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Gender stereotypes: the impact upon perceived roles and practice of in-service teachers in physical education

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Abstract

This study aimed to explore gender stereotypes and their impact upon perceived roles and practice of in-service physical education teachers. Twenty-one qualified PE teachers completed an online story completion method and results were analysed using reflexive thematic analysis. Comparisons were generated between the two-story stems: between male and female participants and between the hypothetical stories and direct question answers. Results showed that teachers' perceptions largely conformed to typical gender stereotypes, including stereotypical views on gender roles, gendered sports and story character assumptions. Participants did not attribute stereotype reproduction to themselves as teachers and negative external pressures arose as a common reasoning for stereotypical practice. However, only female participants highlighted parents and peers as significant contributors, whereas both genders highlighted governmental pressures such as curriculum design. This study displayed that gender segregation, masculine and feminine discourses and gendered habitus are still prominent within PE.

Introduction

This article focuses upon gender stereotypes and how these impact perceived roles and practice of in-service physical education (PE) teachers. Gender stereotypes impact all areas of individuals' lives promptly and continuously (Gundy, 2015). Due to stereotype normalisation within society (Hinton, 2013), gendered behaviours are socialised and

reproduced from an early age (Anderson & White, 2018). These gender discourses are often experienced differently by males and females, but outcomes are usually discriminatory and restricting (Grabruker, 2013). However, stereotypes are not absolute, they are socially constructed (Azzarito & Solmon, 2009); therefore, investigation can promote future change.

Individual behaviours are influenced by the associated embodied dispositions (*habitus*), the predetermined value or success criteria (*capital*) and the encapsulating social context (*field*) (Bourdieu, 1993; Brown, 2005). Expectations and social values attached to social context are experienced differently by males and females and with varying intensities (Anderson & White, 2018). These social expectations are enhanced by the traditional but enduring formation of conventional roles in accordance with gender, which regulate and reinforce gender stereotypes (Spence & Helmreich, 2014).

PE as a field is socially constructed through societal values, cultures, perceptions, political influences and individuals' beliefs (Hay & Penney, 2013). PE as a curricular subject is uniquely and unequivocally stereotyped with gendered *habitus* favouring specific groups (Green et al., 2007; Kirk, 2002; Lines & Stidder, 2003; Metcalfe, 2018; Paechter, 2006). PE celebrates masculinity and typical masculine characteristics such as speed, strength and competitiveness (Anderson & White, 2018), and either discourages or reinforces particular forms of femininity (Staurowsky, 2016). These discourses are often reinforced and reproduced within practice, solidifying masculinity dominance and gendered *habitus* within both teachers and pupils (Valley & Graber, 2017; Walseth et al., 2017; Wrench & Garrett, 2017). Indeed, the PE environment within schools creates a narrow, binary view of gender that is reproduced within the subject through practices, teaching and content. Therefore, it is difficult for teachers to assist pupils in obtaining capital whilst challenging stereotypes. Consequently, certain groups are marginalised and misconceptions surrounding gender and appropriate PE participation endure (Anderson & White, 2018). These stereotypical discourses impact all, teachers can personally encounter disparate experiences due to gendered stereotypes and *habitus*; therefore, investigation is paramount to entice equality and change (Anderson & White, 2018).

Bourdieu's theory of field, *habitus*, capital and practice

The field is the social context in which power relations occur between individuals or institutions (Bourdieu, 1993), in this instance, the field represents the arena of social interaction within PE as a curricula subject and profession (Fitzpatrick & Enright, 2017).

Sport differs from PE due to a lack of academic structure, but it is witnessed in extra-curricular activities and through the games-based essence of the English PE National Curriculum (PENC) (DfE, 2013b). Changes within the current 2013 PENC urge teachers to respond with 'equality' and 'equity' regarding opportunities for all pupils with non-segregated aims and content (DfE, 2013a, 2013b). As the focus of PE evolves so does the associated social relations, but traditions are permeated in gendered discourses displaying positive masculine dispositions and negative feminine ones (Allen, 2014; Brown, 2005; Kirk, 2010; Metcalfe, 2018; Wrench & Garrett, 2017). Therefore, the reconceptualisation of PE still fails to reduce gender bias and inequality (Henson, 2015; Stidder & Hayes, 2017).

