**"You get praised more when you're good at sport"**

**Young people negotiating embodied subjectivities through (dis)engagement in physical education**

by

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# Abstract

The purpose of this study was to engage with a group of students from a diverse school environment about how they construct value or status in their own and others' bodies in physical education (PE) and sport. This study was premised on the notion that young people's constructions of bodies that have value affect both their sense of self and their (dis)engagement with physical activity in and out of school. Sport, physical activity and education are not value-free in their purpose or practices, and constitute arenas in which young people learn about what those values are and how they apply to their own bodies. Learning more about how young people make embodied decisions to engage in physical activity can aid in understanding how best to create inclusive, positive experiences within PE and youth sport. The feminist / poststructuralist theoretical framework that this research draws upon focuses attention on the constructions of embodied subjectivities through an individual's subject positions amongst multiple discourses. These discourses are (re)produced but shift as individuals take up and negotiate positions through the multiple narratives available to them. By linking these notions to that of physical capital, this study explores how individuals' practices affect how they might be seen as valued. This study pays particular attention to gendered and racialised constructions of bodies in PE and sport, as literature identifies concerns about equity in participation and representation. Data were generated over one school year with a cohort of students in Year 9 of an ethnically diverse secondary school in the East Midlands, UK. Fourteen boys and eleven girls volunteered to take part in a collaborative visual ethnographic project consisting of a fortnight's photo diary and the sharing of participant-produced images in group interviews. Taped group interviews, participants' photographs, field notes from observations of the participants' PE lessons and researcher's photographs of the school notice boards were collated and analysed using a combination of thematic, discourse and content analyses. Findings indicated that the participants constructed as valued bodies those that are "good at PE": meaning competency, strength and a desire and ability to win. Alongside this, students also valued fit, "not fat" bodies, and the display of effort or trying one's best. These constructions were often tied to their potential to perform convincingly. The students took up positions in relation to these notions of status, sometimes investing in practices that would develop their bodies in these ways. Participants' fluid subjectivities as they negotiated different activities, physical cultures, and assumptions about gendered and racialised bodies affected their choices not just whether to engage but in what ways they would engage in physical activity.

## Publications and Conference Presentations

**Journal papers**

Hill, J., & Azzarito, L. (2012). Representing valued bodies in PE: a visual inquiry with British Asian girls. *Physical Education & Sport Pedagogy*, *17*(3), 263–276.

Azzarito, L., & Hill, J. (2012). Girls looking for a "second home": bodies, difference and places of inclusion. *Physical Education & Sport Pedagogy*, iFirst 1–25. doi: 10.1080/17408989.2012.666792.

**Book chapters**

Hill, J. (2013). Rejecting the weak Asian body: boys visualising and performing strong masculinities. In L. Azzarito & D. Kirk (Eds.). *Physical Culture, Pedagogies and Visual Methods*, 76-91. Abingdon: Routledge.

**Book reviews**

Hill, J. (2012). Book Review. Cassandra Phoenix & Brett Smith (Eds.), the world of physical culture in sport and exercise: Visual methods for qualitative research, *Qualitative Methods in Psychology Bulletin issue 13*, Spring, 2012, 67-69.

Hill, J. (2012). Book Review. James F. Lee, The lady footballers: struggling to play in Victorian Britain. *Sport, Education and Society*, iFirst, 1-4. doi:10.1080/13573322.2013.721576.

Hill, J. (2012). Book Review. Heather Sykes, Queer bodies: sexualities, genders and fatness in physical education. *Sport, Education and Society*, iFirst, 1-4. doi: 10.1080/13573322.2013.737167.

**Conference papers**

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**Conference presentations (abstract only)**

Hill, J. (2010). Exploring physical cultures and valued bodies with young people. Paper presented at Centre for the Interdisciplinary Study of Sexuality and Gender in Europe, Third Annual Postgraduate Conference, Exeter University, 3 April.

Hill, J. (2010). Young people's constructions of valued bodies in physical cultures. Paper presented at British Sociological Association Youth Study Group, 'Youth 2010' Conference, University of Surrey, 5-8 July.

Azzarito, L. and Hill, J. (2010). Geographies of girls' bodies. Paper presented at Centre for Research on Socio-Cultural Change Annual Conference, Oxford University, 30 August–3 September.

Hill, J. (2011). Physical activity and the body through girlhood to young womanhood. Paper presented at Royal Geographical Society Geographies of Children, Youth and Families Research Group, University of Leicester, 25 February.

Azzarito, L. and Hill, J. (2011). Girls looking for a "second home": Bodies, difference and places of inclusion. Paper presented at American Educational Research Association, New Orleans, USA, 8-12 April.

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Hill, J. and Azzarito, L. (2011). "If you miss the ball, you look like a total muppet!" Managing bodies and social status visually. Paper presented at International Physical Literacy Conference, University of Bedfordshire, 29-30 June.

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## *Abbreviations and Acronyms*

Ofsted…………………………………………….……Office for Standards in Education

NCPE……………………………………….....National Curriculum for Physical Education

PE………………………………………..………….………..………Physical education

SSC……………………………………….………………...….School Sport Coordinator

# 1    Introduction

'We live', Fitzgerald (2005: 4) tells us, 'in a society that places differing values on bodies'. This thesis contributes to knowledge about the ways that young people in an ethnically diverse school make decisions how and whether to engage in physical activity in and out of school in relation to the ways that bodies are valued within the physical activity sites they access. Bodies are bearers of value, displaying a person's social position and expressing something about their identity (Bourdieu, 1990; Shilling, 2003; Turner, 2008). As physical education (PE) is said to be a site of social reproduction (Fernandez-Balboa, 1993; Hargreaves, 1986; Kirk, 2011), the ways young people learn about, manage and move their bodies in PE relates to their broader lives and identities. Adolescence is a significant time during which identities are being formed (Head, 1997). Sport, physical activity and education are not value-free in their purposes and constitute arenas in which young people learn about their own worth.

## 1.1    Research context

PE is charged with a number of objectives relating to young people: to tackle the obesity epidemic (Gard & Wright, 2001); to tackle youth disaffection (Sandford, Duncombe & Armour, 2008); and to encourage young people to make choices for lifelong activity (Green, 2004). PE's purpose and objectives may be debated anew amid planned changes to the National Curriculum (NCPE) in 2013, changes to funding for school sport partnerships and efforts to increase competitive participation through the School Games (Department for Education, 2010). As a subject concerned with the physical, what do young people learn about bodies in PE? Are we indeed looking for education for the future – or education for the citizens of the future (Kirk, 2011; Penney & Chandler, 2000)? Armour (1999) argues that part of a responsible education should be a body focus, engaging students in critical reflection for their social wellbeing. PE is said to teach students about the body as well as about physical activity or health (Armour, 1999; Tinning, 2010). As one of the few school subjects concerned with embodied learning, success for PE as a subject is measured by producing bodies of value; the bodies that gain value will typically be those that meet the objectives that PE has. Within these contexts, young people 'learn and think about their body's value and worth' (Evans, 2012: 1) and make decisions about how and whether to (dis)engage from physical activity. Where PE is aligned with sport physical cultures, value is often associated with performances of highly proficient sporting bodies (Shilling, 2008). Hierarchies of privileged and marginalised positions are produced. Students' meanings surrounding the body, especially with regard to size, power and muscularity, appearance and power, differ along racial and gender lines (Azzarito & Solmon, 2006; van Sterkenberg & Knoppers, 2004), which can influence ways of engaging in PE. It can also affect

whether young people are able to construct an active identity or will be positioned as an impossible learner (Azzarito, 2009b).

This thesis draws on a feminist / poststructural theoretical framework that helps to outline how bodies are constituted, regulated; how difference is constructed, and what that has meant for who is seen as a legitimate or valued participant in physical activity. Feminist/poststructuralist work on the body and gender has unearthed the ways that dominant discourses, media images and physical cultural values are taken up by young women and men in producing and performing their embodied femininities or masculinities (e.g. B. Evans, 2006; Garrett, 2004b; O'Flynn, 2008; Wright, 2004b). Despite a number of years of research and curricular/pedagogical change, PE and school sport remain significantly gender differentiated. As gender intersects with other material and socially constructed sets of values such as race or ethnicity, other researchers have begun to explore how young people make sense of and resist dominant positions on idealised bodies, health and physical activity, looking at the intersection of gender and race in other countries (Atencio, 2008; Lee, Macdonald & Wright, 2009) or in specific sport cultures such as football (Ratna, 2010, 2011; Scraton, Caudwell & Holland, 2005). Additionally it has been recognised that there is a need for more research with students of different ethnicities in "multicultural" settings (Macdonald, Abbott, Knez & Nelson, 2009). Research has begun to look at the constitution of minority ethnic young people's subjectivities among their resistance to or conformity with exclusionary practices and marginalising language or images concerning healthy bodies (Atencio, 2008; Fitzpatrick, 2011; MacNeill & Rail, 2010; Rail, 2009). Researching intersectionality of gender/race/class in PE and sport has become crucial in understanding diversity among young people and their engagements with physical cultures (Flintoff, Fitzgerald & Scraton, 2008; Scraton et al., 2005; Wright, 2006) among symbolic and material privileging of whiteness (Frankenberg, 1993). Data are needed in the UK to gain an in-depth look at the multiple and interconnected ways that social constructions of bodies affect young people's identities, in order to assist in developing supportive physical activity environments that promote broad and inclusive notions of valued, active bodies.

## 1.2   Aim

My aim for this research project is to investigate the bodies that are valued in a local physical culture with which a diverse group of young people engage, and how this affects the meanings they attach to their own bodies and ways that they engage with physical activity. This looks toward disrupting disempowering embodied practices or understanding the impact of fixed thinking about active/inactive bodies, ideal/bad bodies, and healthy/unhealthy bodies. There are three objectives which structure the direction that the thesis will take:

- To engage with a group of young people's visual and verbal narratives concerning how they construct value or status in their own and others' bodies
- To explore how these constructions and the management of value affect these young people's sense of self and their (dis)engagement with physical activity in and out of school
- To explore how young people might invest in a body that has status in PE.

This thesis will contribute to knowledge about how PE can be inclusive through attention to young people's embodied negotiations of value systems in the subject and physical cultures surrounding it. By using the language of "value", the aim is to avoid dichotomous and potentially marginalising terms such as "ideal" while also framing sporting or active bodies as representative of multiple high status behaviours and appearances and remembering that – given the association between sport and hegemonic masculinity – normatively gendered and racialised bodies also impact on ways of being in physical activity. The aim will be addressed through four specific research questions:

1. What bodily meanings and values are promoted in the PE and school physical cultures with which young people are engaging?
2. What do young people construct as valuable?
3. How do young people's constructions of value affect their engagement with physical activity?
4. How do young people's constructions of value affect their sense of self?

## 1.3   *Personal reflections*

Both the academic background and personal life experiences of the ethnographer influence the multiple processes of interaction, analysis and interpretation. Personal narratives have been identified as sensitising researchers to the consequences of their doing and writing research (Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Richardson & St Pierre, 2005). I conclude this introduction with reflections on my relation to sport.

In early 2007 I turned on the television to find a girl of 12, a keen and talented footballer, appearing in a children's question and answer session with the then Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gordon Brown. She had been playing, up until that age, with a boys' football club. However, the Football Association (FA) disallowed mixed football from age 12 and upwards, meaning that this girl had to leave her club – with no local replacement girls' club to join. The FA reasoned that the physical changes undergone by boys in puberty are such that they are a risk to the safety on the pitch of smaller girl players of the same age. As a video clip played of

her running rings around her team mates, the girl appealed to Mr Brown to influence the FA to reconsider, but he was unable or unwilling to understand her predicament. Watching this, although I was personally not involved in sports like football, I was amazed that assumptions about gender and physiology informed an institutional barrier to the progression and enjoyment of girls in football. I began to learn more, writing my MA dissertation on women and gendered habitus in football (Hill, 2008). This became just one of many stories I heard of the impact of dominant narratives concerning who can legitimately participate within sports as they are socially constructed. As I progressed into my PhD and turned my attention to PE and school sport, I saw that constructions of legitimate or marginalised players are closely tied to embodied self, or how one could have an active identity (Hastie, 2010).

My position in this ethnography is linked to my own school and sport experiences and also my relations to the wider social context. The stories I have about my own PE experiences demonstrate my particular positions in relation to sport, exercise and recreation. The female PE teacher at my primary school played football and rugby every day with the boys but not once with the girls. Halfway through my 800 metre swimming badge endeavour I was ordered out of the pool because, the teacher said, I was going too slowly and would never finish before it was time to return to school. I have danced alone on a stage while singing, but being left without a partner during a PE dance lesson when all around me were paired up left me frightened to perform choreographed modern dance. Hearing others laugh at the way a girl ran during a bleep test made me worry that my running style was also funny. My friends would often hide in a cupboard, hang at the back or claim injury to avoid PE participation. My alienation from my once-favourite school sport, netball, helps to frame many of my feelings. In Year 5 and 6 at my primary school I was on the first team for netball. I always felt I was quite good at netball, although I knew I wasn't the best on my team. At age 13 I moved to a girls' grammar school in the South-East. PE had a low status at the school overall compared to academic pursuits, but the academic competitiveness in the school extended into extra-curricular sport. It was a semi-rural area where many girls owned horses, regularly went skiing or participated in other activities with their families, but these were not my experiences. I went to lunch time netball practice but being new and not knowing any of the girls I felt instantly at a disadvantage in a setting defined by social status and popularity. Other players laughed at my inability to remember who I was marking. I lost all confidence to get involved, for fear of making mistakes again. I resented the teacher ignoring me, despite knowing I was the new girl. I never played netball again, nor any other team sport, and did not even own a pair of trainers for a long time.

However, I am a sportswoman, although not according to the definition of sport common in schools and universities. I first went tenpin bowling at age 11, scored terribly compared with

my friends, and I went home upset. My dad found out about a weekly coaching session for children and asked me if I wanted to go along so that next time I could save face. I went back every week. From there I went on to play in junior and student national competitions. Between 2009 and 2011 I was captain of the Loughborough Students Tenpin Bowling Club. I was chosen for the British Universities and Colleges Sport (BUCS) representative squad in 2011 and have won multiple national student tournaments. Yet this sport is one that, at a decent level, can be played by fat, unfit, old people.

Our active identities are always under development. When I first reflected on these memories, beginning my time at Loughborough, I was a sedentary desk-worker, involved in no physical activity. I have tried to become better at "having a go," even though I inevitably lose, now that I can reflect on the experiences I have had. I find that the driving force behind my research interests is a desire to understand how my schooling did not offer me an active identity, or if this was ever a part of who I am. My experiences taught me that team sports are designated only for top class, very fit, confident students. I have come through a journey of my own in undertaking this investigation into active identities and bodies. This has all affected both how I have carried out research and the interpretations I have made. My motivation in researching and writing this PhD is in reimagining what PE can mean and finding a way for safe and empowering education about bodies to contribute to all young people's learning.

## 1.4   Structure of the thesis

A review of the pedagogical and sociological literature and theoretical framework that provide the background to this project is carried out in Chapter 2. This chapter offers a review of empirical and theoretical literature on bodies and subjectivity in PE/sport, what shapes acceptable ways of being active/sporty (in gendered and racialised terms) visible in schooling and physical activity/sport, and how this affects who can perform an ideal or normative body. This is followed in Chapter 3 with the methodological foundations, outline of the research design, data collection techniques and analysis. In this project, I employ an ethnographic design using multiple qualitative methods including participatory visual methods, group interviews and PE class observations, working with a group of twenty-five Year 9 students (age 13-14) from an ethnically diverse secondary school in the East Midlands, UK. Ethnography enables rich, multifaceted data through prolonged engagement in a field. This thesis will narrate how over an academic year I carry out observation in two single sex PE classes, recruit students for group interviews and participant photography projects, and collect researcher-produced photographs and sketches of visual displays around the school. Using photo elicitation techniques in group interviews with the participants provides ways for them to produce stories about their perspectives and embodied experiences, offering knowledge about their lives both within and

beyond school. In Chapters 4, 5 and 6, findings are presented intertwined with discussions on three major areas emerging from the data: visualising valued bodies, managing high status, and resisting low status. As this group of young people negotiate the meanings given to adolescent gendered and racialised bodies within sites where moving bodies are central, they narrate powerful effects on their sense of self. The thesis concludes with Chapter 7 drawing together the key aspects for discussion, looking at implications and future research.

## 2    Review of literature and theoretical framework

### *2.1   Introduction*

> Into what and whose values, norms and attributes are pupils socialised? (Evans & Davies, 2001: 29).

Material and socially constructed bodies, their appearance, practices and representation, as central to subjectivity, status and place in society, will be the focus in this research. Our bodies are how we engage with the world and become involved in social processes. The body is not only physical and material; it is also a focus of subjectivity – of how individuals make sense of their being in the world (Alexander & Knowles, 2003). As physical education educates bodies, or about bodies, it has an important place in defining and inscribing bodies. It has been pointed out that the 'body as a domain of social practice, particularly in relation to (physical) educational practice, remains an area of comparative neglect by theorists' (Sandford & Rich, 2006: 277). As bodies are inscribed with social meanings, they 'can impact on the ways in which individuals interact with their world, how they use their bodies in space and their relationships with others (Wright & Burrows, 2006: 283).

As Evans (2012: 12) highlights, posing questions surrounding what students learn 'will reflect, at least in part, our definitions of and involvement with what education and Physical Education are and where we think it occurs.' Behind the complexity of what bodies can mean in PE and sport lies debate around the purpose of PE and what PE should and can mean for students. As a historically developing subject influenced by educational discourse, wider sporting or active cultures, plus government policy, PE has faced many changes. The history of PE and its place in schooling has been reanalysed alongside contemporary constructions of the meanings and values of bodies. Researchers have contemplated the future of PE in meeting the needs of students in the postmodern age (Kirk & Tinning, 1994). Upon the last-but-one re-evaluation of the NCPE, Penney and Chandler (2000) looked towards the future of PE and its possible contribution to twenty-first century societies and economies. Their concerns drew on Young's (1998) questions surrounding how education plays a part in developing young people as citizens and employees, how to improve connections between education (or PE) and lifelong physical activity, all the while ensuring social justice.

This project draws on aspects of poststructuralism particularly theories of embodiment that provide a foundation for understanding how both the social construction and the materiality of the body inform meanings and values given to bodies. Poststructuralist thought is a way to understand the relationship between the self and the social. Two major concepts structure the theoretical framework for this study: that certain knowledge or truths, as dominant discourses,

about bodies, identity and difference are reproduced; and that subjectivity or selfhood is embodied, affected by and affecting appearance and dispositions. Wright (2006: 60) suggests poststructuralism and other "post" perspectives critique essentialist notions of identity, fixed reality, and work 'to understand how relations of power work in determining what meanings have precedence'. This challenges assumptions in thinking and critiques established practices. Having critical engagement with those perspectives they follow, "post" research needs to constantly "trouble" that which is taken-for-granted, never be comfortable with certainties in its questioning and methods. This chapter offers a review of empirical and theoretical literature on bodies and subjectivity and what shapes valued ways of being active or sporty (in gendered and racialised terms) visible in schooling and physical activity/sport. The theoretical framework is intertwined with the literature review rather than appearing afterwards. Section 2.2 firstly explores how learning about the body can occur in schooling, tying into this an overview of theories of discourse and discipline. This is followed by investigation of two ways, technocracy and healthism, in which PE's objectives or values have been conceptualised, in 2.3. 2.4 introduces empirical literature from the fields of PE / sport pedagogy and sociology of sport concerning gender and race inequality. Outlining theoretical frameworks around embodiment and subjectivity that inform this project in 2.5, I follow this in 2.6 with a look at literature that reflects these theoretical frameworks. 2.7 concludes the chapter and provides a rationale for the study.

## 2.2   *Learning about the body in PE*

As well as learning about physical activity, games, movement in PE, students also learn about their bodies (Tinning, 2010). Schools are sites of both formal and informal learning. Fernandez-Balboa (1993) argues that PE stratifies students with the aim of reproducing social relations of production and, depending on class background, encouraging subordination or leadership. Sociology of education and PE literature informs us about the role of schooling in normalising appearances and movements to serve dominant interests (Evans & Davies, 2010; Harvey & Sparks, 1991; Kirk, 2004). As Armour (1999) outlines, and drawing on Shilling (1993a), education has traditionally been disembodied, privileging theoretical over practical work and hence more concerned with regulating, rather than educating, bodies. School has frequently been acknowledged as a controlling, disciplining, surveilling institution, organising and managing students' time and space (Frost, 2001; Kirk, 1999; Webb, McCaughtry & Macdonald, 2004; Youdell, 2006). Discipline in all areas of schooling is embodied, even where school work is cognitive, investing time in producing a correct and disciplined body (Paechter, 2000). Large scale educational and medical interventions including drilling and exercising in the early twentieth century were designed to produce an 'economically productive and politically

acquiescent' social self (Kirk, 2004: 54). Pedagogies based on skill acquisition and training stand in opposition to pedagogies based on learning through expressivity, exploration and body awareness – qualities common to 'a female PE tradition' whose marginalisation 'reflects power/gender relations in the education system as a whole' (Paechter, 2000: 93; also Kirk, 1992; Wright, 1996). Changes in PE curricula and pedagogy have followed 'a shift in the locus of social control within capitalist societies from mass, external control of the body to an individual, internal mode of corporeal control' (Kirk & Colquhoun, 1989: 418). By schooling the body, argues Hargreaves, PE is concerned with control: ideals of appearance and bodily conformity. Schools are not neutral but perpetuate or challenge representations of normative bodies – 'we *learn* our bodies, that is, we are taught how to think about our bodies and how to experience our bodies' (McLaren, 1991: 156).

Paechter (2000: 92) considers that the relation of PE to 'the disciplinary role of bodily constraint' means that PE is 'hostage to attempts to use it for the control of particular social groups'. A 'knowledge bias' has been recognised in understanding the body – a functionalist, foundationalist view of the body, such as found in anatomy, physiology and biomechanics suggest that the body is a machine (Dewar, 1987; Macdonald and Tinning, 1995; Tinning, 1997). This knowledge bias continues, Tinning (1997) argues, and valorises professional scientific knowledge and marginalises situated or social knowledge. Dominant ideologies of PE have been recognised as centring technocratic knowledge with selective notions of health/fitness, sport and physical education (McKay, Gore & Kirk, 1990). McKay et al. (1990) identify in technocratic PE the promotion of learning based on motor skills and technical problems with goals of efficiency, productivity, rationality, that produce bodies-as-machines. These arguments continue to be made (Kirk, 2011). Current curriculum models, it is argued, emphasise commercial codes and forms of participation, valorising elite performers, not popular participation (Connell, 2008).

## 2.2.1 Sources of knowledge

Research on both PE and wider schooling contexts has previously made use of the concept of the hidden curriculum that highlights the lived culture of schools and their place within – or reproduction of – dominant interests in wider society (Bain, 1990; Fernandez-Balboa, 1993; Kirk, 1992). This concept of the hidden curriculum is able to describe how students acquire implicit, subconscious knowledge that reproduces social structures, arguably explaining how inequalities are enforced, especially in unconscious communication. The hidden curriculum refers to the implicit and explicit reproduction of certain norms, values and beliefs 'embedded in and transmitted to students through the underlying rules that structure the routines and social relations in school and classroom life' (Giroux, 1983: 43). Not just teachers' didactic language,

but other interactions among students and teachers can contribute; Rønholt (2002: 34) additionally states that 'body actions have a dominant role in the learning processes'. Socio-cultural beliefs are developed in schools as a way of encouraging socialisation and acculturation (Kirk, 1992). Particular social concepts, patterns and characteristics are taught that reproduce dominant ideology and therefore serve dominant interests and justify their power (Fernandez-Balboa, 1993).

Kirk (1992) recommends making visible the hidden curriculum found in discourses of talk and text. To this, researchers on the visual cultures of schools would add images (Prosser, 2007), if we consider that 'appearance and vision have become the media through which modern social relationships are constructed, consolidated and reproduced (Shilling, 2003: 194). Within the routines and language of PE and schooling, students internalise the values of the dominant groups of society. Young people learn about their bodies from a variety of pedagogical sites of knowledge production, including school, teachers, film, magazines, posters, commercials and product labels (Tinning & Glasby, 2002). Rønholt (2002) observes that stereotyped ideas of girls' and boys' activities, ways of behaving and performing are perpetuated in teachers' language, the curriculum and student/teacher interactions. The hidden curriculum may be found in resources for teaching that are not explicitly planned for lessons (Harrison, Azzarito & Burden, 2004). Particularly, young people learn through their engagements with popular culture, media and institutional sites and make meanings for their bodies that are relevant to their readings of popular culture (Holroyd, 2003; Oliver & Lalik, 2000; Tinning & Fitzclarence, 1992; Wright, 2004). Kenway and Bullen (2001) attest that the hidden curriculum is delivered through the visual culture of the school. Prosser (2007) suggests that the taken for granted, unconscious culture of school is powerful because it goes unseen, in the sense of its effects being unnoticed. Engagement with visual cultural resources through sports media, spectatorship and participation may inform or illuminate students' participation in school PE and the impact on young people's physical identity or sense of self from constructions of valued bodies. This is of keen importance especially in today's image-heavy, postmodern and individualised world where self-worth and one's place in society are closely tied to the self-managed, but fluid, body (Bourdieu, 1990; Shilling, 2003, 2008; Turner, 2008).

## 2.2.2 Knowledge as power (discourse and discipline)

Michel Foucault's work, located at the centre of poststructuralist analysis and methodologies, has had a profound impact on contemporary thought particularly on the body, control, and the relation of power to knowledge. He offers models of normalising disciplinary procedures that produce an embodied social control. As well as a set of discourses and language, 'physical education and sport constitute specialised sets of practices,' within schools and informal

educational spaces, 'that make a crucial contribution to the social construction and normalisation of the body' (Kirk, 2002: 86). The tools of poststructuralism can illuminate how certain narratives, constitutive and supported by dominant or privileged groups, come to be seen as truth. This section addresses how bodies are produced, according to whose notions of value.

Bodies are regulated or normalised through dominant fields of knowledge, such as medicine and science, that are institutionalised and accepted, thus powerful. Foucault (1977) observed that a rise in the interest in bodies in the eighteenth century was concerned with controlling bodies at the individual rather than mass level – a power over the active body's movements and gestures. The notion of bio-power (Foucault, 1977) is a process through which bodies become disciplined, regulated and made docile. Bio-power enables us to see how bodies are pliable and controlled through disciplinary techniques of power and are invested with meaning (that is, discursively constituted). In order to be most effective, this 'policy of coercions that act upon the body' (Foucault, 1977: 138) needs also to come from within, not only externally. When introduced into prison design, the "Panopticon", a surveillance system, resulted in inmates being constantly aware that they were potentially being watched while being unable to verify whether they were indeed being watched at any one time (Foucault, 1977). The self-disciplining effects of being watched, or believing oneself to be watched, made the actual exercise of power unnecessary, as the watched body would discipline him/herself.

Authority over social and bodily practice is created when producing narratives or knowledge about the body that are taken up by individuals who consequently regulate their own behaviour and identity, enabling control without physical force. Foucault contends that knowledge, and the ability to produce truth, is a powerful position. Power/knowledge is able to structure the world and exclude other interpretations, to produce the "nature" of social reality. Power circulates in discourse, thus is reproduced and maintained with the repetition and dissemination of dominant knowledge (Weedon, 1997). Using Foucault (1977) as a basis, discourses can be understood as 'broad constitutive systems of meaning' or 'ways of seeing the world' through language (Sunderland, 2004: 6, 27). Foucault (1980: 131) calls dominant discourses "regimes of truth", 'the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; … the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth'. Drawing on the work of Stuart Hall, Kirk (1992: 42) identifies discourse as 'all forms of communication whether intentional, conscious, unconscious, explicit, tacit or reflexive'. Discourses can 'refer to the ways in which social and political thought are embedded in the ways of thinking and talking about the world' (Weatherall, 2002: 79). These discourses offer certain norms or ideals of being that are accepted and disseminated (Foucault, 1977, 1980). By constructing through language what is truth (what is possible and impossible), dominant interests can define what bodies can be, in order to retain

a status quo or maintain economic and social structures. Foucault tells us that power resides in those discourses which are more often reiterated across a range of sites, and considered believable. Only those available in the historical and cultural context will be taken up by individuals in making sense of the world and their place within it. Universalising theories of politics, social relations and progress are integral to the structures of power so that establishing what is true or false is not impartial but done to promote the interests of dominant powers. The dominant has the power to name, define and rule over the other (Cixous, 1986). Knowledge claims in dominant discourses represent a social reality because they are accepted as true, people act as if they are true and therefore this knowledge takes on the power of truth.

Disciplining the body occurs in schools as regulating institutions (Davies, 1989; Youdell, 2006) where young people learn to reproduce and enact the dispositions that will enable them to belong in their social groups (Paechter, 2006a). The concept of body pedagogies or biopedagogies (Shilling, 2010) can illustrate how intentions of value are communicated to students. Body pedagogies are 'structures of meaning defining what the body is and ought to be;' what interactions and relations of difference and inclusion are sustained, what ideologies enter common sense, defining 'whose and what bodies have status and value' (Evans & Rich, 2011: 367). Body pedagogies try to normalise other populations to meet a norm, regulating others to routines of practice and lifestyle (Wright & Harwood, 2009). Scientific ways of knowing bodies are privileged. Evans and Davies' body of work on social inclusion informs that high status bodies appear achievable and are normalised so that to not achieve is to not be normal. Evans and Davies (2001: 29) conclude that 'as well as creating opportunities for children and young people, schools also frame and limit them. They also socialise as they skill or de-skill'; they tell us what is and is not for us.

Power that exists in networks and relations is not repressive, rather multiplicitous, generative and unstable (Foucault, 1979). By rejecting the idea of power as something wielded by one group against another we might see instead that it can be "held" by any actor in a social field. Power and resistance are two sides to the same coin: because power is discursive and must be constantly reiterated, it can be challenged and reworked. The deconstruction of power/knowledge enables questioning of how institutions become accepted sources of knowledge that control who can access knowledge. Although discourse transmits or produces power, it also undermines power and 'makes it possible to thwart it' (Ramazanoğlu, 1993: 19). Power can produce resistant bodies as well as docile ones, resisting normalising disciplinary practices (McLaren, 2002), when counter-discourses are voiced that offer alternative subjectivities and relations. The self comes into existence through language, not being a pre-

discursive identity. Weedon (1997: 32) says, 'as we acquire language, we learn to give voice – meaning – to our experiences'. These theories will be returned to in 2.5.

## 2.3   PE values

To understand the guiding and fixing of meanings on the body we must identify the discourses and values in which they are embedded. Bodies valued in PE can be argued to be related to the purpose that is attached to PE. The current NCPE (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, 2007) makes central the role of PE in developing "responsible citizens" and "confident individuals" as well as "competent movers". Frequent policy shifts and research's response suggest crises in the purpose and direction for PE; as this chapter aims to explore, many crisis points have focused on (decreasing) participation and PE's role in public health, often addressing equity for, or marginalisation / inclusion of, particular "groups" of students, reflecting assumptions about the bodies, abilities and physical identities of those students.

### 2.3.1 Technocracy and PE-as-sport

PE is often conflated with sport although the types of activities outlined in the NCPE relate to dance, gymnastics, athletics, fitness and health activities and swimming/outdoor activities and games (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, 2007). PE has become, Evans (2004) argues, fixated with motivation, healthy behaviour, fitness and talent-recognition for organised sport. The valuing of technocratic, science-based knowledge in PE programmes points to the valuing of certain bodies among those who engage with sport or physical activity in that system or under that knowledge. In this technocratic, elite sport centred performative culture, bodies are valued that are athletic, strong, mesomorph, and disciplined (Hargreaves, 1986); not merely active bodies but sporting bodies (Shilling, 2008). Discourses of sport define the variety of skills needed for successfully playing a sport, skills that are not fixed naturally but socially constructed for the type of play embedded in the philosophy or rules of play. Laker (2001) contemplates the social benefits of taking part in sport – as a microcosm of society – are as a way to learn to conform to social codes and behaviours including fairness, cooperation, teamwork and independence, and abiding by rules or laws. These values reflect power relations within schools and physical culture in terms of the control of knowledge, whose interests are met, and the extent to which dominant social systems are reproduced. Interests control political and economic resources and define who is allowed to play which sports, where and when, and whether sports become institutionalised in cultures (Hall, 1996).

For PE to be allied with sport, it subscribes to standards of excellence seeing ability in certain bodies or practices. It is to be expected that the bodies valued in PE are those that gain high

grades – the technically skilled, able bodies, showing motor competence. Ability is 'the capacity or 'competence' … of an individual or individuals to perform a task within a particular context' (Hay & Macdonald, 2009: 1). It also refers to talent beyond the norm – a 'performance-orientated' notion of ability (Wright & Burrows, 2006). Ability, where competitive sport dominates school PE, is associated with sporting prowess (Shilling, 2008). Reviews of the literature concerning ability in exercise physiology, cognitive and behavioural pedagogy find that ability is variously seen as a fixed, measurable entity or set of knowledge and skills that can increase with practice and effort (Hay & Macdonald, 2009; Wright & Burrows, 2006). This perspective on ability greatly affects the purpose of schooling, the potential of students, teachers' roles, curriculum and pedagogy, and justifies differences in achievement or attainment. Egalitarian principles such as found in calls for lifelong activity or sport for all, Kirk (2011) points out, are at odds with sport's standards of excellence:

> Physical education defines ability in terms other than its subject matter but then allows the most inequitable aspects of the sectional interests of its creators to construct implicit notions of ability (Kirk, 2011: 114).

Enjoyment of sport is still regulated by constructions of the bodily performances required to legitimately participate, according to Wellard (2006). The ability to perform a socially constructed, appropriate performance provides physical capital for those who are successful, but has implications for enjoyment and comfortable participation in physical activity for those who are not successful or not interested in performing hegemonically valued bodily practices. This has implications where teachers potentially base opinions of students on their bodily performances and not their enthusiasm. The explicit meanings given to notions such as ability depend on the physical culture, the language, narratives and practices constituting "ability",

> therefore may not be simply the execution of a specific skill, or the capacity to demonstrate particular strategies, or even to choreograph movement, but the embodied capacities to perform movements that are located and valued because of their relations with particular cultures and societies (Wright & Burrows, 2006: 289).

Redelius, Fagrell and Larsson (2009) explore what teachers construct as valuable through their grading practices. Identifying that teachers' grading guidelines are based on performance, achievement and fair play, which are not connected to curricular objectives emphasising lifelong activity and health connections, they conclude that this is connected to the traditional content and connection to masculinity of many sporting practices in the contemporary Swedish PE curriculum where they carried out their study. Those who are not physically active in a sport performance sense outside of school, learn 'that they are not good enough … since the abilities that are valued – those that really count – are the ones needed to make good sporting results' (Redelius et al., 2009: 258).

## 2.3.2 Healthism and slenderness in PE and fitness

O'Sullivan (2004: 397) argues that there 'is no doubt that physical education has caught the attention of legislatures, school boards, principals, and parents with promises that we can and should make significant contributions to children's physical fitness and healthy lifestyles'. The role of PE in public health has been extensively considered (e.g. Evans, Rich & Davies, 2004; Cale & Harris, 2006; Tinning & Glasby, 2002) and concerns about health are often found in the rationale for studies into participation (Lee & Macdonald, 2009). It is understood that PE can potentially improve young people's health (Cale & Harris, 2011), but critiques of links among health or *healthism*, body size, responsibility and self-worth commonly reference a cult of the body (Tinning & Glasby, 2002). Healthism in PE (Kirk & Colquhoun, 1989) constructs "certainty" with regard to knowledge about bodies, health and weight that has negative effects on how PE and exercise are taught in schools, with consequences on young people's subjectivities and orientations to their bodies (Gard & Wright, 2001). Shilling (2010) finds that health and size become public matters to be discussed and measured against a normative vision of an ideal body, supplemented by a culture of performance and assessment.

A student, or indeed a teacher, is valued in PE if s/he works for and performs the ideal in terms of weight, fitness, activity and diet (Webb, Quennerstedt & Öhman, 2008). The use of PE to monitor and tackle obesity 'suggests an acceptance of discourses that are associated with guilt [and] the self-monitoring of the body' (Burrows, Wright & Jungersen-Smith, 2002: 39). Gard and Wright (2005: 183) argue that health promotion frames obesity and low fitness as issues of self-governance for individuals who are free to make their decisions with regard to their health. An overweight body, supposedly a visibly unhealthy body, is considered 'lacking in self-discipline, needing the interventionist powers of the state to encourage and support them in conforming to bodily norms' (Paechter, 2000: 95). PE has become a vehicle of such popular public health discourses and pedagogics (Fitzpatrick, 2011; Gard & Wright, 2005; McCaughtry & Tischler, 2010; Shilling, 2010). Surveillance of overweight and obese children, guided by discourses of health and weight loss, is carried out in the school environment (Allwood, 2010; Evans, Rich, Davies & Allwood, 2008; Webb et al., 2008). If PE is both sports-driven and body disciplining, 'then the possibility for school physical education to realise the high expectations being set for the subject must be limited' (Kirk, 2011: 104). Instead of making an impact on embodied differences that children bring to school, schooling may reproduce ability differences and deficits (Evans, 2004). The following section explores literature that looks specifically at gendered and racialised differences in producing sporting or healthy bodies.

## 2.4 Producing gendered and racialised bodies

Focus on gender and race or ethnicity in PE has predominantly been on participation levels, inclusivity and equity in access, activities and learning. Although (or perhaps because) PE is tasked with a number of health and sport related objectives, young people's participation in and enjoyment of the subject remain concerns in teaching and academia. Studies find that many students report unhappy experiences (Carlson, 1995; Olafson, 2002; Tischler & McCaughtry, 2011). Often these experiences have been related to the sport-based competition or PE-as-sport frequent in Western curricula and, as we saw in section 2.2, to students' lack of personal meaning in PE (Dyson, 1995; Tinning & Fitzclarence, 1992). The marginalising and normalising discourses surrounding health and sport objectives in PE have been reported to have a significant impact on students' sense of self and their physical activity participation after school (Sykes, 2011; Wellard, 2006). A social justice agenda in PE and youth sport, promoting women's and girls' participation in physical activity, can also subsequently uncover ways in which heteronormative notions of appropriate movements and activities have limited all young people's experiences, looking towards providing positive, safe and empowering experiences. The literature, examined here, has researched gender and/or race/ethnicity issues in PE. While this thesis aims to avoid adding race/ethnicity as a secondary issue or an afterthought, much of the available literature on gender inclusion or opportunity in PE has been single-issue; section 2.4.3 intends to specifically address this "add minorities and stir" perspective, as the intention here is to advance an intersectional approach to gender research.

### 2.4.1 Equal access

Equity research has often used a gender lens to understand inequality of participation/access to sports and PE. A liberal perspective in physical education claims there are barriers to distributive equity, or equality of opportunity (Nilges, 2006). Liberal feminism campaigned for women to gain equal rights to men, arguing that women are capable of doing what men do, and desired for public domains such as workplaces, legal and governmental sites to be opened fully to women (Lorber, 2005). Working within existing structures of education and sport, women may gain access to the rights and privileges (funding, activities and facilities) traditionally afforded to men. Within liberal research on women's sport, male strength and higher ability have been accepted, but the causes of women's apparent weakness are unchallenged (Roth & Basow, 2004). Early work on women's sport participation worked within patriarchal concepts, accepting contemporary constructions of physical activity and its purposes (Scraton & Flintoff, 1992). The thinking behind the USA's Title IX and its practices provide an example of the spread of physical education curricula and sports programmes based on distributive equality (Nilges, 2006). Title IX aimed to assure equal opportunities for girls and boys in the educational

arena, resulting in the removal of single-sex classes in schools, including in physical education, in favour of mandatory co-ed classes. Legislation to remove discrimination on the basis of sex to offer equal access was expected to result in girls no longer limiting their space, skills and bodily capabilities. However, concerns were raised, as equal access does not necessarily make experiences better in PE as stereotypical gender attitudes and beliefs about sports remain rooted in the physical education context (O'Sullivan, Bush & Gehring, 2002).

That girls' low, or declining (in comparison to boys'), participation is still frequently topic for research or intervention (recent examples including Gorely, Sandford, Duncombe, et al., 2011) indicates that distributive policy has been unsuccessful in explaining and addressing gendered divisions in physical activity and sport. Liberal approaches to equal opportunities in PE and sport cannot critically analyse the maintenance of patriarchy (Nilges, 1998) for they explain inequality and disadvantage by lack of opportunities 'rather than a more fundamental approach that questioned the underlying power structures and organisation of PE' (Flintoff & Scraton, 2006: 769). Although this did not always result in material and statistical equalities for girls and women, it was a start in acknowledging the inequities in sport (Talbot, 1993). The focus on understanding the barriers to participation that girls perceive has been recognised as naming girls as the problem (Flintoff & Scraton, 2001; Macdonald, 2002). If young people's disengagement from physical activity is constructed as an individual lifestyle problem, the social environment is not questioned. 'Equity policies and programmes have failed to override the influences of hegemonic masculinities, homophobia, and sportist discourses that are underpinned by power structures framed by gender, class and race' (Macdonald, 2002: 216), because school as an institution is reproductive of imbalances upon which society is built (Evans & Davies, 2010). Instead thinking has shifted towards considering how bodies are produced in gendered and racialised ways.

## 2.4.2 Maintaining the gender order

Researchers such as Leaman (1984) noted the construction and maintenance of cultures and value systems in PE and sport that worked for dominant interests, such as patriarchy (Nilges, 1998). Historically, the differences and divisions between male and female bodies have been used to justify women's inferiority and exclusion from sport, partly to maintain the connection between sport and masculinity (Whitson, 1990). According to Jennifer Hargreaves (2000), historically girls' PE programmes were designed to perpetuate physical inferiority by demonstrating girls' frailty and the perceived threats caused by physical activity to women's reproductive capacities. Gentle exercises to guarantee health for future mothers, to create a docile and constrained body that would be in service to others yet remain feminine (Fletcher, 1984), suggest class as well as gender assumptions. Boys' PE was designed to contribute to

developing dominant masculine physicalities by centring force, strength and drills (Kirk, 1994). Vertinsky (1992: 375) highlights early twentieth century attempts to differentiate boys and girls, segregate adolescent activities and promote female health and vigour for the reproductive good of the nation or 'servicing of the state'.

Messner (1988) argues that sports are both gendered (reflecting dominant conceptions of masculine and feminine) and gendering (involved in the construction of the gender order), and are argued to serve to maintain gender roles through five functions:

> a) defining and reinforcing traditional conceptions of masculinity, b) providing a context for acceptable and safe male bonding and intimacy, c) establishing status among other males, d) reinforcing male privilege and perceptions of female inferiority, and e) reify-ing heterosexuality (Griffin, 1995: 54-55).

> For women to enter sport, supposed to be an arena in which masculinity could be defined and performed, is to upend the relational, oppositional construction of gender (Birrell & Theberge, 1994).

Theberge (1985) argues that framing sport as a "male preserve" works to marginalise girls in sports-based programmes while also maintaining relations with broader gender segregation and inequality across society. Campaigning for girls' equal access to organised sport and physical education cannot on its own lift the constraints on female physicality which are encouraged when "girls' sports" (or, the ways girls are taught to play sports) are less physical, or imbued with inferiority compared to "boys' sports" (Whitson, 1994). Women have been thought "physically disabled" by ideology or a value system that defines active bodies in masculinised terms (Guthrie & Castelnuovo, 1994). Girls are silenced, considered to be unmotivated, and alienated from physical activity practices, affecting lifelong relationships with active lifestyles (Flintoff & Scraton, 2001).

> Girls and women are often highly valued bodily at times when the body is least physically active, and deemed 'absent' bodily when displaying competence through movement (Satina & Hultgren, 2001: 525).

Connell (2008) and Weaver-Hightower (2003) point out that the recent media and social panic about the failings of boys' education and the feminisation of schools has brought out a return to dichotomised and essentialist views of gender difference that sees boys as having a natural masculinity, one that is in part produced through PE and sport and which can only be understood and developed by male teachers in a male environment. This has 'given a new lease of life to the idea of gender segregation in education' (Connell, 2008: 132). Schools have often offered different curricula to girls and boys, based on gendered expectations yet contributing to maintaining physical differences between normalised girlhood and boyhood (Hargreaves, 2000). By giving girls modified goals compared to boys', they are differentiated from boys and

rendered inferior (Domangue & Solmon, 2009). Williams and Bedward (2002) advocate single sex PE, claiming that it can liberate girls from domination by boys, from "masculinising" activities through single-sex education. However, this does not address normative gender roles. Wright (1999) and Berg and Lahelma (2010) question the ability of single-sex physical education to address and challenge heteronormative power. While competent or highly-skilled girls may welcome the opportunities in co-ed classes to work harder or more competitively against boys (Griffin, 1984), this does little to dispel the belief that boys are higher skilled or more sporty. Teachers have struggled to provide equity in mixed groups as masculine models of PE strategies and outcomes remained dominant (Griffin, 1985; Vertinsky, 1992).

Mixed PE is a place where some girls have been found to feel contradictory pressure in the presence of boys to display heteronormative femininity (passivity), but also to be active and competent in competitive activities that established the normality of scrutiny and evaluation (B. Evans, 2006). Yet, because girls 'have little control or choice over the way their bodies are presented and used' (B. Evans, 2006: 557), they may resist PE as their image and behaviours are scrutinised. Surveillance is central to PE (Webb et al., 2002), allowing students to be observed, encouraging them to watch each other and perform (Cockburn & Clarke, 2022; B. Evans, 2006; Fisette, 2011; Garrett, 2004b). The objectification of women and the pathologising of young women's development have contributed to the normalisation of girls' anxieties about their bodies in such a way that "the way girls are" is normalised, accepted and taken-for-granted (Pipher, 1994). Girls know that they are allowed to play but need to reconcile their physical activity with a feminine appearance (Hills, 2006). Neither single nor mixed sex PE, within gendered power structures, critique those structures or suggest alternatives (Humberstone, 2001). Co-ed classes may be problematic where they give girls "special treatment" in order to increase their participation (such as requiring that all female players on a team get a touch of the ball before the team is allowed to score – as in Ennis' 1999 Sport for Peace model). Other research finds that teachers give more attention to boys in co-ed classes, and consider girls at fault for not engaging (Macdonald, 1990).

On the surface, boys as a group have not been seen to have the problems with access and opportunity that have been reported for girls. PE has been seen as one of the key sites in school for the construction of hegemonic masculinity as embodied through power and competence (Davison, 2000):

> The gender order in PE is such that girls are generally marginalised and absent because boys are at its centre…boys must be competitive, tough, physically aggressive, misogynist, heterosexual, brave, enthusiastic team players and so on (Bramham, 2003: 60).

Ways of taking up space and being in the world that are powerful are associated with hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1995). Sports that have a high level of physical confrontation have come to be emblematic of gendered physical performances that display hegemonic masculinity, such as football codes, boxing and ice hockey (Connell, 2008). Aggressive masculinity remains an acceptable body performance in mainstream competitive sport (Wellard, 2006). For boys, experiencing sport provides an understanding of how to perform and present a heterosexual male body (Wellard, 2006). In learning the codes of heterosexual appearance and behaviour men and boys fiercely learn to display prowess in sport (Smith, 2007). Those who come closest to embodying and performing conventional or dominant masculinity in a sports context gain the most social and cultural capital (Bramham, 2003). Bramham (2003: 60) notes that boys who are most highly valued are those 'sportsmen' who 'get stuck in', don't fear pain, and are active in school teams and outside of school hours.

The relationship between masculinity and performances of proficient and strong sporting bodies (Connell, 1987, 1995; Segal, 1997; Wellard, 2006) simultaneously marks female sporting bodies as unfeminine (Cockburn & Clarke, 2002) persuades girls into inactivity (Young, 1980) or associates women's physical activity with maintenance of a "not too muscley", shapely and aerobicised appearance (Duncan 1994; Gorely, Holroyd & Kirk, 2003; Hills, 2006; Markula, 1995). Young's (1980) process of learning to 'throw like a girl' and the gradual development of hampered movements manifests the inscribing of gendered dispositions on the female body. Young (1980) argued that central qualities in girls' PE include restraint, quietness and control – learning the protection and hampering of body and movements, a 'bodily timidity' and fragility. Girls constrain their physicality in embodying ideal femininity. The notion of 'inhibited intentionality' or perceived low competence in activities can also demonstrate the disembodied nature of many girls' experiences of PE, such that they do not allow themselves to experience their body's capabilities (B. Evans, 2006). Young's theories have had an enduring impact on literature, providing a compelling account of why girls seem physically weaker, how that has been taken advantage of, and how we might overcome constraints. Despite this, she does not address embodiment issues in boys and treats girls as homogeneously socialised in ideal femininity and weakness. We need to look contextually, but also look at the multiple ways in which young people's identities are affected as they negotiate discourses around sport participation, the active body and gender identity in intersection with race or ethnicity; which the following sections (2.4.3, 2.4.4, 2.5 and 2.6) consider.

### 2.4.3 Gender and race in intersection

The meanings given to race/ethnicity also structure sport participation (Elling & Knoppers, 2005). As with gender disparities in participation and access, meeting the needs of diverse

groups of students has led schools and sport institutions to take into account the differing provisions needed by "minority groups" (Amara and Henry, 2010; Long, Hylton, Spracken, Ratna & Bailey, 2009; Sport Scotland, 2006). Solutions such as making sport institutions and other providers aware of racism so that they might cater for needs (Johnson, 2000) indicate attempts to "add minorities and stir" to existing provision without addressing socio-cultural and class/structural privilege (Raval, 1989). Amara and Henry (2010) raise concerns over encouragement of integration of Asian or Muslim populations into European culture and sporting heritage (physical cultures) that does not centre understanding of diversity. The place and significance of sport in British Asian cultures is thought inadequately understood as there has been little research on Asians in elite sport (Fleming, 1991; Majumdar & Mangan, 2005; Scraton et al., 2005). Where it has been carried out, it has used 'stereotypical assumptions to attribute parental constraint, religion and culture as root causes for lack of participation' (Chappell, 2001: 103). If we look at ethnicity as it intersects with gender it is possible to see marginalising at the borders of white-dominant gendered subjectivities. Connell (1987, 1995) suggests that gender is not a list of traits but indicative of cultural norms that shape interactions and bodily conduct. Culture decides which roles and behaviours fall onto which side of the male/female divide. Although specific practices are culturally and historically located, cultural norms always support disciplinary practices, according to McLaren (2002).

While poststructuralist feminist thinkers, such as Haraway (1988), accuse "objective" scientific epistemology of gender-blind masculinism, Western feminism is accused of colour-blind Eurocentrism through Enlightenment philosophy that 'locates progress and development squarely in the West' while claiming universalist knowledge (Davis, 2007: 204). Concepts of gender role in Western thought have been re-evaluated to take into account the different discourses and practices. The work of postcolonial and black feminisms (Bhavnani, 2001; Brah, 1996; Collins, 1990; hooks, 1981, 1990, 1995; Mohanty, 1988) has challenged white Western feminist theory to pay more attention to diversity and differences in the structural circumstances that surround them. Spelman (1988) warns that race and class are always a part of the experience of gender, for instance 'the oppression white middle-class women are subject to is not the oppression women face 'as women' but the oppression white middle-class women face' (Spelman, 1988: 77). Despite Birrell's (1989) call for a broadening of gender theory in sport to take better account of race and class relationships, research into women's and girls' physical activity and sport continues to risk being accused of extrapolating the experiences of white, Western, middle-class, heterosexual, able-bodied women across all groups, excluding others or treating them as 'different' (Hargreaves, 2000). Wright and Dewar (1997: 83) find that little research on the gendered body looks to the diversity of bodies and experience, for instance taking 'the female body to be young, white, middle class and above all heterosexual'. In noting

their own focus on white, middle class students, Rich and Evans (2009: 3) explain that 'the promotion of the ideal feminine body as disciplined, normalised and slender is intimately connected to whiteness'. Whiteness has been defined as:

> a social location of structural advantage … a "standpoint", a place from which white people look at ourselves, at Others, and at society [and] … a set of cultural practices that are unusually unmarked and unnamed (Frankenberg, 1993: 1).

Claims to equity in research may fail to mention that they focus on white participants. This could be a result of the social and cultural location of specific research projects, but Cooky and McDonald's (2005) work shows that even with a cohort of white participants, experiences can (or should) be analysed in light of ethnicity. Black and minority ethnic women's femininity has been constructed in different ways to white women's (hooks, 1981; Lovell, 1991), so their place in sport, and in all public spaces, has been marked differently (Puwar, 2004) partly through being channelled into certain sports and constrained in others (Cahn, 1994; Gissendaner, 1996). The concept that sport participation is linked to a "femininity deficit" (Cockburn & Clarke, 2002) might more specifically be considered a "white femininity deficit" as the association between femininity and weakness is closely associated with whiteness / white femininity; or perhaps with non-black femininity. Research continues to require focus on minority ethnic students or diverse schools, to gain better understandings of what makes a difference, what does not, as well as deprivileging whiteness. Research that begins to refocus studies on the intersection of gender and race (Scraton et al., 2005; Scraton & Watson, 1998) argues that the production of subjectivities by minority ethnic people must take into account their various positioning in relation to white sport and fitness institutions and locations. Intersectionality is to reject additive models (such as the experience of being a woman plus the experience of being disabled) because discriminations are not experienced independently but are mutually constitutive (Archer, 2004; Brah & Phoenix, 2004), for instance as a disabled woman. Intersections of gender with race and class have enabled more complex understandings of relations and experiences, and have also contributed to a shift from the notion of oppression towards fluidity, contestability, negotiation and agency in identity and social relations.[i]

Part of the focus on South Asian people's physical activity has been a concern with their perceived increased risk of heart disease and obesity (Johnson, 2000; Nazroo, 2003; Long et al. 2009; Sporting Equals, nd). Health interventions normalise "Anglo" body shapes and sizes, basing acceptable levels of physical activity and health on a white norm (Crozier & Davies, 2008). British Asians have been presented as uneducated, inactive, and having a preference for fat bodies that symbolise wealth and leisure – coupling this with an assumption, common in Western culture, that slender bodies are desirable and unproblematic (Johnson, 2000). Drawing

on biopolitics, Macdonald et al. (2009: 2) highlight the issue of cultural minorities being 'frequently positioned as the problematic 'other' to be 'fixed' through various education and health strategies'. The bodies of minority students have been constructed by some teachers as excessive and undisciplined (Atencio, 2008). Where young people are encouraged to conform to performance of ideologies of physicality and healthism, this may result in feelings of failure, powerlessness, and alienation from identity or body (Evan, Rich & Davies, 2004; Oliver & Lalik, 2000). Western societies, we are told, value thin, white bodies, an attractive slender form found in popular media, fashion and the fitness and beauties industries (Fitzpatrick, 2011; Oliver & Lalik, 2000). Rather than being valued bodies – bodies that are healthy, sporting, physically active – different bodies are presented as deviant from normal white bodies and Western ways of knowing (Azzarito, 2010b; Evans et al., 2008; Ramanathan & Crocker, 2009). This marginalising of minority ethnic experience in health and physical activity discourses is arguably mirrored in much research into gender and bodies, which fails to acknowledge the whiteness in selection of research subjects or participants. The following subsections look specifically at the intersections of gender and ethnicity regarding, firstly, South Asian boys in Britain, and secondly South Asian girls, where a focus on Muslim girls is found across much research. At the same time, the absence of a significant body of research that also looks into the experiences of black or African-Caribbean youth in Britain should be acknowledged

### 2.4.3.1   Brawn or brain: South Asian boys

Burdsey (2007: 26) notes that 'perceptions of physicality have been a common and constant source by which minority ethnic groups in general have been marginalized'. A continued biologisation of race and racialised bodies has an impact on valuing sporting bodies (Alexander & Knowles, 2005; St. Louis, 2005). Evidence shows that young black male bodies are constructed as having natural superiority over white bodies, while also being seen as unintelligent physical players (Carrington & Macdonald, 2001; Hayes & Sugden, 1999; Hoberman, 1997). This perception affects the position and practices of both black and white students (and others) in PE lessons (Hayes & Sugden, 1999). Defining black ability as natural can be damaging not only for dividing students and encouraging inequalities among them, but where it is constructed in opposition to the perceived hard work and skill associated with white athletes' success in sports. At the same time, black athletes remain the Other to the white male norm, stabilising the normal white body against the abnormal black body, 'the one with "extra muscles" (Azzarito & Harrison, 2008: 354).

