Chapter 4

Gendered ideas and practices in secondary schools in England

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This chapter focuses on the findings of the qualitative baseline data collected in schools in England from October 2017 to January 2018. The data presented here illustrates how education and school life reflects and reproduces gender and other inequalities. Data analysis is organised under the seven main categories of the GECM: Gender Stereotyping, Leadership, Curriculum, Physical Environment, School-related Gender-Based Violence, Community, and Inclusive Education. There are some overlaps among certain thematic categories. For example, the implications of resisting gender stereotypes and transgressing gender norms are discussed under gender stereotyping as well as in relation to school-related gender-based violence. The themes: Physical Environment, Community, and Inclusive Education are short sections due to the lack of relevant data. There were some differences in the ways entrenched gender and racial inequalities and gender regimes operated across the three pilot schools, as well as in the ways schools dealt with gender issues. However, tacit and explicit assumptions about gender permeated, reflected, and shaped all aspects of schools' life, including culture, divisions of labour, gendered relations of power, emotions and human relations.

Two conceptual ideas influenced the analysis: the gender regime, meaning *'the patterning of gender relations in that institution, and especially the continuing pattern, which provides the structural context of particular relationships and individual practices'* (Connell, 2005, p.6) and intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989; Collins, 2019; Tsouroufli et al., 2011a). We approach intersectionality as a framework for understanding how multiple identities and inequalities might operate to create modes of discrimination and/or privilege (Tatli & Ozbilgin, 2012). In particular we expose how whiteness and white privilege as a symbolic and political form of power operate in European contexts to pathologize and exclude ethnic minority girls and boys (Levine-Rasky, 2000). In this chapter I briefly discuss the dominant teacher discourse of racialization of gender in School 1 as well as the intersections of gender with normative expectation of sexual behaviour and sexual orientation about sexuality and sexual orientation. A more detailed discussion of the intersectionality of gender with race and the intersectionality of gender with sexual behaviour and sexual orientation is developed elsewhere (Rédai, 2020a; Tsouroufli, 2020).

4.1. Gender stereotyping

In this section, I discuss the gendered and racialized perceptions of teachers in relation to student behaviour and attitudes, subject choice, career plans and young people's lives. I also discuss students' gendered expectations for staff and fellow students and students' perceptions of teachers' behaviour. All pilot schools were ethnically diverse and located in very different geographical areas.

Racializing gender

In School 1 teachers discussed gender and gender inequalities as issues concerning almost exclusively ethnic minority students. Young people from Muslim and Roma communities were seen as lagging behind in terms of emancipation and cultural progress and as holding rigid and traditional views about gender, gender appropriate careers and gender appropriate behaviour in the school and the wider community. Religion, gender and culture were discussed as homogenous and static for non-white and non-English communities, whereas white students, including students from white working-class backgrounds were seen by teachers as having achieved a cultural shift, suggesting that white-working class attitudes to gender had changed substantially since the 1980s in terms of gender. Despite the fact that School 1 had a large British Muslim population, predominantly from Pakistani origin and recently from many Arab and European countries, as well as students from different socio-economic groups, teachers used religion (Islam) and ethnicity as the prevalent identities that hindered female students' progress and future careers and compromised their freedom. The following quotations illustrate these issues:

> There is a gender division of labour in Asian families. A lot of the gender issues come from the community. (School 1, Interview 1, white male teacher)

> Well, in the Muslim culture there are a lot of gender issues because of religious observations, cultural norms and expectations outside the school influence. (School 1, Interview 6, female teacher)

> Gender, well really it is a religious culture issue very different to the Western world. (School 1, Interview 8, white male teacher)

Interestingly, Islam was discussed as a homogenous category with no attention to other strands of diversity across and within different Islamic communities in the UK, including ethnic origin, education, and socio-economic backgrounds. Essentialist and stereotypical views of gender,

religion and ethnicity/culture formed the shared repertoire of white British teachers, on which they drew to perform boundary practices of belonging (Paechter, 2003; Wenger, 1998; Lave & Wenger, 1991), and to legitimize inequalities and divisions among individuals and communities (Tsouroufli, 2020; Tsouroufli, 2011b).

Slovak Roma students were another group, discussed as problematic in terms of gender equality by teachers in School 1. Slovak Roma students were described as holding sexist ideas and demonstrating over-sexualised behaviour that had to be penalised and controlled. Their behaviour was constructed as potentially risky, leading to unwanted pregnancies, as the following extracts illustrate:

> In the Roma community there are very gender-specific roles and younger people are getting pregnant. (School 1, Interview 4, white male teacher)

> Slovak girls have babies at 14. (School 1, Interview 2, white female teacher)

Students from all Muslim backgrounds were described as sexually reserved and passive and Slovak Roma students as sexually incontinent in School 1. In line with research conducted in other European school contexts, gender, religion and racial stereotypes intersected with stereotypical perceptions of sexuality of ethnic minority groups in the interviews with teachers in School 1 (Rédai, 2019b). Moreover, the gender of 'others' (Muslims, ethnic minorities) was treated as rigid and fixed and gender practices of these groups as inherent in their culture, leaving little room for change, improvement and emancipation.