English secondary schools for pupils aged 11–18 still largely teach in sex-segregated formats and with same sex teaching and gendered activity choices (Binney & Smart, 2016). This binary notion, seeped in history, leaves no room for those identifying outside the traditional binary norms of gender. Historically, sports have been highlighted as typically masculine such as football or feminine such as dance (Apelmo, 2019; Mulvey & Killen, 2015). Therefore, the field itself, the surrounding policy and normative teaching structures can impact teacher's perceptions and daily practice (Bourdieu, 1993) specifically within PE which is the only subject to be taught in genders.

Habitus is the embodied dispositions, perceptions and norms that are dynamically and symbiotically associated with the field (Brown, 2005). The habitus in PE is stereotyped (Allen, 2014; Hay & Penney, 2013; Light, 2007; Metcalfe, 2018) which contributes to the ideology of masculinisation and sportification of PE (Kirk, 2010). Traditionally, masculine activities reproduce a higher status (Anderson & White, 2018) and it is less socially desirable for a male to participate in 'feminine' sports than vice versa (Horn, 2008). This results in boys often being taught competitive games (Anderson & White, 2018), or a sportified versions of traditionally feminine sports which shifts the habitus and contextualisation to suit stereotypical outcomes of masculinity and physical prowess (Brown, 2005). This demonstrates the prominence of segregated curricula, promoting gender stereotypes and suggests that PE is more suited to masculine participants within all social relations within the field (Walseth et al., 2017). This supports the hierarchal culture of patriarchy, hypermasculinity and appropriate masculine behaviour in Western society (Campbell et al., 2018; Light, 2007). Contrastingly, when girls experience competitive games, they are usually more stereotypical, such as netball, because traditionally it promoted preparation of gendered roles such as mothering as it taught restraint and personal sacrifice for the team (Bowker, 2006). It is suggested that teachers have deep-rooted gendered habitus generated from past experiences (Brown, 2005; Brown & Aldous, 2015) and often attempt to 'manage'

rather than 'reduce' the gender gap due to ability assumptions (Apelmo, 2019). Therefore, this can promote a cycle of the socialisation of gendered habitus and stereotypical perceptions within all involved within PE (Brown et al., 2017).

Capital is the recognised elements of success or achieved status within the field and can be transformed from habitus (Brown, 2005). For example, within PE individuals can possess cultural or physical capital as an embodied aspect of the body or symbolic capital through the socially valued habitus, such as optimal mesomorphic body composition or possession of dominant masculine traits (Brown, 2005; Hay & Penney, 2013). As the success criterion is masculinised, it is unsurprising that the field remains stereotypical, because of PE's physical nature, teachers must praise characteristics within performance which are traditionally associated with males (Larsson et al., 2009). This provides challenges for teachers attempting to act in non-stereotypic ways as the habitus, capital, the dictated curriculum structure and individual teaching norms or policies within schools are usually gendered (Lines & Stidder, 2003).

Gender stereotypes and roles

Alongside the structure and prevalence of a gendered field and the generation of gendered habitus and capital, teachers themselves and their ideologies, beliefs and pedagogies can become conduits in gender stereotype reproduction (Brown, 2005; Valley & Graber, 2017) particularly as these personal elements are usually stereotyped (Amsterdam et al., 2012). All individuals develop pre-disposed dispositions surrounding gender within PE such as dominance of hypermasculinity as gendered habitus (Campbell et al., 2018; Green et al., 2007; Hinton, 2013). Teachers bring this into the field partially or strongly formed (Brown, 2005) and through practice, teachers reinforce field-specific gendered habitus, whilst simultaneously recognising the field's capital. As teachers undergo PE teacher education, they receive little training in relation to gender (Valley & Graber, 2017) and instead experience the 'dominant discursive practices framing the field of PE' (Wrench & Garrett, 2017, p. 332) or 'the gendered "calling" of habitus to the field' (Brown, 2005, p. 10). As teachers attempt to accommodate the demand of their profession, they encounter gendered 'cultural goods'. For example, male candidates should be knowledgeable and efficient in male stereotypical games and vice versa for females to fulfil job roles due to same gender teaching persistence (Brown, 2005; Lines & Stidder, 2003). This leads to narrow focuses and teacher preferences and demonstrates how emerging teachers are expected to

compliment the current gendered norms and structures which reduces opportunities for habitus re-conditioning (Brown, 2005; Wrench & Garrett, 2017).