'In the white imagination', Haywood and Mac an Ghaill (2003: 75) tell us, 'Asian boys were constructed as a weak masculinity'. The discursive construction of South Asian populations during colonisation served to legitimise British rule; Indian male bodies were constructed as

weak, to mark them as inferior to British rulers (Mills & Dimeo, 2003). The exception was Sikh men, who were seen as strong and lion-like – again to fit in with the colonial project of corporeal control (Singh, 1999). A perception of Asian young people's low skill or submissive and frail bodies results in assumptions that they are little interested in sport, or that sporting bodies are not valued in Asian communities, which has been 'corroborated' by there being few Asian sport stars, at least in mainstream popular sports in the UK (Bramham, 2003; Chappell, 2001; Fleming, 1991, 2001; Ismond, 2003; Lewis, 1979; Lovell, 1991). British Asian boys have been seen as below par, uncoordinated, not suited to the cold, but naturally suited to individual, especially racket, sports (Bramham, 2003; Fleming, 1995; Johal, 2001). McGuire and Collins (2008) problematically mark Asian parents as anti-sport, without highlighting structural issues or local contexts. Belief in stereotypes of Asian students have also been identified amongst teachers, such as "strange" Asian food being unsuitable for building a strong body; religious and familial restrictions; or high levels of academicism or work ethic (Fleming, 1995; McGuire & Collins, 1998; Parker, 1996). Bramham (2003) finds that Asian boys may be constructed by white peers as resisters, while also dominating cricket.

Fleming (1991) observed a diversity of masculinities among Asian boys but a common experience of racism and racial stereotyping in PE lessons that offered opportunities for white boys to abuse and bully. Social interactions have a possibility for racial conflict, a common factor amongst Asian boys' attitudes to sport and physical activity; Asian boys avoid venues they perceive to be racist; or seek out self-defence activity (Fleming, 1991). Boys have few role sporting models from British Asian communities and as such, supposedly 'Asian players become victims of their own myths by believing that they lack ability' (Chappell, 2001: 104). The history of work on British Asian students has been one of 'problem Asians' for their own supposed cultural barriers to participation, and not issues of racism, or inappropriate or irrelevant curricula:

> The clear tendency has been to observe and identify 'differentness' with an implicitly value-laden framework (Fleming, 1993: 163).

Within football, Burdsey (2008) highlights symbolic and exclusionary violence, racism in recruitment, and Islamophobia. British Asian footballers have been seen to prefer forming their own clubs rather than try to enter white dominated clubs because of real and perceived racism and violence (Ratna, 2011) while 'some leagues [are reluctant] to accept Asian teams' (Chappell, 2001: 104).

### 2.4.3.2   Caught between two cultures? South Asian girls

> Too often the study of race and sport or black women and sport concentrates on constraints … [which] does little to challenge the ethnocentrism and androcentrism of sport (Scraton, 2001: 183).

As with boys, there is little literature on Hindu or Sikh girls, yet Muslim youth, particularly girls, have captured the imagination of physical education, body and youth researchers (Dagkas, Benn & Jawad, 2011; Kay, 2006; Pfister, 2000; Walseth, 2006). Many studies frame their participants by this religious marker rather than cultural or geographical markers. Much research on Muslim young women's low participation in physical activity in Europe has focused on barriers to participation including parental discouragement, academic priorities, clothing and mixed sex PE (Dagkas & Benn, 2006; De Knop, Theeboom, Wittock & de Martelaer, 1996; Zaman, 1997). Research in the UK on why Muslim parents remove their daughters from PE class concludes that the increase in body consciousness in adolescence was a factor; also inflexible dress codes and low recognition of religious requirements among schools or teachers (Dagkas et al., 2011). Western cultural activities such as dance and music are also found to be an issue (Benn & Dagkas, 2006). Considered to be positioned between two cultures, Asian young women must do identity work, including in physical activity, to negotiate multiple conflicting identities between school and home and manage their location between European and Asian elements. Some research on girls' activity participation (With-Nielsen & Pfister, 2011) continues to highlight or create difference between athletic, "normal" and Muslim girls, as though Muslim girls can be neither athletic nor normal while they take up Muslim subjectivities. This can be brought into question by a number of researchers seeking to challenge dichotomous perspectives. Kay (2006) investigates the influence of family on Muslim young women's involvement in sport and finds that girls negotiate between perceptions of family, culture and Western influences, warning against seeing Muslim take up of Western culture as unidirectional, and against seeing Islam as restrictive. Sport participation may then have more to do with cultural or ethnic ideals of femininity than with religion (Benn & Dagkas, 2006; Walseth & Fasting, 2003). 'Community elders' are considered to disapprove of young Asian girls' recreational activities (Johnson, 2000) while supposedly appropriate sports for Asian women, including tennis, badminton, and squash, are associated with the middle classes and are not available in inner city working-class areas (Lovell, 1991). A perception that British Asian girls have low participation as a consequence of restrictions in their culture or religion rides side by side with a perception that white culture is dichotomously opposed to British Asian culture (Ratna, 2011), simultaneously normalising and privileging whiteness

Basit (1997) states that Muslim young women are not so much under a double standard of "West at school" and "East at home" but fluidly and continuously produce their identities with a

variety of markers. South Asian women have been dichotomised as either traditional and uneducated or deviant, independent and educated, implying 'that all South Asian family structures and gender relationships are inherently oppressive' and that agency can only be exercised by dissenting from cultural or familial groups (Ahmad, 2003: 58). By blaming girls' background, family or patriarchal structures, racism in sport or the inability of current structures and physical cultures to meet diverse needs will not be addressed. As Muslim women's bodies are scrutinised in neoliberal culture, for their apparent retirement from public life through being veiled (some of them), Muslim girls' involvement in leisure and physical activity seems strange even while girls' increased participation is required.[ii]

The frequency of sport and physical activity research with Muslim Asian women in Europe suggests concern with researching the extent to which elements of Islam clash with Eurocentric assumptions regarding the display of performing or sporting bodies. Another reason may be interest in all types of regulation of women's bodies, social integration and interaction in public space (Crozier & Davies, 2008; Duits & van Zoonen, 2006; Dwyer, 1999; Green & Singleton, 2006; Scraton & Watson, 1998; Walseth & Fasting, 2003; Werbner, 2007). Although serving as evidence of complex cultural norms, histories and imperatives for active bodies, this depth of research on Muslim young women is not matched by interest in Hindu, Sikh or geographically diasporic South Asian youth in the West. The experiences of Muslim British Asian young people should not be assumed to also represent the experiences of Hindu and Sikh young people, whose voices remain relatively unheard. Shain (2003) calls for further research on both the commonalities and diversities among young British Asian women in schooling. Their experiences, argue Brah and Minhas (1985: 14), 'must be understood in the context of the complex social and historical processes which account for the subordination of black groups in British society'.

## 2.4.4 Physical culture

> Young people become involved in sport through a series of shifting, back-and-forth decisions made with the structural, ideological and cultural context of their social worlds (Coakley & White, 1992: 21).

From Tinning and Fitzclarence (1992) and Flintoff and Scraton (2001), it can be recognised that for many young people PE is irrelevant, while away from school they value physical activity as a significant part of their lives. If PE is to have positive impact on young people's lives, Kirk (1999) argues that it needs to offer meaningful experiences to complement young people's selves and recreational activity outside of school. Students bring existing knowledge with them to class (Kirk & Macdonald, 1998). Experiences are formed not within a vacuum but within the context of social networks, such as peer groups (Hills, 2007) and sporting or physical cultures

(Kirk, 1999; Sparkes et al., 2007). We need to look towards contextualised understandings of how young people make meanings for their bodies and make decisions about whether and how to engage in physical activity. Hence, an understanding of the contexts within which young people construct valued bodies and manage their own, could be insightful to measures to develop equitable PE practices.

Although young people may be influenced by media, they sometimes resist oppressive messages, so that creating spaces in which negotiation can be done is important. Kirk and Tinning (1994: 620) argue that images of the body are 'continuously present' in popular culture, yet 'young people do not use cultural resources uncritically'. Young people interpret images from TV, magazines, peer and school or community cultures – that is, multiple sources of sometimes conflicting images of the way that bodies should look and how bodies are given high status, which will be negotiated when young people construct their own embodied identities. While geographical sites like school or home are an element of this, cultural sites linked by media or continuity of discourse are also of interest.

Physical cultures provide the resources for engaging meaningfully with sport, recreation or exercise: regulating the body to achieve competence in movements, in defining the legitimate and normalised body and its uses. Kirk (1993, 1999) defines physical culture as a source of body discourse, symbol and meaning making,

> concerned with the maintenance, representation and regulation of the body centred on three highly codified, institutionalised forms of physical activity – sport, physical recreation and exercise (Kirk, 1999: 65-66).

Kirk (1999: 70) argues that contemporary PE has not developed to match the physical cultures with which young people engage, and remains 'embedded in the discursive practices of modernity' such as drilling, skills, team games, and multisport units (Kirk, 1999; Kirk & Macdonald, 1998; Kirk & Tinning, 1994). Indeed, Kirk (1999) considers whether games are already culturally obsolete given their decontextualised forms:

> By reconceptualizing 'the problem' of young people's participation in physical activity as a question of their engagements with physical culture, it may be possible to explore … the construction of identities [and] to begin to develop a typography of forms of engagement that goes beyond simplistic formulations of participation that characterize current research (Kirk, 1999: 71).

Rather than perceiving sport or physical education as intrinsically marginalising some young people, the concept of physical culture, as localised cultural practices, discourses, or ways of being active in codes of sport, physical recreation or exercise (Hargreaves & Vertinsky, 2001; Kirk, 1999) can contextualise explorations of practice and meaning (Silk & Andrews, 2011).

Some sport sites or physical cultures may also be a place for subordinated groups of men or boys to realise a masculine identity away from white dominated physical cultures (Carrington, 1998; Fleming, 1991). Specific sites, such as Asian-only sports clubs (Bradbury, 2011), may offer spaces of resistance. For instance, Thangaraj (2010) finds American "Indo-Pak" masculine identities are formed in relation to blackness and not necessarily whiteness, through young men's association with basketball cultures. Pedagogies that draw upon diverse physical cultures and reflect on the impacts of culture on engagement with physical education may help to develop culturally relevant education and challenge assumptions about the relevance of activity to young people's lives (Rich, 2004).

## 2.5   Theories of subjectivity and the body

I turn now to outlining theoretical concepts that assist me in thinking through how young people negotiate normalising and marginalising discourses of bodies, ways of moving and engaging. Concepts of subjectivity and agency are valuable. Feminist reworkings of Foucault's theories of power, that were touched upon in section 2.2.2, account for gender norms and try to destabilise or undermine them (Markula, 2003). Specifically, the concept of resistance has been used in feminist poststructuralism to re-centre agency.

### 2.5.1 Subject positioning

Poststructuralism decentres humanist notions of a unitary self, in favour of seeing subjectivity as always in process and possibility contradictory (Weedon, 1997). Although some feminists have lamented the end of the coherent subject just at the time women were gaining a subjectivity (Hekman, 1991), McLaren (2002) contends that rethinking subjectivity provides tools for deconstructing categories that work to exclude some as they include, while also theorising agency and resistance in socio-historical context. The use of discursive practices, that is, 'all the ways in which people actively produce social and psychological realities' (Davies & Harré, 1990: 34) positions individuals, generating their subjectivity. Discourses allow individuals to give voice and hence meaning to experience and thus to create a consciousness and subjectivity. Speakers are able to revise discourses gradually; as we speak we position ourselves as subjects temporarily rather than representing a consistent and unified subject (Sunderland, 2004). The language that a speaker makes use of will affect the subject position they are able to maintain. The variety of discourses available to a person enables her/him to engage selectively (Baxter, 2003). Subjectivities can only be constituted through the existing meanings and discourses that are currently available (Davies, 1989). The concept of subjectivity gives a sense of the intentional agency of individuals as actors in the world while also showing them to be subject to external forces.

A poststructuralist framework recognises the power of discourses and discursive practice but also the agency of individuals to exercise choice, argue Davies & Harré (1990):

> Who one is is always an open question with a shifting answer depending upon the positions made available within one's own and others' discursive practices and within those practices, the stories through which we make sense of our own and others' lives (Davies & Harré, 1990: 40).

They outline a number of processes through which this happens. (1) An individual learns which categories include some and exclude others; (2) (s)he participates in discursive practices through which meanings are allocated; (3) (s)he positions her/himself in one category and not in another; (4) (s)he recognised her/himself as having the characteristics of one who belongs in that category: 'the development of a sense of oneself as belonging in the world in certain ways and thus seeing the world from the perspective of one so positioned' (Davies & Harré, 1990: 47); and (5) (s)he experiences her/himself as a continuous self, creating a "I". Selves are positioned by identities that are rejected, as well as those that are taken up (Butler, 1992). Butler sees that agents can select from the theories that constitute them, even those that the agent opposes. The result of social interaction is not an individual who is fixed and unchanging but created and positioned through continued interaction. Stuart Hall (1990) suggests that identity, in the sense of speaking as and about a subject, does not mean speaking as and about the same person all the time. Identity is an always incomplete production. Agents take up or reproduce storylines that make sense to them or speak to their sense of self. Each individual can have a diversity of selves. By focussing on the contradictions between different subject positions, experienced as problematic, this framework enables us to use this to create understanding and change.

As Kathy Davies (2007: 199-200) says, 'individuals use their material locations in the world as a resource for knowing what it means to be embodied as a particular kind of person in a particular social and cultural context'. Although we must understand our positions, these may be continually shifting, discontinuous, affected by power and social forces.[iii]

> We all write and speak from a particular place and time, from a history and a culture which is specific. What we say is always 'in context', *positioned* (S. Hall, 1990: 222; original emphasis).

Mirza (1997) suggests that minority ethnic women align themselves in the spaces between racial and gendered discourses in order to gain a sense of value, a fluidity to 'negotiate, assimilate and resist both black and white encoded spaces' (Atencio, 2008: 319). Diasporic communities and identities can challenge assumptions about the world and the intersections of gender, race and religion. Using postcolonial critiques, researchers should be able to avoid

abstraction and generalisation in their conclusions across different groups, illuminating specific but shifting experiences, commonalities and diversity (Rail, 2009). Paying attention to the theories of hybrid identity, and challenging prevailing narratives of South Asian girls as caught between home and Western cultures can help us to note boundaries around identities and the over-simplicity of defining South Asian or indeed Western adolescence as a singular set of experiences (Rajiva, 2009).

Although subject positioning is a compelling theory that has been used in a number of feminist poststructuralist studies in education (Davies, 1989; Francis, 1999), it emphasises language rather than embodiment. I turn now to outlining concepts of embodiment, performance and accruing capital that are also useful for this thesis.

## 2.5.2 Embodiment

Universalist theories of the body privileged disembodied, rationalist thought, which has enabled inequalities based on cultural meanings and values in bodies. Rationality is built outside of social context untainted by the "immanence" of the body, transcending earthly ties for timeless, rational thought that rejected the specificity of the leaky, sick, unscientific body (Howson, 2004). The disembodied subject, claiming rationality and objectivity, others those marked by their bodies, by gender, race, age, class, as not normal and rational, hence denying them their subjectivity. By defining the other by the body, hence as deviant, risky, sick, and so on, so that the privileged group could take a disembodied stance (Davis, 1997). In fact rationality has been 'identified with, and in turn identified, masculinity' (Longhurst, 1995: 98), projecting a male body as the norm, so that Others are reduced to inferior variations (Grosz, 1994;, Puwar, 2004). Bordo (1993) tells us that distinguishing the mind over the body allows control and normalisation, objectifying the body. Physical education's reproduction of these ideologies supports the naturalistic perspective, which distinguishes the mind from the body. Most often, in schools, students focus on academic work (i.e., on the mind), yet in the subject matter of physical education, students work on the body (Armour, 1999; Shilling, 2003). The naturalistic body focuses solely on the biological, physical body, which neglects to consider the social world in which the body lives; personal experience has no place in knowledge production. Additionally, despite his work on the regulation of the body, Foucault prioritised the mind over the body, because the mind is where meanings of the body (a blank surface) are inscribed (Grosz, 1994; McLaren, 2002).

Notions of natural difference in sexed bodies have been used to maintain social relations of domination and subordination (Davis, 1997). Second wave feminisms aimed to make the inside (the mind), not the outside (the body), central to identity (Steinem, 1983) in response to

conflation of woman-body and man-mind in dualist thought. They draw on social constructionist notions of the body as shaped, constrained, and invented by society (Shilling, 2003). Transcendence of the frail female body in order to attain rationality, knowledge and identity was central to liberation for women (de Beauvoir, 1997 [1953]). When de Beauvoir (1997 [1953]) claimed that one *becomes* a woman, one is not born so, she referred to the cultural construction of refined, idealised womanhood of the time. Oakley (1972), too, in attempting to illuminate perceptions of difference between men and women, introduced a split between biological sex and cultural or socially constructed gender. The sex/gender division aims to show that gender, as feminine or masculine learned roles, has no biological origin. The sense in which Oakley (1997: 29-30) argues that bodies are 'made rather than born' explores the production of gender without much interest in the production of sexed bodies, how a male or female body is created, or the importance of embodied experience. Socialisation relies on gender constructed as a binary and oppositional system of two homogeneous groups, providing ammunition for binary normalisation. Theories of socialisation into singular sex roles do not take into account multiple and shifting performances and meanings for gendered bodies, ignoring experience and the real specificities of bodies. The body is still invisible because it is not integral to conceptions of agency and identity. The sex/gender divide also makes it difficult to illuminate how gender socialisation modifies the body to conform to expected norms of appearance and behaviour. The unchanging nature of the sexed body highlights differences rather than the more frequent similarities between male and female bodies, and ignores how certain body signifiers, shapes, sizes and movements remain gendered masculine and feminine even though both women and men can perform them.

Grosz (1994) has argued to reconceptualise the body as material/physical *as well as* textual, for bodily performances contribute to constructions of discursive meaning. Shilling (2003), too, suggests a 'dialectic approach' can demonstrate that the meanings inscribed on bodies are culturally specific. This enables moving away from sex (natural) and gender (socially constructed) as distinct. The body constitutes and is constituted by the activities and behaviours, acts and gestures it performs. This thinking on the body has importance in binding together body and identity, locating subjectivity in the body and acknowledging multiple identities or subjectivities that are produced through negotiating contradictory discourses. Grosz (1994) highlights the importance of historically and culturally specific lived bodies which are constitutive of systems of meaning. The 'great diversity in the appearance and comportment of the body in different cultures,' writes Davis (1997: 4) is evidence for the social construction of multiple bodies, not natural or socialised binaries of male and female.

Connell (2000: iv) pointed to the materiality of male and female bodies as 'active participants in the social process of forming and reforming masculinities and femininities'. West and Zimmerman (1987: 126) propose a concept of gender as 'a routine, methodical, and recurring accomplishment'. Gender is not an intrinsic characteristic reflected in social situations but is socially produced. Presenting a gendered self involves producing gestures and behaviours, but also appearance. West and Zimmerman (1987) find that gender is "done" constantly. Competence in society is reliant on successfully doing gender – those social and interactional activities that express masculine and feminine 'natures' of the sexed body. The social arrangements built on sex differences can resultantly be seen as normal and natural, accommodating a natural order. By "doing" boy or girl, masculine or feminine, young people stabilise their gender identity and create an essentialised self, affecting the processes of constant identity-formation. According to Butler, (1990: 140), gender is influenced by ideas or discourses and 'stylised repetition of acts' that, as they are repeated over time, come to be seen as natural, 'an abiding gendered self'. The materiality (shape, height, movements) of the body itself is moulded into shape by cultural constructions. Every day behaviour and body conduct reinforces normative and dichotomised notions of gender. By seeing gender as a performance or something that is "done" (Butler, 1993), we acknowledge its fluidity and mutability. However, the existence of people who do not totally perform the "correct" gender for their body enables questioning the naturalness of gender. As West and Zimmerman (1987) point out, if gender was natural there would be no need to regulate. The relationship between the cultural and the biological has subsequently been seen as more complex, and previous biological capacities or structures have come to be seen as also culturally formed (Butler, 1993).

## 2.5.3 Accruing capital

Although this thesis draws predominantly on feminist poststructuralist theories, it is also informed by the concepts of capital, habitus and field which have been appreciated as useful to 'think with' in sport sociology and pedagogy work that illuminates the relations between social structures, practices and embodied subjectivities (Hills, 2006: 541). Bourdieu (1973) notes that the body and meanings are continually developed from birth, although corporeality cannot be shaped entirely at will. His theories of habitus, capital and field, outlining a process of writing society on the body (McNay, 1999) might add valuable consideration of the practices and materiality of the body within a school or physical cultural context. Similar to Foucault, Bourdieu sees the body as a site of communication. Foucauldian bio-power theory leaves some questions about the effect of discourse on the material/physical body and privileges the mind. Bourdieu (1990: 190) theorises a self which is socially produced, transcending body/mind dualism, stating that 'the body is in the social world, but the social world is also in the body'.

Bourdieu (1984) saw the body as an unfinished, but partly constituted, entity, constantly developed and redesigned from birth, creating a social creature. Individuals learn, refine, recognise and evoke dispositions to act. Bodies are contested and contradictory sites where investment and successful management are important to the status that the body accrues. The process of normalising bodies, meanings and practices results in production of bodies that are valued. Bourdieu (1984) articulates this in the concept of capital, the embodied system of claiming, retaining and exchanging value. Bourdieu ties together context (field) with bodily performance and materiality (dispositions/habitus) to the development of status or value (capital). This offers further nuance as to how individuals develop status, and how particular performances may be "not for them". By introducing some of the thoughts of Bourdieu on bodies and status, how we know what is right for us, can be illuminated.

Bourdieu's central work is on the organisation of society into social fields structuring relations of meaning between agents within that field. Fields influence the behaviour of the agents who inhabit them, who learn to embody the dispositions and customs required of them within that social context. Habitus is manifested in tastes that develop based on the opportunities available regarding the social position of an individual. Social location, habitus and tastes, all learnt to the point that they become second nature, are represented on or by the body and also influence its practices, choices of actions and behaviours (Bourdieu, 1990). From the social position held by an individual, a habitus is formed that is a result of that position within the field. Bourdieu's concept of social fields is useful for seeing a PE classroom as a field where struggles for power or distinction are found between 'the educational authority, PE teacher educators, PE curriculum writers, health and sport professionals who have influence over curriculum and practices, individual school administrators, PE teachers and PE pupils' (Hunter, 2004: 176).

Bourdieu (1984) applied the theories of habitus and capital to French social conditions in the 1970s, with a particular focus on the working class. Bourdieu's work on social class can highlight the practices done to distinguish oneself and one's class from another. The sports chosen by individuals of different social classes reflect the values of that class; such that middle-class values of opportunities to socialise and the aesthetics of the body can be distinguished from working-class values of opportunities to relax away from work, or to maintain a physically active body suitable for labouring work (Lee, 2010b). Agents are inclined 'to refuse what is anyway denied' to them (Bourdieu, 1990: 54). While the economic conditions of the working class dictate that they cannot afford an item that will in any case bring them little cultural capital, their tastes also reflect those items they must by necessity buy. Individuals orient themselves to a field based on the meanings that are available to them as a result of cultural or social capital possibilities, of class or gender for instance:

> Agents shape their aspirations according to concrete indices of the accessible and inaccessible and of what is and is not for us (Bourdieu, 1990: 64).

Subsequently, everything which takes place in the field, including everyday 'embodied ritual practices' (Sparkes et al., 2007: 300), should seem sensible and rational for all members. To develop the right dispositions is to gain distinction or capital and might be described as the internalisation of 'the strategies that individuals use in order to gain and hold on to particular forms of capital' (Connolly, 1998: 20).

The field rewards those who adhere to its values (Bourdieu, 1990). A body that bears value (capital or resources) within a specific field acquires distinction, or a better position in the field. People are distributed in a field according to the type and volume of capital they possess (Hunter, 2004). As a field ascribes value to certain social practices and embodiments, dispositions are created in individuals to invest and reproduce or perform those values (Edwards & Imrie, 2003). The culture is reproduced through the body, developed or conditioned through continued practice and performance. Capital accumulates as one develops a habitus in ways recognised as being of value to/in a social field (Shilling, 2003) and, hence:

> A condition for a value to be recognised and assigned then, is that there are people in the field who are predisposed to perceive specific qualities as desirable (Redelius et al., 2009: 249-50).

Bourdieu (1986) identifies three types of capital: economic, social and cultural, to which Shilling (1991) adds a fourth, physical capital. The development and improvement of the body, of physical capabilities or skills, requires resources to create physical capital. The skills, strength and agility developed through some sport practices provide an example. Capital refers to the resources an individual accumulates or possesses that are communally recognised as valuable in the field by the actors. There is a network of positions in a field that individuals occupy and that are in tension (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). The capital in the development of a strong body through exercise can be exchanged for economic capital when that strong body becomes productive in the workplace; the capital in a skilful body in sport can be converted into cultural capital if the individual is held in high esteem by teammates and coach (Shilling, 1993b). For a body to gain capital or bear value in a specific location/field leads to the acquisition of status or distinction (Bourdieu, 1984). Capital accumulation affects one's position in social space, ability to accumulate other forms of capital or power to redefine forms that are worth capital. In this sense, the body is a form of physical capital that can lead to the accumulation of resources; physical capital is produced when the body is developed in ways that are valued in a social field (Shilling, 2003). Capital enables identification of the resources available to individuals that determine their potential, opportunities or motility in fields.

While not poststructuralist, Bourdieu's work has been perceived as compatible and these theories have been adapted for feminist research (McCall, 1992). The theories of habitus-capital-field offer a different theory of production than Foucault's discipline, seeing bodies as socially structured but not determined and offering a number of subject positions that can be occupied or embodied. Choices are systematic and durable and as such are deeply embedded and not easy to disrupt. However, stratified subject positions and related tastes are constantly subjected to continuing experience, thus transformable through an individual's 'self-work' (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992: 133). This has been especially considered so, as individuals move between social fields and hence "disrupt" the habitus of any single field (Holroyd, 2003; Thorpe, 2009). Multiple bodies are performed, displayed and experienced as an agent moves (physically or symbolically) between social locations, taking up different subject positions. Experiencing differing forms of physicality through a broad range of physical activities can also disrupt the habitus. It is important to develop contextualised analyses because of the influences of location, habitus and the development of taste on the way bodies are socially and materially constructed. Discourses suggest ideal ways of being, but it is practice, not just ideology, that marks and trains the body through routine (Bordo, 1993). As both socially constructed and biological, bodies are produced, are meaningful and have value.

## 2.6   *Investing in sporting bodies*

This review places the analytical framework of multiple/fluid embodied subjectivities within a broader progression through feminist, critical and sociological thinking on physical activity, education and bodies. I find in poststructural feminism ideas about the contradictory and contested ways in which embodied subjectivities are discursively (re)created and performed, the power relations and practices involved, and ways of resisting normalising notions of gendered and racialised bodies. The framework, enhanced by Bourdieu's concepts, allows for looking at day-to-day practices and discourses valorising certain narratives, but also the chance to challenge dominant discourses where lived experiences and bodies tell alternative stories. It also promotes looking locally at what notions of gender, race, age and class mean from which we can search for relevant and contextual ways to understand experience. The material and social elements of gender and its intersections have implications that show that positions cannot just be spoken without embodiment. While students may construct their subjectivities discursively, the material body informs to an extent how students can be seen by peers (Fitzclarence, 2004; Shilling, 1991, 2003; Turner, 2008).

These theories provide a way to consider both a) young people's take up or resistance of powerful discourses and images of the body; and b) their productions of embodied selves. We need to think complexly about how social structures and discourses inform young people's

decisions about engagement, as they invest in practices that make sense to them. What and how young people are learning about bodies and activity affects their engagement. The framework outlined here highlights the ways young people position themselves in relation to abiding regulatory structures, while remembering agency in negotiating what the body can be and what it means.

## 2.6.1 Normalising bodies

Subjectivities are constructed and performed within and in opposition to popular discourses, physical cultures or social fields that contribute to continual shifting of subject positions. Exploring the negotiation of dominant discourses by young people has been done to an extent within research on healthism (Atencio, 2010; MacNeill & Rail, 2010; Wright & Harwood, 2009) but less so among other notions of legitimacy or value, or only among certain "groups" of young people, including white boys (Hauge & Haavind, 2011) or white girls (Fisette, 2011; Garrett, 2004b) or specific sports such as football (Cox & Thompson, 2000; Ratna, 2010, 2011). Other questions remain about the practices young people carry out as they invest in or resist conceptions of value. However, Tischler and McCaughtry's (2011) work has addressed subordinate or alternative ways of performing or "doing" boy, and other studies have begun to look at the lived bodies of girls (Hills, 2006) and minority boys (Lee, Macdonald & Wright, 2009). Some work highlights inclusive spaces in out-of-school physical activity (Flintoff & Scraton, 2001), suggesting that more nuanced understanding of the cultures and discourses constituting PE and youth sport may highlight ways in which PE can become relevant to 21st century youth. Understanding the ways in which "normal" is embodied, and what effect this has, can assist with body-focused interventions, while also expanding knowledge on the meanings of sport and physical activity for young people in multiple contexts.

Foucault's work on bio-power has been taken up by gender and feminist theorists attempting to understand the inscribing or constituting of bodies in gendered ways, for example women's bodies become inscribed by the social practices of femininity including dieting and exercise (Bartky, 1988; Connell, 2000). McKay et al. (1990) also linked technocratic sport disciplines with a cult of slenderness. Bordo (1993) argues that the discursive narrative of the slender body acts as one of the major normalising practices affecting young women in modern Western society, leading to the perpetual management of appearance. A desire to fit in to this norm leads to self-monitoring and internalising an objectifying perspective (Choi, 2000). Regulatory mechanisms of power become most powerful when the gaze is internalised, because individuals police themselves to achieve and maintain a normative body (Foucault, 1977). Dominant narratives encourage us to do things that are not necessarily in our best interests (Weedon, 1997) so that those bodies and ways of being that benefit the status quo become normalised or

idealised and, hence, those that we desire to be. Bodily control can take energy away from other, less introspective, goals (Bordo, 1993) and may also reinforce fitness for beauty's sake (Vertinsky, 1992). Duncan (1994) found that the discourses in a fitness magazine promoted exercise for fat burning, concluding that this indicated that all women's bodies are flawed, instead of encouraging, for instance, cardiovascular fitness and health. Markula (2003) tries to construct fitness practices such as aerobics as agentic and positive in the production of a desirable body. The set of tools offered to women through fitness regimes may ostensibly offer self-production but encourage a constraining range of normalised results. Research with boys does not find that fitness practices are used in a similar way to create an ideal body (Wright, O'Flynn & Macdonald, 2006). For Lloyd (1996), the tying of aerobics to femininity and body acceptance to weight loss makes it difficult to foresee a role for aerobics that does not involve normalising pressure. Practices producing a slender body can therefore be seen as an illusory power (Grosz, 1994).

## 2.6.2 Physical capital in PE and sport

Physical education plays a strong role in creating physical capital that can be used in wider sporting competition and additionally in situations where the athletic body is valued. We can define the work done in PE as 'bodywork' (Armour, 1999; Shilling, 1993a): taking care of the body through exercising and so on. In a sporting sense, physical capital has been identified as physical competence, for instance throwing and catching, or doing push ups (Tinning, 2010). By doing body work and developing physical capital, students gain greater status in the class. Ability to perform a certain movement can be tradable for peer respect, that is, social capital. Physical capital associates certain activities with more value than others, or associates the bodies and dispositions developed through one sport as more valuable (or exchangeable (Tinning, 2010)) than from other sports. Choosing activities which offer capital is complex: muscularity alone does not provide men with more significant forms of capital; for example a rugby body may be more valued than a boxing body as a result of the class differences in the historical meanings of rugby and boxing physical cultures and the bodies they develop (Bourdieu, 1984). Lee et al. (2009) examine how physical activity choice and engagement is shaped by capital as manifested in socio-economic status, schooling and available resources. They argue that the students in their study oriented themselves to physical activity based on the meanings that would be available to them as a result of their class, geographical and cultural/social capital possibilities, and their understandings of what PE and a physically active body could be used for.

Sparkes, Partington and Brown (2007) indicate the importance of peer acceptance and habitus for building capital through a body that is valued or that "fits". They examine the production of

value within a competitive sport where gendered physical capital determines the power or value of the individual based on his/her body. Their study looked at "jock culture" as an informal social practice and localised ideology that additionally demanded a bodily discipline in the reproduction of a masculine habitus in order to be perceived as a body of value in that sub-culture. Material investments in accomplishments of the body were important in that culture of physical performance. Gaining status as an able student requires the "right" physical capital (Shilling, 2003). Members of a field must accept certain bodily performances or practices as valued for any capital to be conferred. Developing a "feel for the game" (Bourdieu, 1990) of the dominant physical culture has more value than being on the outside, so it retains a practical logic. Sparkes et al. (2007) offer a convincing narrative and raise questions of the importance of research context or culture. In becoming predisposed to a physical culture one is involved in the exchange of physical capital and thus the structuring of hierarchies and inequalities. The repercussions for those who deviate indicate a strong imperative to invest.

## 2.6.3 Gender as performance in PE

A relational (Connell, 1987, 1995) or complementary (Wright, 1996) analysis of gender can demonstrate how, in a single site such as a school, masculinity and femininity are constructed together. By thinking of gender as relation it is possible to understand that a gender order fixes boundaries around two distinct oppositional groups. The construction of bodily movements as either masculine or feminine, even if they are really common to all genders (Sykes, 2009b), has implications for the restrictions both boys and girls put on the ways they can use their bodies (Gorely et al., 2003; Paechter, 2003a,b). Those same issues affecting girls' selves can be found among boys, as a relational system of gender defines what boys can be. Being dominant, but not universal, hegemonic masculinity may put pressure on all boys to perform (Parker, 1996) whether or not they conform, 'a delicate, complex, and sometimes dangerous balancing act for young men' (Davison, 2000: 263).

> The reality too often is that school physical education privileges and supports boys who are already fit and skilled, while marginalising boys who would seem to be in the most need of the kinds of services that school PE could ideally provide (McCaughtry & Tischler, 2010: 178).

If a body breaks the boundaries of what is acceptable for a girl or boy, it can be threatening. It is suggested that from an early age children understand gender appropriate movements and behaviours associated with physical activity, and stigmatise those who cross the line (Schmalz & Kerstetter, 2006). In response, young people make heavy investment in heterosexual conventions of appropriate activity, behaviour and appearance (Flintoff & Scraton, 2001; Gorely et al., 2003, Smith, 2007). Although women who succeed in elite sport have bodies

valued for their sports performance, a muscular, strong, or aggressive female body must work to retain femininity or risk stigmatisation (Cockburn & Clarke, 2002; Krane, Ross, Miller et al., 2010; Humberstone, 2001; O'Donovan & Kirk, 2008).

Survey research on activity preference among young people suggests that boys self-exclude from feminised activities, for instance, gymnastics and dance (Elling & Knoppers, 2005), fearing being labelled a sissy (Rønholt, 2003). In contrast to this symbolic exclusion, Clark and Paechter's (2007) study of playground football games finds that pupils physically "do border work" by excluding girls or younger boys from the spaces where high status games are played and high status positions can be performed. Extensive literature highlights the marginalisation of small or weak boys, who have endomorphic body shapes, low coordination, low confidence and low popularity (Davison, 2000; Parker, 1996; Salisbury & Jackson, 1997). Physical education is 'a site for policing, regulating and reinforcing certain versions of masculinity by peers and school structures' (Martino & Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2003: 249). Those who are furthest from the ideal body receive abuse from other boys, with Gard and Meyenn (2000) and Pringle (2008) suggesting that performances of status require stigmatising or bullying others. Teachers have been found complicit in the normalising of some boys' dominance by noticing, but not commenting on, aggressive performance (Larsson, Fagrell & Redelius, 2009). Although sport is often considered to be a place for male bonding; 'those boys who can't measure up against the traditional standards of the dominant body-culture begin to perceive themselves as inadequate, failed boys' (Salisbury & Jackson, 1997: 190). Doing boyhood occurs through 'continuously negotiating the assumptions and claims that are embedded in the many discourses they encounter in contexts such as schools' (Hauge & Haavind, 2011: 3). This indicates that hegemonic masculinity is a performance that requires continual reiteration (Connell, 1995; Humberstone, 2001).

A relational concept of gender also enables conceiving that as girls take up practices historically associated with boys, so masculinities will also change in relation. Connell and Messerschmidt's (2005) reconceptualisation of hegemonic masculinity considers that alternative masculinities work to redefine hegemony. Masculinities research has shown that across the globe, as well as within small institutions, 'there are *multiple* patterns of masculinity. There are multiple definitions of what it means to be a man, and there are diverse ways for men to live in gender relations' (Connell, 2008: 132 [original emphasis]). Those masculinities that attain hegemonic status in any field will be constituted by different physicalities, characteristics and practices. Hegemonic masculinity is a dynamic concept with internal contradictions, with the possibility for change as subordinate masculinities interact with the more dominant (Martino & Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2003). Mac an Ghaill's (1994) ethnography of a British secondary school

provides an example of the diversity of masculine and feminine identities performed in a single institution, finding that gender identities had relational meanings as boys positioned themselves or were positioned by others as macho or academic, through their embodiment. Similar research including that by Parker (1996) and Connell (1989) informs us that boys give different meanings to masculinity. Diversity in the materiality of the body affects performance of gender, while performance works over time to change the physical body, both affecting what we can be and do. There is complexity in embodied gender performances – not all girls perform femininity through resisting sport; Hills (2006) argues that some girls perform femininity *through* their physical activity or sport participation in and out of school. In Hauge's (2009) work with Norwegian girls, some took up subject positions in opposition to "normative" femininity as they negotiated transitions from childhood to adolescence. Hauge and Haavind (2011) draw on both positioning theory and notions of practice or performance to consider how boys perform different bodies to position themselves variously within discourses of masculinity, resources that 'boys deploy when constituting adolescent masculinities' (Hauge & Haavind, 2011: 2). In Swain's (2003: 302) study, positions of status were determined by social, cultural, physical, intellectual and economic resources, 'often the outcome of intricate and intense manoeuvring … earned through negotiation and sustained through performance'.

Boys, Swain (2003) observed, performed athleticism, acted hard or tough, or wore cool clothing to mark their hegemonic status, although this differed across school contexts (similarly, Lee et al., 2009). Individuals invest in dominant values by working on the body to develop a habitus, to gain status. The notion of physical capital sees the value of the body not just in 'an embodied capacity to use the body' but the ways that the body shows 'evidence of particular work' (Wright & Burrows, 2006: 278). If gender performance can be read off the body then a body developed through, for instance, codes of football (as stereotypically male/masculine sports) attains a masculine physicality. Not simply the playing of the sport but the movements required to successfully perform the identity "footballer" are tied to masculinity.

## 2.6.4 Multiple bodies

Encouraging engagement in physical activity and PE could require understanding more about the differing ways young people position themselves and others in relation to multiple meanings of bodies, physical activity, health and sport. Concepts of 'multiple bodies' (Azzarito & Solmon, 2006; Cox & Thompson, 2000; Garrett, 2004a; Youdell, 2006) help to conceptualise the competing discourses that impact on subjectivity, especially for those in sporting practices that contradict dominant gendered discourses and practices. Importantly, the meanings of bodies can shift when moving between locations or even in different readings of a single practice. Young people's own body narratives and positions within discourses give them the

ability to make multiple readings of sporting bodies that they encounter (Swain, 2006a,b; van Sterkenburg & Knoppers, 2004). If notions of subjectivity begin with the body, they must take into account difference and context. Although equal opportunities approaches still have value in reminding us of continuing problems of resources and access, attention has moved to the social practices of sport and schooling, and the ways they provide pedagogical sites for girls' and boys' identity processes and embodied practices. Applying a feminist poststructuralist lens, Azzarito and Solmon (2005: 39) point out that 'by encouraging students' participation in specific physical activities and promoting gendered or racial physical activities … boys learn to become white or black men and girls learn to become White or Black women [sic].' This can constrain access to learning, positioning 'girls and boys as "alienated selves" or "impossible learners" in physical education' (Azzarito, 2009b: 173). Students engage or disengage depending on whether the activity supports their body narrative and sense of self. For instance, Oliver, Hamzeh & McCaughtry (2009) concluded that the girls they researched with took up girly-girl subjectivities when they enabled them to drop out of physical activity that they were not interested in.

Given the centrality of the bodies and their practices to sport and PE, they can be seen as a site of identity production, a site where the performance of gender practices (re)creates gendered bodies (Armour, 1999). Oliver's (2001; Oliver & Lalik, 2000) work in the USA offers pertinent questions that could be translated to study of young people in PE contexts in the UK. Her aim in working with young women is to help them to name and later critique their beliefs about the body and their impact on health and well-being. Environments such as this could enable open critical conversations about issues of the body, gender, and practices in order to destabilise gendered norms and habitus, showing the possibilities for resisting the discourses of physical activity and bodies. Ideas of student-led, critical thinking in PE provide young people with the chance to tell their own narratives and to challenge inequitable practices based in racism, sexism, ableism and heteronormativity – developing an active identity (Hastie, 2010). Creating appealing PE practices and spaces must also address which bodies are considered desirable among students. PE has come to be seen to have the potential for providing socially just and equitable programmes for positive embodiment, by teaching critical awareness of normalising or objectivising images, discourses and practices through an inclusive, gender-relevant (Gorely et al., 2003) and body-focused (Armour, 1999) PE.[iv] What is needed is further local, contextualised, research on how diverse young people construct their selves and the issues they negotiate in finding a legitimate or valued position in PE.

## 2.7   Concluding comments

Status or value in secondary PE contexts is often associated with performances of highly proficient sporting bodies (McKay et al., 1990; Shilling, 2008), given the continuing predominance of traditional, team, competitive games in PE curricula and the centrality of corporeal performance in sport. Discourses in physical and health education are implicated in the ways young people position themselves as normal (Azzarito & Solmon, 2006; Garrett, 2004b; O'Flynn, 2008). The notion of valued bodies is useful to explore the ways in which certain bodily appearances and performances/actions are normalised or attain high status because of their value within a social context such as a physical culture or PE context (Redelius et al., 2009; Wright & Burrows, 2006). The research reviewed here, on PE and youth sport/recreation, finds that outcomes desired in sport put value on the display of specific normative body appearance and behaviour of proficient sporting/active bodies, variously performed on and off the pitch in terms of ability (Evans, 2004; Hay & Macdonald, 2009; Redelius et al., 2009; Wright & Burrows, 2006), strength (Bramham, 2003; Hauge & Haavind, 2011; Parker, 1996; Tischler & McCaughtry, 2011), or muscularity (Gorely et al., 2003). The sporting body is not a neutral body but defined by and through structures, discourses and the materiality of gendered, racialised, class, aged, abled and sexualised bodies, producing hierarchies of privilege and marginality (Azzarito & Solmon, 2006; Garrett, 2004b; Hills, 2006; McCaughtry & Tischler, 2010; Oliver & Lalik, 2000; Shilling, 2008). By using the language of 'value', the aim is to avoid dichotomous and potentially marginalising terms such as ideal while also framing sporting or active bodies as representative of multiple high status behaviours and appearances and remembering that – given the association between sport and hegemonic masculinity – normatively gendered and racialised bodies also impact on ways of being in physical activity.

Young people consume meanings and values associated with discourses of normative or valued bodies that are produced through sites including physical cultures, school, media and sports clubs (Kirk, 1999). Body pedagogies, or what is learned about bodies, 'define whose and what bodies have status and value' (Evans & Rich, 2011: 367). In PE, multiple pedagogies have been thought of as working together in 'defining and normalising particular dispositions and attitude towards the body within a culture of 'performativity' where young people are subject to increasing pressures from exams, testing and other performance measures' (Evans & Rich, 2011: 367). This suggests then the encouraging of an evaluative gaze and subsequently bodily performance, working on the body to perform what is valued – such as motor competence and skill, strength, slenderness. Young people may attempt to reproduce a body that is in line with norms by investing in the bodily practices, or habitus, that will develop physical capital

(Bourdieu, 1986; Shilling, 2003). Many factors can mean that certain bodies become valued at the expense of others': media/visual culture's essentialising of gendered bodies (the production of desirable bodies); health and obesity messages aim to increase exercise participation; sports requiring certain physicalities as well as skills; education discourse stressing life skills including competition that must be learnt from PE participation. But as theories of power, agency and subjectivity indicate, resistance is possible.

To link to the research questions that were stated in the Introduction, (1) it is considered that a set of narratives frame the physical culture constituting a school space. These meanings will be picked up by young people as they (re)produce their social worlds in ways that make sense to themselves. (2) Young people can take up only those positions that are available to them. (3) By understanding what they have available to them and how they reconsider notions of value or status, more can be understood about how an active identity may be built. (4) Young people make complex decisions about reproducing associated narratives, performing in such ways as to accrue status through their practices or ways of engaging in physical activity. How do young people make their decisions on a day to day basis, making continuous negotiations? Such investigations might help researchers to understand how young people's embodied subjectivities are negotiated within physical cultures at school with the potential to conceptualise how to create inclusive and safe educational spaces where value is inclusive not normative and exclusionary. The following chapter outlines the methodological foundations, research design and processes used to meet this aim.

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[i] Nevertheless, Puwar (2004) and Giardina (2003) warn about romanticising nomadic, hybrid, hip identities and subjectivities. Phoenix and Pattynama (2008) suggest caution, for social relations (gender, race, class, (dis)ability, age, "etc.") are organised differently and cannot be directly compared. They warn about replacing an additive model with something that reduces all social relations to their similarities: their diversities must be acknowledged (Brah & Minhas, 1985). If we in the academy are to use our cultural, economic and social capital (or privilege) to speak 'about powerlessness from a position of power' (Puwar, 2004: 37), we need an 'epistemological questioning of how it is that [we are] speaking' (Probyn, 1993: 80). These reflections on epistemology will be looked at further in Chapter 3.

[ii] For instance, the recent FIFA ban on headscarves for players during football matches (now lifted – Warshaw, 2012), which served to bar some women from the game, notably the Iranian national team, came at a time when efforts were being made in other sites to strengthen women's football. Remembering also comments by Sepp Blatter, FIFA president, that the shorts women footballers wear should be shorter to attract more spectators (BBC, 2004), it becomes evident that women are accepted in football where their appearance meets Western notions of feminine performance.

[iii] Taking up or being affiliated with different subjectivities and types of activity has been likened to not belonging in either space fully, but in a Third Space (Bhabha, 1988, 1990, 1994). Said (1994) argued that there are no "mono-cultures", that all cultures have multiple connections and influences, yet by

introducing the notion of the Third Space, Bhabha calls for recognition of hybridity, interstitial or diasporic space that can 'ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized, and read anew' (Bhabha, 1988: 208).

[iv] However, we must be careful not to romanticise possibilities for empowerment in education (Ellsworth, 1989; Gore, 2003). If empowerment means to expand 'the range of possible social identities people may become' (Ellsworth, 1989: 307), Gore (2003) wonders how this grand vision can be used at local levels in the daily teaching and learning of students. Teachers and students still must meet the requirements of, for example, assessment as outlined by the National Curriculum. Gore questions the belief that critical and alternative pedagogies are automatically liberatory from dominant discourses. Instead of thinking that teachers can empower (give power to) students through the right pedagogy, Gore suggests rethinking how teachers might assist students in exercising power, providing pedagogical sites for students to evaluate and think through their ideas, beliefs and experiences for themselves.

# 3    Methodology and method

## 3.1    *Introduction*

This chapter offers an account of the processes of carrying out the research – data production and analysis – that form the empirical basis of this thesis. It continues the dialogue begun in the previous chapter concerning feminist poststructuralist and postcolonial theories as they inform methodologies, outlining their use in social research, while acknowledging that there is no single feminist method for research. The chapter will outline the epistemological and ontological approaches to data collection and analysis that are employed within the qualitative paradigm surrounding this project and how they can and have been applied in sport pedagogy and sociology research. As will be explained further into this chapter, the locations within which I carried out this research had student and community populations from a majority British Asian background, which I see as inviting a consideration of difference and identity in taking up an epistemological position and in carrying out social research. Gender, ethnicity and body issues are here considered best accessed through critical and poststructural feminist theories, additionally informed by postcolonialism, as they enable an exploration of the interplay of structural and agentic negotiations of gender/racial relations and power. The chapter introduces the research framework initially by examining: in 3.2, the philosophical positions of ontology, epistemology and methodology; and in 3.3 a background to visual and ethnographic methods for working collaboratively with young people; introducing in 3.4 the setting, participants and data production processes; reflections on the project in 3.5; analysis in 3.6; finishing with some concluding comments in 3.7.

## 3.2    *Methodological positions*

Researchers of the social world need to explain the foundations, principles and values that shape their position with/in that world and the assumptions they make about how they can know the world in order to situate themselves and their research and provide the basis for the paradigm, methodology and methods with which they and their research operate. The theoretical basis for this research project, feminist poststructuralism, has been explained in the previous chapter. Feminist poststructuralism as the study's principles and methodology will here be explained with reference to its place within a broader qualitative interpretive paradigm. Poststructuralism and other "posts" (St Pierre, 2011; Wright, 2006) answer something which came before, utilising many of the methods common in wider interpretivist/constructivist social research, but producing and making claims about research knowledge in different ways (Blaikie, 2007; Lather, 1991; Schwandt, 2000). Lincoln, Lynham and Guba (2011) distinguish between feminist/critical, constructivist/interpretivist, and participatory/postmodern (used here

imperfectly as a synonym for poststructuralist) paradigms and indeed even these categories are given different names or presented in differing ways by other writers concerned with epistemology (Blaikie, 2007; Schwandt, 2000). Lincoln et al. (2011) encourage the use of *bricolage*, or the borrowing of multiple tools, so that critical, postmodern, and constructivist approaches do not have unbridgeable divides between them. This section explores the basis for the acknowledgment made by this thesis of situated knowledges, co-constructed reality and subjectivity, and multiple interpretations in conducting empirical research.

### 3.2.1 Ontology and epistemology

The ontological approach to research used here is that multiple realities are co-constructed by social actors – participants and researchers – who interpret their and others' experiences and situations (Blaikie, 2007; Lincoln et al., 2011). Interpretivism rejects empiricist, positivist traditions wherein the ability of research to uncover a true representation of the world from an objective position outside of reality or experience is valorised. We cannot empirically claim to know the physical world, objectively, truthfully and always (Scheurich, 1997). This approach to research acknowledges the existence of a material, realist world but claims that our knowledge of it is partial and socio-historically contingent. "Truth" and "fact" are contentious; research does not access and represent "reality", for "reality", being socially constructed, cannot be exactly known, seen and be represented from one objective perspective (Scheurich, 1997). Lincoln et al. (2011) identify in interpretivism realities as mental constructions, experientially-based, local and self-constructed. In Lincoln et al's (2011) outline of postmodern/participatory approach, knowledge is created through experience, in interaction, with both researchers and participants (the line blurring between the two) learning and engaging in dialogue. Data generation/production, rather than data collection, can create a 'story where the challenge becomes to generate a polyvalent data base that is used to vivify interpretation as opposed to "support" or "prove"' (Lather, 1991: 91). That the worlds and positions that researchers occupy shape their ways of seeing the worlds they research is not a new idea in (feminist) social research. How researchers see and define the groups, concepts and contexts they research frame the questions they have and the problems they notice. A researcher should address her/his (multiple) identities or selves as they impact on the research process, and reflect on her role as an insider or outsider in the research field, a status that may change throughout (Anzaldúa, 2007). For researchers/observers, it is impossible to 'step outside our own experience to obtain some observer-independent account of what we experience. Thus, it is always possible for there to be different, equally valid accounts from different perspectives' (Maxwell, 2002: 41).

Earlier feminist epistemologies, such as standpoint theory, critiqued humanism's Enlightenment traditions that associated the male and masculine with rationality, truth, and self, against

female/feminine as other, savage and subordinate. This challenged masculine dominated notions of agency and subjectivity and the production of knowledge, bringing previously marginalised "women's experiences" to the fore. However, in accusing "rational" male-centred accounts of universalism, early feminist research recreated the same objectivity in order to claim truth about women's lives, often producing ethnocentric and middle-class accounts (Crossley & Himmelweit, 1992). Both objective and standpoint approaches valorise a singular truth and reality that cannot offer narratives of multiplicitous and fluid ways of being. Interpretivist or postmodern/poststructural approaches do not preclude acknowledging the issues of power and structure that may affect individuals or "groups". Three distinct movements inform contemporary understandings and epistemologies. Writing by women of colour (Collins, 1990; hooks, 1990) postcolonial feminists (Mohanty, 1988; Spivak, 1988) and postmodern feminists (Haraway, 1988) pushed forward rethinking "womanhood", dissolving 'the concept of essentialized, universalized woman, which was to be replaced by the ideas of a situated woman with experiences and knowledge specific to her place' (Olesen, 2005: 243). Feminist poststructuralism seeks to analyse the ways that subjectivities are constituted and regulated. It favours 'the many and multiple stories women tell about the knowledge they have' (Olesen, 2005: 245). Recognition of fluid experiences, identities and differences between women has led feminist research to destabilise the objective, distant researcher, situate the researcher as well as the participants subjectively in socio-historical context and problematise perspectives, experiences and explanations so that 'both women's representations of experience and the material, social, economic of gendered conditions that articulate the experience' are analysed (Olesen, 2005: 249). The effect on social research is to create 'pressure to transform questions about what exists into multiple deconstructions of how people think about what exists' (Ramazanoğlu & Holland, 2002: 123). Knowledge can then be seen as a specific social production. Situated knowledges are historically and spatially located, and partial – not seeing everything, but seeing some things from one or several places. These knowledges are produced through a marginal position to the dominant culture, producing multiple "truths" 'within different ways of knowing and so provide varied ways of making sense of the world' (Ramazanoğlu & Holland, 2002: 55).

Accusations of whiteness in feminist research have been made by Collins (1990) and Mirza (1997), who see the history of research and activism as empowering and liberating for white women while ignoring the different, intersected, experiences of black, disabled or trans women, for instance. Researchers need to look at how we produce knowledge about difference and how this knowledge is caught up with power relations (Gunaratnam, 2003), and whiteness as a racial identity. Social research with minority ethnic people, although it may help to address marginalisation, risks problematising difference and normalising whiteness or race neutrality

(Maynard, 1994). As long as explorations of gendered embodiment, subjectivities and the techniques through which they are produced remain embedded in whiteness, the ways in which ethnic minority students make sense of adolescence, bodies and physical activity will remain invisible. Unpacking the knapsack of white privilege (McIntosh, 1988) enables white researchers to be aware of the assumptions in their work and offer further spaces for addressing race or experiences of "minority ethnic" individuals or communities. As Spelman (1988: 11-12) points out, if I assume that every woman is a woman like me, then I will see her 'as fundamentally like the woman I am'. Given the circumstances and locations within which this research is carried out, to ignore this would be to reproduce white privilege and normativity.

The researcher's ways of knowing influence the making of meaning from the participants' words and images, in particular across constructed age, gender and ethnic or race "difference," issues of 'who and what is heard, what is listened to and how it is listened to' (Haw, 2008: 202) must complicate and problematise knowledge resulting from research. Any interpretation made must be understood as only one of multiple partial interpretations available, contingent on the positionalities of the researcher(s), for grand claims for knowledge developed through research would be presumptive. All this contributes to the reflective elements of this story and in terms of credibility, acknowledging the partiality of this account. As outlined in the previous chapter, this project is concerned with embodied subjectivities and racialised femininities and masculinities, which poststructuralism and postcolonialism can analyse while honouring voice and deconstructing authority and authenticity (Rifà-Valls, 2009). For me, this provides another imperative for epistemologies that recognize the multiple and contradictory ways in which participants' voices may be heard and interpreted in co-creating data and knowledge through participation. This research positions the adolescent participants as a diverse group of social agents, as people able to construct and reflect on their lives and worlds. To counter power issues and bring participants further into the process, research should be a participatory, two-way process of data generation in interaction between the researcher and the participants. Therefore it is important to develop research *with*, not *on*, young people, producing relationships in which young people want to participate and in which they have some control (Valentine, 1999). Epistemologically, we can co-produce knowledge of participants' lives through prolonged interaction, but the conclusions drawn are contingent to that group (Gallagher, 2009a). This is one reason why an ethnographic methodology is useful.