Gender and subject/career choice

In all three schools teachers felt that they had made great progress in terms of gender representation in all subjects and gender parity in achievement. However, it was felt that there was still some resistance from girls and boys against subjects not considered appropriate for female or male students, such as health and social care and drama respectively and resistance against non-traditional gender roles and tasks in classes.

> Boys still find it hard to take instruction from female teachers and boys expect to do less in food classes, less tidying. (School, 1, Interview 4, white male teacher)

Students in all three schools did not feel that gender parity and representation in school subjects was the most important issue in terms of gender equality. Gender expectations in families and society were described as a bigger problem.

> Subjects are not really the problem. There is still an expectation and probably you hear that more outside the school that girls are expected to stay at home. (School 3, Focus group 3, male student)

> Our school is quite good with that, like teachers would not say you cannot do dance. (School 3 Focus group 4 female student)

> As long as you have the drive you can achieve anything. A teacher's job should be to encourage you and teachers are very good at that. Quite equally, even in student leadership, I think our school is good at promoting equal opportunities. (School 3, Focus group 4, female student)

The persistent gender differences in the STEM subjects, and the outreach and development work all schools were engaged in, was mentioned by nearly all research participants in all three schools. Although Schools 2 and 3 were also multi-cultural, gender was not discussed in racialized or religious terms except for an interview with a male teacher in School 2.

Gendered expectations, behaviour and sexist language

Teachers across the three schools referred to the poor choice of language often used by their colleagues, for example, "stop acting like a girl" (School 1, Interview 6, white female teacher). They also referred to students' gender stereotypical perceptions, one example being students' questioning female teachers for having short hair:

> Ms., why do you have short hair? (School 1, Interview 3, white female teacher).

Teachers across the three schools discussed students' gender stereotypical behaviour and attitudes of girls and boys, particularly in relation to perceived competency in what was usually seen as gender appropriate and non-gender appropriate subjects.

> Boys would say that girls are not that good and boys would say that they do not want to perform with girls in PE so we try to promote it as high ability mixed group and there is also less resistance from parents. (School 1, Interview 7, white female teacher)

Teachers across the three schools referred to some of their colleagues' stereotypical behaviour, lack of understanding of gender equality and ability to deal with gender issues in the classroom and the school.

> Some teachers are not aware of what constitutes gender equality. We need to be thinking of the implications of not dealing with issues of gender. (School 1, Interview 9, white female teacher)

There was awareness among the teacher research participants that some of their colleagues held gendered expectations and views which impacted negatively on their interactions and teaching of young people as the following quotes illustrate. When such incidents occurred schools would try to deal with issues.

> In the school you hear stereotypical things like two strong boys please to carry tables. (School 1, Interview 14, white female teacher)

> We had an issue with a Slovak boy who was not allowed by her PE teacher to pick up GCSE dance. The Physical Education (PE) teacher was spoken to and arrangements were made. The young boy was asked to keep his shirt on in the PE classes. (School 1, Interview 3, white female teacher)

> We had an issue with a male teacher who found it difficult to be challenged by bright girls. The girls complained to the head of year and the male teacher was spoken to. We also had another issue. Some Asian Pakistani girls were constructed as having a communication issue or speech problem. We did some work with them and we realised that they're just shy or not confident. (School 1, Interview 4, white male teacher)

Pupils across the three schools seemed aware of their teachers' gender expectations and gender discrimination in the school. They felt that teachers had stereotypical perceptions about students' subject choices, young people's likes, interests, and sport preferences but they also said that teachers would not actively discourage young people from any career choice. Pupils also felt that teachers treated girls and boys differently and that the penalties of misbehaving were more severe for male students, as the following quotation illustrates:

> If a girl swears they would take it more seriously than if a boy is rude. (School 1, Focus group 1, male student)

Some of the male pupils who participated in the focus group in School 1 expressed gender stereotypical views about the abilities of female and male staff and students. For example, one male student felt that women could lack leadership skills.

> A woman cannot be a good leader. (School 1, Focus group 1, male student)

Others felt that gender inequality was not really an issue anymore, as the following extract illustrates:

> Gender equality has been achieved, we do not need more. (School 1, Focus group 1, male student)

Transgressing gender norms

Students in Schools 2 and 3 focused mainly on the gender norms and the different sanctions for girls and boys and female and male staff who transgressed gender norms in the school. These transgressions included engaging in sports, activities and performing jobs considered inappropriate for girls or boys, as well as performing non-normative gender identities and sexual orientations. Moreover, in most cases performing non-normative gender identities automatically resulted in staff and student sexual orientations considered as non-normative too within the 'heterosexual matrix' (Butler, 1990; 1993).

> A boy's father was a nurse and he was ridiculed, so he started saying his dad was a doctor. What we also hear is that boys will get jobs and women will stay at home and look after the children. But if someone says these things then the teacher will say you can't say these things any more. (School 3, Focus group 3, male student)

> If girls were acting masculine they would be accepted a little bit more than boys acting feminine. If a boy came to school with a skirt he would be bullied. (School 2, focus group 2, male student)

> There is a teacher who is lesbian and a lot of people say I would not want to go near her but I respect her. The principal is gay but no one talks about that because he is man. Everybody talks about the teacher who is lesbian. Women would always attract more attention no matter what they do. (School 2, Focus group 2, female student)

> When girls play unusual sports their sexuality is questioned. (School 3, Focus group 3, female student)

> If a boy has a squeaky voice they will say you sound like a girl. (School 3, Focus group 3, male student)

Teachers also discussed the penalties for transgression of gender norms and the power relations among students in the three pilot schools.