Gender stereotypes are socially constructed and normalised within society along the binary notion of biological sex (Azzarito & Solmon, 2009; Degorska, 2013; Walter, 2008). Gender is the 'non-physiological aspects of being female or male' (Lips, 2008, p. 5) including the cultural and social expectations surrounding masculinity and femininity (Holmes, 2007) such as behaviour and appearance (Dea, 2016). This becomes embedded as gendered habitus (Bourdieu, 1993). Gender stereotypes determine how people view themselves and others (Anderson & White, 2018), how they behave (Bem, 1981; Mulvey & Killen, 2015; Serbin et al., 2001), how they present themselves (Carroll, 2019), opportunities they experience professionally (Bird & Rhoton, 2011) and what sporting activities they participate in (Staurowsky, 2016). Non-adherence to gender stereotypes is linked to peer victimisation, social exclusion or isolation and diminished opportunities (Mulvey & Killen, 2015) which continues to regulate and reinforce stereotypic views and gendered behaviours, thus reinforcing gendered habitus. Gendered norms, stereotypic activities and differences are still prominent within PE (Grabrucker, 2013; Metcalfe, 2018; Valley & Graber, 2017; Watson, 2018). Therefore, through the investigation of gendered perceptions held by in-service teachers surrounding an ambiguous but inevitably gendered PE scenario, the impact of gender stereotypes can be analysed in relation to teacher roles and practice using Bourdieu's (1993) theory

Gender stereotypes are applied to individuals, arguably even before birth. Upon physical identification of foetal sex, stereotypes, such as gendered colours; 'blue for boys and pink for girls' (Harris, 1999, p. 145), are unambiguously assigned (Ruble et al., 2007). Society views and represents gender as binary with a distinctive dichotomy in cultures, roles and expectations (Anderson & White, 2018). Children internalise this sex-typed information through socialisation and identify themselves as male or female and create a 'gender identity' (Bem, 1981; Ruble et al., 2007). This is then assimilated and their concept of themselves is applied into their gender schema (Bem, 1981). Children learn and accept 'what is for boys or girls' and through gendered schematic selectivity apply it to themselves. This produces sex-typed behaviours and traits between the ages of two and three (Bem, 1981; Martin et al., 2012; Mulvey & Killen, 2015; Serbin et al., 2001).

Traditionally, masculine traits can be demonstrated by displaying strength, dominance, braveness and competitiveness, whereas females are expected to be feminine and display gentleness, passivity, warmth, weakness and sensitivity (Amsterdam et al., 2012; Coon &

O'Mitterer, 2013; Spence & Helmreich, 2014; Vera et al., 2018). Individuals, who display both masculine and feminine traits, can be labelled as androgynous and could help diminish gender stereotype rigidity and encourage flexibility (Runco, 2007). PE has masculine roots and is largely androcentric (Anderson & White, 2018) and females continue to be marginalised, problematised and undervalued (Kirk, 2002). The value of females within PE is still a challenge as girls face teasing, exclusionary behaviours in an environment that is heavily masculine and heteronormative (Hills & Croston, 2012). Bourdieu's (1993) theory of field, habitus, capital and practice can effectively contextualise PE, it can explain how gendered experiences socialise gendered habitus and how the accrual of gendered capital forms complex identities within each field which overlap, interact and occasionally contrast with one another (Quarmby & Dagkas, 2015).

Historically both gender and sex are perceived within Western society as binary, it is assumed that two sexes exist (male and female) and two genders (masculine and feminine), making gender seem constant and static (McAdams et al., 2013). However, younger generations are expressing themselves in new ways providing challenges for schools and teachers (Bragg et al., 2018), therefore challenging gendered habitus. Diamond (2020) concurs noting that, 'A growing number of children and adolescents report having gender identities or expressions that differ from their birth-assigned gender or from social and cultural gender norm' (p. 110). This is creating a complexity for researchers, as such Landi et al. (2020) assert that while work surrounding sexual orientation and gender identity within PE settings has increased in recent years significant barriers to research remain within this area.

With younger generations challenging the binary system, there could be a move towards a redesign of PE and its curriculum to be more inclusive throughout its structure. Work around co-education classes has also shown that even with a mixed of gender both male and female teachers taught predominately masculine stereotyped activities (Kastrup & Kleindienst-Cachay, 2016). However, there evidence that shows challenging the traditional notion of the gender binary can have positive results for improving attitudes, engagement and students feeling more valued (Sánchez-Hernández et al., 2018).

