Assessment/tests

Q6: **Which subjects or areas of the curriculum do you feel most engage boys?**

T1: “Science, PE, Art, DT, ICT and Maths – sometimes”

T2: “ICT, History, DT, Art, Sport”

T3: “PE/DT/Science/Some elements of Maths. Some enjoy History – they like stories from the past. Some like the discussion within RE, especially about the existence of divine bodies.”


T5: “PE and games – especially where elements of competition. Practical Science, Maths and DT.


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Q7: **Which subjects or areas of the curriculum do you feel least engage boys?**

T1: “Writing, Reading, MFL”

T2: "Maths, English”

T3: “English – poetry, creative writing, MFL. Art – if using fine motor skills.

T4: “Writing”

T5: “Many boys find the physical and technical aspects of writing difficult and this is evident across the curriculum.

Q7/KEY: Writing – English – MFL
Q8/9: Do you have particular strategies that you use specifically to support boys in accessing the curriculum? Explain..

T1: “Yes” “I try to plan activities to suit their learning styles. I incorporate brain breaks. I work to plan activities which involve physical activity.

T2: “No”

T3: “Yes” “Be interested in them and what they do – ‘become an expert in Pokemon!’ They like to see you remove elements at which they might fail. They like to be able to ‘experiment’ – don’t tell them the outcomes of Science experiments – leave things open ended.”

T4: “Yes” “Try to always use a good variety of teaching techniques – interactive learning, actions, talk buddies, etc…


Q8/9: KEY: Physical strategies
Mental strategies

Q10: How effective do you feel these strategies are?

T1: “They vary dependant on other circumstances, ie. ability, home situation, attitude to learning.”

T2: N/a

T3: They seem to work. I have boys in my class who now enjoy reading and writing creative stories, still working on poetry.”

T4: “Need to be used more but can be limited by resources/timetabling.”

T5: “They seem to keep boys engaged for longer. While they develop spoken language, they do not make written work easier and do not develop technical skills.

Q10/KEY: Varied/Limited effectiveness
**Behaviour and Emotional development**

**Q11: What do you see as the main differences in the emotional development of boys to that of their female peers?**

T1: “Boys tend to be competitive and find it difficult to lose [sic]. If they feel too daunted by a task may opt not to do anything. When they do succeed they are quick to say the task was easy. Girls are more motivated to please others. They are happy to seek advice and will often want to clarify what they need to do.”

T2: “Less able to articulate or empathise.”

T3: “The home environment is vital, in particular a boys relationship with his Dad.
Females tend to ‘wish to please’ through conforming to rules and procedures.
Boys wish to please, but through achievement and recognition for tasks they couldn’t do before.

T4: “Female peers tend to be slightly more mature in emotional understanding and reactions to certain situation. They also sometimes find it a bit easier to talk about their feelings.”

T5: “Girls do seem to be emotionally more mature than their male peers.

**Q11/KEY: Not as able to talk/less emotional maturity than girls**

**Different approach to problem solving**

**Q12: How do these differences manifest themselves in boys behaviour and attitudes to learning?**

T1: “Boys may refuse to take part or complete an activity. They may verbally ‘lash out’ if they feel vulnerable and not able to meet an objective. They may become upset if they do not understand or feel they can’t complete their work.”

T2: “They can become negative unless it’s a specific interest.

T3: “Boys can switch off if their efforts are not recognised – even if small. Boys will work if they can see a clear outcome and steps towards meeting it. Boys find it harder to work independently for long periods of time unless they are checked up on, told they are doing well and given opportunities to share their thoughts.”

T4: “Boys tend to respond to more active learning styles rather than ‘sit down’ talking lessons. Sometimes resolution of conflict can escalate to more physical results if they find it difficult to verbalise their feelings.”

T5: “Boys more likely to blame the task when they do not succeed – girls blame themselves (‘I’m no good’ as opposed to ‘It was a silly task anyway’).”

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Q12/KEY: Conflict/verbal, physical behaviour
Switched off /prefer active

Assessment

Q13: How do you assess learning for your current year group?

T1: "Informally during lessons, more formally from the work they produce or through testing – all recorded on APP’s."