> Male students are being picked up for not being sporty enough, female students for wearing too much make-up, boys are being picked up if they are academically able. There is also the use of sexist language like 'bitch' but we will challenge these things. (School 1, Interview 8, white female teacher)

> Girls are submissive to the boys, if they are not they are considered a bitch. (School 1, Interview 9, white female teacher)

Outdated views about female sexual conduct and notions of gendered respectability (Tsouroufli, 2018b) were in operation in all three schools according to teachers. The following extract illustrates the stigmatization of girls who express an interest in contraception and the repercussions for girls who are sexually active.

> A girl asked about contraception, then she was asked by the boys why she was asking and I said you should know too, it is your responsibility too. Girls are seen as less respectable if they are having sex, particularly with older boys or from another schools, they are seen as easy. Sometimes boys will make inappropriate comments like: Ms, she is like that because she is on her period and I would explain that you cannot say things like that. (School 1, Interview 9, white female teacher)

The pathologization of the female body as hormonal and hysterical comes through the data as another aspect of the gender culture in all the pilot schools. Girls in all schools were penalised for demonstrating sexual behaviour. They were also expected to take responsibility and control of their sexual behaviour and their bodies and protect themselves from male predators in the school and beyond (Youdell, 2005). These issues will be explored in more detail in the section about school-related gender-based violence.

Gender and respectability

Respectability came through strongly in the qualitative data and emerged as a professional project that female staff had to undertake in order to achieve professional legitimacy and authenticity (Tsouroufli, 2018b). In School 2, both students and staff held stereotypical views about female competency. Female members of staff felt that there was a culture of mistrust and disrespect towards women sustained on essentialist views about gender.

> I was asked why I teach a boys' group. I had to gain respect. Some of the boys you feel they do not respect you but that's across schools and it's also culture and a lot to do with home. (School 1, Interview 7, white female teacher)

The gender regime (Connell, 1987) was particularly problematic in School 2 and senior leadership was mentioned as responsible for perpetuating and reinforcing sexist attitudes and gender stereotypes about girls and women. It emerged from the interviews with teachers in School 2 that female staff were seen as less competent and able to deal with difficult issues. These gender assumptions led to female staff being treated differently and expected to perform different tasks and responsibilities. Working in school was a struggle as female staff felt they often had to fight a battle against students and staff and prove themselves.

> We have had gender issues in the lower school because women were seen as less respectful or having less authority. Women are not treated the same, we are seen as more emotional, the word 'hysterical' was used to describe a woman who works here. There are women in senior leadership who get this behaviour here and one might not feel confident to go and speak to a person who is behaving like that. Students have different

rules for women and men, they cannot believe that I have a child. Another incident… a colleague went straight to the head to raise an issue rather than speaking to me first about it …. It would not have happened if I were a man. (School 2, Interview 13, white female teacher)

There is an attitude that female teachers are more fragile and weaker. Also if there is a difficult issue to be covered in class it would be given to a man. There are some brilliant role models, the trick is to get the male students to appreciate those female role models. The knowledge base to challenge stereotypes is not always there. I am guilty of that too. (School 2, Interview 15, white male teacher)

Although gender culture seemed more egalitarian in School 3, it was felt mainly by female teachers that there was still a lot of work to be done in regards to the gendered perceptions and expectations for staff and students and discriminatory practices against women. In the following extract, a female teacher refers to the difficulties strong and assertive women face in the school. She also refers to the challenges that female teachers with children face when returning to work.

We are aware that there are gender issues, that's why we got involved in this project. There needs to be a shift in attitudes of teachers and students. For me an issue is that if a woman tries to speak her mind she is seen as bossy. There has to be a shift in the way women are perceived. I have the opportunity to come back part-time after having children but then I will lose points. This de-motivates women and it does not happen in other schools. (School 3, Interview 22, white female teacher)

The implications of part-time work and caring responsibilities on women's career progression are discussed in more detail in the following section about leadership in the pilot schools.

4.2. Leadership (staffing, staff development, school)

Gender representation in leadership and women's career progression

Gender representation in almost all subjects in Schools 1 and 3 was good with many women year leads and a good proportion of women in the senior leadership team. Overall, staff in Schools 1 and 3 felt respected by colleagues and supported by senior management. Schools 1 and 2 did not have any leadership programmes/courses for women or any other formal support for female career progression. School 3 came across as particularly good at supporting female teachers' careers through leadership courses and excellent female role models. However, as pointed out in the extracts below, working mothers faced many challenges in their working lives due to their caring responsibilities.

> In this school you do not see much of a gender divide who gets to progress. We are very lucky, a lot of women are supporting us. The only issue is that the principal has chosen a lot of senior leadership women who do not have children and can dedicate themselves to that, so that is an issue for me. (School 3, Interview 22, white female teacher)

In the following extract, a female teacher treats gender as a non-issue in relation to women's career progression and promotion in School 3. She also discusses the flexible approaches and work culture of the school as conducive to women's career development. However, as a working parent she is concerned about childcare.