## 3.2.2 Ethnography

Ethnography has been used in social research as a holistic approach to the contextual study of a group of people, a place, culture or organisation where immersion in the activities, language and interactions of the subject(s) provides the researcher with richer, more nuanced qualitative

data than can be offered by surveys and interviews alone. Ethnographic research can uncover the complexity of social settings and especially provide for developing a dialogue between researchers and researched in participatory, collaborative projects (Silk, 2005). Feminist research does not claim to have completely different methods from non-feminist research; we might think instead that 'feminism supplies the perspective and the disciplines supply the method' (Reinharz, 1992: 243). Feminist researchers use a diversity of methods, may use multiple tools and share methods with other non-feminist work. For its greater attentiveness to lived experience (Stanley & Wise, 1983; Reinharz, 1992), ethnography has been appropriate for feminist research design, for the way it 'appears to provide much greater respect for and power to one's research "subjects" who, some feminists propose, can and should become full collaborators in feminist research' (Stacey, 1988: 22). The same can be said for poststructural or participatory research, and given the epistemology outlined above, ethnography may provide ways to focus on multi-vocality and issues in the production of knowledge (Eisner, 1997; Guba & Lincoln, 2005). By recognising that all participants construct their own social reality and approach research with a set of ideas, researchers are committed to producing localised narratives 'through the eyes of those being studied' (Silk, 2005: 74) but also contingent to the researcher. This ontological approach provides a strategy for something of the behaviours and actions of the participants to investigated (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995; Patton, 2002):

> Among the goals of ethnographic research is to analyze *social action*, *social order*, and *social organisation* as well as to analyze the forms and contents of *culture* (Harper, 2005:748).

Traditionally, ethnography was taken up in realist paradigms that suggested ethnographers could access a social world and leave having found out the truth of the reality of that world (Angrosino, 2008). As constructionist and poststructuralist paradigms have addressed epistemological and ontological concerns, or how knowledge and reality are constructed, so they also address how methods work or how research is carried out. Ethnographic output has been re-evaluated as a co-construction of knowledge by participants and researchers contingent on their fluid, contextualised selves and discursive positions (Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Blaikie, 2007).

### 3.2.3 *Power relations in ethnographic research*

It has been considered that all research is framed by power relations (Jordan & Yeomans, 1995). Postcolonial feminist research 'has pointed to ethnography as a mainstay of global capitalism, imperialism and power, which is able to establish the terms for the categorization of others' (Skeggs, 2001: 433), based on a vision of a traditional, entitled, white anthropological ethnographer who enters a colonial field believing s/he can access and represent the reality and

truth of the culture s/he observes. Skeggs (2001) advocates reflexivity whereby feminist researchers be vigilant of the power they exercise in their choices of topic and participants, gaining access and making interpretations and representations:

> When we enter ethnography we enter it with all our economic and cultural baggage, our discursive access and the traces of positioning and history that we embody. We cannot easily disinvest of these (Skeggs, 2001: 434).

The researcher becomes a part of the social world, an embodied self who participates in the physical spaces of research, has a presence, and thus reflections on the embodied ethnographic process can increase understanding of how research is carried out (Coffey, 1999; Donnelly, 2009; Giardina & Newman, 2011).

Age, race and gender are often, though not always, tangible visible identity markers contributing to multiple identifications possible in research relations (Raby, 2007). Identity arises through identification with or against other people based on shared characteristics (presumed to be essential). Says Hall (1996: 6), 'identities are thus points of temporary attachment to the subject positions which discursive practices construct for us'. Although socially created, identifications have material effects. If feminism as social criticism is to deconstruct the "truths" and claims of dominant discourse it must question notions of difference and generalisation, including the differences and commonalities between women across lines of nationality, age, ethnicity and class (Ahmad, 2003; Spelman, 1988). Just as Eurocentric assumptions of white universalism have been attacked, assumptions of cultural difference are problematic for supposing that culture is knowable (Bhabha, 1988). It has been argued that white women researchers are unable to fully generate meaning in data with minority ethnic participants because they cannot share their cultural understandings (Archer, 2002). "Ethnic matching" of interviewers to participants has been called for, to enable greater understanding and rapport in interviews (Papadoupolos & Lee, 2002; Bhopal, 2001, 2010). Debates over feminist interviewing and standpoint theory have demonstrated that a claim to have an "insider" role may itself essentialise identities (Wolf, 1996). Relationships between researcher and participants are created through talk, so that race and gender commonalities will not necessarily produce shared positions, because they are produced in interaction (A. Phoenix, 1994). Oliver expresses pertinent points on the problems for white researchers discussing racism issues with "minority" girls:

> For Whites like myself, [open dialogue] may reveal to us that we are far from the innocent, good girls who we envision ourselves to be. Though such awareness is painful it pales in comparison to the pain and destruction that unquestioned White assumptions wreck daily on the lives of so many people (Oliver & Lalik, 2000: 97).

Identification can be seen as providing insider status for the researcher and facilitating access, trust and understanding between researcher and participants, but an assumed insider status can have disadvantages and 'may generate false perceptions of common outlook or similar interpretations of social patterns' (Raby, 2007: 50).

Initially, feminists argued that only women could interview women because of a need for shared understandings to emerge in research conversations. Feminist research has moved on from promoting women interviewing women in intimate female conversation (Mies, 1993; Oakley, 1981), to recognise that research relationships cannot guarantee rapport merely from shared gender. While the history of feminist and postcolonial interviewing debates the interviewer-interviewee relationship where both are women, little is written about the issues for women interviewing boys, with the exception of Archer (2002). Drawing from part of Ramazanoğlu and Holland's (2002: 16) definition of feminist research as concerned 'with how it feels to live in unjust gendered relationships' and the application of this to the study of masculinities (such as the research of Connell, 1995; Mac an Ghaill, 1994; and so on), men and boys can make valid contributions to the production of feminist knowledge. Feminist theory and methods can be used in work with both men and women to deconstruct dominant knowledges (Davies, 2007). As a result of these debates, research across genders has become a contentious issue:

> The sex of the interviewer and the sex of the respondent make a difference because the interview takes place within the cultural boundaries of a paternalistic social system in which masculine identities are differentiated from feminine ones (Fontana & Frey, 2005: 710).

As feminist and postcolonial research debates the impact of cross-gender and –racial interviewing, so research with children and young people recognises the ethics and power dynamics of generation in social research.[i] Power relations between researcher and researched may be particularly compounded by broader societal notions of power between adults and younger people (Alderson, 1995). The ethnography of youth has worked from the ontological position that young people are the insiders of distinctive cultures while the researcher is the outsider (Corsaro & Molinari, 2000) and in possession of a low power/knowledge status (Gallagher, 2009a). Yet students are not alone in locations such as schools. Alldred (1998) argues that some research on children's cultures exoticises those cultures compared to adult norms, constructing children and young people as Other. To paraphrase Alldred (1998), adults hear young people based on what we understand as the social construction of youth. Research with children and young people has not always added their voices, understandings and circumstances (Oakley, 1994). As Greene and Hill (2005: 18) point out, 'for too long we have assumed that children have nothing of interest or importance to tell us about their lives and that

we adults understand much better than they what is good for them and how events impact on them'. Young people are considered to be social actors in interdependence with adults and capable of constructing and negotiating their selves and social worlds (Corsaro, 1997; Christensen & Prout, 2005; Greene & Hill, 2005). Wetherell and Potter (1992) and Enright and O'Sullivan (2011) have identified that it is important for participants to be able to construct themselves as producing legitimate accounts.

The dilemma in researching "others" may be reconsidered through complicating the meaning and use of "difference". Stuart Hall (1992: 255) considers that racism occurs through the constructions of 'impassable symbolic boundaries'; discourses of "Other" are "epistemic violence" (Spivak, 1988). Relations between the researcher and the participants should not be seen in terms of 'essential, unchanging differences' (Gunaratnam, 2003: 89) that homogenises communities and group experiences. Yet social categories may remain significant, because they have a real effect on people and their interactions:

> We analytically embrace these categories of identity as social, porous, flexible, and yet profoundly political ways of organising… By so doing, we seek to understand how individuals make sense of, resist, embrace, and embody social categories, and, just as dramatically how they situate "others", at times even essentialising and reifying "other" categories (Fine & Weis, 2005: 67).

Brah (1996) suggests the possibility of spaces opening up where experiences can lead to connectivity, if not commonality. Instead of searching for a shared female identity or relying on stereotypical similarities or differences, hybridity is called for:

> We are less likely to find a common core of shared experiences…than a family of resemblances with a continuum of similarities, which allows for significant differences (Tuana, 1993: 283).

Neither difference nor hybridity can, however, be assumed (Ang, 1995; Ramazanoğlu & Holland, 2002). To offer an unsatisfying answer, 'in practice we often do not know what it is that makes a difference' (Brownlie, 2009: 708).

## 3.3 *Background to research design*

This section outlines the research design for this project, looking at the rationales for the multiple, qualitative methods used.

### 3.3.1 Visual ethnography

This project is concerned with the meaning-making associated with the construction of value and status in PE and school, processes that, it is argued, are closely tied to young people's

embodied learning from engagement with visual media in and out of school. Drawing on Shilling's (1991, 2003) theories of embodiment, Pink (2009: 8) argues that ethnography, as 'a reflexive and experiential process through which understanding, knowing and (academic) knowledge are produced', is concerned with the relationship between bodies and their experiences of the materiality of their environments. Contemplating Pink's (2009) methods of visual ethnography, in becoming a temporary participant in some of the locations where these young people engage with visual and physical cultures and create meanings for their bodies and experiences, offers ways of "imagining" the perceptions, selves, embodiment and emplacement of others. Prosser (2011: 479) defines visual methodology as concerned not with an object or image in itself but with perceptions and 'the meanings attributed to them'; to visualisation, sense-making, and modes of representation.

Being emplaced in the field of research, Pink (2007: 22) wishes to see ethnography as 'a process of creating and representing knowledge (about society, culture and individuals) that is based on ethnographers' own experiences…versions of ethnographers' experiences of reality that are as loyal as possible to the context'. This view is mediated, however, when we remember that 'it is not solely the subjectivity of the researcher that may 'shade' his or her understanding of 'reality', but the relationship between the subjectivities of researcher and informants that produces a negotiated version of reality' (Pink, 2007: 24). Especially in light of the ontological and epistemological issues I discussed earlier concerning situated knowledge, power relations, and the nature of reality, the relationship between researcher and participants produces narratives in interaction.

Ethnographic work has benefitted from the use of photography, 'as the aim is often to explain and depict forms of life, and the inclusion of photographs aids the creation of 'thick description' (Gibson & Brown, 2009: 81). Calls have been made for new methodological processes in sport pedagogy and sociology for expanding knowledge on the visuality of the body in culture (Azzarito, 2010a). Part of living embodied in society, for sighted individuals, involves negotiating the world visually, and images are constantly present in culture and society (Banks, 2007; Jones, 2001; Knowles & Sweetman, 2004). Images 'can act as powerful indicators regarding the multiple meanings embedded within our cultures' (C. Phoenix, 2010: 93). Tinning and Fitzclarence (1992) and Wright (2004) suggest that young people learn through their engagements with popular culture, media and institutional sites and make meanings for their bodies that are relevant to their readings of popular culture. Additionally, it has been found valuable to use young people's popular cultures to understand their interests and things that are meaningful to them:

Using girls' interests (i.e. the body) to gain and sustain their attention might be a necessary starting point for helping them learn to value other important areas of physical education such as engagement in lifelong physical activity (Oliver, 2001: 149).

Kenway and Bullen (2001) attest that the hidden curriculum is delivered through the visual culture of the school. Prosser (2007) suggests that the taken for granted, unconscious culture of school is powerful because it goes unseen, in the sense of its effects being unnoticed. Researching a visual culture can describe 'observable, inscribed and encrypted similarities of schools in terms of visual norms, values and practices, which constitute taken for granted visual schooling' (Prosser, 2007: 14). Engagement with visual cultural resources through sports media, spectatorship and participation may inform or illuminate students' participation in school PE and the impact on young people's physical identity or sense of self from constructions of valued bodies. As addressed in the previous chapter, this is of keen importance especially in today's image-heavy, postmodern and individualised world where self-worth and one's place in society are closely tied to the self-managed, but fluid, body (Bourdieu, 1990; Shilling, 2003, 2008; Turner, 2008).

Postmodern approaches to visual records have considered that both the producer and the viewer of a photograph construct their own meanings from their positions and interests (Pink, 2007). Visual methods potentially enable researchers to think differently about a topic – not more deeply or more truthfully, but differently (Enright & O'Sullivan, 2011; C. Phoenix, 2010). Visual methods are becoming more widespread in sport and PE research, as the 2010 special issue of Qualitative Research in Sport and Exercise attests. Some research on bodies in physical education has centred on surveillance of movements, appearances and interactions, indicating that a visual approach to studying PE classes and young people's experiences within them is important (Cockburn & Clarke, 2002; Fisette, 2011; Gard & Meyenn, 2000; Wright, 1995). Young people's perspectives on images and visual cultures are necessary to deprivilege adult understandings of the body, provide insights into corporeal meanings and make visible the norms and values of the hidden curriculum (Oliver & Lalik, 2000; Prosser, 2007).

Ethnographic studies with prolonged engagement in a physical education context have become common (Enright & O'Sullivan, 2011; Fitzpatrick, 2011) for their 'capacity … to capture a sense of the relationship between individuals, differences between them, and their perceptions of the discourses and practices that occur in different social fields' (Hills, 2006: 544). Oliver and Lalik (2000) found that images from magazines helped girls to articulate their thoughts on femininity. Azzarito and Solmon (2006b) and Azzarito and Katzew (2010) used a researcher-collected inventory of images of bodies in physical activity to be perused by the interview participants. Lines (2000) drew on a combination of her own and her participants' collected

sport media images, together with participants' research diaries and interviews, to evaluate the gendered constructions of role models that recurred over a period of time and range of media sources. Photo-elicitation increasingly from photographs created in collaboration between researchers and participants (Azzarito & Sterling, 2010; Enright & O'Sullivan, 2011; Krane et al., 2010; Pope, 2010) and drawings (Mowling, Brock & Hastie, 2006; MacNeill & Rail, 2010) has offered alternative ways of engaging young people in sharing non-verbal embodied experiences. Using a photo shoot to create self-portraits of women college athletes as they wished athletes were represented in the media (Krane et al., 2010), Krane et al. (2011) later shared these photographs with middle school girls to elicit conversations around representations of women in sport and education.

To conclude, the visual is important, alongside the verbal, in co-constructing with young people notions of value, power and identity. This project's use of multiple, emerging, forms of data production, where participants have a collaborative role in producing texts and images, is reported in the following sections. Ethnography often incorporates multiple methods to gain richer understandings of a context and participants' worlds. Data were collected from multiple sources – observational field notes, multiple formal group interviews with students, participant-generated photographs, informal interviews with teachers, and researcher-generated photographs. The more methods we have available for producing data on complex and ever-changing human lives, the better the chance of understanding how lives are constructed (Fontana & Frey, 2005: 722). Oliver et al. (2009: 96) argue that 'although necessary, simply interviewing students several times for short periods of time is insufficient for understanding the complexities and nuances of their worlds'. Using multiple methods offers results from slightly different perspectives, providing a rich, in-depth picture and assisting with reliability (Patton, 2002). Ethnographic observations and interviews, offering context and student voice, alongside visual data are crucial because, for example, assumptions about what is seen or cannot be seen, will affect interpretations made of a photograph. Thus, combining interviews, visual and fieldwork strategies when working with young people can assist with producing valuable, rich data.

### 3.3.2 Observation and researcher-produced photographs

The main purpose of observation is to be able to describe the setting, activities, people and the meanings. Observers record actions and interactions, believing that they are 'purposeful and expressive of deeper values and beliefs' (Marshall & Rossman, 2006: 98). Observations are often used to back up participants' interview data or provide context. Emerson, Fretz and Shaw (2001) note that ethnographic observation and note-taking *represent* and *review* the social world. In this sense, writing field notes is an inherently selective process, for the researcher

writes about those things she/he finds significant and leaves out those things she/he feels are not significant:

> They inevitably present or frame the events and objects written about in particular ways, hence 'missing' other ways that events might have been presented or framed (Emerson et al., 2001: 353).

Fieldwork has been considered 'an embodied spatial practice' (Clifford, 1997: 186) where 'the field is produced (not discovered)' (Atkinson, 1992: 5) and where the researcher constructs her idea of what is happening. Coffey (1999: 59) has argued that 'we locate our physical being alongside those of others' as we negotiate the embodiment and emplacement of the researcher as well as of the participants'.

Field notes and my own photographs and sketches of images on posters displayed around the school provide contextual but partial knowledge of the physical culture and the visual discourses that students encounter (Prosser, 2007). The use of photography by ethnographers has been documented as a method for recalling details of the environments that are researched, as well as visual data in its own right (Schwartz, 1989). This is a partial story because it is centred on what is "consumed" directly by students (such as posters, notice boards, student photographs, teachers' talk and practices in PE class). However, it is possible to gain a sense of the values and practices constructing the school through seeing what visual and verbal messages are offered regarding physically active bodies to provide one context for the students' constructions of status and their physical experiences. As will be outlined in section 4.5, some students created their own photographs of the poster displays and notice boards in the school, which provided opportunities for them to discuss the effect of school images on their making sense of their worlds.

### 3.3.3 Group interviews

If observation can access some of the "whats" of people's lives and worlds, 'the focus in interviews is moving to encompass the hows' (Fontana & Frey, 2005: 698). Patton (1990: 278) argues that 'interviewing begins with the assumption that the perspective of others is meaningful, knowable, and able to be made explicit'. Interviews as an ethnographic method complement observations, by allowing 'the research to understand the meanings that everyday activities hold for people' (Marshall & Rossman, 2006: 102). Kvale (2007) describes the process of interviewing as travelling paths, conversing with, and encouraging stories from respondents in their own words.

Group interviews do not necessarily produce or uncover consensus among participants, and can be used to hear a range of perspectives as these unfold in conversations among the participants and interviewer (Kvale, 2007). Typically allowing for multiple perspectives, and for interaction, this method can enable researcher and participants to see that 'both the interpretations of individuals and the norms and rules of the group are inherently situated, provisional, contingent, unstable, and changeable' or 'opening up to the unfinalizable complexity and heterogeneity of "others"' (Kamberelis & Dimitriades, 2005: 904, 906). They are able to collectively build memory or explanation of an event or place, be backed up or questioned, or reminded that others' experiences can intersect with or deviate from their own, but that all have a right to be heard.

Although group interviews sit outside of any particular epistemological approaches (Barbour, 2007), they have been welcomed in feminist research as a naturalistic method that can mediate some of the power imbalance between interviewer and participant and shift the conversation into the hands of the participants (Wilkinson, 1998). They have also been recognised as a way of reaching reluctant or marginalised groups for whom one-to-one interaction with an interviewer may be difficult – in a group, participants are able to contribute when they wish, 'stimulated by the reflection of their peers' (Barbour, 2007: 20). Semi-standardised interviews assist in posing the same questions to all participants, while also providing some flexibility for the participants to shape the conversation (e.g. Garrett, 2004a; Chase, 2006). This interaction is central to the group (Kitzinger & Barbour, 1999) which can be thought of as providing a 'socially legitimated occasion for participants to engage in 'retrospective introspection' to attempt to collectively tease out previously taken for granted assumptions' (Bloor, Frankland, Thomas & Robson, 2001: 6). Group interviews enable researchers to 'explore group characteristics and dynamics as relevant constitutive forces in the construction of meaning and the practice of social life', to access social discourse and interaction that would not be possible in individual interviews (Kamberelis & Dimitriades, 2005: 904). Collective meaning making is invaluable for this research project for exploring the continuous construction, rejection and taking up (Barbour, 2007) of ideas of norms and constructions of bodily value and status among individuals in the community of a PE class. However, this latter point raises the issue of interference with individual expression and the possibility of one respondent dominating, influencing others' answers, or producing "groupthink" (Fontana & Frey, 2005: 705). Although conversations in group interviews can be particularly facilitated if the participants know each other, Greene and Hill (2005) warn that children in group interviews can feel a need to provide socially desirable answers – either what they think their peers want to hear, or what they think the researcher wants to hear. Yet the concern is,

> not with whether or not people [are] telling the truth, but with trying to understand why people tell particular stories, or present their experiences in a certain way (Barbour, 2007: 34).

When it is accepted that interviews are one interaction in which research participants are able to construct their selves through the language choices they make, where our interpretations can 'only claim to represent the versions of [their] "stories" that they chose to tell us on that day' (Cockburn & Clarke, 2002: 652) then it can be accepted that,

> If subjects frequently change their statements … this is not necessarily due to an unreliable or invalid interview technique, but may in contrast testify to the sensitivity of the interview technique in capturing the multiple nuances and the fluidity of social attitudes (Kvale, 2007; 124).

## 3.3.4 Participatory visual methods with young people

As research processes have been recognised as needing to create non-exploitative relationships among researcher and participants, participatory methods have come to be seen as useful for positioning participants assertively in the research, to enable participants to 'define their own reality and challenge imposed knowledge' (Veale, 2005: 254). When investigating youth cultures and the discourses that inform or are produced by them, the use of photography can provide a much greater source for documentation than written and spoken words alone. Young people's perspectives are crucial – researchers need to ask young people and not '[persist] in encouraging study of the body that features adult perspectives' (Oliver & Lalik, 2001: 305). Images can provide insights into meanings that young people create about bodies and their worth (Oliver, 2001), especially photographs created or collated by the participants themselves. Giving some control over the data to the participant-researchers, by asking them to photograph their worlds when they are active and inactive and the bodies that they consider to be valued, respected or admired can enable their active involvement in the research and offer another route for their opinions and identities to emerge. Involving the participants in the production of data provides another way, like interviews, of subjects offering their perspectives and constructions. Using a visual ethnography co-constructed by the researcher and the participants can produce a rich source of images and meanings, producing individual 'personally relevant and meaningful' responses (Samuels, 2007: 213). By using both researcher- and participant-produced and -collated images, 'the notion of a researcher's privileged position is firmly deconstructed in these approaches, as research knowledge comes to be seen as a negotiated creation rather than a researcher's discovery' (Gibson & Brown, 2009: 82-83).

Images provide an ethnographic representation, yet also offer a focus in interviews. Harper (2002: 13) considers that photo elicitation 'enlarges the possibilities of conventional empirical

research' because asking a participant to process visual as well as verbal information can produce different data (Schwartz, 1989). By inserting photographs into interviews, Harper argues, not only more information but a different kind of information can be tapped into than with interviews using words alone. Harper (2002: 15) also suggests 'that photo elicitation be regarded as a postmodern dialogue based on the authority of the subject rather than the researcher'. "Auto-driven" photo elicitation, where participants' own photographs or images are the objects (Clark, 1999) can offer a 'rich perspective about the complexity of … children's lives' (Clark-Ibañez, 2007: 168-9). For Clark-Ibañez, elicited interpretations of photos highlighted aspects of young people's lives not developed in school, suggested the impact of economic inequalities and gave a perspective about how young people are valued in school. Christensen and James (2000: 165) argue that one of the most valuable aspects of using visual tools in research with young people and children is 'that they work to mediate the communication between the researcher and the children', providing in interviews a focus that young people are already familiar with (Clark-Ibañez, 2007). Researchers cannot rely on being able to interpret photos as the participants desired, or allowing photos to speak for themselves (C. Phoenix, 2010). Photo elicitation may be collaborative, for 'when two or more people discuss the meaning of photographs they try to figure out something together' (Harper, 2002: 23; see also Harper, 1998; Gibson & Brown, 2009) and actively engage in interpreting the representation the participant produces. Elicitation of photo sets provides researchers with more information on how to interpret the photo, enabling participants to explain the content, context and circumstances of each image or the set as a whole, what Croghan, Griffin, Hunter and Phoenix (2008: 355-6) call "verbal editing": 'a chance verbally to improve an impression that may have been given and to construct the meanings they favour … [allowing] them to elucidate their motives and values in the context of the constraints and choices available to them'.

It is worth reflecting on the efficacy of different methods with young people, because 'how children respond to and engage with the research is revealing of children's different social experiences and social competences' (Christensen & James, 2000: 161). It is necessary to decide what level of status to give to photos as 'windows into participants' lives' (Croghan et al., 2008: 348). Each photo set is a task produced as a result of a set of instructions given by the researcher and followed to a greater or lesser extent by the participants. Young people may be influenced by peers and family, concerning what should or should not be in a photo (Clark-Ibañez, 2007), so the content may not be entirely of the participants' own choosing. The type of camera offered to the participants can affect their interaction with the task. Disposable cameras are common in visual participatory research designs (e.g. Frith & Harcourt, 2007). However, the use of digital cameras enables participants to have control over flash, colour, zoom, focus,

size or quality, and enables them to delete images, vetting the content before giving it to the researcher and being able to offer access to their lives with which they feel comfortable.

Photographs are both true and constructed (Harper, 2005), a reflection of a physical scene but also containing selections of form, technique and subject. Hence, like other forms of data, visual methods should not be automatically celebrated, and need to be analysed rigorously, not left to "speak for themselves". Despite the apparent imperative to use visual methods in social research, Buckingham (2009) offers, in response to Gauntlett and Holzwarth's (2006) claims for the authenticity of visual participatory data, warnings against seeing creative visual methods as particularly enabling stories or feelings to really be accessed. It must not be forgotten that the form of the creative method defines what is created, and how the participants respond to it and to the researcher. As Pink (2006) has pointed out, visual material cannot be used to record objective truth but can assist in creating new knowledge. As the aim in constructivist or poststructuralist research is not to reach "inner attitudes", creative methods will not do better in reaching places that the interview alone cannot reach.

Researchers have argued that the involvement of young people in the research process can be transformative, empowering or therapeutic for participants (Gauntlett & Holzwarth, 2006) and photographs have been considered to 'inspire expression not normally encouraged in children' (Cappelo, 2005: 171). Although creative methods may 'prove more engaging and enjoyable' (Buckingham, 2009: 646), the single medium on offer (photography) may not appeal to all young people, who may wish not to express themselves creatively but through talk or, if the research design includes them, through drawing, film, or story-writing, for example. It is certainly difficult for researchers using creative methods to claim to be uniquely empowering or "giving voice" (Luttrell, 2010; Yates, 2010). All methods create a position from which it is possible to speak. Nevertheless, if 'the method should follow the object' (Buckingham, 2009), research on bodies greatly benefits from the use of visual methods, with appropriate use and analysis.

### 3.3.5 Validity or rigour in feminist qualitative research

Before outlining the data production process, a few words on validity and rigour. Paradigm differences are particularly found over validity and reliability. Validity has been defined as questioning whether research measures what it intends to measure, or whether it is plausible (Hammersley, 1995). Reliability may be found if another researcher could do the same and get the same results. O'Reilly (2005) points out that this is undesirable, being based on naïve realism that a single external reality can be measured, that the impact of the particular researcher is not based on their own subjectivities. From critical, poststructural or interpretivist

perspectives, the problem for validity is that the concept has been used by 'a conservative ideological movement' claiming scientific objectivism, while actually 'protect[ing] the status quo, and creat[ing] barriers to change' (Fee, 1986: 43).

As the researcher is entwined in the research and makes selective, subjective decisions about data-gathering, 'doing away with subjectivity [to objectively evaluate research] seems to be a futile endeavour' (Oberhuber and Krzyżanowski, 2008: 197).

> Ethnography seeks to reconstruct and understand the specificity of the worlds it purports to study; it does not strive for general and replicable results (Oberhuber and Krzyżanowski, 2008: 196-7).

Any epistemology, such as that employed in this project, that regards knowledge as contextual and multiple, appears to reject notions of objective and singular truth, a criterion for validity:

> The discourse analyst seeks to open up statements to challenge, interrogate take-for-granted meanings, and disturb easy claims to objectivity in texts they are reading. It would therefore be inconsistent to contend that the analyst's own discourse was itself wholly objective, factual or generally true (Tonkiss, 1998: 259).

Guba and Lincoln (2005) suggest that in qualitative work, terms such as *rigour* and *trustworthiness* are worthy replacements for the positivist term *reliability*. They suggest thoughtful and careful commitment to the work and ensuring simply that it makes sense (O'Reilly, 2005). Rigour in interpretation is as crucial as rigour in method: ensuring that interpretations are authentic to the data and the meanings participants give (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). 'Can our co-created constructions be trusted to provide some purchase on some important human phenomenon?' ask Lincoln et al. (2011: 120). A criterion for validity or trustworthiness can be reflexive accounts by researchers concerning their positional in the research project and the creation of ethical relationships (Lather, 1993). Feminist and youth research argue for reflexivity in the researcher who considers her positionality regarding the discourses being studied, while keeping the voices of the participants central and examining their agency and power (Lather, 1991; Weis & Fine, 2004). Personal narratives have been identified as sensitising researchers to the consequences of their doing and writing research (Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Richardson & St Pierre, 2005). A reflection on my experiences of conducting this research, and ethical considerations, are incorporated into the outline of the methods used.

Concerns about the reliability of conclusions drawn in qualitative research are sometimes answerable using triangulation techniques to compare interpretations from different collection processes, perspectives and representations. Subjectivity is important in interpretive research, where triangulation 'is not so much about getting "truth" but rather about finding the multiple

perspectives for knowing the social world' (Marshall & Rossman, 2006: 204). Although postmodern research questions the use of validation techniques, given the potential for fragmented, fluid narratives and a search for, if not celebration of, contradiction (Sheurich, 1997), this does not negate the value of offering participants an opportunity to subsequently contradict, or affirm, both their original narratives and researcher interaction therewith. Indeed, as photo elicitation in interviewing has been found particularly useful for interrogating ambiguity (Azzarito, 2010a; Clark-Ibañez, 2007; Schwartz, 1989), multiple accounts which may arise through further opportunities for conversation with participants concerning their photographs are to be welcomed. Triangulation can deepen the researcher's understandings of the field and the participants' constructions (Bloor et al., 2001). Through multiple representations multiple readings can be made. Banks (2007: 120) considers that visual methods lend themselves particularly well to multiple readings and forms of analysis; 'they are constantly labile, constantly leading research in new directions'.

## 3.4 Research design

### 3.4.1 Setting

The research was carried out in a large secondary school of approximately 1200 students aged 11 to 16, which will be called Vale Court Secondary, in Leicester, the largest city in the East Midlands. This city has a sixty-two per cent white population and it is predicted that before the 2021 census Leicester will become the first UK city to have a minority white population (One Leicester, 2008), although this statistic must not suggest any homogeneity among the minority ethnic "non-white" populations. Vale Court lies in an urban part of the city that has a large British Asian heritage population[ii]. At the school, 88 per cent are from ethnic minority, predominantly Indian, backgrounds (Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), 2010). One third of students have English as a second language. The school stresses its multicultural, integrated and anti-violent or anti-racist ethos that has been commended for its success in building respect, tolerance and community cohesion (Ofsted, 2010).

The school was offered in writing the opportunity of taking part in the research. Subsequently the School Sports Coordinator (SSC) and PE staff were the major contacts and gatekeepers. In the academic year before the research took place, the school had transitioned Years 8 and 9 to single sex PE. Year 7 had one single and one mixed PE class per week; Years 10 and 11 were offered activity choices that may have resulted in single or mixed classes, depending on the choices made. All other subjects were taught in mixed sex classes. The SSC told me that this decision to move entirely to single sex classes in Years 8 and 9 had been made because of the PE staff's perception of low participation especially among girls in those years. She explained

that it had been a difficult decision as she acknowledged that single sex PE was a "step backwards" but the motivation was in increasing participation in lessons (Informal interview with SSC).

## 3.4.2 Participants

The SSC, as gatekeeper, arranged researcher visits to the school and offered access to Year 9 classes (age 13 to 14). This year group was chosen because the single sex PE classes facilitated comparison. The embodied experiences occurring during the transition from childhood to adolescence, around ages 12 to 14, are important (Pipher, 1994). Additionally, the PE teachers identified the Year 9 cohort as "an interesting year group", although "interesting" seemed to have varying meanings as resistant or good-natured.

PE timetabling and class make up for the students who took part in the research was complex and requires some explanation. The year group was split into two populations, A and B, of around 120 pupils each, which had different fortnightly timetables. PE was single sex and there were approximately sixty boys and sixty girls in each population. The girl participants in this project were from population A and the boy participants from population B. Using both populations enabled me to carry out observations in both girls' and boys' classes during the same timeframe because their PE lessons were at different times in the fortnight-long timetable. Students were timetabled for two hours of PE lessons per week. At different times of the year, each single sex PE population was split into two or three Groups. The girls' Groups, in population A, were taken by the two female teachers, Ms Davis and Ms Ferguson, and were on occasion combined as resources or weather demanded. The two boys' Groups in population B, taken by the two male teachers Mr Martin and Mr Brown, were combined for the majority of the Spring term until being split into a high and a low ability group in the Summer term. Mr Sanford was the fifth teacher, who took either a girls' or a boys' class where he was needed, in which case Groups 1 and 2 would be divided into three of around twenty students each. The Head of Department, Mr Martin, told me that this timetabling complexity would not have been necessary had they had their full requirement of six PE teachers.

During the research period, the girls' PE curriculum included fitness (using treadmills, cross-trainers, rowers, free and fixed weights, trampettes and other equipment in the Fitness Suite), skipping (jump-rope), football, tag rugby, netball, dodgeball, table tennis, badminton, volleyball, trampolining, aerobics and diamond cricket[iii]. On occasion these activities varied from the timetable due to room scheduling or bad weather. The boys' curriculum included rugby, circuit training, a Sport Education-style[iv] football unit, field hockey, fitness, tennis, table tennis and baseball (see table 3.1).

**Table 3.1: Year 9 curriculum timetable**

| DATES | GIRLS (pop A) | | | BOYS (pop B) | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (4-8 WEEK UNITS) | GROUP 1 (Ms Davis) | GROUP 2 (Ms Ferguson) | GROUP 3 (Mr Sanford) | GROUP 1 (Mr Brown) | GROUP 2 (Mr Martin) | GROUP 3 (Mr Sanford) |
| AUTUMN | SKIPPING AND FITNESS | FITNESS AND SKIPPING | | RUGBY | CIRCUITS | TABLE TENNIS |
| | NETBALL | FOOTBALL/ RUGBY | | CIRCUITS | TABLE TENNIS | RUGBY |
| | INTERFORM NETBALL | INTERFORM NETBALL | | | | |
| SPRING | TRAMPO-LINING | NET GAMES | STRIKING GAMES | FOOTBALL | FOOTBALL | |
| | STRIKING GAMES | TRAMPO-LINING | NET GAMES | FITNESS | HOCKEY | |
| | NET GAMES | STRIKING GAMES | TRAMPO-LINING | HOCKEY | FITNESS | |
| SUMMER | DIAMOND CRICKET | ATHLETICS | | TENNIS | BASEBALL | |
| | ATHLETICS | DIAMOND CRICKET | ORIENTEER-ING | BASEBALL | TENNIS | ORIENTEER-ING |

During the periods of observation, with teacher consent, I presented the project to the students. The girls' Group 1 (30 girls) was approached with the opportunity to take part, during a whole class discussion at the close of one of their PE lessons in the sports hall. All of the boys in population B (total of 60 boys) were approached at the end of an outdoor lesson in which all the groups were combined. The teachers allowed me to talk directly to the students to recruit participants, although Mr Brown was keen to suggest a couple of boys who "would be good" – that is, would turn up to interviews, produce some interesting and relevant photos and have a lot of sporting experience to talk about. While I was happy to accept suggestions from the teachers, I also made sure to approach the quieter or less participative students. No specific students were selected to take part; the invitation was open to all who were interested. Around forty-five of the ninety students who were approached took an information sheet and consent form (see Appendices i and ii). Opt-in consent was sought from students and a parent or guardian. The students were told that it was their choice to take part or not, that all data would be confidential and anonymised. They were offered the ability to leave the project at any time with no consequences and that their grades would not be affected. Although students were not asked for a reason if they declined to take part, some said that they did not wish to take part because their friends were not involved. Having learnt that the project concerned PE and involved digital photography, students who had "something to say" about PE and/or had experience with a digital camera may have been more likely to take part. Twenty-five students returned their consent forms and all were invited to participate in the project. The participants are introduced in Table 3.2. To provide some demographic information, participants filled out a short form at

the start of their first interview (see Appendix iii) indicating which categories of race/ethnicity and religion they identified with, selecting from those listed in the 2001 UK Census but also with open spaces to write their own answer. Their answers are recorded verbatim in the table. The demographics form also asked participants to list the extra-curricular and out-of-school activities they take part in.

Ethics of consent and anonymity are crucial with respect to any participants but particularly so with minors, where a parent or guardian must also provide consent. While no individual students were pursued to participate (as stated, all students in the classes in the observation were invited), and all were encouraged to ask questions about the research so that they understood fully what was required, questions concerning whether participants read through the consent form properly before signing, and whether they chose to take part or not as a result of the (non-) participation of their friends remain unanswerable. Participants were asked to sign consent forms before taking part in the interviews and visual data collection, that is, after observations were underway. It has not been considered unethical for gatekeepers such as schools and teachers to offer initial consent to access before young people individually consent to involvement in research. Gallagher (2009a: 18) suggests that the capacity to give informed consent freely must take into account 'peer pressure, norms of compliance, and relations of competence'. At the close of the participatory project, participants were again verbally asked for consent for their visual and verbal data to be included in the project. Pseudonyms were created early in the project so that no participants, teachers, family, friends and others are named in field notes, on interview transcripts and in written reports.

**Table 3.2: The participants**

| Pseudonym | Gender | Group | Ethnicity | Religion |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Bhavana | Female | A | Indian | Hindu |
| Chanda | Female | A | Indian | Hindu |
| Lucy | Female | A | White Scottish | No religion |
| Namita | Female | A | Indian British | Hindu |
| Ayesha | Female | B | Asian/African | Muslim |
| Meena | Female | B | Indian | Hindu |
| Nisha | Female | B | Indian | Hindu |
| Kiran | Female | C | Indian | Sikh |
| Rupali | Female | C | Indian | Hindu |
| Amandip | Female | C/G | Indian British | Sikh |
| Yasmin | Female | C/G | Indian British | Hindu and Muslim |
| Anant | Male | D | Indian | Hindu |
| Bhagesh | Male | D | Indian British | Hindu |
| Deepesh | Male | D | Indian | Hindu |
| Irshad | Male | D | Indian | Muslim |
| Harshul | Male | E | Indian | Hindu |
| Jasveer | Male | E | Indian | Hindu |
| Kuldeep | Male | F | Indian | Hindu |
| Mitesh | Male | F | Asian British | Hindu |
| Nikhil | Male | F | Indian British | Hindu |
| Tasvinder | Male | F | Indian | Sikh |
| Jon | Male | H | Black African | Christian |
| Mickey | Male | H | White British / Asian British[v] | No religion |
| Richard | Male | H | White British | No religion |
| Sohan | Male | H | Asian British | Hindu |

## 3.4.3 The participatory project [vi]

The ethnography began with observations twice weekly of a single sex girls' Year 9 PE class of thirty students, and twice weekly of one single sex boys' class of sixty students (with two teachers). I observed girls' and boys' twice-weekly, sixty minute PE lessons across the Autumn, Spring and Summer terms of the 2009-2010 school year. In total forty hours of PE lessons were observed. During observations I wished to learn predominantly about how and where high or low status was marked out, for instance in the choice of team captains or how high performing students (for instance, goal scorers) were treated by peers and teachers; or other ways in which students dominated or were marginalised. I also was interested in learning about interactions between students, their posture, behaviour and clothing styles, all as potential indications of their position in the class and in peer groups. Teachers' instructions to and talk with students

were also recorded as this helped with recall of the organisation of activities. An example of the field notes is included in Appendix iv. Observations of the PE classes guided the development of interview schedules (Patton, 2002). For instance, questions asking who (or what physical movement) is laughed at in PE, and whether participants enjoy PE, were added to the schedule after occasions observing some students being laughed at, and my perceptions of who did not seem to be enjoying lessons. Additionally, I was also able to ask individual follow up questions about incidents I had observed, such as when a student skipped class or refused to take part in an activity. After draft interview schedules and photography instruction sheets were produced and University Ethical Advisory Committee approval gained, a pilot interview was carried out with three non-participant girls in the same year group to enhance the relevance and clarity of the first interview schedule and the photo instruction sheet as will subsequently be outlined.

I drew up focus groups of between three and four participants, a size that assisted moderation and analysis (Barbour, 2007) and produced seven groups from the twenty-five participants. Each group was given a letter from A to H (see table 1) and was kept single sex to reflect the PE class structure. Following consultation with field notes, attempts were made to retain a representation of the diversity of the PE class in each group, relating to ability or participation level, while also paying attention to peer dynamics that might either facilitate or hinder discussion. Yet the processes of doing research with young participants can become messy. When informing the participants of their interview groups, some requested changes so that they would be with their friends, and where group sizes allowed, I accommodated this. Groups C and G were combined after the first interview on the girls' request. A third interview was carried out with the newer larger Group C as a result. Group E contained only two boys after the third member requested a move to group F. Soon after I had drawn up the focus groups, but before the interviews began, unbeknown to me the boys' PE classes, previously mixed, were streamed by PE ability or competence into one "higher" stream and one "lower" stream (in the language the boys themselves used) of approximately thirty students each. Implications of this streaming will be considered in the following chapters. Not by design, then, of the four boys' focus groups I had drawn up, the first contained only boys from the "higher" stream; the second only boys from the "lower" stream, and the remaining two contained boys from both streams. The girls' PE classes remained mixed ability.

In the first round of group interviews, semi-structured questions asked the participants about their experiences in PE and physical activity, and about the ways that bodies become admired or valued in PE (see Appendices v, vii and viii for schedules and example transcript). At the end of the first interviews, each student was given a digital camera for a two week period. It was not assumed that any of the participants had previous experience of operating a digital camera.

They were given verbal and written instructions on operating the camera such as the colour, zoom, focus and timer effects. Each student also received an instruction sheet (see Appendix vi) offering guidelines on the photos they were to produce during the fortnight, and asking the following questions: (1) What physical activity do you do and what do you do if you're not being active? (2) What/Who encourages you to be active? (3) Think about the people who are admired by you and your friends or a club you belong to. What do they look like? What do they do? (4) What makes people valued? Following consultation with the pilot group, the language used on the instruction sheet was adjusted to make more sense to the participants, so that they were asked about "people that they admire", rather than those who have "value" or "status". The questions aimed to probe the relevance and place of physical activity in the young people's lives, provide visual references to their physical cultures, interests and activities both in and out of school, and offer images of people who are valued either in or out of sport and physical activity, and identify the origin, such as among peers, popular media, or a sports club. Participants were advised to gain verbal consent from anyone they photographed and were told to ask permission from the PE teacher before taking photos during a lesson. All PE teachers allowed photography for short, set periods of time. Participants were permitted to delete any images they did not want to share.

The participants were asked to take twenty photos in total, and also invited to attempt to find and collate existing photos, billboard advertisements, posters, leaflets or other media that might show friends, celebrities or sport stars whom they admire. Although no participants brought in any cut outs, leaflets or so on, many had taken photos of photos – existing personal photos and pin ups on their walls, or images downloaded from the internet, as they felt unable to adequately represent their responses to the instruction sheet just by taking photos of the material objects, spaces and people around them and some created photos-of-photos to bring their desired images to the project. Six students photographed images displayed on their computer screens; another, Jon, did not use the digital camera at all, instead sharing with me a memory stick containing five images of famous sport stars that he had found on the internet to provide his answer to the photo instruction sheet. Having not anticipated this way of recording an image (it was not suggested on the instruction sheet), I was nevertheless pleased with the ingenuity the students had shown in finding images that expressed their thoughts on the photography tasks. Not all cameras were brought back within the two week period, as some students requested theirs for longer, having forgotten to take photos at weekly clubs, or desiring to photograph special events over the Easter holiday. All the cameras were collected and all photographs uploaded and printed on gloss photo paper. Each participant's photos were numbered and stored in an envelope for each participant. I looked through the photos before the interviews and noted questions I had, to add to the semi-structured questions. In all stored images, where photographs

produced by the participants contain people, faces have been blurred using Photoshop to avoid identification. Upon download, each participant's photographs were numbered in chronological order as they were produced, and were given a two-letter code: for instance, Lucy's photos have the code "Lu".

At the start of the second group interviews, I handed each participant her/his photos and asked her/him to display them to the group by spreading them on the table or the floor and dividing them into piles to match the main questions from the instruction sheet. The interviews were semi-structured around eliciting the meanings of the photos' content and the representations they offered of the participants' experiences of physical activity during the fortnight with the camera. Following the second interviews, a record was made of how each participant had spread her/his photos across the floor or table sheet (see figure 3.1 for examples) so that the photo sets could be mounted on poster paper in such a way as to mirror the participant's grouping of the photos during the interview (see figure 3.2 for an example). These posters were used in the early analysis procedures and also were shown to the participant-photographer in a short member check. Researcher summaries of the photo sets and interviews were read to participants to help ensure the validity of early interpretations made of the first and second rounds and the visual data (Patton, 2002; Seale, 1999).



*Figure 3.1 Namita's photos*



*Figure 3.2 Poster display of Yasmin's photos (used two sides to display all photos)*

Each round of interviews was transcribed verbatim by the researcher before the next round of interviews began, to aid in developing questions for clarification and further exploration of the issues that arose. Immediately following transcription of the interview tapes, a close reading was carried out to check accuracy against the audio recording. In total, seventeen full and transcribed interviews of between 40 and 60 minutes were carried out; two each with Groups A, B, D, E and F, one with Group G (who then joined Group C), and a third each with Groups C and H, the latter as their second interview was cut short (not including member checks). Each of the twenty-five participants produced a photo set, with a mean average of twenty-three photos each. Group interviews brought to this project constructions in interaction of the self, others,

bodies, and physical activity; young people's language use; and an insight into power relations between participants. The visual data collection in this project provided rich data alongside the interviews and researcher observations. Participants were able to offer their perspective through their framing of shots, and allowed the project to reach further afield by offering images of life out of school, and offered multiple responses that gave all participants equal platform, through each having a camera. The two-week photo diaries of the participants are not intended to be read as indicative of all the people and places that are relevant to their lives and experiences of physical activity.  For some, it was not possible to take photos inside activity sites such as swimming pools and community centres; Lucy for instance said she did not take photos inside her Army Cadets meetings because "I was too busy. Cos I'm Lance Corporal, it's quite hard. [Also] just cos not many people want their pictures taken, so I just didn't." The participatory visual methods approach offered participants some further level of control over data production and the processes of research (Enright & O'Sullivan, 2011), although as said earlier, this project does not suggest that their photos offer more authentic accounts of their lives.

As part of the visual ethnography, when visiting the school I noted visual displays such as electronic notice boards, posters and other display boards, leaflets found around the school in which images or texts concerning bodies, sport, physical activity or other extra-curricular clubs were presented for student consumption. Content and location were photographed if appropriate, or noted in my field notepad. This occurred during the twice-weekly visits in April and May. Additionally, the content of the school website was noted and added to the visual data (the website was not live until May 2010).

**Table 3.3: Data production timetable**

| | |
|---|---|
| Observations | 1 October to 18 December 2009, 11 January to 26 March 2010, 12 April to 21 April, 25 June |
| Give out consent forms | 10 and 11 February |
| Get consent forms back | 24 Feb to 5 March |
| Select groups | 5 March |
| First group interviews | 11, 12, 16 March |
| Student visual data collection | 11 March to 16 April |
| Second group interviews | 15 April to 21 April |
| Third interviews | 25 June |
| Member checks | 25 and 28 June |

## 3.5   Reflections on being in the field

I entered the research setting as a non-participant observer, sitting at the side of the room and not having involvement in the activities of the lessons; Angrosino (2007) calls this peripheral observation. However, after I had been visiting the school for a number of weeks, in some classes I was a little more participant than in others, especially in smaller, indoor PE spaces where I sat closer to the action than in larger outdoor spaces. Sometimes teachers would chat to me while students were engaged in a game, or would use me as an umpire helping to confirm which team had won a point. I also chatted with teachers in their office before and after class. Their most common question regarding my observations was my opinion on the behaviour of the class, indicating that they were perhaps conscious of any judgements I would make about their ability to control their students. During these post-lesson conversations, some would offer me their strongly-worded opinions on the day's game or task. As the interviews progressed, students more often provided anecdotes, asked me questions and used collusive language. In turn, I began to offer stories concerning my own PE experiences.

The school PE classroom is not a student-only zone; the place and notions of acceptable behaviour are dominated by adult discourses, a place where children or young people negotiate disciplinary surveillance by teachers. For some people in some contexts being filmed or photographed can be associated with danger, control and surveillance (Banks, 2007: 79). This project acknowledges the centrality of surveillance and the gaze to evaluations of the self and others. However, the issue of increasing surveillance through a photography project, that ultimately aims to critique dominant ways of seeing and valuing, should not be lost. Some way into the observations I began to wonder that my note-taking during the class could be interpreted as though I were recording bad behaviour to be reported to senior staff, or jotting down an evaluation of the teacher. On a couple of occasions when I observed bad behaviour or language from students, I tried to look away and pretend I did not hear as the students would look at me guiltily, waiting for reprimand. At those times, I purposely did not write in my notebook for a short period so that it would not look as though I were reporting on them.

Different researcher roles in ethnography with young people have been suggested, including "non-authoritarian adult", "unusual adult", friend, or "least-adult" as well as detached observer (Damon, 1977; Mandell, 1991, Christensen, 2004). Yet Tisdall, Davis & Gallagher (2009) remind us that "adult" and "child" are not straight forward roles or static identities but are performed in interaction. Further, I recognise that my presence affected the field, while my embodied self was also affected by it. I became aware of wanting to perform a legitimate position within the school. I found it difficult to feel confident that I could construct and negotiate a self which I felt would offer me credible professionalism in the eyes of the teachers,

and at the same time enable me to be someone with whom the students would feel comfortable discussing PE, activity and bodies. I felt this in the language I used to discuss the aims of the research with the teachers and students and also in the clothing I wore. While I understood that I was rarely read as teacher by the school staff and students, I desired to be read as adult and not as student, and hence took my clothing cues from the non-PE staff. I never dress in sporty clothing anyway so I would have felt uncomfortable in trying to "fit in" with a PE look. On the other hand, wearing sports clothes may have enabled me to take a more participatory role, with potential impact on relationships and the content of my field notes.

Students and staff were told before observations began, and on the consent form handed out at the start of the participatory project, of the general purposes of the research, namely to understand what students think of their experiences in PE, and the importance of physical activity in their lives. My final comments in this section concerns the life of participatory projects after the researcher has left the field. Ethically, research should be concerned with giving something back to the participants and producing research which is of use to them (Olesen, 2000). Validity has been recognised by Lincoln et al. (2011) in authenticity or the capability of participants to use research for moral engagement and reflection. Giving back to participants and gatekeepers avoids a "smash and grab" approach to research. This may be more common in participatory action research projects. Recent projects of this nature have led to student- or researcher-produced visual reports such as exhibitions, magazines or videos, examples of the possibilities in long term investment in research projects with pedagogical, methodological and ethical worth (Enright & O'Sullivan, 2011; Oliver & Lalik, 2000; Oliver et al., 2009). Students may be more enabled to engage critically with their data and push for change in their own circumstances. While this project was not designed with scope for further dialogue, many of the students created opportunities within their interview discussions and through reflecting on their photographs to consider their PE practices and peer relationships, with the photographs providing opportunities to see close up things that are taken for granted. Additionally, short summaries of the data and conclusions were produced for the staff and students, which helped to reiterate what the research was for and the implications it will have (Gallagher, 2009b).

An example from the interviews highlights something of the issues surrounding how we present research opportunities to participants and what they understand of the purposes and outcomes of the research. Participants asked questions in the interviews about how the research would be reported, to whom and in what manner. I explained further that research is reported to the University, with the ultimate aim of helping teacher educators, schools and teachers better meet students' needs in PE. While she had the camera, Ayesha photographed me outside the school

sports hall. In the second interview, I asked her why she had included this picture in her pile of "photos of people we value or admire":

> I wanted to make this … because you're the only one who's listened to our opinions and [is] actually taking them forward. And that's of value to us because it's like, no one's ever listened to our opinions, maybe the teachers have, but you're probably going to take it to other teachers and probably change the way they do PE to other students now and make them happier at least (Ayesha)

This comment resonated with me as I went into the main data analysis stage.

## 3.6   Data analysis

The process of analysing qualitative data has been described using such terms as "unfurling", "transforming" and "emerging" – messy, serendipitous cycles of reading, coding, thematising and comparing (Rapley, 2007), that end when the researcher feels that the end has been reached (Patton, 2002). Analysis appears full of ambiguous phrases like "finding your story". Hatch (2002: 148) claims that 'by systematically asking the right questions of the data … information can be revealed'. Hence, it can seem difficult to provide a formula by which analysis of qualitative ethnographic, interview and visual data can be carried out but, as Lather (1993) requests, we must scrutinise, make clear, and problematise the ways data are interpreted; and give access to much of the material (Rapley, 2007).

Discourse is used in this thesis, as outlined in chapter 2, as language, sets of narratives or truths that are drawn upon to make sense of one's experiences. Gubrium and Holstein (1998) construct interviewing as storytelling, with both a "what" and a "how". The "what" is the story, and the "how" is discourse, how things are said and in what order. Discourse analysis is useful in interpreting the meanings behind shared/collective and individual opinions, how opinions are voiced in interaction, what could be said and by whom (Kitzinger, 1994; Krzyżanowski, 2008). Discourse analysis has been put forward as a useful analytical critique for addressing intersectionality, avoiding picking apart and isolating race and gender (Jordan-Zachery, 2007). As Svender, Larsson and Redelius (2011: 6) put it, discourse means 'games of truth that regulate on the one hand what counts as true propositions ... at a certain point in time, and on the other hand who qualifies as legitimate subjects of such truths'. In this project, this is relevant to identifying ways in which girls and boys position themselves through the narratives (verbal and visual) that they can take up or (co)create about their bodies and experiences in PE (Cooky & McDonald, 2005; Oliver & Lalik, 2000; Wright, 1995). Assumptions about the representation of experience and self can be questioned to suggest multiple possible accounts and subject positions (Davies & Harré, 1990) not related to uncovering a unified identity. As we speak we position ourselves as subjects temporarily rather than by providing a perspective that

represents a consistent and unified subject. Not all subject positions are available to all. Multiple narratives or experiences of, say, fitness or competition, exist among participants. These meanings construct group interview members differently. The data in this study include both pre-existing and purpose-made images, with multiple layers of production and seeing, intent and perspective. Images can be both artefacts in their own right, or narrative representations of something else (van Leeuwen & Jewitt, 2001). The images under analysis are (1) participant-produced representations of contemporary events, places and people; (2) participants' pre-existing photos as records of events, places and people; and (3) researcher-produced photos and descriptions of pre-existing displayed images from the school visual culture. The literature I have been able to draw on for the analysis has at times meant trying to fit existing ways of dealing with photos to my attempts to treat students' photos as both ethnographic data and as interview aides. While the literature on photo elicitation is well-developed, and ways of dealing with pre-existing photos draw from fields such as semiotics and discourse analysis (Rose, 2012), ways of looking at and analysing participant-produced photos are not so common and develop through doing (Luttrell, 2010). Are photos just fodder for photo elicitation in interviews? Or can new, participant-produced photos be treated as standalone artefacts which deserve interpretation? How can we interpret photos in these ways?

