

Abstract

Measuring Pupils Perceptions of Gendered Identity in Secondary School PE

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Gender inequality has been shown to be a factor which affects sports participation in schools (Jarvie & Maguire, 1994: *Sport and Leisure in Social Thought*). However, few studies have investigated pupils' perceptions of how their gendered identity influences their attitudes towards sport and physical education. The aim of this study was to investigate the affect of pupils' gendered identity on their perceptions and lived experiences of physical education in one school in Leicestershire. Bourdieu's conceptual schema was used to frame the study because it has the potential for deepening and developing a theory of gender, the body and embodiment in sport and physical culture (Thorpe, 2009: *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 26, 491-516). Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the School of Sport and Exercise Science ethics committee. Study methods included use of semi-structured group interviews and questionnaires that used Bourdieu's conceptual framework as a guide. Participants were randomly selected. Five male and five female students aged 14 took part in semi-structured interviews, and a further thirty male and thirty female students of the same age completed questionnaires. Interviews were transcribed verbatim and coded using thematic analysis. Questionnaires were also analysed following three procedures for qualitative data analysis: data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing/verification.

Findings from this study suggest that students' physical and emotional perceptions of PE in the school environment were similar among boys and girls. This suggests that multiple femininities/masculinities were in operation, suggesting gender is not solely based on sex in the PE environment. However, despite these similarities, findings also conveyed the stigma associated with gender stereotyped sports and how this replicates the doxic habitus students possessed. SPSS Chi squared testing was used to analyse the significant differences between numerous variables e.g. ($X^2 (1) = 30.07 (2dp), p > 0.001$) showing there is a significant difference in the sports boys and girls are most likely to take part in. Research from this study is an expansion of the work carried out by Velija and Kumar (2009: *Sport Education and Society*, 4, 383-399) who assert that PE does little to break down existing gender relations of PE and often reinforces ideas about the gendered body. Future research is needed to explore the contradictory statements highlighted in this study concerning the male and female habitus in relation to social acceptance issues.