> Senior leadership team presents great role models in terms of having a mixed team and really strong female leaders. In terms of aspirations, in terms of younger staff and where I can get, it's really good. Gender is really irrelevant. We have taken leadership courses, including issues around gender and what might hold you back and women and headship conference organised by (name), it was a fantastic inspirational speaker. However, as a parent something that sticks out is childcare. They are really flexible here, it is not like if you do not work all hours you are not going to be promoted here. (School 3, Interview 17, white female teacher)

In Schools 1 and 3 there was a balanced representation of female and male teachers in most subjects and senior leadership, although some subjects like drama in School 3 were dominated by females.

> Since we had a female principal it has been really good. I would like to believe that this is true. I know drama is dominated by females but you will find female teachers in all the subjects and a good mix of gender in management. (School 3, Interview 21, white female teacher)

Unfortunately, senior leadership in School 2 was very male dominated and sometimes sexist. Despite efforts by some strong women in senior leadership, gender equality had not become a priority in the school.

> The school says the right things but visibility is an issue, not many women in senior leadership, not many women at the top. (School 2, Interview 15, white male teacher)

> The senior leadership team is very male, they have different priorities, they do not put gender issues at the forefront. I feel that shifting the gender culture is not a priority for them. (School 2, Interview 9, white female teacher)

> It is very disappointing, really, governors are all extremely high up males from the city of London, senior leadership is also more male dominated. (School 2, Interview 13, white female teacher)

'Keeping women in their place'

Improvements in terms of the numerical representation of women in senior management did not necessarily lead to a redistribution of power and the shifting of power relations in School 2. The data suggests that male bias and gender hierarchies were mobilized (Burton, 1987) when female leaders attempted to upset the gender order. Women were kept in their place either by being disregarded, illegitimized or pathologized, as the following quote illustrates.

> There are now more women in the senior leadership team and there have been efforts to hire more women but this is more about image. Now they have left, every outspoken woman has been pushed out, their ideas have been silenced. They have been made to feel that they have not added value to the school. No recognition but made to feel guilty when things went wrong, at the lower levels we know what is happening. The Head of School has belittled staff and he is not a person who listens. There is sexism in the way things are dealt with. It depends on who raises issues, women are seen as more emotional. They would say that we have an equal share of power but we don't. (School 2, Interview 14, white female teacher)

In relation to leadership, three issues came out in the analysis: the representation of women in senior leadership and the persistent gendered patterns of representation in some subjects and some schools; the caring responsibilities and challenges faced by working mothers/teachers across all pilot schools; and the role of gendered culture and gendered relations of power in hindering female leadership and change and perpetuating gender inequalities.

4.3. Curriculum (teachers and teaching, school and out of school activities, subject choice, career choice, career guidance)

In School 1 it was felt by teachers and students that the gender gap in subject choice had improved but there was still a gender divide in subjects such as health and social care, STEM and also in sport choice. It was also felt that the emphasis on gender parity in subject choice and attainment had diverted attention from other gender equality issues, such as gender-inclusive curriculum, eradication of gender stereotypes and opportunities for girls to participate in stereotypically male sports activities and for boys to participate in stereotypically female sports activities.

> There are now more girls and boys in stereotypically female and male subjects but we are still fighting a battle, child and health and social care are still female dominated. There is so much emphasis on how girls and boys perform, boys underperform at

GCSE.[1] Staff were appointed to raise boys' attainment, to raise football standards. (School 1, Interview 3, white female teacher)

There is so much emphasis on achieving for boys and girls but other areas have been overlooked. We need a school strategy for gender equality and community work. (School 1, Interview 4, white male teacher)

It was felt that the emphasis on raising attainment for boys was creating barriers for developing a gender-sensitive curriculum as the following quote illustrates:

The curriculum is biased towards boys. There needs to be a balance of texts that are accessible to both. We cannot have war textbooks simply to engage boys because we are reinforcing stereotypes, one size will not fit all. We are looking at that because it is unbalanced in favour of males. (School 1, Interview 8, white female teacher)

Gender issues were often discussed in citizenship education and STEM. Such initiatives were seen as positive in changing girls' and family aspirations.

In citizenship they learn about suffragettes, there isn't a lot of resistance, students have become more aware and families have become more aspirational about their girls. (School 1, Interview 6, white female teacher)

School 1 had done some interesting work in an attempt to promote gender equality. This work involved discussing strong women in assemblies; strong black women coffee morning in citizenship education; participation in the DECSY Gender Respect project; STEM outreach work; equality and agenda for respect in PSHE[2]; engineering campaign; open evenings; and career sessions for years 10 and 11. The school also took part in the 'girl can' initiative organised jointly with the local University and is now showing consideration about how contraception issues should be taught. However, it was felt by teachers in School 1 that there was scope for further work in promoting gender equality.

We need more assemblies, we need to listen more to the students. (School 1, Interview 5, white female teacher)

Both teachers and students in School 1 felt that sports was a particularly problematic area as well as out-of-school activities. Although some progress had been made, there was still limited awareness of the gender issues in PE and sports.