Methodology

The story completion method utilises prior instructions to provide clear information on task nature, expectations and length (Braun & Clarke, 2013), two ambiguous and fictitious story

stems (story beginnings) and prior demographic questions for data contextualisation (Clarke et al., 2017). A 'follow up' question was also implemented, this prompted consideration of how participants would have acted within the proposed story scenario, creating direct data collection which provided further comparisons (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Clarke et al., 2017). This qualitative nature provided indepth responses surrounding interrelated complexities, it generated an opportunity for participants to share personalised views without any restrictions (Thomas, 2017) and provided an alternative to more traditional tools such as interviews (Clarke et al., 2019). Qualitative studies are 'used to generate ideas and concepts and to uncover perceptions and attitudes' (Nykiel, 2007, p. 56) and facilitate investigation of 'lived experiences' and 'practices of groups' (Terry & Braun, 2017). For example, the subjective analysis of stereotypical perceptions and assumptions of PE teachers. The comparable story stems contained identical main content (Braun & Clarke, 2013): a child with a gender-neutral name approaching a teacher and requesting to transfer between two sports, but differed in the request from a typically male-orientated sport to a typically female-orientated sport (Apelmo, 2019; Azzarito & Solmon, 2009; Mulvey & Killen, 2015) and vice versa. Story completion allows analysis of 'hidden truths' as participants draw on own understandings using third-person hypotheticality devoid of ownership or justification (Clarke et al., 2017). Story completion can access 'blocked off' elements of the consciousness, as gender stereotypes in PE can be unconsciously developed and reproduced it is an appropriate method (Brown, 2005). Results allowed comparable investigation of general perceptions surrounding gender stereotypes and gendered PE, teacher's assumptions surrounding given gender of the characters and how participants make sense of and solve gendered issues within PE.

Story stem A: It was a chilly Wednesday morning as Alex cautiously approached the PE teacher during break time. The teacher quickly realised that Alex was upset and asks what is wrong. 'I don't want to play football anymore, I really wish I could dance instead' says Alex ...

Story stem B: It was a chilly Wednesday morning as Alex cautiously approached the PE teacher during break time. The teacher quickly realised that Alex was upset and asks what is wrong. 'I don't want to do dance anymore, I really wish I could play football instead' says Alex ...

Participants were recruited through online convenience non-probability sampling as subjective methods incorporating only qualified teachers were utilised to determine participant inclusion. This allowed an easy and accessible method for participant interaction

and correlated to known methods for the participant group (Clarke et al., 2017). Participants consisted of current in-service fully qualified PE teachers of any age from across the United Kingdom. In total, 13 participants completed Story A (six female, seven male) and eight participants completed Story B (five female and three male).

The project was advertised via online mediums such as social-media and email or through snowball sampling which is effective in accumulating participants within difficult to locate groups (Thomas, 2017). Participants accessed the story anonymously via hyperlinks and participation was completed independently within participants' own environments. Firstly, participants were made cognizant of the studies procedure and informed consent was obtained. Subsequently, basic demographic questions were obtained, participants chose a story stem (A or B) and they were presented with instructions and the opportunity to complete their story. Stories ranged from 72 words to 505 words and the average story length was 184 words. Participants then answered one direct question and were provided with a debrief, withdrawal instructions including receiving a completion receipt number and finally confirming consent. The study was approved by the university ethics procedure and ethical guidelines were adhered to throughout. All data were anonymised at the point of collection, identifying and sensitive data were not collected and each participant was allocated a pseudonym to ensure anonymity.

All data were downloaded and analysed using Braun and Clarke's (2013) approach to reflexive thematic analysis (TA) by the lead researcher. Reflexive TA consisted of six phases which encompassed all data being read in an immersive manner, code creation of key raw data segments, code grouping procedures to construct themes, theme revision to ensure true data representation, theme definition and naming procedures to solidify meaning, clarity and scope (Braun et al., 2016). The summarised and analysed data themes were used to produce the results and discussion section. However, the data are subjective, and reflexivity must be considered as the researcher can impact collection, analysis and results through own personal characteristics, values and perceptions of the research topic (Thomas, 2017).

Results and discussion

This discussion will use Bourdieu's theory of field, habitus, capital and practice to explore how participants largely conform to gender stereotypes and traditional normative discourses. The identification of gendered habitus, capital and practice within the participants perceptions is used as an agent of explanation. This discussion identifies that teachers

attribute negative external pressures within their field as the main contributing factor to the reproduction of gender stereotypes and that their own role in this reproduction is absent or unconscious.