An analysis of the participants' images alone would produce what the 'representations include or exclude, what they prioritize and make salient, and what differences they construct between different people, places and things' (van Leeuwen & Jewitt, 2001: 7), but would not be able to indicate how viewers read and use images, or the intent of the photographers. Enright and O'Sullivan (2011: 15-16) identify that participatory visual methods aid other ethnographic techniques and should 'never be allowed to speak for themselves … only [becoming] meaningful through the interpretive work of the participants'. Similar is said by Collier and Collier (1986: 126), in that 'it [is] when the photographs [are] used in interviews that their value and significance [is] discovered'. In analysing photographs within elicitation interviews, the content may be important but more significantly what the participants are doing through their talk, how they say things and what the context is that enables them to talk in such ways. Taking guidance from Pink (2004), it must be remembered that photographs are not objective records but subjective representations produced with researcher direction by participant-photographers. Vision is socially constructed (Rose, 2012), although a photo may suggest a record of a time and place, its interpretation is subjective. While that sounds self-evident, using visual methodologies present a need to express a position on authenticity or how much of the "real world" is captured by an image.

This also results in difficulties in producing a "recipe" for analysis of participants' photographs within a broader ethnographic project. In similar ways to how an analysis of language (what is said and how) looks for narrative/discursive repertoires (certain phrases and turns of speech that convey meaning), photographic repertoires of what and how a subject is represented can help explain the conveyance of meaning. This may offer a basis upon which to look particularly at the photographs and notes I created in the school. Rose (2012) claims that discourse analysis can be used with visual data as a way to analyse constructions of difference in images, and ways of making, seeing and displaying images, most valid where a pattern of images intends for a coherent message to be shared across numerous sources such as the poster display boards. It is able to facilitate interpreting how the media draw from and reproduce certain discourses and constructions of social difference (Wright & Clarke, 1999).

With these arguments in mind, I thought through the multiple forms of data alone and together in the following layers. Verbal and visual data were handled using systematic coding of themes and discourse. In categorising the data, an iterative approach of multiple codings (Bryman, 2004; Coffey & Atkinson, 1996) was used to inductively and deductively categorise, using the research questions, the early codebook of emic categories and reflections of the literature. Data analysis began during data collection (Miles & Huberman, 1994; O'Reilly, 2005). Points of interest were raised in the member check interviews conducted several months after the first and second interviews.

After producing print outs of the interview transcripts and photo set posters, each transcript was read through while listening back to the audio recording of the interview. The major themes of the conversations were noted, the main questions and their responses highlighted, using emic language and themes. The initial codebook (Appendix ix) was reviewed (for duplicate codes and following organisation of like codes under headings), the data being uploaded into NVivo 8 to begin coding using the node system (Bazeley, 2007; Richardson, 2009). Consequently both text and images could be read by node to look for patterns. As the codebook grew, some categories shifted with reading and clarification of concepts becoming more detailed. Similar or overlapping codes were amended and re-evaluated to avoid duplication. This helped to make sense of what was being said on encouragements and restrictions to participation; characteristics that are valued; peer support; (non-)physically active identities; health imperatives; ambitions, fun, competition; and how it was said; coping strategies; construction of self and others. Questions were posed throughout early analysis, helping to guide thinking on the development of my analysis on how and for what ends knowledge was constructed (see Appendix x). Where new codes were created to clarify or add complexity by splitting into sub-themes, previously coded interviews were read again for instances of the new codes while looking out for

anomalies (Patton, 2002; Rapley, 2007; Gibbs, 2007). I consulted the theoretical literature and research questions to clarify my thoughts on the building of capital and performing status, as it became clear from the interviews how valued bodies were performed as well as discursively constructed. Use was made of NVivo's annotation, model and matrix functions to contrast data, find patterns and conceptualise the fit between the data and the theory. Detailed memos were kept that described or narrated interesting points that would develop thinking on themes and theoretical points such as how, through talk in interaction, the participants constructed themselves as having status. With reference to the theoretical framework, models linking the major concepts and with further in-depth reading, I reviewed the nodes.

Photo elicitation interview transcripts (the second interviews), particularly where the participants had provided their interpretations of the photos, were referred to in order to link the photos to the participants' detailed descriptions of the images and explanations of how they answered the instruction sheet questions. Using NVivo 8, images could be inserted into corresponding interviews texts for simultaneous coding of the concepts and image content. This centred participants' narratives of their photos. Reflections were made where images illustrated or contradicted students' talk. Questions asked of the images concerned what bodies are displayed and how, for what purpose and/or with what effect. Where students used their photos to explain their narratives, this highlighted discursive themes around competition, effort, winning, talent, ability, health, and visualising the self and others. Where participants spoke in interview of a sports person or celebrity, an image was found online and added to the coding of valued bodies by age, gender and ethnicity, to note the visibility of different bodies and groups of people to be reflected on alongside the participants' words and images. By way of introduction to the participants' photo data, counts of subjects/objects in the photos, location, relationship of subjects to the photographer, and whether it was an action, posed or still photograph were recorded (Bell, 2001). This content analysis coded for activity type, location, possessions and other objects, subjects, whether they were active or posing, dress, their relationship to the photographer and whether the participant-photographer indicated they represented a "valued body". This was followed by comparing the frequency of content between the sets of each participant. Appendix xi shows some patterns in content in a table against participants' gender, ethnicity and level physical activity. Field notes were coded thematically and in reflection with the interviews and photo codes to provide context and nuance. Noting actions and words, power relations in interaction among teachers and students, and frequent or unusual incidents, field notes provided a way to compare and contrast my interpretations of practices with what participants said and saw (O'Reilly, 2005; Pink, 2007). The researcher-generated images were content analysed for body type and characteristics, activity, tone and purpose.

Data analysis may simply be a process whereby we 'read, and analysis, whatever it is, will follow' (St. Pierre, 2011: 622). Analysis can end when saturation has been achieved: when there is nothing left that would fit into a new analytic category or the stories make sense (Hatch, 2002; Richardson, 2009). During the process, I likened this way of becoming immersed in qualitative ethnographic data to literary criticism's ways of reading poetry and prose, using a range of tools to find clues in the texts and images to piece together an interpretation of the intention, progression and meanings in the story. Often analysis procedures are concerned predominantly with thinking through, with and about the data, becoming immersed in the stories that arise, and in writing about these stories, producing authentic accounts about what we have learned (Richardson, 2000; Ellingson, 2011). The three discussion chapters that follow demonstrate this working back and forth, questioning, writing and seeing.

## 3.7   Concluding comments

> All theories, concepts, and findings are grounded in values and perspectives; all knowledge is contextual and partial; and other conceptual schemas and perspectives are always possible (Altheide & Johnson, 2011: 581-2).

This chapter has attempted to place participatory visual ethnography and the methods of data production and analysis outlined here within feminist poststructural and postcolonial approaches. Feminist poststructuralism informed the epistemology and methodology – what could be researched and how. From these thoughts about recognising privilege and authority in researcher-researched relationships across gender, ethnicity and age, emerged the project's concern with involving students in co-creation, while gaining contextual knowledge through ethnographic methods. Participatory visual method, as an emerging field, leaves researchers to work out new ways of analysing visual data, especially participant-produced, in conversation with existing analyses. Hence, I find the notion of *bricolage* appealing, and have used a number of methods in developing this project as opportunities and limitations arose. I have tried to make clear the processes throughout, as part of supporting qualitative design, data production and analysis as rigorous and ethical. The emerging descriptions and evaluation of the themes, language and ways of seeing produced rich narratives by each student and interview group, forming the three chapters to follow, structured to centre a number of the students' visualisations of bodies, selves and physical activity.

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[i] 13 to 14 year olds, with whom this project works, are at the boundary between childhood and adolescence in many research texts. Although officially there are attempts to define categories of

childhood, youth, and adulthood – for example, the UN defines children as 5 to 14 years old and young people 15-24 (Youth at the United Nations, 2010) – cultural, religious and political differences in the meaning of youth or adolescence make it difficult to offer objective notions of these transitional categories. The participants in this study, entering their adolescent lives, had experiences at the time of the research no doubt informed by their childhoods *and* by the process of defining themselves as no longer children. As a result, I draw on texts concerning research with both, or either, children and young people, arguing that both are suitable for offering ontologies for thinking about the positions of "not-adults" as heterogeneous groups in schools.

[ii] A proportion of the ethnic South Asian immigrants to Leicester in the 1970s were East African Asians, some having left Uganda (Brah, 1996; Herbert, 2008).

[iii] Diamond cricket involved one bowler and four batters who stood in a diamond shape. The bowler could choose which batter to bowl at. Fielders stood around the outside of this diamond shape. To score runs, the batters all ran from one base to the next around the diamond.

[iv] Following Sport Education (Siedentop, Hastie & van der Mars, 2011), the students were in the same teams for the length of the unit, which lasted some weeks longer than their other activity units in that school year. The teams played matches and scores were recorded by the teacher in each lesson to create a league table of results. Students took on roles as captain, referee and warm-up leader. The unit culminated in a final tournament. However, other aspects of Sport Education were not used during this unit, such as statistician and coach roles; or creating team names, banners or mascots,

[v] As he completed the demographics form, circling both "White British" and "Asian British", Mickey informed me that he calls himself "dual heritage" and that he considered mixed race to be an old-fashioned term.

[vi] University Ethical Committee approval was gained before the commencement of this project. All images, interview transcripts, field notes and other data and written material pertaining to the project have been stored on university premises in a locked office and on a password-protected university computer.

## 4 "I wish I could do that." Constructing valued bodies

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter begins the presentation of the ethnographic and participatory data that explores the student-participants' visualisations and narratives of "sporting bodies" – those that, the students say, are skilled or elite athletes, are competitive, determined, and "just do it". This phrase, "just do it", is highlighted as a discourse framing the physical culture within the school, Vale Court, where this study took place. From the foundation of the investigation of the physical culture, the chapter explores the students' constructions of sporting bodies, their meanings of ability, and subsequently some of the ways in which students visualise their own bodies, their practices and embodiments in PE, sport and recreational physical activity. I draw here on ideas that consumption of images of bodies – whether sporting, slender or muscular, for example – contribute to a visual culture within school (Prosser, 2007) that forms part of a hidden curriculum through which children learn normative ways of being, hierarchies and structures (Fernandez-Balboa, 1993). The chapter explores who is able to be considered a sporting body and who may be constructed as unsporting, through participants' photos and speech, and images around the school. From this foundation, students' practices as a response to these constructions of sporting and unsporting bodies can be addressed in chapters 5 and 6.

The sections progress as follows: 4.2 introduces the school context and looks at what the school physical culture tells us about students' bodies and physical activity participation; beginning to present students' data constructing their notions of the high status body, section 4.3 highlights the centrality of competition and surveillance to the idea, and practice, of able or athletic bodies; 4.4 addresses the "effortful" body, one that tries hard; 4.5 is concerned with strong physicalities; 4.6 considers the dichotomy of fit and fat bodies; and 4.7 draws the sections together in a discussion of the implications for diverse young people's visualisation of and meaning-making about bodies.

### 4.2 The school's valuing of sporting bodies that "just do it"

Walking up to the school, I pass the newly developed cricket pitch, netball centre, and tennis courts. In the background are an artificial pitch and a large playing field. As I enter the school via the main lobby, a bright atrium populated by a small waiting area, two glass trophy cabinets and a flat screen television on the wall. That screen, and others along all the school corridors, display slides with notices for a variety of extra-curricular clubs, school trips, awards and general messages. Physical activity-related clubs predominate throughout these messages: advertisements for girls' cricket and basketball, congratulations to a boy who has become under-

16 county table tennis champion, and two photos of the successful Year 8 girls' rounders team. Even the guitar lesson advertisement displays images of dancers. A recent school ski trip dominates the slide cycle, with twelve photographs of the students and staff on the piste and in the hotel. Pastoral messages offering support to lonely or bullied students are also present, displaying the school's anti-racist ethos. The school's rules on this are shown on a slide: "we do not tell racist jokes"; "racists will be encouraged to change their attitudes and behaviour". In the interviews, anti-racism is evident as colour-blind race neutrality where students use phrases such as "there's no differences between black and white kids".

Turning towards the PE department at the rear of the school, I notice poster display boards, some showing trips abroad, examples of maths problems or short stories. In the PE corridor itself, there are posters produced by external organisations, including the Youth Sport Trust, the Paralympic Movement and Walk2School, a Department of Health initiative. The posters contain glossy images of elite athletes in action. Alongside these, teachers have placed printed text offering motivational messages such as "success ... some people dream of success...while others get up and work at it!" The recurring discourse 'just do it' is seen in words such as "striving", "desire", "passion", "perseverance", "will", "work", "reach" and "[don't] quit" in the posters and printed messages along the PE corridor walls. Students receive the messages that they do not need to have strength or knowledge as long as they have the will. Being a physically active person – an active identity - is normalised, natural, but especially celebrated when it is accompanied by winning. Figure 4.1 shows 6 of the notice boards (all texts and descriptions of images are listed in appendix xii).

*Figure 4.1 Six displays from the PE corridor notice boards*

My initial perception is that "everyone's involved" (Namita) in physical activity and it is normal and unexceptional. There is a clear message within the school's PE and sport culture that can be named "just do it". Without meaning any explicit reference to Nike branding, the 'just do it' culture represents an assumption that all students will and should be active and that the resources and imperative to be active, whatever one's chosen activity, are assumed, implicit, expected, and normative. All students need to do is choose their activity and draw on the motivation that they have, if only they are willing to harness it. This can also be seen in the promotion of continuing activity (extra-curricular and out of school activities) in the teachers' talk. PE is thought to encourage them to take up activity outside of school, and to get a break from school lessons. Wright and Burrows (2006) find that teachers believe that in order for students to continue activity outside of school, they must have skills or demonstrate ability. Mr Martin speaks at length about the activities offered in the school and the facilities that are available. His priority is for students to sample activities across short units with the idea that they will find something they enjoy doing and will take it up outside of school. In this, Mr Martin and the other PE teachers echo much youth sport discourse about encouraging lifelong activity as highlighted by Flintoff & Scraton (2001) and Green (2004). He does not talk about the extent to which the students have access to activities outside of school. In this respect, what he says is reminiscent of the findings of Lee (2010a) and Wright and Burrows (2006) within government schools in the Australian Life Activity Project: that one purpose in PE is to

encourage out of school participation and increase students' ability in order to encourage their motivation (O'Donovan & Kirk, 2008). Throughout the PE lessons there are many references by teachers to the lunch time and after school clubs they run for girls – including dodgeball, cricket and trampolining, inviting engaged or skilled students to attend. Ms Davis most often talks about wishing to get students interested in attending extra-curricular (after-school) sport clubs rather than out of school activities. Lucy picks up on this, finding that PE "gives you a range of what you can do and if you like it, you can get further out of school, you want to play out of school … And if you can't find it, like, out of school, they do like after school ones, so you can still do it here. *If you're talented*" [emphasis added]. In Lucy's interpretation of the teacher's invitation of talented students to clubs, extra-curricular participation remains associated with competence and technical sport skills. The valued body produced here is "sporting" in multiple senses – athletic, confident of ability, hardworking and ready for challenge. Many of the participants' verbal descriptions of high status bodies or those who are "good at PE" also centred such values.

Although Ayesha indicates that the school notice board posters display a range of different abilities and activities, the race and gender neutrality seen in the school notice board texts is missing when the visual culture of the PE department is analysed by gender and "racial" representation on posters of sport stars displayed in the corridor. The written messages around the PE corridor offer a gender- and race-neutral language of motivation where the assumption is that anyone can be successful in (elite) sport, but this is not followed through in the images that accompany the text. The athletes on display are engaged in a number of sports, including football, cricket, rugby, running, wheelchair basketball, gymnastics, high jump, badminton, tennis, netball and fencing. Although some of the images are of Paralympians and thus decentre "able-bodiedness" as valued, the majority of athletes are male and white. Of 27 posters displayed on the walls, only five represent women: three posters of elite white tennis players, gymnasts or netballers, one of white girls playing recreational rugby, and one of elite black women runners. All the Paralympics posters portray male athletes. No Asian women are displayed at all. Only the school website and electronic notice boards display the diversity of the school's student population, with a majority of images being of British Asian students.

### 4.3   *"Beat the best ones!" Valuing competent bodies in competition*

This and the remaining sections in this chapter look further into the students' constructions of valued bodies. Among both students and teachers is evidence that being "good" in PE means having ability and being highly skilled. The students' first descriptions of someone who is valued in PE are often "because they're good at it",  which means "they can do it", "they have the skills", they "help the team win", are "talented", the "sportiest" "all-rounders", athletic, fast,

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as well as showing "good posture", and "they look like they know what they are doing". Teachers praise students who perform technical skills correctly and knowledge is considered important among participants – both cognitive knowledge of the game, or physical capability such as hand-eye coordination. To be bad at PE appears to equate to having low physical literacy or poor motor skills, such as being unable to throw, catch or kick competently. Ability is a determination to pick up skills, learn rules, and other cognitive qualities.



*Figure 4.2 Lu002 Poster of netballers*     *Figure 4.3 Ay004 Poster of gymnast*
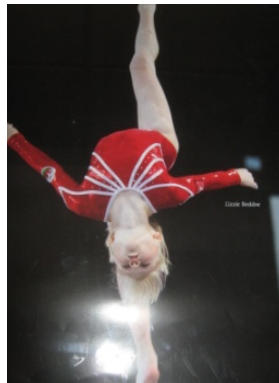
Three girls take photographs of the same two posters on display outside the girls' changing room – of two netballers (Lu002) and Lizzie Beddoes, a British gymnast (Ay004). Lucy says these photos show "two different abilities". Ayesha comments, "people have different abilities and you also have different inspirations or passions towards sports so they try to put as many different things … I think the school tries to show everyone, um, is different but at the same time everyone is equal … When I walk past that poster [of Lizzie Beddoes], I'm like, 'oh I wish I could do that'. Because it looks quite cool". The girls select these posters to photograph, displaying bodies and movements coded as feminine. Students learn that femininities and masculinities are performed through different movements and physical appearances (Paechter, 2003a), creating gendered dispositions. Deepesh believes that boys physically cannot do "girls'" activities like gymnastics or aerobics, "where you're bending your legs about!" It is unclear whether his "can't" really means "shouldn't":

> JOANNE: You mean they don't have the ability to do it?
> DEEPESH: No some people do obviously but like some people don't, so. And like the girls they can't really, like, play football and that [laughs]. And rugby.
> BHAGESH: But we can't do those things that they do.
> DEEPESH: Yeah exactly.
> ANANT: It's more like they don't have interest in it. They're not interested in it so they don't do it.
> DEEPESH: We're not interested in their sports; they're not interested in our sports.

Recalling something of the valuing of ability and being able to perform an activity competently, Deepesh's comments suggest that some young people may constrain their opportunities to

participate in a range of activities because they "can't" do it well enough, a biological or physiological constraint, or should not do it, a socially constructed gender performance constraint. Although Deepesh and Bhagesh seemingly nod to equality in acknowledging girls' superiority in at least some activities, these narratives are powerful in naming the tough consequences for any who transgress norms. Similarly, the girls say that football, rugby, cricket and hockey are boys' sports, despite the former three being on the girls' curriculum (see table 3.1). They also observe that their own PE activities are modified, easier and have fewer rules than the full, proper sports that they see the boys doing. Where the girls' and boys' curricula diverge, notions of appropriately gendered uses of the body are often reproduced: while boys have extended football and hockey units outside, girls' aerobics, trampolining and table tennis classes are held indoors. The differing curricula highlight for the students that girls and boys play different sports and as a result have different abilities and skills (Azzarito & Solmon, 2005; Hills & Crosston, 2011).

As an example of explicit construction of valued high ability, during a cricket game, Ms Davis says often "you have to get the best one out…and the second best"; "you have got to get these best ones out" [field notes]. In these two examples, ability constructions are based on the teachers' prior knowledge of the students and not on observed performance in the lesson. In other PE lessons, teachers' praise is based on performance of correct or even "perfect" technical skills, with the student who performs most correctly being called "the best". The effect is that reference to particular students as "good" or "the best" reinforces students' understanding of their ability in PE being based on skill performance rather than effort, team work, or other ways of participating in the PE class. To gain the highest status, students compete with each other in all activities. Competition is incorporated into most PE activities at Vale Court, even those, such as gym-based fitness, that are not sports per se, yet students have races on the treadmill or rowers and results are recorded by the teacher; or warm ups in racquet sports are set up for competition where the pair with the highest number of returns without dropping the ball "wins". Competition and hierarchy remain implicit elements if not the sole objectives of the class. In one of the boys' lessons, a teacher assumes that one boy has not played very well in the football matches during the lesson:

> Mr Brown suggests changes to the format of the matches that would make sure the lower skilled players on these teams got a chance to participate more, "like Waheed". Immediately two team mates of Waheed's protest, saying, "no Sir, he scored two goals today! He scored twice!" to prove that Waheed did participate and is valued in their team [Field notes]

By expressing that he does not expect Waheed to have had any positive impact on the team's performance, Mr Brown marks players like Waheed as low skilled and therefore unvalued,

reaffirming this connection among the students. Although the students try to resist it, the pedagogical practices and language of teachers, as authority in the classroom, influence students (Brown & Rich, 2002; Rasmussen & Harwood, 2003). In return, the two team mates reinforce that high value is gained by scoring goals, rather than any other form of participation in a team game.

Competition is often thought of as intrinsic to games (Garrett, 2004b). Performing a sport accurately and quickly is identified as a part of this, leading to anxiety in those who lack confidence in their own skills, thinking they are alone and leading to few opportunities for learning (Fisette, 2011; Garrett, 2004b). Competition likewise focuses attention on the body through surveillance. The discourses of competition and hierarchy reproduced among some of the students result in judgement of peers and policing of bodies and practices, and comparisons among students. Performance is constantly on display as physical capital (Hunter, 2004: 183) through the visual and spatial ordering of students by ability. The way students build and exchange capital is by having a "feel for the game" of competition (Bourdieu, 1990), investing in the values of winning or other displays of high ability; producing the embodied and practical values of the field depends on outperforming peers, standing out, aiming to be *the* best. To ensure they could be the best, students appear to appreciate knowing how they compare with others, so that next time those who have the physical capital can use it to perform the highest number of sit ups or push the treadmill to "level 12" as Tasvinder puts it. "Showing off" may be a strategy for actively defining or positioning oneself in opposition to others through differentiating and regulating bodies (Martino & Beckett, 2004). It can also hide vulnerabilities in enabling the body to be perceived as "right" (Kehler, 2010). "Competitive" is also used by girls to explain why boys are more interested in physical activity than girls: "they want to be the best, don't they?" says Lucy. Some girls construct competitiveness as masculine and are scornful of this way of participating in PE. Amandip shows a photo that she created of a boy at school (Am004): "he's good at PE but he brags about it". When Amandip constructs boys as boastful, she also positions herself in opposition, as feminine/girl:

> Most boys are like, they big themselves up too much, but like, they're not really that good at PE, but it's just cos they're boring they like [think] they should all, all boys should be good at PE than girls [sic] (Amandip)

*Figure 4.4 Am004 Amandip's photo of a boy who is good at PE*

In the girls' classes, teachers frequently draw upon discourses of fairness as they put students into teams for a game, concerned not to create one team that would win everything. What results is the teachers' implicit recognition of which girls are "good" and which are not so good.

> Ms Davis tells the girls to split themselves into teams of 5 or 6. 10 or 11 girls can't decide how to split themselves so Ms Davis helps. She says "split yourselves by ability if you want to make it fairer". She directs Rupali, Sally and Lucy which teams to go in [Field notes]

The teacher marks verbally those students who are already high ability; the competition is almost over before it begins, because some girls are already expected to outperform the rest. By suggesting that mixed ability is fair, that high ability students must be split up into different teams, the teacher is encouraging the students to think of everything as a competitive game in which there can be one winner and many losers, provided it is a fair competition. The language might be of "fairness" but in a class without competition, "fairness" would be a redundant word. Ms Davis also equates competition with engagement in the game, with being involved and interested:

> On the way to the netball courts, Ms Davis tells me the rules of the game [diamond cricket] and says that it will be interesting to see how this lot get on, as they are a bit shy and reserved. A more bubbly group would get on with the game well, as it's really good to see them shouting and scrabbling for the ball in order to get the point for their team. But this lot might not be like that, not very competitive [Field notes]

Given this desire to see a class engage competitively, "shouting and scrabbling for the ball", the teacher embeds a discourse in the class that competition, and a need to win, are central to physical activity engagement, requiring behaviours different to their current shyness. This group's perceived shyness lessens their cultural capital (grades) and social capital (invitation to extra-curricular clubs) in PE as a result of the teacher's reaction to it. To be competitive in team games is the marker of engagement that Ms Davis valorises the most. The teachers frequently measure speed, time, goals and other statistics, asking students "hands up who reached 15 reps" "what is your time?" and other measures of the achieving body. Ayesha indicates that she is aware of the teacher comparing the two Year 9 girls' PE groups:

> She'll tell us that the other group was, did this did that, so it makes us like 'oh I want to be like them'! … It's like something you look up to, cos like she told us 'oh the other group did it so nicely and they actually all got a hang of it' so it'll make us feel that if we don't do it, it just doesn't feel – so we actually go on and actually try (Ayesha)

Other girls reflect on this hierarchy of able bodies and use it to understand who is good at PE, who is not, and who therefore is worthy of attention:

> You compare yourself to them. Because if they do something good, you want to do something good. Just because they did it. To stay like equal to them (Lucy)

Girls are traditionally constructed as disliking competition (Jaffee & Manzer, 1992). Performing a self that is competitive risks position by others as feminine (B. Evans, 2006). Indeed, some girls at times draw upon a discourse of competitiveness as masculine to explain boys' boisterous behaviour in sports and girls' reasons not to join in mixed PE or playground games. However, the girls sometimes reveal a desire for competition in their PE lessons, when a feminine subject can compete but not try to win at all cost (O'Flynn, 2008). Competition itself is not a problem - only when "it gets out of hand" or someone "gets over-competitive ... people take them the wrong way" (Ayesha). Ayesha describes players who make PE less fun as *too* competitive and aggressive. Yasmin also calls some "a bit too competitive" but defends competition if "it's just a laugh". The common use – even in research trying to uncover gender inequalities – of dichotomies between girls as cooperative and boys as competitive have been challenged by other researchers such as Clark and Paechter (2007) who analyse girls' resistance to playground dynamics and divisions of space. Coakley and White (1992) consider that some girls use sport to gain respect by proving to boys that they can do sport well, demonstrating competence. However, they point out that while this may seem powerful, it is not empowering, because it leaves the defining of girls' abilities and activity in the hands of boys. In practice, these girls find it difficult to embody a confident subjectivity in mixed PE. Lucy claims that she would like boys to 'believe in us more often. Because we can do it the same as what they can do' (Lucy).

## 4.4 *"You don't have to do it well as long as you're doing it." Valuing effort*

Some other responses to "what is valued in PE?" or "what do you enjoy about PE?" are "trying your best" or "your hardest", "putting all the effort in", and getting involved so that "you're part of it". Mitesh states that he admires "well-motivated people". When asked what teachers expect from students in PE, most say that they should "try hard":

> They keep like, telling you if you do something good, to make you feel good, to make

you carry on doing it (Lucy)

For Amandip, putting effort in means learning, being serious about the activity, using brain power to devise strategies and not just playing a game. Effort can also mean achieving what you want, reaching your goals, being energetic and showing willingness to take part. Ayesha, Meena and Lucy all talk about effort as a way of resisting pressure to win. Where there are accusations that you are incapable or bad at the activity (having low ability), their response is "it doesn't matter if you're capable of something", "at least you can try". For Ayesha, effort is also a way for low status students to gain respect or participate in PE because "if one person can do it, I think everyone can do it in their own way of doing it". She indicates that she does not believe that the teachers would set a task in PE that only some students would be able to complete - all students, albeit "in their own way", should be able to complete it. Although effort is a term used in motivational literature of cognitive pedagogy and sport psychology research (Taylor, Ntoumanis, Standage & Spray, 2010), the participants' use of notions of effort and trying hard is a challenge to the normalising of able, sporting bodies that do perform well in PE and sport. By making the most of one's own effort or praising the effort of others, students can show that one does not need to be the best (most normatively able) or the most dominant player to be valued in some way. Bain (1989) points out that messages concerning the expectation of effort and hard work suggest that students have control over their success, unlike ability or luck.

Amandip and Yasmin offer clues to the complexity of responses to an effort discourse when they suggest that they understand it is a joint investment by all students in the class that makes a successful lesson, and they are hard on people who do not show effort, whilst stating that sometimes they, too, cannot be bothered:

> YASMIN: I think it's better when everyone gets involved because when everyone's just sitting there you don't really enjoy the lesson.
> AMANDIP: Yeah but sometimes, like I can say it myself, I do sometimes can't be bothered [sic].
> YASMIN: Yeah sometimes you're in the mood and sometimes you're not.
> AMANDIP: Yeah, yeah.

Although the participants speak more frequently about valuing effort than ability, it is hard for them to ignore ability, competition and comparison altogether. 'The emphasis on effort rather than engagement,' Bain (1989: 28) stresses, 'does not challenge the overall meritocratic principles of the school but reinforces the marginal status of the field and the underlying assumptions of mind/body dualism'. The students operate within a culture that monitors and creates hierarchies of competing bodies, in activities often requiring physical performances to overcome opponents. Even so, these expressions of effort indicate the most commonly valued characteristics, even more frequently mentioned in the interviews than the valuing of ability,

skill or body shape. Students use this as an alternative discourse to being *the* best. They suggest that participation and involvement in the activities of the PE class are more important than being able, the best, winning, and demonstrating other evidence of skills or bodily performance. Values such as athleticism are interpretable in different ways – being associated with hard work, commitment and effort by Cooky and McDonald (2005). They indicate that this may signal a shift away from dominant notions of athleticism as tied to physicality, while also reflecting dominant educational values and performances. At an abstract level, effort is valued; coupled with a lack of physical capital, however, students may be read as not trying, if they are also unable to perform well. As Hay and Macdonald (2009) discuss regarding teachers' rewarding of ability, gaining and using capital greatly depends on how a pupil's pre-existing resources, dispositions and orientation in the field are interpreted by peers and teachers, which in turn affects how a student may use her/his resources to create capital or gain a better position.

## 4.5 "I wanna be hench." Valuing strong bodies

Having been asked to produce images of people they admired, many boys created photos of strong or muscular bodies, as well as bodies with technical skill or competence. Muscular bodies are seen as strong; other synonyms that students use included "powerful", "built" or "hard". While muscular is not the only body shape that the boys talk about or photograph as being valued, it is especially respected or feared. Performing successful masculinity has been linked to sporting success but also to physicalities that express strength or muscularity (Hauge & Haavind, 2011; Swain, 2003). That strong and big bodies are valued among many boys while scrawny bodies are devalued has been pointed out as an example of gender relationality in PE/sport discourses (Connell, 2005; Hauge & Haavind, 2011; Mac an Ghaill, 1994), where strength is masculine and weakness feminine. Participants state that it is acceptable for boys to be strong, but not girls, because strength is associated with particular readings of masculinity (Gorely et al., 2003). Only certain body sizes or shapes are presumed to have strength.

Frost (2003) tells us that approval from other boys is crucial and develops through displaying a valued muscular body. Boys at the school reproduced this, especially admired muscular bodies that has symbolic value. We can see this when Group H discusses a photo of Ben, a tall, well-built black boy in their PE class:

> MICKEY: Majority of sports he's good at.
> JON: He's good at football…
> MICKEY: Everyone must be scared of him, like…
> JON: Especially in football, you just move out the way for him, even if you're in defence…
> MICKEY: I'd go into him more! I like getting him angry, it's funny. [Mickey and Richard laugh] He gets so angry.

Ben is one of the tallest boys in the class and he is often captain in football. During team games, he plays in attacking positions, a style of play that, by Ben, is rewarded. Ben is best avoided and not angered because, Mickey explains, 'he's the hardest in our year'. Masculine bodies are linked to 'the ability to play sports, win fights, and stand up for yourself', 'a crucial factor in identification' (Frost, 2003: 65). Ben's status also affects how some of the participants approach PE especially where they interact with him – Jon says he moves out of the way for Ben. Strength or being "hard" is useful in boys' constructions/practices of PE because it enables a player to "just barge" into opponents.

The boys' relationship with strength was complex and different body sizes and shapes were given status for different purposes. Where Asian bodies are admired by the boys, they are slender in their muscularity, or display physical strength but not dominance over others in team sports. After discussing Ben's aggressive football style, Jon, Mickey and Richard compare his figure to that of Dev, another high status classmate, in photos where the two boys are competing in a race on the rowing machine (So024 and So039). Dev is admired for being "hench but also skinny," hench being slang for muscular or toned. Unlike Ben, Dev was slender while still muscular, displaying physical strength but not dominance over others in team sports. During football matches in PE, he is often the captain on the opposing team to Ben, but he is not feared for being too angry. Although these boys' respect of their classmate Ben's aggression recalls stereotypical "angry black man" images and the related perceptions of Asian academicism (Bramham, 2003; Parker, 1996) and black athleticism/anti-intellectualism (St Louis, 2005), they create multiple notions of strong bodies based on themselves and their peers that resist, while also being affected by, broader white privileged masculinity.



*Figures 4.5 and 4.6 So024 and So039 Sohan's photos of Ben and Dev on the rowing machines*

The boys valorise black and Asian muscular bodies, but do so within a broader valorisation of white hegemonic masculinity. O'Donnell and Sharpe (2004: 119) indicate that the Asian boys they researched with 'rarely drew on [stock cultural knowledge and referents of Asians] in a way which crudely endorsed dominant stereotypes' but were aware of assumptions about

physicality and activity preference in the way they shaped their subjectivities. Hauge and Haavind (2011) point out that discourses about male bodies are recognised by all boys, but "deployed" in different ways, intersecting with other discourses such as those of age and ethnicity. Teachers' and researchers' understanding of the ideal masculine sporting body as just muscular and competent (Parker, 1996; Swain, 2006b; Tischler & McCaughtry, 2011) could be broadened to account for local physical culture complexity and preferences for different sports.



*Figure 4.7 Mk005 Mickey lifting weights*

There are some positions that active girls can find for themselves within these discourses, for girls can be muscular, but "not too much" (Namita). Indeed, the teacher encouraged assertive body movements and physicality in girls. During a dodgeball game,

> Ms Davis demonstrates throwing tactics, asking questions as she goes: "how do we throw, do you remember? ... like a shot-put" Best throws are low and powerful so they are difficult to catch. She asks Teena to throw back to her: "Teena, aim at my legs...that would've been fine but a bit more power [needed]" [Field notes]

Despite encouraging power among the girls, on another occasion, the teacher asks,

> "What is aerobics for?" The responses include heart rate, calorie burning, and toning muscles – particularly bottoms; "it won't give you a big bottom, just tone it and make it slightly smaller," she assures the girls [Field notes]

Girls may hold back from sports participation if they are worried about over-developing muscles. Namita says that muscularity "is kind of more of a guys' thing". Lucy points out that "girls are meant to be less strong than boys" reiterating a normative discourse of girls' weakness while suggesting that this is a social construction. She is willing to resist it by hinting that she and some other girls are in fact strong, and can be as able in PE as boys, but although physically they may challenge the discourse, many girls behaviourally conform by hiding their ability or performing weakness. This sentiment, that boys can be muscley but girls cannot, is echoed by Nisha talking about ideal body types for girls and boys:

> For a girl it's like feminine and like dainty delicate sort of thing, and then if you have a girl who has like big muscles, looking like a man, it just… (Nisha)

Training and work out are associated with boys and with maleness/masculinity such that girls who train and/or become muscular start to "look like a man" (Lucy). Boys work out to train, in order to produce the muscular body whereas for girls this is not an acceptable or usual reason for activity. Being big is acceptable for a sportsperson who plays competitively, where a sport such as rugby requires a certain body type, but this might have negative effects once away from the sport field. Gorely et al. (2003: 438) similarly state that female muscular bodies are accepted 'as legitimate, but only because they are specifically required in order to be an elite performer. To possess a muscular body and yet to be less than an elite performer continues to infringe conventional views of embodied femininity'.

Off the pitch a strong masculinity can be one that shows vulnerability. Continuing the idea that fluid constructions of strong masculinity were appropriate or inappropriate at different times, Bhagesh admitted that he felt pressure to be a 'good guy' whose appearance does not betray a rough or working class background:

> BHAGESH: And like when you go for interviews. Miss, if you think about it yeah, if you have scars yeah and you go to an interview, what will they think of you?
> DEEPESH: They won't be interested.
> BHAGESH: Yeah, exactly.
> DEEPESH: You're from a more rough environment.

Bhagesh was aware that an appearance that may offer physical and social status in working-class situations could hinder his middle-class aspirations when he looks for work. Deepesh argued back that some scars, such as from sport, are more acceptable than scars from street fighting – something he was aware of as a boxer, preparing for legitimate sporting fights. While aggression was valuable on the football pitch as Ben tried to score goals, off the pitch similar performances of hyper-masculinity were much less valuable. Some boys discussed how sport and physical activity 'gets us off the streets', recalling discourses of troublesome working class masculinity or the risk of becoming a victim of violence. Bhagesh and Deepesh did not in fact carry the scars they were so worried about, but they demonstrated how aware they were of the classed and racialised boundaries of young manhood that structured their lives, informed by the economic positions of Leicester's Asian populations, providing the discourses they could use to narrate their experiences.

The boys value both male sport stars' strong bodies and competent performances, naming or photographing those they admire, often footballers. Harshul offers a series of photographs (Ha026 to Ha030) of the posters pinned to his bedroom walls, mainly displaying from

footballers (at the time of interview) his favourite team, Arsenal, and some posters of Liverpool players that are pinned to his sister's bedroom walls. These photos also show a poster of wrestler John Cena and Indian cricket captain Mahendra Dhoni. Explaining the footballer posters, Harshul says,

> Torres [is] tall. So he can head the ball. And he's fast, so like he can outpace defenders. And he's pretty strong as well... Gerrard like, the whole of England [value him] because he's English and he's a good - like he's one of the best … Fabregas is skilful, he can like pass the ball from anywhere. He can hold it in tight spots. He like, runs Arsenal's team (Harshul).
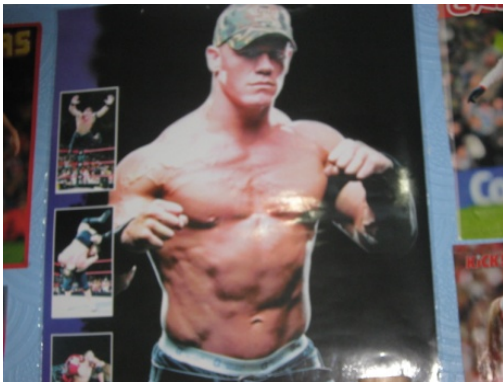


*Figure 4.8 Ha026 John Cena*



*Figure 4.9 Ha027 Cesc Fabregas*



*Figure 4.10 Ha028 Steven Gerrard*



*Figure 4.11 Ha029 Fernando Torres*



*Figure 4.12 Ha030 Mahendra Dhoni*



*Figure 4.13 Ha004 Harshul and his poster of Sami Nasri*

Harshul's football pin ups are all white Europeans apart from Sami Nasri (KK004), a French player of Algerian descent. Like the school corridor displays, the pin ups on Harshul's wall are permanently visible reminders (for Harshul) of what high status bodies look like. In the often white-dominated sports (at national/international levels) of football and wrestling, the posters available for Harshul to pin on his wall are mainly of white players, leading Harshul in interview to wonder why there are no British Asian players in media-sanctioned football. In cricket, the greater predominance of Asian and British Asian players at the highest levels of the sport mean that Harshul is able to find a poster of a player who shares his Indian heritage. His cricket pin up is "[Mahendra] Dhoni. He's like, the best batsman. In the world. He's strong, so he can hit the ball hard." Harshul constructs Dhoni's physicality in ways that resist representations of Asian men's embodied masculinity as weak and unmuscular (Bramham, 2003). Representations of Asian men as stars in particular sports rather than across the spectrum 'lock[s] brown bodies into a limited corporeality' (Fitzpatrick, 2011b: 4). In this way, these conversations reiterate previous research that identifies institutional barriers in sport for South Asians (Ratna, 2010, 2011) or the position that "sport is not for us" where power operates to retain divisions and status quo. However, social identification is important in sport, where participants desire to identify with a club but also to actively disidentify from others, perhaps choosing favourite sport stars based on ethnic or national affiliation (Elling & Knoppers, 2005; Messner & Sabo, 1990). Burdsey (2006) argues that the diasporic identities of British Asian youth sometimes express themselves as support for the *England* football team and the *Indian* cricket team, drawing on multiple physical cultural traditions.



*Figure 4.14 De019 Deepesh's photo of Mike Tyson*

Deepesh's pin up is Mike Tyson (De019). Deepesh calls Tyson a role model and Bhagesh explains that "you look up to [him]'. Tyson as role model highlights the different ways in which sport stars are admired, or the types of behaviour expected or acceptable, in different sports. Tyson's fall from grace in the public eye following conviction for rape (Schipp, 1992) arguably eroded opinion of him as a boxing great for much of the 1990s. Within Deepesh's lifetime however, respect for Tyson appears to have been restored (Ashley, 2009). Deepesh makes no

mention of Tyson's violent past. Other sport stars who are high achievers, as we see in Jon's photo of Formula 1 driver Lewis Hamilton (Jo003), are constructed by this group as those who practice or are determined. Despite Jon including this photo in his set of admired sport stars, he and the other boys in his group have ambivalent feelings towards Hamilton as a role model sports star. Jon criticises Hamilton for "firing his dad … just to go on his own" (Jon). This low valuing of disloyalty and immorality extends to other sports stars and clubs. Conversations illustrate how other sport stars' indiscretions lead these boys to drop them as heroes.



*Figure 4.15 Jo003 Jon's photo of Lewis Hamilton*

MICKEY: I don't admire all of them, I think they get paid too much man, they are all divs [idiots], do you get me?
JON: No.
SOHAN: Ronaldinho's sick [awesome].
MICKEY: They get paid too much, yeah, nah I reckon they're good footballers yeah but they get paid too much. I think they are good at what they do yeah, but they shouldn't be getting paid like millions and that.
SOHAN: Like [John] Terry, man, having an affair.
RICHARD: I know, he got so popular off that.
SOHAN: Joe Cole, man.

MICKEY: Well AC Milan, yeah, they got done for cheating.
SOHAN: Yeah they lost points. And then they are fifth.
RICHARD: Really? How did they get done?
MICKEY: They paid the referee.
JON: No.
MICKEY: Yeah, they paid the referee to help 'em…

Similarly, Cristiano Ronaldo, although featuring in three boys' photo sets of admired players, can no longer be admired because of his disloyalty in leaving his club, Manchester United, say Deepesh and Sohan. The boys construct an ideal athlete as not just a winner but also someone who displays moral behaviour, although it is surprising that this does not also apply to Mike Tyson. Martino & Pallotta-Chiarolli (2003: 249) find that 'many boys were aware of the impact of the media's centralization of men's sport and idolization of male sporting figures on the place of sport in their own school lives'. The students at Vale Court shared their sporting role

models and discussed the status of technical skill and strength but were also able to think critically about the types of people they admired, generally dismissing role models who display bad behaviour off-pitch or off the track. Tyson, perhaps because he is in a sport where violence and aggression are part of the values and expectations of the physical culture, does not lose his status in the same way.

During the spring term, following the end of the boys' long football unit, the teachers stream the boys' classes into a "higher" and "lower" group. Many of the boys who are placed in the "higher" group – including Ben and Dev – are those identified as having muscular bodies. This physical capital is often accompanied by social capital in the form of popularity. Those in the higher group are also more assertive or vocal in class, shouting more and putting themselves forward – whether a cause or an effect of their being placed in the "higher" stream is uncertain. Mitesh's view that the boys in the "higher" stream are "up there" also indicates social status. This raises questions concerning teachers' decisions to stream by PE ability. While the differences in physical capital may correspond to students' grades or levels according to curricular assessments, I perceive near uniformity of body sizes in each streamed group. Redelius et al. (2009: 245) ask whether ability is a matter of 'to be, to do or to know?' The streaming here suggests that it is a matter of 'to be':

## 4.6 "They diss you about your weight." Valuing fitness, not fatness

Amongst factors that constitute "good" players, fitness, stamina and speed are mentioned, because they allow players to keep going. When I ask about body types that are admired, Lucy's first answer is "not fat". In an echo of the connection made between exercise and health (Kirk & Colquhoun, 1989), fitness and strength are associated by the students with a slender body. Fat is abject, immoral, and avoidable. Rupali offers an example of the constraints placed on fat people:

> Most sports, cos if you're like really fat and you want to go on a trampoline, you'd be really like, self-conscious, or if you had to go swimming, you wouldn't wanna cos you've just got too much flab on you (Rupali)

Rupali cannot imagine a fat person wanting to participate in activities such as trampolining or swimming, which might display the body and its failures (B. Evans, 2006). Similarly Amandip and Yasmin tell me that obese people are not valued in PE, because "they can't do" physical activity or sport. Group F associate not exercising with being fat:

> JOANNE: What are your opinions about people who don't do any sport or exercise out of school?
> MITESH: Lazy. Fat, like Homer Simpson, Fat Joe, all them sort of people who are fat.

> JOANNE: Hmm.
> MITESH: Fat Albert.
> KULDEEP: Eat too much.
> TASVINDER: Its fat and drunk people.

Tasvinder continues, explaining that "there's no point, yeah, if like, you sign up for some proper playing for some team, then like you're fat and you can't run. And then they're just going to say, sorry you can't play. Because you need to be fit" (Tasvinder). When the boys' classes are streamed, almost all the boys I perceive as having larger bodies are placed in the "lower" group: again body size appears to correspond to ability. Where peers are seen to be slow, unskilled or otherwise low status in a sporting context, gendered and sizist slurs are used against them:

> Oh my god! Have you seen how fat the guy is? My sister's faster than him! (Bhagesh)

This would mean little if the students did not accept the assumptions that girls are slower than boys and that fatness implies an inability to run. In the PE context that these students construct and represent, fat people are firstly marginalised in physical activity or sport because of perceptions that they "can't do it". But if someone does not participate, they are consequently labelled fat and lazy. Few participants speak about their classmates as unvalued or not admired except when they are fat, and considered low skilled and inactive. Nikhil (including himself among the students who are teased for their body size) perceives that criticism of low skill centres not on that low skill but on the victim's appearance:

> The thing is that when you do like stuff, if you like let a goal in, or something like that yeah, they start, they won't diss you about how you play, they'll probably diss you about your weight and stuff, like that (Nikhil)

Overweight boys tend to be "put in defence" by team captains – defence being a low status position compared to attack. Lucy says, "you get teased a lot if you're, like, bigger than everybody else". This offers a clue that fat is not absolute but a relative value - if someone is big in comparison to their classmates, then they look fat.

Many participants conflated the value of a fit, not fat, body with the health and wellbeing benefits of being active. Fatness is not an acceptable long-term state - "some of them might want to get fitter" (Lucy). Fatness is unhealthy because it causes "heart problems and stuff" (Jasveer). Many of the reasons both the girls and boys give for undertaking PE and sport are linked to weight management, keeping/getting fit, "improving healthiness", and counteracting the impact of eating "fatty foods" or playing on the computer/watching television. Lucy says that if someone is not active, they are at home "eating crisps" as though these are mutually exclusive and the only behaviours possible. Using the same imagery, Mitesh and Jasveer

represent their time spent not being active with photos of themselves lying on the sofa eating crisps (Mt004 and Ja001). Health is presented as fleeting, difficult to attain and maintain, in the face of so many risky behaviours of which one must constantly beware.



*Figure 4.16 Mt004 Mitesh on the sofa*



*Figure 4.17 Ja001 Jasveer on the sofa*

In 2004 Green wrote that it seemed unlikely that young people would be motivated to participate in sport and physical activity because it is "good for them", and considered that young people choose physical activities that are fun and wherein they can find companionship. However, Green (2004) also highlighted that young people make informed choices about the long term benefits that physical activity can have for them. More recent research indicates that there can indeed be powerful effects on young people's decisions about activity and health based on the body pedagogies they come into contact with in and out of school (Allwood, 2010; Evans et al., 2008).

In telling me they would like more frequent PE lessons, Jon and Mickey cynically recognise additional PE lessons as a solution to concerns about young people's weight:

> JOANNE: Why do you think [PE] should be every day?
> MICKEY: Because it's healthy for you.
> JON: It'll stop them moaning about obesity.
> SOHAN: It'd be great to do it.
> MICKEY: And it's, but, all the time on the news all you hear is, oh, kids are getting…
> JON: … Obese. Obese.
> MICKEY: Obese, kids are getting obese, yeah.

Here, these boys seem to echo critical pedagogic concern about the ubiquity of policy suggestions that PE form the vanguard of the battle against childhood obesity (Gard & Wright, 2005). Some participants brought up elements of public health messages that visualise the building up of fat inside the body:

> If you don't do any exercise you turn into, like, proper fat and you have like clogged up veins and all that. If you don't burn calories, the calories get taken in as fat (Mitesh)

By recalling aspects of the health messages consumed through popular media, Mitesh and other young people may think that being inactive is inherently risky and associate inactive bodies with this visualisation of fat building. They are afraid of reaching a period in their lives when they are unable to exercise and would viscerally experience this fat build up. Echoing Mitesh's reasons, Ayesha explains that activity can "increase the length of your life" when it "burns off your fat foods" but must be combined with eating "your five-a-day". By thinking that the potential to increase the length of your life should "inspire" you to "do all these sports", Ayesha recalls the objective of health interventions as discussed throughout Wright and Harwood's *Biopolitics* (2009) which is to rouse individuals into taking control of their own health. Literature is concerned that young people are consuming health discourses in such a way as to engender fear if they do not keep up vigorous exercise and strict eating habits (Evans et al., 2008). The imperative to be a healthy body led some students to use their photos to convince me and their group mates that they are active - Mitesh, Jasveer, Kuldeep and Nikhil use photographs of themselves walking to school or doing household chores (Mt022, Ku006, Nk001, Ja051) as demonstrations that exercise is integral to their daily lives.


*Figure 4.18 Mt022 Mitesh doing household chores*


*Figure 4.19 Ku006 Kuldeep walking to school*


*Figure 4.20 Nk001 Nikhil walking to school*


*Figure 4.21 Ja051 Jasveer walking to school*

Within these constructions of fatness and fitness, being slim and unhealthy, or slim and unfit, are not possibilities. The desirable body, currently a "healthy" slim body, is taken for granted,

normal and available to all (Gard & Wright, 2001). The devaluing of fat bodies in sport and physical activity can be associated with the links made in popular discourse between physical activity and obesity prevention, exercise against sedentary behaviours and medical discourses' treatment of "risky" individualistic and immoral behaviour. Health seems something to be controlled, fixed and managed, with size and weight the measures of health controlled through physical activity. As PE shifts from sport to health rationales, ability is less about gaining sport skills and more about gaining or maintaining the slender normative body:

> New, invidious, social and ability hierarchies are tending to emerge in PE and other health education settings, atop which reside not those high on cognitive perspective but the 'able' and willing to get active, fit and thin (Evans et al., 2008: 130).

Some participants also create images of unvalued bodies, particularly larger bodies. Mitesh shows a photo of his sister (Mt005), whom he calls lazy, lying on the sofa under a duvet. The following discussion about Yasmin's photo (Ya001), an image she found on the internet, reveals some more thoughts about fatness:

> JOANNE: So, number 1, could you explain this photo for me?
> YASMIN: Mm, they're the kind of people that don't get admired, like people don't like them and stuff.
> JOANNE: OK, and why would that person…
> YASMIN: The way she looks.
> AMANDIP: It's a she?
> YASMIN: [Laughs] Yeah because of the way she looks…people just think she wouldn't [exercise] because of the way she looks and whether she'd take her time to do it.

Amandip's question, "it's a she?" both defeminises and dehumanises the person in the photograph. Unable to speak for themselves, but laden with multiple assumptions about their behaviour, physical capabilities and morals, fat people are the at-risk Other (Azzarito, 2009c) who are "bound to get bullied at school" (Rupali).



*Figure 4.22 Mt005 Mitesh's sister*
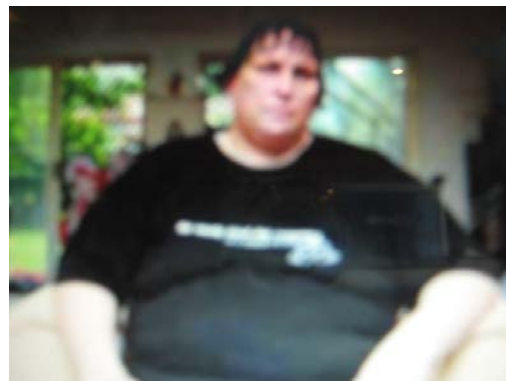


*Figure 4.23 Ya001 Yasmin's photo of a fat person*

The complexity of fit/fat body pressures is articulated by girls who discuss celebrity culture and slender imperatives. The girls feel they need to have the right sort of fit body that is neither "too" fat nor too skinny but average. Yasmin considers skinny to be unhealthy and vain, using a photo of slender white fashion models to show not valued bodies but unvalued (Ya002):

> YASMIN: Some of them do kind of like look hot, and they like think too much of themselves, and that's not a good thing to do… You'd wanna be healthy.
> AMANDIP: Wanna be average, yeah.
> RUPALI: You wouldn't wanna be like, anorexically thin, you'd wanna be normal.



*Figure 4.24 Ya002 Yasmin's photo of slim women*

By representing a dichotomy in her photographs between the abject fat female body and the glamorous but "too skinny" and big-headed models, Yasmin adds to the discourse that appearance determines good/bad bodies. When the group begin to talk about how they would not like to look like the slim models in Ya002 because they would "wanna be average", they produce their selves through their portrayals of the other (Atencio, 2008; Rail, 2009). This photograph acts, then, as a site for them to add nuance to ideas of the good/bad or slim/fat body in relation to "real girls" and body possibilities.

> YASMIN: Some people, like that, are admired because they're so thin.
> AMANDIP: Yeah. Like do you know when you're a celebrity you have to be average size because do you know like they keep an eye on your body shape and all that cos in the magazines like Kerry [Katona] went fat and they pointed out what she is eating and what she is doing and all that.
> YASMIN: And half the time the women that they show on TV, they don't actually look like that anyway.
> AMANDIP: Yeah. Yeah do you know, who is it, Olay, that cream, it made you look clear but they showed that they edited it and all that.
> YASMIN: They airbrushed it. Photoshopped them.
> AMANDIP: Yeah.
> JOANNE: Hm, what do you think about that then?
> AMANDIP: I think you should just show your natural beauty, you don't need make up or whatever to look different.
> YASMIN: And it makes people look fake as well. Like they're not normal, not natural.

Asked whether there is any pressure on young people's bodies, Lucy raises the issue of celebrity culture and women's magazines' display of slim female bodies, "because ... all the pictures that are put up, they are things that you must do, or things that you must wear." Ayesha also took up a position against celebrity-channelled pressure:

> Some people are really too skinny and I'm sure everyone's heard about Victoria Beckham or… people… do you know people, Cheryl Cole like she's really skinny, um, people like just saying 'oh I wanna look like that, I think she's got a nice figure' but if you look at it, you wouldn't exactly starve yourself for the rest of your days just to look like her … [but] it brain washes people (Ayesha)

The difficulty Ayesha recognises is that desiring to be admired for one's figure can tip over into "starving yourself"; for Ayesha it is common sense that "you wouldn't exactly starve yourself," yet research shows that there are links between popular culture imperatives and young women's disordered eating (Allwood, 2010). Interestingly it is Cheryl Cole, whom Ayesha uses as her example here, who is the only woman to feature in any boys' photos.

Jasveer rejects the discourse that fat people cannot play, saying "some of them are good so they're like treated the same as the ones that are normal and fit". However, with this faint praise Jasveer still Others fatness by making a distinction between normal and fat. The undesirable also works to define its opposite, the norm, simultaneously defining (creating space for) what is stable, ethical, desirable and within the limits (Butler, 1993). Bodies that do not fit in this natural space must be avoided through 'vigilant investment in 'health' practices' (O'Flynn, 2008: 56). In a world where health is an individual's self-produced investment, abject bodies represent unethical, self-indulgent immorality. These conversations reinforce links between exercise, fitness and slenderness (Kirk & Colquhoun, 1989).