We have sports ambassadors, professional female athletes, sky sport for living but a lot could have been done with sky sports, they could have raised some gender equality issues. (School 1, Interview 6, white female teacher)

Physical Education (PE) and Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) are very male dominated, there are also problems with out-of-school clubs. (School 1, Interview 6, white female teacher)

Some clubs were not open to girls and in some subjects or sports activities the under-representation of girls or boys was not helpful in breaking down gender stereotypes and barriers in participation.

> There is a basketball club and cricket for boys only. Also more male Physical Education ambassadors, girls do not want to do it. (School 1, Focus group 1, male student)

> Sometimes, students would not choose a subject if they are the only person of their gender. In the trampoline a boy was asked 'why are you here? Okay it was not a big issue. (School 1, Focus group 1, male student)

The situation was similar in School 2. It was felt that there was still a gender divide in some subjects and that the school should continue to work towards gender parity in subject choice, a gender inclusive curriculum, equal opportunities in out-of-school activities and the eradication of gender stereotypes.

> There is still a gender divide in subjects, a small number of girls do computers. There are still certain subjects that male students would not go near like health and social care. Things have gone better but more still needs to be done. I brought my sister to do a talk here, she is an engineer. (School 2, Interview 14, ethnic minority female teacher)

> In physics A level there is only one girl in the class and in year 12 physics only 3 girls. All chemistry teachers are female and we did a lot of work in recruiting female mathematicians. (School 2, Interview 16, white female teacher)

> There are some strong female teachers in the science department and the male teachers also encourage girls. Young girls have an issue with confidence in science that lies also with the teachers. (School 2, Interview 9, white male teacher)

> We have more girls in English and literacy but maybe also biased towards the choice of textbooks because we know we have more girls. White British girls, well the head of year would like them to have sufficient levels of self-esteem. (School 2, Interview 12, white male teacher)

> There are gender issues in the provision of clubs and activities after school. I am also not aware of any projects specifically on gender equality, but there has been a lot of publicity to highlight the profile of the girls, the basketball team. (School 2, Interview 14, ethnic minority female teacher)

Most of the teachers interviewed at School 2 were committed to addressing gender issues in their teaching and would actively look for opportunities in their lessons to challenge gender stereotypes. Interesting workshops had been delivered in the school about Female Genital

Mutilation (FGM), pornography and consensual sexual relationships but it was felt that there was scope for further work to be led in a more systematic way by the school management.

> I teach contraception, it focuses on women. Getting pregnant is seen as the women's fault. We talk about infertility and I said just so you have to be aware a guy, men can be infertile too. (School 2, Interview 9, white female teacher)

> We did workshops with boys about sexuality and masculinity but nothing specifically about touching. Not sure what was taught to the girls' group. (School 2, Interview 12, white female teacher)

> Year 9 boys had a workshop on pornography, the head of year was trying to promote respect. Year 9 girls had a workshop on being thankful and how to develop community. (School 2, Interview 9, white female teacher)

Many attempts had also been made in citizenship and STEM subjects to address gender issues but further work in engaging parents and changing traditional parental attitudes to gender was required as the following extracts illustrate:

> In citizenship we explore identity issues, equality, women and PSHE quite good in this school. Also in PSHE issues of consent in relationships for both boys and girls. The school is diverse, both staff and students, but mums in this area are mainly housewives. (School 2, Interview 13, white female teacher)

> In citizenship we discuss issues of male superiority. Things are of course better than they were 10 years ago, but the school has not done enough to address gender issues, it is one of those topics that have to be coming along all the time. I ask students to think of MPs numbers and think why more men. History is a very patriarchal subject. There are some good champions of gender equality in the school, all females, but I am not aware of any gender training, nor gender-based service. Gender issues in PSHE are given like twenty minutes in the morning, there is no quality control over the teaching. In this area also you have poorly educated parents in the community and the school intimidates them. (School 2, Interview 15, white male teacher)

School 3 had actively began to engage with the Gender Equality Charter Mark project and appointed teachers to address gender issues in all the areas of the GECM.

> We have a working group of staff, meeting every week to discuss aspirations in terms of gender and what we can do. There is a teacher who looks at the language used in school to reinforce gender stereotyping, somebody else is focusing on curriculum or the physical environment. (School 2, Interview 18, Ethnic minority male teacher)

In School 3 the divide in school subjects was similar to that in the other two schools that took part in the project. The female interviewees were committed to addressing gender issues in the

curriculum of their subject and also in working with young people to close the gender gap in school subject choice.

> We have a lot of boys doing literature, we have done a lot of work, we have not presented English literature as something fluffy. (School 3, Interview 17, white female teacher)

> Girls have this idea that women cannot do physics, there is this idea that physics is a male subject. Women tend to underachieve in my subject and it is not ability because at entry level they are the same. I encourage them at GCSE but we are not doing enough. I am trying to get funding for a science club so girls can come without the boys. (School 3, Interview 22, white female teacher)

> I am providing space for people to talk about gender issues in English literature, raising issues about gender and power. I have not noticed a problem but there is always more you can do. There isn't a forum to talk about gender attitudes but that relates to the general landscape of education. We promote STEM subjects among girls. We also did a lads' reading session to promote reading but I changed it to family reading to promote it to everyone. (School 3, Interview 17, white female teacher)

> We took part in the 'girl can' initiative. (School 3, Interview 21, white female teacher)

However, prior to the involvement of School 3 in the GECM project there had been no systematic approach for addressing gender issues in the curriculum, in teaching, and out of school activities. Staff development programmes for teachers could have played an important role in raising awareness about gendered curricula (Tsouroufli, 2018c). The following extract from an interview with a male teacher is a good example of the lack of awareness of the role of gender in the hidden and formal curriculum of schools.