Perceptive conformity to gender stereotypes

All participants conformed to gender stereotypes and stereotypical views on some level through adherence to or reinforcement of traditional gender stereotypes, gendered roles, sports and character assumptions, thus, suggesting the presence of gendered habitus. Within the Story A sample, 12 of the 13 participants gendered Alex as a boy. This story portrayed Alex wishing to transfer from football to dance and as football is traditionally masculine (Apelmo, 2019; Mulvey & Killen, 2015) and usually undertaken by boys (Hanan, 2000), it demonstrates that teachers continue to follow the embodied dispositions and gendered norms of PE (Kirk, 2002). Within the Story B sample, in which Alex wishes to transfer from dance to football, four of the eight participants gendered Alex as female and two participants (one female and one male) did not provide any gender indications. It is possible that as they were informed that the study was investigating gender stereotypes that they used gender neutral language proactively and therefore are not considered with discussions around stereotypes.

As dance is typically associated with femininity (Apelmo, 2019) the four participants that gendered Alex as a female demonstrate dispositions of gendered sports and stereotypical assumptions surrounding its usual participants. Interestingly, only female participants gendered Alex within the opposite 'expected' gender; as a girl in Story A (one participant), or a boy in Story B (two participants). This supports research that depicts men usually hold gender stereotypes firmer (Marjanovic-Umek & Fekonja-Peklaj, 2017; Mulvey & Killen, 2015). Although these three participants were in the minority of the entire sample, including within the entire female sample, all participants identified Alex within the traditional binary labels of male and female, therefore disregarding gender fluidity and other possible identities. This furthers the traditional gender binary and does little to transgress the simplistic view of gender (Schippers, 2007). Therefore, teachers within this study are reinforcing the gendered habitus within the field of PE.

Across both stories stems participants displayed perceptive conformity to gendered sports through including characters who stated dance 'isn't masculine enough' (Elizabeth A; Kate A) or 'dance is just for girls or gay boys' (Emily B). This reinforces distinct gender

categorisation (Carroll, 2019) and displays gendered habitus through dominant assumptions surrounding 'appropriate' activity participation in relation to an individual's sex (Scraton, 2018). As Metcalfe (2018) acknowledges linking capital to gendered behaviours and expectations can impact an individual's status within the school environment. These statements disregard gender fluidity (Schippers, 2007), alternative masculinities (Pascoe, 2007) and the opportunity to challenge discriminative practice and perceptions in relation to sexuality. Emily's story segment shows that stereotypical dispositions endure when considering gender and activity choice (Scraton, 2018) and that negative intersectionality is still applied to individuals based upon their sexuality (Drury et al., 2017).

'Alex looked around, she knows that all the girls love dancing and she knows she's supposed to love it too. But she just wants to play football' (Oliver B). This demonstrates typical male and female sport associations (Apelmo, 2019), which could result from exposure and assimilation of the socially generated stereotypes and opposite perceived cultures (Bem, 1981; Martin et al., 2012; Serbin et al., 2001). These stereotypes are encouraged by normalisation and societal acceptance. However, it is difficult to locate with certainty gendered disposition origins; therefore, these ideas could originate from the gendered habitus that PE inevitably regulates and reinforces (Kirk, 2010). PE reproduces field-specific stereotypes such as masculine dominance (Anderson & White, 2018) and stereotypic restrictions such as gender segregation (Paechter, 2006) and assumptions based upon gender (Chalabaev et al., 2013). The taken-for-granted behaviour and attitude that is demonstrated by PE teachers reinforce the field's gendered habitus by valuing symbolic capital in line with traditional gender roles.

Participants displayed stereotypes through bodily images and personal characteristics linking to physical capital and reinforcing gendered habitus. When Alex was portrayed as a boy, who wanted to transfer from football to dance, he was described as small in stature and reserved (Thomas A), shy and 'girly' (Joshua A) or someone who struggles with the frequency and intensity of the male-orientated game (James A). These qualities are deviant to the social expectations of masculinity (Coon & O'Mitterer, 2013; Vera et al., 2018) and the traditional masculine traits of physical capital that are heavily valued within PE. Feminisation of male individuals, who pursue dance (Torhild Kломsten et al., 2005; Watson, 2018), directly opposes the valued physical capital within PE, therefore devaluing the participants status within the field.

Alternatively, Sophie gendered Alex as male but described him using typical 'jock' qualities such as tall, popular and outgoing. Her story encompassed the idea that the 'school's

football star' was concerned about his public image because he wanted to dance but not 'look like a girl'. This conforms to traditional notions of the high-performing masculine athlete and the idea that they should not participate in 'feminine' activities (Hanan, 2000; Torhild Klomsten et al., 2005).