## 4.7   Concluding comments

This chapter has explored some of the ways that the students visualised and spoke about valued bodies, and how this makes them think about their own bodies, through the lenses of the school visual culture, participants' own photos, and their narratives in interviews. They highlighted competent or competitive, effortful, strong and fit bodies, all intersecting with structural and discursive notions of gendered and racialised appearance and physical activity participation. Visual and verbal data have been reproduced here extensively to share the complexity of the students' responses. Locating the physical culture of their school/PE department as ostensibly valuing good behaviour and continued engagement, students interpret this as valuing competitive, athletic bodies that are monitored, measured and compared through corporal surveillance.

Pressure to perform heightens competition among some students, as their way of being the best. The valuing of ability is of what the body does (the technical skills it has) and also what it looks like in shape and size, looking the part or "looking like you know what you're doing", as Lucy puts it. Ability, that is technical motor skill, may be the predominant ways students are measured as successful, but linked to other values especially effort, strength, and gender normativity. Wright (1996: 77) sees competition 'deeply embedded in Western capitalist discourses of sport' so that 'physical activity without some element of competition is almost unthinkable'. A competitive culture or ethic was also identified by Millington and Wilson (2010), dominated by hegemonic masculinity because associated with the aggression of certain boys. Competition favours a small number of boys by valorising their skill, strength or aggression. But competition also exists in the girls' PE, wherein there are no aggressive boys. Where the girls enjoy competition, they relate it to enjoyment or fun. When the boys' classes are streamed, they receive a visible marker of the differences in ability that are perceived by the teacher as requiring separation into two groups. Some male students become more active once they are in the "lower" group compared to their engagement in mixed ability PE, which suggests that streaming is not intrinsically unequal or exclusionary. However, where access to "higher" streams is awarded to students with a certain body size or shape, there are questions concerning the extent to which body size, muscularity and popularity are factors in defining and performing competence in physical activity (Redelius et al., 2009.

While some measures were identified among teachers as attempts to increase girls' participation in PE and school sport, such as allowing freer interpretation of the PE kit rules; including traditionally female activities on the curriculum; and dividing PE into single-sex classes, there appeared a divide between the recreational, school-level activities that were available for girls, and engagement in higher levels of sport that was reserved for male athletes. The girls' understandings and negotiations of young feminine bodies influence both their positioning and performance as girls and also their relationship to physical activity.

> Worries about inappropriate display of skill and the potential for embarrassment and teasing are interwoven with concerns about presenting appropriate forms of femininity for some girls (Hills & Crosston, 2011: 7).

These discourses enable the students to define themselves as valued sporting or active bodies. The students create subjectivities and appearance (as a marker of identity) through picking up discourses of, for example, femininity, athleticism, healthy, good student. In producing conversations about gender difference, the students recreate a gender order (Connell, 1987, 1995), 'doing' difference between boys and girls but variously positioning girls or boys as superior, largely following broader educational discourses around girls' maturity and academic

conscientiousness, and boys' aggression and underachievement (Archer et al., 2007; Weaver-Hightower, 2003). In earlier models of equality, boys and boys' sports have been seen as more valued in schools, leading to attempts to get girls more active in those sports (Scraton, 1992). The Vale Court girls resist this in some way, claiming that boys should be more supported in sports associated with girls, such as trampolining.

Theories of discursive practice (Weedon, 1997; Davies, 1989), visual culture (Prosser, 2007) and hidden curriculum (Kirk, 1992) highlight that the dominant visual messages offered within the school space affect these girls' constructions of themselves as active or sporting. The explicit curriculum's messages of participation and perseverance seem to offer "sport for all", while the implicit or hidden messages instead reinforce gender and race hierarchies valuing whiteness and masculinity in sport. Teachers' and students' talk also reinforces this; as the hidden curriculum literature tells us, teachers' language is one route through which socially reproductive systems are maintained (Fernandez-Balboa, 1993). Teachers are already reproducing notions of girls' lower status through their speech (for example Mr Martin's "I'd rather teach one hundred boys…" remark) and practices (creating differentiated single-sex curricula) before class even starts (Berg & Lahelma, 2010). When gender is used to explain students' behaviour, it 'reinforce[s] notions of hetero-normativity and demonstrate[s] the tenacity of binary thinking' (Hills & Crosston, 2011: 12). In light of the anti-racist messages in the school, teacher language creates an outwardly race-neutral but gender divided culture. Through listening to students, however, we might see that it is more complex, that their gender negotiations intersect with race or class.

In this chapter, the students' conversations have shown how, through selecting and dismissing different discourses of active bodies, gender normativity and participation, they construct complex images of bodies that have status. The students position themselves variously amongst these discourses and in places this chapter has shown participants perform through their speech fit or strong bodies and produce themselves as boy or girl (Davies, 1989). This context provides a useful starting point for considering how some students articulate their embodied identities as active or inactive as they negotiate and challenge dominant constructions of valued sporting and racialised feminine bodies. As highlighted in chapter 2, a position as high status or valued can depend also on physical performance and development of the right sort of bodily comportment, size and capabilities. Yet the students construct these bodies as possible for anyone to achieve through working on the body. As such, this demonstrates an effect on the material body. At the same time, young people are still affected by structural concepts – the legitimate healthy, strong, competent body is additionally gendered and racialised while presented as achievable for all (Azzarito, 2009c). The next chapter takes a closer look at those participants who invest in

the sporting body discourse, to explore their practices for developing the resources or capital associated with being a sporting body, as the appearance of a fit, able, strong body. It will be demonstrated that students can become valued if they have resources for building and exchanging physical and social capital.

# 5   "If you miss the ball, you look like a total muppet!" Managing bodies and status

## 5.1   Introduction

Having explored the students' understandings of valuing bodies in Chapter 4, this chapter examines students' ways of negotiating and managing or developing a body that has status in PE. This chapter draws on three boys' and one girl's visual and verbal narratives, from their own photo diaries, of their physical activity experiences in and out of school to explore links among physical education, bodies and management of social status. The student narratives in this chapter explore different ways of investing in or managing the body to perform the criteria for high status as a sporting body. While students may position or construct their subjectivities discursively, the material body informs to an extent how students can be seen by peers to embody high status (Fitzclarence, 2004; Shilling, 1991, 2003; Turner, 2008). Physical, gender and social capital inform how the students are able to invest in and perform sporting/active bodies. This chapter also looks a little deeper at students' ways of engaging with physical activity, to understand what it means to participate and what can be gained from physical activity. Using the analytical framework developed from feminist poststructuralism and postcolonialism as outlined in the previous chapters, this chapter and the next look at the implications of sporting bodies being valued in PE. The participants take up various and fluid subjectivities as they position themselves among gendered and racialised discourses of ability, athleticism, sport and physical activity. The sections in the chapter progress as follows: 5.2 picks up Deepesh's narrative of his physical activity regimes built around improving his fitness and trimming his body so that he is better able to compete in PE as well as benefit from his boxing training; 5.3 demonstrates how Mitesh invests in locally dominant physical cultures, even though he is marginalised; Harshul's worries about looking unskilled in PE and his continual practice outside school are the focus in 5.4; 5.5 considers how Lucy engages extensively in physical activities both in and out of school yet copes with pressure to conform to femininity; and 5.6 brings together the common themes in this chapter: appearance, performance and social status.

## 5.2   "I want to get fitter." Deepesh's narrative

Deepesh produced 34 photos showing some of the school, home and community spaces that constitute the place of physical activity in his life. Through his photos, he offers an insight into his identity as a boxer and as a young man who uses exercise and training to improve his body both for PE and sport. Furthermore, he constructs physical activity as benefitting not only physical but mental development:

> DEEPESH: I know that you can do PE and if you keep doing sports like with my dad pushing me and sport is that it would help me in my education. Cos like, it makes you think more dunnit, yeah! Like faster reactions and that. [Others mumble or pull sceptical faces] Yeah, see, it's true! Look it up on the internet.

For Deepesh, a member of the "higher" ability PE class at Vale Court, PE is "fun". He uses his photos to display the teamwork and communication that are important practices in their sport-based lessons (De001), while he accords low status to classmates who are "not very participative", valuing those who show enjoyment in the game. In terms of the body, for him stamina and having "pecs" also mark someone as high status. As a boxer, and as someone with high stakes in the competitive atmosphere of the PE class, Deepesh constructs himself as aware of the importance of body size or of producing and displaying the right body for sport. Deepesh puts himself at the centre of many of his photos, often as others might see him during a training session (De008). He offers a series of shots of his training regime at home, which "my dad makes me do", where he does sit-ups, push-ups and "pad work". His body is in action in his photos, displaying controlled, practiced movement (De023, De025, and De027).

> JOANNE: So the push ups and other exercises, are they for boxing training?
> DEEPESH: Yeah, and for school and that, innit, get fitter. Yeah.

Woodward's (2007) research on boxing bodies presents them as 'heroic bodies'; boxing transforms skinny bodies that may get 'bashed around' 'into fit, powerful bodies that can take care of themselves and earn the respect of others' (Woodward, 2007: 23). The version of masculinity associated with a boxing body is, Woodward argues, one that has overcome fear of harm while also being able to inflict harm on others, demanding control over one's body and domination over others'. Furthermore she finds that many boxers enter the sport after having suffered bullying or racist taunts. Clearly these are not the only reasons for the take up of boxing by young men; peer networks, and as Wacquant's (1992) notable work highlights, class habitus, play a role as with other sports. However, Woodward's suggestions resonate somewhat with Deepesh's explanation that in his "rainbow coloured" boxing club, he feels more comfortable than in football despite being a keen fan. Continuing issues of both the visibility of British Asian footballers and the structural barriers in the sport for Asian men and women (Burdsey, 2007; Ratna, 2011; Scraton et al., 2005) are evident as Deepesh explains that he perceives institutional racism among scouts from top football clubs who he claims visit local youth teams and will either not select Asian boys, or sign them but never give them a chance to play. Through boxing, Deepesh is able to challenge notions of Asian boys as unsporty. Bradbury (2011: 75) finds that minority ethnic sports clubs offer a symbolic physical cultural space as resistance to white sporting dominance and where can be created 'new, youthful, multi-ethnic identities'.

*Figure 5.1 De001 Deepesh's photo of a hockey lesson*



*Figure 5.2 De008 Deepesh at boxing club*



*Figure 5.3 De023 Deepesh doing push ups*



*Figure 5.4 De025 Deepesh doing sit ups*



*Figure 5.5 De027 Deepesh doing boxing drills*

Boxing is constituted by disciplinary techniques that regulate the body, inscribing it with practices, traditions and routines (Woodward, 2007). Similarly, Deepesh explains his after-school jogging routine thus:

> JOANNE: So what are your reasons for going jogging?
> DEEPESH: Just to lose weight.
> JOANNE: You want to lose weight?
> Yeah. Cos I want to do PE for GCSE. So like I want to have the stamina and stuff for the bleep test and that (Deepesh)

During one interview, Bhagesh teases Deepesh, calling him a slow runner. "Toning the body" is

a large reason behind the boxing training Deepesh carries out both at home and in the club. It is these training regimens through which Deepesh works on his body, creating the "right" body for PE as well as boxing. The imperative to meet the standard in PE is such that boys' out of school physical activity takes a form through which they work on the body for PE performance. Deepesh works to develop a muscular and trim boxing body that will be useful for his long term engagement in this activity after he leaves school, as he sees post-school activity as much more important than PE and school sport. The maintenance of a physically acceptable body is also seen with Harshul, Mitesh and Mickey, although they draw on different discourses to describe what is the right body for them. Throughout the discussions and representations of fit bodies, the participants bring in explanations of how their own physical activity behaviours related to health and obesity imperatives. For Lucy and Namita, being active "makes you feel good", "fit", or "healthier, you're doing something good to your body". Burning calories induces a physical and emotional satisfaction; Amandip feels good about being active, especially when she monitors her calorie loss with a pedometer app on her Smartphone. Sport and exercise are commendable for improving the body and health. In this way, students can gain status for what activity does to their bodies - especially toning and slimming. It becomes clear that how they think about attaining status, suggests the body is a project to be worked upon (Bourdieu, 1984; Shilling, 2003) or working on the body in such ways that they could better match the appearance of a fit body. Deepesh constructs his identity as a future competitive club boxer:

> Like there's a sport that you want to get better at, you could always go to clubs. That's what I did ... It only matters what you do out of school. Like, boxing, like, if you work hard in boxing and that you can actually box for your club (Deepesh)

Deepesh believes that because he is only at school for a few years, his achievements there do not count for as much as his longer-term achievements in his boxing club, which are what will get him known as a successful sportsman. Some students believe that sport is hardly worth doing unless they push themselves to the top. Richard uses a ladder metaphor concerning his aim to become a professional hockey player for England. There is a ladder that he must climb - moving through the ranks as he grows up, from under 16s to under 21s, from club level to county level to national level. The story he tells is that he already has each step on the ladder planned out, and he only has to continue to participate to take the next step upwards:

> RICHARD: Following the same steps that they [my role models] took, like, they can go from public to like your whole city and then to Midlands and then to international ... I've done three, I've only got one more step for England, that's, I've done for my county, now I need to do Midlands, but I'm going to try out in August. And I'm doing England when I'm 16 ... then I go to under 21 and then I go to professional.

Unlike Deepesh's physical training and centring of an embodied project to get where he wants to be, Richard suggests that his achievements in hockey are already guaranteed as long as he continues to play. Talent and improvement can be considered, in this "ladder" narrative, to come as a natural result of prolonged involvement in a sport. For Richard, a white boy, success in sport is expected to come a lot easier. Deepesh, Mitesh and Mickey (who we saw lifting weights in Figure 4.8) indicate their reasons for engaging in fitness or muscle-building routines outside school: 'to get hench' or to develop a body that could display competence in PE. As in research with other schools, there were consequences for the masculine status of boys who did not perform some form of valued masculinity (Tischler & McCaughtry, 2011; Wellard, 2006). As Fleming (1991) argues, even where Asian and black British boys and their masculine performances constitute a majority and are dominant in school spaces, there are multiple practices and performances through which they produce their selves and others so that it is not possible to find a singular narrative of the physicalities of British Asian boys. While some boys may be marginalised because of their ethnicity, there are complex intersections of ethnic categories with age, body size and gender relations.

Some participants compare themselves to their role models and discuss how they might follow similar paths to sporting greatness. However, this is not always just a case of ability or practice, as Bhagesh and Deepesh indicate:

> JOANNE: Would you like to be like [Mike Tyson]?
> BHAGESH: Yeah.
> JOANNE: Erm, do you think that you are like him now?
> BHAGESH: No!
> JOANNE: What would you need to do to be like him?
> DEEPESH: Change skin colour.

Having expected Deepesh to answer this question with a plan for increasing his fitness, practicing hard, and committing to the sport, I am surprised to hear this answer. It is unclear whether Deepesh is saying something about the superiority or greater natural suitability of black men like Tyson to boxing – in claiming that boxing is not racist like football he mentions British Asian boxer Amir Khan[i] – and Deepesh possibly was being disingenuous. Yet by articulating this thought, that Deepesh cannot be like Tyson because Deepesh is not black, he may be limiting the possibility of his success in boxing because of a perceived ethnicity barrier in the sport. As in Thangaraj's (2010) ethnography with "Indo/Pak" young men in the USA playing pick-up basketball and developing masculinities through their take up of black cultural codes, through boxing Deepesh constructs his self in relation to blackness and Asianness, not whiteness, offering some level of resistance to white dominance; a white dominance that may be found in sport as a whole, although not always in boxing.

### 5.3 "I'm still not that good…what more can you do?" Mitesh's narrative

Mitesh included nearly sixty photos in his photo diary, detailing his relationships with friends and classmates with a focus on the tensions surrounding physical activity and his small-framed body. In the multiple locations displayed in Mitesh's photos – living room, bedroom, garden, playground, recreation ground, leisure centre, street, gym, sports hall and all-weather pitch – stories are told of the developing place of formal and informal play and exercise in these adolescent lives as they negotiate masculinity and youth. Most of Mitesh's photos show that he believes he has low physical and sporting status compared with his friends. He visually presents himself as a small and weak boy in juxtaposition to his friends who are strong young men. In at least one photo (Mt007) Mitesh has placed himself side by side with his friend Satnam to offer a direct comparison of their sizes – displaying visibly Mitesh's small stature compared with that of his friend. Mitesh photographs Satnam in mock bodybuilding poses including the bicep curl (Mt006), sometimes in juxtaposition to Mitesh who seems to emphasise his angular, unmuscular body. Rather than feeling embarrassed to show his small frame compared to other boys', Mitesh used this photo to point out that boys gain status through their bodies and not through determination, fitness or teamwork. As subordinate or resistant boys are still measured against mainstream or hyper-masculinity (Hickey, 2008), Mitesh actively visualised himself as subordinated, with this photo. No other participants are so frank in, effectively, "putting themselves down" or opening themselves up to visible comparison. This photo is used by Mitesh to answer the question "what do people who are admired in PE look like?"

> It's um, picture 7 shows the diversity between like stockier build and a skinnier build, yeah, so it makes [him] valued for [his] skills and body (Mitesh)



*Figure 5.6 Mt007 Satnam and Mitesh*



*Figure 5.7 Mt006 Satnam's body-building poses*

Mitesh also photographs his friends at the playground doing pull-ups on the climbing frames (Mt016 and Mt007). These photos display for comparison bodies and their capabilities, unlike other photos that show football-playing, scrambling on playground equipment, walking or

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cycling. Mitesh seems to show how boyhood play comes up against a display of the muscular body of young manhood, in a juxtaposition of two different displays of masculinity.



*Figures 5.8 and 5.9 Mt016 and Mt017 Mitesh's friends doing pull-ups on the swing frame at the park*

Jasveer, another of Mitesh's best friends, took many of his photos for the project at the same time, in the park and playground, and together the two sets of photos produce in these locations spaces that these boys can rule (Ja011) albeit uncomfortably - whether at times eerily empty (Mt013 and Mt015) or shared with young children (Mt046). The tension between boyhood and adulthood is also expressed in the way Mitesh talks about the new fitness suite at school, an exciting space where the students feel they are treated like adults: "in our old school we used to use, like, cones and all that to run around. And then we thought it is a treat when they brought out apparatus. And then when we came here [new school build] and we have, um, new equipment, like adults use." A classmate takes many photos of Mitesh himself using the new school's gym equipment (e.g. Mt031).



*Figure 5.10 Ja011 Jasveer's friend*

*Figure 5.11 Mt013 Mitesh's photo of the park*



*Figure 5.12 Mt015 Mitesh's photo of the playground*



*Figure 5.13 Mt046 Mitesh on the climbing frame*



*Figure 5.14 Mt031 Mitesh on the rowing machine*

In interview, Mitesh offers insights as to how his size and ability affect his feelings about himself and his place in class. He engages in physical activity in an attempt to improve his ability and to increase his body size or muscularity, "to look more stocky and more bigger". For Mitesh his lack of strength is one of the causes of his low status in PE. Mitesh desires to develop his body into the ideal masculine body often discussed by the boys.

> JOANNE: Why would you want to put on weight, what would be the reason for that?
> MITESH: Just to look more stocky and more bigger.
> JOANNE: Is that because, to be stocky is to be, um, is the type of body that is admired?
> MITESH: Yeah. Yeah like Cristiano Ronaldo's, or picture number 6 [Satnam].

Mitesh could be considered a boy with something to prove, using the interview to talk at length about each of his photos and how they demonstrate the place of physical activity in his life, such as walking to school (Mt002), doing household chores  (see Figure 4.19) or running errands for his mother ("they always tell me to go upstairs and get something, but they can't go, I always run upstairs and go get it, and then I tell them it's not hard, you just have to run upstairs that's it"). We can also see, however, that Jasveer and Mitesh's leisure time does not solely involve being active - they both include pictures of themselves relaxing, sat on the same sofa, watching television and eating crisps. Mitesh gives himself away when he says, "I would

normally do that [sit and watch TV], but sometimes I like being active, yeah." As I have outlined in the previous chapter, the students often drew on neoliberal language of health surveillance, personal responsibility and shame as a response to inactivity.



*Figure 5.15 Mt002 Mitesh walking: "There are other pictures of me like walking, as walking is a big part of my life. Because like I walk here, I walk everywhere"*

Mitesh's friends' loyalty is constructed in the way he talks about their acceptance of his low skill. They include him in their games of football, something Mitesh is grateful for, saying, "But when I'm with like my friends in pictures [Mt]017 and [Mt]016, they don't say anything. Cos they know my capabilities. And they don't like get surprised at how not good I am. They are good and they help me to be good at football." He almost accepts his low status in PE, especially in team sports such as football. Football looms large in Mitesh's mind. He says, "I try my hardest at football and I'm still not that good". To him, skill and respect in this sport are key to respect throughout PE and school sport.

In his most intriguing photo (Mt019), Mitesh can be seen knelt on the floor, head in hands, while a disembodied hand points down at him accusingly:



*Figure 5.16 Mt019 Mitesh hides his face while Satnam pretends to point and laugh*

Mitesh explains that this photo is a representation of what discourages him from being active - "someone laughing at me. When I can't do sport. When I'm trying hard it will look either funny or I just don't know how to do it... It's because like if people think that I'm doing it wrong, why

should I do it? Whereas if I genuinely can't do it, then I'll quit." Although British Asian boys have been found to have low status physically in terms of ability in ethnically diverse schools (Bramham, 2003), where South Asians are a majority as in the PE classes at Vale Court, hierarchies are worked out in other ways than by ethnicity. Those who are good at football are able to exchange that physical capital for admiration in other sports, and for social capital outside of the PE class. Being in the high PE set offers a level of social capital, irrespective of performance during the class:

> NIKHIL: So like the higher group is more respected by everyone and more liked and all that. They're like…
> MITESH: Everyone wants to be in there.
> NIKHIL: In the circle. And the people in the lower group or just like, some of them are in the circle, but you know what I mean, some of them aren't.

Praise is thought of by students as confirming their social status - one may be the best or fastest but only when peers or teachers say that they have done well can students see that they have respect. To score a goal and even to try to be the best enables Mitesh to feel validated by others.

> It's like people just like, praise you more and you think higher of you, things like that… say if I score a goal, everyone's gonna be like, 'wow' [Tasvinder laughs] …And just say if a big person got a goal, everyone's gonna be like, normal. It's normal for them to score but not normal for us to score, is it? Like that (Mitesh)

Mitesh explains that outside school he is involved in a lifesaving course and frequently goes swimming. He is proud of his achievements in gaining a range of lifesaving qualifications. Although he does, therefore, present himself as active, he is unable to gain physical or social capital in PE class. Sports have a differential value and profile based on how their practices reproduce high status dispositions (Sparkes et al., 2007). As Fitzgerald (2005) finds with boys who play boccia, likewise a low status sport, Mitesh's chosen activities out of school are not activities wherein physical capital can be built that has exchange potential. Mitesh accepts his small stature and low status, investing in some of the practices of the PE culture yet also wishing for change so that training in lifesaving might offer him some possibility of capital. While he supports most of the practices in PE, he is not high status and has to work against practices and language that marginalise his body and actions in class. Unlike other students whose low status causes them to hold back in PE, Mitesh's "feel for the game" of the PE class hierarchy leads him to verbally and physically assert an authoritative position in an attempt to gain recognition, and some capital, for the effort he exerts. Despite talking about his own low status in PE, Mitesh is quick to construct all girls as low status and bad in PE. He shows no solidarity with other low status students, instead attempting to accrue for himself more social capital among the boys in his interview group by putting girls down. However, in the following

extract, when Tasvinder challenges the construction of all girls as worse at sports than boys, Mitesh concedes that only "ninety nine per cent" of girls are worse. Then he is able to draw on his gender capital (male privilege) in exhorting me not to feel offended:

> JOANNE: All the girls are worse than all the boys?
> TASVINDER: No.
> MITESH: Yeah, all of them!
> TASVINDER: There's a girl yeah, she's good at hockey, she's like the best in the year. She's the best hockey player in the year.
> MITESH: Vina.
> TASVINDER: Yeah, Vina. So, yeah, it's not true yeah that girls are like, whacker [worse] than boys.
> MITESH: OK well ninety nine per cent.  [Mitesh and Kuldeep laugh]
> JOANNE: Right. Um.
> MITESH: No offence.

Harshul argues that the boys' greater ability and effort in PE is enough to require PE to be gender segregated and to exclude girls from the "real" business of PE that the boys participate in. Richard says girls "are not as talented as we are". Even when boys recognise that they are themselves placed at disadvantage by the values and practices in school PE, they often fail to connect this to girls' treatment within the physical culture. In hockey class,

> Mitesh spends much of the practice twirling his hockey stick around in imitation of a majorette. The ball is not passed to him much in practice (a sort of piggy in the middle) and when it is, he misses it and has to run after it. Mitesh stands to one side during the hockey game, talking to another boy who should be playing, and a boy with no kit who is watching, all stood in the middle of the pitch. Suddenly, one of the opposition kicks the ball with his feet [a foul] and Mitesh shouts across the pitch "oi fucking bastard, feet! Fucking stop the game! Feet!" He runs over to catch up with play, still muttering and criticising the opposition. His call is ignored. He takes more of an interest in the game after that. [Field notes]

Mitesh has little interest in the game until he sees a foul go unnoted, then he wants to make sure everything happens properly. His criticism of the infringement is one way for him to have a stake in the game and to gain status, because his playing does not bring him capital. To be a valid performance of authority, other students must accept Mitesh's authority; when they ignore him, his performance fails. Hunter (2004) mentions that the shape or look of the body carries symbolic capital as though one can judge another's skill/ability by their body. Physical capital is offered to those approximating the ideal body, and 'withheld from those without' (Hunter, 2004: 188). Those who do not or are unable to take up legitimated subject positions in PE including competent motor performance or the appearance of a strong, healthy body can be constructed as bad students and are marginalised; and with less influence in the field, are less able to accrue value even when trying. Mitesh's story can indicate how intersections of gender/masculine status with race and age are implicated in taking up subject positions or

performing a strong or muscular body. The same is the case of Deepesh, although body size is related to fitness in his narrative. Mitesh blames his low ability in football on his smaller stature compared to his friends and other class mates, so he endeavours to produce a stockier body. At the onset of adolescence, Mitesh offers powerful images of his peers' changes from boyhood to young manhood embodied in their size.

## 5.4 *"If you miss the ball, you look like a total muppet." Harshul's narrative*

Harshul presents 30 photos in his set. Many have a posed quality, where he or his cousins occupy a central position while displaying a type of physical activity that they enjoy outside school. Like Mitesh, Harshul has engaged with the photography project as a way to display himself - but unlike Mitesh's photo narrative, Harshul's is a narrative of sporting abilities. Highly skilled bodies displaying sporting excellence are frequent in Harshul's photos: a sequence of photos (see Ha008-015) shows Harshul in his backyard posing with various sports equipment - a football, tennis racket, cricket bat or bicycle; in other photos we see Harshul holding a hockey stick or golf club - indicating that Harshul wants to display how comfortable and confident he is in using this equipment. He also poses playing on his PlayStation and while out walking his dogs (Ha019).



*Figures 5.17 to 5.21 Ha008 to Ha015 Harshul demonstrates his sports equipment*

*Figure 5.22 Ha019 Harshul takes his dog for a walk*

When the boy's PE classes become streamed, Harshul is placed in the "higher" ability group by the teachers. He is also active in two after-school clubs – hockey and badminton, and one outside school club, cricket. Harshul's description of someone who is highly valued in PE ("they can play, like, every sport, and they are good at it, so they make the team win") focuses on sporting performance and winning, suggesting conformity to the physical culture in PE class as described in Chapter 4. Bearing in mind the self-representation that Harshul builds in his photo set, he presents a complex construction in the interviews of the pressure he feels to do well in PE. Explaining the photos of himself posing with golf clubs and so on, Harshul talks about practicing sports, especially golf, outside of school, in order to look good at them in PE. He talks about being worried about messing up in PE:

> Like, sometimes … we have passing drills, and if you can't pass the ball people start laughing. Or if you mess up or do something… You've gotta like learn quick (Harshul)

He clarifies this by saying that he practices golf a lot outside of school in order to have sufficient literacy in the necessary movements:

> JOANNE: How did you get interested in golf?
> HARSHUL: Er, like, my cousin took me and then he like, teaches me. At first I can't hit it, so like I wanted to go and improve. So after, in Year 11 we have to go [to golf lessons] from here, so it's better if I learn right now with my cousin. If I like, if I mess up at school like people are gonna laugh, so…
> JOANNE: Is it something in particular about golf that makes you worried about not looking good?
> HARSHUL: Yeah if you miss the ball, like, you look like a total muppet.

At the same time, he calls himself a quick learner and someone who picks things up easily. However, he claims that if other boys in the class have played golf before, they will look skilled, so his quick learning will not do him any good if everyone else also knows what to do. Although Harshul shows himself as competent in racket sports, hockey and cricket, he indicates that he finds golf particularly difficult, something which he must practice. The physical competences that he has gained in other sports are insufficient for Harshul to feel that he will

have capital enough to play golf without practicing a lot. He does not have enduring physical or social capital that is tradable for high standing in golf (Sparkes et al., 2007; Tinning, 2010).

The students are concerned about what others think of them. High levels of criticism can be avoided potentially by him being the best and aiming high all the time. Sparkes et al. (2007) argue that to retain a place in a sporting culture and retain value, participants/members have to develop a habitus of continual practice because that place is not guaranteed and must be worked at. Status is accrued not through being skilled (if everyone else is skilled) but through standing out in some way.

> JOANNE: Do you think that people in your class are competitive even when it's not a race, or it's not a match?
> JASVEER: Yeah.
> HARSHUL: Cos like if they come last yeah, then people are gonna start like dissing them.
> JOANNE: OK. Is it quite a big concern, then, to not be last?
> HARSHUL: Yeah.
> JASVEER: Yeah. So everyone tries to get…
> HARSHUL: Better.
> JASVEER: …To the top.

Harshul is keenly aware of needing to look like he can do something already, or being knowledgeable. As seen in the previous chapter, this need for performance appears typical to the culture of the PE class - Harshul talks about his greater enjoyment in sport clubs outside school, where all the boys are a similar ability and he can relax more, not needing to perform as much where "everyone plays to the standard" and hence "there's no point comparing because you're all like about the same ability" so "they aren't as competitive".

> Yeah PE yeah, you try to do better, I suppose, if you do it like messed up yeah, then you're gonna get told [laughed at] like, for weeks and weeks yeah. But out of school yeah if you mess up once, it's alright cos you can, it's only like a week thing, or whatever it is, so you like you won't get dissed or whatever (Harshul)

Displaying knowledge about how to perform an activity correctly - and telling someone they are doing it wrong - is a form of capital that potentially could build or reinforce status:

> [Football] Some players shout advice to their team mates, often "leave it!" if it is going out. On one of these occasions, the slight, Asian, boy near the ball keeps it in play, and soon the opposition go on to score a goal. Ben, his captain, is furious, and shouts at least three times, "you should have left it!" The guilty lad shrinks back into the corner of the pitch. He is much smaller than Ben. [Field notes]

Sometimes high status players ignore team mates to whom they do not want to pass, which can have negative consequences. During team selection, students might display their dissatisfaction

with their placements, physically distancing themselves from undesirable team mates, as a way to perform social status or difference. One instance from the field notes illustrates this.

> [Diamond cricket] Ms Davis asks the girls to get into teams of four. Ms Davis asks for anyone not in a four to come to her. Amala shuffles forward. Ms Davis asks Lizzi, a popular white girl, to join with Amala, Nisha and Nasneen. Lizzi protests strongly, but Ms Davis insists. Lizzi shuffles over and stands, with hands in pockets, facing away from her team mates, looking over at the team she wanted to be in. For the warm up she stands apart from them, with a disdainful look on her face, and will not get involved in the activities. [Field notes]

Displays of dissatisfaction with team mates indicate that value in terms of social status affects capital in the PE class to such an extent that some students would rather not participate than have to work with people whom they dislike. Lizzi's status in peer terms is more important than any status she may gain from PE participation.

Far from being put off, Harshul manages what he sees as the ever-present risk of low status through frequent practice of the movements and skills required for ball sports. A student must already be fit or strong or skilled in the activity, because he is on display to others and although not having these characteristics does not bar him from playing, he will "be at a disadvantage". Skill is not enough if he does not have the right body. Other boys also articulated similar feelings, that if they don't aim to be *the* best in PE, they might end up being the worst. Tasvinder says that students cheat "so they can say that like they're the best, and no one can beat them". Every participant remembers times when students call names, laugh, mock and put down others who have performed badly in PE, and this behaviour continues outside of the PE classroom. Harshul's relationship with his older cousin also contributes to his sporting self. Many of Harshul's experiences in physical activity outside school are initiated by his cousin, who teases Harshul if he loses (despite Harshul being five years younger). Their playful rivalry and Harshul's attempts to keep up form the basis for much of Harshul's positioning in relation to sport and physical activity. In Hauge and Haavind's (2011: 9) study, technically skilled boys are 'constituted as athletic adolescents' for whom performance and competitiveness 'secure entry to the world of men'. They point out that mastery in sport intersects masculinity with age. Harshul's elder cousin's teasing of Harshul points out the latter's low skill.

> HARSHUL: I play with him at sports, because that cousin is like he's always playing different sports yeah and saying he's better than me. And I always like take up new sports like to try and beat him. Because all the time, yeah, he shows off like he got me into most of my sports. Cos he like, plays this or that, I want to play it as well. Like, I enjoy like most of the stuff he does so like I know if he likes it I'll probably like it. And I want to beat him at it.
> JOANNE: Is he the one that got you into golf?
> HARSHUL: Yeah.

JOANNE: Does your cousin get you into a lot of activities?
HARSHUL: Yeah. Cos he's like good at everything. And I try to beat him but I can't.

Throughout our conversations, and my observations of the boys' PE lessons, this need for performance appears typical to the culture of the PE class. Sparkes et al. (2007) argue that to retain a place in the dominant culture or to retain value, participants/members have to develop a habitus of continual practice or constant work because a high status place must be worked for. Body size, practice and competence intersect as symbols of the high status sporting body in this physical culture. Echoing Harshul, Yasmin says "they'll still be talking about it for like a week." This complex representation of the objectives of competing in PE compared to the more relaxed atmosphere of recreational and club sport offers an insight in the production of the school/PE physical culture that places emphasis on competition, winning, being the best.

## 5.5 *"They call you 'man' and stuff." Lucy's narrative*

Lucy presented herself as a highly active, give-it-a-go sportswoman who competes in county-level cross-country running, is a Scout Leader and a Corporal in Army Cadets, used to be an acrobatic dancer, and who was at age 13 invited to join an under-21s women's football club. This construction of her active self is supported by observations in PE class. Lucy is one of the most highly valued members of the girls' PE class, as indicated by being one of the most frequent demonstrators, warm up leaders and captains. She is expected by peers and teachers to win every activity. On the rare occasion that Lucy loses in a competitive game, her classmates and the teacher express surprise. It is a greater achievement for someone to beat Lucy than any other classmate.



*Figure 5.23 Lu022 Lucy's photo of a volleyball lesson*



*Figure 5.24 Lu010 Lucy's Scout troop*

Lucy does not appear in her own photo diary. The majority of her photos show a PE volleyball lesson (Lu022) and a Scout meet at another nearby school. The photos of her Scout troop are mainly posed shots, indicating friendship (Lu010). Lucy appears in a number of the other girls' photos showing people they admire, because she is "good at PE" (Yasmin). She builds this

status using her physical capital as a strong, confident mover, demonstrating skill in most activities; also by exchanging her physical capital for social, often taking control such as questioning others' movements, the teachers' rules, or demanding increased engagement from her team mates. For her, being valued or appreciated in physical activity is gained through confidence, being strong and trying hard. Lucy says, "I do cross country and my dad wants to push me to be the best, cos if you're going to do it you might as well do it as good as you can … As long as we're having fun and involving themselves (sic) then it's alright, try our best".

In the previous section it was noted that Harshul practiced at home to become better at sports in PE. Lucy is much more confident about gaining new skills. The physical resources she has to draw upon, and her ability-related social status in the class, ensure that she will not be "put down" if there is an activity that she has not done before:

> Some people are always going to be better than other people at different sports. So you're alright, just try your best. Other people are sometimes going to be better than you. Just leave them out! … Like trampolining. Like, I'm not good at it compared to some other people, but I don't give up, I can, and stuff (Lucy)

Challenging valued body constructions may be easier for those who carry some other form of status. Being identified as high ability additionally offers privilege so that even when these students display low participation, they do not lose status (Hay & Macdonald, 2010). Lucy's high status enables her to sometimes resist the practices of PE as she does not need to conform – in the sense of participating or behaving well – all the time in order to maintain her position and capital. Resisting normalisation or stigmatisation is a privileged position for those who already have power or capital (Martino & Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2005). From the field notes,

> Ms Davis called the girls in from warm up by saying 'the last one in is a….!' leaving some of the girls to complete the sentence. As they all ran in towards the bags of tags and balls, the girls completed the sentence with '…a green hairy toad!' Most girls ran back quickly. Lucy jogged slowly, is the last to come back, and said under her breath sarcastically, 'oh no I'm a hairy toad'. [Field notes]

Lucy is able to resist the low status that is being threatened (playfully) because she is usually fastest and won't lose her high status just by being last and being called a name once. She also could be resisting the immaturity of name-calling. In Berg and Lahelma's (2010) observations in a mixed dance class, two boys who resist the heteronormative regime by dancing together are perceived to get away with it because their strong muscular bodies perform dominant masculinity well enough for them to avoid heterosexist ridicule.

Despite all PE classes for their year group being single sex, like other girls in the study, Lucy is preoccupied by difficulties previously experienced in mixed PE:

> LUCY: You try not to do your best around boys.
> JOANNE: You try not to do your best?
> LUCY: Yeah you pretend you don't know anything.
> JOANNE: Oh right.
> NAMITA: Cos I, sometimes, you don't want to be better than them.
> LUCY: Yeah so you try not to be better. Sometimes you can, if you want to be competitive.
> JOANNE: But inside you might be thinking 'I'm better than them'?
> ALL: Yeah.
> NAMITA: But you don't want to show it.
> JOANNE: OK. Why would that be? Because they would say something?
> NAMITA: You're scared about what they might say.

Lucy articulates similar thoughts about girls' body shape, size or strength indicating observance of normative femininity. In the second interview I ask Group A about this again. Lucy explains that boys "start picking on you, like 'oh you're really strong', you're not meant to be like, girls are meant to be less strong than boys. They call you 'man' and stuff." The girls are concerned about boys' regulation of girls' movement and engagement with activity. Lucy also talks about her body image and sense of self being affected by boys' comments, betraying her concern and the effect on participation in PE. She reports at various times that boys call her "man" (as seen in the quote above) or "fat", as a double attempt to deny her femininity.

> LUCY: I get called fat all the time by boys, so I … try harder in PE, just try to look more skinny.
> JOANNE: What do you think about them when they say those sorts of things?
> LUCY: I just, I think they're stupid for picking on us, because no one's perfect, they're not going to be like – people call you fat, they're like big themselves! [Others laugh] So how can they say that when they're big themselves? I'd understand if they wasn't.
> JOANNE: Do you believe them when they say things like that?
> LUCY: It's because of how much they say it, so if they keep saying like every day you come to school and they've said it, and they say it again, then you start to believe it, but otherwise, no. Like they say it once or twice, it tends to not work. It affects different people. Depends on how strong you are mentally or emotionally.

She goes on to further explain the effect on her sense of self:

> Makes you feel like you can't be what you wanna be, but what other people want. Cos there's some people ain't even fat but if boys seem to think they're fat then they tell other people, like compared to other people they just bully you for nothing. Like say you're fat or even if you're big boned, but you look like you're fat, they make you not want to eat because you want to be skinny, because you want to go on diets and stuff (Lucy)

Importantly, Lucy indicates that other people's comments "make you feel like you can't be what you wanna be" - that her subjectivity and physicality are restricted by another's idea of what she should look like and how she should behave. Lucy recognises that this is "stupid"

because it is both hypocritical and hurtful, but with the frequency with which she hears such comments, "you start to believe it" and her agency to reject the disciplining is affected. Combating "put downs" "depends on how strong you are mentally or emotionally" (Lucy), "showing that you don't care" and it doesn't bother you (Ayesha), or giving as good as you get (Yasmin).

Lucy's active, confident, muscular body conflicts with normative feminine body ideals. To be either fat or masculine is to take up more space than a properly feminine, slender, passive and restricted body (Murray, 2008; Young, 1980). She constructs her femininity in relation to the images of slender white sports women in the PE corridor but also among peers in a predominantly Asian school where Lucy stands out for her pale but flushed skin and for her confident sports engagement. Even those girls like Lucy who gain enjoyment and status from physical activity are betrayed by ways of seeing bodies that affect not just the PE class but interactions among students throughout the school. Lucy's physicality renders her capable and confident in PE and sport, but her reaction to the name calling from boys is complex. Acknowledging that she is caught between two competing narratives of empowered and stereotypical femininity, Lucy says "girls can be just as strong as them [boys], it doesn't really matter if you're strong" and suggests that it is a case of having mental or emotional stoutness to ignore comments. She draws on popular discourses that girls "can be toned ... muscley, but not too muscley". A discussion of swimmer Rebecca Adlington ("she's like, nice because she's toned but she's not too skinny or too big" - Lucy) indicates that the girls are anxious about being muscular when part of the body is out of proportion to the rest, whereas in swimming "it's not just your arms or just your legs, so it wouldn't make you look out of proportion".[ii] Lucy struggles to ignore her feeling that boys, in and out of school, are the source of negativity towards girls' involvement in sport, but is able at other times to present herself as resilient and not shy:

> NAMITA: Cos like football when we're in mixed groups, the girls tend to like, step back a bit and let the boys do it.
> LUCY: Except for me [laughs].

Lucy is the only white girl who participated in the project, although there are three other white girls in her PE class, Sally, Lizzi and Jenny, all of whom are constructed by the teacher as "able". For Lucy to claim that effort is much more important than competence in gaining a position of status in (girls') PE can be argued to come from a position of privilege. Cooky and McDonald (2005) consider white girls to be "insider-others" in sport – marginalised by gender but benefitting from white privilege whereby their bodies are reflected in media, unremarkable and normal.

Lucy's participation in a range of activities, including some that may be considered traditionally masculine, remains high. Lucy says that she uses the training she gains in Army Cadets and Scouts to gain qualifications such as for first aid, or to learn leadership through organising country walks; in her eyes, football, Scouts and Cadets are legitimately feminine activities – especially Cadets where there is a majority of young women. She aligns Cadets with a girl identity. In Lucy's narratives, she is not a girl who hides her capabilities in mixed PE, but her stories indicate her struggles in reconciling her active self with demands for her to present a normative feminine self at school. Lucy's account demonstrates what she and other girls in the study experience as a contradiction between their capable, confident physicality in single-sex (or female-dominated) social fields and remnants of gender-differentiated language and practice among peer networks in school. While some girls may challenge boys' dominance and echo calls for equal opportunities, they may struggle to not also reiterate conflicting narratives that boys are stronger (Cooky & McDonald, 2005). Being sporty on the pitch, doing tomboy identities, has been thought to increase girls' acceptance among boys (Paechter, 2010); yet off the pitch, "normal" femininity becomes important again (With-Nielsen & Pfister, 2011). In different contexts, varying forms of doing gender have different meanings and are more or less acceptable. A mismatch between gendered habitus, equality discourses and evidence of strong/able female physicality, is recognised by Hills (2006) as central to conceptualising girls' agency in questioning or subverting male dominance in sport. Gender conformity, in body shape and activity choice, remains imperative in the PE culture.

## 5.6   *Concluding comments*

This chapter has explored the ways in which some students discursively and visually represent valued bodies and invest themselves in constructions of the sporting body in an attempt to achieve high status in single-sex PE. The practices employed by students to accrue or manage status in PE were the focus. The four narratives demonstrate investment in sporting or active identities, and attempts to produce a high status body. Students manage or build a sporting identity and/or social status through developing and converting physical capital in their appearance of skills, strength, body size, fitness or gender performance. The ways in which peers and teachers see the self are important for a student's gaining status. Students performed to create status as able/technically skilled or fit, which are highly valued in the school culture and among peers. Given the importance of appearance, gendered and racialised constructions of normative and ideal bodies affect the extent to which students are able to convert capital and the practices and language with which they construct an active or inactive identity.

The students whose stories are narrated here develop a habitus which enables them to function effectively in the PE field (Sparkes et al., 2008) but the complexity of constructions of valued

bodies means that a combined performance of an able, fit, muscular masculinity, or an able, fit but social acceptable femininity is required to have status or even be a legitimate member of the class. Low status is often a result of a student not looking as though they can do the activity - presumptions about ability before the start - as with Mitesh whose physical appearance marks him as weak and unable. Harshul on the other hand, practices sport so that when he is watched doing the activity, he is skilled and can avoid being marked as low status that way. The physical capital of muscularity, fitness or skill performance can be converted into social capital, such as popularity outside PE or being picked for a team. If peers are unconvinced by a performance, status may not be conferred or acknowledged. Not only girls but boys too 'make ongoing decisions about what behaviours and modes of self-presentation are "appropriate"' (Millington & Wilson, 2010: 91), based on their collaborative constructions of desirable bodies.

How students may invest in or resist forms of physical culture affects their participation or engagement in sport and physical activity. Some students' discursive construction of an active identity does not automatically mean that they become valued in PE - there can be other practices that must be done as well to gain a space in the field. Students' capability to be a sporting body or construct an active identity is affected by social and physical capital, based on how others see them and their potential for exchanging that capital. Being able to take up subject positions legitimated within the field means investing in reproducing the game to maintain one's position and therefore value. As Hunter (2004: 181) found,

> to accrue physical capital in PE, a student must be able to recognize the discourses of sport and operate successfully within them … Particular students positioned closely to the teacher in values, the *serious students* and *pleasers*, had bought in to the *game* and are therefore *on the team* and a part of maintaining the game. They had accumulated the necessary capital through legitimation by the teacher and many of the students through the taken-for-granteds and symbolic violence, to be important ways of being' [original italics].

Investing means to develop dispositions more like those valued in the field, and working on the body so that one's physical capital in the sense of appearance or motor competence matches. As Mitesh, Harshul and Lucy show, physical capital developed in one activity is not always tradable for social respect among peers, on or off the pitch. In the previous chapter the images and texts of the school visual culture were found to encourage students to "just do it" – to engage fully in sport-based activities and not be affected by social criticism. However, in PE lessons the creation of hierarchies based on physical and social status resulted in much more competition and anxiety over performing sufficiently to avoid low status. Developing the analysis of constructing ability as high status, it becomes apparent that many of the constructions of valued bodies suggest the *appearance* – looking right – of status or ability, rather than an actual ability.

Brock, Rovegno & Oliver (2009) recognise that the characteristics that contribute to social status vary across settings or (physical) cultures. Student status as popularity, personality, athleticism, attractiveness or economic capital can impact who is heard, who is silenced, who gets to play or make decisions about who plays. Social status influences participation, skill performance and interaction (Portman, 1995; Griffin, 1984a; Sanders & Graham, 1995). There are relationships between experiences and status factors such as gender, race, class and ability (Wright, 1997, 2000; Wright, Macdonald & Groom, 2003; Wright & Burrows, 2006). Highlighting the importance of understanding social status for working towards equitable practices, Siedentop and Tannehill (2000: 274) state that

> students must recognize all the status issues that can marginalise them in physical education – gender, skilfulness, race, body type, height and weight, and the like. The norm of 'all getting a fair chance' cannot be achieved without students being fully aware that these status issues often work to the detriment of some of them.

By drawing on Bourdieu's (1990) language of field (as another way of thinking about a localised physical culture) and the associated concepts of habitus and capital, we can understand how students develop a "feel for the game" for the PE class and the notions of normative and ideal embodiment that it supports. Capital is accrued through developing a habitus, or set of dispositions. Students invest in and manage their bodies and practices to develop physical capital that can be exchanged for social capital. The "jock culture" explored in Sparkes et al's (2007) ethnography of a university rugby club encourages physical investment by club members in the rules of the game in order to retain social acceptance in the field. Even those who do not achieve hegemonic status within the field may be complicit in reproducing the game. A physical culture in PE that valorises particular sporting bodies in gendered and racialised ways may have a negative impact on young people who are unable to conform to producing a sporting or normative body, do not gain status, and who feel excluded or marginalised in PE (Hickey, 2008; Millington, Vertinsky, Boyle & Wilson, 2008; Tischler & McCaughtry, 2011).

Even though these students participate in a range of activities, and Deepesh, Harshul and Lucy are regularly able performers, their investment and high engagement are sometimes fraught. Each of the four students shows that at times they engage in physical activity in ways specifically intended to work on the body to increase their physical capital – improving fitness, muscularity, skill or body size. Desire to invest in and produce the right body does not preclude feelings of constraint or anxiety in activity. Even those who appear engaged in PE, yet also encounter powerful messages about normative bodies, should be able to encounter supportive environments and social interactions that enable equitable participation for all students.

Through reading their own and others' bodies, boys understand how they must develop a strong and skilled body to have status not only as a sporting body but as a boy (Kehler, 2010; Swain, 2003, 2006b). These narratives offer examples of the complexities in the lives of boys working out a space for themselves in their school culture. They tell and show powerful stories about the pressure they experience to embody the highly skilled, strong and muscular body. Although concerns with boys in PE may be lessened by the conflation of sport with masculinity and there being differences in how sports men are represented, it remains that within sports there are often not multiple ways of being and many boys are marginalised in PE (Tischler & McCaughtry, 2011). Research on boys' body image suggests that boys are 'obsessed with aspects of their physicality' where bodies are linked to 'the ability to play sports, win fights, and stand up for yourself', 'a crucial factor in identification' (Frost, 2003: 65). The development of social capital (popularity or respect) is tied to the students' physical competence or capital that can be exchanged "off the pitch" (Hunter, 2004; Sparkes et al., 2007; Swain, 2003). These boys' narratives echo findings by Kehler (2010) that boys see developing skill as a way to avoid being teased, as a defence strategy. Where boys may feel unable to develop skill mastery, a strong body can also offer masculine capital (Hauge & Haavind, 2011). Kehler (2010) recognises muscularity or ability as convertible to popularity (as a performance of masculinity). Students position their sporting or active identities in relation to the social as well as the physical hierarchies of school and PE class. Social status in terms of popularity and respect, or of merely not being called a "muppet", is a desirable reward for these boys. They seem to train their bodies for 'navigating other forms of more highly valued muscular, sporty masculinities' (Kehler, 2010: 164). The stories that Deepesh and Harshul share of their desire to maintain their position as athletic or competent bodies offers a further layer to the story of the popularity awarded to the muscular bodies in the "higher" ability stream in boys' PE. Performance and appearance – being seen by peers – is crucial. If peers are unconvinced by a performance, status may not be conferred or acknowledged. The physicalities legitimated amongst the boys are those associated with competence and fitness as they produce strength, skill and power (Wright, O'Flynn & Macdonald, 2006).

These narratives offer examples of the complexities in the lives of three boys and one girl working out a space for themselves in a physical culture. The development of social capital (popularity or respect) is tied to the students' physical competence or capital that can be exchanged "off the pitch". Students position their sporting or active identities in relation to the social as well as the physical hierarchies of school and PE class. Lucy is able to use her sporting ability and body as capital to combat gender-conforming attacks on her appearance. Not to diminish the powerful effect of heteronormativity on Lucy, Cooky and Macdonald (2005) claim that white girls still have race privilege to define themselves in sport and therefore their

marginalisation as girls – as white girls – should be perceived in this light. While team game cultures or spaces may require additional work in creating welcome environments, in Scouts, Army Cadets and cross-country running, Lucy encounters and contributes to alternative cultures. The difference may be disjunction between popular physical culture and school PE cultures. Chapter 6 will turn to considering students' concepts of the differences between their in- and out-of-school physical activity experiences.

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[i] Joanne: "What about in boxing, do you see anything like that [racism] in boxing?" Deepesh: "Yeah Amir Khan. Yeah there's lots of er, boxers. As long as you're good." Deepesh's preference of Tyson, a heavyweight boxer, over Khan, a middleweight, might again suggest greater status as the boxing body becomes larger and ostensibly stronger.

[ii] This construction of a female swimmer's body as "not too muscley" is intriguing considering that psychological research on body image has found that the development of a muscular body has been perceived by female swimmers as contrary to body ideals and has affected their body satisfaction (Howells & Grogan, 2012).

# 6 "We should play lacrosse!" Resistance and creating alternative meanings

## 6.1 Introduction

This chapter explores two broad ways in which some students resist the dominant discourses reproduced by physical cultures. While some disengage, others refocus attention on how their out of school activities and physical cultures provide ways for them to rewrite what physical activity can be. Theoretically, this chapter recalls (1) that students position themselves in relation to those discourses that are available (Davies; 1989); and (2) ideas of resistance: what is resistance and to what? With opportunities to engage with alternative discourses, the possibilities for alternative selves are opened up. Further participant narratives are used in this chapter, like in chapter 5, to look in more depth at experiences of struggling to find a position to be themselves in physical activity. 6.2 firstly looks to understand how being watched and appraising others affected participants' engagements in PE; 6.3 offers three girl participants' narratives to explore their physical activity engagement but struggles to position themselves as active; 6.4 looks towards alternative cultures, considering how students describe out of school physical activity sites and cultures as more "free" and how they use this to create suggestions for changes to PE; and 6.5 offers some concluding comments.

## 6.2 Constrained physicalities: holding back, dropping out

The four students whose stories were presented in chapter 5 are at times critical of sporting and social practices and the cultures they are active in. However, they still invest in dominant narratives and work to create bodies that fit. For other students, their ways of coping are through resisting PE engagement. For some, constructions of their identities do not include seeing themselves as active or sporting. In the face of powerful imperatives to invest to gain status, or risk marginalisation, it is important to know the causes of these constrained, sometimes painful, physical experiences by asking students about their lived meanings.

### 6.2.1 "Don't ask us to do something stupid. If a girl can do PE, it makes her want to do it more"

Some students claim in class or in interview that they are unable to perform a skill or movement. By announcing before they tried something that they are unable to do it, they are heading off criticism or warning other people not to judge them harshly by their failure, as these three examples suggest:

> I like [diamond cricket] yeah, but the bat it's too heavy for me (Ayesha)

[Cricket] Ms Davis asks Nisha to bowl. 'But I can't bowl' she says.

[Trampolining] Ms Davis asks 'Who remembers what to do?' Yasmin cries 'I don't remember anything!' [Field notes]

By holding back or claiming that they cannot perform a skill, students suggest that they feel self-conscious or embarrassed at criticism or attention, with a negative impact on their sense of self. This suggests low confidence in one's body and uncertainty about inhabiting and using the body in all its capacities/capabilities. Examples include making oneself smaller, not fully making the movements needed for the activity, putting hands to face or hair, going in defence or goal, not tackling. It is important among the students to avoid as best they can exhibiting awkward, wrong, or stupid movements and actions. Nisha says that her favourite activity is trampolining, because "there's no right or wrong way of doing it", suggesting she is concerned about not appearing able in activities where skill and winning (that is, overcoming an opponent and hence being better than someone else) are important elements of the game. Nisha explains that "if you're in PE and you do something wrong, Miss will come and tell you that you're doing it wrong". She indicates a level of fear of being marked out as less able. I ask Group C what they mean by "wrong":

YASMIN: If you fall over. [Rupali laughs]

AMANDIP: Fall over.

YASMIN: Do something stupid.

AMANDIP: Um, if you can't catch a ball, or something.

YASMIN: And when you're doing timed run, you come like ten minutes after all the girls, you get laughed at, like 'oh my god did you walk?' and this and that.

In the girls' narratives, boys control legitimate play in PE and lunchtime games. Chanda says that boys think "you will spoil the game". When the girls expect to fail, they hold back from participation rather than try, and risk criticism. Some girls may 'collude in their exclusion' (Hills, 2006: 547) by considering some activities as beyond female capabilities or designated just for boys. The desire among students not to look foolish or stupid has been identified as important to their desire to participate (O'Donovan & Kirk, 2008), as part of a need to feel normal, accepted and not exposed. Admitting that she used to skip PE class in her first year of secondary school, Amandip says she found it difficult to feel comfortable or confident in a PE situation where things were "different" and she did not know how to do the activities. As Garrett (2004b) finds, some girls struggle to engage in secondary school PE in what they see as the right way, based, she argues, on their failure in primary school to develop basic physical competency or literacy.