> I do not think that the maths curriculum is a gender-based curriculum. Maybe language is a gender-based curriculum. (School 3, Interview 20, Ethnic minority male teacher)

However, students were very aware of the persistent gender inequalities in the curriculum, sports, and out of school activities and very confident in raising gender issues in the focus groups and with their teachers. Some students made suggestions about ways to promote equal opportunities in the school. However, they also pointed out on many occasions that entrenched gender inequalities do not have an impact on them as they are very determined to succeed and have very coherent plans about their future.

> A good idea would be to have a mixed football team. (School 3, Focus group 3, female student)

> We told a male science teacher that his presentation was all about men and then the last few slides about women scientists. He admitted himself that there were a lot of men. But, all that does not affect us. (School 3, Focus group 4, female student)

Interestingly, no gender issues in relation to career guidance were raised and staff and students in the pilot schools felt that students were supported in achieving their full potential.

In summary, the main issues discussed in relation to the curriculum were: the persistent gender divide in subjects; the gendered nature of subjects and curricula; schools' commitment in repairing school curricula (Tarc, 2011); and schools' limited understanding of gender and resources in developing an effective strategy for repairing school curricula.

4.4. Physical environment (unbiased physical environment, engaging with gender-sensitive resources)

The physical environment and engagement with gender-sensitive resources were the least developed areas in regards to gender equality across the schools. In discussions with teachers and young people the only reference to unbiased physical environment was posters of famous women scientists in the lab and/or Black famous women during Black history month. In School 2 the librarian, who was also a music teacher, had responsibility for inclusive resources and she had made an effort to find resources that would reflect the gender and ethnic background of students.

4.5. School-related gender-based violence

Understandings and forms of gender-based violence in the pilot schools

Teachers in all three schools drew on a discourse of zero tolerance against school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV) reflecting national policies and legal frameworks about violence against girls and women as well as a popular socio-cultural discourse of 'no touching'. However, the data suggests that teachers' understanding of SRGBV was superficial and usually seen as an individual or cultural issue rather than a systemic problem, particularly in Schools 1 and 3.

> I am not aware of [violence] but I am sure if it was reported it would have been dealt with. I am not part of the pastoral team. It is not part of the culture here and if it was, I would do something about it. We have a policy that encourages people to talk. (School 2, Interview 17, white female teacher)

SRGBV was understood by many teachers as physical or sexual. However, incidents of physical violence were often perceived as gender-neutral or innocuous behaviours for young people, particular boys.

> Not aware of any such issue [gender-based violence]. If there is a fight it will be predominantly among male students. I have not heard of a situation of a sexual harassment situation. (School 2, Interview 18, ethnic minority male teacher)

> Boys being boys and girls being girls, there is obviously the [name of school's wider area] stereotype and students play up to it. I cannot say that I have seen any gender-based violence. Boys fight with boys and girls with girls. (School 3, Interview 22, white female teacher)

Teachers and students in School 1 often referred to sexist language used among students as well as inappropriate sexual behaviour.

> We see a lot of inappropriate sexualised behaviour and we deal case by case, we look at the behaviour, it will be written as a safeguarding issue, parents might be brought in. (School 1, Interview 4, white male teacher)

In School 1 teachers' perceptions of oversexualised and inappropriate behaviour were associated with the attitudes and practices of girls and boys from the Slovak Roma community as the following quote illustrates:

> We see a lot of aggressive flirting, rude behaviour unchallenged by Roma females and reinforced to be an object of desire, particularly in year 7 sexualised behaviour and objectification of women is fairly disappointing of what I would expect in modern Britain. We challenge these behaviours every day. (School 1, Interview 7, white female teacher)

SRGBV in School 1 involved also bullying towards girls or boys who had chosen a subject considered masculine or feminine, although such incidents were rare:

> We did see some bullying when one girl joined the electronics class. We dealt with it but eventually the girl left the class. (School 1, Interview 1, white male teacher)

Teachers across the three pilot schools in the UK seemed to have neither the knowledge nor the skills to deal with SRGBV incidents and educate students about consensual sexual relationships. Most teachers seemed uncomfortable with young people's sexualised behaviour even when young people engaged in consensual sexual relationships, and felt it was their duty and ethical responsibility to police and penalise young people's sexual behaviour (Davies et

al., 2019). Preventing and dealing with sexist language were described as a challenge for teachers in all pilot schools.