Within Story B participants mostly gendered Alex as female with characteristics such as 'tomboy' with shorter hair and larger in weight (Hannah B) or 'heavier but stronger than the other girls' (Joseph B). These portray Alex as aberrant against the typically accepted feminine characteristics and 'attractive' body types (Amsterdam et al., 2012; Bowker, 2006), this shows participant conformity to stereotypical body compositions within narrow binary gendered ideals (Azzarito & Solmon, 2009). Similar to Story A results, this suggests that girls, who desire to play customarily masculine sports, should display masculine, or rather unfeminine, qualities (Anderson & White, 2018). Females displaying these behaviours can gain capital within the field, yet no parallel capital gain occurs for males displaying feminine qualities (Horn & Sinno, 2014), thus, reinforcing the importance of symbolic and physical capital to demonstrate masculine behaviour, attitudes and appearances being valued by PE teachers.

Teachers often have preconceived stereotyped bodies for certain activities, these ideals are impacted by socio-cultural factors and societal socialisation of these norms (Bowker, 2006). Therefore, participants may have given Alex characteristics that not only justify the choice of football, but also portray a masculine image to match the male dominated sport. Teachers have higher investments into masculine qualities such as strength and speed as they become performance grading criteria (Larsson et al., 2009) and are the fields symbolic and physical capital; therefore, participants could assume that Alex requires more masculine qualities to be able to effectively perform within a masculine sport (Chalabaev et al., 2013).

Negative external pressures

Participants displayed perceptive conformity when discussing potential negative external pressures as reasonings within the stories for Alex's conflict. This inadvertently displayed why participants believe gender stereotypes are being reinforced and these external pressures developed into three subthemes: parents, peers and government. Across both story stems, five participants referred to parental pressure all suggesting a heteronormative family unit. Heterosexuality has strong associations with dominant gender behaviours and

expectations (Wrench & Garrett, 2017) and particularly with masculinity (Pascoe, 2007). This further shows conformity to traditional gendered habitus and reinforcing heteronormativity.

“That’s ok, you can do dance instead or you can do both” ... said the teacher ... But there was no point getting excited as his parents wouldn’t allow it ... dad had said he cannot do dance he’s to do rugby or football instead. Alex has become so unhappy he feels misunderstood by his family and doesn’t fit in. (Alice A)

This story segment acknowledges a difference in generational stereotypes. Scholars recognise that older generations and fathers may prescribe to gendered stereotypes more firmly (Marjanovic-Umek & Fekonja-Peklaj, 2017), reaffirming that gendered behaviours are first socialised within the family (Anderson & White, 2018). When adapted to PE, generational pressure leads to ‘regressive physical education based on cultural nostalgia and conventual social hierarchies are evident’ (Brown, 2005, p. 7). As such, gendered habitus is reinforced with symbolic and physical capital more valued within the PE field.

Interestingly, within four out of the five stories the parental pressure emanated from the father, whereas the mother was described as ‘supportive’ (Kate A). This displays elements of the traditional masculine and feminine characteristics such as aggression or gentleness (Coon & O’Mitterer, 2013; Spence & Helmreich, 2014) and hints towards traditional gender roles within a heteronormative family. For example, women were expected to provide care and attend to children’s needs which, respectively, meant that men were disassociated with that role (Oakley, 2016). This could explain why participants wrote mothers as the ‘supportive’ parent and fathers as the dominant or negative one (Schneider, 2011).

A further five participants wrote about peer pressure and the gendered habitus that can emanate from peers. For example:

Alex had spent days trying to pluck up the courage to make this statement! Alex’s teacher smiled and nodded her head, “I’m so glad you have come to talk to me about this Alex, you haven’t been yourself in PE lately”. The teacher signalled for Alex to follow “What made you choose dance in the first place?”. Alex stood hands clenched together, her mind working overtime to try and think of a justifiable reason that wouldn’t make her sound stupid. “Did you feel like you had to do dance because your friends chose that option?” Alex’s teacher interjected when she saw Alex struggling for words. Alex

gazed down to the floor, relieved that someone understood how she was feeling and nodded her head. Alex was waiting for the bad news, she was waiting to hear the reason why she couldn't participate in football. "Well I don't see why not Alex, as long as you have some shin pads for next lesson, feel free to borrow some today" said her teacher with a smile on her face. Alex was overcome with excitement, she couldn't wait to participate in PE again, she did not care that she was joining a class full of boys and club level girls who were all much better than her, she was getting the opportunity to do something she enjoyed. (Lucy B, Full Story)