> By avoiding physical engagement completely, these individuals resisted the discursive constitution of their subjectivities via the hierarchical relations of a merit-based physical education experience (Garrett: 2004b: 235).

It seems they prefer to be in the background, not picked out and not seen by others. There is some embarrassment at being praised by the teacher for one's movements or picked out for demonstrations that causes some girls to hold back. In trampolining the girls who are identified as high ability occasionally deliberately mess up or do something wrong, as though it is not the cool thing to be too good. Self-consciousness is also higher during individual activities such as trampolining, because the smaller number of students who are active at any one time put those on the trampolines on display.

> AMANDIP: You get a bit embarrassed.
>
> YASMIN: You get a bit, cos you can do it when you're in lessons but when everyone's staring at you it puts you off a bit.

> At the end of a trampolining lesson, Ms Davis asks Bhavana and Rupali to demonstrate. Bhavana has lost her flow now that everyone is watching her, wobbling when she jumps. She says 'I can't do it now!' and cannot perform a swivel hips move, which she has been practicing satisfactorily for the whole lesson [Field notes]

When girls are aware of being watched, they say their movements are restricted as they are "scared" of being laughed at for possessing low skill or doing it wrong (Namita). Students who feel that they are doing something wrong often laugh at themselves, thus diminishing the impact of others' laughter. Many examples of students' behaviour and actions might be interpreted as holding back from full participation and restricting the body's movements, thereby suggesting low confidence in using the full range of the body's movement potentials. Surveillance is central to PE's public nature, encouraging observation, and where students feel that their bodies are on show and they have to perform (Cockburn & Clarke, 2002; B. Evans, 2006; Fisette, 2011; Garrett, 2004b). Being watched affected the participants' feelings of their own and others' competence and encouraged hierarchy, using competition to prove one's worth and status.

While "just try your hardest" is commonly articulated, conflicting discourses of effort are used to make meaning out of PE experiences. Lucy complains that classmates who think they are unable to participate at a competent level "won't do it, they won't even try". In the conversation below, Group A consider students' use of the phrase "I can't do it" as a lack of effort in some girls that is almost inexplicable to them. They believe that everyone is able to do it. In all-girls' PE, where girls consider that they all have the same ability, effort should match.

> LUCY: People that don't try… are not gonna be admired, because if they just stand

there and don't do it…

NAMITA: They won't learn.

LUCY: Or say they can't do it, when they obviously can if they put the effort in, because everyone can try. Some people they expect sympathy sometimes…

JOANNE: Do you think there are other people in your PE class that don't have ability, that can't do PE very well?

LUCY: I think all of them. All of the people in our group can do it.

NAMITA: Yeah everyone can. *Even Safiyya* can do it as well [emphasis added].

BHAVANA: Yeah.

LUCY: Yeah *even Safiyya* tries her hardest to do it anyway. And if she can do it, and if she puts the effort in…

CHANDA: Then anyone can do it.

LUCY: Exactly. Everyone's equal, should be able to do it as well.

Despite this, Lucy sees students who are more able as not needing to put in as much effort: "we seem to all be good at it as well, so even if you don't try, you're still good at it". Lucy constructs unity among all the girls in interview Group A with this "we". As someone who rarely struggles, but has a go even when she perceives she is not as good as others, she finds it hard to understand those who feel unable. By pointing out that "even Safiyya", their classmate who uses a wheelchair, "can do it", Lucy and Namita attempt perhaps to put other students, those who are "equal" (read: non-disabled?), to shame. Group B similarly discuss Safiyya's engagement in PE, admitting their own reluctance to form a team with Safiyya yet asserting her value as a team mate once the game has started. Safiyya has little physical capital in terms of skill or strength, but her team mates suggest she has capital in the effort she puts into taking part, doing "her best". These are difficult conversations for the students to have, as they draw on narratives of inclusion at the same time as examining their practices of exclusion.

In boys' football classes, the students who do not display sporting bodies avoid tackling other players, place themselves (or are placed) in defence or in goal and try to make themselves appear smaller or invisible so as to not have to engage in play. Lukas helps illustrate this. Lukas is a slender white Greek boy, who speaks English as a second language, and who spends most team games in a corner of the pitch, reluctant to tackle:

> [Football] Lukas hangs back in defence again. He watches the other games much more than he does the play on his own pitch, mostly when the ball is up the other end. If the ball comes near him, he takes his hands of out his pockets, watches play and makes a few shuffles sideways, but never goes for the ball or towards the other players, and when it goes away again he relaxes. One time, the ball is going to go off the pitch near to where Lukas is stood, and he kicks it, so that the throw in goes to the other team. Razak screams at him, "what did you do that for? What is that?" and laughs. The goalie (Lukas' friend Vasilis) says similar. Lukas freezes, shrugs and looks down [Field notes].

McCaughtry and Tischler (2010) observed that boys who messed about in class were trying to hide their low skill – that it was more acceptable to look badly behaved than to attempt and then fail the activity. Holding back from engagement in PE can cause alienation for girls and boys 'as they attempt to negotiate their way through the physical tasks they are set without transgressing normative standards or exposing themselves through the possibility of revealing their physical incompetence' (Kirk & Tinning, 1994: 622). Garrett (2004b: 235) considers that some young women resist 'the discursive constitution of their subjectivities as inferior via the hierarchical relations of a merit-based physical education experience' by dropping out and hence being invisible so that they cannot be scrutinised. Yet as we have seen, effort is also highly valued among the students at Vale Court, so that resistance itself can constitute low status.

## 6.2.2 *"Everyone's looking at you." Under surveillance*

The visually-driven culture ensures that students' appearance - dress, movements, actions - is the focus of judgement. This shyness in team games translates into a wish to not draw attention to themselves. Students avoid confident movements using their whole body. Behaviour that makes students look too keen is also avoided.

> Trampolining requires, explains Ms Davis, large circular motions of the whole arms from the shoulder to help you get higher bounces. She frequently spots girls moving their forearms, from the elbow, in tiny circles at their sides, and laughs that they need to stop being shy about it and move their whole arms. Nisha, Amala, Bharti, Rahkee and Nasneen spend a lot of time getting their hair out of their eyes rather than getting their arms up in these circular motions. Touching their hair seems to be an excuse for having their arms in the air so as not to be caught looking like they are trying hard or making effort or doing it properly - perhaps doing it properly is not very cool [Field notes]

Those who don't possess a sporting body or perform the right movements may feel the need to hide, to drop out or avoid being seen in any other way (Tischler & McCaughtry, 2011). Being low down in the ability hierarchy can be linked to a restricted physicality, practices that students develop to keep themselves out of the limelight. If someone thinks that PE is not for them, s/he may have difficulty building her/his physical capital and converting it into recognition or status. Avoiding participating altogether is uncommon, but is observed among some low status or marginalised students. Some students avoid activity by giving the appearance that they are taking part, while just walking around the equipment. Amala, of South Asian heritage, is observed rarely taking part fully. She has English as a second language and only speaks to a couple of girls in her year group, in their home language. As these girls are in a different PE class, Amala communicates little with her PE class and holds back from participating in most activities, often claiming illness. In the Fitness Suite,

> Amala wanders around on her own for much of the lesson, not sure what to do. She puts one foot on a small trampoline, but changes her mind and turns to where some girls are stood by the dumbbells, going over to them but not picking anything up, just looking at the instructions for some exercises on the wall. Later she looks at the rowers and starts to get on, then sees Ms Davis nearby and goes to her, asking something very quietly, but Ms Davis either doesn't hear her or chooses to ignore her and continues to call in the whole class for a rowing challenge. [Field notes]

However, during badminton and table tennis lessons Amala smiles and laughs and engages confidently. Amala has skill in these activities, although she is never asked to demonstrate. This suggests that Amala's experiences in PE are a combination of low social status (or low cultural capital, as she has few friends and speaks little English) and doing activities which have little cultural or personal relevance for her.

Kiran, Lucy and Ayesha, who assume sporty/active subjectivities, may have the physical/social capital to join in with boys' games, but even they sometimes express low confidence. Kiran especially dislikes and rejects trampolining. She resists climbing onto the trampoline, and stands still or makes tiny jumps when she is forced to at the teacher's behest. Kiran chooses to sit in the corner of the room so as to avoid the trampoline. Ms Davis eventually defines Kiran's resistance as bad behaviour and threatens her with detention. In interview, Kiran simply articulates that her reason for hating trampolining is because "you just jump up and down, and all that." During netball lessons Kiran adopts a position of cluelessness wherein she acts as though she is unsure of the rules and positions. This is her way of resisting the dominance in the curriculum of netball over her favoured sport of basketball. During a moment of down time in one netball lesson, Kiran takes the ball and begins to bounce it as is done in basketball, dribbling forward towards the net while her friend Narinder defends. The two girls smile and joke, much more comfortable performing identities as basketball players than as netball players. As a competent shooter because of her basketball experience, Kiran retains status in netball lessons despite her apparent ignorance of the game. Ability is not value free but is socially constructed (Redelius et al., 2009; Fagrell, Larsson & Redelius, 2011). Activity choices by teachers can restrict some, as the subject positions available do not speak to students' gendered subjectivities, and they avoid engagement. As seen in chapter 4, sometimes assumptions can be made about students without watching their play, and assume low skill, as Mr Brown did of Waheed.

Brace-Govan (2002: 403) argues that activities that draw attention to the body for the purposes of judging appearance 'disempower through the effect of the "gaze"'. Parallels might be drawn with trampolining as the girls discussed above. However, as other students suggest, the need to manage appearance by holding back from full participation can impact on a number of

activities, not just those focused on aesthetic performance like dance, gymnastics or trampolining. In mixed classes, "the shy ones" don't like to be active in front of boys because "they'll take the piss like that, they'll take the mick" (Amandip) and "they'll still be talking about it for like a week" (Yasmin). There are occasions where girls are able to demonstrate some resistive power. When Amandip states that "we just diss them back!", she produces a subjectivity where she can 'give as good as she gets' and diminish the effect by considering it a playful game, not harmful name-calling. Lucy says, "we try and join in" and reports that sometimes she is able to prove boys wrong and challenge their dominance. Where students do not have the social resources to "diss them back", being laughed at can be enough to put them off from taking part - restricting their engagement in activities because of the way other people have judged them. It has been pointed out that picking up on others' faults is not a serious attempt at belittling but is a way to gain social capital or popularity (Hastie & Pickwell, 1996). Other research finds, however, that while female bodies are viewed within dominant cultural definitions of femininity, their subjectivities will be formed by such, and alternative subject positions constructed through an instrumental physicality will be difficult (Brace-Govan, 2002; Garrett, 2004b).

While the participants whose stories were presented in Chapter 5 managed their status in continued participation in sport to produce a normative body, the students in this section seem to resist much of the physical culture, either gaining social status through inactivity or retaining a low physical status, an inactive identity. This is in agreement with Rønholt's (2003) conclusions that girls who disengage in PE, while challenging teacher authority and imperatives to keep active, make little challenge to gendered expectations of girls' and boys' relative engagement in sport. Girls complain that the mockery they receive from boys in PE is often not based on effort, ability or strength, but a disciplining of performances of femininity in the sense of keeping their hair styles neat and their make up in place. Ayesha reports, 'boys just start taking the mick, 'haha, look at this' … and you feel like, I'm not going to try, I don't want to look like that'. A reddened face or wind-blown hair are causes of embarrassment and must be tamed and managed in order for a feminine mask to remain in place. As Sykes (2009b) points out, sweating is gendered masculine.

> BHAVANA: It's like mainly guys judge girls about…
> NAMITA: Depending on how they look, yeah.
> CHANDA: If your hair's messed up, it's 'oh, why?'
> BHAVANA: Guys just want to be mates with the pretty girls, yeah.

The pressure girls perceive to conform to desirable femininity (embodied in the boys' admiration of Cheryl Cole) even while boys scorn feminine practices creates an impossible burden to perform both heterosexual femininity and be appropriately active. Richard calls girls

"weird" for worrying about their body shape; Barnes (2011) spots 'a particular discourse of dismissal and discouragement related to femininity' among the 15-16 year old boys she interviewed. During the observation period, the female teachers became exasperated by the low level of engagement they perceived amongst the girls. Frequently they blamed declining engagement on increasing femininity, ironically strengthening the discursive construction of femininity as unsporty, exasperatingly claiming that girls who used to be sporty have "got girly" and would resist PE "because they have straightened their hair or have done their make-up" (Ms Davis). Field notes from October to May record only a couple of instances of girls actually absent from class or sat out, and very few times when girls are present in class but hold back from participation. Unable to quite appreciate Ms Davies' concerns with low participation in this year group, I asked Group B about it in their second interview – "why do girls stop participating in Year 9?" Ayesha responds, "Ms Davis actually told my parents at parents evening that I'm totally the opposite, that I've actually went out in Year 9 and I'm doing better [sic]." Now that she is free from the boys' gaze, Ayesha implies, she cares less about potentially "messing up" her appearance. Ms Davis tells me that Ayesha is one of the most able, active and confident girls in the class. Azzarito and Solmon (2006) find in single-sex classes fewer girls try to produce "skill-less" bodies. Girls may display actions not traditionally associated with girl identities, or femininity, to subvert or reconstruct girlhood. Boys' aggressive play marginalises girls in mixed PE, according to Ayesha's constructions. At the same time, she recognises that those boys who have teased her may feed off her discomfort:

> You know if you let a guy, if you let a guy's point of view come through, yeah, and they see that it bothers you they are obviously going to let your self-esteem go down even more but you show that you don't care then obviously then they'll be like, oh whatever, let's leave her (Ayesha)

Coakley and White (1992) note that for some young women, the decision to participate in physical activity can be affected by their notions of what is babyish and what is adult, as they are concerned about their transitions through adolescence. Girls' comportment, dress and adornment of the body, along with their physical activity participation may shift to be more compatible with adult feminine behaviour and appearance to maintain the capital they gain from feminine displays (Coakley & White, 1992; Hills, 2006). Mr Martin wondered whether "maybe some girls are worried to look like they are enjoying it because enjoyment of PE is not a cool look". Oliver et al. (2009) find that use of excuses by girls who claim that they are too "girly-girl" to take part in physical education are not often questioned by schools because "girly-girl" is such a normalised and accepted attitude for girls to take up. Girls perceived boys' ways of playing, risk of getting hurt or dirty, as barriers, 'thus, rather than play in situations they identified as unsuitable, they chose not to participate' (Oliver at al., 2009: 102). However, being

a "girly girl" as an excuse to avoid vigorous activity does little to help girls' cause with the boys, who frame beauty imperatives as a choice girls make as they talk about their frustrations with girls who hold back and do not participate.

> MICKEY: Cos girls yeah, cos boys don't really, they're not too bothered like what they look like where girls yeah like they're always doing their hair and nails stuff like that. So they care about their bodies more than boys … [Puts on a falsetto voice] 'My nail!' or something [all laugh].

Gender constrains them, but they construct it as a choice not to be active. As Oliver at al. (2009) conclude, involving students in the decisions about PE content can increase their investment in lessons.

In Western contexts, ideal girls' bodies are white, heteronormative and are attractive to boys (Azzarito, 2009a; Rajiva, 2009). Oliver and Lalik (2000) point out that this requires further management of non-white female bodies to meet white-normative standards. For the South Asian and black girls, their subjective positions are also affected by "colourism" or pigmentocracy; skin colour has been considered the central issue of racism in the 21st century (Nakano Glenn, 2009). Young women have been found to support and emulate racist criteria for beauty (Durham, 2004; Rajiva, 2009) – for example, healthy hair is described as straight, shiny and managed in Oliver and Lalik's (2000, 2001, 2004a,b) work with young women of colour. A few female participants explain that they would cover up with extra layers or long trousers as a protective move in mixed PE to hide their bodies from view.[i] Fisette (2011) constructs covering up as a powerful action to hinder others' surveillance of the body. Rupali says that girls-only PE means that they "could wear shorts in summer", but when summer arrives, even on warm days some of her classmates choose to wear tracksuits and hoodies for PE lessons outside. On one sunny, hot day, the two white female teachers, dressed in shorts and vests, express amazement that these girls will not remove their hoodies to stay cool. The teachers whisper to me their puzzlement over the girls' excuses that they do not want to get darker skin. The teachers are embedded in a white culture that defines beauty as paler or tanned white skin; a "normal" response to sunshine is to sunbathe bare skin or to keep cool in short sleeves. Fordham (1996) states that black girls continually learn that their natural features will always be inferior. Fanon (1952) notes that superficial bodily differences, such as skin colour, hair type and texture, eye shape, body shape and accent, force on black people signs of their "natural" difference and therefore inferiority, resulting, Fanon argued, in heightened self-consciousness. Hence, 'skin colour becomes a salient human characteristic' and racist criteria for beauty are accepted uncritically by young women (Oliver & Lalik, 2000: 65). Beauty – and therefore success (Martin, 2007; Rich & Evans, 2009) – is accused of being racialised, affecting non-white subjectivities and physicalities (Azzarito, 2009a). Although wearing a hoodie in hot weather

was not a barrier to the girls' participation, it marked their appearance as different and lacking a somewhat "care-free" attitude that white girls who "just do it" can display. Differentiating between athletic, "normal" and Muslim girls, With-Nielsen and Pfister (2011: 660) state:

> PE is problematic for many girls – at least for Muslim and for 'normal' girls – since it arouses neither interest nor enthusiasm.

The possibilities for minority and/or 'normal' girls to define themselves as 'girly' *and* athletic need to have a place in research if it is to challenge gender binaries (Oliver et al., 2009).

## 6.2.3 Deconstructing gender differences

In chapters 4 and 5 we saw some of the young people draw upon gendered discourses of appropriate physicalities and activities. They must negotiate their place within this gender-divided culture, meaning that to be a legitimate member within the culture they cannot easily challenge the practices that they find sexist or inequitable. It could be argued that as boys gain advantage from investing in normative gender relations and roles, they have far more to lose than girls if they transgress the boundaries of acceptable gender performance (Gard, 2008; Gorely et al., 2003). Some students constitute their subjectivities within the spaces between conformity and resistance to gender norms or gender "troublemaking" (Butler, 1990). There are examples of the students "undoing gender" by discussing the damage done by defining certain activities as gender appropriate (Hills & Crosston, 2011). According to Namita, trampolining is something that boys are not supposed to be interested in, although Lucy challenges this:

> LUCY: I think sometimes boys do wanna do trampolining.
> NAMITA: Guys don't care about trampolining.
> LUCY: I bet they'd wanna do it, because they don't do it.

Here Lucy constructs new activities as exciting endeavours through which young people should be able to embrace rich new experience – a gender neutral discourse. She goes on to recognise that the activities for boys and girls are chosen by the teachers, who perhaps have prejudices about the inappropriateness of trampolining for boys (Brown, 2005). Again, though, these girls argue that it is boys who police gender conformity by bullying those who transgress, while the girls present themselves as more progressive:

> JOANNE: If there were a boy who did want to do trampolining, either in school or out of school, um…
> LUCY: That would be bullied.
> JOANNE: What would be your opinion about it?
> LUCY: I'd think it is alright.
> NAMITA: I think it's good.
> BHAVANA: Yeah.

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> LUCY: Other boys will come out and say something about it … But we don't say it when they play netball, cos they've played netball before [all laugh] and we don't go 'oh you can't play it, it's a girls' sport'.

In other interviews, girls examine again the tensions between masculinity and "girls' sports":

> AMANDIP: Guys get criticised like getting called gay and all that yeah, if you do dancing but like…
> YASMIN: [There's] this guy yeah that is a real bad man guy but he did ballet and that proved that guys can do stuff like dance, just need to stand up for themselves.

Yasmin's claim, that boys need "to stand up for themselves", reinforces the connection between masculinity and toughness (Tischler & McCaughtry, 2011; Hauge & Haavind, 2011). In the example Yasmin gives, as long as he performs a "bad man" identity, his ballet performing will not be too much at odds with hegemonic masculinity. They frame it as an equality issue, where girls and boys should be able to do whatever activities they like. However, discourses of the body and sexuality, wherein muscular bodies are masculine and slender bodies are feminine, remain intact (Gorely et al., 2003; Wright & Clarke, 1999). Performing status through being athletic and strong, and gaining physical capital in this way, cannot outweigh the risk of losing gendered capital for boys doing gymnastics. Girls talk about boys' investments in gendered sporting discourses, 'boundary-solidifying practices' (Hills: 2006: 547) or border work (Berg & Lahelma, 2010) excluding girls from the benefits of social capital associated with football, and so on. In imagining a trampolining boy, these girls resist the gender order in their talk but in practice the girls retain a gendered habitus where they are uncomfortable in taking up what is "anyway denied" them (Bourdieu, 1990; Gorely et al., 2003). There are multiple ways in which boys appear, in girls' eyes, to be the gatekeepers to girls' possibilities of participating in physical activity. Yasmin prefers to argue that making fun of someone's appearance is not serious but a running joke among students:

> They do but they don't judge you, they just think it's quite funny … So if by judged you - some people take it seriously, that's just because they kind of can't even do it to the others but other people take it as a joke and you start doing it to someone else and just like creates this massive thing (Yasmin)

The girls are aware of gendered social structures and do question the "rules of the game," as Hills (2006: 550) expresses it, 'girls acknowledge inequalities but behave in ways that reinforce, rather than challenge, traditional power relations'. The girls state that they can play, but struggle to reconcile that with heteronormative imperatives. Explaining inequalities and exclusion in PE by claiming that boys and girls are simply different masks the embedding of gender in the organisation and hidden curriculum of PE.

## 6.3 Struggles in performing an active identity

While 6.2 considers factors in students' decision to hold back from full participation, at other times it is apparent that while some students do not drop out, their full engagement is affected by a sense of self that is not sporty or active, and they struggle to position themselves as active. Narratives of Meena, Bhavana and Rupali are offered here to explore their ambiguity in positioning themselves as active, considering factors in this related to constructions of sporting bodies.

### 6.3.1 "I've got to go and join a club." Meena's narrative

Meena's photo set and interviews offer an important insight into the ways students' embodied subjectivities and activity participation could be affected. For Meena, Olympic athletes represent the sporting bodies that she admires, as are commonly displayed on the PE department walls. She talks about being inspired by watching the Olympic Games on the television:

> I only watch the Olympics and it's because the athletes are so good. It's like it inspires you like, oh, even if I go towards sports sometime I'm going to try and do my best and maybe one day if I start to get really good at it I might take it forward, like, you can imagine yourself there but then you realise like I don't go anywhere, I've got to go and join a club first (Meena)

Another time, Meena suggests that PE encourages students to be active outside of school, while demonstrating that she is seen as the at risk inactive Other who should do more sport:

> I think it encourages you to actually enjoy sport more and do something out there rather than just stay in at home, erm, playing on some electrical something. I think it makes us realise that we should do more sport (Meena)

Meena speaks about competitive sporting opportunities as though 'they are not for me'. While she suggests that she might, in the future, take up a sport in a competitive way, really this has little real relevance to her life and self as she constructs herself now. She constitutes herself in opposition to the competitive sporting culture she recognises in the Olympics and other institutions. Although Meena says that she enjoys watching elite athletes, her sense of herself is not informed by being a sports person. Meena claims at one point that outside of PE she is not very active. She does not participate in club or recreational sport. In PE lessons, she does not resist participating, performing as a well-behaved student, simply finding that "it is not for her". In the quote below, emphasis is added to highlight how her language suggests she is not interested in sport – it is for other people:

> They've got different sports so that there's something for everyone and it *could* like *possibly* make *others* want to go and join the sport because it's so much variety so it's

like, um, you *might* go and join a club after you've done the sport in PE (Meena)

The ways in which PE and physical activity are constructed in the school physical culture lead some students to think that an investment in sport means a large commitment, dedicating oneself to a life of sport and aiming for a level of success. Students who do not think of themselves as having an active identity are unlikely to be inspired to greater participation by the health and activity campaigns, posters for which are on the walls of the school. Additionally, consumption of public health discourses concerning about the importance of health and lifelong fitness/well-being may clash with the disconnection some students feel with PE, such that they may think of themselves as unfit and at risk.

In Meena's set of 26 photos, there are 12 from within her single-sex PE class (including a number of photos containing Meena herself, such as Me012), and seven of large groups of male students also on the playing field but engaged in football and running games (e.g. Me006), and five of her friends posing for the camera during lunch break out on the school playing field (Me017). Meena's friends are important to her and she discussed the support and team work she values in PE and in their recreational dance activities at home. Looking at these photos, Meena takes an opportunity to explain the inspiration she gains from her friends who are active in extra-curricular sports clubs at school, although she has resisted joining in with them, claiming that she has other hobbies that she prefers, including Art Club. In line with her admiration for Olympic athletes, Meena indicates that both her friends and the boys at school are to be admired because they are committed to sports participation in extra-curricular clubs at school.



*Figure 6.1 Me012 Meena and Nasneen in PE*

*Figure 6.2 Me006 Meena's photo of boys playing on the school field*

*Figure 6.3 Me017 Meena's friends posing on the field*

Meena does not like to think of some classmates as better than others:

> I think everyone's like, everyone's equal in our PE group cos like we want, we concentrate more on team work and how we can improve on each other's support and how we can help others so that they can be like the captains that are usually chosen (Meena)

The language and practices she draws on might be linked to her own experiences in PE. Meena resists comparing her classmates because she has been affected negatively by hierarchies of status. Indeed, high status students like Lucy complain that team work or cooperation mean that "you have to wait for other people, when you could've gone like, pushed forward, but you have to wait for everybody else". Meena argues that within a system that values ability, students watch each other's performances in PE and compare themselves, causing low confidence:

> JOANNE: Do you think that young people compare themselves to these sorts of people?
>
> [Pause]
>
> MEENA: Yeah, I think so, well I don't really compare myself but you can tell some people do. … their self-esteem goes really, really low, like 'oh I'm not good, and I'm not going to bother taking part' and then they start comparing themselves and then they get really, really, um, they lose interest in what they're doing. And that's what I think, so, it's like sometimes you don't feel comfortable, but they still carry on comparing how they are and then how the sporty people are.

As was highlighted in 6.2, in individual activities such as trampolining and aerobics, the focus on precise and confident body movements positions students as being under surveillance and emphasised performativity.

The only activity that prompts Meena to talk animatedly is dancing with her friends at home. She talks about making up routines and teaching each other new moves, just to perform to each other in the home. She says,

> It builds up my confidence and before I don't think I was really confident, but after I'd

> taken up dancing I used to um perform everywhere and I've learnt the actual dance and everything. I think my confidence has gone up and I think it helps me to do things other than dance as well. Sometimes (Meena)

Dancing, and particularly the performance of dancing, offers Meena confidence that she uses in other aspects of her life. Some girls talk about leisure/recreational spaces and activity forms (such as dancing) as being free and offering emotional satisfaction and kinaesthetic pleasure. As Atencio (2008) argues, alternative cultures or styles of, in this case, dance, can enable young women to avoid the disciplinary practices of dominant white culture. This contrasts with the disciplined space of the school physical culture wherein behaviour and movements are monitored by teachers, marked right or wrong (stupid/awkward), activities are constrained by certain objectives, students feel watched at all times. Students invest in the forms of activity that give them this sense of freedom, pleasure and positivity. Other research on physical activity and space with young Asian women in the UK has argued that the site of home is considered a safe space for girls' activity, where they are able to construct new forms of girlhood and develop identities through physical activity with their friends and family (Azzarito & Hill, 2012). Meena felt ambiguous about any connection between her physicality in expressive activities such as dance and the physicalities of her sportier friends. Although Meena did what was expected of her in PE, her experiences suggest that she simultaneously resisted subjectivity as a competitive sports player while promoting cooperative situations such as dance.

Meena may be unable to visualise herself as a sporting body, feeling ambiguous about any connection between her physicality in expressive activities such as dance and the physicalities of her sportier friends. Suggesting that she only envisages that sport can be done in organised clubs, Meena does not connect her own activity with an active lifestyle or identity. Meena's "sport is not for me" stance can also be seen in the way she spoke about sport as not being an acceptable career path for people of a certain background:

> It's like different types of people expect different things, so like some people who um, say if for example, weren't educated and they want to educate their kids as far as they can, and they don't want to take the risk that oh, if they go round doing sports then what are they going to earn later on? So I think it's a bit like that (Meena)

While she does not explicitly refer here to British Asian or other specific ethnic background, using instead indicators of class or socio-economic background, Meena's speech recalls the common notion that British Asian parents want their children to be doctors or lawyers, devaluing sport if it has no academic or career use (Ramanathan & Crocker, 2009; Strandbu, 2005). Meena, while talking impersonally, may have been positioning herself and her family as devaluing sport as a career. Elsewhere, Harshul argues that is it just football that is unvalued among Asian parents, such that they discourage their sons or daughters from playing:

> HARSHUL: Indian people they think that football ain't a profession, like so sometimes if they're good, yeah, their mums or dads will say stop playing, because it can't be a profession.
>
> JOANNE: Ah right, OK. Does that happen in cricket as well or is that different?
>
> HARSHUL: Nah in cricket like cos all, most Indians like cricket, so it don't happen in cricket.

Deepesh identifies institutional racism in football, where scouts would not select Asian players: "they [Asian boys] might get into trials yeah, yeah but they never get in, like because of racists". The "just do it" ways in which sport is presented in the school lead Meena to think that an investment in sport means a large commitment, a life of sport and aiming for a high level of success in it. Participation-level or recreational engagement are not associated with valued sporting endeavours. Lee et al. (2009), drawing on Bourdieu (1990), suggest that young people reject what is anyway denied them because of their racialised or classed positions. Meena makes sense of herself as unsporty through a combination of discursive narratives that link sport engagement with whiteness and imply barriers for Asian young people's participation, whether self-imposed or structural. Inquiring with the students whether there are any differences between white, black and Asian students in the school, most said no. Nisha drew a contrast between Vale Court and another local school:

> in some schools, like my cousin, she goes to um, Northglen, and she's like, she's the only Asian in her class so she feels kind of awkward but then after a while she gets used to it, she's alright. But our school's sort of alright cos there's loads of people of different backgrounds in our school (Nisha)

The barriers that these students identify for Asian young people in physical activity are evident outside of school, while inside school they report no barriers and constructed an equitable if race-neutral ethos, as reflected in the electronic notice board signs in section 4.2.

## 6.3.2 *"The girls tend to lay back a bit." Bhavana's narrative*

Bhavana's narrative demonstrates how, or whether, girls see themselves as active, as examined through the subjects of her photos and her accompanying explanations. Bhavana is a highly active, confident and competent mover in PE. She is also a black belt in taekwondo which she participates in outside of school. Bhavana uses two images of black males to illustrate her conceptualisation of valued bodies. An image of a sprinter (Bv010) represents valued athletic bodies. The sprinter she chooses is Harry Aikines-Aryeetey, although she does not name him; this image is one of the first results when image-searching on the web for "Olympic sprinter". Claiming that she values teachers for the help they give to students, Bhavana represents this by reproducing a cartoon image of a black male teacher in sports kit (Bv009). This cartoon is not representative of any of Bhavana's PE teachers at Vale Court. She also creates a photograph of

a boy (Bv007), using a web image search, to represent those boys whom Bhavana cannot respect or admire because of their mistreatment of girls in mixed PE. Thus this boy is unvalued. Black males here seem to be central to Bhavana's understanding of people who are involved in sport. Of this photo, Bv007, Bhavana says,

> That like when it's like mixed PE it's like, boys think they have to compete and they're like, they end up showing off and stuff it kind of puts the girls down and then like they seem, the girls tend to lay back a bit and let the guys kind of take over and stuff [sic] (Bhavana)
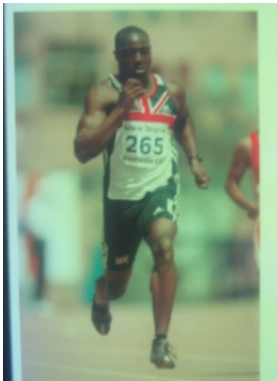


*Figure 6.4 Bv010 Bhavana's photo of an Olympic sprinter*



*Figure 6.5 Bv009 A supportive teacher*
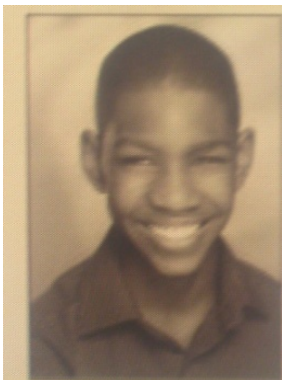


*Figure 6.6 Bv007 A school boy*

At the same time, girls like her are represented as passive or inactive. She photographs her brother demonstrating taekwondo moves as an example of an active, skilled and disciplined body (Bv004). However, she does not photograph herself doing the same despite her own achievements in this sport. To represent her taekwondo participation, Bhavana lays her kit out on the floor (Bv005), not even wearing it to pose in or to create photos similar to those showing her brother.

*Figure 6.7 Bv004 Bhavana's brother*



*Figure 6.8 Bv005 Bhavana's taekwondo kit*

The only time she is visible in the photo set is in a self-portrait (Bv011). In the second interview, Bhavana places this photo in her "what I do when I'm not active" pile. The instruction sheet given to the students along with the cameras advises that it is acceptable for them to hand the camera to a friend in order to take photos of themselves, if they wish. While the lack of self-photos may at times be a technical issue – no one around to take photos – in those instances where friends and family are photographed in action it would have been simple for the photographer and subject to switch roles. Bhavana chooses not to do this. She is not alone – only nine per cent of girls' photos are of themselves, compared to 25 per cent of boys' photos. Bhavana meets with few images within the school space of girls like her as active or sporting bodies. Although Bhavana is confident and able in PE and active in martial arts outside school, as South Asian girls' bodies are invisible in the school visual culture her subjectivity is affected such that she does not represent herself as active in her photos – making herself invisible in her photo set apart from through the ideal femininity portrayed in her self-portrait photo. Pop media and social networking do not just encourage viewing celebrity or otherwise ideal bodies, but to put one's own body on display more often, with the preponderance of camera and camcorder equipment encouraging frequent capture of the moment.[ii]



*Figure 6.9 Bv011 Bhavana's self-portrait*

As with the students who hide at the back in PE lessons, not being seen in photos may be a reclaiming of power (Fisette, 2011; Sánchez de Serdio Martín & Vidiella, 2011). It is not only girls who do not appear in their photo sets, active or inactive. In interview, Richard is keen to

construct himself as both active and ambitious about his hockey training, repeatedly saying that he practiced "24/7" in order to reach the standard he desired. While five of his nine photos are related to hockey, none show Richard playing or practicing: only the empty all-weather pitch at school (Ri008), a photo of his two "best" hockey sticks (Ri005), and a photo of his hockey shirt (Ri006). His county shirt can display his achievement and status in hockey, without showing himself playing the sport. His other photos show video games and musical instruments. Hockey offers Richard class distinction from his school mates, being a middle class sport requiring expensive kit and playing surfaces. The possessions in Richard's photos enable him to show how much money has been spent - this seems to be something that Richard thinks is impressive, as he speaks about spending hundreds of pounds on hockey sticks, and explains the importance of schools spending money on the best kind of artificial pitches, discussing the relative merits of the water-based hockey pitch at a local private school, compared to the all-purpose Astroturf pitch at Vale Court, causing his group mates to defend their school's resources. Through these displays of economic capital, Richard tries to improve his social capital (Fitzgerald, 2005), with little success, as his narratives are challenged by the other boys. Without the interviews, Richard's photos would not demonstrate the amount of time and effort that he puts into his hockey training and practice, how much he thinks and talks about the sport – and also how much his friends seem to be bored by this. As Richard spends a large proportion of the interviews defending his identity as a hockey player, his photo set could be a conscious way of toning down his self-construction in front of the others.



*Figure 6.10 Ri008 Richard's photo of the pitch*    *Figure 6.11 Ri005 Richard's photo of his hockey sticks*

*Figure 6.12 Ri006 Richard's Number 9 hockey shirt*

Other students' photos resist the idea that young people must be active a considerable amount of time. While many students use their photo diaries to show themselves or friends as active, or photograph objects to represent the types of activity that they do, many also take photos to represent their inactivity. Students represent doing homework, texting friends, or playing on the computer, as De016, Mk003, 010 and Ru003 show.



*Figure 6.13 De016 Deepesh doing his homework*



*Figure 6.14 Mk003 Mickey's video games*



*Figure 6.15 Na010 Namita's laptop*



*Figure 6.16 Ru003 Rupali's mobile phone*

Bhagesh, although very active in a local football club as well as in PE and after-school clubs, chooses to create instead photos of himself reading poetry at temple (Bh006) and playing the drums (Bh010) which he plays "at weddings for some pocket money".[iii]

*Figure 6.17 Bh006 Bhagesh reading in temple*



*Figure 6.18 Bh010 Bhagesh playing the drum*

The girl-participants altogether create only 17 photos (9 per cent) showing themselves, compared to 95 photos (25 per cent) of the boys' photos. Similarly, only a small number of the photos that the girls themselves produced represented women as sporting or valued, two exceptions being Nisha's photos (Ns011 and Ns013) of a lunch time dodgeball club and of Bharti jumping and smiling on the trampoline in PE. As the instructions for the photo diary included photographing people who are admired, the types of bodies that are represented in the students' photos and around school highlight who is thought of as an active or sporting body, who can legitimately be active, or the extent to which the participants see themselves and people like them as sporting or able. Minority ethnic women are seemingly absent from the participants' popular cultural consumption. Among all their discussion and photos, only one depicts a woman of colour, the pop singer Leona Lewis (Bhavana says she admires Lewis for the lyrics she writes for her songs). There are in any case, Matthews (2002) asserts, few images of Asian women in visual media. Where they are visible, 'they inadvertently replay processes of racialisation and sexualization' (Matthews, 2002: 2). Matthews raises concerns that an increase in representation, meant to make up for lack of Asian women in public, may be related to increased commodification of hybrid, sexualised images and desire for Westernised identities.



*Figure 6.19 Ns011 Nisha's photo of dodgeball club*



*Figure 6.20 Ns013 Nisha's photo of Bharti at trampolining club*

I return to the images on the school notice boards as introduced in section 4.2 to consider reasons why the girls do not produce photos of sporting women. The images on the walls suggest that white and black men are active in sports; white and black women can participate in feminine-appropriate activities such as running, netball and tennis; but there is little place for Asian women to be considered legitimate sporting bodies within this physical culture. Within this visual context, the girls build their relationships to sport and learn how they might see their own bodies or selves as active or inactive. A lack of Asian representation seems striking in this school. Given that 80 per cent of the student population in the school is from a British Asian background, ideas of valued, sporting bodies promoted in the school site are embedded in Whiteness and send strong messages about who is entitled to visibility and status in sport (Fernandez-Balboa, 1993). The teachers would not express these messages in their speech, but in the images, many more assumptions are communicated.

I argue that greater visibility in school poster displays is a marker of greater legitimacy for bodies in sport. Birrell and Theberge (1994) noted similar with respect to women's sport as a whole. Davis and Harris (1998) suggest that sport media may portray minority ethnic sports players in stereotypical ways, reinforcing inequalities. An absence, as well as a presence, of minority sports players can also send out messages. The participants learn within a broader culture that considers minority ethnic, bodies, including people of South Asian heritage, as more sedentary (Azzarito, 2009c; Nazroo, 2003), where sporting bodies are tied to whiteness. Similarly, Meena assumes a natural suitability in men for rugby based on only ever seeing men playing rugby on the television:

> MEENA: You watch telly and then you always see like in football they are always um, men playing football and men playing rugby so it's like, and cricket and all that, but you hardly see like women and girls playing all those sports, so it's like, it's just naturally suited for [men].

Greater visibility in school poster displays or exposure on television are markers of greater legitimacy for bodies in sport. Exposure on TV is a measure of value: because only men's sport is regularly seen on television, men appear more naturally suited to sport and the girls assume that there are few women's sports teams. Other girls demonstrate limited knowledge of women's elite sport, for instance:

> You know how they have the World Cup, there's no girls' one. [Joanne nods] Oh! Is there?! Where?! (Amandip)

Amandip suggests that she would be interested in knowing more about opportunities for women in elite sport, and that if girls knew more about the opportunities available for young women in

competitive to elite level sports, they might be more inclined to participate in the knowledge that they could "make something of it" or continue sport to a higher level:

> AMANDIP: You know how the teachers favour the guys, because they think that they can get somewhere in life, than the girls [sic]
> JOANNE: With PE?
> AMANDIP: Yeah because they have opportunities than the girls [sic].

Girls indicate that more images of sports women would help them to visualise the possibilities for women in sport and hence give them something to aim for: that being the "passionate", "confident", "persevering" body, as promoted through the posters in the PE corridor, is a possibility for girls too. It is not the case however that no girls participate in games, although they often do this in informal, non-competitive settings such as after-school clubs or pick-up games with friends at home or in the park. Of the 14 girls involved in the research, only three are active in organised competitive sports outside of school, all of which are individual activities, not team games – Lucy competes in cross-country running, Bhavana in taekwondo and Rupali in karate. Even Kiran, a high status team game player and recreationally active, exclaimed that she simply did not know how to find out about clubs that she could attend away from school, and this was the only reason she did not participate at a competitive level.

Research with young women athletes suggests that performances of desirable bodies have a negative effect on body image, yet images of attainable success can inspire young women to greater physical activity or sport participation (Cusumano & Thompson, 1997; Krane et al., 2011). Research with girls age 9 to 14 in the USA on their reactions to photos of female college athletes indicates that girls appreciate authentic images of women showing determination and focus on the pitch (Krane et al., 2011). Female athletes may see themselves as not as feminine as peers (Ross & Shinew, 2008) and as a result may overemphasise their hegemonic feminine performances off-pitch (Harris, 2005) or find that media reports overemphasise it for them (Wright & Clarke, 1999). The presence of positive images of women in attainable and legitimate sporting/active circumstances may enable the Vale Court girls to better think of themselves as valued bodies.

With girls such as Meena positioning sports as predominantly for boys, the images displayed throughout the school, as we saw in Chapter 4, rarely offered an alternative visualisation of girls' legitimate place in physical activity. Although it is clear that not all young people will become successful in competitive sport, findings here suggest a link between the visuality and legitimacy of elite female athletes and girls' positioning of themselves as active or sporting bodies. The minority ethnic girls are caught between representations of athletic and sporting bodies as male, and desirable feminine bodies as white. Due to this, they have to make their

own meanings. Among these narratives suggesting Asian students' low ability and engagement in physical activity, it is also evident that these girls *were* active outside of school, that despite the construction of people like them as inactive, they are able at other times to resist. Young people's own body narratives give them the ability to make multiple readings of bodies that they encounter in educational or media sites (Atencio, 2008; Davies, 1989; van Sterkenburg & Knoppers, 2004). The school physical culture appeared to offer few alternative narratives for producing subjectivities, so that within the meanings the girls had available to them, they did not define their recreational engagement as sporty. Yet outside of school, the girls found meanings that enabled them to engage in physical activity and thus resist notions of Asian girls and women as passive and physically inactive (Fleming, 1991; Lovell, 1991). Bhavana and Meena became involved in, respectively, taekwondo and dance through female friends or family members, who did represent active minority ethnic women. Peer and family networks have been found important for minority girls' recreation (Scraton & Watson, 1998). Fitness and dance practices are also constructed as positive spaces for activity and energy enjoyment in what are often women-only locations (Azzarito & Hill, 2012). Although Bhavana and Meena are participants in physical activity, if they do not position themselves as active within the discourses defining what active means there may be implications for their continued engagement (Garrett, 2004b), perhaps being unlikely to be inspired to greater participation by the health and activity campaigns whose posters could be found on the notice boards along the school corridors. Given the increasing importance placed on competition in school sport and at the same time lifelong activity, a commitment to representing diversity among elite sports players may assist objectives to increase young people's engagement.

### 6.3.3 "She's got a life now." Rupali's narrative

At the start of the study, Rupali presented herself as active outside school in a range of individual activities, including hill walking, aerobics, karate and circuit training. Rupali is a "cool" student, in two senses of the word. She is a quiet and unexcitable member of class, popular and fashionable in her dress, make-up and hairstyle. She is one of the first to be chosen for teams and puts herself forward to demonstrate, displaying a usually confident physicality. Her capabilities developed in aerobics outside school are converted into symbolic capital in PE where Ms Davis calls her "yoga queen" for her flexibility during stretches and warm up. However, Rupali's popularity amongst peers is interpreted differently by the teachers so that her social capital counts for less. During a class where Mr Sanford covered for the absent Ms Davis,

> [Table tennis] While demonstrating the scoring system, Mr Sanford asks for a girl to call out the score each time the demonstrators win or lose a point. Mr Sanford says, "Rupali, you're stupid, you tell us what the score is first" (i.e. 1-0). [Field notes]

In interview, Rupali reflected on this and similar incidents:

> RUPALI: He [Mr Sanford] hates me. I hate him too. He doesn't like me.
>
> YASMIN: He takes the mick out of Rupali, it's funny.

Although it comes at Rupali's expense, Yasmin makes allowances for Mr Sanford's comment because like banter among friends it creates, for Yasmin, a relaxed environment in which "he'll take the mick out of you and it'll just make you start laughing and then he just makes you want to do even better." Rupali does not see it this way and the work she does to maintain a high social status is undone somewhat by Mr Sanford's comments here. The meanings she gives to physically active feminine bodies are produced in relation to how she is constituted in this PE class. Physical activity is a serious endeavour where Rupali requires respect and to not be made fun of. She carefully manages the self that others see at school, wanting to avoid jeopardising it. Outside school, however, Rupali participates energetically in karate, circuit training and aerobics. The ways she speaks about her engagement in these classes seems at odds with this school self:

> I don't really care if people look at me. Cos I know I look silly half the time but like that's just me, sort of thing (Rupali)

Unlike other girls, such as Lucy, who expresses dislike of her own body shape, Rupali openly says "I like my body," feeling comfortable displaying her active self and the "good" PE body as described by Garrett (2004b) and Azzarito and Solmon (2006b) – a slender, fit, competent yet feminine body. Away from the gaze of her school peers, although among strangers, Rupali is less concerned to manage her dishevelled, moving body. Rupali demonstrates that in a context in which she feels validated, her physicality is less constrained. Bhavana expresses a similar sentiment:

> Yeah, I think cos it's like, you know like, you see them not as often [outside school], but they treat you more with respect. Like, they don't put you down or anything, they just like mainly encourage you. And like in school if you're with guys it's like if one person starts picking on you the rest, like, all follow (Bhavana)

In Rupali's final group interview, some months after the first interview, she says that she is no longer attending karate club, although she is unclear as to whether this would be temporary or permanent. Rupali talks about her declining activity in such language as "I can't be bothered ... I'm always like doing something else. Either online or Facebook". Her fellow interviewee Amandip adds, "she's got a life now". Rupali's social relations are incompatible with physical activity, as teen leisure activities including going to town or online chatting encroach into time previously spent in play. Developing adult femininity and related pressures on social life and time have an impact on the uses of her body. The capital Rupali builds up through her cool or

popular status in school could be at odds with activities she associates with childhood. Power dynamics in friendship groups inform acceptable and inacceptable behaviour for girls, such that 'running around for fun is considered babyish' (Paechter & Clark, 2007b: 322). A passive, girly femininity is constructed in part to preserve coolness. In school, popularity is valued among students, identified as rebellious behaviour, attractiveness (or as Rupali puts it "not looking too disastrous") and being friendly or cool with everyone are the resources that could offer social capital. Mickey argues that popularity is gained by having the right clothes - a form of economic capital where one has the resources to buy designer labelled clothes that is transformed into social capital in school. "Cool girl" dominance means inactivity on the playground and resistance to or disruption in PE classes. Girls who covet the friendship of cool girls follow this behaviour. In other research, coolness has been constructed as a performance of Westernisation among Asian youth for whom a "typically Asian" identity is not cool (Ratna, 2011). In Ratna's study, "typically Asian" young people were treated in racist ways by their "cool" peers who tried to distance themselves from Asian-ness while simultaneously avoiding being seen as "too white". Ratna argues that there are different versions of South Asian ethnic identities constructed by young people, so where Asians are outsiders in sport contexts it is not necessarily a result of their ethnicity. "Being really cool" does not guarantee high status but simply helps to ensure normal status for young people while marginalising others (Martino & Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2005).

Other girls in the project who talk about their martial arts participation at a younger age also put it in terms such as "we just got to a point where we just didn't wanna do it anymore"; it is "a phase we went through" (Yasmin). Yasmin marks the transition from girlhood to young womanhood. Her recreational activity is now walking around the park chatting, "to get out of the house". Students drop out rather than participate in activities which have less personal interest or meaning for them. Despite the level of activity she engages in outside school, Lucy sees herself as less active than she used to be: "I'm more into Music than PE. I did like it though. Like in primary school I used to be like proper energetic like every single sports day", claiming being a girl and growing up to be the issues. "We act more girly. We don't want to do sport" she says, a comment that constructs solidarity between Lucy, still active, and her group mates Namita and Chanda who are less so. The "girly" self that Lucy constructs here appears very different to the active self she usually performed, as seen in chapter 5. Lucy is doing girl to fit in with her peers who have not matched her active narratives. Arguably she reasserts a feminine, unsporty, subjectivity to better belong amongst Namita and Chanda who have positioned themselves in resistance to physical activity. Growing up, for these girls, suggests greater responsibility to school work, and a greater need to display normative womanhood/femininity through their bodies and activities. There is less opportunity for

messing about in the park, for instance, in informal play; greater passivity during mixed PE and lunchtime activities; more importance placed on clothing, makeup and hair, which impacts on participation as has been found in many projects with adolescent girls (e.g. Cockburn & Clarke, 2002; Garrett, 2004b; Oliver et al., 2009; Williams & Bedward, 2001). When they discuss their leisure, recreational or sporting activities outside of PE, some students are keen to explain that they have other hobbies aside from sport that they prefer. Bhavana, Namita and Rupali describe their leisure time as full of trips to the cinema, to town or shopping malls, and chatting with friends. These girls sometimes tell stories of girlhood/youth where physical activity is either childish or an inconvenient necessity.

> YASMIN: [If I want to be active] I just have to be bothered to go and do something [laughs]
>
> JOANNE: Do you think that you're not bothered sometimes about doing things?
>
> YASMIN: Yeah.
>
> JOANNE: What makes you not bothered?
>
> YASMIN: I don't know, there's just other things to do.
>
> JOANNE: Like what?
>
> YASMIN: Be at home [laughs].
>
> JOANNE: Just sort of chilling out?
>
> YASMIN: Yeah, and going shopping with your mates and stuff.

Yasmin, Rupali and Lucy remain active and engaged in single sex PE but it appears to be beginning to clash with the supposed imperatives of young womanhood and changes in the way their femininity is displayed. These girls are constantly making decisions whether to play or drop out, negotiating their personal goals at the time. By recognising the agency of girls to construct their own identities, researchers such as Oliver et al. (2009) suggest we cooperate with them and question the association of girly-girl with inactivity, rather than the subject position girly-girl itself.

## 6.4   Towards alternatives?

Rupali's claim that she is less concerned with her appearance in physical activity outside school helps to outline a key point about the context of PE. A number of students speak in similar ways about the contrast they perceive between PE and out of school activities. Ayesha identifies two different sets of practices in PE and recreational sport or leisure outside school: the former competitive, the latter supportive. The status-building and hierarchies of gendered practices and performances in PE are arguably missing from organised sport outside school where there is less emphasis on winning or monitoring peers' mistakes. Ayesha articulated this as a difference

between the competitive school culture and the supportive, social culture of recreational and club activities outside school. This section considers this distinction further.

### 6.4.1 "Outside school no one's going to say anything"

The issues that some girl-participants report with boys' comments about their bodies and abilities occur only in PE and not in out of school recreational or sport club activities, suggesting that there is something particular about the school culture that causes the girls to feel in such ways. Out of school they report feeling open, less constrained, more relaxed; boys are less judgemental and, with no lesson targets or objectives, there is less competition:

> AYESHA: When we're all outside, sometimes when you go outside in summer in the park and we're all together even the guys from our school, um it's not as much as competitious [sic], sort of thing, because in PE class you have to do what the teacher says, um but outside of school you can do whatever you want and just everyone treats each other like normal and it's perfectly fine. I'm not blaming on the teachers target or objective of the day or something but people do get quite competitive. Because you have to set one thing at the end of the lesson and they go for it. But whereas outside of school you just do whatever you want.

> NISHA: Outside of school it's like, it's no one you know so you can just do your own thing, sort of, and if you're with your friends it doesn't really matter what you do, you just do whatever you want because there's no like, if you're in PE and you do something wrong, Miss will come and tell you that you're doing it wrong. And erm, if you're out of school and you do something wrong it doesn't really matter, no one's going to say anything.

Both high and low status students described the freedom outside school in terms of not being judged on performance which might indicate how students feel restrained in PE:

> Teachers can't moan at you. Saying, well, you're doing this wrong (Jon)

> You get like levelled [graded] on your abilities in school, it's like you have to do, um, what the teacher's saying, you've got to do the sport that's given to you. And you also get levelled and the pressure is on you to perform well when you're playing sports. Whereas if you go to the park to play with your friends or you go to a club where you're actually learning, um, it's like, um, there's no pressure on you, you can just enjoy the sport that you're actually doing (Meena)

> People discourage you there, in school, yeah, but when you're in the park with your friends yeah, it's like, you go and do the monkey bars and [if] you can't do it, no one's gonna say nothing. You're having a good time, just ignoring everyone. But then if you go to out of school clubs, yeah, people don't know, like, what you are capable of, so they don't like downgrade you or anything like that (Mitesh)

When physical activity has a different, more relaxed or cooperative purpose, the young people are able to engage differently. Relaxed spaces where girls are able to express and perform their embodied identities, in ways that are meaningful to them, enable confident, unconstrained physicality. Participants' engagement is constructed through their experiences in the school

physical culture. Reported or perceived freedom in out of school activities, as well as their greater relevance to individual interests, orientates students differently to recreational activity, thereby influencing their negotiation of meanings and practices in PE. As explored in chapter 4, the students do not dislike competition, but the way it is constructed at school at times, coupled with a surveillance that gives other students the power to "put you down". By reflecting on their recreational experiences, students identify alternatives and make decisions about the practices they want to see in PE. This was manifested in a number of suggestions – working with friends, choosing their own activities or spaces.

> You have to feel confident how you are doing something so like when you want to do something, practicing to be good at it, you can't have people laughing at you because it just puts you off, if you get me, so you have to be like yeah they're supporting me so yeah I can do it (Ayesha)

Group A conclude by arguing that playing with friends is best:

> BHAVANA: When you go out for PE no one says anything.
>
> NAMITA: Cos even if you're not good at the sport they'll still encourage you.
>
> CHANDA: They're not going to put you down.

Ayesha explains that only with friends can she "jump around and get all my energy out", suggesting that she feels less embarrassed to be active around friends. Mitesh is the only boy who explains that the photos of his friends are to show that he admires them and feels supported by them. The valuing of friendship in PE may result from using friends as a strategy for feeling safe during physical activity, as young people can trust their friends to affirm their abilities (Fisette, 2011). O'Donovan (2002) and Green (2004) highlight that young people's activity engagement in adolescence occurs more often among friends as a leisure activity, than as organised formal sport.