> We hear sexist violent language in relation to someone's sexuality or perceived position in relation to someone's gender, sometimes there is also lack of ability to sort out a problem, lack of communication to sort out an emotional problem. When your priority (as a teacher) is to sort out a difficult situation it is very difficult to challenge a stereotype and say, 'why did you say that?' (School 2, Interview 15, white male teacher)

Teachers and students in Schools 2 and 3 mentioned incidents of sexist language among students and among staff and by students to staff as the following extracts illustrate:

> The language that senior managers use about women is unacceptable; one woman was called hysterical because of an issue she raised. If a male colleague had raised the same issue he would not have been called hysterical, so there is an underlying culture that very few people challenge. (School 2, Interview 9, white female teacher)

> I have heard sexist language like the use of 'darling' by students and staff. Males dominate over females. I have heard of incidents of over-sexualised behaviour but I have not seen it and I have been told also about inappropriate touching. I have seen aggressive behaviour from both sides but mainly from males to females. If it was reported to the pastoral team it would have been dealt with. (School 3, Interview 21, white female teacher)

Digital violence (Ging, 2006) was another form of SRGBV, a new form of violence that presented many challenges particularly for School 2, as the following quote illustrates:

> In year 9 there is a lot of sexual inappropriate language, social media are responsible for that too and we are aware that as a school we find it very difficult to handle. Young people describe these incidents as normal. They communicate by text in a very sexual way. When we did some research, we found that girls felt that girls are expected by boys to do all sort of things with objects. It has a huge impact on girls because they refuse to come back to the school. If a photo goes round it has the worst ramifications for the girl. We have a lot of passionate teachers about this. We have done some assemblies, used some very good resources (mixed gender assemblies, like sending this image is inappropriate), we did focus groups with girls who had been bullied although we called it female leadership. Also posters around the school on space, physical contact and assemblies. There is a lot more work to be done, we need to do more work with parents and families. (School 2, Interview 16, white female teacher)

School 2 was very active in raising awareness and combating digital forms of violence. However, the limited knowledge and competence of parents in the use of digital technologies (Zhang & Livingstone, 2019) posed further challenges for teachers as the following quote illustrates:

Parents also know very little about cyber-violence. We had an incident with a mother who accused teachers about what had happened to her daughter and she asked me to close down Facebook. She was filmed performing a sexual act, she was then bullied on Facebook. She was absent for 3 days from the school and did not want to come back. The school could not do anything because the boy was from another school. (School 2, Interview 16, white female teacher)

Trivialisation and tolerance of school-related gender based violence

In Schools 2 and 3 teachers and students discussed many incidents of inappropriate and unwanted touching of girls by boys. In School 2 the female teachers were very committed to eradicating GBV and encouraging young people to think critically about sexual harassment. However, their attempts to resolve issues without a SRGBV policy to draw on were challenging and not always effective.

> I remember one year a boy touched a girl's boob and it took me a long time to resolve it. People said maybe it was an accident, maybe he didn't mean to. I heard about boys touching girls but I don't know of a policy in the school. If a boy pushes someone there is a procedure. One of the boys put his body against a girl and I said, 'get off'. Boys and girls were being loud. The boy touched the girl's shoulder. He said, 'I was only trying to get her attention', and the teacher said, 'you should ask yourself why you had to touch her in the first place to get her attention. (School 2, Interview 9, white female teacher)

> We have offered workshops for girls and boys. Girls would almost accept boys' lifting a skirt and a female teacher said, 'no, it is not okay, you have to report it'. She was a feminist. The vice principal now has a zero tolerance policy with these issues. It would be good to have an audit on the reasons why certain issues go unreported. (School 2, Interview 13, white female teacher)

In all schools young people usually hesitated to report incidents of sexual harassment either because they were not aware of what was appropriate or inappropriate, because of fear of repercussions and exclusion from the peer groups and/or because of their perceptions of SRGBV as trivial.

> The boys do things like grabbing a bum that girls would not report. Girls think that boys are just annoying. (School 2, Interview 10, white female teacher)

> We hear a lot of sexist language but they mean it as a joke. (School 1, Focus group 1, female student).

I would not say anything because the school would resolve the situation with the girls but it will take very long for me to be accepted by everybody in the school. (School 2, Focus group 2, male student)

If a boy said something the girl would have heard it before and say 'go away' or they would see it as a joke. (School 3, Focus group 4, female student)

Maybe [gender-based violence is not reported] because it is not as serious as, you know, people of different faiths fighting. It is not seen as religion or racial equality, which has been a problem in history with black and white people fighting leading to deaths. But gender has not been seen to affect lives like that. (School 3, Focus group 4, female student).

Female students in School 3 felt that male students did not understand what constituted appropriate behaviour towards girls. They also felt that when boys were challenged for their sexually aggressive behaviour they tended to trivialise the incidents and disregard girls' comments.

If they touch you and you tell them to stop they will be like chill out it is not a big deal. If I report it, it would be taken seriously but I do not want that. (School 3 Focus group 4, female student)

I do not think they fully understand why you would not want them to touch you. Yes, we are friends but you do not want them in your space, you would not want them to touch you where you do not want to be touched. (School 3, Focus group 4, female student)

Gender norms and school-related gender-based violence

Data from interviews and focus groups suggest that SRGBV was predicated and sustained on gender norms about women's sexuality, respectability and women's place within the school/workplace gender order, as well as gendered power relations among male and female staff, male and female students and male students and female staff (Sundaram, 2016).