This story and statements such as Alex 'is feeling pressured by his friends to drop dance as it is seen as a female activity and play football with the lads' (Emily B) shows the prevalence of expectations of social conformity to group norms, stereotypic and binary practices and gendered habitus (Mulvey & Killen, 2015). Norm resistance perpetuates clear consequences such as social seclusion (Horn & Sinno, 2014). Sarah (story stem A) highlighted how verbal victimisation and peer rejection can occur by writing 'I keep missing the ball and all the other children keep saying I'm stupid because of it'. This correlates to the loss of status and obtained masculinised physical capital for non-conformity to the gendered habitus within the field (Brown, 2005; Hay & Penney, 2013; Horn, 2008). Within Emily's story peers held firm stereotypic views which suggested 'dance is just for girls', hence demasculinising Alex for wanting to participate and the sport itself. Only female participants wrote about parental or peer pressure as a reasoning, perhaps because women usually experience effects of gender stereotypes earlier and occasionally more severely particularly in male-dominated fields such as PE (Anderson & White, 2018; Brown, 2005; Kirk, 2002).

Additionally, 15 of the 21 participants discussed gendered issues within policies and procedures that are regulated by power relations within schools such as normalised segregated curriculum, same-sex groupings and same-sex teaching (Lines & Stidder, 2003; Paechter, 2006). For example, 'sadly we don't offer dance on the male side of the curriculum' (John A, William A) or

It isn't feasible for you to dance in PE ... the boys don't do dance, it's only the girls and it wouldn't be fair if I let you join ... because they may feel uncomfortable. (Joshua A)

This reinforces that PE, its habitus and practice is entrenched with gendered dispositions and gender stereotypes (Allen, 2014; Henson, 2015) showing taken-for-granted nature

within the field (Metcalf, 2018). In total, 15 participants listed 'explaining or reinforcing the structure of the curriculum' as an expected teacher role which demonstrates the limitations teachers face when operating within professional expectations (Null, 2017). Nonetheless, participants highlighted the importance of creating inclusive and varied curriculums for all (Natalie B; Jacob A; Joshua A); however, Joshua highlighted the limited power that teachers possess to achieve this. 'Offered dance as an extracurricular activity for all genders. I don't agree with the current curriculum so [I] would encourage my department to choose their sports for the year with an emphasis on fitness' (direct question response). This demonstrates a disagreement with the current segregated curriculum structure and the fact that teachers can only 'encourage' change. However, it also demonstrates conformity through a recommended continuity of sport-based selections which inevitably socialises sportification and masculinisation of PE due to stereotypical discourses (Anderson & White, 2018; Brown, 2005; Kirk, 2010; Lines & Stidder, 2003; Stainback, 2018).

Additionally, 16 participants used extra-curricular as a solution, suggesting that non-gendered participation can only be achieved outside of curriculum time. Clubs were described as 'the next best thing' for all genders (William A) and a place to meet like-minded people (Sophie A; Sarah A). This demonstrates the possibility that teachers believe that gender stereotypes may only be challenged and changed within extra-curricular settings which supports the idea that PE is traditionally and persistently unequal and stereotyped (Green et al., 2007; Lines & Stidder, 2003; Stainback, 2018). Therefore, acknowledging the entrenched gendered practices within the PE curriculum that are seemingly taken-for-granted and unwilling to change.

Positive teacher encouragement

Participants portrayed the teachers in the story and themselves in the direct questions responses as overtly positive, including positive teacher traits and reactions to both story stems. For example:

The teacher is a new PE teacher to the school at only 25 years old. They ... are eager to open up as many opportunities as possible for all pupils. When Alex confronts the teacher ... the teacher is warm and comforting. (Emily B)

or

'she [the teacher] is very friendly, approachable and always around ... The teacher approaches Alex with a calm attitude' (Chloe, A). Statements like these were also replicated within direct answer responses such as 'I would have been empathetic to him/her and tried to understand what was making the student feel this way' (Claire, B).

Positive reactions from teachers who encourage teacher-pupil communication and joint problem solving can lead to the beginning of challenging and changing gender stereotypes definitively (Shilvock & Ingram, 2012). For example, teachers who display calmness, positivity, openness and a readiness to listen are more likely to encourage and facilitate positive chances for pupils to discuss their issues and approach gender stereotypes collaboratively (Grossman, 2004). Furthermore, if teachers continue to hold the ideal of challenging gender stereotypes (Joshua A; Claire, B; Emily B; Alice A), this needs to be considered within teacher education to ensure equality and diversity within PE is developed.