Although the students have exclusively single-sex PE classes at the time of the research, mixed PE is still very much on the girls' minds. The teachers argue that, socially, mixed groups do not work because of girls' lack of participation. Mr Martin admits that he would rather teach a group of 100 boys than ten girls, because those ten girls would give him much more hassle. Recognising that girls' disengagement with PE has become a national talking point "on *The Jeremy Kyle Show*"[iv] the school has "even tried aerobics and tenpin bowling" with no improvement in participation, Mr Martin said (informal interview). Although this construction of girls' disengagement may be supported by the interview data, problematising girls' participation in PE ignores social factors influencing their femininity performances and positions within a physical culture promoting masculine sporting bodies and competitive performances of status. Neoliberal discourse of girls as problematic and risky, sport as

unproblematic (Svender et al., 2011), is reinforced. Much of the girls' situated knowledge is based on their experiences of mixed classes in Years 7 and 8. Through their talk about the anxieties they feel in mixed PE, some of the girls construct differences between a girls' "way of doing PE" and a boys' way, sometimes tying this to the construction of competitiveness as masculine. The girls see their way as more supportive, mature, comfortable; those being the environments that, they argue, girls prefer:

> But I really like it when it's a group of just girls cos it's like if the boys are there they'll diss us cos they can do more things than we can, if you see, in like sports, but when it's just us girls we like understand each other cos we're girls we're not meant to be like tomboys or anything or something like that. But we just get on with each other. So it's better off being with just girls (Ayesha)

Girls unequivocally tell of how they feel freer and more relaxed in single-sex PE. Single-sex PE spaces where girls are "protected" from boys' eyes (B. Evans, 2006) can be valuable because there, girls are not 'vulnerable to being measured and evaluated in terms of their outward signs and bodily shape' (Garrett, 2004b: 224). While PE remains gender-segregated in discourse if not in practice, girls who are sporty elsewhere will continue to hold back in mixed PE or in "boys' activities" (Hills, 2006). However, this both puts power in boys' hands and reproduces gender dualism (Berg & Lahelma, 2010; Larsson, Redelius & Fagrell, 2011). Whatever academic position is taken regarding the mixed-singles debate in PE, these girls' agency to define their experiences for themselves should not be denied: their truth is that they are more empowered in single-sex PE. Rønholt (2002) suggests that we can see girls as accepting the gender order by not engaging with sport, yet simultaneously challenging or resisting because they are making their own meanings for PE, able to define PE in their own terms.

### 6.4.2 Using the body with confidence

Hearing these powerful stories, I want also to hear whether there are any times that are more positive. After all, my motivation on initiating this project was to add to work towards more inclusive practices, not to catalogue bad experiences. I ask the students, what makes them feel good physically in PE? Lucy considers feeling good in PE is related to receiving teachers' praise, being told that she has done something well. She also expresses pride at having won a cross-country race that she did not think that she would be able to win.

> You've actually won and you didn't think you'd win but you beat like the best team, like on the run they're the best team, and go get beaten, you would've got beaten but you pulled it back (Lucy)

Similarly, Ayesha describes the physical or strategic practices that contribute to feeling good:

> Through the practices it is actually good because do you know how tag rugby you have

> to be a bit like sneaky to get the back and get the tags and run around, it isn't like normal rugby would be played, because it is just girls, and that is actually rugby I enjoyed as well (Ayesha)

Hickey (2008: 109) perceives that 'the channelling of (excess) male energy through physical activity has long been seen as a virtue' in PE but Ayesha also expresses feeling joyful, energetic, and needing to release pent up emotions. After being active, she says,

> I just feel better cos you've actually taken everything out, cos you know when you sweat and you just have a drink and you know I feel so relaxed, I'll just go and have a shower and then go straight to sleep. You feel like you're calmer in a way. So it's quite good cos you've taken all your energy out (Ayesha)

Although Ayesha speaks positively about the feelings she gets from exercise, she turns to talking about burning out "all the fatty foods" inside her; associating feeling physically good with fitness, slimming and preoccupation with calories and fat. However, other ways in which participants speak about their reasons for being active, or the types of enjoyment they feel in developing a sporting or active body suggest that health is not the only way in which young people make sense of physical activity and the body. Rail (2009) observes that many participants construct themselves as healthy even if the practices popularly associated with health are not a part of their lives. Likewise at Vale Court, although healthism may contribute to the development of the participants' subjectivities, its connection to their sport/PE engagement is relatively low, as Nisha declares, "I wouldn't actually listen to it, I'd say that I'd do whatever it says but in the end I'd just like carry on with my own thing".

As seen in chapter 4 where students' constructions of healthy or fit bodies imply the devaluing of fat bodies, students' meanings for PE are informed by the requirement to lose weight and tone up as much as their enjoyment. As Sykes (2009a) says, empowering is not necessarily deconstructive. Although pleasure, self-expression and freedom to construct one's own identity is empowering, freely chosen activities may not indicate resistance to dominant power relations or social norms (Raisborough & Bhatti, 2007). While young people can take up practices that they find pleasurable and empowering, their practices do not necessarily challenge existing structures and discourses concerning, for instance, gender-appropriate activities (Atencio, 2008).

Throughout this and the previous chapter, we have seen how students construct, in their practices and speech, subjectivities through which they align themselves with or against active identities, are able to see themselves as valued or legitimate participants in activities. Sport and recreational physical activity mean more for their embodied experiences when the students exercise some control over either the choice of activity or over the ways in which their bodies

move and are seen. I conclude with a conversation between Yasmin, Ayesha and Amandip. The three discuss how they often resist the teachers' instructions in the large outdoor space of the All Weather Pitch, by playing their small-sided games as far away from the teachers as they can go so that they can also chat and mess around, while insisting that they do get their work done. They are aware that they must balance having fun with putting in effort, but find it difficult to invest in sports they are bored with:

> AMANDIP: Everyone always messing around and like can't be bothered cos we do the same thing every year.
>
> [All talk at once about Rounders]
>
> YASMIN: Every year we do this, it gets well boring. Like, can't believe we're doing this again.

I ask them whether there is another activity that they would like to do instead. Instantly, Ayesha informs me that she would like to try lacrosse.

> AMANDIP: Oh yeah lacrosse!
>
> YASMIN: Oh that.
>
> AYESHA: Yeah.
>
> YASMIN: What?
>
> AMANDIP: Yeah it's like a…
>
> YASMIN: Oh yeah yeah yeah. I know. And then you… [laughs]
>
> AMANDIP: Have you seen a photo?
>
> YASMIN: A bit of it.
>
> AMANDIP: They've got a stick and there's a little …
>
> YASMIN: It's a …
>
> AMANDIP: And then you throw it [mimics action] and then you have to catch it and run, and do something with it, yeah.
>
> YASMIN: They should do those things here.
>
> AMANDIP: Yeah.
>
> AYESHA: Look on Google.

It does not matter that Amandip and Ayesha do not entirely understand what lacrosse involves as they describe the game to Yasmin - what matters to them is that it would be their choice, that they would be able to try new activities that they have chosen and in which they might be able to find new meaningful engagement in physical activity. As a sport that, in the UK, is often associated with upper class, boarding school cultures, lacrosse is unlikely to be something that students like Amandip, Ayesha and Yasmin would have experience of, perhaps for class reasons. It seems poignant to use lacrosse as an example of activities that have been out of reach for these students. Their class habitus should mark lacrosse as "not for them", yet lacrosse

seems so far removed from their experience that they have no knowledge of its meanings. Another time Amandip talks animatedly but vaguely about activities that she remembers from primary school, including "small games" involving some sort of team relay task, and climbing or orienteering at a local outdoor pursuits centre. As Humberstone (1995) tells us, where activities have no gendered connotations, being new experiences for all the participants, they can provide more neutral spaces to rethink physical ability and work out valued positions for all girls and boys. While lacrosse fits the bill as a new activity, it is a ball-based team game just like the netball, hockey and rounders that the girls find so repetitive. The multisport short unit in PE, heavily games-based, has frequently been critiqued within the literature, although its value for teachers who wish to introduce their students to a great variety of activities was highlighted by Ms Davis in chapter 4. For Amandip, the individual sports like squash, or recreational activity in the park, that she engages in outside of school, are appropriate in those contexts, but she associates school with learning a variety of team games. No girl-participants engage in team games outside school, although Kiran plays pick-up basketball on the street. However, there are other girls in the year group, not participants in this study, who are members of netball or football clubs, whose experiences and subjectivities cannot be explored here. That the concept of lacrosse carries no "baggage" for Ayesha seems more important than its similarity to games she already plays. The contexts or physical cultures surrounding activities combine with students' desire to express their own choices, demonstrating that students have complex and shifting reactions to physical activity and their physical identities.

## 6.5   *Concluding comments*

This chapter has outlined a number of ways in which the students of Vale Court resisted the valuing of bodies in ways built around sporting appearance and physicality. Recalling theories of disciplinary power and resistance, students variously position themselves amongst competing discourses. What is clear is that all of the participants have at some point moments of restraint or negativity in the ways they engage with physical activity. We have seen how fat, scrawny or awkward physicalities have led to constraint. By findings ways to avoid surveillance or draw attention to oneself, students were seen to resist both the valuing of effort or competence and competition, and teacher requests for all to participate in all activities. Students with a negative sense of self are those over whom others have the capital or power to define their place in the activity, how the activity is done and who can play. There is a lot of pressure based on competition and performance so that the positions available for students to take up depend upon their ability to embody status. Students need to have a (valued) position in the field in order to have positive experiences on their own terms, to develop an active identity. Meena, Bhavana and Rupali have ambiguous relationships to taking up an active subjectivity, finding it at odds at

various times with their gendered identities (as they intersect with race or age). However, unlike some research has found, they do not reject physical activity and did participate, sometimes in ways that were meaningful to them. Again age is important as girls consider how to reconcile active bodies with their developing adolescent feminine identities.

Participants also describe activity spaces and situations in which they feel free, able to be themselves and also unconstrained (places where they can make their own meanings for their embodied selves and practices) as empowering. Students desire to make choices in physical activity but this is difficult if their bodies are at odds with those valued by dominant physical cultural elements. The contrasting narratives – that strangers and friends make good activity buddies, while school peers do not – further indicates that young people acknowledge their preferred contexts and cultures in other spaces, with fellow participants less important. At the same time as recognising a competitive culture in school that they find difficult not to reproduce, many of the young people experience or envision different sporting / active cultures outside of school that show the possibilities for alternatives within school. Ayesha describes an alternative supportive culture wherein students' effort and team work are valued. However, she considers that this support is not evident in PE. Hierarchies remain in place even if effort is valued over performance. Although students identify a competitive culture in school, it is not entirely clear how it is unique compared to out of school physical cultures or spaces. Bethan Evans (2006) evidences how surveillance and judging of peers affects girls' construction of their feminine subjectivities. Tischler and McCaughtry (2011) show that holding back, what they call "survivalist" tactics for "guarded bodies" can give students power, in avoiding judgement. Nevertheless it is difficult to see empowerment in not engaging in physical activity.

The chapter draws together the participants' reconsidering of valued bodies to contemplate what the potential might be to build positive, unconstrained physicalities and embodied subjectivities when confident young people define for themselves their own meanings of bodies and physical activity. Understanding and moving forward will require harnessing something of the relationships, pedagogies, activities or ways of moving that have been suggested possible by these young people's narratives.

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[i] PE kit, often identified as one of the major barriers to girls' enjoyment in PE, is not evidently a problem for girls at Vale Court who want to cover up; rules for all students were relaxed, stating black jogging pants or shorts and a white t-shirt or polo shirt - not the traditional gym skirt and knickers so often derided (Cockburn & Clarke, 2002; Williams & Bedward, 2002). Many students in fact flout these rules,

wearing coloured jogging pants and hoodies or zip-up jackets. Teachers remind students that they should be wearing regulation colours, but rarely are there any other repercussions.

[ii] The Center for Eating Disorders at Sheppard Pratt (2012: 2) claims that an increase in portrait photos in social networking affects young people's body image and causes an increase in unhappiness with body size and shape, as 'Facebook appears to be fuelling a "camera-ready" mentality'.

[iii] Bhagesh's photo in temple is the only participant photo wherein a religious identity is explicitly represented.

[iv] The Jeremy Kyle Show, a daytime television chat show, is known for featuring the real life problems of its working-class guests, generally considered a moralising yet moral-less and voyeuristic show. It seems not, therefore, a show that Mr Martin sees as having any authority to weigh in on educational issues.

# 7    Conclusion

## 7.1    *Introduction*

This thesis is concerned with the ways in which young people's constructions of valued and unvalued bodies affect their embodied selves. It has attempted to address how young people understand some bodies to be valued in PE, how they negotiate normalisation or marginalisation and, as a result, what effects there are on their sense of self and their engagement with physical activities. Considering students' representations and meaning-making, I have discussed how students invest themselves in a physical culture that values gendered and racialised performances of skilfulness, strength, and muscularity, in order to accrue status. This study engaged young people in visual and verbal data production to investigate their physical activity practices within the physical cultures of their school and community. Some ways of engaging in PE are valued over others, awarding those with capital or the right dispositions and appearance with status, affecting the participation and physical sense of self of those who do not have status. In the literature review (chapter 2), I highlighted that PE and sport in Western contexts tend to valorise active, strong, muscular but slender, technically skilled bodies. This is communicated through the explicit and hidden curricula through teacher and student language, media and visual culture. It marks some students as other or different, especially as these constructions of valued bodies are regularly tied to ideal masculinity and whiteness. Young people position themselves in relation to these valued bodies. The meanings given to valued bodies do not always speak to students' own experiences, contributing to resistance and the development of alternative engagements with physical culture. This project contributes to knowledge on how young people make sense of the discourses and practices that construct schooling, sport, and bodies, in the context of their lives; the impacts of these discourses on investment in their bodies; and what might make young people choose or resist engagement. This chapter concludes the discussion for thesis. The research questions are addressed in 7.2 (with the first two research questions addressed together), 7.3, and 7.4; implications for PE are considered in 7.5; reflections on the study in 7.6; future research in 7.7; and 7.8 concludes the chapter and the thesis.

## 7.2    *What do young people construct as a valued body in PE? How are bodies constructed as valued within the physical cultures that young people engage in?*

Different bodies, or forms of physical capital, had value for the students: the effortful body, the technically competent body, the fit body, the heteronormative body and the strong body. There was not often consensus among the students about the exact meanings and embodiments of

these values, but they were all frequently expressed, affecting students in different ways. The complexity of the ways in which the participants positioned themselves and others in relation to these sometimes conflicting images was also apparent. While fitness and fatness were constructed as opposites, some students also critiqued skinniness and some suggested that a larger body size does not mean someone is incapable of competence. The strong body intersected heavily with both gender conforming and racialised body sizes. Gender conforming (heteronormativity) itself, in the sense of appropriate activities, was questioned by some girls while the boys mocked girls' inactivity and feminine performance. Although effort was one of the primary values that a vast majority of the participants mentioned, it did not necessarily signal a challenge to hierarchy and status – students could be read as not trying if they were also unable to embody competence or strength. High status has been constructed in able, determined students, engaged in competition, similar to the sporting body that Shilling (2008) outlines. The able, technically skilled or competent body can be found throughout all the participants' constructions, linked to the notions of fit, strong, determined/effortful, and heteronormative bodies.

The main meanings of valued, normative or sporting bodies identified in the literature review and the data have complex meanings and are negotiated in various ways because of their relationships with gendered and racialised identities. Strength for instance enables boys to dominate team games but a boy's body type can mean he negotiates attaining a strong body (or mediate the impact of a weaker body) in different ways. The meaning of ability and who could be awarded status for their abilities differed depending on the activity. Many of the students' constructions were an accumulation of ideal and normative bodies in existing literature but not always in conforming or subordinate ways. Messages in the informal or semi-formal spaces of school sometimes told a different story to the teachers' "just do it" message. Among the complex narratives, there were multiple ways for students to position themselves, or to resist, in ways that can be seen as positive or negative for their engagement in physical activity. The most interesting aspects of the data were not the types of valued bodies that the young people constructed, but how, and what influence there was on their sense of self and (dis)engagement: the subject positions they took up as they invested or resisted.

## 7.3 *What effect do these constructions have on engagement in physical activity?*

In answer to the third research question, I offer three themes.

**Investment / managing bodies.** Wright et al. (2003) ask us to go beyond participation in understanding young people's engagement with physical activity. Decisions to engage were

complex. The size and shape of the body become public matters to be discussed and measured against a normative vision of an ideal body, further supplemented by a culture of surveillance, performance and assessment (Evans et al., 2008; Evans & Rich, 2011; Martino & Beckett, 2004; Shilling, 2010). In this project, students displayed themselves as being active, skilled or fit by working on the body, engaging in such a way as to perform or practice what would gain them capital. Bodies are valued in PE if they work for and attain or perform the ideal in terms of weight, fitness, activity and diet (Shilling, 2010). Other work demonstrates that young people are not only making sense of their bodies through discourses of the ideal or normative, but schooling may be teaching the practices, activities and techniques required to reshape the body (Evans et al., 2008; Rail, 2009). Chapter 5 explored some of the practices the participants used to develop or maintain a valued body. As the chapter indicated, positioning oneself as normative, resistant or transformative relies on symbolic capital where others' surveillance in part constructs the self and what the self can be or do. Students' experiences and embodied subjectivities must be included in researching the discursive constructions of ideal or sporting bodies as experienced. The materiality of the body and place within societal and schooling structures affect the take up of discursive positions. Students accrued status depending how closely they embodied these values. Students managed their bodies to gain acceptance and some succeeded while others tried but were unable. Gaining status required presenting or performing a body that was accepted as valuable or admirable – if a student did not have the resources, or capital, to match the values of the field it was hard for that student to be admired. Normalised values are imposed on all, 'a paradigm of normativity' (Fitzgerald, 2005: 54). Physical capital in low status sports, such as Mitesh's lifesaving, was not exchangeable in other sports.

As chapter 6 shows, for some of the participants, status-management could have a powerful effect on their engagement in particular sports, or the circumstances in which they participated. Physical capital was manifested in appearance, and sometimes through competency in sports. Even though some may resist hegemonic masculine practices, the group has power to marginalise them. Like girls, boys also need to perform the right body in terms of shape and size, and physicality. While Wellard (2006) found that boys who are not skilful may stop playing or stop engaging in sports, in other spaces boys may take part enthusiastically even if not skilfully, such that value as a player, or enjoyment and engagement with the game, need not rely on skill (Azzarito & Katzew, 2009). Transformation, or a borderland subjectivity (Garrett, 2004b) is difficult, as Mitesh shows: aware of the ways in which dominant values affected his position in class, Mitesh still reproduces many of these related narratives and works to produce a body that is valued, as stockier and bigger than his own body. Despite his body work, his social and physical status remain low.

**Surveillance**. Highlighting the performative aspect of schooling (Ball, 2001), Evans (2012) claims that 'there will always be an opportunity for someone to watch you'. Rich and Evans (2009) make a connection between surveillance and educational 'performance on demand' that marks students (and teachers) as having to constantly "look like they know what they're doing", in Lucy's words. Where appearance was valued, it was 'less to do with what the body can do than with what the body looks like it can do' (Wright & Burrows, 2006: 279). PE, sport and education are all closely associated with valuing, ordering, grading, rewarding bodies and their functions – embodied particularly in PE as the space taken and actions performed (B. Evans, 2006). The body is a central instrument for the expression of skill and subject knowledge and thus is very much exposed to the gaze of others (Garrett, 2004b). Unlike Azzarito and Solmon (2006) who find that girls perform skill-less bodies in mixed PE, Bethan Evans (2006) documents some girls' need to be skilful when watched by boys. I found that girls spoke in interview as though they wanted to be seen as skilled (as long as teachers "don't ask us to do something stupid", says Yasmin), but in practice they often constrain their movements and their space. Girls discipline their bodies as they internalise messages from visual media and culture, (Bordo, 1993; Wright, 2004a). Similar to the participants in Oliver and Lalik's (2000) study who expressed dissatisfaction with the size and shape of their bodies, the Vale Court girls are dissatisfied with how their bodies look, particularly while moving, recalling Garrett (2004b: 232):

> Such is the strength and power of discourses around the body that the confidence with which a young woman engages with physical activity and PE seems to be significantly influenced by the 'appropriateness' of her body as well as the fear of public display.

The public nature of PE's physical culture (Fisette, 2011) means that the way one moves under surveillance in PE can affect how one is read as girl/boy, adolescent, cool or popular, technically skilled or otherwise competent, strong or fit (Paechter, 2003a; With-Nielsen & Pfister, 2011). The girls' concerns about the pressure they felt to conform under surveillance, whether from peers or teachers, are similar to those found by Bethan Evans (2006). She notes that competition is evident in out-of-school physical activity too, but the 'evaluative, *critical* gaze from someone in authority' (B. Evans, 2006: 556; original emphasis), where success or failure can be measured and recorded against one's own previous performance (or peers' performance), is particular, she argues, to PE. Competition was an important context for high ability students where capital can be displayed. Students did not disengage from PE altogether but some would only engage in certain activities, for instance those that were possible within peer group constructions of the heteronormative or gender appropriate, or avoiding individual activities where their performances were more visible. The strategies coded in chapter 6 as "holding back" or "dropping out" might suggest passivity in disengagement, but these students

can be seen as active agents in making choices and defining their physical activity for themselves (Azzarito et al., 2006). Kirk (2006) highlights the possibility for sport to contribute to emancipatory and empowering goals through critical pedagogy, *if* it is removed from its competitive associations ubiquitous in both contemporary PE and media sport.

**Physical cultures**. Contemporary PE delivery is argued to reproduce physical cultures that are not meaningful for young people and keep them alienated in PE through upholding normalised constructions of ideal bodies (Azzarito & Solmon, 2006; Kirk & Macdonald, 1998; Kirk & Tinning, 1994). Research consistently finds that young people's recreational or outside school physical activity habits – and the physical cultures they engage with – do not reflect their PE activities (Green, 2004). They would participate in spaces where they could be unconstrained and make their own choices, or have personal investment. It certainly appeared to be the case that the students engaged in different activities outside school, especially the girls. Students are active in choosing different activities, but do so amid changing gender relations (Flintoff & Scraton, 2001). Confirming findings elsewhere (Flintoff & Scraton, 2001; Cockburn & Clarke, 2002; B. Evans, 2006), there are not so much (or not only) structural or institutional barriers for girls and boys in certain activities but social constructions and narratives of appropriate girlhood and boyhood that affect the construction of embodied subjectivities. The contrast between competitive and supportive cultures, as articulated by Ayesha, also made it clear that many of these young people are aware of how physical activity and sport are organised and practised. But students did not reject competition entirely. PE at Vale Court is dominated by team games, although there are some attempts to introduce individual activities such as using the fitness suite, trampolining or skipping, and racquet sports constituted a large proportion of the girls' curriculum. Even the alternative games that Amandip suggested, in chapter 6, are competitive and team based. Many participants chose individual, not team, activities outside school, predominantly in non-competitive, recreational spaces. Girls' desires to play both individual and team games in PE suggest that the problem is in the physical culture and the ways of engaging that are made possible for students, and not the activities themselves (Flintoff & Scraton, 2001). As Kiran shows, decisions are not always made on gender appropriate lines – she rejected most activities that we might commonly associate with femininity or girlhood. Teachers framed her resistance as bad behaviour, showing that the dominant message is one of conformity, not agency or choice (Wright et al., 2003).

Outside school, physical activity was seen by students as having a choice of activities, freedom of time, less judgement, less concern with ability and differentiation/hierarchy, and less surveillance, including from teachers. The other participants in a physical activity space were also important. PE's place in the curriculum may partly be defended through use of assessment

as in other subjects, but the content of that assessment depends in whose interests PE needs to be (Penney, 2000). Critical pedagogy and curriculum studies have demonstrated that existing ways of knowing in school are common sense and, furthermore, that education legitimises in selective ways whether explicit or implicit, intended or unintended (Davies, 1989; Fernandez-Balboa, 1993; Young, 1998). Penney (2000) points out that selective values are implicated in exclusion and inequalities, whether those values and interests in PE are in line with technocratic, competitive sport or healthism and so on. The common issue is dominant discourses of sporting bodies and racialised gender performances through which girls and boys must make sense of their bodies and participation; where they can make their own meanings they express more freedom. I am not intending, however, to imply that all physical cultures outside school are superior to school in offering young people freedom of choice. This competitive physical culture was not mirrored completely by the explicit discourse of hard work and perseverance that was noted in the visual culture, such as the PE corridor posters, but formed from multiple sources including media sport and youth cultures. The underlying message in the physical culture at Vale Court is one of participation, although this is often interpreted as elite sport involvement.

## 7.4  What effect do these constructions have on sense of self?

With the privileging of achievement, young people are divided and stratified according to the ability and hard work they display (Evans & Penney, 2008; Wright & Burrows, 2006). Students who feel that their ability is low, and fixed, will avoid challenge; their perception of ability affects their success and attribution of success. Being identified as high ability offers access to contexts where more capital can be acquired or displayed; low ability students are marginalised from this access, remaining low ability. Ability is often also tied to perception of competence and motivation or desire to participate (Wright & Burrows, 2006). However, alone these are not enough to develop high status, so students must also bring 'sufficient capital … to the performance context to ensure a higher ability categorisation' (Hay & Macdonald, 2009: 11). Bodies valued in PE show an intersection among able sporting bodies and appearance and gender normativity; intersections with age, ethnicity and (dis)ability were also salient. Students managed their social status, sporting skills, body size and gendered dispositions at different times, positioning and performing their selves so as to develop status, or avoid the risk of losing status, such as by avoiding surveillance.

Theorising how students negotiate their selves at the intersections or at the boundaries has been invaluable for examining how ideal body narratives are complex and defined by the boundaries. The bodies, physicalities and narratives of students show the tensions and fluidity of dominant constructions, affected by materiality or physicality. What a young person can be or become

affects how they engage or disengage with activity as a whole, or in certain sports, to manage their embodied selves. In this project, Bourdieu's theories enabled a look at both structure and agency. Being valued in PE was a material embodiment not just a discursive position: students indicated that they worked on the body to develop capital. Agents 'shape their aspirations according to … what is and is not for us' (Bourdieu, 1990: 64). The conversion of physical capital into cultural and social capital may be more likely for students who already hold a level of physical capital, and who dominate in the PE class and in social interactions (Hills, 2007).

Using feminist poststructuralist conceptions of embodied subjectivity, agents position themselves among competing dominant and alternative discourses to produce a sense of self (or an active identity) that can be multiple and shifting. Thinking about multiple subjectivities rather than fixed identities may help consider the varying ways boys and girls position themselves and their practices, and also are positioned by others (Davies & Harré, 1990). Constructions of bodies that have value, and students' relations to them, develop. Like other research that finds various experiences and multiple selves (Atencio, 2010; Cox & Thompson, 2000), different students seemed not just to define their selves as sporty or unsporty, as good or bad (or borderland – Azzarito & Solmon, 2006) bodies. Instead, they made continuous negotiations within different PE sites or activities, physical cultures and peer groups as they coped with complex competing discourses of gender and heterosexuality, finding multiple positions available to them, making decisions on how to explain their experiences and to embody practices every day on the small scale. The participants told complex stories of their performance of selves that could be active or inactive depending on the meanings they gave to bodies and activities. To use the language found in Azzarito & Solmon (2006) and Garrett (2004b), their narratives of investment and challenge may be more complex than those good, bad, and borderland or transgressive bodies. A good body had various meanings and embodiments. The students did not just discipline their bodies to the ideal, but made choices to position themselves as active, determined, strong, fit or skilled, based on personal body narratives. A desire to invest in and produce a good body did not mean that feelings of uncertainty or constraint could be avoided.

Resistance also had many meanings: students positioned themselves in resistance to gender, sport or PE at various times. Girls were aware of gendered social structures and did recognise inequalities even while reinforcing traditional power relations. If PE can provide spaces or pedagogical sites for students to critically reflect, this might be harnessed for assisting girls and boys in rethinking their practices. Throughout, there are examples of participants drawing on counter-narratives that resist normative girlhood or the marking of Asian bodies as risky. Their ambiguous negotiations of their subjectivities demonstrate their agency in defining suitable and

fluid meanings among the pressures of white-dominated health, beauty and muscularity. Paying attention to the theories of hybrid identity, and challenging prevailing narratives of British Asian girls as caught between home and Western cultures can help us to note boundaries around identities and the over-simplicity of defining South Asian or indeed Western adolescence as a singular set of experiences (Rajiva, 2009). This project finds that gender relationality (Connell, 1995) and gendered physicalities remain strong, while some students are able to recognise and deconstruct them, to have active identities in other physical cultures. Students made decisions to align themselves with peers or construct different subjectivities – for instance Lucy calling herself "girly" when she was with Chanda and Namita – drawing on intersecting discourses of age and femininity where useful (Weedon, 1997). Students were aware of the problems of dominant narratives and could be critical of them, but in practice still found it hard to *do* otherwise.

The association between sport performances and hegemonic masculinity does not stop girls from participating completely (B. Evans, 2006; Flintoff & Scraton, 2001; Markula, 2001, 2003). For some girls, PE promoted meanings of the body based on health and fitness, such as feeling good and exerting energy, while marginalising the ways in which physical power could be valued and celebrated (Garrett, 2004b; O'Flynn, 2008). While some studies find that girls hide their physically active identities (Hills, 2006) or perform normatively feminine, inactive identities (With-Nielsen & Pfister, 2011) to conform, some girls at Vale Court were able to make physical activity a part of their identities while remaining feminine. As Rupali and Meena suggested, however, doing aesthetic activities (Markula, 1995) such as dance and aerobics was not associated with being sporty. If students are learning in school that their activities do not meet definitions of legitimate sporting endeavour, they may be more likely to feel that 'it's not for me' (McCaughtry & Tischler, 2010: 37).

As well as intersecting with gender, students' values were also affected by ethnicity. While the students still valued ability and competitive performance and so on, these intersected with gender and race. Varying bodies had symbolic capital, as gender performances intersected with age, ethnicity, body size and class. Four narratives in Chapter 5 showed how students coped with this and managed their bodies to meet expectations, three of them offering a contribution to knowledge on boys' negotiation of dominant masculinities or whether, even in rejecting dominant masculinity, boys are still measured against it (Hickey, 2009). Their embodied knowledges as British Indian teenage boys informed their self-constructions in relation to hegemonic masculinities both within their school and of mainstream British boyhood. There remained pressure to perform valued versions of masculinity as we saw the boys working to develop their muscularity outside school to benefit their performances in PE, but what dominant

masculinity looks like varies. The boys' practices within PE, in a diverse but Asian-majority school, and their attempts to find a safe or fulfilling place within community sport clubs informed their constructions of masculinity. Not fixed, their ideas of masculinity continued to be redefined as the boys moved between different spaces and physical cultures. These boys redefined their bodies and sports practices while still acting within broader social and ethnic patterns. Dominant masculinities are not constituted by the same set of characteristics in all physical cultures, being informed by intersections with class and ethnicity (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Swain, 2003). Precisely because hegemonic masculinity varies at the boundaries in relation to subordinate/alternative masculinities and femininities, there is the possibility for shifting power to create resistance. Masculinities are not simply differentiated by ethnicity but cross ethnic lines (Parker, 1996), while ethnicity does play a part in students making sense of their bodies.

The participants valued different bodies and behaviours in different sports, indicating that teachers' and researchers' understanding of the ideal masculine sporting body as mesomorph and competent in games (Millington & Wilson, 2010; Tischler & McCaughtry, 2011; Parker, 1996) could be broadened to account for local physical culture complexity and preferences for different sports. While some boys may be marginalised because of their ethnicity, there are complex intersections of ethnic categories with age, class, body size and gender relations (Brah, 1996). In a school or localised culture that is not numerically or symbolically dominated by white masculinities, the British Asian boys were more able to define their masculinities and to experience sport and strong bodies in ways that did not always reference whiteness as dominant. At the same time, as Deepesh's feelings about racism in football show, within broader social structures Asian boys' opportunities to be involved in sports are still mediated by their positions at the margins, as "different" boys. Worried about looking "rough", the boys were still framed by class boundaries of respectable masculinity that intersects with ethnicity and class. Alternatives to dominant narratives of masculinity, strength and Asian boy become clear through considering the interplay of local and global physical cultures.

The bodies of those who are "different" are sites for marking the boundary of the norm, yet those outsiders are also often disciplined while stigmatised. Puwar (2004) says that where bodies differ from the somatic (bodily) norm this is used as evidence for why they should be treated differently. Young people, minority ethnic or working class people can find themselves embodied symbols of social ills. The stigmatisation of some black and minority ethnic young men's bodies in public spaces may be as prevalent as the sexualisation of young women. Islamophobia since 9/11, anti-hoodie feeling especially around the 2011 England riots, rising binge drinking and associated street violence, have moralised the bodies of young men of

certain ethnicities or classes; notwithstanding simultaneous fascination with and reviling of both covered Muslim hijabis and uncovered young Western women (Durham, 2004). Bodies, in appearance, manner, dress or location have become visual signs of deviance not diversity. Interests in PE and education have shifted to meet commercial/private enterprise interests (Evans & Davies, 2010; Evans, 2012) alongside the growth of individualism in politically and economically neoliberal times (Apple, Kenway & Singh, 2005). Individualist responsibility shifts problems of social structures onto the communities whose self-segregation hinders multiculturalism (Cameron, 2011). The threatened rights of "different-looking" people to access public spaces (DeVega, 2012), together with continued apologies for racism in sport (Hunter, 2012), suggest implications for young people of racialised or classed minorities learning about their place in society and the development of safe, inclusive or empowering educational and leisure spaces. Notions of what is a physically educated child, and ways to improve equity within PE and sport, must remember these broader contexts.

Within the participants' narratives of their lives and engagements in sport and physical activity they did not always say that ethnicity made a difference. However, this does not mean that in pedagogical research we can avoid making the effort to tell complex stories and to think critically about what we mean by, for instance, girl", "boy", or "culturally relevant" curricula and pedagogies. Where an ethnic group is no longer "minority", at least locally as in Vale Court and its area of Leicester, the analyses of difference and inequality must become more complex to move away from seeing experiences as a result of membership of a minority group, while retaining awareness of structural inequalities, material and discursive effects (Amara & Henry, 2010). Where the girls subscribed to dominant discourses of lack of discord between ethnic groups, they reproduced a tendency to whitewash minority ethnic concerns or difficulties within white dominated society, wherein diversity is problematic or where white ways of engaging in the world and in sport are assumed possible for all. Gender distinctions seemed to be made unapologetically by teachers and students, while the anti-racist discourse in the school did not facilitate conversations around race and class. Although the notice board messages and most common student values concerned trying hard and getting involved, looking closer it became more complex. While locally (in the school and community) the Asian girls were a majority, they still remained marginalised, not privileged. The students articulated few ethnic differences or experiences where ethnicity / race were factors in their embodied knowledge. Perhaps this says more about Leicester than about British Asian identities. Leicester is somewhat unusual, held up in recent years as an example of successful integration (although on a local level, communities remain geographically segregated (Herbert, 2008)). Complex understandings of diversity of physical cultural participation require exploring multiple sites and multiple meanings of physical activity and minority.

## 7.5 Implications for PE

As a project focused on an educational setting, it is important that the research has some value to working towards potential reconsiderations of practice.

**Encourage broad meanings for ability and valued engagements**. This project supports broad notions of what physical activity participation can be and how young people can make choices. Wright and Burrows (2006) see that ability intersects with ethnicity and can – or should – mean different things so as not always to be associated with technical skill or as something that people either have or don't have:

> It is imperative to conceptualise 'ability' as embedded in social and cultural relations and that it needs to encompass a wide range of movements and capacities (Wright & Burrows, 2006: 288).

The current NCPE aims to develop competence and confidence through challenging situations and to enable students to discover their aptitudes to 'make informed choices about lifelong physical activity' (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, 2007). Tinning (2010) claims that PE needs to focus on competency in skills, not perfection, arguing that the codes underpinning curricula and policy still focus on performance, not wellbeing or physical literacy. However, competition is being reprioritised through the School Games, a re-centralisation perhaps of technocratic, PE-as-sport and performance (McKay et al., 1990; Kirk, 2011). The Vale Court participants' indications that competition often brought them anxiety and division questions the character-building often valorised in competition (i.e. current policy supposes that 'competitive sport...brings out the best in everyone,' Department for Education, 2010). Some teachers' styles, models and forms of communication refocused attention off performance onto effort. Measures such as broadening the curriculum away from games and relaxation of the PE kit had been implemented at the school, but PE was still not representing many of the students' recreational activity interests. Penney and Chandler's (2000: 76) vision for a future PE includes addressing social justice, 'establishing children as creators, not merely receivers of knowledge, skills and understanding' and focusing on learning through moving, not just about moving. The interest of PE might become, Evans (2004: 95) reminds us, 'to work on, effect changes in, develop and enhance 'the body's' intelligent capacities for movement and expression in physical cultures'. PE may be an 'embodied capacity to engage in different forms of movement' (Wright & Burrows, 2006: 282) through which young people develop a sense of self (Bennett et al., 1999). PE might be revalued to focus on participation and well-being rather than the pursuit of high-performance athleticism (Vertinsky, 1992). Connell (2008: 143) calls for more

democratic processes in physical activity and sport – less dominance by capitalist commercial interests that have hierarchical structures designed to select elite performers and more emphasis on 'the participatory and collaborative possibilities in young people's games and physical learning'. The development of physical capital can be a good starting point for transforming physicality, activity and femininity: young people become open to new, challenging experiences of the body (Hills, 2007).

Where girls expressed relief at having single-sex PE because they could act more like themselves and did not have to worry about what some boys would say about them, the suggestion seems to be that critical work needs to be done with boys on re-evaluating how and why sports/activities can be played, rather than curtailing girls' spaces and opportunities in order to protect them. Girls were able to redefine gender boundaries outside school and play in different ways at different times (Evaldsson, 2003). As the girls indicated, in reporting themselves much more active in single-sex PE than in mixed, the solution would not just be to return to mixed sex, for the gender order would remain in place, Berg & Lahelma (2011) argue. Likewise, the context and curriculum affect the efficacy of mixed classes (Osborne, Brauer & Sutliff, 2002). A relevant curriculum should provide opportunities to reinforce inclusive practices while doing something about exclusionary practices (Clark & Paechter, 2007). Given the enduring importance placed on a number of aims in PE and school sport, including competition and lifelong activity, a commitment to representing diversity among elite sports players may assist objectives to increase young people's engagement by showing people like them in achievable sporting success. Berg and Lahelma (2011) suggest supporting teachers and a deeper investigation of social arrangements, so that deconstructing gender does not rest entirely on PE teachers' shoulders.

**Link PE activities to students' physical cultural engagement outside school.** The perceptions that students had about why physical activity is important – for enjoyment of exercise and feeling the body move, or achieving success in sport – is disconnected from the imperatives of perfection and performativity, that encourage criticism and judgement of bodily appearance. My research supports Wright and Burrows' (2006: 289) call for the centring of relevant physical cultures and 'movements that are located and valued because of their relationships with particular cultures and societies' or embodied capacities that matter to young people. Liberatory or empowering PE (Azzarito et al., 2006; Fisette, 2011; Garrett, 2004b) might involve greater links to the physical cultures young people engage in and construct outside of school (Kirk & Tinning, 1994), including activities that are relevant to their broader lives (Green, 2004), or more space to express multiple physicalities, encouraging 'body work' to understand one's own body in relation to the socially constructed ideal (Hargreaves, 1986).

Among the Vale Court students there were girls who were more active outside school and who were enthusiastic members of clubs based around competitive sport (cross-country running, taekwondo) and fitness (aerobics, dance), or just related to physical activity (such as Army Cadets and Scouts) and additionally some girls expressed a desire to become more involved in sports clubs. Even Kiran, who wanted to play, did not know how to find clubs to join outside school. Some of the teachers encouraged attendance at extra-curricular school clubs and there were some posters advertising clubs on the PE notice boards, although they were dwarfed by the motivational posters of elite sport stars. Further effort to assist students in finding a range of sporting and recreational activities beyond school could help students like Kiran to find the clubs she desires, or for students like Meena to see that people like her can become active and see themselves as sporty. Providing a greater range of images on notice boards, of diverse sporting bodies from elite and participatory levels, may also be of benefit. These could then be used to engage students in discussion of visual culture and the impact of the media.

> If we are going to promote sport and physical activities as part of the concept of lifelong learning … then it is vital that those involved in both promotion and the teaching of physical activity understand the social and cultural frames of reference with which many women [and men] construct their notions of sport and leisure (Deem & Gilroy, 1998: 102).

PE faces a challenge in finding new ways 'to empower girls and young women [and boys] so that they feel confident and skilled in using their bodies rather than constrained by restrictive forms of gendered embodiment' (Garrett, 2004b: 235). Paechter (2000: 107) argues that a 'truly empowering PE will need to break away from and be transgressive of both the male and female PE traditions…to…struggle against models of masculinity and femininity that deny aspects of the physical to either gender'. For instance, Gard (2008: 190) sees dance as a way of expanding the 'range of movement vocabularies that students use' and of examining and transgressing the physicalities of masculinity and femininity. This form of pedagogic work can disrupt the normalised meanings of gendered embodiment and deconstruct the normativity of hegemonic masculinity. Developing competencies requires dropping assumptions of gender and racial differences in ability while remembering how assumptions of difference have already affected students' embodied capacities and teachers' practices (Wright & Burrows, 2006). PE *can* provide spaces for social responsibility, relationship building, communication and conflict resolution, team problem-solving and assertiveness (Hellison, 2003). A transformative PE, then, may be one that acknowledges how selves/identities are embodied, and recognises the body work that is done in PE.

**Involve students in curricular design and critical work on the body.** The physical education classroom can be a site for empowerment through knowledge of the body, providing

opportunities for young people to construct their own meanings of their identities and deconstruct dominant notions of sporting or ideal bodies (Armour, 1999). By interrogating the practices and visual discourses that educational institutions are offering to young people, ways can be found to deconstruct normativity and hierarchy in the ways sporting, racialised and gendered bodies are given value. The visual might potentially be used as a tool for raising critical questions in schools about the intersections of dominant and subordinate masculinities and race/ethnicity in certain sports that permeate boys' construction of the body and identity. The students unravelled their perspectives and choices by discussing their photos and experiences. Critical inquiry can encourage dialogue and make visible other possibilities. As has been said elsewhere (Oliver, 2001), young people are able to critique the messages they receive, especially if offered the tools with which to do so in pedagogical situations. For instance, some participants deconstructed images and narratives, such as links between slenderness and health. As an aspect of critical inquiry, students' photos created opportunities to discuss inclusion and exclusion, normalisation and marginalisation, across intersections of gender, age, race, disability and ability (Hills & Crosston, 2011). By interrogating the discourses that educational institutions are offering to young people through the hidden curriculum, ways can be found to deconstruct assumptions of whiteness in the ways sporting and gendered bodies are given value in school sites (Wright, 1995). If researchers and teachers are committed to deconstructing ideas of normative bodies, participatory visual methods within ethnographic studies have the potential to enable highlighting of the complexity of young people's meanings of their selves. Schools may not be able to change all the media young people consume but education might be able to help them think through the messages they receive and subsequently how bodies become valued and the ways they accrue/maintain status (Oliver & Lalik, 2000).

As Berg and Lahelma (2011) point out, work with students in schools requires the support of teachers, and requires supporting teachers. Any recommendations for transforming PE, such as these, need to recognise the interrelationships of teachers and students, plus senior staff, governors and policy-makers, in creating and maintaining the (physical) cultures in and around PE, sport and schools. While this study has been student-focused, for longer term success in developing critical inquiry and participatory research, teachers must be invited into collaborative processes and be able to make an investment alongside researchers.

## 7.6   Reflections on the study

This research was carried out in one school, in Leicester, with one cohort of Year 9 students. As the teachers encouraged me to research with the Year 9 group, the experiences of other year groups remain unexplored. As explained in chapter 3, this cohort of students had recently

switched from one mixed and one single sex lesson of PE each week, to all single sex, which undoubtedly had an impact on their prioritising of gender in the interview conversations, as we have seen throughout the previous three chapters. While generalisability is not an aim of this research, the findings should be able to indicate ways in which other young people may negotiate status.

Whether any of the differences in reactions to interviews were a response to the researcher's identity (A. Phoenix, 1994; Archer, 2002) would be difficult to comment on. The participants were not just speaking to me, but to each other – friends and classmates who will remember what has been said. Throughout, I was aware that meaning may not be passed from participants to researcher as the participants intended it. I may be unable to provide nuance to what is not explicitly said during interviews. Often both white and Asian participants were keen to construct their school as anti-racist, integrated and caring and almost all deflected questions concerning racial differences among students or sports stars. I almost certainly performed whiteness when I avoided asking direct questions about ethnicity and religion. At the same time as they minimised ethnicity as a factor, gender difference was a frequent topic of student-initiated conversation. This study offers valuable data from Hindu and Sikh young people, who have not been a focus of PE research previously. However, the significance of the participants' religious identity in shaping their physical activity experiences is not something that this project is able to comment on. Likewise, there is also silence here on sexuality, although the students' ages and the use of group interviews may explain this. Centring students' voices meant that if they avoided talking about something, for instance race or religion, I was unable to go into much detail about their constructions and negotiations of discourse. The discourses they highlight, particularly gender, were the ones I was most able to write about. The interpretative nature of this project means that the students' photos and interview conversations are indications of their possible responses.

Ethnography is a messy, emergent process of data production that involves making decisions about the progress of the project throughout. Particularly with the participatory elements of the data production, choices had to be made when the participants' involvement deviated from the original plan, specifically with groupings of interviews. Some participants requested switching groups to be with friends. Those groups that produced the most conversation (whether or not this is the richest data) were those where all participants were friends. I often had to negotiate asking questions on the interview schedules to all participants or allowing conversation between some participants to continue. We have not heard in this thesis the voices of all twenty-five participants equally; some, for instance Irshad, Kuldeep and Chanda, appear only briefly here, and this may have been a result of the groupings in the interviews. While I defend my use of

group interviews, further interviews with each group, or a maximum of three in each group, may have enabled those quieter students to talk more, involving them further in the research (if they had desired it).

Three strands have developed in the use of visual methods: researcher-created or collected images; participant-created, existing images; and participant and researcher collaboration in the creation of images (Banks, 2007; Thompson, 2008). If not a truly participatory project, for the participants did not contribute to designing the purpose and methods of the study, this project is collaborative in the sense of the participants bringing their own interpretations to the photography instruction sheet, being able to take cameras away and show their experiences in pictures as well as words. In this project, ethnography was useful to learn more about their friendships, interactions, everyday speech and for observing students' actions in PE class, not just hearing about it in interviews. Coupled with the photography, the ethnographic project was able to generate data from beyond school as well as within it, to move towards a richer picture of how cultures outside of school affected students within school. Photography alone would not have achieved this, however; Mitesh's photos, particularly those that tell a story or represent a hypothetical event, rather than record a real occurrence, are a key example of why photo elicitation is necessary. Researchers cannot understand students' visual narratives without interviewing to learn more about the participants' meanings and their reasons for creating each photo. Similarly, participant photography cannot be used as a perfect method for recording all their activities or other experiences; for instance, active students did not always reflect the many clubs and recreational activities that they take part in. This is especially seen in Lucy's and Richard's photo sets as considered in chapters 5 and 6, as well as other participants such as Sohan and Irshad.

Reflecting on the use of long-term participatory visual methods with young people, Enright and O'Sullivan (2011: 11) note the 'epistemological benefits' of students' engagement in tasks that deviate from the privileging of written text in schools, and suggest students may believe that they can be more truthful through photography – or at least, not embellish their accounts to say what researchers want to hear. Participatory photography in ethnographic inquiry can constitute a less intrusive way of accessing something of students' out of school experiences and likewise, can show teachers what they do not see of physical activity engagement both in and out of school. Photography or related tasks such as scrapbooking and poster-making can provide ways to begin conversations about young people's consumption of images, the meanings they give to different bodies, and how role models are formed and perceived (Holroyd, 2003; Krane et al., 2011; Millington & Wilson, 2010; Oliver, 2001; Oliver & Lalik, 2004). As research or curricular tasks within critical physical education or media literacy projects, producing and

discussing photographs from the physical cultures of school, community and beyond can enable students and teachers to see others' ways of seeing and being. This said, I concur with Buckingham (2009) that visual or creative methods do not achieve more authentic insights than other methods such as interviewing alone. Concluding on this project with the twenty-five students from Vale Court, it is my understanding that visual inquiry can offer a way to encourage participant investment in research, by creating data that offers insight into the particularly visual aspects of their lives.

## 7.7 *Future research*

Drawing on feminist poststructuralist theory and previous empirical studies, this project focused on a gender analysis as it intersects with ethnicity (as well as age and class). Students were not asked specific questions about gender – they raised it themselves, often minutes into the interview. Similarly, teachers began talking to me in class about their concerns surrounding girls' and boys' participation without prompting. This stressed the continuing preoccupation with gender difference or gendered bodies in PE and the thinking within schools as well as by researchers. In contrast, few students spoke explicitly about ethnic differences and or how their ethnicity affected their access to physical activity. The more nuanced research can become, the more we may understand these complex conceptions. To continue to work towards gender-sensitive (Vertinsky, 1992) and body-focused (Armour, 1999) PE may require more in the way of researching with children and young people. In centring student voices, I avoided leading them into any specific conversations. Handled sensitively, future research could initiate further conversation around gendered and racialised meanings and experiences, creating further knowledge about how students make sense of themselves and physical activity. Resonating with Oliver's calls for critical inquiry with girls to understand the impact of popular media images of girls' bodies and behaviours, McCaughtry and Tischler (2010) point out that critical readings of the body are crucial for reforming how gender relations and performances, ability, sexuality, ethnicity and fat-phobia affect students in PE classrooms.

Looking further at pedagogies of the body in school and media discourses can prove fruitful in understanding the source of discourses and images. I see interest in further research on representation and the implications of seeing oneself or people like oneself represented in media or within the school visual culture. Drawing on school images as were recorded through researcher photos and notes was a positive addition to the study and raised many interesting or unanticipated questions. This could be followed up in exploring other schools' visual cultures. Looking beyond students' direct experience and visual media consumption, their school experiences are also constructed by teachers, policy, community, governors, NCPE and initiatives. The discursive construction of the body in these spaces could also prove informative

concerning students' bodily knowledge. This project also highlighted to me the importance of age as it intersects with gendered identities and notions of acceptable physical activity and physical identity. Some students indicated that their constructions of gender difference formed much earlier than adolescence. The experiences at the transition from primary to secondary school recalled by some of the students highlighted the need to undertake critical work with primary age children or at the transition from primary to secondary. Some research is beginning to acknowledge this (Birbeck & Drummond, 2006; Paechter & Clark, 2007b). With appropriate developments to the methodology, a collaborative project such as this could be used with primary pupils.

Additionally, the ethnographic aspects of the study proved most valuable for developing nuanced understandings, building relationships with students and seeing more of their multiple subjectivities as they moved between different PE activities. While the photos gave some view into their physical activities outside school, it would be valuable to aim to research with clubs as well as in school, gaining further knowledge of those cultures that the students found different to PE. For instance, researching with fewer participants but both in school and their clubs or recreational activities. In particular, those spaces that are constructed as more "free", inclusive or empowering, where no one cares about others' appearance, may offer insights for creating those links for PE to relevant youth/physical cultures (Green, 2004; Tinning & Fitzclarence, 1992). Future research could look closely at the relationships between in school and out of school physical activity or sport engagement for diverse young people, to investigate further how PE curricula and facilities can develop in line with young people's popular and physical cultures.

## 7.8   *Concluding comments*

The findings from this study make several important contributions to literature on the engagement of girls and boys from ethnic minority backgrounds in PE and sport and concerning young people's everyday choices about their PE engagement. This thesis shows the complexity of the discourses and practices that students may negotiate concerning bodies that have value. As they learn about bodies as well as about physical activity and health in PE cultures that are not value-free (Kirk, 1999; Shilling, 2008; Tinning, 2010), young people create meaning for their own bodies and selves as well as for those around them. They negotiate embodying those values that may have powerful messages about who can perform an active subjectivity.

This project has contributed to knowledge about what a valued or high status body may look like among a group of 13-14 year old students in one diverse school in Leicester. It looked particularly at their physical activity engagement in school, while also recognising that their

physical cultural engagement outside of school informs their practices and experiences in PE. I recognised the need to research with minority populations where previous work may have centred white voices or not considered the effect of ethnicity in social constructions of the body or structures in schooling and physical cultures. By working with a diverse group of students, or one in which an ethnic group typically thought of as being a minority is a majority in the school and community, consideration can be made of how whiteness as well as dominant gender binaries affect young people's embodied selves in PE.

This project used students' visual and verbal narratives to explore their experiences and meaning-making within physical education, physical activity and sport – or physical cultures. Through a series of interviews and their photo diaries, the students constructed multiple ways of valuing bodies at different times, and positioned themselves in relation to these constructions as they made sense to them. The participants constructed as valued bodies those that are "good at PE": meaning competency, strength and a desire and ability to win. Alongside this, students also valued fit, "not fat" bodies, and the display of effort or trying one's best. Frequently their embodied knowledge in physical activity was based on how the body looks when active. Enduring structures stratifying along gender, "race", class and age lines were also evident. The participants' engagements in PE responded to their capability to invest in practices that could develop their capital to be considered valued, or their choice to resist scrutiny or narratives that marginalised them by dropping out. The students took up positions in relation to these notions of status, sometimes investing in practices that would develop their bodies in these ways. Status, as both physical and social capital, remains powerful in young people's lives in school and PE as they are aware of their own and others' bodies and movements, trying to "fit" into social hierarchies.

While this work contributes to discussion on participation, students' perceptions and learning in PE, it looks beyond participation (Wright et al., 2003). Participants' fluid subjectivities as they negotiated different activities, physical cultures, and assumptions about gendered and racialised bodies affected their choices not just whether to engage but in what ways they would engage in physical activity. The unique contribution of this project is in detailing the complexity of the social construction of valued or normalised bodies amongst a cohort of students as their meanings and experiences of active embodied subjectivities intersected with their gendered and racialised subjectivities.

An education for the future (Penney & Chandler, 2000), one offering safety, wellbeing, learning and an active identity, should work to address ways in which young people are normalised or marginalised through practices, discourses and images constituting the physical cultures that they engage with outside school. Visions of engaging young people in lifelong activity must be relevant to their popular and physical culture, their sense of self and fit in with their broader

lives (Lee, 2010b). The young people in this study have been able to verbalise and visualise what valued bodies mean to them. If they are given opportunities to create alternative narratives and selves within educational settings they may have more space to articulate *and* experience active subjectivities.

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# Appendices

## *Appendix i: Participant information sheet*

Dear Participant:

I am a researcher in the School of Sport, Exercise and Health Sciences at Loughborough University conducting a study with secondary school students. I would like to invite you to take part in the study.

The goal of the research project is to gather information on what secondary school students think about their experiences in physical activity. We will ask each student to participate in three interviews, and to collect pictures that represent the importance of physical activity in their lives and their thoughts on the types of people who take part in physical activity. Each interview will be conducted in a quiet room at the school identified by the students' teacher. During the first interview (40 min.), students, in small groups, will be asked questions about their participation in physical activities in and out of school. Students will then be given the opportunity to learn about digital photography and be asked to collate a number of photographs relating to physical activity. Once they have collated their pictures, they will be interviewed in a group a second time. During the second interview (40 min.), they will be asked to explain what the pictures represent. All photographs will be anonymised for use within the project. A final short interview will ask for reflections on their photographs and first two interviews.

All of the information that students provide will be kept in strict confidence. The students' interviews will be anonymous. No students' names will be disclosed to anyone at any time. Only the researcher will have access to students' interviews and photographs.

Students' participation in this study is completely voluntary, and will not affect their grades in any way. Students may choose not to answer interview questions and can withdraw from the study at any time.

Students can ask the researcher questions about their participation in this study at any time. For any further information regarding this study, please contact me.

Contact:

Ms Joanne Hill, MA. School of Sport, Exercise and Health Sciences, Loughborough University, Loughborough, LE11 3TU. Email: j.hill@lboro.ac.uk. Tel: 07590 514 138

Principal Investigator:

Dr Laura Azzarito, School of Sport, Exercise and Health Sciences, Loughborough University, Loughborough, LE11 3TU. Email: l.azzarito@lboro.ac.uk

## *Appendix ii: Informed consent form*

(To be completed after Participant Information Sheet has been read)

The purpose and details of this study have been explained to me. I understand that this study is designed to further scientific knowledge and that all procedures have been approved by the Loughborough University Ethical Advisory Committee.

I have read and understood the information sheet and this consent form.

I have had an opportunity to ask questions about my participation.

I understand that I am under no obligation to take part in the study.

I understand that I have the right to withdraw from this study at any stage for any reason, and that I will not be required to explain my reasons for withdrawing.

I understand that all the information I provide will be treated in strict confidence and will be kept anonymous and confidential to the researchers.

I agree to participate in this study.


Your name
(printed)
Your signature _____ Date _____


Parent/Guardian name _____
(printed)

Parent/Guardian signature_____ Date _____


Investigator name _____
(printed)

Investigator signature _____ Date _____


PLEASE RETURN THIS FORM TO YOUR PE TEACHER OR THE RESEARCHER IN YOUR NEXT PE LESSON.