T2: "Against national levels. Children are encouraged to review their work and assess plus commenting on others."

T3: "Due to the year groups I teach most assessments are against APP and level descriptors."

T4: "APP, SATS papers, questioning – verbal, written work (marking), visual – eg. watching performances."


Q13/KEY: Formal assessment
Informal/in class

Q14/15: Are the boys involved in their own learning at all?

T1: "Yes, [they] use a symbol to say whether they have met the objective. Recording results on charts for tests eg. times tables, mental maths tests."

T2: "Yes – see Q13"

T3: "We use ‘AfL’ (Assessment for learning) the children show their confidence rating of a piece of work. They also have target cards to see what the next steps in their learning are."

T4: "Self evaluation in terms of what they enjoyed, found easy/difficult, ‘up levelling’/marking and improving their own work."

T5: "Yes, boys (and girls) are encouraged to use the success criteria to judge if they have met objectives.

Q14/15/KEY: Self assessment/use success criteria
Q16/17: Are the boys involved in setting personalised learning targets? Please explain..

T1: “Yes through PSHE they are asked to decide on personal goals. In other subjects, particularly Maths and English next steps are discussed with groups or individuals.”

T2: “No”

T3: “No”

T4: “No but perhaps feel they should be more involved, tricky logistically for younger children.”

T5: “No”

Anything to add....

T1: ----

T2: “KS1 boys can be very emotional, historically it’s considered they’re tougher than girls. They aren’t.”

T3: “We start our children in formal schooling at too early an age. I think/feel this hinders boys as they lose the opportunities for outdoor/large movement play. Their gross motor skills are not always fully explored/developed before they are put into a situation of holding a pencil and having to develop fine motor skills. I think boys are ‘wired differently’ to girls and need more time out of formal schooling before they start, the classroom is too confined and usually set up by a female so might not fully meet the needs of boys.”

T4: “Sadly I think that the children do tend to in general conform to certain stereotypes although there are always exceptions to the rule. I think that comprehensive curriculum & more creative planning engages boys depending on the topic explored.

T5: ----

KEY: Gender Education Development
(IVR/multi) Boy#4 Transcription with Reflective Dialogue

'Home Corner: Camping with Pets'

Obs: Look, I can see you playing ...what was the game you were playing?
B#4: (whispers) Mums and Dads
Obs: (repeats) Who was the Mum and who was the Dad?
B#4: M was the Mum and I was the Dad

Obs: Where were you going there? (on screen)
B#4: Well to the campsite.
Obs: Is that your puppy that you have there with you?
B#4: Yes and M has the cat with her.
Obs: So you’re taking your pets camping with you...do you have pets at home?
B#4: No
Obs: Would you like to have a pet at home/ What pet would you have?
B#4: Well.....a cat and I had hamsters but they’ve gone somewhere else
Obs: (in game) Do you’re pets have names in your game with M?
B#4: yeah, mine is called Fluffy and M’s cat was called Georgie
Obs: Do you play these games at home with S** (brother)?

B#4: Yeah...he can be a child and I can be the Dad
Obs: Look they’re all having snack now

new video loaded... M*** and B4 in tent (camping scenario)

Obs: What’s happening there then? (B#4 looking through binoculars)
Who were you looking at?
B#4: You. I was looking... (laughs as watching) at E****
(laughing in real time as he watches himself laughing on screen)
says on screen “You are big Mrs A” laughing
Obs: Why am I big when you’re looking at me?
B#4: I’m looking through big bit

new video loaded.......ice experiment

Obs: What did you have to do in your experiment this morning?
B#4: You had to make the ice melt
Obs: How did you do that? Did you manage with your partner – who was your partner?
B#4: Yeah......L and *** (B#5)
Obs: What are those boys and girls doing there?
B#4: Making the ice melt on the radiator
names all the children on screen including teacher
Obs: Where are you then...I can’t see you yet
B#4: I was having my snack then
(spots himself again on screen)

KEY: Doing Gender
the social
B#4: There I am...with L
Obs: So what do you like playing best in your classroom? (12.26)
B#4: Fun things.....fun games
Obs: Do you like the interactive board and number games
B#4: Yes
(new video loaded........)