It is encouraging that the present data, except for one response, highlight that teachers believe that they teach with an empathic and caring nature. The one response that displayed 'drill-sergeant' traits was the oldest participant, which suggests that traditional discourses, cultures and teaching patterns may be difficult to adapt (Templin et al., 2017). If teachers are striving to normalise differences (Sarah A), encourage social acceptance (Emily B; Claire B), reduce habitus surrounding gendered sports (Elizabeth A) and encourage communication regarding issues (John A; Elizabeth A; Joshua A; Alice A; Chloe A; Emily B; Lucy B), then initial but positive steps can be taken to reduce gender stereotypes within PE (Lindsay, 2015).

However, this study also identified participant perceptive conformity; therefore, they could fail to recognise their own impact and role within stereotype reinforcement and socialisation. This was apparent through the overtly positive teacher image and the suggestion that stereotype reproduction and conflict emanates from external pressures such as parents, peers and governments. This could result from the fact stereotypes can be held, obtained and strengthened unconsciously as a result of interactions within society (Gundy, 2015) and within specific fields with gendered habitus and capital (Brown, 2005).

Furthermore, although participants encouraged passion (Joshua A; Jacob A), uniqueness (Claire, B), non-conformity (Claire B; Emily B), enjoyment (Sophie A; James A) and free expression (John A) it seems they are limited to actually facilitate this within curricular time due to perceived external constraints. Teachers resort to encouraging these in extra-

curricular time or providing alternative roles to manage this, rather than challenge the current segregated, gendered and unequal practice (Allen, 2014; Kirk, 2010). Although each participant portrayed friendly and supportive teachers who were keen to rectify the issue within the stories, their own underlying conformity to gender stereotypes and gendered habitus may still regulate gendered discourses, therefore, reinforcing a trend of continuity rather than challenge and change (Brown, 2005).

Conclusion

The story completion method produced complex and varied interpretations of the two story stems (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Story responses highlighted that in conjunction with previous research gender stereotypes are still apparent within PE and current in-service PE teachers continue to hold stereotypical views (Anderson & White, 2018; Allen, 2014; Brown, 2005; Metcalfe, 2018; Lines & Stidder, 2003; Walseth et al., 2017). These appear to be sub-consciously held, reinforced through gendered habitus and inculcated within the field (Hay & Penney, 2013). This included gender stereotypes surrounding traditional gendered sports (Apelmo, 2019; Azzarito & Solmon, 2009; Mulvey & Killen, 2015), bodily assumptions (Amsterdam et al., 2012), gender roles (Lindsay, 2015), masculinised habitus (Brown, 2005; Brown et al., 2017) and masculine and feminine discourses (Coon & O'Mitterer, 2013; Vera et al., 2018). This study found that most teachers attribute regulation of gender stereotypes to external pressures; women ascribe parental and peer pressure more than men, and both genders largely associate it with governmental constraints. Results highlighted that gender segregation continues to reinforce inequalities and gendered habitus within PE through available activities and that the aims of the English PENC (DfE, 2013b) still fail to practically eradicate these inequalities (Stidder & Hayes, 2017). Results show that teachers believe that extra-curricular activities are the easiest and occasionally the only place to provide diverse and inclusive experiences for all genders, potentially because there would be no disruption to the gendered habitus and capital of the field.

Teachers demonstrated positive traits, reactions and encouragements towards teaching and challenging the gendered stereotypes, but there is a clear need for teachers to acknowledge the reinforcement of symbolic and physical capital that leads to the gendered habitus within the field. Brown (2005) suggests that identification of gendered personalised habitus and practice is the first step in achieving this. It is essential to acknowledge that the use of the story stems containing heavily gendered activities may have added to the reproduction of gender stereotypes and normative gendered behaviours within the field of PE. Further

research is required to discover how teachers can conclusively identify their own impact within this area and not develop stereotypical views whilst operating in a stereotypical field (Campbell et al., 2018; Light, 2007). Furthermore, additional research is required to identify how professionals within the field can work towards truly challenging gender stereotypes on personal, institutional and governmental levels to ensure stereotype reduction within curricular time. Detailed and longitudinal research into the use of co-educational classes would also be beneficial to examine any impact on challenging gendered stereotypes for both staff and students. Definitively, this research found that gender stereotypes continue to be persistent within the field of PE and that contemporary and innovative strategies are required to reduce this.

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