Women and girls in the three schools were objectified and responsibilized (O'Malley, 2009) for resisting men's advances and maintaining respectable behaviour. For example, in School 2 female staff had been emailed by senior management during summer to be careful about their choice of clothes on hot days and 'a*void wearing spaghetti strap tops or figure hugging clothes'.* (School 2, Interview 12, white male teacher)

Gendered and sexualised constructions and expectations of girls and women were also common among students. In the following extract a female student discusses the policing of girls' behaviour in schools (Adam et al., 2019) as well as the repercussions for transgressing gender norms:

> If girls do not wear make-up they are seen as ugly, if they do wear too much they are seen as vulgar and sluts. If a girl is talking to a lot of boys they would call her names but for a boy it would be okay to talk to a lot of girls. Even if you report stuff the school will not be able to do anything. I do not think they really think about it. (School 3, Focus group 3 female student)

> Young people in Schools 2 and 3 felt that their schools were not able to deal effectively with reported incidents of GBV. Teachers though felt that boys had no understanding of consensual relationships and their aggressive and sexist behaviour was predicated upon tacit assumptions about women and gender.

> In the workshop that was offered by a feminist colleague boys said that girls say no but they mean yes. They think the girl is lying because she did not make a noise. They have no idea of consensual relationships. They do not have opportunities to discuss these issues. Some boys think they are being attacked when we talk about empowering women. (School 2, Interview 14, ethnic minority female teacher)

The focus group discussions provided a safe platform for young boys to express their assumptions about gender and critically discuss the implications for GBV.

> Girls are bitchier, and the things they say would stay with me and hurt me more. I said to him, 'If you hit a girl that would stay with her forever.' He said, 'I had not thought of that'. (School 2, Focus group 2, male student).

> How can a man be raped or how can women be murderers? (School 2 Focus group 2, male student)

Male students in school 2 felt that incidents of GBV were not dealt with fairly and the punishments for boys were always more severe. As the quotes below indicate, teachers' responses to SRGBV reflected stereotypical perceptions of girls as victims and boys as sexual predators.

> Equality should be the same in punishment (School 2, Focus group 2, male student)

> Boys get into much more trouble for sexual harassment but if a girl touches a boy the girl would probably get detention. (School 2 Focus group 2, male student)

> If a boy and girl were arguing or fighting the teachers would comfort the girl and drag the boy away. (School 2 Focus group 2, male student)

> If a girl screams she is hysterical but if a boy shouts it is because he is a boy. If girls are fighting they are seen as disrespectful. (School 2 Focus group 2, female student)

In summary, the analysis has brought to the fore three main issues in relation to SRGBV: the prevalence of violence of sexual nature in the form of verbal, physical, or digital abuse; the trivialization of SRGBV; and the gendered and racialized assumptions underpinning conceptualizations and performances of GBV in the three pilot schools.

4.6. Community (family engagement, links with feeder schools and colleges)

There was a need for development and scope for further work in this area across all the pilot schools. In focus groups in Schools 2 and 3 young people discussed extensively their parents' gendered expectations, particularly in terms of subject and career choice, and in School 1 teachers referred to parents' gendered expectations, particularly those from Muslim and Roma communities. School 1 had a community liaison but it was felt that further work was needed, although this could come with challenges, as the following extract from an interview with a teacher illustrates:

> It would be difficult to talk to people in Mosques. (School 1, Interview 5, white male teacher)

School 1 had an Equal Opportunity policy but not gender equality specific plan whereas School 2 had started working with a number of schools on gender equality and had agreed on an action plan. School 3 was part of a federation academy and therefore had better links and had established relationships with feeder schools and colleges.

4.7. Inclusive Education (co-operation with other agencies)

This was an under-developed area in all pilot schools in the UK. Teachers only mentioned co-operation with agencies that could provide support to LGBT students.

Concluding thoughts

The analysis presented in this chapter provides a vivid picture of the gender regimes (Connell, 2002) across the three pilot schools in England. Despite differences in the manifestation and prevalence of violence, in the relationships among staff, among students and among students

and staff, and in the ways the hidden and formal curriculum operated, the cultures in the three pilot schools were gendered. Tacit and explicit assumptions about gender influenced leadership, the curriculum and curriculum changes, relationships and gender relations of power, and shaped the experience of teaching, learning and being part of the school community. Organisational hierarchies and gendered divisions of labour had various shades across the three schools but control and authority were always exercised along gender lines and mobilizing gendered beliefs, gendered practices and violence was the means for silencing girls, and women and keeping them in their place.

Gender inequalities operated along other axes of oppression and inequalities in the pilot schools. Assumptions about gender intermeshed with prejudices about race/ethnicity, culture and religion in one school, reflecting wider divisions in the geographical area of the school and challenges within the English context. In all three pilot schools assumptions about gender intersected with sexuality norms and prejudices against non-normative sexual identities.

Further work on promoting gender equality in schools through whole-school approaches should acknowledge and be informed by the particularities of schools, their local communities and geographies as well as the wider education, policy and socio-political context of schools. Changing gender regimes in schools and disrupting their entrenched inequalities and multiple axes of oppression requires a systematic approach guided by robust theoretical and empirical work and a strong collaborative ethos and practice among school staff, researchers and external organisations. These issues are discussed in more detail in the concluding Chapter 8. Chapter 5 focuses on the qualitative baseline data from Hungary and Chapter 6 focuses on the qualitative baseline data from Italy.

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[1] The General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) is a set of exams taken in England, Wales, Northern Ireland and other British territories.

[2] Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education is a school curriculum subject in England and Ireland.