B#4: I’d like to see that one...is that ****’s film?
Obs: Yes would you like that one?
B#4: Yes
Obs: What’s O making there?
B#4: A gun
Obs: So you’re allowed to make guns in the classroom?
B#4: Only pretend ones

(This footage starts with B#1 then others including B#4 join in – group role play)

Obs: You’re playing a good game, is it an aeroplane game? Who was the pilot?
B#4: L*** and then we had some music.... We did some dancing
Obs: You spotted an alien
(laughing as he watches... then sees himself fall over on screen and
laughs asking to watch it again)
The alien killed me.

(B#4 is very engaged and reliving the play experience, laughing with others
as they laugh on screen. He’s particularly engaged when footage shows them
dancing.)

B#4: I told the girls to stay in (the home corner with him)
Obs: And did they stay in?
B#4: Yes we’re saving them
Obs: I can see you saying stay in – so what role were you...spaceman?
B#4: No.... ice robots saving the girls
Obs: Ice robots saving the girls...
B#4: I want a different one. (19.11)
(interested in watching others play....)

Snack time episode

Listening as children talk about visiting each others houses (B#4 is included in
footage)

Obs: Is ‘I***’ coming to your house? (female peer)
B#4: Yeh
Obs: When she comes to your house, what games do you play together?
B#4: We have to play girl games
Obs: What are girl games?
B#4: Erm.....don’t know
Obs: Last time ‘I’ came to your house, what did you play?
B#4: We played robots...it’s a boy and girl game.

Had watched enough and asked to go back to class.........
‘Ponytail’

#4 Listen...can I tell you something....I have ponytails on my head every day
#3 Ponytails? (incredulous) Ponytails everywhere?
#4 In my hair
#3 On your hair?
#4 I always have ponytails on my hair everyday
#3 So then you’re a girl with a ponytail on your head
#4 (corrects) In my hair
#3 I had a baby ponytail in my hair once.

(later..........conversation continues after pause)

#4 Do you know how many ponytails I got at home?

(no response ....then......)

#4 I’m putting ponytails in when I get home

(no response as others are watching screen...episode of football playing, conversation becomes more animated)

#4 My Dad’s a football player
#3 I’m a football player
#2 My brother is a football player

KEY : Doing Gender
       ‘the social’
Reflective Dialogue of Graphic Representation Boy#2

‘The King’

Hair
Hair
Eyes
Body
Ear

(around the other side)

B2: You know ‘Avacar’[?]
Obs: mmh
B2: Where there’s things like his hair. It’s em one of those Kings.
Obs: Oh...so this bit, all these patterns up there?
B2: Yeah, [they] are the Kings hair
And they are the eyes
Obs: There? (points)
B2: No...there next to him (points)
Obs: Wow I love that. What does the King do?
(observer thinking B2 is talking about film called Avatar).
Obs: Is that film scary?
B2: No atually [sic] it’s a story, you know the King and Mary that one is in. The 3 Kings and Mary. Yeah and the baby. The baby is baby Jesus.
Obs: In Avatar? Are they a funny colour, the people in Avatar...their skin?
B2: Yeah, but it’s just white.
Obs: Like yours and mine?
B2: No, just golden white
Obs: Aah...and what happens in the film?
B2: Em, we watched it and em they go down on a horse and when they make it to Bethlehem they see some sheep and some people there and there’s a stable they can sleep in!
Obs: That’s good and was it warmer in there?
B2: Yeah

KEY: highlighted areas illustrate metacognition – knowledge and understanding of his own thoughts and influencing factors

Appendix 15
Obs: So this picture of the King ....what was the name of the film you watched him in was it on television at home?

B2: No at school

Obs: What are these bits?

B2: They're the body. And that coloured bit is a little bit at the end with the other ear around the back

(7.19)

Obs: (clearer now) 'Cos you were in the Nativity here at school weren’t you?

B2: I was a donkey.

Obs: Was it good fun being the donkey

B2: Yeah, everyone knew I could come up and when them told me to sit down and C*** told me to sit down .....I said no.

Obs: Did they not get it right ....were you not meant to sit down then?

B2: I am, but em Mary and Joseph are and em they have to tell me when to sit down and I sit down and C*** told me to sit down and I said no.