## *Appendix iii: Participant questionnaire*

Please could you answer these quick questions to help us know a little bit more about the students taking part in the study?

**Do you belong to any clubs or groups (sports, hobbies, language, dance, etc.) outside of school?**
……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

**Do you do any after school or lunchtime clubs at school?**
……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

**Please circle which ethnicity you consider yourself to be:**

White:
      British
      Irish
      Other White ………………………………

Asian or Asian British:
      Indian
      Pakistani
      Bangladeshi
      Other Asian ………………………………

Black or Black British:
      Black Caribbean
      Black African
      Other Black

Chinese

Arab

Dual heritage ……………………………………….

Other......................................................

**Do you belong to a religion? Please circle:**

Buddhist
Christian
Hindu
Jewish
Muslim
Sikh
Other ………………………………………………………………
No religion

## *Appendix iv: Example observation field notes*

Observation 13-10-09
Tuesday, 11am. Girls, rugby, AWP.


IN THE OFFICE
I went to the PE staff office at 10:50 to wait for the lesson to begin. Mr Martin and Ms Ferguson were eating snacks and attending to paper work. We chatted about the coming half term break and the need to do paper work and make records.
Two South Asian (S.A.) girls knocked on the door and entered. They asked Ms Ferguson about the dance competition. There is to be a Michael Jackson tribute dance competition on 11th November, either lunchtime or after school.  There must be something Jackson-related – clothing, music, or dance moves. Ms Davis and Ms Ferguson are organising it, but as they are not dance specialists they will not be teaching/guiding, so the students will have to make things up themselves.


OUTSIDE THE CHANGING ROOMS
While waiting for the lesson to begin, some of the girls who had changed quickly are were outside the changing rooms were talking about their netball class. The teachers were not there yet. One S.A. girl (attitude, form 9.3) said out loud, "I want to go in your group, I'm with a bunch of loners". Later she said, "If I move form I'll be in your PE group". At the end of class, on the way to the next lesson, I also heard her say (in the direction of teacher Ms Ferguson) "look I have some friends now" and she was followed by a small group of girls. I don't know whether these were her 'usual' friends. Ms Ferguson made no reaction. There may have been a discussion about her changing teams while in the netball class.
Three S.A. girls were playing chase, trying to pull out each others' hair bands. Kiran was one of them. They were running around the steps/ramp up to the changing rooms.
Today the path from the changing rooms to the netball centre was blocked off due to demolition of the old sports block next to the changing rooms. Loud crashing noises can be heard, sections of building fall down and clouds of dust rise up around 30m away from us. Ms Davis says, "I hope there's no asbestos in there" and she covers her nose with her register book. She said that when she and Ms Ferguson first moved to Soar Valley just over 4 years ago they were told their office had asbestos in the walls, but nothing was done about it.
Because of the path closure, the netball class has to go through the tennis courts to get to the netball centre, a walk of perhaps an extra 50m. On the way, some girls complain of the walk. One says "we shouldn't have to walk, we should have little go carts to take us".


RUGBY
23 girls present, 5 white (W), 1 black/mixed race (B/MR), rest S.A. Two of the W girls I didn't recognise from the last lesson I observed.
Weather – sunny and warming up
A new S.A. girl has joined the class. She does not speak much English – Ms Davis tried to ask her if she knew rugby and the girl looked blank. Ms Davis told her to watch how

the game was played, as she would be playing on Thursday. Before the lesson started she was talking to a girl who seemed to be her guide, looking after her, and a small group of girls who introduced themselves.

Some girls were absent due to a Gifted and Talented school trip. Donna was absent.

Ms Davis directed the girls to go in their teams (4 with around 5-6 girls in each) from last week. Some took a while to remember which team. Four girls had been absent previously and did not have a team. They were added to teams.

Two teams put on green or yellow bibs. They complained that the bibs were smelly and they didn't want to wear them. Kiran held her bib out to a team mate – "ugh smell that" she said. "We wore bibs last time" said another.

Ms Davis told the class that the plan for today was to play a second game and also to develop line outs. In Year 8 they were not allowed to intercept passes in line outs, but in Year 9 she would allow them to do so.

Joanna was on Sally's team and appeared a little subdued – arms folded, not much chatting.

Ms Davis instructed the team captains (two of whom were Lucy and Sally) to lead warm ups. Each team got into a line and jogged across the pitch while pass the ball from player to player as in rugby. Lucy's team carried this out successfully, not dropping the ball, running together at the same speed. Other teams struggled – the ball was dropped and was hard to pick up. They all followed with stretches. Lucy's green bibbed team stayed at the far end of the pitch to stretch, chatting throughout.

Ms Davis called the girls in from warm up by saying "the last one in is a….!" leaving some of the girls to complete the sentence. As they all ran in towards the bags of tags and balls, the girls completed the sentence with "…a green hairy toad!" Most girls ran back quickly. Lucy jogged slowly, and said under her breath "oh no I'm a hairy toad" sarcastically.

The girls put on tag belts and got a ball and walked to one of the two halves of the pitch as directed by Ms Davis, green v. non-bibs on one half, yellow v. other non-bibs on the other half.

B/MR. girl Dionne and W girl Jenny are friends and walked to their team's part of the pitch with their arms round each others' shoulders.

Ms Davis calls out to all the girls "put your fastest players on the wings"

Play begins on each pitch. Meanwhile I helped Ms Davis to pull the hockey goal away from the line, for safety. Ms Davis says to me, "see, they seem so much more up for it now".

During play the green team and their opponents surround the ball. There is lots of calling. At one point Joanna is passed the ball and screams, runs in the wrong direction then remembers and switches direction, laughing. Ms Davis blows the whistle before she can try.

Lots of girls hesitate before running when they are passed the ball. There is also hesitation before sprinting for a try, and in getting behind team mates to enable a pass if needs be.

There is less hesitation before pulling tags off and many "tackles" are made this way. When a tag is pulled the girl must stop and pass the ball. Many girls were screaming and blindly tossing the ball in the air instead of trying to pass to a team mate.

The teams tend to follow the ball rather than spreading out. Ms Davis notices this and tells them to spread out.

Kiran makes the same mistake as Jessica, and Ms Davis comes over to guide the next play, and Kiran's team scores. Lucy (on the opposite team to Kiran) asks Ms Davis "Miss, when will you come and help us?"

Later Lucy asks "are we allowed to jump?" – that is, out of the way of being tagged. The answer is yes.

The other game (yellow team) is more confident and successful at passing, but after a try they spend a long time getting into the starting formation (defence – a straight line; attack – an arrow)

Sally's team (against the yellow bibs) do not follow Sally when she has the ball and is tagged, so she has no one to pass to close by, so has to throw it far and the team lose it. However, when the teams swap, the next time the team are there to catch the ball from Sally.

Ms Davis teaches six girls from each game how to do a scrum. Girls volunteer to participate. They must put their arms around each other and lock heads and shoulders with the other side. The ball is thrown into the middle and one girl is selected by Ms Davis to tap it out with her feet. The thrower collects it from behind the scrum and passes to another girl.

Amala is more engaged in today's lesson, and smiles.

Kiran often throws the ball like a netball shoulder pass. On one occasion she throws the ball and it flies into the face of the opposite team captain, but she is not upset. Ms Davis admonishes Kiran: "it's not a weapon – you just lobbed the ball!"

Ms Davis praises the girls for "putting in loads and loads of effort. Your rugby is really improving". They will do more scrums next week and as there were no balls out of the pitch there were no line outs. She asks if they are enjoying rugby and would they want to play more? About 70% put their hands up. There is due to be only one more lesson of rugby but as some girls were disappointed at this Ms Davis says she will look at the timetable.

Once the girls have gone, Ms Davis says to me she is pleased with the lesson. She had split up the "characters" and they all seemed more engaged.

Ms Davis, Ms Ferguson and I stand outside the changing rooms. As the girls come out of the changing rooms in ones and twos, Ms Davis calls to one pair, "you did well today".

One girl (from the netball class) on her way from the changing room to the main school building, says to Ms Ferguson "Miss, I'm tired."

## *Appendix v: Interview 1 semi-structured schedule*

*Aims:  What other physical cultures are they in?*
*Feelings towards PE; which bodies are valued in PE*
*What do valued bodies look like and do?*


PE PHYSICAL CULTURE
Do you enjoy PE?
What don't you enjoy?
What does being "good" at PE mean?
What does being "bad" mean?
What is PE for? Why do we do it?


STUDENT UNDERSTANDINGS OF VALUED BODIES
**Are sports and physical activities designed for a particular type of person?**
What words describe people who are highly valued in sport?
Are you like that?
**What types of people do not enjoy sport and exercise?**
**Are there people who have a high status in PE? Who is valued in PE? You don't need to mention any names.**
**What for?** Are people valued for what they look like, or what they do?
**Which [bodies] are valued in PE? Why?**
**Which body types are not admired? Why?**
What [actions, movements, skills] do you admire people for in PE?
What gets laughed at or is not admired?


MEDIA, NETWORKS, CULTURES, COMMUNITIES
**What [sport] clubs, groups, and so on, do you belong to, in and out of school?**
If you aren't involved in any sport clubs, why not?
When you are not active, what do you do with your free time?
**Outside of school, what or who encourages you to be active?**
Does anyone or anything restrict you? What gets in the way?

## *Appendix vi: Photography project instruction sheet*

## A Week in the Life of…

Create a series of photos that express who you are, what you do and what is important to you.

- What physical activity do you do?
- What do you do if you're not being active?
- What/Who encourages you to be active?
- What discourages you?

Please try to take 10 photos for this part.

## People We Admire

Think about the people who are admired by you and your friends or a club you belong to. They might be friends, celebrities or sports stars.

Please use your cameras, and also try to find pictures from magazines, websites, TV programmes and commercials, or billboard advertisements.

- What do people who are admired look like?
- What do they do?
- What makes people valued – it is for their skills or body?
- What do people who are not admired look like?

Please try to take or find 10 photos for this part.

**Remember:**
Physical activity can mean lots of different things
You can take photos of other people, but ask their permission first (faces will be blurred after you hand the camera in)
Other people can help to take photos of you
You can take photos at home, at school and other places where you spend time.
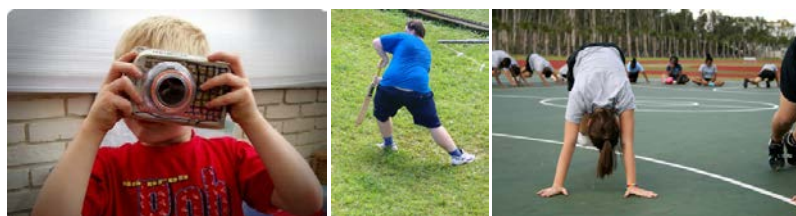
**Welcome to the Canon PowerShot A470**



Experiment with your camera and see what it can do. Try…

**Continuous Shutter**

By holding down the shutter button you can take photos continuously - capturing different movements or expressions over a period of time.

**Shutter Speed**

You can change shutter speeds to capture more movement – i.e. a slower shutter speed creates a blurring effect.

**Self Timer**

You can change this setting to give yourself time to push the shutter button and get in the photo before the camera takes a picture.

**My Colours**

You can take photos in colour, sepia (brown tones) or black & white.

Questions? Contact J.Hill@lboro.ac.uk

THE CAMERA MUST BE RETURNED TO PE CLASS TO OR THE PE OFFICE BY 24TH MARCH AT THE LATEST

## *Appendix vii: Interview 2 semi-structured schedule*

PHOTOS
Part 1: do these photos show you being active, and do they show what you like about PE?
Do they show what PE and physical activity are for?

Part 2: Which photos show images of people that are valued?
- Would you like to be like them? Are you? Why? How does that make you feel?
- Are these the bodies that are encouraged in PE?

Which photos show pictures of people you would not like to look like?
- Can you explain why you think this?
- Are these the bodies that are not encouraged in PE?

If you have photos of both men and women, are they different?
[Asian photos?] Are Asian people valued in sports?

For any of these questions, if you can see a photo of your own or someone else's that helps you to explain what you're saying, use it.

EFFECT ON PHYSICALITY
What makes you feel good in PE?
- What makes you feel awkward?

What does it mean for someone to be an active person?
What does it mean for someone to be a healthy person?
What does it mean for someone to be a sporty person?
Do you think of yourself as an active/healthy/sporty person?
Do you think you are the same as or different to the people that you value in PE? How? And those outside of PE?
How does this affect you and the way you take part in PE?
Does PE have an impact on whether you do activity out of school?
Is PE different to your clubs? Is it different from playing in the park? Does it make you feel different about yourself?

Are there any pressures on young people about their bodies? Can we see this in the photos?
[How would this photo make young people feel about their bodies?]
Do you think that young people have always felt like that or is it recent, in your opinion?
Are any of these things different for boys and girls? Are they different for white kids, black kids and Asian kids?

## *Appendix viii: Example transcript*

Group B, Interview 1
Present: Ayesha, Nisha, Meena.
Circumstances: Thursday, P4, non-PE day.
START

| | |
|---|---|
| JOANNE: | Can each of you start off by telling me whether you enjoy PE in school? |
| MEENA: | OK you start… |
| NISHA: | Erm, I like PE, but sometimes I just don't, I'm not in the mood to do it, but I like being with my friends and doing sport and stuff. |
| JOANNE: | What makes you not in the mood for it? |
| NISHA: | The weather. |
| JOANNE: | Really, the weather? |
| NISHA: | Yeah. |
| JOANNE: | So it's when you're outside that you might not enjoy it when the weather's bad? |
| NISHA: | Yeah. |
| JOANNE: | Meena? |
| MEENA: | I enjoy it quite a lot but sometimes when you're tired and you've still got to do PE it's like, you don't want to do PE. So when you're really, really tired. |
| AYESHA: | I like PE but there's certain things I don't like, like I'm not good at loads of things in sport but the things I enjoy I like doing, the other things I'm that I'm not good at but I still enjoy it. And I don't like when the weather's really cold and we get sent out or something. But I really like it when it's a group of just girls cos it's like if the boys are there they'll diss us cos they can do more things than we can, if you see, in like sports, but when it's just us girls we like understand each other cos we're girls we're not meant to be like tomboys or anything or something like that. But we just get on with each other. So it's better off being with just girls. |
| JOANNE: | Hmm, yep. Are there any activities that you prefer in PE? Which things to do you prefer to do? |
| AYESHA: | Um, basketball, netball, and stuff like that. I don't like football. I hate tennis. |
| JOANNE: | How come? |
| AYESHA: | Oh I'm just not good at it, it just goes everywhere [all laugh]. |
| JOANNE: | How about the other two? |
| MEENA: | Er, I like more team games like when we're playing against each other so it's more team working and you get to know each other and we all support each other playing team games. |
| NISHA: | Erm, I like playing, I like doing trampolining because like it's fun and you can just do your own thing and there's like no right or wrong unless you're actually practicing something. And I like playing basketball. |
| JOANNE: | OK. So the things that you enjoy, erm, what sort of things do you enjoy about them? You mentioned you like a supportive team atmosphere, you like being able to do your own thing, are those sorts of things important, and what would make – is there something that defines the activities that you don't enjoy doing? What things don't you like about, say you mentioned football? |
| AYESHA: | It's um, I don't really like aggressive games like rugby or something like, OK, I like it a bit but sometimes it's just like everyone just gets a bit too aggressive and um, we like team work sort of thing, friendship and not like too much of an aggressive – I don't know if it's cos it's girls or whatever, but yeah. |

JOANNE:       OK. That's something I was going to ask actually, about boys and girls in PE together, so perhaps I'll skip to my questions about that. Um, what's the difference then, do you all agree with that, would you all say that it's different for mixed PE classes and just girls PE classes?

MEENA:       Yeah, because like erm if it's was boys and girls together there'd be like a separation between the two and like erm, usually boys and girls don't get on together unless you're friends. Um, they're more of an aggressive personality in games and they need everything perfect, that's what I think [laughs].

JOANNE:       Are there any girls that are like that? That are competitive or perfectionist?

AYESHA:       Yeah, there are some in our group.

NISHA:       Yeah, but like, you can still like get on with them and stuff, and with the guys they just like, you can't get on with them and they'll just be like competitive so you won't be able to like whatever you're doing, say you're playing something you wouldn't be able to get on with them properly. And being in a team like, feel comfortable with your team.

JOANNE:       Mm, ok. So it's um, with girls it's a more supportive environment? Is that what you mean, yeah? Erm, is that important when you're doing physical activity?

AYESHA:       Yeah because you have to feel confident how you are doing something so like when you want to do something, practicing to be good at it, you can't have people laughing at you because it just puts you off, if you get me, so you have to be like yeah they're supporting me so yeah I can do it. So it's just like, yeah.

JOANNE:       Does that happen in all of your PE lessons? …

AYESHA:       When it's us girls they're like they encourage us by cheering like 'go on!' like they encourage us, even though we can't do it again at least we try, but when it's guys and they'll be like 'oh, she can't do it, she can't do this, she can't do that', so it puts you off at times.

JOANNE:       Are there any times when girls are like that in your PE lessons, sort of unsupportive of each other?

AYESHA:       Not sure.

MEENA:       Not usually. But if they are, it usually gets sorted out. So erm, I think it's better to feel comfortable and then enjoy what you're doing rather than be separated into two groups of boys and girls.

JOANNE:       So you'd say that you prefer singles PE to mixed?

ALL:       Yeah.

JOANNE:       Erm, when you're in a class that's mixed, do you think that you behave differently in PE, do you think you take part in a different way?

AYESHA:       Um, do you mean like when there's boys in there?

JOANNE:       Yeah, when there's boys in the class, compared to how your PE is now…

AYESHA:       I think people work even harder so they don't get people taking the mick out of them sort of thing, and in a way it's a good thing to work harder because you're not with your friends and you're not talking, but in some ways it's just like, it always comes back to that, they take the mick and in some people, when some people take the mick, they trying proving the other person wrong and actually it does something, so it's kind of a good way both sides.

JOANNE:       Er, do you think the teachers are different when it's mixed PE, do they talk to the class differently.

MEENA:       Not really.

JOANNE:       Do they have to encourage you more?

AYESHA:       I've got two different PE teachers for singles and so I don't know.

JOANNE:       OK, you can't really tell? Erm, do you think that all boys, do all boys take the mick out of…?

| | |
|---|---|
| AYESHA: | No not all of them. |
| MEENA: | No not all. |
| JOANNE: | Without mentioning names, what is it about the boys the mick that take the mick out of you, why would they do that, what is it about them? |
| AYESHA: | To make themselves look bigger. |
| JOANNE: | Really? Are they competitive? |
| ALL: | Yeah! |
| AYESHA: | When we do group work like Mr Martin and Mr Sanford's group come to together, it's always like 'we're gonna win, we're gonna do this' and the guys are like 'oh no, no we're gonna win!' and you chose – because you have to choose sometimes groups and they always chose the best girls, they never put it in the mixed ability. In some cases it's a good thing if you want to win, but it's bad cos you're leave the people who can't do it out, and they feel a bit bad. So, yeah. |
| JOANNE: | So, um, that would make you feel, if you were left out the "good" group it would make you feel a bit bad? What if you were chosen to play against the "best" boys, how would you feel? |
| AYESHA: | Yeah. |
| NISHA: | I suppose people put more effort into it if you're in the good group but like if you're in the bad – I'm not saying it's a bad group but if you're in the group that's less able, then you won't put as much effort into it as you could put like if you were in the better group. |
| JOANNE: | How is your PE class split at the moment? When the teacher puts you into different groups, does she choose like mixed ability groups or does she put… |
| AYESHA: | She mixes us into pairs and then in them pairs she'll put us in different groups with that person, so if you don't have a friend at least you have that pair with you, that one person, so it's just like you've got a group back together, if you don't get along with the people in the group you've still got someone. And I think that's good because I like the way Ms Davis changes the abilities cos it's like, all the good people are in different teams and it makes other people work towards it, to make a really good game. So, yeah I like it when it's mixed ability. |
| JOANNE: | Yeah? Is that better than say if you're with your, you can chose to be in a group with all of your, with just your friends? |
| MEENA: | Yeah. |
| AYESHA: | Yeah, in some ways. |
| JOANNE: | Um, what is PE for, why do we do PE? |
| AYESHA: | Is it to keep you healthy? |
| NISHA: | Most kids nowadays don't go out and do exercise, and it's just all the technology and stuff. |
| AYESHA: | Stay in on the laptop! |
| NISHA: | So they just stay inside and like sit around so it's better having PE so you can like have a bit of exercise in your day. |
| MEENA: | I think it encourages you to actually enjoy sport more and do something out there rather than just stay in at home, erm, playing on some electrical something. I think it makes us realise that we should do more sport. |
| JOANNE: | Does PE make up the most of the sport and activity that you do at the moment? |
| MEENA: | Yeah. |
| NISHA: | Yeah. |
| JOANNE: | Do you do more outside of school or more in school? |

| | |
|---|---|
| AYESHA: | I used to go dancing which was an hour in school and then I used to go home and just practice and practice, but now I don't go, cos I haven't got time. |
| JOANNE: | Why don't you have time? |
| AYESHA: | Cos I go mosque. I have to go and pray every day. It's always like at 5 o'clock and there's no more times so. |
| JOANNE: | Oh right. Was that a club that was run by the school? |
| AYESHA: | The dancing? Yeah but um because half of the people didn't show up so it shut down. |
| JOANNE: | Oh right. |
| AYESHA: | But it was a really good class. |
| JOANNE: | Yeah?Why do you think that people stopped going? |
| AYESHA: | It's because um, to be honest there was a really good, nice group of girls but when all friends get together they don't do the work they just talk and talk and talk and Jo got a bit fed up because no one actually got involved in the lesson apart from me and Lucy, and Bhavana, at times, and hardly, then everyone stopped turning up because all they did was sit in the mirror to take pictures. One thing I noticed, you know that upstairs dancing studio, the mirrors, yeah, they can, some people can get a bit self-conscious at times, cos you just look and they would never do any work. |
| JOANNE: | OK. Do you use the dance studio much? |
| AYESHA: | We used to, we use it sometimes. |
| NISHA: | We used to. |
| AYESHA: | We do sometimes with Ms Davis, she goes up there to do aerobics or something and it's quite fun. |
| JOANNE: | Yeah I remember one of the first lessons you had this term in PE you were doing aerobics in class… |
| ALL: | Yeah. |
| JOANNE: | … in there weren't you? Erm, how does it make you feel when you face the mirrors? |
| NISHA: | Self-conscious. Like, you can see yourself and it just makes you feel like you're doing it wrong. That's how I feel like when I see myself I feel like I'm doing it wrong. |
| MEENA: | Sometimes you can see other people looking at you cos like you look at yourself in the mirror, you think that 'oh I'm not like them' and sometimes they find it funny like, you're not doing it right and then it makes you more self-conscious. That's what I think, yeah. |
| JOANNE: | Would it be better if you were facing away from the mirrors then do you think? |
| MEENA: | Yeah. |
| NISHA: | Yeah. |
| AYESHA: | But sometimes it does help cos you're looking at yourself for what you're doing, and when you know you're not doing a leg right or something then you try and do it. So sometimes it's good to have a thing but sometimes not. |
| JOANNE: | So what sort of things do you learn in PE? Um, yeah what is it that you learn from PE do you think? |
| AYESHA: | Um. |
| NISHA: | To work with other people, like some people you just don't talk to, but you get along with, so you can meet new friends and stuff. |
| AYESHA: | Um, it's like a working environment you can walk around and do things like run around, so it's, instead of sitting down and doing your work, writing, you've got actually some few times that you do activities sort of thing in a |

way, and um when you got outside in the fields in the summer it's like you have to run and do laps and it's quite good at the same time because it actually gets you, your energy going and it's really fit for you and healthy. But um, yeah um, we then like to work in a god environment with everyone and so it's good.

JOANNE: So would all here of you say that you enjoy PE?

ALL: Yeah.

AYESHA: Not in the winter though [all laugh].

NISHA: Yeah, hate it in the winter.

JOANNE: What about when you're indoors in winter, is that ok?

AYESHA: No cos you know when you go in the changing rooms you put on PE clothes, it gets cold as well cos it's like, oh it's so cold.

NISHA: But then we get a warm up, we warm up after. It's alright doing the actually PE bit.

JOANNE: Yeah? It's just at first when you get changed?

NISHA: Yeah.

JOANNE: OK. How do you feel when you've finished your PE class? How does it make you feel?

AYESHA: Like I need to go get water! [All laugh].

MEENA: I think it makes us more alert about our next lessons, cos it like helps you concentrate more and you feel physically better like, I mean you feel better.

JOANNE: You've mentioned Ayesha that you think that um, PE helps you to be healthy. What sort of things does healthy mean?

AYESHA: Um, do you know how people my age, and younger generations they don't eat their five a day or all they do is just sit around, OK some actually do go outside and play about, which is quite good I suppose, but um it keeps you healthy because it's not just burning off your fat foods and all that yeah, it's actually taking some calories out which do help, so I guess it's good but not as much as if you eat your five a day and you go for walks even more, so.

NISHA: It also keeps you quite fit and this is what I heard but if you do lots of exercise and stuff your brain becomes more active so you're ready for whatever else is coming so, if you had like PE third lesson, um your brain has just got like more active and stuff so for your next lesson you'll be a bit more like bright and ready and to learn something.

JOANNE: Yeah. Where did you hear that?

NISHA: Um, my brother was doing this thing for school and I was just helping him. So I just learnt it through there.

JOANNE: And you agree with it?

NISHA: Yeah.

JOANNE: Erm, what does the teacher want you to do in PE? How would your teacher encourage you to act in PE?

NISHA: Enthusiastic.

AYESHA: She'll tell us that the other group was, did this did that, so it makes us like 'oh I want to be like them'!

NISHA: Yeah.

AYESHA: It's like something you look up to, cos like she told us 'oh the other group did it so nicely and they actually all got a hang of it' so it'll make us feel that if we don't do it, it just doesn't feel – so we actually go on and actually try. And it's something that yeah…

JOANNE: Does that make you feel 'oh if that group can do it, then we can do it'?

AYESHA: Yeah. It feels like that.

| | |
|---|---|
| JOANNE: | Not like, 'oh Ms Davis must prefer that other group'? No? |
| ALL: | No. |
| JOANNE: | OK that's good. Um, what does the teacher discourage people from doing in PE? |
| NISHA: | Like, um, stay with your friends, she wants you to like mix in with other people like that's why she obviously doesn't ask us to choose our own group, because if we stay with our friends all the time we're all like of the same ability and then we just talk, so she encourages us to like… |
| AYESHA: | She wants us to be independent. |
| NISHA: | Yeah. |
| JOANNE: | Yeah? Do your families encourage you to be active? |
| ALL: | Yeah. |
| JOANNE: | So your parents sort of get you involved in activities? [All nod] Yeah? Um, what do you think they'd like you to do when you get older? |
| NISHA: | Um… |
| JOANNE: | Do they say anything? |
| NISHA: | No, my parents don't really say anything, they just like want me to do what I want, but like, reasonably. But like so… they want me to like have – make my own choice, sort of thing. |
| JOANNE: | How do you choose what you wear in PE? Do you all stick to the plain black and white that's in the uniform or do you make different little adjustments? |
| MEENA: | Yeah. |
| AYESHA: | Um, I don't know if you're allowed to have just black trainers but my trainers have a bit of purple and I'm not sure if that's against the thing but I'm sure because all black's the thing. Um, everyone wears a white top. Some people wear black hoodies or grey, I think that's quite normal but some people wear red but I don't know about that. Yeah I come in black and white, I don't know about these lot. |
| NISHA: | I come in black and white but I wear sometimes a different coloured t-shirt. |
| MEENA: | And I wear black and white as well, I'd rather stick to what it says. And I think we're allowed to wear any trainers we want so that's alright. |
| JOANNE: | OK. Why do some people wear different colours? Is there a reason, like if someone had a red hoodie on? Would there be a reason for that? |
| MEENA: | Maybe because they want to look more better than everyone else, cos I think you get much variety in black and white. So they probably wear more colourful things to stand out and look more better. Cos they are fashion conscious or something like that. |
| JOANNE: | Does that work then, does that make somebody stand out if they look a bit different? |
| AYESHA: | Not really! |
| NISHA: | No. |
| AYESHA: | Cos you, if Ms Davis comes in like um brown, sometimes she comes in brown trainers and a red thing, hoodie, I think that's alright but yeah, some people just get a bit OTT, if you know what I mean, they just come in um… |
| MEENA: | Random colours. |
| AYESHA: | Yeah, random. |
| JOANNE: | Would you say that um people who wear something other than the plain black and white, are they more admired in PE? So if they stand out, are they considered to be good for that reason? Are they cool? |
| AYESHA: | Um, not sure about that. |

| | |
|---|---|
| NISHA: | I don't think so, just cos you wear like a different uniform, like different coloured clothes, don't mean that you're cool or things but I don't know. |
| JOANNE: | But from what you said they might think that, they might think that if they dress a bit differently they might be more admired in PE? Um, so if you could think about the people who have got a high status in PE, so who is valued in PE? You don't need to mention any names. But who would be valued in PE, what for? |
| AYESHA: | The person that is more sportiest and can do more thing, sort of thing. |
| MEENA: | They are probably picked a lot for team captains and they probably form a huge group, really good sporty people. |
| JOANNE: | So the other students would value highly someone who was sporty, and was the captain? OK. Um, are they valued for what they look like or for what they do? |
| AYESHA: | I think none of those to be honest, cos none of us actually care about what you look like cos everyone's the same to be honest, I I don't know about what they do but all I know is if you're good at sports everyone will be like, 'oh you're the captain' cos that means you can teach us a bit of what you know. So. |
| JOANNE: | Do you feel like your PE class at the moment is um, supportive? |
| ALL: | Yeah. |
| JOANNE: | So the people who are highly valued, um, they don't make you feel any different about PE yourself? How you would take part. |
| NISHA: | No. They don't make us feel like we can't do anything, they get us like involved if they are team captain and stuff, but we just like expect them to, because they are the team captain, we like expect them to tell us what to do sort of thing. |
| JOANNE: | Hmm. Erm, if you were good at something, at a particular activity and you didn't get picked to be captain or to do a demonstration, how would you feel? |
| MEENA: | I wouldn't, um, take it as – I wouldn't really mind because um whoever got picked they um, they're gonna teach us something to do, so it's like as long as we learn we are alright. |
| JOANNE: | OK. |
| NISHA: | For me it doesn't bother me who's really team captain, it's just like playing the sport really, and you just work as a team and it don't matter who's the team captain as you're going to do the same thing, all the teams anyway. |
| JOANNE: | Is it always the same people who get picked as captain? |
| AYESHA: | Yeah sometimes. |
| NISHA: | Yeah. |
| JOANNE: | How do you feel about that? |
| AYESHA: | It feels alright cos Miss always puts me as a captain and I don't like it, cos like it looks as if I'm, I'm gonna know, I don't like that, I even made Miss not pick me, I always hide at the back because I don't wanna get picked. Cos it's just like when you have a group of people you just feel like, woah, how am I gonna get everyone to do this and do that, cos you're not experienced properly. So it's, yeah… |
| JOANNE: | So is that why you don't like to be picked, you think that you're not up to the task? |
| AYESHA: | Yeah, yeah. |
| JOANNE: | OK. So, are there any particular body types that are valued in PE? Like, er, the fastest, the most skilful, the slimmest, the tallest person? What sort of bodies? |

| AYESHA: | The tallest and the slimmest can run very fast, I think that. Cos everyone that's really skinny and really tall, well I'm not tall but I know someone who's really skinny and really tall and loads of the girls are really fast like that. But um to be honest there's – it doesn't matter about body shape, size, shape whatever you are yeah, if you can do something you go for it, you try it yeah. Cos I believe that um, if one person can do it, I think everyone can do it in their own way of doing it, sort of thing. |
|---|---|
| JOANNE: | Hmm. Is this specifically in girls only PE that it's like that? Is it different when it's boys and girls together? Are there different body types that are valued in mixed PE? |
| AYESHA: | Um. Cos for rugby you need someone that's really strong and got a really big body sort of thing, not fat but someone that's really capable of like, has got strength. So I think it can matter for guys cos you wouldn't exactly have the smallest person doing rugby, or I don't know, if the person's good or something but you wouldn't have, it depends on what sports to be honest. |
| JOANNE: | Mm. Do you think that the different activities you do in PE help you to develop different types of skills or different types of body? Um, the way you would look. |
| AYESHA: | Yeah, fitness suite can help your legs and boost up your muscles and all kinds of things, I think. |
| JOANNE: | Are those things important? |
| AYESHA: | Um… |
| JOANNE: | To build muscles? |
| AYESHA: | I wouldn't! |
| NISHA: | Not for like, for guys I suppose yeah. But for girls, you have to, you can't have like, you can have a bit of muscle but you don't want like big muscles like on a girl, it doesn't look good. |
| JOANNE: | Why not? |
| NISHA: | Because like it's just like, for a girl it's like feminine and like dainty delicate sort of thing, and then if you have a girl who has like big muscles, looking like a man, it just… |
| MEENA: | I just think we're used to seeing um, boys with more muscles in like sports and everything. So that's probably why. |
| JOANNE: | What would happen if you happened to build a lot of muscles up through doing activity? |
| NISHA: | It doesn't really matter, but during like one lesson or something I don't think that… |
| MEENA: | …you'd build that many muscles. |
| NISHA: | Yeah. But if you build them up, like but not too much, sort of thing, it's alright. |
| JOANNE: | Um, what types of people are not admired in PE? Is there anyone who's not admired? |
| MEENA: | I think everyone's like everyone's equal in our PE group cos like we want, we concentrate more on team work and how we can improve on each other's support and how we can help others so that they can be like the captains that are usually chosen. |
| NISHA: | And um no one like, if there was teams and Miss puts us into a group, no one really gets that upset if they've got someone um that they don't want, cos everyone… |
| AYESHA: | … We're all used to each other now… |
| NISHA: | Yeah. |

| AYESHA: | … cos it's been since Year 7 in our half, and everyone's used to each other sort of thing. |
| JOANNE: | Um, are there different types of actions and skills that admired in PE? Would you say? |
| NISHA: | Um. |
| AYESHA: | Not sure. |
| NISHA: | Is this as in, by us like, or… |
| JOANNE: | You three in particular, what would you admire people for? |
| AYESHA: | Enthusiastic, kind of energy. |
| NISHA: | Yeah. |
| AYESHA: | And like, it doesn't matter if you're capable of something but if you put the energy to do it, it actually counts for something because you tried, it's better off trying than actually doing anything. |
| MEENA: | Someone who actually enjoys PE, and like um, they are not actually not bothered in everything. Like some people in PE they don't pay attention and then they don't want to do PE because they don't like it or… |
| AYESHA: | Cos it messes their hair up, or whatever. |
| NISHA: | Yeah sometimes like when you have a team and erm you don't like the team you're in some people just don't make the effort, so if just lets the whole of your other team down. And it's like, if you put the effort in, it can make a difference like, a big difference in how many scores or whatever you get. |
| JOANNE: | Hmm. Do you have to be skilful to put the effort in? |
| NISHA: | No. |
| MEENA: | No it's just like how much you, how enthusiastic you are, how much you um you enjoy PE. So if you've got the um, if you really, really um want to do it and improve you put, it's just automatic you put lots of effort in to how, um becoming really good at PE. |
| NISHA: | Most people in our group are quite determined to do it, everything, like no one's really ever not bothered, but like occasionally people are just, don't out the effort in sort of thing. |
| JOANNE: | Hmm. Um, so er, do all three of you do any sports clubs or groups outside of school? |
| AYESHA: | I used to go dance and I used to do dance outside of school as well. Um, which was ballet, but then I left it because I just got bored out of it. |
| JOANNE: | Oh ok. |
| NISHA: | I don't go outside of school. |
| MEENA: | I just used to um, at home um we used to, our friends used to gather up and we used to um do some dancing and we used to um teach it so that our skills and our dance, so it wasn't really a club but we usually met together and we taught each other dance. |
| JOANNE: | Hmm. So why did you do those things, why did you do dance? |
| AYESHA: | Since I was a kid I've always wanted to be a dancer. And I'm looking forward to getting to college but um, as you grow up things change but I wasn't so, I'm not so enthusiastic as I was to be a dancer, but um, I wanna be a dancer and something else, to put on top of that cos I know just dancing wouldn't help me in the future. So I want to take something to do with geography or fashion. |
| JOANNE: | Oh ok. And Meena? Why do you enjoy dance? |
| MEENA: | Um, because I think it's an enjoyable activity to do and like it builds up my confidence and before I don't think I was really confident, but after I'd taken up dancing I used to um perform everywhere and I've learn the actual dance |

and everything. I think my confidence has gone up and I think it helps me to do things other than dance as well. Sometimes.

JOANNE: How does it make you feel to do dance? Is it um, so you've mentioned confidence, and things like that, um, when you come out of a dance class, how do you feel physically?

AYESHA: I just feel better cos you've actually taken everything out, cos you know when you sweat and you just have a drink and you know I feel so relaxed, I'll just go and have a shower and then go straight to sleep. You feel like you're calmer in a way. So it's quite good cos you've taken all your energy out. I suppose it's good but at the same time it actually burns everything out, inside you all the fatty foods I suppose and all that, quite good.

JOANNE: So you do feel sad that you're not doing any dance at the moment?

AYESHA: Um, I'm not cos I actually do some at home with my sister cos she does belly dancing after school, yeah. So she teaches me some at home.

JOANNE: So like an informal sort of level?

AYESHA: Yeah.

JOANNE: Um, outside of school, what or who encourages you to be active?

AYESHA: My mum! [Laughs]

JOANNE: Yeah?

AYESHA: She always tells me 'oh go for a walk' cos all I do is sit down and watch TV or after mosque I just sit on my computer. She tells me 'oh, go out, or walk' and all this, come for a walk. [Laughs]

JOANNE: Why is she like that? Why does she encourage you?

AYESHA: Oh cos she knows that I'm the person that's got too much energy and she wants me to burn it off before I just burn the house down or something!

JOANNE: How about the other two?

NISHA: Um, my friends like and my neighbours, some of them encourage me to go out cos um we go out to Cossy Park or we go for walks and do just like, sometimes my family and my friends we just go out like with my neighbours and we have like, go Cathedral Park and stuff. And play a few games. Play like – it makes me feel better when my friends are there, rather than family, because it would just me and my brother doing stuff, and mum and dad would be sitting there.

JOANNE: Do you prefer to be active with active friends, rather than family?

MEENA: Yeah.

JOANNE: Is it all girl friends or some male friends too?

NISHA: I've got some male friends too.

JOANNE: Do you go and do activities with them?

NISHA: Yeah.

JOANNE: So if you go to the park and things if might be boys as well as girls? Is that different from when you're in PE class?

NISHA: Yeah, cos these are like my neighbours and stuff, it's alright, they've like known me for ages and I can just be myself with them. But like, in, if I was doing mixed groups in school, I'd feel a bit less confident because like, they just, I wouldn't feel comfortable with them.

JOANNE: Why is that?

NISHA: Because like they're really competitive and they wouldn't like, I don't know, I just don't feel comfortable with them.

JOANNE: Um, does anything get in the way of you being active?

NISHA: Technology.

JOANNE: Like computers and things?

NISHA: Yeah.

| | |
|---|---|
| JOANNE: | [Laughs] Sometimes you prefer to do that than to go and do some physical activity? |
| NISHA: | Yeah. |
| JOANNE: | Um, so do you think that the people who are highly skilled or highly valued in PE are the same people who are valued outside of PE? In school but outside of PE? |
| AYESHA: | When we're all outside, sometimes when you go outside in summer in the park and we're all together even the guys from our school, um it's not as much as competitious, sort of thing, because in PE class you have to do what the teacher says, um but outside of school you can do whatever you want and just everyone treats each other like normal and it's perfectly fine. I'm not blaming on the teachers target or objective of the day or something but people do get quite competitive. Because you have to set one thing at the end of the lesson and they go for it. But whereas outside of school you just do whatever you want. |
| JOANNE: | Um, is physical activity better inside of school or outside? Do you prefer it either way? |
| AYESHA: | I don't mind cos it's quite both the same in a way. Cos....But in other aspects I prefer it outside cos no one's actually judgemental. Cos everyone just treats each other normal, so. |
| JOANNE: | Yeah. Either of you? |
| NISHA: | Yeah I agree with Ayesha, because like outside of school it's like, it's no one you know so you can just do your own thing, sort of, and if you're with your friends it doesn't really matter what you do, you just do whatever you want because there's no like, if you're in PE and you do something wrong, Miss will come and tell you that you're doing it wrong. And erm, if you're out of school and you do something wrong it doesn't really matter, no one's going to say anything. |
| JOANNE: | OK. Erm, so you've talked about things like this being different for boys and girls, erm, are there any differences within school or within PE between white kids, black kids and Asian kids at all? |
| MEENA: | No. |
| AYESHA: | No, our school's so much cultural, everyone loves each other for who they are. |
| NISHA: | Yeah. |
| MEENA: | We just um get on together well and we don't really care about background you come from. It's just like we're all not really bothered about where you come from or anything like that. |
| NISHA: | Yeah. |
| MEENA: | We just get along with each other. |
| NISHA: | Yeah. |
| JOANNE: | Do you think that different schools in Leicester would be different or do you think it's the same all around the city? |
| AYESHA: | I'm not sure because I don't really know any other schools apart from this one. |
| MEENA: | I don't....yeah. |
| JOANNE: | Mmm. |
| NISHA: | But like, um, I don't know like, in some schools, like my cousin, she goes to um, Roundhill, and she's like, she's the only Asian in her class so she feels kind of awkward but then after a while she gets used to it, she's alright. But our school's sort of alright cos there's loads of people of different backgrounds in our school. |
| JOANNE: | So everyone gets on and it's a really supportive environment for everybody? |

| | |
|---|---|
| AYESHA?: | Yeah. |
| JOANNE: | Um, ok. My last question, where do you all get ideas about how you should dress or act? Erm, do you read magazines or watch TV programmes or is it from your friends that you get ideas of how to… |
| AYESHA: | There's um, do you know when you watch TV it's all the celebrities and we're like 'oh my god I wish I was like her, oh wow look at her clothes, I wanna see if that dress is in the shops', some people do that, but some people're just like 'forget her, I've got my own fashion'. Some people are quite, they don't, I'm not being mean but some people are like, I don't like this I'm just, girls would like to wear joggers and be [unclear 34:57] normal, and be walking around, so it depends on the personality of the person you are to be honest. |
| NISHA: | And it's like you get people, like, some people who just walk in the streets or your friends and you see something you like and you wanna go get it and buy it. And you wear that round. |
| MEENA: | Yeah I'd rather wear something more comfortable and focus on the look at the same time, and that's not… |
| NISHA: | … I wouldn't be uncomfortable… |
| AYESHA: | … Something that you're comfortable with but you enjoy looking at it yourself like 'oh my god I like it' but not get too self-conscious about it. |
| MEENA: | Yeah. |
| JOANNE: | Do any of you read any magazines? |
| AYESHA: | Yeah. |
| JOANNE: | Which ones? |
| AYESHA: | Um, there's Sugar, there's Mizz, um, there's loads of magazines to be honest that we read. |
| MEENA: | OK! Magazine. |
| NISHA: | Yeah. |
| JOANNE: | Right, that's all my questions done. Thank you… |
| END | |

## *Appendix ix: First codebook*

- **What is high status?**
  - Tallness
  - Slenderness
  - Enthusiasm
  - Knowing what you're doing
  - Strength gets better results
  - Being supportive
  - Judged less in PE than other subjects
  - Getting better team positions
  - Doing sport "right"
  - Value in school, out of PE, for not trying hard in class
    - Avoid looking academic or doing school work
- **What is ability?**
  - Natural
  - Worked at
- **Consequences, or What do you do with your status?**
  - Status brings popularity
  - Work harder
  - Role of captain
  - Help out low status people
  - Critical comments are made in the heat of the moment
  - Improvement through practice is not always given recognition
  - What happens if you are criticised?
    - Laughed at
    - Not picked
  - Coping strategies
    - Not bothered
  - A desire to be active enables one to ignore negative comments
  - Who can be active?
    - Fat is never valued
    - Fat people do not enjoy PE
    - Fat is a disadvantage
    - Sport is rarely done by people who are not good at it
    - Sport is not for me
- **Who can have status?**
  - PE gives non-academic pupils a chance to gain status
- **Encouragements to be active**
  - Being bothered
  - Verbal support
  - Pressure to conform
  - Losing
  - New or novelty activities
- **Why are you not active?**
  - Low ability/skill/fitness is caused by technology
  - Family responsibilities
  - Not in the right mood
  - Discouraged by losing
  - Perception of structural racism in sport
- **Origins of value systems**

- **What is activity for?**
  - A time filler
  - Less valuable than other hobbies
  - Not relevant to my life
  - Link between activity, enjoyment, ability and health
    - Being good at PE means you are healthy
  - Compensates for over-eating
  - Sport as a means to an end (career, health)
    - Sport as a profession (not recreational)
  - As an end in itself
  - En route (activity done in order to do something else, i.e. transport)
- **What is PE for?**
  - Socialising
  - Learning about the opposite sex
  - Getting fit
  - NOT for getting good at a sport
  - A more complex motive than "being active"
- **What is out of school physical activity for?**
  - It is for fun
  - Higher standard than PE
  - Refreshing and different
  - Do it to get better at a sport
    - Little room for unskilled or new players because of need to win
  - More choice
  - "Different"
  - PE doesn't count, OSPA counts
  - Contains a similar standard of people
- **Health imperatives**
  - Guilt for inactivity
  - Understandings of "health"
  - Being fit = healthy (not slim)
  - Healthy body, healthy brain
- **Body image**
  - Body shape and size as predictors of activity levels
  - Need to be fit before doing activity
  - The salient rugby body
- **Body manifestations / Impact on physicality**
  - Effect on body image, physicality or sense of self
  - Skill needs to be accompanied by the appropriate body size
  - Muscle size
  - Sweating
- **Age**
  - Get less active as you get older
  - Older means more freedom
- **Gender power**
  - Boys are competitive
  - Girls lose agency and confidence around boys
  - Boys' feelings are more valid than girls'
  - Boys are expected to dominate
  - Boys have power over girls' bodies, lives, activities and looks
  - Salience of mixed PE memories

- **Gender divide**
  - Insurmountable gender differences (of personality, activity preferences, muscularity)
  - School constructs a binary gender division
- **The gaze**
  - Boys as gender police
  - Self-consciousness
  - Boys are critical of girls appearance and performance
  - Visibility of others' ability / watching others' ability
  - Being seen or watched is a problem
  - Being though unknowledgeable is a problem
- **Constructing other people**
  - "Some people think"
  - Girls constructed each other as supportive
  - Power in constructing others
    - Putting others down
    - Dismissing their knowledge
    - Dismissing their way of moving
    - Making self look good by dismissing others
- **Nationalism**
  - Who you support and would play for
  - Loyalty to nation
- **Freedom**
  - When you're older
  - No choice in PE
  - Recreational activities

## *Appendix x: Secondary questions for discursive analysis*

- Where does language comes from
- Who says it?
- How do they say what they do?
  - What does the language do? How does it work to persuade?
  - How it is controlled or limited?
  - Label according to subject positions/interpretive repertoires
  - How young people position self with regard to topic
  - What can be said from different subject positions?
  - Identify the institutions supported or undermined by a discourse

- Are dominant cultural images reproduced?
  - If not, are they resisted?
- What is conformity?
  - How is conformity framed?
    - To PE lesson
    - To culture
- What is resistance?
  - How is resistance framed?

- What do young people wish to display about themselves and their relationship to physical activity?
- If young people do not show themselves as active, does that mean that physical activity is not important to them?
- What body shapes, activities and ways of moving are valued among peers? Which are stigmatised?
- Who/what restricts young people from doing sport and physical activity? Who encourages them?
- What coping techniques do the participants use to deal with PE participation?

- Are there differences or similarities in the ways in which participants construct valued bodies in school and out of school?
- Who produces knowledge about valued bodies?
  - What constitutes resistance and reframing?
- What discourses are drawn upon in the construction of valued bodies?
  - Which values or discourses are resisted?
- Are fit/slender, sport/non-sporty, fat/unhealthy, or cool /awkward body narratives and imperatives more salient?
- What knowledges of the body, activity and self do young people produce in their words and pictures?
  - Can we see particular visual cultures or local cultural resources reflected in them?
  - What light do they shed on the processes and objectives of school PE?
- What are young people supposed to understand about how bodies become valued?

## *Appendix xi: Introduction to student photographs*

| | Total | Br. Asian/ Indian | Asian/ African | Black | White | White/ Asian | Female | Male | Club outside school | No club outside school | Recreation | No recreation | Sikh | Hindu | Muslim | Christian | No answer |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Total people in this group | | 20 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 11 | 14 | 19 | 6 | 20 | 5 | 3 | 16 | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| Total photos by group | 574 | 516 | 15 | 5 | 33 | 5 | 195 | 379 | 453 | 121 | 452 | 122 | 72 | 425 | 34 | 5 | 38 |
| Action | 284 | 269 | 7 | 2 | 6 | 0 | 67 | 217 | 185 | 99 | 227 | 57 | 24 | 236 | 16 | 2 | 6 |
| Posed, active context | 34 | 30 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 13 | 21 | 26 | 8 | 30 | 4 | 2 | 26 | 3 | 1 | 2 |
| Posed, inactive context | 52 | 42 | 1 | 1 | 8 | 0 | 22 | 30 | 52 | 0 | 47 | 5 | 1 | 41 | 1 | 1 | 8 |
| Still, active context | 144 | 132 | 4 | 1 | 7 | 0 | 52 | 92 | 86 | 58 | 96 | 48 | 17 | 108 | 11 | 1 | 7 |
| Still, inactive context | 40 | 38 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 20 | 20 | 38 | 2 | 26 | 14 | 14 | 24 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Home | 112 | 102 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 4 | 21 | 91 | 111 | 1 | 106 | 6 | 0 | 101 | 1 | 0 | 10 |
| Inside | 89 | 81 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 2 | 21 | 68 | 88 | 1 | 83 | 6 | 0 | 80 | 1 | 0 | 8 |
| Outside | 23 | 21 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 23 | 23 | 0 | 23 | 0 | 0 | 21 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| School | 369 | 339 | 13 | 0 | 17 | 0 | 156 | 213 | 255 | 114 | 256 | 113 | 72 | 244 | 32 | 0 | 17 |
| Self | 112 | 107 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 17 | 95 | 85 | 27 | 91 | 21 | 4 | 102 | 5 | 0 | 1 |
| Object | 75 | 60 | 3 | 0 | 10 | 2 | 20 | 55 | 0 | 4 | 71 | 4 | 2 | 53 | 8 | 0 | 12 |
| Pets | 12 | 12 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 12 | 12 | 0 | 12 | 0 | 0 | 12 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Place | 78 | 69 | 2 | 0 | 7 | 0 | 39 | 39 | 76 | 2 | 44 | 34 | 30 | 36 | 5 | 0 | 7 |

Although 80 per cent of photos were taken in an active context - meaning a sports hall, playing field, park, gym, or anywhere that ordinarily would be used for physical activity, only 61 per cent of those were "action" shots, of subjects moving, running, throwing, jumping and so on. The rest were posed photos, or students standing around waiting for an activity to start, watching others or resisting participation. Sometimes the counts might match what we would expect to see: 94 per cent of photos by students who report not being active outside of school took their photos inside school compared with 56 per cent being taken by students who are active outside school. However, active students took many more photos inside their homes than did inactive students. Girls took significantly fewer action shots than did boys; but boys produced many more photos inside the home. Of note, girls photographed themselves only nine per cent of the time, while a quarter of boys' photos portrayed themselves; eleven boys and six girls photographed themselves. Where girls did photograph themselves, over half were posed. Many of the girls' photos in the sports hall and boys' photos in the gym show similar images - they were all taken from the same angle, in the same place, at the same time, of the same people. In girls' PE it was difficult to have time to take photos when so many students had a camera at the same time, and the teacher offered five minutes in each lesson for photography, and then requested that the cameras be put away. A whole photo set of the same activity, such as in Chanda's set from a volleyball lesson – could suggest disengagement from the photography task but might also point to Chanda's dissociation with physical activity outside of PE and the lack of spaces she accesses in order to take relevant photographs.

Of the 574 photos created by the participants, 369 (64 per cent) were taken in school. Looking more closely, 56 per cent of boys' photographs and 80 per cent of girls' photographs were taken in school. The difference here seems large enough to consider that girls' physical activity meanings are constructed much more in school, during PE lessons, extra-curricular clubs and lunch time recreation. Remembering that the participants had a choice as to whether to take photos in school or out of school, this view of their active worlds as considerably framed by the activity choices, resources and discourses available to the girls in school should be respected as the choice they made. Six girls and four boys *only* took photos in school. Given the nature of the photography task, the methodological underpinnings to the research and the demographics of the participant group, statistical analysis of the photo content was not entirely appropriate, obscuring the nuance, narrative and understanding that qualitative methods attempt to reach. Students did not and could not document their day to day lives, activities and their comings and goings thoroughly during their fortnight with the camera. The content count was not intended to quantify all the activity participation or identify which groups of students are more or less active. Instead it offers a guide or notion of *some* of the ways of seeing valued bodies that were meaningful to these students at that time.

## *Appendix xii: Images on school notices boards*

Posters with the tag line "Live the Paralympic values":

1. Courage (white male one-legged high jumper in mid-air going over the bar)
2. Inspiration (black male wheelchair basketballers)
3. Equality (male blindfolded footballers of colour smiling and hugging in celebration)

Posters from the Youth Sport Trust with the tag line "striving to achieve your personal best in competition":

4. Pride (white male wheelchair racer at UK Youth Games)
5. Confidence (white male gymnast on the rings)
6. Suppleness and strength (one black and one white wrestler/judo)
7. Desire to improve (white male gymnast on parallel bars)
8. Passion (two fencers, gender and race unknown)
9. Enjoyment (Lizzie Beddoes (named), white female gymnast doing handstand on bench) - photographed by three participants

Other:

10. ActiveKids (Sainsbury's voucher scheme) – silhouettes of boy catching a ball, girl with hoola-hoop and girl jumping
11. Football Fantasy League ad. Posed images of Premiership players.
12. RFUW poster. Ad for girls' rugby: "all girls have the opportunity to play rugby, ages 12-17" giving the location. Photo of three white girls aged 16-18 running on a pitch facing the camera, passing the ball to each other. They are wearing white kits that are not muddy, and they look slightly sweaty and messy.
13. Three posters advertising the Walk 4 Life, walk to school campaign. "Put his best foot forward". One has a photo of a girl's lower legs and feet and another of a full body shot of a boy with captions suggesting walking will help them.
14. White male badminton players at Athens Olympics
15. Dame Kelly Holmes and another black female sprinter crossing the finish line in an athletics stadium; Holmes is celebrating her win. Three smaller images below of white and black female middle distance runners; in one a black runner celebrates her win
16. Maria Sharapova (white tennis player) four images, active on court and posing with Wimbledon trophy
17. England v Portugal men's football, goal shot - white and black male footballers
18. Two white male hockey players
19. Collage of national-team cricketers in action, white and Asian: Andrew Flintoff (white, English), Matthew Hayden (white, Australian), Jacques Kallis (white, South African), Rahul Dravid (Indian), other Sri Lankan, white South African and English players
20. Johnny Wilkinson (white rugby player) kicking the ball
21. Two white female netballers (one with Australia on her kit) clashing as they both jump for the ball

Printed messages under posters:

22. "Perseverance … the difference between a successful person and others is not a lack

of strength, not a lack of knowledge: BUT RATHER A LACK OF WILL!"
23. "Success ... some people dream of success...while others get up and work at it!" This print out appears twice.
24. "Motivating for success ... the danger is not that our aim is too high and we miss it but it is too low and we reach it!"
25. "Once you learn to quit, it becomes a habit."

School website:

1. Library (Asian students inc. two hijabi girls; two white female teachers)
2. IT classroom (Asian students and white female teacher)
3. Dame Kelly Holmes with mixed race group of girls and WISPA banner
4. Football team posed shot (8 Asian boys, 2 Asian girls, in kit)
5. Artificial rock climbing, wall set up in playground (white female instructor, one white boy and two Asian boys, in sports wear)
6. Asian and white students hanging out in the purple area
7. Asian boys on PCs in open plan classroom